

Branching Out

CANADIAN MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

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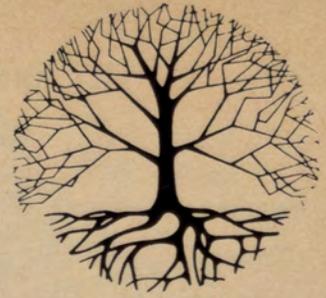


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MADLY IN LOVE WITH THE DEVIL AND THE DIVINE
TEN CASES SINCE MURDOCH
LA NEF DES SORCIERES IN MONTREAL
NEW POWER FOR ACADEMIC WOMEN
THE NEW GERMAN FILM
POETRY, FICTION, REVIEWS

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The appointment may be joint with the appropriate university department or may be full time in the Women's Studies Program. Canadian candidates with teaching experience in Women's Studies will be given preference.

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Search Committee
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letters



The article and pictures of the Inuit women (July/August) were especially interesting to me. Pamela Harris gave a realistic glimpse of these truly remarkable women and their lifestyle which not many of us have occasion to experience.

Gail B. Clark,
The Voice of Alberta Native
Women's Society,
Fort McMurray

I am giving copies of the July/August issue to two Inuit women whose photographs appeared in Pamela Harris' article. Both live here in Cambridge Bay now and were surprised and delighted to see themselves.

Diane Holt
Cambridge Bay

I have just seen the Spence Bay crafts at Snow Goose here in Ottawa and was delighted to find Pamela Harris' photographs and comments in *Branching Out*. Their products are a real expression of their joy in living.

Ann Darbyshire, Ottawa

I believe the faults in Evelyn Reed's book *Women's Evolution* are more fundamental than suggested by Yvonne Klein (July/August issue), and the problem with her dialectics is that she is no dialectician.

Basically Reed inverts the Judeo-Christian dogma that man is made "in the image of God" and woman created for man. She takes the position that women are superior and all human accomplishment rests on female accomplishments. She describes what she believes happened, lists examples, opinions, facts and myths that tend to support her view, and ignores material that doesn't support her case. Her approach is that of a lawyer, a politician or a preacher, not that of a scientist. Whereas women for centuries have been denigrated as "daughters of Eve," guilty of bringing sin and death into the world, Reed declares that men were the initial sinners — "the violence of male sexuality," "the problem of cannibalism."

Klein's statement that "Reed is a Marxist" (reflecting Reed's claim) suggests that she represents the one Marxist position. Not so. It would take a book (and an unusually expert and non-partisan writer) to explain the diversity of "Marxist" interpretations of history and the position of women.

Reed's work is unsound as a whole, not just in a spot or two, yet she uses all kinds of material that is valid in itself.

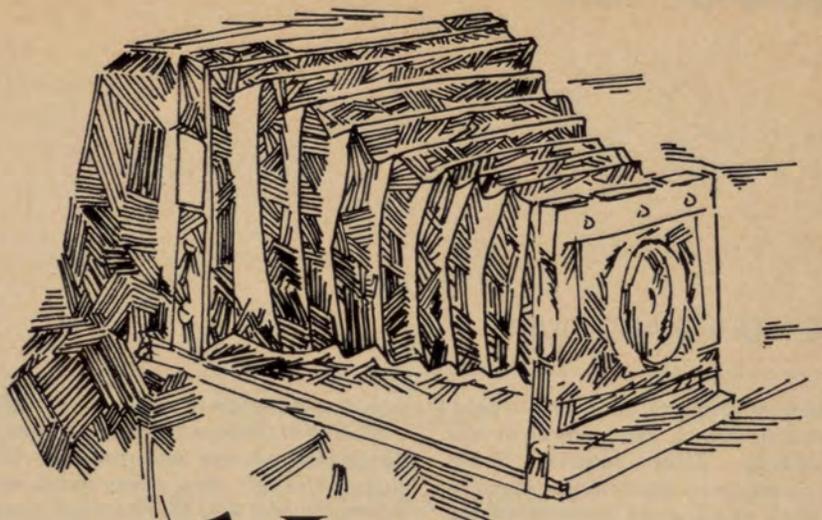
Alison Hopwood, Vancouver

We read your article on rape in the February/March issue.

The issue of rape probably means different things in different towns, yet few of us have the knowledge, time or resources to comprehend a larger view of the problem. Considering the amount of time and money researchers are encouraged to spend on such great national crises as birth-control for pets and the possible acceptability of subway art, it is amazing that rape is such an under-researched topic of no apparent interest to universities, the government, the medical profession and police investigators. How can it be that small groups of self-educated feminists know so much more about rape than doctors, lawyers, politicians and detectives?

At present we are working on a Kingston Women's Handbook, and I'm hoping that our research for this will make the issue of rape in this town a bit more obvious and understandable than it is at present.

Julie Morris
Kingston Women's Centre
Kingston, Ontario



A Lens on the Past

Three special exhibitions at the Provincial Museum of Alberta depict our past through photographs of long ago.

INTO THE SILENT LAND

August 25 to October 10

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THE CAMERA AND DR. BARNARDO

August 20 to September 26

A heart-tugging exhibition of photos from 1874 to 1905, portraying children who passed through orphanages in England under the auspices of Dr. Thomas John Barnardo. 25,000 of these children emigrated to Canada.

JOURNEY INTO OUR HERITAGE

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CULTURE

MINE, YOURS AND OURS

Money, property, contracts — cold, unromantic topics, but central to any relationship. After reading Stella Bailey's article on matrimonial property, we talked about some of the problems we have encountered in our own relationships. While in our ideal self-images we are strong and financially independent, it's sometimes hard to reconcile this with the realities of our living situation.

Jobs

The most fundamental consideration for most of us is what kind of job we want to have; whether we decide to make a commitment to a full-time career or to homemaking; whether making a lot of money is an important goal. Some women attempt to combine home and work in creating their own freelance jobs. However, often it is difficult to draw or write at home, especially if there are small children. Some of us have difficulty because our skills don't qualify us for high-paying jobs, and if we live with a man whose earning power is greater we may feel it's not worth it to take a low-paying position. But this can be a cop-out. Many men don't like their jobs but keep working because they've been socialized to accept this role, or feel locked in because they have children and debts. A 'job crisis' usually affects both partners.

Sharon: I left a relatively high-paying job to work full-time on the magazine and in doing so became financially dependent. It was a complete turn-around for me. For years I had felt I was an independent person, and financial independence was the most tangible sign of this. I had thought my first full-time job would be the beginning of a career commitment, but it was dreary. I didn't like most of my co-workers and after a month or so I wasn't learning anything new. Working on the magazine part-time was exciting, but I was over-extending myself — I didn't even have time to write a letter to a friend.

I was making a lot of money, but I

began to question whether it was really critical to my independence; I seemed to be spending more and more on 'luxuries'. The fact was, I was living with someone who was also earning a good salary. Our joint monthly income seemed ludicrous to me. My partner liked his job — most of the time — and supported me in my desire to do something I would enjoy. Earlier in our relationship my financial contribution had been greater than his, and this made me feel I wouldn't be a parasite if I cut back my contribution for a while. And I was convinced that I had enough skills to get back into the conventional work force fairly easily if I needed to.

I've been working now for two years without an income and I'm beginning to question whether it's fair to myself or my partner. I don't feel I have as much right as he does to say how money should be spent, and I feel guilty about some expenses — particular car repairs, since I use it more than he does — if we split up, I'm not sure I would feel right about claiming half our possessions.

Lifestyle

When you enter a relationship with someone, you soon discover that different financial backgrounds or family situations affect spending patterns. Either or both of you may be divorced or have children. If your ages are different, there's a good chance your life rhythms are in different phases; one of you may be into a career, the other wanting to establish a family. There are bound to be differences in the ways you like to spend money, and perhaps in your attitudes towards saving and financial security.

Karen: We were both in the process of splitting up with partners we'd been married to. I was a "poor student", he had a professional's salary, four kids to support, a farm to maintain. While we were dating, the conflicts were minimal, and I paid my share as often as I could. Things got more complicated when we decided to live together. I worked part-time for money and part-time for

pleasure. The difference was, I was no longer sharing expenses with a student-husband but with someone who made and spent six times what I did in a year. When we wanted to go out to eat or to a show, did I say "No, I can't afford it" or did I go, and let him pay? Should I pay room and board? Was my work around the farm worth anything?

After a trip to Europe, some things crystallized. Each of us paid our own way, but we spend more money than we took, on things I didn't feel I could afford, like renting a car. I felt he could better afford to pay for these extras, and he felt I was a cheapskate because I had savings from my last job that I didn't want to contribute. The whole issue made it clear that we had different "financial self-images". But we weren't familiar with each other's self-images because we hadn't talked much about money matters.

Separation

The cases Stella Bailey describes in her article demonstrate that a lot of legal complications can arise when couples split up. Many couples have no written, or even verbal, agreement about property division; often it's not until there are a lot of bad feelings on both sides that questions of money and property are really discussed. It is important that couples are able to talk about these issues while their relationship is still working. Sometimes an agreement can be useful in court, if that's where your relationship ends. Money seems to acquire a symbolic value to people in a dissolving relationship, and it's hard to predict how you or your partner will react.

Sharon: I'm living in a fairly stable relationship of several years' duration. I feel I know how I react to things, how he reacts, and it's difficult for me to imagine that the property would be a big issue. It seems to me when you decide to end a relationship, the important thing is to come out of it with your freedom, and for both parties to have

some sense of self-respect and dignity. Since I see both of us as reasonable people, I have difficulty imagining that a financial division would be hard to work out. Yet I've seen friends whom I respect get involved in very bitter hassles over material things. Maybe I'm being naive in thinking it wouldn't happen to us.

Karen: Since I split up with my husband two years ago, and have watched several friends involved in the same process, I feel differently about the property issue. I felt guilty when I left, and I guess I was paying my own ransom by saying "keep it all, I don't want anything." After a few months my emotional involvement with the situation was diminished, and I felt that I hadn't done myself justice, that I should assert myself by taking some things from the home we had shared. Our relationship had been an essentially non-communicative one and this didn't change much after we split up; our contact was limited to the disposal of what had been mutual property. There was some conflict here, and I believe it was a way of working out some of the feelings we had for each other. The things were important to me for their psychological value as much as for their material value.

Many of us avoid talking about each other's assumptions about how money should be earned, spent and saved until a conflict forces us to do so. We needn't think of ourselves as being crass and materialistic because we are concerned with the money factor in our relationships. Head and heart both play a part in helping us to sort out these issues and to make decisions together.

Karen Lawrence
Sharon Batt

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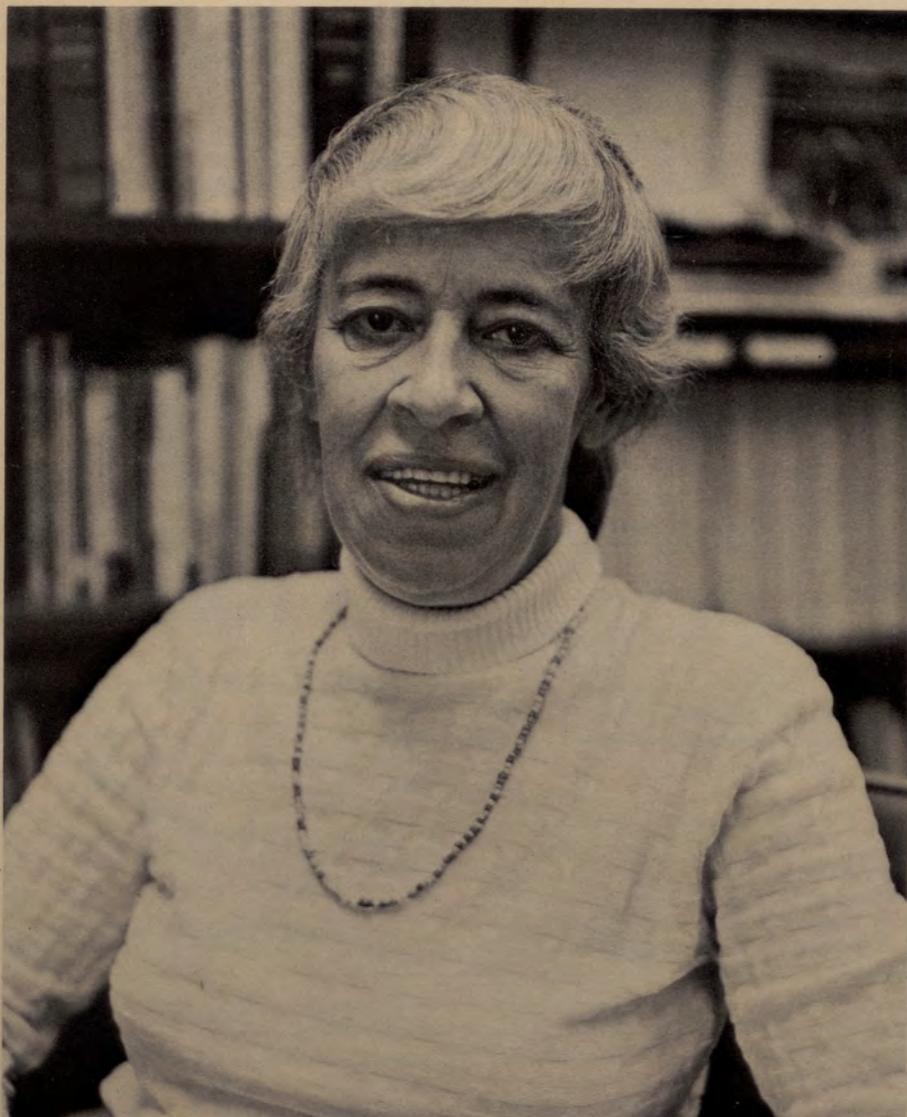
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Things Do Happen in the Groves of Academe



by Shirley Swartz
photos by Diana Palting

Not everything in Canada suffers inflation.

The proportion of female to male graduate students has not changed since 1921; for fifty-five years only 20% of doctoral candidates have been women.

But even there the attrition does not stop. Graduate schools function largely to train replacements in the academic community. Yet, in 1974-1975, should a woman convocating with a Ph. D. have been fortunate enough to be hired as an assistant professor at a Canadian university, only 10.2% of her colleagues would have been women. If in that same year she had just been promoted to the rank of full professor, that number would have dwindled to a mere 3.8%. Moreover many — not all — universities would have paid her between \$100 to \$3600 per annum less than her male counterparts. Her chances of becoming a member of any of the committees which made policy decisions were negligible; these committees were almost invariably 100% male and nominations to them were usually made by another all-male committee.

These "appalling statistics" indict the traditional response of many universities towards the women, both students and faculty, in their midst: ignore them, discourage them, they will get married, have kids and quit anyway. Many of them did.

But university women themselves have begun to insist with considerable success that they will no longer be ignored, discouraged, discriminated against. Between 1972 and 1975 various academic administrations — UBC, Queen's, Waterloo, Toronto, Alberta — under pressure from women, undertook studies to determine the extent to which their women faculty members had suffered discrimination. Some universities have already remedied salary discrepancies

The traditional response towards women was, ignore them, discourage them, they will get married, have kids and quit anyway.

between men and women. York is one of several institutions to have named an advisor to the President on the Status of Women. For a time Toronto had a woman Vice-President.

But even after Task Force Reports had been commissioned, after they had shown definite discrimination against women and made specific recommendations to eliminate it, some universities still found it "easy to say we can solve this problem by assuming there isn't any problem." The words are those of Jean Lauber, Professor of Zoology, Associate Chairman of her department, and, now, Associate Vice-President (Academic) of the University of Alberta. That university had tabled its Senate Task Force Report on the Status of Women. A group of women on campus had organized in response and had the tabling motion reversed. One of the most tangible results of their action has been Professor Lauber's new appointment, an appointment carrying with it "primary responsibility" for women's affairs. She will begin by chairing a committee for the "systematic review" and rectification of salary discrepancies between men and women.

Professor Lauber recalled for me the spontaneous gathering of women which led to her initial involvement in the effort to improve the situation of women in the university. "I was involved in a very *ad hoc* kind of study on whether women had been discriminated against and had suffered from lower salaries and less possibility of promotion at this university. In the course of that study we became aware that women were very badly under-represented on committees in the university and so a friend and I tried to find some women to nominate for committees as vacancies opened. We discovered that we really didn't know all that many women, that we weren't reaching all the women on the faculty by any means. So, just on the chance that it might be an interesting social

event, we sent out a notice to all the women we could locate saying, come to dinner — a no-host dinner. We'll get acquainted. We thought maybe a couple of dozen people would come. There were seventy-five, we had a tremendous time, and the group decided that it wanted to go on meeting on a very informal basis. We didn't want to be an organization, we didn't want to elect officers and have a constitution and all that, we just wanted to go on getting together. That went on almost two years with meetings almost every month and people finding new friends in the university.

"Then the report of the Senate Task Force on Women was tabled. We had a meeting shortly after that at which we had a woman who had been a member of the Task Force tell us about what it had found and its recommendations. Suddenly things just jelled, like that. We decided in the space of about half an hour that we had to become a formal organization, we had to become a *power-base* from which to try to get some of those recommendations implemented. So we all tossed our quarter into the hat and drew up a letter to the university administration saying we thought the Task Force report was a very solid thing and that we were keenly interested in seeing it implemented. From there we were off and running."

Jean Lauber was the first President of the group that had become the Academic Women's Association. "We've gone on meeting and we've been pressing in lots of ways to get things done. Sometimes it seems like a terribly uphill fight because you write letters and you think you've just said it beautifully and then nobody takes any notice of it. That's one of the reasons I'm very pleased with my new position. Now we won't always be asking for things from the outside looking in. The women on campus will have somebody who's highly enough placed in the administration structure to at

least be their eyes and ears and to be a spokesperson for them and for things they want to bring to the attention of the university."

Most women academics find themselves trying to manage two careers as they struggle to find enough time for both their jobs and their families. For Professor Lauber, the assumption of the Associate Vice-Presidency will add a third. "I had to have a discussion with myself to convince myself that this was the kind of thing that *I could* do and *wanted* to do.

"As a scientist one *has* to keep in touch with the field. If I get away for a year or two, I think I'd never get back because you have to keep up with the literature, you have to keep up with the research. I am responsible for two research grants and I have to keep my research going in that area. I have several graduate students who look to me for supervision. So it's going to be a very touchy thing whether I'll be able to manage my teaching — I'll be teaching one course — my research, my own publishing, and the research of my graduate students. I'm sure it's going to require superhuman effort but then it does for anybody who goes into administration. I fortunately have support at home and my children are old enough so I can leave them on their own more than I could at first."

The "superhuman" effort required to be a wife, a mother and a full-time academic, whether student or faculty member, doubtlessly accounts for many of the women "drop-outs" from the university. Others compromise. They take positions as "sessionals" year after year. As sessional lecturers they have no responsibilities beyond teaching. But often they also have no privileges. They are hired on an eight-month contract, at the lowest academic salary. The university renews the contract from year to year, often at the last possible minute; there is no tenure, no job security. In most

"There's no reason why a person can't be dedicated to a career on a part-time basis."

departments — not all — sessionals have no vote, therefore no power, in department meetings. The university will not provide a sessional lecturer with travel funds to attend conferences or with authorization for his or her application for research funds. Now that jobs are scarce, new Ph. D.s are taking sessional lectureships as intern positions until they can find tenurable appointments. But traditionally women have remained "ghettoized" in the rank of sessional lecturer in some — again not all — departments for years. Should these women apply for regular academic appointments, their lack of publications, their failure to attend scholarly meetings, are often counted against them. They seem less "dedicated" than their male colleagues. But where were the research funds, the travel allowances?

The subject is one about which Jean Lauber feels strongly. She hopes not only to end obvious inequities between men and women faculty but to make alternate career patterns, patterns which would acknowledge a woman's double responsibility, to her family and to her job, acceptable.

It's certainly true that women have different life styles and different career patterns, very obviously because many of them take time out to have families. Or, when it comes to the crunch, their husbands' jobs come first, and they may be delayed a couple of years in their taking up the duties of a job. But it certainly doesn't mean that women are less committed to their careers because they follow a pattern different from the traditional one. There should be other ways, for example, of arranging a graduate career so that people don't have to attend full-time. There's no reason why a person can't be dedicated to a career on a part-time basis when that's the only way she can pursue it during the years when she has home responsibilities."

She cites applications for

research grants as an instance in which the "spotty" record of a woman who has taken time away from the university to have children may work to her disadvantage.

"I don't know if women get fewer grants because there is discrimination against women just because they are women or if there is discrimination against people who have not followed the traditional career patterns. As we get more women onto the review panels which make decisions about these grants, they will be alerted to not discriminating against an applicant because she is a woman. But those review panels might very well have said, this person doesn't look sincere, dedicated to doing this kind of research because she has had this spotty kind of background: five years out when we have no record of her doing anything in the field, and she didn't start publishing until five years after she got her degree, or something like that. *That* kind of thing, without looking for the reasons, without appreciating that there were reasons that didn't have anything to do with a person's intellect or dedication to their field, *that* might have happened and might still be happening. It's very important to get women to apply for grants because it frees them for research which they must do if they are to get head in the academic world. One of the things I keep trying to do in my interactions with academic women is to say, *publish*, even if it means you do a little less for your students this year, you've *got* to get some research done."

But Jean Lauber's concern is not only with faculty women. She would begin in the elementary schools, eradicating sex-stereotyping, giving women the confidence they need to succeed as students, teachers, researchers. She spoke of her own lack of self-confidence as a student and of the need for better career counseling at all educational levels.

"When I finished my Bachelor's

degree, I didn't think I was capable of graduate work and nobody was there to convince me that yes, I was as capable as the next person. I spent one year out between my Bachelor's and going back for my Master's and it took working in a very dull job for months before I realized that this was not the sort of thing I wanted for the rest of my life. But then I was five years out between my Master's degree and going back for my doctorate. In fact I was married before I went back, to one of those very supportive husbands, of which there are not all that many, who encouraged me. Coming back to graduate school I was somewhat older than most graduate students and I had to fight the battle of being taken seriously in spite of being both older and a woman. Mostly I wish I had had the faith in myself which I later developed. I would see that as one thing which I would like to instill in women students.

"We have to make women academically qualified by encouraging them to stay in graduate school and finish their degrees rather than placing some other pursuit first, by encouraging women at the undergraduate level to prepare themselves for a career before they get distracted with marriage and a family. Universities are in a unique position among employers in that they're really in the business of training replacements for their own staff. So the universities have some sort of obligation, I think, to give attention to ways in which women can be encouraged to stay in the field and to prepare themselves for academic jobs."

Beginning in elementary school, suggests Jean Lauber, there should be women counselors who are conversant with career possibilities as well as personal problems. And from grade one to graduate courses in physics and mathematics, women must be hired to provide role models for students.

In recent years, Professor Lauber has worked on a number of projects,

"Should we have credit courses in women's studies? You can make the case that this would be ghettoizing women. I think for a period we need women's studies courses to bring out something that hasn't been looked at before."

directed at various educational levels, to reduce sex-stereotyping. One of these was "A Women's Studies Sampler."

"Last year the Women's Program Centre and the Academic Women's Association participated in a trial course — we called it A Women's Studies Sampler — and it was very successful. We ran it specifically to test the market, to see whether there was a demand for this kind of thing in the university. There seems to be. We didn't want to lose the momentum that had been established by the course and so just last week I got together a committee — a very *ad hoc* group of people who could speak for their own fields and talk about women. There's a possibility we could offer some courses next year. We want them to be for credit because we want to have academic credibility. We will only teach them if we can get the courses established as part of the regular academic scheme.

"Should we do this? You can make the case that this would be ghettoizing women or you can ask what a woman does who majors in women's studies.

"There are many junior colleges now that are teaching women's studies; junior colleges tend to respond more quickly to public demand than do the traditional universities. And so there is presumably a teaching market out there for people who have this kind of a major. As more employers get into the affirmative action type of hiring and find more ways to work women into their corporations, there will be places for women who know the history of this effort and who have worked in these fields.

"I think maybe eventually these courses should talk about people but for a period we need women's studies courses to bring out something that hasn't been looked at before. People have been studying literature for hundreds of years and it has always been from the man's point of view. Perhaps for a few years we need to

focus on the woman's place in literature or on woman as creator of literature. Hopefully it won't be necessary to do this for evermore."

Other projects were directed at elementary and even pre-school children. One involved rating children's television shows for sex stereotyping. "We became worried about stereotyping in the TV programs the children watch; we didn't know if there was in fact a problem or if it was just our imaginations. We did a sort of pilot study, then we wondered what to do with this and decided we didn't have quite enough information to write to the networks and the cable companies and say, You are guilty! So we decided to make it into a national survey by talking other women university scholars into doing a study in their regions. We feel that if we could get another couple of hundred people involved in several different regions,

that would give us a lot firmer base from which to write and say, We are going to boycott the products advertised if you don't improve.

Other activities aim at providing more visible role models for young children, giving girls self-confidence, boys an easy acceptance of intelligence and achievement in their female peers. To this end, the Academic Women's Association put together a booklet they nicknamed "Any Woman Can." It consists of a series of autobiographic stories by women who have been successful in various professions demanding extensive academic preparation. Now known by the less provocative title of *Profiles*, the book will be distributed to Junior High Schools "as a way of providing role models and perhaps convincing some girls that yes, there are women who have made it and you could too."



"When I had my first child the university said, you must quit when you are five months pregnant, the students would be embarrassed by a pregnant woman lecturing in front of them."

They Jumped so High They Touch-ed the Sky is a second booklet aimed at children in grades five and six.

"This grew out of an effort of the University Women's Club. We became concerned about sex stereotyping in textbooks and about how early the process of convincing girls that they are second-class citizens begins. We decided to write some stories about famous Canadian women. We each chose a woman, did our research, and wrote a story. An editor who had written books for grade-school children polished them all and put them in the same kind of format. A year ago we tried these out in the schools and the response was quite good; the kids, both boys and girls, were interested in them.

"We were encouraged enough that we tried to get a publisher. You know how that goes: one sends the manuscript out and then one waits and waits and waits. Finally it comes back: Very interesting but we have a full schedule for the next five years. Meanwhile you can't send it to anyone else because its being considered by a publisher. We finally got up and decided we'd have the stories typed, put together by the xerox route — 200 copies —, and take them to our national meeting, which is this month, to let people get a copy. If this generates orders then it will also generate money for printing up some more of them. Maybe we can interest some publisher in coming to us."

Altering women's education goals and the position of women in the universities, Professor Lauber emphasizes again and again, will take *time*. It takes *time* to educate women. Her activities and proposals to remove femal stereotyping at all educational levels gain value precisely because education does take time, because the university cannot provide more female faculty, more models for women students, until it educates more women Ph.D.s and until women themselves gain the necessary confidence to pur-

HAVE YOU MISSED OUT?

If you haven't been getting the **NeWest ReView** you've missed the hilarious writing of MAARA HAAS, nationally-known journalist MYRNA KOSTASH describing her life in Two Hills, Alberta, MARGARET LAURENCE on the poetry of LORNA UHER, DIANE WOODMAN with a feature interview on the Saskatoon women's group that produces the HERSTORY calendar and MARIA CAMPBELL, author of *Half-Breed*, evaluating Gabriel Dumont.

It's true that not all contributors to the **NeWest ReView** are women but a lot are. The Review has been published monthly since June 1975 and costs only \$3 per year. It brings you the best in writing from Western Canada and keeps you in touch with Western Canada and issues. There isn't a magazine like it. Subscribe today.

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sue professional careers.

Nonetheless things *have* changed, however slowly. Jean Lauber's assured manner and ready laughter belie the young woman filled with doubt about her own capabilities. And women academics today, provided with maternity leave, can afford to be amused at her recollection of her first pregnancy. "Maternity leave," she smiles, "would have helped. I had my first child at the stage when the university — not this one — said that

you must quit when you are five months pregnant; the students would be embarrassed by a pregnant woman lecturing in front of them. I didn't quit in fact; I taught until I was about seven months and *huge*. I was teaching reproductive biology and the class was *very* interested."

Things *do* happen."

Shirley Swartz is book review editor at *Branching Out*. She lectures in the English Department at the University of Alberta.

Madly in Love

A Search for Spiritual Awareness

interview by Claire Caplan
photos by Eleanor Lazare

Branching Out first interviewed filmmaker Anne Wheeler two years ago. At that time she was an active member and shareholder in the Edmonton-based company Filmwest. Recently Anne spent several months in an ashram in India and there became a disciple of the Indian master Rajneesh. She has changed her name to Mugdha. In July, Claire Caplan talked to Mugdha about her spiritual commitment.

Claire Caplan: Why don't we take up your career where Branching Out left off in the November/December issue of '74? What was happening to you?

Mugdha: I was snowballing. I had a series of ten television programs that I had written with another woman, Loretta Walker. It was on general concepts for kids from grades 4 to 6. I had just done a number of four-day film workshops across western Canada, teaching women how to make one-minute films. I was co-producing a film with Lorna Rasmussen, called "Happily Unmarried", which was based on the story of her mother, and I had a radio series of 28 programs for children, on music, with myself and "Wilbur the Worm". I had another film to direct and edit for the National Film board, called "Augusta", which was about an eighty-nine year old Indian woman.

Then what happened?

Well my nerves were getting a little strung out and things between me and Filmwest were becoming a bit tense. I had been fortunate enough to get money for ideas that I was working on and Lorna was working with me pretty full time. A lot of tension began to grow

in Filmwest because it was felt that jobs should be rotated. Yet I was getting money and my ideas were being sold. I was beginning to get more of the directoral jobs around the office instead of slave jobs like camera assistant.

Why were your ideas being sold more than anyone else's?

Well one reason was that I had a personal, gut-level interest in them, and I think that helped a lot. Also there were two of us, Lorna and I, selling those ideas and we were really committed to them. I think the people who were funding believed us and they were willing to invest their money in us. Consequently, we were getting the opportunities, especially in International Women's Year, to do what we wanted to do. Filmwest was at sort of an ebb; a lot of their personal ideas were not being funded. People were coming to them with *their* ideas and they were doing the films for other people. It was very difficult because, above and beyond, we had been together for a number of years. They were my closest friends and our relationships were being tried. The tension in me began to grow and at one meeting there was an emotional outburst. I had a decision to make at that meeting: if I was to continue making films about women with Lorna I was going to have to do them outside Filmwest. Yet Filmwest had been a tremendous commitment for me. I had never committed myself to anything like that before so it was very difficult to make the break. Fate entered into it and made it a little easier for me. I fell down the stairs upon my exit from the meeting and broke my leg, tore all the ligaments, and ended up in the hospital for a week. In that week I really had time to reassess where I was

letting life lead me. I decided that one thing I had always wanted to do was go to India, I had always felt pulled toward India. I knew I was going to have to go eventually so I decided, while lying there on my back in hospital, that within the next twelve months, indeed, I was going to make that possible.

When you were making this decision, did you wonder at where all your creativity had brought you and what it was doing to you as a person?

Well to anybody who was looking at me from the outside, I was very successful. I was moving right along in my career, people were starting to know my name, I was getting money for my ideas, and things were going much easier than when I first got into films. But inside there was a terrific tension building and I knew there was something amiss. The cause of this distress wasn't something that, amidst all the chaos in the life I was leading, I was ever going to be able to see. Yet I knew it was something I was going to have to solve, to face. I wasn't able to explain it, I just knew it was there. All this success, what seemed to everybody else a tremendous success story, was *not* a success story because underneath it all I was a very unhappy person.

You didn't feel fulfilled?

No, I didn't feel fulfilled, even though I had gotten to where I thought I would never get to, I had gotten there and that wasn't it.

So when you came out of hospital what did you do?

I finished up my commitments. This took until just after Christmas, I

madly pretaped all my radio programs, my TV series, made the decision and bought my ticket. I took the plunge, and the tremendous relief when I got on that airplane . . .

Why India, of all places?

Well it's very sentimental. My family had a history in India. My brothers had been born there and my father had been a doctor there. I had never really talked to my father about it. Although I always felt quite close to father I never knew that much about him, but I did know that India had been a real influence on his life.

Was he a spiritual man?

Yes, I think he was. He never was a churchgoer but he certainly was a spiritual man. He had been a doctor in India and with the British forces in Singapore. He had been captured and held in a Formosa prison camp and, after visiting a number of his friends who had been in that prison camp, I began to realize that he had become the spiritual energy of the camp. He had maintained his soul and was a tremendous help to the other men. He had run his little hospital in the camp and had done a lot of miracles. People said he himself was a miracle. There was an article about him called "The Man Sent from God". So he was very special to me. I had always wanted to go back to where he had been, not really knowing what it had done for him because I was only seventeen when he died and I had not been able to speak to him as to what his life experiences had meant to him. So that and the fact that over the last five years a number of people who had entered my life had connections with India and had always encouraged me to go over there — there just seemed to be all these clues that I was supposed to go to India and see what was there for me.

Where did you set out for in India?

I set out to go very slowly. I went via Vancouver and finished off the production elements of the film "Augusta" on my way, then I flew to Bangkok. I expected to spend some time in Thailand, because I had a good friend there, but once I got started I just couldn't stop. Immediately, upon getting off the plane in Bangkok, I booked myself on a plane for India the next day and got on that plane, a rickety old Air Egypt special, no air hostesses, no life belts. It was an amazing old plane . . .

Was there a pilot?

Yes, apparently there was a pilot. I got off in Bombay and things seemed to be very easy in getting to Poona



where I was headed to meet some of my friends who were there with an Indian master, Rajneesh. I thought, what an opportunity, I have these two very close friends in Poona so I will go there and visit with them for a couple of days. They have been all over India so they can give me some good advice as to where to go, then I will head over to Pakistan where my father's hospital was and see the district where my family lived. I arrived in Poona exactly four days after I left Canada. It had been so easy to get there, I just couldn't believe it. I arrived at the Rajneesh Ashram in midafternoon. My two friends were sitting right at the gate as if they were waiting for me. They just started to laugh because they hadn't expected me for months.

Do your friends live in the Ashram?

No, Rajneesh's movement is growing so quickly that there isn't really enough room for everybody in the Ashram. They live very near it and they have been with him for about five years

now. I stayed with them for about ten days, then it became obvious that I was going to stay, well I just didn't have any desire to go anywhere else, so I decided to get my own place and settle down for a while.

When you stayed with your friends those first ten days did you go to the Ashram for any of the meditations?

Oh I just dove right in, absolutely, illogically and totally! They had me involved in meditation that evening and the next day they said, you should meet Rajneesh. Well I'm only going to be here a few days so I guess I should meet him. They took me to meet the woman who takes care of his appointments and sets up his *darshans*, the meetings in the evening that he was with about fifteen of this *sannyasins*, disciples. Every night he meets with them and talks to each one individually. If you wish to become a *sannyasin* you go to one of these *darshans* to be initiated. Well I was completely naive

about all these terms, so when they took me to this lady and said, "This is our friend and she would like to meet Rajneesh" and she said, "Oh you want to take sannyasin?", I thought she meant do you want to meet him, so I said, "Yes, yes I want to meet him!". She said, "Oh we just love people who are so positive here." I thought, why wouldn't I be positive, I want to meet this man, he has been a good part of my friends' life all this time. I had no idea that I was saying yes to . . . that I would be wearing orange for the rest of my life.

By saying yes like that you were committing yourself?

Well I didn't realize it but I was committing myself to becoming a disciple of this man, right? And of course as soon as I said yes and she put me down for tomorrow night I saw my friend Gayatri grin, then I knew what I had said yes to, not just meeting him but also becoming his disciple, and I had only heard him speak once at that time. I had heard him talk that morning. He speaks from a veranda or porch every morning, from 8 to 9:30, to all his disciples and anyone who wants to hear him speak. So I had listened to him for an hour and a half and everything he had said that morning had seemed so applicable to me. I had had a tremendous sense of well-being. It's a cliché, but I had arrived home. I had a feeling of surrender, of belonging. So when I said yes I would take sannyasin, and I realized what I had said, I thought, well I guess this is the way it is all supposed to work.

Did you ask any questions before going that evening as to what you were actually committing yourself to?

No, I didn't ask any questions. My friend Gayatri said, "You must wear orange tonight" and I said, "Oh fine."

Why must you wear orange?

I imagine there is a different reason for everyone who wears orange. For me it's a constant reminder of the Eastern energy. It is a color that has been worn by disciples of Indian masters and Buddhist masters, so it has a lot of spiritual energy with it. I'm not sure if it is because spiritual people have worn it or because the color orange is spiritual and gives a certain spiritual energy to people, but it definitely is a spiritual color. To be given the direction to wear orange in this society, if you are a Westerner, has all sorts of implications. It is a declaration. If you have not surrendered to your master you are going to find it very difficult to wear orange.

Having made a previous statement of being very much your own person,

and being a feminist, did it not bother you to surrender to a man, the fact that your spiritual master was a man?

The first letter I wrote home was to a friend, Myrna Kostash, and I put in a message, "You won't believe this but I'm wearing a picture of a man around my neck. I'm sure this will be the cause of many a subtle joke." To me Rajneesh is a feminist. He might have said things at the beginning that, intellectually, I wanted to argue, but as I spent more time with him it became clear to me that indeed he was a feminist. This realization had to do with the idea that the world is basically made up of opposites, the yin and the yang as the Chinese call it.

What do you mean?

Well I used to have a personal philosophy that there were two different kinds of people when it came to thinking or to character. One kind of person was what I would call convergent and that person was able to come to a point — a person who made decisions quickly and acted on them. The other kind of person was divergent and that person was always thinking of alternatives and often found it difficult to come to any decisions. A very creative person would be a balance of convergent and divergent. Yin, divergent, is feminine and yang, convergent, is masculine. The whole dichotomy reaches right into a number of my experiences, as an educator, as a feminist and as a person on a spiritual path. I think that a lot of the inner turmoil in me before I went to India was a result of my becoming very yang, very masculine, I was becoming unbalanced. I was very much a survivor, I was going to survive here. I don't think I was paying tribute to my yin or any of my feminine qualities and I call Rajneesh a feminist because in a way he believes in reviving, in nourishing, the feminine in everybody, in men and women. He taught me to look at myself in terms of this dichotomy and make sure that I have a balance. If the whole world could become more feminine then it would be a better place to live in, in terms of men and women. So wearing a picture of a man around my neck is not really the point, it's wearing a picture of a person who believes in spiritual or feminine convergence, or celebration, whatever you want to call it.

Well most spiritual masters, and Carl Jung, have professed the existence of both masculine and feminine as a part of man's make-up and if there is an unbalance you are either mentally ill, or off-centre. Could you explain a little about Rajneesh's philosophy?

His philosophy is that everyone is going to find their own path, that there is

no definite intellectual path for everyone to follow. He can't say that this is the path you must follow, this is the path of the mind, or this is Tantric Yoga.

What of that part of his teaching that is different than most spiritual masters', that you are not asked to become celibate?

Well again, he has a terrific sense of humor . . .

Anybody that follows a spiritual path has to have a great sense of humor, just to survive . . .

Well I remember one of the questions that was asked when I was there which had to do with the Christian theology of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The question was, "What happened to the Mother?", and he said that, at least in the East, in India, Shiva is not masculine or feminine, Shiva is both, and to think of any god being one or the other is completely naive. So again, he very much advocates the balance of feminine and masculine and he would tease the Christians, what are the Trinity doing now, surely they must be bored, for the masculine and feminine are energies that play off each other, they grow with each other, they need each other. So the celibacy question is absurd within the Rajneesh Ashram.

Is he celibate?

No, I don't believe he is celibate. I never asked him but he certainly has a lady who has been with him for a number of years and many of the questions that are asked of him are to do with sexual energy. So his ashram in India is one of the only ashrams where men and women can enter on a completely equal basis. There is no discrimination. It's a very beautiful ashram to be in because there is no role definition and the people there tend to be quite balanced. You have the women who have made it to India and in order to do that they have to make a number of decisions, so a lot of the women there are, for a lack of a better word, strongly masculine, like myself, and a lot of the men who have made it there have a strong feminine side, for they are the men that have said, I'm not interested in making \$30,000 a year, pursuing a career without a break in fear of missing a rung on the ladder of success. They have given their spiritual needs a high priority and have ended up there too. So it is a nice mixture of men and women.

Is the Ashram made up mostly of Westerners then?

Rajneesh speaks English very well so that is one of the reasons that a lot of

Westerners go to him. He speaks English for one month and Hindu for another.

You arrived then in an English month?

Yes. I arrived on the first day of what is called a meditation workshop, or workcamp, for what he is most famous for, his madness meditation. There are six other meditations and they are done for ten days every month at the camp. So having arrived on the first day I got to try all the different kinds of meditation. In fact the madness meditation was not the one that particularly connected with me. Because it is so absurd it is the one that has the biggest reputation, for Rajneesh.

What happens there?

Well basically the meditation is in four parts. The overall philosophy of the meditation is that if you can allow yourself to go mad at least once a day and empty yourself of that madness and go to the end of the cycle then you will, especially as a Westerner, be prepared to meditate. He feels that a lot of Westerners try to meditate and find it almost impossible because they are full of this madness that is never released. So he gives you a tool with which you release the madness and then you have an inner calm and you are able to meditate.

These meditations go for periods of ten days at a time?

Well the meditation camps do. During a meditation camp you do six meditations a day, you go to one lecture in the morning 8 to 9:30, then there is another lecture, on tape, in the afternoon, a lecture he might have given six months ago, so they are extremely concentrated days. After ten days of this you are feeling fairly blissed out.

You were in the Ashram for how long?

Nearly two months.

Did you do ten-day workshops one after another?

Well I did the first ten days, then I went and spoke to him and he suggested that I attend a couple of groups that were happening at the Ashram. There are a lot of different things going on at the Ashram beyond Rajneesh, for he has attracted an incredible group of people around him. So there are classes in T'ai Chi, there is a lot of music, drama, different workshops in extrasensory perception. I took two. One was called the Om Marathon which was a four-day, fast kind of endurance test. It was a very negative group, very aggressive,

and it was designed to get out your negativity. It was run by a man and a woman, he was Puerto Rican and she was a black American, who had been involved in helping heroin addicts. They have a very, very difficult exercise for people to do. It is designed to get in touch with the games people play. I took the first of all. It was very intense and after the four days I was exhausted.

Did you come to any awareness of the games you were playing?

Oh yes, very much so, on a very personal level. My avoidance of anger, for instance. I also came in contact with my strength. But, ironically, in this group I... well I am a very independent woman, I've travelled a lot by myself, make sure I can take care of myself in most situations and ways, and in the group the men seemd to be trying very much to be in touch with, again for lack of a better word, their feminine qualities, and the women with their masculine qualities, their ability to stick up for themselves. One of the first perceptions people had was that they didn't quite know what group I should be in because when it came to sticking up for myself, on an overt level I was able to do it, but on an emotional level people were very quick to realize that was pretty hidden. So they had a kind of mock discussion of whether I should be put with the men or the women. It was very amusing but definitely enlightening. So in that group I got in touch with quite a few of my suppressions. And the next day Rajneesh put me into an eight-day group which was called Tao, with means "nothing". It was run by a very beautiful man from the U.S. who apparently was a well-known psychiatrist there. One interesting thing about the Ashram is that if you decide to participate you are given a name so that people don't know what your old name was, they don't know what your history is, so I don't know what this fellow's real name is. He had met Rajneesh and apparently went back to the U.S., sold all his possessions, sold his business, and now lives in a 9' x 9' room in the Ashram and works for Rajneesh running this group. He was a very fine man. This Tao group really took me into all sorts of places I had never been before.

Where, for instance?

Again, it made me face a lot of the games I played, games I play about my appearance, the fact that I didn't like the way I looked, very basic personality characteristics that I have developed over the years. All these groups were aimed at revealing the fact that there is only one truth, there is only one energy, and that these are all only games that we play. You always became very close

to the people in the group. You went through all their trips with them, as they did with you. You came out of it very stimulated, positive.

Since you've come back, have you caught yourself playing the same games?

Oh yeah! But now I watch myself. There is always that person sitting there saying, well, there you go again, making sure that people know what you do, or making sure that people say... I don't know... just the same old ego game, but now there is a certain distance from it. I observe myself, but I definitely play the game. Everything is set up so that you do play these games here.

So after your eight-day Tao workshop, what did you do?

I stayed around the Ashram, went to the lectures and developed a number of relationships with the other disciples there, beautiful relationships that were based on a commitment that we all belonged to the same family no matter what games any of us played. Mainly I just tried to slow down. So I would get up in the morning, go to his lectures, then sit around and talk to people and just allow the day to happen and offer what it had to me. I went to Goa for a couple of days later on, by the sea, and just completely slowed down. Then when I returned I went and said goodbye to Rajneesh, spent six weeks visiting Thailand and Indonesia, then returned home.

Does he have any rules or regulations to help you keep centred and to eventually be able to... I can never remember that word that I have a mental block about...

Surrender?

Yes, that's the word, surrender.

First of all, I think by the time you are completely surrendered you will be enlightened, but to keep yourself centred he offers you the six meditations and I have found them very difficult to do every day. It takes an hour of your time and in this society time is something that you are constantly running out of. I find it hard to put that hour aside every day, but I try. He makes three rules for you to obey if you are coming back into society which, on the surface, seem like very small requests but they do lead you into a lot of tests. One of them is that you change your name, second is that you wear only orange, and third is that you wear this mala around your neck. And if you do all three, there is no way you can get away from being a sannyasin.

That mala really resembles a chain, doesn't it?

Well it's a constant reminder and it leads you into all sorts of trips. If I didn't have to do these things I'm sure I could keep it a deep dark secret that I was a sannyasin and I could do this little trip in the secret of my room and carry on. But the fact that I am so obviously wearing orange does completely put me in the position of always being with him, of always doing the trip.

What is your spiritual name and what does it mean?

Mugdha means madly in love.

With what, everything?

Well the full name is Ma Deva Mugdha and deva is the Sanscrit derivative of the devil and of the divine, it's both, so my name means madly in love with both the devil and the divine. I think it's like the state of mind when you first fall in love.

You mean bliss?

Yes, an ecstatic feeling of infatuation.

Are you going to use your name — Mugdha — in business?

I haven't so far because I've been finishing a lot of things that Anne Wheeler started. It's a very interesting exercise to make people call me Mugdha.

Does Rajneesh encourage his disciples to return to society and live a full life?

Oh very much. He wants you to return to North America and to watch yourself and to be aware of the life you have chosen to lead. He doesn't ask you to renounce any of your indulgences.

Through your meditations they will probably just drop away.

Yes. The main thing is really to like yourself the way you are, not to expend a lot of energy trying to be something that you aren't. You realize that the way you are is perfectly alright.

In what way do you feel that this whole experience has changed you, if at all?

Mostly in liking myself, not taking myself too seriously or the games that I play too seriously. I also learned a lot about death with him.

What are his views regarding death?

He teaches that death is the ul-

imate experience. The Western world tries very much to avoid facing death, tries to cover it up, tries to solve death, but it's the one mystery that man will never sufficiently solve. So the great lesson is to be able to face death and experience it, to be totally aware all your life and when death comes to be able to be aware and experience it.

I believe that death is a much more pleasant experience than birth. People who have re-experienced birth through the medium of hypnosis, during the experiment, have described it as an extremely traumatic experience. But death, described through the ages by sages, if faced with an awareness, is always a tremendous release and a beautiful experience.

Of course I will never really know until it happens, but I certainly don't have the great fear of death that most people have, that I myself lived under.

From his teachings then do you find your whole attitude toward life very different? And your motivations, have they changed from before?

Yes, I can say that they are, but I can say I'm still just a student. I very much fall back into the old patterns, the same old mistakes. I catch myself more now but I think in relationship to the women's issues I start out with the positive assumption that I don't have to prove myself as a woman, because I find myself proving myself a lot. I also carried a lot of anger with me before. I always felt misdone by men or very suspicious of men's intentions and I have become a lot more positive towards men through the whole trip. I don't start out with an assumption of anger anymore. I start out with a much more positive perception, like the film I just did, "Augusta". I

started it before I went to India and finished it when I came back and when I watch it I find that this old woman whom I think is a very special person comes across like this in the film. I don't have to prove to you she is special and I don't come on that way. In "Great Grandmother" I felt I had to prove to people that they were great and special women. In "Augusta" there is a complete acceptance on my part that she is a special person. I just showed her as she is.

Do you feel since you have become a disciple that a lot of your hostilities were just a reflection of who you really were?

Oh yeah! You were asking about games, well I was very sensitive about chauvinism in men. By learning that other people are just a reflection or a mirror of yourself I realized that I, indeed, was a chauvinist when it came to men. In the last couple of years I had developed a great love for women and I had liked being with women and I found myself at parties migrating towards women and talking with women and being very real with them. I assumed I had more to share with women and that was all a result of my projections. So if you realize that everyone is just a reflection of yourself it brings about a lot of changes in your life. When you judge other people for things you don't like in them you realize it's usually something you don't like in yourself.

From these teachings then you seemed to end up accepting and loving yourself more. Is that how it works?

Yes. Buddha always said everyone had only one responsibility and that was to love himself, be happy, and the only way to be happy is to love yourself.



Did Rajneesh speak about reincarnation?

I've read portions of Rajneesh on reincarnation and I think the conception of reincarnation is one of the things that makes the dichotomy of femininity and masculinity very real. To Indians, or to the people that study under the Indian masters, if you can believe that you have been a man or a woman in one of your past lives, or maybe in the future, then the difference between the two sexes becomes less extreme. Reincarnation became very real for me while I was there when a woman by the name of Vapassna died. Although I really didn't know her at all she taught me a lot through her death, she was about my age and she was very involved in the theatre and music. We had a lot of things in common. She had a history of migraine headaches in her life and while she was at the Ashram conducting a group called Vapassna, which means breath, she got a very severe headache. She went to see some doctors in Bombay, was diagnosed as having a brain tumor and was told her life was very short. She came back and spent a lot of time with Rajneesh in her last days, facing death with awareness, then went into a coma and within a couple of days she was dead. As a Westerner, even though my father had died and there had been deaths in the family, it had been so taken out of reality for me, something that was never going to happen to me. In India it's so immediate, there are dead bodies in the streets, there are so many people that are obviously near death. The very same day that she died her body was to be cremated. So we all gathered around Rajneesh and he said that this had been a high death and that this was her last life and he felt that she had reached the Supreme Awareness in her last days, that death was a natural ending for her life, she had come and learned what she was supposed to have learnt. He instructed us to take her body down to the cremation yards and decorate it with flowers, build a fire around it and celebrate. We all paraded through the streets of Poona. We danced and sang and brought the body to the cremation yards and burnt it. We played drums and chanted and I felt it was the right way to go, and that when I died all my friends and family would also celebrate that I had passed through this life. The whole process of cremation too had an effect on me. My father is buried and every time I pass the graveyard I hang on to his memory, I've never really let him go. I think I let him go that night, accepted his death, believing that that was the way it was supposed to be. Grief didn't make any sense except on a personal, selfish

level. Our whole system is based on grieving over people dying, wishing they hadn't died, trying to keep them a part of our lives. It's not a positive way.

Talking about negative feelings, what about guilt?

Well again, if you like yourself perfectly the way you are, you are not going to feel any guilt, you just accept that that's the way you are. It's a beautiful freedom.

So where is this going to take you? What is going to happen to Mugdha with this new found freedom?

The big change is that I don't know. If you had asked me a year ago what I was going to do I would have had a list of goals and projects, there would have been a definite answer to your question. Now I'm just trying to be patient and to let come what comes. I've got lots of interests and I'm certainly in a mood to work.

That's good. For a minute I thought you were going to spend the rest of your life contemplating your navel. So many people believe that once you are on a spiritual path that's what happens, it's all meditation and no work.

Oh no, no. But I just don't have that desperate feeling — I have a feeling that things that are supposed to happen will happen. The right work will come and I'm lucky I have the skills behind me. I'm just very positive that it will all work out the way it should.

What are your feelings regarding the problems women are facing today? Do you feel that if they changed their attitude, as you have, that these problems would disappear?

If what has happened to me can be shared positively with other women I think the lesson is that we don't have to prove ourselves. We've got what it takes already, the qualities, the talent and the energies. It's all there and if we realize that, and use it, we don't have to spend any energy proving ourselves.

You mean we are all liberated?

We are all perfect the way we are so let's just be what we are. I'm still very interested in women and doing films about women but the whole approach is different. I don't think of it as a fight anymore.

What do you think of it as?

Just a natural evolution. I think of all the men over the last couple of years that I have had conflicts with and the

conflict isn't there anymore. I make the assumption that women are legitimate so my energy isn't all going into the conflict.

To quote U.S. Anderson, "Don't react, act."

Oh yes, I was reacting a lot. I was so sensitive, if anybody used the word *he* instead of *them* I reacted. When I first met Rajneesh I was picking over all his words with a fine-tooth comb and of course I would always find something to be angry about.

Did he say anything to you about that?

Well ironically, when I arrived there, he did three lectures in a row where he kept bringing up the women's movement in the west and everybody would kind of look at me out of the side of their eye and chuckle. He seemed to be talking about it an awful lot and my friends said that to their memory he had never talked about it before. If you heard his lectures you would think it was a feminist talking except that he never emphasized the negative side of it, always the positive side. A positive step would be women liking themselves, therefore liking other women, supporting other women, being fulfilled, growing and not identifying themselves through someone else. There wasn't a war between men and women, that wasn't part of it.

Do you feel that you could now have a more fulfilling relationship with a man?

Very much so, yes. I'm almost thirty, I've never been married and I've never lived with a man for any length of time. I've always been busy proving myself. I had that defense.

When you were having a sexual relationship was it on that level?

Oh yes. A lot of times, when or if the relationship didn't work, I would try and make him feel guilty and imply that it was due to my looks, the fact that I didn't feel particularly attractive, that I was overweight. I never would admit that it could have anything to do with my attitude or personality traits. But now I think that I could have a good relationship with someone who was also aspiring. It would have to be with someone who was on my wave length, who was aware and growing.

Claire Caplan has had a varied career in T.V. and radio. She presently has a weekly ½-hour radio program on CKUA in Edmonton and is teaching drama for the Citadel Theatre and Grant MacEwan Community College.

A Stage of Seven Women

Feminist Theatre in Quebec

by Yvonne Mathews-Klein
and Ann Pearson

When we talk about feminist theatre, we are talking not simply about content but about process. Ideally, feminist theatre works from within the life experience of the women who create it toward the establishing of new connections among the group and thence outward to involve the audience itself, which sees its own experience validated and confirmed by what is passing onstage. In a sense then, a given piece of feminist theatre is never wholly finished, since the relationships among the artists and between the performers and the audience continue to develop as long as the piece is in production, nor does it wholly exist except in performance; more than perhaps any other form of drama, the text merely suggests the play — it is not authoritative.

We have seen relatively little theatre of this kind in Canada, and virtually none, either here or in the United States, has been given a commercial production before a general audience. For this reason, the production of *La nef des sorcieres* at Theatre du Nouveau Monde in March of this year is the more extraordinary. For those unfamiliar with the Montreal theatrical scene, it should be noted that TNM is the most prestigious of French language theatres in the city, wholly professional and, if not precisely conventional, certainly a well-established institution. The point needs to be stressed because *La nef*, which played three weeks in the spring to packed houses and returned in July for another successful run, represents as thorough-going an attack on the conventions of established theatrical production from a feminist point of view as we are likely to see in the near future.

The work consists of six monologues, the work of seven authors. Each writer was approached initially by Luce Guilbeault, who had the original idea for the piece, and provided with a



photo by Andre La Coz

Actresses in *La nef des sorcieres*. Front row: Michele Magny, Francoise Berd, Louise Dussault. Back row: Michele Craign, Pol Pelletier, Luce Guilbeault.

suggested topic on which to write a short dramatic scene in an unspecified form. The writers in turn chose the actors with whom they wished to work. As the writing progressed, it became evident that each writer was spontaneously working in the monologue form, a circumstance that Guilbeault speculates arose from the necessity of every woman to become autonomous

before discovering the strength to work in a group.

When the play went into rehearsal, the group collaborative process operated to shape its final form. The most striking example of the effects of this process occurs in the character of the lesbian, Marcelle. Pol Pelletier, who plays the role, was distressed at the implications of the character as



Actress and writer Luce Guillbeault.

originally conceived by Marie-Claire Blais, believing that the sensibility that Marcelle records was not sufficiently particular an expression of women's experience. As Pelletier points out, normally in such a situation, either the writer or the actor must retire — the director is left to make the final decision about which view will prevail. But in this case, after acting Blais's Marcelle, Pelletier proceeds to deliver her own, more overtly political, text, still in the character of Marcelle. It is a moment which violates all conventional expectations of character unity and is as well the dramatic climax of the entire play, in which we see revealed an utterly feminist confidence in both author and actor, supported by the group as a whole, to do what is authentic for each.

The play begins with an actress, both written and played by Luce Guillbeault, attempting to act the part of Agnes in Moliere's *School for Wives*, finding that she cannot continue. She keeps losing her lines, forgetting her role, while reminiscences of her real life, hidden so long beneath the roles she has played on stage, flood in and overwhelm her. She squats on an imaginary toilet to pee, relieving herself as the characters in classical drama never can and reminding herself and the audience of her physical humanity and the fact of her sex. Thus in the opening monologue, Guillbeault establishes the distance between the kind of drama we are witnessing, experiencing, and that which represents the traditional theatre of male ideology — theatre which at once idolizes and

debauches female characters, by denying them the reality of female experience and transforming them into actors on the stage of male fantasy. Simultaneously, we in the audience are alerted that we are permitted, even required, to view the actors on stage in a new way — not merely as interpreters of the authors' visions, but as participants in the act of creation itself.

The attack on traditional interpretation continues in the next monologue called, in French, *le retour de l'age*, the change of life. For Francoise Berd (who, incidentally made her stage debut in the role at the age of fifty-two), speaking Marthe Blackburn's text, the phrase must be taken literally and positively. For the first time this woman, who is at a point in her life conventionally disregarded as faintly comic, learns to speak in her own voice. No longer defined by her fertility, she can oppose her experience to the theories of the men who would deny it to her — her doctor and her psychiatrist. She reflects bitterly on the cultural response to women's blood as opposed to men's: "Men have such a horror of our women's blood. Even the Church . . . called us impure and forbade us to enter the temple each month, as if our blood would make Christ's turn pale. Men's blood, that's always been a different thing. Men's blood, that's holy, that's glorious . . . But ours! However, you have been made, sustained, nourished with our blood, my women's blood." She speaks not only of the lies men have told women about their own reality, but of the lies women have told men: "I

always lied for you, for you, because I had to please you; you were superior, you possessed Power, . . . I lied because I had to reassure you, because it was you who carried the world on your back. But what has become of the world today? I lied in order to hold you in my arms . . . but I only held shadows which slipped away." But she concludes, the time has come and her "daughters" who are twenty years old know it as well, for men and women to cease lying to one another, to sit down face to face and to reveal for the first time their true faces to one another. She ends with a little legend which tells of a king, besieging a poor village, who is petitioned by a committee of women to allow them to remove their most precious and most fragile belongings. The king is amused that such poor women could consider anything they owned precious and fragile and so grants permission. The next morning, each woman leaves the town, bearing on her back one man. The time, she says, has come.

Although profoundly rooted in felt experience, the function of the first two monologues is essentially analytic — they lay out the theatrical and intellectual convictions which separate this play from anything which has preceded it. The next two speakers, though they are certainly "typical" in their lives and experiences, retain a definite quirky individuality which moves the level of discussion of the play to a new, even more deeply personal, area. The first monologue, written by France Theoret and performed by Michele Craig, presents a woman who is literally an *enchantillon*, a "sample," a woman who has worked most of her life in a dress factory in Montreal. She tells us the painful details of her daily life; how she rises, showers, dresses, takes the train, what she is paid, what she has for lunch. She speaks of her boss, who never misses a chance at a dirty joke, his way of reinforcing his double superiority as employer and as a man. But though her life might appear to be dehumanizing in its simple repetitions, she is no victim. Although she counsels her nieces to get married, if only for one day, so they can forever after call themselves "Madame," she herself remains resolutely unmarried. She displays her ring, which she has just finished paying for, a diamond engagement ring which she wears not to pretend she is engaged but because, as she says, she has earned it, because she is married to her life.

Up to a point, the next speaker, in the monologue "La fille" (by Odette Gagnon, performed by Louise Dussault), appears almost a predictably conventional type. This section of *La nef* was originally projected as a consideration of the theme of the prostitute, but became refined into a more complex

photo by Andre Le Coz

reflection on the little prostitutions of daily life. The character is, of all these women, the most specific to Montreal. Her speech is full of references to street names, restaurants, little jokes about Plattsburgh, N.Y. to the particularities of Montreal life. The history she recounts to us is composed of the countless depressing encounters of a young woman who learned in childhood that money and power flow from being nice to the men who have access to it. Yet when we see her, she is celebrating the fact that it is Saturday night and she doesn't have a date. Although she sits in the classic attitude of the woman waiting for her man, knitting away at a rather improbable afghan, she rejoices that no man is coming. It is she, moreover, who makes the most startling and most moving gesture of the evening, when, having delivered some half-humorous, half-bitter remarks on the bodily perfection demanded of women, she strips off her clothes and confronts us, unashamed in her naked, human imperfection.

The split in the dual character of Marcelle I and II suggests some of the difficulties still presented by the presence of a lesbian onstage. Historically, lesbians have fared, if anything, worse even than post-menopausal women or prostitutes. When they appear at all, they tend either to occur as pathetic victims of society or biology (*The Children's Hour*) or menacing butches battling men for the possession of a woman (*The Killing of Sister George*). The other characters in *La nef* have a long history of dramatic prototypes behind them which provides a shared frame of reference against which both writer and actor can work. In the case of the lesbian, however, the dramatist is pretty much on her own. It is this circumstance which may account for the tension which exists between the two aspects of Marcelle. In Marie-Claire Blais' view, Marcelle is characterized most by a kind of Romantic *angst* and alienation. She speaks to herself, much more than to us, as she awaits a lover with whom she has fought and whom we suspect will never come. Nervously alert to every sound, she vacillates between an assertive defense of her life-choices and a pathetic admission of failure and defeat. Still, she says, nothing is perfect and, although she would like a companion in her "brief passage through a hostile and dangerous land," during which she hopes to "experience all, understand all, love all, assimilate all," she recognizes her short-comings and can only ask her friends to take her as she is. All of the characters stand in isolation from one another; only Marcelle I remains isolated from the audience as well. Her pain is not to be accounted for or assuaged by any heightened feminist

consciousness — she is as she is. For her alone the personal is not political.

The breaking of glass signifies the violent transition to Marcelle II. Pol Pelletier snatches off her wig to reveal the shaven scalp beneath and speaks her own lines. She begins with the bitterness she has felt toward women themselves who have betrayed, robbed and sold her. "Women are shit," she says, "submissive, tranquil, docile, nice, insignificant, accommodating shit." But, she goes on, in the depths of her despair and self-hatred, a woman touched her and the world changed for her. In intensely sensual, rhythmic language she describes her first love affair with a woman. (On both occasions that I saw the play, certain men in the audience felt compelled to audibly protest at this point, and both times were forced to subside by a hiss of almost electrical intensity which sizzled through the theatre. Pelletier's may have been a voice never heard before onstage, but the audience wanted to hear it now.) She goes on to speak of the new freedom she has found through loving another woman, formed as she is formed, from the tyranny of roles, expectations, and definitions of femininity. She concludes with a political prophecy: each time a woman goes to bed with another woman, she reconquers her self-respect which has been stolen from her. Soon the few will be many, will come together and become "a mountain, a mountain with a voice. Pay attention to that voice, it's rumbling, rumbling. Our patience is exhausted."

Nicole Brossard's writer, acted by Michele Magny, makes explicit what has been implicit in the preceding monologues. She speaks of the particular problems of the woman writer, who inherits a language and a literature which has been pre-eminently male, and of the necessity to validate her women's experience and sensibility in literary terms. "*La vie privée est politique*" (the personal is political) occurs periodically throughout her speech as a

kind of signpost toward the goal she is struggling to reach, a struggle which climaxes in the mimed birth of a girl-child, signifying both sorts of creation. Her final words, and the final words of the play, "I learn, I learn, I speak," remind us of what each of these women have told us, that conscious awareness has profound consequences. To learn is to speak and to speak is to act. The act is the play itself.

Because she wanted to hear "the voices that I have never heard in the theatre," Luce Guilbeault conceived the original idea for *La nef des sorcières*. She is distressed that the severest criticism of the play came from feminist critics, some of whom found the texts not strong enough or the production amateurish. Unquestionably certain criticisms can be made of various aspects of the play. It is unfortunate that no way was found to involve each speaker with the other women onstage, who remain motionless, silent, and unresponding through each succeeding speech. The terrible isolation in which each speaker stands and, indeed, in which each appears to rejoice, is disturbing. Yet, each time I saw the play, the connections were made nevertheless, between the actors and every woman in the audience who seemed to hear herself speaking out loud for the first time. *La nef* generates that immense, troubling exhilaration that we once experienced in consciousness-raising groups and does it with a random audience of women, the majority of whom have had only the slightest connection with the women's movement. It is in this sense that *La nef* is revolutionary — less in its specific content than in its capacity to unite the women present and provide them with an image of the possibilities of a collective experience.

Yvonne Klein is a Montreal writer. She teaches English at Dawson College.
Ann Pearson is a Montreal photographer.

ABORTION: FREEDOM OF CHOICE

If you believe women should have the right to control their own bodies, support the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (CARAL). Become a member, visit a meeting, donate some money! Contact CARAL Head Office, Box 527, Station Z, Toronto.

she talks with her hands flat and wide

she talks with her hands flat and wide
like the prairies from which
she came

she moves them like cirrus clouds over
the stories she tells

she told many
some still so sad

so painful

like the prairie's dawn sun

her face burst into red
hot with tears

she laughs in between

sobs

clenches her fist

red in front

of her mouth

to cover the teeth

her family told her

were

buck

she has left the prairies

when she sleeps

she curls up hard

like the rocks of Muskoka

if

you were to pry

her fists open then

there would be

spring crocus pushing

their way up through

thin ice

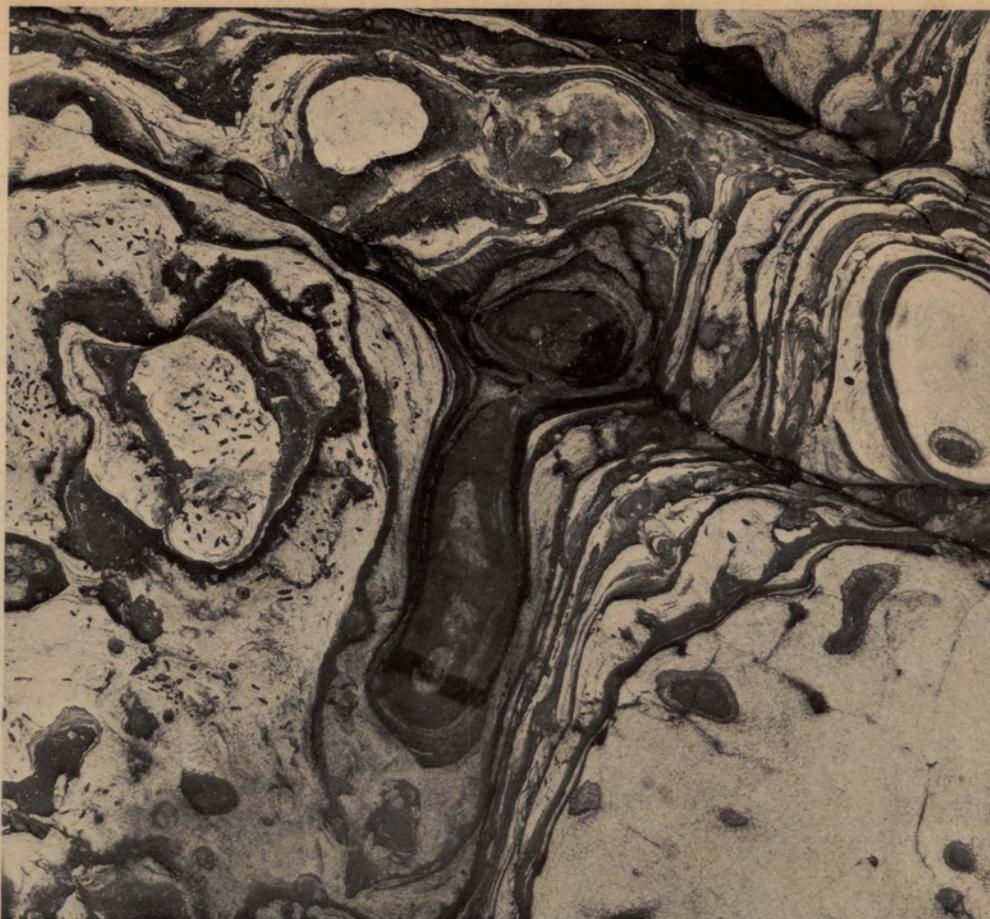
"The force that drives the water through the rocks drives my red blood . . ."

— Dylan Thomas

photoessay by Diana Palting









To Whom it May Concern

by Diane Schoemperlen

drawings by Karen Wakal

Monday, April 26

Dear Mom:

All last week I was meaning to sit down and write you but just couldn't seem to get around to it till now. I know it's been a month, and probably closer to two, since I got your last letter. I hope you haven't been worrying about me — even though I know without asking that you have. Everything here is fine now. Well, not really *fine* — but I'll get to all that in a minute.

First things first: are the leaves on your new philodendron still turning down brown at the tips? While I was sorting through some of the old things in the cedar chest, I came across a book on the care of foliage plants. Possible causes of brown leaf-tips: soil too dry (water more frequently and more thoroughly); soil too high in salts (leaching is the only answer); or air too dry (buy a humidifier or maybe hope for rain?). Take your pick, I guess. And by the way, the rubber plant that Stewart bought me for my twenty-seventh birthday, the one I named Ulysses, has collapsed. Mental exhaustion perhaps? Do plants have nervous breakdowns?

People do. But don't worry — I won't. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself now.

The real reason why I'm writing this letter (and why I've been putting it off for so long) is to tell you that Stewart and I have separated. For good. The divorce is in the works.

After six whole years, after only six years. Maybe you were right. I know you never liked him much, even though you never told me why. Maybe I never asked. But do you remember what you said when I told you we'd set the date? You said, "Well, Vera, you're the one that has to live with him, not me." According to all the movies and TV commercials that I'd seen, you didn't get your lines right. Maybe you've forgotten this by now. But I never have.

And yes, I did have to live with him. And maybe now I've got some reasons of my own for disliking him. He must have gone through three new picture tubes (coloured, of course, and nothing but the best) all by himself. And I've just had the chesterfield re-upholstered for the second time — nobody yet has invented the miracle cleaner I needed to get rid of those grease stains he left after so many evenings lying there sweating with no shirt on. Eating buttered popcorn or Spanish peanuts. His mother taught him years ago never to wipe his fingers on his pants so he used the couch instead.

Are you surprised by the separation? I know I've never mentioned how very many nights there were when one of us didn't come home. (I always stayed with my friends on those nights but I don't know where Stewart stayed — can't say that I much care now and I can't remember why I never asked him then). But then maybe you aren't surprised. Maybe I underestimate you. Maybe you've been reading in between the lines of my letters all along — although the letters and the lines were few enough at that. So maybe you've just known it from the start.

When you write to Thelma and Jessia and all the other relatives (I know I can count on you for that), please don't insinuate that I just gave up. It's not true, not true at all. I've forgotten now how many schemes I cooked up in hopes of "saving" our marriage (or at least of salvaging something for scrap and old scrapbooks). I was so damned determined to make it work, maybe just to prove to myself that you were wrong. I tried staying at home and crocheting afghans and cooking gourmet meals and cleaning out the toilet bowl at least two times a week. I tried working as a volunteer, an office clerk, a newspaper reporter and a barroom waitress. Through it all, I took evening courses in psychology and Conversational French. I tried writing a novel and painting a still life of garlic bread and grapes and I even tried giving Tupperware parties just like all my happily married friends did. And I made sure that we had sex at least four times a week. But nothing worked.

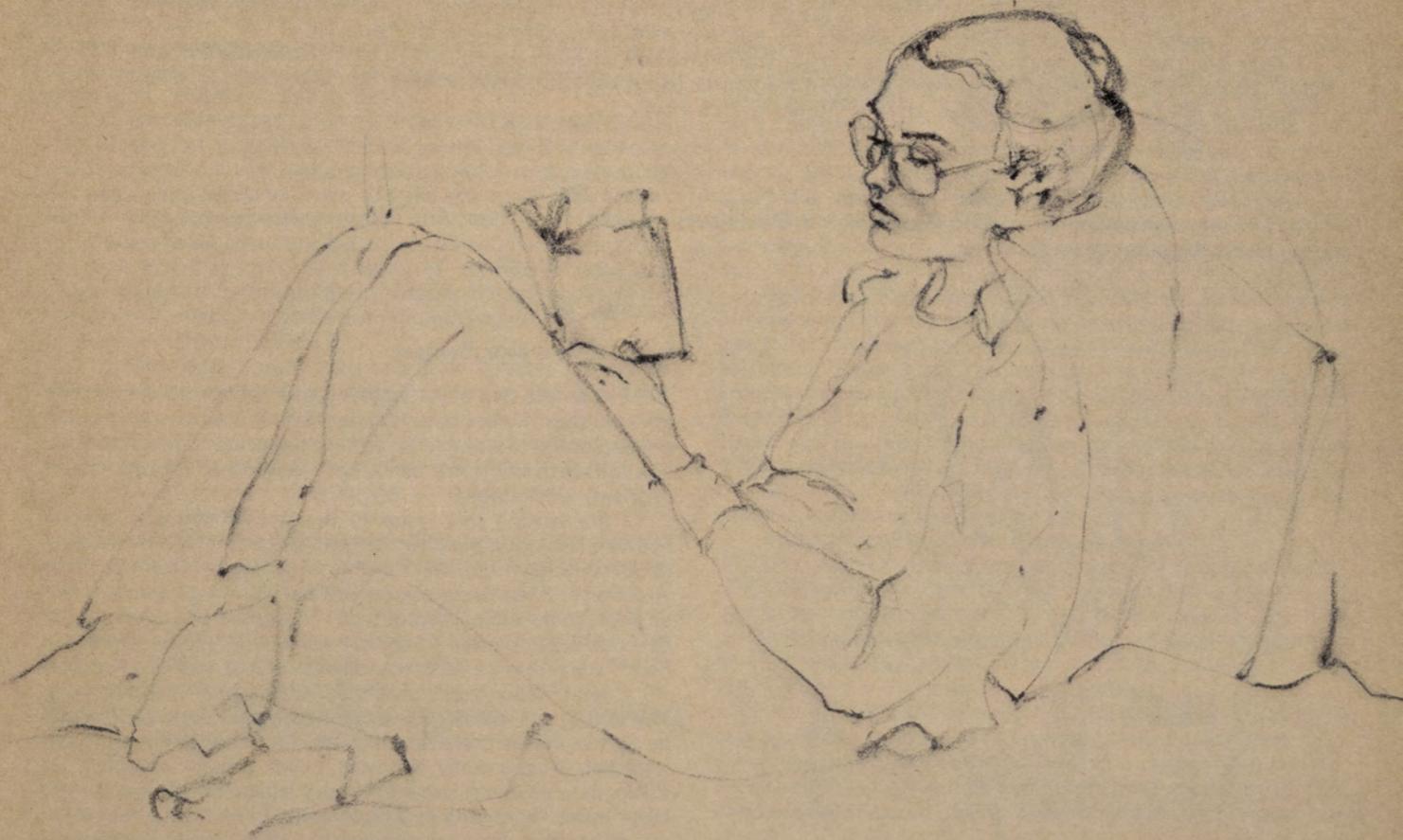
Stewart tried too — despite what you're thinking right now as you read this and nod your head in sympathy with me. He sent me flowers when it was nobody's birthday, took me dancing, helped me with the dishes every single night, made sure that we had sex at least four times a week.

So you see, he wasn't quite the villain that you were/are sure he was/is. There will be no blame-laying here. We grew apart, away. We lost the need to talk and smile and dream out loud and spend lunch hours together in crowded cafeterias with just our knees touching under the table. And I've almost forgotten now that the question "How are you?" can have any answer but "Fine". We stopped arguing and explaining and now we've even stopped asking the questions. It was all just too much trouble after all.

Last month we redecorated the living room — new upholstery as I've already mentioned and stacking tables, three of them, and a swag lamp with a tassel at the end of the pull-chain and even a new group of pictures for the west wall, all in matching metal frames, of course.

It didn't help though. And now the carpet doesn't match.

Stewart left two weeks ago yesterday. I had a shower while he finished packing up his things. But the water ran cold and I had to get out before he had time to be gone. I'll always see him now just going, going, never really quite gone. I guess I need new luggage now. All I've got left is the old cardboard case that you bought me when I left home for college.



How many years ago was that anyway? Never mind; don't count.

There are lots of things now that I just don't count, no longer keep track of. Like how many bathtub rings I've cleaned and how many ashtrays I've emptied and how many jobs I've gone through and how many diets I've started. And how many of my old friends have been divorced and how many are getting remarried this summer. It makes it somehow simpler just not knowing.

It's starting to rain. I can hear it on the awning. I've got some clothes out on the balcony. I tried washing my new wool suit. Hope it doesn't shrink; it cost me fifty dollars. No alimony arrangements have been made yet.

Please don't ask me to come up and stay with you. The kitchen needs painting. I guess I'll get to learn to use a roller after all. Never thought I would. There were always advantages, I suppose. But do write soon. Or maybe call — collect. I'll be able to afford it if my income tax cheque comes in this week.

Love,
Vera

P.S. Maybe I should have phoned to tell you this. But I never thought of it till now. And my voice always sounds so much better on paper than air.

Tuesday, May 11

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Burgess:

I hope the two of you enjoyed your wintering in Florida. I am sure that you are both very brown and fit and well-rested. I am beginning to wonder if the sun has decided against coming this far north this year! It has been raining off and on for the past two weeks here.

I am writing this letter to the two of you just in case Stewart has not done it yet himself. We all know how he feels about writing letters, don't we? I am writing to inform you that your son and I have separated. We are planning to be divorced as soon as possible. I regret that I cannot let you know where Stewart is living now — I don't know myself. Probably you will hear from him once he gets settled in at a permanent address.

I don't mean to insinuate that Stewart has "deserted" me. The end of our marriage was not nearly as drastic or dramatic as all the things that word implies. We reached the decision together — rationally. Stewart never did go in much for dramatics. You both know how very logical he always is — so clear-eyed, far-seeing and diplomatic. Even throughout all of our difficulties, Stewart managed to remain on an even keel. I do not think that the break-up has changed him at all. He would never let it.

The reasons for our separation are not particularly dramatic either. It has nothing whatsoever to do with adultery or cruelty, not even of the mental kind. Our marriage simply has ended. I cannot even truthfully say that it "fell apart" — it merely faded away, came slowly undone. We were not "torn asunder". None of the standard phrases seem to fit what has happened between Stewart and I. We just stopped being together even when we were sitting just the two of us in the very same room.

Stewart was always very tolerant of my needs and always much too polite and self-controlled to laugh at my moods and emotions. I am sure you taught him all this even as a child. He always listened when I demanded that we talk about "us" — even though he afterwards contended that there was nothing to talk about because there was nothing wrong with "us". And I realize now that he was quite right after all, although I could not see it at the time — there wasn't anything to talk about because there wasn't really any "us".

He took me out wherever I wanted to go whenever I asked him to. But once we got where we were going, he never failed to inform me that he really had not wanted to go, had in fact agreed only in order to humour me. He is such an honest man as I am sure you both well know. But he never would tell me what **he** wanted to do. When I complained that he made me feel guilty because I always seemed to be getting my way, he quite calmly and clinically assured me that he has nothing to do with it, that I made **myself** feel guilty. He was always so blameless and guiltless and maybe he was heartless too — although you may think my choice of words a little too harsh for your only son.



He let me have as much time as I needed to be by myself. He let me go out for an occasional evening with "the girls" — as long as we kept to our shopping and knitting and recipe-swapping, of course. He let me buy myself a new gown for every wedding that he ever took me to. He let me take night courses at the university too — maybe he thought they would expand my horizons and make me that much more interesting to come home to every night. But then he did not come home every night. But then neither did I.

Oh yes, we had an equal marriage — at least that's what Stewart told me to believe. He even let me have my very own chequing account with personalized cheques and everything. His generosity astounded me and did you teach him that as well?

Do not think that I am especially lonesome without him. The apartment is small and some of his hair is here still clogging up the bathroom drain. I know it's his because it's brown and I am still a blonde (even though you were so sure my roots would grow in black).

The only time I really miss him is on Monday nights. He always put out the garbage then just before the last night news. He never missed a night. And oh, how the neighbourhood ladies must have envied me as they came trudging out with their garbage bags and cans! And now we smile and call to each other across our new-mown, unraked, Monday night lawns.

After Stewart left, I cleaned the attic out and I am sending you a parcel of the things he saved through the years: a tennis racket needing to be strung (he always kept in shape), a double-breasted suit with too-wide lapels (he always kept in style), a shoebox full of pictures and postcards and old swizzle sticks (he always kept in touch with memories and moments that we didn't share). These things meant nothing to him — he left them here with me. But knowing the two of you as well as I do, I am sure that they'll mean everything to you.

Vera

Sunday, May 16

Dear Therese:

For weeks I wondered, Is this the end? Hoped not, hoped so, hoped not, hoped so. Wished I had a daisy to help me to decide.

But now I know that yes this is the end and I am happy and I am hurt and I am happy and I am hurt and the door slammed oh so good so loud and I wanted his ears to hear it again and again and striding out to the car he forgot for once to worry about tripping and falling and ripping his pants and ruining This Moment and I heard the car door open good but quiet and no one screamed Goodbye and the tires did not spit up gravel and hate as he left. They simply rolled away.

For a week I lay awake not sad but so afraid that he might return for revenge with a gun burn down the house love someone else in our front lawn kill himself with the car, but then I wasn't losing any sleep anymore and this is the end and he will not call and I only slammed that door behind me because he couldn't get mad about the things he should have and he will not call and I've figured out at least a dozen ways to get around without a car.

Today is Sunday and now I'm more sorry about that than the fact that Stewart is gone because Sundays make me maudlin because Sundays make me think.

How is your eczema and what about your sister, the one who flew to Europe right after her divorce? The weather here has been, is, and will be, wet. The wind in the night makes my bedroom awning squeak. But then the covers get so heavy on my skin that I can't help but be safe. And I am sleeping better now than I have for our six years.

Therese, are you wondering what went wrong with us? I am. It started as a simple song, song with no lines and no words, only movements and motion and my hands gesture up round and ripe like grapes and who'll pull back the skin and swallow up the seeds to help me understand?

The things that I wanted were simple enough but my words wouldn't work for some reason and who had the ears or the hours to listen to me anyway? I felt like blisters were breaking up under my skin. I promised the world that I'd not give it words because already there are enough. So I tuned up my throat and I wanted to make a new sound, my sound, not his sound, not our sound, but my sound, my, mine. I wanted to push the world one more step, one solid step closer to wherever it is we are going. In my mind I heard the sound and it had no name because that would mean words and then it came out.

But the ears it broke through to were his ears and old, not old like with cobwebs and rust, no, not that old. But they were just familiar old with too much use and expectation. They were just filled up with all the sounds that every body makes sometimes: maybe when they're being born or making love or dreaming of someone who has not and will not ever be born. There was no room and no reason for me and my sound. He always wanted a reason. But before I could teach it to heel, my mouth started talking, explaining, discussing, reaching for reasons instead of the sky.

And that was all he ever wanted anyway.

This morning on my way to buy another quart of milk (the other one went sour and curdled in my coffee), I saw a bird's egg broken on the sidewalk. It was blue, a robin's egg. And does this mean that someone next year won't get to see their first red-breast of the season? For that person, it won't ever be spring and why do I hope that it's Stewart?

Who's fault is all this anyway? Why, I have to say it's his, of course. Because he couldn't learn to listen and now that he's gone, I've finally remembered how to cry again. But not too much or too often because what if my tears all run out? I can even cry again at sad movies and the Sunday night re-runs of Lassie.

I don't know where Stewart is and it's too late now to teach him how to wash and iron his shirts. He asked me once to show him how but I said no because I wanted there still to be something that I could do for him that he couldn't do for himself. It helped me know he needed me. And he won't wear a single shirt that's wrinkled or a day away from clean.

Last night I just forgot and set the table up for two. Cleaning up, I dropped the plate that wasn't used and why was I so sorry that it didn't break?

There are still a myriad of things that need to be done — my lawyer calls it "tying up loose ends" and I've been there at least a dozen times, signing papers and changing the beneficiary of my insurance policy and signing some more papers. I'm beginning to enjoy it all — it must be time to leave. My lawyer always sighs and says how lucky we are that there were no children involved and he's constantly admiring how "very adult" we are being about this whole damn thing.

Yesterday a deaf-mute came around the neighbourhood selling helium-filled balloons. I bought a yellow one for fifty cents. I left it for a while just to stick light-headed to the ceiling but then I took it out onto the balcony and gave it away to my favourite neighbourhood child: the sky. It went at first just cautiously up. Did it know this was one ceiling that it would die trying to reach? I want to believe that some of me is fierce and brave enough to go with the balloon.

How many times have you and I shook our heads so sadly and in unison when we got the news of another divorce? Funny that now I just can't be bothered to shake my head at this one — can you?

My mother, of course, wants me to come down south for a while, to spend a month or maybe two getting a tan and a man. Why can't I make her understand I don't want either one?



I'm coming out to visit you instead. Don't panic though; I don't intend to move in on you or anything. I'll find my own apartment and a job and maybe I'll even learn how to drive. I'll be thrifty and mobile and quite comfortably alone. I'll be there in about two weeks. Don't meet me at the station — I can find my own way home.

Love,

Vera

P.S. It must be summer after all. A ladybug is bashing its brains out on the light globe over my head. The sound of its wings on the glass is like flames.

Monday, May 31

To Whom It May Concern:

I realize that it isn't common practice for a former tenant to leave a note for the unknown future tenants — but there are certain things I feel that you, whoever you are or will be, really ought to know. I am taping this note to the fridge door so you can't miss it and maybe so the door won't look so empty now that it's given up being a bulletin board and a calorie chart (at Stewart's suggestion, of course).

No, the roof doesn't leak and the taps don't drip — although you do have to turn the bathtub hot water tap at least two good cranks before it comes on. There are electrical outlets in every room. The bathroom light switch works backwards. This is not a mystery (too bad) — we put it in ourselves. Merely an amateur's accident.

Don't plug in the toaster while you're ironing. Garbage pickup is Tuesday morning **early**. The grocery store at the corner does deliver, does not give credit. Use the stairs whenever you can — the elevator tends to get stuck on the roof.

I hope you can arrange your furniture to cover up the worn spots on the rug and that stain in the corner too — once we had a cocker spaniel named Babe for a week before the landlord found out. And maybe you can use a picture or a plaque or a framed highschool diploma to cover up that dent on the west wall. It's only a remnant of the day I threw our hand-carved granite ashtray (a wedding present from my aunt Thelma) at Stewart's forehead. The dent, I guess, is my fault because I threw the thing. But his fault too because he ducked.

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Women: a country

In those days it was
pails of wellwater drawn up
(cracked ice on the first of November)
and piles of flax unspun, kept for blizzards
spent pumping at the spinning wheel
in the kitchen furnace heat.

In those days it was long before we knew each other.
Clocks ran down and we waited.
Our husbands built the straight roads,
traced dotted line boundaries over indifferent land,
gone for days while we stood round the stove
wishing them true direction, for
when they walked in circles the wind
took their minds like candlefire.

And our hair that went grey as string,
we tied it back
and looked out putty windows
at strings of roadside outhouses,
wormcarved farmbuildings and women
old as the rocks
in checkered shirts, boots and thick socks.

Julia McLean

Women's Movies: Made in Germany, Not the U.S.A.



Angela Winkler in "The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum"

by Judith Mirus

For those of us addicted to movies and vaguely disappointed with what has been coming out of North America, West German cinema is presently providing some very exciting fare. Not since the classic period of the silent German Expressionist Film has Germany had anything cinematically extraordinary to boast about; now there is a creative boom that is affecting the course of cinema elsewhere as well as in Germany. This movement of the so-called New German Cinema started (officially) at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1962 when a group of young malcontents issued a manifesto proclaiming the breakup of what they designated the Conventional German Film and the advent of the New German Film (*Der Junge Deutsche Film*). Their purpose was to put aesthetic life back into German cinema and eliminate the overweening financial influence of the huge Americanized German distribution and production companies.

All movements are implicitly political, but what distinguishes this one is its overtly radical, usually leftist orientation. Typically, its members regard film as the most effective means to express their political consciousness *and* radicalize that of the viewer. What is equally exciting is that this radicalism extends to the treatment of women in film; in fact, compared to what we're used to, there is a phenomenal degree of direct participation by women in the New German Cinema — participation that isn't limited to an occasional well-defined female screen role or to a few low-budget explicitly feminist films.¹ This isn't saying that Germany is a sexually liberated society — far from it — or that men don't continue to reap the larger portion of attention for their film work, but only that women are a

1

Obviously, such non-commercial feminist films are also being made in Germany. But as in Canada and the U.S. they reach only a limited and usually already convinced audience. Two recent examples are Ingemo Engstroem's *The Struggle for a Child* (*Kampf um ein Kind*, 1974-75) and *We've Kept Quiet a Long Time* (*Wir Haben Lange Geschwiegen*, 1974) made by the Women's Film Group, Munich.

recognizable, and increasingly recognized, element of the New German Film.

Margarethe von Trotta is an example of a woman in the mainstream of the movement who has substantially affected all the projects she has been associated with. Working primarily with Volker Schlöndorff, she has gradually influenced the tenor of what were "his" films and altered the choice of subject matter for what have become "their" films. His early movies, made independently of von Trotta, focus on male literary and/or historical figures and their principally masculine concerns. Schlöndorff's first film, *Young Toerless* (*Der Junge Toerless*, 1965-66), is about a sensitive adolescent's coming of age in the bizarre atmosphere of an Austrian boarding school at the turn of the century. The film can only treat women in the context of Toerless's limited image of them: as mother and as whore. In *Michael Kohlhaas* (1968-69), a historical epic about a horse trader who led a 16th century peasants' rebellion, the female characters are similarly stereotyped: Anna Karina plays Kohlhaas's sensitive self-sacrificing wife and Anita Pallenberg a greedy, lusty camp-follower. But by the time he made *The Sudden Wealth of the Poor People of Kombach* (*Der Ploetzliche Reichtum der Armen Leute von Kombach*, 1970) von Trotta was participating on the script and playing one of the female leads. If women aren't the central figures in this tragicomic account of the attempt of an impoverished handful of peasant-farmers to feed their families by committing highway robbery, they are finally presented as developed, independent personalities.

With each successive film, von Trotta's influence is more noticeable. Two of their recent and critically and commercially most successful efforts concentrate specifically on women and their awareness of themselves as individuals. In *A Free Woman* (*Strohfeuer*, 1972) Schlöndorff directs and von Trotta again shares credit with him on the script; she herself beautifully plays the lead role of a woman who decides she wants a divorce, not

necessarily because she no longer cares for her husband, but simply because she no longer wants to be married. The story revolves around her struggle to assert her own ambitions and build her life around her own interests. But she is also a mother who wants very much to "keep" her child. The film becomes a comment on German society's narrow and restrictive perspective of women's roles as "good" wife and mother.

In their latest film, von Trotta and Schlöndorff share equal responsibility for script and direction. Based on Heinrich Böll's short story, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (*Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*, 1975) is their most startling and politicizing film and creates one of the best women's screen roles to come out of contemporary narrative cinema. It is the story of a fairly conventional, attractive young woman, Katharina Blum — brilliantly acted by Angela Winkler — who is politically radicalized by the indiscriminate and brutal intrusion of the police and press into her private life: The morning after she has spent the night with a political dissident she met at a costume party, the police invade and ransack her apartment searching for him; they take Katharina briefly in custody and harass her with accusations and subtle insinuations about her sex life. A scandal-sheet reporter picks up and viciously distorts the story, precipitating her mother's death and causing Katharina to lose her job. Although she has the support of a few close friends, her upbringing and previous experience have left her initially unprepared to defend herself against the public's contemptuous curiosity and the callous invasion of her privacy by the authorities and the press. Finally confronting what has happened to her life, Katharina makes a radical — but very credible — move, which re-establishes her honor in the truest sense of the word. To tell more would ruin a very exciting climax; it is enough to say that Katharina is allowed a revenge usually reserved for he-men.

Two filmmakers who are very concerned with the total radicalizing effect of their films are Jean-Marie

Straub and Danielle Huillet (Mrs. Straub). But despite this genuine desire to reach a wide audience, their films are just too structural, too contra to what we are used to, and perhaps too demanding for general viewing. Still, they are important because their stylistics are indeed revolutionary. Both dedicated Marxists, they are committed to reconstructing the schematics of the Marxist dialectic on film. Although the films ostensibly have stories, they have rejected most of the conventions of narration: There may be a beginning, middle and end, but not necessarily in that order; characterization is one-dimensional; there is almost no transition between takes, and little camera movement. In short, these are all techniques used to alter the viewer's customary sense of time and space, and the purpose is to project on screen what the Straubs consider the most authentic materialization of the idea. And one of their principal ideas is the resolution of alienation: through a revolutionary act, an allegorical figure frees him/herself of an exploitive and alienating situation.

Significantly, these figures are quite often women. In *Not Reconciled or Only Force Helps Where Force Reigns* (*Nicht Versoehnt oder Es Hilft Nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt Herrscht*, 1965) it is only the composite wife-mother-grandmother figure who is free of alienation because her whole life is shown as a refusal to accommodate an immoral status quo. Even more explicit is the allegory of *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne and the Pimp* (*Der Braeutigam, die Komoediantin und der Zuhaelter*, 1968), where the so-called Comedienne stands literally and figuratively between the other two; as wife, she becomes the free partner of the Bridegroom; and, as whore, she extricates herself from the domination of the Pimp. While it would be silly to claim that these or any of their films are specifically concerned with women per se, it is apparent that the Straubs have picked certain motifs — such as the exploitation of whores by pimps — because they are representative of their mutual perception of social reality.

This intrusion of the female

German films offer a more sympathetic and enjoyable rendition of ourselves on the screen.

perspective into a traditionally male-dominated sphere isn't restricted to the few women directors, script-writers, producers, etc., who have contributed directly. The New German Cinema as a whole seems much more aware of women as professional partners and much less fixated on working out masculine — as opposed to human — fantasies on film, than its North American counterpart. Indeed, there are a few male filmmakers whose movies stand out because they are not merely conscious of, but also, utilize a woman's perspective. For instance, Rudolf Thome, a director still largely unknown outside Germany, has been labelled a "feminist" by a major German film critic. Reportedly, his films thoroughly reverse the usual masculine allegiances, giving the sympathetic advantage to women. His most recent feature, *Made in Germany and U.S.A.* 1974, does a cinema verite-type study of an "open marriage" in which it is the man who has a hard time accepting the woman's sexual and emotional freedom. It isn't that Thome turns sexual role-playing upside down, but that he seems to envision a man's liberation aligned with a woman's.

Alexander Kluge is another and perhaps better case in point. His films are more likely to become accessible to Canadian audiences than Thome's — a few of them have already been shown and received good press in the U.S. And their sheer entertainment value should make them more appealing than Thome's and the Straubs' more experimental fare. It is nevertheless difficult to characterize his film; they don't at all fit the conventional descriptive pigeonholes applied to movies. They are stories but always told in a round-about, tongue-in-cheek way. The characters are equally unconventional. They are prototypes mimicking real people, or, more exactly, very human personifications of Kluge's preposterous but "documentary" imagination. In a deliberately amateurish, self-parodying style — such as the actors deadpanning for the camera, long takes of nonsensical activity and conversations,

Kluge's redundant off-screen narration, bombastic music, speeding up the picture a la silent movies — he recounts the quixotic efforts of average Janes and Joes to circumvent, crack or, conversely, attack and antagonize the socio-economic system that overwhelms them.

More than half the time, and most engagingly, Kluge's alter egos are women. His first feature, based on a short story from his autobiographical *Curricula Vitae (Lebenslaeufe)*, stars his real-life sister, Alexandra, as the surrogate Alexander. Then there are the two Leni Peickert films, *Artists Under the Big Top: At a Loss (Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos, 1968)* and *The Untamable Leni Peickert (Die Unbezaehmbare Leni Peickert, 1969)*. The first chronicles Leni's unflagging attempt to master-mind a circus in the face of never-ending official interference. In the sequel, she gives up her entrepreneurial ambitions in frustration and takes up the counter position as the system's radicalized opponent.

However, only *Occasional Work of a Female Slave (Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklaven, 1973)* has any explicitly feminist content and even in this film Kluge's principal interest is to enlist our intellects, encourage a considered response to the content, rather than massage our feminist sympathies. Once again, Alexandra is at work, this time as the harried Frau Bronski, putting her medieval-bore of a husband through graduate school by performing illegal abortions. In the daily course of events she becomes ever more politicized, attending a meeting of dissidents here, making a quick drive down to Portugal to study the revolution there, until she emerges matter-of-factly at the end of the film as the undaunted strike agitator at the factory where her husband has landed an establishment job as a research chemist.

If *Occasional Work* reflects Kluge's preponderantly masculine approach, with his crazy mixture of rad-lib dialectics and satire, it is still one of the most intelligent and well executed feminist

films ever made because its form and content are so thoughtfully integrated. Like every one of his films it illustrates his proposition — this time specifically for women — that "radicalism is not a thing of will but of experience."

Let me emphasize that these films and their makers are not just part of a lunatic fringe. Kluge, von Trotta and Schloendorff, and, in particular, the Straubs have had the attention of critics outside Germany for several years. All the films discussed, despite their stylistic diversity, are in the mainstream of the New German Cinema and are representative of the movement's activity as a whole, particularly of its perspective of women and their changing role in international cinema. Right now, the New German Film is being "discovered" by some of the more influential English-language critics. That means many of these films may eventually be distributed in Canada — not an unpleasant prospect for those of us who would like to see a more sympathetic and enjoyable rendition of ourselves on the screen. In fact, *A Free Woman* is already available through Faroun Films Ltd. in Montreal.

Judith Mirus is a graduate student in comparative literature at U of A and vice-president of the National Film Theatre/Edmonton. She recently returned from a year in Germany.



MATRIMONIAL PROPERTY: WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE MURDOCH?

by Stella Bailey

drawing by Barbara Hartmann

A short time after Irene Murdoch was denied an equal share in the family ranch by the Supreme Court of Canada, a magazine writer pointed out: "Until the provincial governments offer a more equitable way *Murdoch v. Murdoch* will stand as a troubling precedent" (*Time*, March 25, 1974, p. 8). Now, almost three years after that fateful day, there are two questions which come to mind. How troubling a precedent has *Murdoch v. Murdoch* in fact been? What have the provincial governments done to resolve the inequities in matrimonial property law?

Since *Murdoch*, there have been many cases in which the courts have either referred to, applied, followed or distinguished *Murdoch*. (By "distinguished" it is meant that the courts have shown *Murdoch* to be inapplicable due to essential differences between the case being decided and *Murdoch*.) In ten of these cases, which can be said to represent the existing law in the area, the wife claimed an interest in property which was in her husband's name. Before considering these cases, however, it is useful to review the reasons for the decision in *Murdoch*.

One reason why Mrs. Murdoch did not receive her fair share of the property was because the Supreme Court of Canada found that she had made neither a financial nor a non-financial contribution toward its acquisition. (Actually it is not clear in the case whether a non-financial contribution would have been sufficient.) The \$6000 which she had provided for rent and a down payment from moneys given to her by her mother was apparently treated by Mr. Murdoch as a loan and was accepted as such by the Court. The Court did not consider the financial contribution which she made when some of the earnings which she and her husband had received as a hired couple were used to purchase property. Since the work which she did on the ranch amounted to that done by any ranch wife according to the Court, she had not made a non-financial contribution either. The Court record showed that Mrs. Murdoch looked after the ranch for five months every year while her husband was away on Stock Association business and throughout the year did such activities as "Haying, raking, swathing, moving, driving trucks and tractors and teams, quietening horses, taking cattle back and forth to the reserve, dehorning, vaccinating, branding, anything that was to be done".

Even if Mrs. Murdoch had made a contribution toward the purchase of the property, it would not have entitled her to an interest in the ranching operation but only to one in the matrimonial home, or so the Supreme Court of Canada indicated. The Court also concluded that it was not the Murdochs' common intention that Mrs. Murdoch was to have an interest in the property. Consequently, twenty-five years of hard work as a ranch wife (she was also the mother of one son) earned Mrs. Murdoch absolutely no interest in the property which was in her husband's name.

Almost six months after the *Murdoch* decision, the Manitoba Queen's Bench held in *Kowalchuk v. Kowalchuk*

that the wife was entitled to a one-half interest in farm land, machinery and equipment, a decision which was later upheld by the Manitoba Court of Appeal. In that case, the husband and wife had carried on a mixed farming operation for the twenty-nine years that they were married and living together. The two parcels of land in which the wife was found to have an interest had been acquired over a period of eleven years and were registered with the knowledge of the wife in the husband's name. Since her husband had always told her that the farm was for both of them, she did not object to the titles being taken in his name.

The decision in *Kowalchuk* was in favour of the wife for two reasons: she had made a significant contribution toward the acquisition, improvement and operation of the farm; and her husband's statement that the farm was for both of them was effective as disclosing a common intention of the parties. To elaborate on the first reason, a gift of four cows from her parents was held to be a significant contribution as was her contribution in the way of labour (she was the family banker and housekeeper, she helped in the fields, looked after a large garden and helped with the chores as well as raising four children). In referring to the *Murdoch* case, Mr. Chief Justice Dewar of the Queen's Bench stated: "... at the very root of the *Murdoch* decision is a finding of fact in the trial court that there was no significant contribution by the wife as here and no common intention that created an interest in the wife in diminution of the husband's vested proprietary interest".

However, when one compares the contribution of Mrs. Kowalchuk with that of Mrs. Murdoch, it is difficult to see how her contribution was found to be more significant than Mrs. Murdoch's. Obviously both were significant. The judges of the Manitoba Queen's Bench probably also thought that the contributions of both women were the same but in order to give effect to their belief that a wife's non-financial contribution is equal to her husband's financial one, they had to find that the one's contribution was more significant than the other's. That is how I like to interpret their decision. In *Kowalchuk* the outcome of the judges exercising their discretion was favourable to the wife. However, the Court could just as easily have held that since the contributions of both women were similar, Mrs. Kowalchuk should have no interest in the property. Thus the judges would have demonstrated their belief that twenty-nine years of work on a farm by a woman is worth nothing. And herein lies one of the dangers of allowing judges to exercise their discretion in the division of matrimonial property; the same contributions may be evaluated differently depending upon the judges' beliefs.

It is interesting to note that, after *Kowalchuk* was decided, a writer in a "You and the Law" column in a Winnipeg newspaper discussed *Murdoch* and *Kowalchuk* and concluded: "So those women who accused the Supreme Court of chauvinism were wrong, and Canadian farm wives can take heart. Depending on the circumstances, a farm wife most definitely may have a legally enforceable interest in her

husband's farm. That's the law" (*Winnipeg Free Press*, August 28, 1974).

My belated reply to that writer, who was rather optimistic when one considers that the case was being appealed at that time to a higher court, is that women who accused the Supreme Court of Canada of chauvinism for its decision in *Murdoch* were not wrong; in fact women can continue to accuse the Supreme Court of Canada of chauvinism until such time as it considers a case similar to *Murdoch* and comes to an opposite conclusion. As for Canadian farm wives taking heart, or city or town wives for that matter, before doing so it would be better at this point in time to consider the cases which were decided after *Kowalchuk*.

In each of the first four cases which followed *Kowalchuk* in time, the decision favoured the wife. *More v. More* was a British Columbia Supreme Court case in which it was held that the wife was entitled to a one-quarter interest in the matrimonial home which was registered in her husband's name. In that case, the wife had handled all the finances throughout the twenty-three year marriage and had put all the moneys (both her and her husband's salaries as well as rent from boarders) into one bank account. From this account came the down payment and mortgage payments for the house. Since her salary was approximately one-quarter of her husband's, she was found to have contributed one-quarter towards the purchase of the house. In *More*, there was found to be no proof of a common intention expressed by both parties. However, applying a 1972 English case, the Court held that there was no need to prove an agreement where monetary contributions are established because they supply the basis for a beneficial interest. In referring to *Murdoch*, the Court noted that in *Murdoch* "... there was no evidence the wife did contribute to the purchase of the property in issue, and further that the interest she was claiming was not part of a matrimonial home".

In *More* it is disappointing though not unexpected to see that the wife's share was limited to one-quarter of the value of the house, this amount being what her financial contribution was judged to be. Had the judges wished to give her an equal share, they could have done so by ruling that the husband and wife contributed equally to the purchase price of the house.

In *Re Whitely and Whitely*, a case which was decided a couple of weeks after *More*, the Ontario Court of Appeal held that the wife was entitled to a one-half interest in a matrimonial home, thereby reversing a lower court's decision which had denied her any interest. In this case the wife had provided the entire initial payment, without which the property could not have been acquired. As well, her earnings were used for household expenses so that her husband was able to spend his entire earnings on improvements on the house totalling \$9000. The wife in this case worked outside the home for two years at the beginning of the marriage and then did some seasonal work while raising four children. At the time of marriage she had savings of \$850 and soon after marriage her parents gave her \$300 to be applied on the purchase of the home on the condition that she was to be a joint owner, a condition to which the husband apparently agreed. However, he denied it at the trial.

The Court inferred from the conduct of the parties during the initial years that it was their intention that both should be entitled to the property. They had both selected the property in question. The property had been purchased through assistance under the Veterans' Land Act which required the husband's signature alone on the agreement. The wife did sign a certificate at the time of application for assistance that she did intend to co-operate with and assist her husband in every possible way. By accepting his wife's financial contribution in these circumstances, the husband had induced in her the reasonable belief that the acquisition of the home was a joint venture.

At this point you may be wondering why the Court has to

go to such lengths to justify giving a wife an equal share. It is because separation of property is the law, except in the province of Quebec, and separation of property means that what he buys with his money is his and what she buys with her money is hers. With respect to land, the person in whose name the title is registered is generally the owner. So the cases which have been and will be considered which favour the wife really are an exception to the law of separation of property since she is being given a share in property which is legally her husband's. In these cases, under the existing law, the Court cannot simply say to the wife that she has an equal share because the property has been acquired since marriage. It has to determine whether the wife has made some contribution which merits a share in her husband's property and whether her husband intended to give her one. If this situation is to be changed then the law must be changed and in such a way that it recognizes marriage as an equal partnership. But more will be said about this later.

In the next case, *Fiedler v. Fiedler*, which was decided in July 1974 by the Trial Division of the Alberta Supreme Court, *Murdoch v. Murdoch* was distinguished with the result that the decision favoured the wife. (Here it should be noted that this decision was later reversed by the Appellate Division of the Alberta Supreme Court.) In the *Fiedler* case, the wife contributed the sum of \$51,000 during the marriage of twenty-two years. That money was used to purchase food, clothing, medicine, furniture, etc. In addition to this financial contribution, Mrs. Fiedler assisted in "... seeding and harvesting operations, looked after cattle when her husband was not able to do so, pumped water, threw out bales of hay, maintained a large vegetable garden, cooked for the hired man, picked rocks, assisted in mending fences, mowed the lawn and kept the house, and all of this during the period of time that she was raising two children and teaching school".

By doing the above, Mrs. Fiedler had made, according to the Trial Division of the Alberta Supreme Court, a very substantial contribution, without which the lands in question would not have been acquired. Consequently she was entitled to a declaration that her husband held the lands in trust for himself and her equally. *Murdoch* was distinguished on the basis that the contribution of Mrs. Fiedler "... exceeded by a wide margin the contributions of Mrs. Murdoch". In the *Fiedler* case, there was no agreement between the husband and the wife as to ownership of the farm property, no common intention that Mrs. Fiedler was to have an interest. However, as in *More*, the Court seemed to accept the proposition that there was no need to prove an agreement once contributions were established.



SURE YOU CAN TAKE SOMETHING WITH YOU!

In *Fiedler*, the Alberta Supreme Court is seen making the same ridiculous distinctions as to contribution as the Manitoba Queen's Bench made in *Kowalchuk* in order to award Mrs. Fiedler her fair share. Once again, think how easily the Court could have said that the contributions of Mrs. Fiedler and Mrs. Murdoch were similar and that therefore Mrs. Fiedler should have no interest. But there is not much use in lingering over this decision since, as already mentioned, it was overturned by a higher court in the second month of International Women's Year. I will return to a discussion of this reversal later.

Prior to the *Fiedler* reversal, three Ontario cases were decided by the High Court of Justice, two in favour of the wife (*Calleja v. Calleja*, *Easton v. Easton*) and the other in favour of the husband (*Madisso v. Madisso*). *Calleja* was not only decided on the same day as *Fiedler* but also distinguished *Murdoch* with the result that the wife obtained a one-half interest in the matrimonial home. Mrs. Calleja had worked during the eleven year marriage, staying home only to give birth to their three children, and had turned over all her pay to her husband up until four years before they separated. As well he had kept donations received on their wedding day which totalled \$1400 to \$1500.

The matrimonial home which was purchased two years after they were married was registered in the husband's name alone because the wife was under twenty-one years of age at the time. However, at the time of purchase the husband indicated that when she reached twenty-one, the property would be put in their joint names. This was never done. Part of the matrimonial home was rented out and, although the evidence was conflicting on this point, some of the money received by the wife was turned over to the husband.

The Ontario High Court Of Justice distinguished this case from *Murdoch* on two points. Here there was an agreement between the husband and the wife that when she attained her majority she would become a joint owner. Secondly, the conduct of the parties prior to and following the purchase of the property raised an inference of a trust on the husband in favour of the wife because she had made a financial contribution or because the husband's conduct was such that he induced his wife to act to her detriment in the reasonable belief that by so doing she was acquiring an interest in the matrimonial home.

Several months later Mrs. Madisso, who had been married twenty-four years prior to her separation, sought a declaration that she had a one-half interest in a family home and vacation property. She based her claim to an interest in the matrimonial home on the fact that her income was used to buy food, clothing, furniture, etc. for the family, which included two

children, while her husband's earnings went to mortgage payments, interest taxes, insurance and upkeep of the premises. Because of the above arrangement she thought she was also an owner of the house. The Court found that her husband also contributed to household expenses.

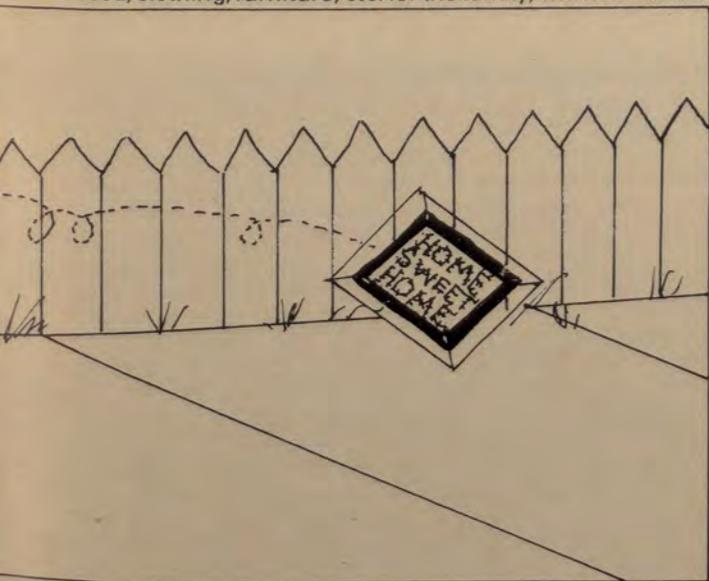
The Ontario High Court of Justice followed *Murdoch*, and denied Mrs. Madisso an interest in the family home because she had made no financial contribution to its purchase and because her husband never intended to give her any interest in the property and there was no concrete evidence on her part that she expected any.

As for the vacation property for which the application to purchase had been made by Mrs. Madisso, even though she performed physical labour in the construction of the cottage, she was found to have no interest because her husband had paid for the property and because she, in letters to her husband (which incidentally were requested by him), disclaimed any interest in the property asking that title be taken in the final documents in his name.

The *Madisso* case provides an example of the principle "Ignorance of the law is no excuse". Mrs. Madisso should have known that frittering away her income on household necessities would give her no interest in the house and therefore should have insisted that the house be registered in her name as well or at least paid the mortgage payments. Or so the Court is saying by its decision. I think Mrs. Madisso should have received a one-half interest in the property. After all, she had made not only a financial contribution during the marriage but also a non-financial one. But the Court could not distinguish this case from *Murdoch* and was therefore bound by the *Murdoch* decision. And like other courts, it will continue to be bound by the inequitable decision of *Murdoch* until provincial governments reform their matrimonial property laws.

In another Ontario case, *Easton v. Easton* which also concerned a matrimonial home, the Court was able to distinguish *Murdoch* with the result that the wife was entitled to a one-half interest in the property. In that case, the couple purchased their first home with money from their joint bank account into which the wife had put some of her earnings, using the rest for living expenses. The husband and wife also borrowed \$3000 from his mother in order to purchase the house and jointly accepted responsibility for paying back the loan. The proceeds from the sale of the first house were used to purchase the second house which was sold in order to purchase the house in question. The Court accepted the wife's evidence that there was an oral agreement between the two as to their joint ownership of the property. This case was distinguished from *Murdoch* on the fact that, unlike in *Murdoch*, here was a direct financial contribution by the wife. Also Mrs. Easton had made an indirect financial contribution by bearing household expenses and had assumed a direct financial obligation by way of the promissory note.

To return to Alberta, it was in February 1975 that the Appellate Division of the Alberta Supreme Court applied *Murdoch* and reversed the lower court's decision, denying Mrs. Fiedler's claim to property in her husband's name. In denying her claim, the Appellate Division indicated that the trial Judge had not attached enough importance to the question of intention or belief. In its words, "The vital question in the present case is whether in doing these things (teaching and using her earnings to support the family) Mrs. Fiedler acted in the reasonable belief that she was obtaining a beneficial interest in the lands". The Court found that she had not acted in the reasonable belief that she was obtaining an interest for the following reasons: when the property was being acquired she did not consider that she could have her name on it; she never asked that any of the property be put into her name or their joint names; the marriage relationship was strained and unhappy; when she left her husband in December 1970 she knew he owned the farm, and it would be



unreasonable to infer that the husband ever intended his wife to share in ownership of the land.

My only comment on this unbelievably unjust decision is that it strongly reinforces my belief that the judiciary should not be allowed to decide how matrimonial property is to be divided between a husband and wife.

Incidentally, after this decision the husband and wife apparently came to some agreement. Therefore there was no appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada which probably, when one considers what happened in *Murdoch*, would have been unsuccessful anyway.

About a month after the *Fiedler* decision, the British Columbia Supreme Court applied *Murdoch* with the result that a common law wife was entitled to a one-half share in the proceeds of the sale of a home. In that case, *Ahone (Smith) v. Ahone*, the common law husband and wife had lived together for twenty-four years. Their first home was a small general store with living accommodation for which the husband's father had provided the purchase price. The store was registered in both the husband's and wife's names as the husband wanted his wife to have some security and also because they intended to marry. The wife operated the store while the husband worked as a labourer and logger. They sold the store and bought the property which was in issue in this action. This property was put in the husband's name only to avoid the claims of income tax authorities. However, when the husband later attempted to sell the property he told his wife, as he admitted in court, that she would get her half share. The relationship between the two parties gradually deteriorated until the husband moved out.

The *Ahone* case was decided in favour of the wife primarily because the court found that there was a common intention to own the matrimonial home jointly. Also the proceeds of the sale of the store which was registered in both names constituted the down payment on the second home.

After *Ahone* came *Bussey v. Bussey*, a Newfoundland Supreme Court decision which followed *Murdoch* and denied a wife an interest in a matrimonial home. In *Bussey*, the matrimonial home was built with money earned by the husband and with the labour of both husband and wife. According to Mr. Justice Mifflin, who delivered the judgment in the case, the wife ran the household well. In fact, "... if she were not a careful manager, there would not have been any money in the bank account for the purchase of materials to be used in building a house". In this case, it was held that the wife did not have a beneficial interest in the house for the following reasons: she had made no direct financial contribution to its acquisition, the work that she did in connection with building the house was not an unusual effort by any wife in Newfoundland (according to the wife, she had gathered stones for use in the cement, hammered, helped hold gyproc sheets when they were being put in place, did all inside painting and some outside painting), there was no evidence that the husband and wife had come to a common intention that the wife was to have any interest in the property. Consequently, after thirty years of marriage and ten children, the wife had to move out.

More recently, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal overturned a 1974 decision of the Saskatchewan Queen's Bench that denied a farm wife any interest in farm property which she and her husband had worked for 21 years. In *Rathwell v. Rathwell* (not yet reported in the law reports), the Court apparently distinguished the case from *Murdoch* on the fact that Mrs. Rathwell had contributed money to a joint account used to purchase farmland. In the judgment, Mr. Justice Brownridge indicated that "when both partners to the marriage contributed an equal amount of money to start with and both worked hard to build the assets now worth \$150,000, I do not think it either reasonable or probable to conclude that the partners intended that one should end up with all the assets and that the other should end up with nothing". Mrs.

SUMMARY

MURDOCH v. MURDOCH

October 2, 1974

The Supreme Court of Canada rules that Mrs. Murdoch, after 25 years of hard work as a ranch wife, has no interest in either the matrimonial home or the ranch.

KOWALCHUK v. KOWALCHUK

The Manitoba Queen's Bench holds that Mrs. Kowalchuk was entitled to a one-half interest in the property. The decision is upheld by the Manitoba Court of Appeal.

MORE v. MORE

The B.C. Supreme Court awards Mrs. More a quarter-interest in the matrimonial home.

WHITELY v. WHITELY

The Ontario Court of Appeal awards Mrs. Whitely a half-interest in the matrimonial home.

FIEDLER v. FIEDLER

The Trial Division of the Alberta Supreme Court awards Mrs. Fiedler a half-ownership in farm property but the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court reverses the decision.

CALLEJA v. CALLEJA

The Ontario High Court of Justice grants Mrs. Calleja a half-interest in the matrimonial home.

Rathwell received one-half interest in the farmland.

A newspaper account of the decision ("Wife Wins Out On Farm Appeal," *Edmonton Journal*, June 25, 1976) did not reveal whether the Court of Appeal found a common intention between the parties that the wife should share in the property. Without this information one cannot applaud the Court of Appeal for being creative in its decision or even predict the outcome of Mr. Rathwell's appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. (His lawyer indicated that the case would be appealed if the former husband and wife do not come to an agreement (*Edmonton Journal*, July 21, 1976.) My guess is that the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal found a common intention between the parties whereas the Trial Court had not. The Saskatchewan Queen's Bench had denied Mrs. Rathwell an interest in the property because it accepted the husband's evidence that there was no agreement between him and his wife as to her having any proprietary interest in the lands. If the husband had said that the lands were "ours" as the wife testified, he did not mean anything by it since, according to the Trial Judge, "... husbands (other than a foolhardy and valiant few) who desire a life of peaceful co-existence within the matrimonial bailiwick rather than either a hot or cold war

OF CASES

MADISSO v. MADISSO

The Ontario High Court of Justice denies Mrs. Madisso's claim to a one-half interest in family home and vacation property.

EASTON v. EASTON

Mrs. Easton is given a one-half interest in the matrimonial home.

AHONE (SMITH) v. AHONE

The B.C. Supreme Court awards Mrs. Ahone a half-interest in the sale of a home. The relationship was a common law one.

BUSSEY v. BUSSEY

The Newfoundland Supreme Court denies Mrs. Bussey an interest in the matrimonial home.

RATHWELL v. RATHWELL

The Saskatchewan Queen's Bench denies Mrs. Rathwell any interest in farm property. The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal overturns the decision, giving Mrs. Rathwell a half-interest.

habitually use the diplomatic and ambiguous 'ours' rather than the forthright and challenging 'mine' when referring to anything of monetary value". With judges holding the view of women which is implicit in that statement, how can we even hope that they will award us our fair share of the property on marriage breakdown?

It can probably be said that *Rathwell*, like most of the other cases considered above, merely clarifies what was not quite clear in *Murdoch*, namely that both a financial contribution and proof of a common intention between the parties are necessary before a woman can claim an interest in property which is in her husband's name. Before *Murdoch* was decided, both of these requirements were unnecessary. A wife could claim an interest by showing a financial or acceptable non-financial contribution or by showing either an agreement that the interest should be shared or that her husband's actions had led her to expect that she would share in the property in return for her contributions.

When one considers what a wife has had to establish since *Murdoch* in order to obtain an interest in property registered in her husband's name, there is no question that *Murdoch v. Murdoch* has indeed been a very troubling

precedent — and so it will continue to be until the provincial governments (with the exception of Quebec where partnership of acquests is the law) enact legislation and thereby reform matrimonial property laws. To date the provincial governments have done absolutely nothing in this area. Since that is the case, women and men must demand that the laws be changed and changed so as to recognize that marriage is an equal partnership in which some women make their contribution by staying home and caring for the family. Three different schemes which might recognize the equality of women and men in marriage are: community of property, deferred sharing and judicial discretion. I say "might" because the latter would not necessarily do so. To describe briefly the three schemes, under a system of community of property the husband and wife would own property in equal shares. Under deferred sharing a husband and wife would own property separately during marriage but on marriage breakdown, if one spouse had more assets than the other, he or she would pay the other spouse so that each would own an equal share. Under a system of judicial discretion a judge would decide what is a fair share, perhaps by considering certain criteria.

Since space does not allow discussion of all three schemes, I have selected for consideration the two which were included in a report submitted to the Alberta government by the Institute of Law Research and Reform, namely, judicial discretion and deferred sharing. I have already made it clear that I do not favour the former. In my opinion enacting a system of judicial discretion would create no change in the law. The reason I am so concerned about this alternative is that the Alberta government apparently favours judicial discretion over deferred sharing and is planning to make it the law — that is, unless Albertans lobby against this choice. The following comparison between judicial discretion and deferred sharing is directed to anyone in Alberta and the rest of Canada who feels that judicial discretion is the best proposal for reform.

I really do not know whether one good thing can be said about a system of judicial discretion. The main advantage usually cited is that of flexibility, that is, the judge can decide what is fair on the merits of the individual case. But how will the judge decide what each person deserves? His or her decision will of course depend on how successfully each of the parties argues that there should or should not be an equal sharing. Obviously the most convincing "story" will win out. Then too, knowing that the judge might decide that one need not share equally — or at all — will undoubtedly encourage people to take their cases to court and unnecessary expense and bitterness will be the result. Under a system of deferred sharing, however, there would be more predictability as to the outcome of a court action and consequently people would have less incentive to involve the court in a division of the matrimonial property. Another disadvantage of judicial discretion is that until the individual case is decided, a married person will not know whether she or he will share in the assets which have been acquired as a result of the contribution each person has made to the relationship. Under a system of deferred sharing, however, each person would be assured of an equal share, unless of course there was a provision in the legislation that the court was to have the power to reduce or cancel the share of a spouse whose contribution to the welfare of the family was "substantially less than might reasonably have been expected under the circumstances", as the Alberta Institute of Law Research and Reform has suggested in its August 1975 report on matrimonial property. This provision, incidentally, has both friends and enemies.

Yet another disadvantage of a system of judicial discretion is that there will be no consistency as to how judges exercise their discretion. One need only compare the contributions of Mrs. Murdoch, Mrs. Kowalchuk and Mrs. Fiedler and the decision in each case to see how three courts evaluated similar performance and came up with a different conclusion.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, a system of deferred sharing is more desirable than one of judicial

discretion for the reason that it recognizes marriage as an equal partnership. On marriage breakdown each spouse receives an equal share of the property acquired during marriage regardless of whose money paid for it. However it is only on marriage breakdown that the spouses attain an equal property position since this scheme preserves separation of property during marriage. This feature of deferred sharing may be seen to be a disadvantage, especially where the woman makes her contribution by staying home and caring for the family and house. But I am looking forward to the day when every woman, married or not, is economically independent. Then separation of property will be advantageous for all because it allows women who marry to retain their financial autonomy. And today it could be argued that separation of property does not present problems since married people happily share until the marriage breaks down. At that point, under a system of deferred sharing, each would obtain his or her equal share while that might not necessarily be the case under a system of judicial discretion.

Another possible disadvantage of a system of deferred sharing is that it assumes that the husband and wife are making an equal contribution when they might not be. For this reason, a discretionary provision might be included in deferred

sharing legislation, as mentioned above. However, this sort of provision could well defeat the purpose of enacting a deferred sharing scheme.

I hope this comparison of judicial discretion and deferred sharing will help you decide what sort of reforms to demand in your province so that women are assured of receiving an equal share of matrimonial property. Until new legislation is enacted, however, separation of property is the law for those of us living outside Quebec. If your house or farm is registered in your husband's name, have it put in joint ownership. As the law presently stands, if you do not do that, you must make a direct financial contribution to the acquisition of the property (e.g. by paying the mortgage payments) and have your husband indicate in writing (e.g. in a marriage contract) or verbally in front of witnesses that the property is for both of you. That is what *Murdoch*, as interpreted by recent cases, has said.

Stella Bailey is a second year law student at the University of Alberta. As Director of the Women's Project at Student Legal Services of Edmonton, she has been working in the area of Women and the Law this past summer — conducting seminars in the community, doing research, and submitting briefs to the government.

LAW FOR THE LAYPERSON

by Myra B. Bielby

Marriage and Family Law in Alberta by Jean McBean. International Self-Counsel Press Ltd., 1975, \$3.95, paper.

Women in Canadian Society by Paula Bourne. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1976, paper.

Law, Law, Law, 4th ed., by Clayton Ruby, Paul Copeland, Lynn King, Greg King. Anansi Toronto, 1976, paper.

The Law is Not for Women by Marvin Zuker and June Callwood. Pitman Publishing 1976, \$5.95 paper, \$7.95 cloth.

There has been a great upsurge of interest in recent years, particularly from women, in investigating, informing oneself about and criticizing that mysterious and misunderstood force that so deeply affects our lives, the law. In response to the felt needs of many Canadians in this area, several books have been published. All of these share the common defect, present in self-counselling series, that their readers may take them as containing absolute truths and may not fully realize the dangers of assuming the laws of one province apply to their province as well or that seeming-

ly small differences in fact may result in vital differences in law. Apart from this criticism, however, the efforts of these authors to inform readers about an area far too long kept in the dark can only be lauded.

Each of these books has a different focus, flavour and slant and each reflects the biases of its authors to a greater or lesser degree.

Marriage and Family Law in Alberta is the best reference for the individual interested in Alberta law and the procedures for applying it. The text is written by an Edmonton lawyer, Jean McBean, who has an extensive matrimonial practice. The book, as its title suggests, concentrates solely on the marriage and children aspect of the law, as well as including a section on marriage contracts with a sample of one of these documents in the index. Suffering from the narrowness of orientation that materials written by lawyers for laypeople so often suffer, it is better used as a reference text than as simple reading material for information purposes. In short, it is rather dry, being heavily laden with an attempt to outline exact methods to be used and steps to be followed by the person interested in using the law by and for herself without the aid of a lawyer. To this end, however, it suffers

from the lack of an index and poor internal organization.

Ms. McBean definitely analyzes the law from the feminist stance and also from the position of the low income woman. Her tactical advice may not be appropriate if this is not the reader's situation in life. She also, although perhaps not intentionally, presents certain areas as clear-cut in application and effect, such as the section dealing with one spouse ejecting the other from the matrimonial home, where in fact these matters are often hazy in the end result.

The text contains several indexes that provide information on starting proceedings and preparing for trial oneself, legal aid and free assistance and legal agreements. These may be the most useful sections in the book for the average reader.

In summary, this is the best book of the four for the intelligent reader interested in applying Alberta law to her own situation. Others may find it tedious reading.

Women in Canadian Society has the most unique format of the four books, being designed to promote discussion and intelligent analysis of controversial legal issues relating to women. It is short on information, dealing only

with areas of matrimonial property, prostitution, rape, abortion, working conditions and situations, and Indian women. Not all of the matters dealt with are strictly "legal" items, such as the section covering women's involvement in the labor movement, but all relate to the social and economic position of the Canadian woman today.

The format includes a summary of a recent well publicized case or decision on the point to be discussed followed by a series of questions on the moral issues involved and potential or possible reforms in the area. Recent amendments in certain areas, including the replacement of the old Criminal Code offence of being a nightwalker with soliciting as the "prostitution" offence in the Criminal Code, are discussed.

This is a highly readable book designed to be used in the classroom or in a discussion group. It is of little assistance to the woman interested in information to aid her in untangling and using the law herself but it is generally informative. Also, while the author is concerned with woman's position in the world, she is more reasonable and well balanced in method of presentation than some of the more wildly feminist writers in this group.

Law, Law, Law is fun to read. Anti-establishment in orientation, it advises readers how to protect and exercise their "rights" until a lawyer appears to assist. It is not geared toward a do-it-yourself approach for the entire legal spectrum.

Published first in the early Sixties as a guide to the rights of young people when dealing with the law, this book has evolved to include a discussion of some of the other areas of currently popular interest including drugs, immigration, sexual offences, juveniles, human rights and consumer protection.

The authors' major orientation has remained directed at the Ontario situation. One quarter of the book is specifically marked as applicable only to Ontario but I found that this province's influence had spread throughout and colored much of the rest of the text as well. The limitations of this to non-Ontario readers are obvious.

The Law is Not for Women is a 1976 update of *Canadian Women and the Law* which was published in 1971 and is badly dated. The books are both authored by the same people, one an Ontario lawyer and the other an author and journalist. I found these books to be the most unsatisfactory of those reviewed. Badly biased, severely slanted toward the "woman as a creature to be pitied" point of view, the publication simply expounds on the

Ontario situation and blithely assumes, in many cases, that this applies nation-wide. A reader relying on this work for advice on the law and legal procedure would often be misled to the pointed of actual harm.

The authors, like McBean in *Marriage and Family Law in Alberta*, attempt to provide a guide to procedure as well as to substantive law. However, they fail miserably as to accuracy; the differences in procedure are great from province to province in Canada and cannot readily be encompassed in a book of this size. The authors would have been better advised to limit themselves to a more general overview of the law in their attempt to make their work Canada-wide in scope.

Despite their effort to particularize the law as it applies to women the authors are overly simplistic in their descriptions of many things with the result that many important differences in situations may be blurred. This is so in the area of the book dealing with separation agreements where the authors imply that certain matters must be covered in these documents, such as the matrimonial home, while in fact the parties are completely at liberty to include or exclude such matters at will.

The radical stance taken by the authors in their interpretation of the law will no doubt alienate many middle-of-the-road readers. Rather than trying to inform their readers as to the law as it practically operates, the authors dwell on some of the more provocative, unjust and theoretical elements of our jurisprudence, such as the need of a separated wife to remain chaste to receive alimony, an item often repeated throughout the book, without in fact advising that the law rarely operates to achieve this result. Also, some of the matters the book state as fact are truly only one interpretation of a complexity of law that could actually often be interpreted otherwise.

One of the more dangerous results of this type of book is that it could discourage the more timid individual from exercising the rights and remedies she does have, by instilling a sense of hopelessness at her situation rather than incensing her so that she lobbies for reform which is, no doubt, the goal aspired to by the authors. One example of this is the comment, that the cost of legal assistance in matrimonial matters ranges from \$500.00 to \$10,000.00. While there may have been a few bitterly contested cases when the lawyer's fees extended toward the high end of this scale, the vast majority of women pay less than even the lower figure given for such advice and

assistance.

The Law is Not for Women covers some pseudo legal areas, such as how to get an abortion, while others are strictly legal matters, including law as it relates to children, marriage, matrimonial property, duties and obligations of motherhood, obscenity, sexual offences, separation, divorce, welfare, credit, citizenship, arrest, mental incapacity and old age. The reader can gain much information of general interest from these paperbacks if she is alert to the writer's strong views which have so obviously influenced their interpretation of the law.

In short, which of these four books is the best depends upon the purposes for which one reads. All can be of assistance to the layperson in understanding and using the law. The law becomes just only when the people it affects know what it says, how it operates, how to use it and how to change it if they don't like what they see. There is a well known legal fiction, "everyone knows the law and is therefore bound by it," Publications of this kind make knowledge of the law less of a fiction and more of a reality.

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Musgrave, Fiamengo and Yeo

three poets, three voices

by Christa van Daele

The Impstone, by Susan Musgrave. McClelland and Stewart, 1976, \$3.95 paper.

In Praise of Older Women, by Marya Fiamengo, Valley Editions, 1976, \$2.95 paper, \$5.95 cloth.

The Custodian of Chaos, by Marg Yeo, illustrations by Susan Porter O'Shea, Applegarth Follies, 1975, \$5.95 paper.

Bones, blood, and water. Nights of horror, a dead wind rising, creepy things, rats and rats' babies, crawling and gnawing and hatching in a fecund, moist, phantasmagoria — Susan Musgrave is not an easy poet to digest. You may spit up a hairball when you're finished the meal. That's why *The Impstone*, if you're new to Musgrave, should definitely be read in company with her earlier stuff. There, particularly in *Grave-Dirt and Selected Strawberries*, the Musgrave world entertains at least a measure of oxygen and sunlight. *The Impstone*, of itself, may leave you somewhat traumatized and quothing 'Nevermore'.

At twenty-five, Musgrave is something of a west coast Baudelaire. Her famous repertoire of grotty images and themes springs from a complex, nervous imagination. A little more cerebral and detached in *The Impstone* than in previous volumes, Musgrave gives off a surprisingly flat, Atwood-like flavour. (Surprising for an extremely original poet. A comparison with Atwood no longer means what it used to. The contemporary Atwood is as mellow as a barrel in comparison to fierce *Power Politics* writing). Wariness, spiritual aridity, omens of peril and dread, an awareness of the unwelcome intrusiveness of men — these are the preoccupations of *Impstone*:

Beware
of your children
bound together
by blood.

Be careful
of the skeleton
held together
by dust.

The point that these preoccupations become a little relentless for my own taste occurs when Musgrave's interesting territorial sense — I am *here*, this is *my* magic, you stay out — all but overpowers her external foci, the outwardly tuned poetic sensibility. Ever the cursed witch, the poet's voice repeatedly soaks the ground with blood, blood, blood:

I'll suck on the
blood of that
murdering
father; his old wig
is crawling with
worms

his old cock
is no good for a maggot.

.. So much violence, in the service of a very private mythmaking impulse.

The stronger poems do not coagulate to this turgid end; they spin off marvellously from concretely grasped sights, smells, and sounds ("I saw the moon/burst like a/puffball from the/stabbed body of the/trees"), and touch home in expansive bursts of feeling that aim for a target and hit it. For all the darkness, cultism, and interiority about her world, *The Impstone's* pages show signs of a struggle against the autism of the poet's own bewitchments. When Musgrave really takes arms, scrapes the black candle drippings from her desk and sets to work, she writes circles around most poets her age.

Seenach
when I am
old
be compassionate

remember me
as a
woman
an idea without children
to learn by . . .

I, for one, look forward to Susan Musgrave's kinder, older age.

Mary Fiamengo's *In Praise Of Older*

Women is a ripe book of mixed blessings. Political, passionate, and robust, Fiamengo's poems fall like a mature and necessary hail on the characteristically monotonous terrain of a self-exploratory, confessional body of women's poems. For that departure from the sagging genre are we grateful. It's been a long time coming.

Old women, wrinkled old women, are at the centre of this collection. In America, Fiamengo proposes, women do not grow old: they second-debut. She writes eloquently of the old women of the world, their strength, endurance, and simplicity:

They bend over graves
with flowers,
they wash the limbs of the dead,
they count the beads of their
rosaries,
they commit no murders
they give advice
or tell fortunes,
they endure.

She paints the tragedy of American womanhood with a little love and a little irony both, and sums up with a personal declaration: "I will grow old in America/ I will have no second debut . . ." Hallelujah, Marya Fiamengo. The title poem alone, direct, sturdy, and self-disclosing, should cheer the heart of any post-menopausal North American woman.

Fiamengo's ill-considered politics give one rather less to cheer about. The humanism of the old woman poems makes a startling and inexplicable about-face on the question of race. "Germans At West Bay" unleashes an unattractive, mistaken fury in Marya Fiamengo. A rapid, dizzying series of associations — simply *hearing* German spoken on a sunny beach at West Bay — provides the poet with a point of departure for an absurd and total indictment of the German people. *Immigrant* people. In *Canada*. So the smile of an immigrant woman sunning herself on the beach becomes pure evil, hideous and absolute: "Don't smile at me,/ Gnädige Frau/ In the curve of your lips/ . . . I see the limbs/ of murdered Partisan children". This

kind of invective (and it's a random sampling — there's more) is not far from the stuff that Eliot and Pound were cranking out between the wars: Bleistein with a cigar. The Jew under the piles. The highminded nationalist dedication of this collection ("To Robin and all those who struggle against the Amercanization of Canada") sits like an uneasy pronouncement over Fiamengo's own willingness to slur and brand a people along with a state. . . . I find it distressing, in a book of poems that purports to talk history ("Red On Black"), politics, and people, to locate this reactionary ethical sense. . . . Outrage can, and should, explode into great art. Picasso's *Guernica* demonstrates that it can. But it takes discipline, insight, and analysis to set off the explosion.

Marg Yeo's largest and most impressive collection of poems to date appears from the creative press of Applegarth Follies, in London, Ontario. Yeo's finely tuned poems in *The Custodian of Chaos* travel along some of the same highways that we've seen Atwood on — the familiar persephone myth, for example, which organizes for both of these poets a dual preoccupation with personal history and with landscape. But Yeo's debt to Atwood probably leaves off in the younger poet's earlier collections, *Games for Shut-ins* (1971) and *Evolutions* (1973). *The Custodian of Chaos* features themes, stances, and moods that herald the emergence of a startling new voice indeed.

For Marg Yeo is caught up in that most seductive of poetic ambitions, the poet as performer. It is not every poet who can play for these stakes. The outstanding female entertainer, in particular, is a rare species, and for good reason: in both of her comic and tragic aspects, the comedienne has traditionally mocked herself, purchasing a laugh at the cheapest possible price. Yeo as poet-entertainer has effectively raised the price of that ticket. Swollen with a dark sense of personal history that is at once fantastic and real, bizarre and wholesome, the poet imagines herself a Dietrich, an Isadora Duncan, even, on the more grotesque side, a Helen Keller. Her zany Dietrich poem signals both the passion and endurance of the quest that will guide the poet through a persistently chaotic world:

i am willing to be as
old as necessary, to live as
long as miracles and trans-
formations take, i plan to go
out in that white fur
coat with burt bacharach
playing my song and

remembering morocco

Yeo's wryness here, her smooth *au cabaret* voice, is cultivated throughout the first section of the book with a sense of style, wit, and the baldest kind of exaggeration.

If the first part of *Custodian* disarms the reader by its genial air of recklessness, its imagined and discarded identities, "Portraits in White", the book's second section, effects several substantial hushes in a quickly paced collection. The poet's ambitious preoccupation with portraiture is an effort to delineate, to define, to allow for "the hugest/spaces where we want/ to be". Where a thing cannot be said, or gotten hold of, there is only a realization of silence. Yeo's statements on this matter are among the most balanced of the collection. Those moments when the language fails us are perceived, as in much contemporary writing, in spatial terms: "i cannot pain you, white/ you draw me into/ your canvasses". White, the colour that is no colour, or all colours mixed pristinely together, is the taut beauty and emptiness of the blank page, the blank and poignant page of a flat Canadian landscape. Yeo is capable of a very light touch, and the sunny haiku-like portraits she executes approach a fluted delicacy of tone that consistently indicates a poised, crafting hand.

"Persephone speaks", the third section of *Custodian*, brings the book back around to its approximate point of departure. As the element of surrealism creeps back into the poet's imaginary world, images of the fabulous ("myths and fish walk up/ right on solid/ ground") and the wonderful ("i am/ a ring dreaming the/ hand to wear") spiral the book once more into highly fantastic realms. Yeo's final poem is a beautiful piece of high fantasy and romance. Like that other clever mistress of the unexpected, Mary Poppins, this poet bows out with a good deal of high class *sprezzatura*. Slightly sardonic, slightly cocky, and holding out the tantalizing promise of return, Yeo enralls all of the children and all of the big people too:

look for me always descending
on you from stations and the sky
look for me when there is no one
to look for, nothing expected . . .

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

PRIVATE WORLDS — THE STORIES OF JOYCE MARSHALL

by Alison L. Hopwood

A Private Place, by Joyce Marshall.
Oberon, 1975, \$3.50 paper.

A Private Place is a small collection of short stories but their complexity, the variations among them and the resonances between them give the effect of a much larger book. Joyce Marshall writes chiefly about women but the core of her writing is her perception of the human condition of both men and women; her women are representative human beings rather than women as a special class.

Joyce Marshall is not a beginning writer. She published two promising novels in the late forties. A long silence followed, ended in the late sixties by several translations from the French: two of Gabrielle Roy's books, the selected letters of a seventeenth-century nun who founded a girls' school in Quebec, and a contemporary account by a Quebecois writer of a trip across Canada. Her experience as translator is evident in her precise choice of words, the directness and economy of her descriptions, in *A Private Place*.

Life in these stories proceeds steadily and unemphatically. Her fans will see that her view of life has not changed since her early work. In *Presently Tomorrow*, published in 1946, a priest reassures a young girl: "Don't be worried about the future. It doesn't jump out at you all at once, you know. It's simply one thing after another. Today and then presently tomorrow." He also tells her that she is fortunate to be free of hampering ties to others, and should be "terribly happy" starting out on her own. Thirty years later, Joyce Marshall's characters still live "today and presently tomorrow," but none of them is, or expects to be, "terribly happy." These who are free from others are painfully isolated, like the girl who tries to commit suicide in "Salvage" and the husband who loses his mind in "The Old Woman." Those who care for others are "willing victims" of whatever treatment they receive, like the old doctor in "Any Time At All" and Margaret in "A Private Place" and "So Many Have Died."

The first and last stories tell about Margaret and her lover Arne Svensen and are the only two in which there is an overlap of characters. The relation of these stories and their placement is certainly intentional and important. The second of the pair is more revealing and more profound; it is also concerned with events antecedent to those of the story placed at the beginning of the book. The reader turns back and re-reads the first story, and the book becomes a complete circuit of meaning. The initial story is the title story of the collection — "A Private Place" — and a second reading confirms that this, and all the other stories in the book are about that most private place in which each person must live alone, the mind.

Alison Hopwood lives in Vancouver and teaches Canadian literature at Simon Fraser University.

WHO WAS THEN THE CRAZY ONE?

by Shirley Swartz

The Butterfly Ward, by Margaret Gibson Gilboord. Oberon Press, 1976, \$8.95, cloth, \$3.95, paper.

W. B. Yeats somewhere recalls the proud carriage of certain Dublin women, gaunt with hunger, mad with drink and despair. Theirs is not only madness but communion with a reality beyond the understanding of saner men. They would recognize kindred spirits in the madwomen of Margaret Gibson Gilboord's *The Butterfly Ward*. Her characters have not the physical freedom of those women Yeats remembers striding along the Dublin quays. They are regimented, restrained, by hospital routines, by drugs, group therapy, shock treatments, lobotomies, by those who say they love them. Yet each makes a space for herself into which she escapes from pain, a space into which she refuses to admit the doctors. Lobotomized Ada retains fragments of poetry and the will to murder an "outsider," a woman not

"crazy" but only fashionably neurotic who has mocked her. Kira of the title story retreats into a "nebula" which appears on no scanning device employed by the neurosurgeons of a surrealistic future. Catherine of "The Phase" watches through "secret eyes . . . that no-one else could see."

These women — Kira pinned on the butterfly board to have her brain x-rayed, Catharine welcoming a murderer she mistakes for a man she knew only slightly but has loved and searched for during many years — know a "truth" inaccessible to saner people. They are "too real," in the words of one of the characters, for those on the "outside."

They believe that an amoeba eats at their brains, that ulcers nest under their ovaries, that bone-crushers attack them; some throw tantrums, others eat glass or preserve their virginity against the contamination of male touch. Yet when the narrator of "Ada" shouts during a group therapy session that "we on this ward are the sanest group you could find," we believe her. That we believe her is a tribute to the skill with which Gilboord presents the mentality of her main characters. She records their perceptions with a precision, in ample detail, which give their words solidity. Theirs is the only perception, the only reality, Gilboord permits her readers; we are forced to accept it. The technique can be unusually moving as it is when Ada recalls lines of poetry a lobotomy should have erased or when the exchange of letters between Liza, a young woman playing the game of "functioning" so that her baby will not be taken away, and Robin, a homosexual female impersonator, ends with the baby's stillbirth and a blank page.

Three of the stories involve men who, unlike most of Gilboord's women, cling to children. "Making It" features the female impersonator. The second, "A Trip to the Casbah," is the least successful story of the collection. Perhaps it tries to incorporate too much, the narrator's kidnapping of his daughter and flight from pursuers (is the car coming up the road really pursuing him?), his obsession with his father's death, his excessive sensitivity to being Jewish.

The third story raises the thematic crux of the entire collection, the question of who is sane. In "Considering her Condition" the narrator belongs to the "outside," to the world of the conventionally sane. We see his wife Clare's madness only through the stereotypical gestures he records — her fists pressed against her eyelids to stop the images of horror, her silence, her recital of Lewis Carroll nonsense

rhymes, her constantly twisting and wringing hands. We know little of the workings of her mind beyond her unwillingness to make love or to bear the child she carries. What interests us in the story is the manner of her husband's observations. Stephen's responses to her are those that he has learned from books as appropriate for dealing with the deranged; he carefully masks his resentment. Moreover he sees only to record. Images of the camera-eye and of videotape control his narrative and he transforms all his observations into a parody of literature — a breakfast table is sad — to be recorded in his journal. His self-control, the camera that is his eye, his journal, constitute his reality. After Clare has committed suicide we see



him at his son's first birthday party, incessantly photographing the child and reviving memories of his dead wife to be recorded in the journal. A portrait of compulsive behaviour emerges which makes us ask which of the two is the more insane.

"Anyone that doesn't know the fine line between reality and fantasy is a fool," writes Liza in "Making It." Gilboord's stories move us with the reality of her madwomen and force us to question the fantasy of our versions of reality.

Shirley Swartz is book review editor at *Branching Out*.

...and more books

Our Bodies, Ourselves, revised and expanded, by the Boston Women's Health Collective. Simon & Schuster, \$5.75.

I still have a copy of the first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, printed by the Free Press and sold for thirty cents. At the end of the modest first edition there appear the arguments for and against turning the distribution over to a commercial publisher; the desire for improved distribution is weighed against the fear that in the hands of an establishment publisher the nature of the book itself would be profoundly altered. The current (second, revised) edition, now 245 pages longer and five dollars and forty-five cents more expensive than the original thirty cent version is the result (to date) of the decision to accept a conventional publishing route. From the perspective of five years, it is clear that both sides of the argument had merit. The Simon & Schuster editions are doubtlessly reaching far more women than did the old Free Press newsprint version, but probably fewer of them are the women for whom the book was originally intended: poor and working class women left defenseless and mystified by the bland, indifferent expertise of the clinics and emergency wards which comprise their primary experience of health care.

The present edition, bristling with (useful) indexes, bibliographies and footnotes, seems much more oriented toward the middle-class woman who has the luxury of choice of physician and treatment and the articulateness to demand and get what she wants. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* remains a useful, even indispensable, book for all of us who seek to regain control over our own bodies, but it *has* changed its focus over the years and that change is rather sad.

Should you buy the new edition if you already have the previous one? The new edition has been substantially enlarged, and most important, enlarged in the direction of emphasizing current research indicating that the so-called women's "miracle" therapies — the pill, estrogen replacement treatment for menopause, and so on — are considerably more dangerous to us than we have been led to believe. Women on the pill and menopausal women contemplating estrogen replacement therapy should

certainly read the relevant chapters in order to make an informed decision about their alternatives. The addition of extensive bibliographies is also a useful, though not essential, improvement. But *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, in whatever edition, should be available to every woman older than ten as a precious resource in our struggle to stay alive and well in a man's world.

Yvonne M. Klein

Single Blessedness: Observations on the Single Status in Married Society, by Margaret Adams. Basic Books, 1976, \$13.75, cloth.

If you are single, you live in a paradox. You are independent, self-sufficient, probably creative and

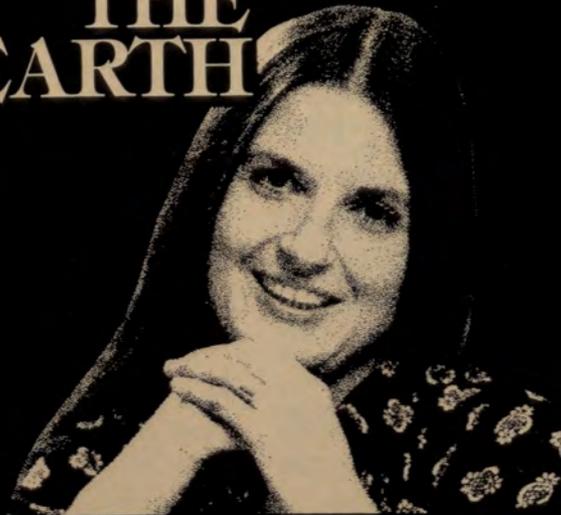
productive, and more than probably content to be what you are.

But psychologists, psychiatrists, and well-meaning relatives persist in trying to help you overcome whatever it is that is barring your normal passage to the joys of matrimony and little children. Perhaps you begin to believe that there *is* something wrong with you, and then your happiness and faith in yourself are ruined.

Margaret Adams' book *Single Blessedness* is a refreshing refutation of all the soul-destroying nonsense that seems to be the lot of single people. The dust jacket proclaims the book as "a generous and unapologetic celebration of unmarried life in married society," and so it is.

Ms. Adams, a feminist writer and a happily, purposefully unmarried social psychologist, reviews singleness from both theoretical and

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practical perspectives, the latter based on informal interviews with a selection of single women (her special focus) and men.

Society, she points out, has encouraged singleness when it has been to its own advantage. But now, patriarchal and capitalistic western society sees single women as a threat to its stability, for it depends on the family unit to maintain its comfortable *status quo*. She comes strongly to grips with tendencies of psychologists to define marriage and family as normal and singleness as abnormal, thus perpetuating an outmoded socio-economic system. Single people will be cheered to read that it is not their own mental health that is in question but the dubious ethics of such disciplines as psychology and psychiatry, whose sell-out masquerades as "help."

Throughout the book, single people are portrayed not as pathetic, frustrated creatures unable to maintain stable interpersonal relationships or to contribute meaningfully to their society, but as independent, creative, psychologically autonomous individuals rather more intellectually inclined, more dedicated to their work, and more aware of social needs and change than their married counterparts.

Some who share the values and problems she ascribes to single people may feel left out, because her definition of singleness includes only those who have never married and who have neither children nor quasi-married relationships. Indeed, the ideals of independence and psychological autonomy are also treasured by a good many married individuals and, in practice, may be the saving of marriage itself.

Nonetheless, Ms. Adams's book is an eloquent book, an encouraging book, a pioneering book in the little-known world of singleness, and a book that deserves a wide and thoughtful readership.

Jeanette Rothrock

Women Look at Psychiatry, ed. by Dorothy E. Smith and Sara J. David. Press Gang Publishers, 1975, \$10.00 cloth, \$4.00 paper.

Women Look at Psychiatry is an important addition to the growing body of literature documenting women's oppression. By bringing together the experiences of Canadian women who are connected with psychiatry as victims, professionals and theoreticians, this book begins to peel away the layers of an ideology that has long deprived us

of an understanding of how psychiatry acts as a mechanism of control in women's subjugation. Many of the women represented in this book speak from painful experience. The accounts of their desperate battles reveal with striking clarity how psychiatry — in language, theory and practice — denies the frustration, anger and despair of the female psychiatric patient.

The collection of essays begins the task of constructing a framework for understanding and analysis grounded in women's experience and interests. Articles like Dorothy Smith's "Women and Psychiatry" and Meredith Kimball's "Women, Sex Role Stereotypes, and Mental Health: Catch 22" critically examine psychiatry as an institution, while accounts by former patients articulate the grimness of the everyday lived experience. Together they are a powerful indictment of the theory and practise of psychiatry today.

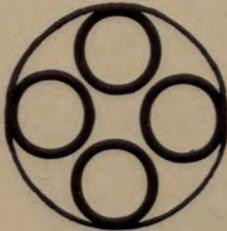
In an attempt not to be "uniformly critical," *Women Look at Psychiatry* proceeds from condemnation to an examination of alternative practises emerging from the experiences of women. New types of feminist therapy are explored, again through the eyes of women, both professionals and patients. Judi Chamberlain, from her vantage point as an ex-mental patient, deplors the inevitable dichotomy between therapist and patient in any

standard therapy situation. A suggested alternative is therapy collectively practised by and with those that have lived the ordeal of being patients. Each alternative attempts to leave behind the idea of an illness located somewhere deep within the individual woman and to allow her to make her feelings intelligible within the context of her position as a woman in our patriarchal, capitalist society.

What *Women Look at Psychiatry* leaves undone is the task of piecing together a picture of the relationship of working class women to psychiatry. As Dorothy Smith herself points out in her article, "The Statistics on Mental Illness (What They Will Not Tell Us About Women)", "the dominant pattern that we have been sketching for women (is) one that may be generalized to the situations of middle class women rather than working class." This pattern applies to the book as a whole. Just as the situation of women gets lost in a history of "mankind" or in an analysis of the "oppression of the workers," the important differences in diagnosis and treatment of women in different classes often become invisible. The feminist analysis must be integrated with a class analysis.

Women Look at Psychiatry is important reading for all women — those of us trying to understand their situation in our society and women as therapists

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attempting to develop new non-sexist methods of therapy — and perhaps most important for women who have experienced the violence of psychiatry or who are seeking treatment. The first major document in the area of women and mental health/illness since Chesler's *Women and Madness*, *Women Look at Psychiatry* adds a new and essential dimension to our understanding.

Linda Yanz

Penelope's Web: Some Perceptions of Women in European and Canadian Society, by N.E.S. Griffiths. Oxford University Press, 1976, \$4.95 paper.

Penelope's Web is written by a Canadian woman who, in her search for ideas on the position and status of women in the twentieth century, found herself going back into the nineteenth, eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. While Ms. Griffiths provides a great deal of interesting information about living conditions in those centuries, she weakens her book by her lack of analysis.

The reader constantly wonders about the relationship between European conditions and twentieth century Canadian women. The connection is never clear; the chapters on Canadian women seem isolated from the rest of the material.

The final comment in Ms. Griffiths' preface suggests that her ideas might be imprecise and her perceptions superficial. Unfortunately, the remark is altogether too true. But her book does provide an initial collection of ideas and a good annotated bibliography from which other, similar studies might begin.

Helen Hargarve

Women in Business, by James E. Bennett and Pierre M. Loewe. A Financial Post book, Maclean-Hunter Ltd., 1975, \$4.25 paper.

Women in Business collects a series of articles (originally written for the *Financial Post* in 1975), about the role of women in the business world. The articles are written by men and directed towards men. The authors' concern is not for a particular woman or group of women in business but for the business world itself in its failure to make use of a vast and substantially unused resource — women.

Women in Business presents an unemotional, factual and well-researched statistical analysis of the actual status, or lack of status, of

women in Canadian business. The authors draw comparisons with other western countries, particularly the U.S.A., where equality of opportunity has legislated. Contrary to popular opinion, such equality of opportunity does not exist in Canada where women still endure "ghettoization in low scale, low paying jobs". Moving from analysis of the problem to its remedy, the authors provide a methodology by which Canadian companies can evaluate and implement a future program for maximal utilization of women.

The most valid conclusion reached by Bennett and Loewe is that equal opportunity for women in business in Canada cannot be coerced by Government. Historically, Canadians have disliked being confronted with legislation to effect social change. Lack of strong legislation, coupled with weak enforcement, has resulted in a situation in which most men are unconcerned or complacent about equal opportunity problems in their organization because circumstances have not forced them to feel otherwise. Change will only come about slowly and with the realization that Women's Liberation is here to stay. Then, "Women themselves will gradually tighten the screws on Canadian corporations, both working from within through women's groups and unions and besieging them from outside through increasingly militant and effective women's organizations." The authors are quick to point out that Canadian businesses would do well to seize the opportunity to participate in this process now and to begin using what "amounts to an underdeveloped labour force."

Women in Business is certainly to be recommended to male employers and management. To the woman about to enter a career in business, it could prove useful background material. For those women already in the business world, the book states the obvious and may well be redundant.

Dorothy Zolf
J. E. Mos

... and still more books

No Life for a Lady, by Lotta Dempsey. Musson Book Co., 1976 \$10.95, cloth.

The autobiography of one of Canada's first and most prominent women journalists. Ms. Dempsey's account concentrates on portraits of famous personalities.

Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings of Virginia Woolf, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind. The University Press, Sussex, 1976, \$13.95, cloth.

Small Ceremonies, by Carol Shields. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976, \$8.95, cloth.

A light novel with occasional *longeurs* where Ms. Shield has not completely assimilated autobiographical material and remarks more appropriate to literary criticism.

For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality, by Lonnie Garfield Barbach. Anchor Books, 1976, \$4.50, paper.

A description of the theory and practice of masturbation therapy for "pre-orgasmic" women.

Country Women: A Handbook for the New Farmer, by Jeanne Tetrault and Sherry Thomas. Anchor Books, 1976, \$6.95, paper.

A guide to the woman farmer, the handbook provides practical information about everything from buying land to delivering calves and spinning yarn. The emphasis is on a minimum of expense and outside help.

people in this issue

ELEANOR LAZARE

Eleanor Lazare works at the National Film Board in Edmonton. She teaches Photography at Grant McEwan College.

DIANA PALTING

Diana Palting is photography editor at *Branching Out*. She is currently doing graduate work in anthropology at the University of Alberta and working as a freelance photographer.

JULIA McLEAN

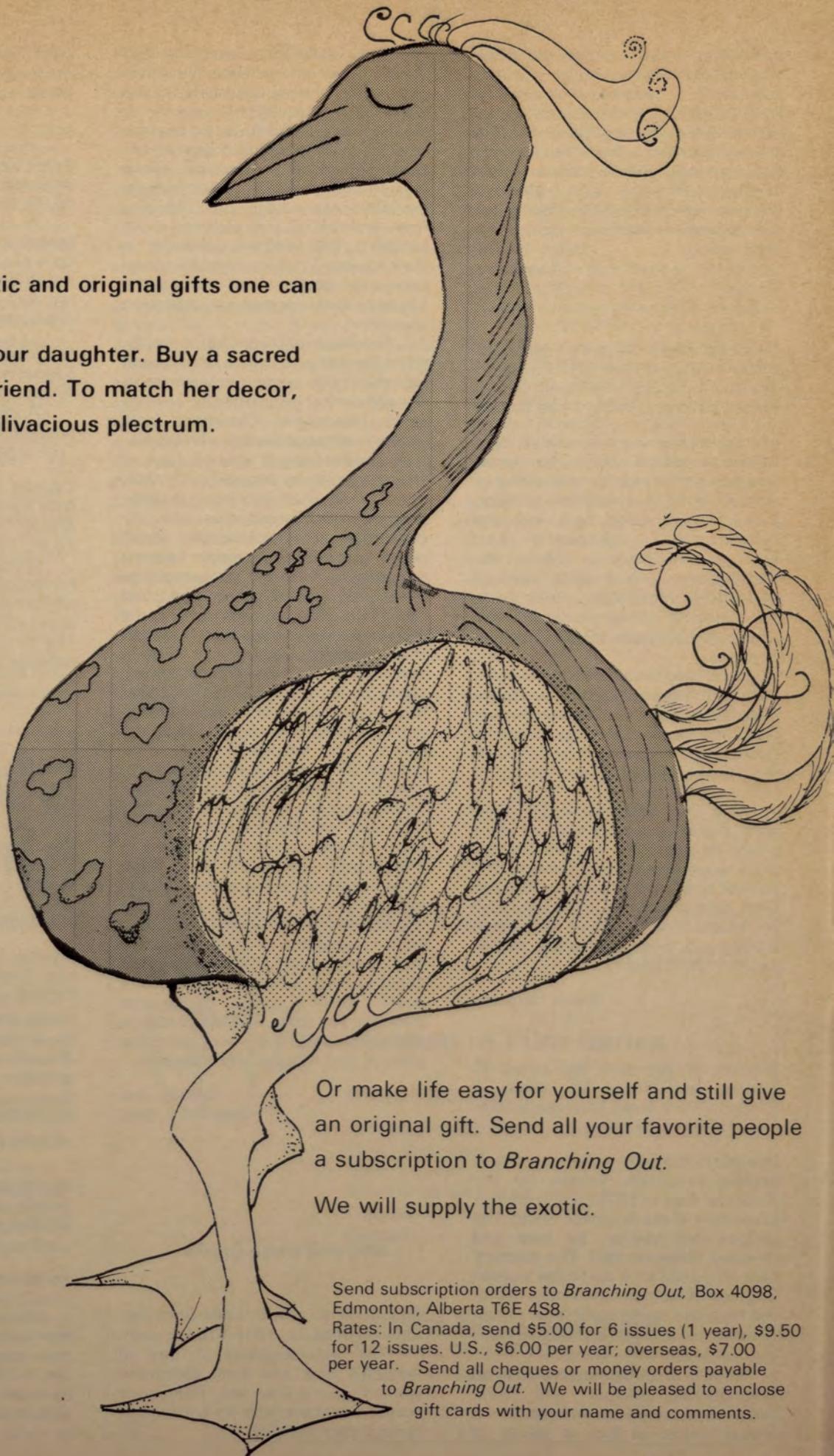
Julia McLean lives in Montreal. She has had several poems and stories published and is currently completing a collection of poetry about Diamond Lil. She also collects women's dreams.

BETSY WARLAND — VAN HORN

Betsy Warland-van Horn is a poet now living in Toronto. Her work has been published in *Waves* and *Room of One's Own* and a 'hanging' of some of her work was held at the Space Gallery early this year.

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