

Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

Volume V, Number 1, 1978 \$1.25



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Models**

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editorial

What if we all “helped” the principal?

The tone of the articles in our recent issues has been depressing. The same phrase is repeated in relation to women and education as in women in politics. “Change is inevitable, changes must come about, but change is *slow*.” In this issue we wanted to look at women and education, at what is happening in various areas — sexism in the schools, role-stereotyping, women’s studies, upgrading courses for women — any area that dealt with feminist issues. What we got was “change must come, but change is *slow*”. This attitude is no comfort to those who are concerned about equal access to the world’s goods — whether they be material, emotional or spiritual. A tremendous amount of collective energy is needed to make the changes which must come about if every individual is to be allowed some chance to achieve his or her potential. This energy is not loosed by depression or cynicism. Energy can be vitalized by anger, by compassion, by even minor achievements toward a goal. Energy can too easily be turned to random violence, rather than to productive work.

Contributors to this issue have touched on the basic cause for change coming so slowly — but most have been peripheral touches — a sort of swipe at the trouser leg of a well-entrenched, stone statue. Education is conservative. Of course it is conservative! What is the function of education in any society? It is to socialize the young into the ways of the already existing structure. Education is to teach people to live with what *is*. Look at your children. Are they being taught to ask questions, to look critically at the way things are organized? Are they being taught to look at *all* the factors in any particular problem and to come up with new solutions? How long does any child survive in the public education system if s/he questions the way things are done? Think of the reasons your child has been punished at school (or the behavior adopted to avoid punishment). Kids are punished at school because they don’t follow instructions. Those who don’t understand why they must conform learn very quickly to keep quiet. They may be confronted with

conflicting values, and a different set of rules from those they learn at home — but it is up to them to internalize that conflict and find a mode of behavior that allows survival in both situations.

This year my youngest child started kindergarten. She isn’t completely socialized yet. During an assembly called for the principal to reiterate the school rules, my daughter realized that he had forgotten to talk about one of the rules. So she piped up in what is still a strong voice, “And you aren’t supposed to use the front door” (only teachers and administrators use the front door). Embarrassed silence and covert giggles. She knew *most* of the rules, but had not yet learned the most important one. You do not, at school, correct or “help” the principal. This is the rule we learn as part of “education”. It carries over to our first job, our relationship to all designated as our superiors — in short, to all who hold power over us. The penalties for breaking this rule are serious regardless of your age and position. What is left out of education is the *questioning*. We are not taught to examine alternative ways of dealing with problems, we are not taught to use our own judgement, we are not taught to make changes if they seem necessary, we are *not* taught how to work cooperatively and to use the collective energy, knowledge, and skills of a group. We are not taught to think, but to accept. Schools do not teach you to read, write and speak. They teach you *what* to read, write and speak. And a child who is taught to obey unquestioningly does not turn overnight into an adult who makes changes. Is this what education is to be forever?

There is lip service in educational materials to self-growth, attention to the needs of the *whole* child, etc. There are administrators abounding who know just what to say to any enraged parent to calm him/her down: “Our priorities are the children’s needs.” That is garbage, but it is garbage flowing out in a soothing, paternalistic, smoothly-educated voice. What they mean is that for a child to survive in school, and later in adult roles, s/he must not be a troublemaker. S/he must learn obedience. In a twisted

play of logic that *is* for the child’s good.

I realize that there are teachers out there who will find this offensive. I hope so. There are also a few educators who truly are concerned with the growth and development of the whole person — and even a few who would like to turn out thinking, critical people. But they are very few in number and without our visible support they can achieve nothing. A minor point, too, for those who feel offended because they think I am advocating disobedience en masse. There are two kinds of rules. When a teacher says that you must not disrupt the classroom because other children cannot work, that is a necessary rule and one that benefits all of the people concerned. When a kindergarten teacher lays down a mimeographed form of a rabbit and says that you must glue cotton — one in each ear, five on the body, and one for each foot — that is *not* a beneficial set of instructions. It does not teach children how to make judgements or solve problems on their own.

Education does have to change, but it won’t change as long as the function of education is to serve as a socializing arm of whatever power prevails in the overall structure. It doesn’t matter whether we are talking about Canada, the U.S., Africa or China, education is a branch of the total governing structure. It will *not* change as long as the goals are unchallenged by the people who are being “educated”. It will not change until people decide what their true priorities are and attempt to take control over their own lives. The energy for change is available but it must be used and directed by the individuals who are most affected. Change will not come from “above” but from you.

Diana Palting

letters

About the cover . . .

While one of your readers did not like the *beautiful* macrame work that you chose for your cover photo (September/October) I must say that I did not like the large and not very subtle photo on the cover of the December issue. Many of the photos inside were also unpleasant to look at because of the lack of subtlety in the humour — the woman climbing the stairs (such a big photo for such an empty image), the camouflaged woman, the one pushing the ashtray and the hat — the message is *too* obvious.

Micheline Ferron, Ottawa

The cover of the last issue was terrific — a real eye-catcher that made women want to buy it.

Brig Anderson, Burnaby, B.C.

I thoroughly enjoyed the articles by Rosemary Brown, and Louise Dulude, and those about Laura Sabia, Marva Nabili, and Kate Millet, in the Nov./Dec. issue. They are right on target. It is for such as these that I subscribe. It seems to me that they are helping to do the job of integrating women more fully into society. But will someone please explain to me the rationale of the cover pictures, both last edition and this. Last month's seemed pointless and this month's — I thought *Branching Out* advocated women being more than just carbon copies of men? Why the defiant stare? And particularly its repetition on page 49. Why the smoking, when the health authorities have been pointing out for two decades the deleterious effects of smoking? I find that these cover pictures turn me off and I have little interest to read further or to pass the magazine on to my friends.

I am sure that *Branching Out* must have a constitution or a set of 'Tenets' to which it ascribes. Could it be printed in your next edition?

Grace L. Cook, Edmonton

Editor's note: The defiant politician of our last cover is, in reality, Lauren Dale, an amiable, nonsmoking, freelance

photographer. *Branching Out* publishes material which editors feel is of high quality. We attempt to present opinions and creative work which will be stimulating and varied. We do not expect all readers to agree with every editorial decision or to enjoy each section of the magazine equally. We are attempting to make improvements, however, and welcome readers' criticisms.

Politics

After slugging through all the political power play, law (or lack of it), incomprehensible art, and grotesque nudity of body and soul, I found Lisa Strata's lighter view of the women's movement, "Whither WISP?", very refreshing.

*Winifred N. Hulbert,
Hamiota, Manitoba*

I would like to congratulate you on your Nov./Dec. issue. I particularly enjoyed the various perspectives on Women and Politics and hope you will continue to feature articles on this topic. It seems to me that the future of the women's movement depends upon our ability to develop an adequate feminist analysis of the power structures which oppress us, and concomitantly, strategy to make the changes that we seek.

The article "Wither WISP?" was truly provocative, and cleverly written. I will pass it on to some of my male colleagues. I loved the photographs by Diana Palting. Please continue to include visuals like this in your magazine. We need to laugh too. The "Self-Help Special" on running a political campaign was delightful and the tactics "recommended" all too familiar. Finally, I enjoyed the interview with Marva Nabili, and I hope I have an opportunity to see her film.

I have been reading "Branching Out" for the past year and found this issue to be the best that I have read.

Pearl Roberts, Vancouver

Cape Scott Trail

I have just read my first issue of *Branching Out* (Sept./Oct. 1977) and really feel an excitement that I have not felt in a long time concerning a Canadian periodical. The article and photoessay describing Cherie Westmoreland and Sally Bowen's Wilderness Hike to the Cape Scott Provincial Park left me breathless. I lived at Holberg, a logging community nine miles from the start of the Cape Scott Trail, for almost four years and though I never travelled to the Cape myself I did hike through to San Josef Bay and on other trails in the area. The history of the area and the settlers who braved so many unknowns to try and establish a community in the region is a modern day tale of undaunted courage and heroism.

Deborah Jossul, Comox, B.C.

more letters on pages 5 and 6

NOTE TO READERS

It has come to our attention that some copies of the December 1977 issue were improperly collated at the bindery. If you purchased or received a subscription copy of *Branching Out* that began on page 9, ended on page 40 and had an unconventional sequence of pages in between, return it to us and we will send a replacement.

POETRY MISCREATED

Branching Out apologizes to poets Audrey Conard and Rosemary Aubert. In the December issue, Ms. Conard's poem "Putting On Shoes" was credited to Rosemary Aubert and Ms. Aubert's poem "Dinner" was credited to Audrey Conard. The correct bylines are "Dinner" by Rosemary Aubert and "Putting On Shoes" by Audrey Conard.

We also misspelled Ms. Conard's name as "Conrad". Since we are the second publisher to make this mistake, the mythical Audrey Conrad is beginning to gain a reputation at Audrey Conard's expense.

Custody Rights for the Nonconformist

by Halyna Freeland

illustration by Barbara Hartmann

Custody disputes are perhaps the most difficult decisions which courts are called upon to make. The training and experience of judges, however, is usually in company or commercial law and does not particularly qualify them for this task.

The rule in custody cases at one time was that mothers were almost automatically awarded custody unless they were proven to be unfit. Today, partly as a result of pressure from feminists who are insisting that both men and women should take responsibility for raising and caring for the children of the marriage, courts are now much more willing to award custody to a husband.

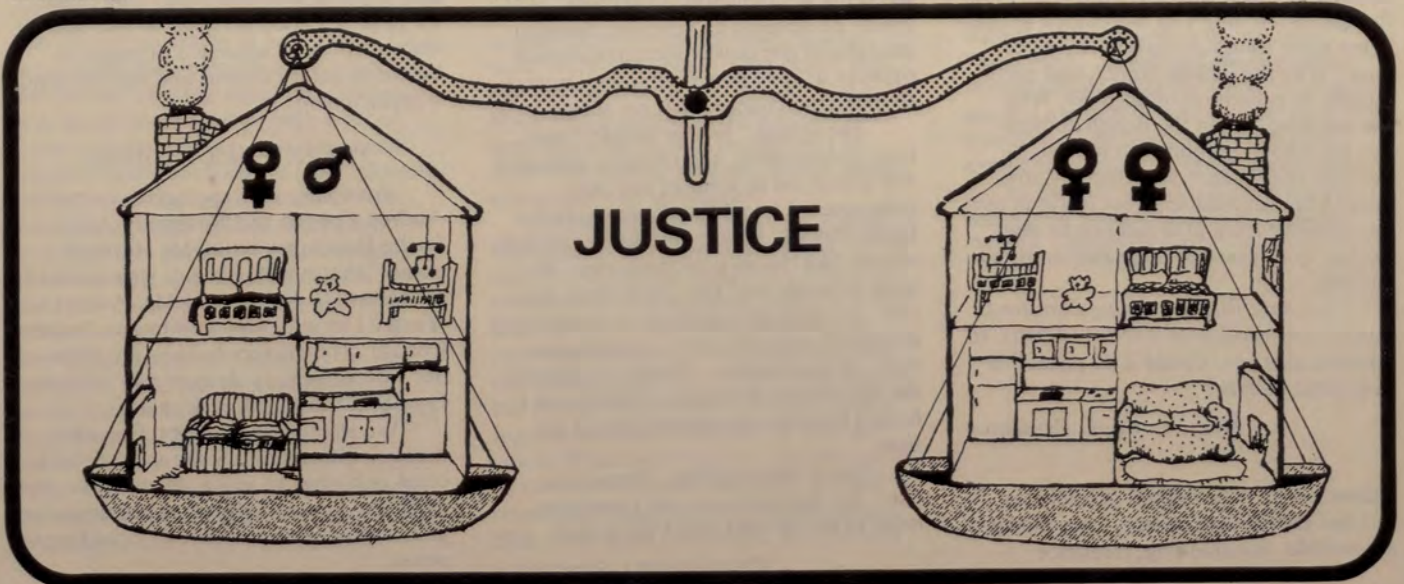
The guiding rule in custody cases is that the court must base its decision on the best interests of the child. This means that the judges are to look objectively at the facts presented by the mother and the father or others claiming custody and attempt to resolve the question in a manner which will be most advantageous to the child. The courts are forced to base the decision on the evidence presented to them. Unfortunately, under the adversary system where the mother and father oppose one another and are competing for the custody of the child, the evidence which is presented to the court can often be distorted or misleading.

Even if the evidence which is presented in court is fair and objectively describes the situation of the competing parties, the judge is still called upon to decide who, in his opinion, will be the better parent for the child or children involved. The judge's opinion is coloured by his temperament and background and the majority of judges, by reason of training and experience, reflect a conservative, traditional attitude. What this often means is that any parent or person seeking custody has a good chance of losing their case if s/he is believed by the judge to be living what could be termed an unconventional lifestyle. One form of behavior which the courts have labelled unconventional is a situation where the mother leaves the marriage and lives in an adulterous relationship with another man. Not all such cases have been decided in favour of the father but there are a number of decisions that state that if the mother chooses to break up her marriage and live in an adulterous relationship she does, in fact, lose custody rights.

Another situation which the courts have recently deemed unconventional is the case of a lesbian mother claiming for custody of her children. There are two reported Canadian decisions. The first is *Case v Case* which was decided by Saskatchewan Queen's Bench. The second was *K. v K.* which was decided by

the Family Court of Alberta. In both decisions, the courts held that the homosexuality of a parent was only one factor to be considered in awarding custody. In the *Case* decision, the lesbian mother was refused custody and in *K. v K.* she was granted custody. In the *Case* decision, the judge first stated that other factors besides the mother's sexual preference would be considered in awarding custody, then went on to rule that since the mother was a strong advocate of gay rights and was very active in the gay rights movement, not only her sexual preferences but her methods of expressing them would be harmful to her infant child. He also commented unfavourably on the fact that Mrs. Case's partner was not a witness in court and did not give evidence in the proceedings. In contrast the judge commented that Mr. Case had a very stable home and could provide a stable and firm relationship for the infant daughter of the relationship. Accordingly, he awarded custody to the father.

I acted for the lesbian mother in the case *K. v K.* I believe an important reason why she obtained custody of her infant child was that the father's lawyer assumed as a foregone conclusion that his client would be awarded custody because of his wife's homosexuality. Acting on this assumption the father's lawyer called little evidence and did not



adequately prepare his case. In my opinion Marty, the mother, was by far the better parent but I wonder if the outcome of the trial would have been different if the husband's case had been presented more forcefully.

I decided there were several hurdles that I had to surmount for my client to obtain custody. My first step was to prove that homosexuality was no longer considered a disease. Two psychiatrists and a psychologist testified, and all stated that the American Psychiatric Association supports the position that homosexuality is not a disease. The psychiatrists, after interviewing the mother and her partner, Nelly, further testified that the women were perfectly normal people who, although they were under a strain, were not reacting to the pressures in a way that could possibly hurt the child. The two women themselves had only recently recognized their homosexuality and were in the process of accepting and adjusting to it. Having to justify their choice only added to their stress.

The psychologist gave evidence on the incidence of homosexuality in the population as a whole. In addition, her examination of Mrs. K. showed the mother had a strong parental relationship with her child. There was no corresponding evidence in regard to Mr. K.'s abilities as a parent.

I also called another lesbian mother to give testimony about her experience

raising her child while living in a lesbian relationship. She testified that her child was able to deal with the relationship between mother and partner and was not adversely affected by it. She commented that it was not her intention to determine the sexual preference of her daughter but that it would be up to her daughter to make her own choice.

My client and her partner both gave evidence. They described their home si-

The father's lawyer assumed that his client would be awarded custody because of his wife's homosexuality and didn't prepare his case adequately.

tuation, their relationship with the child, their plans for the future, their plans in relation to the child and the feelings they had for each other. Both testified that it would be necessary to treat the question of their sexual relationship in a discreet manner so that their daughter would not be subject to outside pressure from persons who disapproved of homosexual relations. Their evidence was that the community viewed them as two women who were forced by financial circumstances to live together. The women did not intend to change this impression.

Nelly's husband took the stand and gave evidence that he felt both women were good mothers. He stated that in his opinion Marty was one of the best mothers he had ever known.

In spite of the thorough and convincing evidence which I was able to call on

Mrs. K.'s behalf, I believe she would have lost custody of her child had the father not been found completely incapable of caring for the child. Marty's decision to live as a lesbian was not accepted by the court as normal but we were able to minimize the unconventional aspects of her lifestyle in the testimony. The judge compared the social pressure which might be visited upon the child because of her mother's lesbianism to the pres-

sure which might be experienced by a child in a mixed race marriage. He also commented that because the mother was very discreet about her sexual relationship the effect of public opinion on the child would be minimized.

The decision is important as it is the first reported Canadian case in which a lesbian mother was awarded custody of her infant child. Any woman who pursues a somewhat unconventional lifestyle could be faced with similar difficulties in a custody dispute with her husband. Although Marty may have won her case for reasons other than acceptance of her unconventional lifestyle, women in similar situations can be encouraged by this decision to fight for their rights in court.

Halyna Freeland practices law in Edmonton.

MORE ON MEDICAL RIGHTS

In the December law column, "Medical Rights: Beyond the Written Law" Louise Dulude presented her strategy for resolution of the reproductive freedom issue. She suggested reformist groups must go beyond repeal of the abortion and sterilization laws to control of "medical practitioners and hospital administrators" who interpret and administer the laws. Dulude supplemented her position with portions of the Badgley Committee Report. Following are two replies to her article. L.D.

HENRY WHO?

Louise Dulude's article on abortion in Canada does little service to the women of this country who are struggling for reproductive freedom.

Her thesis appears to be that section 251 of the Criminal Code, which forces women through an often nightmarish bureaucratic procedure in order to 'qualify' for an abortion, is hardly relevant to the current situation — a rather surprising point of view. Even more startling, she goes on to argue against repeal of this section on the grounds that the federal government

would lose its 'jurisdiction' over abortion.

I know Ms. Dulude personally, and I respect her; it causes me some pain, therefore, to have to write that she has given the readers of *Branching Out* nothing more than re-hashed Liberal policy on the abortion issue. In the wake of the Badgley Report, a document combining solid data and some very shaky conclusions, the government adopted the position that the law (section 251) is not at fault, only the people who administer it. The message, put more simply, was: leave us alone, it's a provincial matter, blame them for any failures.

The Liberals appear to operate on the premise that, the more outrageous and illogical a statement, the more likely it is to be believed. Clearly they have won an adherent in Ms. Dulude. The fact remains, however, that it makes no sense, besides being cynical in the extreme, to legislate difficulties for Canadian women and then blame the administrators of the legislation for these difficulties. To be sure, Ms. Dulude is absolutely right that hospital boards and provincial governments present real

problems, and that a good deal of resistance must be overcome at the local level if freedom of choice is to become a reality. What she apparently doesn't realize, however, is that the government has placed a powerful weapon in the hands of the resisters.

It is clear that the mere presence of a criminal statute can and does serve as an excuse for hospital boards to obstruct women, either by refusing to set up a therapeutic abortion committee (whose assent is legally required before an abortion can be performed), or by imposing arbitrary criteria (such as requiring partner's consent for the abortion, narrow definitions of 'health', etc.), or by other means such as quota systems. For one thing, hospital administrators cannot always be certain of their own ground. We surely have not forgotten Otto Lang's letter to hospital boards warning them that they *could* be breaking the law; or the case in Ottawa in 1972 in which an Alliance for Life lawyer used the courts to intimidate a therapeutic abortion committee which had already granted a woman permission for an abortion — they agreed to have nothing further to do with her, and she

subsequently was forced to bear a child against her will. Hospital boards can also argue that establishing a committee means an additional administrative burden. And, where a committee has been set up, administrators are still free to make the application procedure as harrowing for the woman as they wish, invoking the law to justify their actions.

The Badgley Report reveals, by the way, that the average length of time a woman takes to jump through the hurdles required by section 251 (assuming she is successful in her application) is *eight weeks*. This ensures a large number of riskier second-trimester abortions which could otherwise have been avoided. To insist (as Badgley and the government have) that this delay is not attributable to section 251 is simply dishonest. Repeal of this section would, at a stroke, both do away with the time-consuming committee system, and rob hospital boards of a valuable source of excuses.

On the question of federal 'jurisdiction' over abortion, I confess that I find this point of view unbecoming in a

HOSPITAL BOARDS CLARIFIED

Diana Palting's photograph to illustrate the article *Medical Rights: Beyond the Written Law* is superb. It reminds me of a page of advertising from obstetrical journals demonstrating anti-depressants! Secondly: Louise Dulude cites political action to get open minded people elected to hospital boards. It is my understanding that in provincially owned hospitals of this city the hospital board positions are appointed, not elected. I also believe that the criterion for "balance" on a hospital board is thought to be found with persons who are financial giants (to manage monies), lawyers (to be knowledgeable about lawsuits) and administrators. Usually there are a few token members of the public. What hope have we then of patients' issues being considered at board meetings — to say nothing of women's issues?

Keep working on these problems!

Muffy Mathewson, Edmonton

Dulude replies: I confess to having committed the shameful sin of assuming that Ontario hospital administration practices were representative of those to be found elsewhere in Canada. To make amends, I contacted every hospital association in the country and discovered the following bewildering array of hospital administration laws and policies.

Newfoundland Most members of public hospital boards (also called hospital trustees) are appointed by the provincial government.

feminist. I thought the whole gist of our struggle was that *women* should have this jurisdiction, not governments or hospital boards. If Ms. Dulude is worried about inconsistency from province to province, she should read section 251 more carefully: the provinces already have the right to impose their own regulations with respect to abortion, and they have in many cases done so. But at any rate, to argue as she does in effect that federal control of any kind, even if harmful to women, is preferable to no control at all, is to substitute Liberal centralism for feminism.

Repeal of the abortion law is not the end of the battle. But it is an essential first step; we certainly cannot permit ourselves, at this crucial point, to be misled into thinking section 251 is irrelevant. Doesn't anyone remember Henry Morgentaler?

John Baglow, Secretary, Ottawa Chapter, Canadian Association for Repeal of the Abortion Law

Dulude replies: Heaven preserve me from my friends indeed! John Baglow

has evidently completely missed the main point of my article and has misconstrued the rest. My central argument, which he invokes himself in his letter, is that section 251 is merely a tool which the Canadian government put in the hands of this country's medical establishment.

Secondly, and more important, I absolutely did not "argue against repeal of this section on the grounds that the federal government would lose its jurisdiction over abortion". I still believe, as I have for many years, that sections 159 (2) (c), 251 and 252 of the Criminal Code should be repealed as soon as possible.

What I refuse to do, however, is to mislead Canadian women into believing that this repeal would give them much more power over their bodies than they have at the present time. As long as our medical establishment and our provincial governments are controlled by anti-feminists, there will be no reproductive freedom in this country.

Louise Dulude Member of CARAL



photo by Diana Palting

P.E.I. Most public hospital trustees are presently elected by the residents of the communities they serve. However, a soon-to-be-proclaimed law creating a new large hospital (by merging two existing ones) calls for a board made up of an equal number of elected members and of members appointed by groups such as municipal councils, the lady's auxiliary of the hospital, Women's Institutes, etc.

Nova Scotia More than half of all hospitals are controlled by board members elected by people in their communities.

Others, including the province's three largest hospitals, have boards mainly made up of provincial government appointees.

New Brunswick Some public hospital boards are appointed by the provincial government while others are controlled by members nominated by groups such as city council. None of the trustees are elected.

Quebec The law governing all public hospitals provides for boards ranging in size from 9 to 13 members. Of these, two

are elected at public meetings, two are government appointees and three are elected from different categories of the hospital staff. If the hospital belongs to a non-profit corporation (such as a religious order) that corporation can appoint four additional trustees.

Ontario Except for a small number of religious and municipal hospitals whose boards are controlled by their owners, most general public hospitals have boards largely made up of members elected by people in the community. The rules determining who can vote vary greatly but most require the payment of a nominal fee (around one dollar) to become a member of the hospital corporation. Some hospitals have rules specifying that only taxpayers are eligible which has the effect of excluding most housewives.

Manitoba Close to half of the larger hospitals have boards elected by members of the community. The province's largest hospital used to have an elected board but now has a board controlled by provincial government appointees. The boards of smaller municipally owned

hospitals are appointed by a municipal council.

Saskatchewan With the exception of a few religious hospitals, which are administered by their owners, most public hospital board members are appointed by municipal/city councils or by the provincial government.

Alberta Most of the larger public hospitals are controlled by boards mainly appointed by city councils or the provincial government. District hospitals, which include most of the smaller ones, may or may not have publicly-elected boards (the choice is up to the various municipal councils involved).

B.C. Almost all public hospitals are governed by trustees elected at annual public meetings. To be eligible to vote people must have become members of the hospital society or corporation which usually means paying a nominal fee within a specified time limit.

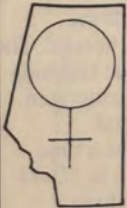
N.W.T. Of six public hospitals three are owned by the federal government and run by an appointed administrator. The other three hospitals are in the pro-

cess of being taken over by the territorial government. Of these, one has a board mainly elected by the public (members of the society who paid a one dollar fee).

Yukon There is one hospital owned by the federal government and run by an appointed administrator. It has a citizen's advisory board made up of delegates from various groups such as the Whitehorse town council, the Indian community, etc.

One important preliminary finding I made while doing this survey is that public elections seem much more likely than appointments to produce women hospital trustees. In B.C., for example, the election process results in almost equal proportions of male and female trustees while Saskatchewan's hospital association officials complain that their province's appointment process produces a very small proportion of female hospital board members.

As these findings indicate, many laws and policies remain to be changed and much lobbying needs to be done before women gain an equal voice in Canada's health administration system.



ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

Matrimonial Property Information Project

Marriage — A Partnership of Equals?

Share and share alike? That's not happening in Alberta right now. Homemakers, mothers, farm wives and women who work in a family business — their non-financial contributions don't count. New matrimonial property legislation has been proposed, but it still doesn't embody the principle of equality. The Alberta Status of Women Action Committee — and many other people in this province — think it should. That's why we're asking for a retroactive deferred sharing regime.

Expect the next round in the ongoing struggle for equality in marriage to begin March 2 when the Alberta Legislature convenes for its spring session.

After almost a decade of discussion, Alberta's Attorney General Jim Foster continues to ask for input from Albertans on this vital issue. He has indicated that he will introduce Bill 102 in the spring session unless he has massive response indicating that changes are desired.

Act Now!

Start by clipping the form below and sending it to Mr. Foster — but don't stop there. Follow up with a letter telling him why you support deferred sharing. Tell your friends about the proposed matrimonial property legislation. Phone and meet with your MLA. Organize a workshop.

For assistance and information, contact the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee Matrimonial Property Information Project, P.O. Box 1573, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2N7 (Phone 474-7619). Posters, lobbying guides and workshop kits are available.

To *The Hon. J.L. Foster*
Attorney General
404 Legislative Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B7

In response to your request for public input to your Matrimonial Property Bill 102, please register my support for deferred sharing, as recommended by the Institute of Law Research and Reform, to apply to all presently married Albertans.

signature

print name

print address

Time for a Grass Roots Revival

by Christa van Daele

illustration by Sheila Luck

When I left the University of Western Ontario in 1973, "Women's Studies" was merely the rubric for a shimmering utopian dream that had floated up from groups like the Cambridge-Goddard feminists in the Boston area. Women? Studying women? O brave new world, we murmured to ourselves. But it didn't seem real.

For myself, an honours English undergraduate on the quiet London campus, it was a delicious, hectic scramble to introduce the term "misogyny" into every possible discussion of Milton and Spenser, Hemingway and D.H. Lawrence. Though the movement was a good five years ripe in the U.S. and in Canadian urban centres, the sex variable was an apparently brand new beast in our imitation neo-Gothic classrooms. It was easy to make waves. By calmly underscoring the most blatantly sexist passages in the classical texts and holding them up for all to see, you could throw an afternoon's polite discourse completely into chaos. It was a lot of fun.

None of this prepared me for what I found at the two universities I'd chosen as a point of departure for my article. York and the University of Toronto turned out to be, in both style and structure, wildly different from each other, and also from my own remembered university experiences. Going back brought the distinct pleasure of seeing the dream realized, of confirming that the waves really had come from persistent currents. There were the courses, printed for all to see in the official academic calendars. You couldn't take that away from us. It was, I rejoiced, the accomplishment of the mid-seventies. On the other hand — and here enter some of the more pessimistic questions of my search — the currently institutionalized status of even a handful of women's studies courses appears, in 1978, to be a besieged and struggling phenomenon on the university scene. If we buoyantly believed, in the early seventies, that Women's studies, would consistently expand with changing times, we were wrong, because economic conditions conspired against us. As I was finishing this article, some of the rumours that I had been familiar with for several months — rumours of tradeoffs in the women's studies ranks, of layoffs of part-time instructors, of the threatened existence of the Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women, of the dropping of important courses — gelled to certainties. The rest of the news will be confirmed by the time this issue comes off the press. This article, in the meantime, sketches in a little of the background of women's studies programmes in two Ontario universities, and raises some of the questions that hard times have brought.

Looking Back: From Collectives to Cross-Appointments

Women's Studies at the University of Toronto owed its start to the favourable liberalizing context of interdisciplinary studies in the spring of 1971. "Nobody knew exactly what interdisciplinary studies were supposed to be," says Kay Armatage, a Women's Studies instructor who has been with the programme from the start, "but they provided a kind of

temporary run-off — a safety valve — for the radical interests of faculty and students." A group of undergraduates and graduate students, believing the situation to be a promising one for women's studies, began to meet to thrash out the first core course. Over the summer, sixteen people with a good deal of energy began to meet on a regular basis to shape the course; by the fall of 1971, a peak time of energy and excitement in the Toronto feminist milieu, it was ready to go. "The course was absolutely chaotic for the interdisciplinary studies bureaucracy," recalls Armatage. "There we were, planning everything collectively, dividing all the work, dividing salaries according to need . . . We were meeting every week." The group of instructors largely composed of graduate students and now 13 in number, called their course "Women in the 20th Century." Their political experience, collectively, was considerable. A few had been involved with Praxis, an anti-poverty group, three or four were founding members of the early Toronto Women's Liberation, a few were members of the Communist party, and others were busy assimilating the book publishing skills that produced *Women Unite!* The first year that the course ran, and the second, constituted a tremendous political education for everyone involved, especially the more politically naive participants, among whom Kay Armatage numbers herself. The grassroots style of instruction and organization of the teaching collective extended to every project that the group generated. Academic classes were just one dimension of the total experience; public lectures that packed 500 people at a time were held during the '72-73 academic year and again in '73-74. Women's Studies at the University of Toronto, for three fast-paced years, drew from a broad popular base, enjoyed political connections with other groups in the city, and provided a public forum for much of the feminist discussion going on in Toronto. It was a two-way relationship of the most dynamic kind: the teaching group provided a ready focus and target that put it in the public eye, and the public, in turn, fed energy and expertise back into the programme.

The three year pitch of sustained excitement ended as abruptly as it began. Women's Studies, along with other interdisciplinary courses designed in 1971, was scheduled for evaluation at the end of the three year period. That had been a term of the original mandate. At evaluation time, the course did not fare well. University budget cuts left only enough money for modest salaries, and a switch to a new location disoriented the programme. Enrollments dropped. Mutterings that there was no longer a women's studies constituency began to be heard. One thing aggravated another; the drop in enrollments was not cheering, and the teaching collective that had founded the core course was beginning to register a degree of exhaustion. Demoralization ensued; by 1976, a Women's Studies was lost in yet another political shuffle. This time, the programme was moved to New College, with four highly committed members of the original group of 13 now left. The rest had moved on to other things, or dropped out because of increasing exhaustion. In very short order — December 1976 — three of the group of four received notice, suddenly and dramatically, that their

teaching contracts had not been renewed. Although the letters didn't specifically say so, the three instructors, all of whom were still in the process of completing their graduate work, were later led to understand that a full PhD constituted the appropriate criteria for staying on. Only Kay Armatage, who had completed her degree, was invited to re-apply. It was clearly the end of an era.

During this period, an equally significant trend emerged. This was the push for academic respectability, seriousness of course content, and a growing awareness of the all-important 'standards' issue that was to characterize the struggle for the programme's survival in the especially formal university environment of the University of Toronto. At U of T, the pressure to bring standards 'in line' with existing academic standards came from two directions: the administrators of the colleges who hosted the programme, and the tenured faculty women who had begun to offer a number of the Women's Studies courses under the auspices of their own departments as the original teaching collective was in the process of disbanding. These women owed their mainstay appointments to the traditionally organized arts and science departments of the university. As successive budget cuts and decreasing enrollment took their toll, the rationale for tightening up course requirements and guaranteeing impressive research and teaching credentials of the faculty presented itself as a strategy for survival. With so much suspicion already looming over the whole women's studies concept, who would deliberately go out of their way, these arguments ran, to provide more grist for the mills of the scoffers? Thus developed the we're-keeping-our-house-in-order philosophy of the current Women's Studies Curriculum Committee. The committee's expressed aim, says its co-ordinator Chaviva Hosek, is to nurture the academic respectability of women's studies, lobby for high quality cross-appointments, and generally "firm up the whole thing."

In short, the survival strategy of women's studies, to the surprise of no one in particular, has changed with the times. It has become co-operative rather than confrontative, exploring for support and for assurances of survival the traditional avenues that the university offers.

The York Experience

In 1975, York University, with a totally different kind of ambience — more fluid, interdisciplinary, and American-patterned rather than British — became the site for a somewhat less flamboyant initiation of Women's Studies, long after the first collective phase at U of T had cooled into history. Stuck out in the quasi-industrial fringes and one-time farmlands of north Toronto, York University initially makes an appalling impression on the unprepared visitor. Precariously spread over hell's proverbial acre, one wonders how anything, let alone something as politically sensitive as Women's Studies, blooms or grows at York. Perhaps York's environment is so vastly dreary that individuals, rather than giving up completely, band together to overcome the common enemy of the pitiless landscape. Whatever the cause, the impact of this fight-back psychology is a happy one, for more women's groups, women's organizations, and Women's Studies courses flourish at York than any other Canadian university. The notion of a support community, a network of women, is an important one to keep in mind when assessing the relative impact of a women's studies programme on a given campus. At U of T, save for one room which serves the Women's Studies group as a combination classroom, committee room, and office for Kay Armatage, there is no other centre or drop-in setting available to women. York boasts no less than nine specialty groups and centres, as well as a comprehensive 30-odd page feminist publication called *Breakthrough* which circulates to 4,000 students 6 times a year. The volunteer activity required to keep all this going is



astounding. More crucial still, York University has been the historic locus for the unionization of secretarial staff. Links between female faculty and female staff, students and staff, and faculty and students, are in evidence at York as they are on no other Canadian campus that I know of. The three strata jointly organize, staff, and maintain the York Women's Centre. Although female faculty are inevitably the highest paid and most prestigious group of women on campus, the degree of solidarity and awakening consciousness among classes of women at York is heartening in comparison to unchallenged and only dimly perceived barriers elsewhere. No one at U of T spoke to me about the plight of the non-academic woman on campus. One woman faculty member touched on the subject a little guiltily, by way of an afterthought: "I sometimes feel I ought to be more . . . *socialist*."

The Women's Studies courses themselves, though on first glance extensive, are not without attendant problems at York. For one thing, there is no *department* of Women's Studies as such, and course offerings are largely dependent on what departments choose to offer. A course can thus be added or withdrawn at a given department's discretion, making continuity and structure in the Women's Studies programme exceedingly problematic. Since a course need only show 25% concentrated women's studies content to qualify for York's official Women's Studies cross-listing, many of the slated courses are hardly burdensome for the various departments to package together out of existing standard courses. A second and more immediate difficulty that bodes ill for future developments is the pressing problem of the lack of job security for the part-time women instructors, who teach on contract only. The tenured female faculty members I spoke to at York emphasized the "absolutely inspirational" role that the younger part-timers play in the women's studies curriculum. Without the "fresh blood" of the younger women, some of whom teach the key introductory course or the politicizing and contemporary courses, much of the excitement and strength of the programme would doubtlessly evaporate. The prospect of losing them — and the courses that they teach — is a saddening one.

The False Alternatives: Ghettos and Integration

To develop the complications just one step further, let's look at two things (i) budgets (ii) the prevailing conflicting philosophies on the subject of women's studies in the university setting. The first is relatively straightforward: budget cuts are an immediate threat at both universities. At York, sociology professor Judy Posner predicted tough times ahead. A way of bracing for future programme cuts, she said, "would be to make cuts ourselves . . . to make sure that there is no duplication of courses." In addition to the almost certain loss of some of the part-time instructors, other course cuts might conceivably occur in an economically precarious future. At U of T, official predictions about the future of Women's Studies seemed obscurely worded, at best. When I queried the Dean of Arts and Sciences about the status of Women's Studies in days to come, he prepared a cautious and elaborately qualified reply. It was his hope, he said, that Women's Studies would eventually — when he could not say — "do itself out of business." What he was really hoping for, he said, was "an integration of the women's studies material into the mainstream." It would not do, he added, to continue to foster an image of women's studies as "a ghetto group."

That there is a large element of wishful thinking here is an inescapable conclusion. The dean's vision of U of T's curriculum as progressively entering a blissful state of complete women's studies methodology and content, wedded to, and transforming, traditional sexist thought — all in the next ten years or so — certainly constitutes a roseate picture of the future, especially when pitted against the alarming picture of a

'ghetto group.' More to the point, perhaps, is how comfortably this particular way of framing the question rationalizes the disappearance of a separate women's studies branch in the economic squeeze ahead, without really addressing or in any way providing for a programme of integration. Two birds are killed with one stone as the two alternatives become falsely polarized: the first, that of the integration, will certainly be denied the administrative clout it needs to take effect, and the second is strategically diminished by the gloomcasting and unsavoury aura of the 'ghetto' idea.

In the past few years, the undesirability of a continuing separate women's studies branch has also emerged as a dissenting opinion, albeit a minority opinion, among the ranks of feminist academics themselves. Ann Marie Ambert, a sociologist at York, has become an outspoken critic of a separate women's studies curriculum. Although Ambert agrees that Women's Studies as a separate area of research can constitute a step in the right direction, she qualifies her view rather heavily. "Unfortunately," she adds in a personal addendum to the Report on the Status of Women's Studies at the Graduate Level, "women's studies also serve the function of segregating the new perspective and empirical material from the mainstream of sociology . . . In many ways, women's studies contribute to reinforce our sexual division of labour — and of status (for women's studies are not given much prestige by many of our peers)." Margrit Eichler, a sociologist at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, elaborates on the guilt-appeasing and status-quo maintaining dimension to the problem: as long as a token women's studies branch exists off in the corner somewhere, she says, "departments will rest secure in the knowledge that they have one . . . course on women and that, therefore, nothing needs to be changed."

The much rued notion of the dangers of a ghetto group, of course, means different things to different people. For the already uneasy and somewhat unconvinced university administrators, it may prove highly convenient to find allies in the camps of the women academics themselves; here, they could conceivably argue, is *feminist* support for the integration-into-the-mainstream idea. One can well imagine, in the troubled times to come, Women's Studies expediently phased out from above without any compensating *enforced* integration of women's studies material into the mainstream. Although Ambert loosely throws around a strategy for such integration ("it may well be that the only solution is to offer compulsory courses in 'women's studies' to all faculty members in sociology so that they can integrate such perspectives . . ."), enforced integration, in a male-dominated university setting, seems highly unlikely. In the experience of the women faculty members I spoke to, male faculty members — and they still constitute roughly 80% or more of the full-time faculty in Canadian universities — will *not* have women's studies material "rammed down their throats." Judy Posner remarked that male faculty approach her for women's studies materials and readings from time to time, "but only when they feel ready." Posner emphasized the importance of getting across the new content "without getting their (the male faculty's) backs up . . . You feel out the situation."

Evidently, then, ambitious feminist academics who yearn for a piece of the pie — or, in these times, for the right to simple survival — have not escaped the series of depressing binds that they have always found themselves in. With an eye on integration, they can 'approach' the men, but not without tact, caution, and patience; they can integrate the material into their own courses till the cows come home, but receive little respect or remuneration for their efforts; or they can teach their material under the confining women's studies label, and suffer the isolation, tokenism, and low-prestige repercussions that Ambert and Eichler raise. Or, of course, they can put their shoulder to the wheel and do all three. Many choose to do

exactly that: enter the chilling spectre of Superwoman once more.

Postscript

If a brighter concluding note is in order, it may come from one part-timer at York who does not appear to be hopelessly weighed down by the economic squeezes ahead. When questioned about the budget cuts at York, Angela Miles spiritedly responded that "an academic curriculum isn't everything." Her plan, when she finishes her thesis, is to personally commit some of her time to strengthening the extra-curricular support system, airing the issues, and keeping the lines of communication open on the campus. "We've got

the energy to do it", she says. The task, as she and others see it, is to tap once more the grassroots resources that feminists have always utilized.

And that, I think, is an interesting upbeat note. If women students and faculty respond with guts and feeling to the course-cutting crunch by leaning back on the old network, by making a little stretch a long way, it may very well take us back to our dynamic beginnings: the movement out there that generated a 'women's studies' in the first place.

Christa van Daele is a Toronto freelance writer.

Sheila Luck lives and works in Edmonton.

Prairie Poem

I grow here attached in centrifugal space
to long threads of yellow tallgrass waving.
I do remarkable feats of daring agility
holding my own in the big wind:
spiralling sunward in thin air
freefalling from unbearable altitudes
finally descending my formless body
deepens down each fragile shaft
through the cracked soil crust down to dark
to stay not moving.

Forbidden soulnourisher:
centrally content the coulee conceals
this germination a separable gestation.

I grow here nascent in fragments
shaped like ancient river valleys
and arching contour shadows or
tufted gorse nestling purple where
those slopes meet just there converging.

Sealed by wind by soil
I feed then from the prairie.

But inbetween above piercing
the comforting mass of grainy black
little pin shafts of light
prick my consciousness:
I am reminded of the sensation of sun
on warm earthsmelling skin.
I yearn upward and begin
to push towards the surface greening.

Jane Leslie

Jane Leslie spent most of her life in Winnipeg then lived two years in Lethbridge, Alberta. She is now a student in honours English at Carleton University in Ottawa.

women's continuing education

Back to Frills?

by Janet Willis
art series by Sarah Jackson

Nothing has changed. In spite of the many speeches in recent years on behalf of women's equality, in spite of the superb efforts of thousands of women educators (and some male educators) and in spite of the proliferation of truly excellent educational programmes for women . . . speaking globally of the status of women in continuing education in Canada, nothing has changed.

I am referring to change in the most profound and pervasive sense. Change that would affect every aspect of our educational institutions' operations. Change that would integrate the services women need in order to learn into all departments of these institutions. None of this is happening. Indeed, in September 1977 a model of educational services to women which had been offered at Humber College for Women in Toronto was abruptly terminated. I think this is more than an isolated incident. It is a warning to all who are concerned about continuing education for women in this country.

In November 1976, as Co-ordinator of the Canadian Committee on Learning Opportunities for Women, I began a mail survey of continuing education programmes offered to women across the country. I have since made several coast to coast trips to visit learning institutions and meet with educators from Y's, colleges and universities. From these discussions and from the survey I have developed some strong impressions about the barriers faced by women who wish to continue their education and why change has been so difficult to achieve.

The biggest barrier to a woman's opportunity to learn is her own self-concept. Women who have spent years in the home or simply away from formal education often feel they cannot learn. One tool for overcoming this barrier is a women's centre, a place where women can take short-term "first-step" courses in a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. Few educational institutions provide such a centre. Even fewer make any attempt to reach women where they are — in the home and in the community.

Another barrier is that most courses for women are offered at times and places inconvenient for women. One exception worth mentioning is the unique community education programme called College Without Walls offered by Seneca College in Toronto. Credit courses are offered through churches, schools, and libraries at hours when children are in school. Courses for women in subsidized housing have been offered in the housing locations with child care provided. Most institutions, however, make no attempt to deliver part-time programmes or services to women at times suitable to them in places they can get to easily.

The problem of child-care is one that has been with us so long we tend to accept it as a given. Obviously, the lack of child care is a serious obstacle in the way of women's learning opportunities. Institutions that offer babysitting or child care are rare and when child care is available it is almost invariably denied to part-time students.

Finances are another severe limitation to women's attempts to learn. Most colleges and universities have a rule that continuing education courses have to break even or make money. Many women cannot afford to take these courses. Even

those from middle or upper income homes often feel they do not have the right to use family income for their own learning when it could be used for household needs. I found that this attitude cut across all income levels, but seemed strongest in Atlantic Canada where economic problems are most severe. Few institutions provide any financial assistance for part-time learning. It seems ironic to me that in our society the young have a right to education but education for adults is considered a privilege.

All these problems point to the fact that there has been virtually no change in providing services women need if they are to have access to learning in the first place. While there has been an expansion of educational programmes geared to women, most offerings are frill courses — arts, crafts, and fitness — rather than courses for retraining. A report published in 1977 by Humber College's Centre for Women indicated, as did our study, that the courses women needed most were in the areas of retraining, re-entry and life skills. The retraining courses that are offered still tend to be in the traditional low-paying, sex stereotyped career areas.

There are, however, a number of institutions in the country which have tried to meet these needs (see box). With only one



or two exceptions, which are YWCA's, all the successful programmes for women have in common three interrelated factors. There is a woman with an initial dedication and ability who can determine what needs to be done and rally the support necessary to do it. There is a sympathetic male administration which supports this woman's efforts, and there is sufficient funding. If one of these factors is missing, nothing of great significance for women's continuing education will happen within an institution. If one factor is withdrawn, the programmes are usually terminated or peter out. It seems sad that significant learning opportunities, that would help to change the dependent status of women still require the good graces of men, but since the number of women in senior management in our colleges and universities is farcically small it is not surprising. Aside from leadership, administrative support and funding I noticed that the continuity of good programmes for women was helped by support bases within the institution itself and outside in the community. When people within and outside the institution support a programme it is difficult, but not impossible, to remove it. Without this support, programmes are vulnerable to the whims of administrative change.

The next factor to note about these successful programmes is that even they are ghettoized. That is, there is almost always a "Women's Centre", or a "Women's Director", or a "Women's Co-ordinator". This in itself is not bad, I hasten to add. Indeed, I would advocate that every educational institution in the country have a Women's Centre, a place where women who wish to take that necessary first step toward developing their own potential can go for adequate and supportive counselling about the options open to them. What I deplore is the fact that these women's "depots" end up being just that. Any concerns remotely to do with women, whether it be the pay scale of women faculty members, the desire to set up women's studies courses, or submissions to government ministries by the institution on women's concerns are referred to the "person in charge

of women" for handling, regardless of her job description. These women want to be fair to their peers, they are committed to improving the status of women, and they know that the matter won't get dealt with unless they do it, so they tend to take on this extra labour and are thereby exploited. Meanwhile, the administration has dealt with the matter, salved its conscience . . . and nothing has changed.

One thing that concerns me about these "successful" programmes is the fact that the institutional support or commitment to them is seldom deep, sincere, or based on a conviction that they are really needed by women. Rather, the commitment is usually for reasons of institutional image, either to look relevant in today's society or to appear to meet the needs of all segments of the society. A classic example of this situation is the case of Humber's excellent Centre for Women, founded in 1969. Recently, Humber has completely withdrawn its commitment to its Women's Centre. Last August the president of the College was quoted in the Toronto Star as saying that women's special needs are not as pressing now as they were six years ago when the Centre was founded and since "women have made great advances over these years . . . there is not quite the same need for special counselling for them that there used to be". Interesting observations, especially in light of the college's own report, which asserts quite the contrary. The point of this illustration is that commitment to women's programming and its related funding depends on the benevolence of the current administration in any given situation. There is no commitment to women's programmes based on the premise that women need them.

If women's concerns were truly integrated into our educational institutions, then not only would these "women's centres" exist as a matter of course, but every aspect of the institution's life would reflect concern for the learning needs of women. The curriculum of every course, the instructors in every department, would be non-sexist and supportive of



women learning. Every educational opportunity within the institution would be available equally to men and women. This means that there would be an *active* recruitment of both men and women into non-sex-stereotyped options. It also means that women would be integrated into senior management positions with more than just token responsibility. Courses would be given at times and places convenient to women and, of course, child care would be provided.

One reason I am pessimistic about the future has to do with the sense of powerlessness felt by the very group that could be doing the most to bring about change. The educational administrators I met were mostly middle-management women working within educational institutions. These women, most of whom would probably not consider themselves "feminists", were working exceedingly hard to improve women's learning opportunities. Their concern and commitment were awe-inspiring and heart-warming, and gave me enormous personal inspiration. What bothered me was that they, essentially the top women in the field, had no idea how to bring about change within their institutions. By and large they passively accept the precepts laid down by their senior administrators as "givens" not subject to change. The most constant reaction I heard from these women when change was mentioned was "I couldn't do that", or "they'd never let me." This perception of powerlessness must be challenged.

The men I met in educational institutions were much more assertive, seemed more used to power, and seemed to know how to change things. The women administrators were often passive and uncomfortable with the idea of being able to bring about changes themselves. They feel extremely frustrated because they hold a deep commitment to seeing improvements on behalf of women, yet themselves are relatively impotent. Women at middle-management levels within any institution, educational or other, need education about power and organizational change. Women must become more comfortable about

challenging precepts, and using their power, and they need help to do this.

These statements are not meant to construct a "we" versus "they" situation between men and women, yet reality must be faced. It is indeed women who have seen the need to improve learning opportunities for other women and who recognized what needs to be done for this to happen. It is men who hold power positions within institutions at present. Women need to confront realistically the obstacles to change and *admit they exist*.

One of the things that struck me as I travelled the country was the open, honest sharing among the women educators I met, and their commitment to co-operation with each other. These strengths must be capitalized on if change is to occur. Honest sharing, active co-operation and supportive assistance can be powerful tools. We must fight the tendency to mistrust women who had made some strides — and despite the openness that was so gratifying to see, I do think we sometimes fall into this trap. In a group of competent women who are peers, one who is perceived as having some power or extra ability in some area will often be put down and given no credence. I think we have to learn to help and support these women. Most of our institutions operate in highly competitive ways. In a time of scarce resources we can no longer afford to compete with one another or to support competition between our institutions. By sharing resources, we can maximize services for the benefit of all members of our communities.

Mutual support is all the more necessary now, because there are signs of a backlash, a retrenchment that is going to get worse before it gets better. The old litany is being raised that women are taking jobs from men — and women themselves are often the ones who raise this cry.

The state of our economy has provided a convenient excuse to cut back on or cut out the full services to women which our institutions provide, but my gut reaction is that



economics is not the real issue. The real issue is that we had become somewhat threatening, although we still are relatively powerless. We are perceived as vulnerable — fragmented, disorganized — and unimportant. But we had begun to get some issues resolved in our favour, so the institutions we work for are moving to defuse us, to stamp us out.

When the rug is about to be pulled out from under us, however, we don't know how to prevent it. Women don't know how to think in terms of strategizing, in terms of working around the system, or in terms of power. Most of the educators I met with would never use the word "power" themselves. The word itself is too threatening, too assertive, too risky. Few, if any, of our women educators are recognizing the problem as one that lies within the system rather than within themselves. But if all women are in the same position and are feeling the same way it makes sense to look outside the individuals for the source of the difficulties. We should be prepared to challenge the rules which say continuing education courses have to break even or make money, which say women must go where the schools are at hours set for the convenience of people from the paid work force, which say day care is available only to full time students, if at all.

Not only should we challenge the rules, we should challenge the competitive institutional style of operation. I have seen how open women can be in sharing their problems and information. If we could co-operate as well in strategizing, in working around the system and in using power, we might get somewhere. I would like to see collaboration between women educators to prevent duplication of efforts. I would like to see "have" agencies such as colleges and universities helping YW's or women's centres, and I would like to see women educators combining to lobby for changes that would benefit them all. We have to work together and learn to strategize. If we can even hold on to what we've got for the next five years, we will have achieved a great feat.



This is not a comprehensive listing of programmes worth mentioning but illustrates the best programmes available in different regions of the country.

B.C. At the University of British Columbia, the Women's Resource Centre offers assistance to community women who seek assistance with further education, new careers and jobs, community involvement or retirement planning. Services include individual interviews, self-development groups and information and referral. The Centre makes excellent use of volunteer leadership — mature women are trained to work with the mature women who come to the Centre.

Alberta A 22-part weekly television series called *Finding My Own Way* is an interesting experiment in education for women. Topics covered in the one-hour programs include alcoholism, welfare, depression and divorce. There is a work booklet intended to be used with each program. (A group of Edmonton women who had watched the program each week at a community centre evaluated it for *Branching Out*. They praised the concept and most of the individual programs but noted that booklets were not always sent out in time to serve as a study and discussion aid.)

Saskatchewan The Career Development Office of the provincial government has a programme which enables women in secretarial or clerical positions within the provincial government to take time off the job with pay and with tuition and text book costs paid to take a series of eight university credit courses. On completing the programme the women receive an Administrative Development Diploma which qualifies them to apply for management positions.

Manitoba One of the most innovative programmes in this province now seems threatened by the recent changes in government. The provincially-funded Focus Program offers courses such as Women and the Law, Sexuality, Child Care, and Mental Health to mature women in northern towns. About 300 women a month have participated in Focus.

Ontario The Toronto YMCA is one of the best examples in the country of an agency attempting to serve *all* women. Their major objective is to help women develop as individuals and agents of social change. The programme includes many courses tailored to low income and immigrant women.

Quebec Dawson College is just beginning a good series of programmes in the community.

Atlantic Provinces An outreach programme called Pro-Feminae is offered in three of the four Atlantic provinces (the programme was recently axed in Newfoundland). It is funded by the Department of Manpower and Immigration and includes workshops in how to look for jobs, legislation affecting women and lifeskills.

Janet Willis is Co-ordinator of the Canadian Committee on Learning Opportunities for Women (CLOW).

The CLOW is a group that is trying to promote equality of educational opportunities for women. Membership currently consists primarily of women educators but is open to anyone willing to work to redress some of the imbalance outlined in this article. If you would like to be involved in CLOW write to the Committee at 29 Prince Arthur Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1B2.

Sarah Jackson is a Halifax artist recently appointed artist-in-residence at Nova Scotia Technical College. Her sculptures, drawings and prints have appeared in many exhibitions. In the past few years she has developed techniques for creating prints using a Xerox copier. Shown here is a selection of six prints from the 12-part series "Finding Herself".

Sex Role Biases

we can escape them?

interview by Shirley Denkhaus

Before children start school, their environment is seemingly determined almost solely by their parents, and even after school starts, parents exert an enormous influence on the child's self-concept. But how autonomous can parents really be in a society where sex-roles are still a basic determinant of behaviour? Tom and Diane Kieran have tried to work out equal roles in their own marriage and attempt to raise their children, Kristen, age 10, and Peter, age 7, without rigid sex-role stereotyping. Both Tom and Diane have full-time jobs at the University of Alberta.

In the interview that follows, Shirley Denkhaus asked the Kierans' about the problems they encountered in trying to develop a family unit without sex-role biases. Shirley Denkhaus' own interest in male and female roles has developed slowly, through her experience as a secondary school teacher, a wife, and recently as a mother teaching school part-time.

When you married, did you plan to raise a family without role stereotypes?

Diane: I planned to be a traditional homemaker. I don't think we ever talked about roles. When we married, we were both teaching and I expected that I'd work for a while, have children and then stay home.

What happened?

Diane: We both entered graduate school, and once we got into graduate school our expectations and the demands on our time made things quite different. My consciousness raising came over a period of time. Studying the family, talking about equalitarian marriage, being aware of negative issues for women: all of these things played a part. I was doing a great deal of reading, but I didn't apply it right away. Becoming aware of the inequalities and thinking about my own situation were part of my own growth.

Were you doing more of the household tasks in the early years of your marriage?

Diane: I guess we shared somewhat when we were first married. By the time we had Kristin we had been married for five years. I was finishing a PhD. Tom was finished, and by that time we were committed to careers as well as to having a family. We were sharing roles much more.

It took a long time for me to accept that I wasn't going to do everything around the house. From that experience I can talk to my students now about the way women feel guilty about not doing all the household tasks.

In other countries is more support given to the development of equal roles?

Tom: There aren't many social experiments in things like work sharing. There was a university research project in Oslo, Norway, to study work sharing by couples. The study was done seven years ago, but last year we were able to visit one of the couples who had chosen to continue on their own. Each partner worked only part time and shared other tasks. The experiment was sponsored by the government so that they wouldn't lose any of their tenure or insurance

benefits. Still the university had a problem in finding couples who were willing to be studied. Very few people would volunteer.

Was it easy or difficult for the couple you talked to?

Tom: Well, the husband we visited said he had a great deal of difficulty in the beginning. He'd walk down the street at 11 a.m. and see a man chopping cement with a pick, and he'd know that the guy was watching him and wondering why he wasn't working. He said that eventually he began to rationalize that the other man would think he was on night shift! Finally it just didn't bother him at all, but it took a long time.

Diane: You'd think the arrangement of shared work would lead to openness and a decrease of conflict, but it doesn't. It opens up roles to negotiation and that means you have to have increased conflict to resolve things. If you think of conflict as bad, as some people do, then you're going to have to work awfully hard. There is no easy solution. Work sharing does not produce a neat model for those who are interested in equal roles.

When the children were born, did Tom share a lot?

Diane: Yes, it had to be shared child rearing; we were finishing degrees, trying to collect data. Then we took on our first jobs, and our children were at day care.

How did this affect your children?

Diane: Daycare has an interesting effect on kids, depending on the programme. In our experience private centres tend to have more stereotypic techniques with boys and girls than some of the subsidized centres. In the subsidized centres the personnel are better trained and have looked at at least some of the principles of child rearing. A lot of the private centres have a very simple philosophy; they want to care for the children as best they can. They do not debate whether or not they will provide an open environment or a structured environment. I think they often tended to be more traditional in the kinds of things kids could play with and the activities they encouraged. That's just my assessment.

Did you find that differences between a centre's philosophy and yours bothered you?

Diane: Oh, yes. I think it is something that you have to look at when you're looking for day care. You're giving your child over to some other people who will be socializing him or her, and you have to give up some things in doing that. You have to be aware of the philosophies under which they operate. Often you don't ask that kind of question. You ask is there heat, is there food; you look at the physical but you don't look at some of the attitudes that they have. Using child care facilities was a learning experience. We really became aware of what we were giving up in terms of our own philosophy.

Did you find when your children were older that it was not the toys that they played with but the people they met and the attitudes these people had that were more influential?

Tom: Well, yes. Dolls and trucks are not the real issue — should boys play with dolls and girls with trucks? You can't really dictate what they are or are not going to play with.

Diane: You'd think that in a family where Tom and I had both worked since the kids were little that their attention would be set by what we did. It's not so. I remember driving home from day care one night when Peter said to me, "Mothers don't drive." I said, "It's obvious that mothers do drive because I drive." And he repeated, "Mothers just don't drive." I replied, "That's not right. Anybody can drive. Mothers can even drive trucks. Who told you this?" He said, "God said mothers don't drive."

Peter is very soft and very emotional. He likes to give people big kisses. Last year we were travelling on sabbatical, and he attended school in Georgia. At the first teacher's conference she set us aside and said that she thought that perhaps Peter was too soft, that we should work with him a bit so that he wouldn't be quite so emotional.

This was your son's teacher?

Diane: Yes, and I said that I kind of liked his softness, and I didn't think that I wanted to do very much about it. It would indicate that he was sensitive to other people. I asked if he was disturbing things in class, couldn't function, or if it was making him unable to be part of the class. She said no, it was just that he would cry if things bothered him, for example, if somebody was feeling really sad. He just seemed to be a lot more emotional than she thought boys should be. It was a much more physical culture than the one we came from so perhaps he had to cope with a different style of getting on with other kids.

So you ran into her idea of what your little boy should be like.

Diane: Yes, and I think that this is an important thing about socialization. You can decide in your own family that you want the tasks, rights and responsibilities to be somewhat equal whether the child is a girl or a boy. But then their friends tell them "mothers don't drive" or "fathers don't cook". That is important to them. If they're told that girls

aged ten can't play soccer because it's physically aggressive and that they should be jumping rope, it may upset them especially if the person saying it is an attractive figure, someone they like. So, what do you do?

Tom: In Texas, at the outdoor learning centre, the boys went out to dig in the garden while the girls stayed inside and did math. This is the Southern culture.

Diane: You wonder how strong you can be, telling your children that you want things to change, that you want these kinds of opportunities. You still want them to be accepted by their friends. For you to criticize a popular teacher or friend is very hard on their self-esteem. You've got to balance some of these pressures on kids to do things that are 'appropriate'. I don't think that we're very successful in trying to implement socialization techniques that will be equal for boys and girls. I often feel frustrated.

Parents need to have people who say that we're still acceptable if we do these things. And it's important to know if people support you — your spouse, your family, your neighbours. If I were to quit my job, I'd probably get support from many people, saying 'you've finally seen the light.' And Tom would get no support if he decided tomorrow that he was going to become the house-husband, and I was going to work. Where would he get support except from me?

Tom: When I resigned a job at Penn State, the Dean called me in and asked me why I was leaving. I gave a lot of reasons but one of them was that Diane didn't have a job. He said, "Well next time she'll decide to move first! It's just no good for your career. You ought to make these decisions and she ought to fit in."

How would you assess your progress?

Diane: I think our kids are at least aware that opportunities are somewhat similar for boys and girls and of the risks you have to take if you really believe in this and want it. They have to learn to cope with the things which are not easily changed.

If we've had successes, the thing that I feel best about is what we've done through encouragement. I think Kristin would fit very nicely into a feminine role; she likes things that are feminine. She felt a little insecure in sports and some things that are more aggressive. I think that through our encouragement she's really come into her own now in sports and feels that this is something she can excel in. The first year she played baseball she didn't know anything about it. She dropped out. We said, "You're going to stick out the next sport that you join." She'd gone into soccer, and the first year she was a little timid. The second year she developed some skill and felt some success.

I think also that you have to take a big risk. Having decided with our son and daughter that we were going to socialize them to be open to sex roles we had to face the fact that Peter might not be accepted by his friends and teachers if he turned out to be very sensitive and soft, feminine by all definitions of our culture. That's saying I'm going to be ahead of the times in socializing my child in a certain way. I think most parents have opted out of that risk. They'll do some things, but they won't go all the way because they don't want their kids to be misfits.

You have to justify your technique to your kids and to yourself, and you are always being tested, especially if roles are less fixed. Having to justify your decision to them helps you clarify it in your own mind. But you still have questions. We leave *Parent Effectiveness Training* by our bed because we have to read it many times. I think that we have probably reached middle levels of success. It depends on the day.

Winnie Schmolke recently completed her degree in fine arts at the University of Alberta.



illustration by Winnie Schmolke

Something Better Than This

fiction by Mary Gaitskill

illustrations by Barbara Hartmann

It's one of those raw, wrung out Yonge street Saturday mornings. The old smog-gray sky is just congealing into blue over the buildings and concrete. A dozen or so kids in denim are lollygagging outside Mr. Submarine sandwich plaza. They're wearing T-shirts with messages like "Have a shitty day" emblazoned on them, and they all look bewildered. They aren't the only people out on the street. The old men in rain coats are shuffling along, mumbling in a phlegmy secret language and spitting all over the crusty sidewalk. Then there's the woman in a short, pubis-gripping skirt and the occasional cop floating by in a yellow cruiser, eating a choco-cherry donut and beating out "Here Comes My Baby" on the dashboard.

It's six o'clock in the morning, and the neon lights are still humming and clicking away like pinball machines, the subway is just beginning it's rumbly purr, and the 24-hour massage parlors (raw! juicy! gurls!) are still cranking their all-the-hits-all-the-time music out of their narrow doorways.

In the midst of all these Friday night leftovers, a newcomer emerges from the bowels of the subway, a girl named Susan with pale, oniony skin, long brown hair and wide hips in new sand-papery jeans. She's holding two Rexall plastic jewelry cases on top of two pieces of chip board, which are apparently very heavy judging from the way she's bent backwards, glaring at the sky. The heads of the boys in front of Mr. Submarine all spin around and watch her, eagerly bursting into cat calls and gleeful adenoidal whistles as she hurries past. Silently, she curses them. Surely she was made for something better than this! At least something better than clobbering down to this humming, clicking neon nuthouse of a street. Something better than carrying Rexall jewelry cases (the damn things are heavy and the drawers in them always come open when she carries them across streets, dumping their shiny jewelry all over the place), better than carrying chip board with nails in it, better than those pimple-mouthed forms of low-life clinging around Mr. Submarine like fungus.

She trundles the stuff over to a place called Avco, an insurance office, puts the jewelry cases down, puts the chip board on top of them, takes the shiny jewelry out of the cases and begins to slog it down on the chip board. It really is hideous stuff just a notch or so above those things you sometimes find in cracker jack boxes, like a ring or something that loses its shape after a kid wears it a few days. This jewelry won't bend like that, at least not after a few days wear, but that's about all you can say for it. It's made out of white metal and coated with rhodium and will leave that familiar green stain on the skin around it.

But it's the style of the things that really gets to her. The mundane items like horoscope necklaces, crosses, rhinestones, keys and hearts are passable except that the astrology signs are embarrassingly unrecognizable. "Pisces," for example, looks like a couple of worms. But those other things! That necklace with a pendant that is actually five inches long, made of two figures with bullet heads and pointy shoulders, tangled up in a copulatory weave. And then there are the mystic signs. "Mystic signs!" The things are about the size of a penny and are engraved with the most cretinous squiggles. The card they're

mounted on explains, in all seriousness, that this one is to ward off witchcraft, that one is to bring you wealth, this one is to turn you into an engine of virility and so on. People, full grown, decently dressed earnest people, actually come up to Susan and ask if these things really work. Gawd! Then there the satanic pendants, the talismans, oh, the stuff gets worse and worse. It all shines like mad too, it would almost glow in the dark. God knows where the man she works for gets it. She's certainly not going to ask.

When she finishes "Setting up," she sits down behind her display, arranges what could've been a rather nice face into what looks like Miss Right for the Grinch That Stole Christmas, and waits for the streets to start crawling. Something better than this! Susan has been waiting for something better than this for years now. She hasn't got a clue as to what this better destiny might be, although she can picture herself writing caustic bestsellers, or hosting talk shows or something, you know. But this will have to happen later because now she has this stuff to sell.

She sits there behind that old scarred up naily chip board as the sun comes blasting up over the city, its white laser beam rays ricocheting off the monoliths of plexi-glass and steel, and shooting out over the Toronto hemisphere, turning the sky from blue-gray to a startlingly bright color. She stands up as the street is taken by the Saturday live ones — eager kids from the suburbs with slinky toy necks, dazzling teeth and rubber feet, monstrosly tall negroes with long, jewelry laden hands, impossible hats and even brighter teeth, trip-footed girls with short jackets, right jeans and basic blush faces, the Yonge street sweethearts with their feathery silks and rhinestone eyes, and the Yonge street studs with their grip-butt pants. She stands there as the street fills up with thrumming sun-reflector cars, full of hot, grinning Americans up for the weekend.

Girls with critical eyes and candy colored finger nails grope after her astrology pendants, stupid boys with razor blade faces buy crosses and say idiotic things. And Susan stands there, moving her arms like a vending machine, hot, shy, and blinking before the Saturday live ones.

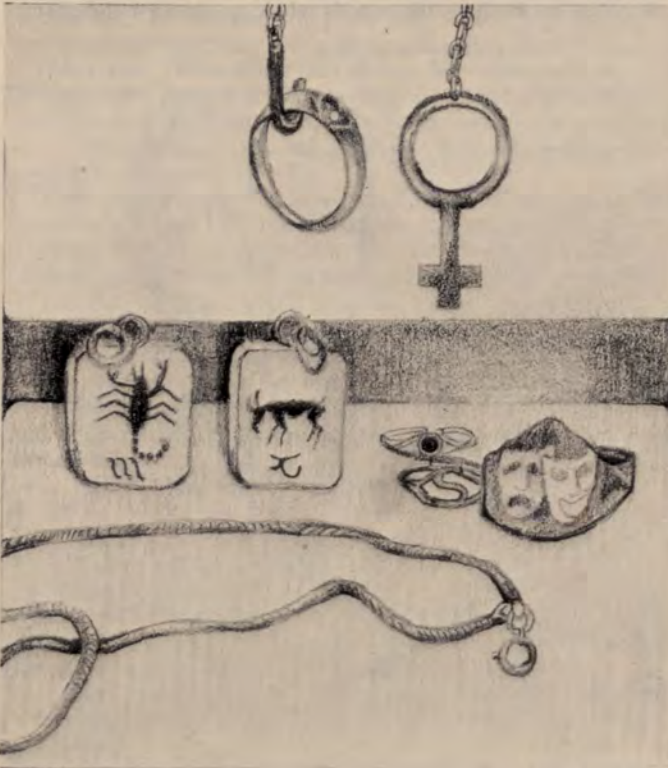
At four o'clock the crowd begins to thin out as everyone noses their way home to their warm dinners. In a way, the emptying street is worse because it draws more attention to her sitting there, curled up like a dead spider behind the chip board. There seem to be more males out now, especially those television-faced boys that move up and down Yonge street all night in their cars, staring at female hind quarters and at Susan. What do they expect her to do? Take off her clothes? They stare at her from behind their grimy nose-up-against-the-glass windows with blank dislike. Yes, that is part of what they would like her to do, and since she isn't going to do that, they are going to stare at her, and maybe make some remark that is supposed to reduce her to nothing instantly. They do not like me, thinks Susan. Is it possible that they like anybody?

There's a car full of them going by right now, their denim arms and blunt hands dangling out the windows, and one of them is staring at her with his face hanging from his hair, staring with stupid hostility. All right, so who wants to be liked by

them?

Then there are the ones on foot, clicking by in their six-inch heels and pants stretched tight across their bodies, giving her these, "oh, Gawd, look at this gauche, unspeakable creature" looks. Well, it doesn't bother her. She knows that under her scratchy, denimy, tennis-shoed appearance is a buttery babe that would make these twitch-bottom males drag their slick tongues on the ground in idiot lust. She knows! But she doesn't care.

But now and then she'll see the occasional weirdo, like Gawd, look at this one. He is an odd one, not really weird, but weird in comparison with the average. He's got a big, gallumphing six-foot five-inch body and ham pink skin and a



nose that bumps out in about four different places and an extraordinarily noticeable backside.

He just caught sight of the glaring jewelry and here he comes. The way he's coming is part of what's strange about him. That big body and those big feet were not made to mince along in that tight-lipped way he's mincing. Now that he's closer, she can see he has kind of a bag-like face that seems to lack any sort of foundation, with pursed together features and a spacious forehead bearing the pock marks of adolescent acne. His eyes look like they've been wired in by Claude Neon, Ltd., his mouth is Revlon red, and his nose makes you think that if you were at the right angle you could look right up into his nostrils and see how his brains work.

So this odd one, with an expression on his face like Charlton Heston in "The Robe" comes mincing up to her like an elephant on a tight rope, his eyes purposefully zeroing in on the rhodium jewels. A big, pink, scrupulously clean hand goes up to the pink hairless chin. His pale, feathery brows knit together in what looks like concentration, and he just stands there. Two curly headed girls sharp with blue mascara and arched cat-back brows stop to gaggle over the mystic signs. Their slightly muscular, adolescent bellies protrude aggressively between bright halter tops and low-slung scrubbie jeans. The faceless car

boys look at them, half angrily, half wistfully, but this ham-hipped character here doesn't even glance at them. He remains poised in thought, one big hip slung out at a rather feminine angle. The two girls make their purchase, and, as they are tripping away, the pink thinker slowly raises his head and looks at her, right at her, with a blazing, even stare.

"Pardon me," he says, "but may I ask where you purchase your merchandise?" His voice sounds like he lives on a solid diet of mayonnaise.

"I work for someone," answers Susan, "I don't know where he gets it."

"Ahh." He kneels down and looks at the aluminum inlaid crosses, touching them with odd tenderness for such large hands. "This isn't very nice jewelry is it?"

"No," responds Susan, irritated by his tenderness, "it's not." What kind of person could get tender over these crummy things? Is this guy trying to embrace the world or something?

His horizontal mouth curves up in a smile. Yes, he is happy to hear her admit that she is a vehicle for the foisting of hopeless trash on a hopeless public. "If you don't like it, then why do you sell it?"

"Oh, I just like meeting people I guess," answers Susan.

There is a silence. He stands there with his strobe light eyes bearing purposefully in on her in one of those "I am opening all the folding interuterine doors of your girl-soul and funneling down into your timeless oceanic being. Do you understand? I know you. Open to me, and—" Oh, puke, thinks Susan. How long is this going to go on?

She turns away from him and looks at the suddenly welcome public, at the swarming Eaton's building across the street, with its plush, this-is-the-good-life windows.

"My name is Andrew. And yours is . . .?"

"Susan."

"Would you like to accompany me for dinner Susan? After work of course."

Susan often wonders what it is about her that attracts these cases. What could it be about her face, her posture, that makes someone like like this pink mayonnaised-voiced creature with kilowatt eyes single her out as his own private sounding board? "I don't think so," she replies. "I'm supposed to meet a friend after work." She smiles nicely, revealing her cavity ridden teeth.

Either Andrew doesn't notice the cavities or he doesn't care. His eyes just turn themselves up a kilowatt or so and become searching enough to probe themselves right out of their sockets. His mouth pulls itself taut. "Not even for a cup of coffee?"

"I haven't got time."

"Can't you make time? Just a few minutes?" Probe, probe.

How on earth did things get this far? But of course, they always do, and in a minute he's going to start telling her that she is good-looking and it is too bad she's so fucked up. Fucked up! As if anyone who isn't dying to see him is a hopeless schizoid.

"No," she says, "I have to stay out until it's time to quit."

"Why?"

"I need the money." Her voice is beginning to sound like the woman on the phone who tells you that at the tone the time will be . . . All right, so those desperately inferior rat faces in the cars are right. She is an unfriendly bitch. This is a hard world. You have to be a bitch to survive, and for God's sake Andrew, what do you expect?

But he doesn't tell her what he expects. He doesn't call her a bitch or tell her she's fucked up. He just stands there, staring like . . . like . . . Susan doesn't know what it's like and she doesn't know what to do. She feels like putting her finger in her mouth. "Very well," he finally says. "Good-bye." He abruptly turns around on his imaginary tightrope.

Well, it's too bad, thinks Susan, that you have to be that way with people. The sun is beginning to look less and less like a laser as it disappears behind Avco. Dinner is over and the

street is beginning to look like an ant colony again. Susan is putting out the talismans again when she catches sight of a familiar pink face floating above a sea of heads. It's him again, and this time he doesn't remain discreetly in front of her display. He moves right in, fast for a mincer, right in behind the chip board, and sits down beside her. She gives him a side-winding glance as she hands a necklace to a trusting girl with blunt, turquoise fingernails.

"Why," he asks, "don't you want to go to dinner with me?"

Susan looks at him and notices that his face is incredibly porous up close, a real sponge. "Because I don't have time," she says.

"Why?"

Doesn't this guy know how awful he is? Doesn't he know that even if he was perfectly healthy and sane and had a plain, ordinary face she wouldn't want anything to do with him? Does she have to draw pictures? "I don't have time to go to dinner with you because I don't want to."

"I don't think you're being honest with yourself Susan."

"I think I am."

He looks at the sidewalk as if he's trying to bore holes in it, smiling to himself. "You mustn't think," he says meekly, "that I'm looking for anything salacious. If I wanted anything of so base a nature I'd go into any of these uh, massage places on the street." He leans forward, trying to look earnest. Instead, he looks like a thirteen-year-old kid with a magazine called "Poke" or "Eat" or something.

"What are you looking for?"

What I want is to talk to you. The moment I saw you, I knew you were different from anyone else on this street. You stand out like a black dot in a sea of white. Not many people strike me like that. I had to know you."

A blank. A zero. A vacuum where a quick answer should have been. Her hand goes up to her brown hair. She shifts around on her heels. Susan looks more bewildered than those Mr. Submarine boys did this morning. "Why do you think that?"

His cheeks light up, blossoming into a smile, every pink air pocket on his face exudes thrill. "I don't think it Susan. I know. I see in you something that I've made it a point to look for all my life. A soul that will be in harmony with mine. A person that I could reach out to for love and understanding instead of the terrible coldness I usually get from everyone else."

The white, vacuous space continues to swallow Susan's brain. She begins hearing all the lyrics to Big Bad Leroy Brown in her head, with particular attention to the part where Leroy casts his eyes on a girl named Doris and "oh, that girl look nice."

And meanwhile, Andrew says that he's been in every massage parlor on Yonge street looking for a perfect woman, and he hasn't found one yet. He also says he's trying to reach the stage of "total spiritual evolvment," which is impossible in his current state because he has this problem with women, **these feelings when he sees attractive women — sexual feelings.**

Leroy Brown fades into the distance. A brain cell pulses its way out of the vacuum like a feeler. Susan looks at Andrew and he has that kid-with-the-magazine look on his face which is pressing closer and closer to hers. This is beginning to sound more familiar.

He notices the look on her face and smiles in a demure, blushful way. He clears his throat. "It all started with my family. They were very against sex. I never had a normal sex life. In fact, I am still virgin."

That voice is beginning to get to her, creaming its oily way into her brains. It's almost beginning to sound soothing, like muzak does if you listen to it too long. This is too much! This ham-hipped nutball is standing here giving her a come-on with a weirdo angle to it and pouring mayonnaise into her brains. This

can't go on.

"What's your sign?," he blurts suddenly.

"Scorpio."

"Really?," he responds thrillsly, "I too am of the Mars sign. What year were you born?"

"November 11, 1956."

With alarming speed, his pink hand shoots out and slaps down on Susan's thigh like it was a meat counter, and she is jolted into one of those eyeball-wobbling, mouth-twitching looks of nervous shock. She lunges away from him.

"I'm sorry," he whispers, "but this confirms all I have said. We were born on the exact same day."

The skin on his face is suddenly redder than anyone's should be. His wet pores seem to open with excitement and his big, fleshy hands are trembling. Why is he doing this to her? Why has her birthday thrown his whole goddamn metabolism



into a frenzy? She has been nice to him hasn't she? "I have been nice to him," she silently explains to the Eaton's building. And she would be nicer, she really would, she would be a princess of porno, an idiot cunt of dreams, for Andrew and every other male madding its way around that street. She'd like to make them all happy, she really would, but it's just that it would make her so . . . well, it would make her sick.

Without a word, Andrew pulls out a driver's license with November 11, 1956, officially typed into the slot that says "birthdate." "Now do you believe?"

"Lots of people were born on that date."

A smile breaks out on his face like a rash. "Can you really think this is a coincidence? Do you really think I've been randomly attracted to somebody who just happens to be born on the exact same day?"

She stares at him. It begins to dawn on her that he is perfectly serious. He actually means what he is saying. He likes her. He loves her. Yes, she is annoyed. She knows he isn't worth her while. But still. What if he is right?

"Look Ida, more jewelry." With these words, the public,

that is, two apricot-haired women and their nervous bread-winners, nose up around Susan's jewelry, now shining in the bits of neon and headlight. Andrew steps back slightly, his eyes blazing, as Susan helps these determined bargain hunters pick over every rhodium object in sight.

"Sexual energy — oh, that's far out."

"Girl, do these rings here turn your skin green? I don't want anything to turn my skin."

"I don't know if they do," answers Susan.

The faded hazel eyes continue to pulse over the rhodium.

"She's probably lying Ida. It probably turns your skin green."

"Well, it's junk Margaret, what do you expect? If you want good buys, you go to Sears, not someone selling on the street."

Susan doesn't say anything. She just stands there like a vending machine until they buy a couple of horoscope sign necklaces, "For the kids, they like junk," and squeeze down the street on their puffy feet without answering Susan's faint "Thank you." Why didn't they answer her thank you? A strange, salty lump is growing in her tear ducts because they didn't answer her thank you. This is ridiculous. Who are they?

"Oh, Susan!," exclaims Andrew. "You behaved like a princess in disguise!"

His familiar pink shape lurches up close to her again. "Yes Susan, the longer I'm around you, the more sure of you I become. Destiny has brought us together. Don't deny it! If you deny it, you'll be making the most terrible mistake of your life. If you turn me away, you'll be alone, totally, utterly alone."

The lump in her tear ducts trembles violently; her nose suddenly becomes damp and full of pin pricks. This is too much. Anybody would see that this is too much. "Well, I guess it's about time I packed it in." Susan begins shovelling her chains, pendants, rings, and mystic signs into her knapsack with both hands.

"What? Oh, I see we're going!"

"No. We're not, I am."

"Susan, don't you understand what I have said?"

"I think you're wrong."

"Susan, please . . ."

Her little face squeezes together like an enraged cat's. "I think you're crazy!" She's said it, and all the rhodium is in the knapsack and the warm subway is only a block away.

"Let's be honest with each other for a moment," he pleads with damnable gentleness, "what do you think of me — from the heart?"

From the heart! What can she think of him? That unbelievably creepy skin, that mouth, my God, the whole picture is just — well, she's been a lot nicer to him than most people would be. From the heart he's hopeless, an all-night screwball, a goon.

"Susan? Susan? Why don't you answer me?"

But she can't tell him what she thinks of him because that salty lump in the ducts bursts and all of a sudden tears are all over her face. To her horror, Andrew wraps his long, knightly arms about her, and folds her into his soapy bosom, engulfing her in his world of smells, the ear-waxy dandruffy, wet-testicle smells that are part and parcel of his soul.

"Oh Susan," he says, almost in tears himself, "oh, Susan, I knew you felt the same as I. You are far too loving a woman to hide your feelings for long."

She looks at him, limp as a wet valentine. His kilowatt eyes, turned up full blast, meet hers and, in a horrible rush, the sloshing wetness of his mouth covers her lips, and his tongue insinuates itself half way down her throat.

Mary Gaitskill lives in Toronto.

Barbara Hartmann works as a community programmer at the Edmonton Public Library. Her work appears frequently in Branching Out.

Libido At The Library

How can you sit there,
Reading and reading
About Marx and the boys,
Like every other brain
In this stuffy library,
So stacked with metal and words?

How can you sit there,
Reading and reading,
When we could sit close
On the back stairs,
Talking,
And feel our clothes
Touching in the right places?

How can you sit there,
Reading and reading,
When we could be
Characters in a living book,
In the historical now?

I'm sure Marx would understand.

Lauren Walsh

Lauren Walsh is a promotion assistant at a Toronto publishing company. She is a graduate of the University of Toronto where she studied English and Journalism and worked on the University newspaper. She has not had poetry published before.

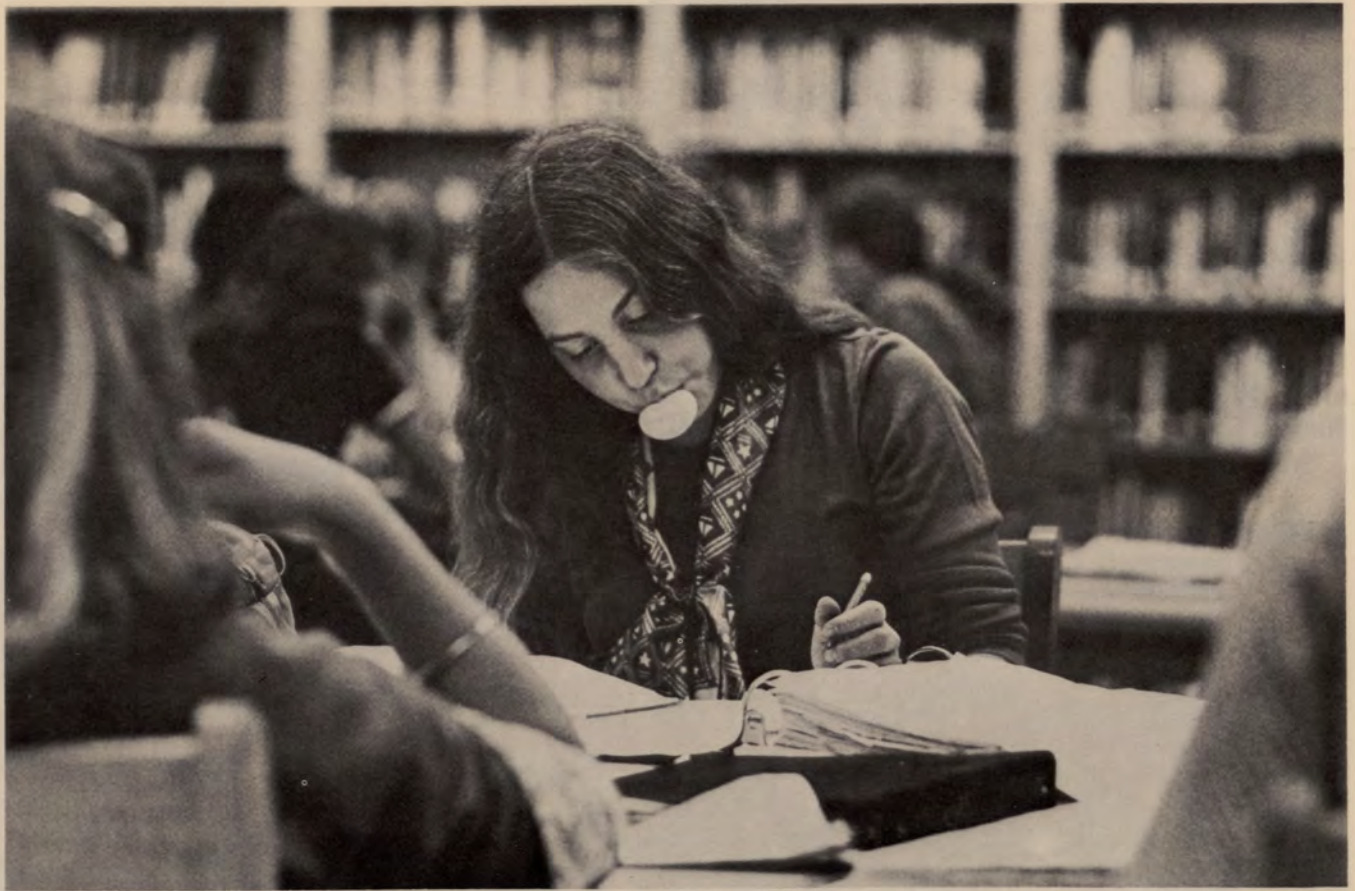
Return to High School



photos and text by Lauren Dale

Finally, I've left high school. It's been more than eleven years since I officially finished, but it's only recently that I've *left*, departed, done with it. Perhaps it was because it was the 1960's; perhaps it was because we were that age; maybe high school felt like that for everyone. But those three years seem to have been extraordinarily destructive. What self-confidence, or even enthusiasm, one possessed on the first day of grade ten was largely annihilated by the last day of grade twelve. No matter what your achievement it was never enough. If you were successful academically, it was insufficient. Why weren't you athletic? If you were athletic, why weren't you on the students' council? The principal would appear unannounced in the class room to lecture us on our duties and responsibilities as the future leaders of society. We would cringe and squirm, having difficulties enough with the pressures of exams and dating. We felt attacked on all sides and worn down, and the effect was lingering. So, returning for a visit home last spring after five years absence, it seemed appropriate to purge those old emotions. I was also very curious to see what changes had taken place. With my cameras and equipment, I went back to my old high school for a week.

The first surprise was full and free permission to wander the school, shooting whatever I pleased. In the past paranoia had reigned, perhaps with some justification. At regular intervals students would try to burn the place down. The freedom I was given was one facet of a greatly changed attitude. Dress regulations for the students seemed barely existent, or at least not rigidly enforced. Shorts? Everybody wearing shorts? In the past, not even trousers were permitted for girls. This was one of the most visible signs of the relaxing of what had been an overwhelming discipline.



Responsibilities had shifted from the parental and authoritative administration to the students themselves. Attendance was taken each class, but nothing seemed to be done about those absent. The students were expected to be mature enough to recognize what was needed to make it through. I talked to teachers and kids about this and it seemed everyone was much happier with the change. Teachers need not be so much the heavies anymore, and the students didn't feel so oppressed and regulated. In the first year, fresh into freedom from junior high, some can't cope and barely attend anything, but by grade twelve the majority are able to balance the relaxation with the required work. The most astonishing result is that the kids like school. They are actually happy to be there, while we had to be locked in.

Alongside this new system, however, run some extraordinary attitudes. In several ways, these high school kids were more old fashioned than we ever were ten or twelve years ago. The 1950's are alive and well and having a pep rally in the gym. There were lunch hour dance practices so that everyone would know how to cha-cha at the spring prom.

Good clean fun. I didn't run into either dopers or drinkers, but that was perhaps because of the ambiguity of my position. Both students and teachers

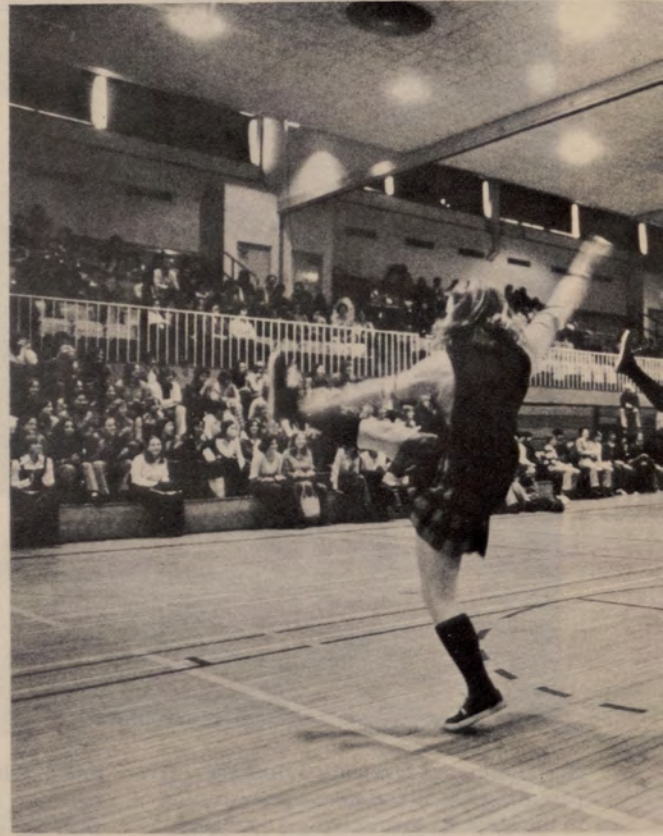
found it difficult to place me. Seeing my cameras, kids would ask me if I were from the photo club, or taking pictures for the year book. I sat through an entire class without the teacher even noticing I wasn't one of "them". At least one alert person, however, did class me as a possible narc, something I had expected to happen. This occurred in a social setting, in one of the girls' toilets. These washroom scenes were one of the most interesting new features of the high school. What I had expected to see in the washrooms was girls scabbling about on the floor, looking for lost contact lenses. That was the most common sight in my time. What I found was an elaborate club system. Each washroom had a different ambiance, a different sort of population, and everybody knew what sort of people frequented which washroom.

The group pressures are still there, but shifted in a direction which seems less painful than the all-important dating of 60's. Individualism is still not encouraged, though some of the girls spoke of futures with careers and not necessarily husbands. Coupling off is also frowned upon. If the group feels a couple is getting too exclusive, or spending too much time together, the pair will be warned to ease off.

The pressures to conform are very powerful. I was astonished to see how

quickly I succumbed to them. A dozen years of learning to become myself began to rapidly evaporate. I realized this one hot afternoon when a double period class had been cancelled. I was hanging around outside with the gang. (A great deal of time is put into hanging around, talking just to say words and reassure one another that, yes, they all still approve, and everyone is still OK and accepted.) The conversation in the sun turned wistfully to cars. If somebody had a car then we could go to the Dairy Queen. "Gosh, yeah," I thought. "Sure would be nice. Dairy Queen." Then I thought, "Just wait. You *have* a car, your own car. You have the keys in your pocket. You know how to drive and can leave any time you want." I was amazed. That incident made me realize that I hadn't been dressing quite the way I usually would, afraid the others might find me strange. I had slid back so quickly and not just because I was a photographer blending with my material. I was becoming sixteen again, and it was not fun.

Thank god its over. My experience was unavoidably brief and incomplete, but it was sufficient to see that, though still not enviable, being in high school is now mercifully less agonizing than it was. Those destructive years of my own past are gone. At last I've graduated.

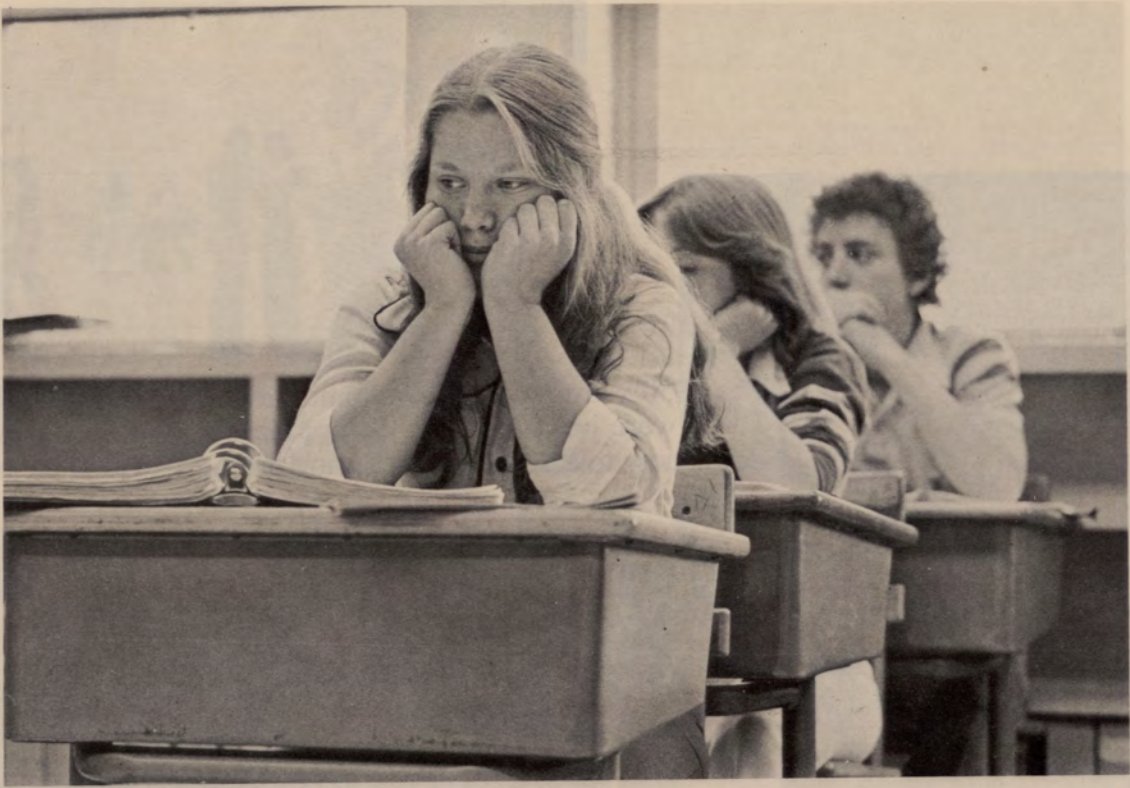


AUGUST (and it was)



The 1950's are alive and well and having a pep rally in the gym. There were lunch hour dance practices so that everyone would know how to cha-cha at the spring prom . . . Good clean fun.





Teachers need not be so much the heavies anymore, and the students don't feel so oppressed and regulated. In the first year, fresh into freedom from junior high, some can't cope and ba-

rely attend anything. By grade 12 the majority are able to balance the relaxation with the required work.



Lauren Dale is a freelance photographer in Edmonton.

AUGUST (as it was)

These are the sunshine times
the moments that provide
pleasure.

i don't recall ever
(but once)

slitting my eye or
clenching my teeth
against these August days.

(4)

threshing time
men intense bodies
taut and agile
strumming sustained concentrated rhythms
among tractors, combines, wagons of hay
the sun hot and crackling
the loft swallows the brittle
glistening stalks
wheat fills the granary
children slide beneath the gentle spray
of golden kernels
munching oblivious.

4 o'clock

amber sun ravishes the orchard
children along tree boughs
laze and spit
cherry pits to the ground.

(6)

the house
she held
on her shadow side
deep in the ground
the humid apple cool fruit cellar.
white Queen Anne cherries preserved & crowded
into Mason jars, longside
homemade ketchup & tomato juice
jams of rhubarb, peach & plum
stood waiting for the toast of a
cozy winter morning.
Saturday
she
a seasoned aristocrat
received
on her pine shaded lawns
family friends
for the wedding of the youngest daughter
banana blended peanut butter tea sandwiches
and nine bottles of pop !

Dolores Brandon

Dolores Brandon grew up in Toronto and graduated from the University of Toronto. She is now living in New York where she moved to pursue a career in theatre. The stanzas published

here are part of a longer poem which describes the summers spent at her grandmother's farm in Chatham, Ontario.

Non-Sexist Books

Sliding Down the Iceberg

by Sherrill Cheda

It is not by mistake that revolutionary societies, utopias, and science-fiction often concentrate on the education of the young, for that is the way values are transmitted and change (or lack of it) is carried on in a society. Part of the feminist movement has also concentrated on education and its instrument of instruction: books.

Sex-role stereotyping in books is the tip of a very large iceberg which includes at its base, sexist attitudes and along the way, misogyny, cruelty to women, rigid sex-roles and economic discrimination. Nearer the top of this freeze-out in the educational institutions, we also have omission of women from textbooks and the curriculum, sex stereotyped toys and sports.

As an active feminist and a vocal librarian interested in children's literature, I have been asked many times over the last eight years to write about or speak on sex-role stereotyping in children's books to groups of librarians, teachers and parents. It often seemed to me that my audience believed an end to sex-role stereotyping in books was a panacea to the problems women face in the world — an isolated feminist goal without connection to the women's movement and its challenge to the power structure.

We must ask ourselves: since one of the long range goals of feminism is the eradication of rigid sex-roles and its corollary, training strong independent women, how might we best go about this? Education immediately comes to mind, but education for what? What qualities make a strong independent woman? She would obviously be economically independent and physically and mentally fit. To be economically independent, women need skills to obtain jobs; hence they need skill-training, which presupposes literacy.

Illiteracy rates are much higher for women than for men due to religious practices, sexual and cultural mores that restrict learning opportunities and education for many women in the world. (Twenty-eight percent of the world's men are illiterate compared to 40.3 percent of women. In North America,

850,000 men and 1,600,000 women are illiterate. Women who are already literate must be assured their right and access to education. For women who have acquired skills, equal access to the labour market is important, and of course equal pay for work of equal value. These are the very prerequisites to discussing a positive feminist education and it is within these conditions that the negative term "non-sexist education" is important.

As long as we remember that fighting sex-role stereotyping in textbooks, the curriculum and the classroom is a short term objective of a longer range more radical change, this work is important. If, as I often suspect, an end to sex-role stereotyping is seen as an end in itself, an easy out, a non-political issue because it involves innocent children and books, then we must analyze the concept more closely.

In any analysis of feminism, we soon discover that we are discussing power. During the prerequisite period, power operates to keep women from literacy, education, skills, the labour force, and equal pay. During the next stage, if there is to be a next stage, there must be power to change these negative forces into at least neutral ones. This power was at work in North America and England during the abolition of slavery and the women's suffrage movement, a period of change covering the seventy year period from 1850-1920. More recently, during the first half of the 1970's, we have seen the power of women to affect changes through the impetus of the feminist movement and its targets: major institutions such as business, government, religion and education. If we zero in on education, we can document some of the changes that have taken place, always keeping in mind that *these changes took place because committed feminists were applying pressure* (a political tool) in a wide variety of ways through school and library boards, government departments, publishing houses, and professional organizations. These feminists were teachers, librarians, parents, writers, politicians and community people who

cared about children and the quality of their lives. They wrote their own books, started their own presses, did studies, wrote articles, made films and published magazines.

At the beginning of the 1970's in Canada, we did not yet have the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report* with its thirty-two recommendations in the field of education or the 106 page study *Sex Role Imagery in Children* by Ronald Lambert which showed, from a sociological point of view, that sex roles were learned and not inherited. There were no feminist presses, no feminist magazines, no articles, studies, books or films on sex-role stereotyping.

As early as 1971, a few rustlings could be heard; there was an article here and there in the alternate press; library school students were beginning to do papers on sex-role stereotyping in children's books; Bonnie Kreps made her film, *After the Vote*, which examined women's sex roles imposed by society, and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission became the first provincial government office to define both the problems of sex-role stereotyping and the omission of information about women's contributions in textbooks.

In 1972, the Canadian Women's Educational Press began their ambitious publishing program, which included non-sexist children's books; popular magazines such as *Chatelaine* and daily newspapers were running articles on sexism in children's materials; other provinces' departments of education were beginning to look at their textbooks and, generally speaking, teachers, librarians, and some parents began to be conscious of sexist education.

By 1975, Canada had a number of feminist magazines; every province, through its curriculum department, was aware of the problem of sex-role stereotyping and some were reviewing all new textbooks and issuing guidelines to publishers and writers on the inclusion of women. Articles continued to be published, more and more studies were being done, several films were available and school boards were doing studies of sexism.

When 1977 rolled around, both the Ontario and British Columbia departments of education had issued fine Women's Studies bibliographies; some new books being published were not only free of stereotyping but actually had positive images of women and even, sometimes, discussion of sexism; and media people seemed to understand the words "sexist" "sexism" and "sex-role stereotyping."

With all these changes, why is it that our children were still getting a sexist education?

The truth is that change is slow, and there are basic conflicts between the attitudes of society at large and the feminist political goal of eradicating rigid sex-roles. It will be twenty years before all the textbooks our children read reflect non-sexist guidelines because that's how long many textbooks stay in circulation. But even when that does happen, what about sexism on television, in the movies, at the playground and the many other places children encounter such anti-woman prejudices?

Because sexism permeates every aspect of society, the political change necessary to change it all is so massive that it is tempting to throw up our hands and say "I can't do anything." If we see ourselves as isolated individuals, that is a reasonable response. But we aren't isolated individuals; we all work and live in groups and it is these groups that form the basis for political action and change.

While we are hacking away on the damaging stereotypes in school books, there are many other things we have to do to pave the way for a basic non-sexist education, always remembering that what we want is a positive feminist education. School books make only one small dent in a child's imagination. If these children see girls and boys being treated differently in their own homes and observe inequality between their parents, rigid sex roles are reinforced rather than diminished. By the same token, the television programs children see influence them. While, you can't change television programming single-handedly, by banding together with other like minded parents in your community you can put pressure on local channels. Remember, it only takes fifty individual complaint letters to make an advertising company reconsider their ads.

You can make sure that your children have only non-sexist books in their home and make suggestions for purchase at your local library. When you buy products, you can try to support feminist businesses as much as possible.

In the political arena, it is important for feminists to be active in parent/teacher associations, professional organizations, school and library boards and

political parties to work for improvement in the status of women and to raise consciousness. If you cannot be a politician, your support of feminist candidates can help to bring about important change. Working with citizens' groups to affect legislative change beneficial to women is a long, tedious process but a very important one in the long run.

If an end to sex-role stereotyping is seen as an easy out, a non-political issue because it involves innocent children and books, then we must examine the concept more closely.

Any one of these activities in isolation from an overall feminist philosophy and involvement and without long range goals will achieve little. If there is no feminist organization in your community, you may have to begin to build one so that there is a dedicated group of women to bring about significant change for women, of which education would be one component.

At the same time, we must address ourselves to what a feminist curriculum would contain, discuss it with other feminists, exchange ideas, draw up lists, course outlines, bibliographies, and communicate with women beginning to work on the same kinds of plans in other cities. Once certain kinds of content are agreed upon, locating resource materials and creating new ones would be

necessary. Who will teach the children a totally new curriculum? Who will teach the teachers? Obviously we have a lot of work to do but we cannot do it in a vacuum.

Education is only one part of a person's life, but a very important part. Educational control is political control. Who are the people who have the power in your community and how do they fit

into the power of the province and the country? These are questions feminists first have to answer, so that we can organize to change the power structure and the way power operates over our lives and the lives of our children. These societal changes will take place when we make them take place, and only then will we have a non-sexist education and possibly even a positive feminist education.

Sherrill Cheda is an active feminist, co-editor of Emergency Librarian and librarian at Seneca Community College in Ontario.

These ideas developed over the last few years in conversations with Bev Allinson, Dorothy Curzon, and Phyllis Yaffe.

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Role Models *Have* Changed From Fantasy to Reality

by Heather Lyons

A role model or exemplary ideal for imitation is not a new idea. Who, in her childhood, has not curled up with a book such as Sarah Bolton's *Lives of Girls Who Became Famous* to regale herself with the inspirational lives of Louisa May Alcott, Marie Curie, Amelia Erhart, Florence Nightingale, Helen Keller and many more? Possibly your heroines were Canadian, either English — from Herrington's *Heroines of Canadian History* or Sander's *Famous Women* — or French, from Pepper's *Maids and Matrons of New France*, Hugenin's *Portraits de Femmes* or Francis' *Femmes Celebres*. The women in these books reflect the aspirations of some segments of society, prior to the women's movement. What has happened since?

Certainly, feminist critiques of history have pointed out the imbalance in the frequency with which male and female role models are presented and redress has been recommended in the form of herstory, an account of women's contributions to society. There had, in fact, been one attempt to immortalize Canadian heroines alongside their male counterparts, Mckinley's *Famous Men and Women of Canada*. Feminist grumblings led to a proliferation of individual and collected biographies of female achievers: Allaire's *Tetes de Femmes*, and *Profils Feminins*, Bannerman's *Leading Ladies 1639-1967*, and McInnes' *Clear Spirit: 20 Canadian Women and their Times*. A famous man, Grant MacEwan, also took up the pen to write *And Mighty Women too: Stories of Notable Western Canadians*, although, as the "too" in the title suggests, with a certain paternalistic tone.

Occasionally, such collections focussed on a single groupe of heroines as in Hacker's 1974 book *Indomitable Lady Doctors*. One group especially — the suffragettes — was highlighted in books (Basett's *The Parlour Rebellion*), in capsulated biographies and posters (M. Benham's *Nellie McClung*, O.I.S.E.'s *Women's Kit*, in films such as *The Visible History of Women* by the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, and in reeditions of



Amelia Erhart, from *Lives of Girls Who Became Famous* (1886).

The Heroine: the traditional model is a female achiever presented as a subject for passive adoration.

books such as Cleaverdon's *The Women's Suffrage Movement*.

Lists of "first women achievers" were developed and popularized, for example, in the O.I.S.E. *Women's Kit*. Compared to the American curriculum kit *Women Who Won*, the Canadian material does not stress the achievement angle quite so baldly but the same trend is there.

The original intent of herstory, however, had been to describe the participation of *all* women in society, as was done in the Corrective Collective's *She Named It Canada Because That's What It Was Called*. In this broader social history approach the elitism of the heroine tales was modified to include the

contributions of women from the other "forgotten" groups in history; the native people, the immigrants, the working class. A number of biographies and autobiographies of native peoples have served as recommended reading and resource material in the curriculum: A. Green's *Forbidden Voices: Reflections of a Mohawk Indian*, J. Willis' *Genish: an Indian Girlhood*, Campbell's *Half-breed*, and from the O.I.S.E. *Women's Kits*, Manitowabi's *Ojibwa Girl in the City*, and Eskimos; a record and pamphlet.

Materials on immigrant women are less available, the multicultural movement notwithstanding. Some are currently in preparation. There a number of case studies in "The Black Woman in Canada" from O.I.S.E.'s *The Woman's Kit and More* but the women in these studies are not always immigrants. Frequently, the experiences of immigrant women are integrated into the history of different ethnic groups, as in two recent books on Ukrainians, Potrebenko's *No Streets of Gold* and Kostash's *All of Baba's Children*. Sometimes their experiences are found in histories of the working class such as the Halifax Women's Bureau's *Women at Work in Nova Scotia*, the Canadian Women's Educational Press' *Women at Work*, the Corrective Collective's *Never Done*, and, by Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Working Women*.

Sometimes immigrant experiences are found in the history of pioneer women. Excluded from the latter category are the numerous English women such as Marion Cran, Mary Hall, Ella Syke, Mary Sanson, Elizabeth Morris and Binnie Clark whose accounts were written more for prospective settlers. Even Anna Jameson, Anne Langton, Susannah Moodie and Catharine Parr Trail whose works have been republished and their lives recaptured in print and videotape seem to fit more readily into the heroine category because of their literary achievements and privileged backgrounds.

Qualifying as pioneer women are

women of the expanding frontiers: Johnson's *Wilderness Women*, Goudie's *Women of Labrador*, Badley *et al's Yukon Women*. In order to capture the experiences of the "ordinary" women, new methods have been tried along with more traditional ones. Local history has continued to be fruitful (Brant County, *Women's Regale*). Audiotapes on different Western Canadian pioneer women such as Eliza Hardisty and the McDougall women have been produced. However, oral history and visual techniques have particularly flourished. Reminiscences of pioneer women in the west have been collected along with those of their male counterparts and used as one of the themes in the videotape series *Pioneer Years* (ACCESS, based on the book by Broadfoot). Similar recollections and historical materials have been juxtaposed alongside archival photographs to depict the daily life of these women in *A Harvest Yet to Reap* (Rasmussen *et al*) and the pleasures and hardships of their pioneer life has been evoked in a film through the use of interviews, historical photographs, location shots and dramatizations (*Great Grandmother*).

Another change in the role models of contemporary curriculum materials is the tendency towards the emulation of contemporary rather than historical role models. This is seen in a number of individual and collected biographies and autobiographies of prominent women: Casgrain's *A Woman in a Man's World*, Bird's *Anne Francis: An Autobiography* and the Canadian Teacher's Federation's *Challenge 77*. Contemporary "first women" examples are popular such as the first woman police inspector with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department (*Women in Canada*). Tape recordings of contemporary poets, writers and public figures are also available (Van Nostrand tape series and Clarke Irwin).

Another change has been a stress on active realization rather than passive adoration of role models, an emphasis which verges on career counselling. Sometimes the role models are case studies of women doing work traditionally performed by men, either in the professions or heavy manual labour. Other collections show women in a wide spectrum of traditional and non-traditional jobs (the National Film Board's *Working Women* series, and the Newfoundland Status of Women's book *This is Our Work*). As some titles suggest, the accent is on expanding the alternatives for the fuller development of women's potential (ACCESS videotape series *You Can Too*, and *The Least You Can Do is the Best You Can Do*). Practical information is given about attaining career goals, as opposed to the



Augusta Stowe Cullen, from *Canadian Portraits*.

The women's movement has stimulated a proliferation of biographies of women including first women achievers and suffragettes. Cullen, above, was the first



illustration from *Women at Work in Nova Scotia*, 1973.

Some recent books have documented the contribution of working class women and particular groups such as immigrants and native women.



Nellie S. McClung
aged five
Chelworth, Ont.

McClung at age 5, from *Nellie McClung*, 1975.

women to graduate as a doctor in Canada. Nellie McClung was active in the suffrage movement in Manitoba and Alberta.

Marian Hearn, fishcutter, from *This is Our Work*, 1975.



heroine approach which implied the need to imitate ideal characteristics which were sometimes fostered by privileged class backgrounds. *The Least You Can Do* series strives to portray women in careers which require education and its accompanying handout gives reasons for the individual's career decision, the length and type of education required and suggestions for obtaining further counselling. A comparable use of case studies is found in pamphlets designed by the Public Service Commission to encourage women in such careers as mathematics and accounting (*These Days Everybody Works*).

In *The Least You Can Do* series, the women talk frankly about the interrelationship between the public and private aspects of their lives, showing the implications of their career choice. This is of utmost importance to young women concerned about the supposed dichotomy between a career and a satisfying personal life. There is also discussion of this theme in the curriculum kit *Beyond the Big Three* which uses historical and

contemporary role models in conjunction with material on stereotyping and on marriage and its alternatives. These materials are significant because they present role models in the context of career decisions and life choices in general.

There is a danger of overestimating the effectiveness of role models in career counselling. Cultural expectations, peer groups, the dynamics of classroom achievement, the local status systems, and media-induced sex role stereotypes may not be sympathetic to change. For female role models to be most effective males as well as females must accept the advantages of redefining sex roles. Equally important are male role models in a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional jobs and lifestyles, the motto being, 'if they can, we can too'.

On the one hand, some role models which recognize the contribution of "ordinary" women or encourage work in non-traditional fields in lower socioeconomic classes may engender complacency. The relegation of women to a

minority power position in society will not change, without a revolution, unless there is an increase in the representation of women in the power structure. On the other hand, some role models may create unrealistic expectations which underestimate and even camouflage the inequalities in the school system and society in general. The development and recognition of certain qualities, attitudes and expertise does not immunize women against discrimination.


On the more positive side, female role models offer possibilities for teaching. Theatre groups can dramatize aspects of herstory such as the mock parliament which helped win the suffragettes the vote. This is currently being tried in Ontario. Realistic role models with which young people can identify can also provide situations for role playing so that both men and women can empathize with the rewards and challenges of some of the "first woman" achievers. Indeed, reverse role playing where males take on female roles and vice versa allows both groups to experience different reactions to such things as sexist remarks in the classroom.

Simulation games allow students to experiment with the hypothetical consequences of changing sex role expectations. Through skits they can explore such situations as a parent-teacher night at a school. One role playing situation has a determined and ambitious mother asking a teacher to reconsider her daughter's low science mark because she wants her daughter to pursue a medical career. When the teacher states that the mark is an accurate reflection of her daughter's ability in the subject, the mother suggests that the teacher is not giving her daughter enough encouragement in the subject and insinuates that the teacher's feminism is reserved for middle-class students. In another simulation a traditional father complains to a liberated male teacher that the new family living course is making a sissy out of his son by teaching him to make a bed and cook some meals. When the teacher defends the programme, the father accuses the teacher of being a homosexual. For added fun, the daughter and son may be included in the script.

Such teaching methods are a clear departure from the old chestnut of biographies of heroines. However, only when role models in the curriculum are used in conjunction with career counselling and the exploration of stereotypes will the titles of such curriculum resources as *Anything You Want to Be* have any real meaning.



Heather Lysons teaches in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

TOUCH THE EARTH



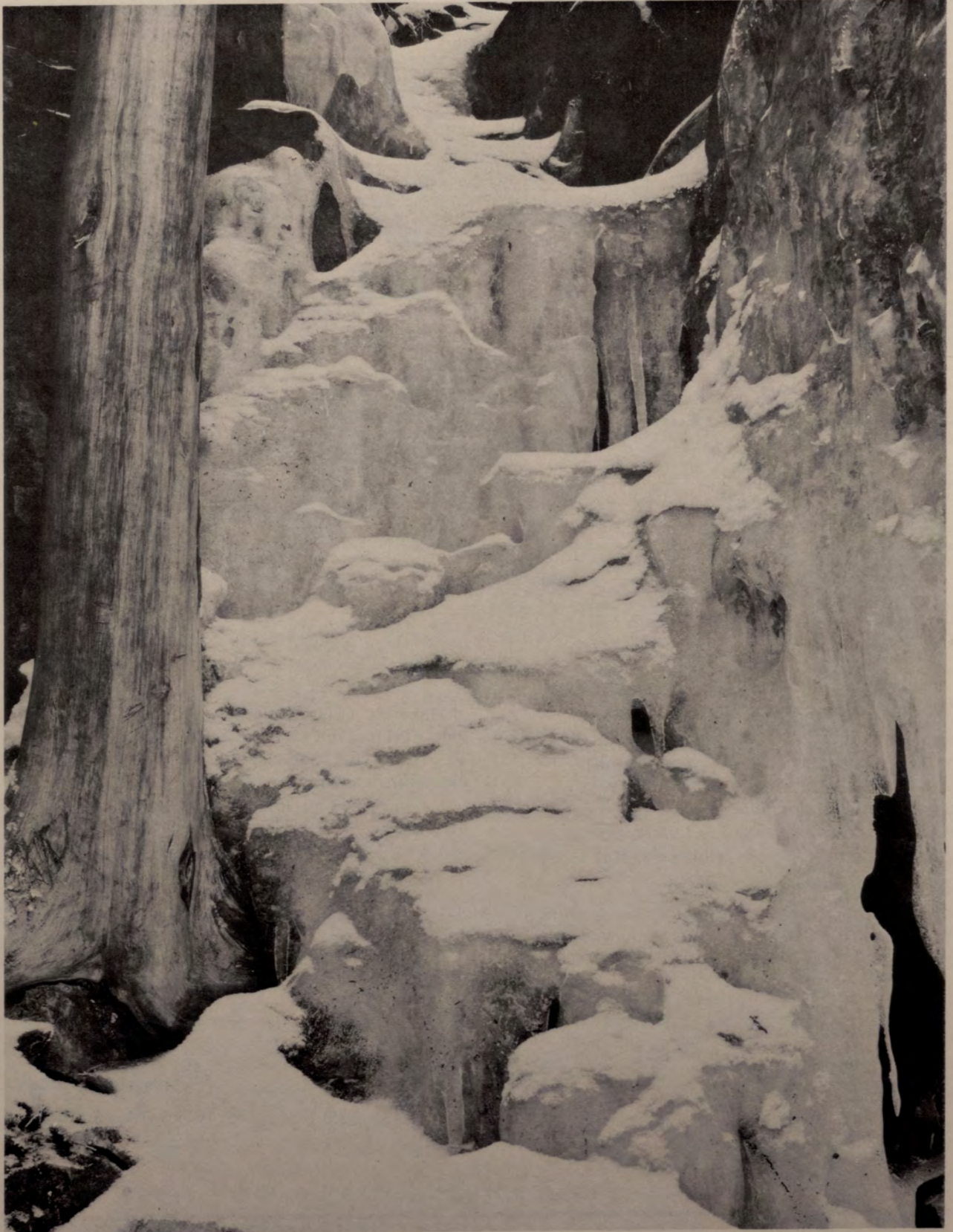
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by Carol Marino



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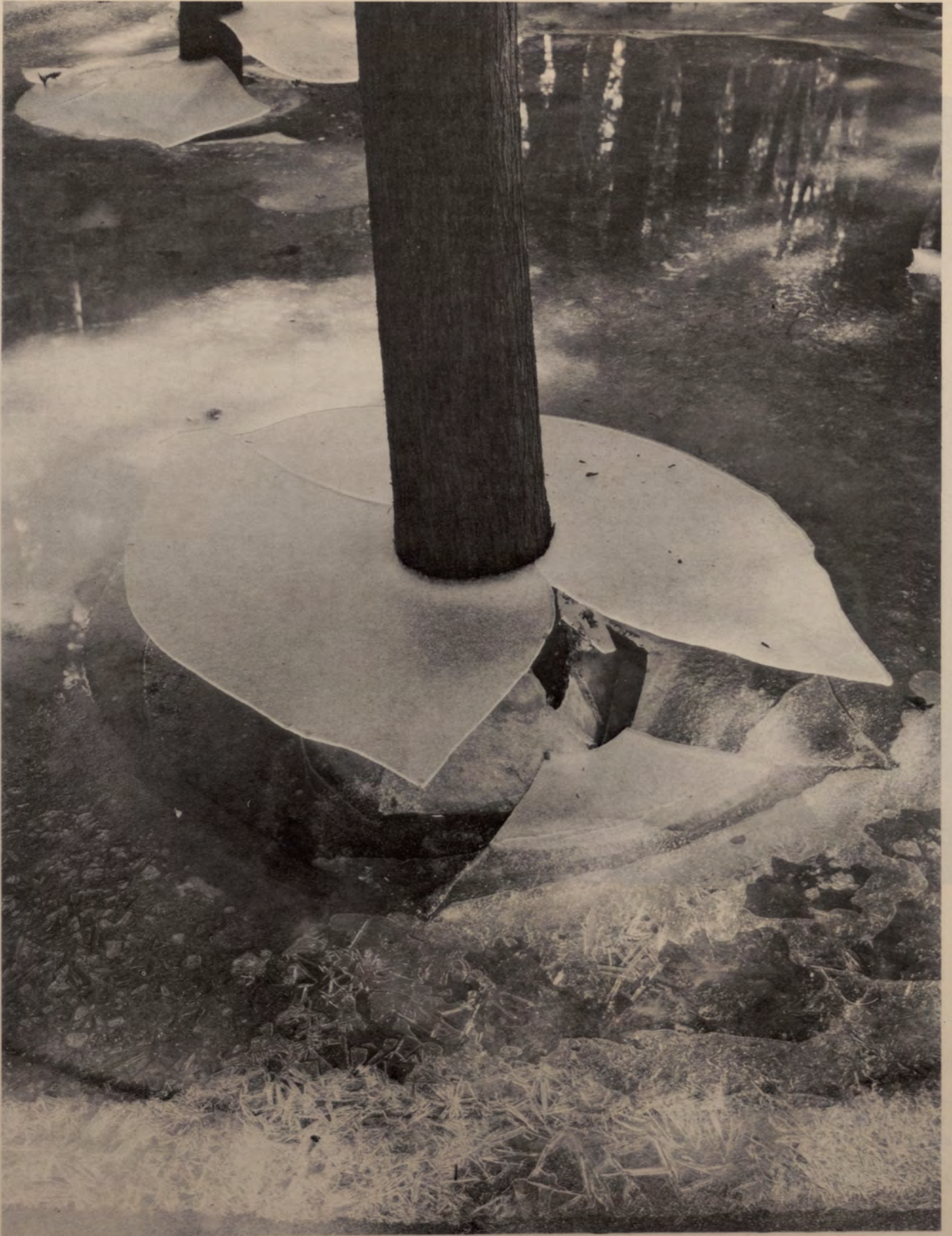
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LANDSCAPES

by Carol M. White





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films

Images for Revolution: Women in Two Cuban Films



from "Lucia 1933" courtesy of Tricontinental

by Margaret Cooper

Since feature films and alien images have often been synonymous in our part of the world, not one of us has escaped some damage from the females we've met at the movies. There's little doubt, however, that women knowing the extremes of underdevelopment, dependency, and colonialism can and do suffer far greater harm from encounters with motion pictures. What they view on the screen poses the most startling contradictions with what they live from day to day, and celluloid creatures lacking all visible contact with their own circumstances effectively reinforce the mentality and values indispensable to subjugation.

Only two decades ago film had such an impact on Cuban women, the vast majority of them members of the lower classes where illiteracy, racism, and male supremacy took their highest toll. Access to the island's theatres, largely controlled by U.S. chains, brought exposure to the poorest Hollywood exports and even worse commercial fare from Mexico. The occasional Cuban production, unsuccessfully launched in the absence of a

national industry, was invariably a crude copy of already inferior foreign models. So when she wasn't seeing *gringas* who increased her oppression, the Cuban woman faced some fantastic Latin hybrids exerting a similar influence.

Twenty years have reduced this kind of conquest, like other types of colonization, to historical curiosity. The same Revolution integrating women's emancipation within the struggle for a new society is giving visibility to those formerly denied it, and in a national cinema as conceptually unique as it is technically innovative. Reaching all Cubans, no matter how remote their location on the island (thanks to mobile projection units), Cuban films now bring both sexes face to face with their complex and changing reality. For Cuban women, this means that their own images embrace the past which has shaped them and the present they collectively share.

Process and purpose are most strikingly illustrated in *The Other Francisco* (1975), the first full-length film by Sergio Giral. His dialectical exploration of a

poorly understood chapter in Cuban history adapts and criticizes the picture of slavery advanced by *Francisco*, a Cuban abolitionist novel from the nineteenth century. Initially, it translates Romantic literature through the stock devices of Hollywood's Historical re-creations of the past. Zoom-ins, conventional voice-over, a lavish score, and stylized acting tell the story of doomed love between an ultra-refined black house slave and a mulatto seamstress.

Because of his relationship with Dorotea, the mistress' favorite maid, Francisco incurs the anger of his owners. Exiled to outdoor labour with the other slaves, he passively endures mistreatment from both Don Ricardo, the mistress' son, and a brutally sadistic overseer. No less resigned than her mate, Dorotea submits to Don Ricardo's sexual advances in the hope of saving Francisco's life. Although it spares her lover from more of their master's jealous wrath, the sacrifice quickly proves futile. Disillusioned and hopeless, Francisco commits suicide.

With this view of slavery as its point of departure, the film proceeds to question its portrayal on every level. Novelistic sequences are juxtaposed with a more authentic version of events and challenged by a contemporary narrator. Before long there is a cinematic countertext to place the book in true perspective. *Francisco* appears as the product of a nineteenth-century bourgeois reformism which saw slavery abhorrent to its Christianity and found abolition compatible with capitalism's need for willing labour.

Especially undermined are the pure-souled, docile creatures made whitely virtuous and victimized exclusively by Don Ricardo's lust. Alternate frames showing widespread, systematic violence against slaves reveal something other than individual passions as the single inspiration for abuse.

Just as accurately, *The Other Francisco* highlights the response of slave sabotage and uprisings this policy produced. Slave suicides — like the fictional Francisco's own — were common

enough, we learn. But they occurred as acts of desperate resistance, not as the defeat of refined Romantics forced to share their women with their masters.

As we become aware of this second Francisco, the one neglected by the novel, we also recognize a different Dorothea.

Her silent surrender to Don Ricardo is offset by evidence that sex between female slaves and masters was hardly tranquil and usually general practise. Rape held potentially defiant slaves in check while simultaneously increasing their numbers.

Pregnancy itself or, more precisely, Dorothea's answer to it, comes under the camera's scrutiny too. Her dewy-eyed reaction to the prospect of bringing another slave into the world, the fruit of her unsanctioned union with Francisco, is eroded by a particularly powerful sequence. In an act of unmistakable rebellion, female slaves rely on herbal lore and, hidden away in the cane fields, deliberately induce abortion. Like the film's other subversions of fact against fiction, the double vision introduces a past long withheld from Cubans who are only now free to acknowledge it.

Encounters with women occupy far more footage in *Lucia* (1968), the feature debut by another male director, Humberto Solas. *Manuela* (1966), an earlier short, found him concerned with the revolutionary awakening of a young peasant woman among the guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra. Here in *Lucia* (made when he was only twenty-six!), Solas, like Giral, works with the love story's popular conventions. But he also draws upon a triple protagonist, a versatile camera, and nearly seventy years of Cuban history. The result is fairly remarkable: a three-part epic of transition in which the narratives of three separate Lucias reveal the inescapable ties between private and public destinies.

The first Lucia is a strong study in extremes where period melodrama recreates late nineteenth-century Cuba in its struggle against Spanish domination. *Lucia 1895* belongs to that propertied class whose national aspirations generated the fight for Cuban independence, a creole aristocracy whose social code bound women to a marginal existence of chastity, obedience, and servitude. Her life defined by rigid traditions, Lucia (Raquel Revuelta) moves within a world of drawing rooms, dueñas, and daily devotions. Gossip, parlor games, and escapist fantasies provide the normal refuge from routine, while mending for the troops reminds her of the man's war being waged outdoors.

Not surprisingly, narrow privilege and cloisterlike conditions breed a special vulnerability. Lucia, the sister of a

rebel leader, is easily conquered by a Spanish adventurer claiming indifference to the political upheaval. Infatuation with Rafael, who has a wife and child in Spain, finally forces Lucia to break taboos forbidding their liaison. Personal freedom draws her into the national drama which previously seemed a man's world away.

Actually a spy for the colonial government, Rafael cleverly engineers Lucia's seduction and uses her to locate the Cuban insurgents. He then abruptly abandons her before the Spanish troops. Having inadvertently disclosed the rebel stronghold and caused her own brother's slaughter, Lucia witnesses the bloody aftermath of Cuban resistance and Spanish repression. Maddened by the betrayals, she takes a revenge that is as public as it is violent. While Rafael, now fully outfitted as a Spanish officer, stands talking in the town plaza, Lucia stabs him to death in full view of the horrified spectators.

The act's obvious symbolism is consistent with parallels developed throughout the film. Clearly, woman

the creature of her age and class, is scarcely freer than in her amorous delusion. But in the total progression described by the *three* Lucias, avenging self-assertion is the prelude for future liberations.

To express its personal and social upheavals, *Lucia 1895* explores an intensely visual, Visconti-like style. Lush interiors and flamboyant gestures are enhanced by musical crescendos. This is *fin de siècle* Cuba in the throes of late Romanticism, a culture as doomed to destruction as the old colonial order imposed by Spain. Imminent collapse is conveyed in overexposed shots of ravaged streets and mangled bodies as well as in protracted battle sequences where the fury of insurrection matches Lucia's final rage.

Considerably more restraint greets us in *Lucia 1933*. Another period piece, this episode relies on subtler techniques which distinctly recall the films of Hollywood's Thirties. Operatic effects and visual virtuosity yield to standard film realism as the restrictions of a creole aristocracy give way to the mobility of



Adela Legra, from "Lucia 196," courtesy of Tricontinental

an ascendant middle class. The second Lucia (Eslinda Nunez) has an easier time escaping her traditional role. Contemptuous of the frivolous materialism infecting the women around her, she leaves her upper bourgeois family for a young revolutionary bent on overthrowing the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. Soon Lucia's support for Aldo's cause changes to involvement in her own right, and she is organising the women in the factory where she works for participation in the period's massive

strikes.

Although Machado is successfully overthrown, the visions of equality and justice which animated Lucia and Aldo fade before corruption and self-interest in the new Republic. Disgusted with the lack of change, Aldo abandons his job as a government functionary and takes up weapons against the present regime. But with neither popular support nor anything more than a vague idealism to sustain it, his individualistic campaign gets him killed. It also leaves a pregnant Lucia alone with her memories.

Heightened political awareness and engagement in social struggle give this Lucia a considerable edge over her predecessor. Just as active solidarity with her female coworkers is decidedly different from the limited cohesion of women confined to sewing and prayer or reduced to perpetual adolescence. Undeniably, four decades have brought improvement in women's status. Yet *Lucia 1933* still reveals obstacles to freedom and social integration. Compared to Aldo's ongoing effort, Lucia's involvement is relatively short-lived. More often than not, we see her waiting aimlessly in their room for Aldo's return. Furthermore, in her wholesome acceptance of Aldo's ill-fated anarchism, there is nothing to indicate independent thought and everything to imply a modified peripheral role. Since the entire episode is shown in flashback, we know that the widowed Lucia supports herself by working in a tobacco factory. Nevertheless, the concluding frame, which follows Aldo's death and has her distractedly pacing the dock, suitcase in hand, gives

Lucia 1933 an unfinished quality. For the second Lucia's incomplete development, it seems especially appropriate.

Open-endedness is more pronounced in the third segment, where even the title, *Lucia 196-*, signals "To be continued." Set in the early Sixties, when agricultural diversification and nationwide literacy were among the Revolution's top priorities, *Lucia 196-* brings a new Cuba to the screen. Close-range photography and semi-documentary style reveal a communal society truly reflecting the island's racial mix; a rural setting takes us far from places any pre-Revolutionary camera normally went; and a young peasant now holds the central role. But among these changes, the legacy of the past lingers on — this time in a young husband's determination to exercise proprietary rights over the third Lucia (Adela Legra).

A caricature of Latin *machismo*, newlywed Tomas succeeds in preventing his wife's return to work once they have married, even going so far as to nail the windows shut! Kept under lock and key, Lucia registers only weak protest. After all, she reasons, Tomas is her husband. So what can she do? For a while she submits to domestic tyranny. As she gains her freedom from another form of bondage and learns to read and write, however, her self-confidence increases.

Professing solidarity with the Revolution, Tomas has grudgingly allowed the nightly visits from Lucia's literacy teacher. But his preposterous jealousy inevitably gets the better of him, and Tomas attacks his imagined rival. The sight of the two men slugging away at each other

sends Lucia fleeing from her domestic prison.

Unable to retrieve his wife from her neighbors and coworkers, Tomas takes to drink and absenteeism. For her part, Lucia finds separation increasingly depressing, so much so that she comes looking for Tomas at last. She has decided to return to him; but no longer the slave she was, she will continue her work outside. Still the household despot, Tomas tries to reassert his male prerogative, only to face open defiance from a tearful though resolute Lucia. We leave them physically struggling in the sand, deadlocked in their conflict.

Accompanied by lively folksong commentary (new lyrics for the popular "Guantanamo"), *Lucia 196-* is an intentional overstatement in buoyant good humour. Yet its intimacy and warmth don't disguise its attack on a genuine obstacle to woman's full integration in Cuban society. Moreover, the broad comedy of domestic strife only emphasizes the absolute necessity for Lucia's self-determination. Unburdened by the sexual constraints of *Lucia 1895*, she enjoys something neither of her predecessors knew: the full support of her community, especially its women, in her desire for liberation. Even so, the struggle against a chauvinism neither she nor her community can accept from one she obviously loves will be a true test of revolutionary resolve. The episode offers no clear indication of the eventual outcome. But it intimates that this Lucia's dilemma and an archaic male supremacy will have little meaning for her successors.

Presumably, other challenges await the next Lucia, the one introduced at the film's conclusion. Walking across the beach, a little girl follows the couple's combat with some alarm. Quite soon, however, she senses its absurdity and laughingly departs. The final focus for all of *Lucia*, the child's presence is anything but capricious. It bears witness to the dynamic vision of an extraordinary cinema, both a people's art and a vital component of collective experience in ongoing transformation. Like the women emerging from the Revolution itself, neither the vision nor its images must go unnoticed.

Lucia had its Canadian premiere at the 1976 Festival of Festivals. The Other Francisco was included in the special two-day screening of Cuban films at Cinema Lumiere (Toronto) in February 1977.

Margaret Cooper is currently film editor of *Branching Out*.

Women in a Violent Society

April 21 - 23, 1978

Violence against women occurs on a continuum ranging from harassment and pornography to battering and rape. The purpose of this conference is to examine the sources of violence against women, the services available to victims of violence, and the law as it applies to these issues. Speakers will include:

Lorraine Clark, *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*
Gene Errington, Coordinator, Vancouver Women's Research Centre
Sheila Kieran, Royal Commission on Violence in the Media
Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful; Going Too Far*
Diana E.H. Russell, *The Politics of Rape, Crimes Against Women*

Place: Palliser Hotel, Calgary, Alberta

Fee: \$20.00 before April 14, 1978 (includes two meals)

For registration information contact: Calgary Status of Women Action Committee, 223 - 12th Avenue, Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G9

books

Finely Woven, Loosely Tailored

review by Karen Lawrence

Ladies and Escorts, by Audrey Thomas. Oberon, 1977. \$4.95 paper.

The cover illustration of Audrey Thomas' most recent book, *Ladies and Escorts*, is a picture of Little Red Riding Hood, alone in the big dark woods, her eyes bugged out with fear, a basket of goodies under her arm and no idea of what to do next. Waiting for an escort, perhaps. Most of the characters who people Thomas' stories are in predicaments similar to Red's — men and women who are stuck, who think themselves into corners, who are afraid to take risks. There are such people, of course. And Audrey Thomas is a skillful weaver of the fabric of their days, their relationships, their memories and reflections. The problem with the stories is that the fabric isn't fashioned into garments; they are richly-textured, often brilliantly-coloured pieces which don't quite hang together.



cover and title page illustration

Oberon has re-issued the author's first collection, *Ten Green Bottles*, as a companion volume to *Ladies and Escorts*. The reader who is acquainted with Thomas' earlier work, especially *Blown Figures* and *Mrs. Blood*, will find some familiar material in these two books of short stories. The so-called 'mad housewife' has become almost a stock character for Thomas, and in several stories her situation — kids, housework, reasonably sympathetic but unhelpful husband, inability to cope, descent into the void — is described predictably and fails to move the reader. But one such story, "Xanadu" (*Ten Green Bottles*) is transformed by the figure of Joseph (the cook/steward who appears several times in both books) and the woman's growing awareness of the various aspects of her relationship with him — social (white/black), sexual (female/male), and political (master/slave). Her emotional balancing act is shattered when she realizes he has taken her place, subsumed her woman-functions:

Not only had Joseph made himself a necessity in their household, but he was making her a family joke. Each time that he increased in importance, she diminished. It was unbearable. She felt stifled, afraid. All the little helps which Joseph had performed for her, all the larger duties which he had removed from her weary shoulders — each act now seemed like a golden thread binding her tighter and tighter to a conception of herself as a totally incompetent, albeit delightful, woman. She felt as though she had been tricked out of her rights, deceived.

In general, the African stories shimmer — they have a terrifying vividness of detail. It is as though there is a tension or fear in the very words and images. A character in *Mrs. Blood* commented, "My Africa is only real for me"; when some of these characters attempt to describe or cope with African culture, there is a strong sense that they are attempting to sort out what is real and unreal — "Is this paranoia or prudence?" And their fear is of strangeness, and of the loss of control which can come about when one is outside one's mother culture. But Thomas' ability to create images can also serve her badly. In many places there are too many details; they seem irrelevant, distracting, gratuitous. I have the feeling that Audrey Thomas saves up freaky images — the memorable and the shocking — in a little notebook, and then feels that she has to use them somewhere. She dishes them up in great servings here, and they are not enough to dine on, not enough to make a story out of.

In many of these stories, Audrey Thomas connects an experience to an image but fails to make that connection clear, fails to define the essence of the experience. This kind of definition should be a part of a short story; in fact, it is one of the distinctive features of the genre. To Thomas' credit, she is refining her technique — her earlier work is often fragmentary and elusive. In *Ladies and Escorts* she is more experimental with kinds of characters and points of view, and the stories are fuller and longer on plot. But she asks a lot of 'whys' and doesn't come up with answers; most of the stories deal with unresolved conflicts, and many of the endings are simplistic or simply shabby. After finishing the stories one asks "Well yes, but what would have happened if . . .?"

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DO WE NEED AVATARS?

reviews by **Diana S. Palting**

Emergence, by Cynthia MacAdams. Introduction by Kate Millet. Chelsea House, 1977. \$15.00 cloth.

"The women in *Emergence* have found their voice. They are the warriors and saviors of the Aquarian Age." Thus Cynthia MacAdams describes the women who dominate the pages of her book. "I've chosen (to photograph) these women because each one has a strong radiation of light from her forcefield. Each one emanates positivity and strength. They survive on their own will power." There are portraits of feminists such as Kate Millett and Gloria Steinem. There are actresses, poets, writers, filmmakers, producers, directors, and others in the arts. There are also anonymous women who should not remain anonymous, but are unnamed by the photographer. All show in their postures, their gestures, their faces and their eyes, the strength, individuality, and disregard for public opinion that the photographer wished to portray as the "new breed" of women.

Kate Millett, who writes the introduction to *Emergence*, claims that Cynthia MacAdams has taken it upon herself to "be the first to record and print what is really our generation of women." I take exception to this claim

on two counts. Firstly, she and MacAdams fail to acknowledge the work of predecessors and contemporaries who have also portrayed this "new breed" (regardless of their year of birth). This failure takes away from the solidarity they imply in the book. Cynthia MacAdams may be the first to purposefully select a group of women who exemplify the characteristics that she admires, but she is years and even generations away from being the first woman to photograph other women (or



men) in this style. Imogen Cunningham, from the '30's until her recent death, photographed women who exude the same strength and individuality: Gertrude Stein, Anna Freud, Ruth Asawa, and many others whose faces she "found interesting". Dorothea Lange photographed women whose circumstances were far more impoverished than the women on the pages of *Emergence*, but who exemplified strength and survivability. The closest in age and style may be Judy Dater, a California photographer who has been photographing urban women in a similar fashion for at least ten years (Some of her images can be seen in *Women and Other Visions*, Dater and Wellpott, Morgan and Morgan, 1975, and in *The Woman's Eye*, 1973, Alfred Knopf).

Secondly, I take exception to MacAdams' and Millet's proclamations about "saviors," "our generation of women," "avatars", etc. Look at the women in these pages. Are they the embodiment of characteristics feminists must have? I question the idealization of this kind of strength. Many of the women in this book have taken on the characteristics of men, but in exaggerated fashion. They *do* look strong. But are we to be strong in isolation from the rest of humanity? Does strength mean indifference? Can't we be strong without being hard? I don't wish to be divisive — there are conflicts enough without adding to them. But I don't see that the "new



breed" of women should be a variation on being male. The characteristics of personality as well as sexuality (if the two are separate at all) should be a matter of individual choice or proclivity. The idealization of any one set of traits is a step backward. The word "avatar" is especially irritating. Millet is saying that we now have, embodied in these women, something worthy of worship and exaltation. What kind of growth and equality is that? I thought we had finished with idolatry. No thanks, Kate: if I ever feel the need of an avatar or a savior I would at least prefer to choose my own.

Nonetheless, Cynthia MacAdams has put together a fascinating collection of portraits. They are direct, real, and expressive. Each and every photograph could stand alone without introduction or explanation. And if, in reading this book, we question the directions we are taking, so much the better.

The real contribution of *Emergence* may be that it forcefully contradicts the vision from the commercial world. These women are women who *see*, and who care not at all how they are seen — from passive to active. There is a constant barrage of images from the media that depict women in roles not of their own choosing — women whose sensuality can be used to sell a product. The women in *Emergence* choose their own roles, and use their sensuality for their own purposes.

After Ninety, by Imogene Cunningham. Introduction by Margaretta Mitchell. J.J. Douglas, 1977. \$16.95 cloth.

What a pleasure to find this book! *After Ninety*, by Imogen Cunningham is a collection of portraits, comparable in a few ways to *Emergence*, but in a very few. Imogen Cunningham was 93 when she died in June of 1976. She had been photographing for more than sixty years when she began (at 92) to make and gather together the portraits of her contemporaries that are included in this



book. Obviously she, like MacAdams, chose to photograph those people whose characteristics she admired and respected. Her "survivors" were strong, active, interested people who had suffered as many defeats as they had enjoyed triumphs, and had not given in to the defeats. These are not old people living out their years in the passive isolation so common to the aged. They represent a celebration of life — life that is strong enough to accommodate and to accept death. This may have been Imogen's own, typically direct way of dealing with her own approaching death. Someone once remarked that Imogen Cunningham was a teenager for the first 89 years of her life. Nonetheless, she was a realist. Death, however, is the last thing you think about when you read this book and look at the remarkable people in it.

Imogen Cunningham was a woman of great vitality who was elfin and mischievous, always irreverent, and endowed with a quick, incisive wit. She was a humanist. Her respect for each individual is evident in all her portraits, although she was not above taking a jab at the ego for those who got a bit pompous. The book is peppered with her taped comments about the people she photographed. These captions give more insight into the interaction between sitter and photographer, as well as a healthy dose of wit and balance. They add a



welcome dimension to the portraits. The caption over a bespectacled, goateed gentlemen with a carnation in his buttonhole reads, "I was telling Dr. Cookingham my medical history during the sitting, and he fell asleep twice. He was stone deaf." Her mischievousness shows in the words over a picture of her former husband, Roi Partridge (they were divorced in the '30's): "Of the group of prints of my ex-husband from this session, the one he liked the least was with the cow's skull, so I decided to include it." Another page shows "a distinguished radiobiologist who asked me to photograph her. I wasn't taking on commissions any more, but I did it because she didn't care if she looked old, and she didn't hate her face." Imogen's matter-of-fact acceptance of death is mirrored by a quote over a strong portrait of a famous pianist (Martha Eidler) who was more than ninety. "She had just undergone an operation for cancer, and she refused further treatment. She said, 'I might as well die when I'm supposed to,' and I said, 'You're right.'"

I mentioned that *After Ninety* was comparable in some ways to *Emergence*. The subjects in both are strong individuals. They are, in both, survivors. But the people in Imogen's book are survivors of years of living and of distilling their thoughts. They have come to terms with themselves and with their world. They are not defiant, neither are they beaten. They pursue their own particular interests even into old age. Most of them do not care how they are seen, but they do look as if they care. There is a warmth and humanness about all of them. When I look through the pages of this book, I want to meet the people she has chosen to photograph: I would like to spend some time with them and share their thoughts. Even the feistiest of them look approachable. I didn't have those feelings about most of the subjects in MacAdams' book.

In the introductions to both books there is discussion about the strength and uniqueness of the photographers, but their lifestyles and philosophies differed considerably. I'm sure that if Cunningham could hear MacAdams talk about her tai chi, zazen, macrobiotics, kundalini yoga, astrology, scientology and Reighian therapy, she would turn on her heels snappily and simply get back to work. Cunningham's philosophy was to get as much work done each day as possible; work, play, and growth were one and the same thing. She claimed she had no answers for those who came seeking some bit of wisdom. She kept her "feet on the ground and her hands in the dirt." As for religion — when a preacher visited her in the hospital a few days before her death and wanted her to

fill out a form asking what religion she was, she raised herself up in her bed and said, "Haven't chosen one yet." Imogen was a free spirit, independent, hard-working, constantly in touch with her own sources and with the many people who found her company exhilarating, interesting, unpredictable, helpful and enjoyable. She would not have needed the circular routes to self-knowledge that MacAdams travels because she never lost contact with her real self.

At the risk of being classified a reactionary feminist, I would opt for Imogen and her contemporaries if I needed avatars. Their reality is one I can empathize with.

Photos on page 42 are from *Emergence*: centre, self-portrait of Cynthia MacAdams; left, painter Judy Chicago; right, actress Susan Tyrrell. Page 43, from *After Ninety*: centre, detail from drawing "Imogen Photographing" by Ruth Asawa; left, poet and painter Helen Salz; right, pianist Martha Eider.

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Pirouettes and Falls

review by Sharon Nicoll

Dancing Girls and Other Stories, by Margaret Atwood. McClelland and Stewart, 1977. \$10.95 cloth.

The first story in *Dancing Girls* is slight but amusing. It is also short — not asking its subject to bear more weight than it can — a good aperitif. Unfortunately, it's followed by "The Man From Mars" whose protagonist is uninvolved and uninvolved throughout. She is followed around by a foreigner and her response to him is muddled by her fear of racism. Moreover, his attentions give her an unprecedented mystery in the eyes of her friends and in her own eyes. The ideas are interesting but the character of Christine is not and they cannot survive her.

"Polarities" is better. The principal female character has energy, perhaps because she is mad, and Atwood gets in a few pokes at the liberal conscience, Canadian Nationalism among university professors and male chauvinism. The loneliness and isolation of the American protagonist is quite moving, though Atwood cannot be accused of oversubtlety in presenting it: at the end

when he is alone at the zoo and asks a woman a question she answers, "You from around here?"

Like the protagonists in the preceding stories, the central character in "Under Glass" is a loser. She perhaps trembles a little too decoratively on the edge of madness, but she is real and she is aware. Like other Atwood characters, she extrapolates frightening fantasies from ordinary things and situations, perhaps to convince herself by her own fear that she's alive, or perhaps just in an effort to make herself invulnerable to an unpredictable world.

The protagonist in "The Grave of the Famous Poet" not only does this too, she is ironically aware that she does: "If I'd had more sleep last night I'd be able to frighten myself this way". Her awareness doesn't keep her from spinning disasters out of ordinary situations, however. As her lover is about to climb onto a second story porch her response is: "I turn my head away, I don't want to watch. It will be such an effort, the police, I'll have to explain what I was doing here, why he was climbing and fell." A complex and interesting woman, she switches from wishing things to stay as they are to a sad awareness that they cannot, from blaming her lover for what's gone wrong in their relationship to acknowledging that they are not meant for each other: "We love each other, that's true, whatever it means, but we aren't good at it: for some it's a talent, for others only an addiction." This is Atwood at her perceptive, economic best and it's one of the two best stories in the collection.

The remaining stories, with a few exceptions, are more "idea" pieces that never overcome their predictable framework. "A Travel Mystery" is perhaps the worst of these. The protagonist, a woman who has trouble feeling "real", is left in a "does she or doesn't she" murder and cannibalism situation, which is robbed of whatever impact it might have had by the character's being only a type. The idea is neither powerful enough, nor original enough to withstand the lack of characterization.

"When it Happened", "The Resplendent Quetzal" and even "Rape Fantasies", despite Atwood's conscious use of the popularity of the subject, also suffer from tired ideas with nothing in characterization or situation to justify dragging them out of mothballs. "Training" is more interesting, perhaps because how one responds to the severely handicapped has been less thoroughly explored than "after the disaster" (When it Happened) or "how losing a child affects a relationship" (The Resplendent Quetzal). But in this story too, clichés abound: the boy pushed to follow in the

career footsteps of his father and grandfather, pushed to be athletic (Roy's mother pointing out he's "the sensitive one" will bring an answering flinch to the breast of anyone who has had to hear those smug knowing labels) — and there's even a kid's kiss in which braces get stuck! Roy's final recognition that laughter may be a necessary response is rendered perhaps unnecessarily poignant by his favorite cripple's catching him at it. "Dancing Girls" is also redolent of *déjà vu* — predictable digs at the racism of the masses, the paralysis of the "liberal-minded", but despite the clichés one is again reminded of just how acute Atwood's dry observations can be:

She could see he was drowning but there was nothing she could do. Unless you were very good at it you shouldn't even try, she was wise enough to know that. All you could do for the drowning was to make sure you were not one of them.

"Lives of the Poets" presents a self-pitying poet given to melodrama and gratuitous contempt for those around her. She lacks the ironic self-awareness that is the saving grace of some of Atwood's characters. The story may appeal to poets or audiences who've been there, however. Similarly, "Giving Birth" may have some resonance for those who've done it.

"Hair Jewellery" is an excellent story whose ending is weak only because the story itself is so strong. A woman looks back with compassion, understanding and some amusement at her younger self and the man she was with. When she says she would never want to be twenty-one again she is convincing: "Surrounded now by the doleful young, I can only feel grateful for having escaped, hopefully forever (for I no longer believe in reincarnation) from the intolerable bondage of being twenty-one." But when she is finished her story, she is less interesting than she was when she was telling it. Perhaps this is deliberate, but I hope not. Despite the ending, this story is possibly the best in the collection: it is marvellously written. Here the central character talks about the "youthful" fears many Atwood characters never outgrow:

If, as had happened several times, my love was requited, if it became a question of the future, of making a decision that would lead inevitably to the sound of one's beloved shaving with an electric razor while one scraped congealed egg from his breakfast plate, I was filled with panic. My academic researches had made me familiar with the moment at which one's closest friend and most trusted companion grows fangs or turns into a bat; this moment was expected, and held few terrors for me. Far more disconcerting was that other moment, when the scales would fall from my eyes

and my current lover would be revealed not as a demigod or a monster, impersonal and irresistible, but as a human being. What Psyche saw with the candle was not a god with wings but a pigeon-chested youth with pimples, and that's why it took her so long to win her way back to true love. It is easier to love a daemon than a man, though less heroic.

Atwood excels at this kind of presentation. The disillusioned romantic, her self-deprecation perhaps suspect, her tone ironic almost to the point of nastiness, with a controlled build to the vivid undercutting image, views life with a cynicism only somewhat relieved, in this instance, by amusement.

There is some very good writing in this collection and there are a few good stories, but the mix is too much in favour of the mediocre and even the bad. A friend of mine suggested that perhaps Atwood just publishes too much. Perhaps she does.

Sharon Nicoll's best friend says: Nicoll is nobody in particular. But she sure is a snob.

MORE BOOKS

Men and Women of the Corporation, by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Basic Books, 1977. \$14.50.

Why are women excluded from the upper levels of most organizations? Is it because of women's inadequacies, men's perversities, or some combination of both? Rosabeth Kanter compellingly argues that it is none of these. Rather, organizations themselves are the villains that limit women's opportunities and experiences.

Kanter develops her argument through a detailed study of "Industrial Supply Corporation" (Indsco), a U.S. multinational firm employing over 50,000 people. Over a five-year period, Kanter had extensive contact with Indsco as a consultant and researcher. Her systematic observations, surveys, and personal discussions with individuals are interwoven to give an account of life at Indsco from both a theoretical and human perspective.

Indsco is no better and no worse



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than other organizations. Large, hierarchical and bureaucratic, it is attempting to respond to the social changes and pressures of the 1970's. As a result, the organizational environment which is created for its employees is good for some — and bad for many, particularly women.

What characteristics of an organization make it the villain? Kanter focusses

“Bossiness” is the response of any powerless leader and women bosses are more likely to be in relatively powerless leadership situations.

on three that she sees as crucial: opportunity (the patterns of organizational mobility and promotion), power (the capacity to mobilize resources to accomplish tasks), and proportions (the social composition of people in the same situation). These three characteristics explain individual responses to organizational life — responses that are common to both men and women.

For example, previous research has indicated that women are more likely to be interested in the social and interpersonal aspects of their jobs than are men. Is this a sex difference — or a manifestation of one? Kanter suggests it is not. Instead, it is the response of any individual whose mobility upward in the organization is limited. People with blocked opportunities may respond by forming cliques which give the individual reassurance and protection. Since, on the average, women are more likely than men to be blocked, they are more likely to focus on social satisfactions in the work environment.

Similarly, individuals respond to situations of power or powerlessness in common ways, regardless of sex. That women bosses are seen as “bossy” and over-controlling is due to the fact that women are more likely to be in relatively powerless leadership situations, and “bossiness” is the response of any powerless leader.

The chapter on proportions is particularly useful for an understanding of the difficulties involved in improving the situation for women. Groups of one social type (the dominants) respond to a newcomer of another social type (the token) in certain systematic and predictable ways. These responses in turn lead to predictable responses on the part of the token. When the dominant group is male and the token female, these responses are of such a nature as to reinforce sex-role stereotypes. Furthermore, “successful” adaptation by any one token does not necessarily help those who come after her, and tokenism becomes self-perpetuating.

In some ways, the concepts that apparent male-female differences in work orientation are due to differences in

organizational level, and that there is a basic conflict between individual and organizational needs, are not new ones. Kanter's very real contribution is in linking and extending the two in such a way as to make clearer the nature of the factors which affect and limit women. In addition, her perspective allows her to provide new insights into familiar phenomena and past research in such a

way as to stimulate both the more-knowledgeable and the less-knowledgeable reader.

This is a scholarly book, however, Kanter's continuous integration of theoretical perspective with comments drawn from the people of Indsco makes her scholarly points accessible to everyone, while making the experiences of the Indsco people understandable, real and involving.

Kanter's proposals for change are, as she admits, reformist rather than revolutionary. Her rationale is that it is the less-advantaged who must pay the price of the delay which the (more-advantaged) revolutionaries advocate. After sharing the lives of the Indsco people, one can only hope that reforms will not be long in coming.

Dallas Cullen

Saturday's Stepchildren: Canadian Women in Business, by Sybil Shack. The Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 1977.

Who is a businesswoman? According to Sybil Shack's “personal report of the feelings, thoughts and experiences of businesswomen,” a woman in business is a woman working in finance, trade and commerce. She can be self-employed, or work for a small or large corporation (at any level). In the first chapter the “businesswomen” we meet include a receptionist, a private secretary, a bargain basement salesclerk, a part-time supermarket checkout clerk, the vice-president of a publishing house, and the owner of an art gallery.

This list illustrates the problem with *Saturday's Stepchildren*. Judging from the advice in the last five pages, the book's intended audience is high school women. Its purpose (I assume — the purpose and audience are never stated) is to show these young women the range of possibilities open to them in the “business world,” and encourage them to enter this world. But because of Ms. Shack's definition of “business,” the picture and advice are confusing and, at times, contradictory.

The experiences and problems of the woman in a secretarial pool are different than those of the woman in a managerial position. Among other things, the secretary is generally in a subordinate position in interactions with men; her organizational position limits her chances for promotion. These factors reinforce the sex-role stereotypes that have narrowed her occupational opportunities in the first place. The woman in a managerial position is somewhat freer of such organizational constraints, but faces a different set of problems. As Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim point out, *The Managerial Woman* is in a foreign country — she lives in a world designed by men for men. Even though she is willing or able to play by the rules of the game, she may not know what they are. Following Ms. Shack's advice, “If you see changes that can be made, make your suggestions through the proper channels, and constructively, being careful of the sensibilities of those whose policies you are challenging” (p. 176) means one thing at the top of the organizational hierarchy; it means quite another at the bottom.

Not only are the “frustrations, satisfactions, qualities and qualifications needed for success” (some of the topics covered) different for each of these women, they are also different from those of the woman who chooses or is forced to work part-time in the “business world.” All their experiences are different from those of the woman who is self-employed, be it by doing some form of paid work in her home, or by incorporating her own business, a distinction which Ms. Shack also does not make.

For the reader who has some knowledge of the issues regarding women's employment (by being employed, for example), the book offers few new insights. While it is entertaining to watch Ms. Shack skewer sexist nonsense, must we be told again that attitudes change slowly, that we need more day care, that we need equal pay for work of equal value . . . You can finish the list yourself.

Dallas Cullen

Dallas Cullen teaches a course in Women in Business at the University and is on the faculty at the University of Alberta. She teaches a course on women in business.

A Population of One, by Constance Beresford-Howe. Macmillan of Canada, 1977. \$10.95 cloth.

Willy Doyle, the single, over-thirty and somewhat inept heroine of *A Population of One*, could be an interesting and appealing character for she harbours the same feeling of insecurity that resides deep inside of

many women. Early in the novel we discover that Willy's most important objective is to "marry somebody as promptly as possible — or at the very least to have an affair." The almost desperate nature of Willy's determination to lose the albatross of her virginity virtually predetermines the unsatisfactory relationships she has. Fittingly, she does not succeed in her aim and at the end of the book, wiser but still virgin, she does come to an acceptance of herself.

Willy is a pessimist who thinks of herself as an optimist. Her anxious dissatisfaction is certainly a common feeling but there is a self-centered mundaneness to her narration that makes it rather pitiful. Incidents that are intended to be humorous fall flat and the reader often suspects that Willy's laughter, especially at herself, is false. We sympathize with Willy's loneliness ("My identity is a vacuum; it bounces off no other human presence"), but at the same time it is clear that Willy lacks discrimination. The men she chooses as the executors of her project are as hopeless as her own clumsiness.

Perhaps it is Willy's total lack of rage that makes her so bland. As a first person narrator, she is constantly telling us how and what she feels, but we get very little real sense of her feelings because she never *shows* them. Willy's tendency to define herself in terms of what others think of her gives rise to daydreams. At one point she says, "If life were only more like literature, there'd be a whole lot more satisfaction in living." Willy is not the butt of some cosmic joke, as she thinks, but at the mercy of her own self-denial; she fails to realize that life is a fiction that we create and orchestrate ourselves. Beresford-Howe appears to suffer from much the same delusion. In her attempt to create a totally realistic and life-like novel, she deadens her story. Without the quickening touch of "fiction" (and after all, life is very strange), the story is mundane and somewhat dull.

It is true that Willy ultimately comes to terms with her aloneness. As a depiction of a woman who feels the need for human contact, this novel is both realistic and important, but the writing lacks spice and energy. Beresford-Howe avoids portraying any real emotion in her character. Although Willy finally accepts loneliness, there is little in the creation of her self-deprecating solitude that leads the reader to a new and fresh understanding of loneliness as a part of life.

Aritha van Herk
Aritha van Herk is Branching Out book editor and a graduate student in English at the University of Alberta. She recently completed a novel.

The Box Garden, by Carol Shields.
McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977. \$9.95 cloth.

The title of *The Box Garden* clearly suggests the book's most notable qualities. Barbara Amiel lamented in a review in Maclean's that *The Box Garden* does not deal with vast landscapes, or unveil the inner lives of popes and presidents, but presents a detailed, small-scale picture of the lives of average people. They are not as hopelessly trapped in middle-class mediocrity as Amiel suggests, but are recognizably ordinary people with believable problems. I found the effect enlightening rather than claustrophobic.

The narrator and most interesting character of *The Box Garden* is Charleen Forrest, a 38-year-old divorcee who makes ends meet financially with a part-time job and small child-support payments, and spiritually by writing poetry. She has published four books, and carefully cultivates a poetic persona for the benefit of her friends. She has not, however, written a line for two years. Like the child-support payments, Charleen's poetry is a legacy of her relationship with her husband, who is now finding himself on a commune in rural Ontario. "The truth is, I am a sort of phony poet; poetry was grafted artificially onto my lazy unconnectedness, and it was Watson — yes Watson — who did the grafting. Watson made me a poet . . . by his frenzied, almost hysterical efforts to educate me."

Having confessed that a game-playing attitude to language and a "daily injection, administered like Vitamin B, of early Eliot" gave her the techniques of a poet, Charleen admits that Watson provided her with a subject as well: ". . . after Watson left us . . . poetry became the means by which I saved my life. I stopped assembling; I discovered that I could bury in my writing the greater part of my pain and humiliation."

Not surprisingly, Charleen's two poetically-barren years coincide with her increasing emotional involvement with a definitely prosaic orthodontist named Eugene. *The Box Garden* explores Charleen's entanglements with two completely different men, and resolves her confusion through some very satisfying plotting.

The book's action takes place during a week-long visit to Toronto where Charleen assists at her mother's wedding and Eugene attends a dentist's convention. During the week Charleen meets her ex-husband long enough to inform him that their son has been kidnapped and found again, and to say good-bye forever. She also discovers the mystery of Brother Adam, whose sayings, like

her mother's, "form a perpetual long-playing record on my inner ear turntable." By the end of the book, one can sense her turning away from the obsession with the past which fuels her frequently self-denigrating internal monologue, and looking more realistically to the future.

The internal conversation, in spite of the fact that it so often revolves around Charleen's sense of inferiority, is the major attraction of *The Box Garden*. Charleen's observations of herself and others are clear and her descriptions pointed. Of her friend Greta, another relic of Watson's era, Charleen comments: "Information sleeps beneath her pores, for she is an intelligent woman, but it is always disjointed, disassociated; she's never been the same since she underwent shock treatment."

Shock treatment *The Box Garden* is not, but it is a well-written, wittily observed book which manages to comment on most of the human-potential fads of the 1960's while maintaining a personal concern for human development.

Marylee Morton

Marylee Morton recently completed her M.A. in Canadian literature at the University of Calgary.

Kerr, Luella. *Tenth Muse*. Fiddlehead; 1977, 86 pp. \$5.00, paper.

With *Tenth Muse*, Luella Kerr demonstrates that contemporary poetry can celebrate life without trivializing it, can be spirited without being trite, and that the tone can be happy, yet still move the reader.

Kerr doesn't deny the existence of sorrow and misery. Her approach to life — and to poetry — is evident in the following poem: "It is good to be concerned/with violation/Not asiatic earth-innocence/and 'the people forever guilty'/but that/within our means/we practice religiously/to hold that which we have learned/with one hand/while giving it away with the other.

The range of subject matter in *Tenth Muse* is virtually unlimited. For Kerr, any experience is worthy of poetic interpretation: conventions of arts administrators or hairdressers, places, people, events, thoughts about poetry, love, spiritual awareness. Kerr writes with the confidence of a woman content with her life and her calling. She writes with humour, delighting in word play; she uses rhyme effectively and has an enviable sense of rhythm. In "Sonnets in Memory of John Keats" and other traditionally structured poems, she handles the form with ease — always maintaining her lively sense of spontaneity.

Tenth Muse is Luella Kerr's fifth book of poetry (of which three appeared under the name Luella Booth). Fiddlehead provides an invaluable service in exposing the works of less established poets to a small, interested public. But now the time has come for Kerr to be published by a larger company — one that can afford to give her work the promotion and distribution it deserves.

Barbara Novak

Barbara Novak is a freelance writer and editor in Toronto.

A Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood for Women on Their Own, by Patricia Ashdown-Sharp. Vintage, 1977. \$3.95, paper.

This book was written for all women who find themselves pregnant and alone. It is equally informative to the unmarried teenager and the recently widowed woman. Ms. Ashdown-Sharp obviously feels that the standard references are couple-oriented and she has filled the gap with a comprehensive text that deals with diagnosing pregnancy, and the alternatives available once the pregnancy is confirmed.

The author presents the same information that is available in many other books, but she deals particularly with the situation of the woman "on her own." She covers abortion and adoption in as much depth as childbirth and child-rearing, yet always remains objective.

For Canadians, there is a major drawback to this book as a reference, since much of it is devoted to identifying American agencies that might be of assistance in different situations and to pertinent laws of individual states. Also, the chapter on abortion presupposes an abortion-on-demand law which is non-existent in our country. Nonetheless, the serious reader could use these lists as starting points for investigating sources in her own area.

In the past, pregnant women on their own have been urged to seek marriage as a solution. Ms. Ashdown-Sharp's convincing assertion that there are other alternatives implies the need for a change in society's thinking. Only new attitudes will allow the emotional and financial future of the single mother to become more secure.

A Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood for Women on Their Own clearly defines the available options for women who find themselves pregnant and alone.

Mary Riskin

Mary Riskin lives in Edmonton.

STILL MORE BOOKS

by Aritha van Herk

Mirror Mirror, by Kathryn Weibel. Anchor Press, 1977. \$4.50, paper.

We see ourselves everywhere, or rather, we see what we're supposed to be like. *Mirror Mirror* is an interesting but somewhat superficial study of how women have been represented in popular culture through history: fiction, television, movies, advertising, magazines and fashion. Weibel's study does make clear that popular culture reflects women as passive and generally inferior creatures, but she does not deal with the ramifications of this stereotyping. That the media still wants us to be housewives or sexpots isn't unusual; it's not convenient for them to portray women as individuals. As a historical survey of how women have been portrayed, this book is valid, but that's where it stops. What are the solutions? Is there a way to change the often-distorted image television, movies, and advertising project? Is there a way to change what popular culture does to mold us in that image? Weibel doesn't touch these questions.

We know how the media portrays us. What are we going to about it?

The Woman's Dress for Success Book, by John T. Molloy. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977. \$12.50, cloth.

Hide your breasts and cover your buttocks, women! *The Woman's Dress for Success Book* tells us that the only way we can compete with men is if we dress to neutralize our sexuality. We must be neither too masculine nor too feminine, but neutral. Of course, this book is written by a man. Molloy's research has proven (so he claims) that the most successful uniform (yes!) a woman can wear if she wants to get ahead in the male-dominated business world is a dark, skirted suit and blouse. (Shades of the man in the grey flannel suit?)

Molloy's research is convincing, but the question remains: do we want to neutralize ourselves? Should we give up our individuality to adopt what he claims should be our "uniform"? Of course, our chances for success will increase, but should we compromise our sexuality in order to "get ahead"? Molloy's suggestions are interesting, but he operates from the male premise that women are sex objects unless they dress to conceal their sexuality. If we cannot be accepted for our ability instead of our

appearance, this could be just another way of classifying women and keeping us "in our place." This book is not overtly sexist. It is true that men dominate the power structure and that very often they control a women's advancement. Nonetheless, is it useful for us to dress in such a way to downplay our sexuality? Would this pretense be a different kind of acquiescence to the male power structure?

Molloy does make some interesting points about the fashion industry and its deliberate exploitation of women. He has done experiments that show that women's clothing usually does not last as long or perform as well as men's clothing does.

If you are determined to be the president of your company, this book can help you to dress the part, but take it with a grain of salt. We should not have to deny the fact that we're women to gain equal treatment.

The New Sexual Etiquette for Women, edited by Patricia Holt. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977. \$9.25, cloth.

What is the new sexual etiquette for women? Narcissism, according to this book. These are the collective thoughts of a group of women ranging in age from 27 to 48 who believe they have found a new and better way of coping with sexuality. The attitude expressed is wry, humorous and irreverent, but while this book offers some refreshing insight, some of its premises cannot possibly be taken seriously, e.g., that the length and size of a man's hands correspond to the length and size of his penis when erect. Very funny. The chapters on intercourse are even funnier. They advise women to depend on their own sensations while he "comes at you like an armoured tank with his bazooka at the ever-ready."

What is distressing about this "get yourself in hand" manual is first of all the collective assumption that men are "dongs" and not much more. Not a very sensitive approach. Secondly, feminism is dismissed as something that "doesn't work"; indeed, feminism is put in the same class as the "total Woman" concept — they're just options. At this point I threw the book across the room.

There is humour in this book, alright. There is even a little insight, but under the surface runs a "middle-of-the-road" acquiescence that is frightening. "Take it," this book says. "Get your boss coffee and then turn around and look in the mirror and say, 'I'm so wonderful!'"

Perhaps this book offers an option, but it's no solution. Narcissism will get us nowhere.

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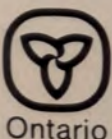
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