Branching Out

canadian feminist quarterly

Volume VII
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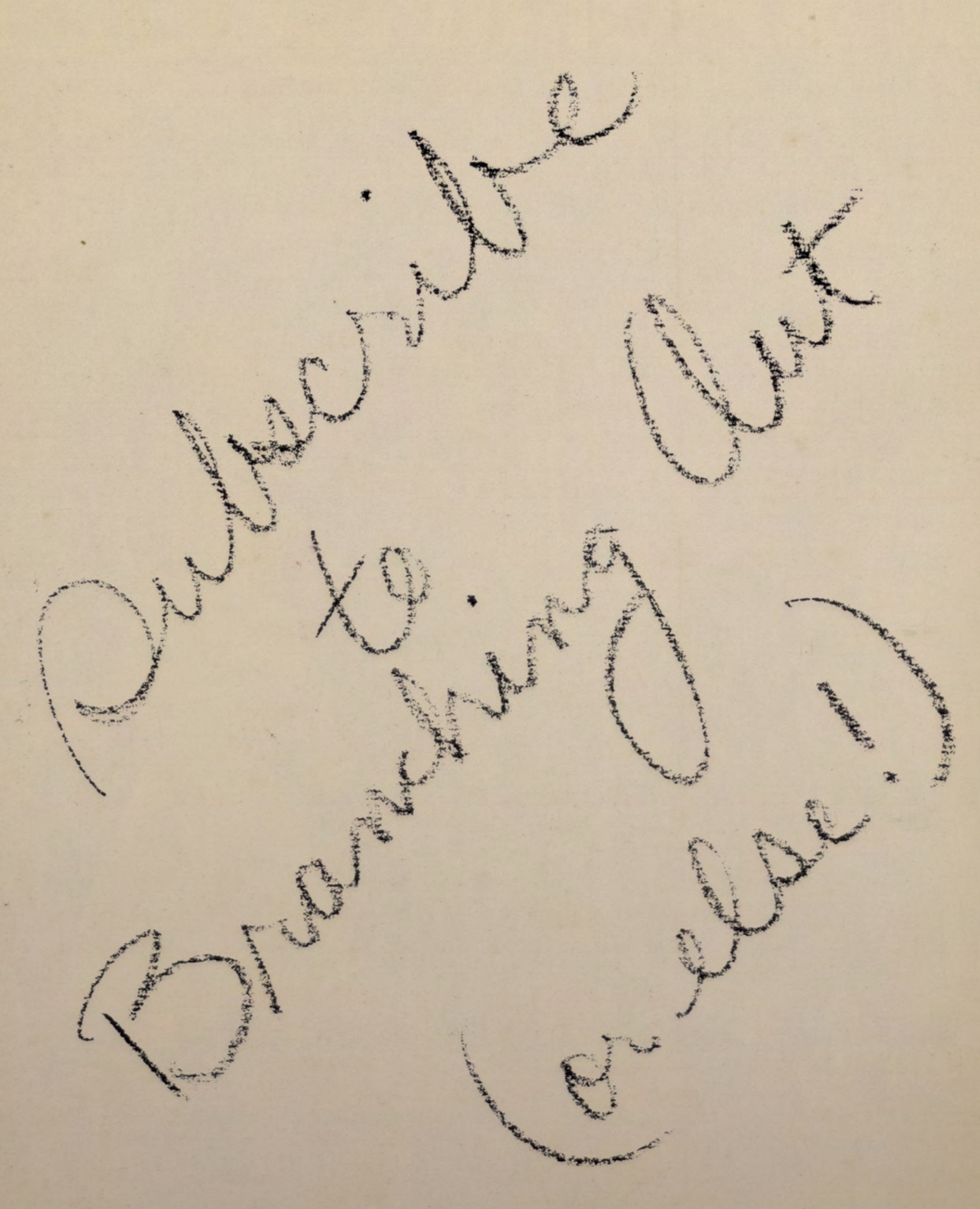
Crisis of Hard Times: What Can We Learn From the "Dirty Thirties"?

1930's 1980's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Branching Out
(or else!)

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EDITORIAL PAGE

This first 1980 issue of *Branching Out* includes a number of articles that look back on the position of women fifty years ago. The half century mark is chosen as more than a sentimental signpost; there are significant parallels that led us to take this backword look. By 1930 Canadian women had, for a generation, worked with some success towards goals of economic, social and electoral equality. With the Depression and later World War II, social and economic forces were against us and women's activism lessened. Important gains were few. Women even stepped back in the "national interest" or (see Abby Hoffman's article on page 23) in the interests of protecting their "soft bodies."

Now, after a decade of renewed feminist activity, forecasts of hard times and possible war dominate the headlines again. What do these gloomy prophesies mean for feminism? In the Depression married women were required to give up their jobs to make room for men. Such a blunt discriminatory measure sounds impossible in these days. We have human rights commissions, don't we? More subtle means to the same end are not only possible, however they are a reality. In her article on women and the economic crisis, Monica Townson outlines the measures our men in Ottawa have taken to reduce the accessibility and appeal of the work force to women (especially those of us who are "secondary wage earners" — a bureaucratic way of saying married women).

A reduction of married women in the work force could have consequences beyond the economic. Joyce Marshall, in her conversation with Dorothy Livesay, observes that women forced out of the work force in the depression were less able to help other women. They became, once again, isolated in the home. There were fewer women's organizations than there are today, and less sisterhood.

Here, perhaps, is a point to hang some hope on. Many women in the Thirties, like Livesay and artist Marion Scott, were spurred by the economic crisis into intense political participation and resulting camaraderie with other activists. Their political concerns were not specifically with feminist issues but under similar conditions today, perhaps they would be. With a clear view of how far women have yet to go, and how precarious our recent gains are, we can decide to face the probably hard times of the eighties with activism and mutual support.

***

Regular readers will notice changes in the magazine's format. Maureen Crawford, a fine arts student at the University of Alberta has performed surgery — both major and cosmetic — on the design. We have introduced two new features. One is a two-page poetry spread concentrating on the work of an outstanding woman poet. The second is our Readers Respond section, the success of which will depend on you. Reactions to any of these changes are welcome.

This issue we particularly want to hear from readers who have recollections of the Depression years. In researching the articles for our theme, we were particularly struck by the fact that so much in written accounts of the Depression is from a male perspective. If you are a woman who was alive during the Depression, let us know how it affected you. Did you have a job? Did economic hardship force you to move? Did you rely on family support? Were you on the dole? (The welfare system in the Depression was the municipal dole. There was no medicare and no unemployment insurance. One article, published in *Canadian Forum* in 1937, says there were over 8,000 women registered in thirty-three cities in Canada, "not a large number as relief numbers go." Such women "receive allowances for food, shelter and clothing in separate amounts." The highest shelter allowance recorded was $1.90 a week. The clothing allowance ranged from 15¢ to 46¢ a week.)

Branching Out extends special thanks this issue to the Clifford E. Lee Foundation which assisted us with a grant of $3,000. Last year the Lee Foundation purchased a house for the Edmonton women's shelter. Perhaps in the 80's more private foundations will recognize women's organizations in their funding programmes.

Sharon Batt

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LETTERS

This is a letter to the readers of Branching Out and its editors. It is *not* a letter to Cathy Hobart. This is a request for clarification of the *Branching Out* criteria for printing book reviews and articles. There seems to be editorial confusion about the distinction between book reviews and articles. Cathy Hobart's piece on Judy Chicago was in the book review section but was in no way just a book review. Rather, this piece was an article badly researched and factually inaccurate.

In my judgment it was inadequate as either a book review or an article. As a book review it reflects a misreading of the book. As an article it uses gossip and unconfirmed "facts" as a point of departure for personal attack and slander. Your readers have a right to expect greater journalistic responsibility.

In your last issue you printed two substantial criticisms of the piece on *The Dinner Party* book. These criticisms struct me as substantially different than an ordinary difference of opinion. They addressed themselves to bias, misrepresentation and a negative tone that permeates the "book review." The only response you printed to that criticism was further *unsubstantiated* attack by Cathy Hobart on Judy Chicago, her intentions in producing the project, and further misreading of the book. Are we, as your readers, to conclude that the editorial position and Hobart's are one? If not, I question giving Hobart the last word. In any case, I would like an editorial response on the issue of responsibility. Where do you stand?

Sara Joy David

Editor's Note: *The opinion of our reviewers and writers are not necessarily those of* Branching Out*'s editors. The editor and book review editor take full responsibility for publishing this piece. Our reasoning was that book reviews are by nature subjective and that Hobart presented a valid point of view. Hobart felt that her friend's experience was important to her perception to the book. She also said, prior to publication of the article, that she stood fully behind the article, both statements of fact and opinion. The criticisms published in the last issue have not changed her views.*

Another reader, Sylvia Spring of British Columbia, has registered her strong objections to the article. Spring phoned Branching Out *after visiting California where she interviewed women who participated in the Dinner Party project. She concurs with Sara David that the article misrepresents facts.*

Branching Out *does not operate as a collective and each section of the magazine represents the editorial judgement of one person. One member of our editorial staff did in fact object to the review of the book,* The Dinner Party. *Others did not see it prior to publication. If our staff had to reach a consensus on all articles, much of what is printed in the magazine would be eliminated (some of our staff were also in disagreement with the decision to publish the article "Finger vs. Man" in the last issue). Our hope is that we can maintain editorial responsibility and at the same time keep the magazine controversial and representative of the diverse viewpoints in the Canadian feminist movement.*

I'm a *Branching Out* subscriber who is really disappointed in your Margaret Atwood contest. It panders to a kind of celebrity worship that I would not expect to find in independent, sophisticated, politically aware women. Surely you can launch a subscription drive that treats your readers with more respect.

Diana Ackerman, Providence, R.I.

Editor's note: *No disrespect to readers was intended. We wanted to provide a token of appreciation to readers who helped expand our subscription list. The contest and paraphernalia package were meant in a lighthearted vein and not as an attempt to subvert the moral integrity of participants.*

READERS RESPOND

In an article in the last issue, "Zen Construction," Kathleen Braid described her experiences as a construction worker. Here, two readers contribute their thoughts on working in this "non-traditional" field.

illustration by Alina Wrobel

by Kathy Poff

I applied for a job on construction for one reason: there was no other work available. In fact, there was only one job of any kind available in the economically-depressed area where we live and both my husband and I were out of work. I found the idea of doing manual labour for the village sewerage construction project interesting; my husband found it nauseating, so I suggested that I be the one to apply.

"Forget it. They'll never hire a woman," my husband said. "Someone else will get the job and I'll have to go to the city to work."

I got mad. I used the old analogy of black-white discrimination. "If I were your black friend, and you knew they wouldn't hire me because I was black, would you say to me 'too bad you're black' and go out and take that job closed to me?" I demanded. "You wouldn't work for a place that discriminated that way."

After filling out application forms and approaching the superintendant of the project on the street daily for a month or so, I was hired. As a flagger.

I went out that first morning at 7 a.m. in mid-February minus 20 degrees farenheit in vinyl boots and driving gloves because I was hired after the stores closed and started work the next morning before they opened again. By 9 a.m. I was pretty sure I was going to have frost bite before quitting time. The foreman took one look at me and suggested I take ten minutes off to buy some steel-toed boots and mitts. I did. Still, by 6 p.m. when we quit I was about as cold as you'd expect after standing around in sub-zero temperatures for 11 hours.

Two weeks passed and they didn't need a flagger anymore. I knew that if I were my husband they would have put me in the trench with a pick and shovel. Instead, the foreman simply said: "You can't work in the trench. You're a woman." I accused him of discrimination. He shrugged. "Anyway," he demanded, "Who's looking after your kids?"

"My husband," I answered.

"What is he? A no-good bum?" the foreman asked.

I approached the superintendant and explained that I really needed the work — three people were depending on me for food.

"O.K.," he said. "You can drive the packer." And he gestured to a huge steamroller-type diesel machine.

"I don't know how," I gulped.

"Can you drive a car?" he asked.

"Of course," I answered.

"This machine is much easier," he said.

And it was. For three weeks I ran the packer. Truckloads of fill were dumped into the trenches where the pipes for the sewer system had been laid. It was my job to pack the fill down. I drove the machine down a graded slope into the trench, then backed it out again. Sometimes it was necessary to pack fill to the edge of a sharp drop of eight feet or so, but that was the only part of packing that was even slightly difficult.

The only controls on the machine were forward and reverse. When it wasn't moving it idled in neutral. The roller could be turned on or off: either it vibrated or it didn't. I have never driven anything easier, including my little Datsun, and yet people approached me daily, amazed that I was operating "heavy equipment." Months after I finished the job, people would refer to me as "the woman who ran the machine on the sewer project." During the hours when the packer wasn't needed, they put me in the trench to operate an hand-steered machine, much like a heavy vacuum cleaner except it didn't vacuum, it packed. The motor kept it going but I had to use every ounce of my strength to keep it on the right course. It was used for compacting finer sand deeper in the trench. For three weeks, I was warm and the work was relatively interesting, then it was back to flagging.

The foreman propositioned me daily. I came to look on it as almost routine and was told by other women who had worked construction that it was to be expected. In my long underwear, two shirts, a sweater, two pairs of my husband's pants, his old parka, a toque, a hard hat, a scarf, snowmobile mitts and felt-lined boots, there was nothing fetchingly feminine about me but at least once a day he asked me if I would like to go to his house for a drink and dinner, then he'd wink and poke me. I usually just laughed and said no. Laughing was probably a mistake. One afternoon he pulled up beside me in the company truck and told me I was to work on the other side of town for a while and he'd drive me over. I got in the truck. He drove to the edge of town, stopped the truck and tried to kiss me. I told him that his behaviour made me very angry. I was astounded that he felt he could approach me that way. He didn't speak English very well and had only been in Canada a few years so I decided to put his behaviour down to a cultural misunderstanding. He apologized and nothing similar happened again, though he did continue to stop and chat with me on occasion. I was fairly cool at the time but when I got home I sat down and cried. I didn't tell my husband until months later because I knew he would insist I quit.

During the winter, several men came up to me while I was flagging and said, "I did that job the winter of '59 (or '48 or whenever) and it's the worst job on construction. You get colder and more tired here than anywhere else. If you can flag, you can do anything." After my short stint as pit labourer and machine operator, I agreed. At least in the pit it was warm, and time didn't drag as much.

The longest day I worked was from 7 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. with a half-hour off at lunch time. Nobody stopped for supper since the reason we worked so late was to get some pipe laid in a trench that was too steeply banked for safety regulations. The crew wanted to get the pipe laid after dark, when the government safety inspector was through for the day.

Spring came and I shed my underwear and shirts but kept my parka because even in April and May standing around for 10 hours is cold work. In June when the temperatures hit the mid eighties I wore loose jeans and shirts because I was paranoid about my position as the only woman on the crew.

I quit at the end of June. Working in the sun was worse than working in the cold ever was, and money was no longer the problem it had been. Later I learned that the whole crew and half the town had been taking bets on how long I'd last. Most people were betting I'd quit before the first week was out. Nobody seemed to realize I was working because I had to.

Kathy Poff is a freelance writer living in Lillaloe, Ontario. Her work has appeared in Harrowsmith, *the* Ottawa Citizen *and various weekly newspapers.*

by Naomi Wakan

In the days when I was a psychotherapist, the psychiatrist I worked with used to complain bitterly of how unemancipated I was. At the time I didn't feel inadequate, downtrodden or poorly paid. I didn't understand the women patients who were yearning to break out, nor did I

understand their almost compulsive need to work in areas where they would compete with men, particularly where muscle was concerned. Now, several years later, after spending four months in construction boots and work clothes building a home with my husband, I sympathise a lot more with them.

During the building of our home, I never knew which of my feelings to attribute to frustration at my lack of skill, and which to put down to envy of masculine energy. Other emotions emerged as I reacted to the men's mixed feelings at having me on the site. From time to time, overwhelmed by confusion and fatigue, I would squat in a corner and weep, or rush to the cook shed to write something down about my impotence and bitterness.

I had started off badly, by choosing to take a female role in planning the house. I was obsessed with interior decorating long before there was any interior to decorate. I planned the rugs and quilts that would hang as room dividers, but gave no thought to considerations of light or acoustics. Although the house was to be experimental — passive solar and covered in earth — I read no technical pamphlets and refused to understand the very basic problems of orientation and choice of materials. My husband, Eli, said "impregnated wood" and impregnated wood it was; he changed his mind to concrete, and that was all right with me too. Later I asked myself why I submerged my thinking ability throughout the whole building process. There was both a positive answer and a negative one. I knew intuitively that I had to concentrate all my energy on my senses to learn the manual skills and indeed to make sure that I didn't get seriously hurt on a fairly dangerous site. Partly, however, my passivity came from wanting my husband to take the whole responsibility so that I could not be blamed for failure. I also sensed, perhaps, that my husband wanted to do it alone (while insisting I should be a full partner, particularly at difficult moments) and I didn't want to encroach on "his" thing, even though half of it was to be mine.

For the first few weeks I cleaned the cabin we had made as temporary headquarters, aired the tent, cooked the meals and tried to plan a belated garden. I complained of the mess the men left on the site and generally felt out of sorts. Soon, however, there was no way that I could stay any longer from the manual work. Thousands of ties had to be made on the rebar before the concrete could be poured and so I was needed. I emerged somewhat self-consciously from the shed. My wrists were not strong enough to use the tying tool so I invented a method with pliers, much slower and more laborious, but more to my strength.

The crew we hired to help with the concrete was self-conscious. The men showed off and made half-spoken remarks, followed by sniggers. At my timid request the off-colour jokes stopped and so did the radio. When I was centred on the work, I was not to be outdone. I worked steadily, unlike the men who took breaks for cigarettes, but it was hard to keep it up, and I found myself encouraging their questions and showing off. I hated myself for it but the old female-seductive conditioning was still there.

The men did not like me to give them orders nor did they want my help on certain aspects of the job. Most of all they disliked being told to help me with any job they had defined as 'female,' such as filling wire cages with stones for a support wall. My husband admitted that each task I mastered left him free to do more skilled or complicated work, and challenged him to choose more and more difficult jobs to keep ahead of me. He also owned to assigning me jobs that were tedious or tiresome. This seemed fair enough, as I was the apprentice and he had played that role himself for a few years.

As I tried tasks that were more strenuous and dangerous, I felt a great joy in my being. I now strode around feeling all in one piece. I learned to lift properly. I could now lift planks above my shoulders to Eli, on the roof. I hardly ever washed myself or my clothes and loved to wipe my hands onto my trousers.

Since I prepared all the food and even baked bread on our newly acquired wood stove, often I felt a psychological split. I felt guilty taking time off to cook when I was needed on the site. At the same time, while I was working, I felt I should prepare a hot meal. Sometimes matters came to a head and I would announce firmly that I had to spend the day cooking; but the needs of the building always called me back to the site.

By the time we came to covering the house with earth, I felt, in many ways, Eli's proper partner. As apprentice I still got the Joe jobs, but now we were shovelling sand together and gravel and topsoil. Although my shovel may not have been so laden, I hung in. Hanging in was many times my downfall, for I carried on long after I was fatigued. Only after I stopped did I allow my body to feel the pain of having carried loads far too heavy, for far too long a time.

The day we poured the concrete floor was the turning point. We started pouring at eleven a.m. and couldn't start trowelling until evening, for it was cold. We continued trowelling all night. I was freezing, wet and dirty. I felt my husband had set it all up to test me. With the trowel frozen to my hand, I waited for Eli to decide where and when to begin. I began to hate him and all the other people in my life who had held me back. Yet the rational part of me knew that he was doing a careful job. About 4 a.m. I'd had it, but I refused to go to bed and sat for yet another hour frozen to the windowsill. At last I came to my senses and retired to the tent. I had done everything I was capable of and would never again hang in beyond my capacity. Eli joined me shortly and later admitted he was glad I had given up, so that he could too.

We discussed our conflicts openly. We were rather horrified by the woman malingering in her supposed weakness, and the man who wanted to be boss, but owning up to those parts of ourselves allowed us to move into the home as partners. I prefer to cook and clean and sew, but I now look forward also to the hours we spend outdoors collecting our winter's wood. I don't use the chain saw: I prefer quieter, slower tools. Eli is proud of my strength and my growing ability to handle tools. The old patterns still arise from time to time. One of his suggestions will sound more like an arbitrary, bossy order, or I will ask for help when I don't need it.

Our spirits are asexual and partners. It is the conditioned body that betrays.

Naomi Waken lives in Brighton, Ontario.

"printed matter"

Maria Campbell: Putting the Pieces Together

Maria Campbell has no formula for interviewers, no droned or anticipated answers, although since becoming the writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta in Edmonton last September, she admits to being interviewed "at least twenty times." Yet she approaches the questions with a genuine interest that disarms. An extraordinary woman in other ways although Maria would be the first to deny it, she had lived with pain and failure for a long time before her anger and courage helped her to examine her life and learn from the mistakes. Stinging self-revelations, many documented in the autobiographical *Halfbreed*, have given Maria a hard-earned compassion — a compassion she is quick to share with anybody who might need it. So her spacious, sun-filled office in the Humanities Centre is a busy one. "A lot of students come to talk to me about problems in writing and end up telling me their problems period. And I have to listen. I was mixed-up. I've been there myself and I won't turn them away. I keep telling myself that they have counsellors here — and I need energy for my writing. But if talking it out helps someone, I'll be there."

That same compassion helps her with aspiring writers. Instead of criticizing a passage she doesn't understand in someone's work, she asks the writer to explain what she is trying to say, what purpose she is trying to achieve. "That way we can talk about it, find ways to say things more clearly. I learn a lot that way too."

Given the amount of time spent with other people, the number of speaking engagements she's had plus the number of times she's been interviewed, it's remarkable that Maria finds any time for writing. Maria laughs. "I find my time is all bits and pieces — like housework." Currently working on the second draft of her first novel, tentatively called "Old Woman's Story," Maria plans to use one old woman, much like her great-grandmother, Cheechum, to narrate the tale. Already there are plans to use this story of six generations of Metis women as the basis for a film similar to *Roots*. She has nearly completed a children's book, the second in a series called *Stories for Ahsinee*, as well as working on a number of short stories. She manages all this despite the admission that she doesn't have the energy she used to have. "But I used to be angry too. Now I can accept a lot more. I'm not bitter and I used to be." She explains not only with words but a cupping and extending of her long, slim hands. But the temper is still there. When asked why she doesn't use her 'real' name, listed in library records as being June Stifle, she retorts: "That's my married name. My first name is Maria and I was born a Campbell. I get so damned mad when people that used to know me — and most of them know I don't use that name anymore —call and ask for June Stifle. It's a put-down. If I get a message using that name, I don't return the call."

Maria describes herself as "motherly." The image of soft, enveloping roundness isn't evident in her tall, slender grace. But the word is apt. A masterful storyteller, Maria tells of her oldest daughter leaving home. Her words and intricate hand movements weave the pain of thousands of women who've watched their children discard the warmth of the family "blanket." "She wouldn't listen. I told her if she was going to stay in my house, she'd have to follow my rules. And she left. She had no job, no place to go. We didn't speak to each other for a long time after that." Her green eyes fill and she briefly covers trembling lips with her fingertips. "God, I was so worried." A moment later, she continues, proudly telling how well that same daughter is doing now.

Now 40, she has found some of her roots in her native religion, a religion of spirits and legends. She studies under Rose Auger, a medicine-woman in Slave Lake. "I don't believe in Christianity. Too many people have died because of it. The legends of the Cree have more meaning for me."

As a Metis woman still deeply concerned about her people — a concern which shows in her writing as well as her speeches — Maria meets regularly with a group of Indian and Metis women. "It's a good group and the women are very political although we haven't done much yet. There are so many basic things we have to work on. Even how we feel about white women." If it's been a struggle for Maria to come to grips with her complex feelings of anger not only toward the injustice Indian and Metis people have experienced but also toward her own shame and confusion at being "one of them," it has also been a struggle to talk openly with native organizations these last fifteen years as she has tried to get recognition of native women's rights. "I believe Indian women should keep their treaty status when they marry white men. Their husbands wouldn't be recognized but their children could have treaty status. Same goes for Indian men. Their children would get treaty status, but their wives keep their own nationality, their own identity." Maria's frankness has turned some of the Indian and Metis people against her. But her detractors are far outnumbered by staunch friends such as June Sheppard, a respected *Edmonton Journal* columnist who considers Maria "a good friend." "I was as pleased as Maria was when she got this appointment. It's more money than she's ever made in her life."

Maria Campbell *photo by Diana Palting*

Maria laughingly agrees. She plans to spend next year writing with savings from this year's salary. While she has called the position "welfare for writers," she is still proud of the recognition the appointment as writer-in-residence has given her. "It's good to know that my work means something to others," she acknowledges. But she admits that writing has its own more immediate rewards for her. "I've always loved to write. To get paid for something I enjoy — well, how many people are so lucky?"

Maria has made her own luck. She is a complex, compelling woman with the courage to take from life as much as she can get without hurting others in the process. And her optimism is as strong today as it was in 1973 when she wrote in *Halfbreed*: "I believe that one day . . . people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we need one another to survive."

Maureen Bursey

Halifax Right-to-Lifers Appointed Guardian to Foetus

A Nova Scotia woman from Cape Breton decided last summer to seek a therapeutic abortion. This set in motion a series of events which brought into court a number of basic legal rights; the right of a woman for whom an abortion has been approved to have it, the right of a father/husband in an abortion decision, and the right of an outsider to guardianship over a foetus.

Janet H. is 19 years old and has one child born during her final year of high school, eight months before she married the father. The marriage never ran smoothly and she and her husband separated and reconciled several times during the year. More than once she required medical attention after physical abuse, and eventually she laid charges in family court for assault. Feeling she could not cope on her own after the final separation, Janet applied for a therapeutic abortion and was accepted by the hospital board in Halifax. Her husband then applied for an injunction from the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia to stop the abortion, scheduled for the following week. The Supreme Court hearing for this injuction was never held. When the physician heard of the legal action he refused to perform the operation. Janet, by this time nearly eighteen weeks pregnant and frightened by the threat of the injunction, decided to continue her pregnancy to term. Meanwhile, another legal action took place; one Dorothy Simms was appointed "Guardian Ad Litem* of 'H,' an unborn child allegedly of eighteen weeks gestation" by a judge of the Nova Scotia Family Court. Simms had volunteered to be guardian after the lawyer for an anti-abortion group called Nova Scotians United for Life was requested to assist with the husband's injunction. Reasons given by the judge for allowing the application for guardianship included an interpretation of the *Children of Unmarried Parents Act* to include unborn children. He made references to International Year of the child and the principle of paramouncy of welfare of the child, then defined the unborn child as a child in need of protection and therefore under disability. With the help of the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Law (CARAL), Janet applied to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia for a declaration of the law, in other words, they asked if the Family Court had the right to do what it did. The Supreme Court determined, essentially, that the guardianship had lapsed when there was no hearing on the injunction and therefore the Court would not make a decision on the issue.

According to a Dalhousie law professor, this is the first time in the Anglo-Commonwealth system where a child not yet born has been appointed a guardian. However, because the order was granted without allowing an argument from the other side and because the Family Court is a lower level court this case will probably not set a precedent. Also, Canadian, British and American precedent is against the court appointing a guardianship ad litem over a foetus, which is not considered a person in the eyes of the law until its subsequent live birth.

Canadian women are watching this case with interest, as the outcome may affect others who find themselves in the same situation.

Judith Wouk

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* Guardian Ad Litem is a guardian appointed solely for the duration of a legal action to act in the best interests of the "child."

Feminist Party of Canada: Entering the Electoral Mainstream

After the spectacle of the fall of the government (or was it a push?), some of us, feeling an awfully persistent sense of deja-vu in the campaign, began expectantly looking around on the horizon for the first electoral activity of the new Feminist Party of Canada. The formation of the party was announced at its first public meeting in Toronto in June, 1979, with over 600 women attending.

The birth of the Feminist Party had been preceded by years of formal and informal discussions by Toronto-area feminists, including Kay MacPherson, Moira Armour, Maryon Kantaroff, Laura Sabia and Lorna Marsden. These discussions finally culminated in a meeting of over a hundred women last February. A committee structure was then set up to cover the practical areas of fundraising, membership, and public relations, and an interim committee began to study and recommend a course of political action. After the large public meeting in June, the initial committees were augmented, and an office and newsletter begun. The Party started a phase of study and discussion in order to draft a set of principles and objectives, as well as a constitution. Initially, a founding convention was planned for the fall of 1980, but it is now expected to be held in 1981. Delegates at that convention will adopt the constitution and formally launch the Feminist Party on its course in the Canadian political scene.

At the same time as the Party was undergoing an introspective process of defining strategies and principles, its members began a programme of expansion and communication, for its objective is definitely to represent a mass movement. Feminists across the country, particularly in Quebec, responded to the newsletter and media reports. New chapters were formed and some useful international contacts were made. The Unified Feminist Parties of Belgium and France contributed documents outlining their analysis, and these documents provided a shortcut to the process of defining a feminist political platform.

Initially, there was some division over the question of participating in elections, but the idea was finally accepted as at least an option to its members. It was felt involvement would take the Party one step beyond previous feminist pressure groups. However, it was the failure of the traditional parties to fulfill a moral responsibility to represent the female electorate that formed the Feminist Party's most compelling reason to participate in elections. The Party's interim committee maintained that even successful women candidates "regardless of background or party affiliation, reduced their connections with women's organizations to a minimum when the obtained office . . . at the moment of victory, these women shake off political debts and walk on alone."

Having made the decision to move in the direction of mainstream political activity, the Feminist Party began to examine alternatives. In order to be registered at the federal level, a party is required to have merely a hundred supporters, but to have fifty candidates running in each election. A provincial party in On-Ontario, on the other hand, must have 10,000 signatures before being registered. The Feminist Party has decided to move ahead on the provincial level in Ontario, and will soon-start a campaign to get the 10,000 signatures. Some members find the municipal level an attractive option, and hold this up as a possibility as well. But to most Feminist Party members, the significance of operating on any electoral level is clear — numbers are needed. At present, the membership stands at close to 400, mostly women, although membership is also open to men.

When the February federal election was called, the Party was caught off-guard, although, as one spokeswoman said, "It would have been no trouble to find fifty feminists across the country who had the time and were prepared to run in their ridings — it was simply a question of whether, at this stage, to put our energy there."

The federal campaign, however, did give the Feminist Party its first vehicle for organizing outside Toronto and for organizing as a pressure group. The membership list was divided into ridings so that local meetings could be held to prepare a Feminist Party presence at all-candidates' meetings. Questions to the candidates were formulated; they covered a broad range of issues including daycare, poverty among women over 65, nuclear waste disposal, pensions for housewives, rape, and immigration regulations affecting domestic workers and Chilean refugees. The Party's first question was, "How long do you estimate it will take your party to have an equal number of women in Parliament? Our estimate, based on the rate of increase from one woman in 1922 to ten women today, is 842 years."

Members consider the Feminist Party to be a breakthrough. For the first time in Canada, a party unlike the others is being formed, one that is emerging from the history and experience of the women's movement, one that is based on a feminist "vision."

This vision is based, they stress, on values and an analysis opposed to the present male, profit-motivated political system. Values such as non-violence, environment and health protection, the control of excessive profit, and the opportunity for ongoing education have not been given a chance. The Feminist Party believes it is possible to build a radical organization which cuts across class lines and which incorporate these values.

Some feminists have criticized the politics of the Feminist Party as too visionary, or the attempt to unite women regardless of class background as naive. But the Feminist Party thinks "the time is right," and maybe they'll have a chance to prove that in the next federal election. The mailing address for the Feminist Party of Canada is Box 5717, Station 'A,' Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A0.

Maureen Hynes

Maureen Hynes, a regular contributor to "printed matter," recently got a job teaching English as a second language at the University of Chengtu in Szechuan, China. She returns to Toronto in September.

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Women and the Economic Crisis

by Monica Townson

The economic situation is far and away the most serious issue facing Canadian women today. The cause for concern is not just the economic situation of women themselves — though that is bad enough — but what the economic situation will do to women, and whether it will mean that they are in danger of losing the rights that they have fought for and won.

Rights to equal opportunity, non-discrimination in employment and equal pay for work of equal value, so recently established by way of the Human Rights Act, have scarcely had time to take root. They could easily be swept away in the uncertain economic climate Canada faces over the next few years.

"Rights women have fought for and won could be swept away in the uncertain economic climate of the next few years."

The threat will come from those who believe that it is only in times of economic prosperity that we can afford the luxury of worrying about equal rights and equal opportunity. That attitude has been surfacing again lately and it could have serious consequences for Canadian women.

Just a few months ago we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. It was October 18, 1929 when the gentlemen of the Privy Council of England decided in their wisdom that Canadian women were "persons" and therefore eligible for appointment to the Senate. Just one week later, on the other side of the Atlantic, the stock market crash on Wall Street heralded almost a decade of economic depression that came to be known as "The Dirty Thirties."

There is not much information about how women were affected by the disastrous economic situation. One clue, perhaps, is the fact that when the 1921 population census was taken, women made up just over 22 per cent of the Canadian labour force. By 1931, that percentage had fallen to 19 per cent. Presumably those women who had a man to provide for them had to withdraw from the paid labour force.

"During the 'Dirty Thirties,' women who had a man to provide for them presumably withdrew from the paid labour force."

Women's work in the paid labour force has changed quite a bit over the past fifty years. But women's status in the labour force has hardly changed at all, because women have exchanged one job ghetto for another. There has been one major change, though. Married women, by their active participation in the labour force, have defied that idealistic notion of Victorian manhood that "a woman's place is in the home." Almost 40 per cent of the Canadian labour force today is female, and the majority of women workers are married.

"In 1931, only three and a half percent of married women were in the labour force. By 1979, that figure had risen to 47 per cent."

In 1931, only three and a half per cent of married women were in the labour force. By 1979, that percentage had risen to 47 per cent. In fact in the age group of 20 to 44 years old, almost 59 per cent of all married women are in the paid labour force. That means that, despite what the television commercials might lead us to believe, the average married woman, whether or not she has children, is NOT a full-time housewife. She is more likely to have a paying job, either part-time or full-time, in the labour force.

"Married women's right to work has never been accepted because, after all, they are 'secondary earners.' "

Those facts are highly significant because they have had a major impact on the way our policy-makers and business leaders look at women workers. The captains of industry and the politicians today, when faced with an economic downturn, confront a different kind of work force than they had during the depression fifty years ago. Forty-seven per cent of the unemployed workers today are women.

More than eight per cent of women workers could not find jobs in December, while 6.5 per cent of male workers were unemployed. Because the women's unemployment rate is higher than the men's, the presence of women workers means that the average unemployment rate for the labour force as a whole is higher than it would otherwise be.

The response of policy-makers to this phenomenon is certainly a novel one. Instead of asking why so many women workers are unemployed, and trying to do something about it, they have chosen to attempt a return to the good old days when a woman's place was indeed in the home. The approach appears to be based on the notion that the influx of married women into the labour force may be only a temporary aberration. Their right to work has never been accepted because, after all, they are

"secondary earners." So in times of economic depression, every effort should be made to persuade them to return to hearth and home.

The changes to the unemployment insurance scheme and manpower training allowances, introduced by the Liberal government in 1978, were clearly intended to discourage married women from participating in the labour force. Part-time workers were effectively eliminated from eligibility, re-entrants to the labour force now have to work twice as long as workers already in the labour force to qualify for benefits, and training allowances for those living with an employed spouse were cut from $45 a week to $10 a week — although this caused such a furor that the allowance was later increased to $20 a week.

The measures were attacked by women's groups across Canada and by the parties in opposition at the time. Once the opposition became the new Conservative government, they enacted the measures proposed by the Liberals and went to work on developing yet another scheme to exclude married women from UI benefits.

"Basing unemployment insurance benefits on family income is income redistribution at the expense of women."

The so-called "two-tier" system, tying benefits to family income or to number of dependants, was in an advanced stage of development when the election was called. Even with the Liberals back in power, there is a strong possibility that some version of this scheme will be enacted.

The unemployment insurance scheme is supposed to be a plan that insures against loss of earnings through unemployment. Anyone who works in the paid labour force must contribute to the plan on the basis of earnings. What these schemes propose is that some people who have paid into the plan will now not be able to collect full benefits if they lose their jobs. In effect, married women workers will be expected to subsidize benefits to male workers.

As it looks now, married women will have to pay into the unemployment insurance scheme, as do other workers, on the basis of earnings, but they will not be entitled to full benefits because they are considered "secondary workers." They are considered secondary workers because they do not make as big a contribution to family income as their husbands do. Of course, the reason why they make a lower contribution is that their salaries are so much lower. But employers justify these lower salaries because, they say, women are only secondary workers. It seems to be a masterpiece of circuitous logic.

"Allowing some women workers to be treated differently from other women workers reflects on the position of all."

Schemes which would tie social benefits to family income — and the UI proposals are not the only ones that have been suggested — make the implicit assumption that all members of the family have equal access to the income of the family unit. It is only necessary to look at some of the cases that come up before the divorce courts to recognize that this is not a valid assumption.

Those who are in favour of basing benefits on family income see their proposals as a way of directing social benefits to the lower-income families who need them most. Of course, this is a very persuasive argument. But it is income redistribution that is taking place at the expense of women. Benefits can be recovered from higher income families by way of income taxes. To be fair, the supporters of family-income-based benefits should be willing to see such a system reinforced by matrimonial property laws that would guarantee wives an equal share in family income, not just at the time of divorce, but throughout the marriage as well.

But there are even more serious concerns. The changes to the unemployment insurance scheme that were proposed would mean that married women workers would not have the same rights as other women workers. As long as some women are singled out as being different and not entitled to the same benefits as other workers, women as a whole will continue to be treated as second-class citizens in the work force.

Some advocates of the family-income-based benefits schemes have tried to justify them on the grounds that women who are single parents will still be entitled to full benefits. While this may be reassuring, it must be recognized that allowing some women workers to be treated differently from other women workers reflects on the position of all women workers. As long as married women are forced back into a situation of dependancy within the family unit, employers will be able to justify paying all women workers less than men.

The way in which we treat women workers, whether they work without pay in the home, or whether they are in the paid labour force, has serious repercussions for our society as a whole. The problem of widespread poverty among our senior citizens, for example, will not be solved until we recognize that most of the elderly poor are women and their poverty is a direct result of the way in which their work has been regarded by society. And it is precisely because women's work is undervalued and underpaid that so many single-parent families headed by women are poor and that such a high percentage of poor people are women.

Policy-makers do not appear to have made the connection between the way we look at women's work and the fact that so many of the poor are women. It's not much good saying, as the Canadian Council on Social Development did recently, that the way to solve the problem of poverty is to find people jobs. The kind of jobs women can get pay only just over half of what a man could earn.

The National Council on Welfare's recent report on Women and Poverty has a much clearer perception of the problem. It says, "A more likely explanation for much of the poverty in Canada and one that might have been arrived at long ago if poverty experts had not ignored the fact that so many of the poor are

"Those who insist on keeping married women financially dependant need not wonder why women are poor when there is no longer a man around to take care of them."

female, is that one-half of the population of this country is brought up on the assumption that it will always be financially taken care of by the other half."

The return to the idea of married women as dependant members of families is one that we will probably hear much more about in the coming months. In view of our current economic situation, it will be a particularly difficult issue for women to deal with. But deal with it we must, unless we want to lose those few gains we have made.

Those who insist on keeping married women in a state of financial dependency need not wonder why women are poor when there is no longer a man around to take care of them.

What can we do to make sure that the slow march of our progress is maintained and perhaps even speeded up a bit? For a start, we should lobby vigorously against a "two-tier" system in the unemployment insurance scheme. The implications are serious not just for women in the paid labour force, but for all women.

We must insist that the anti-discrimination legislation now in place is enforced, with no let up. Equal pay for work of equal value, equal opportunity, affirmative action and contract compliance are all provided for in the Human Rights Act. Pressure to down-play these provisions or to go easy on enforcement will increase in direct proportion to the worsening economic situation. We must be ever vigilant.

For the longer term, we need a feminist-based economic analysis. While there are sociologists who have studied some labour market issues from a feminist perspective, there appears to be virtually no serious analysis by economists who are prepared to take a new approach to women's work. Since economists have such a major input to economic policy, this is a serious problem and one that must be corrected if the economic situation of women is to improve.

Monica Townson is an Ottawa economist and author of "The Canadian Woman's Guide to Money." She was formerly the vice-president and director of research of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Biscuitmakers, Dressmakers, Ironers & Pressers . . .

by Sheila Klein

Canadian women today are concentrated in female job ghettos many of which are an extension of the traditional female role, are low paying, and involve some degree of subservience to men. Early Canadian census data (1901 to 1931) show that generally women have been concentrated in low paying and sex-typed jobs since the beginning of the century.

In 1901 women were sixteen per cent of the labour force with the highest proportion (47 per cent) concentrated in the *Domestic and Personal Service* occupations with the next highest being *Manufacturers* (25 per cent) and *Professional* (16 per cent). Of women who were engaged in the *Domestic and Personal Service* occupations the majority were servants (50 per cent), then seamstresses and housekeepers — occupations that were an obvious extension of women's traditional role. In *Manufacturers* the highest percentage of women were employed in what was called the Cotton industry with average wages for women recorded as $237 per year. Only two per cent of males who were engaged in *Manufacturers* were employed in the Cotton industry, yet they earned wages of $375 per year. In this industry there were only two women in what was called the salaried, officers and managers category earning $700 compared with 136 men earning $1299. Of women in the *Professional* occupations, 89 per cent were teachers. A cursory examination shows that in 1901 there were exactly 47 women professors, 10 lawyers and notaries, 62 accountants, 3440 office employees and no engineers or surveyors.

Ten years later, with eighteen per cent of women in the labour force, the greatest number of women were employed once again in *Domestic and Personal Service* occupations followed by *Manufacturers* and *Professional*.

Within the *Domestic and Personal* occupations the greatest number of women again worked as servants. In *Manufacturers* there was some diversification with the highest number of women now being employed in the Women's Clothing industry. Men's Clothing, Boots and Shoes, and Cottons still employed a high proportion of women, with Fruit and Vegetable Canning, and Bread, Biscuit and Confectionery industries also becoming important employers of women.

In 1921 the 15 occupations listed for females show that women still worked in 'female oriented' jobs, even though in World War I women were employed in a variety of non-traditional occupations. Women worked as Charworkers and Cleaners, Cooks, Domestic Servants, Hairdressers, Manicurists, Knitters, Matrons — housekeepers, Milliners, Operatives — boots and shoes, Saleswomen, Spinners, Teachers, Telegraph Operators, Telephone Operators, Waitresses and Weavers. The highest paid were Telegraph Operators at $18.46 per week and the lowest were Domestic Servants at $5.82.

In 1931 the list of selected occupations for females had increased to thirty, however, many of the additional occupations still relate to the traditional female roles, for example, Confectionary and Biscuit Makers, Dressmakers, Ironers and Pressers, Sewing and Seamstresses. Telegraph Operators were again the highest paid at $23.28 per week and Domestic Servants the lowest at $5.38. In fact Domestic Servants had a net *loss* in weekly wages of 44 cents over the ten year period.

When we compare women's earnings as a percentage of men's for the census years 1911 - 1931 with recent years (1967 and 1972), the result is disturbing, to say the least. Taking wage earners ten years(!) and over, women's wages as a percentage of men's in 1911 was 52.8 per cent, in 1921 was 54.2 per cent and in the depression year of 1931 was 60.2 per cent. In 1967 women's earnings as a percentage of men's (all earners) was 54.3 per cent and in 1972 was 54.6 per cent. In sixty years women have gone from 16 per cent of the paid work force to almost 40 per cent, yet our income relative to men's has not increased at all.

Sheila Klein is a graduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa.

courtesy Canada Packers Ltd.

"Tenants" *by Marian Scott 1940, oil on board, 25" x 16½"*

"Jarvis Street Sidewalk" by Peggy Nicol MacLeod courtesy Art Gallery of Ontario

Art Transformed

by Cathy Hobart

Nearly fifty years to the day after the 1929 stock market crash, painter Marian Scott sits in her livingroom talking and remembering the Thirties: "We were living down near the centre of Montreal, and everyday there would be someone coming to the door asking if I could make them a sandwich, give them a cup of coffee. You were aware of the real suffering, the real hardship that people were having. I think that if painters are sensitive at all they can't help being affected by that."

Marian Scott was among many painters, who, during the Thirties, began to turn away from landscape painting that had dominated Canadian art until that time. Painters, particularly in Montreal, began to be influenced by European and American art, and by the social conditions of the age. Scott was also one of an extraordinary number of women painters who were active and prominent in the Thirties. Former members of the Beaver Hall Hill group, Sarah Robertson, Ann Savage, Prudence Heward and Lilias Torrance Newton were well known artists in Montreal. On the west coast Emily Carr was beginning to gain recognition, and in Toronto, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Yvonne McKague Housser and Paraskeva Clark were among several women painters.

Notwithstanding David Milne's remark, "artists stand depressions quite well, depressions look so much like their regular brand of prosperity," life was extremely difficult for artists in Canada during the Thirties. There was no state support for artists similar to the Works Progress Administration in the United States, and sales of works dropped to almost nothing. Artists supported themselves teaching, doing commercial work, or as labourers.

Marian Scott speculates that the depressed economy may have been one reason for the comparatively high proportion of women artists in the Thirties; "I have an uneasy feeling that . . . they could risk it, more than a great many men who perhaps would have liked to have started out as painters. For instance I remember one painter who used to go around to the back of Steinbergs' or Dominion stores and collect the wilted vegetables . . . to

would hold an open house each week and other artists would visit, bringing their own refreshments, since few could afford to entertain. Another favourite drop-in for artists was Smith and Palardy's flat. The Montreal group would get together to hold exhibitions of their work, lectures, discussions, and shows of other arts groups. Many were also involved in social reform, and would make posters or donate works for special exhibitions and sales such as one to raise funds for the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. The posters were done by hand, as there was no money to have them printed. They were done, says Scott, "on very cheap paper, and were very immediate. A lot of them would be notices of meetings. Since there was no television or radio, this was a time of so many meetings and of coming together. I think that people growing up today don't realize the difference; then if there was anything that bothered you, there would be a meeting. Whereas now you try to get on the CBC."

Scott feels now that most of the posters and announcements she did during the Thirties were "probably pretty awful. It took me a long time to realize that . . . there could be other ways of trying to take part in the problems of that time, that I could use myself personally, but not my painting." Nonetheless, in her painting, "It was an adventure for me in the Thirties, changing from the bucolic scenes that we did as students when we used to go out and hunt for old French Canadian farmhouses or paint women in cabbage patches. . . . I began painting scenes like the docks or the grain elevators or outside stairways. I think it had a bit to do with the time I was in; I was painting in a rather more rigid and disciplined style than perhaps if I had been living in a luxurious style where you could just enjoy the pleasures of being alive.

"Most women painters have something that pulls them away from their painting," says Scott, "and many women are bitter. I have really been fortunate. I have managed to keep part of every day for painting." Some of her contemporaries did not continue painting. Paraskeva Clark began to paint less after the Thirties as she devoted more time to her family. And Pegi Nicol MacLeod, who studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Montreal with Scott and Jori Smith, also painted less after moving to New York in the late Thirties.

When they were students together, says Scott, Jori Smith "was one of these people who really obviously had talent, . . . everything seemed to come so easily to her, and everyone expected her to get this scholarship at the end of the year. They sent a student to Paris for a year. She didn't get it, and so she took the year over, since everyone was really certain that she would get it the second year. The authorities took her aside towards the end of the second year and said, 'You know, you should get it, but we can't afford to give it to you, because you are a woman, and you will go over and get married, and you'll stop painting. This is taxpayers' money, and we would be criticized for it.' "

Like Marian Scott, Jori Smith is still painting, (although her former husband Jean Palardy did stop) and had a solo exhibition in Montreal as recently as October, 1970.

"Petroushka 1937" by Paraskeve Clark *oil on canvas, 48" x 32"*
The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

support himself." Certainly many of the women painters were supported by their husbands or families. Scott herself was married to a professor at McGill, and her friends Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Paraskeva Clark were also supported by their husbands. But another friend, Jori Smith, was married to painter Jean Palardy, and they lived a more bohemian life, exchanging paintings for food, starting a commercial art studio, and holding exhibitions of their work in the flat where they lived rent-free provided they kept the place heated. (At one sale of their paintings, says Scott, Palardy signed a number of the works "P.B." for "pot-boiler.")

Anne Savage supported herself teaching, and although she is now gaining some recognition as a painter, she is mainly known as an art teacher. Marian Scott says that Savage once remarked to her "almost bitterly" that "it never occurred to her when she was growing up that you could support yourself painting."

Among Montreal artists during the Thirties there was a strong sense of community. Some, like John Lyman,

Cathy Hobart is a Toronto printmaker and art editor of Branching Out.

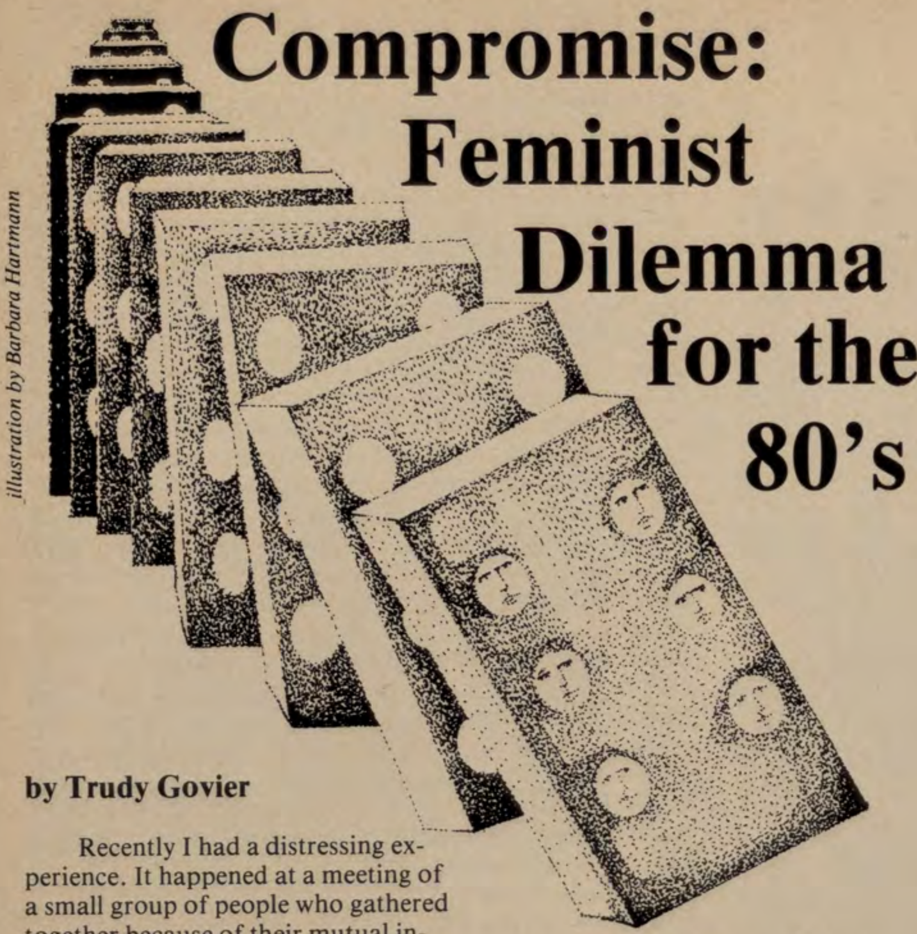


illustration by Barbara Hartmann

Compromise: Feminist Dilemma for the 80's

by Trudy Govier

Recently I had a distressing experience. It happened at a meeting of a small group of people who gathered together because of their mutual interest in sponsoring a Vietnamese refugee family. I was doing a lot of talking at this meeting and had taken on a kind of leadership role in the group. Surprisingly, given the context, one man was quite an Archie Bunker. Despite repeated assurances to us from his wife (Edith?) that they did want to offer financial and social help to a family, he asked persistent obnoxious and obstructionist questions, putting them most unpleasantly. Sensing that part of the problem was that he did not want to accept certain responses from me, I looked pleadingly at my husband, trying to convey a request that he respond to the man. He did this and, for a short time, things were better. Then I spoke again. The man's resistance became overt, explicit. "What I'd really like to know," he said, "is how someone like you gets to be the chairman of a group like this." Stunned silence followed this utterance. After a minute or two, I responded in a calm tone, explaining that I had, in fact, been the only one of us to attend a general meeting held by a larger co-ordinating group and that, as sole attender, I had been given a file with names and phone numbers and had had to take on the responsibility of drawing the group together. I added that with my work and a four-year-old child, I was well occupied and had no desire to remain the chief organizer and moving power behind the group. I suggested that when and if we did decide to collectively sponsor a refugee family, we elect a chairman. This we did. She is a woman — not I — enthusiastic, capable and sensitive. Wish her well.

I felt miserable after this meeting. Irrationally, my misery persisted overnight and into the next morning. Then, illumination! I was spending the day in the library and began to browse through women's studies journals. I came upon a study of women in authority roles in small groups. I read it in horrified fascination. The authors had set up a number of groups, some with female leaders, and had studied the comparative dynamics of these groups, which met frequently over a period of several days. Male-led groups functioned relatively uneventfully, it seems, but female-led groups experienced serious problems. Men in these groups felt very uncomfortable, which they freely admitted, and they tried in various ways to undermine the role of their female leaders. Women who started the study as confident, assertive members of female-led groups came to feel that they had to choose between co-operating with the leader and alienating the men in their groups. They either became quiet, adopting more "feminine" roles even to the point of altering their dress, or else continued to assert themselves, but angrily and under stress. As a result, women participants in the groups with female leaders came to be seen either as relatively lacking in competence or as "bitchy." Since this was a study, women leaders continued in their roles. None opted out, as I effectively did myself. The men in this study, a footnote informed me, were mainly professors in psychology and in the health professions.

Discovering this paper made me feel better and worse. Better, for it confirmed my shaky belief that I had not been personally obnoxious but was a victim of the man's deeply rooted sexist attitudes. Worse, for its pessimistic implications. If the study is correct, its findings would imply that small groups which want to get anything useful accomplished had better be all female, or else led by men. To cope with my unpleasant situation, I compromised: I spoke less, virtually apologized for my temporary leadership status; said I did not want to lead the group. Sometimes I compromise for reasons of sheer convenience. And sometimes I compromise because I really do believe that it is the right thing to do in the circumstances. The refugee meeting was a case like this. We needed our Archie Bunker in order to meet a legal requirement (five distinct family units) for sponsoring our family. The Vietnamese boat people are desperate people who live now in crowded refugee camps in unwilling host countries, who have risked their lives on the turbulent China sea, who have experienced horrors. We hope, as a group, to bring a family of these people to a better life. We may literally save lives. Because our purpose was of such humanitarian importance, I believe that, in this context, it was right to compromise. Sexism is a pernicious

and terrible thing, but I am willing to put up with a little bit of it, if doing this is necessary in order to save six desperate people from a refugee camp. Wouldn't most women agree with this reasoning?

I hope that I was right to compromise, and I hope also that I am correct in my understanding of why I did compromise. For often I let things go unchallenged when I should not. I've kept my maiden name, for all the standard feminist reasons, but when people ask me about this I do not always tell them just why. Often I say, in an apologetic tone, that when I married I already had several academic publications in my maiden name and that it would have been professionally inconvenient to change my name. Sometimes when I fly Air Canada I let them call me "Mrs. Govier," for I'm flying alone with my young daughter and do not want to use "Miss." I sometimes ask for "Ms.," as I should, but often don't, out of combined timidity and inertia. I travel often this way, for my husband and I have a long distance marriage. This unorthodox arrangement occasions many comments, not all of which I challenge as I should. When we are about to reunite, people often say, "Won't it be nice to be a real family again?" I think we're always pretty real, as a family. In fact, usually when people say this I think to myself that we have a closer and more serious relationship than those asking the questions. But I never challenge the remark. Recently, I was in a group which began to discuss the somewhat peculiar subject of women who are allergic to their husband's sperm. A man joked that the reaction to such an allergy is severe swelling of the belly. I was vaguely offended at the joke, because of the attitude to unwanted pregnancy and to pregnancy which it seemed to imply. But I said nothing. My compromises are due partly to cowardice and partly to the belief that life is too short to include confrontations over "every little(?) thing."

The problem is that the division between male and female is so basic, with its baggage of attendant stereotypes, that sexist attitudes really can be found in "every little thing." If we let all the little things pass because we are timid, or because life is short and we don't want it to be brutish and nasty as well, then we don't do much for the women's cause. Last winter, I received from Iris Young, an American philosopher, a perfectly amazing and excellent paper on the subject of why feminism, as such, ought to be of interest to philosophers. She explained that philosophers, as those who study and question the fundamental concepts in terms of which we organize our experience, are indeed the appropriate people to address their attention to the concepts male/female. These are, *par excellence,* fundamental concepts around which social life has been structured. They carry with them an immense baggage of assumptions, emotions and attitudes. To question these concepts (the bifurcation, that is) and the accompanying assumptions is to question the very foundation of social life. Women may seem picky, when, as feminists, they object to dress styles, greeting customs, pronouns and other apparently trivial aspects of our culture. But this pickiness is a sign, not of women's fanaticism, but rather of the depth and pervasiveness of patriarchal assumptions. Every pick becomes a probe. To me, the account made sense and was very exciting. The paper, incidentally, was rejected by a very good journal and remains unpublished.

Changes in all the little things won't come about as a result of the compromisers. They will come about because people do not compromise. But should we never compromise? Was I wrong, in my sponsoring group? Since sexist assumptions are so pervasive, women who take up the challenge wherever they meet it will have to be tough indeed. My sister, a more assertive feminist than I, once engaged an Italian doctor in North York on the subject of marriage and maiden names. (She was then married, and using hers.) I hope she made some headway, for the things he said left her upset for a week.

Moral philosophers discuss this problem under the label "justice versus utility." "Utility" refers to the well-being or ill-being of people resulting from a course of action. "Justice," by and large, refers to the respect for individual rights. The "versus" comes in because sometimes paying scrupulous attention to equality and rights costs dearly in human happiness. Some have believed that justice should be done, though the heavens fall. Immanuel Kant thought this, though he didn't believe, apparently, that *women* were fully moral beings meriting justice. Utilitarian moralists like John Stuart Mill regard the consequences of actions for human happiness as the thing which makes them right or wrong, and see rights as derivative: no heavens should fall for justice. Paradoxically, it was Mill, not Kant who argued, with great beauty and strength, for giving women their due.

The "justice versus utility" controversy is centuries old. I've pursued it, from time to time, but the material I've read helps little to resolve my personal questions about when to compromise on feminist principles. I'm a feminist, but I'm also a utilitarian of sorts, and I'm perplexed. Surely sexist attitudes will change only if people do challenge the "little things." Since social life has been organized — apparently for millenia — on the basis of a sharp distinction between male and female roles, many, many "little things" will be in some sense sexist. Underneath so many small phenomena is a mire of tradition, stereotype and prejudice. By challenging every little thing, we are sure to make our own lives miserable. Wasn't female martyrdom something the feminist movement was trying to overcome?

Should we compromise whenever it's easiest? Should we compromise not at all, in desperate toughness? The answer seems obvious: Sometimes we should compromise, sometimes not. But this itself is a compromise. And few are likely to feel secure in their distinctions here.

Someone Cares, the Calgary organization which is co-ordinating the sponsorship of Indo-Chinese refugees, advises that in the Vietnamese culture there is little respect for women's rights, and males, particularly older males, make all important family decisions. They suggest that sponsoring Canadians respect these traditions as far as possible. More compromises lie ahead.

Trudy Govier teaches philosophy at Trent University in Peterborough. She is on sabbatical this year in Calgary.

Poetry by Lorna Uher

THE FAT LADY'S DANCE

The fat lady can't get out of bed.
He has done it before, his idea of a joke.
He has left her there and gone to work
after he has watched each greasy egg
slither down her throat, after he has made her
swallow every wad of buttered bread.

When she hears the door close, she snivels,
she starts to cry as she always does.
But something strange begins to happen.
Somewhere under the globs of flesh
she feels a motion, a memory of movement.
The fat lady thinks of feet,
the dance, the leap, the tapping toes.
She stops crying
opens her mouth, sucks in all
the rage her belly can hold.
With a massive heave-ho she rolls
off the bed to the floor and goes on rolling
splits the door frame with her legs
crumbles the wall with her shoulders
crashes through the living room
onto the steps and rolls down the street.

Cars skid out of her way
she carooms off a bus
and on she rolls, her flesh
slaps the pavement
children follow her booming parade
dogs bark at her one piece band.
She fells trees, she burst hydrants
she rolls through the town
and up to the door of his office.

With one great yell, one mighty heave
she rolls the building flat
then rises up on jiggling legs
and shaking the brick dust off her nightgown
she pirouettes out of town.

illustration by Rebecca Burke

LETTER

Our first daughter
with pinking shears cut out
her mouth, stuck it on the mirror,
a lipstick drawing, then spoke
her death in blood. Our second daughter
swallowed a word I had carved
into a hook and died across the table
spilling her wine on the white lace cloth.
The youngest son sewed my love
into his pockets and fell into the dead
trees reaching from the river.
I keep their baby teeth in jars, hand
prints in books. All our children kill
themselves, I write.

FALL

10,000 snow geese he says
I've never seen anything like it
as if a cloud had opened up
emptied all its down into the lake
making it a soft white bed
for you and me to love on

three snow geese
on the kitchen table
heads and necks hang
over the edge, ice
pendulums in broken clocks
drip drip drip
bright seconds counted out

see what I've brought you
goose for our supper
feathers for your dreams

THE MAGICIAN

When the magician left, he forgot
to join the sawed woman. The upper-half
asleep in her box, did not see him go.
But when she awoke she knew —
all the rabbits had disappeared,
his cape had been pulled
from the laundry basket
and the house was clear of smoke.

For days her head screamed,
her legs kicked the box, but no one came.
The neighbours had heard goings-on
in that place before. He had fooled them
more than once.

When the magician remembered,
he cancelled his travelling band and returned
home. The lower box was empty, but the eyes
in the head opened and the woman said,
"It's too late now. I've found a rat
for a lover. He's eaten my dainties,
my most delicate bits. When he has
swallowed my tongue, we'll sing you
the song of bone. The wind, my rat lover
and me."

The magician buried her head in the yard
and covered her grave with stones, but stones
couldn't hold down the wind or still the rat
scuttling along the darkness above his head.

In powerful, disturbing images, Lorna Uher calls forth the women of her poetry from an underworld of repressed anger and violence. Her work, which includes three books of poetry (the most recent, No Longer Two People, *was written with Patrick Lane), speaks eloquently of women imprisoned by their fears, their loves. There are moments of clarity and light though, and with these come humour, as "The Fat Lady's Dance" attests. The idea for this poem came from a magazine article about a jealous husband who encouraged his wife to become so fat that she couldn't move anywhere without his help.*

— H.P.

Rebecca Burke is an Edmonton-based artist whose work has been featured in Branching Out *(Volume IV, Number 4, 1978). She teaches art at Grant MacEwan Community College.*

Dorothy Livesay: A Bluestocking* Remembers

* **blue·stock·ing** *n.* a woman who displays great interest in intellectual or literary subjects. [nickname "*Blue Stocking* Society" given to a group of English women who met (about 1750) to discuss literature]

interview by Joyce Marshall

Joyce Marshall: *Do you feel, as I do often, that young women today think of the feminist movement as something that started about 15 years ago?*

Dorothy Livesay: I believe they're inclined to think so. They're not students of history. The women's movement certainly started in all the European and English-speaking countries in about 1900 didn't it? So my mother was caught in it, and I was caught even more in it, and then it seemed to lapse during the second world war, and in the Fifties there was a great slump.

Let's talk about your mother who, as you told me earlier, 'did her own thing.'

Well, Florence Randal was brought up in a very Victorian atmosphere, the second girl of three girls, and with three younger brothers. Her mother was widowed. My mother went in for governessing and began to write quite early on. She must have been ambitious even then about her poetry because she sent things to a magazine called *Massey's Magazine*, and her poems and stories were published, alongside Charles G. D. Roberts' and [Bliss] Carman's in that magazine in 1896 or thereabouts — it's fascinating to look back at it.

Then she got a job on the *Ottawa Journal* as a reporter and was, I think, in charge of the society doings on Parliament Hill.

Do you know what year that was?

Probably about 1900. This was after she'd done quite a bit of teaching, French and English, in different schools in Buckingham, Quebec. It was as a result of combined teaching and journalism that when the Boer War was over the British government called for Commonwealth teachers to come and teach the Boer children English, thirty Canadians were to be chosen and my mother was one of them. So here was a young girl, reared in a small country village in Quebec, with no real knowledge of the world — by this time though, she was about 28 — and I would say quite an innocent sort of woman [laughter] from her diaries! And obviously headed to be a spinster. But she got chosen to go to South Africa and was in a concentration camp for Boer families with a group of other teachers from around the world, and spent a year there teaching.

She came back and decided she didn't want to teach at all, she wanted to write. She had been sending articles about South Africa and about the children to the *Ottawa Journal* and the *Winnipeg Telegram*. Since her younger brothers had moved to Winnipeg my mother joined them, went West. This would be about 1903.

Her diary then describes her life as a newspaper woman, in a staff largely of men. She met my father, Fred Livesay, who was also working on the paper. He was a young Englishman who had had many jobs in Canada, none of them very lucrative, so only by the time they were 35 did they get married. He fell into some money which enabled them to put a down payment on a house in Winnipeg's North End.

Was your mother, during this period, involved in the women's suffrage movement?

When she was doing this work she belonged to the Canadian Women's Press Club, the branch in Winnipeg, and met there some most interesting women like Cora Hind and Nan Moulton who had gone to South Africa with my mother. In that club was another woman writer, a Mrs. Cohen, who wrote under the name of Wilhemina Stitch. I guess Nellie McClung had been in that group, but by this time it would be early wartime years and I suppose the women's movement had really been launched by Nellie McClung in Winnipeg in 1912. So my mother must have known all those people and she was interested in what they were doing. I never heard her speak about women's rights or anything of that sort, but she just went ahead and did what she wanted to do [laughs heartily].

She just took the rights . . .

In those married years, part of the time her husband was a war correspondent overseas, while she got interested in Ukrainian folk songs, and learned how to read the language. She got someone to help her translate some of the songs she heard her servant-girl singing, and away she went, doing a whole book of Ruthenian translations which was published in 1917. She sent out poems to *Poetry Chicago*, which were published alongside those of Ezra Pound [laughter].

So riding on the crest of this she became quite ambitious. And it was then that her husband returned from the war, settling down eventually to a big newspaper job in

Dorothy Livesay photo by Eleanor Wachtel

Toronto. He rather looked down on mother's desire for publication, her desire for acclaim, and her letters are rather pitiful, wanting him to be pleased that such and such a magazine gave her this or that. He thought this was sort of showing off.

Would that have been real, strict, male jealousy of the woman, his woman?

No, it was that he was a failed writer. He wanted to be a novelist. He's done some very good short stories and he should have been a writer himself, but he got caught up in the newspaper game.

But still, he didn't like his wife succeeding where he couldn't . . .

Well, he never would *say* that because he always treated women writers as very important. He gave me all the books he could buy by Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Edith Sitwell and Dorothy Richardson. So it was all right for me, his daughter, to do this [laughter], but he never took any real interest in my mother's writing.

But did she still go on writing?

Oh, she went on doggedly, but without any real support from her husband. So that was the pattern set up that I seem to have followed.

Do you feel then that you followed in a sense your mother's life, but more quickly and easily because of your mother and her generation?

Yes, and because of my father. Both of them encouraged my writing, too much even. My first little chapbook, published at 19, was rather precocious yet I think there are some good things in it [laughs].

You published in 1928?

Yes, *Green Pitcher*. And that had never been done in Canada, any girl as young as that producing poetry. And there were very patronizing reviews about this young girl, saying perhaps it was just a "pie-crust" promise [laughter].

Do you think they would have said the same about an eighteen year old man?

Oh, no. Look at what happened to Roberts with [his first book of verse] *Orion*, he was acclaimed, wasn't he? [Archibald] Lampman was thrilled to find a young man publishing poems. The only woman poet predecessing me was Isabella Valancy Crawford who died in 1884, and she'd had a very rough time. Roberts, the editor of *The Week*, would never see her or encourage her. I think she died of a broken heart, really, for not getting a reception. So her work was not recognized at all, back in the 19th century, whereas my mother's work was recognized in 1917. Then, in the Twenties, Margery Pickthall received acclaim and I began to be recognized by 1930 and 1932 when my second book came out, *Signpost*.

As a young woman who had been interested in writing and who was published at an early age, did you consider having a career in writing, in other words, a livelihood as a writer?

No, according to my diary I decided that there was too much against me, that men would never accept a woman as having an independent career as a poet in Canada, and I would have to fit it in, as my mother had, on the side, if I had a family then hiring someone, in those days called a "servant-girl," and giving my time to writing rather than housework, and that's what I'd have to do. But I never felt that the results would be any more than pocket money.

You did feel that for a woman, it was harder?

Yes, though I certainly think that in the depression there were many frustrated men who wanted to write novels and didn't. I mean, why haven't we any literature

from that period? Because they were all either hopelessly unemployed or they were active in politics as I became. So, I think it was hard for everybody to become a writer in those days. It wasn't just women, no, and yet I know I *resigned* myself to the role of not being the key person in a marriage, one who would have a professional life as a writer, as Virginia Woolf was. I didn't think that was ever possible in this country. I got very interested in politics, as you know, and so my writing was shoved back secondarily, until I had a breakdown, after working in social work for a while. The breakdown revealed to me that I simply had to write poetry.

Yes, of course I think a great many people, during the 30's did feel that their personal ambitions to express themselves, become writers, weren't . . .

But you see, on campus, it was almost impossible to be thought of as a woman writer. The University of Toronto writers' club was only for men. Women had their own organizations in the colleges, but we never mixed or had a real writers' group going. I never met with the poets who were reading poetry, I was ashamed to admit I was a poet when I met some new young man because he'd be scared stiff. At Trinity College I was known as a bluestocking and I wasn't invited to parties or dances. I once gave a tea for my student friends, and half of the young men refused to come [laughs heartily]. Altogether, if you read *The Varsity* of those days you will see that there was a battle about it, letters to the paper about women's poor showing, not admitted to anything. It was quite a shock to me, just two or three years ago to find myself invited to Hart House [at the University of Toronto] to a women writers' conference. In Hart House! We were never allowed in the place except for a dance, so things have changed all right, much for the better. But then it was rather a drought period.

You became politically active, in the early 30's? . . .

Yes, after returning from the Sorbonne in 1932, I found the depression in Canada, and was appalled, when I'd already been quite active in the writers' activities, not knowing any writers in France, but going to their meetings and joining in parades and all that sort of thing, I got very interested in the political movement in Paris, along with other Canadian students who were over there with me. So I came back prepared to work as a political person, and that's why I went into social work. My father wanted me to get a job teaching, but of course there were no jobs then for people who could teach French and Italian.

Which was what your university training was.

Yes, I just redirected myself entirely into social work, much to my father's disappointment. He wanted me to be in a more academic field where he thought I might have a chance to write.

Let's talk generally about the position of women in the 30's and women in political movements. I imagine that you were welcomed, you were not told that you were putting your nose in where you didn't belong.

Oh, no. It was absolutely the opposite of university life. Once you got into the movement against war and fascism and then later into the Young Communist League, there were endless jobs to do, meetings every night, picketing to do, and things to write for the left wing press. For the first time in my life I was an equal with men and got to know men, because I'd suffered badly as a student, being just a wallflower. So I became very close to men, as comrades, and that was a most happy time in my life, because men were never condescending. We all had jobs to do, we were allowed to speak up and give opinions and the whole movement was very restorative to my psyche [laughter].

Don't you think that speaking just generally, because I remember that time also, a great many of us women, we really did think of ourselves thoroughly as people?

Yes, absolutely.

I often think, for instance, that there were relationships, with or without marriage, there would be great comradeship, even a sort of equality, except for one deficit — the women did all the dishes! Would you agree with that?

Yes! There were a great many abortions because women in the movement hadn't the time or money for children, and they knew it. Abortions were illegal, of course, and I had one such —

I never did, but I can remember having to call around and trying to find somebody to do one. Changes in abortion laws are one gain for the women of this period . . .

Oh definitely. Have it in the open! Also, I had illicit relationships, as my parents would have thought, living with a man in Paris, and then in Montreal, and I had to keep it dark from them, as I had to keep my abortion dark. Well, I did tell my father because I wanted to pay $40 to the abortionist, and my father gave me the money.

Your father was an exception, though.

Of course he had to hide it from my mother. But we had to *hide* this living with a man, it was all in secret! That made life very difficult.

You would live openly only with regards to certain friends and contemporaries, right? But otherwise you kept it definitely dark from parents, and the general population. You wouldn't have let an employer know?

Oh, no. Well when the time came to move out west, and I met my husband-to-be, Duncan McNair, a Scot, a lot older than I was, we became lovers, but in great secret, because I was a social worker with the government then. Finally, he could not get a job, he was an unemployed single man, and you couldn't get jobs if you were that, and moreover, he could only get welfare if he went to a work camp. So instead he did odd jobs — placer mining and taking off to the bush and that sort of thing and coming back to town. We found out that if a man was married, then he had a much greater chance of getting a job, or of getting relief, or what have you, so we decided to marry. I told my boss, who was a very wonderful, progressive woman in charge of the welfare field service, Laura Holland, I told her I was going to marry, and she said, well you know the rule is that once you marry you lose your job. That was true in teaching, nursing, social work, anything. I said, 'yes but, couldn't we keep it quiet until he does get a job and then I'll be fired.' So she very generously allowed me to be married in secret, and it not be known to the staff.

But then he did, in a few months, he got a job, through socialist — CCF — friends, and he got some kind of job earning I don't know what, $100 a month maybe, which was what I had been earning as a social worker.

That was very good pay, that was excellent pay during the depression.

Well, we had to pay $20 rent, for a house. Anyhow I

photo by Eleanor Wachtel

Dorothy Livesay

lost the job — I mean this was all arranged, this was going to happen, I knew it was going to happen — yet I got terribly depressed. We lived in a small apartment near Stanley Park, and I was in a real slump for not having any work to do, I couldn't even write because I felt so crippled somehow.

Well do you think, now we do have a recession, we have 8½% unemployment, that is a grave unemployment, but it is not what it was in the 30's — 30% or 35% — I don't know the figures exactly, but do you think there would ever be a movement against women now, you mustn't be working?

What about women teachers now, they're beginning to lose their jobs, aren't they? All this kind of competition for jobs is starting, but I can't believe it will go back to that of not allowing married women to work, which was the case in my day. Because everybody's married, either legally or illegally nowadays. What business is it of the employer whether you're living with a man or not, nowadays?

Well, that's another gain.

That *is* a gain. I don't think that will change. How can that be changed, unless we get a Khomeini.

But there does seem to be a sort of conservative trend. Of course, when you were in the position, with others, in the 30's, of not being able to continue your jobs after you were married, women were not able to help other women, were they? It was all too precarious. And now, I think there's more sisterhood.

Oh, much more, and women are in trade unions, or in teachers' unions, everything's more organized, then there's this human rights thing always working.

Yes, women could apply to human rights, that would be discrimination.

Exactly. Well there are battles going on. But there is still of course, an awful lot to be done. For instance, imagine Canadian lesbian women not being allowed to enter the United States to go to a conference! That's just happens [laughs]. Again, you see they're looking at women through sexist eyes. Because they're lesbians, for no other reason whatsoever, they're not allowed into the States. Of course the whole revolution of gay people is still going on, and women are part of that.

Was there much lesbianism, either open or secret, during the 20's or 30's?

Certainly there was on the university campuses, certainly there was at the University of Toronto. I think it had its origin in the way women were kept in ghettos, that is to say, their only resource and comfort was with each other, in residences and so on. There was a lot of it, it was very secret, but once you had friends who were students who were practising it or what have you, you knew all about it. I had the very strong feeling that it was because of men's attitude to women on campus, and the fact they didn't even think women could ever be creative, or write or paint or anything. These statements were made all the time in *The Varsity*, I think it's because of that that lesbianism did get quite a start.

Would these women have been expelled if discovered?

No, it would never have been brought into the open at all, the authorities would have ignored it. I mean, there were women professors who were involved, so nobody would tell on anybody. But once you were in the know you sure knew who they all were.

Now they can be more open, even though they still can't get into the United States.

[laughs] That's about it!

I would say that compared with my writing life in my twenties, young women today have gained — not equal pay for equal work — but much greater freedom to live as they choose, married or unmarried, with or without children. What is also most important — freedom to create and to gain recognition for their contribution to the arts. In receiving grants from the Canada Council, provincial arts councils and universities women stand an equal chance with men. Women's magazines such as *Branching Out* have proliferated in every major city in Canada; Women's Studies as a university discipline are comfortably established offering a wide variety of credit courses. Moreover it is most encouraging to see how women over fifty are responding to new opportunities in education and the arts.

Thus, as I see it, the sexual revolution has not failed. It still presents many hazards, as much for young men as for young women. But I agree with what that amazing young dancer Margie Gillis said in a CBC interview, "Freedom means tempering one's actions — self-discipline. Freedom does not mean tearing wild all over the place." And she adds some words which express my own long-lived thoughts about Canada: "There's a kind of freedom that's definitely in our landscapes here in our snow, our trees, our animals and our instincts. If we could just tap that, then we would have something that is very exquisite and raw." It warms my heart to hear such words from a young woman artist.

The Thousandth Spring Would Be The Same

The last of the snow is old
grey shoulders in the street
honeycombed
and sinking fast
into black stains.

My little house stands forth
washed in soft tints;
And the fresh east wind
is ringing with squeals of kids
who are gleeful at last
to be skipping outside in their shoes.
In my garden patch
the shoots and swollen buds
wait ready as fists
to thrust and open.

Strange that an old dame of eighty
with her humpback and crutch
should watch and should chatter
of Death, and go on
about spring just like Heaven . . .

by Marianne Bluger

Marianne Bluger lives and writes in Ottawa. She has published in various literary magazines and is working on a second book of poems.

1923 - 1935: The Golden Age of Women's Sport

by Abby Hoffmann

When women today participate in track and field, marathon swimming, baseball, even boxing or wrestling, golf, tennis and many other sports, they are not doing anything that hasn't been done before. From the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s there were probably more opportunities for women to take part in competitive sports than there are today. The years 1923 to 1935 could really be considered the Golden Age of sports activity for Canadian Women.

If sport for women prior to World War I was regarded as something suitable for women who rode and played golf and tennis with both the appropriate clothing and decorum, participation had broadened considerably by the 1920s. The types of sport played were diverse, and there was if anything more tolerance of rough, aggressive, body-contact style of play than there is today. University women had indulged in the greatest number of competitive sports before World War I, but after the war, women from all walks of life took part. Many women today find it almost impossible to play competitive sports after they leave school because of a lack of professional or amateur outlets. In the 1920s and 30s, there were ample opportunities for women beyond school age. While school sport did develop in this period too, it was sport for adult women that flourished in a way yet to be duplicated in this country.

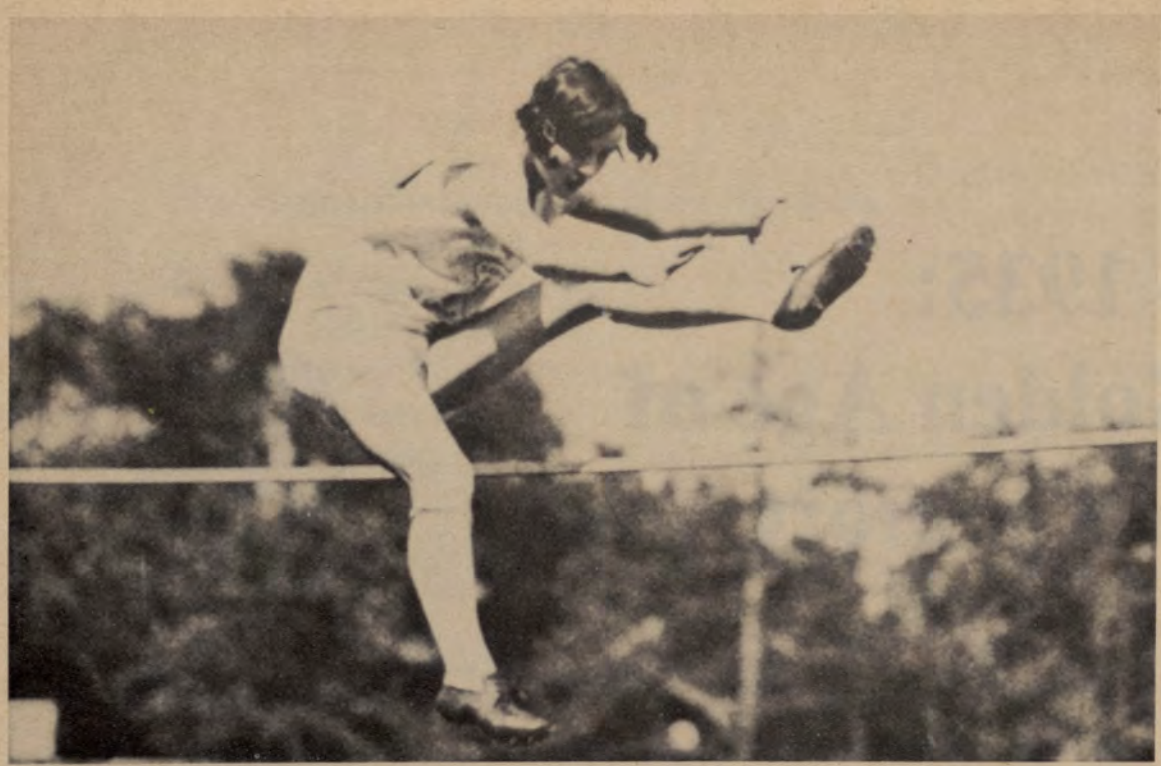
This was also a Golden Age in terms of the record of Canada's female athletes in international competition. Canada had world champion speedskaters, basketball teams, and marathon swimmers. The Canadian team carried off many honours, dominating the events, when the Olympic programme included track and field for women for the first time in 1928, in Amsterdam. It is interesting that the advantage did not last long. Facing stiffer competition four years later at the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1932, Canada did not do quite as well. By 1936 the women's team was reduced to a single medal in track and field. After World War II, the team gained only one medal again at the first post-war Games, held in London in 1948, and has yet to strike for a medal in Olympic track and field since then.

Similarly, throughout the 1920s and 30s, the Edmonton Grads basketball team showed the world what basketball was all about — but when women's basketball was added to the Olympic programme in 1976, the Canadian team was nowhere near the top.

Spectators flocked by the thousands to see women play basketball in the late 1920s, and newspapers covered the activity of women athletes in a manner reserved today for male sports stars only. Radio stations carried women's basketball games 'live.'

Prior to World War I, the general attitude of society was one of

Noel MacDonald



Ethel Catherwood

grudging acceptance of the relevance of sport for women and sports participation was confined to relatively few sports and mainly to women of means.

Mass sport for men had gone through a major growth period in the first decade of the 20th century, and it was inevitable that demand for participation among women would eventually follow. There was quite simply greater interest and enthusiasm for sport in the 20th century's early years than ever before. This was partly a product of increasing urbanization, more leisure time, and the deliberate development of sport as a major entertainment through professional and amateur leagues. Indicative of this widespread interest in sport was the introduction of daily sports pages in newspapers after the war.

As more women entered the labour force it was logical that women soon demanded similar leisure-time activities. There appeared to be a general loosening of attitudes about the suitability of pastimes for women as a result of women's greater role in the economy. Clothing too had evolved to styles more suitable for sports. And while a woman might still be arrested for public nudity if she dared to take off her stockings to go swimming at a beach, the physical exposure of women for sports activity was accepted very rapidly, and by the late 1920s there was not a great deal of difference between the sports uniforms for girls and women that were in style then and those worn today.

The movement snowballed as more and more girls and women became active. The obvious pleasure and satisfaction to be gained from involvement in sport was infectious. The same thing applied to spectators of women's sports. One writer of the time, referring to women's baseball games in Toronto, said that "the spectators came to jeer but stayed to cheer." Women's sport, which had been regarded as something of a joke, became an immensely popular entertainment. The result was that crowds of five and six thousand were common at Toronto's Sunnyside Stadium when women's games were scheduled. These crowds were often larger than those for men's games.

Montreal and Toronto were the most active centres of sport for women during this era, but throughout the country there was a great deal of participation. Members of Canada's international teams in this period came from the Maritimes as well as from Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver. If there was any single group within the country where participation was consistently low, it was among French-Canadian women. It was the English population in Montreal that had started the big sport and social clubs like the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, and, while French-Canadian men did participate in sport, their involvement was considerably smaller. For a combination of historical, cultural and economic reasons, English-Canadians were more interested in sports. Add to this the fact of Roman Catholic restrictions on the liberalization of attitudes to women, and one can understand the smaller participation of Quebec women in sports.

A prominent feature through most of this period was the relative autonomy of the separate organizations governing women's sport. Women were probably more active as coaches, organizers, administrators and fund-raisers than they are today, mainly because most of the sports clubs and organizations they belong to were, of necessity, exclusively for women. There were several reasons for this, not the least of which was the fact that when women started to become interested in sports they found many doors closed to them. If they wanted to play, they had to start their own clubs, leagues and federations. At all levels of sport there were many

women-only activities. There was a Women's Olympiad held in London, England in 1925, three years before the addition of track and field to the regular Olympic Games. Women's track and field was governed by the Women's Athletic Federation of Canada and under long-time president Alexandrine Gibb (a prominent athlete and sports writer herself) it succeeded in producing some of the best track athletes in the world. Although affiliated with the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (the AAU), it was for the most part the only agency responsible for the development of women's track and field. In eastern Canada, most of the clubs were women only — the Lakeside Ladies Athletic Club, the Toronto Ladies (one of the first, established in 1920), and the Laurel Ladies Athletic Club were all prominent in Toronto, as was the Dolphinets Swim Club.

That closed doors produced women-only clubs is best evidenced by the tenacity of Canada's greatest golfer — Ada Mackenzie. Mackenzie died in 1973 at 81 after a golf career which lasted 60 years. Throughout the lengthy career she won many American, Ontario, and Canadian titles and medals. One of her most enduring achievements was the founding of the Toronto Ladies' Golf Club in 1924. There were many women interested in the game (it was, after all, a sport that had gained wide social acceptance early on), but these women found that it was hard to get access to the links. Today many golf courses have "ladies' days" with the remainder of the week restricted to male players, and it was no different then. To combat this severe restriction on playing time for golf and tennis, Ada Mackenzie personally sought out a site in Thornhill, Ontario and undertook the financing and purchasing of the club. Ironically, the club is exclusively for women but an occasional concession makes the facilities available to men.

Canadian men had first entered Olympic competition in the third Games in 1904. Women's events (tennis) were first held in the Olympics in 1900 but Canada did not have any participants until 1924 (Winter Games) and 1928 (Summer Games). Canadian women were relative latecomers in the Summer Games

Ada MacKenzie

programme, but when they did arrive, in 1928, it was a fabulous debut — if an official team points competition had been held, Canadian women led by Bobbie Rosenfeld and Ethel Catherwood would have won hands down.

One of the greatest ironies in Canadian sporting history occurred in Amsterdam. While the Canadian women athletes were out on the track showing the rest of the world what excellence meant, Canadian doctors were attending a special colloquium to discuss the future of Olympic events for women, arguing against the suitability of sports for women and women for sports.

Some people have argued that the medical debate in Amsterdam was mainly precipitated by the condition of finishers in the women's 800 metre event. They were widely reported to have collapsed after crossing the finish line in a state of great distress. Other observers said that they were no more exhausted than men competing in the same event, but that this degree of fatigue was considered unacceptable among the "weaker sex." Dr. A. S. Lamb of McGill University led the charge against women's athletics with claims about the potential damage that would befall women who indulged in sports. The arguments fell on deaf ears in Amsterdam for the most part, although the 800 metre run was eliminated from the Olympic programme and not reinstated until 1960. In Canada, the newspapers treated Lamb's comments disparagingly and

Myrtle Cook. One of several women ex-athletes hired as a newspaper sports reporter in the 1920's.

in response to his fear for the reproductive capacities of female athletes, published many photos of prominent women athletes and their babies — delighting often in pointing out that these women were continuing successful athletic careers (Montreal's Myrtle Cook was an outstanding example of this) after giving birth. Nevertheless, the argument did not die.

The medical arguments of such men as Dr. Lamb were not totally without their following, even though acceptance of women's sports was the norm. Prosperity and a general liberalism toward women in the 20s had led to a tolerance of women in sports as in many other areas of life formerly restricted to men, but when the prosperity of the 1920s was interrupted by the Great Crash of 1929 and the Depression of the 30s, attitudes shifted.

It has often been pointed out that bad times can lead to a resurgence of conservative ideas, and this was certainly the case in the area of sports.

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Photographs by Carol Tesiorowski

flute player and the child

Carol Tesiorowski refers to these images as "fragments of femininity." She has also taken photographs in documentary style and sometimes uses idealized concepts such as Mother and Child. A frequent visitor to California, she often photographs in the southern exposure of that region.

Ms. Tesiorowski is from southern Ontario and has exhibited her work in numerous galleries in and around London, Ontario. Her photographs have appeared in recent issues of *Camera Canada* and *Photographer's Forum*.

Solo Dive

fiction by Barbara Novak

Jessie cupped her hand over her eyes and squinted at the glare of the sun on the lake. The smooth surface exploded in a glittering splash as two campers cannon-balled off the edge of the dock. The slippery white planks splayed out over the water, containing it in a big square Y. From far back on the beach where Jessie stood with her ankles sunk into the soft, burning sand, the water looked cool and inviting. But she didn't want to go swimming. Not today. "I'm sure the lake is full of pee," she said to Lisa, who stood ahead of her in the line.

"I think it's just revolting," said Lisa. They had discussed this before. The boys who went to the American Arts Camp were the kind who peed in the lake. This discussion was as much a ritual as their Monday afternoon march with the other ten-year-old girls across the highway to the boys' division for Co-Rec. Lisa called it forced fun.

"I don't even feel like going in the water," Lisa said.

"Me neither," said Jessie, feeling a trickle of sweat roll down her collarbone into the top of her bathing suit. It was her favourite one — navy, with yellow and white ducks on it. Although both girls dreaded Monday afternoons and hated having to go swimming with boy buddies, they had tried on all their bathing suits for each other during rest hour that day to decide which one looked best.

Cool splashing sounds and laughter floated up from the lake. "I wish they'd just get it over with," said Lisa. "My feet are burning." Jessie edged out from behind her to count how many girls were ahead of them. The campers who already had buddies could go in the water. The others had to wait in line to be paired. She looked at the fidgeting row of glistening pink shoulders, swayed backs and slender legs and wondered if the other girls felt as shy and naked in their two-piece bathing suits as she did in hers. She wished she were back in the girls' division at their own waterfront, their own lake, where it didn't matter which bathing suit she wore and where she could be buddies with Lisa. Since the first day of camp when Lisa had asked her whether she wanted to be best friends, the bond between them had been absolute. Jessie hadn't known anyone at the camp when she arrived, and northern Michigan seemed to be a long way from her home in Montreal. Lisa hadn't known anyone either, so the two girls were grateful to have found security in each other. Already they had thrown their arms around one another and sobbed in anticipation of the last day of camp, still six weeks away, when they'd have to say good-bye. Jessie planned to visit Lisa in Los Angeles during the Christmas holidays and Lisa promised to come to Montreal to see Jessie at Easter.

"You're number forty-three and I'm forty-four, but the boys won't stand still long enough for me to count them," Jessie said.

"As long as I don't get Martin Sweeney. I'd rather die than have to be Martin Sweeney's buddy," said Lisa. Martin stood across from them kicking the sand with his pudgy, white feet. His pale, loose flesh sagged over the top of his Hawaiian swimming shorts. Martin played the trombone. He had thick, slobbery red lips; he was loud, a bully, and even the other boys disliked him. His only friend was the Rooster, and nobody liked the Rooster either. He was a pale, skinny kid with red hair, freckles and practically no chin. Secretly, Jessie felt sorry for him. They were supposed to be gifted youth at this camp. That was one of the camp songs, sung to the tune of Mickey Mouse — G-I-F-T-E-D Y-O-U-T-H. You'd only have to take one look at the Rooster, Jessie thought,

illustration series by Barbara Hartmann

to know that he had no talent. In fact, he was last chair violinist in the Junior Orchestra. But then, Jessie figured, someone had to be last. He and Martin were engaged in a sand kicking contest. They were seeing who could kick it closer to the girls' line. The Rooster echoed everything that Martin yelled.

"Look out for the sand storm, girls!" Martin shrieked, kicking wildly at the beach.

"Yeah, look out for the sand!" cried the Rooster.

"Hey! Your bathing suit top's falling off!" Martin called to no one in particular.

"Yeah, your bathing suit's falling off!" the Rooster shouted, scooping up a spray of sand with his foot. The breeze, though faint, was against them. The sand flew back into their own line. Jessie saw the boy standing behind the Rooster get some in his face.

"Cut it out, you jerk!" he said to Martin.

"It's not my fault. He started it," Martin said, shoving the Rooster backwards. The boy pushed the Rooster back into Martin. Then a shrill whistle brought everything to a halt. Walter, the boys' division head, stood at the front of the two lines, with his whistle around his neck, sparkling like a beacon in the sun.

"Remember to place your badges on the buddy board before you go in the water," he announced. The campers wore round plastic badges identifying them by name, home town, division, and major instrument or activity. Lisa's and Jessie's both said "ballet."

"You're not allowed in the deep end unless both buddies have a red star," Walter continued, ignoring the protest from the boys' line.

"Let them drown," called out Martin.

"There will be no pushing, shoving or running on the dock and no talking during buddy checks. You all know the rules. Now it's a very hot day and I know you're all anxious to get in the water. So with your co-operation, we'll get started."

Jessie dreaded this part the most. She hated stepping forward to meet her buddy while everyone watched and waited. Walter always dragged it out, too. What was she supposed to say to the boy who had to be her buddy? What if he didn't like her? If anyone had really wanted to be her buddy, she thought, he would have asked her and they'd be in the water right now. But the girls in the line were there because nobody had asked them. We're the rejects, Jessie thought. It didn't matter that less than twenty campers were already in the water and that some of them were buddies with their sisters or brothers. What mattered was that she wasn't. She hadn't been asked and so now they were going to force some kid to be her buddy.

"It's not fair," she whispered to Lisa. "It's not our fault we weren't asked. Why can't they just let us go in the water with each other?"

Lisa nibbled at her bottom lip. Her eyes darted over to the boys' line. "Just hope neither of us gets Martin Sweeney."

They had stood in another line early that day to try and get out of standing in this one. Right after breakfast they had raced back to the cabin together to rinse their mouths with the hottest water they could stand. Then they'd run across the field to wait in line at the Girls' Infirmary where they hoped to get a swimming excuse.

Maybe she should have told the nurse the truth, Jessie thought. She should have described to her how awful these Monday afternoons were, and pleaded with her for a note so she wouldn't have to go in the water. But instead, she had pretended to have a sore throat.

Lisa had been waiting for her when she got outside. Lisa had complained of a stomach ache, figuring it was harder to diagnose. But the doctor had said that she was perfectly healthy. He had told her it was just a muscle ache from dancing.

"Jeez, Jessie. It could have been appendicitis, you know. They don't even care!"

"I didn't even get to see the doctor," Jessie had grumbled. But she had been relieved that Lisa hadn't got a swimming excuse either. She wouldn't have wanted to go through the line-up alone.

Now that the lines were moving it was easier to predict who their buddies would be. It looked as though Lisa would just miss getting Martin Sweeney. "Thank God!" she said to Jessie. "Even the Rooster is better

than him."If Lisa got the Rooster, that meant Jessie would get the kid next to him, the one who had told Martin to stop kicking sand. She didn't know his name, but thought she recognized him from the chorus of the operetta. He looked ordinary, she thought, probably shy, like herself.

The pairing was a slow process. Walter did one couple at a time. The boys groaned as though they were in horrible pain. The girls giggled, stepping forward with backward glances to meet their reluctant buddies. Then they ran off to the buddy board to hang up their badges and then finally, into the water. There were still about fifteen people ahead of Jessie and Lisa when Jessie noticed Michael Rainer, who played Pitti Sing in the operetta, step out of line. She nudged Lisa. "I wonder where he thinks he's going," she said.

They watched him stride round the back of the boys' line and come over to the far side of the girls' line. "It looks like he's coming over here," Lisa said.

He walked right up to them as though he weren't even shy or nervous and said, "Do you want to be my buddy?"

"Who me?" asked Jessie.

"No, her," he said, indicating Lisa with a casual flick of his thumb.

"Thank you very much," said Lisa. And with a gesture that left Jessie deeply impressed, if somewhat bewildered, she tossed back her dark hair, looked him directly in the eyes and added, "I thought you'd never ask. See you," she said to Jessie, and without another glance in her direction headed over to the buddy board.

Jessie quickly stepped forward to fill the gap in the line. It had suddenly become a lot hotter. She could feel moist heat rising from her own body. The hair on the crown of her head burned her fingers when she touched it. Her face felt hot and prickly red as though she were going to cry. There were two groups of Junior Girls, she thought. The ones who got asked and the ones who didn't. Lisa got asked. And Michael Rainer was okay. After all, he had a lead role in *The Mikado*. Jessie wondered whether Lisa would have been happy for her if she'd been asked instead.

The girl behind her tapped her on the shoulder. "Is Lisa going out with Michael Rainer?" she asked.

"Going *out* with him? We're too young to go out yet. We're only ten, you know." Jessie wished she hadn't said that. She felt ridiculous. Did this mean that Lisa was going out with Michael Rainer? Did it mean she'd be going to concerts with him and sitting six inches apart which was as close as the counsellors would allow? Would he ask Lisa to be his buddy next week?

"She's never even talked to him before," she said to the girl, wondering who she was. Suddenly, Jessie realized with a sense of panic that she didn't have any other friends besides Lisa. The other girls in the cabin accused them of being snobs. Even the counsellor urged them to make other friends, but they didn't care. From the moment they woke up in the morning, Lisa in the top bunk and Jessie in the bottom, they were inseparable. Just last night Nancy Parker, who stood in front of her now that Lisa was gone, had asked Jessie if she could sit next to her at the High School Orchestra concert, but Jessie had said no, she was saving the seat for Lisa.

Poor Nancy, Jessie thought, seeing that Nancy was going to be stuck with Martin Sweeney. As soon as she stepped forward to meet him Martin began to shout, "No, no, no, no! Not her, not her! Save me, please, anyone but her."

Nancy, who was still only nine, stood with her head bent down, her arms behind her back, hands linked, softly digging in the sand with one bare foot. Jessie could tell she was trying not to look embarrassed. Martin was only joking. He threw himself down on his knees and begged Walter to have mercy on him. The boys snickered while the girls kept their heads lowered and looked anyway, as though it were a bad part in a movie. Then Walter blew his whistle. Martin, either you march over there and escort that nice young lady over to the buddy board and into the water or else you can run fifty laps around the tennis courts and miss the cook-out tonight." Martin smirked. Then he waddled over to where Nancy stood and bowed deeply. Everyone laughed.

Now it was Jessie's turn. The Rooster stood opposite her, staring straight out to the lake. Jessie raised

her head and took one delicate ballet step toe first into the sand. She waited.

"William," said Walter. The Rooster didn't move. "You're next, William."

Jessie stared at his profile. Turn around, she silently pleaded with him.

"Let's go, William," said Walter with exaggerated patience.

Jessie knew something was wrong. It shouldn't be taking this long. She wondered whether he'd gone deaf. She could see his Adam's apple disappear into his neck and then bulge out again like a big lump of terror and she was torn between wanting to reassure him that it was okay; she didn't hate him, and scorn; for she did hate him. He was just standing there like an idiot making her wait in front of everyone.

"Okay, William," Walter said again, moving towards him. The Rooster stood perfectly still until Walter touched his arm and then he opened his mouth and started to shriek. This wasn't play-acting, like Martin. His howls were real, as real as his yellow teeth and his bright pink tear-stained face. Jessie watched with horror; this was happening to her no less than it was happening to him. She wondered how to faint, how to disappear. She hated him with all the intensity of her ten years of obedience, forgiveness and stubborn understanding. She hated the Rooster's mother, she hated Walter, the counsellors, the campers and she hated Lisa for having abandoned her.

Walter struggled with the Rooster, trying to pick him up. Next to Walter with his hairy man's arms and his thick, tanned chest, the Rooster looked so small. His hoarse sobbing cut through the distant sounds of the lake, the laughter of the campers in the water, even the soft quick sound of Jessie's breathing. Jessie stared at him while he squirmed and kicked in Walter's hold. She prayed Walter wouldn't try to carry him over to her and began to tremble with relief when she saw that he was taking him away in the direction of the cabins. The terrible choking howls grew more and more faint until they finally subsided into the distance.

One of the counsellors took over the proceedings. The campers were subdued. The next boy in line, the one who had pushed the Rooster, stepped out to meet her. He was about her height with brown hair. Jessie could see a picked, scabby mosquito bite on his cheek. When she looked him in the eyes, the way Lisa had looked at Michael Rainer, he didn't change his tight blank expression. She trotted over to the buddy board with him. "What's your name?" she asked.

He flashed his badge at her. Thomas Springer, Chicago, Illinois, Junior Boys Division, voice and drama.

"My name is Jessie Greene," she said. Thomas didn't answer.

"Are you in the operetta?" she asked.

When he didn't reply she said, "I thought I saw you in the chorus. I'm in the chorus." Thomas kept walking.

"I have a red star on my badge, too," she said, running to catch up with him. "That means we can go in the deep end." She curved her neck around so that her head was right in front of his face. "Why won't you talk to me?"

It wasn't my fault, she wanted to tell him. Look, she wanted to say, I didn't ask to stand in that line, I didn't ask the Rooster to have a fit, I didn't ask to be your buddy, how do you think I feel? He looked at her, his eyes flickering with contained hostility, then he shut them off again. He stepped up on the dock and walked along the white planks to the edge of the deep end. Jessie watched him jump off, his arms and legs flailing. She waited until he bobbed up to the surface and watched him swim away to the raft. She took a deep breath, raised her arms, and entered the water with a perfect, graceful dive.

Barbara Novak is a freelance writer and editor living in Toronto.

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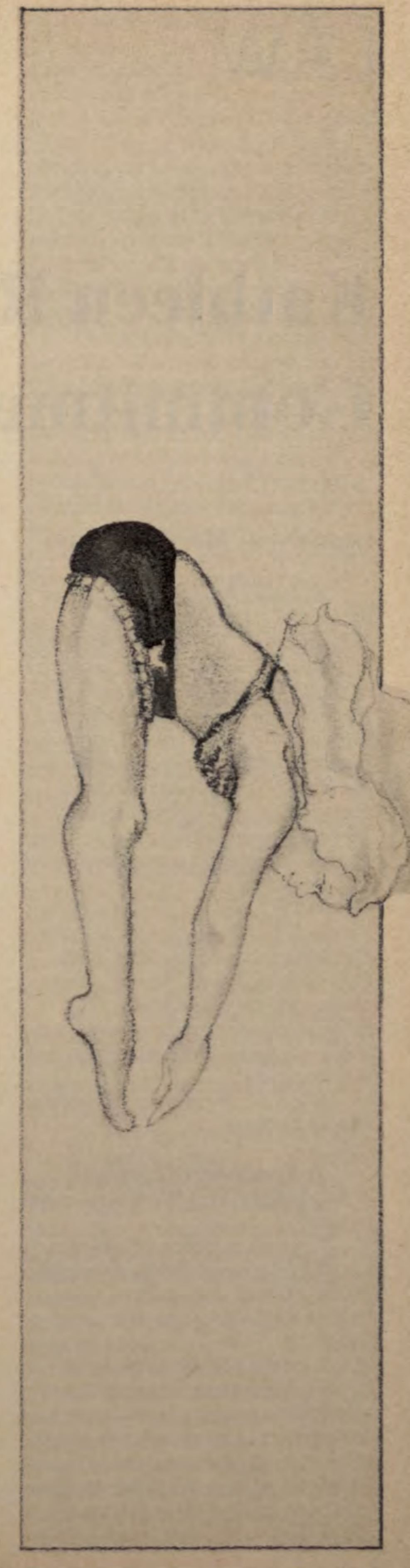


Kathleen Ruff: Passionate Commitment and No Apologies

interview by Maryka Omatsu

Kathleen Ruff is the hostess of the CBC-TV programme the "Ombudsman." Formerly a university professor of French at the University of British Columbia at Victoria, she was involved in the lettuce boycott campaign and the rights of immigrant workers. Later she became active in the Women's Movement and was President of the Victoria Status of Women group. In that capacity, she became a spokesperson in the human rights area.

In 1972, she ran unsuccessfully for the B.C. New Democratic Party. She was appointed Director of the B.C. Human Rights Branch, where she quickly became known throughout the province for her outspoken defence of the disadvantaged in our society.

She is 39, the mother of two, and lives in Toronto.

You call yourself a feminist. What does the term "feminist" mean to you?

It means someone who is committed to the equal rights, privileges, dignity, power and status of women in our society. So it has to be an active thing.

It means you are working and fighting in whatever way you can to bring about equality for women. A feminist has to go against the grain of our culture. It doesn't mean you stand up and preach but it means you are trying to change the fact that in our society today, women are treated as lesser human beings, whether you're talking about financial security or subconscious attitudes.

How would you evaluate the Women's Movement of the 60's?

I think a lot of progress has been made in people coming to recognize that things were wrong. I was totally conditioned to think it proper that women should only have certain jobs and lower wages. I think I was typical of many women and men who felt that this was somehow a God-given arrangement.

During the 60's people began to question whether in fact this was fair. Gradually they started to try to bring about changes in legislation and in private and social practices.

There doesn't seem to be the same enthusiasm and energy around the Women's Movement today, as there was a decade ago. Do you think this reflects a lessening of interest or are women working at a different level than they were in the 60's and early 70's?

I would like more visible action by women because I am a great believer in dealing with what's happening. I think the internal things — like consciousness raising — are important but, to me, it's not as important as the fact that there are women suffering poverty right now. There are older women living in miserable conditions without enough money for a proper meal, and yet there doesn't seem to be the active work needed to deal with those urgent problems.

Why do you think there isn't this activity?

I think when you start talking about an idea you can do a certain amount to get people to recognize the concept. But to change the practice and the reality is much harder, and more unpleasant. You must be prepared to take a lot of hostility and ridicule. That's unpleasant and you need a lot of commitment or a lot of guts. It's easier to just talk.

Our society stresses the individual so much. It encourages us to think just about ourselves and our relationship to the world around us. There isn't much stress on getting involved with other groups of people.

Perhaps because of those pressures women have tended in the 70's to look inward and stress consciousness raising and to look at their own bodies and their feelings.

I also think times are hard. The economy and unemployment are disincentives to take risks. The stress is on surviving and looking after yourself.

Do you think women see themselves as having things in common with other oppressed groups in our society?

I think quite a few women do. In the Women's Movement there is sympathy with the idea of co-operating with other minority groups. In the city of Vancouver, for example, the women, the minorities and the handicapped all joined forces to bring about an affirmative action

hiring programme. They made a joint strategy, presentations and deputations. They succeeded in getting the programme introduced and set up. Then there was another municipal election and a very reactionary council killed the programme.

"In the 70's women have tended to look inward and to stress consciousness raising and to look at their own bodies and feelings."

You ran unsuccessfully for the NDP provincially in 1972 in B.C. Do you think that the Feminist Party is a solution for having greater female representation in Government or do you think that women should work for more equal representation in the major parties?

I don't think that I can try to tell other women what to do. My feeling has always been that people should take their own paths. We're all trying to achieve the same ends and some will work through the established system and others will take different routes. My feeling is that there are many roads to Rome and that all these women in a way help bring it about and that's a good thing. I tend to think that people are critical of extreme feminists. Extremists can make things uncomfortable, but they sure have made a difference. If there hadn't been extremists in the beginning of this century, women wouldn't have the vote today.

"We're all trying to achieve the same ends. Some will work through the established system and others will take different routes."

There's a lot to be said for working with the established parties. Your chances of getting elected, of having a voice in the Legislature, are better. But on the other hand, none of the established parties have a clean record on women's issues. So why not set up a women's party that is completely committed to women's issues?

Do you think having more women in Parliament would really make a change for the better?

I think you want people elected who are committed to feminist principles — people who have an awareness of what discrimination is all about and what respect and equal treatment are all about.

To me, feminist principles mean commitment to an open society, with equal dignity, privileges, opportunities and rights. Feminism doesn't mean equal treatment for a few privileged women. That doesn't interest me one bit.

The kids of people on welfare, handicapped kids, kids of minority people should have equal opportunity to share in our society and to shape our society and not just be hewers of wood and drawers of water, which they are now. The amazing exceptions don't interest me a great deal. Sure there are exceptions — the street cleaner's kid who rises to the top. But it's what happens to the average person, born from a group that doesn't enjoy equal status in our society, that interests me. What chances does he or she have? Right now, very little.

"Feminism doesn't mean equal treatment for a few privileged women . . . It's what happens to the average person, born from a group that doesn't enjoy equal status in our society, that interests me."

It should be a goal to have a substantial representation of women in government because no group has a monopoly on talent, skill or ability. If the system is fair there should be a reasonable representation of all groups in all places. You've got a cock-eyed society when minorities are all clustered in miserable low-paying jobs and women are clustered in a tiny segment of jobs and virtually non-existent in politics and decision-making.

How did you become involved in human rights? What made you an activist?

I have never understood why some people become very actively involved in community issues and others just don't. Part of it, I guess is your own experience.

I come from a working class background. My mother was a uniformed servant for an upper class family. She came from a mining family where there was a lot of poverty and really hard times. On a very personal gut level, I know what that does to a human being. My mother had no chance at all to have a life of her own, because of both economic deprivation and the attitudes of society. The system never gave her a chance.

I never thought, in a conscious way, 'isn't it terrible what society has done to my mother and all those other people.' But I had a real gut feeling of how unfair it all was. I have a strong sense and commitment to people who are so treated and suffer discrimination. For me, personally, my commitment is very much a rational thing but also an emotional thing. I'm not ashamed of that.

In our society, we try not to care about things, but reason and logic are not good enough. You've got to have human compassion, morality — call it what you will. Look at the people who advised Kennedy during the Vietnam war. Their brilliant minds told them that napalm was the best stuff to burn up little children. What's the good of having a brilliant mind if you don't also have some kind of human judgment and morality, some sense of what it's like for the people on the ground?

What do you think the role of the Human Rights Commission is in bringing about social change?

I think they have a tremendous responsibility because they do have some power, legal status and social authority to bring about change and end injustice.

My feeling is that you work through the two routes of legislation and enforcement, and education. Your hope is not only to win your battle, but just by fighting to expose the issue and get people thinking about it. The other way is through a straight educational role, by continually talking and trying to make the issues interesting.

When I was with the B.C. Human Rights Branch, I believed that human rights had to be right out there in the market place — in the blood, sweat, tears and mud of everyday living — not tucked away in comfortable government offices, not a little elite sitting around debating

whether or not to take this case or what their policy should be on that case.

Human rights people should be known by ordinary people. Their names should be out there. They should be on hot line shows, in the thick of things. It shouldn't be a comfortable job, and I think that anyone in human rights who has a comfortable job, isn't doing their jobs.

I've always believed you just have to keep moving along even if you lose. We took cases in B.C. where we knew that the chances were 50-50 or even worse that we would lose. But if it was an important issue we thought it important to try and make the legislation work.

Even if you didn't succeed, at least you exposed to everyone that the legislation had failed to deal with the matter. You help build up pressure to change the legislation. Nobody can pretend that they didn't know. They can't stay in their comfortable indifference. If the Government, employers, what have you, refuse to do anything, then it's up to the public to apply pressure.

"Anyone in human rights who has a comfortable job, isn't doing their job."

What do you think the major issues in human rights will be in the future?

I think affirmative action will be one. I think the handicapped issue — physical and mental handicap — and, as well, the equal pay issue. I think the sexual orientation fight is just going to go on until homosexuals have equal rights with everybody else. They've just started mobilizing. They're obviously going to grow and win. Freedom of political belief will come too.

Do you think quotas will have to be imposed in Canada?

I think what we need are goals and not quotas. In the United States, 95-99% of the time, they have used quotas only when they have had to go to court and the judge has seen from the facts that there was a complete recalcitrance, a total refusal to allow blacks or women in.

When employers have shown no willingness to obey the legislation and have done everything possible to circumvent the law, the judges have had to say, 'We're taking this matter out of your hands. We will order you to hire a black or a woman or whoever is appropriate.' I think that forcing an end to discrimination is a last resort, but if there's no other way, then so be it.

Only when there was no other alternative, have quotas been imposed in the States. I think people have to understand that. People throw around accusations of quotas, of having to hire a woman no matter how ill qualified she is. That's not the truth about the experience in the States.

Quotas are the worst way to break down the barriers. All I can say is, good luck to those poor blacks or women who have got to go into a job under those circumstances. I think they have a lot of courage. I think they probably have a hard time ahead of them.

"Forcing an end to discrimination (by quotas) is a last resort, but if there's no other way, so be it . . . All I can say is, good luck to those who have got to go into a job under those circumstances."

What do you think of contract compliance?

Contract compliance is the government giving you a government contract provided you show that you have made proven efforts to achieve certain reasonable goals within a certain reasonable amount of time. I think that's fair.

If you fail to meet your goal and show that you did make the effort with good will, but it just didn't happen, then that's all right. No one expects you to do the impossible. You don't lose your contract. However, if you have no records of having made any efforts, you get cut off. That's the difference between goals and quotas. The quotas are inflexible.

"My commitment is very much a rational thing but also an emotional thing. I'm not ashamed of that."

In the United States under contract compliance and affirmative action when it's been done with good will, it's been successful. A lot of those companies have found that they've been successful. A lot of those companies have found that they've exceeded their goals, like the coal mining industry in Kentucky. They were ordered to hire women, after they had refused to do so, and they found that it worked just fine.

Jane Fonda said that in the United States, people have input to political decisions but little or no input to environmental or economic decisions. Why is it that when we are talking about enlarging human rights,

photo by Cathy Hobart

Kathleen Ruff

we are only talking about the handicapped, and not about economic security in our old age or the right to breathe clean air and drink pure water?

I think that's true. I think that, in a sense, human rights is the icing on the cake. A better comparison would be that it's the tip of the iceberg above the water. But the 7/8's of the iceberg that's hidden can't be gotten at through human rights legislation.

With human rights legislation, all you're saying is that blacks, women and the handicapped get an equal share in a basically unfair situation. So you're not addressing the substance of the problem. But on the other hand, it's still very important for minorities and women to at least get part of what's going.

All that human rights legislation does is say, let those groups who have been discriminated against get a fair chance in the system as it is now. But that begs the question. What if the system, as it is now, is very amiss? It doesn't do anything to change that. It's like selling equal shares in the Titanic. (laughter) From that point of view, you can say, human rights is redundant. But for the woman who wants that pay cheque at the end of the week because she's got to buy food for her kids, it's an immediate urgency.

I don't think that the major issues can be dealt with by human rights and maybe even shouldn't be dealt with by human rights. To my mind, they are very straight political issues. Putting the label 'human rights' on it is not going to resolve it. What it means is grappling with basic economic issues like how much do we want to share in our society.

If you look at Canada, it appears that the amount of sharing hasn't changed a great deal in the last twenty years. The distribution of wealth is still very much tilted to a minority who have a very large share of the wealth and the overwhelming majority at the other end who have very little of the wealth.

People have been saying for years that you should have consumer representation on the bodies that maintain standards in the consumer area. It used to be just the manufacturers and the big companies. That's self-policing.

We don't let the ordinary kid who's in jail for shoplifting turn around and tell us that he or she wants self-policing, so why should more privileged people have the right to police themselves? Just because you have a white collar shouldn't mean that you aren't held just as accountable for harming society.

"All human rights legislation does is say, let those groups who have been discriminated against get a fair chance in the system as it is now. I don't think the major issues can be dealt with by human rights."

After 6 years with the B.C. Human Rights Branch, you're now hostess of the CBC-TV show "The Ombudsman." Was it a good change?

I'm a great believer in dealing with the real issues and not theory. I'm also a great believer in trying to relate to ordinary people and not to the elite who make decisions.

I think a lot of decisions are made in our society purposely to seem complicated, academic and difficult, so that only the elite understand them and have input in them. There's no reason in the world why ordinary people can't understand those things. The majority of people don't have any input into decisions, don't have any knowledge of what the issues are. Yet those decisions are going to affect their lives, and the lives of their children and children's children.

I get very concerned about how our society and the media try and condition people to be non-thinking and non-caring people. They are inundated and bombarded with ads and stupid TV programmes that encourage you to become passive and not use your mind or feelings. What scares me is that we're destroying society because we're wiping out thinking and caring amongst large segments of people.

It's very important to me to use the media to relate to ordinary people where they do count. Where their minds count, their opinions count and their caring counts.

I think the programme that I'm on is something that's worthwhile because we are trying as much as we can to say: "Look, these are some of the facts, this is what so and so is saying, this is what we think is wrong. What do you think?

It's been proven time and time again that the viewers do have minds, do care, can make judgments, want to be part of what goes on in our society and they respond. But for the most part they're treated like dummies because it's more profitable that way and God knows you don't want them to think because they might start to stop some of the bad things that are going on.

I don't want to be sentimental or romantic about it but I think that very often people who are living day-to-day lives have a very good judgment of what needs to be done because they know what the effects are. A great many of the decision makers don't have to live with the results of their decisions. They live in some affluent apartment on the 64th floor of Harbour Towers, or some wonderful estate in the suburbs and then drive into their own special parking places.

"It's been proven time and time again that the viewers do have minds, do care, can make judgments, want to be part of what goes on in our society and they respond. But for the most part they're never given that chance."

You are one of a handful of visible women in the media. What are your thoughts on that situation?

I'm glad to have the chance to be in a job, in a role that there haven't been too many women in, that isn't a "woman's" job.

Kathleen Ruff *photo by Cathy Hobart*

I think the more women who get into visible jobs that have been traditionally held by men the better. The saying "a picture says more than a thousand words" applies. You can say there should be women and visible minorities in the media and talk about it and people will agree in theory. But it helps a lot when it actually happens. Then people's attitudes begin to change and they become more open to the fact that women and minorities can do any job.

Do you think the CBC needs an affirmative action hiring programme for women?

(Laughter) I'm sure it does. The same as I think every major corporation in Canada does. The banks, the provincial or federal governments, the CBC, industry may all have a large number of female employees but they're not distributed fairly. The women are very much segregated into a given type job and I don't think that changes without some real effort to bring about a change.

What are your thoughts on some graffitti that I saw scribbled on the wall of a women's washroom: "A woman who only aspires to be equal to a man, lacks ambition."

(Laughter) I think that's true. I think both men and women should aspire to be worthwhile human beings, caring human beings, who use their minds, their hearts and their bodies to the best of their ability.

As women we haven't been indoctrinated to care or use our bodies to the best of our ability because we don't enjoy our bodies and the physical sense of just being alive. We've been indoctrinated to be plastic bodies, plastic toys. We put a tremendous amount of money, time, stress, energy and fulfillment in plastic bodies.

We've been indoctrinated to use our hearts to quite a great extent in caring for our kids and families. But we haven't been encouraged to use our minds, hearts and bodies and to be full strong human beings. But then, neither have men. Men have been indoctrinated to rip off women, to exploit us.

Maryka Omatsu is a Toronto lawyer and acting director of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Ontario region.

More on the Cuban Code

photo courtesy of Canadian Women's Educational Press

In the last issue we printed excerpts from an article by Margaret Randall, a journalist residing in Cuba, in which she related the development and progress of labour and family reforms instituted by the Cuban government specifically related to women. We felt it would be useful to provide readers with a brief analysis of these reforms from a Canadian viewpoint, and therefore solicited the response of Canadian lawyers specializing in family law and labour law. — L.D.

The Labour Code

Randall's article raises many problems familiar to anyone who has studied the differential treatment of women workers.

Articles 47 and 48 of the Cuban Labour Code close certain jobs to women on physical grounds and designate others 'for women only.' This appears to be a strict form of "protective" legislation, but protective laws have also been known in Canada. In Ontario, nineteenth century laws restricted the hours and types of work of women workers and, in effect, restricted their ability to compete for jobs held by men. These laws, disguised as "protective" to women, actually contributed to the ghettoization of women's work, and the resulting reduction of women's wages in comparison to men's. There are numerous examples of types of jobs which were well paid when performed by men, but which apparently decreased in value when filled by women.

With these Canadian precedents in mind, I would like to know the basis for Randall's statement that "these clauses in the labour code were written both to protect women as well as a means of reorganizing the work force." And what is the rationale for "the consensus . . . that in Cuba physical differences between men and women were thought to be biological as well as social in origin?" I would like to see the data to support the observation that "neither administrative nor pay differentials result from this compartmentalization."

Given the trend seen in numerous countries (Canada, the U.K., Europe) of under-valuation of jobs primarily performed by women, one must decry the ghettoization of women's work in Cuba, unless it is actually true that the average wage of women workers there is similar to that of men. It is known that in Canada, for example, women receive approximately 56% of the wages of men, and concerned women have emphasized the necessity to break down ghettoization, and expand the opportunities for women to move into traditionally male jobs. Do the 500 jobs reserved for women in Cuba include new non-traditional job openings?

It has become clear that equal pay for equal work legislation is ineffective in reducing the male/female

wage differential as long as there are no men in the jobs where women are concentrated. Equal pay for work of equal *value* is the legislative concept necessary to close the wage gap, and one must ask on what basis the Cubans *value* work done, to know if women are in fact receiving equal pay.

The position of many trade unionists in Canada is that only legislation which expands the rights of both male and female workers to better wages and working conditions can be considered truly *protective* legislation.

Michelle Swenarchuk

The Family Code

The concepts and ideas behind the Cuban Family Code which became law in Cuba March 8th, 1975 and which were outlined by Margaret Randall in the last issue of *Branching Out* are not unknown to Canadian jurisprudence. We do not have in Canada one comprehensive code which defines all aspects of family law, however. This is partly because some facets of family law, such as divorce, are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government while other branches of family law, in particular property rights, are dealt with by the various provincial governments. This structure in Canadian government makes it extremely difficult to formulate a comprehensive and uniform code. For instance, reforms in the area of matrimonial property law have been an area of discussion for many years. Almost every province in Canada has had its Law Reform Commission prepare reports on the matter. To date, only some of the provinces have similar legislations to the one that exists in Alberta.

The provisions in the Family Code of Cuba, in particular clauses 24-28, which outline the equal rights and duties of both spouses, are progressive at first glance. When one looks at them more closely they are in fact extremely ambiguous and obscure. It is easy enough to state that marriage is an equal partnership but it would be difficult to outline exactly what constitutes equal rights in a marriage relationship. In order to do so any such definition would necessarily involve a subjective assessment by the parties and the individual adjudicating the case. Clause 25 of the Code ("The spouses must live together, be faithful to one another, consider and respect each other and mutually help the other") sounds as if it belongs in a modern interpretation of the ten commandments. Again, one party's interpretation of faithfulness may be quite different to another party's view of the matter. Clause 26 of the Code states that both spouses are obliged to care for the family they created. This seems natural enough but what does it extend to? Clause 28, pertaining to the right of both spouses to exercise their professions or crafts, is particularly vague and does not deal with the major problem in this area which is the disparity between the quality of work and in income levels. Granting both spouses the same right to work or study does not alleviate the fact that women are generally in the lower income and lower prestige occupations. What the Code should be saying is that both parties have a right to enjoy equality of treatment in the labour force and that all of society, including government and the individual, should work towards this goal.

In terms of the substantive sections of the Code which are outlined briefly in Ms. Randall's article, these are not unlike many provisions which have been implemented in Canadian Family Law. For instance, in Alberta as well as most other Canadian provinces, amendments have been made to the various domestic relations acts to allow a man to apply for child support if he has custody of the infant children of the marriage. Further, the concept of joint custody is relatively new in Canadian jurisprudence but it is being used more and more frequently by the legal community. Under Canadian law both parties have equal rights of guardianships to the children until such time as the courts or the parties themselves have decided differently. In terms of property, the new Matrimonial Property Legislation which exists in most provinces is based on the premise that marriage is in fact an equal partnership and therefore the assets acquired during that marriage are to be divided equally. Unfortunately, the few decided cases in the area suggest that our Courts are having difficulty in recognizing this concept and that they are trying to avoid the presumption of equality.

In summation, whereas in theory the Cuban Family Code sounds almost idyllic, one should be leary of such promises. In 1917 Lenin guaranteed equal rights between the sexes in his Soviet constitution. Anyone following the progress of women in that country is made quickly aware that theory has not materialized into reality. Yet it is admirable that the Cuban Family Code has been written and presented to the people. The fact that such a code exists at least encourages discussion by the parties and perhaps that is the first step towards a socialization of spouses to view marriage as an equal partnership.

Renee Couchard

Michelle Swenarchuk is a Toronto lawyer in private practice, specializing in labour law. Renee Couchard practices law in Edmonton, specializing in family law.

LEGAL NOTES

Sweet Reason

by Louise Dulude

Recent criticisms of human rights commissions remind me of the time I joined a half-dozen feminists in a bold attempt to "liberate" the male-only Albion Tavern in Ottawa. It was 1974, and the law for once was on our side.

After running a gauntlet of jeering University of Ottawa students and snarling older drunks, we sat on rickety chairs and vainly waited to be served. After an interminable twenty minutes, the manager came over to show us his liquor licence, issued by the Government of Ontario, which stated that the Albion could serve liquor to *men*. After a pause designed to better aim his coup de grace, he smirked and said: "I might even lose my licence if I served you girls."

One rather undignified retreat later, I found out from the Ontario Human Rights Commission that 1) the manager had told the truth; and 2) the Human Rights Commission was in the process of negotiating a settlement with the Liquor Licence Board, the results of which would start to be felt in a year or two. Was there any point to my filing a complaint? Not really, was the answer, just wait and everything will be all right eventually. Was anyone going to be punished for issuing such licences for years in violation of the Human Rights Act? Oh! No, I was told, when the parties settle there is no fine imposed.

The human rights officer couldn't understand why I was upset. Probably neither would human rights veterans such as Professor Walter Tarnopolsky of the federal commission, who rejoices in the fact that the old punitive approach to human rights has been replaced by an atmosphere of sweet reason. The contemporary view seems to be that if you catch people who rankly discriminate against women, Indians, blacks, cripples, etcetera, and explain to them gently that what they have done is very, very naughty, they will almost always see the light and never sin again.

The danger of this approach is that it plays right into the hands of determined offenders and timorous human rights commissions. Even in Ontario, where the commission is comparatively vigorous, female complainants have reported being pressed into accepting too low settlements. In Manitoba, where the commission always was timid, a typical settlement in a flagrant case of rental discrimination against a native woman consisted of the owner "issuing a written apology to the complainant and offering to consider her for the next available suite." Most likely there wasn't even a follow-up to check whether the owner had changed his practices.

It would appear that most Canadian human rights commissions never seek out offenders. Except in Saskatchewan, Quebec and perhaps Nova Scotia, I am told, investigations are usually restricted to the case of the person who complained, even when there is good reason to believe that a dozen or a hundred of her/his co-workers are treated the same way.

Mary Eberts, University of Toronto law professor and civil liberties expert, believes that governments, and not the commissions themselves, are to blame. The commissions are so underfunded they can't do a proper job, she says. As a result, enforcement is so bad that employers all know it pays to discriminate.

While agreeing with this in principle, a friend of mine who works for a human rights commission says that the same resources will go a lot farther if the people appointed to lead a commission are strongly committed to its mandate. This is where an indefatiguable crusader like Carole Geller (Director of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission) can make a great deal of difference. Contrast her with the Alberta commission's new chairman Bob Lundrigan, who thinks homosexuals do not need protection against discrimination, or with Manitoba's vice-chairman Barre Hall, who was recently overheard at a national conference to say that, "This business of human rights can be carried too far," or with one of B.C.'s commissioners, whose sole experience with human rights before his appointment was that he had twice been cited as an offender.

Even if all Canadian human rights commissioners and directors were well chosen, however, there is a limit to what can be achieved with inadequate laws. As pointed out by Kathleen Ruff, former Director of the B.C. Human Rights Branch and CBC-TV's new Ombudsman, Canadian laws are not really addressing the whole situation of discrimination at all. While they aim at correcting blatant and overt individual cases, discrimination today is most often unconscious and imbedded in our educational, employment and promotion structures.

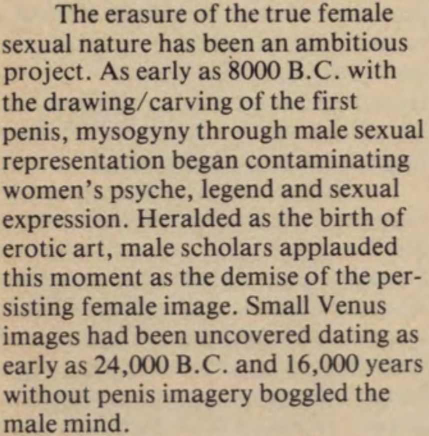
The federal government may not specifically discriminate against women who apply for public service jobs, for example, but we know something is drastically wrong when about 30% of all applicants for female-dominated clerical positions, where the educational requirement is Grade 10, had university degrees or college diplomas or certificates in 1977. Until our laws are improved to cope with situations such as these, says Ruff, we have no reason whatever to be smug about accomplishments in human rights in Canada.

Louise Dulude is an Ottawa lawyer and researcher.

The Myth of Erotica

by Connie Smith

> Within a culture possessed by the myths of feminine evil, the naming, describing, and theorizing about good and evil has constituted a maze/haze of deception. The journey of women becoming is breaking through this maze — springing into free space, which is an a-mazing process.
>
> Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*



The erasure of the true female sexual nature has been an ambitious project. As early as 8000 B.C. with the drawing/carving of the first penis, mysogyny through male sexual representation began contaminating women's psyche, legend and sexual expression. Heralded as the birth of erotic art, male scholars applauded this moment as the demise of the persisting female image. Small Venus images had been uncovered dating as early as 24,000 B.C. and 16,000 years without penis imagery boggled the male mind.

It is within these 16,000 years that women's sexuality lies. However such unhampered female expression is difficult to imagine. For 10,000 years male theologians, philosophers, psychiatrists and artists have been perpetrating the female experience based on their own mysogynist sexual fantasies. Resultant are pornography and erotica.

Erotica, like pornography, bears no resemblance to the actual nature of women, be it through act, word, thought, or visual aid. Erotica *is* pornography as its origins are in male sexual violence towards women, nonconsensual and otherwise. Considering the depths of women's subjugation the validity of consent should be examined. Conditioned self-degradation and guilt may lead a woman to consent perforce.

The definition and defense of erotica based on its root word "eros," meaning "love," are not only simplistic, they are purposefully ambiguous. Erotica is exclusively the masculine concept of sexuality.

A critical look at the myth of Eros as well as primitive erotic art is prelude to exposing the male myth of erotic love. The original sexual nature of women waits somewhere *far* beyond.

Eros, often described as "the giver of sweet gifts to men," was originally the Greek god of love and loyalty *between men*. He was most celebrated in the Boeotian city of Thespiae. In keeping with his own homosexual behaviour, Eros made no contact with women. It wasn't until he was insulted by Apollo, (also a homosexual), that he aimed his arrow at a woman for the first time. When Apollo told Eros he should leave archery to The Men, Eros shot him with a gold tipped arrow causing him to fall in love with the mortal Daphne. With a lead tipped arrow, Eros shot Daphne making her immune to Apollo's pleas. With a successful revenge, Eros' masculinity was restored.

It is no accident that Eros, (in Rome, Cupid), was given arrows or little love darts by his creators as his weapon. The arrow is the symbol of phallic penetration, virility, power and war. It is the piercing masculine principle and its effects cannot be undone. (Patriarchy, through the Right to Lifers, fights to maintain this, as a woman who choses abortion "undoes" the effect of phallic penetration.)

Aphrodite, goddess of "erotic love" is often said to be the mother of Eros. However, he was already on the scene when she was created. This, of course, makes sense, as Aphrodite was unnecessary for erotic stimulation, as were *all* women, prior to Eros' quarrel with Apollo. Aphrodite's arrival reeks of men and violence, as she was the result of semen from the castration of Uranus by his son Cronus. When Cronus casts his father's severed penis into the sea, the event was recorded by Hesoid in his *Theogony*.

> There spread a circle of white foam from the immortal flesh, and in it grew a girl . . . and (she) stepped ashore a lovely goddess . . . and the gods call her Aphrodite, and men do too . . . and here is the privilege she was given and holds from the beginning, and which is the part she plays among men and the gods immortal; the whispering together of girls, the smiles and deceptions, the delight, and the sweetness of love, and the flattery.

Perhaps better read, the erotic woman is manipulative, secretive, and ego building. (Today these same feminine attributes are perpetuated through the Total Woman and Fascinating Womanhood empires.)

Aphrodite's name is from the Greek word "aphros" meaning sea-foam, not unlike se/men. Modern erotica employs a similar semen birth bath to that of Aphrodite's. Women are depicted with semen between their breasts and dripping from their mouths, and with time lapse photography, they are shot in the face by invisible "lovers" jacking off. Semen is said to be rejuvinating, nonfattening, and good for the complexion. These images cross class lines from "dirty" postcards to expensively bound books of Danish "erotic" photography.

Eros, himself, was an invisible lover in the original erotic Cinderella-Sleeping Beauty combo: His treatment of Psyche, the only woman he was to experience sexually, has been called passionate, loving, and "highly erotic." (The use of these adjectives together is purposely confusing as it intimates that the words are synonymous.) A closer look at Eros' habits expose him as the psychic sadist he was. Unfortunately his "loving" behaviour is now legend and the myth lives on.

Aphrodite was the most beautiful of all women until the mor-

tal Psyche. When words of Psyche's beauty reached her, (mirror, mirror, on the wall . . .) Aphrodite sent "naughty" Eros to "punish" her. With a few drops from the bitter fountain, Psyche was denied marriage. However, Eros discovered hetero sex when he bent over her and wounded himself with his own arrow.

True to her punishment, Psyche sat lonely in her apartment. Her two sisters of "moderate charm" married royalty and her parents lamented the fate of their unmarried daughter. Finally word came down from the gods that Psyche was destined to be the mistress of a monster "whom neither the gods nor men can resist." Assertively Psyche said, "I submit. Lead me to that rock to which my unhappy fate has destined me." "Panting with fear," Psyche stood on the ridge of the mountain and was carried off.

Psyche was imprisoned by Eros who came only at night to ravish her. In spite of the fact that she believed her captor to be a hideous monster, Psyche continued to consent to his wishes believing herself to be "stupid," "silent," and deserving nothing better. The only sound advice came from her sisters who told her to take a knife to bed and cut off his head before she was "devoured." (This decapitation theme, symbolic of men's fear of castration by women, continually expresses itself throughout religious myth and art history.) Unfortunately, Eros escapes and "condemns" Psyche to the company of her sisters "whose advice you seem to think preferable to mine." Of course Psyche's sisters betray her by desiring Eros themselves, so alone and repentant, she becomes a housekeeper for a couple of gods.

What follows are lengthy and dangerous trials of Psyche's housewifery by Eros *through* Aphrodite. Aphrodite appears to be the ogre in this tale, the mother-in-law keeping the lovers apart, however, she is as much a victim as is Psyche. It serves Eros' purpose to have Aphrodite actually inflict the pain. This way, the real enemy remains invisible while the women destroy and betray each other. When Psyche can bear it no longer, Eros re-enters her life and they are married.

This erotic myth is usually considered allegorical by male scholars. Psyche is the Greek word for butterfly and also for soul. We are led to believe that Psyche is the soul of woman purified by sufferings and misfortunes thus prepared for the enjoyment of true and pure happiness through marriage. More accurate would be Psyche as the soul of woman imprisoned, abused, and "kept in the dark." The soul of woman "psychically" scarred by faceless male fantasies. The centrefold woman used as erotic stimulation for the invisible penis monster. This is erotic love.

In ancient women's religion, *there was no equivalent to Eros* and Aphrodite was a complex goddess who ruled over all of nature, associated with fertility cults. The intrusion of men brought the alteration, objectification, and control of women's sexual nature. Those who resisted were annihilated. (Witness the massacre of the Amazon nations and the burning of nine million women as witches.)

Primitive erotic art exposes men's hatred of women easily, as it reflects simply the basis of men's thought and language. Male contemporaries, however, are not without slight of hand, as they often include matriarchial female images in studies of erotic art. This, of course, serves to confuse women's religion with the patriarchal worship of the penis.

There are several recurring erotic themes which span centuries. One is rape. Overtly the rape of women, symbolically the rape of the goddess. Early cave paintings depict forced intercourse between man and cow, the cow being an early representation of the moon goddess. The man is usually holding the cow up by the tail and inserting a long erection. (And the cow jumped over the moon . . .).

In New Guinean erotic art, rape occurs predominately with the domesticated pig, which was thought to reproduce without fertilization. The pig is another early association with the moon goddess. Statues are still being carved "beautifully" today of men mounting pigs as well as sniffing the pig's anus. Later the pig would become a symbol of impure desires and of the amoral plunge into corruption; a word used to describe a loose woman. (As an auditory archtype, the squealing of pigs being slaughtered was mixed subtly into the soundtrack of *The Exorcist* to heighten excitement.)

Another favourite technique of male scholars is to describe what is not there. In Philip Rawson's book *Primitive Erotic Art* a water vessel labeled "a loving couple" is really a woman who has been forced down with the man's penis inside her, his hand rammed up against her chin. A statue "depicting intercourse" is a woman being raped by a huge creature said to be a jaguar priest. She is in pain, terrified, and screaming. Stone pipes from the Cherokee Indians of Georgia, Mochian water vessels, and Peruvian statues all portray women on their knees and hands performing fellatio on larger than life erections as the men sit or stand, often with their hands holding the woman's head in place. (Nowhere is cunnilingus given equal time.)

A mid-20th century carved panel from southwest Nigeria shows two men on either side of a woman, holding her with both arms while she touches their erections against her thighs. An erotic brass gold weight from the mid-19th century introduces woman as wheelbarrow. The man holding her legs has, of course, a huge erection inserted. The flying monkeys who capture Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz are straight from the rim of Mayan dishes. These monkeys, symbols of sexual excitement, are painted assaulting a bare breasted woman.

A mid-19th century western eskimo paddle is described as "covered with scenes of sexual stimulation designed to promote animal fertility." The key question is

stimulation to whom. One scene is a man with a club and an erection beating a prone woman with her legs spread, vulva open. This same paddle also depicts another popular male obsession: love of death and war, or "hunter eroticism." A man with an erection shoots an arrow at another man also with an erection and carrying a spear, (not unlike Eros and Apollo).

It is said by Virginia Woolf that war "is an outlet for manly qualities

without which men would deteriorate. Obviously there is for (men) some glory, some necessity, some *satisfaction* in fighting which women have never felt or enjoyed." The Zuni Indian image of the god of war is a slim piece of wood with a helmet-like head and an erect penis at a ninety degree angle carved in the shape of an elaborate spear. A pottery warrior from 300 B.C. is shown masturbating. A Soloman Island engraving outlines an archer, bow raised, with an erection. A Peruvian water vessel in the likeness of the male figure of death holds his penis, the spout. A 9th century carving called "Swastika" has four men squared off kissing each other's buttocks, holding each other's feet near their own mouths. However, the most grotesque of these erotic images is a "standing warrior in the state of erotic stimulation." The warrior's hands are behind his back accenting his erection, his tongue hanging from his mouth.

The primitive images of solitary women served men in the same way as the inflatable dolls with life-like anatomy do now. Certain statues of women came equipped with "thrust holes" of two sizes, one for penis, one for finger. Currently in the Hamburg Museum, visitors are invited to stick their thumb in a limestone statue of a woman. Other statues show women squatting "tempting Man" by "displaying their vulvas" or "riding the serpent of sinful lust." Another common image is the prone woman with a crocodile crawling on her, the tail entering her vagina.

Primitive art is not without its sado-masochism. A piece of Maprik woodwork has a hornbill nibbling away at a man's penis. The man's head is reversed on his shoulders looking away from this "zone of torture — or delight." Other primitive themes include transvestism, (another archetype used in sublimal advertising,) and castration and menstruation fears.

The elements expressed in primitive art were not just male fantasy. These art pieces were imbued with strong feeling as they had been fortified by lived ritual. Primitive erotic art was the direct experience of primitive man.

Soloman Island has for centuries practised an "erotic art of its own" treated as a "beloved work of artistic craftsmanship." In an operation *always* done by experts, a cross piece is driven through a man's penis. Then, when the penis is put into use, the "owner" adds pig bristles, bamboo shavings, and broken glass to enlarge the bar's diameter. As for the physical pain experienced by the woman upon penetration, all that is said is "the bar *may or may not* penetrate the urethra." For the man, the only side effect is that he must be self controlled when inserting his penis, so "it undermines a sense of masculine domination."

Author Tom Harrisson, in his work "Equatorial Islands of the Pacific Basin" attempts to minimize the effects of male sexual fantasy and violence against women. He comments:

> To underline the erotic complexity of these small islands in the southern Pacific, it should be made clear that marital devotion can be very high indeed. For example, among the Sakau people of Santo Island, the widows of a polygamous chief committed suicide, (by) hanging themselves, on his death, while I was there."

In light of Mary Daly's expose on Indian Suttee, in her book *Gyn/Ecology*, it is highly unlikely that the Sakua women died of their own free will.

In North America, primitive female figures are rare in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. The warrior plays the supreme part. However, lack of erotic female imagery does not mean lack of erotic custom. When the Pawnee Indian men needed food, they would steal a young girl from another tribe, strip her naked, mount her on a framework with limbs spread, and shoot her full of arrows. When the Plains Indian boys got together, their sun dance was laced with masochism. After days and nights of dancing, they would hang from the roof of the medicine lodge with chest skewers thrust through their flesh. (A zone of torture — or delight).

Perhaps man's erotic relationship to woman is most simply and obviously displayed in this mid-19th century ritual performed by the hunters of Australia. The men dance around a trench decorated with bushes holding their spears between their legs like phalli. Later they stab their spears repeatedly and vigorously into the trench.

In an attempt to reinforce the normality of erotic expression and in order to disguise eroticism's true beneficiary, art historian Phillip Rawson says in his introduction to *Primitive Erotic Art*:

> An ancestor-image which exhibits a large and decorated phallus is to remind *people*, male and female, *of the real experiences of the phallus*; with in addition any special factors such as beliefs about the relationship of semen to vitality, and perhaps memories of initiations in which phalluses, real and artistic, figured.

Primitive art is full of stone dildos, as well as animal skins full of blood used on women in initiation rites. Rawson and other scholars use such terms as "human penis" and "male penis" to further confuse the issue. However, in a rare moment of male truth, Rawson calls eroticism "the essence of *masculine* symbolism, not subordinated to (the) birth-female complex, but involving (male) sexuality as whole with all its *proper* overtones of pleasure and ecstasy."

Connie Smith lives in Vancouver. She has worked actively in the women's movement as a political organizer, a singer-songwriter and a journalist.

Scissors and Silhouettes

an interview with
Lotte Reiniger

Intertitles for The Pied Piper of Hamlin

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

Lotte Reiniger occupies a secure niche in film history as an undisputed genius with scissors; however, her niche, like others occupied by modest women of genius, has been somewhat neglected and her name is hardly a household word. But this neglect is not universal. She is well known and beloved in puppeteering circles around the world, and also among aficionados of the art and experimental films of the 20s and 30s: she is known as a pioneer in the art of cut-out animation, and, perhaps most importantly, as the first to dare embark on the enormous project of making a feature-length animated film, the wonderful Adventures of Prince Achmed. *Finished in 1926, this preceded Disney's first feature,* Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, *by 11 years.*

Many of Lotte Reiniger's films, including Achmed, *have centred on the theme of romantic love between a handsome young man and a beautiful girl, but dramatic or comic interest is often focussed off centre, on wonderfully unromantic figures like the Ogress in* Achmed.

As is the case with most of her films, there is no clear moral for women in the tale of Lotte Reiniger. Her characters are not role models, nor are they studies in oppression; she herself has earned a very special niche in film history, without precedent and without very much in the way of followers. She is simply a very hard working, patient artist, dedicated to her work. She has forged her talent into genius. Not many women have been able to do that; let us take Lotte Reiniger as proof that it can be done, and consider why it has not been done more often. B.H.M.

Well, I am supposed to tell you what happened to me in my life and how I came to make silhouette films. Most people, when they meet me, say, "How did you ever get the idea to make silhouette films?" The trouble is, I never had the idea. It came all by itself, like in a fairy tale.

When I was young I was mad about theatre and I gave theatre performances with my school fellows all the time. Then later, when film came, this passion of mine turned toward films. I was most enthusiastic about the early films of Paul Wegener, who was the foremost pioneer in German films, and he made films in an artistic way, always emphasizing effects which couldn't be done in a book or in a theatre or elsewhere.

And then it happened in 1915 that I went to a lecture by this man, Paul Wegener, and there for the first time I heard animation mentioned and the possibility of making films in so-called "tricky" ways — that means shooting films frame-by-frame and then having the motion artificially done. At that moment I had the idea, "I must know that man!" for he would know everything which I wanted to know and he was the only man who could get me into films.

Now, I was still a school girl at this time, and when I left school I intended to go to the acting school of Max Reinhart's theatre. I had myself enrolled (to my parents' great, great sorrow), so at least I was near the theatre where this famous actor [Wegener] was playing. Eventually, I got into the acting school, but there I discovered that my acting talents weren't good enough. My voice was bad and I sing out of tune, and all sorts of drawbacks. So in order to draw the attention of this great actor and all these people, I started cutting out silhouettes, for I was always very clever with my scissors. I cut out silhouettes of all the actors in their big parts. They were very successful and there was a book published. And I succeeded in drawing the attention of this, for me so much adored, Paul Wegener.

I pestered him, telling him that I wanted to go into films; and so, in 1918 or so it was, he gave me my first film job — which was to make the intertitles for his film *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. In this period, the films were produced in reels and the better films had a special title for each reel, artistically made.

Then, also through Wegener, I met a group of young people who wanted to open up an experimental animation studio in Berlin. Wegener said to those people, "For heaven's sake, let this silhouette girl make some films there with you." And these people did.

So, on the 12th of December, 1919, I made my first silhouette film figure — I hadn't learned anything in between, you see. This was a short film which was a kind of ballet between two figures. It was called *The Ornament of the Loving Heart* and was quite successful in the theatres. I went on making my silhouettes with this company in Berlin — the so called Institut fuer Kulturforschung, still today under the direction of the same man, Dr. Hans Kurliss. And his best friend was a man by the name of Carl Koch, who also worked in this unit. We became very good friends, and in 1920 we were married and worked together from that moment on. It was quite a period — which ended, to my deep regret, with his death ten years ago.

While I was making these simple silhouettes with this little company — it soon became very famous, for we made specialized things — one day I was visited by a group of film directors of a big company. There was a young man with this group who pleased me. I showed him my work and he was very impressed. Later on, together with my husband, he made a film, and so we came to his house. And one day he said to me, wouldn't I be interested in making a full-length silhouette film? Now this was a never-heard-of thing, and I was doubtful, but of course it was a great temptation. So, we decided to do it. But he — this banker — didn't want to make this film with the Institute, he wanted to make it in his private home, and he built a studio for me there.

Now, we had chosen the *Arabian Nights* [as a subject] because these diverse stories gave scope for film, particularly for animation. So I read all the *Arabian Nights*, and of each fact which seemed useful for a silhouette film I made a note and then stirred them all together and we got a kind of script for *Prince Achmed*. And since this film was a new enterprise and we wanted to make it as good as possible, we collaborated with the best people to make the

Prince Achmed

With the invention of cinematography an entirely new kind of puppeteering came into being. This was called animation, which meant giving life to otherwise immovable objects.

The ogress

system — Bertold Bartosch was there; by this time Walter Ruttmann had shown his first films in Berlin and we were very impressed by them. He agreed to work with us and made wonderful things for all the magic elements — the witchcraft of the sorceress and all that. We worked on this for over three years, and then when we had finished it, nobody wanted to play it, for it "wasn't done" — you didn't make full-length animated films for the theatre! But we wanted to distribute the film, so out of our private means we gave a first performance, in a real theatre, not a film theatre.

The first night of *Prince Achmed* was very remarkable, for everything which could go wrong did go wrong! What do you say? An art historian, specializing in China and Java and these things, made the opening speech to impress the press people, telling them that this was a work of art, etc. We had agreed he should just make a short speech and stop, for the theatre was over-crowded and people were quarrelling with each other about their seats and all sorts of things. But this man talked on and on. It was a very tense situation. And then suddenly he stopped and went behind the curtain.

Later on I knew what had happened: just before the projection was to start, the projection lens broke. It was a beautiful May morning on a Sunday — where on earth could one get another lens? So my husband went to a shop on the Potsdammerplatz which sold such things and stood there. I don't know, he might have thought of smashing the windows. But this wasn't necessary, for a man came with a key and opened the door. My husband explained about the plight of these poor artists and the man gave him the lens so the performance could start.

But the audience responded very nicely to every special effect, every new idea — and there were plenty, for these things like the sea storm were new. Now maybe they are a household word in animation, but at this time they were brand new, and the audience applauded madly after each reel.

Then, at the end, I saw some smoke, which I knew wasn't part of the film. It was during a magic fire scene which took place in the film, and the audience took that smoke for an especially good artistic achievement. It was only some old sacks which the workmen had left hanging over the central heating, which stood, unfortunately, just under the projectors.

Martineau: *Can you talk a little bit about working with your husband?*

Reiniger: Ah yes. Well, I had the worst trouble keeping my husband for myself, for he was so wonderful — clever — that all the people wanted to work with him — Jean Renoir took him away from me and Bert Brecht. But I always got him back.

You ask me, "What did he do?" and "What did you do?" I do not understand what you mean. I had the idea to make a film and he helped me get that into shape. He helped me with the script. He was the producer. I was, so to speak, the tree and he was the gardener. He was an ideal producer — he stopped me from making too great a fool of myself. He always could tell you when to stop, when the thing was good, and this was very important.

After *Prince Achmed* — these were still the days of the silent film — I made the stories of *Dr. Dolittle*, for I was acquainted with Hugh Lofting and he gave me the permission to make the first *Dolittle* film. They said [about *Achmed*], "Well, this full-length film was so difficult to place; make short films now." And so I made three short *Dolittle* films, which later were shown all three together at the theatre as a feature. They were a very big success.

Then came sound film, and you had to make the films go with the sound. So my style altered completely. With the sound film I didn't rely as much on the story, which I had done before; but I made the films more as a kind of ballet and made music instead of the story the base of the thing. I first started with a Mozart film — *Ten Minutes of Mozart* [1930] — yes. And then I made a film on 17th century music and . . . I started a series of opera parodies with the film *Carmen* ['33]. By then my husband had gone to work with [Jean] Renoir in France and I joined him there for awhile, for we were very nervous about that Hitler business. But then we decided we couldn't all run away, so we started anew in Berlin and I made the films *The Little Chimney Sweep* ['35], *Harlequin* and other ones.

They were always shown in London at the Film Society and had a big success there, so I was asked by the Victoria and Albert Museum to have an exhibition. So I moved all my things over and had this exhibition, in '36 I think. And then I met [John] Grierson* and he gave me some work to do for the GPO film unit. I made various films for him and had all my equipment brought over and started working in England.

Lotte, when I saw your films in London — Cinderella *and* The Little Chimney Sweep *— and then saw them again recently in Canada, I was struck by the difference between the* Cinderella *I saw in London and the one I saw here, and also in* The Little Chimney Sweep. *How did that happen?*

Well, the *Cinderella* you saw in London was made in 1921 and the other one was made in 1956 or so. The original *Cinderella* was made for Germany and used the German version, which is different from the more well-known version of the French story. The German *Cinderella* is a folktale, and the main part in this would be the pigeons who help Cinderella pick the lentils out of the ashes. Also, there would be no fairy godmother, but Cinderella would get her things from the little tree above her mother's grave. Well, the Paris version was written for the court of Louis Quatorze or Seize or something, and it's quite different — stately.

Yes, What I missed in the Perrault version was, in the first version you had the wicked stepmother splitting in half with her anger.

Oh yes, yes. And the sisters cut their toes and their heels off.

It seemed that the scissors were a part of the action in the first Cinderella *because they used a scissor to cut off the big toe and then the stepmother splits along the lines of the scissor cutting . . .*

Well, the second version was made for a television series, and in a television series you mustn't show any cruelty, you see? You mustn't show snakes, you mustn't show spiders — I don't know what all you mustn't do.

This was for the American television series?

Well, it was made for America — it was meant for everywhere. I made it in England after the war when I had to make these films as a television series. And then, I thought that my old *Cinderella* was lost. It would have been too primitive for this series anyway, you see, for it was made in the technique of '21 . . .

But for the series did you use the original film of The Little Chimney Sweep . . .

Ah yes. Well, I had to make 12 films for the series, you see, and they had to be ready in one year, and I couldn't make 12 films in one year, so I used some of my old films.

I think it's generally agreed that your early films, that you made in Germany, are better and more interesting than the later films.

Well, in Germany I made exactly what I wanted to make and did not have to consider anxious mothers who might be frightened for their children.

Do you think of your films as being made for children?

No — well, they are made for children, because I had to. But generally I didn't think of any particular audience. I just made what I was in love with — the Gibbons music for the *Dolittle* films or the early 17th century music or Mozart and all that. The funny thing is, the things which I made after my own tastes, they have survived longer than the other things where I made concessions to the audience.

In terms of fantasy, you were saying that when you made films according to your own conception, they've lasted. To me the fantasy in Prince Achmed *is so strong. My favorite character in all of your films is the ogress (from* Achmed) . . .

Mine too. But this is a fantasy from the *Arabian Nights*. And so, the ogress, as I made her — and also the flight of the sorcerer — is literally like that in the *Arabian Nights*, somewhere, I don't know in which story.

You see, she is so short — a fat figure -- and [such figures] are all much nicer to move than these tall, long-legged creatures. Therefore, I liked very much playing with her.

The essential difference between a shadow and a silhouette is that the latter cannot be distorted.

The sorcerer

*Ed. note: Grierson "fathered" documentary filmmaking in Britain before and after WWII under the auspices first of the Empire Marketing Board and then under the General Post Office. In 1938 he came to Canada and a year later founded the National Film Board.

Cinderella's stepmother

When you see trees or figures against an evening sky, you would say, not that they are shadowed against the sky, but silhouetted against it. The silhouette exists in its own right.

Also, that sequence when she fights with the sorcerer and they change into all manner of beasts . . . . that sort of fantasy is so strong, so universal. You're working on the level of myth there, and yet, for so many years Prince Achmed *was gone. Nobody knew about it, nobody saw it, until recently.*

Yes, but this is no wonder. This was a silent film and a black and white film, and in the meantime we have the sound film in the theatres and we have colour film.

But Achmed *was a colour film . . .*

Not actually colour. It was tinted. In those periods all the films were tinted because it was a little bit more entertaining, you see. When there was a wood, then it was tinted green; when there was a sky, it was tinted blue . . . you took the positive and dipped it into a bath and then you got these tints.

I've heard you say that you were happier working in black and white, with silhouettes, and then tinting the film afterwards.

Well, yes, of course. This was natural, for the tinted colour was not as strong as actual colour is. When you have the coloured background, it's much stronger and you have to compose much more carefully. Usually, in the black and white films, I'd always show the action taking place against the lightest part of the picture, and with colour you must also balance these things out as the action takes place, into the least dense colour. Do you see? When you have dark blue night, you hardly see the silhouettes.

[In] your book — Shadow Puppets, Shadow Theatres *and* Shadow Films *— you talked about the ancient shadow theatres of China, Java, India, and Greece and Turkey. I think you said they used coloured figures?*

They were coloured figures. They were made of parchment which was tinted and they had transparent colours. So it makes it more entertaining — the audience does not have the feeling of sadness which they have when they see the black figures. I make a film now and children say, "That's nice, but we don't like it that the figures are all black." Well, you can't help that now.

You have made films with coloured figures lit from on top. But you're not so happy with those films?

Oh, Gott! I have a talent for profile action, profile movement, and the movement and the silhouette show up more quickly and clearly in black and white. When you have coloured figures, they are not so expressive.

In your book, Lotte, when you talked about silhouette-making having remained a minor art, I thought about animation and how your films had disappeared for so long and I wondered if it's true that people consider animation, like silhouettes, a minor art, perhaps because it's for children?

Ah well, it needn't be at all for children. You see, it's like the notion that puppets are for children, which is sheer nonsense. For in the real puppeteering countries the grown-ups take the puppets as seriously as anything. They are the original form of theatre, so this is a myth that it's only for children.

Do you think that we've somehow cut off children's art from grownup art and that that's a bad division?

No . . . you can't say that; very many things made for grownups are not suitable for children . . . I don't know why, but children are much underestimated. Children are the most attentive audience. You can't allow yourself a single mistake. They spot it immediately, and they remember everything, and so, they are fantastic.

And the children like silhouettes. There might be some people who have an aversion to silhouettes. This can't be helped, you see. But the children themselves, they identify very easily with the silhouettes, for [in] their own fantasy [they] can imagine the colour of that hair or those eyes — it makes the fantasy work better.

Lotte, you've told me that it was very exciting for you to think of coming to the film board to make a film.

Yes, of course, for I had always wished to come to the Film Board, to meet McLaren and all that. And when they asked me to do a film there, I jumped in with both feet, for I had given up entirely the hope of making a film ever again. I hadn't made anything for ten years, since my husband died. But when I came here I was very frightened, for I thought perhaps I couldn't do it anymore! And until I saw my first rushes I was

a very anxious person.

It must be very different working at the Board from what you're accustomed to, working in London?

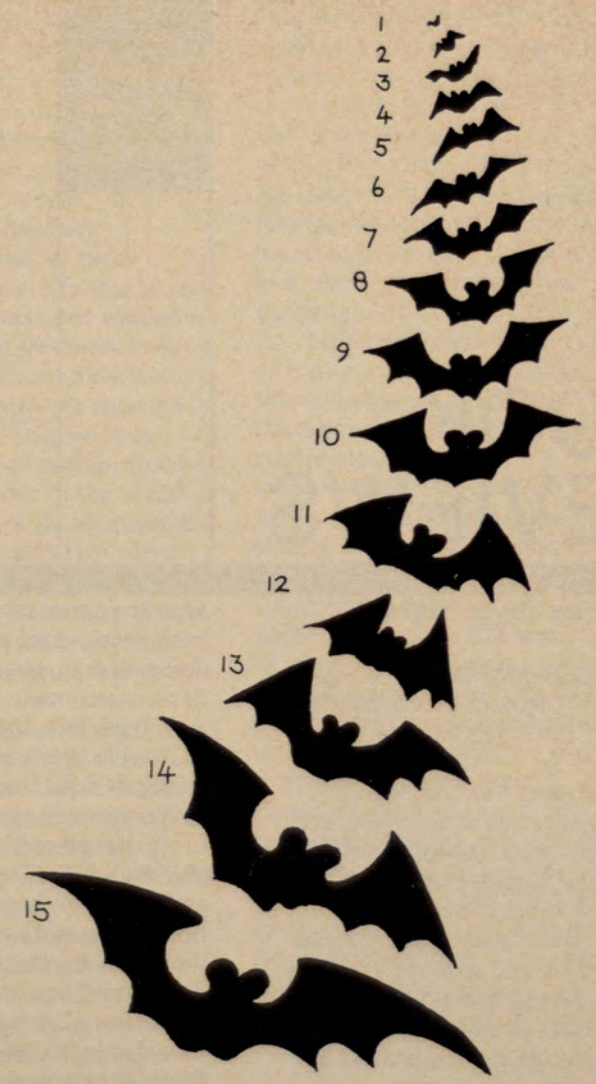
Well, in London I had my studio on my own premises and could work the hours I liked, and I like working late hours, you see. When the night falls and everybody's asleep, then you have the concentration for this kind of work. But when you have to start at 9 o'clock in the morning and finish at half-past four, that is very difficult, to catch yourself at the right moment.

Also, I think the way that you make your films is different from the way most animation films are made.

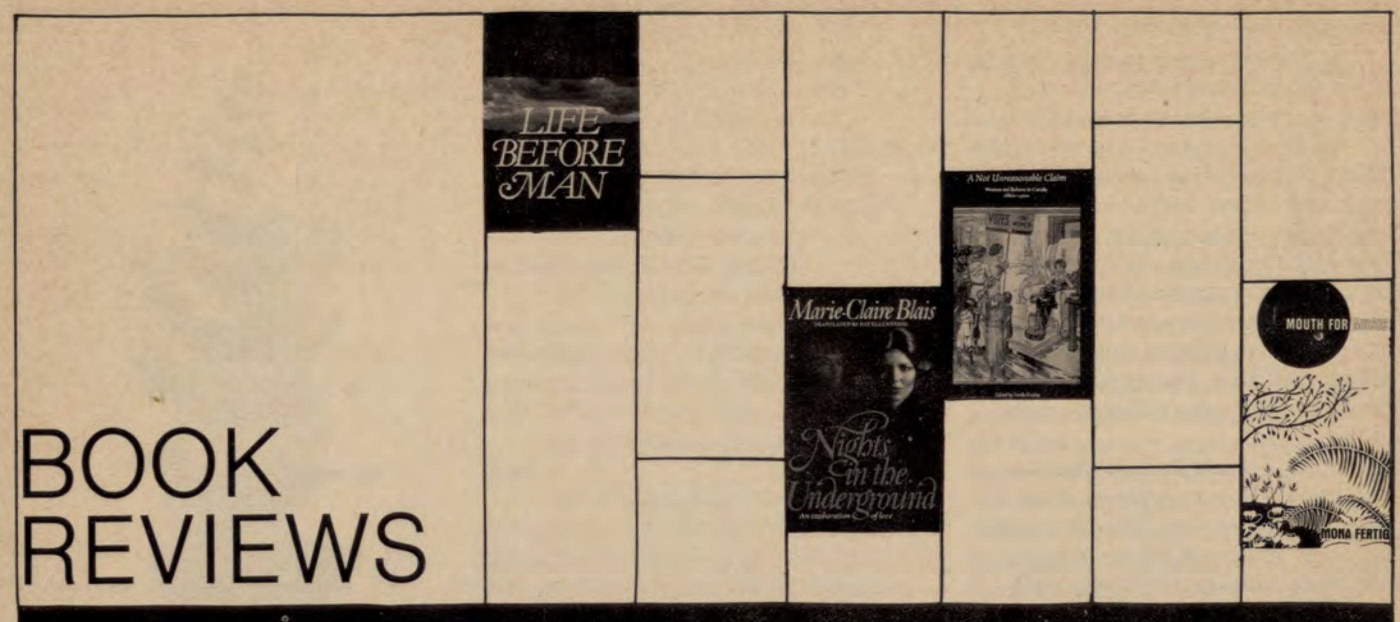
Yes. It's much nearer to puppeteering, you see, to playing with puppets. For you play directly in front of the camera. Mostly, the things are planned out [in other forms of animation], the construction done beforehand and made in various drawings; and then the photographing is a mere mechanical process. But here you have to have your concentration while you are moving the thing frame by frame in front of the camera, and you mustn't make a single mistake.

Editor's note: Lotte Reiniger was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1899. It was there that she did all of her early, pathbreaking work, although she has since worked in Rome and, most extensively, in England, where she moved permanently after WWII. In 1974, after an hiatus of 10 years, she was invited by the National Film Board of Canada to create another of her animated masterpieces under their auspices. The result is the charming Aucassin & Nicolette (NFB 1975). *Her latest film,* The Rose & The Ring (1979) *was also produced in Canada, by Gordon Martin & Associates, Montreal. Most of her films, including* Achmed, *are distributed by Carman Educational Associates, 8074 A Islington Ave., Woodbridge, Ontario. The preceding is an edited excerpt of a special filmed interview done on the occasion of her stint at the Board. J.M.*

Barbara Halpern Martineau is a teacher, writer and filmmaker based in Toronto. She is presently travelling and speaking about feminist film aesthetics and screening her film Good Day Care: One Out of Ten.



Cutouts used to show the approach of a bat: different models are used for each shot, starting from a dot and getting bigger and bigger until it has reached the size of the figure you want to appear.



BOOK REVIEWS

review by Joyce Marshall

Life Before Man by Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979. $12.95 cloth.

Margaret Atwood, who is undoubtedly one of our finest and most individual writers, is also one of our myths. Because we've had good writers so briefly, we make myths quickly. But the mystique that has gathered around Atwood's writing and her person makes it hard to look at her books straight on, simply as books that tell stories, possess like other books style, incidents, atmosphere, tone. She must always, we feel, be saying more. Perched somewhere above us, smiling the little smile we know — half closed, entirely cryptic — she spins webs to tangle and tease.

I am as bad as anyone, I find. Just encountering the statement, while I was deliberating this review, that in *Life Before Man* Atwood has declared the human male extinct was enough to send me scurrying back to the book. Lesje, one of the novel's two chief female characters, is a paleontologist and often imagines herself hunched in a treetop while below her the giant lizards lumber. I'd thought she preferred dinosaur fossils on the whole to humans because they are clean and cold and dead, that in common with many of us she was troubled by what our kind has made of planet earth. "It's long been her theoretical opinion," Atwood says on her behalf, "that Man is a danger to the universe, a mischievous ape, spiteful, destructive, malevolent." The capital M reassured me.

True, Atwood isn't particularly charitable to either of her two principal male characters. Nate, a lawyer turned toy-maker, in love with Lesje though engaged in an "open" marriage with Elizabeth, runs compulsively, hoping to take off finally into midair. "Occasionally though by no means all the time," Atwood tells us, "Nate thinks of himself as a lump of putty, helplessly moulded by the relentless demands and flinty disapprovals of the women he can't help being involved with." (That "by no means all the time" is, I think, significant.) Chris, who was Elizabeth's lover, is already dead when the novel opens. His suicide has reduced Elizabeth, one of the most horrendously manipulative women I've met in fiction, to a grief that is a good three-quarters fury. "I could kill you," she says. "If you hadn't already done that for yourself." Is that a clue? That men can have power over women only in death?

But then the women in the novel aren't treated any more kindly. Elizabeth is, as I've said, a manipulator, who doesn't even hope to be happy. She merely wants to win. Lesje sees her as "a shark . . . a huge Jurassic toad." . . . "I figured it out," says Martha, an earlier lover of Nate's whom Elizabeth has "managed" out of his life. "You wanted to *supervise* us. Like some kind of playground organizer . . . You can admit it now, it's over." And at the end of the novel the hitherto rather inert Lesje performs the ultimate act of sexual manipulation, flushes her pills away and, by becoming pregnant, forsakes the dinosaurs that have been as "familiar to her as pet rabbits" and casts in her lot with the rest of us.

The novel centres upon each of the three living characters in turn. This is a matter of focus, not of voice. Except for Elizabeth on rare occasions, they do not speak as themselves. Instead we are given, gradually, in snippets, the details of their lives, their attitudes, their pasts. All have highly singular pasts. Lesje, the product of a mixed marriage, was fought over by her Ukrainian and Jewish grandmothers and seems to herself to belong nowhere. Elizabeth was "rescued" from a drunken mother by her terrible Auntie Muriel, a sort of walking Protestant ethic, one of Atwood's archetype-characters, rather like "the Americans" in *Surfacing*. Nate has spent his life trying not to be his do-gooding mother's son. ("Which maybe," Atwood tells us, "he is.") He learns finally that his mother's devotion to the classic liberal "causes" was simply busy-work to keep her from killing herself. And even the horrific Auntie Muriel is reduced to a pathetic dying figure at the last, though still capable of a kick or two from beyond the grave.

I don't believe that Atwood is generalizing to any extent in *Life Before Man,* or consigning half of us

to extinction. She is simply taking a cool penetrating look at a small group of particular people in particular circumstances at the point of history we share, in prose that is in itself a delight — wry, lucid, often wildly funny. She probably feels at times, like Lesje (and like me) that Man (note the capital!) is "a danger to the universe." But, as in Lesje's case (and mine) this is only "a theoretical opinion." For as we all must ultimately admit, mischievous apes though we are, we're all we have.

Joyce Marshall is a Toronto writer and translator presently completing a novel. Her translations include Enchanted Summer *by Gabrielle Roy. A collection of short stories,* A Private Place, *was published by Oberon in 1975.*

review by Janice Newson

A Not Unreasonable Claim, Ed. Linda Kealey. Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1979. $7.95 paper, $17.95 cloth.

Prior to the sixties, social history was largely shunned as an inferior if not illegitimate approach to historical analysis but over the past decade, it has emerged almost as the new orthodoxy. Social history tries to account for historical patterns and events within the context of the social structures and cultural orientations of the times. It differs sharply from the approach which chronicles events as they unfold from the actions of particular, often "exceptional" personages, as though these individuals and their actions were totally unconnected to the possibilities and constraints of their milieu. Perhaps inadvertently, this change has been a valuable asset to the feminist movement. Reciprocally, the high quality of feminist scholarship in the tradition of social history has contributed to its enhanced credibility. Linda Kealey's edited collection of nine essays on women and reform in Canada is one example.

A Not Unreasonable Claim is about the women's movement in Canada from the 1880s to the 1920s. The essays in this collection range from an overall analysis of this phase of women's activism to detailed explorations of its various aspects, including the Federation Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, the farm women's organizations on the prairies, the activities of urban women in labour unions, professional associations and voluntary agencies. The range of topics includes material which up until now has been overlooked, neglected, or even underplayed. The contributors focus attention on the diversity of women's involvements during this time, even though modern feminists may feel more comfortable with the equality arguments of the suffragists than with the moralizing of prohibitionists or the religious fervour of the social gospellers. One major implication of the book is that the early radicalism of the period was eventually superceded by a benign progressivism because many of the organizations which channelled women's energies adopted narrowed reformist objectives. These narrowed objectives based the claim for women's participation in public life not on the basis of sexual equality but instead on the basis of sexual differences. Women were seen to have unique maternal abilities to qualify them for involvement in limited arenas concerned with nurturing, altruism, moral purity and domesticity. United by this shared perception of the de-radicalization of women's early activism, the contributors try to explain why the period unfolded as it did. In the tradition of social history, they locate this explanation within the social structures and cultural orientations of the time.

Because of this, however, the collection as a whole often flounders. In trying to support their general explanation that, with the inevitable unfolding of capitalism, the activities of these feminists were dominated and ultimately shaped by bourgeois class interests, several of the essays rely too much upon assertion rather than analysis. The use of Marxist terms such as "class conflict" and "monopoly capitalism," as though these terms are self-explanatory, does not constitute a Marxist analysis and the material throughout is too rich and suggestive to be forced into these abstract categories.

Far more concrete and illuminating is Suzann Buckley's essay on midwives, in which she argues that the emerging interprofessional rivalries among medical groups prevented reforms to reduce infant and maternal mortality because these groups, each in their own way, feared the competition of the midwives. Also noteworthy is the essay by Joy Parr which takes seriously the theological convictions of women involved in the emigration of children as a means of explaining their definitions of womanhood.

Neither of the articles by Buckley or Parr preclude the development of a Marxist analysis of this period, but the terms they use in their argument render meaningful and understandable (even if not agreeable) the actions taken by the women at the time. In this regard, social history of the scope and depth contained in these essays is an asset to modern feminists. The consciousness of these earlier feminists was not shaped mechanistically by their objective class membership but rather, in subtle, complex ways by processes related to their participation in occupational, religious, political, and cultural associations. To understand this is to provide modern feminists with a key to understanding their own vision. Such understanding means that even if men, because they do not learn from their history, are forced to relive it, women are not.

Janice Newson is an associate professor in the sociology department at Glendon College, York University. She is on sabbatical during the 1979-80 academic session.

review by Joy Parks

the murdered dreams awake by Cathy Ford (1979) $4.50, paper.
Mouth for Music by Mona Fertig (1979) $2.50, paper.
Split Rock by Carolyn Zonailo (1979) $3.50, paper.
All published by Caitlin Press, Vancouver, B.C.

In the inevitable way that social change has a tremendous impact on all spheres of life, including literature, no one can estimate the impact that a deeper awareness of feminist perspective has had on recent poetry in both Canada and the rest of the world.

While it is the dream of all those involved with this awareness to be able to boast that new work produced by women is quality poetry, unfortunately this is not always the case. The underlying problem seems to be that in order to reconcile the fact that women's voices were so long ignored, a great deal of work ranging in degree of quality is being published to resolve all those years of silence. The result is an over-abundance of poetry that is ill-crafted, trite and lacking in polish.

Such is the case with *the murdered dreams awake*, by Cathy Ford. While in content Ms. Ford manages to reflect much of the anxiety and frustration that surfaces within a woman's life, she seems to forget that her principal purpose is to be a poet. This produces poetry that is neither structured nor meaningful. Yet, she has skill in the creation of images that could provoke the reader's mind. Her fault lies in her inability to sustain unity within a single poem. Her poetry appears as a series of images, each one significant on its own, but not as a component of a whole which should flow together to create a definite message. The reader is hit by a string of disjointed imagery which moves too quickly to be anything but confusing.

Luckily, the awareness of women in general has given many the courage to look deeply into themselves and other women, and to write honestly about what they see. Mona Fertig's *Mouth for Music* is tightly structured and has a definite impact on the reader. Ms. Fertig writes of women in a 'friendly' way, using sharp detail and concise description to portray a common bond between women. Her subject matter re-states our lives; she writes of children and sisters and women she has known, women who go mad and women who dance, happy women and, too, those who topple in frustration. Her use of detail is uncanny and her perspective toward the feelings of women works to produce a fine volume of poetry.

Before attempting to interpret the work in *Split Rock*, a profound and rich first collection by Carolyn Zonailo, one must encounter her honest use of language;

"A gigantic flower grows
from my naval.
I open my thighs
to let the flower of my sex
blossom. Have you tasted honey?"
from "Maiden's Complaint"

In that short passage, Ms. Zonailo's freedom of description breaks through all of the dangerous myths dealing with the mystery of woman's sexuality. The poetry of Carolyn Zonailo is highly sensual and moves deep into the desires and the pride that women have hidden too long, even from themselves. Her tendency to use natural images reinforces the discovery of women's natural urges. She reaches far into the inner world of a woman with her discreet but determined imagery and the reader is mesmerized by her stroking voice. *Split Rock* is a forceful work that deals honestly with women's sensuality and too, with the common themes present in the lives of all women. It is a unique and beautiful piece of work.

Joy Parks is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Waves, Fireweed, Emergency Librarian *and other publications. She lives half the year on the shore of the St. Lawrence River and the rest of her time is spent in North Toronto.*

review by Doris E. Govier

A Literary Affair, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by Sheila Fischman. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979. $12.95 cloth.
Nights in the Underground, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by Ray Ellenwood. Don Mills: Musson Books, 1979. $8.95 paper.

Marie-Claire Blais, Quebec's internationally famous novelist, is a lesbian and feminist who refuses to be bound by these labels. *Nights in the Underground*, her most recent work, is sub-titled "an exploration of love," a phrase which could be applied to both works, and indeed reveals a preoccupation of all her fiction. The earlier *A Literary Affair* was published in 1975 but delayed in translation, so that Blais' anglophone readers were offered two books in 1979.

A Literary Affair is the story of Mathieu Lelievre, a young Quebec writer visiting Paris on a Canada Council grant. He is introduced to a Parisian novelist, Yvonne d'Argenti, and at their second meeting becomes her lover. Their affair is carried on openly before Yvonne's grown children and her husband Antoine, who has the bad taste to prefer young boys to the embraces of his insatiable wife. Then Antoine introduces a young Tunisian bedmate of his own to complete this unconventional household. The story develops as a satire of old world decadence and new world naivete, but this familiar theme is saved from triteness by the witty presentation of an upper class family of impeccable breeding and outrageous morality.

As Mathieu's mistress, Yvonne makes love efficiently, but with a self-absorption and dispatch often associated by novelists with male characters. "Do you love me?" comes regularly to her lips, but rarely "I love you." She considers Mathieu's youth and sexual energy "good" for her, but frankly admits that their affair will end when his money runs out. A natural mother in the biological sense, Yvonne detests children, especially her own. The women in her novels physically abuse their young, and Mathieu wonders uneasily whether the true Yvonne is in her life or in her art. He discovers that the reality is in both.

No reviewer could accuse Blais of feminist bias in this novel, as Yvonne is an evil, if fascinating, character. Perhaps one of its purposes is to shatter the accepted myths of femininity and motherhood as a first step towards the conception of woman as merely human, and not the "second sex."

Nights in the Underground, however, tends to didacticism rather than impartiality. The Underground is a Montreal bar frequented by lesbians, the name symbolizing the social position of women who have been scorned by "straight" society for their sexual preferences. Here Quebec sculptress Genevieve, who has had an unsatisfactory heterosexual relationship in Paris, falls in love with Lali, a free spirit whose wartime childhood in Europe has in some way scarred her both physically and spiritually. After a

brief affair Lali abandons Genevieve for another woman, but the experience is nonetheless positive. Now aware of her true nature, Genevieve has the self-confidence to initiate a bonding with Francoise, an older woman whose vibrant lesbianism has been smothered out of respect for her conventional daughters' feelings. The theme of "This above all: to thine own self be true" is presented with sympathy and earnestness.

The conclusion of the novel is hopeful for all the women of the Underground. During its time span they have passed from winter into summer, from darkness into light, and from isolation into the wider human community.

Nights in the Underground is short on plot and long on psychological nuances and lyrical descriptions. Its liveliest passages belong to the minor characters with their racy dialogue and eccentric behaviour. Certain tableaux are permeated with female sensuality, yet there are no specific sex scenes. The physical aspects of lesbianism are treated with delicacy, with the body presented as the gateway to the soul. The lovers have their humiliations and betrayals, but at its best, Blais implies, the love of woman for woman is more tender and spiritual than the love of man for woman, or of woman for man.

Of the two novels, *A Literary Affair* reads more quickly and is more entertaining. *Nights in the Underground*, through its lack of action, is difficult, but fresher in its insights, novels with lesbian characters having been few in Canadian literature. With this, her fifteenth work of fiction, Blais has emerged from her own personal underground. It is now public knowledge that for many years she has lived with and loved an older woman, the artist Mary Meigs.

Doris Govier teaches a course in women and literature in the Department of Extended Education at the University of Calgary.

AUNTIE

A thorough turnout, you might say.
Shake the head and pillow feathers fly,
and the dust spins up in loops
from cerebral circuitry:
motes of imagery flee
like troops in disarray. Muster eighty
years of misremembered fact.
There is no going back. So good-bye
to odds and ends, set cloisonné;
to perfumed shadows dancing in the shade,
to lovers with mismatched names, atticked in grime.

And here's the heart that Molly made.
And an empty tortoise shell
found that time we hunted cattails
signifying "house" and "dead;"
and flowerchains of praise, of pride;
and the cutting board that Peter made;
and words, words, words; sweep out
truths along with lies.
Out with photographs,
the bride in lily-poise beside
her soldier, sepia clouding mother;
with rusted grenades, souvenirs of anger;
with tears pickled in Mason jars, with sterile clutter.
Out, sorting and sifting, lifting
laughter, and a flock of starlings
swoops in a flash of sun. I love you, I love you
wrinkled and worn, tossed.

Home is born again clean. White with wonder,
brain walls pure and idle, eggshell babe,
the clear blue windows overlook the sea
where waters rock and rock and rock.

by Audrey Conard

Audrey Conard lives in Oakville, Ontario. Her poetry has appeared in previous issues of Branching Out *as well as in many literary magazines and journals.*

SPORTS

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The occasional discussions about the suitability of sports for the female population gave way to frequent debates on this issue, and as the 1930's wore on, a clearly hostile view was becoming evident. This was paralleled quite closely in other areas: for example, it was made very clear to women in the 30s that they were taking jobs away from men (in the face of very high unemployment) by virtue of being in the labour force. Women, therefore, were actively encouraged to revert to the more traditional role of being exclusively housewives and mothers rather than housewives, mothers *and* gainfully employed breadwinners. Liberalism gave way to antipathy.

As early as 1934 there was a protracted debate in the newspapers on the general theme of "Girls, is sports good for you?" The debate had been sparked by a long tirade by the prominent Vancouver journalist Andy Lytle. In his attack on women athletes he stated: "Take basketball. True it's now played according to girl's rules, but it used to be played by boys' rules. I say you can't have bodily contact without danger to the soft bodies of women. In Vancouver the girls play lacrosse and they are constantly going to the doctor for treatment. They cannot pad their bodies to prevent injury. It's a rough game and it takes the polish off girls."

To their credit, the major male sportswriters in the *Toronto Star* took issue with Mr. Lytle's attack on women athletes. But even in their defense there were some danger signs. They easily refuted the matter of physical harm that might come to women atheletes. But they spent too much time defending the women on the basis of their ability to retain their femininity while playing sports. Said Frederick Griffin of the *Star*: "Go out and see the girls playing softball at Sunnyside Park evening after evening in the summertime, and you will be astonished at the way they conduct themselves under all conditions. They are the best of sports and almost uniformly ladylike."

Some of the reactionary attitudes toward women athletes prevalent in the United States were adopted in Canada. Canadian women sports columnists reported with disdain the decision in Ohio to institute "girls' rules" basketball — but just a few years later high school physical education teachers in Canada adopted the same rules. It was unfortunate that instead of examining the British or European approaches to physical education and sports, physical educators chose to absorb a regressive model from the United States. Canadians had taken the lead in developing sports for women, but now they were allowing that development to be aborted.

As women were discouraged from involvement in sport in the mid-1930s, many of their organizations died out. One should not assume that all sport for women collapsed after 1935, but there was certainly a period of decline brought about by the conservatism of the Depression. It took World War II to actually disband most of the leagues and organization, but throughout the 1930s many organizations were amalgamating with the corresponding men's associations. The interests of women were therefore left virtually unprotected, because mixed associations tended to use most of their resources to benefit their male members.

Doroty McKenzie Walton of Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

The success of Canadian women in the international arenas of sport was a reflection of the extensive participation by women and support for their athletic activities within Canada. Extensive newspaper coverage, including women sports columnists, considerable financial patronage by wealthy individuals and business concerns, and high level of spectator interest in women's sport existed in the late 1920's. But just 20 years later, Canadian women were surpassed in international competition by athletes from countries who had been far behind in 1928. Our decline in sport both at the participation and the excellence levels started in the early 1930's. The democratization of sport for women that started in the early 1920's and reached its zenith in the late 1920's deteriorated during the depths of the Depression. We not only lost our international standing in sport by the end of the 1930's but the opportunities for general sports participation among women were drastically reduced throughout the 1940's, 50's. Although the interest in sport and personal fitness in recent years combined with a rethinking of the stereotypes and roles of women have again increased the interest of many women in physical activity, women are still fighting the vestige of the limited notions of female capacity and sex stereotyping that developed in the 1930's.

Abby Hoffman is a former Olympic track athlete. She has worked as a sport consultant and freelance journalist and has been active on behalf of the rights of girls and women to have equal access to sports and physical recreational opportunities.

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photo of Margaret Atwood by Vivian Frankel

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