# Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

Volume V Number 3 1978 $1.25

## Environment Issue

# Subscribe!

# Branching Out

# Now in its Fifth Year

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

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

of *Branching Out* to:

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

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

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

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

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

of *Branching Out* to:

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

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

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

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

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

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

# Branching Out

## Columns



## Features: Women and Environment



## Fiction, Poetry and Art



**cover:** "Matinee" by Cathy Hobart serigraph, 20" x 20", 1976.




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

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

Send all correspondence to Box 4098, Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 4S8. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We review unsolicited manuscripts from Canadian women only. Subscription rates in Canada, $6.00 per year, $11.00 for two years for individuals; $10.00 per year, $20.00 for two years for institutions. Add $1.00 per year for U.S. rates, $2.00 per year for overseas rates. Advertising rates available on request.

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

Typesetting by Superior Typesetting Ltd.

Printed by Alpine Press, Edmonton.

Second Class Mail Registration Number 3517, Volume V, Number 3, 1978.

**ISSN 0382 - 5264**

# editorial

Environment and ecology are for most people words from the 60's when affinity for the land, the sea and wildlife was "in." The prolific "Ban the Bomb" and "Let it be" posters, buttons and bumper stickers have long since had their slogans replaced by other, trendier sayings. Now unless you subscribe to *Mother Earth Catalogue*, *Nature Canada* or *Harrowsmith* chances are unlikely you will encounter any stories of back to the earth or cleaning up the environment. One could readily surmise that any public interest in nature and surroundings had disappeared along with Haight Ashbury.

While I confess these topics are no longer popular, interest and concern about our surroundings has not disappeared. People are now simply looking in different directions. Many groups, whether their concern is construction of highrises or battering of women, are becoming conscious of deep rooted but subtle underlying reasons for the planning and development decisions in their neighbourhoods and on a national scale. One factor becoming clear is the role of women.

Why the emphasis on women and the environment? It is true, all people suffer from pollution, overcrowding, poor public transit and high housing costs. But women are especially heavy losers. Falling at the bottom of the economic ladder women are left with few choices of shelter, particularly when they are single parents or widows. Few women hold positions of authority and thus as a group we have no direct input into decisions about construction of nuclear power plants, expropriation of housing for expansion of roadways or development of land without provision of social services or amenities. Women clearly are not only suffering the consequences of bad planning decisions but have few voices speaking on their behalf. The response to letters we sent to people working on a professional and volunteer basis in all parts of Canada tells us they have discovered special needs and talents in women. They are finding that women have unique information and experiences which must be explored.

International Women's Year has come and gone. The ecology movement has lost some of its bite. But just because governments have cut off their token support for shelters for battered women and people are tired of hearing about the Berger Commission does not make the problems go away. I hope the articles published here will encourage you to participate in the search for new solutions.

**by Linda Duncan**

**New Column**

In this issue we introduce a new column, "printed matter" which will include news stories of national importance and other short items. We invite your comments and suggestions on this and other features in the magazine.

---

*Margaret Bremner, whose illustration appears at left, was a "founding parent" of the Saskatoon Environmental Society and did graphics for the environment magazine* Probe. *She also designed the covers for the 1977, 1978 and 1979 "Herstory" calendars. She now lives in Rimouski, Quebec.*

# letters

**Swell Review**

The review in *Branching Out* of my book *Right Hand, Left Hand* has given me that good warm feeling — a sitting by the fire over glowing embers feeling. It was good of the editor to give the book to Joyce Marshall, a participant. A number of the reviews have been by half-baked, youngish smart alecks who know nothing of the period. This review could teach them how to approach a book: "What is the author's intention?" (Not what they *think* it should be) and "How well does she fulfill her aim?" (Not, she should have done this and that.) Joyce Marshall understood the book beautifully; its strengths and weaknesses.

Not wishing to quibble, I think it amusing that not only Joyce Marshall, but friends whose letters I quoted *exactly* now want to wash their hands of the "lingo" of the time. We all said "Swell"! Why not record it? We were all struggling in a culturally barren, deprived country to see literature in the context of social change . . . So our judgements were often confused.

*Dorothy Livesay, Winnipeg*

**Hype Not Appreciated**

The photography and layout (in the last issue) are stunning, the drawings in the film animation piece are beautifully appropriate. The sketches reveal the care and respect women artists can have toward each other. The article is a demonstration of what collective effort and individual achievement can mean without being boring or competitive.

There were some things in the issue I didn't like, such as wonky lines in the printing which I suppose were an accident. More seriously, I found the interviews of Marian Engel and Aritha van Herk reminiscent of the kind of media hype these two writers, I am sure, wish to avoid when they don't have to be "on" the air. Surely these two wonderful artists deserve some more unconventional celebration.

*Brig Anderson, Vancouver*

**Diary Begun**

I thought Barbara Martineau's article about some of us who are women animators was very good and very fair. I like Barbara's conclusion about the solitary nature of our work, that it is an adaptation in part to the system of production of animation which isn't geared to giving many people control. I enjoyed reading other articles in the magazine. After reading about diary keeping I have begun to keep a diary of visual impressions, little sketches of sights to remember.

*Caroline Leaf, Montreal*

**Classification a Danger**

After twenty-nine years as a professional artist, I believe there is a grave danger in the sociological approach in which the works by women artists are classified (*Branching Out*, Vol. 5, No. 2). I find my own creativity involves research and searching my intuition, in depth, to find my own imagery and style. The 'form-giving' act of creating art is ever fluid and classification makes the results static. The danger is that others will come along and see the art from the outside aspects without any sense of reality.

*Sarah Jackson, Halifax*

**Softening Needed**

I had two intense reactions to the last issue, both positive. One was to Barbara Martineau's animation article, which I found excellent. I think the film department is consistently the best — I should really say my favourite — part of *Branching Out*. My second reaction was to the letter from the woman who criticized you for ignoring motherhood. Her comment about how biological roles endure while "changing roles" are just surface, was very eloquent.

Sometimes *Branching Out's* tone is determinedly unemotional, and I think that's a mistake. You don't often talk about sex, love, and marriage in positive ways and that goes against a lot of women's ingrained feelings. I think you could soften and make an attempt to touch those women's lives and hearts without disgracing yourselves in any way.

*Anne McLean, Montreal*




# IRIW Demands Changes

**by Lorraine Hughes**

Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act states that a treaty Indian woman, upon her marriage to a non-treaty man, is not entitled to be registered as an Indian. She loses her right to own or inherit property on her reserve, her children are not recognized as being Indian, and she is prevented from returning home even if ill, widowed, divorced or separated. She loses the right to free medical and dental care, free education, and exemption from taxes guaranteed to Indians by treaties signed in the early 1800's. The ultimate wrong is that she is not allowed to be buried on the reserve of her ancestors.

If a treaty man marries a non-treaty woman, she and her children become Indian and gain all these benefits lost by the Indian woman.

Incredibly the government has excluded the Indian Act from the reaches of the new Human Rights Act. So the Indian woman who has lost her status in this manner is also denied recourse on the basis of sex discrimination.

This discriminatory clause is the basis for the continuing efforts of Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW), who are determined to change this law that has oppressed Indian women for 109 years.

In a recent trip to Ottawa Jenny Margetts, national head of IRIW, presented Minister of Indian Affairs Hugh Faulkner with 15 resolutions outlining changes to the Indian Act.

IRIW's resolution that one-quarter blood line be used as a criterion for determining Indian status was met with surprise by Faulkner who said he doubts that existing bands have enough land to cope with this demand.

The IRIW resolution paper suggests that the Department of Indian Affairs allot extra funds and land to band councils to meet increases in enrollment when the status question is resolved.

A matrimonial properties contract to be endorsed by the band councils was another proposal made by IRIW. The contract would specify that a non-Indian spouse has the right to live on the reserve but would not acquire Indian status nor rights such as owning or inheriting band property, voting in band elections, registering as a band member or receiving annuities or royalties that other band members get.

Another resolution was that a status Indian woman who marries an Indian from another reserve should be allowed to stay on her reserve if she wishes and that the children of that marriage be given a choice of membership in either band at age 21.

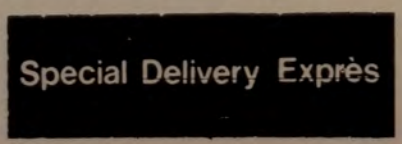
Finally, IRIW ask that a personal letter of apology from the Prime Minister be sent to all those status Indians who had involuntarily lost their status.

Jenny Margetts feels that the Indian Rights for Indian Women is a united group working for a common goal and any success they have is because of the strength they have as women. Margetts has personally experienced the alienation of family and friends from her reserve. She feels that the families of IRIW members suffer at times at the hands of Band Council because of their efforts to regain status.

"Any success we have is because we fight as one body, not against our brothers and sisters" she concludes.

Faulkner said he will introduce a proposal in Parliament this fall to amend Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act.

*Readers wanting to know more about the status of Indian women in Canada can send for a free copy of Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus. Write to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R5.*




# RELIEF CENTRE FUNDS DENIED

**by Mary Anne Erickson**

Women in Victoria expressed shock when Saanich Mayor Mel Couvelier voted against a fund request from the Victoria Rape Relief Centre because he objected to the clothing worn by Centre spokeswoman Trisha MaryMoon.

Couvelier voted to turn down the request for $16,500 claiming "I'm not so sure I want some woman in a low-slung blouse standing in front of a bunch of Grade 12 students giving a long dissertation on rape. I'm not even sure they're going about this the right way . . . talking to boys about it."

Speaking after the Greater Victoria Intermunicipal Committee meeting on May 9 Couvelier told Victoria Times and Daily Colonist reporters "Did you see her blouse for God's sake! The thing was down to here," gesturing to his chest. "Nobody else seemed to notice it," he added, "Maybe I'm just a dirty old man."

Trisha MaryMoon attended the meeting to answer questions regarding the request. MaryMoon wore what she considered conservative clothes, a sundress covered by a belted jacket with a scarf in the V-neckline.

Quoted in Victoria papers, MaryMoon called Couvelier's attitude incredible. She commented that the overall position of the local municipalities toward the centre's fund requests is intolerable. About Couvelier's remarks she said, "They're giving us such ridiculous reasons for turning us down. He seems to have a lot of fantasies."

Shirley Nordstrom, Status of Women Action Group spokeswoman expressed shock and anger that Couvelier would base his negative vote on his perception of MaryMoon's clothing. Various other individuals and

women's groups also sharply criticized Couvelier's statements in letters to the press and in the community.

Rowena Hunnisett of the Victoria Rape Relief Centre claims that Couvelier's remarks "perpetuate the myth that the victim asks to be raped." The centre criticized the Mayor's attitudes about rape prevention education for boys. "That's the ultimate in short-sightedness," Hunnisett remarked, "taking preventive measures is crucial." Hunnisett feels the Committee does not seriously listen to their requests. She says one member asked "What is the need for your service anyway?"

The Rape Relief Centre in Victoria has been shuttled back and forth between individual municipalities and Intermunicipal Committee in a bureaucratic two-step shuffle familiar to most women's community service groups. They are caught in a funding search which saps energy from their work with rape victims and community education. Hunnisett stated that the "whole of Rape Relief energy went into responding to Mel Couvelier for a whole week — time we cannot afford."

Rape Relief presently operates with 2 full time staff and 12 volunteers. In 1977 they handled 102 cases, plus educational work, counselling, and crisis intervention. Earlier grant requests to the Victoria Municipalities in 1976 and 1977 were also rejected. Ms. Hunnisett said funds applied for in 1978 are needed not to expand the service but to cover operational costs and a third full time salary.

When the funding committee rejected the 1978 request they did not notify Rape Relief of their decision, nor of the May 9th appeal requested by Oak Bay Ald. Shirley Dowell. Rape Relief inadvertently found out about the appeal meeting one hour before it happened and sent Trisha MaryMoon.

Victoria Rape Relief's next step was to push for another appeal of the committee decision. Nancy Goldsberry, Research Officer with the B.C. Attorney General's Department was asked by the Committee to advise them with an evaluation of the Rape Relief Centre. When they received Goldsberry's report, the committee again turned down the funding request.

Meanwhile, the staff members at Rape Relief will continue to work, as Trisha MaryMoon says, up to 100 hours per week each.



# CHEAP LABOUR

**by Maureen Hynes**

On March 6 of this year, 81 women employees of the Fleck Manufacturing Company in Centralia, Ontario went out on a legal strike that has become a symbol to both the labour movement and the women's movement in Ontario.

Of 131 employees, 125 are women. The plant manufactures small automotive wiring parts, and is 50% owned by the family of Ontario Deputy Minister of Industry and Tourism, James Fleck.

The building has rats, and the women are frequently forced to wear coats and boots while working in the winter because of the cold and water on the floor. There are complaints that the workers are repeatedly burned by spitting moulds, that overhead wire racks fall on them, and that dust levels in the plant cause sinus problems and headaches. There are usually only three working toilets. (The Industrial Safety Act in Ontario requires six toilets for the number of employees in the factory.)

And the wages? $2.85 an hour to start, *$3.24 after ten years of service*. There is no company pension plan, and few other fringe benefits.

However, the basic issue of the strike does not concern working conditions. The members of Local 1620 of the United Auto Workers at Fleck have gone out on strike because of the management's refusal to negotiate on a crucial union security clause for their first contract. The clause involves the application of the Rand Formula, which provides for compulsory union dues check-off in the employee's paycheques. In Quebec and British Columbia, the implementation of the Rand Formula is automatic in first contracts; in Ontario, it has to be won in bargaining. The Ontario Minister of Labour, Dr. Bette Stephenson, has publicly stated that the local should be guaranteed this union security clause.

From the beginning, the strike at Fleck has been viewed as "a women's strike." There seems to be unanimous agreement among the strikers that "if we were men out on strike, they'd be listening to us all right." Glenda Lewis, one of the strikers, was quoted in the *Toronto Sunday Star* as saying, "There are four or five men who work at Fleck, and not one of them came out on strike. We were paid so little because we were women — cheap labour — so this is our fight alone."

The Ontario Provincial Police has consistently maintained a strong presence at the Fleck plant, and it is this presence that has put the strike on the front pages a number of times. The week before the strike began, three members of the OPP went to the plant to outline strikers' "rights and obligations". The women were warned that improper behaviour on the picket line could put them in jail.

According to its own figures released at the beginning of June, the OPP had spent $1.2 million on policing costs for the strike. Although they send at least 40 officers to the picket line, there have been mornings when 10% of the force of over 500 men have appeared. On some occasions, the *entire* female police staff from all over the province has been present. On the morning of May 24, 140 policemen, including a 46-man crowd control squad arrived in the vicinity of the picket line. When the entry gate to the plant was not cleared, police forcibly removed picketers to assure safe entry of the non-striking workers into the plant.

On July 21, CBC radio's *As It Happens* reported that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has ruled that the United Auto Workers Union can launch four court actions. The UAW will be able to sue the Fleck Manufacturing Company, its vice-president, and a provincial police constable. The Board rules the union could argue a case that both the police and the member of provincial parliament acted outside their jurisdiction during the dispute.

UAW Canadian director Robert White says this ruling does not settle the strike, and he does not see any early end in sight for the 80 striking women at the Fleck Manufacturing Company.

Months drag by, and the women continue to draw their $45 a week strike pay. It appears to be management's intention to prolong the strike as long as possible in order to break the strength of the local. There has been a remarkable massing of opposition to the formation of this local — the direct tactics of the OPP, the rigid bargaining position of management, the lack of just legislation in the area of first contract disputes and, of course, the opposition the women confront daily, the scabs who keep the plant open. The support Fleck workers have been receiving from other locals and trade unions, from women's groups, and Members of the Provincial Parliament has been growing. It is clear that a great deal is at stake in the areas of labour relations and the economic status of women workers.

PRINTED MATTER

## Athletic Council Gives In

# *U. OF T. WOMEN WIN SOCCER RULING*

**by Maureen Hynes**

The legality of excluding women from traditionally male sports has again been tested. In a recent case at the University of Toronto, Sheila Lewis (an Actuarial Science student) and Barbara MacKay (English and History) won the right to play intramural soccer, after a year-long struggle with the University's Athletic Council.

Despite a ruling preventing women from joining intramural soccer teams, MacKay and Lewis started playing with the University College soccer team. They played three games illegally, and because of this, the team was required to forfeit the games, two of which it had won. Members of the team voted to keep them on in defiance of the Council's ruling. At this point, the Athletic Council acceded by changing the rule to allow them to finish the season. MacKay and Lewis thought the battle had been won.

However, in January, the Athletic Council again reversed its rule, putting women back into the position of playing intramural soccer illegally or not at all. With the support of Bruce Kidd on the U of T Athletic Council. Lewis and MacKay took the issue to the Student Advisory Council's Women's Commission, the University of Toronto Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Commission. They were advised by the Human Rights Commission that they did indeed have a case of discrimination on their hands, but to work through the university bodies before formally bringing the case to the Commission.

MacKay and Lewis did not need to go as far as the Human Rights Commission. At the end of April, the Athletic Council made a new regulation determining three categories of intramural sports — contact, non-contact, and co-ed. Women and men would be allowed to play in all three categories.

Abby Hoffman, a consultant to the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation and a four-time member of the Canadian Olympic Track and Field team, spoke at the university meeting organized to support women's right to play intramural soccer. She pointed out that in books and articles on contact sports, the *only* reference made to women stresses the danger and possibility of injury. In fact, the University Athletic Council had offered the feeble argument that the injury rate to women would be higher than for men, but this could not be statistically proven.

Don Harron, host of CBC-AM's national radio programme "Morningside", interviewed Sheila Lewis and Barbara MacKay in April. One of his first questions to them concerned how they protected themselves so that in future life they would be able to nurse their babies.

"We were just floored by that," said Ms. MacKay. "It was such a silly question. That sort of protection is not necessary. He either doesn't know anything about women in sports, or he doesn't know anything about soccer."

The two women will of course sign up for the University College soccer team in September, and they expect that soccer will be the sport most affected by this new ruling.



*mailbagmailbagmailbagmailbagmailbag*

*Quote from the Fredericton Daily Gleaner, New Brunswick*

*Title: Women's Duty to Stay Home*

*"I think women were brought into the world to bear children . . . any woman who decides somewhere along the line that she wants to make a life's career, that's all right, but let her forget the marriage ceremony and go out and do her bit."*

*The statement was made by Dr. J. Everett Chalmers, Minister in charge of the New Brunswick Alcohol and Drug Dependency Commission. Because of the statement several unions in the province have voted to have Dr. Chalmers removed from office. He has made great efforts to correct this unforgivable attitude, but the damage has been done. Unfortunately he has received considerable public support from some women who, perhaps defensively, applauded his statement.*

*submitted by Marie Patrick*

*First prize in the poetry category of the National Magazine Awards was given to Victoria poet Marilyn Bowering for a poem published in* Branching Out *in 1977. The cash prize of $1,000 was presented at the awards dinner in Toronto on May 11.*

*The poem, "Rose Harbour Whaling Station 1910", depicts the guilt of a whaler over the daily killing of the whale hunt. Unable to still his nightmares he turns on his wife who, in his dreams, becomes a whale.*

*Our next issue, due October 15, will concern women in sports and fitness. After several unsuccessful attempts, issue co-ordinator Elaine Butler received a press pass for one reporter to attend the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton this August. According to a Games official, our appeal occupied discussion at three consecutive meetings of the press committee. The official emphasized that our reporter should not attempt to sit in a seat in the press gallery unless it was empty. (The gallery? The seat?)*

*From her head-above-the-crowd viewpoint our reporter will be bringing us some interesting observations on women athletes in the Commonwealth Games.*

If you wish to contribute news from your area, please write to Printed Matter for guidelines. We request that clippings from other publications be sent on the entire page on which they appear. Include the name and date of the publication, and your name and address.

## AFTERNOON EPIPHANY

*Feet on the rattan matted stairs thud secretively*
*hands not holding*
*mouths whispering not sure why*
*the house is empty the house is ours*
*silence seeping everywhere*
*outside the poplar leaves trembling together*

*Truant afternoon one to savour remote here*
*the world is working*
*bees fly from the hive*
*queen in honey warm wax-lit chamber*

*The room smells quiet carpet dust undisturbed*
*human smells hiding under the blankets*
*we are still dressed*
*falling on the bed like discarded clothes*
*the motes jump up startled the impact*
*explodes musky thigh-scents from virgin wool*

*Your jeans drop and my skirt leave the socks to last*
*hair shaping down body in graceful animal patterns*
*trapped by grey fleecy socks*
*genitals exposed feet covered*
*gallant genitals swaying free*
*cocksure the feet are the obscenity*
*the ocular offense in the socks*

*I snort feathers you leap on laugh-burst sides to avenge*
*socks rubbing my skin like a whisker burn*
*fingers tickling chest pressing*
*fighting to release taut lungs burnt tissue*
*my laughter in your mouth my tongue teasing yours*

*Hands turned to small animals searching for burrows*
*five-legged creatures roaming*
*probing with blind instinct a night animal's senses*
*wet nudging sightless searching blunt nose beast*
*sensitive and flesh pink as a truffle-pig's snout*
*knows how to discover treasure in the warm dark earth*

*Open earth touched by the pulsing sun expands*
*son throbbing for sons need and knowledge*
*fear the seed turned whole*
*want them don't want them*
*straining cry breaks against the silence*
*like a wave against a seawall*
*mind escaping on the moan from the mouth cave*

*Hand creatures turned ferocious diggers gouging the passion*
*welted homes in black flesh*
*under closed lids vision stained with pulsing blood*
*leaking in cut glass tears leaking away*
*left hollow shuddering with a sudden glimpse of death.*

Darlene Quaife

*Darlene Quaife is completing a Master's degree in English at the University of Calgary. She teaches creative writing workshops at Mount Royal College.*

# Ecological Decision Making

## where politics, morality and technology meet, who makes the rules?

**interview with Susan Mayo and Susan Holtz**
**by Janet Dunbrack**

*The first thing that struck me about the Ecology Action Centre was its logo. Its essence is feminine. If the tree symbol is pulled out and down you have the symbol of woman. Compare this with any of the hundreds of current logos using arrows which are decidedly masculine and intended to convey the impression of drive or agressiveness. The Ecology Action Centre's logo invokes in me feelings of wholeness, self-containedness, growth.*

*The logo reflects many aspects of my conversation with Susan Mayo and Susan Holtz, two coordinators of Halifax's Ecology Action Centre. Susan Mayo has been general co-ordinator of the Centre since 1975. During this time, projects undertaken at the Centre have included paper and glass recycling programs, a car pooling project for Halifax and Dartmouth communities, a successful campaign against spruce budworm spraying in Cape Breton, a lobby before the Nova Scotia Utilities Board against electricity rate increases and in favour of energy conservation policy, and strong informed stands against the building of nuclear plants. The last issue is one which has particularly concerned Susan Holtz, the Centre's energy policy coordinator and a nationally respected spokesperson on nuclear energy. She has been associated with the Ecology Action Centre for seven years as a part-time worker on a grant from the Halifax Society of Friends. I talked to Susan Mayo and Susan Holtz about their work.*

*How do you feel about your role as a woman in the ecology movement? What do you feel your organization has contributed?*

Holtz: In a very global sense the Ecology Action Centre is a social change organization. What I mean by social change is bringing a new value system to bear on certain kinds of political decisions with an environmental perspective. But we're also dedicated to broadening the role of citizen participation in these decisions. In a very broad way we're dedicated to public education and public involvement — the development of a new consciousness, a new ethic.

Take the debate about whether we should be using nuclear power — whether it's politically, socially and environmentally desireable. Various studies done in Canada have shown that more women are opposed to nuclear power than one would expect, given the level of involvement of women in politics or women in the nuclear industry. For a while most of my anti-nuclear power colleagues were women. Now the male/female ratio at meetings is about 50/50. This is atypical of political life where at most meetings there is only one woman present.

*Ecology Action Centre logo*

*You are saying then, from your experience there are a lot of women involved in environmental issues. Are these women who are also active in other issues or political groups?*

Holtz: Some are, as with men and as with any citizen's movement. There are key organizers who have a lot of experience in organizing and are not one-issue people. There are an awful lot of people who have become involved for the first time because of the nuclear issue. For a long time, nuclear proponents, such as the Canadian Nuclear Association, and the Atomic Energy Association looked down on citizen's groups because so many women were involved.

*How do you know that?*

Holtz: Oh, they said it. They said, 'these are a bunch of housewives who don't know anything!' It was quite out front. Their attack was directed at the question of technical qualifications of the people opposing them but it was particularly argued as 'these people are irate housewives' even though the composition of the group was 50/50 men and women. They could just as well have said, 'these people are irate geologists'. This is sort of dirty pool really.

For a long time I just discounted this part of the argument. I thought it was just so much bunk but, when I began sorting out different strands of the issue I began to realize that maybe it was significant. It's a very complex issue, because it involves both technical and non-technical aspects. I think it's really important to delineate whether an issue is purely technical or whether it's a political issue. If it's a political issue, then, according to my political philosophy, a lot of people should have input into the decisions about it. If it's a purely technical issue then the people who have the most technical qualifications should be making the decisions. It became fairly important to sort this out for myself because I came in on the technical end.

*Did you believe at that time the use of nuclear power was more or less a technical issue?*

Holtz: I never believed it was a purely technical issue. I thought some of the things I was concerned about — for example, the longevity of radioactive life which extends down into the future for about a quarter of a million years — almost excluded it from being purely a technical issue. There is no way of talking technically about events that far into the future, so I thought on those grounds it moved into the political realm. But there's more to it than that. There's the question of sorting out assessment of risk from reactor accidents and who should make those decisions. In sorting out what was technical and what wasn't, I became aware that virtually all of my opponents who were associated with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited were men. This affected the sort of values they held and the fact that they were so extraordinarily technically oriented and so obtuse when it came to political issues and moral dimensions. I began to realize that there was something about this debate that was being shaped by which sex was on which side. Mind you, I'm not saying men are morally obtuse or

*Susan Holtz (left), Susan Mayo* *photo by Christoper Majka*

incapable of subjective thought. I'm talking about the value system that goes into contemporary ideas about masculinity.

*Do you feel the problem also lies in the attitude that decisions such as use of nuclear power should be decided on so called logical, technical information?*

Holtz: Exactly. People tend to take pride in divorcing themselves from anything remotely connected with emotions and politics, so these people could not see the other dimensions of the debate. They couldn't see that when you're talking about radiological risk of considerable magnitude you move altogether out of the dimension of technical decisions and into the dimension of morality — what do we owe future generations? I realized that when I was talking on this level about the social and political implications of 'going down the nuclear road', and I think they are considerable, the engineers I was talking to could not see that certain technologies implied certain events, structures and institutions. They were just oblivious to this aspect. This is not something that is particularly masculine, but it has to do with the kind of thinking that men are channelled into, the kind of thinking they are made to feel comfortable with. Conversely, there is the kind of thinking that they are not comfortable with, namely the evaluation of their own emotions, the identification of the whole subjective realm of experience.

---

**"People tend to take pride in divorcing themselves from anything remotely connected with emotions and politics. But when you talk about radiological risk of considerable magnitude, you move altogether out of the dimension of technical decisions into the dimension of morality."**

---

*What sort of reactions were you confronted with when you tried to broach this discussion of moral and political implications?*

Holtz: Well, I've talked to many senior people on different occasions. It's varied. I first of all, inevitably, have to 'win my spurs' in any discussion just because I'm going in there as a woman. The Canadian Nuclear Association, which is the lobbying arm of the Canadian nuclear industry, has a convention every year and all the suppliers and so forth from AECL go to it. They have a parallel convention for the wives, not even the spouses, which involves antique shows and other entertainment. I find that quite extraordinary and it relates to what I said about having to win my spurs because any group that habitually does that sort of thing is not used to listening to women.

*Do you find you have to come armed with all sorts of technical information?*

Holtz: I have to know twice as much as they know. But basically what I have been trying to do is change the rulebook overall. I am willing to talk about technical issues and I think it's crucial women or men in my position have this grasp of technical facts so that we can conduct arguments at that level. But at the same time that I'm doing that, I'm fighting very hard to change the rules about what the issues are. I'm trying very hard to get into the whole decision-making process a much greater awareness of the role of the subjective, intuitive, or moral, implications that have been associated with women's values only. The fact that an engineer in the nuclear industry who has committed 25 years of his life to the development of a nuclear reactor quite honestly believes

**"It's crucial for men or women in my position to have a grasp of technical facts, but at the same time I want to change the rules about what the issues are. I'm trying very hard to get into the whole decision-making process a much greater awareness of the role of subjective, the intuitive, the moral."**

that he is more objective about nuclear power than I am and does not even see the implications of this attitude, is bad for everybody. So I'm trying to change the rule book about what considerations are recognized in decision making.

*In what way are you changing the rules?*

Holtz: We are changing the rules by being more honest and by challenging people on a personal level.

Mayo: Yes, I would agree with that. Not only do I sense with these people in positions of authority an incredible degree of dishonesty but impersonality as well. This whole business of rationality being the basis for decision-making and the implied perspective men have about human nature is false to me. People are not basically motivated by rational considerations. There are a whole cluster of things of which rationality is one small component. An awful lot of these so called rational decisions are simply rationalized decisions. This is where we begin to introduce other values. As women I think it is easier for us to realize how fragile human beings are. They must be nurtured to feel safe enough to change their minds. We realize this is true about our opposition as well as ourselves.

Holtz: If there's going to be change it's got to be so slow, you can hardly perceive it. You have to make it safe to change, in a lot of ways, and of course at a political level, I think this goes back to political change. We're interested in changing the whole idea about what goes into politics beyond changing who is in power, or putting an environmental party up for office and winning an election and running the government. There is more to significant social change than this. It is important that we make it easier for all people to make good decisions.

I think the whole radical paradigm of the sixties was probably based on confrontation. It was based on a zero-sum game, 'what I win, you lose'. I think we're moving into a paradigm, at least I am, of believing that radical change can also come about in other ways. Instead of saying, "we disagree, I'm here and you're there," we say, "ok, we disagree about a lot of things, what are some of the things we agree about?" One of the things that comes from working on this basis is a whole process of trust, of finding out what assumptions we share and not just what we differ about. In this way you can completely alter the outcome, because you sometimes just forget about the things you disagree about and they never come up again.

*Can you give some specific examples of successes you have had with your cooperation tactics?*

Holtz: An example that comes to mind is our lobby with the Nova Scotia Energy Council on energy conservation. When we started talking it was about 1975. The differences between the Nova Scotia Energy Council and the Ecology Action Centre were so great it was very hard to think of any common ground. We could meet periodically with the Director of the Energy Council and talk, for the most part, about the role of energy conservation rather than about nuclear power. We thought energy conservation was the most important thing and it was also the least controversial thing. I think some of the results that are starting to show are based on the information that we provided the provincial government. There's no doubt that they are beginning to do more about energy conservation.

*Do you feel these tactics can work where you are faced with a political deadline? For example if someone is pushing a nuclear power project and you feel it will not be very effective for you to come in and pound your fists on the table, but on the other hand you have a deadline in the back of your mind that you are working against, do you still feel these co-operative tactics can work?*

Holtz: It depends on the issue. For one thing, I work very hard to change the deadlines. You do that by trying to buy time by reducing demand. That has been our overall strategy. But sometimes there are deadlines. The Cabinet, last year, had to decide one way or the other about spruce budworm spraying, and indeed they had to decide by a particular time we couldn't stretch even though we persuaded them to defer it many times. Basically our reasoning is that the longer anybody looks at an issue the more likely it is that they're going to land on our side. If I didn't believe that about any given issue, I wouldn't be working on it. We're very hard-nosed politically. I would not say we would never use delay as a tactic although we've been falsely accused of using delay tactics. But certainly we're not above that. Delay is a tactic that has been well used in the States. It's ironic because corporations could afford to delay and prolong. That was their tactic, because they had the money and the lawyers and they could just wait out citizen groups, or environmentalists. Ironically, when environmentalists become sufficiently well-organized to use similar tactics, the corporations began crying dirty pool.

*In what other ways do you feel you operate differently than other organizations?*

Mayo: One of the things I think within our own groups that makes it different from a typical male-dominated citizen group is that we are much more consciously aware of the need to support each other on the same side. As well as having an awareness of the emotional aspect of our opponents, we are aware of our needs, too. It makes a tremendous difference.

*How does this manifest itself in the way you run the centre, then, or the way you relate to it?*

Holtz: For one thing we always tell each other when someone's done a good job. My male colleagues hardly ever do this.

**"Our reasoning is that the longer anybody looks at an issue the more likely it is that they're going to land on our side. If I didn't believe that about an issue, I wouldn't be working on it."**

*What about in the thick of the conflict when somebody really does need support?*

Holtz: Well, we give support all the time, it's not a question of waiting till there is a time of conflict, or when there is a gap. I think we're also more tuned in, as far as conferences, and workshops in the various things we do, events that we sponsor to provide for a wider range of people's needs. By and large, male-dominated groups have very little regard for the social needs that people have to get together, for the physical needs for getting up and stretching, or for people's need to participate. Most conferences are structured from the top down with someone talking at you all day. This is at a very pragmatic level. I think that overall we try to bring a more holistic concern for people's needs, including the emotional.

*But this idea of men consistently acting on the basis of logical, reasonable ideas is a common image. I ran into it frequently in my work with the scientific establishment. Do you see any merit in*

*this argument of rational versus the emotional?*

Holtz: The ideas these men hold are well thought out, crystallized and there is another adjective somewhere — they're egotistic. The ideas belong to them. I heard a very good comment once that you can do anything if you don't care who gets the credit for it. I think that to a great degree characterizes how Susan and I work. I am a writer by training and I have been brainwashed from a very early age that writing is a very individual act, and that you can't do it by committee. I have done an awful lot of writing by committee and I realize now that there's a greater potential for cooperative endeavor than most people realize. Part of being able to do that is not being totally attached to *your* ideas in particular.

*I'm aware that the previous coordinator of the centre was a man – do you feel that when you took over the focus changed or you recruited different kinds of people?*

Mayo: Overall I did, but this had more to do with personality differences. I think I have just had a lot more determination and a lot more persistence than the predecessor, and that's not a male or female trait. Overall people associated with the centre have grown in their understanding of what an environmental perspective is all about but that's a process that takes place and will continue, we hope, and go on in general.

I think that there's been a more overt emphasis on the centre as a responsive body rather than planned programs. A lot of management strategy changed. In a lot of organizations you sit down and decide what you want to do, how you want to get there and then develop a program to achieve them. You put blinders on everything else so that you can focus on what you previously decided you wanted to do.

*Sort of a flow chart.*

Mayo: The nature of thinking is to exclude rather than be open, because you don't want to be distracted from what you're doing. My approach is instead of closing things off, you open yourself up. You have to be very clear I think and aware of your ultimate goals and values, the kinds of things you are happy about and the kinds of things you're not happy about. Instead of shutting down you open yourself to anything that happens and then you build on things that happen.

*So a lot of your action is spontaneous?*

Mayo: It is ingrained in us. I think as a result the centre has had a tremendous amount of outreach that you can't achieve otherwise. I consider this legitimate work, as much as planned programs.

Holtz: That's a good point. I sometimes lose sight when it comes to the dollars and cents game. I sometimes put myself into those nice little square boxes. You have to do this, this and this and you'll get this much return dollar value back.

---

**"There is a greater potential for cooperative endeavor than most people realize. Part of being able to work this way is not being totally attached to *your* ideas in particular."**

---

*How do you go about raising funds for the Ecology Action Centre particularly in light of the way you choose to operate?*

Mayo: It's very difficult fundraising in the corporate world which is totally dominated by the program thinking. For instance, our intervention at the Public Utilities Board was just a massive effort, one of our really fine efforts, and yet it was not a planned program we could apply for funds for. It was more or less trial and error.

Holtz: I suspect this is true with a lot of citizen action groups in general. It's common knowledge that the most difficult thing to raise is core funding — in other words the funding we need to run the office and pay salaries. You can much more easily raise large amounts of money to run specific programs that funders can see and evaluate than you can to exist as an organization. This is a perennial problem and I do think it's related to the kind of managerial thinking that dominates most corporations, that is you run a program than you evaluate that program. This certainly is the way government offices approach funding.

*I'd like to ask you about what you see as the potential for changing values towards the environment. What do you think is the present pace and what stage are we at now in Canada?*

Holtz: That's a really fascinating question — it's one I've been thinking a lot about — what are the true indicators of social change? Until fairly recently my opinion was heavily coloured by typical left thinking. Namely, you have a revolution, of one sort or another, cultural or at the point of a gun, or you have an election such as in Chile. These are highly visible external symbols of social change and of course that's very important. But at the level I'm working at which is value change it's very subtle, and it's very difficult to come up with genuine indicators. I don't really have the answer.

As far as the present pace, it's always hard to tell what's happening in your era when you're living through it. I know change happens a lot more rapidly now than it did in the past. Because of communications, and travel it's possible for ideas to become global within a very short period of time. Witness for instance the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth and how quickly that has become a part of thinking in many people's minds. I look at what our provincial premier says as an indicator for my own work, in the level of changing energy policy.

*Can you think of any notable examples where people have altered their outlook to include moral or social implications of an environmental issue because of citizen based environmental groups?*

Holtz: I can think of one I wasn't involved in but which is a well known incident. It involved Sir Brian Fowles, head of the nuclear section of the British Royal Commission on environmental pollution.

Most environmentalists were not hoping for much from this Royal Commission because of the fact that Sir Brian Fowles had been Associated with the nuclear establishment in Britain for such a long time, but in fact the report "The Sixth Report on Nuclear Power and the Environment" which was published in September 1976 had some remarkable recommendations which came as a real

---

**A lot of the Centre's work is spontaneous. This is legitimate work, as much as planned programs.**

---

shock to the nuclear establishment. He commented that his own perspective shifted, as a result of hearing a different point of view from the public who came in and presented briefs on what the moral dimension of the nuclear debate was, who reiterated over and over the necessity for public involvement in the assessment of risks and the taking of risks. I found that very interesting.

*It must have given you a little bit of encouragement.*

Holtz: It did indeed.

*Janet Dunbrack is a freelance consultant living in Halifax. Recent projects include organizing a cultural festival and Canada Week activities in Nova Scotia. She studied economics and oceanography and has worked in labour relations and as a marine biologist.*

# Urban Sprawl

## the price women pay

**by Gerda R. Wekerle and Novia Carter**

*photo by Doris Friedrick*

Until 1976 there was no bus system in Whitehorse, a city of 13,000 sprawled over 164 square miles. Now more than 700 passengers per day ride the 16-seat minibuses operated by the Yukon Women's Minibus Society. It is significant that the bus system was initiated by women. The idea arose after the Yukon Status of Women Council studied the effects of isolation on women and children in Whitehorse. The Council found that day to day life was claustrophobic for the women who had no access to stores, schools and businesses. Long, cold winters further aggravated the strain. The minibus system was designed to make the city centre accessible to women and to provide them with high-paying part-time jobs. The buses are now widely used by commuters and children as well as women and the Society has added another bus to the initial fleet of four.

One of the prevailing myths about suburbs is that they are good places for women and children to live. Until recently, the many books, articles and research studies on suburbia neglected to examine women's lives in the suburbs. The study by the Yukon Status of Women Council is part of a growing body of evidence that suburbs are not designed to suit women. The conclusions of the research now being done are devastating. Women tend to be more inconvenienced than are men living in such an environment and they are less satisfied psychologically.

David Popenoe, an urban planner who compared women's lives in a Swedish and an American suburb concludes that, "urban sprawl is an urban development form designed for and by men, especially middle class men." Suburbia functions best for those with an automobile at their disposal and those people tend to be men. American women in Popenoe's study experienced the isolation and boredom associated with the "trapped housewife" and some had feelings of incredible loneliness. Women who did not drive were highly dependent on others for all the basic necessities. Popenoe argues that the inadequacy of the suburban environment for women's needs is largely a design problem. North American planners have a stereotypic and narrow image of women, limited to the traditional housebound wife and mother. According to Popenoe, the major flaw of American suburbs is "the lack of facilities essential in the lives of working women, and the inaccessibility of those which are available." In contrast, higher density Swedish suburbs are exceptionally well designed from the point of view of working women. They are relatively compact clusters of low rise apartments, with close public transit links to the city centre and public facilities. The woman's dual role is supported by access to a large job market, public transportation, a range of local daycare options, and a low maintenance dwelling.

Women in North America become the captives of the inadequate public transit systems of the suburbs, a situation which is aggravated by the low density of the housing and the time and cost of getting from one place to another. Reliance of suburban women on public transit affects their participation in the labour force. Those women with a double commitment to an outside job plus home and children are very conscious of time and distance. More than men, they have to find jobs closer to home, near the transit service and with ready access to day care and shopping facilities. For many women this means the location of a job may be just as important as pay and opportunities for advancement.

---

**North American planners have a stereotypic and narrow image of women, limited to the traditional housebound wife and mother. In contrast, Swedish suburbs are exceptionally well designed from the point of view of working women.**

---

A woman's journey to work is both more complicated and time-consuming than the typical male worker's. Women with children routinely make two trips every morning and two more in the evening. They travel from their home to the day care facility and make a second trip from that location to their job. Often the day care centre is not close to either home or work but is in a different location entirely. There is a considerable expenditure of time, money and energy before the workday has even begun. New jobs being created in industrial parks in the suburbs are off limits to many women. These industrial parks are difficult to serve by public transit because they are spread

out, and therefore less accessible to women whether they live in suburbs or in the central city.

Given these drawbacks it is not suprising that women are often the catalyst for moves from suburbs to older inner city neighbourhoods which are being renovated by middle class families. After such a move women report shorter commuting times, more time for leisure activities outside the home, and a higher level of general satisfaction with the house and neighbourhood. In fact, research on attitudes that men and women have towards the home show that their environmental preferences are antithetical. Men tend to view the home as a retreat from urban stress and a source of status. They often prefer a marked separation between work and home life.

**Men tend to view the home as a retreat from urban stress and a source of status. They often prefer a marked separation between work and home life. Women tend to view the home more as an expression of self, a place to raise children and a location which provides them access to jobs, services and friends.**

Women on the other hand tend to view the home more as an expression of self, a place to raise children and a location which provides them access to jobs, services and friends.

Even in the seventies, however, there is no evidence that suburban design is changing. Builders, architects and urban planners have not yet realized that as women's roles and aspirations change, so must their urban environments.

There is some hope that planning for women will become part of urban planning. A few professional associations and schools are encouraging women to enter architecture, planning and engineering because of the low numbers of women in those fields and in the hope that women will bring their own experiences to bear in the solution of problems. Important though this is in terms of general equality, it is a long-term solution and no guarantee that new perspectives will enter planning.

A second promising approach is to focus on planning with and for specific populations. At present, planning is often based on geographical boundaries such as neighbourhoods or regions, or it is organized along functional lines such as planning for housing or transportation. People who are going to live in the neighbourhoods and use the services should be involved and their needs considered whether those people are men, women, the elderly, children or handicapped.

This approach to planning is illustrated by the Lebreton Flats Project in which women associated with the Ottawa Tenants Council joined in planning for a federal demonstration housing project. A group of single parent mothers living in public housing drew on their own experiences to design a housing model. The model would support the housing needs of women at various stages in the transition from being part of a two-parent family to heading up a single-parent family. The design provides for crisis housing, a small apartment complex which supports co-operative sharing of work and childcare as well as family privacy, and a women's centre. This proposal would place mother-led families squarely in the downtown area where there is good access to transit, community facilities and social services. The proposal has received extensive media exposure and interest among women's groups and non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, the design was rejected by several federal agencies as too expensive, but an attempt is underway to form a non-profit co-operative to get the single parent housing built.

Women's self-help groups have begun to address more directly the issue of women's mobility in the city. Rape Crisis Centres, for example, have found that women's fear for security and safety greatly limits their freedom. Women's transit authorities have been set up in various American cities to provide services to women at night and prevent rapes. Women's Transit Services in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin were organized by women, are run by women and provide rides only for women. The Madison Transit Authority was founded in 1973 and now operates two cars seven nights a week. It operates within a four-mile radius of the campus and provides about 750 rides a month. Both programs are dependent on volunteers and seriously underfunded.

The minibus service run by the Yukon Women's Minibus Society is another example of a women's self-help project. It is extremely unusual to have a bus system in the North on a fixed route and opposition to the idea by city hall included the argument that northerners were "too tough" to ride a bus system. In addition to diligent lobbying at city hall the Minibus Society appealed to the federal Ministry of Transport which provided the funds for capital costs.

Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) the federal agency responsible for housing, is one government office that has collected and analyzed information from a women's perspective. It has set up a women's bureau to monitor internal hiring and promotion and looks at the effects of the National Housing Act on women through mortgage-lending practices. But the women's bureau is merely advisory and has limited input to decision-making at the highest levels of the CMHC. Its existence has had little apparent impact on mortgage-lending


**illustration by Sheila Luck**

practices in Canada, although access to mortgages is critical if women are to have a broad range of choice in residential location. Women are triply discriminated against when they seek mortgages: because they have low earning power, because they are women and because they are often heads of single-parent families. Sex-discrimination has often forced women to rent even when they could afford to own, or they have been forced to live in city locations where houses are cheaper. In the United States an Equal Opportunity Credit Act makes mortgage

*photo by Doris Friedrick*

**discrimination by sex illegal but women in Canada are not** afforded this protection. Creating a women's bureau within a federal agency does not safeguard women's rights unless it is given power to impose sanctions, budgets and access to decision-makers.

Women should not be forced to choose between their own environmental needs and those of husbands and children. Neighbourhoods, instead, should move away from the model of the child-centred, homogeneous community centred on the school. Alternative suburban plans that have been suggested by Popenoe and others involve enrichment of the local environment, decentralization of services and jobs, increased densities and better public transportation links to all parts of the urban system. Most of the innovation in dealing with women's needs in the urban environment is occurring outside the government sector as women themselves create solutions to problems that have not been met by traditional institutions. Urban decision makers must be encouraged by these activities to acknowledge that women are a distinct group with legitimate environmental requirements — otherwise the present inequalities will become much worse.

*Gerda R. Wekerle is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. Novia Carter is an Associate Professor in the School of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario. They are presently editing a book on women and environment from which some of the material in this article is drawn.*

*Doris Friedrick is a student in Fine Arts at the University of Alberta. Sheila Luck will be entering the Fine Arts program at the University of Alberta in the fall.*

# One Woman's Journey

**by Sylvia Porter**
**illustration by Margaret Bremner**

For me it began innocently enough. I was a young Roman Catholic mother of two small children, teaching school by day and caring for my husband and babies at night. Then I became involved in the nuclear protest movement. Before long, I had left the Church, become a feminist and started on a journey of independence.

The time was the 1950's and woman's place was in the home, not out marching and lobbying and protesting. Political action was for men, so was building atom bombs, testing them, sending a cloud of radioactive dust across the wind paths of the world that would rain death down on unsuspecting residents.

In the age of Greenpeace it's relevant to look back twenty years to an environmental struggle that roused women and university students across this country in a united effort to put an end to nuclear testing, and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

I was ten years old when President Truman ordered the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima. I remember the headlines and the pictures — especially the pictures of the mushroom cloud. Watching a news reel in a theatre, I was fascinated as the cloud eerily took shape, glowing and glimmering as it engulfed the screen. I don't recall being horrified by the death and destruction caused at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bomb had ended the Second World War and brought my older brother home from Europe. It would be thirteen years before I again thought about the bomb.

By the 1950's more and more criticism was being levelled against nuclear weapons. In Canada, various disarmament groups were being formed and the slogan "better red than dead" was stated by Lester B. Pearson, our future prime minister, as he discussed disarmament on nation-wide television. Pearson's wife belonged to the Voice of Women, a peace organization, as did a number of prominent Canadian women. In the universities students were uniting in a common cause and in small towns from the Pacific Coast to the shores of Newfoundland voices were being raised against the nuclear monster.

In Richmond, a Vancouver suburb where I lived and worked, I joined a group called "The Committee For Nuclear Disarmament". It was composed of men and women of various political persuasions who formed a coalition to lobby politicians both in Canada and the United States. We met several times a month to exchange information and plan strategy. At the end of each meeting we wrote letters — letters to every major world leader and federal and local politicans. We became experts on the issue and seized every opportunity to bring the facts before the public. Once, when a guest speaker failed to appear at the P.T.A. meeting in my school, I hastily became the substitute who spoke at length on the "Ban the Bomb" issue.

At the time, John Diefenbaker was the prime minister and Howard Greene, the Minister of External Affairs. Not so long ago I read an article about Howard Greene. When asked what memories of his long political career he would like to share with the readers, he referred to the thousands of letters he received from ordinary citizens protesting nuclear weapon testing. Both he and Diefenbaker were most receptive to citizen groups. It was the Diefenbaker government that would not allow the United States military to store Bomarc missiles on Canadian military bases. This policy was later changed by Pearson.

One of the highlights of our small group's effort was helping to bring the world-renowned scientist and winner of two Nobel prizes, Linus Pauling, to Vancouver. Since we operated on a shoestring budget it was agreed that one of the methods used to advertise Pauling's visit would be to contact all church ministers in the Greater Vancouver area and ask to have the visit listed in the Sunday bulletin. Who would have though that such a small request to men of God would result in both my friend and me forsaking organized religion? We had agreed to visit the ministers in Richmond, asking them to take a stand on nuclear weapons, to preach sermons on the issue and to list Pauling's visit. Naively, we anticipated no problems — an error of judgement we never again made. When we got to my Catholic parish, my family priest refused to consider our request and suggested we would both be better off in the kitchen baking cookies. When we tried to discuss Pauling's visit, he told us we were "well-meaning but misguided." To this day I remember his advice: "Go home to your children, don't interfere with men's work." We went home and I never again stepped inside the door of his church.

The night of Pauling's visit, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver was packed. Finally we were going to see and listen to a scientist with impeccable credentials, who would inspire us and frighten us with his tales of horror of increased leukemia in children,

*continued on page 48*

# The Castle Revisited

**by Lynn Hannley and Marsha Mitchell**

Annie Jones pounded her fist on the desk in frustration. "I was so angry at that guy I kicked his garbage can over on the sidewalk. I couldn't help myself. Then I felt embarrassed." Annie had just looked at her nineteenth apartment in five days, and had just been turned down, this time because she was a single mother and "wouldn't be able to maintain the apartment." Her fulltime job as a bank teller, her university education, and her good credit rating didn't help with the task of finding housing for herself and three children now that she was separated.

Many women living alone or with children can testify that Annie's case is typical. Single women pursuing careers, single mothers, women who are separated or divorced, and widows all share in the difficulties of finding housing adequate to their needs at a price they can afford. It is not just economics that put women at a disadvantage when they try to compete in the housing market. Annie's experience illustrates that while she could pay for the apartment, she was not considered capable of looking after it. The problem is one of stereotyping of masculine and feminine roles and capabilities. And, merely getting housing is only half the battle. Many women today, whether living in suburban single-detached housing or in highrise apartments, would argue that their housing is not designed to meet their needs and, further, that the very physical design of the house limits their opportunities to participate in society.

How did these problems arise? The economic and stereotypic aspects have complemented each other throughout the history of Canadian settlement. At the turn of the century the government encouraged boatloads of single women to emigrate to the Canadian west to marry male homesteaders. At the same time, women were viewed as frail creatures so incapable of farm work that they were legally excluded from homesteading themselves. This stereotype is refuted in an excerpt from the Grain Grower's Guide, 1909:

> I know of two women myself who do as much work outdoors as any three men. These women have horses and cattle of their own and work the land themselves; but they cannot afford to buy it and the law forbids them to homestead and so they have to rent.

Most women remained dependent on husbands, employers or families to provide their housing.

Urbanization did not improve women's ability to obtain housing. In urban areas housing has been placed almost completely in the hands of the private entrepreneurial market. According to 1975 figures, the average female head of a family earned only 47.2% of the income earned by an average male head. In many major Canadian cities an income of over $25,000 is required to qualify for a mortgage for most new housing. This eliminates over 75% of the population, male or female, and allows very few women the possibility of home ownership.

The alternative is renting, but the same problems apply. Stereotypes about women being undesireable tenants still abound in the private rental market. One American report states:

> The presumptions that women are less capable of maintaining property, unable to cope with fatherless children, sexually indiscreet, or have a higher vulnerability to crime are commonplace in the rental market. Even the presumption that women have more parties was mentioned in our hearings.

Renting in the private market may not even be cheaper than home ownership. Often rental payments are as high as monthly mortgage payments, but lack of savings prevents the women from making a down payment. For those fortunate enough to have an adequate income, there are other barriers to full participation in the housing market. Stereotypes remain with us as we go to banks for mortgages. Women, still believed by some bankers to be uncommitted to their careers, or incapable of budgeting or maintaining property, are often asked for greater security than their male counterparts or for male co-signers. Some women who do achieve the status of homeowners do so through the variety of programs offered by government mortgage corporations. All of these programs, which provide subsidies to enable people with lower incomes to buy housing, require that they have children to be eligilble. While such programs are helpful, they obviously do not tackle the underlying economic and stereotyping problems.

As women, we must develop our own solutions to these barriers. However, if we regard housing as primarily a market commodity — something to be bought and sold at a profit — the present situation will be perpetuated. A few more women might gain access to a house as their economic status rises but many of our low income sisters will be left out. We must insist that housing be seen as a non-market commodity — a social right regardless of income.

The problem of obtaining housing designed to meet women's present day needs will demand a much broader change in the whole housing process. Housing as it is now built does not reflect women in the 1970's. As the Report on the Women's Resource Group for LeBreton Flats states:

> Sociological, psychological and medical evidence indicates that the present urban environment is not allowing women to adapt well in their fast-changing roles. The large number of women no longers fitting the planners' poorly constructed stereotype of the 'average family' is a growing cause of concern.

This problem of design is really a problem of adapting the physical facilities of older cultures to the social and emotional needs of the new. Standards of good design may reflect the solutions to problems found by other generations. While we would not consider wearing grandmother's corset, we often turn to housing designed by her contemporaries.

Kitchen design offers an example of the difficulties encountered by designers in adapting to cultural changes. Women in the 1950's, wishing to free themselves from the long hours spent in the kitchen by their mothers, welcomed the small 'step-saver' or bar kichen with its electronic gadgetry. Unfortunately, the technological dream did not come true; much time is still spent in the kitchen. However, because of the small size of these kichens, women now work in isolation. Today, at housing design meetings of self-help groups, we hear

evidence of a desire to return to the large "country" kitchen. A woman will often ask for a kitchen big enough for children to play in, or for friends to visit in while she works. Clearly, this nostalgia for grandmother's large kitchen is not a desire to return to a life dominated by cooking and cleaning, but rather an attempt to increase opportunities for meaningful contact within the home. Using the old model, developed when family size, wealth and stability were quite different, to solve today's problems of isolation, is not likely to be satisfactory.

The complication of housing technology has affected women particularly since so many of their creative contributions were associated with the home. The hand-dipped candle is not only a beautifully crafted object, but was also the only light for the evening meal. While such activities are still used for creative self-expression, they no longer serve a survival function. The current interest in log cabin building suggests a wish to regain control over the home environment. Today's housing technology of steel and concrete, complicated wiring and plumbing, effectively reduces the average individual to a mere consumer of housing. The log cabin, with its reasonably simple techology, answers a desire to understand and control one's living space.

Women must become more involved in the housing process if we are to cease to be limited by our surroundings. A short-term solution is for more women to become specialists in the current housing technology. Women as a group will not believe themselves really capable of affecting the design of housing until many more of us become competent members of the building trades. And it is not enough that more women become architects, designers and engineers. Some women will have to become bricklayers, electricians and plumbers before women's comments about housing design are taken seriously. If we wish women to be consulted about anything besides interior design and kitchens, some of us will have to break through that stereotype by gaining practical skills.

A second method of involving ourselves in the housing process is through community planning and self-help housing groups. In such groups, residents of a neighbourhood, or potential residents of a proposed housing project, come together and pool their talents and ideas to develop unique and affordable housing which reflects their specific needs. The results can be innovative. Normally these groups will engage specialists to translate their ideas into the physical reality. Although at the present time we know of no completed projects designed exclusively by a group of women, many women have been able to contribute significantly over the past ten years to the design of their houses and communities. There are also examples of women's planning groups developing designs for particular types of housing. Both the Women's Resource Group for LeBreton Flats in Ottawa and the Women's Design Centre in Vancouver, have designed apartments specifically geared to single parent families. Both groups suggested making hallways and laundry areas into play and social areas with comfortable seating and play equipment, indicating the importance women attach to increased social contact within their housing. The Women's Design Centre makes special mention of the importance of these co-operative solutions:

> From our interviews with women regarding housing we noticed that the solutions offered to alleviate their housing problem revolved around forms of co-operative living, whether it was a housing development to be built, a group of existing houses that formed a community network or an apartment building where the tenants have taken over self-management. These women saw not just the economic benefits of sharing faciltiies but the social rewards generated by a 'sense of community.'

Whether as average citizens or specialists, as individuals or in groups, women must take the lead in demanding that our technology develop toward simplicity. Housing is a common human need; housing technology should provide human-scale solutions. Wall panels, already containing the complexities of wiring, insulation and plumbing are available in manageablbe sizes which people without specialized training can use to design their own housing. More alternatives of this type should be developed.

New solutions should give individuals or small groups the possibility of direct control of over all aspects of housing. For women, the economic aspect, the old stereotypes and new designs must all be worked on concurrently to bring about a realistic solution to the housing problem.

Our challenge as women is to become the creators of new concepts in housing which will reflect not only our need for protection from the elements but our potential as creative social human beings.

*Lynn Hannley is the director of Communitas, Inc., an Edmonton-based community consulting group specializing in cooperative housing.*

*Marsha Mitchell is employed by Communities Inc. and is coordinator of the Shelter for Battered Women Project.*

# the fat lady

**by Anne Porter Paris**

**illustrations by Sylvia Luck Patterson**

She lolled on the sand, wiggling her toes which resembled two clusters of small pears. Her eyes which seemed hidden by flesh, like slits in a Hallowe'en sheet, peeked through sunglasses at the largely indifferent masks on the faces passing by. Occasionally someone stared at her in disgust or amusement, then turned to address some comment to his companions. It made her boil when she noted complacency. Seen in some man or woman who was already immoderately plump, it made her *seethe*. Presently, she felt nervous and sulky, almost depressed. She wished that it were time for lunch, not that the prospect particularly cheered her today. She had been obliged to keep up the pretense of dieting by bringing only one sandwich for herself and each of the children and two for her husband. But at least it was food and would serve to keep her unpleasant thoughts at bay for a little while.

"You wanto eat now?" she asked the smallest child who was idly pouring handfuls of sand into his hair.

"Mmmmmm-okay," responded the child with less enthusiasm than his mother could have wished.

"Go call Tommy and Laurie then."

'F'crissake, Elna," Tom Senior raised his head from the towel. "Don't make them have lunch at eleven o'clock again. Go ahead and stuff your*self* if you want to, but let the kids get up an appetite so they can enjoy the picnic!" She winced at the hatchet accusation in her husband's voice, and shielded herself with the thought that he might not want the last half of his second sandwich and she could sneak it later.

"Put your leftovers in the bag, here. Don't strew them across the beach," she admonished the children righteously as she doled out the food.

"You don't need to make such a big point of it," her husband snapped. But she was so anxious to get their scraps collected *before* they hit the sand, that she repeated her lecture each time a crust seemed about to drop, glancing toward her husband in a kind of involuntary reflex that brought her his contemptuous stare. She then took to carefully prying the crusts from the children's fingers before they could have the *thought* of dropping them, until Laurie, the one whose greedy eyes followed every bite into Elna's mouth, shrieked in protest, "I'm not finished!"

Elna immediately flashed a guilty look at Tom who, but for that, would have been unaware of the situation.

"Ch-rist!" he muttered, giving her a murderous glance. "Will ya leave the children alone. They fight enough as it is. I don't want the whole beach staring at us!" Maybe not, she thought, but you're certainly staring at that woman in the blue bikini. In all likelihood he was also making bitter comparisons between *her* figure and those of most of the other women. Somehow it was reassuring to notice that blue bikini's husband had a great shelf of stomach overhanging his khaki bathing trunks. Elna was extremely envious of her husband who was slim and wiry and who ate slowly, sighing with satisfaction when he had eaten only three-quarters of what was placed before him. She always poked down whatever meat or dessert he left on his plate with her back to the table if Laurie's watchful eyes were present. She had even managed to cram it in when leaning over the garbage-bucket as though in the act of scraping the plates. She hated dinner-guests who tried to help her with the clean-up. She preferred to stuff herself on the leftovers as she washed and wiped and listened excitedly to the banal conversation coming from the dining-room.

At last her husband led the children down to the water and she was free of their vigilance. Furtively, her hand slid into the plastic beach-bag near her, squeezed open the catch on her purse, felt around inside, grasped and removed a crisply wrapped chocolate bar and smuggled it under the head of her towel. Covertly, she eased back the two layers of paper and snapped off one row. Cocking her sun-hat to hide her face from the water, just in case Tom should be looking, Elna brought her hand, closed in a loose fist, to rest lightly against her mouth so that she would appear to be meditating. She had cunningly made this an habitual gesture. Then slowly, as though pondering some inner question, she shifted one section of the chocolate from fist to mouth, her lips and tongue sucking the morsel in as though they composed some sort of moving assembly line.

Ah, the pleasure of clandestinely munching a forbidden bar while in constant peril of detection. She was soon ready for the second row and the third. It was surprising how quickly she found herself picking up the last piece of that jumbo bar. She thought of the nutty one which she had been intending to save for the afternoon. She craved it now. Yes, but what would she do later? She scanned the blue-grey shoreline for her husband. There he was, pretending to be a whale with the children draped over his back. She could risk it then. This time, she held each section in her mouth until it melted, coating her teeth and tongue and palate with plush sweetness. Vague pictorial images swarmed up of womb-like interiors whose walls were layers of melted chocolate. Finally, she crunched the toasted almonds and swallowed lazily. At moments like this, she wished that she could go on doing this one thing forever. That to her would be heaven. Where you could go on and on devouring chocolate without becoming nauseous. Of course, she had tried to attain heaven often. After her many diets. She would resist all sweets and starches, restricting herself to an egg, a piece of dry toast and half a grapefruit for breakfast; a slice of liver and an apple would be her lunch; a sliver of chicken breast and string beans, her supper. She would feel miserable the first day, elated the second, then down the third day and up the fourth.

That fourth day she would be feeling so good and sure of herself that she would be endlessly calculating: I've lost three pounds in four days. That means I can lose twelve pounds in sixteen days. That's about twenty pounds a month, anyway. That means that in only five months, I'll be down to a decent weight. Of course, I'll keep going and get back to my old weight of one hundred and six. Then, I'll be so gorgeous! I'll wear a bikini and lace underwear and tight slacks. I'll look a lot better

than the women who sneer at me now. I'll go back to college and take an M.A. and then a Ph.D. in drama. I'll direct and teach. I'll have the confidence for it, once I'm back to my right size.

It would be that very night that, sure of her resistance, she would serve ice cream sundaes to the family for dessert.

"Where's *your* sundae, Elna?" Tom would smirk when he caught Elna eyeing his dessert above the jagged terrain of her apple saved from lunch. "Ohh yes!" pretending amused recollection as Elna glared. "Children, be prepared. We're going to have Megalon living with us again." Rising with a dangerous smile, Elna would retire to the kitchen where only the refrigerator door stood between her and the sugary rush provided by a chocolate sundae. Within seconds, the battle would be over.

Seeing her habits in this perspective turned Elna's stomach a little sour. The last eight squares were devoured joylessly. Once out of the way, their presence would not irritate her. She now thought with derision of the sluggish brown ooze that bagged out the protesting gastric walls. Yuk! the insipidness of chocolate! She would never be induced to indulge herself that way again. What a fool she was to waste her life cramming food into her mouth, when there were so many other enjoyable pursuits.

A young man with a fluorescent pink Frisbie was smoothing a large purple towel into position not three yards away. Why out of all the spots he might have chosen was he installing himself so close to her? Behind their sunshields her eyes boldly scoured the newcomer for an explanation. Perhaps his slight inclination toward plumpness made him indulgent of her weakness. She had once glued a photograph of her own head to the body of a fat nude and presented the result to Tom who had been titillated. Georgina from her counselling group had lost fifty-six pounds with an extramarital affair. Of course, she had lost her marriage too and her sixteen-year-old son was an alcoholic. At least she wasn't bored to death; each week she had a fresh new calamity to report. Elna checked to see if the young man was looking toward her. He was staring straight ahead now, but she had felt eyes on her. Furtively, she spat on a kleenex and dug all traces of chocolate from the furrows around her mouth. Fool! she told herself afterward. You'd love, just once, to have someone attracted to you. Having it actually happen, however, is out of the question.

Tilting her head to look off in the distance, she then assessed the stranger through lowered eyes. That's the purpose of sunglasses, though catch anyone admitting it, she assured herself. The nostrils were strong, the forehead high and the eyebrows emphatic. He vaguely reminded her of her counsellor, a young man who seemed to have the power of penetrating beneath the fatty deposits to the woman she would be, given a happier marriage and a more convivial sex life. Turning suddenly, the young man caught her staring.

"In case you're worried about me moving in so close," she imagined him saying, "I'm not trying to pick you up. I'm feeling lonely and thought maybe you'd like to talk a while or throw the Frisbie around and then we'd both continue our own ways, you know?"

"I'm not sure what to say," Elna would reply, astounded by his self-assurance.

"Just say whatever comes into your head. I do," he would encourage.

"I'm thinking that — you sound so sure of yourself. I don't mean glib and insincere, of course. I'm not so self-possessed as you."

"Why don't we just toss the Frisbie around for a while then?"

"I'd love to, but I'm afraid my husband wouldn't understand."

"You should do what *you* want. It's *your life*."

It would never happen that way, she decided, plunging herself back into the unseasonably cold waters of the present. If she didn't take the initiative, they would never speak and she would feel disappointed afterwards.

"Hi, there. Wanta play Frisbie?" Elna called out cheerily. He didn't look towards her. He either hadn't heard or didn't want to. She hesitated to risk humiliation again. That was what had happened with the counsellor. After dissolving the gelatin of distrust with which she surrounded herself by his encouraging, "*I* would feel angry if someone did that to *me*", when she *really* began to open up, he had turned cold, distant and appraising. He never actually *supported* her husband against her, but his chilly little hm's came right next to disapproval. When she shared this observation with him, feeling utterly naked with all the group looking on, he had denied feeling any disapproval. Instead, he did acknowledge having to protect himself from Elna who was becoming too dependent on him. This seemed so cruel that Elna had burst into tears and snivelled out her feelings of rejection, while he sat silently watching her, his only comment being, "Does anyone *else* want to give Elna feedback?" No one did.

Was it something wrong with *her* that caused harshness to be so keenly felt? The question blocked her like an obdurate turnstile that wouldn't budge until she had deposited an answer. Tom's puny shins briskly crossing the sand, intervened. She felt a kind of relief at seeing them decisively approach her as though knowing where they belonged. They squatted down on the other side of her as Tom whispered, "Who's that guy? Ever seen him

before?"

"No."

"Why's he sitting so close to you?" Elna, stroking Tom's shins, suggested that perhaps he'd lost his mommy. Tom didn't smile.

"Has he said anything to you?"

"No."

"Where's my other sandwich?"

"Here."

"It's okay. I don't want it. I was just checking up on you."

"Were you feeling jealous?"

"No, I'd just like to know why he's practically sitting in my wife's lap. I feel like asking him to move."

She was spared the need to protest by the arrival of a long-legged young woman, strikingly mahoganied by the sun, varnished with suntan lotion and festooned with a purple bikini. She was scooped out and polished in the very places where Elna looked like overly risen dough. Appreciative, Tom appeared to be making the same observation. Elna wished she could prance out of her fat and leave it lying on the beach like an abandoned Galapagos tortoise shell.

"There you are, Turkey!" The newcomer pounced on the young man, snatched up the Frisbie and began shovelling sand at him.

"Knock it off will ya?"

"Thought you'd get away from me, eh? Found yourself a wall to hide behind." She glanced guiltily toward Elna who was caught with an expression of dismay. Tom, seeing it too, put his arm protectively about Elna and glared at the woman.

"C'mon," she tugged at her friend petulantly. "Everyone wants to eat, *now*." The young man seemed rather sullen as they plodded away, the purple towel trailing in the sand. Was that a wistful glance he had thrown Elna as he passed?

"Not a very nice remark," commented Tom soothingly.

"It was calculated to make me rush out and buy Ayds." Together they stared at their children who were protecting an elaborate fortress from thoughtless treaders.

"I guess I'll take the kids for another swim," said Tom after a while. "Want to come?"

"Sure," she began, her only thought to please him. Then remembering the wrappers under her towel and fearing their exposure, she relapsed into a lazy attitude and said, "But what I'd *really* like is to just lie here feeling that I'm not responsible for anyone but me."

As soon as Tom had blended with the other beach figures, she raised the corner of her towel, dug a hole and buried the evidence. She had erected a little mound over the wrappers intending to mash it down, but instead lay watching the loose grains on the top shiver slightly under her breath. Occasionally a glassy facet caught the sun and tossed it toward her, a brilliant whizzing disc. She kept staring at the grains until they became a cluster of individuals, each one standing out as singular and independent with its own configuration; each owing its force and its position to the presence of its fellow grains. A surge of revelation came to her. She knew now that her destiny was to remain as she was. She enjoyed eating; so she would eat. She would be successful at it. She would use her commanding presence to its best advantage in the community. She thought of the organizations she had considered heading up. Well, she would see about the Profile Theatre and the Philharmonic, tomorrow. She knew that she had both leadership and persuasive gifts. People would respect her for her ability to secure big donations. She would be the portly matron in pink satin presiding over the Benefit Ball. The dapper gentleman at her dimpled elbow (she was seeing the photo in the morning Chronical) would be none other than awe-stricken Tom. Deeply her nails sank into her palms in response to the excitement she was feeling. Tomorrow, she would leave the children with Mrs. Moore while she went out to purchase the appropriate outfit in which to launch her new career. Her mind was racing with the possibilities open to her — the United Appeal, the Women's Service Centre (she was very concerned about battered wives), the Cancer Foundation, the SPCA, the Red Cross (or would one have to be a nurse for that?), the Ballet — oh, so many avenues there were to explore! She could be out each evening once the children were in bed.

Where had her family gotten to while she schemed? In order to leave guiltlessly tomorrow, she should be playing with them right now. Sliding her sunglasses up to her forehead, she allowed the sun to spear her eyes while she sorted through the clusters of swimmers. Tom would oppose her. Like some sort of hobble, he had the children strapped to her ankles. She would spare him the news of her breakthrough for now. That would leave finding a complimentary outfit as the first hurdle. Repeatedly, those minuscule try-on rooms with their merciless triptych mirrors, had snatched away her self-esteem. In simplifying her down to a bulging container, they cancelled out her unique inner complexity. She became a terrified blob billowing out the skimpy curtain.

Far down the beach she spotted Tom and the children thrashing about in the water, all four of them oblivious to life's pressures. Why was *she* the only one with this awful need to distinguish herself? Feeling the exhilaration beginning to curdle she wondered was this brilliant plan to collapse by the wayside like all the others? She took up her purse and removed a dollar bill. She would just run up to the snackstand and back before joining them. If they returned first, she could hide the chocolate bars (she was already picturing the ones she would choose) in her sun-hat and say that she had been to the toilet.

# Two Poems by Audrey Conard

## FROM THE HILL

*Mist washes through alfalfa,*
*crosses the roadway,*
*and then winds past splintered barns*
*and corncribs, climbing up*
*the fetlocks of the cows*
*out early in the far fields.*
*The little, dark, tailed dots appear to float*
*by the farm pond's dime reflection.*

*The trees on the horizon blur,*
*peripherally, and up,*
*brush smudges leak into a bluing sky*
*where clouds swell cumulus and splay*
*out over the shiny balding poles,*
*then rush, and thin, and drift upward*
*and out into the blackness thick*
*with grains of stars and stellar grit,*
*the infinite unbroken black, out*
*to the gristle edge which is the mind's*

*beyond which words are not,*
*where miniscule digits of formulae fail,*
*and even the imagination*
*stops.*

## STANDING BY

*Tucked under salt hay, the bulbs are singing pink*
*with next spring's tulips. I go softly over the nursery,*
*close the shed, moved by the marvel of small life*
*ready on the heels of the dead.*

*

*The rich expanse of lawn in its last green*
*works on me like tides, like phases of the moon.*
*I would mother this wide, wild garden, take it in,*
*hold its branches from the sickling wind.*

*

*Clouds lower, pile in grey chilled smoke.*
*Behind my collar, in pocketed fists, winter begins.*
*Dust to dust and bloom between; no parable,*
*we are kin. I listen for some stir of green within.*

*

*Nothing to hear, no more to be done.*
*Hedges close ranks against impartial wind.*
*Shut out of the garden again I do as much*
*and go, quiescent, in, and shut my house.*

*Audrey Conard is a closet poet. She came out in Storm* Warning 2 *and has appeared in* Fiddlehead, Dalhousie Review *and* Branching Out. *Between appearances she returns to her disguise as an Oakville matron.*

# Thelma Manarey


The work of Edmonton artist Thelma Manarey has appeared in many solo and group shows. She is represented in the permanent collections of the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Art Foundation of Alberta, and others. Her miniature etchings are well known. This fall, a showing of her watercolours will be held at the Lefebvre Gallery in Edmonton.


MARAREY 1978


MANAREY 1978

# Trial Balloon
## the story of a course

**by Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson and David Morley**
**photos by Janice Newson**

A course on women and environment had never been suggested at York University before. The idea for it grew out of discussions among three colleagues and, despite scepticism, the course materialized.

Three of us, Gerde Wekerle, an urban sociologist, Rebecca Peterson, an environmental psychologist, and David Morley, an urban geographer — proposed the course for the Faculty of Environmental Studies in the fall of 1975. We had worked together for several years planning courses and research projects on the relationship between environment and behavior. Our focus was on how rooms, buildings, neighbourhoods and cities could be designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people. The elderly, poor, handicapped, and various ethnic groups were all perceived as having special environmental needs. For some reason women were not, despite the popularity and influence of Women's Studies in other disciplines.

In the Faculty of Environmental Studies no course dealt explicitly with women, although one third of our 200 graduate students were women. Most of the teaching faculty came from disciplines such as geography, urban studies, urban planning, engineering and the natural sciences, fields which traditionally have fewer than ten per cent women participants. Not surprisingly, only two of the 24 faculty members were women.

Our proposal for a new course did not meet with favour from the others on the faculty. The course was seen as either too political or too personal, and not worthy of academic credit at the graduate level. Having a male colleague as co-director of the course helped to "run interference" and made acceptance a little easier, however, he had to deal with jokes and jibes from colleagues about what he was "doing with the girls."

Even the students looked askance at the course. Many women students did not want to be singled out as "radical feminists"; they wanted to learn marketable skills and did not see such a course as relevant to their future professions. Moreover, they did not see why there should be a woman's perspective on the environment or in planning. Most male students saw the course exclusively as a consciousness-raising exercise — for

YWCA Women's Resource Centre, Toronto: Meeting Room.

women only. In the end, we managed to attract six students — five women and one man — two of them from outside the University.

We had no models of similar courses to follow when we began to design the course. Women's courses and women's literature tend to ignore the environment and how it supports or hinders women's activities and aspirations. We took our own interests in urban planning, housing, neighbourhoods, natural environments and social change as a starting point. We decided to observe and talk to women in specific environments to see how they used and managed the spaces that had supposedly been designed for them.

We met with four women living in a new condominium townhouse project in a Toronto suburb. They talked about the design of their homes: the "tight" spaces which resulted in tiny kitchens, the shortage of cupboard and storage space, the problems of walking from the parking garage to the unit through a series of locked doors laden with groceries. Although many working women lived in the project, no day care facilities had been planned. Because there were no convenience stores nearby, all of them were forced to use shopping facilities near work.

Two sessions were held in spaces planned for women outside the home: the YWCA Resource Centre and 21 McGill, a private club for women.

The sharp contrast between the spare Resource Centre and opulence of the private club made us realize that few women ever gain access to social, recreational and work spaces designed for them. We were struck by the fact that women's groups, because of their precarious financing, often have to make do with left-over spaces that no one else wants, spaces which are dark, unattractive, non-nurturing and inaccessible. It was a shock to enter a women's environment which was bright, attractive, and designed with care specifically for the women who would be using it.

**Women are often "clients" who occupy spaces but rarely control or design them.**

We held another session at Women in Transition, a house for women in marital crisis and their children. There we discussed the importance of emergency shelter and refuge to women who have fled a husband's home. Although the shelter was created and is run by women, we were told that children often do not understand that women can control an environment and will ask, "where is the boss (man) of this house?" The women there had to adapt creatively to a house originally designed for a single family, which housed multiple families only with difficulty.

We visited the obstetrical unit of the McMaster University Medical Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. The unit was designed to provide a homelike atmosphere with wall paper and lots of colour in waiting areas, open-ended visiting hours, rooming-in for mothers and new-borns. The policy was to provide a supportive atmosphere in which to give birth. As we toured the unit we noticed that the public areas, such as waiting rooms, were very bright and non-institutional in design. In the backstage areas, however — the labour rooms, delivery rooms, and incubator room for premature babies — where the real drama of life is played out, we found a typical hospital decor: white, stark walls, no windows, harsh florescent lighting, hard surfaces and chrome machinery. This high-technology environment, where machines were most prominent, contrasted greatly with the photographs we had seen of neighbourhood birth centres and with the comfortable surroundings of home births.

These visits confirmed our impressions that women are rarely seen as a

Twenty-one McGill Street, Toronto: licensed lounge.

group with distinct environmental needs. They are often "clients" who occupy the spaces but rarely control or design them. They are most prominently involved at the smallest scales — the house, the planning of neighbourhoods — but not on larger ones. We felt that women's environmental needs had to be documented first, in order to raise consciousness about this aspect of women's lives. We also hoped to find examples of actions by women which would serve as models for a feminist consciousness of the environment.

Our course had a number of results: the students did original reserach on women and kitchen design, the privacy needs of home day care workers, women in transition and the travel patterns of suburban women. We prepared a paper for the Habitat Forum of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. At Habitat, we met hundreds of women from around the world who were concerned about the effects of planning and urban settlement on women's lives. One outcome of that conference was the creation of a Newsletter on women and environment. Three issues of the newsletter have been published and an international network of 250 people interested in this subject has been created.

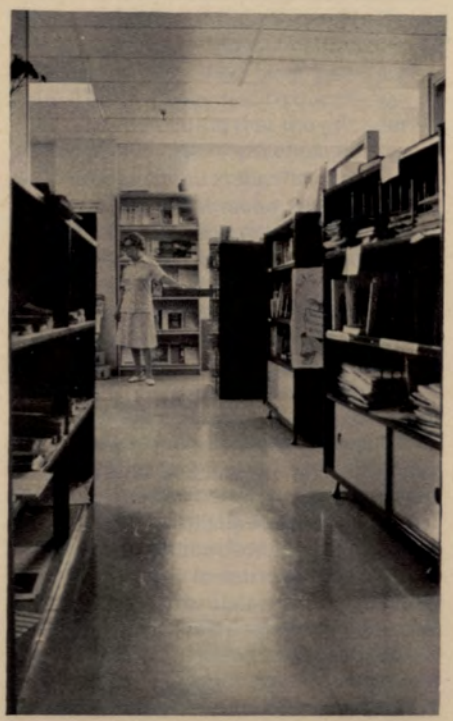
Interest in women and environment has been accelerating, particularly in the United States. Four conferences in 1974 and 1975 focussed attention on women's roles in the environmental design professions. Several projects resulted, including exhibits on the work of women architects and Susanna Torre's book *Women in American Architecture*. New courses on women in architecture and planning have been introduced at Columbia University, University of Oregon, City University of New York, and the University of Waterloo. In the United States, new professional organizations have been formed, such as "Women in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Planning," "The Alliance of Women in Architecture" and "Sisters for a Humane Environment." Alternatives to design education are provided through the Women's Building in Los Angeles which was founded in 1973 and the Woman's School of Planning and Architecture founded in 1975. Special issues of journals have been produced to focus attention on women's environmental needs and new books have been written or are in preparation.

Our original course on Women and Environment had a short but glorious life. Although it gained greater institutional acceptance the second year, it still could not attract students and had to be cancelled for lack of enrolment in 1976-77 and 1977-78.

# Twenty-One McGill

**text by Gerda Wekerle**
**photos by Janice Newson**

I felt ambivalent about 21 McGill, the private club for women. It is posh and elitist (fees are $700 to join and $400 per year). It would be easy to criticize from a feminist perspective — it certainly doesn't reflect much concern for social change. Some rooms, like the billiard room and library, are so typical of similar rooms in a men's club they almost seemed like parodies. On the other hand, the club made me realize how few public spaces there are that women can call their own.



# YWCA

The sparsely furnished and often cramped quarters of the YWCA resource centre in Toronto offered striking contrasts to the private club. The Resource Centre is used by a variety of Toronto Women's organizations.

*Gerda R. Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson and David Morley are all faculty members in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. They are co-editors of the Women and Environments International Newsletter and of a forthcoming book on women and environments.*

*Janice Newson is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Glendon College, York University.*


top, Women's Resource Centre, Library
above, Women's Resource Centre — Women's Information Centre and Referral Service
above, right, Women's Credit Union in the Resource Centre Building
right, Toronto Women's Fundraising Coalition

# law The Forgotten Offenders

**by MaryEllen Gillan and Brenda J. Thomas**
**illustrations by Barbara Hartmann**

Prompted by complaints from female prisoners, the British Columbia government passed an order-in-council on December 5, 1977 for a Royal Commission on the Incarceration of Female Offenders. Madam Justice Patricia Proudfoot was appointed to the chair and lawyer Ann Rounthwaite was chosen as one of the commission members. The report was released in March. One of the main recommendations, the replacement of the director of corrections, has already been implemented.

This report, with its strong recommendations, is one of the few bright signs for female offenders in Canada. The only other noteworthy report is that of the National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender, a committee appointed by the federal government in 1976 for six months. Its report was released in 1977 but the recommendations are still being debated at the two levels of government.

Female offenders command less attention than male offenders because they are fewer in number and their crimes are of a less threatening nature. Policies and training programs for women are spotty. Only about 500-600 women are in prison in Canada at any one time compared to 16,000-18,000 men. In a system so dominated by men, studies tend to be conducted on male offenders and programs are based on male needs. Where treatment of women does differ from that accorded men, the difference usually reflects an assumption that the female offender will return to the protective bosom of her family rather than entering the work force. This is ironic when crimes by women — shoplifting, prostitution, theft, fraud, drug offences — are usually committed for financial reasons.

Figures from 1972-1973 show that approximately forty percent of the men found guilty in Canadian courts are imprisoned, while for women the figure is about seven percent. Typical sentences for women, particularly first offenders, are ones which allow the offender to remain in the community. A suspended sentence is frequently given. When there is a term of imprisonment, temporary absence passes are commonly used to enable the offender to return to her family and community as soon as possible. More innovative programs, where they exist, frequently involve some sort of restitution, that is, community service work orders requiring the offender to pay back society in volunteer work. Innovative community-oriented programs are available in a limited number of communities and they are not always available for women. The usual plan is to start programs for men first then adapt them or extend them for women. The National Advisory Committee indicated that there are still not enough community alternatives for women, although female offenders are jailed less frequently than males.

Treatments specifically for women should be developed and they should be based on an understanding of the female offender in her own right.

*A twenty-seven year old bank teller, single parent of two young children, appears in court for the first time. She is confused, frightened and cannot believe that this is really happening to her. She is fairly well-educated, has had a good job for the past six years and has thrown it all away. Her charge: defrauding the bank of five thousand dollars over an 18 month period. On a limited income and receiving no support from the children's father, she sought means to supplement her income. Her sentence is not unusual – it is suspended for a period of two years during which time she will report to a probation officer on a monthly basis and "seek whatever counselling is necessary." This latter condition will probably not be followed. The offender will be busy looking for work without benefit of references and she will be on partial social assistance for some time. In combination with caring for two children, she will be occupied to such an extent that the probation officer will probably not pursue the counselling condition – the woman is simply in need of more money. Her employment prospects cannot involve positions of trust as she can no longer be bonded. And it will be five years after her two years' probation expires before she can apply for a pardon.*

Female offenders are generally young, usually under thirty-five, and involved primarily in non-violent offences. These include property offences (shoplifting, theft, fraud) and drug offences (possession, trafficking, importing). The National Advisory Committee reports that there has been a significant increase in the number of women charged with criminal and drug offences during the 1970s and the most obvious trends have been increases in theft and drug offences. Reasons for the increases include awareness of the equality of sexes with an attendant reduction in paternalistic attitudes in the criminal justice system. The suggestion is that we are no longer hesitant to arrest women; they are no longer viewed as being only "pawns in the hands of men." With increasing egalitarianism, more women enter and remain in the labour force and are therefore exposed to opportunities for involvement in the wider range of offences particularly theft-related crimes.

Social scientists have always considered shoplifting to be a feminine crime. The traditional shoplifter is believed to be a middle-aged housewife suffering from either sexual frustration or menopause. A 1973 study entitled "Who Shoplifts" examined the phenomenon in Toronto. It found that shoplifters were equally represented by males and females.

Statistics indicate a dramatic rise in shoplifting over the past few years. Explanations of this increase must consider the socio-economic status of the offenders and the larger problem of inflation rather than the psychological and biological traits of offenders, particularly female offenders. Female shoplifters include women of lower income brackets, women on social assistance, and professional women. The classic kleptomaniac is rarely seen. Women with few dollars are increasingly turning to shoplifting as a method of supplementing the household budget, or as a means to obtain goods which are so attractively advertised and temptingly displayed. Items stolen range from childrens clothing to groceries as well as personal cosmetics or clothing.

Although research indicates that

shoplifting is mainly an economic crime, correctional personnel still tend to treat female shoplifters as though they have committed this offence in order to satisfy psychological or biological needs. Why else would they "throw away" respectability? Sentences for shoplifting include fines, probation or imprisonment. During the past ten years most shoplifters, particularly women, have been given probation. This sentence will frequently include the stipulation that the offender obtain psychiatric or psychological counselling.

The new panacea for correctional treatment in the community is "diversion." Diversion programs such as the Adult Diversion Project in Delta, B.C. are usually at the pre-trial level after the accused has admitted guilt. The accused person is dealt with by community representatives rather than being taken to court and receiving a legal sanction for the offence. Shoplifters are presently being used as target groups for diversion projects. Generally, store personnel will make private referrals to agencies which are on call for consultation and assistance in the private disposition of arrested shoplifters. These agencies usually see that the shoplifter makes restitution of some kind. Again it is assumed that the offender will be in need of psychological counselling. Most of these projects are in operation in British Columbia and Ontario — the two leading provinces in correctional innovations.

*An attractive nineteen year old woman stands before the provincial judge to reserve her plea in order to seek legal counsel. She appears bored and acts as though the whole situation is a big joke. Her friends sit at the back of the court room awaiting the assignment of her next court date. The night before, her friends had arrived at her place with two ounces of cocaine. Later, when the police arrive, having been tipped off by an unnamed informant, she was arrested for possession of a narcotic for the purpose of trafficking. The amount and the type of drug were sufficient to charge her with trafficking rather than possession for personal use. As she was the tenant of the apartment and no one else was willing to claim the substance as theirs, this young woman was charged. Unless her lawyer can have the charge reduced to simple possession she will probably do some time. Sentence length or type will likely be based on the judge's particular bias, community pressure, the persuasiveness of legal counsel and the prior record of the accused.*

In Canada the second largest increase in female offenders charged in the 1970s has been for drug related offences. When a sentence of federal imprisonment (over 2 years) is imposed on a female it is primarily for a conviction under the Narcotic Control Act for trafficking or importing. Most convictions for these offences in the past few years have occurred in British Columbia and Ontario — areas of greatest opportunity and availability of illicit drugs. There is a problem of inconsistency. Either the sentence is inadequate and there is no opportunity for treatment or the sentence in harsh with several years in jail.

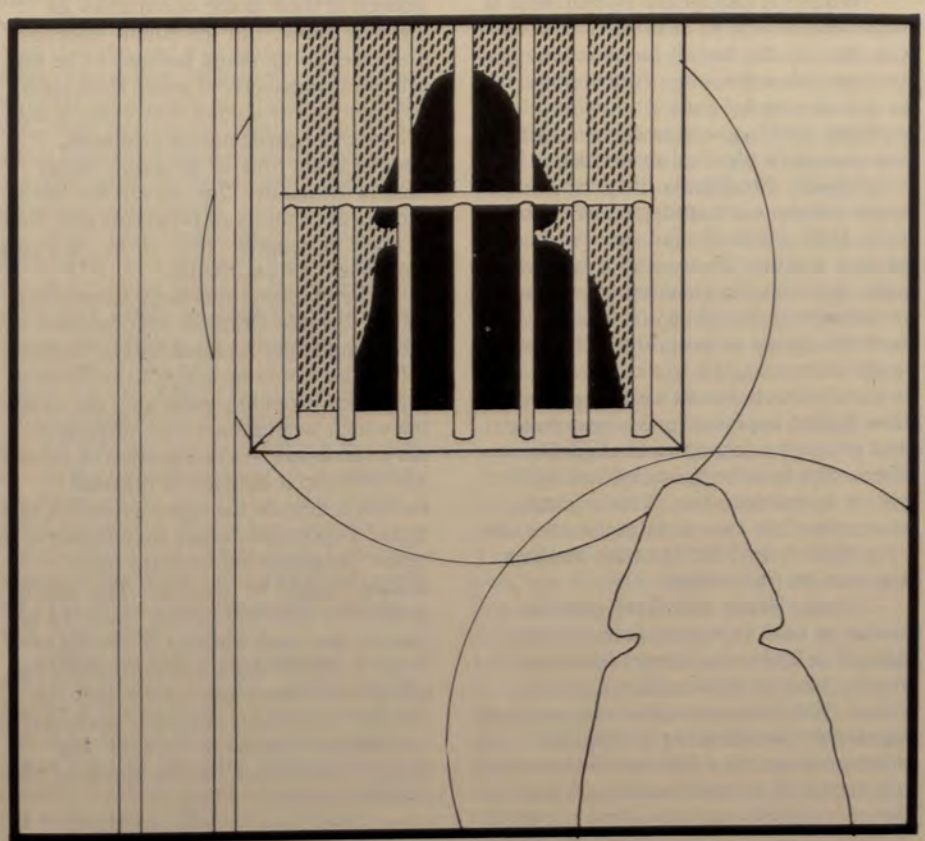
The province of British Columbia has become concerned with the increasing number of heroin addicts and has devised a compulsory and controversial heroin treatment program that is now under review. Inmates in B.C. made submissions to Justice Proudfoot concerning the proposed program. They claim that compulsory treatment cannot succeed. Citizen groups fear that there will be an infringement on civil rights in such programs where suspected drug addicts can be hospitalized for six months and longer by a panel of five. Referrals to this system of corrections can be made by police who suspect drug dependency in accused persons.

*Attractive, young, well dressed, poised – she doesn't at all resemble the television portrayals of "ladies of the night". A plea of guilty is entered and a trial date set for two months from the appearance date. The court accepts the argument that she has residential stability, since she has lived at the same address for six months, and releases her on $500 cash bail. This money will be forfeited if she fails to appear.*

The most renowned of the female offences is soliciting for the purposes of prostitution. Besides being one of the oldest professions, prostitution has traditionally served as a financial support system for heroin addicts. As a result of a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision which has made convictions difficult without strong evidence of open soliciting — including harassment and stating a fee — few prostitutes are being charged.

When prostitutes are charged and convicted they generally receive a fine as a penalty. If the woman charged is a member of an organized group of prostitutes she has little financial worry. She can be back on the streets within twenty-four hours, supporting her habit by means of her lucrative profession. And if a prostitute is imprisoned, how can one "treat" her? Convince her that retraining as a typist or secretary will provide more meaningful or rewarding work?

*A twenty-one year old women, charged with possession of stolen property, has been diverted from the court system. Her apartment was used as a storage spot for stolen items – stolen by her sometime common-law husband. He*



*has long since departed from the scene. But the stolen property was traced and she has been charged with her second criminal offence (the first offence occurred 1½ years previously – a charge of simple possession of marijuana or one "joint"). She would be facing a possible jail term but for the intervention of a community agency. Members of the Elizabeth Fry Society found her literally wandering aimlessly in the court house hall. They directed her to legal aid, offered her community assistance and have accompanied her to court – she is given a suspended sentence. Under supervision she will reside in half-way house for females, some of whom have been in prison. From this residence she can find full-time work, now that she can no longer depend on the occasional hand-out from her common-law husband, and she will eventually move out into her own apartment, possibly sharing it with one of the women she lives with in the community residence. She will maintain contact with the Elizabeth Fry Society which will be able to direct her to upgrading classes, life-skills courses and availability of subsidization for courses. These classes may improve the self-image that led her to such dependence on another person and ultimately to criminal activities.*

Improvements in the treatment of women have been recommended. How soon and how thoroughly they will be implemented is another question.

The opportunities for socially approved behavior are in the community. There the women will find jobs, education and their families — what sociologists call ties to society. A return to the community is inevitable for nearly all female offenders. What is presently being advocated, albeit slowly, is community involvement and responsibility in the treatment process as soon as possible in the woman's sentence. The Report to Parliament on the Penitentiary System (1976) states:

> Much of the fear in the minds of the public comes from not knowing what is going on behind the high wall. That wall keeps offenders confined, but it also discourages citizen participation in the institution and inmate involvement in outside activities.

The report suggests that community involvement can encourage better attitudes in public as well as re-integrate inmates into society in a more meaningful manner. To date it would appear that the public's image of the imprisoned is based on the sensational happenings — the riots and hostage-takings — and these incidents are notably restricted to male prisoners. Yet the female inmates suffer the same stigma. What of their reputation in the community? Offenders are unlikely to conform to norms set by people who despise and fear them. Who, then, will the female offender identify with?

Both the 1976 Report to Parliament on Penitentiaries and the 1978 British Columbia report on female prisoners encourage citizen participation in corrections. The Elizabeth Fry Societies are the most active Canadian group involved with female offenders. They participate in programs from the pre-trial stage through the court system and imprisonment as well as the post-trial stage through the court system and imprisonment as well as the post-release and re-integration phases. But the number of groups interested in female offenders is disproportionately small. Again it would appear that publicity has favoured the males.

We're all aware of hire-a-con programs but the assumption is that it will be a male. Females who have "done time" are all too frequently regarded as unstable and unreliable. They suffer all the traditional female stereotyping and then some: time off work (for court or parole reporting), emotional instability ("she's done time!") and unrealiability (who are her friends?). Employment opportunities in unskilled occupations, as waitresses, chambermaids, dishwashers and car wash attendants, are the most readily available.

What is it like for the woman who is sentenced to a term in prison? Once inside the jail she has all her personal possessions taken from her. She is subjected to questioning by guards and social workers, and is given an embarrassing but necessary physical examination for contraband. Frequently drugs and sometimes weapons are smuggled in by women. Once inside the jail she spends a lot of time waiting. She waits for her security classification (maximum, medium or minimum) then waits for assignment to work details or programs. The inmate waits to be assigned to a counsellor who in turn instructs her to wait set periods of time before applying for various passes and programs according to eligibility dates. She has the agony of waiting for parole board decisions. This is much worse than the two or three months she may have waited for her trial, for then she was on the outside.

Unlike males who have penitentiaries in each province, females sentenced to 2 years or longer have one facility located in Kingston, Ontario. Since 1974, however, a federal-provincial agreement provides for provincial institutionalization of females if/when they are accepted by their home province. Space available and individual suitability determine prisoner placement. Suitability is sometimes defined in terms of security risk and nuisance potential (such as aggressiveness, lesbianism, militancy). Needless to say there are a number of problems in housing women serving serveral years with women imprisoned for a few days or a few months. The latter group will be eligible for community release almost immediately. They will probably not be involved or interested in institutional programs due to their impending release into a larger resource centre. This mixture of federal and provincial prisoners could contribute to morale problems for those serving longer terms. It may also contribute to internal security problems as those permitted temporary absences are pressured into bringing contraband when they return to the jail.

Women sentenced to less than two years are imprisoned provincially. Females usually have only the one facility in each province while males may have two or more, thereby increasing the likelihood for men of being closer to their families and community resources.

During the past few years commissions and studies have recommended the closing of Kingston Penitentiary for Women. It is still open, and despite the 1974 agreement between the federal and provincial governments, women still do pen time (2 years or longer) in Kingston rather than in their home province. Some provinces do attempt to keep as many women in their home community as logistics allow. But the subtle selection processes force many females to be imprisoned thousands of miles from their families. Some women, however, usually seasoned or professional criminals, choose to do time in Kingston rather than provincially. One reason for this is greater availability of programs and there is pride in being a "pro" or in "drawing pen time" for an offence.

The National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender recommends establishing either regional federal facilities for females or contracting to individual provinces providing programs are available which would meet federal penitentiary standards. A combination of federal and provincial inmates in regional facilities, despite the many problems of a mixed population, could be conducive to better programming because more females would be involved. This would justify the time and money involved although the small number of female offenders should dictate opportunities for reform and innovation rather than the second-class status presently accorded to imprisoned females in Canada. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended that

> No matter how small the female jail population, adequate treatment programs and services should be organized

for women. In fact, the small numbers involved provide an opportunity to try out new methods of correction.

Planning and programming will determine the success of the programs as will the selection of provincial inmates. The latter group should be those who are serving the longest provincial sentences and who would benefit from internal courses and programs.

An example of poor planning for females is the co-educational or co-correctional institution at Prince George, B.C. This attempt to stimulate the "real" world of men and women was a quick copy of American experiments. As pointed out by Madam Justice Proudfoot, however, "there were rarely more than 13 and sometimes as few as six female inmates . . . (while) . . . the male population fluctuated between 120 and 140." Jealousy and associated problems arose. The feasibility of such a program for provincial prisoners serving short sentences must be questioned. The B.C. Report recommended it be discontinued immediately.

The official programs, many of which exist on paper only, include the usual stereotyped female occupations of laundering, sewing, housework, beadwork, busy-work. One never ceases to be amazed at the many arts and crafts techniques applied to disguising kleenex boxes or toilet paper rolls in stuffed animals or knitted or crocheted covers. Imagine the employment possibilities upon release when one attempts to apply these skills. The prison philosophy appears to be centered around turning female prisoners into acceptable middle-class traditional females. Certainly the employees of institutions are drawn from the conservative conformists.

What really takes place inside, unfortunately, is a process of defeatism. The B.C. report suggests that boredom and a lack of challenge pervade the day-to-day life. Efforts by concerned corrections workers as well as private citizens' groups are frequently hampered by the prison administration. Establishing a library for inmates can become a major task as can the implementation of innovative programs or the promotion of educational resources. The school teacher at Oakalla Woman'e Correctional Centre illustrated this when he testified that sixty per cent of his time was spent dealing with bureaucratic red tape.

These problems are outlined in inmate newspapers, the B.C. report and by Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada. The B.C. report indicated, for example, that of the five so-called programs — laundry, kitchen, sewing, beauty parlor and education — three are for the maintenance of the building. The official programs usually do not include upgrading or technical courses which can be accredited on the outside. If inmates had the incentive of certification, they would be encouraged to participate in programs and perhaps in life. Service-oriented and home-making programs are not applicable to females who will be required to support themselves and in many cases, a family, upon their release. Nearly all female offenders will need to work at least part-time for most of their lives. For these women, it is not a case of returning to a well-ordered traditional family with a male as the main wage earner.

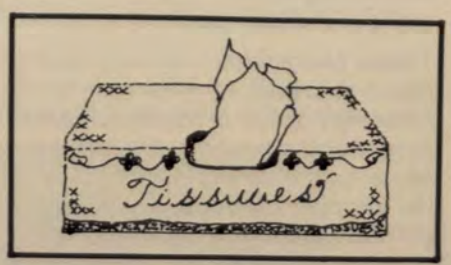
If little attention is given to female offenders it may be because they have called little attention to themselves. Unfortunately prison reforms only seem to occur once disruptions and violence occur and female offenders have not been involved in publicity campaigns. There is also a possibility of a "divide and conquer" tactic as federal inmates, serving longer terms and having more of a vested interest in changing the system, are imprisoned separately from the majority of provincial inmates.

Females are now becoming more assertive and are establishing programs for themselves. Despite occasional subtle internal opposition, inmate newspapers are operating. In addition, inmate committees, where they exist, are occasionally requested to provide input into the formal administration.

The use of innovative programs need not be directed by economics. An informed and concerned administration can implement programs oriented towards community-based sentences whether a few females are involved or large numbers and serious offences must be dealt with. Given that provincial imprisonment means short sentences, why bother with incarceration? The female offender will be on the street in a matter of weeks or months. And given the relatively fewer female offenders, why not concentrate on innovative programs for women? When they are successful they can be adapted for the male offenders instead of employing the usual reverse procedure of studying males first.

The male-dominated prison system is as suceptible as any other to token government appointments and programs. The appointments of Justice Proudfoot and Ann Rounthwaite in B.C. seem to go beyond such tokenism. Their report demonstrates a readiness to listen to concerned citizens and corrections personnel as well as offenders. Implementation of their recommendations has already begun. The entire procedure did not take several years but only a few months from the time the order in council was passed. The B.C. commission was precipitated at least in part by allegations of misconduct by prison officials — allegations made by female prisoners. This report was initiated, then, by a threat of scandal in the B.C. corrections branch. But the report was made before any violence erupted. Although Canada has yet to see the Patty Hearst or violent political types of crime, female involvement in serious, non-violent offences (fraud, drug trafficking and importing) is increasing. Female offenders will become more visible with increasing egalitarianism in Canadian society.

Two alternatives for programming suggested by the National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender are still being discussed by both levels of government. Individual provinces are eager to have a regional facility established in their area so that they might benefit from federal financing; the federal government is concerned about treatment of females jailed for two years or longer. Both governments do seem to appreciate the necessity of community contact. It would be refreshing indeed if changes were instituted promptly. We should not have to wait for threats of scandal or violence before reforms are made.




*MaryEllen Gillan received her M.A. in Sociology from the University of Alberta. Her Master's thesis was based on her research in B.C. and Alberta correctional centres. She is a member of the board of directors of the Elizabeth Fry Society which is presently establishing in Edmonton. Ms. Gillan has worked inside a provincial correctional institution and is presently employed in the corrections field in Alberta.*

*Brenda Thomas received her Masters in Applied Criminology degree from the University of Ottawa in 1977. While completing her degree, she did various field placements including work for the National Consultant on Diversion in Ottawa. She is presently a correctional practitioner in Alberta and has done research on both juvenile and female offenders.*

## JOURNEY

*Leaving Toronto for the west*
*he packs our bags*
*and I tuck in supplies*
*for my period, two days late.*
*We board the train*
*with a sense of embarkation.*

*By Winnipeg I begin to grow*
*with the stretch and reach of land.*
*Filled with expanding hope*
*I am in the hands of God.*
*Tissue to crotch,*
*tissue to crotch,*
*I test and test again,*
*but there's no spot, no stain.*

*Edmonton, Calgary,*
*then to the mountains.*
*I ask for signs, for clues.*
*But there are no omens,*
*only silence,*
*unpunctuate faces of rock.*

*In Lake Louise I feel so bloated*
*I seem to float and*
*then like clouds catching on peaks*
*stop,*
*wondering if I will flow*
*without the tidal pull.*

*Tissue to crotch,*
*tissue to crotch,*
*I feel very small in the mountains,*
*sure that the moon can't find me.*
*More than a week now*
*we are both on edge,*
*cliff-hanging cycle counters,*
*waiting.*
*We don't dare ask*
*what we'll do if it's true.*

*In Banff my breasts blossom and ache.*
*The mirror gives back my image*
*glowing with joy.*
*The mountains loom*
*outside our Rimrock room*
*and in my abdomen*
*do cells divide and redivide*
*in their plushy uterine bed?*

*But in Banff I bleed.*
*After a dinner of trout,*
*in a blue enamel cubicle*
*of the restaurant ladies' room,*
*the paper turns pink.*
*I bleed, I bleed,*
*I wring my hands and moan.*
*The mountains heave their bulk*
*against the cloudless sky,*
*the heft and weight of rock*
*no longer the labor of earth,*
*but only walls of granite*
*echoing back my cries.*

*No babies, no babies, no babies.*

*My womb weeps out its rusty blood*
*and maybe, who knows,*
*some miniscule being.*
*Sterile pads and wads turn red*
*in witness of my barren curse,*
*and all this bloated flesh offends.*
*The milky swell of breast and belly*
*was only fat, was only dreams.*
*I am in the hands of God,*
*I said,*
*I am in the hands of God.*
*Then we cross the Great Divide*
*and I flow down to the sea.*

# *Two Poems by Isabel Huggan*

## CHICORY LOVER

*Jesus, when I was ten or so*
*I had a dream of you.*
*You had a long white dress on,*
*and we walked hand in hand*
*across a weedy vacant lot*
*picking blue chicory flowers.*
*Chicory Jesus, you were my friend*
*when I really needed one.*
*Dream lover, you believed in me*
*and I was a true believer,*
*a true blue chicory picker,*
*buddy of the Lord, amen.*

*Now I've been looking since then*
*for another vacant place,*
*another sweet face in the sunshine*
*and all the good feelings of faith.*
*But chicory root is bitter,*
*its blue petals fall and fade,*
*and I've been made and I've been laid*
*but the dream just won't come true.*
*Christ, you're a chicory cheater,*
*you led me on, you son of a bitch!*

*Isabel Huggan lives near Belleville, Ontario. She has had fiction published in* Quarry *and* Grain *and has recently won a contest for women scriptwriters sponsored by the National Film Board. She gave birth to a daughter in June 1977.*

# The People's Republic

**text by Wendy Danson and Linda Duncan**
**photos by Linda Duncan**

*In April, 1978, Wendy Danson and Linda Duncan travelled for two weeks through the People's Republic of China. Their visits to cities and rural communes brought them into contact with women in their working, domestic and leisure environments. They share here some of their impressions of the life of Chinese women.*

On our daily excursions we came across city women laboring at every conceivable task — housing construction, street maintenance, railroad crews and demolition projects. It was refreshing to witness women so capably participating in a working environment foreign to Canadian women. One of our first insights into the Chinese perspective on working women was the night we came across a crowd of Chinese watching a woman maneuver an enormous crane through a narrow opening at a construction sight. It was not until later that we realized that while our attention was drawn to the female operator, the Chinese spectators were engrossed in the machine.

The sight of women working in factories side by side with male workers was the norm in China. We saw them at work in a tractor factory, glass factory, oil refinery and open pit coal mine. Women did not appear to be restricted to assembly line work. We met women members of revolutionary committees managing workers' communes and factories. Among the most dynamic and impressive Chinese we met was the female Director of Darien Harbour, one of the major international ports in the country.

We met women working within the "professions" at a Shanghai University, Shanghai Hospital and Rural Clinic, the Darien Deaf-Mute School, and many of the interpreters were


women. The hospital briefing session revealed the Chinese, by their own admission, to be slow in reaching the level of expertise and mechanization we know in the west. We were fortunate to visit a rural clinic of one of the noted "barefoot doctors" who are minimally trained to tend to common ailments allowing the more skilled to give time to the seriously ill. Yet with so few Chinese working in specialized fields, we noted that one of the Shanghai hospital staff introduced was a female heart specialist.

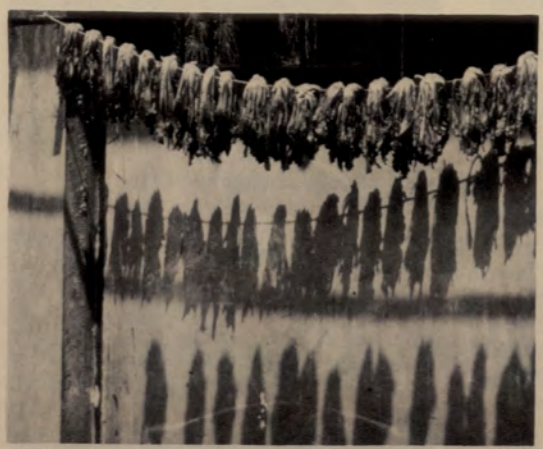
With agricultural production their most crucial industry, rural communes arise as the backbone of modern China. Women seem to be playing a key role in these communes. They were not isolated in farm kitchens cooking for male crews nor limited to farm house chores. We saw women planting crops, managing greenhouses, preparing poultry for export and laboring along-side men in a commune tractor factory.

The extended family remains one of the mainstrays of Chinese life. But with most women now expected to work outside the home, institutional child care has become equally common place. Work places provide at no cost round-the-clock care for workers' children; additional time away from their jobs is permitted for nursing mothers. Special


bus service delivers mothers and their children to the work place. Yet the provision of child care outside the family fold did not seem to be replacing the parenting role. We saw fathers, mothers, grandparents, neighbors and other children caring for the young. One sensed that time spent with children was an enjoyable task and children very much a treasure.

Children continue to live with their family until their late twenties due both to a scarcity of housing and a stringent policy of planned parenthood. It is common even after marriage for in-laws to share their home, normally one room, with the newly-weds. One Chinese home visited housed fourteen members — a grandmother, son, wife, children and grandchildren. Those who wish to hold out for their own home must patiently endure their single status until their name surfaces on the work place housing list.

Our brief China tour could provide us with only a superficial view of life for women in a communistic country. But by the trip's end, we felt we had experienced fleeting glances at a life not radically different from our own, at least on a personal scale. Women shared with us many of the same desires — more living space, better consumer goods and increased leisure time. Their crowded, unprivate, sparse existence was dismal compared to our soft, comfortable life; yet China emanates a feeling of happiness, direction and joy.



*Linda Duncan works at the Edmonton Social Planning Council.*

*Wendy Danson is a union organizer for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.*

# books

## SOME THOUGHTFUL TALES

**review by Rebecca Smith**

*A Casual Affair: A Modern Fairytale*, by Sylvia Fraser. McClelland & Stewart, 1978. $12.95 cloth.

The German poet Schiller wrote, "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life." In *A Casual Affair: A Modern Fairytale*, Sylvia Fraser continues her search for a literary form, a stylistic structure, a fictional mode that will allow one accurately to express extremely complex ideas. In this novel that both uses and analyzes fables, myths, and fairytales, Fraser explains her choice of this form via the words of her unnamed heroine, herself a creater of fairytale stories and tapestries. Fantasy allows one more of the necessary simplicity — as in a biblical parable or an Eastern sutra — so one can escape ordinary patterns of thought and absorb ideas and perceptions that go beyond the ordinary. Fraser's heroine creates fairytales because she sees them as psychic shorthand: "a distillation of the secret yearnings that pull on us from the inside, like invisible cords, controlling our lives, upturning, re-routing, just when we want to be most reasonable. She believed all of us — in our dreams in our unconscious lives — write our own fairytales, and that if we could discover these we could understand our own past, our own present . . . get glimpses of our future." At the end of the novel, as she rows across a lake and toward a new kind of life based on new understanding, the heroine again describes the simplicity of fairytales, which "comes from having experienced great complexity . . . the simplicity of distillation."

After warning the reader, again via the heroine, against "the Hollywood trap of judging every story by its ending," Fraser tells a love story with a decidedly unpleasant beginning, middle, and ending: She creates a silver and white fairytale world inhabited by a nameless Princess ("a slender woman with pale blond hair pulled sleekly back from pale forehead, her face dramatically moulded around deep blue eyes . . . all planes and angles, light and shadow") and her reluctant, also nameless, Knight ("a tall, elegant man with gaunt cheeks and hollow eyes . . . a distinguished ruin of a man, face and body fudged by age and dissipation, his pewter hair clipped close and polished like a helmet"). Naive and vulnerable, the Princess initiates the affair because she is tired of Paradise; she resents being "pampered at a level below my growth." Cynical and insensitive her Knight longs for a "dream girl" but admits that all his current fantasies are about making money, not love. Their "modern fairytale" love story is a miasma of misunderstanding, guilt, disappointment, pain, and finally violence. Their private neuroses allow no mutually redeeming acts of compassion that could bring them together; each is trapped inside his or her own pain. Princesses and Knights can no longer expect miracles, and the two do not live happily ever after. Indeed, as the ending of the tale suggests, they are lucky even to live "haply ever after."

Between most of the sections of plot development are the stories that constitute the second level of fairytales — "real" fairytales that take the already reduced story of human inter-action and reduce it still further, if "reduce" is the appropriate word for distillation, crystalization. These tales cut away the killing day-to-dayness of reality, of obligations, forms, and formalities, of stereotypes. They also are stripped of the simultaneously helpful and entrapping sociological jargon, popularized psychological buzz-words, and quasi-metaphysical speculations. They are eerie, sometimes macabre, and always evocative, demanding creative and imaginative reading — like parables and fables: *Eskimo Tales #II, Why There Are So Few Unicorns*, and *The Enchanted Forest* are three of Fraser's modern fairytales that work with amazing power, saying things that simply cannot be said — because of their complexity — in any more effective way, simultaneously disconcerting and enlightening the reader.

*Sylvia Fraser*

While *using* fairytales, Fraser also critically examines the genre. She implicitly attacks those who live by adherence to unexamined "fairytale" models: the manipulative, dependent wife; the cool, macho male, successful in exploiting other men in business and women in bed; or the intelligent, beautiful woman who seeks her man to save her from the pitfalls of an independent life. Fraser attacks "fairytale" morality, where one's life becomes "an accident of fate," and insists that people must take responsibility. There are no automatic heroes, villains, and victims. And she attacks the demand for "fairytale" endings to real life stories. At the end of *A Casual Affair*, neither the Princess nor the Knight has found that a love affair conquers all, that a kiss from the right person will give life meaning and happiness. The man returns to his self-imposed and self-perpetuated traps of marriage and business, after having hit the Princess over the head with a fireplace poker. She, after an unsuccessful suicide attempt, comes through pain to awareness, losing what she thought she wanted — a miracle, a pewter-haired

Prince who will impose happiness upon her — but gaining something better. At the end of the novel, the ex-Princess rows away in a boat, on a quest like Ulysses, a new female journey-maker — rowing away from the sure self-destruction of belief in old myths and fairytales that no longer fit, and into the unknown of "the universe inside her skin." There are no White Knights to do the dirty work of making meaning for her life, yet "she would live."

This is not a pleasant book, but, then, neither was *Pandora* or *The Candy Factory*. Persumably, Fraser is not aiming for pleasantness; more likely, she is aiming for dissonance, that unpleasant sense of disharmony that compels one to seek mitigation. A reader can relieve the sense of dissonance by rejecting the book as distasteful, the heroine as neurotic, the plot as unsatisfying. Or the reader can begin to analyze the causes of the disharmony — the wide discrepancy between what we expect and want in fiction and what we get in *A Casual Affair*. Perhaps, I think Fraser suggests, our wants and expectations need reconsideration, forcing readers to examine the "fairytale" patterns that implicitly mold our behaviour and attitudes toward ourselves and others.

I think *A Casual Affair* is better than some reviews suggest. But do not expect to read the book intellectually and emotionally unmolested.

*Rebecca Smith teaches English at the University of Prince Edward Island.*

## NEW ARRIVALS, OLD PROBLEMS

**review by Julia Berry**

*The Immigrants*, by Gloria Montero, James Lorimer & Co., Toronto, 1977. $12.95.

Lately there's been a flood of books on ethnic groups searching for their roots. There are ethnic histories and ethnic song and dance groups, but little has been said about recent immigrants to Canada. The tendency is to think that only immigrants in the old days had a hard time. In *The Immigrants* Gloria Montero gives us interviews with immigrants of all ages, from 4 to 84, from recent arrivals to those who have been here for decades. She does not identify them by ethnic group and we are given only the first name and occupation of each person. It is refreshing to note that the majority of the people interviewed are women. In fact, Montero started out doing a book on immigrant women and somehow men got added along the way. Equally refreshing is the fact that she considers Americans, Scots and Englishmen as immigrants.

For people who have little contact with recent immigrants this book is particularly revealing. We learn of the multitude of problems facing new arrivals from the minute they step off the plane, with Customs and Immigration, with language and discrimination, with a change in values, with education and employment difficulties. In compiling her book, Gloria Montero interviewed over 400 people. Getting them to speak out on the problems they had experienced must have taken incredible patience and persistence on her part. Not many people will open up to an interviewer on their first meeting, and recent immigrants often feel they should be polite and not criticize Canada to Canadians.

The attitude of many immigrants seems to be: "We had to come." Despite the difficulties they found in Canada, they had left countries where there were serious political problems, few jobs, little food, little hope for the future for themselves and particularly for their children. Canada often becomes the lesser of two evils. For recent arrivals there is constant doubt as to whether they have done the right thing. Is the struggle to live a good life in Canada worth it? The immigrants who have been in the country longer feel it is. "It's like the war. After you live through the bloody horror and the hard times you look back and all you can think about is the good times," says an Italian construction worker after 18 years in Canada. A housewife named Isabel comments, "But with all the problems I have had here, I like Canada. I like it very much. There is a future here that we never knew in the Azores." If only newcomers themselves could draw encouragement from these philosophical remarks, it might help them get through the initial hard times.

Immigrating to a new country puts abnormal stress on a marriage or family. For many, it can mean years of separation. Often the husband will come to Canada first with the thought of sending for his wife and family once he has made some money. Many times this never comes about. Jobs are hard to find or even non-existent if you don't speak the language. Frequently, couples separated for a length of time will have troubles adjusting to the new-found independence or Canadian ways one of them has adopted. With a new culture often comes a questioning of old roles, for women especially. As one Jamaican says about his wife, "So she comes and starts to get fancy ideas here. Now she goes to school and does a bit of work in her spare time . . . She's fillin' up her head . . . I don't know what's happened to her. She's not the same anymore . . ." Men brought up to play a traditional "macho" role in their marriage can find Canadian ways very threatening, while their wives tend to appreciate the more liberal attitudes.

Women on their own in Canada sometimes find themselves forced to have sex in return for "favours". Angela, a kitchen worker, was raped by her boss who said he would tell Immigration and have her sent home if she reported him. A Jamaican woman spoke of having sex with a man at the immigration office in order to get help with her papers. Another woman working as a domestic was raped by the man in the household. She reasons, "I did it and I did it because I wanted somethin' . . . It's up to the girl. When she gets her paper or whatnot, she doesn't have to see him again." Lack of knowledge about legal rights in Canada and the threat of deportation (real or imagined) keep a strangle hold over immigrants.

Almost every immigrant interviewed mentions employment problems. The majority of them are slotted into low-level jobs such as working in a garment factory or meat-packing plant, picking crops on farms — in general, minimum wage, non-skilled, non-union work. Even people with good educations in their own countries find their documents are of no value here and they must often begin their studies again. Not knowing the language can keep many people in low-level jobs for most of their lives. The thought of immigrants coming in and taking jobs away from Canadians is a well-worn myth. On the whole they end up doing jobs Canadians wouldn't deign to do. There is resentment on both sides. "Being an immigrant in Canada is being a second-class citizen. We have to work twice as hard and be twice as good for the same job." If you do succeed in rising above the masses, people may resent the fact "that you have come to enjoy what someone else sweated for . . ." Racial discrimination on the job is frequently mentioned. A Filipino security guard comments, "The money I earned didn't make the way I was treated any easier to take." Charles, an unemployed immigrant tells his story: "We are not given the opportunity to improve or to demonstrate what we can do . . . I have my honours in economics . . . There are jobs. Many times, I'd phone companies and they couldn't distinguish who you were. They'd say, 'Come on right away and apply for the job.' You'd go and they'd see you were black and they'd say it was filled two hours before. That happened many times."

Children experience discrimination in school because of their looks, because of their dress or accent. ". . . Life for a child in a family of immigrants is quite a bit more difficult than for a Canadian child. The immigrant child must cope with the fact that at home his parents speak to him in one way and teach him certain things, while at school he learns something that is often quite different. The children resent this. They are young and don't want to be different. They don't even like their friends to know that their parents are Spanish, because in fights or disagreements it is often used to insult them."

Even the old in Canada feel discriminated against. For immigrants who come to Canada when they are already old, this is especially hard. "I am too old for this country. This is a land for young people. Life for them is good . . . I am just an old woman who cannot find a job because she speaks such poor English . . . I have learned that old people should stay in their own countries where they know people and are known", says Ludwiga who came from Poland to be with her daughter.

Gloria Montero pulls no punches. She shows that Canada often gains more from its immigrants than it offers. From the immigrant's point of view, our society is not as multicultural as the government would have us think. Montero's Barry Broadfoot approach is a great stimulus but it leaves the reader hungry for more analysis and hard facts. *The Immigrants* stops us from feeling smug, but it doesn't provide us with any ammunition to push for improvements.

*Julia Berry teaches English as a Second Language and is managing editor of the* NeWest ReView *in Edmonton.*

*Ukrainian immigrants arriving at Quebec* *photo from* Greater Than Kings

## BITTERNESS AND REGRET

**review by Aritha van Herk**

*All of Baba's Children,* by Myrna Kostash. Hurtig, 1977. $12.95, cloth.
*Greater Than Kings,* by Zonia Keywan and Martin Coles. Harvest House, 1977. $16.95, cloth.
*No Streets of Gold,* by Helen Potrebenko. New Star Books, 1977. $5.95, paper.

The recent, almost simultaneous publication of three books on Ukrainians in the West should mean something. Is it an indication of a suddenly burgeoning and sentimental interest in our ethnic origins. Or is it a long-overdue recognition of the true story of Ukrainian immigrants as opposed to the romanticized version of Easter eggs,of embroidery, sheepskin coats and pyrohys.

Although Kostash, Potrebenko and Keywan approach their subject differently, the prevailing tone of *All of Baba's Children, Greater Than Kings* and *No Streets of Gold* is similar: bitterness tinged with regret. As all three of these books makes clear, Ukrainian immigrants did not have an easy time of it. Canadian streets were not paved with gold. The people were poor, exploited, and often treated with prejudice and intolerance — "bohunks". Indeed, it was even a major struggle for them to be recognized as Ukrainians instead of Russians or Austrians. The courage of people who uproot themselves from a feudal society to suffer incredible privation in a new and hostile land is sobering; there can be no doubt that these books are meant to provoke a twinge of guilt in the more privileged Anglo-Saxon Canadian.

*No Streets of Gold* and *All of Baba's Children* are unmitigatedly political. Although *No Streets of Gold* masquerades as a history, it is only historical in that it is a chronological recounting of Ukrainians in Alberta. Both tone and approach deal with the settlement, work, education, religion and identity of the Ukrainian immigrant from a political standpoint. The Ukrainian is represented as the exploited worker. Although Potrebenko cities numerous facts and figures to support her analysis, she neglects to give adequate documentation for those facts and figures. This failure, along with Potrebenko's obviously subjective interpretation of historical events does not add to the credibility of the text. Given her anger and emotional perspective, it is necessary to question whether the author is recounting history or using history as a lever for her own ideology. At times she is thought provoking: "assimilation is a false issue. Culture grows out of the history and economic realities of a nation." At other times she is unreasonable: "it is obvious that the purpose of the schools was cultural and hence, political annihilation."

Althought Potrebenko's political negativism is annoying, some of the stories she recounts are terrifying, vivid in detail. It is these stories of the Ukrainian people, rather than bitter facts and figures, that hook the reader and make the book worth reading.

If Potrebenko pretends to be objective, Kostash is unashamedly subjective. *All of Baba's Children* suffers from the same rhetoric and polemicism that *No Streets of Gold* does, but for some reason, it is more palatable. Kostash hits us over the head with just as many ugly facts and figures, but her writing style is far superior and her tone even manages a self-depreciating humour. The immigrant stories that Kostash transcribes are moving and powerful; they serve as a voice that unites the book. Although *All of Baba's Children* is too long and repetitious, it is an interesting exploration of the ethnic consciousness and it thus suceeds in a particular way that *No Streets of Gold* does not. Kostash exhibits a definite political awareness too, but her anger seems to be rooted in a cultural rather than a political ideology.

Kostash's implication that only Ukrainian immigrants suffered is

irritating. It is true that Anglo-Saxons were privileged, but many immigrants experienced much the same kind of treatment as the Ukrainians. An immigrant is an immigrant.

What is most impressive about *All of Baba's Children* is Kostash's perspective. Rhetoric and bitterness notwithstanding, Kostash does not pretend to be objective. This is as much a book about Myrna Kostash as it is a book about Ukrainian immigrants and we see clearly her attempt to come to terms with her cultural roots. She is concerned with defining her own identity. It is this present awareness of the past that makes *All of Baba's Children* exciting.

> If there's any way at all that I carry on from where (Baba) left off, it won't be with her language, because I never knew it, nor with her habits, because they make no sense, nor with her faith, because I have lost it, nor with her satisfaction, because my needs have changed. It will be perhaps with the thing she had no choice in bequeathing: her otherness. As the alien, the bohunk, the second-class citizen, and the ethnic, she passed on to me the gift of consciousness of one who stands outside the hegemonistic centre, and sees where the real world ends and the phantasma of propaganda begins.

As feminists, both Kostash and Potrebenko closely examine the role of immigrant women. What they reveal about the role of women is both terrible and impressive; these books are worth reading if only for that.

*Greater Then King* is the least political of the three books. In comparison it is far less powerful. Keywan reveals little personal bias, but neither does she offer any new insights. She concerns herself primarily with tradition and makes no evaluative statements, restricting herself to a relatively simple account of the Ukrainian immigrant's history and lifestyle.

After the fiery brandishings of Kostash and Potrebenko, *Greater than Kings* is tame reading. What does make the book interesting are Martin Coles' photographs. They are primarily photographs of people — the immigrants themselves. Most of them are posing, facing and camera self-consciously. But despite their careful expressions, one sees in their eyes what Potrebenko, and especially Kostash depict so well. Perhaps it is the fanaticism of every immigrant in search of a promised land. Perhaps it is a hopeless hope.

*Aritha van Herk is a Canadian with Dutch "roots." Her novel* Judith *will be published in the fall.*

## LIVESAY DISTORTED

**review by Mary Lee Morton**

*The Woman I Am*, by Dorothy Livesay. Press Porcepic, 1977. $3.95, paper.

*The Woman I Am* is deceptively titled: it represents only a fraction of Dorothy Livesay. My first impression was that the book presents a much more limited range of talent and subject matter this is usual in Livesay's work. All the poems seem to be about sex, menstruation, babies (having them and bringing them up), and more sex. There is a cluster of poems on widowhood and aging, but the claustrophobically personal tone of the book pervades. One extremely important aspect of Livesay's personality —her involvement in social issues and her devotion to justice — is almost completely missing from this selection.

Where did the political Livesay go? Into another book, apparently. Read *The Woman I Am* in conjunction with *Right Hand Left Hand* and a more accurate portrait of Dorothy Livesay emerges. *Right Hand Left Hand* gains by the political and social commentary in poems like "Day and Night" and "The Outrider"; the selection of "best loved poems" in *The Woman I Am* is correspondingly diminished. Oddly enough, the social documentary *Right Hand Left Hand* is dedicated to Livesay's son, Peter Macnair; *The Woman I Am* is dedicated to her daugher, Marcia Hays. The dichotomy between the political-male and personal-female poles of human nature is one which Livesay herself has consistently rejected. It is surprising to find it so perfectly embodied in these two books. One can only guess that the publisher assumed the books were aiming at two different markets; an assumption both crass and inaccurate.

**The dichotomy between the political-male and the personal-female poles is one which Livesay has consistently rejected. It is surprising to find it so perfectly embodied in two of her books.**

Although *The Woman I Am* is flawed, in my opinion, by its omission of Livesay's powerful writing on social issues, it does offer what any selection of her work is bound to include: compelling and readable poetry. The book is in four sections: 1926-1971, 1971-1975, 1975-1977, and five poems for her former editor, Alan Crawley. The chronological divisions show the growing uniqueness of Livesay's voice, from the naive, occasionally gushing girl to the spare, strong old woman. The most unified and lively section of the book is 1971-1975, which includes several poems from *Plainsongs*. "Why We Are Here" summarizes Livesay's sexual and spiritual ideas in classically simple imagery.

> Some of us are here
> because we were visited
> at dawn
> were given a third
> ear
>
> Some of us especially
> are women . . .
>
> Some of us are here
> as messages
> because in the small womb
> Lies all the lightning.

The middle section of the poem refers to Irving Layton's phrase: "The womb is such a diminutive room in which to lie". The contrast between the two poets is instructive. Layton's poetry about sex is uneasy, focusses on power, and is ultimately fearful of women. Livesay leaves one with the impression that she loves men, including what she refers to in another poem as "the seven-inch reach".

Other sections of the book are not quite as convincing as the 1971-1975. The first part, 1926-1971, has been redone in other books by Livesay, notably and most completely in the *Collected Poems*. It is difficult to rationalize the appearance of the same poems for the fourth or fifth time in yet another book. Collecting the five poems for Alan Crawley in one place sheds an interesting light on Livesay's relationship with her editor, but the section is out of balance with the rest of the book. Sadly, the final section, 1975-1977, shows a noticeable diminution of poetic inventiveness. Poems like "Life Styles", "Still Life" and "A Certain Dark" seem flaccid by comparison with Livesay's earlier work.

Altogether, *The Woman I Am* does not show Dorothy Livesay at her best. The book is sloppily produced and is a partial and inaccurate sampling of her work. The serious reader would do better to invest in the *Collected Poems*, and the casual reader would find the best of this collection in the chapbook *Plainsongs*.

*Mary Lee Morton has a Master's degree in Canadian Literature from the University of Calgary.*

## OH JULIA! OH HILARY!

## OH DORIS . . .

**review by Sharon Batt**

*Two Women*, by Doris Anderson. MacMillan Co. of Canada, 1978. Cloth, $9.95.

The publisher's blurb gives the first clues that *Two Women* is aimed at the bestseller list, not literary posterity: "a big popular novel . . . full of event . . . some very explicit sex." Each chapter number is adorned with a cute graphic symbol, something I hadn't seen since I gave away my fairytale books. Fair enough. Canadians need to escape too, and the bestseller lists tell us that a good number are doing it with Doris Anderson's first novel.

A significant reason for the book's sales is undoubtedly the fact that Anderson was editor of *Chatelaine* for eighteen years, stepping down less than a year ago to write this book. *Chatelaine* readers, numbering well over a million, provide a large potential audience, and the book has been heavily promoted in the magazine. As the woman who lent some gray matter to Canada's oldest fashion and recipes publication, Anderson should be a few leaps ahead of the rest of us in her understanding of facts and ideas that concern women. I was curious to see to what extent she would include lessons of the women's movement in her book. They aren't hard to find, but the emphasis is on feminism in the conservative tradition, namely, equality for women within the existing structure.

The two women of the title are Julia, a divorced career woman, and Hilary, her friend of over twenty years. Most of Julia's energy goes into her work and raising her model son, but she manages a deus ex machina pregnancy during a brief romance with Hilary's husband, Howard. Hilary's life revolves around looking after her appearance, organizing little social functions and accomplishing various errands not carried out by the hired help. Both women's lives take a melodramatic turn when Howard jumps unsuspectingly into a bathtub death trap that Hilary has set for herself. The rather improbable complications of plot and emotional conflict are resolved too conveniently to give the reader much pause for thought. The book ends happily with Julia pregnant, and Hilary widowed, vacationing together at a tropical resort.

The most carefully developed theme is Julia's struggle to get the promotion she deserves at the book publishing company where she is an editor. The scenes of staff meetings at which she is the only woman present dramatize the power dynamics documented the books like *Men and Women of the Corporation*. Presumably Anderson has also drawn from her own experience. She takes aim at such institutions of the business world as the Old Boy System, but she does not question the extreme division of the business world into executives and support staff. Her irritation at custom-furnished offices and generous expense accounts is not founded in a belief that these frills may be unnecessary, but in a resentment that they are reserved primarily for men.

Hilary is first presented as so self-centred and shallow that she is hardly credible as a person, let alone a friend of hard-working Julia. In later chapters, drinking heavily and fantasizing about the good old days when Howard loved her, she is merely pitiful. Only in a few scenes with her daughter does she elicit sympathy from the reader. I was surprised by the portrayal because it suggested that Anderson lacks empathy for the woman who is, literally, a chatelaine or mistress of her home. There are sardonic descriptions involving Hilary that read like take-offs of stock women's magazine articles: her make-up routine, the commentary of a fashion show she helps to organize, her earnest attempts to follow the "correct" procedure for being a wife and mother. The housewife role is still with us and its crippling effects are worth yet another look. Unfortunately, the reader can feel no compassion for this caricature or see any hope for her future.

In a few scenes Julia explicitly expresses her ambivalence about radical feminism. At a meeting of college women who are discussing the formation of a feminist magazine she is impatient with the group's lack of direction. "They're talking to each other too much", she says "Totally female groups were probably a great psychological boost a few years ago. Now the problem is to be effective working with men." Totally female feminist groups are set up partly as a tool to avoid traditional structures in which men dominate women, not simply to provide a "psychological boost." Julia's lack of sympathy for this goal seems particularly strange given her own inability to get ahead by the route of hard work and communicating with men. Her ultimate success in getting promoted occurs when her incompetent superior develops a heart murmur, not because of significant changes in the attitudes of the men with whom she works.

I was dismayed by Anderson's portrayal of the 'friendship' between Hilary and Julia. I took for granted that if Hilary was Julia's "oldest and best friend" there would be evidence of a special warmth and rapport between them — the sort of closeness that women now realize is possible and important in their relationships with one another. Instead, they seem to have continued to see one another over the years out of mere habit. As for the little matter of Julia's fling with Howard, we are told that she "agonized" over the pain it could cause Hilary, but once Howard is out of the picture she decides to have the child and makes up an amusing story to keep Hilary from probing into the question of paternity. She needn't have worried. Hilary immediately insists on buying a pram and gushes, "Oh Julia, this is going to be such fun." Scenes like this illustrate the ultimate pointlessness in trying to divorce the content of the book from its style. It may be Anderson does recognize that women can have extraordinary friendships but lacks the skill as a fiction writer to develop one. It would take an inordinate amount of skill to raise this friendship above the pedestrian, and if that's what Anderson was aiming for she missed the mark by miles.

As a vehicle for ideas, a popular book has the same limitations as a popular magazine. It's not meant to be taken too seriously, but neither can it be dismissed when so many people are reading it. Are thousands of Canadian women searching *Two Women* to find answers to the problems of love, marriage and making it in the working world? Absurd — or is it? After all, Hilary *did* read all the books and magazine articles that told her how to keep her marriage alive . . .

*Sharon Batt is editor of* Branching Out.

## CHANGING LIVES

**review by Joanne Hedenstrom**

*The Women's Room* by Marilyn French. Summit Books, 1977, hardcover, $13.50.

"Women's literature" is a term one cannot yet use with critical certainty, although books are now beginning to delineate what is unique about women's writing. Such books have had a historical bias and have been limited to examining who wrote, when, and about what themes and concerns. Often, the books seem giant and cumbersome because they have so much to tell: the attempt to fill in the unwritten literary history of centuries of women writers is a massive

job. But if you read several examples, such as *A Literature of Their Own* by Elaine Showalter, and *Literary Women* by Ellen Moers, you begin to understand how women write and think, the problems and concerns which inform their themes, and the distinctive characteristics in their use of language and metaphor.

Such an understanding is all the more difficult to achieve because women have always been subject to male editorship and male readership. What would women write if they were free of these influences? Since male editorship, criticism and publishers are still facts in a woman writer's life, the real woman's voice may not be known for some time; but *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French is the first convincing sign such a voice will be heard. Regardless of what else is said of this novel, the reader must admit it is profoundly a woman's book, and that this can now be said with admiration rather than condescension.

**The ability to verbally share intimate experiences with another women was very likely a necessity in the past — it is clear in *The Women's Room* that it is no less a necessity now.**

*The Women's Room* is not perfect (thank goodness). It is sometimes cumbersome, too long, and too much like a catalogue of women's lives. Yet it is also very involving and at its climax all the currents which the book has established coalesce. It is difficult to imagine a woman reader who will not be changed by this most forceful experience.

The style of the novel is curious. There is an epic quality to the story, and it is told in an almost choric or collective manner, despite the first person narrator and heroine. The book chronicles the story of many other women whose voices seem to speak for themselves. The story of Mira (the heroine) is punctuated by the first-person ruminations of the feminist narrator, and supplemented by the discussions Mira has with a group of friends who share their concerns and convictions and give each other moral support. At first, these intrusions are annoying to the reader, until one remarkable fact becomes clear, a fact often overlooked by male editors and readers. It is simply, that the woman's tradition is oral, not written. Women learned to teach one another and comfort one another through talk. The stories we told (condescendingly labelled Old Wives' Tales) were the reassuring expressions of a fellow traveller. The ability to verbally share intimate experiences with another woman was very likely a necessity in the past — it is clear in *The Women's Room* that it is no less a necessity now. The need of women, as a repressed majority, to gain comfort and solace by bringing their joys and concerns to friends is emphasized and dramatized in *The Women's Room*. In a way, the talk of the main circle of friends tells the story, and the development of that circle of women reflects the growth of women over the centuries — as well as the growth of women from the 1950's to 1970's.

This novel is an experience that must be lived as well as read because it is not a fairy-tale or a bedtime story. It is a lengthy book and progress from cover to cover is slow, but unforgettable. For once you can believe the blurb on the book jacket: *The Women's Room* is "the kind of book that changes lives" and it is "a classic of the woman's movement". I would only add that it is also a classic of women's literature.

*Joanne Hedenstrom teaches English at the University of Alberta. She specializes in women's literature.*

## ROMANTIC CONVENTIONS

**review by Catherine McQuaid**

d'Amboise, Jacqueline, *Mother Myths*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

McCracken, Kathleen, *Reflections*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

Oulton, Bawnie, *Pocket Crumbs*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

Rolyn, Sarah, *Shadowplay*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

Simmie, Lois, *Ghost House*. Moose Jaw: Thunder Creek Publishing Co-operative Ltd., 1976.

West, Ann J., *The Water Book*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

Willie, Mary, *Under this World's Green Arches*. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978.

Reading six volumes of poetry where one encounters the conventional solitary and suffering poet can be demoralizing. Are all poets introverted, isolated from a female collectivity, eternally addressing a male "you" who never responds? Few women appear in these poems, except, in one case, a poem dedicated to a mother, "Gift in Winter", where the mother becomes a shelter for suffering animals in winter!

Not only do the majority of these poets portray themselves as isolated from other woman and suffering at male hands, but the images which convey this sentiment are those traditionally assigned to women by male poets- water/cycles, earth/seasons. In the best manner of sentimental poetry, sexual acts are coquettishly disguised:

> Her fingers deep upon his blackness
> Palms together
> rolling over trees
> that he grows to be

*Mother Myths*, despite its promising title, is the best example of male-directed sentiment. Medusa and Oedipus are the only myths in the volume, unless one can reduce earth/woman tree/man to a myth. In any case, Medusa is hardly a female model. *Mother Myths* exemplifies contemporary poetic formulae: evocative imagery rather than logical progression through a poem. In "Pomogranate Dream" a lover is a forest, then rain in a torn bronze bed, which becomes a "smoky bedpost". The lovers end up as seeds of a talisman. This may be evocative imagery but one might ask how they are related to each other.

*Pocket Crumbs* also suffers from unmotivated changes within a single image.

> i was a soldier and you nursed my
> hideous mind
> i was a child until you aborted my
> mother

Is this "you" a psychiatrist or a gynecologist? Throughout *Pocket Crumbs*, this colloquial speaking voice is used; it could have been used very successfully, but unfortunately it mumbles on, contributing to a passive tone.

*Water Book* makes use of some Anglo Saxon diction, the kind one reads in Tolkein, "maunder", "thrum" and "thralldom". They do not help sustain the earnest water imagery upon which the verse is built. Drawings by the sisters of the poets in *Water Book*, as well as in *Under this World's Green Arches* are as decorative as the poetry.

---

**Are all poets introverted, isolated from a female collectivity, eternally adressing a male "you" who never responds?**

---

There are three poems addressed to Marion in *Shadow Play*, but Marion's relationship to the speaker is elusive and ambivalent. Marion, it seems, is suffering nature. The other woman in this collection is "Blue Girl", Modigliani's lover, an orphan who committed suicide while pregnant with his child. Is it any wonder the poet "wait(s) here for the cold coming"?

*Reflections* is the only volume of poetry in this group which deals with something other than unhappy love affairs. Written by a sixteen year old high school student, it is poetry freed from the cliches of post-Romantic verse: the suffering, isolated poet with no sense of a female collectivity, and images of women as earth or water. Each poem in *Reflections* is an episode, a confrontation with the "facts of life": death, cruelty and loneliness. Realizations and observations are gently arrived at, such as "Memory":

> How like a man
> your silent
> sun-up
> leaving

From a tombstone inscription describing a wife as a "lamb of God", the poet reconstructs a personality who may have

> read drugstore novels
> on Sunday afternoon
> had four lovers
> and felt no guilt.

This is the poetry of feminine experience which has not been ordered into poetic convention.

Feminine experience ranges from girlhood to ninety in *Ghost House*, a series of short stories about ordinary women, told in a plain style, with humour and fondness. The only exceptional character among these women is Belle, a tough alcoholic who frees herself from a lifetime of "digging goddam potatoes" by taking off in her husband's truck with the grain check in her hand.

Reading tastes may perpetuate Romantic conventions in poetry, placing restrictions upon the poet which are not placed upon the prose writer. Almost all the poetic stances of this poetry may be a result of the type of poetry being written, rather than the content, the female condition. Only two collections were not limited by conventional images of women, one from a very young poet and the other from a prose writer who is working on a novel.

*Catherine McQuaid is a graduate student in Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta.*

## MORE BOOKS

*SHADD, The Life and Times of Mary Shadd Cary* by Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler. NC Press Ltd. Toronto, 1977, cloth $16.00, paper $7.95.

Mary Shadd Cary was one of those trailblazers who establish numerous firsts (first black woman in North America to edit a weekly newspaper, one of the first black women to lecture in public — indeed one of the first women to lecture in public in the Southern U.S., Howard University's first woman law student, etc.) and then sink into undeserved obscurity. This biography spans her life (1823-1893) from her birth in Delaware in a home that was a station for the underground railway, to her sojourn in Windsor, Ontario where she established and taught a school for refugee blacks, her newspaper work in Toronto and Chatham, and later (during and after the Civil War) her return to the United States where she finally established her law practice in Washington (at the age of 60!). It was a remarkable life, all the more remarkable when the odds against her are considered.

Authors Bearden and Butler are to be commended for giving this determined woman some long overdue recognition. The research and documentation are

admirable since much of the information had to be gleaned from private correspondence, newspaper files, and archives. If there is a problem with this book it is the incongruity of style, perhaps because of the joint authorship. The majority of the book is written in a lively, almost lyrical style which makes enjoyable reading although it occasionally gets out of hand:

> Windsor, Canada West? Some place west of the Rockies, right?
> Wrong. Follow this closely.
> Canada West, now Ontario, was formerly Upper Canada.
> Upper Canada was below Lower Canada (geographically, that is).
> Although not very far west, Canada West was west of Canada East (parts of it at least).

The difference in style is most noticeable in the last chapters. Perhaps the authors were labouring under the difficulty of less solid information to go on, for, apart from her activities in the Women's Suffrage Association (with Emancipation, black *men* received the vote so that women like Shadd who had worked for the cause of rights for Blacks, were now starting all over for rights for Women) there seems to be little data on her law practice or her personal life during the Washington years. Whatever the cause the writing is much less interesting. Perhaps it is the lack of quotations from Shadd's own writing for the many excerpts from her correspondence and newspaper articles in the rest of the book display a wit and acuity that make this book a pleasure to read.

**by Cora Taylor**

*Cora Taylor is an Edmonton writer.*

*One Child by Choice*, by Sharryl Hawke and David Knox. Prentice-Hall Inc., 1977. $4.50, paper.

I have always been prejudiced against one-child families. As the youngest of five children I was only too aware that if my parents had decided to limit their family, I was the one who would have been limited — right out of existence. However, with apologies to John, Norma, Allan and Robert, growing up in a large family is not the unadulterated paradise that some defenders of the lifestyle would have us believe.

I never questioned the desirability of multiple-child families until my own son was two, and became independent enough to allow me to pursue other interests besides parenting. At that stage, it became obvious to me that the more children a woman has, the fewer her chances to freely determine her own lifestyle.

In *One Child by Choice* Hawke and Knox explore the myths and facts, advantages and disadvantages of the one child family. Emphasis on the advantages is heavy: a one child family has more money, more time, more energy, closer relationships, and more career options for the adults, they claim. A good deal of energy is devoted to exploding the myths about lonely only children. According to Hawke and Knox, single children are more mature, self-confident and well-adjusted socially than those from large families. The most encouraging aspect of their discussion of the family is their assumption — one rarely made by people who write on the subject — that parents, and particularly mothers, have the right to consider their own needs and life plans when deciding how many children to have.

**The mother of a single child is treated like a faulty cigarette machine; she is figuratively kicked in the ankles and knocked in the back to see if somehow, someone can't knock another baby package out of her.**

Hawke and Knox argue the obvious: that having one child is a perfect compromise between having none and having a large family. That this fact is obvious has not made it socially acceptable. Social pressure to produce brothers and sisters (or at least a brother or sister) for one's child is unremitting. The mother of a single child is treated like a faulty cigarette machine; she is figuratively kicked in the ankles and knocked in the back to see if somehow someone can't knock another baby package out of her. The fact that the sibling relationship is possible seems to produce the supposition that it is necessary.

Reproductive freedom has long been recognized as one of the most fundamental aspects of women's liberation. Such freedom presupposes a continuum of choices, from having no children, to having one, to having two or more. As long as the overwhelming social prejudice against single-child families dominates our thinking, women will be unable to choose a family size freely.

*One Child by Choice* leans toward promoting the single child family, but it does attempt to present some of the disadvantages encountered by single children and their parents. On the whole it is a balanced exploration of one option for families.

**by Mary Lee Morton**

*Mary Lee Morton is a field officer in the Edmonton office of the Secretary of State Department.*

# films

## OUTRAGEOUS!

**review by Joanne Hatton**

*Written and directed by Richard Benner. Starring Craig Russell, Hollis McLaren, Alan Moyle. Canada, 1977.*

A more cunning title for this film could not have been chosen. The characters and plot are undeniably outrageous yet even more outrageous is the effect the film has on the audience. One leaves the theatre not entirely secure in the belief that "normal" people lead happier lives, or indeed that a distinction can be made between normal and abnormal. Without a doubt one feels that conventional lives are less exciting and, most likely, dull. "No dazzle," as Robin says at the beginning of the film. Twinges of envy for the excitement and intensity of the major characters swell as the plot progresses; for Liza's imaginative writing, her secret language and people from "the other place," for Robin's remarkable impersonations of famous women he admires and even for Martin's resolute plans to end the Sino-Soviet border disputes by enticing the soldiers into massive gardens which are actually prison camps.

How can such an absurd-sounding plot elicit such a response? A young woman, played by Hollis McLaren, escapes from a mental institution and moves in with an old friend, Robin (Craig Russell) who is a gay hairdresser and budding female impersonator. The story (adapted from Margaret Gibson's "Butterfly Ward"), concerns Liza's attempt to function outside of the institution against the advice of her doctor, family and friends. Robin supports and encourages her, helping her to fight off the "bone crusher" and making her laugh at herself and her situation. At the same time, Liza encourages Robin, who is dissatisfied with his job and his life in general, to strike out in the nightclub scene doing his impersonations of women like Mae West, Bette Davis, Carol Channing and Barbra Streisand — women he has admired and imitated all his life.

*Allan Moyle, Craig Russell, Hollis McLaren* *courtesy of New Cinema*

Noteworthy for several reasons, *Outrageous!* is that rare phenomenon: a Canadian enterprise. Producers William Marshall and Hendrick van der Kolk are Canadians, as is most of the cast. The talented Richard Benner (a Kentuckian with extensive credits at the CBC) conceived the project and wrote the script, for this his debut as a feature director. Shot on location in Toronto and New York, *Outrageous!* reflects Benner's schizophrenic affections for that "Toronto the good" which can be as boring as it is pleasant. But *Outrageous!* is one film that will not be patronized for its Canadian content alone. Its appeal stems from the portrayal of a rather bizarre life-style which, despite everyone's better judgement, has a very healing effect on the characters involved.

Probably the most fascinating aspect of the film, the relationship between Robin and Liza is quite aptly described in the line from a song which Robin (as Peggy Lee) sings for Liza at the end of the film: "We love each other in our crazy way, I wonder when they'll come to take us away." Robin and Liza have been friends for years and are quite open in expressing their love for each other. They talk, laugh and cry together as they share their thoughts, fears and dreams. The only thing they don't do is sleep together. It is at this point that one begins to wonder whether this is just a very tantalizing and unique twist of plot or if there is a lesson here in the art of loving. Although individually, Robin and Liza are undergoing some very serious personal crises, their relationship seems remarkably free of tensions and problems. They do not question, moralize about or judge each other's actions, and they defend each other against outsiders' criticism and judgement. Although they both pursue sexual relationships elsewhere, they seek emotional satisfaction and fulfillment from each other. One wonders if they are able to maintain their relationship because they are both "crazies", to use Robin's word, or if it is the nature of their love, without

expectations and jealousies, which sustains them and assists them in overcoming their problems. The important point is that it works: Liza finally banishes the notion that she is the "one born dead" and although she may never conquer schizophrenia, she no longer feels compelled to conform to society's definition of normality. Robin sheds his somewhat respectable image as a hairdresser and pursues his new career, first in gay clubs in Toronto and then in a straight New York nightclub.

*Craig Russell* *courtesy of New Cinema*

The unconventional nature of the relationship does tend to obscure the fact that they adopt fairly conventional male-female roles. Liza is very dependent on Robin to calm her fears and to convince her that she is capable of functioning outside of the hospital. Her schizophrenia cannot be ignored and her stay in the hospital has undoubtedly weakened her confidence, yet she does not reject the tasks of housework and child-rearing as Phyllis Chesler suggests is characteristic of the schizophrenic female. She seems quite content to keep house for herself and Robin and is delighted when she learns of her pregnancy. Robin, on the other hand, is quite ambitious in his career and although he appreciates Liza's encouragement, one does have the impression that he is much less dependent on her and could function quite well without Liza's support. The interesting aspect of their living arrangement is that it seems to have worked itself out, unaccompanied by demands or expectations. Rather than being debilitating for Liza, her role provides a very positive and necessary function in her life. She becomes less frightened and more independent — to the point where she can manage on her own when Robin goes off to New York. In making a difficult character quite believable, Hollis McLaren, an accomplished actress, is extremely good.

As for Craig Russell, he is a delight to watch. His Robin is almost upstaged by his exceptional impersonations — audiences gasp with disbelief! Yet for all that, the character is sensitive, funny, and very appealing in a film which is as thought-provoking as it is wistful and warmly comic.

*Joanne Hatton is a freelance writer from Sarnia. Now residing in Edmonton, she works for the magazine* Edmonton Report.

## AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

**review by Jane Dick**

*Written and directed by Paul Mazursky. Starring Jill Clayburgh, Alan Bates and Michael Murphy. U.S.A. 1978.*

Not since I was twelve years old and free to spend my time as I chose have I spent an entire afternoon in a darkened cinema, watching the same movie twice through.

In this case, Paul Mazursky's latest film. Had not hunger pangs, a sore backside, and the joyous life-celebrating philosophy of the film so inspired me, I might be sitting there yet.

*An Unmarried Woman* is an intelligent, engaging, marvellous film, which follows a woman in her late thirties through the various stages of transition from happily married to divorced to happily unmarried.

The story is telescoped. In the space of one year (the film takes us from summer to summer) Erica, our heroine, played with remarkable wit and sensitivity by Jill Clayburgh, recovers from the trauma of the unexpected breakup of a sixteen year marriage and meets *the* most *won*derful man who very quickly and irrevocably falls deeply and passionately in love with her. (We should all be so lucky.) And it has a built-in guaranteed happy ending, evident from the opening shot onwards. Erica is after all a healthy, intelligent, well-adjusted woman with a sense of humour, a healthy attitude towards sex, a happy rapport with friends and daughter, and is able to both give and receive love, generously. Needless to say, she is also attractive. A positive role model if there ever was one. Can a woman like this lose? Not on your life! And if all this isn't enough for you, she has a strong support system of an understanding daughter, an excruciatingly calm yet surprising female therapist, three close women friends with whom she meets for weekly "encounter" sessions, *and* her marriage was a happy and loving one, to the last. (Yes Virginia, it *can* happen.)

Her ex-husband, Martin, a pleasant but lost man, suffers considerable personal trauma throughout the film and under the circumstances is a little too acquiescent in his ready support of her new single life. A very important part of Erica's life and development, Mazursky too easily dispenses with Martin even though Erica outgrows him. However, the essential factor in the saga of Erica vs. Martin is not the lack of depth in

*Jill Clayburgh*

which it is explored, but that it is a divorce without bitterness. They suffer hurt, guilt, loneliness, frustration, despair, anger, and outright hatred, but never fall into the miserably comfortable trap of blaming each other or anyone else for circumstances for which they are responsible. Theirs is a maturing experience, not a destructive one.

*An Unmarried Woman* is an affirmative film. It does not deny pain or weakness, neither does it dwell on them. Surely we can fill in our own blanks.

In a particularly moving scene, Erica, one sleepless night, assembles all that is left of her marriage — sports equipment and toiletries Martin has left behind, some photographs, her wedding ring — and dumps them all on the dining room table as her daughter watches silently. The effect is heart-rending, devastating, draining, cleansing.

At one of Erica's lowest points her therapist asks her, "Do you feel like this is going to last forever?" There is a significant pause. Of course that's how she *feels,* but she also *knows* it won't, and furthermore, she is not about to let it.

Mazursky has chosen to locate Erica against backgrounds which reflect her emotional state. Making her first uneasy step into a new social life we find her in a bustling Chinese restaurant, surrounded by chattering people, strange foods, and casual friends who appear out of nowhere. The camera is constantly moving in this scene, not allowing us or Erica to focus, to find a stable resting place. Having rediscovered love, self-esteem, and sexual pleasure, Mazursky takes her skating, hand in hand with her three friends. The scene opens with a close-up on her face, radiant, floating gracefully across the blue sky of the screen — flying. Her affair with Saul (Alan Bates) is heralded by a multi-coloured splash of paint across a white canvas, a happily ever-present image for the rest of her screen life.

*An Unmarried Woman* is a unique film. It is peopled with women, in a two to one ratio over men. The men range from crass to weak to damn near perfect (Saul) but are all portrayed with some sympathy. After all, being a wonderful person ain't all that easy in the high-pressure urban world (N.Y., N.Y. to be exact, but familiar nonetheless). But the women — ah! they are all positive characters, each and every one. This is not to say they don't have their weak sides — they *do* — but they know where they are and where they'd like to be and are not afraid to ask for help in their struggle towards a positive future for themselves. They're resilient women, and though they have all been extracted from the same comfortable economic strata, are a varied and interesting sampling of personalities.

Every character in *An Unmarried Woman* has experienced divorce yet the film, on this point, is not cliched. Divorce is treated as a fact, not an issue. It is treated as likely but not inevitable and is looked at as a stage in a progress, a lesson learned; like falling down as a child, it becomes one more reason to learn to walk. Learning to walk, for Erica, is the discovery that in coupledom she is not the other half of a similarly incomplete person, but that she is a whole individual, and when added to another whole person they can create any number of wonderful sums.

That *An Unmarried Woman* was both written and directed by a man is scarcely evident, if at all. Early on in her relationship with Saul, Erica asks if he is disappointed in her (gritting of teeth on my part) because she once had sex with her friendly neighbourhood jerk. But a few scenes later when he expresses favour with one of her decisions she wheels around at him, "Approve? What do you mean you *approve?* I'm not doing it for *your approval!*" She changes, as we all do, as her needs dictate.

The script is rich in female mannerisms, shared intimacies, and that unique feminine raunch to which few men are privy. It explores female camaraderie, strong, indispensible friendships among women — the kind the movies, until late, would have had us believe only existed among men. But I hesitate to call it a "women's film". It is about people — who happen to be women and who happen to be vitally interested in living full and happy lives.

It is not a perfect film. The music is too present, the editing wants polishing, and we could legitimately beg more subtlety on many points, but within the parameters the film sets for itself I think we have to accept it, and doing so, find it a pleasureable and uplifting experience.

Mazursky has given us a specific story about particular people in a singular city who are financially and emotionally equipped for survival but his overall philosophy is for everyone to share: 'celebrate!' It is summed up, but not defined, in the final scene (which I won't reveal) in an unparallelled glorious image of a single woman holding love and freedom in her outstretched arms, with all the responsibility, awkwardness, and dizzying joy they both imply.

*Jane Dick is a Montreal screenwriter and assistant director of a repertory cinema in that city.*

JOURNEY
*continued from page 15*

of mother's milk too contaminated for babies to drink and of a world bent on destroying itself.

After Pauling's visit, the tempo picked up. Weekly we wrote letters, sometimes to the editorial pages, sometimes to the politicians. We organized marches and we kept the issue alive. Across the country demonstrations were held and in England Vanessa Redgrave was arrested for civil disobedience. President Kennedy was now in power in the United States. He put a partial end to the issue by signing an agreement with Russia not to test nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. France refused to participate and continued testing. Later, China became involved in the arms race. Today, world leaders are still trying to resolve the problems of disarmament. But since the early 1960's, all nuclear testing by the United States and Russia has been underground.

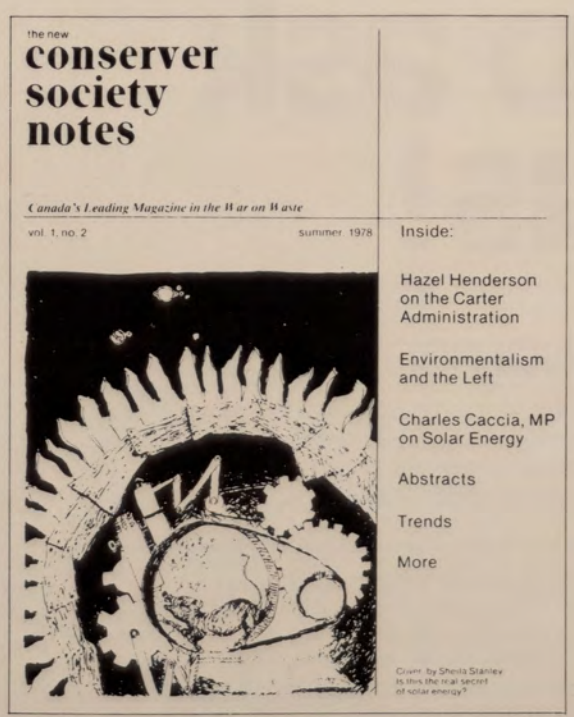
Ten years later, in 1971, when the Americans planned to denotate a nuclear device at Amchitka in the Bering Sea, another cry of horror went up, only this time the leaders of the Vancouver establishment participated. The *Vancouver Sun, The Province,* the Vancouver Board of Trade all raised their voices against the Amchitka blast. No longer were the activists labelled "pinkos" and "fellow travellers" — their ranks were now filled with respectable businessmen. Thousands of residents of B.C. signed petitions and wrote letters trying to stop a nuclear blast from taking place virtually on their doorstep. It was to no avail. The Americans went ahead with their blast, Vancouver was not destroyed by a tidal wave, and today when Amchitka is mentioned, few remember the cause.

Today, more Canadians are ready to take a stand on environmental issues. When a Newfoundlander clubs a baby seal over the head on an ice-floe in the Atlantic, when a smelter in Sudbury pours arsenic into the air, when 2-4-D chemicals are used to combat weeds in British Columbia lakes, voices everywhere are raised in outrage.

And what of me — the young naive school teacher? I'm no longer teaching. I am in the process of organizing a coalition of citizens in the Greater Victoria area who will work toward the elimination of all sewage outfalls in the province. When you see the slogan "Follow the birds to Victoria" remember that daily the city of Victoria pours millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Then think of me, and my journey from a tranquil domestic life.

## Announcing the new

# conserver society notes




*Notes* was started in 1975 by the Science Council of Canada, as part of its Conserver Society project. It quickly became widely known among professionals and citizens interested in the concept of the conserver society, publishing such articles as Arthur Cordell's critique of marketing and advertising, and Amory Lovins' scenarios of energy-efficient futures for Canada.

But the heart of *Notes*, in many ways, was its coverage of new literature, current events, and trends in public policy relevant to the conserver society.

The Science Council's project has now completed its work, with the publication of Report No. 27, *Canada as a Conserver Society.*

But *Notes*, now published by Alternatives, Inc., is still making a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about a conserver society for Canada.

In the first issue of the new *Notes*: a special report on energy, jobs, and the economy. In the second: Charles Caccia, MP, on solar energy for Canada; Hazel Henderson on the Carter administration and the inadequacy of economics; the statement of a special Science Council workshop on the conserver society.

Upcoming: special reports on recycling and resource recovery; women in the conserver society; cooperative institutions and social change; the state of the solar energy art; equity in the conserver society.

Plus, in every issue, literally dozens of abstracts of recent books and articles from around the world; reports on current and upcoming conferences; news items on technological developments, business and public policy trends. Topics like Quality-of-Life indicators; business and the Conserver Society; nuclear power; sun rights; transportation.

"Canada's leading magazine in the War on Waste". That's how the Science Council describes the new *Notes*. At just $5.00 a year, it's also one of Canada's leading bargains.

**Yes,** it's a bargain...please enter my subscription to Conserver Society Notes ($5.00 a year; students $3.00)

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Code _____

**Conserver Society Notes, P.O. Box 2097, Station C, Downsview, Ontario M3N 2S8**

You'll never know, Eve, till you ask...

# so ask us!

## at the Alberta Women's Bureau

If Eve had been able to ask someone about her rights and responsibilities within the law, perhaps she would have decided against the apple.

It's hard to make the right decision without all the facts, especially on issues that affect you as a woman. Knowing the particulars and procedures might not get you into paradise, but at least you won't unwittingly invite the punishment Eve did. So ask us — about any topic you're interested in. We can probably help.

*Information sheets on the following subjects are presently available — free of charge. Check those of interest to you and mail this coupon or phone 427-2470.*

TO: ALBERTA WOMEN'S BUREAU
1402 CENTENNIAL BUILDING
10015 - 103 AVENUE
EDMONTON, ALBERTA T5J 0H1

*Please send me, free of charge, the information sheets I have checked below.*

- ☐ Changing Your Name
- ☐ Wills and Estates for Albertans
- ☐ Children: Custody and Access
- ☐ How to Prepare a Meaningful Resume
- ☐ Helping You Cope with Widowhood
- ☐ A Woman's Rights
- ☐ The Illegitimate Child
- ☐ Establishing a Good Credit Record
- ☐ Alberta Labour Legislation of Interest to Women in the Paid Work Force
- ☐ Probate Procedure

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Alberta
WOMEN'S BUREAU