Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

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Art by Diana Roy

Special Fiction Issue

Equal Opportunities for Women in the Federal Public Service

The first two female public servants were hired as matron and deputy matron at the Kingston Penitentiary about 100 years ago. By the turn of the century, about 13% of public servants were women, and already a pattern was developing that was to continue unchanged for decades: women were confined to low level positions, nor was there any attempt to disguise discriminatory practices. Although the Civil Service Act of 1918 provided for equal pay for equal work, deputy heads of departments could limit positions to one sex or the other. Women (what else is new?) were hired as "stenographers and typewriters", dead-end jobs, and men as "general clerks", the bottom rung on the promotional ladder.

In 1921 married women were barred from the public service unless they were self-supporting or there were no other qualified candidates available. These restrictions were relaxed during World War II, reinstated in 1947 and remained in effect until 1955. Regulations concerning the employment of women were made, and exceptions granted, only in the light of public service requirements; no policies were based on the concept of women's right to work or equality of opportunity or advancement.

The 60's: a time of change

The 60's were a decade of foment and agitation as women took stock of their position in society and in the workplace and demanded that injustices and inequities be remedied. Kathleen Archibald noted in her report **Sex and the Public Service** (1969) that 83% of the women in the public service were secretaries, typists and clerks, many of them with little opportunity for advancement within their category or for transfer out of it. One of her recommendations was that an equal opportunity program be set up within the Public Service Commission to ensure equal opportunity for all. She spoke of the concept of equity:

> "If an employer requires more evidence to decide a woman is capable than to decide a man is capable, the fundamental idea of equity is transgressed just as it is if a jury were to require less evidence for a verdict of guilty against a non-Caucasian than a Caucasian." (p. 5)

Equal Opportunities: a slogan and a program

In 1971, the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women was set up in the Public Service Commission. Some of the objectives of the Office are:

* to provide and analyse statistics concerning the employment of women in the public service
* to assist the Public Service Commission in identifying and removing employment barriers
* to assist departments in developing strategies to increase employment opportunities for women
* to provide information about the EOW program to employees and the public.

The federal government's policy on equal opportunities for women was restated and expanded in 1975: "The government wishes to ensure that, within a reasonable period of time, representation of male and female employees in the Public Service in each department, occupational group and level will approximate the proportion of qualified and interested persons of both sexes available."

Actions speak louder than words, however, and in order to make sure that these good intentions were carried out, a program was developed to implement the policy.

The Action Plan in action

Each department was required to develop a five-year action plan to promote equal opportunities for women. They first undertook a situation review, collecting data about the number of women in each occupational group. Generally, women were clustered in certain job ghettos (for example, administrative support) and at lower levels of management and professional categories. The departments then analysed their own data, trying to identify the reasons for this clustering. Perhaps there were women whose lack of experience in more responsible positions could be remedied by new training programs. Perhaps there were barriers to the advancement of women because the terms of eligibility to compete for positions were unnecessarily high; strategies to eliminate such barriers were planned.

Departments submit yearly reports on their action plans, showing progress to date and evaluating the success of programs and strategies undertaken.

The role of the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women

The EOW office monitors the departmental action plans for the Public Service Commission, assists departments in developing and implementing programs, and promotes special training plans of particular interest to women.

Changes are being made. Women made up only .4% of employees in the executive group in 1972, but 3% in 1977; they made up 14% of the administrative and foreign service group in 1972 and 22% of the same group in 1977. Yet change is slow. Current cutbacks in budgets and staff years make change even more difficult, but EOW continues to be a priority. We look forward to a time when equal opportunities for women can cease to be a goal because it has become a reality.

The following publications are available free of charge from the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women, 1559 West Tower, 300 Laurier West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0M7:

Interaction: A quarterly publication for women in the public service

EOW 77: an annual publication highlighting EOW activities.

These Days, Everybody Works: a series of booklets for high school girls about some non-traditional careers in the public service

Filmography: information about films about, by and for women

Legislation Review: an outline of federal and provincial legislation affecting female public servants

All of those publications are available in both French and English.

Branching Out

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Columns

Special Fiction Feature

Poetry and Art

cover illustration: "Nuptual Valentine" by Diana Roy
acrylic on canvas, 47" x 61", 1978
photographed by Lauren Dale

EDITORIAL

mythology of our own

Women are remaking their world with words. Women are writing stories, writing good stories, writing the kinds of stories that we have wanted to hear for so long. Perhaps this is one reason why women have such a strong voice in Canadian fiction: we are now creating our own mythology, our own heroines, our own environment.

This is *Branching Out's* first annual fiction issue. The five stories we include here all reflect or elucidate some aspect of the experience of women. The writers themselves are varied: they represent almost every area of Canada; some of them are reasonably well-known, with several published books; some of them are almost totally unknown. The stories, too, have a wide range: "Emovora" examines a dichotomous sexual sensibility through a child's eyes; "The Illusions of Young Men" is a subtle exploration of the intricate tug-of-war between married couples; "The Birthmark" deals with a highly successful woman's attempt to come to terms with her past; "Please, Lady Bluebird-painter" is a humourous but biting story of a woman's "subversive activity"; and "His Family" looks at a father's role through the eyes of his daughter. This range of style and subject matter, of voice and place, helped determine our selections.

Most of all, these stories deal with women coming to some understanding, a particularly female epiphany. Interestingly enough, a large percentage of the stories we received dealt with some aspect of the family, and three of the stories we selected are concerned with family. Woman's role has traditionally been within the family structure and clearly, women writers are trying to come to terms with this in their fiction. Just so must we attempt to understand our world; and for this reason, our writers can serve as important guides.

As a story-teller, I have often felt that my own liberation lies in my ability to put words on the page, words that can elucidate some aspect of universal experience for both men and women. It has long been acknowledged that Canada's strongest fiction writers are women: Margaret Laurence, Marian Engel, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood and Audrey Thomas have set a significant precedent and they deserve our gratitude. Judging from the response to our request for stories, that tradition will continue. Story-telling is a part of our domain; we tell the bed-time stories, we exchange our experiences with each other. And when women create their stories and write them down, they are changing the world. What begins as an attempt to understand ourselves, can develop into a plan for the future. These stories are about *us*, about the things that concern *us*. It is to the possibilities of our world rather than simply the probabilities that we must look. The importance of art as a vehicle for change is undeniable. Fiction can lead us forward, can provide us with a voice and a direction, a mythology of our own.

Aritha van Herk

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LETTERS

I am not renewing my subscription to *Branching Out* because I read very few of the articles. I find your format unimaginative and unnecessarily monotonous. Your use of photographs is poor and the content of many of your articles is predictable and, alas, rather preachy. You also seem to lack a sense of humour except in the drawings (I loved "Could this woman bake a cherry pie?"). I read the books section with interest.

My frank reaction to your magazine is that it operates (consciously?) on a narrow view of feminism which does not energize most women. You repeat cliches and continuously give examples of the ways "institutions oppress us". Yet rarely do you enter into creative discussion about an alternative non-sexist culture. Personally I am thinking towards a broader philosophical base for our movement and I had hoped to converse in *Branching Out* with the many voices of Canadian women, instead of just being told the ideas of what seem like faceless sociology majors. I had expected your magazine would be a forum for all ranges of opinions, feelings and hopes on what feminism is or should be. *Your* magazine should be *our* magazine, a place where we can find out what others think and feel (even if you don't find these attitudes enlightened or fruitful). When you print an article, invite response and dialogue. Look at your present "letters" page and witness how fragmented we are from each other in your magazine. Dare to let conversation and controversy give life to *Branching Out*.

Sylvia Bowerbank, Burlington, Ontario.

I want to object to Jane Rule's comments on women writers, feminist writers (Vol. 6 No. 1). I have seen no evidence at all that Rule has any feminist consciousness — I have read three of her books — and therefore don't see that she has the experience to make judgements.

I enjoy *Branching Out* although it seems to be a little heavy on academics.

Louise Thompson, New York

I would like to add one thought to Carole Swan's article (VI, 2) which so clearly documents discrimination against women in the work force. Now that child bearing and child raising is taking fewer years of a woman's productive life, denying her the right to enter or re-enter the paid labour force when child raising responsibilities are over is tantamount to saying that the compulsory retirement age for women is 40 or 45. Can we afford the economic and social costs of supporting people who are forced to retire during their prime productive years?

I look forward to every issue of Branching.

Beth Weick, Ottawa

Re: Founding of women's political party. Please make sure we know how to join. Try to print a membership application form blank.

Inge Lang, Mississauga, Ontario

Editor's Note: The Feminist Party of Canada held its first public meeting Sunday, June 10 in Toronto with an attendance estimated at 600-700. The founding convention will be held in the fall. Interim memberships are $5.00 with a reduced rate of $1.00 for seniors, students, welfare recipients and single parents. Write to Feminist Party of Canada, Box 322, Maple, Ontario L0J 1E0 or phone (416) 487-9427.

Lynn McDonald's series "The Evolution of the Women's Movement" (VI, 1 and 2) was very interesting — let's have more such articles. I also like your Printed Matter section — keep it up.

Carole Anne Soong, Vancouver

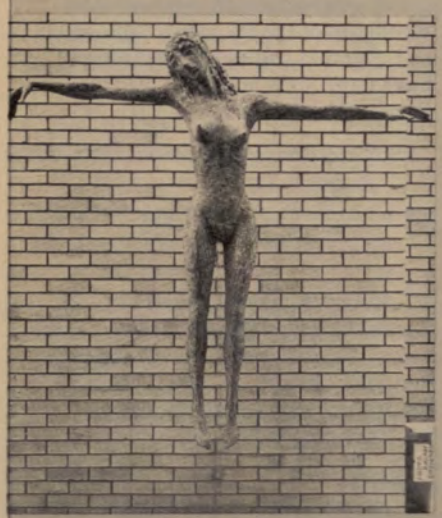
Rugby, like hockey and baseball, is a sport to be enjoyed not only by us hulking males. In their pursuit of rugby as a vigorous and exhilerating team game, Ms. Samler and Ms. Ford were put off by the ever-present chauvinism and violence. Their article (Vol. V, No. 4) well illustrates the problems of women attempting to crack any game traditionally in the male domain.

What the authors do not get across is that the chauvinism and violence on the surface mask a more complex subculture inhabited by reasonable and skillful people. Rugby has a British heritage admittedly out of whack with twentieth century Canadian mores, but no-one takes the bawdy ballads and beer drinking seriously. As for violence, if you play or watch the game for a couple of years, the skills, tactics, imagination — the dance of thirty savages — will totally overpower the uneducated initial impressions. Rugby is a clean game where surprisingly few are hurt, a game where one referee controls a thirty man contact sport (compare this self-policing with hockey), a game (unlike football) where people play nose to nose, clap each other off the field and share a clubhouse after the game. What most see is a group of foulmouthed drunken psychopaths. Underneath is a super-civilized competition that compares favourably with any other Canadian sport in vitality and friendship.

Yours hulkingly,
W.R. Henderson, Gibson's R.F.C.
Grantham's Landing, B.C.

PRINTED MATTER

Woman Crucified New Symbol for an Old Reality



"Crucified Woman" photo by Brian Condron

The usually penitent and introspective period of Lent brought a remarkable gust of controversy to one downtown church in Toronto; the story spread as far afield as the front pages of Honolulu and Miami newspapers.

The appearance of Almuth Lutkenhaus' powerful sculpture "Crucified Woman" (polyester and resin, 8 feet high) at Bloor Street United Church for four weeks in April evoked an overwhelmingly favourably response from the 900-member congregation, as well as charges of blasphemy from churchgoers and ministers outside the United Church. The pastor of Bloor Street United, Dr. Clifford Elliott, expressed his intentions and those of the church's Art Committee in choosing the sculpture as the focus of the Passiontide liturgies: it was to be a forceful symbol bearing witness to "the fact that women have been crucified for centuries in many cultures . . . it can stand there as an act of confession for the way our society has crucified women by denying them full rights and by not treating them as equals, and by exploiting their love." Dr. Elliott suggested that "Crucified Woman" would serve to remind the congregation that the qualities of "gentleness, sensitivity and forgiveness", which are usually associated with women, are qualities shared by Christ and ones that are "essential for full humanity." He echoed the artist's intentions to "present a new symbol for an old reality", to shake loose old ways of looking at familiar images.

Almuth Lutkenhaus produced "Crucified Woman" in 1975, International Women's Year, although the idea had been on her mind for years. Her motivation was not religious, although she believes that "all great art is religious in essence." Nor was her intention to represent Christ as a woman, but rather to "show the suffering of humanity. Since I myself am a woman, I did a female figure, and that's all there is to it." The idea is admirably simple and all the more effective for its historical accuracy — women were indeed crucified during the Roman Empire and, like men, were crucified naked.

Lutkenhaus was "stunned" by the response, the mounds of mail, the front-page coverage, the radio phone-in shows and interviews requested. She hastened to disavow any intention to express a theme on the liberation of women. She explains the intense reaction by the fact that, in agreeing to place the sculpture in a church, she "unwittingly touched three fundamental concerns: politics, religion and sex." She deduces that the naked "Crucified Woman" struck an "archetypal" nerve deep in the modern psyche. Lutkenhaus was gratified that the sculpture triggered so much controversy, for she believes that getting "the thought processes going is what art is all about."

Almuth Lutkenhaus has had a long and prodigious career as a sculptor both here in Canada since her arrival in 1966, and in her native Germany. She has lectured at the University of Toronto, and has been teaching at Mohawk Community College in Hamilton, Ontario since 1968. Since coming to Canada she has been commissioned to do more than a dozen over-lifesize figures and relief sculptures for universities, municipal buildings and shopping centres. "Crucified Woman" was created and cast in a Brampton, Ontario school with "hundreds of kids around", under an Ontario Arts Council Creative Artists in the Schools Programme grant; its development was photographed, and the slides now form an educational display used by the Board of Education.

A retrospective show of Lutkenhaus' work at the Geothe Institute this May reflected her fascination with modern dance, particularly with the energy and grace of ballet. She stretches and strengthens the dancers' reach by elongating limbs and torsos in a manner reminiscent of Modigliani. Her figures present an expressive and dynamic symmetry in their physical relation to each other. Lutkenhaus draws on an astonishingly wide span of cultural subjects, from mytholgical and Biblical figures to current issues of grave concern. Her latest work, "Brave New World", was inspired by the radiation leak at Three Mile Island. Her treatment of mythological figures reveal her concern for deep cultural archetypes, and these again emerge in her lighter treatment of modern fantasies and themes. She is capable of satirizing overly serious personalities as well as creating representations of peace, conflict, joy and suffering.

When I asked Almuth Lutkenhaus what reaction to "Crucified Woman" had gratified her the most, she told me about a social worker who had reported the remark of one of the battered wives she works with. The woman said that when she saw "Crucified Woman" she was able to relate to a religious image in a church for the first time. This reaction was the most important to Lutkenhaus, for it gave validity to her question, "Why cannot the suffering of 'mankind' be seen through the suffering of women?"

Maureen Hynes

Lady Beware — This Pamphlet is Not About Rape

Rape — a harsh word which Edmonton women have no fear of encountering in the pamphlet "Lady Beware." Unfortunately, rape is the harsh reality which the pamphlet, compiled by the Crime Prevention Department of the Edmonton City Police and printed by the Alberta's Solicitor General's Department, is supposed to help women avoid. The pamphlet is part of a "Lady Beware" programme, which also includes a film and lecture by city police members, now being used by Edmonton City Police to deal with the growing problem of sexual assault. It is, in fact, a prime example of how police and other authorities are reinforcing the old myths and attitudes about sexual assault which Rape Crisis Centres across Canada are trying to dispel.

For example, the "Lady Beware" pamphlet states: "A man determined to follow and attack a woman is more readily attracted to a woman who is wearing revealing clothing or behaving in a suggestive manner." This is almost always the first myth about sexual assault which is refuted in information published by Rape Crisis Centres. Sexual assault is a crime of violence, not of passion, with the attacker acting out of a need to have control over someone, to express anger, or both. "I have written to the Solicitor General's Department about the pamphlet, pointing out that *any* woman is a potential victim, and that males are also victims of sexual assault," Marie Laing, administrator of Edmonton's Rape Crisis Centre said. The centre has received reports of assaults which involve victims of both sexes, covering an age range from six months to a woman in her eighties.

By omitting the words "rape" and "sexual assault" from the "Lady Beware" pamphlet, the police are protecting the public from having to recognize the existence of a violent crime. Yet, in the first 10 months of 1978, the Rape Crisis Centre of Edmonton received reports of 153 sexual assaults, including 114 rapes of women, 23 indecent assaults — five on men and 18 on women — and 16 assaults on children.

Perhaps the saddest fact about the "Lady Beware" pamphlet is that it still circulates in a province which shares a border, and presumably some sort of information flow, with British Columbia, where an impressive and comprehensive rape prevention programme has been developed. The B.C. Rape Prevention Project is a total educational package which includes an 89-page resource manual, an accompanying film and sample public handouts. It was compiled and produced by Rape Relief and police personnel, under the auspices of the B.C. Police Commission. The manual covers an amazing amount of information about rape and rape prevention, ranging from myths and statistics, legal and medical considerations, to the psychology of a rapist and how to speak on the topic at a public meeting. Of particular interest is an article on police attitudes, written by an R.C.M.P. member. The article stresses the need for a professional attitude towards rape on the part of police, including understanding the trauma involved and handling a sensitive issue the correct way. "The film, resource manual and brochure were developed in an attempt to establish good working relations between members of various police forces in B.C. and Rape Relief," according to Dorothea Atwater, of the B.C. Police Commission's Special Projects. But, she adds, "unfortunately this has not occurred, except with the people directly involved with the project." The project's film, entitled "This Film Is About Rape" and directed by Bonnie Kreps, has received a mixed reaction from police, she said. "If police officers feel comfortable with providing answers, or rather alternatives, to members of the audience, then "This Film" will be right for them. Unfortunately, there are not that many police officers who are that comfortable. We hope that will eventually change." Ms. Atwater also said because most police forces across Canada have used Fred Storaska's film "How To Say No To A Rapist," and feel comfortable with that kind of delivery, they would prefer to use it. Storaska's film has received widespread criticism from Rape Crisis Centres for it's light-hearted approach.

However, "This Film" has received good response from Rape Crisis Centres across Canada, as illustrated by the following excerpt from a film review by Joannie Vance, National Assistor, Rape Crisis Centres. "Bonnie Kreps packs the essentials into a 30-minute film. She does so in a manner that will open up audiences — make them think and make them talk. 'This Film Is About Rape' is a powerful addition to our anti-rape repertoire."

The Ontario Provincial Police Report concluded that the majority of rape victims were indiscrete, promiscuous, or both.

Despite the efforts of the B.C. Rape Prevention Project to provide realistic information on sexual assault, real progress in changing the public attitude towards rape will not be made until police and other authorities accept this information and use it effectively. Without this acceptance, the Canadian public will continue to be exposed to outdated, and even destructive, information about rape, as exemplified by the recent Ontario Provincial Police report on sex offences. That report resulted from a study, conducted by two civilians working in the police planning and research branch, which examined police records of reported sex offences occurring between April and September of 1978. The report concluded that the majority of rape offences involved victims who were indiscrete, promiscuous or both. The report drew an outraged response from women's groups within Ontario. "The conclusion, drawn from the study that rape victims invite the assault are inaccurate, judgmental and degrading to all women who have been victimized by such a violent crime as rape," the Ontario

Lynn Gordon (Ontario Status of Women) is "sick & tired of the victim being blamed for rape".

cartoon by Susan Touchbourne

Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres said in response to the report. "The study is advocating and perpetuating the myth that rape is a sexually motivated crime. . . and places the blame not on the offender, but on the victim." The Ontario Status of Women Council has called for an investigation into the report. Lynne Gordon, Council Chairman was quoted in a Toronto news report as being "sick and tired of the victim being blamed for rape." "Rape crisis centres, status of women councils and the federal law reform commission have made it clear that rape is actually a form of assault and should be treated as such under the law." One fear generally expressed in reaction to the report is that it might further deter women from reporting rapes. Although the B.C. Rape Prevention manual states that the reported incidence of rape in Canada is increasing, it adds the general opinion of those connected with law enforcement or research in the area is that "rape is still one of the most under-reported offences," with only between one and four of every 10 rapes committed being reported.

An unreported rape benefits no one — not the vicitm, not society as a whole, and not even the rapist, who could be helped with a serious psychological problem. The attitudes of the police and other authorities, such as doctors and those involved in the legal system, are of paramount importance in encouraging victims of sexual assault to come forward. These figures of authority often set the example for how the public views sexual assault, and any educational or public information materials used by them must take a frank, realistic approach to the subject. To this end, the B.C. Rape Prevention Project is far superior to Alberta's "Lady Beware." But such material must be accepted and used every day by police and other authorities to have the desired effect — making rape and other sexual assaults totally unacceptable to the general public.

Janet Bliss

Divorced And Widowed Homemakers Denied Pension

An older woman who has devoted her married life to homemaking and mothering deserves some kind of retirement security but, should she be divorced she'll discover that the pension is his, and she'll have no right to it. One Edmonton woman who disagrees with this practise is zeroing in on that area of private pension plans that hurts the older divorced woman — the fact that the pension is solely the employee's property and not part of the family assets. Lila Lofts, who will be 60 this year, has begun a lonely and sometimes painful letter-writing campaign to cabinet ministers, government departments, her husband's former employer, and newspapers. She's determined to see changes made in the current pension and property law legislation.

When her marriage of nearly 37 years ends in the divorce courts this summer, Mrs. Lofts will be forced to look for a job when she has never worked full-time outside the home. "I have worked though, raising three beautiful children, and making a nice home. I've earned that pension just as much as my husband has," Mrs. Lofts said. Monique Begin, former Minister of National Health and Welfare agrees. In a reply to Mrs. Lofts' letter, she wrote that she supported the idea ". . . that (employer-sponsored) pension assets are owned jointly by both spouses. Recognition of this principle would then lead to the splitting of pension credits if a marriage breaks up and provision for mandatory survivor benefits following the death of either spouse". However, she said in the same letter that since both federal and provincial governments share jurisdiction over pension plans "a great deal of consultation must take place before changes . . . can be made". But private pensions could be made a joint possession by simply revising the marriage and property acts. In Manitoba, the former NDP government recognized pensions as being a family asset when they passed their

"Only one woman in four will receive any survivor benefits, and then only half of the amount accrued."

Marital Property Act. The Act, which was to go into effect in January, 1978, was first suspended and now repealed by the new Conservative government there. And in B.C., a Family Relations Act not yet in effect recognizes some rights under pension and retirement savings plans. All the other provinces and territories have yet to recognize or acknowledge private pensions as a common asset in their legislation.

An Edmonton lawyer respected for her work in family law found her way around the non-legislation. Jean McBean recently handled a divorce case where private pension and survivor benefits were involved and she hired an actuary to determine her client's needs over her longer life expectancy. She asked for and got a capital-cash value settlement for the woman based on those actuarial figures. However, if the divorcing couple do not have adequate resources for such a settlement, Ms. McBean would advise against divorce. But it's too late for Mrs. Lofts to try this tactic. Not old enough for Canada Pension Plan benefits and Old Age Security, she'll be dependent on alimony and, as her ex-husband is retired, it won't be a large sum. "And I'm not eligible for Spouse's Allowances because I'll be divorced."

Since starting her campaign, she's talked and met with other women in similar straits. "Some of these women are in terrible situations, living on welfare. This whole pension system is dreadful. We shouldn't have to live the rest of our lives in poverty," she said. And yet that's exactly what most older women do. In a study prepared for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women called "Women and Aging", Louise Dulude reports that old women in Canada are among the nation's poorest, with at least 67% of over one million widowed, single and divorced women over the age of 55 living on incomes below the poverty line. In part of her conclusion, she wrote, "it is essential that the private pension system be changed to ensure that wives of participants will always be entitled to a pension upon their husbands' deaths."

As Mrs. Lofts calls herself a "court widow", she too feels entitled but, instead of mourning, she's planned a busy summer. More letters to write to major Canadian newspapers and proposed visits to higher-echelon government officials are part of her agenda. She also wants to hear from others in similar predicaments.

"We deserve better than that", she said. "We've got to do something about it".

Maureen Bursey

You and Your Pension

By Andrea Vincent

Question: I am desperate for money. My husband died seven years ago and I have been living off my capital ever since because I can't work. I will be 60 years old next month and my friend who is over 60 gets a special pension. Her husband is still alive. I tried to get the same special pension as my friend but I was told by the government that I was not eligible because my husband is dead. Surely this can't be true. If my husband was alive I wouldn't need the money because he could support me. Please help me. Don't suggest welfare, I would rather starve. — I.F. — Edmonton

Answer: The special pension for spouses over 60 who are married or living with a person over 65 is not available to you because your husband is deceased. I agree with you about the stupidity of that particular regulation. It has never made sense to me.

Don't be too upset if welfare is the only alternative that you have. It doesn't really matter which branch of government issues the cheque as long as you get the money.

from The Edmonton Journal

Comment

Why are offices designed to have ALL the windows assigned to offices for management and sales staff, many of whom are out during the day, and NONE to the office-bound secretaries and clerical staff? Why are windows the property of management anyway? Why should they be used as a reward for climbing the corporate or government ladder, a status symbol instead of a human right? Why should the staff be cooped up in windowless areas, work day after work day, season after season, to contemplate unchanging bland walls, the same humdrum reproductions, probably developing tunnel vision?

These dehumanizing floor plans are standard practice in business offices and are totally unnecessary when a molecule of thought is given to their design. Are you aware how prevalent this insensitive indifference is and how many in our society are demeaned and suffer by the injustice? SHAME on management for such arrogant selfishness and for thinking of office employees as no more human that the office equipment. Why should more consideration be given to the human dignity of prisoners in jails than to office workers who are the underpinnings of the business world? Don't dismiss me as claustrophobic. Remember it is those in the position to do so who confiscate all the windows.

A study would prove that more work is done more cheerfully with less absenteeism and staff turnover in offices where a moment can be taken here and there throughout the day to refresh the psyche, to look to infinity for the health of the eyes, and to stay aware of the world beyond the confines of perpetual sameness.

Can you tell me where pressure can be applied to force executives to acknowledge office employees as human beings by having them *share* so basic a human need?

Jean H. Blair,
Agincourt, Ontario

Powerhouse

Powerhouse, a women's art gallery in Montreal, opened its 1978-79 exhibition schedule last fall with a showing of self-portraits produced by member artists. Some of them are reproduced here with comments by Doreen Lindsey, a member of the Board of Directors of Powerhouse Gallery.

The strong resemblance of each self-portrait to the artist who produced it is evident in the accompanying photographs. At the beginning of the project, however, the thought of making a self-image was a frightening idea. A self-portrait reflects the torment and confusion of one's mind. We are rarely content with ourselves, always searching for something just out of reach. Yet each artist in a self-portrait must come to terms with the way she is now. She must be critically observant of her body, her face, her feelings about her own identity. As women artists, we are aware of what happens outside ourselves, of attitudes in the art world concerning the type of work we do, of our position in the struggle for success. We try to understand this milieu in which we place ourselves.

photos by Doreen Lindsay

Doreen Lindsay

Diane Quackenbush

Claire Salzberg

Be van der Heide

The women of Powerhouse are organizing an exhibition of "Artists' Books" for October '79. Canadian women artists working in this new/old medium are invited to submit their work. These books can be unique works or small editions, hand-made or offset printed, stamped, folded, bound, stapled, xeroxed, silk-screened, or etched. We would like to discover the ways in which the basic concept of a book, an idea or ideas expressed in a sequence of pages between covers, is being developed as an art form. The exhibition will be held at Powerhouse from October 1 to 20. The deadline for submissions is August 10. For application forms, please write to Artists' Books, Powerhouse Gallery, 3738 St. Dominique, Montreal, Quebec H2X 2X8.

A Word from the Authors

Rachel Wyatt "Being a woman is not as great a problem when you publish novels and stories as in the media world, where one sometimes confronts a wall of men." Rachel Wyatt says she is a "feminist of a kind" — "My writing is more of an outgrowth of a way of thinking". In the past seven years she has written twenty radio plays for the CBC and the BBC; her two novels, *The Springbox* (1970) and *The Rosedale Hoax* (1977) were published by House of Anansi, and a new novel will be published next spring. She wrote her first novel when she had three children at home — "I didn't perceive having a family as a problem." Wyatt feels that writing is a privilege, and that feeling sometimes evokes a sense of guilt at not contributing to the 'real world'. "The other side of it is that sense that writing is *so* important. Why do we feel that sense of urgency? Why can't it wait until tomorrow: no one is out there asking "Rachel, write me a story"?

Edna Alford Edna Alford lived with her writing for a long time before she began sending it to magazines; she was finally encouraged by friends to do so, and gratified by the positive responses she received from 'good' publications. A lot of her work concerns women and the themes of isolation, dependency, and the double binds of families. Alford sees these issues as "some of our chief enemies; people need the freedom that comes from not being tied to family, yet in their transitions they lose their roots, sometimes throwing out the baby with the bath water". She has been able to combine writing with having a family and sees her difficulties as "the same ones everybody has." Alford is currently working on a collection of stories about aged women, and writes a lot of lyrical poetry — "I like to celebrate, too".

Frances Itani After three or four difficult years, fighting for enough financial support to give her time to write, Frances Itani finds things are going her way. Two Canada Council grants and an Ontario Arts grant enabled her to employ a housekeeper and to write full-time. Though she doesn't call herself a feminist — "I am in control of my life" — Itani's psychological fiction often deals with women characters who are unfolding, developing. Regarding *His Family*, Itani says . . . "I did want to expose something common to families — away from concept, idealization — that is that the network is so complex and long-term, and the complexities are often so bittersweet."

Elizabeth Brewster "I write poetry with a strong sense of *place* — the maritime place I have come from, and the prairie place I have come to. In fiction I'm often concerned with memory and time, with the *way* things are remembered and the impressions different people have of the same event." These themes are woven into Elizabeth Brewster's seven books of poetry, a novel, and a volume of short stories, *It's Easy To Fall On The Ice* (Oberon, 1977). She feels that women writers have fewer difficulties than women in other occupations because of their working conditions. But she points out that women writers often need "bigger reputations" than men to achieve recognition. "Even today, when there are equal numbers of good male and female poets writing, there are consistently fewer women represented in anthologies."

Helen Holden When asked whether it has been difficult to combine writing and having a family, Helene Holden said "No — living with children *enlarges* one's experience. Lonely people live in a vacuum. Children make noise, take time and energy. But they help me decipher myself. And I like having children in what I write — they have a different way of seeing, a way of leaping over logic". A Montrealer of Greek-French origin, Holden has written short stories, two novels, television and film scripts. She is currently finishing a novel about

Quebec in that void which comes after a revolution — "not because I think it will happen, but because Quebec is the place I *know*". The theme that concerns her most as a writer is 'why are we here'; she says her new novel is "not just a map for others, but a map for myself".

interviews by Karen Lawrence

Please, Lady Bluebird Painter

by Rachel Wyatt

When I can't buy paint any more, I shall stop painting. My work can only be done at certain times and it's getting cold. On the paint can label it says, "Non-effective at temperatures below forty-five degrees." Spring was the worst time. And now it's muddy again like it was then. There's been a lot of rain. Sometimes I nearly lose my footing and slide down onto the road. If I fell, they would find me there, covered with blue paint and call me a hit-and-run victim and wonder how I came to be crossing the road there, where pedestrians are forbidden, literally on pain of death, to cross. Maybe they would see part of that particular bluebird and the paint and put two and two together and realise who I had been.

I found a newspaper in the trash can at the restaurant the other day and it stated, loudly, for everyone to hear, 'Bluebird painter at work again.' No one erases the birds. People are beginning to notice them, you see. You see, Gerard, you see, they are beginning to recognise me as an artist and appreciate my brush strokes, my little gift to this city, to the world.

That is the great problem, isn't it? Don't you find that? It's all very well to be helpful to your friends, to love your neighbours, and not to kick dogs but what contribution are you making? In what way are you leaving the world a better place than you found it? It's not only religious sermonizers who ask these questions nowadays but newspapers, social workers, teachers, and children aged ten, eleven and twelve. And what answer do you give? Can you give? Should you give?

"Give me a kiss,' the taxi-driver said, 'and I won't ask for the fare.' And I cried then, Gerard. It was the taxi-driver who, unknowingly, sent me off to buy my first can of blue paint. Not indigo blue, not navy blue, not turquoise blue but true sky blue. It shows up well against my concrete canvasses.

Concrete canvasses which quiver with sound; the rushing of cars on the road, huge trucks with double rows of heavy-tired wheels and drivers who glance ahead to make sure they're not going to drive straight into the concrete, and who look up, who look up, who look up, and see the bluebirds there, painted for them, to remind them that there is a sky and a world which is not all concrete, all road, all highrise. That's my contribution. So they know there are other things beside great concrete pillars supporting other curving roadbeds which carry more cars and more trucks and more motor-cycles and make layer upon layer of dust and noise and fumes and grit and more noise.

When the paint runs out they will come for me, Gerard. They will put a light on my face and demand the significance, the code of the bluebirds. Did one bird flying alone mean I had left a bag of heroin under the first arch to the left? Who was my employer? Why bluebirds? Why there? Why me? And when there are no answers, they will take me away to a nice quiet place and give me crayons, a table, plenty of paper.

Right up to the day when the taxi-driver said (and I am forty years old, you know), 'Give me a kiss,' I was all right. In my groove. About to look for another job. Set on my course. Keeping the little place clean. Keeping it clean, Gerard, not in case you should come back, not expecting that, but in case I should not come back. In case, one day, I should fall out of the office window and THEY, a whole lot of THEM, would come into my place and begin to tidy up, sort out, look around, run their fingers on the ledges. For THEM I cleaned and polished after office hours. For THEM I kept a few fresh flowers on the round table. Merely, really, to avoid that condemnation, 'She let herself go.'

You had said to me, Gerard, 'Get a job, you can always paint in your spare time. You need the money. I can't keep you forever.' And you made it seem reasonable. But there was no spare time.

The taxi-driver, thoughtlessly, put a label on me: Aging whore! How can I help what I look like?

Do you remember that day, Gerard, when we went to the market and you bought halva and salted herrings and pickled tomatoes and bagels and when we got home we tasted them and threw them all out and sent for a pizza? That was the last of your unpractical days. After that you became the new, straight, forward-thinking Gerard whom I didn't know. And who didn't really want to know me.

But what has all that do with bluebirds which, in fact, go back to holidays long ago in a wilderness park with everybody there, mom and dad, Jenny and the dog, and long days outside and there were bluebirds. Maeterlinck and his bluebird of happiness were there together.

What do I think people think when they drive by and see them? I think they think, 'Crazy nut painting on concrete pillars!', or 'Bluebirds in this unlikely place. Must be an omen. Something good is going to happen.' And if then they are crushed on the road by an oil tanker, at least their last thought was optimistic. And some of those who drive on will see them and smile and remember something in their lives that was good.

So I reviewed my life on that day. What was I doing in a taxi anyway? Me! I was going home from the office.

'You may,' I had said to Mr. Rockford the office manager, 'take your typewriter and your filing cabinet and your magic eraser and put them in your round waste basket. I am tired of sitting here with eighteen-year-old girls who come and go like summer butterflies while I stay on forever. Also I have become convinced that the work we are doing is of no value whatever.'

He told me to go and see the doctor on the seventh floor, the doctor on the seventh floor being a psychiatrist with a reputation for sadism, and when I told him what to do with the doctor on the seventh floor, he told me to come back on Friday for my cheque. And I said I might or I might not. The taxi, you see, Gerard, was to be my great gesture — the gesture of a woman who can hardly afford bus fare by Thursday of most weeks. A gesture at the world. Who was not watching!

I made the mistake of sitting beside the driver instead of in the back seat. I was beginning a new life, in my mind, at least, to do useful things and getting away from the awful cycle of merely keeping myself going from week to week. And he said, 'Give me a kiss instead!', when I offered him the fare.

In that moment, I knew what the whole world would say,

what august men in smart gray suits would say, what the spokesmen for charity organisations would say, what the collectors for food for the starving in Bangla Desh would say, what the fund-raisers of North America would say when I went to apply to them for a useful job. All of them, a thousand voices calling back to me, 'Give us a kiss instead. Who needs your charity, lady. Your charity is in your face, your pliable body, your face beginning to wrinkle and show age but still enticing. That is your gift. That is what we want from you!'

I gave the taxi-driver a kiss, Gerard. I gave him a phony phone number and he gave me a little card and told me to call him day or night. You could have predicted that.

Then I went home to heat up some soup, to stomp about with my shoes on and annoy the people in the apartment below and to count up my money.

'Well there are other ways,' I told myself, 'other ways of helping, of leaving a little part of the world brighter, making a small mark.' I would have painted cheerful things, Gerard, but you too thought my talents were elsewhere. Painting could be a great hobby, you said, something for that spare time of which there was none. You never saw me as an artist who might rate reviews in the newspapers. Well I do now, I do now. They are writing about me now. Only they don't know my name. They even take it for granted that I'm a man. Perhaps I should begin to sign the concrete pillars and become someone at last.

I was painting at four-thirty this morning. A good time because only the drunks are driving home and they have no eyes to see with. They aren't looking for women under the archways of the great road system. I've taught myself not to flinch when their cars go by because that makes for an ugly brush stroke. I have to hurry in case a police car slows down and comes towards me. I haven't left a bluebird unfinished yet. I've been lucky. And then, Gerard, tucking my jar of paint into my straw bag — I'm still using the old straw bag from Mexico — I sidle off up the embankment, or down, make my way to the road and walk on as though my car's broken down further back up the highway.

Then I go back to my room and sleep. And the landlord is beginning to look at me as though I'm earning money as a prostitute. I can't shout out to him, "I'm an artist!" But I am running out of money and out of paint. Don't think I'm asking you for money, Gerard. Don't think I'm asking you.

Three more bluebirds. That's about all I have paint for. Do you think the city would give me a grant? Do you think the mayor will come to me in his robes and chain and say, "Please, lady bluebird-painter, don't stop now. We love your bluebirds. We'd like them on every piece of concrete. When you've finished the highway arches, start on the highrise buildings. We'll loan you a crane. Bluebirds lying flat on the top of highrises so that planes can see them and know this as the Bluebird City. What about that? Take this sack of gold. It's more than we gave to the man who rid us of the plague of rats. When you've spent it, come to me for more. Buy only the finest, most durable paint. We don't want your bluebirds to wash away in the rain. And here's a camel. Take its hairs for your brush."

Years and years ago, in my own bluebird time, I dreamed of having a studio and a long gown and an easel and canvasses and the future has turned out to be now. But that was before you, Gerard, before you and one or two others had pointed out my real talents, my true gifts, those ecstatic talents which were of such benefit to mankind and must on no account be thrown away. The straw bag is lasting well.

Perhaps you were right, Gerard. If I had a studio, I might have remained enclosed in four walls, painting only what was in my mind for ever and ever. Instead, coming to it late in life, I have the whole city for my studio, no end to my free canvas; only an end to the paint.

'Please, Mr. Paint-seller, no, I do not want oil paint. I want paint that will stay on concrete and not sink into the porous surface. Say I'm doing my basement if it makes you happy, just give me the right kind of paint, the right colour, the colour of a bluebird's wing.'

One of the girls came by the other day. One of the girls from the office. She wanted to see if I was all right, she said. They hadn't heard anything. They didn't know what I was doing. The manager had left. And anyway none of them liked him. Why didn't I try to get my job back? It would be all right. They know I'm a hard worker. They know I would stay if I got another chance. Olive in the corner has left to go back to school. Marie is pregnant and hasn't the sense to do anything about it. The desks are all changed around and somebody called Jenny has my old typewriter. The pay has gone up a few dollars a week. Cost of living. So they decided to make sure I was O.K. That was kind, eh, Gerard? And I lied to her.

But I couldn't hide the crummy look of the apartment, the total lack of quality of anything that I own, the fact that everything, my clothes, me, the place, is wearing down.

She asked me, 'What are you doing now?'

'Something I've always wanted to do, paint,' I told her.

'That's terrific,' she said, and after a cup of instant coffee she went away, relieved. I was O.K. I was doing what I wanted, they can forget about me: She's painting. She doesn't mind how she lives.

But I do mind, Gerard. Do you think I wouldn't like to live in a well-kept place with plenty of space and clean windows and the right kind of china and furniture to match and the sort of clothes that would stop a taxi-driver from asking me for a kiss instead of the fare?

('Wait for me, wait for me,' you cried out as I ran up the steps to the Temple of the Sun. I have waited. You haven't come.)

Do you think it's what an artist's soul requires, this creeping about furtively to paint in the darkness by torchlight with cars zooming by at illegal speeds, coming home covered with grass and mudstains and carrying my shoes up the stairs to clean them off in the sink before I can go out in the daytime and buy a few groceries?

Hot dogs are not as cheap as they used to be. Pogos ready-cooked are filling. Wilting lettuce at throwaway prices and baked goods are half price on Mondays.

Smile at my bluebirds when you see them. They are my gift to you.

I shall stay at home tonight. I have a few things to put in order. And then tomorrow, or will it be the day after tomorrow, I shall set out a little later than usual and paint on into the daylight, three fine big bluebirds with outspread wings, and wait there till they come and take me away, to a hospital perhaps, let them tap their fingers on my soul and say, 'Is it hollow here?', 'Does this hurt?', 'What are these hard calloused places?'

And when they have finished and have examined my head for lice, my feet for athlete's foot and my soul for paint-stains, they will take me to that quiet room and offer me huge sheets of clean white paper, crayons, space, silence. And I shall draw concrete highways and confuse them.

Alina Wrobel

The Birthmark

by Edna Alford

Ingrid was on the porch zipping up her high black leather boots, Italian, the best she could find in the city, $235 a pair. She could hear Uncle Frank's voice through the gaps in the weather-stripping around the door leading from the kitchen to the porch.

"She's on her way to Templeton's. To see her grandma." That was how he put it when he told the others where she was going. Ironic, the way he said it. What was there left to see?

Ingrid straightened. Then she pulled the kid leather gloves out of her Gucci bag, pulled them carefully over the finely manicured nails, unpainted today because of the funeral. She pulled each glove over the slender fingers, pushing the leather tightly to the joints between the fingers and hands, caressing the soft leather smooth over the backs of the hands, over the wrists. Then she pulled the cuffs of her sable coat down over the tops of the gloves.

She had done well — at school, at the university, with the oil company. She had finished her doctorate in engineering and now she worked in Calgary. She had participated in the development of plans for the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline. Today she held a most significant position in her field, and her salary was commensurate. She could afford to dress exactly as she needed, fly anywhere she pleased. She had flown here, had chartered a plane to the funeral. As usual, the relatives had raised their eyebrows when they heard, letting her know what they thought of this latest extravagance. It was flagrant, they thought, disrespectful.

"It saves time," Ingrid had told them. She remembered saying that same thing to her superiors. She had to go to this funeral, she had said, but she would fly. She would be back as quickly as possible. And she would. But she had to go.

Now she was ready for the drive to Templeton's Funeral Home, to view the body. At least she was dressed properly. She would be warm, was glad she had brought the sable cap as well as the new coat. The weather had changed dramatically since her arrival and even now she doubted whether she would be able to leave for Calgary on schedule. The fear lay exposed on the surface of her mind. She could be trapped. Here. Among them.

There had been blizzard warnings on the radio. Ingrid peered through the tiny square of the porch window. Already you could scarcely see the houses across the alley. The vindictive wind had whipped the drifts blind white against the back fence, lifted the lids off the metal garbage cans, clanged them against one another like cymbals. Scattered the tins in the alley, rolling them to and fro whimsically, like paper cups; shaken their guts out, exposed all the refuse of the house, so carefully packed and sealed and hidden. The wind had decorated the white ruts with streamers of tin cans, used Kotex pads, and little mounds of curled and frozen potato peelings. It had sprinkled wet black coffee grounds, like dark confetti, over the fresh snow. And the snow swirled like a poltergeist, sweeping and stirring the garbage, aimlessly lifting and whipping and scattering.

Watching it made Ingrid feel dizzy. She tried not to panic, tried to swallow her confusion. Loss of control. She feared this above all. Still, the dizziness reminded her of a seizure. The beginning of a seizure, though she hadn't had one in years. She no longer took medication, hadn't given a thought to the little tablets of dilatin and phenobarbital since her final check-up with the neurologist. But she knew it was possible. The doctors had told her the seizures could recur, later, under stress. Another electroencephalogram, electrodes stuck into her Medusa head, brilliant complex patterns between her eyelids and her eyes. Confusion. Loss of control.

Her mind ferreted desperately. Hadn't she proven she could handle stress, to everyone, to herself? Hadn't she done what none of the others had, taken on more and more and more until even her colleagues marvelled at her stamina? All of it true; nonetheless, she became aware of herself staring without sight. Symptomatic. The quiet frozen stare before the storm. The nauseating hiatus.

She couldn't leave until she knew. It would be criminal to drive now, before she knew. And she wouldn't ask one of *them* to take her. So she stood and waited. Peered through the window, squinting as if she had to protect her eyes from the wind, though she was indoors. Squinting as if she could allow in only a little bit of light at a time. Squinting to ward off staring.

She began to notice her breathing, shallow, erratic, frightened. Then saw the frost of her own breath against the window. She stood back from the window and breathed deeply. She exhaled. There it was, visible in the air, like the Hollywood version of a ghost, frosty, ethereal, there and gone. You could see through it, but it was there. Proof. The pitiful delicate opaque breath. A kind of whimsical consolation prize for living in the north, she supposed, but proof nonetheless.

Memory whipped her from behind, caught her unaware - grandma standing on the stoop, wearing a red toque and red mitts, sucking in her breath, then blowing out a silver cloud, throwing her head back, unrolling a hefty bolt of laughter. And a little girl standing beside her in a plaid parka with a hood trimmed in white rabbit fur, her miniature lips gaping up at the miracle, at the magical rotund grandma who had pulled the proof out of her body like a rabbit out of a hat. The little girl took a breath, then blew. There it was. Her own breath. Just like grandma's. Magical. Mysterious. As inexplicable as that first sickening reel toward the floor, that first derailment of her thought.

Ingrid turned from the window. She felt chilled, felt her skin begin to shrivel, shrink away from the silk lining of the sable coat. Her legs felt as if they were made of raffia, unable to support her sudden weight. She leaned against the kitchen door, toward the current whispers.

"I bet Catherine and Bert would be plenty proud of that girl if they were still alive."

"I imagine so, Frank. Especially Catherine. She would've been tickled pink to see her all dolled up the way she came in here. Nothing would have pleased her more, except maybe if she'd married a rich man. Catherine would have liked that. That's one thing I don't understand. Why she never married. She must be pushing thirty-five by now." Aunt Sophie.

No surprises, even now, at grandma's funeral.

"She has her reasons, I suppose," said Aunt Margaret. "Maybe the scars. Maybe the fits. Who knows. Though I can't say I've ever understood the girl either. Secretive. Buried somewhere inside herself, just like Catherine."

"Thing is, Ingrid was pretty close to the old woman," said Uncle Frank. "It's bound to hit her hard." At least one of them understood, Ingrid thought bitterly. No surprises. Again it was Uncle Frank who understood. Once, when Ingrid was nine or ten, she had had a seizure at a dance, a family reunion no less. And Aunt Sophie had put her on the floor of the cloakroom, and everybody had crowded around above her and looked at her as if she had been an animal in a zoo. Then they had left, all of them but Uncle Frank. And when she sat up, he had put his arm around her. "Everybody gets them, Ingi, or something like 'em," he said. Thing is, yours is got a name, that's all. You don't need to feel ashamed about a little name. Come on now, let's you and me go have ourselves a dance."

But today, Margaret agreed with Frank, in a round-about way. "That's a fact," she said. "Ingrid spent most of her time with her grandma. Especially when she was little. And even when she was in school. Mom moved right up to Prince Albert to be close to Catherine and the kids. Though I never could see why. She'd been better off with the rest of us if you ask me."

"She's back now ain't she?" said Frank.

"You know what I mean, Frank. This is where she belonged. After all, the homestead's close by, and Papa's grave."

"I never understood that neither, Margaret," said Sophie. "And another thing I never understood was the way Mom used to treat the girl. Always held her up like she was something special. That was part of the problem. Mom never seemed to care that she was marked; wouldn't even listen when you told her about the fits. Never believed she had them. Mom thought she was perfect."

"That ain't so hard to understand," said Frank. "The old woman always believed what she wanted to and no more. I heard her tell us one time there was no such thing as surfing. We was watching it on T.V. and Gran pipes up and says, 'It's a trick. They got 'em strung up on wires. I lived by the sea for thirty-five years and I know it can't be done. If it could, then there would've been someone out there doing it.' And that was all there was to that!"

Ingrid could hear laughter, assorted, like a box of chocolates. She herself almost laughed, couldn't keep from smiling, no matter how badly she felt about it.

"And you should of seen her when they walked on the moon," continued Frank. "Pure fiction. No truth in it at all, she said!" More laughter through the gaps in the weather stripping around the door. More. But polite this time, restrained. They would bury the old woman within hours.

Ingrid huddled against the door like a small hunted animal, alone and still and waiting for the owl. Musty coats hung on hooks along the porch walls. They smelled of sweat. Her stomach heaved. Parkas and scarves and sweaters all carried the enemy scent. There were extension cords and battery cables hanging from nails beside the door. Electrical apparatus. She never trusted it. There was always the possibility of malfunction. She had written a major paper on the subject at university. She knew more about electrical malfunction than most people.

She looked away from the cords, toward the floor. Workboots stood empty on the porch floor. Head down, she surveyed the row of boots. She grew dizzy. She raised her head, and when she did, she thought she saw the arms of a parka reach out, then lift their hollow sleeves toward her face. Battery cables with metal clasps and silver teeth extended themselves toward her, hovered in the air above her head. Cords with pronged heads like snakes undulated, swung dangerously close to her eyes. This had to be an optical illusion, she thought, or hallucination. She needed to rest, to lie down. Then she would be all right. But she was afraid to lie down in case one of her aunts might come out and think she had collapsed. "The falling sickness" she remarked to herself sarcastically. Still, the porch walls menaced, began to close in on her.

And the screams began. Inside her head. "Grandma was right. She was right. There's nothing wrong with me. I'm the same as you. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am." so loud that she began to be afraid they might be heard on the other side of the door. That she would hear the others laugh again.

Because they were right too. Her grandmother did not believe men had walked on the moon, no matter who tried to tell her. One day in the nursing home in Prince Albert where Ingrid had visited her many times, right up until the end, until they'd brought the body back here, Ingrid had tried to explain how it had been done, in a way she thought the old woman could understand. But she hadn't believed her. She had scolded Ingrid for filling her own head with sawdust, just so much foolishness, she had said. And what was to become of her if she believed everything she heard.

The wind whipped the outside walls of the porch, tried to whistle its way through the keyhole of the storm door. Maybe they were right about her too. Why not? The old woman had pitied her, protected her out of pity. Snow flayed the window. A spray of silver sparks, like the ones that had spewed out of the frayed cord of her old kettle the night it short-circuited in the kitchen of her apartment. Enough of them could break through.

This time memory lifted her grandmother's arm, exposed it like the top of a snow fence whipped visible out of a drift by the very wind it meant to overcome, the same wind that had worked like a fiend to bury the fence in the first place. The arm, exposed, was immense. Fat and round and full of flesh. And when she slept at grandma's house the arm was always offered. Her pillow through the weekend nights. Was warm around her. She could hear the pulse, could feel the life against her face. The soft and steady solitude of flesh.

She lay in the crook at the elbow, and she could feel her hair grow warm against her grandma's skin, could feel the dampness, smell the rising of the wild rose arm, perfumed earlier in the hot bath she shared with the old woman in the deep white porcelain tub, the water rising round them, scented with the Avon oil. "To a Wild Rose." Always the same too sweet, too heavy fragrance. Almost always thick enough to make her gag. Grandma never saw the scars, or never said she did. Ingrid stayed with her every weekend, and on Mondays she was always better for it. She cowered less among the others. Believed almost that she was one of them.

She felt slightly better. The dizziness had passed although the nausea had not. But she was well enough to realize that she had to leave now. Otherwise there would be no time. The funeral was at three and it was almost noon. She opened the storm door as quietly as she could, hoping they wouldn't hear her leave, wouldn't suspect that she had heard.

She lifted her gloved hand to her head and straightened the sable cap. The cap formed a black frame for the frame of her light brown hair, properly coiffed, a Sassoon cut, a geometric cap, good for her face, still elfin in spite of her age. The upturned nose, the large brown eyes, the unmascaraed lashes.

Even the walk to the car was difficult against the wind, but she remembered, quickly, the best way through. You bowed your head and leaned into it. That was the only way.

She unplugged the extension cord from the block heater. Thank god Uncle Frank had remembered to give her the cord the night before. She got into the rented car and turned the unfamiliar key in the ignition. Nothing. The connection must have been faulty, or she hadn't plugged it in properly, or something. No wonder she didn't trust the damn things. They were always malfunctioning. Finally the motor turned over. She left the car running, got out, and with one gloved hand swept away the snow

from the windshield and the back window. She had to be able to see, a little, at least, when she drove through the city.

Although she hadn't been back here for years, Uncle Frank's directions were precise. She had no trouble finding the place, Templeton's Funeral Home, stuccoed white and stippled with the snow.

The long low rectangular building crouched near the sidewalk which had drifted in again, though it had obviously been recently cleared. Someone had tried to hide the self-conscious squat of the building with dwarfed cedar, juniper and story-book spruce. The funeral home didn't look real to Ingrid. It was like an imitation building, something a little girl would construct out of cardboard and paint white. Paint on stained glass windows. Paint on doors, tempera, dark brown. Only the child must have grown tired of the pastime, leaving it unfinished, or had forgotten to cut slits in the cardboard so that the doors and windows could be opened; or perhaps she had never wanted to go in, ever.

Mechanically, Ingrid reached for the handle on the door. She tried to pull it open toward her, against the wind. She became aware of a tremendous resistance. She couldn't get into the building. She froze to the step, afraid for a moment that the building was not real after all, that the whole thing was some kind of diabolical practical joke engineered by the rest of the family. Then she realized that this, too, was a trick of the wind. She remembered. There was always this fighting to open doors, always the tension back and forth.

She liked the funeral director. He wore an alpaca sweater over a madras shirt. No Dickensonian shirt and tails. She was more comfortable than she thought she'd be. But this worked against her. The relaxation, the amicable appointment with this death. Initially, she had admired the young funeral director for his enlightened approach, for being able to create this relaxing atmosphere in such an unlikely place. After all, death was part of life. It shouldn't be so very different.

He spoke to her naturally. "Yes. Mrs. Lund, your grandmother. I hope your trip wasn't too difficult. The weather's terrible. The roads must be terrifically dangerous."

"I flew."

"Well, even that would be dangerous, I would think. I hope the rest of the family arrived safely."

"Yes, they did, thank you." By then, he was reaching for the handle on the chapel door. He opened it. The door which closed behind her made no sound. Ingrid stood for a moment. She felt abandoned, betrayed. There was no continuity. The comfort and ease and affability of the funeral director had left with him.

The coffin was open. But then what had she expected. She felt uncomfortably warm, unbuttoned her sable coat. But when she had the last perfectly upholstered button out of its silk cord button hole, she grew cold again, and wrapped the fur around her, clutched the hair of the coat as if it were her own, as if she wanted it to cover thickly all her years, as if she wished it grew out of her skin, through pores, with roots and oil and softness all her own.

She walked down the short aisle, then stopped, instinctively, before she could see over the velvet rim of the coffin. She sat down on a blue chair in the fifth row from the front of the room and set her Gucci bag carefully beside her on the floor.

The chapel was quiet, not oppressive, but quiet. Natural. No heavy oak pews or phosphorescent crucifixes. Tasteful. Natural. Like someone's living room. Someone you'd know. Only there were chairs, wooden ones with blue upholstery. They were arranged in rows across the room. And at the front, the flowers, wreaths of pink and white roses on wicker stands, like the easels of an eccentric painter. The coffin was pink too, flesh-coloured velvet mottled with the petals of a thousand roses imprinted like fossils on the surface of the fabric. It was mounted on a stainless steel trolley, discreet and unobtrusive.

She waited. But whatever it was she waited for did not come. Finally she wrapped the coat around her and rose easily from the chair. She walked forward, toward the velvet lid.

She could see the body now. It was nestled in white satin folds. It was wearing a flowered gown, a family brooch pinned on its chest, like a medal, one birthstone for each offspring. Sophie's idea, no doubt. But they hadn't lied. The woman here was dead, and the woman had been her grandmother.

Ingrid leaned over the side of the coffin. She thought she heard herself call, quietly at first, "Grandma? Grandma?" This could have been inside her head. She couldn't tell.

Now she reached down toward the slate-grey hair and, as if she were in a trance, she observed herself caressing the hair with her glove. Someone had brushed the hair back, straight back, the way her grandma never wore it. She always had curls, Ingrid remembered, gentle grey-blue curls, like four-o'clock shadows on snow. There were bruises on the forehead of the corpse. Three of them, large and dark, as if someone had sketched them on with charcoal, an afterthought.

Ingrid was fascinated by the bruises and by the dark brown spots on the skin stretched and dried over the bones on the backs of the hands. Someone had stuck three artificial roses in the hands. The roses were made of light pink silk and Ingrid knew immediately why they had been put there. The hands were uncooperative. They declared the death with unruly rigor, stuck out their fingers awkwardly, displayed their stiff arrangement of blue nails. There were gold rings on the fingers and the rings were her grandma's. Ingrid remembered them, not from her last visits with the old woman, but from her childhood. On mobile fingers lifting countless coffee cups toward the moving mouth. The rings were hers but not the hands. Someone had tried to hid them with the roses.

For appearances' sake the arms had been delicately sheathed in flowered silk, but they still strained obstinately at the stitches of the seams. Just like before. The arms — immense and fat and round and full of flesh.

Ingrid braced her hands against the coffin's edge, felt the velvet crush beneath her fingers. She raised her skirt and sable coat, then lifted one leg, exposing the crotch seam at the top of her pantyhose. She levered herself, lifted her body up and over the edge of the coffin until she lay face down on the corpse.

It did not yield, and though she felt the stiffness of the frame, at the same time she was aware that the shell was insubstantial, like the carcass of a dried grasshopper. She put her cheek against the corpse's face but drew back instantly because of the cold. The skin was cold, dry. She pressed her ear against the flowered dress, heard nothing, began to be aware of an unfamiliar odor, a little like formaldahyde or rubbing alcohol, but it was neither of these which she could have recognized. The smell wasn't strong, but she gagged. For a moment she feared she would vomit, but she didn't. Then, quickly, like a small animal, she burrowed her head deep into the crook of the stiff arm. She closed her eyes, and it was as if a switch had been thrown in some secret box inside her head. All of the energy seemed to leave her body as if the simple climbing in had used up everything, all the reserves, and left nothing.

She was almost asleep when the whispering began. She could hear the others whispering again, just as she had heard them on the porch, just as they had whispered after her down all the stairstep years of her childhood.

"Catherine always dressed her up like a doll. In my opinion it wasn't good for the girl. Made her think she was something special." Aunt Dot, her mother's older sister.

"You're absolutely right, Dot. She thinks her shit don't stink." Ingrid remembered the shrill pitch of the voice. It belonged to her cousin Carla.

"She's always thought she was better than the rest of us," said Carla's mother. "You can tell by the way she walks, head thrown back, nose in the air. And the way she talks. Good god, Margaret, we could all go to the dictionary and look up some of

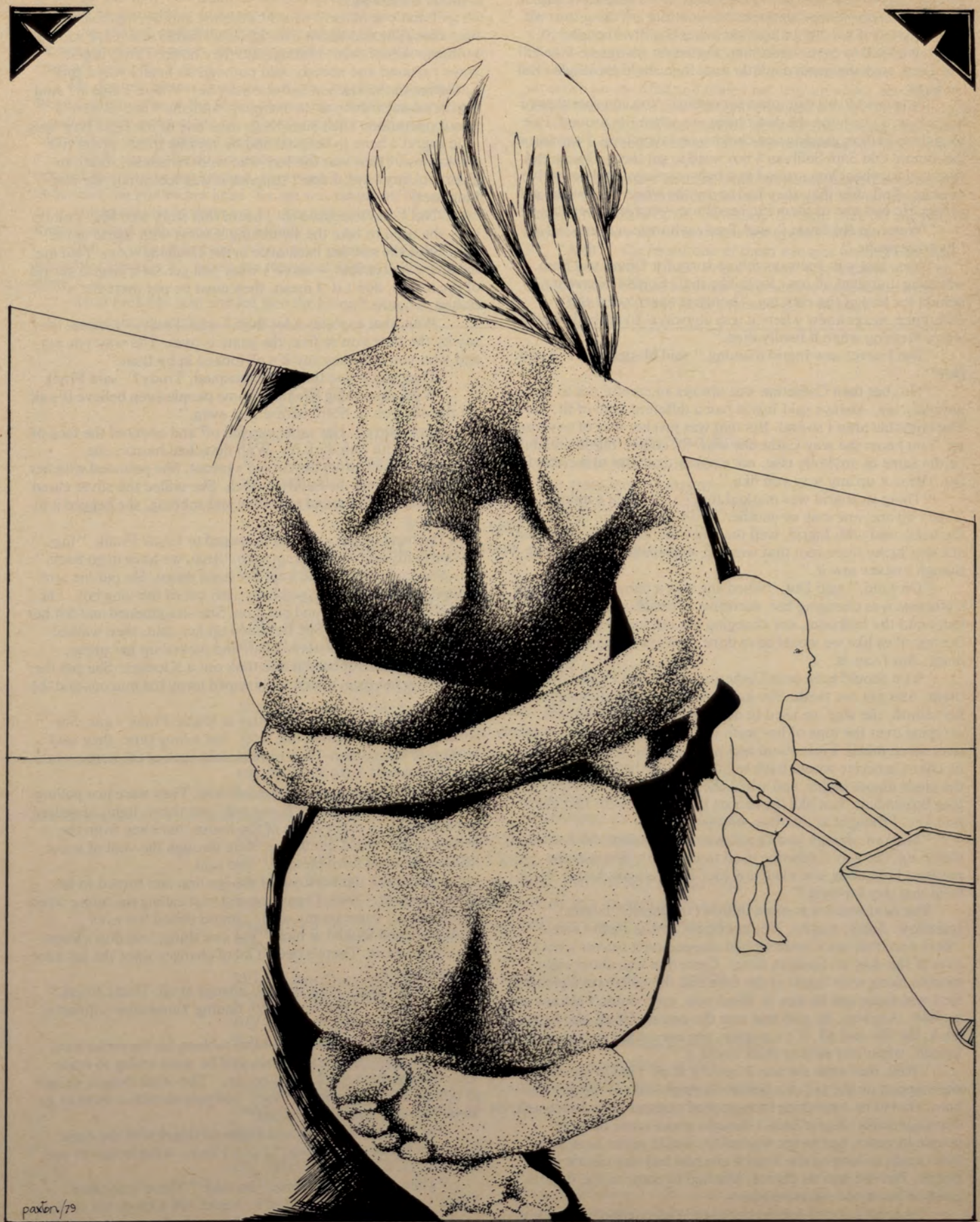


illustration by Maureen Paxton

them hundred dollar words for ourselves, if we wanted to put on the dog. She don't need to think she's putting anything over on us. It's not as if we don't know she takes the fits, though Catherine liked to cover up for her. Catherine always said the girl was tired, said she needed a little rest, then she'd be alright. But we knew.

"You can tell by their eyes every time. You can spot them a mile away. I just hope she don't have one when I'm around. I've seen them before, gagging and choking and twitching. Foaming at the mouth. Old Sam Sullivan's boy used to get them. Got so bad they had to wheel him around in a baby carriage, and he twelve or more. And after that, they had to use the wheel barrow, he got so big. He had one of them big heads too, what is it they call it?

"Water on the brain," said Trudy who was a nurse, "hydrocephalic."

"Yes, that's it. I always felt so sorry for Ginny and Sam, wheeling it around all over town like that. Couldn't leave it behind for fear of the choking. Though it never knew the difference, never knew where it was anyways. Everybody said it was a blessing when it finally died."

"But I never saw Ingrid foaming," said Margaret. "Did you Dot?"

"No, but then Catherine was always so careful not to let anybody see. Always said Ingrid had a different kind of fit, too. The ones that aren't so bad. But that was just her way of covering up. You know the way Catherine was. Of course Ingrid couldn't be the same as anybody else, not even in that. But to me, fits is fits. Dress it up any way you like."

"Thing is, Ingrid was marked too," said Carla's mother. "They all are, one way or another. With the Sullivan boy it was the head, and with Ingrid, well the hairy mark. Born with it. But she was lucky there too; that was hid, was on her back, I think, though I never saw it."

"Oh I did," said Dot, "when she was a baby. I saw it when Catherine was changing her, secretive as usual, sneaking the baby into the bedroom, not changing her out in the parlor with the rest of us like we would have done. Always trying to hide the mark. But I saw it.

"You should have seen Catherine start when I walked in on them. And grit her teeth. She had two diaper pins sticking out of her mouth, the way we used to do, and I could hear the pins scraping over the tops of her teeth just like one of Frank's files over scrap metal. I just stood and waited because I knew sooner or later Catherine would have to lift that little bottom up to slip the clean diaper under, and when she did, I saw it. A patch of long brown hair. Just like the hair on the baby's head. Just like a monkey, I thought at the time, or a gopher.

"Marked, though you could never tell it when she was all dolled up, the way Catherine used to keep her. She was the prettiest little thing you ever saw too. But I always knew. Right from that day forward."

The next voice was more difficult to identify, fainter somehow. Sadie, maybe. No, not Sadie. It was Aunt Olive. "Bert once told me Catherine had stepped on a beaver's back over at the dam on Spanish River. Catherine was about eight months along with Ingrid at the time and they were on a picnic. Bert was there and he saw it. Mind you, you couldn't always go by Bert. Anyway, he said that was the cause of it all, the hairy back, the fits and all. It's a wonder she ever made *anything* of herself, when you stop to think about it."

"Well, that's not the way I heard it at all. I heard she *dreamt* she stepped on the tail of a beaver the night before the girl was born. Had to be something though; that's a fact." This voice was unrecognizable. Ingrid hadn't thought about some of these people in years, had never wanted to, would never have seen them again as long as she lived if she had had any choice in the matter. But she had no choice. She had to come to the funeral. She had promised the old woman.

"She still got that hair on her back? I mean, don't she shave if off or something?"

"I don't think so. I heard Catherine and Bert got her an operation. She was about five, I guess. Charlie and Kaye were up in Prince Albert then, visiting, and they noticed little Ingrid wasn't around and nobody said nothing, so finally Kaye gets Catherine in the kitchen and she asks her. Where's Ingrid? And Catherine says she's at the hospital. And she's had to have a minor operation. Then later Kaye asks one of the boys how long little Ingrid's been in hospital and he says he thinks about five weeks now. (That was the boy who went overseas, Ethel, to Cyprus). Anyways, I don't suppose it was too minor, do you Margaret?

"No, I don't suppose so. I heard that story too. My Audrey says she used to take the swimming lessons with Ingrid at the lake. Says she saw her back once in the changing room. Told me the scars are terrible — show's what you get for trying to get rid of the marks, don't it. I mean, they must be put there for a reason, I figure."

"Well, that explains a lot then," said Trudy. "I mean, they say by the time you're five, the game is over. The way you act and who you are, they say it's all locked in by then."

"They teach you that at the hospital, Trudy?" said Frank.

"Well, something like that. Some people even believe it's all set the day you're born, before that even."

Ingrid stirred. Her sable cap fell off and covered the face of the corpse with rich dark fur. With detached horror, she observed herself strike the corpse's breast. She pounded with her gloved fist against the family brooch. She willed the silver cloud to reappear. Choking and pounding and sobbing, she begged it to reappear.

The hand on her shoulder belonged to Uncle Frank. "Ingi," he said softly and without reproach. "Ingi, we have to go back."

She said nothing, but kept her head down. He put his arm around her waist and helped her climb out of the long box. She retrieved her sable cap and put it on. She straightened and felt her legs stiffen under her. She buttoned up her coat, then walked over to the blue upholstered chair and picked up her purse, Gucci, $285. She opened it and took out a Kleenex. She put the Kleenex to her face, distractedly wiped away the mucous and the water.

They drove back to the house in Uncle Frank's car. She would pick up the rented one later. For a long time, they said nothing to each other. They were almost back at the house when Ingrid spoke.

"Why did you come? she asked him. They were just pulling into the driveway. Though it was only one-thirty, lights appeared to be burning in every room of the house, but even from the driveway you could hardly see them through the wall of snow. "Someone must have phoned," she said.

Frank took the keys out of the ignition and turned to her. "No," he said, "Dick Templeton was just calling the house when I walked in. I came on my own." Ingrid raised her eyes cautiously and looked at him. "For one thing, you don't know the city no more. There's been a lot of changes since the last time you were here."

"Some things don't seem to change at all, Uncle Frank," she whispered. "I had no trouble finding Templeton's if that's what you mean."

"I know that Ingrid," he said, rubbing his forehead hard with the fingertips of both hands as if he were trying to erase something written there. He went on, "The other thing is we got to talking after you left, and they said you shouldn't have to go alone. No one should, they said."

She lowered her eyes and began to fidget with the bone handle of the bag in her lap. "I don't know what to say to you," she said.

"Then don't say nothing," he said. "There's no need. There's none of us understand it, Ingrid. Oh I know we all have to chew it over every time a thing happens. Seems we somehow

got to go through it all again. Over and over. Once just don't seem to be enough for some reason. So we just go on telling the same old stories, switching things around and figuring and figuring and carrying on. But in the end we don't know anymore than we did at the outset."

He opened the car door and got out. Ingrid watched him bend down to plug in the block heater. She could see his breath rising over the hood of the car. She opened the door and got out. She walked slowly toward the porch steps.

Inside, she unzipped her boots and took them off. When she opened the door to the kitchen, everyone in the room looked up at her and she bowed her head. As she was taking off her cap and coat, she heard one of them ask in a hushed voice, "What the hell kind of animal is that anyway? Mink?"

"No," Carla whispered, "she says it's sable; she told Frank it's sable. He says it's worth ten thousand dollars if it's worth a dime."

Ingrid took her coat and hat into the living room. She laid the cap on the arm of the sofa, then spread the coat at one end over the cushions, fur side down. She smoothed her dress behind her with her hands. The dress was black virgin wool, a Givenchy. That had been an extravagance too, but then how long would it be till she'd be able to go back to Paris, she had rationalized. She sat down on the coat and pulled her legs up under her, then settled them to one side. She shivered and wrapped the rich dark fur around herself. She crooked her arm and lowered her head until she was comfortable. Then she burrowed her head into the crook and closed her eyes.

She had begun to doze when someone passed between her and the bright light shining directly down on her face from the lamp on the coffee table. She heard the lamp click off and felt the darkness, like a salve, between her eyelids and her eyes.

"A fit?" she heard one of them whisper from the kitchen.

"I guess so," Uncle Frank replied. She imagined that he nodded then, bowed his large grey head toward some wind.

"Don't wake her till it's time to go," he said.

Pieta '78

Between my mother and me the spaces are long and filled
with other things: T.V., a companion, the moka, in its
jet rush, the pouring of espresso, the passing of sugar,
the clicking of spoons. Then she says something about the
weather, *La brutto,* it's ugly, says the blue language of
the Mediterranean, all that dark oily slush that won't
come clean.

She is massing dough, she is baking for Christmas.
I am reading the *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*
at the table, while the clock complains,
spitting out phrases, as if it's weary of telling time
when life doesn't change.
But this is a three hour visit, after all, and not the house
in which I'm rooted. It is the only church I frequent,
the choir of household noises in attendance, the sermons
on money and the weather. It is the only temple I honour
because there are still some things I hold sacred:
the warmth of baking, its glow, imminent in my mother's
brow as the light fans her hot face by the window, assaulted
by the dark breath of cocoa. I keep my feet up, sitting
in the kitchen, reading a good book. Part of my mind has
watched her work before, that part of my mind relaxes,
reassured by the routine learned off by heart, the simple
life.

While another woman stands trial in the pages of print I
try to understand,
my mother offers the bowl to lick up the batter.
Between my mother and me, the spaces fill with things other
than foreign words. In my chest revolves a spiral spring
that masterminds the blood. Mamma would like to knit her
own soft heart from a ball of white wool she tosses into my
lap.

by Mary di Michele

Mary di Michele is a Toronto poet whose first book, Tree of August, *was recently published by Three Trees Press.*

"Emovora"

fiction by Helene Holden

"Emovora" was the word she used after sending her daughters out of the room and calling my father in to entrust them to him. They were eighteen and twenty and topped him by a head. He, at forty-two (we were small in my family), had just been elected President of the Greek Community; and people were predicting he would be going places. Which may have been one reason why the dying mother called him to her bedside at a time like this, apart of course from the fact that she was not on speaking terms with any of her relatives. If you didn't have your choice of relatives, might as well pick a promising stranger.

She handed him the bonds and the policies. She had written to her sister in Greece, "a peasant," she apologized contemptuously. "Let her guard their virtue — You hang onto the money." And she winked, a wink my father would decode later, with mother, as an assurance that the sister, although estranged for thirty years, might row across the Atlantic for the sake of her nieces' honour, and that unwooed and unwed herself, she would like nothing better than shooing suitors away like flies.

"Maybe my children would be better off alone," the moribund mother admitted. "But you know how people are."

Father agreed, firmly.

It was then she issued her fateful warning. "Roula will be a handful — Emovora," she hissed. And a curse for the younger daughter quickened her last breath. What she meant by "Emovora" — not the etymology but what *she* meant — remained a secret between herself and Father. Maybe she never told even Father. Maybe even she didn't know. Maybe the word, rightly as she used it, loomed larger than any of us: a pythian word, ours to fear, yet never to decipher. Maybe only Roula could savour it as the blood she was reputed to thirst for, only she capable of understanding because only she recognized the taste.

"If the girl's so bad," my mother mused afterwards, from pursed lips, "Why wasn't she left to fare for herself instead of being dumped on you and the aunt!"

"Because you don't abandon your child, however bad," Father perorated. "At least Greek mothers don't. "This, a dig at mother who was not Greek, but who was not one to take a dig lying down, either.

"Well and in this country, not only do mothers not abandon their children," she retorted. "They don't even talk against them to strangers."

My parents did not fight low. They jousted on tasselled chargers. They armed themselves with embroidered generalities where glittered the gold of righteousness.

Roula's mother had died in the summer of her fiftieth year; and my parents now discussed her age at length, because after all the pains she had taken to conceal it, there it was, big as life, on her death certificate.

We children had never seen the deceased otherwise than in V-necked black crepe. The very white, ample flesh of her face had been going a little slack by then; but the rest of her was surprisingly firm, down in the deep V's. With her husband dead eight years, longer than I had been alive, she managed to maintain an attitude of searing-fresh widowhood awash in tears like lobster in a saltwater tank, her habitual expression one of pungent and wet disappointment no doubt caused by the premature death of her husband. Now people whispered he had disappointed her in his lifetime too. And when I asked my parents how — *how* had her husband disappointed her in his lifetime? Father answered with a Greek proverb of which he had enough to cover or evade any situation, while Mother concluded caustically: "It's a shame she never realized a smile is the cheapest facelift."

So Martha and Roula were now orphans. *Deux orphelines*. The very word made me weep, though less at five foot eight than had they stood under four feet. Besides which the girls looked more lost than broken-hearted, that summer, leaning on our porch bannister in their chaste black clothes. Still, I shed a word or two out of loyalty to the word, "orphan", especially for Martha who suffered from the heat and whom her mother had liked if only by comparison.

When the aunt arrived, we met her at the pier. She would have been impossible not to recognize. She was the mother's double but smaller, fatter, flabbier and older: last year's economy model of the very same line. She managed to clash with Roula in the car between the boat and the girl's apartment.

"It's an insult!" Roula murmured with sobs in her voice (the aunt who spoke only Greek showed by a wooden expression she at least understood she was being talked about). "Just like my mother to put her grown children at the mercy of some backward stranger she couldn't get along with!"

Father frowned: "Be good to your aunt."

"She's a busybody!"

"Of course, she's a busybody," Mother interjected softly. "That's what she's here for, isn't it?"

"I don't want her living with us! She smells of garlic and mothballs. I'm going to boarding school."

"You are not," Father said, Martha worked at a bank; but Roula was an honours student in college. "She'll look after the boy. Weekends, you'll come with us."

And so they did, the girls began visiting every Sunday. And true to his promise, Father made sure the aunt stayed home by simply not inviting the younger brother.

My sisters and I were subdued in their presence, still awed by their recent bereavement. I remember mysterious conversations downstairs afterwards, after we were put to bed, when my parents sometimes switched to Greek but not always because Mother's Greek was not concise enough for gossip; and when their secretiveness only forced us to exercise greater ingenuity. I have no doubt that had sex magazines been fashionable then, and had my parents ever bought one, and had they taken the trouble to hide it, I would have found it as I found everything in the end, including the prophylactics in a black and orange box which I believed until I opened it to contain tiny Turkish Delights (it had the silhouette of a minaret on the cover), and which aroused my curiosity though I didn't like Turkish Delights, only because these had to be special indeed if my father took the trouble to hide them under his socks. I remember staring

up from the box, puzzled and guilty, straight into the eyes of Saint Joseph on the wall.

Father loved Saint Joseph — an unlikely choice of patron for a Greek non-Catholic; and one not exempted from my mother's jibes. Was he hoping to acquire elusive virtues by osmosis, she asked him? Was it the size of the shrine which impressed him? Or the fact that anyone with a dome so impressive had to have been a big shot? And that never mind if, back in Greece, a cuckold, even a saint, was not much revered: this was Canada, Canadian men didn't fuss about honour; and anyway a little immigrant in need of connections could do worse than worship somebody as influential *here*?

Whatever his reasons, and perhaps also because a visit to the Oratory was free, we all traipsed over to call on Saint Joseph almost every Sunday afternoon. Climbing on foot the hundred and seventy-two steps which the pilgrims climbed on their knees, I sometimes ran ahead, and then paused and pretended to be a real pilgrim myself. But I knew I might as well pretend to be a chartered accountant. And I knew dimly too that if they had a secret password, my non-Catholic father would sooner possess it than I.

Martha and Roula now came along on our excursions; and we soon made a ritual of lighting a lampion for their mother. The heart of Brother Andre, founder of the shrine, floated in a jar of preservative like a colloidal suspension. Crutches dangled in the blinking light. I no longer raked my head for a miracle to pray for; since the girls came with us, it was easy: I prayed for the resurrection of their mother. I imagined her rising all of a sudden between the crutches and the lampions. Maybe someone else was in her grave, maybe she had been alive all the time. Martha cried: "Mama!" and burst into tears. Roula, passionately repentant, renounced her blood thirst forever. And sobbing, and freshly widowed, and quiveringly freshly orphaned and restored to each other again, they would all descend on our house to *stay*, and ship the aunt right back to Greece.

After viewing the heart, we usually crossed the street to the Wax Museum Luncheonette for an ice cream cone. I wish I could report here that Roula always or only once chose strawberry; and that bites of the fruit clung to her lips like blood clots. But either she didn't, or I don't remember.

The first winter of the girls' mourning seems to have been rich in weddings and christenings. While the aunt's meddling caused Mother to declare Greeks had invented soap opera *too*, Father as President of the Community, often served as best man and godfather. We were now old enough to drag along. And then the girls needed distractions. "Once we've paid for a present," Father would shrug mischievously, "Might as well get as many free meals as we can out of that wedding, eh?"

Greek sacraments were lavish affairs where it was *mal vu* not to display sentiment. Parents walked their daughters to the altar with torrents of tears dripping on their shoes. Babies even old enough to swim reacted to the baptismal fonts as if they had been tossed in boiling oil. Widows refused tranquilizers so as to howl more convincingly. Add hords of lively and much indulged small children running amuck in the assistance, candles lighted at the merest excuse, interminable liturgy laden with chants and symbolism, and the passing of food, and not just dry bread or cheap wine, either, but good food, *delicious* food: you get the picture. The Greek church was not unlike the scene of ancient pagan orgies.

In this tradition, inevitably, Roula made a bad impression. People who remembered her dry-eyed at her mother's funeral, now observed her coldness of heart towards her aunt, as well. It was rumored she would be hard to find a husband for. The name "Emovora" had even leaked out.

"She's being ostracized," Father sighed, one evening, at the dinner table, long after the rest of us had eaten supper in the kitchen.

"No wonder," Mother retorted a little tartly. "Anyway, is it usual to invite people to parties when their mother just died? How can Martha and Roula have time for anybody else, the way we're monopolizing them? Why don't we leave them alone for a while and see if they get invited elsewhere? It can't be fun for two young girls to be with a middle-aged couple and three small children all the time?"

"You don't understand our customs," Father sighed. "Greek girls don't run around the way you North-Americans do. Their mother entrusted them to me. And as you know," he paused for effect, or for an allusion to sink in (one I had missed), or perhaps only to take another bite, "I am not one to take my responsibilities lightly."

So if we went anywhere *en famille*, that winter, we went with the girls, and as usual, we went on a whim.

My father was all for doing things when and if he felt like it — not weeks before or months afterwards. As a consequence, and in spite of the fact that he considered himself, quite rightly, responsible, he treated RSVP's as if they were for other people. Bills he was not yet secure enough to leave unpaid. But RSVP's he was not yet socially scrupulous enough not to toss in the basket. Years later, I would realize I had learned to tell the newcomers from the natives by simply watching them open their mail: they had different priorities, what they took seriously said it all.

Once we decided that yes, we were going to this one, Father would telephone the girls. "How about a wedding, this afternoon?"

Mother scampered to his side, waving her arms; "For heaven's sake, they're not invited!"

"They're not invited eh?" Father repeated, winking into the receiver while Mother went into some silent dance beside him. "I don't see that this invitation specifies NO CHILDREN . . .?"

"They're not children and they're not ours!" Mother would whisper convulsively. "Even Greeks don't invite people to *other* people's weddings!"

"My wife believes she knows better than I do about Greek manners. Never mind what she says. We'll pick you up at four. I take it you'll be ready and not keep us waiting."

If Martha was on the line, the conversation ended there. If Roula had picked up the call, however, there was likely to be a pause when she must have rejoindered: "Well and don't *you* keep us waiting either," because Father added: "*I* will keep you waiting if I have to. But *you* will not keep *me* waiting," before he hung up, invariably much amused.

Somehow in silence, and not always in silence, I always rooted for Father. Mother could be fun when she was in charge. But she never overpowered circumstance the way he did. She was not the master of any situation. With Father on your side, you were a winner. With Mother, it was touch and go. She was not self-assured or cautious enough to be entirely loyal.

Furthermore, when Father took it upon himself to be Fun, she had to slip into a No Fun position if only for the sake of maintaining a balance. Yet she was not allowed to be Fun when he played No Fun.

I had also noticed that while Father's presence seemed to heighten Roula's sense of humour, Roula's presence seemed to deaden Mother's. Again, I supposed, a matter of balance.

So Mother inherited the bum role in a family group. She couldn't match Father; and half the time she didn't want to. And if you couldn't join them, you might as well try to beat them. But she couldn't beat them, either. All she could do was register protest. Constantly. Endlessly.

The crunch came when an invitation did specify NO CHILDREN.

"No children, eh?" Father would grin dangerously, while Mother tried in vain to dissuade him, and we denounced her for

siding with strangers against us, and the girls goaded him on, especially Roula: "Old Man Gavaris is such a sourpuss and cheapskate!"

Old Man Gavaris (or Nakis, or Maroulis, or Kouloukoundis) invariably seemed surprised but delighted to see us, not one inch the sourpuss described an hour earlier. "You said no children, but," my father pointed out as if it were necessary, as if we were not very visible behind him, eyeing the buffet table, "I brought mine anyway."

"What will you do to him if he kicks me out?" I would ask her, delighting in advance in the ferocity of her answers. Roula dared take anyone on, even a man, even an old one, even at his own daughter's wedding (even her own mother, my mother had to remind me — She wasn't Emovora for nothing).

"When I said no children," our host would retort unctuously, "I didn't mean that you, my friend, could not bring along yours. Your children are my children." And he would turn to the girls: "I see he takes his responsibilities very much to heart."

Later, I caught him glowering at our group, and mumbling in Greek remarks which I imagined a lot less flowery. Meeting my eye, he would rush over. He asked: was I being a good girl? And I nodded: "Mallista," hoping he would believe I had understood every word, which of course I hadn't. And I knew he knew I hadn't, since it was common knowledge among Greeks that my father's children were French — What else could you expect with him married to this "foreigner"? My mother's ancestors had arrived here three hundred years ago; and it was clear Montreal Greeks rated her as I imagine the first Frenchmen must have once rated the Indians.

Father puzzled me around this time by making vague allusions to "the sins of the fathers."

"What sins?" I would ask, frankly unimpressed by Orthodox sins, because if Father's religion wasn't the true religion, how could his sins be true sins?

illustration by Elizabeth Forrest

He puzzled me even more by his reaction to my report that everytime I missed school, the whole class fell on its knees to pray for his conversion. "Do you know what Catholic means?" I added, laying a pious trap for him.

He didn't answer. He just remarked with a quiet and troubled humility that if the nuns were going to pray for his soul, they should know he was facing worse problems than mere semantics.

"What are semantics?" I asked, sidetracked.

Mother entered the room, the same moment, and he put a finger to his lips; and I walked away assuming semantics must be romantic heretics of some sort.

When he alluded to "the sins of the mothers," however, my eyes popped: "Not Mother too!"

"Of course not," he said. "*Their* mother. The girls'. I'm beginning to wonder if she didn't know this would happen. If she didn't want it to, and maybe even planned it. Well if she did," he concluded sadly, "she was a monster, wasn't she?"

They were still visiting on Sundays, with or without excuses of aunt, mourning, weddings or christenings. Most times, they simply came for lunch, or if we lunched out, they tagged along. Father would meet them at church, drive the boy and the aunt home, and then returned with the two girls. We could worship with him as often as we wanted; but we never missed our own sedate and compulsory Mass which had the one advantage of being short.

The Greek service was an event: social and sumptuous. They were flush with incense, out there. They sang more, louder and better. They gave out sugar-coated almonds at weddings and christenings, cake at New Year, dyed eggs at Easter, and Kolivas on anniversary services: steamed, spiced, sweetened grain decorated with pignolas, raisins and silver dragees. They sold candles of all sizes in the vestibule, which were not only for lighting but for holding, too. How fire never broke out must have been a proof that God was in there watching; though I wonder why, if He could stop that kind of conflagration, He allowed the other kind to rage unchecked. It wasn't as if there had been no appeal. Most Sundays, we ended up going to church three times: to the Catholic Mass, to the Greek service, and then to Saint Joseph's Oratory. Was that not in itself a subconscious plea? An effort to ward off temptation? Or had all these visits to so many sanctuaries become no more than more occasions for falling?

The aunt returned to Greece for mysterious reasons, one of which was that her visa had expired, another that she wasn't on speaking terms with Roula, and a third and even more intriguing: that she wasn't on speaking terms with Father, either. He told us all this, leaving a great deal unsaid, in an injured voice where I detected a measure of falseness. I knew he must know why the aunt had turned on him. I also knew he hadn't liked her. So why was he pretending to be offended?

And the Sundays followed Sundays, and the girls always appeared; and we never knew where we would have lunch after church until long past noon, when the Greek service was over and the men had all filed out, and determined and debated not whose turn it was to entertain, but what there was to eat at everybody's house. Father would readily forsake veal or chicken for lamb any Sunday. But for the more exotic dishes, the ones Mother refused to prepare, I suspect he might have relinquished his very right of primogeniture. For barbounia with their heads on, for instance. For heads of anything that swam, flew, crawled or walked. For eyes and tongues and tails and feet and gizzards. A delicacy I remember going out for, among others, was lamb testicles. Roula's delight on that occasion reached a paroxysm. Mother, morosely, lunched on potatoes.

It must have been the following summer, when the girls visited us at a small hotel where we were spending July by the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Father had brought them with him from Montreal; and whenever he came afterwards, they accompanied him. They towered over us in their white shorts, displaying lengths of fuzzy young legs. I was already perceptive enough to find the comparison unkind to Mother's thin, blue-veined ones. But I didn't dare warn her. God knew what it took to turn a girl into an Emovora. Mother resented criticism almost hysterically; and those death curses were recent enough to make anyone eager to be a favorite daughter. Still, I wished I might have been allowed to point out that white shorts were sexier than white socks, knits than blouses, sandals than loafers. The list of what was sexy and of what wasn't seemed pretty clear to me — How come I knew, the girls knew, Father might notice, yet she, Mother, didn't have a clue?

The clues were piling up.

I remember a Sunday noon in Montreal, a birthday party for Roula at our home after church; and father's gift: a navy blue silk robe, a style surely more appropriate for Mother, maybe Mother's choice. I remember how it rose from the tissue like a huge puppet, very limp, very new; and how Roula held it against herself. "It's too small, Kostas!" she cried — Father's name in Roula's voice rings through those years of my childhood.

He helped her into the robe as if it were a coat. The sleeves didn't cover her elbows. She threw her head back; and I saw the fillings in her teeth as she abandoned herself to laughter. I remember the dark hair, the long nose, the mouth, girlishly sweet and yet voracious. I remember him scampering around her, very amused, very animated. And me watching, thinking: "He's making a fool of himself."

I glanced at Mother to see how she was taking it. I was shocked. She was laughing. She was being by far the bigger fool of the two. She was splitting her sides, laughing as if she had intended to ridicule Roula; and as if she believed she had actually succeeded.

Why, you only had to look at Father to know she hadn't! You only had to follow his shining eyes, to see Roula as he saw her: Roula dwarfing the rest of us, Roula soaring out of that skimpy robe, soaring and roaring like a goddess!

Late on Sunday afternoon, maybe of the same day, maybe of another Sunday, I remember dusk in the baywindow of the living-room, and the remains of a party smelling of damp ashes, and me sitting in an armchair with Father. I remember the weight of his arm, my eyes closing. And my consciousness drifting, now loud, now low. Suddenly, I fastened on something; one sentence emerged, assumed a shape. I didn't know what had awakened me. Perhaps a burst of laughter, perhaps a silence. Perhaps the fact that it was Father, speaking, almost in my ear, as if he meant the words for me, not only for me, yet for me *also*. Had he squeezed my shoulder? Had he called my name? Or was he only pretending to address me while addressing someone else?

"All men are the same," he said. Hardly an original statement. We didn't shy away from Great Truths, in my family. The trick was to unravel the particular from the general.

"All men are the same . . ." And he stared intently across the room. I forget who else was there. Or how I guessed he had paused to stare: by the tone of his voice? by a twitch of his arm? by a catch in his breath? I felt too sleepy to open my eyes. Besides, in a way, I saw better without looking. I knew what he directed at me was the excuse, the apology, the warning. What I didn't know was who else he spoke the words for. What else they meant. Or how vividly I would remember them. How profoundly they would shape me, years from now.

Martha and Roula had become part of our family.

I doubt they had intended to. I doubt that joining a group the way they did ours is ever a premeditated or even conscious decision. People slip into it. In this case, with a good push from Father.

Whenever we were invited, he would ask in a soft voice: "May we bring the girls along? They have been entrusted to me,

you know. I don't like to abandon them on a Saturday night" (or on a Sunday noon, or on an Easter morning, or on a summer week-end).

It seems strange to me now that we could have made such a fuss about the sisters, yet ignored the younger brother so consistently. Where did he spend his Sundays? Did he have a godfather? Who had he been entrusted to?

Anyway, just when it seemed we could do nothing, go nowhere anymore without the girls, Martha dropped out. She had a boyfriend.

Mother would ask: "Is he a good boy?"

Father shrugged. "How would I know?" He took another bite as if to muddle the words, as if he didn't quite believe in them: "She's difficult."

"What?" Mother asked.

"Difficult."

She would slip him a sharp look. "Shouldn't you look into it a little more?"

He would sigh: "It isn't my business."

She would insist: "Didn't you promise the mother?"

He shook his head. "You know I didn't. Anyway, the girl is of age, I've turned over her assets to her, she didn't ask me to continue to take care of them, so I won't."

Mother stared at him across the table. She had eaten earlier with us. He was always late, a festive presence, becoming rare though not as rare as a year from now. She was wearing a dark skirt, a pale blue vest over a white blouse, and as usual, her socks and loafers. She was tailored as opposed to glamorous or sexy. Her attitude was tailored, too.

"You surprise me, Kostas," she said. "You sound glad to be rid of Martha. I would have expected you to be much more protective, more strict with a young girl."

He continued to eat, gazing at her with his chin in his plate. She was forever making fun of his appetite, of his large mouth, of his table manners. He filled the silence now with a sound of chewing; and a look passed in my mother's eyes which I knew well. A look of irony and contempt.

She said: "I would have also expected Roula to get a boyfriend first."

"Why?"

"She's so much more outgoing. But of course, if she did, I'm sure she'd be sneaky enough not to tell you."

Father's eyes focused sharply.

"No," he said with his mouth full. "Roula has no boyfriend."

"How do you know?" Mother taunted.

"I know," he said.

Strange things happened after that.

Father would get attacks, terrible chills which racked him like earthquakes, which knocked the teeth in his mouth and banged the headboard on the wall. "Malaria," Mother murmured sinisterly. I had never head that word. A Greek disease, she elaborated: exotic, distant, *Alien*. A bug from a land of snakes, wars and intrigue. She called it near-eastern, with an air at once menacing and disdainful. Turks had dwelled there too long. Bulgars had cut priests in little pieces and thrown them in village wells, depriving populations of both their leaders and their water. A country where olives grew on trees, where whole lambs roasted on pits with their eyes and tails, and where soldiers wore *skirts* and people ate octopus.

The girls were called in. They were Greek, they would know what to do; in Greece you never needed a doctor when this happened. I remember them standing near the bed, as puzzled as we; and Father slipping them crass, sidelong glances as if there were two of him: one sick and shaking, and another one not sick at all, hiding underneath.

One night, Mother ran out in her negligee to get reinforcement in the person of a Greek restaurant owner down the street. I remember running after her but I forget if I stopped her. Or if the man came over. All I recall very vividly is Mother dashing out into the black night (on a white pavement: was there snow?), with a black negligee flying behind her.

The strange thing was: this black and transparent negligee which she forgot to even hold closed around her, had a little girl collar and short sleeves — a mute repudiation of easternness and mystery. The strange thing was: you couldn't look sexy in a thing like that. You could only look nude and scandalous.

I last remember Roula with us on a Sunday afternoon, towards the end of summer. Belmont Park didn't seem fake and seedy, then, but magic: the rides didn't give me a headache, the loudspeakers weren't as loud, you could hear the motorboats on the river, and the river lapping the shore, and people in the rollercoaster, screaming.

Father's eyes were very green, very piercing, that day. "Who's for the roller-coaster?" he asked; and the surprise would have been if Mother had cried: "Me!" which of course she didn't.

My two sisters and I fitted into one seat, while Roula got in with Father behind us. When we emerged from the tunnel before the climb up the first hill, I turned around and noticed how flushed they were. When we plunged down the other side, I heard her screaming behind me. And when at last my sisters and I stumbled out, almost too weak with fear to walk, Father and Roula stayed on for two more turns.

Mother's mood deteriorated inexplicably. She was snapping. Nagging. Refusing to have fun. Incurring our indignation by demanding we go home. At once. And of course, wearing those awful white socks.

She had the baby in November. I didn't know about pregnancy. She hadn't told me.

Late one afternoon, she sat in her bedroom rocking the boy, her first after after three girls, a cause for rejoicing but Father didn't even come home to dinner, these days. The blinds were down, or the sun, or both. As she rocked, her face appeared in the light from the hall, and disappeared, and reappeared again a moment later.

"Your father has a girl friend," she said.

I waited for the light to catch the glisten on her cheek. I hoped I had been wrong, that this might be a joke — But no it wasn't.

I asked: "Who?" I knew very well who.

"Guess," she said, our eyes meeting in the light, her liquid eyes coming at me before they toppled backwards.

It wasn't much of a riddle. Yet I couldn't guess right the first time or she would have known how noticeable it had all been.

"Oh come on," she insisted.

So I said: "Okay, Roula," because I didn't want to appear stupid, either. Besides, not to guess would have forced her to tell. It would have been like arguing on the wrong side uselessly.

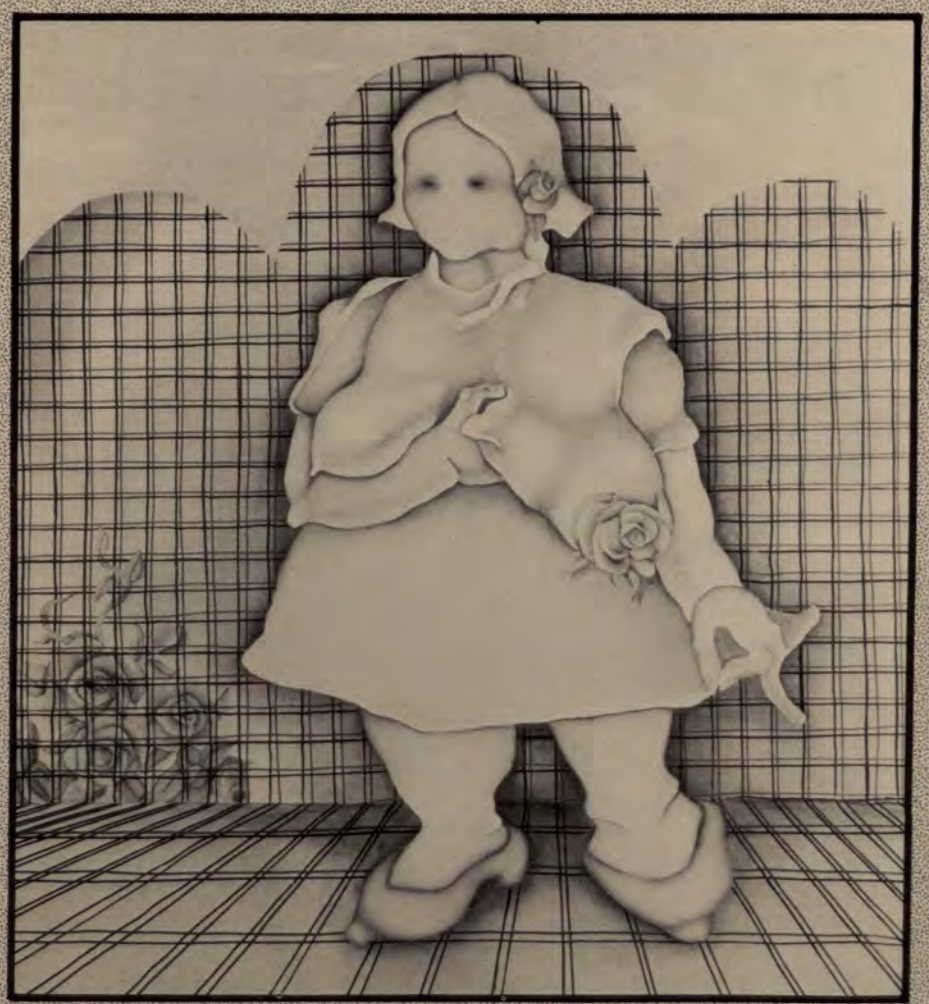
"Are you shocked?" she asked me from the darkness.

How could I be shocked by something which had happened little by little under my very nose? I answered: "No."

She sighed and sniffled and hung her head in shame. The chair creaked to a stop. She was crying freely now. I drew close. I slipped an arm around her shoulders. I felt her solitude, her sense of uniqueness. As if no husband had ever betrayed a wife before. As if she had a copyright on humiliation. As if it took a special kind of monster to inflict this upon her. And she spoke the monster's name suddenly, with such abrupt hatred that the baby woke up and started to cry. I said "Shh." I smelled on her breath a perfume without flowers. I wondered what an Emovora's breath should smell like. I didn't even wonder what Emovora meant anymore. I must have thought I was beginning to understand.

Gallery *Fantastique*

by Diana Roy



Rose Textures

The pieces here and on the cover are part of a collection artist Diana Roy calls the "blank face series." "I found it superfluous to include detail," she says. "I felt I could say more by omitting the details, and I could still make each one distinctive." When she began the series Roy was interested in costume, and for this reason depicted only women in her paintings. She soon began to get criticism from male artists for not painting men as well, which made her conscious for the first time of her bias. "I deliberately did only women after that," she says, "now they accept them."

Her work is often satrical, an aspect she feels she has to control. "I can be very dry and acidic, but I think it would be self-indulgent just to paint things that would disturb everybody."

Diana Roy attended the University of Windsor, graduating with a B.F.A. in 1973. She works in a wide range of media, including charcoal, coloured pencils, xerox and acrylic. All the pieces reproduced here are near life size, in acrylic on canvas, and were done in 1977. They were part of her first exhibit in western Canada, held in April at the Students' Union Art Gallery at the University of Alberta. The paintings were photographed by Lauren Dale.

For the Brothers

Kutchzka

All the Way Home

Essex of Turtles

Lady Lillian

First Prize

Illusions of Young Men

by Elizabeth Brewster

Dinner was over, and the Nortons had just moved their guests from the dining alcove into their little living room. They were new in the Department, fairly recently married, and not yet accustomed to entertaining. However, everything had gone off well enough, although there had been an initial delay because that lemon chicken casserole from Sharon's Mum's cookbook had taken longer to cook than they thought it would. But it had tasted quite creditable when it appeared, and Jenny Lamont had even asked for the recipe. The rolls were hot and crusty; Freddy had made his special blue cheese dressing for the salad; everybody seemed to like the German white wine, and George Odell had picked up the bottle and looked meditatively at the label. The dessert was a walnut torte with whipped cream, a real triumph. George Odell and Roger Lamont had both had second helpings, though Hannah Odell had murmured something about her diet and insisted on a sliver, a mere sliver. She had, however, had a second sliver.

So Freddy and Sharon smiled at each other contentedly as they prepared to serve the Odells and the Lamonts with coffee and liqueurs. Cherry brandy and Cointreau and creme de menthe in their nice expensive bottles, too precious to open except for guests.

"What a dear little house this is," Hannah Odell said. "You two have done so much to fix it up."

"It looks smaller on the outside than on the inside," Jenny Lamont said. "Why is that?"

"Tricks with mirrors, partly," Sharon answered. "A mirror on the wall adds another window, somebody told me once. Not too many pictures either."

"There's a tapestry, though. Rivers and woods. I suppose that makes another window." Roger Lamont got up and peered at it nearsightedly. "Rivers and woods and medieval ladies and knights in armour. Why not a more modern landscape?"

"Oh, that's Freddy's," Sharon said, smiling. "I think it belongs to his Guenevere period."

"It's more imitation William Morris than genuine Middle Ages, I'm afraid," Freddy said. "But I like to remind myself of my illusions. And it does add a bit of space to the room, like Sharon's mirror."

"What was your Guenevere period, Freddy?" Hannah asked. "I love to find out about people's pasts."

"Oh, just a phase I went through," Freddy said vaguely.

"A very long phase, from what you told me," Sharon said. "He wrote sonnets for her," she told the others. "At least forty sonnets."

"More like fifty-five, it was."

"And were you really in love with a girl named Guenevere?" George asked. "You're lucky you didn't marry her. Think of getting up in the morning and saying, 'Another cup of coffee, Guenevere.' "

"Don't typecast women, George," Hannah scolded. "She might have said, 'Coffee, please, Freddy.' "

"I don't think I visualized having coffee and toast with Guenevere. More like nectar and ambrosia. And somebody would have waited on us. But her name wasn't really Guenevere. It was — No, I won't tell you what it was. I called her Guenevere because the name suited the sonnets."

"Tell them the story, Freddy," Sharon said. "I like this story."

"There isn't a story. I met this girl, my Guenevere — Gwen, let's call her — back in my first year in university, in Winnipeg. She used to sit in the row across from me in Freshman English. I thought she was the most beautiful girl imaginable. She had this long fair hair and violet eyes. But all that year I couldn't work myself up to speaking to her."

"The desire of the moth for the star," Roger quoted helpfully.

"You mean you went all your first year of university without talking to a girl?" George asked, "I can't believe it."

"Oh, I talked to other girls. I went out with other girls. I'd been going with girls ever since first year high school, nice motherly girls. But this was different. This was true love. It was like yearning for a Rolls-Royce while you're driving a second-hand Ford."

"But you did talk to her your second year, didn't you?" Hannah asked. "She wasn't quite so star-like then."

"She let me buy her coffee. She let me read her essays for her and correct her spelling."

Guenevere was a poor speller?" George asked. "That's not very star-like."

"An endearingly poor speller. She looked up at me mistily from under her eyelashes while I corrected her spelling. Long eyelashes."

"And from there?" Jenny prompted.

"Oh, she confided in me about the other men who were in love with her. She was always being pursued by other men. She treated me like a brother."

"And you were writing all those sonnets to her then?" George asked.

"Not then. The sonnets came after I'd gone away to graduate school in Toronto. I ran into her at a party there. She had gone to Toronto to work, and had a friend who was married to a friend of mine. We got to know each other faster in Toronto than in Winnipeg, I guess, because we were two Westerners in the East. Anyhow, I began writing her the sonnets, two or three a week there must have been."

"Were they good sonnets?" Roger asked, shoving over his glass for a refill of cherry brandy.

"I think they were good," Sharon said. "I've read them. He's never written a sonnet to me."

"I don't need to write you sonnets, Dear. We live together. You're real. I make the coffee every other morning. Well, for sonnets I guess they were OK, but who reads sonnets now? Still, my Gwen read them."

"And what did she think of them?" Jenny asked, looking thoughtfully at Roger's glass.

"She was most impressed. Well, she laughed at first, but she really was impressed. I had always had illusions about her, and now I think she began to have illusions about me. She began to think she was falling in love with me. She had seen *Camelot* and

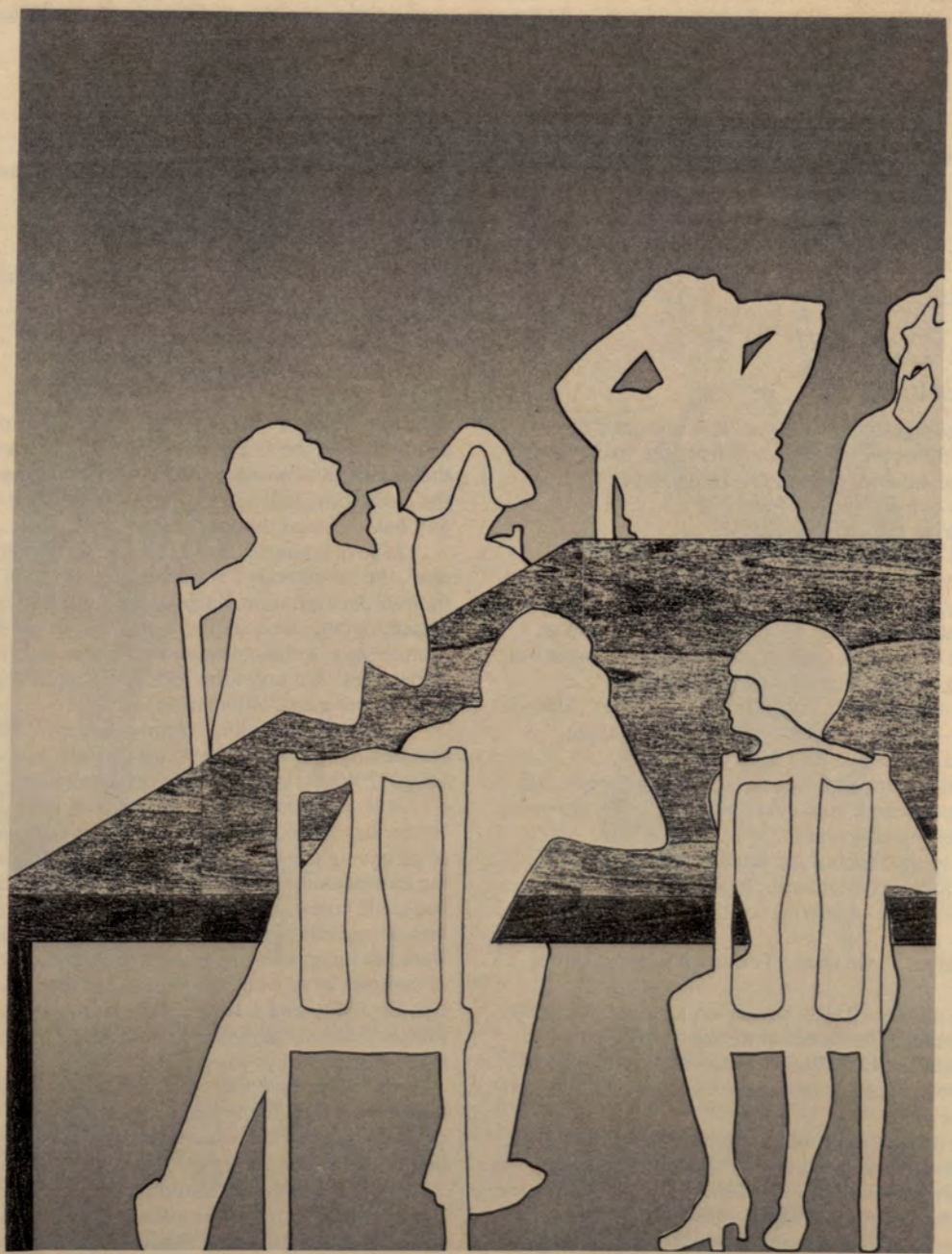


illustration by Cathy Hobart

she began to call me her Arthur."

"That was a bad omen," Hannah commented. "Everyone knows Guenevere left Arthur for Lancelot."

"Gwen wasn't a very literate girl, really. But you're right. It was a bad omen. Still, everything was very pleasant for awhile."

And how come Arthur didn't marry his Guenevere and live happily until Lancelot came along?" George asked.

"Well, we got as far as becoming engaged. But we decided to spend a few days together before announcing the engagement. Gwen wasn't so medieval as to marry Arthur without knowing him a little better. So we took a weekend and went to Montreal."

"And?"

"And it was a complete disaster. I think we knew it would be a disaster before we even unpacked our suitcases."

"Tell us some details," Hannah said. "How was it a disaster? If you were writing a story this would be your big scene."

"I'm not writing a story. Imagine it for yourselves. We were hardly speaking to each other on the train going back to Toronto."

"Still," Hannah said, "every now and then a honeymoon is a failure and a marriage succeeds. Do you remember our honeymoon, George?"

"Do I remember?" Oh, God."

"Well," Freddy said, "maybe if we had already been married we'd have stuck it out. The trouble was we had our honeymoon first. Anyhow, I still wanted to marry her, but she didn't want to marry me."

"And that was the end of the story?" Roger asked. "Your Guenevere left you? Did she find her Lancelot?"

"Oh yes. She married an ex-football player from Calgary who was getting a graduate degree in Physical Education. But I've spoiled the story. I should have kept you in suspense, shouldn't I? In a way, I was in suspense myself, because although the wedding took place fairly soon after our trip to Montreal, I didn't meet her husband until a few years later. And this may sound incredible, but I was still writing sonnets to her during that time. I used to go out with other girls, but I used to tell them that my heart wasn't really in it, that I had lost the one great

continued on page 48

His Family

fiction by Frances Itani

We peer out the windows of the car. It is not quite dusk; noises of the water fight can still be heard from the back yard.

"Remember the summer holidays?" Jenny says.

We've had this conversation before.

"When we'd drive to Nottawasaga?"

"Father would borrow old Peli's car . . ."

"Why would Peli lend us his car?" I don't know the details of this. Peli didn't really *know* our family but must have cared for father, knew there was no money for a car in those post-war years. Father didn't even work for him but every spring went out to the country and helped Peli put in his garden.

"I don't know why. But do you remember mother? She would never know — never — when we would be leaving."

"She'd learned not to ask."

"It enraged father. Enraged him to have his authority, his decision-making, questioned. And every summer, *every summer,* he would, some evening after work . . ."

". . . drive up to the front of the house in PELI'S car!!"

"Walk up the steps triumphantly, keys swinging from a finger, and announce: 'We're leaving for the Bay — 6 o'clock tomorrow.' "

Jenny and I pause . . . we think of our own ordered selves . .

Two of those summers it was raining on announcement day — two that I remember. The destination was always the same: our grandparents' old rambling house about a mile from the bay. Four and a half acres of land, a few apple trees, two billy goats.

How happy we were!

But mother, with that night-before notice, was somehow responsible for preparations. And on the two soggy, sodden, pre-departure evenings that I remember, there were clothes-lines strung across the kitchen; rows of underwear, summer shorts and shirts hung to dry and beating into our faces as we criss-crossed the rooms mad with excitement because 'holidays' had finally come, had dropped out of the sky and there was Peli's green Mercury parked outside to prove it.

Why did she never fight back? Sometimes Jenny and I risk very high phone bills trying to come to grips with this. We laugh, we cry.

Of the two sons and two daughters it is Jenny and I who 'keep in touch'. We would describe ourselves as close; each makes an annual trip across two provinces to visit the other's family. It is then that we surprise our husbands by ignoring the worlds we have built with them, by revelling in our own — fantasies of childhood, choking over sudden perverse memories from our past.

As for our brothers, Alan — in whose parked car we are now taking refuge — greets me in the same way no matter whether it has been days or years since we have met. Always a bear hug; my breath rushes out of me. Then an awkward moment, a silence we cannot (and never have been able to) breach. Here at his home he pretends it is like our old home, a continuation. But it is not — we both know; that is neither possible nor desirable. Some measure of blood and genes has caused this reunion, the celebration of the Greenwood line; the christening of Alan Junior took place this morning. Alan, who has organized the events of the entire day, will carry it through; we shall all, in fact, see the day out — fiasco though it may yet become.

Jake is youngest, not quite thirty. He is called the 'family one', the 'homebody'. If we were to stick him with pins he would fight to the end, arms flailing. Jake and I have a silent understanding of each other's position. It is far more difficult, our silence says, to be oldest and youngest than to be sheltered and in-between. We are, after all, the perimeters of the family and have borne many of its bruises.

"Some celebration," Jenny mutters. "We've had the christening; we've had the family picnic, but what about the club tonight? Who's going to take responsibility?"

It is too much to answer for. It is, after all, the first time Father has had occasion to celebrate a Greenwood son — the rest of us having produced a steady line of daughters. But now that the entire family is together, I notice that we have quickly slipped back, old rules. All of us are middle-aged or approaching middle-age but the men are the 'boys' and we are the 'girls'. Bared as much as we ever were in childhood but now with layers of complexity to wade through — not that any of us would care to try. Oh Jenny and I do; we dig past the surface but never get further than our parents. 'It would take a lifetime to unmuddle that', Jenny always says.

But why, I wonder, are our sisters-in-law immune from the water drenching Jenny and I are sure to get if we leave the shelter of Alan's locked car where we are now sitting quietly smoking, and return to the back yard? A water-fight, it started in fun — Alan's joke — but we, sisters, quickly became targets. We have fled but the others will be sitting unbothered at picnic tables, fading into early evening shadows, pulling toddlers to their knees, releasing them as they wriggle to be free. Mother will be watching, noncommittal.

We had just arrived at Alan's house this morning when Father and Mother's car pulled up behind. Alan was ready with his piper, his wife smiling from the steps, a proud accomplice to the outlandish extravagance of the plan. The piper, a sallow-faced young man with a thinly bearded chin, wearing Bermuda shorts, piped the grandparents to the first male issue of the Greenwood line. Mother kept blushing furiously, moving her hands as though to brush the young man and his pipes away, but he persisted and led the way through the gate into the back yard where the baby had been quickly laid on a blanket, its wizened face blinking in the sun. Father ran towards the shawled bundle and wept over the likeness, the private vision, the sure truth of his own issue. Then the piper — a neighbour? — discreetly disappeared through the back hedge. Alan, turned to me, extended his broad gestures to encompass the suburban house, the new son, the wrought-iron fence and said, "I've just closed another deal — everything I touch turns to gold!" And grinned his ear-to-ear grin that recalled sliding the slopes of gullies and

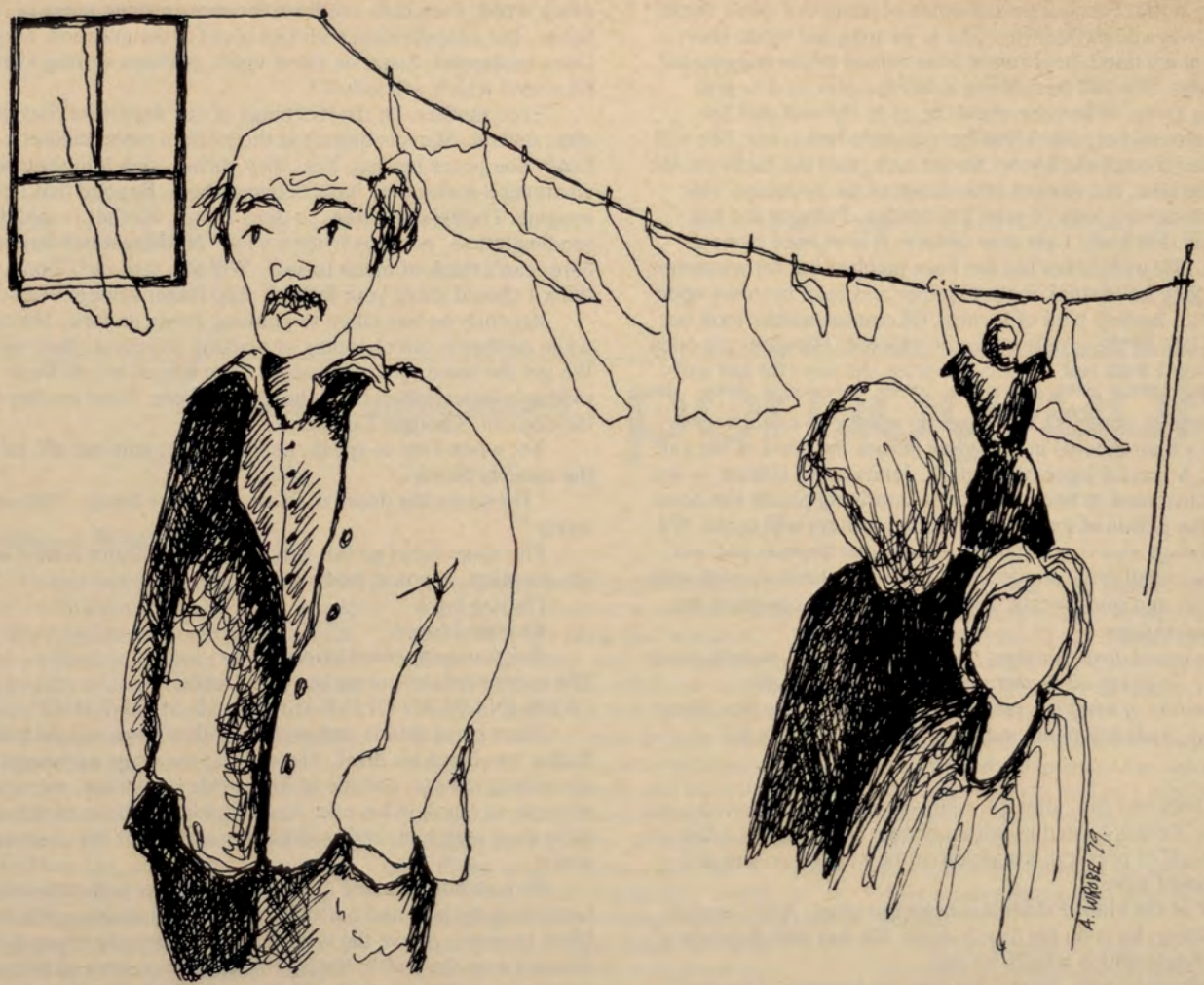


illustration by Alina Wrobel

diving off the booms of our childhood. *Everything I touch turns to gold!*

Am I imagining things when I sense rage from the boys, an uncompleted act against us? Or is it just another part of family structure that none of us is able to shed? Perhaps an unspelled game of letters father has shaken onto his sons, like dice. The letters won't arrange themselves; they remain coded, out of order.

* * *

Of those long ago summers I remember crammed battered suitcases; the lunch-making the night before; paired slices of bread opened to receive a grainy mixture of bologna and pickle which Jenny or I would have twirled through the blades of the silvery-bodied grinder that clamped onto the edge of the kitchen counter.

I remember, too, arriving at grandmother's; mother taking still-damp clothes from the suitcases, hanging them out to dry. Grandma stood beside her clucking her tongue while mother, clothespins between her teeth, rattled our hand-me-down wardrobe out on the line.

Jenny and I cannot really imagine what it was like at all. Who knows why mother put up with it? Why father acted as he did?

It is dusk now; there are long shadows on the lawn. All quiet in the back. The boys must have given up — or are crouching between cars ready to pounce while we split threads of the past, unaware.

Our daughters, at least, have been behaving. Jenny's and mine are a little older, senior cousins. I wonder how *they* perceive family; the tone of the afternoon has been somewhat hysterical. It is not often that our children get to see their parents in the role of siblings. And I, I confess, feel a disappointment: that Alan will not let things lie; that he will usher us through his extravagances, which seem to barely touch the fringes of my own sense of reality. And yet, we have committed ourselves; we shall do our utmost to please.

Last summer Jenny, I, our husbands and children, shared a large cottage. Jenny and I took off frequently in the boat, leaving the men to spincast off the dock or catch tadpoles with the children. We rowed in and around contours of the lake, laughing, weeping . . . yes, when we are together there is always a mixture of tears and laughter. Because no matter what else we talk about, all conversations culminate in a reference to father.

We have always judged and loved father. He is our burden. The past two or three years our conversations about him seem to have become marked by a kind of pragmatic hysteria. Perhaps this is progress of a sort, acceptance. Which may be preferable to the close-lipped entrenchedness I detect as the stand the boys take. Perhaps the boys, by not questioning, do accept. Perhaps — and this is an allowable, if remote, possibility — perhaps the boys are more fair. Jenny and I are always trying to *explain* him. He has burdened his daughters with images of Willy Loman, shades of nonsense, confusion, brilliance, passion, fear. Oh it is impossible; it is what Jenny and I are always trying to find.

A ruby glow from the front step curves through the dark like a dying sparkler. Mother is there, alone, having sneaked away for

a quiet cigarette. She is a no-nonsense person but I don't think she has always been that way. She is wearing her white shorts and I see in my mind, her bruised blue-veined thighs hugging the cool cement. She will be rubbing at her temples as if to give something away. When she stands to go in she will pull her cardigan around her, check that her cigarette butt is out. She will look past us though she knows we are here; past the highway, the woods, the lake, the eastern boundaries of the province. Her eyes will contain a look of grim knowledge. Perhaps she has always had that look; I am now unsure. It is at once cynical, knowing. Life with father has not been painless but for whatever reasons, they have stuck it out together and each bestows upon the other an austere kind of loyalty. Of course mother took her stand too late so she is only partially released. The gates are open but she won't walk out. That is the price she pays for her early acquiescence.

"Come on out girls! We won't do a thing — cub's honour."

Jake's figure looms in a shadow across the hood of the car. He grins. A playful lapse of memory. Jenny and I stretch — we are unaccustomed to being banned to confining places but have enjoyed the period of exile. Now the babysitters will come. We shall exchange shorts and halters for summer dresses and suit jackets; we shall drive a mile and a half to a lakeshore club with our spouses and our parents. And there we shall complete the day's expectations.

If we could drop barriers, fling aside illusions, would it not be better? Shall we all depart tomorrow with no better understanding of what has brought us together in the first place?

Jenny reads my mind and says, "Don't dwell on it."

* * *

It is only one day, after all. Alan's house is bulging with cots and cribs. He has hosted us with a benign hand; he has taken it upon himself to preserve his vision of the kind of closeness a family should have.

Here at the club, Father has been too quiet. And I cannot help counting; he is on his fourth drink. He has withdrawn to a separate space which admits no one.

The stage is unlit, empty. Mother sits between Alan and Jake, talking and smoking. I somehow feel responsible for bringing our parents here, though it was Alan's idea. Whatever will happen center-stage, we shall have ringside seats.

I suddenly remember gowns in zippered plastic wardrobes which hung in the cedar-lined closet of our old home. As a small girl, I would walk deep into that long rich-smelling cocoon of darkness, inspecting the glitter of strapless taffeta gowns layered with crinoline; the coarseness of black crepe sheaths, rich green material criss-crossed over the bustline; sequined blouses. Who wore these if not mother? Her long black hair curling simply and naturally.

There is an image, too, of a photograph, a foolish photo really: mother in strapless gown, father in dark suit — a New Year's Eve house party. They are standing in a room I do not recognize, surrounded by laughing faces. An unidentified man behind my father is holding a plastic potty upside down above his head. It is easy to tell by their faces that they still have hopes, dreams.

If we could be given the impossible . . . if we could hold just a glimmer of what has been passed on . . .

At this table we are divided. My family and Jenny's; our brothers and their wives; mother, father. Our parents have had little to say to each other in recent years — at least it seems that way when I visit. But what goes on when they are alone? When I am there so are the grandchildren, my husband; sometimes Jenny too, plans her trips at the same time and there is much laughter, activity, fun. But later, after the departures? Father is sixty-eight, retired. Does he drift sleepily from room to room, looking out at the street from behind a network of plants and drapes? While I talk to mother he ignores, or pretends to; at other times he hears every word, even calls out from the most remote areas of the house. But conversation with him is out of the question, abortive. Does he depend, hang, on these visits, perhaps storing events to fill a void which will follow?

Even mother, on the mornings of our departure, begins to sink, deflate. She sits quietly at the kitchen table, cigarette in hand. She pours her tea. Yes, they shrink, sink into themselves, whatever it is that they have between them. Beyond that I cannot imagine. I telephone often; so does Jenny. Mother responds by sending letters, perhaps twice a year. 'Nothing much happening here, can't think of much to say'. Will she visit us? 'Don't really think I should leave your father'. And father seldom visits.

Recently he has taken to phoning Jenny and me. He calls while mother is out shopping or walking Seymour, their spaniel. We get the same spoken message from him as we do from mother's letters. 'Not much happening here. Your mother took the dog out. Thought I'd phone . . .'

Yet when I try to speak, he interrupts, cuts me off; he does the same to Jenny.

"He wants the doors to be open," says Jenny, "but on his terms."

The stage lights go up. Any sudden departure is now out of the question. A voice, body unseen, echoes:

They're back
Rico and Jorge
Our favourite entertainers

The cardboard cut-out on our table reads:

"JOIN IN ON AN OLD-FASHIONED SING-SONG"

Jorge plays drums and organ. Mother has a pained look. Father swallows his drink. He looks at the stage as though it is something remote, outside of his world. He shrugs, waits; a glimmer (a tear?) in his eye. Alan, looking as close to defeat as I have ever seen him, smiles, folds his arms over his chest and waits.

Rico stands over and above us. He seems to have worked at narrowing his hips and buttocks so they will squeeze into his black trousers; above the waist his torso abruptly expands to almost twice the width. Sitting this close, we seem to be more vulnerable to his physical self; his makeup, in fact, has drizzled over one eye. In the room around us, faces are upturned expectantly, ogling him, yoked as he is by the yellow lights of the stage. He reaches back out of the lights; in one snappy movement a cane appears and he taps out a few steps. His purr is released, a light Latin voice over the steady subtle beat of drums.

Good evening ladies, gentlemen . . .

Loud guffaws from a back corner. Rico picks up on a sudden beat

WELL IT'S ONE OF THOSE SONGS THAT YOU HEAR NOW AND THEN

Perspiration is already running down his face in rivulets; his cheeks are smudged. Jorge hits the cymbals and begins a frenzied maintained burst on the drums through Rico's gasps

a big happy family
I love you

Rico tips back again, out of the lights; his hand glows as it holds up a stack of small black discs and sheets of paper

and because I love you all
I will now pass out to you
our sing-along sheet
of American favourites
and a complimentary copy
of my latest RECORDING!

He sprints from table to table — can barely be seen — a tightly paunched jackrabbit in tails, a flash of white breast, a split coat fluttering horizontally on the air behind him as he runs. He wheels from one table to the next, darts close to us wheezing and sweating and drops a bundle on our table. The record is one of those small 45's that is so soft it can be bent into loops. Back on

continued on page 47.

LAW

our newest battleground: pornography

by Eleanor Wachtel

"It's our newest battleground. One where we find ourselves in opposition to each other and to homosexual men with whom we have sometimes been allied." Pornography was the theme of the lecture by Gene Errington, co-ordinator of Vancouver's Women's Research Centre. And within the past year alone, pornography has been the subject of articles in *Chrysalis, Kinesis, This Magazine,* a *Ms.* cover story, and so on. Andrea Dworkin, a frequent contributor to *Ms.* and author of *Woman Hating,* is now writing a feminist analysis of pornography to be published in 1981. Susan Griffin, whose ecological study *Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* has just appeared, is preparing a new book, *Pornography and Silence.*

Like rape, wife battering, and child abuse, pornography is an age-old problem that feminists want re-examined, re-evaluated, and, if possible, reduced. But unlike rape, wife battering, and child abuse, whose negative social consequences can hardly be disputed, pornography wallows in ambiguities. Sure, clobbering your wife is bad, but what's the harm in peeking at some "feelthy pictures"? The subject is a morass, with the quicksand of free speech on one side and the weeds of repressive prudery on the other. It resists reductionism. Attempts at solutions wax subtle and complex.

If there are as yet no clear answers, some progress is being made. The major feminist contribution to the analysis is to reorient the discussion away from the obsession with sex which has for so long clouded the issue. Specifically, the feminist analysis of pornography begins by distinguishing it from erotica.

Erotic (From Eros, the god of sexual love) is defined as relating to sexual passion and love; there is no reference to gender or other details. The pornographic (from *porne* meaning prostitute) is a depiction of obscene or unchaste subjects, obscene being that which is disgusting, filthy, etc. The latter definition is loaded with subjective notions but it's clear that it has little to do with love or even sex, and a lot to do with breaking taboos, the medium for which is a woman who is paid to comply and herself has no status. Erotica is love-making, implying equals; pornography portrays unequals, with the woman always the "un".

From words to pictures: women in spanking harnesses being beaten, looks of ecstasy across their faces, full labial display with fists about to penetrate, nipple harnesses, — torture, in short, of apparently willing eager vicitms. Pornography perpetuates the dynamic that women don't enjoy sex but experience pleasure through pain, that they must be forced since that will free them from any restrictive social norms, and that men, on the other hand, measure their prowess by the degree of mastery, sexual dominance. Pornography is an advertisement for misogyny. Like rape, it has little to do with sex and a lot with violence. Pornography is the theory, writes Robin Morgan, and rape the practice.

Certainly there is a sense of continuum in woman-hating: humiliation, degradation, violence; popular images in the media, pornography, assaults against women. Once women are reduced to objects, less than human, pieces of a person, then it would seem, anything goes. High fashion ads feature women in furs — and chains; a billboard scrawl reads "I'm black and blue from the Rolling Stones and I love it"; a record album pictures a woman's crotch in scarlet — "Jump on it"; the Pointer Sisters sing of a wealthy man, locking the door, setting up his "medieval game" in which the woman "forsees terrible trouble and (stays) just the same." The refrain? "I'm a fool to do your dirty work." (In another song on the same album the singer invites rape where no means yes: "I say I don't like it, but you know I'm a liar, 'cause when we kiss —oooh— FIRE." Is all this just because liar rhymes with fire?)

Brutality Chic it's been called, giving widespread currency to the link between sex and violence, sex as a medium for violence. It is an insidious dehumanization where woman is always the victim. But this is the feminist perspective; how does society through its laws perceive the subject?

In the Criminal Code of Canada, obscenity is defined (in section 159(8)) as "any publication a dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely, crime, horror, cruelty, and violence." Allowances are made with respect to whether the material serves the "public good." In addition, case law has developed the criteria that the publication as a whole be examined (in order to determine what a "dominant characteristic" is), the purpose of the author be taken into account, as well as the work's literary or scientific merit. The whole thing is to be judged in terms of contemporary community standards, which have come to mean a national Canadian rather than a regional viewpoint. Expert witnesses are generally used to gauge these standards.

This obscenity law has been deemed problematic — certainly it is imprecise — and presumably in response to public outcry at the prevalence of pornography, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs last year undertook to produce a Report and recommend changes to the Criminal Code.

It is worth pausing to look at how this Committee responded to and absorbed representations by feminists who

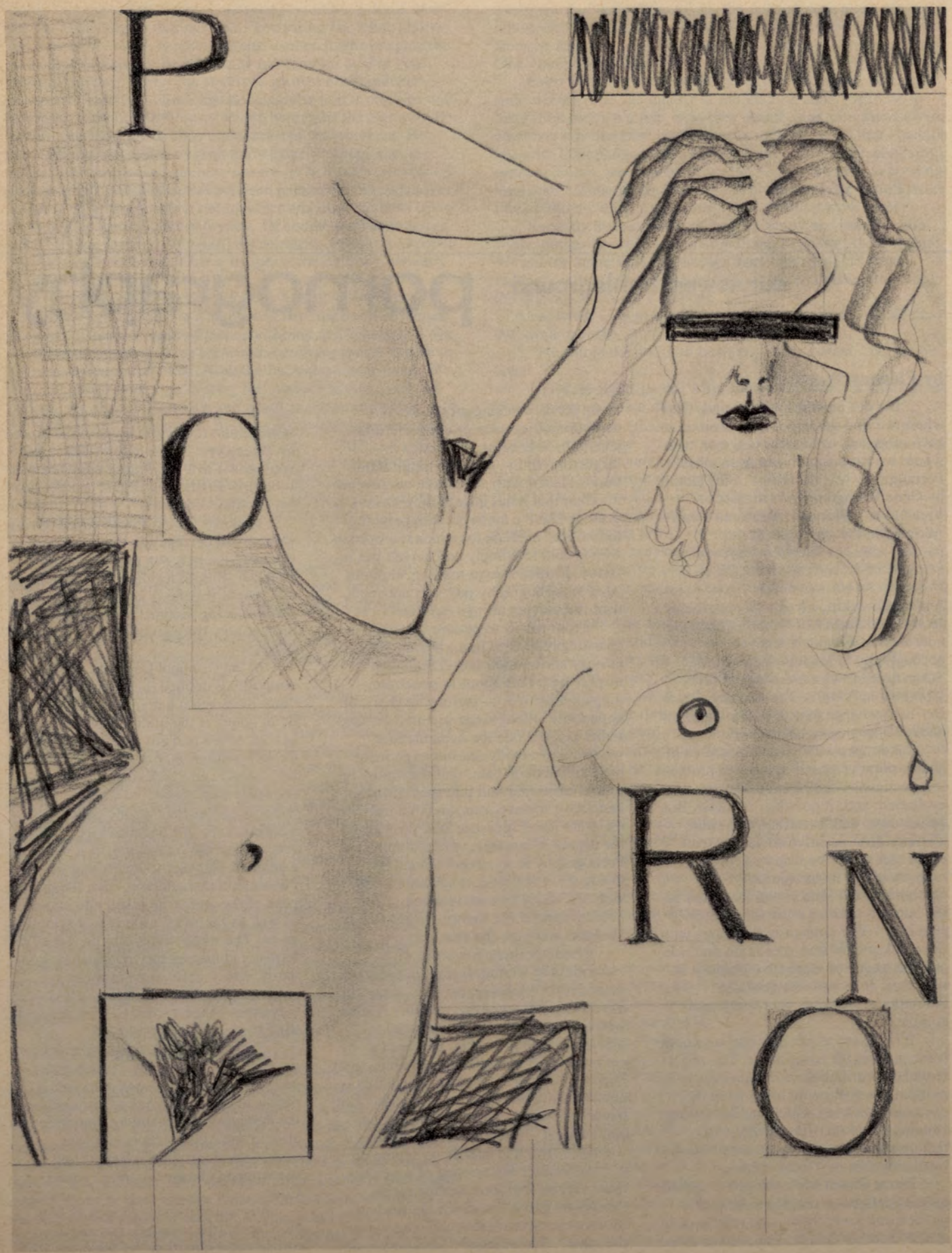


illustration by Sheila Luck

presented briefs. Although it is not much evidenced in their final recommendations, they clearly co-opted some of this material into their Report. It states that pornography is "exploitive of women — they are portrayed as passive victims who derive limitless pleasure from inflicted pain, and from subjugation to acts of violence, humiliation and degradation. Women are depicted as sexual objects whose only redeeming features are their genital and erotic zones which are prominently displayed in minute detail. . . The effect of this type of material is to reinforce male-female sterotypes to the detriment of both sexes. It attempts to make degradation, humiliation, victimization, and violence in human relationships appear normal and acceptable." Gloria Steinem could hardly have put it better.

The actual legislative proposals, however, showed no sign of translating this analysis into law. They would have effected the following changes: 1) "publication" would be replaced by "matter or thing" because a Supreme Court decision on "marital aids" found the wording confusing; 2) instead of "the undue exploitation of sex or of sex *and* . . .," the new law would treat sex as one of a number of isolates — "the undue exploitation of sex, violence, crime, horror or cruelty or the undue degradation of the human person." (The subsection goes on to deal with children which is outside the purview of this article.) 3) Fines and penalties would be stiffened and the material forfeited upon conviction. The Committee also recommended mandatory trial by jury, which would itself represent "community standards" and eliminate expert witnesses. This, of course, would narrow the notion of community, as any item could be found acceptable in one town and unacceptable in the next.

These amendments became part of an omnibus bill, C-21, which died on the floor of the house on March 26, 1979, when Parliament was dissolved for a general election. Although this was legislation proposed by a Liberal government, there is little reason to think that the new government will not also feel they must respond to a perceived "emergence of a number of unhealthy social tendencies which are unacceptable to the vast majority of Canadians."

Apart from the mind's boggling at what *due* degradation of the human person might entail, one encounters other difficulties with these proposals. The argument underlying the distinction between pornography and erotica is not taken up; indeed the elimination of any link between the undue exploitation of sex and the list of other assaults detroys the point. This confusion is further emphasized in their Report which treats as equal examples of obscenity depictions of fellatio and defecation, sodomy and sadism, masturbation and necrophilia, — in short, anything but the missionary position is wholly evil. (Like the British judge who equated erotica, homosexuality, drugs, and violence as equally corrupting.)

Some feminists, despairing of ever being understood by law-makers, have urged a reductionist approach. Debra Lewis, co-author of *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*, proposed in a brief to the Committee that "We want a law based on new standards which would entrench the physical and sexual autonomy of women and children within the law. Such a law should be based on the following principles in establishing a definition of obscene material: (1) That the material displays or condones the actual or implied use of physical force or coercion against another individual." (The other points concern children.) This represents an attempt, like that which would translate rape into assault, to remove the sexual component entirely.

Whatever the tactical merits of this argument, it is a little too abstract and elegant for what is still a misogynist society. If coercion against women is expressed sexually, then that is not merely an adventitious aspect of the problem. It would be utopian to believe that women can be treated the same as men, that assault is just assault and not rape, that pornography preaches simply hatred and not sexual aggression. The distinction is worth preserving in law. At this point, what is needed is a more careful definition of obscenity to incorporate the argument differentiating erotica from pornography.

While we are not yet ready for the universalism of Lewis' suggestion, her argument leads along another line of analysis. Were any other group — say Blacks or Jews — to be represented as women are in pornography, we can well imagine the public outcry. This may seem a tired analogy but it is effective in driving home the point that pornography is hate literature disguised as entertainment. Part of the reason for its current proliferation is a backlash to the women's movement. Pornography reasserts male dominance and is a reactionary counter-offensive to uppity women.

One staunch civil libertarian, after expounding for 20 pages on the harmlessness of pornography, suggested that a reason that might be put forward to ban it would be to protect women from being exposed to a subject painful to them. "It is easy to understand the reaction of a woman, *considering the hatred which dominates so much pornography*, who on reading such a work feels threatened and menaced." (emphasis added) So near yet so far. He fails to make the connection that this is indeed hate literature, and instead concludes that to ban it for such a reason would be too paternalistic, as it surely would.

The law does ban hate literature (s.281) "against any identifiable group" but this includes neither women nor homosexuals. As the law currently stands it is so weak that "any reasonably held belief", however destructive, is legally permitted.

Pornography — whether it is defined as hate literature or as obscenity — is not simply a problem, but a symptom, an epiphenomenon of a more widespread cultural syndrome. Misogyny. To see it in this context is not to diminish its significance *per se* but to highlight the difficulties inherent in trying to deal with it. There are a lot of things we don't like — from song lyrics to nipple harnesses. They all carry the same message: the difference is only one of degree.

This compels two questions: i) how is pornography *in particular* harmful, and ii) should anything be done about it? Is the relief available to us through legislation, however redrafted, useful or itself destructive?

The legal "solution" hinges on empirical evidence from the social sciences. Sadly, like so many areas where one wants facts, there seems to be a social study for every position. Still research findings are a better guide than anecdotal arguments in which one side points to the pornography found in the mattress of Son of Sam and around the Charles Manson household, and the other side counters that similar material is collected by university presidents. So despite the limitations, it is instructive to review the main line of pornography research.

The most common "scientific" defence of pornography is the catharsis or safety-valve theory. It assumes that men are inherently aggressive towards women and that some of this sexual hostility can be released with the help of pornography — presumably through masturbation. The alternative position is that it acts as a stimulant, that instead of releasing sexual activity, it enhances it. York University sociologist Thelma McCormack, in an insightful analysis of research on media violence compared to that on pornography, found that analogous studies prompt opposite "results" and recommendations: censor the first and condone the second. With media violence, the burden of proof has shifted to those who claim it's harmless, and a concerned, or pro-censorship attitude is adopted by the researchers. Yet faced with comparable studies, the professionals favoured a permissive attitude toward pornography. McCormack concludes that future studies

should start by examining the machismo bias of research.

While current studies ought to be viewed with considerable skepticism, they are in some ways the bottom line for both feminist analysis and legal recourse since they are introduced to "prove" positions. A positive, if not unexpected, finding debunks the notion that pornography is merely grist for a fringe element of moral degenerates. Like rapists who are not, after all, crazies hiding in the bushes, the consumers of pornography have been found to be white, middle-class, middle-aged, married men with above average income and education. Such information is met with resistance as the old myths continue to be perpetuated. A recent newspaper item proclaimed: "Vancouver's grubby raincoat brigade is supporting a Porno Pipeline . . ."

In parallel, researchers have found that convicted rapists were less exposed than the 'norm' to pornography during their adolescence. This is used to support the safety-valve theory. Look what happens when they can't get the stuff.

On a broader front, however, results are less clear. A prime example is the famous study of the "Danish Experience" (where the reporting of sex crimes was examined after pornography became freely available in Denmark) which showed that the number declined in all categories *except for rape*. Here the safety-valve theory doesn't hold because "the offender against women (and here we may include the rapist) would be the last one of whom to expect that he could use pornography instead of the offense." On closer examination, it turns out that the decline in the other categories can be attributed to a changed social climate in which attitudes, reporting and registering altered. The one type of crime which did decrease was child molestation. This study isn't quite as dramatically in support of their case as the "pro-porns" claim, but neither do these relatively static figures show that pornography directly increases sexual crimes.

One of the principal Danish researchers, Berl Kutchinsky, discovered in a more recent study (in a laboratory setting) that exposure to pornography had a disinhibiting effect on men with respect to women who had offended them in some way. That is, pornography precipitated retaliatory violence (as McCormack would predict on the basis of parallel studies of non-sexual media violence). Similarly, a new study found that rapists were sexually aroused by depictions of violent scenarios, whereas the 'norm' was stimulated by sexual prurience. This finding seems highly suggestive about the role of pornography as feminists have defined it.

In this mixed bag of findings, no clear conclusions emerge. Pornography, violence through sex, is attractive to a large segment of the male population. It neither dramatically increases violent sex crimes nor unambiguously decreases them; it seems to disinhibit men from expressing aggression to women but cannot be shown to be the trigger for a population of convicted rapists (who are nonetheless particularly aroused by violence).

All the same, conclusions have been reached. Notably in 1970, the American Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in its influential assessment of the literature declared that, "It cannot be demonstrated that pornography causes crime or delinquency nor that erotic materials constitute a primary or significant cause of the development of character defects. Further, public opinion favours free access for adults to read or see whatever they like.

Their glee at these "results" is irrepressible. Clive Barnes, in his introduction to the report, states: "Perhaps the greatest (surprise) — perfectly evident from the findings — is that women are virtually as interested in erotica as are men." You've come a long way, baby. But he's given himself away. For a start, he doesn't bother to distinguish between pornography and erotica. He suggests an 'equal time', equivalent liberation from repression for all — like the Vancouver nightclub that recently added the Wet Jockey Short Contest to their evenings of Wet T-Shirt Contests — when in fact it's degradation without representation. Women are by and large *not* consumers of pornography. At the local news and magazine store, one section resembles a urinal, a phalanx of males shoulder to shoulder, eyes front, each carefully absorbed in his own inner vision.

The experimental research conducted for the Commission was carried out by male researchers with almost exclusively male subjects. The Commission itself was composed of 16 men and two women. A special number of the *Journal of Social Issues* devoted to some of that research includes only male contributors. An endpaper "Comment" by two women academics tentatively hazards that "the female researcher's involvement in the study of the 'male problem' pornography might have unexpected but significant benefits."

A feminist-informed research is clearly indicated as a systematic corrective to the current line which seems contaminated with the same ideological confusion of pornography and erotica that plagues the legal system that science is supposed to advise. The core hypothesis of this research might be the "common sense" suggestion that just as exposure to media violence produces violence, exposure to racist propaganda enhances racism, so pornography encourages sexism.

But given that at the moment we have little alternative but to take a fairly conservative (if mighty suspicious) view of the harm pornography does, that

illustration by Sheila Luck

makes the assessment of the utility of a legal remedy all the more difficult. For inevitably what is involved is censorship.

Censorship already functions explicitly through a number of channels. *The Customs Act* enables border officials to seize materials "of an immoral or indecent character." (This has included *Penthouse*.) *The Broadcast Act* prohibits obscene, indecent or profane language, and the *Post Office Act* suspends delivery of mail to persons who use it to distribute pornographic literature, (a penalty which might hardly be noticed). Provincial film "classifiers" may censor or reject movies ("Pretty Baby" in Ontario), although their approval of a film does not render it immune from charges being laid through the Criminal Code.

Municipalities may try to censor through the revocation of business licenses. Vancouver's Mayor, Jake Volrich, last year went on a crusade against *Nude Moppets* and other kiddie-porn. A recent Supreme Court decision, however, with regard to a case in Prince George, B.C., held that while a municipality can regulate businesses per se, it can't use the licensing power as an indirect method of suppressing pornography. At the same time, Hamilton's city council came close to passing stringent by-laws which would have hamstrung all booksellers. The thrust of their action too was directed at controlling pornography.

Implicit censorship is, of course, widespread. Obvious examples are media bias and the predisposition of Canada Council or other arts funding bodies. More insidious is the self-censorship imposed by "cautious" businesspeople. In the U.S., the Hayes Code operated for decades within the movie industry to suppress by anticipation explicit portrayals of not only sex but politics, anything unAmerican. In an equally disturbing fashion, some Canadian publishers are tying into their writers' contracts clauses that would have authors assume total liability for any legal action taken against the work.

But the official view is still the Criminal Code of Canada. Although section 159 is the relevant chapter, section 164 is also pertinent for it was under that section, making "use of the mails for the purpose of transmitting or delivering anything that is obscene, indecent, immoral, or scurrilous" that the *Body Politic* was charged for its article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men."

Censorship must be seen in its two aspects: legislation, the wording of the law, and enforcement, how it's carried out. For the first, the sensible theory would be to rethink the definition of obscenity in section 159(8) of the Criminal Code and then have all other laws which touch on obscenity (from Customs to section 164) reflect this same definition.

Enforcement is an independent problem. This column, for example, in the last issue of *Branching Out* indicated that there already exist a number of laws on the books that could be used against wife batterers, but that the police won't lay charges because they don't consider it a crime against society, just a private domestic event. Thus what laws the police may choose to enforce must be taken into consideration. We cannot simply formulate our perfect little legislation and send it, hopefully, out to sea. In the U.S., Phyllis Schlafly et al, are slamming prochoice abortion literature and even contraception information as obscenities that should be denied the use of the mails. There is wide latitude, a dangerous discretionary power regarding what the police can choose to seize, when, from whom. The enforcers are afflicted with the same cultural male chauvinism that is endemic to our society.

Unless we are conditioned cynics (which many seasoned feminists are sadly becoming), it often comes as something of a surprise to discover that other people don't think the way we do, don't listen to *our* reason, nor share our assumptions. The Parliamentary Committee claims we live in "A society committed to egalitarian, consensual, mutual and non-violent human relationships". Where?

Is this a country where the courts will create such a utopia for us? Where the highest in the land, the Supreme Court of Canada, upheld an appellate court ruling which threw Dr. Henry Morgenthaler in jail after he'd been acquitted by a jury? Where that same court ruled that the *Vancouver Sun* was entitled to refuse to publish a classified ad for a gay newspaper? Where the Attorney-General of Ontario can retain 12 cartons of material seized from the *Body Politic* after that magazine was acquitted, declared innocent? Where local school boards ban Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners?* And so on and on.

It may seem that this is straying far from the issue of pornography and censorship, that we are slipping into the quicksand of civil liberties. How can this sensibly be avoided? It is necessary to assess the "mood of the times" (ans: repressive). It would be naive not to be aware of who our bedfellows are. Phyllis Schlafly too is against obscenity.

It is a virtual certainty that obscenity laws, especially if poorly-defined, will continue to be used against us. Under the proposed amendments, would "the undue exploitation of horror or cruelty or the undue degradation of the human person" include a depiction of war atrocities? Would that photograph of the Vietnamese shooting a captive in the head, a picture which zapped the front page of every North American newspaper and seemed to galvanize public feeling against the war, would such a photograph be censored as obscene? Would those searingly memorable depictions of the holocaust (which Susan Sontag described as cutting her life in two — before she saw them and after), would these terrible touchstones be banned? Would the eye-gauging scene in *King Lear?*

We cannot afford to let the law stand mute on this issue.

Of course, non-legalistic ways of dealing with pornography are also possible. Bans, boycotts, harassment of consumers (photographing the customers at a porn shop) might well have some effect. But these are the weapons of the underdog, not of people in control. Gene Errington pondered what strategy the local Women Against Violence Against Women committee could adopt against an offensive movie, for example. "What could we do that wouldn't quadruple the box office? Should we just go and vomit in the aisles?"

It is not an appetizing choice. Given all that we know about law as it operates in the real world, we are reluctant to put our trust in its efficacy and certainly in its safety. Yet, until the social climate can catch up to our ideals, we cannot afford to let the law, the embodiment of official values, stand mute on this issue. Feminists should involve themselves in changes to obscenity laws, as they should in drafting legislation in all areas of life, but with an especially cautious, minimalist approach.

Pornography stems from a noble tradition of the objectification of women. In examining the genre of the nude in European oil painting, English art critic John Berger notes that "A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.)" He's describing more than 500 years of "fine" art (in non-European art, sexual love is depicted actively between two people), where *men act* and *women appear*, where it is not surprising that "the principal protagonist is never painted." This is the spectator-owner, the man for whom everything has been arranged, presented, packaged. He is a stranger, still wearing his clothes. The answer is not to strip him of his attire, but of his power.

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LEGAL NOTES

promises, promises

by Louise Dulude

While important men sat around for centuries discussing matters of state such as Liberty, Equality and the Pursuit of More Territory, their wives twiddled away the time tending the sick, raising the children and trying to improve the conditions of life of the poor. The end result of their respective efforts, of course, is that a very large part of the business of modern governments is concerned with health, education and welfare.

What has remained unchanged is that "important" decisions are still made by men. Of the 282 federal members of Parliament who will convene before long to study legislation affecting our lives, only 11 will be women. As nine of the 11 are in the Opposition, however, compared with only two in the previous Parliament, the coming session may well produce the best public airing of women's issues this country has ever known.

One way of anticipating the coming debates is to examine where the new government stands on questions of particular importance to women. In alphabetical order, here is a brief overview:

Abortion: The Conservatives' position on this is to not have a position. They have been quoted as saying they "would allow for a free vote" on the issue, which may or may not mean they intend to provoke a debate on it in the House of Commons.

Employment: As Canada's most influential employers and grantors of contracts, the Conservatives promised:

1) to give to the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) of the public service the power to "require . . . each federal department and agency to implement the programmes needed to achieve parity in status and income between men and women in the federal public service within a decade";

2) to empower the OEO to report directly to Parliament every year on the progress of departments and agencies towards equal opportunity for women and on changes required to accomplish this goal;

3) to promote working conditions more favourable to maternity, such as flexible workweeks, part-time work, special child care leaves and day-care centres in the workplace;

4) to suspend or refuse to enter into contract dealings with private firms that violate provincial or federal human rights legislation.

As the Conservatives are against quotas and strict target dates, it is not easy to see how they intend to achieve "parity in status and income" for female public servants within 10 years. Another snag is the Conservative promise to reduce the public service by attrition, which affects women more because of their higher turnover rate.

Native Women: Inclusion in the federal Human Rights Act would not protect Indian women from loss of their Indian status when they marry a non-Indian. What it might do, however, is prevent these women from being thrown off the reserves by taking away Indian leaders' right to decide who can live there.

To take this traditional right away from Indian leaders would be a drastic step, especially when negotiations are in progress on a new Indian Act. After years of criticizing the Liberals' decision to exclude Indians from the Human Rights Act, therefore, the Conservatives quietly dropped their own long-standing commitment to include them. All that remains are promises of consultations with the National Indian Brotherhood and "other concerned parties".

Pensions: In Parliament last year, the Conservatives vehemently insisted that the Spouses' Allowance (given to very poor wives aged 60-64 whose husbands are over 65) be continued after the husband's death until the widow reached her own pensionable age of 65. That position was untenable, the Liberals pointed out, because it would result in giving some widows federal pensions denied to other women (and men) equally old and equally poor.

The only satisfactory solution, put forward by the NDP, would be to extend similar pensions to all poor people between the ages of 60 and 65. The Conservatives have refused to endorse such a measure.

During the election campaign, the Conservatives made statements promising to amend the Canada Pension Plan to allow wives at home to contribute as "self-employed" persons. No further details were provided to explain how this could be done.

Taxation: The Conservatives' single straightforward promise for women was to amend the Income Tax Act to permit the deduction of salaries paid to spouses in unincorporated businesses or farms. This would also allow these wives to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

Unemployment Insurance: After opposing them very strenuously when they were introduced and passed last fall, the Conservatives do not intend to repeal the Liberal amendments to the UI Act that reduced benefits and made it more difficult for part-time workers and re-entry women to be eligible for them. On the contrary, the Conservative statement on this seems to say (it is not very clear) that unemployment benefits will be reduced further for claimants who have no dependents.

All in all, it seems that the feminists on the Opposition benches of the House of Commons are going to be very, very busy.

Louise Dulude is an Ottawa lawyer and researcher.

FILM
festival notebook

The 29th International Berlinale

by Judith Mirus

Part I: Homily on Festivals and Feminist Filmmaking

Way back at the end of February I was again in Berlin for this year's festival. Covering such a "now" event months after the fact may seem spurious, but it's taken me this long to filter and assimilate the material. And considering the lag time between the premiere of most films at a European festival and their appearance, in Canadian theatres in particular, then it shouldn't matter how current the coverage is. What's important is the festival context itself, and the fact is that most reports, however instructive, hardly ever bother to elucidate why there are such events in the first place.

More often than not, the press treats the major international festivals, especially Cannes, as media hyper-happenings set up for the self-aggrandizement of the film industry. But every festival, whatever its orientation, exists so that filmmakers can sell their products, and the degree to which "sell" applies, either in a commercial or cultural sense, depends on the make-up of the audience.

An issue or so ago *Branching Out* published two reports on Canadian Women's Film and Video Festivals, both special instances of women filmmakers, most of them feminists, submitting their work to an audience made up largely of women like themselves. Such forums for cross-creative exchange are as important for filmmakers as the literal marketing of their films, but because that kind of atmosphere encourages more supportive than critical feedback, its benefit is limited. Most women filmmakers — if they aren't simply activists who happen to choose film as a vehicle — want the exposure and scrutiny provided by an international festival format. As long as the so-called free-market mechanism dominates film distribution*, it's the best place to get eventual access to that other, unconverted public, the one that could most use some exposure to feminine interpretations of reality.

What this has specifically to do with feminist filmmaking in the context of the Berlin festival is that, as one of the two or three "biggies", it concentrates on recent films that reflect new trends and perspectives. Films by women are a distinct part of this, mainly those screened through the Forum of Young Film. And it isn't a matter of the women's movement being currently *en vogue* in certain European intellectual circles; women's films are innovative and competitive, to a degree they haven't perhaps been in the past, recent or distant.

At previous festivals a few films by exceptional directors — e.g. Chantel Akerman (*Jeanne Dielman*, etc., Belgium), Yvonne Rainer (*Christina Talking Pictures*, etc., U.S.A.) — stood rather noticeably apart. There was a difference between their perceptibly mature styles and the groping for form apparent in the otherwise-okay films by other female directors. Some recent feminist-oriented filmmaking has been so absorbed in its subjects and so possessive about them that there didn't seem to be much awareness that it really matters *how* the message gets across. What resulted was, too often, merely an unmediated projection of a private experience or idea; what was missing was a formal means of expression to transcribe the particulars into universals that more than an initimate circle of friends could relate to. Most, maybe all, of the movies by women that I saw this year reflected the kind of assurance and sense of accomplishment that characterizes an individualized style. These women knew what they wanted to say *and* had found the formal framework to mirror it.

* There are examples of filmmakers themselves or film cooperatives establishing their own distribution systems, but their markets are too often restricted to educational or cultural groups.

Part II: Mini-critiques of a Handful of Films

The Competition's award for best director went to the grande dame of Danish cinema, Astrid Henning-Jensen, for *Winter-born (Vinterborn*, Denmark, 1978). This was an unexpectedly discerning choice since it isn't the type of grand-standing film that attracts the most attention in the super-charged festival atmosphere. In contrast, Jeanne Moreau's *Teenager (L'Adolescents*, France-W. Germany, 1979) received no jury recognition, but the press' response, perhaps more to her presence than to the film itself, was hyperbolic.

The latter film is stunningly professional visually, decidedly modeled for commercial success. It recaptures an idyllic vacation spent in the country at grandma's the summer of 1939 just before the outbreak of the war. The story is 12-year-old Marie's (played by Laetitia Chauveau), but Moreau's voice-over preface and interjections identify it as her remembered adolescence.

Women are the centre of this film. Grandma (Mamie), played to full effect by Simone Signoret, is the village innkeeper, thus knows everyone and is a wise old observer of human nature. Marie's mother, significantly named Eva (Edith Clever), is rather too attractive and seductive to fit well as a butcher's wife, but it's appropriate for her fleeting affair with the town's handsome young Jewish doctor. What moves the story is that Marie, too, has fallen for him with all the innocence and passion of first love.

Moreau's characters are all romanticized in a fashion that has more to do with studio notions of characterization than with the vagueness of memory. To some extent it's the French version of *Summer of '42*, and it will likely have a

similar nostalgic appeal. Nevertheless, her view of relations between people, mother-to-daughter, grandmother-to-granddaughter, daughter-in-law-to-mother-in-law, or lover-to-lover, is warmly human and balanced. It's a pleasant change from the Hollywood stereotypes.

By contrast, Henning-Jensen's exceptional *Winter-born,* based on a novel by Dea Trier Morch, focuses without any kind of interpretive comment on a microcosm of women in the National Hospital under observation for end-of-term pregnancy complications. Shot literally "on location", much of the dramatic tension derives from the immediacy of that atmosphere and the individualized look we get of the particularities of pregnancy itself. The central character, also Marie, (played by Ann-Mari Max Hansen) is a nursery school teacher. She joins the group rather diffidently, only gradually trusting herself to warm up to the climate of communal feeling. Despite her profession, as the only unmarried woman there, she's not sure she wants or will know how to be a mother. And because she has an excess of amniotic fluid, she's terrified the baby won't be normal. Marie isn't transformed over the course of the move into the epitome of the happy mother, but she learns — and so do we — a lot about sharing, maybe the most common female experience, with women not necessarily like herself, and about interaction as a way to sort out private fears.

The film works as well as it does because Henning-Jensen sets up an equilibrium between the matter-of-fact presentation of real-life events and the unsentimentalized warmth and attachment shown equally to every character. It's as actual and human a document of pregnancy one is likely to see — there's a finely handled live birth sequence — without the revelatory or documentary posturing of most other films, or books, of its kind.

The best entries by women directors were screened outside the Competition, primarily in the aforementioned Forum. *La Maternale* (Italy, 1978) is, apparently, a first feature by Giovanna Gagliardo, whose previous experience includes scriptwriting for one of the cinema's most oringial formalists, Hungarian Miklos Jancso. Without borrowing his mannerisms, she also uses a highly formal camera style and is similarly exact with setting. The film was shot in vibrant, nearly pulsating colour, but filtered to look somewhat grainy and pastel-like, giving the images an irreal, suspended effect. Movement is correspondingly graceful, as if deliberated, sometimes in slow motion, as in flashback scenes, but always so reduced as to reinforce the sense that this is an enclosed world. All the action occurs within the confines of a villa and its grounds, a purposely idealized domestic environment.

Ann-Mari Max Hansen (as Marie) and Helle Hertz in Winter-born.

More a portrait than a story, it is about a woman who composes her entire self-image around her function as mother to a sick daughter. In periodic flashbacks (part of the mother's remembrances), Gagliardo shows the genesis of a disturbing relationship: a small child contracts a frightening disease — probably polio — and the mother responds with natural protective anxiety. But what was necessary behavior toward a sick child becomes, inadvertently a pretext for obsessive mothering of the teenager.

Throughout the film, the mother, played to perfection by Carla Gravina, over-protects her daughter according to some mutually understood sense of decorum, prodding graciously for her to eat her meat or to quit over-exerting herself. But gradually the daughter, except for her youth an almost perfect physical pattern of her mother's beauty, begins to grow stronger, to assert her own personality, and by the end of the film to "come out" at her birthday party as a healthy young woman. Gagliardo reveals a dependency that is subtly reversed as the mother's identity crumbles in direct proportion to her daughter's regained strength.

Similar in theme and outcome is Ula Stoeckl's *A Woman with Responsibility (Eine Frau mit Verantwortung,* W. Germany 1978). Produced originally for TV in conjunction with the Max Planck Institute as part of a series on psychiatric problems, it's based on an actual case history of a woman, Helga, whose personality disintegrated under the force of her family and society's image of her. Brought up by her father, for necessity's sake she had always assumed the roles of housekeeper and mother-surrogate to her brothers. After graduating from high school she took a year to learn French by working as an *au pair* in Paris. There, at least, a few people encouraged her to "be herself", not to take Responsibility so seriously. When she returned to Germany, she got tied up with someone who got her pregnant, mainly because the experience of Paris had left her at loose ends. Instead of asserting *her* feelings against those of her father, she accepted marriage as the solution and was carted off to live in a nondescript suburb with her husband and his mother.

From the beginning of the film, Helga is preoccupied with her duty to clean up after everyone else; by the end she has turned cleaning and being clean into a compulsion. When her mother-in-law finds her obsessively scrubbing a single, already pristine, spot of door, she notices something is wrong, but instead of taking her to a psychiatrist, she tries to

Christina Scholz as Helga in A Woman with Responsibility.

Benedetta Fantoli and Carla Gravina as daughter and mother in La Maternale.

reason with her by explaining how to clean more efficiently. This essentially well-meaning, sympathetic woman, like everyone else around Helga, can't recognize such behavior as symptomatic of psychosis because for her, too, cleanliness is an absolute standard of order.

By fictionalizing her presentation, Stoeckl creates a real character out of a clinical case history, a person we can relate to because she's representative, not just an aberration. What Stoeckl doesn't do is give a one-dimensional view of Helga's situation as being merely the fault of a ruthless system or an insensitive family. Neither her father nor later her husband or mother-in-law are portrayed as self-serving manipulators. Their fault, and Helga's, is that they never question; they live as if their daily modes of behavior — such as fastidiousness as a sign of a responsible housewife — are givens. Stoeckl's point is that society and it's norms aren't abstractions, but the result of individuals' acquiescence or conscious participation. We victimize ourselves, not only each other. Stoeckl keeps this message from being too "loud" by telling the story episodically as if it were domestic melodrama. Rather than trivializing Helga's tragedy, this approach puts enough distance between the audience and the story to emphasize how absurd and unnecessary it is.

In an altogether different vein were *Description of an Island (Beschreibung einer Insel,* W. Germany, 1977-79) and *Work, Newcomer (Fad, Jal,* Senegal, 1979). Both are original examples of a current tendency, among European filmmakers anyway, to move away from psychologizing character or narrating events towards ethnological renderings of given or random situations.

Fad, Jal is all the more extraordinary because its maker, Safi Faye, was returning to her native village to record a way of life being slowly disrupted by a Land Nationalization Law. She structured the film to coincide strictly with traditional patterns of village activity, covering the period three months before and three days during a communal harvesting. This is prefaced and interposed with scenes of the (male) children gathered around one of the elders to listen to the story of their ancestors and the making of the village. That this is all being threatened by encroaching westernization comes out when some of the young men return from working in the city and want to be paid for helping harvest, etc.

Faye doesn't pretend that the old ways aren't patriarchal, nor try to interject a feminist interpretation of what this means for the women, though she's doubtless conscious of their status in feminist terms if only because of her own experience as a black women in European society. The film illustrates an ethnological fact: that where strong tradition and custom still have meaning, each person has place and purpose, and independence as we perceive it is an anomaly.

In 1977 Cynthia Beatt and Rudolf Thome set out with a number of friends to film, as it progressed, their own full-fledged ethnological study of the island of Ureparapara in the New Hebrides. Everyone in the group was specialized in Natural History or Ethnography or the like; each had a particular assignment in the project. But what *Description of an Island* becomes instead is a study of themselves. Since their approach to filming was simply to respond to and record the incidents as they went along, its focus changes as their attention transfers from their subjects on the island to their problems in adjusting to a radically different life-style and environment. The initial excitement about living on a tropical island and interacting with its inhabitants fades when some of the group contract a strange, painful rash or when the information they need doesn't come from "the natives" as readily as expected. Then begin the internal misgivings and misunderstandings about working methodology and individual intentions. Divisions form along language-cultural lines since most of the group are German but Cynthia, who seems the organizer, and her brother are English.

It's hard to convey how engrossing the film is — it runs a lengthy 192 minutes — without relating details of private conversations or describing personalities. Perhaps this is because its format is so doggedly a-structural and non-analytical; the film just presents us with real people who've gotten so used to the camera — islanders and visitors alike — that they do behave "naturally," and the situation being out of the ordinary generates responses that are exceptional, almost dramatic. Indirectly Beatt and Thome demonstrate how ethnography could start "at home."

Short Features

Also worth noting in brief are a couple of short features. Jan Oxenberg's *A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts* (USA, 1977) parodies some of the more stereotyped notions of lesbians, such as the Wallflower or Stompin' Dyke. Obviously made with an enthusiastic circle of friends, the film talks up to its audience and is all the more enjoyable for not proselytizing. *They Are Their Own Gifts* (USA, 1979), by Lucille Rhodes and Margaret Murphy, is a documentary portrait of three remarkable women whose dedication to their work has been the struggle of their lives for longer than current feminism has been topical. Actually in three separate parts, the first is of poet Murial Rukeyser, the second of painter Alice Neel, and the last of choreographer Anna Sololow. Each woman is so singularly herself that the movie is worth catching if only to see how differently we can think and still be feminists.

Judith Mirus lives in Edmonton and is film editor of Branching Out.

BOOKS

The Dollmaker

review by Marian Engel

Old Woman at Play by Adele Wiseman. Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1978. Cloth, $14.95.

The old woman, Chaika, is also known as Cookie. You go into Adele's house and her play strikes you: archways are festooned with a hallucination of creatures, button-eyed, fishbone, and orange-net and chintz and stocking-bodied. They are comical and quizzical, anything but bland. I find it impossible to be tense or pretentious when they are staring at me. Other people hate them.

They are dolls, but not proper dolls: not wax or china, not kid glove lace-and-frills, neat, compulsive; they are more than this. They are made out of the stuff of our lives, and in a strange way they become therefore, wry-necked, gawky, sometimes graceless, life itself.

Adele bustles them out. "Look at this one! Look what she's done to the Fleecy bottle. Here's a thalidomide one, see?"

There is no mother-daughter alienation here. Adele and Cookie are proud of each others' work. The doll maker and the writer live together now, with Tamara, the grandchild, who draws, writes and waits to grow up and become the receiver of — what is it? An urge? A history?

Adele has written a book to describe and define the urge, the history. It is not a conventional book any more than the dolls are conventional. Fortunately, physically, the book is as shapely and interesting as the dolls themselves: odd-sized, but not as thick as an art book, colour illustrations inhabiting wide margins as well as circled and inset. This is a lucky — or well-calculated — production job.

And the text? Like Cookie's work it meanders, but never pointlessly. We have almost the whole of the woman here . . . anecdotes about growing up in Russia; Adele's and her mother's versions of the years in Winnipeg, reflections, ponderings. What is Jewishness? it asks. What is art? What is the effect of all this history?

Since she was a teenager apprenticed to a dressmaker Chaika Wiseman has lived with a needle in her hands. When the day came to close her husband's tailor shop, she was unable to put the needle down. Unpretentiously, she went on making, making.

> "Why do you make them, mama?
>
> "Because I see the sadness. I remember when I was a little child, there was a tragedy in our town . . . It seems to me I see nature . . . and I don't know how to explain it . . . I feel if I'll make it that way the way nature gives it out, any little thing it's got to be done . . . The people should feel the doll is happy to be created, like I feel."

Chaika Wiseman

There is this, there is a great deal more in the book. Chaika Wiseman's salty humour, family history, and, throughout a wondering about the nature of creative urges that emerges not as intellectual analysis but as a meditation on the sheer, wonderful human need to make things: cakes, dolls, books, boots.

> "Well then, mother and her works have taught me about
>
> Art as Communication
> Art as Imitation
> Art as Mediation
> Art as Reorganization . . ."

The list is long, and you will have to read the book to find its meaning for yourself. It is a strong conclusion to a beautifully prepared document of a life that embodies (still one hopes, for though we know Cookie is dying we are thrilled by the small excuses she makes to postpone her death) acceptance and creativity and joy in an astonishing proportion. She is lucky in her daughter, her daughter is lucky in her, and we are lucky in the book.

Marian Engel's most recent novel is The Glassy Sea. *She has been living in Edmonton for the past two years and recently returned to Toronto.*

Language and Self

review by Caterina Edwards

Who Do You Think You Are? by Alice Munro. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1978. Cloth, $9.95.

In this book, Alice Munro continues using the same style and subjects of her earlier works: the stories that, rather than seeming to follow a consciously patterned structure, read at first like a string of loosely connected, meandering anecdotes presenting the young girl growing up or the woman making her way alone. By exploring her old preoccupations on new levels, she furthers her mastery of the short story, throwing into even clearer relief her concern with language and its relation to the inner self.

Who Do You Think You Are? consists of ten stories about Rose, dealing with her poor and "deprived" childhood in Hanratty, her time at university as a scholarship girl, marriage to a department store heir, motherhood, divorce, her work as a radio announcer, actress, community college teacher and her several inadequate love affairs. Although the bare outline is similar to that of many books written by women these days and though, like many contemporary heroines, Rose finds satisfaction in neither man, child nor work, Munro's vision is unusually complex and rich. She has no easy scapegoats — neither the capricious men, the unresponsive child, the unfulfilling work, nor even the stepmother, Flo, who like the stepmothers in the fairytales, serves to expose, by stripping away the ties of love and blood, the darker side of the mother-daughter relationship.

To Rose, Flo is a reproach, an embarrassment and, in old age, a burden. Flo turns up at a reception where Rose is to receive an award for an acting performance in a "mauve and purple checked pantsuit and beads like strings of white and yellow popcorn. Her hair was covered by a thick gray-blue wig, pulled low on her forehead like a woollen cap." She stands in the middle of the gathering and yells "Look at the Nigger," pointing at one of the other winners. In the same story "Spelling", we hear that Flo reacts to a picture of Rose as she appears in *Trojan Women* with one exposed breast, by writing over the picture SHAME. Rose uses Flo's comment as "material" for a comic story for friends, but suddenly, she feels ashamed and realizes that making fun of Flo is shabby. Besides, the gulf between her and Flo is common. "Most of her friends who seemed to her ordinarily hard-working, anxious and hopeful people could lay claim to being disowned or prayed for, in some disappointed home". Still, on a deeper level, she comes to realize that the gulf is not a humorous thing. Flo's reproaches were "painfully, truly, meant; they were all a hard life had to offer. Shame on a bare breast."

It is Flo, who sees herself as an expert on life since she worked as a waitress in Union Station, resenting Rose for her lack of gratitude, her confidence, who first attacks her with the phrase "Who do You Think You Are?" a question that we are later told "often struck her (Rose) like a momentous gong". The question works in two ways in the collection. It stands for the typical Hanratty (and Munro feels the typical Canadian) view that to try for success, to try and stand out in any way is beneath contempt and moreover, asking for trouble. This is particularly ironic, considering the number of eccentrics Munro presents us with. The question also points directly to the essential problem of Rose's life. "Rose is an actress, she can fit in anywhere" and she does change roles and scenes with remarkable ease, giving Munro a chance to poke fun at a variety of milieus, from that of a woman scholar in the 50's, to that of a semi-bohemian life in the 60's, to the college staff party in the 70's — complete with feminist, professional waif and obnoxious student. Rose wishes she could do more than take on a role — in fact, be taken in by one, but she can't "take such pains . . . make ceremonies, impose herself, make bread." Even love, good or bad, removes you from life, robs you.

Alice Munro

In the last story, entitled "Who Do You Think You Are?" parallels are drawn between Rose's life and that of a classmate, Ralph Gillespie. Ralph's biggest talent is one of imitation, particularly of Milton Homer — the "village idiot" who himself is a talented mimic — but it is eventually this talent which causes him to be unwanted and jobless. At a last meeting at the legion bar, Rose wishes she could speak to Ralph, not amusingly or flirtatiously, her usual style, but to his inner self which is "self-sufficient, resigned to living in bafflement, perhaps proud." But, though they both recognize their kinship, they can't speak to each other on that level, for certain feelings can only be spoken of in translation, and translation is "dubious, dangerous."

This concern with the relation between our words and our inner reality permeates the book. And it is often the cliches, said without thought, that are the translations. The first story is called "Royal Beatings" and it is by Munro's exploration of the different implications of the phrase "a royal beating" that the string of anecdotes is ordered. So Rose's associations with the phrase are linked to her being beaten by her father, to an eccentric dwarf who was savagely beaten by her father, to that father's death by beating, to one of the beaters years later, reminiscing on the radio about the "good old days" when we made our own entertainment, to Flo, senile in a country home (beaten by life?)

In "Royal Beatings", Munro also explores the different layers of the split between the everyday and the secret inner self. The respected centenarian on the radio shows no sign of the murderer he once was. The face of Rose's calm and decent father loosens as he beats her, his eyes filling with hatred and pleasure. But the most telling split is a language one — a split between her father's everyday conversation, which gives away nothing, and the extraordinary words he allows to flow when he is alone: "Macaroni, pepperoni, Botticelli, beans . . . The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces."

In the story "Spelling" we are given another example of language that both connects the inner self to the outer reality and acts as a magic talisman of that self. We hear about a blind, senile old woman. The only thing she can do — the only thread in the emptiness or confusion of her mind, is spell, "she was sitting, waiting; waiting in the middle of her sightless eventless day, till up from somewhere popped another word. She would encompass it, bend all her energy to master it."

In this collection, which won the Governor General's award for fiction this year, Munro demonstrates again she has truly mastered the art of the short story.

Caterina Edwards teaches English at Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton. She is presently working on a novel.

Vaginal Hype

review by Cathy Hobart

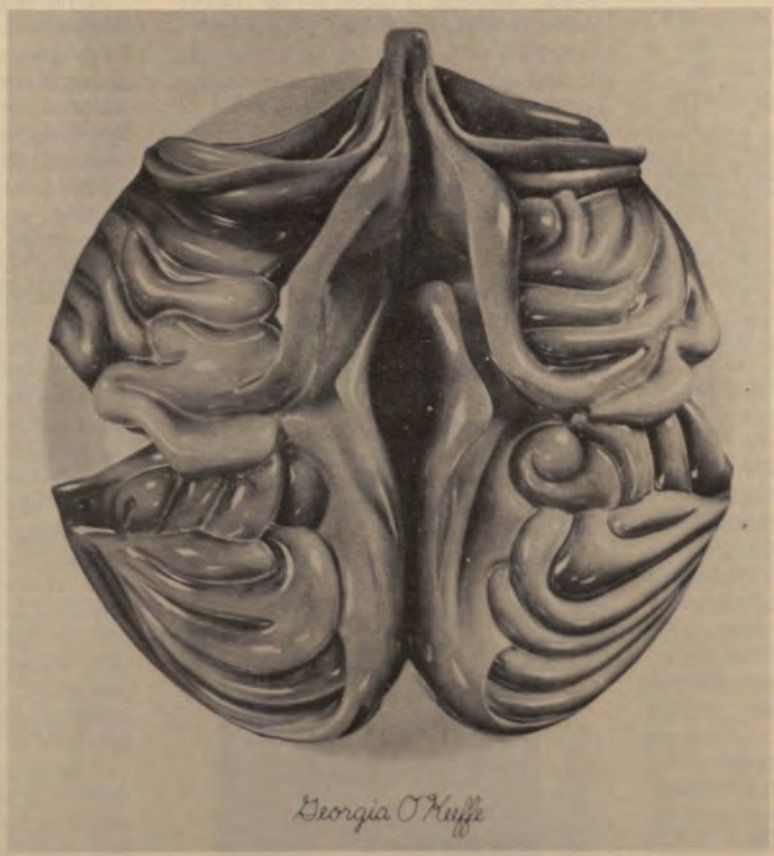
The Dinner Party, by Judy Chicago. Anchor Press/Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1979. Paper, $15.95.

The Dinner Party is the first of two volumes accompanying a multi-media art piece of the same name. The book is at once a documentation of the production of the dinner party piece, a catalogue of the dinner plates, a dictionary of capsule biographies of 1038 women, and an essay on the history of women from matriarchy to the present.

The art work itself is an ambitious project consisting of a triangular table with thirteen place settings per side, situated on a ceramic floor bearing the names of 999 women who Chicago feels have made an important contribution to the history of women. Each of the thirty-nine settings at the table honours a different woman: mythical such as "Primordial Goddess", or real, like Virginia Woolf. The plates are painted ceramic sculptures which are meant to be abstract portraits of the woman represented. Each plate is placed on a hand sewn runner bearing the name of the guest and needlework imagery relating to her life.

Chicago calls the piece "a symbol of our heritage", a visual history of women, designed to give us a taste of our past and to build a permanent monument to women's achievements. It is a nice idea.

This first volume doesn't have photographs of the completed piece or the runners, but the plates are all reproduced in full colour, and if they are indicative of the quality of workmanship in the rest of the piece, the work as a whole should be a real aesthetic treat.



Georgia O'Keeffe plate, from The Dinner Party

Given Chicago's description of her intention to depict women's history however, I was surprised to see that the individual portraits of the dinner party guests are simply modified vaginas. Surely a woman's genitals are not the most important aspect of her as a person, and they do not say anything about her personality or achievements. After studying thirty-nine vaginal forms on dinner plates I found I didn't know anything more about women's history than when I started. The book's biographies of the women were brief, and shed no light on how the vaginal imagery of each portrait represents the different women's lives.

In the diary section of *The Dinner Party*, Chicago describes the making of the piece. She initially thought she could do all the work herself, but lacking the skills in ceramics and stitchery necessary to realize her conception, she needed help. The project grew and grew, and eventually took hundreds of volunteers, $200,000, and five years to complete.

In her journal Chicago emphasizes that she believes she is creating a masterpiece. She compares herself to masters such as Michelangelo, and at times she begins to sound disagreeably egocentric. Her belief in the importance of the piece and her own self-importance is reinforced by the number of people who rushed to help work on the project for weeks or even years without pay. Chicago acknowledges that the completion of the piece would have been impossible without these volunteers, and she sees the project as a model for collective feminist projects, where women can work together in harmony.

I have spoken with one woman who was involved in the project, and who found the conditions less than ideal. She was invited by Chicago's assistant, Susan Hill, to help in the making of tapestries for *The Dinner Party*. She was eager to participate in the production of the piece, and was particularly interested in attending workshops which were to be given at the studio, teaching the participants fundamentals of fund raising and organization of large scale cooperative women's projects. This woman was anxious to learn organizational skills that she could bring home and apply to similar projects in Canada. At her own expense, she flew to California and found that the workshops had been cancelled, and that instead of working on tapestries, in which she was skilled, she was asked to cross stitch an embroidery sampler — a tedious and simplistic task. The artist was disappointed that she would not learn the skills she expected, and was told by project coordinators to "just stick around and watch Judy. You'll pick it up".

On arrival at Chicago's studio, she was given a list of rules — "Do not speak to Judy Chicago unless she speaks to you first. Do not talk to the other women working in the studio. Use the toilet only when absolutely necessary. No personal phone calls." These rules are not what you would expect from a friendly cooperative project staffed by volunteer labour. In fact they sound like the rules in a common sweatshop. After four days the Canadian artist left the project, saying that she intended to write about her experience there. That night she got a phone call from Judy Chicago, who accused her of being "unsisterly" and "selfish". Unable to convince her to return to the fold, Chicago slammed the phone down in her ear.

Chicago describes *The Dinner Party* as a sort of female Last Supper, exalting female values and goddess worship. She claims to have felt the spirit of a goddess touch her years ago. It appears that Chicago is trying to set herself up as a messenger of her goddesses, a messiah bringing the divine female truth to the world through her art. She repeatedly refers to her workers' *devotion* to her, and certainly only a true devotee would voluntarily work under the sweatshop conditions described by my

photo from The Dinner Party: *artist Juliet Myers at work.*

source. Is Judy Chicago attempting to establish a new cult?

Chicago designed *The Dinner Party* and accompanying books to teach women about their history. In her historical essay she concludes that once women are aware of their heritage, the world's problems will somehow take care of themselves. There will be peace on earth, true equality of all people, and "then everywhere will be called Eden once again". I doubt it.

Cathy Hobart is a Toronto Printmaker.

Harlequin Politics

review by Linda Hughes

A Very Political Lady, by Judy LaMarsh. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1979. Cloth, $12.95.

Judy La Marsh's novel is little more than adolescent fantasy; Walter Mitty trapped in a Harlequin Romance. It's a poor piece of writing; rejection slip material by most normal literary standards. But it wasn't published for its literary merits. Ms. LaMarsh's fiction promised something other than good literature, something much more tantalizing for Canadian readers. "A Very Political Lady" is a *roman a clef* which promised a candid, gossipy, insider's view of Canadian politics.

Unfortunately, the book doesn't deliver. While her characters are obviously based on real people, the story itself is so unreal, the dialogue so stitled, that the book is robbed of any sense of authenticity. Ms. LaMarsh may have captured the true character of many of the leading actors in Canadian politics but she has written them into a plot which reads like a young girl's fantasy, complete with success, fame, a white knight and, most of all, sweet revenge.

Consider the heroine. Kathleen Marshall is a lawyer from the Niagara Peninsula and a cabinet minister in a Liberal government. Who else but Judy LaMarsh? (Note the play on names.) But this is the fairy tale version of Judy LaMarsh: tall and slender with classic appeal; not the minister of health and welfare or secretary of state but the more prestigious minister of justice, fighting for abortion reform and winning despite incredible, male-led opposition. Instead of resigning from office as Ms. LaMarsh did, her heroine is dramatically, and of course unjustly, fired by an arrogant prime minister. And, as in every daydream, the heroine is vindicated in the end. The entire power elite of the Liberal party turns to her as the only person who can bring the party back together; the person destined to be Canada's first female prime minister.

No fairy tale would be complete without a handsome prince and Ms. LaMarsh has created for her heroine the most wonderful suitor one could imagine. Andrew Wickstrom is a wealthy publisher. He is tall, handsome, thoughtful, wise, kind and good-humored, with just enough macho manliness to be appealing while at the same time being understanding and supportive of his wife's career. In short, he is perfect and their love affair, including a traditional, blushing wedding night, is without a flaw.

Part of every adolescent fantasy is getting back at the people who have mistreated or maligned you, thus, although Ms. LaMarsh left public life a decade ago, her book is in large part a vindicative, bitter swipe at her former colleagues in the Liberal party.

In the novel, Prime Minister Jean Jacques Charles is "enigmatic and haughty" with "pebbly skin over high cheekbones." Sound familiar? He is painted in cruel, cold terms; an unbending, unlikeable person. While our heroine is fighting for abortion reform, he prohibits his young, beautiful wife the abortion she needs to save her life. (If that sounds far-fetched, the reason he forbids the abortion is because his mother was in exactly the same position when he was born.) This is not a delicate knife job, it's an assault with a bludgeon and will hardly alarm the real, enigmatic ex-prime minister.

The characterization of Hume Frazier, the "handsome, almost pretty" minister of finance with the greying temples, is a more vicious attack on one of Canada's prominent former finance ministers, but the digs the author makes through her other characters are really rather mild. While Ms. LaMarsh obviously got some satisfaction out of trying to eviscerate her former colleagues, the result is not very satisfying for her readers. It may be fun trying to pick out who's who, but the process is not too enlightening.

The book is hyped as an authentic view of Ottawa politics. When Ms. Marshall and her allies in abortion reform meet for a last minute strategy session before the crucial vote in parliament, there is concern about the prime minister's role and part of the discussion goes like this:

> ". . . he's made damn sure some of our other Cabinet colleagues do some arm-twisting, especially Stan Findlay, our peripatetic Minister of Transport. Stan is the man behind the delays and the complications, you may be sure."
>
> "Stan was upset when you replaced him as Minister of Justice," said Harry Williams.

Does that sound like authentic back-room politics? Not likely.

Ms. LaMarsh's first novel is the kind of light reading you can finish in an evening and, like a third-rate soap opera, once you start reading you may find yourself pulled into the story. The best advice is not to start — it's not worth the evening.

Linda Hughes is an editorial writer at the Edmonton Journal.

Epochal Conflicts

review by Mary E. Sainsbury

A Man to Marry, A Man to Bury, by Susan Musgrave, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979. Paper, $6.95.

Alone on a stark white page in *A Man To Marry, A Man To Bury*, are the words "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition". With these words as a battle cry, Susan Musgrave thrusts her readers into the midst of a conflict that is epochal in its implications; a woman must choose between the death and burial of herself in love, and the agonizing struggle to construct a new definition and mythology of love. The battle is both terrible and beautiful; the conflict produces a vision of woman as hunter and seer, explorer of new frontiers of passion, defender of both love and freedom.

This six-part volume of poetry explores almost every conceivable aspect of love and death, sexuality and even

witchcraft. Parts One and Five are decidedly strong because of a well-honed organic unity. The remaining four parts have dramatic breadth but are not as internally harmonious although each retains a distinctive tone and mood of its own.

"The Embalmer's Art", - Part Two is a series of portraits of, and monologues about, death: there is death by accident, suicide, femicide, death by due process of law by means of strangulation. There is even the death of art and the artist. The tone is cuttingly bitter, as in the image of an audience "satisfied" by the poet in "Salad Days" who "bares her chest and lops off her/breasts."

In Part Three, "Becky Swan's Book", Musgrave dons the masks of women betrayed by illusions of married love, illicit love, lust and even friendship. Death itself is cast as a brutal seducer in his lust to "share everything".

> He wants to get under the covers
> he wants to get on
> he's panting to get on.

"The Angel-Maker", Part Four, introduces "Witchfinder General" who congratulates herself on hunting down and murdering the heretics of love, those witches who feel no pain when they take revenge for betrayal and are "incapable of bleeding" anyway.

Parts Two, Three, and Four bridge the two strongest and most intensely personal sections in this volume. Journey under a "clean sky" and upon a "bare sea", the woman experiences the comfort of love, then undergoes the pain of separation when her lover travels away, and finally the pleasure of reunion. In "Right Through The Heart", love is a knife, a weapon of terrible beauty captured enigmatically in the rhythm of orgasm itself.

> You want it to last forever,
> you want to own it.
> You want to take love's tiny life
> in your hands
> and crush it to death before it dies.

Then, the lonely aftermath of love contracts the poet's voice into sparse, lean lines

> This is war.
> This is real.

and

> This is trying to keep warm.
> This is trying to stay alive.

and

> I wake up wanting to die.
> I wake up waiting.

Like Part One, Part Four, entitled, "Salmonberry Road", is a crossing by water. This section is composed of ten phases of a voyage in which a new happiness is discovered by the traveller. She learns to "make do" with the present and learns also to accept the loneliness of singularity.

Acting as a denouement of painful revelations, Part Six, "Even in the Ordered World", dramatizes the woman's gradual acceptance of the ghosts of love within. Now, as a seer she can declare

> Ah, the pity,
> ah, you.
> An infected corpse in the groin.
> Bog-muck in the brain.
> Love, love.
> I am wholly yours.

From Charlie Beaulieu, an Indian friend, alien in his own land, disenfranchised by history, woman as hunter-seer learns that she does not own anything, "not even the past". She becomes a Christmas moon "impaled on the penis bone of a bear". In the final poem she carries her well-honed knife and rises from the bed of her lover with the taste of "sweet spice and pieces of flesh" in her mouth. She learns to recognize the "scraps of iron" on the floor as the armour of love. She learns also to rinse her knife each time, knowing that later, "down by the breakwater" she will "start humming the same old tune". The great war is over but the struggle to remain faithful to her new mythology of love and freedom will continue. The woman-traveller, once possessed of a "witch-heart", once a hunter of men, an avenger, now knows that she must be in the ordered world but not of it, she must do the "dance of/lonely women". The men she knows love cages but she cannot be caged.

Mary E. Sainsbury teaches English at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary.

Tacit Surrender

review by Pat Preston

The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women, by Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1979. Cloth, $12.95.
Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women on the Job, by Lin Farley. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. Cloth, $12.95.

Sexual blackmail in the workplace isn't new for feminists who've been campaigning for meaningful protective legislation for its victims and promoting increased public awareness of the issue. Neither is sexual sabotage novel for working women who've been humiliated by the problem since joining the work force. What is new, however, is the release of two books focussing on the sexual harassment of women. These two publications should not only help the plight of victims who've had difficulty obtaining any recourse, but also raise the consciousness of a public that chooses to wear blinkers whenever this issue

Dare we leave copies, as employees in TV commercials left mouthwash on bosses' desks, on the desks of office offenders?

surfaces. True, recent court cases in the U.S. and similar cases brought to light through Canadian human rights commissions have opened some people's eyes to the frequency of sexual coercion. But much more awareness and understanding are still needed.

Both books are similar in their treatment of the subject. Each contains sections dealing with the historical imperative, case studies, problem-plagued job areas, and remedies. It is the latter I find most useful and in the Canadian book, most thorough. Backhouse and Cohen combine their legal and political expertise in presenting personal, managerial and societal solutions for a persistent problem which has power as its base. Women, they point out, "are not guilty of incitement; they are victims of morally and ethically reprehensible male behavior." Farley believes "the name of the game is dominance." All three concur that one obvious solution would be for working women to unite in order to develop vigilante tactics, as well as methods to confront offenders. Collective action, according to Backhouse and Cohen, eliminates the risk of further victimization.

Backhouse and Cohen say sexual harassment is not a personal problem, but a "personnel problem." A sexual harasser, they say, chooses his victim "because of her vulnerability, because he has authority over her." They uncovered, after thousands of interviews, some discouraging evidence about who the harasser is and why women have been reluctant to speak out. Job reprisal and fear of being ostracized were frequent reasons for tacit surrender. One case study reveals some alarming information: investigative officers (female) for a human rights commission were being sexually harassed by the commission's director!

Backhouse and Cohen offer practical

do's and don'ts to prevent sexual harassment. Their advice to the working women on how to discourage the office groper is sensible. *The Secret Oppression* does stress that women should refuse to feel guilty or "in any way responsible" for the problem. They should instead "be angry" and seek support from co-workers and women's groups.

Barbara Amiel of *Maclean's* (June 4) recently scoffed at a University of Toronto study on sexual harassment. She belittled the university's report and snidely compared sexual harassment to the "bubonic plague". (Incidentally, there are now reported instances of both in California, so perhaps that prompted her comparison). Amiel calls Backhouse and Cohen's book "a wretched little treatise." She sarcastically says that perhaps she's "peeved" because she's "been in the labour force 20 years in every job from waitress to executive and no one has ever sexually harassed me." This is the same smug "blinker approach" that politicians and the public don when a subject is touchy. The 'it hasn't happened to me, therefore it isn't a problem' attitude reveals not only narrow-mindedness, but a total lack of concern for other women.

Of these two books, *The Secret Oppression* is both more readable and understandably more relevant to Canadians. Its tone, although angry, is factual and precise and it is thoughtful and well documented, whereas Farley's assertions are not so logically or empirically supported. Although both books are disturbing in their content, hers is less convincing in its presentation of case histories. A more historical and academic approach to a down-to-earth problem makes her book tedious in comparison. Canadian women will find that the Backhouse-Cohen book throws some sharp light on a serious and too long neglected problem.

That these books on sexual harassment exist at all is encouraging for women. Their very publication signals some public recognition of what was always considered a private problem. Dare wé leave copies, as employees in TV commercials left mouthwash on bosses' desks, on the desks of office offenders?

An executive member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Pat Preston has written widely on and spoken frequently about sexual harassment.

HIS FAMILY
continued from page 32

stage now, swaying a little, catching his breath.

BABY FACE OH OH OH OOH
YOU'VE GOT THE CUTEST LITTLE

From the back of the room, guffaws again. And before the laughter has died down, a horizontal black disc swishes back through the air like a Frisbee, closely missing Rico's head. It drops to the floor near our table where a waiter, tray of glasses in hand, steps on it, mushing it into his path.

My brothers shrug; time to leave. We blunder out and wander slowly across the parking lot. The moonlight is soft, warm; I would like to drift in it forever. Moonbeams entice, make me wish I were an outdoor creature.

We have brought three cars and somehow, father and I end up in his. I have to drive of course; he is in 'no condition' mother states, flatly, and without humour. She will go with my husband because they are friends. They reassure, strengthen each other in ways I have never been a part of. If father and I had those same powers — but no, when we are together, we ravel. Each seems to find the main thread of the other. Perhaps that is why there is nothing to say. But there is everything to say, everything. I saw it this morning in father's face as he groped for the baby, as he fumbled for my brothers' handshakes, a mixture of tears and love and inhibition and the ultimate reality that he holds before himself — that there must be more — that his life has not turned out as it should.

All cars have turned in before we get back. I have driven slowly, smoking again. Father too, has smoked; it fills the spaces.

The lamps have been turned on in the living room; white sheers have been pulled across the picture window. The house is quiet. Babysitters must be on their way home, Alan walking them. Adult shapes move behind the curtains.

The moon is bright across the grass and I see small wizened apples, green and hard, strewn randomly beneath the one big apple tree. Father tugs me off the walk, across the grass until we are in the centre of the lawn. Hidden by night, we watch other members of our family. I scan profiles, suddenly remember full sheets of twins to be matched in newspaper contests of the fifties. "IS ANY LIKENESS TO BE FOUND?"

Someone has made coffee. Alan's wife is walking the hope of the Greenwood line back and forth across the end of the rug. She pats his back rhythmically, the kind of pat a mother gives to a steadily crying infant. Jake is standing with his back to the window. Mother is in an armchair; I can't see the expression on her face. Jenny is not in the room — probably checking the children.

Father grasps my hand, squeezes hard. Tears drift down his cheeks, moonlit tears. Overcome by his memories, his own thoughts, he gestures to the figures behind the glass — his family — and mutters, in sobs almost, "It's the . . . it's the deal you see . . . this is the deal."

---

love of my life. It wasn't until I saw Guenevere with — well, let's call him Lance — that I decided it was really over."

"Had Guenevere lost her looks?" Jenny asked, patting her own hair absent-mindedly.

"Oh good heavens, no. If anything she was even better looking. Blooming with happiness, I suppose. They were very kind to me, even put me up in their apartment when I was on a return visit to Toronto. Really Gwen was always a kind girl. I guess what it boiled down to was that I saw how ordinary her tastes were. I suppose it will sound conceited, but I guess I thought to myself, 'She could have had someone like me, an intellectual type who wrote sonnets to her, and instead she chose a side of beef.' "

"Well, Freddy," Sharon said, "Calgary beef is very good. Nourishing and wholesome."

"Oh, Lance was wholesome too, I have no doubt. Six feet tall, handsome in an ugly way, with a broken nose and a heart of gold. He loved Gwen and the baby. Do you know what his thesis was about, though? I read it while I was in the apartment."

"Football?" Hannah guessed.

"Maybe, in a way. He was doing experiments with white mice. There was one set of mice doing all sorts of exercise, and another set of mice leading an ordinary sedentary life. The idea was to find out which set of mice would be healthier."

"And which of them were? I hope the sedentary ones." This was Roger, continuing further into the cherry brandy.

"It was a draw. The experiment didn't prove anything."

"Poor Lance. What a waste of time. I suppose, though," Hannah said thoughtfully, "that he probably was rather like the original Lancelot, if there was one. Those knights in shining armour probably weren't brains. You can't blame Guenevere for preferring someone muscular and stupid if what you admired her for was her violet eyes and poor spelling."

"Funny," George said, "I had a girl who did experiments with white mice and white rats too. I'm not sure whether I disillusioned her she disillusioned me. Both, I guess."

"Have I heard about this one, George? I thought you had told me about all your past loves, but I don't remember a scientific one."

"There wasn't much to tell. She wasn't as scientific as she said she was. She said she was working for a medical degree, but she was just a lab assistant. I was disillusioned when I discovered she'd been lying. I think she was disillusioned with me before that, though."

"And how did you disillusion her, George?" Jenny asked.

"She took me into the lab one evening. She said she had to feed the rats, or do whatever one does to rats. And then she killed one. She didn't need to kill it, I'm sure; she was just showing off. Anyway, I fainted. I felt rather odd, but I didn't realize I was as near passing out as I was. I fell, and cracked the corner of my head against a table. When I came to I was bleeding like a stuck pig. Mary (let's call her Bloody Mary) was in a panic. We had to go hunt up a doctor who put in some stitches. I still have a small scar at the corner of one eye. Have you ever noticed that, Hannah? I thought she might be impressed by my sensitivity, but I guess she thought men shouldn't faint. I didn't see much of her after that."

"Just as well, George," Sharon said. "A girl who told lies and enjoyed killing rats doesn't sound like an ideal wife."

"Yes. Well, Hannah may tell a lie now and then, but I don't think she would kill me if I was a rat."

"Don't test it, George, don't test it," Roger said rather blurrily, perhaps feeling the effects of the cherry brandy.

He stood up again and examined the medieval-appearing tapestry carefully. "A virgin and a unicorn," he said. Then, "My Guenevere had red hair."

"I think you should have more coffee, Roger," Jenny said. "Sharon, could you give Roger some more coffee?"

"It's men who create all these illusions," Hannah said. "I never went through all that nonsense, daydreaming about some man or other, the way Freddy did about his Guenevere.

"Neither did I," Sharon said, handing the coffee to Roger, who had sat down again. "Of course I love Freddy, and I liked one or two other men. But love isn't illusion."

"Don't speak for all women," Jenny said. "I had my daydreams too. I remember them very well."

"Jenny and I both remember our daydreams, don't we, Jenny?" Roger gulped his coffee and shook his head.

"The first time I fell in love," he said, "was back in the fifties, in summer vacation. It was just before I went to university. I went to work for the summer on a farm. City boy getting to use my muscles. And I fell in love with the farmer's wife. Sure, you'll all laugh. I was seventeen; she must have been thirty. Her husband treated her badly; he'd stopped noticing her. He was a lout."

"So you were really Lancelot, Roger," George said. "I suppose King Arthur neglected his wife for the Round Table."

"I guess I was more like Galahad. My heart wasn't pure, but my actions were, or least as far as she was concerned. She told me she had a lump in her breast. I was afraid she was going to show it to me and I might be tempted. She did have a lump in her breast. She died of cancer the next year."

"We should keep our confessions light and amusing," Hannah said. "Death isn't amusing. You're breaking the rules, Roger."

"Death prevents disillusion, though," Jenny said. "Roger never saw her breasts. Sick or well."

"The second time I fell in love," Roger continued, ignoring her, "was in my third year at university. I had my appendix out, and I fell in love with my nurse. That wasn't so pure, though. We had a really sizzling affair for six months or so."

Nobody commented. Jenny stared at the floor.

"Then it stopped sizzling," he continued. "And I never knew why. She just got bored, I guess. Or maybe I just got bored. I remember we were lying in bed together on this hot July evening. She had a very beautiful body but suddenly it seem to be just meat. I was making love to her and she was lying there inert. Afterwards I got up and left without saying goodbye. It seemd to be unnecessary."

"Why did you think it was unnecessary?" Jenny asked. "How do you know what was in her mind?"

"Whatever was in her mind was unflattering. I'm not so stupid I couldn't understand without words. Stupid as you think I am."

"I'm not so clever I pretend to understand everything, even when words are said. If you had asked me before, I might have guessed why she acted that way and told you."

"The third time I fell in love . . ."

"Good heavens, George," Hannah exclaimed, "I'm sorry to interrupt Roger, just when I'm learning more and more about your past, but George and I have to get home. Our baby-sitter expects us."

Everybody stood up. Roger teetered just a little, and Jenny steadied him with one hand.

"Do you need any help, Jenny?" George asked. "Will Roger be all right?"

"Yes, I'm driving anyway. He'll be all right once we're out in the fresh air. Come along, Roger."

In the hall there was the usual commotion with coats. Freddy helped Roger on with his coat. Jenny fastened a scarf around her neck.

"I'm not drunk," Roger protested, "just got dizzy when I stood up."

"Of course you're not drunk, Roger," Jenny said soothingly, buttoning up her coat. "It was a lovely evening, Sharon." She hesitated, then said to no-one in particular, "Roger wrote poems when he was in love, too. Quite good poems. The third time he was in love. To me."

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