

# the pedestal

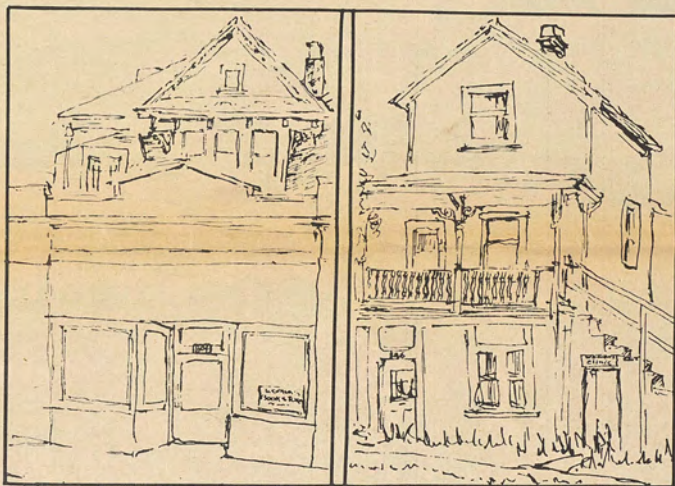
VOL. 5 NO. 5 JUNE 73

THE VANCOUVER WOMEN'S LIBERATION NEWSPAPER

25¢

**NEW**

Women's Health Centre  
Women's Bookstore



Women's Bookstore - 804 Richards

Women's Health Centre - 146 East 18th

**IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH P.1**

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**CANADIAN FICTION P.10**

**"bitterly yours" - DENNY'S P.5**



collective vancover women's health van  
 women's health collective vancover women  
**VANCOUVER WOMEN'S HEALTH**

IN **SICKNESS**

Do you know that your medical insurance will not cover the fee for a visit to the doctor for a breast examination unless your doctor indicates on the billing card that you were "anxious" about having breast cancer?

Do you know that a general physical checkup is also excluded from coverage by both MSA and BCMP unless "anxiety" about physical condition is given as the reason for the visit?

Both examples illustrate how health care is arranged in our society: doctors and nurses work in offices, clinics and hospitals where people come with their illnesses and anxieties. The healthy person stays at home.

This distinction between sickness and health is especially damaging for a woman: although female physiology naturally implies menstruation, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause, a woman regularly deals with any or all of these functions in the office of her doctor who may even be a specialist in women's problems - a gynecologist.

She is classified by herself, her doctor (and her medical plan) as "ill" or anxious about being ill. Thus, women comprise the majority of a doctor's patients and are called neurotic or hypochondriacal. And if a woman chooses to stay at home, not considering herself to be unhealthy, she may fail to recognize the signs of authentic female illnesses such as breast cancer, pelvic disease and so forth. Without the knowledge of herself in health as well as in illness, she has no framework for effective consultation with health professionals and no solid information about preventive care.

It is no exaggeration to say that her doctor assumes more responsibility for a woman's body than she can herself; the more of an authority the doctor becomes, the less confidence the woman will have in her ability to make decisions regarding her own health care.

The woman who has been taking birth control pills for six or seven years may have vague misgivings about using them for a long period; she may go to her doctor with her doubts and find reassurance ("Leave it up to me, dear"), or indifference, or even resentment about taking up time or not trusting the doctor's judgement. She will rarely be given solid information concerning the mechanism of birth control pills, or the details concerning side effects. She will not be encouraged to pay attention to her body's messages. In fact, doctors often deliberately omit telling a woman about the potential side effects because "then she'll just develop that symptom".

In addition to feeling dissatisfied, uncomfortable, and probably angry, the woman will feel trapped in a situation where she does not know what to ask in order to find out what she needs to know.

Our beginnings as a Health Collective focussed on the frustration (and often humiliation) we commonly experienced as women in our doctors' offices. Together we prepared a questionnaire which a woman could use to evaluate her doctor, specifically in relation to female concerns. Our goal was to establish a directory of doctors who were recommended, and for many good reasons, by women. And the questions themselves provided information about good health care:

"Did your doctor explain the common occurrence of vaginal infections while taking antibiotics?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 or while taking birth control pills? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_"

The questionnaire has been widely distributed and the maintenance of the directory is one of the ongoing projects of the Collective. We are currently involved in setting up a series of visits with doctors in order to have additional information about them. And we are eager for comments from women since the effectiveness of our recommendation system depends on us all.

The Vancouver Women's Health Booklet was published last summer as the culmination of an OFY project which systematically distributed the questionnaire to 100 women. The booklet summarizes the results of the survey and includes experiences and plans for future action. We have learned that women want and need more information and that women will use that information effectively. Most important of all, our belief in our own capacity to learn from each other and from ourselves has been amply confirmed.

**VANCOUVER WOMEN'S Bookstore / LIBRARY.**

we have: health booklet working in hospitals v.d./birth control handbooks

we need: \$ time, energy, books, suggestions for books.

Call us: 684-0523 VAN. B.C.

804 RICHARDS.

MEDICINE FOR THE PEOPLE

cover women's health collective vancouver women's health collective  
collective vancouver women's health collective vancouver women  
COLLECTIVE VANCOUVER WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTIVE VANCOUVER

# AND IN HEALTH

## The Women's Self-help Clinic

As an extension of our conviction that women have a great deal to offer each other in health and in illness, we operate a weekly women's self-help clinic which deals specifically with women's concerns and is oriented around health-education.

Some women come to the clinic with a health problem and have the opportunity of participating in the procedure of resolving that problem. The doctors who work with us appreciate the importance of the woman-patient's involvement.

Other women come to the clinic for information about their health. Our emphasis is to demonstrate how we can learn to use information about ourselves: in understanding our menstrual cycles, in breast self-examination, in making choices about birth control or pregnancy, in our sexuality and in our use of available preventive services such as the pap test for detection of cervical cancer.

At the clinic a woman may learn how to look at her own cervix in order to detect its routine changes, thereby reclaiming the right to be familiar with her own body without shame or fear.

## Health Education Group

Since January, 1972, when we were meeting at A Woman's Place, the Health Collective has organized several health education groups: a group of women who are interested in learning and sharing information about health care met regularly for eight or ten weeks and systematically discussed topics of concern, including sexuality and nutrition along with aspects of female physiology. Resource people from the Collective and from the community are available, although our commitment to self-education includes them in a way which is different from the usual guest lecturer situation. In fact, our groups have been quite different from one another - some more focussed on study and action, others more involved in sharing personal experiences and cultivating the intimacy that grows when women come to trust each other.

As we penetrate the mystery of our own bodies we have discovered how much can be known! It seems even more unreasonable that this knowledge has been so carefully concealed from us, as if, as someone said, information about our health is a secret potion which loses its effectiveness if the word gets out.

Our whole effort is to continue to spread the word!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE  
VANCOUVER WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTIVE  
-146 East 18th Ave. 873-3984

## HEALTH EDUCATION GROUPS

- meet at 146 East 18th
- three groups operating now
- two are general female health groups, one is an "over-40's" group whose interest is in learning/sharing about menopause
- a new group can begin at any time. Call 873-3984 for information.

## HEALTH LINE

- 873-3984, from 11 am - 7 pm, Monday to Friday
- information about doctors, abortion referral, other health resources.

## WOMEN'S SELF-HELP CLINIC

- 1952 West 4th Ave. 731-6929
- every Friday evening 6.30-9
- vaginitis, vd., birth control, pap and pelvic exam., nutrition, breast and cervical self-examination, etc.
- we are hoping to expand to a second evening, perhaps at a different location.

## Books and other Information

- Our Bodies, Our Selves (the "original" - we have ordered newly-published and expanded version)
- McGill Birth Control Handbook
- The Birth Book
- The Vancouver Women's Health Booklet
- assorted gynecology texts.

And: - we collect and file information which relates to women's health. The files are open to all.



# M I C R O N O V

It has never been our practice, in health groups or at the clinic to tell a woman what she should or should not do (or swallow or say). Rather, we want to make information available to a woman so that she can become actively involved in decisions about her own body.

It is in this context and spirit, then, that we present some information about Micronov. More details/conversation are available at the Health Clinic.

## The No-Estrogen Pill

Micronov is the brand name of a birth control pill manufactured by the Pharmaceutical Corporation which contains only a synthetic progesterone, called novethindrone. It is also referred to as the "mini pill".

Micronov is being prescribed fairly widely in Vancouver these days. Most doctors present it to a woman as a Safer Alternative to the "regular" combination-type birth control pills which contain small amounts of progesterone and estrogen. It is estrogen which has been associated with most of the side effects which worry us, such as thromboembolism (blood-clotting) and strokes, as well as with the "nuisance" problems such as bleeding, mood change, breast tenderness, for example.

## Dosage

The dosage of Micronov is different from most of the other pills. One pill is taken every single day. It comes in packages of 35 pills, when one package is completed, another is begun without taking a break.

## Mechanism

The progesterone seems to have three major effects which make it an effective contraceptive:

- (1) It acts on cervical mucous to make it thicker and less slippery so that sperm cannot penetrate it. Sperm is thus prevented from moving into the uterus and tubes where it might meet an egg.
- (2) It acts on the endometrium (lining of the uterus) so as to make it inhospitable to an egg even if one does happen to get fertilized.
- and (3) It interferes with the action of the pituitary gland so that the hormones which cause an egg to develop and not rupture (ovulation) are not secreted, if there is no ovulation, there cannot be a pregnancy. (This is the major mechanism of the regular combination-type pill).

(3a) Sometimes, ovulation is not suppressed, and in these cases, the contraceptive mechanism would rely entirely on the actions of (1) and (2). For this reason, Micronov has a slightly higher rate of pregnancy than do the regular, combination-type birth control pills.

## Side Effects

The major side effect of Micronov which is a problem for many women particularly those who do not ovulate, is very irregular bleeding (with intervals of 10-60 days). This is inconvenient because of its unpredictability and disturbing because of fears of possible pregnancy.

At the same time, the progesterone pill has not been associated with the serious complications that seem to be estrogen-related.

It is important to know, however, that research on Micronov is still in progress and that there is uncertainty about its exact mechanism and effects.



## Who is taking Micronov?

A woman would take Micronov if (1) she wants to use a birth control pill for contraception and

(2) she cannot tolerate estrogen because of her family history, or her own philosophy.

We are interested in knowing the process involved when doctors prescribe Micronov. We know of young women whose doctors have prescribed it as their first birth control pill when there was nothing in their medical backgrounds that indicated its necessity.

## What We Need To Know

We would like to know if Vancouver doctors are involved in research on Micronov and if so, we should know the details.

We would like to know what kind of information women are given about Micronov, and what their experience with this pill has been.

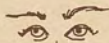
If we share our experience and our knowledge with each other, we can ensure better health for all of us.

## DOCTOR REFERRAL

LAST SUMMER WE CIRCULATED A QUESTIONNAIRE TO SOME WOMEN IN VANCOUVER ASKING THEM ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THEIR DOCTORS FROM ALL THE INFORMATION GATHERED, WE PUT TOGETHER A LIST OF DOCTORS, LISTING VARIOUS COMMENTS AND FEELINGS EXPERIENCED BY THEIR WOMEN-PATIENTS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE A FAIR NUMBER OF DOCTORS LISTED, WE NEED LOTS MORE, ESPECIALLY FROM OUTLYING DISTRICTS OF VANCOUVER. SO IF YOU NEED THE NAME OF A DOCTOR OTHER WOMEN WOULD RECOMMEND, OR WOULD LIKE TO HELP US AND YOURSELF BY FILLING OUT A QUESTIONNAIRE, DROP BY:

THE VANCOUVER HEALTH  
♀ COLLECTIVE,  
146 EAST 18<sup>th</sup> (NEAR MAIN)

OR CALL US AT 873-3984  
AND WE WILL MAIL YOU ONE.



Joy & Karen are looking...

for a house or some such  
acomodation to share with  
other women. Phone 685-7474-

# DENNY'S -

## saved by the court/N.D.P.

Dear Phyllis Young,

Judge Hinkson dismissed the motion for contempt of court against myself and three other defendants charged with picketing Denny's restaurant. The other two of the six named on the notice were never served and so did not appear in court.

The notice was dismissed because Denny's had not properly established the identity of those charged. Essentially, it was the brilliant defence by defendants' counsel, Harry Rankin, Stuart Rush, Peter Fraser, Sandy McCandless, and others who did not appear in court, which saved us from a jail term.

The judge was very regretful that he couldn't jail anyone. He waxed indignant about the picketing and said that Denny's had tried in every way possible to make the injunction known to the picketers. The judge would have liked to punish someone for acting "contumaciously" (i.e. stubbornly refusing to submit to authority) but couldn't because they were hiding behind a cloak of anonymity.

It was a case of winning the battle but losing the war. Until this time the picketers had understood the injunction applied only to the hotel staff. The judge's decision showed clearly that it applied to everyone in the world. There is no legal avenue by which to carry on this protest.

Under these circumstances, harassed by Denny's who are assisted by the laws of B.C. there seems to be no choice but to stop the picketing. It has been amply demonstrated that there is no protest under the law for unorganized workers and that there is no legal means for them to organize.

The NDP Gov't was elected because it promised among other things to change the anti-labour legislation. No one has expected that the NDP would actively support management against workers. Yet this is precisely what the NDP is doing. We expected the court wouldn't help us, we did not expect the courts to help them.

If the confrontation had been between Denny's staff and Denny's management, the issue would have been clear. The laws of B.C. interferred to punish the workers, so there was no such confrontation. We only ask that the courts be neutral. All you NDP types talked about justice and now your leader talks about neutrality. That's all we asked for in this case - neutrality. We didn't get it.

We were charged with contempt of court. Denny's prepared such a lousy case the judge couldn't put anyone in jail even though he really wanted to. Denny's was not, of course, expressing contempt for the court by not bothering to prepare a proper case. They naturally expected that the court would support them no matter how rotten was their case. They were right.

Denny's is the third attempt I know of restaurant workers trying to organize themselves. In the first two instances - Smitty's and Pizza Patio - people also lost their jobs, in those cases, due to the Labour Relations Board. Again, there wasn't even a pretence of neutrality or objective weighing of evidence. Management was right because they were management and workers were wrong because they were workers. If you are interested in these cases, and I have no reason to believe you are, the stories are available in back copies of the Grape and the Pedestal.

What these three cases demonstrate is that the NDP government continues to ensure that women workers have no means open to them by which to organize. Many people have criticized women for not attempting to improve the conditions under which they live and work. We have seen what happens to women when they do make this attempt. They lose their livelihood and when that livelihood is so precarious, women are unwilling to fight management, laws, the trade unions. The array of power lined up against waitresses is awesome indeed.

The trade unions have also made their stand, or lack of, shamefully obvious. The Vancouver Labour Council and the B.C. Federation of Labour executives had a meeting with Rankin, counsel for the staff and defendants in the contempt of court case. They refused to meet with staff or defendants. They were in a panic because they were being forced to make a stand and they searched frantically for ways to get themselves out of the situation.

Denny's workers, the trade union bureaucrats say, should be in the House of Labour before they ask the House of Labour for assistance. They must join Hotel and Restaurant Workers, Local 28. Even the Labour Council executives agree it's a hopeless union. Workers belonging to this union under as bad or worse conditions than unorganized workers. Waitresses, whether in this union or out of it, get low pay, rotten working conditions, and are subject to insults and mauling from both bosses and customers. The only advice trade union bureaucrats had for the tired Denny's staff was that they should go back to work, which was self evidently absurd, since Denny's has refused to rehire them. Beverage Dispensers Local 315 provided the staff with a lawyer who not only didn't argue against the terms of the injunction, but withdrew his objections to the injunction. The Hotel and Restaurant workers union has made no attempt to organize unorganized workers.

Nevertheless, the Labour Council and the B.C. Fed executives maintain the staff should have joined this hopeless union. An appeal from the defendants in the contempt of court case met with an equally hopeless response.

"You got yourself into this, you get yourself out", Syd Thompson said. "This is the Vancouver Labour Council, you know." (Do they wear purple robes at their meetings? Jack Lawrence agreed that it was the anti-labour laws, not the defendants who had got us into this; nevertheless, too, searched frantically for some way to weasel out of the situation.)

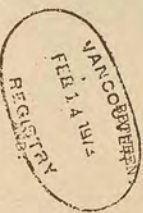
Women and independent unions terrify these worthy gentlemen. They act as if they had two sets of enemies: management and workers, and of the two, they fear workers more. And, indeed, democratic unions are a threat to the comfortable living these gentlemen make at the expense of the workers. Democracy would mean they would have to listen to their membership. Syd Thompson's union, for example, passed a resolution supporting the Denny's boycott. But Mr. Thompson, his union's representative to the Labour Council, acted against their wishes and without consulting the membership in trying to cut off all support to the Denny's staff and defendants.

The only people with courage and an idea about justice were the Denny's staff and a group of picketers, belonging to the Working Women's Association, the Grape, rank and file NDP members, a few students, the Women's Centre, some members of independent unions, a few individual workers.

Denny's has 722 outlets in 15 states, Canada, and Mexico. It's head office is in Los Angeles. It's annual budget probably equals that of this province. It was, to begin with, an unequal struggle. They could threaten to hire assassins, they did hire high priced lawyers and dozens of private detectives.

All this was to prevent waitresses from asking for any rights. All we had on our side was determination and idealism. We did a good job. But the B.C. government and the trade unions united with Denny's and we got screwed.

Bitterly yours,  
Helen Patrebenko  
C.C. to Rosemary Brown.



NO. 41941  
31(41)

at approximately 12.15pm., I observed approximately twenty-five people picketing in front of Denny's Restaurant location

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

THAT on or about the 24th day of February, A.D. 1973,

BETWEEN: D.R.I. OF CANADA LTD.

THAT on or about the 27th day of February, A.D. 1973,

Plaintiff

THAT on or about the 2nd day of March, A.D. 1973, at

AND: OTHER PERSONS UNKNOWN

TO THE PLAINTIFF ACTING AS PICKETS

THAT on or about the 7th day of March, A.D. 1973, at approximately 9.10pm., I personally observed approximately thirty persons picketing in front of Denny's Restaurant located at 1296 West Broadway, in the City and Province aforesaid. The Attached hereto and marked Exhibit "E" to this my Affidavit is a true photographic likeness of the persons I observed.

AT OR NEAR THE PREMISES KNOWN AS DENNY'S RESTAURANT NO. 1 - 1296 WEST BROADWAY, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Defendants

THAT on or about the 2nd day of April, A.D. 1973, while

♀  
**SISTERHOOD**  
 IS ♀  
**POWERFUL**  
 ♀

Graffiti is one of the easiest and cheapest ways of advertising. It has been used for centuries, ever since women invented writing and scratched their first messages on cave walls. It still remains as one of the few non-commercialized art forms left in this world of television and high-pressure selling. And we can use it.

All a graffiti artist requires is a good felt pen. Find one that doesn't squeak too badly, as this can be a little embarrassing at times. Keep it with you always, since chances to use it crop up when least expected -- in buses, public washrooms, on the streets.

You can start by defacing signs that are particularly annoying. Like the "Turn on a male chauvinist" ad that was hounded off B.C. Hydro buses with "This exploits and degrades women" stickers. Ads for dances and rock concerts etc. are often extremely sexist, and should always be defaced as a matter of principle. The best sorts of graffiti are short messages written on bathroom walls, or sides of buildings. We once painted

GOD IS A WOMAN

on a large church in pink spray paint. This stopped traffic for several weeks. In relation to the War Measure's Act, "Women's Liberation supports the FLQ" and "Et Les Femmes Libre" was painted on Vancouver buildings. 3 years later, many of the graffiti remains. If in doubt, a women's liberation symbol is always appropriate. Also **SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL** should be visible everywhere women might see.

Try also **VIETNAMESE WOMEN CARRY GUNS OR WITCHES AND AMAZONS ARE STRONG WOMEN OR LOVING WOMEN IS REVOLUTIONARY OR I WAS A VICTIM OF SEXIST SOCIETY UNTIL I DISCOVERED**

**SISTERHOOD OR CHANGE YOURSELVES --CHANGE THE WORLD OR PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU HATES WOMEN OR MALE CULTURE IS DYING. HELP PUT IT OUT OF ITS MISERY OR WOMEN ARE STRONG TOGETHER OR STRONG WOMEN HAVE BEAUTIFUL FACES OR SMASH SEXISM. SAVE YOUR SISTERS, SAVE YOURSELVES OR RAPE IS THE STUFF THAT MARRIAGES ARE BUILT ON OR DYKES UNITE.**

Anyway, every time you write one of these down, you are saying something important to all the women who will read it. Think of your own graffiti. Think of something that says exactly how you feel and write it everywhere. Let your anger and your love spread itself around. Be public. Tell the world. Write it down wherever you go. Send it in to the Pedestal and pass it on to your friends. Decorate your home with beautiful graffiti. Hang a women's symbol from your rear view mirror. Embroider it onto your clothes. Paint it on your body. You have a right to be heard, so shout a little louder.

Judith

**MORE  
 CONTEMPT**

THAT on or about the evening of the 23rd day of March, A.D. 1973, I arrived at Denny's Restaurant No. 1, and observed a sign painted on the back of the building which read "Boycott Denny's", the said sign being made by bright orange paint. At approximately 6.40pm. I observed eight persons, three female and five male persons, picketing in the manner aforesaid in paragraph 5 herein, carrying signs bearing the words "Denny's exploits waitresses", "Denny's re-hire fired staff", "waitresses", "Denny's unfair to staff and customers", "Re-hire fired staff",

## Rape trials are trials of the victim

THE FOLLOWING LETTER DATED FEBRUARY 5 1973, WAS SENT TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

We are writing to you to express our anger about the December trial held in Williams Lake of three Quesnel men charged with forcibly seizing and indecently assaulting a seventeen year old Native woman from Nazko.

We know that as the law stands convictions for rape are notoriously difficult to obtain, and that, given the stigma attached to "sexual offender" juries are reluctant to convict. However, having read an account of the trial in the January 4th issue of the Williams Lake TRIBUNE, we find it inconceivable that these three white men could be found not guilty. We deduce from this that the white jury acted in a racist and sexist manner.

We understand that you have said you are "concerned" with this case. We are much more than "concerned", we are outraged and angry and we ask that the matter be immediately reviewed and the case reopened. The law on assault must be enforced if women are to feel safe from rapists. At the moment many sexual assaults on women go unreported as women know that it is almost impossible for the man to be found guilty, and the trial only compounds the humiliation and degradation for the woman. Right now this case makes the Law look racist, sexist and foolish and women are becoming increasingly angry with such judgements being passed.

We note also, that the Jury in this matter was all white, eleven men and one woman--hardly a representative group of Cariboo and Chilcotin residents. This, Mr. Attorney General, is not good enough. Such juries, we understand, are drawn from voters' lists and few Native people are enumerated. We ask that since jury selection comes under provincial jurisdiction that the present jury laws, which can allow a jury such as the one in the

Williams Lake case to be convened, be rewritten. Women have as much right as men to be protected from assault, sexual or otherwise, and we think that rape trials should cease to be trials of the victims rather than trials of the rapists.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Quittenton (Hospital Employees Union, Local 180, Women's Caucus)  
 Nancy Martin (for The Working Women's Association)  
 Jean Rand (President, Service Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada, Local 1)  
 Jane B. MacDermot (Vancouver Women's Centre)  
 Leja Milner (for "A Women's Place")  
 Jane Blackstock (Co-ordinator, Women's Referral Bureau)  
 D. Davis (for Little People's Nursery, Castlegar)  
 Georgia Swedish (Women's Selfhelp Clinic)  
 Frances Isaacs (Co-ordinator UBC Women's Action Group)  
 Shelagh Day (Spokeswoman, Women's Action Group)  
 Pat Moan (Executive member, Media Women, BC)  
 Marcy Cohen (Daycare occupation force)  
 Jean Knaiger (Mothers Action Centre)  
 Lori Rosenthal (The Pedestal Newspaper)  
 Betsy Wood (South Hill Child Care Centre)  
 Jennifer Clemens (President, Association of University and College Employees, UBC, Local 1)  
 Carolyn Jerome (Grandview Child Care Centre)  
 Betty Varty (Executive Director, SFU Day Care Society)  
 Carol Sayre (Child Care Information and Resource Services)  
 Mary Leggett (Living Free Peoples Group)  
 Alice James (Status of Women Council of B.C.)  
 ADDRESS ANY ENQUIRIES TO: No. 3 - 45 Kingsway, Vancouver, B.C. (WORKING WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION)

"I believe that one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences, and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another but because we need to survive. Then together we will fight our common enemies."

Maria Campbell

HALFBREED by Maria Campbell

Review by Carol Summers

Maria Campbell grew up on a road allowance, that strip of crown land here and there along the Prairie highways where Halfbreeds are permitted to live. From a childhood of extreme poverty in Saskatchewan, she moved along the downwardly mobile path open to her in this society. As a woman, she went behind the man -- on her way to the prostitution and heroin rings of Vancouver. As a striking beauty, she was quickly discovered by ringleaders who quietly and graciously served big business and government clientele -- with Maria and other young women like her.

Maria tells a haunting tale in her book *Halfbreed*, which has just been cut and published by McClelland Stewart. The politics of this publishing make up an unwritten chapter extending that oppression Ms. Campbell documents in her autobiography. Omissions from the original manuscript, made without the author's permission or even knowledge, include a scene where Maria, aged 14, is raped by three on duty, in uniform RCMP officers. Perhaps M and S "The Canadian Publishers" thought it a bit tasteless to recount such a tasteless incident? (This is also the RCMP's centennial year). Passages which describe Maria's assignments as a pretty prop for important men have been chopped. Perhaps we might recognize some of these men? -- who, as Maria notes, "perpetuate in private what they condemn in public."

In its amputated form, however, the book remains a Canadian legacy. Very much in the tradition of her people, Maria shares in it all that she has and is -- the joys of her childhood which outline her family's proud way of life, rich with the culture and history of Canadian Halfbreeds; the less and less gradual erosion of that way of life; the experience of her people's growing shame growing in her; her love-hate for Halfbreeds; her endless struggle to survive, to keep her brothers and sisters from the State, to be proud, all on much less than adequate food, clothing, housing, schooling.

Maria's family would accept no government "aid". Her father, Daniel, burned charity boxes from white neighbours -- "We won't let them make us poorer than we are," he said.

Daniel was the son of Cheechum, (Maria's Grandma Campbell). He lived like her, the spirit of her uncle, Gabriel Dumont.

It was Dumont and Riel and 150 Halfbreeds who were stopped in 1884 by 8,000 government troops, 500 NWMP and white volunteers from the territories during the Riel Rebellion. Their spirit was not stopped. Cheechum cherished it and nurtured it in her children, in her children's children. *Halfbreed* is the story of Maria and others of her people, fully realizing that spirit in themselves today.

-NATIVE PEOPLE-

In Vancouver - for information phone or drop in:

B.C. NATIVE WOMEN:  
#514-193 E. Hastings,  
738-4003

B.C. ASSOC. OF NON  
STATUS INDIANS:  
1027 W. Broadway,  
736-8721

NATIVE INFO. CENTRE:  
687 E. Hastings, or  
584 Nelson St.,  
255-0535 (24 hrs)

UNION OF B.C. INDIAN:  
CHIEFS: 140 W. 12th,  
736-6751

INDIAN CENTRE:  
1855 Vine St.,  
736-7481

NATIVE BROTHERHOOD:  
193 E. Hastings,  
685-8049

NASAIKA LODGE: Residence  
for women 16-20 yrs.  
666 W. 12th,  
874-9922  
874-4812

A Native Women's Newspaper:  
The Native Sisterhood,  
P.O. Box 515,  
Kingston, Ont.

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# SELMA JAMES

women's  
theorist



activist &  
from England

ARTICLE BY LIZ RUPERT

We went to see Selma James last night, Nora and Jeanine and Carolyn and I and a roomful of others. She came in weary from an appearance at S.F.U. From what I have seen of the apathy among many students there since '69, I can understand why she seemed down, quite apart from the strain of her heavy schedule.

As she started to talk and we started to respond, her weariness fell away and her energy and conviction poured over us; she tossed back her thick black hair and pushed up her sleeves and flung her arms wide as she talked about women working "out there" and held her arms out to us, fingers curled, pulling us in as she talked about women working in the home; women working, working, working, everywhere and all the time; women working for little pay or no pay at all was the core of her argument and is the core of the women's movement as she sees it. Too much work and too little money, which translates into much too little power in a money economy, is the central fact of women's lives from which the other facts of their oppression derive.

Fight in the abortion campaign, fight in the equal pay for equal work campaign, fight in the daycare campaign, fight in the unions, yes, fight how and where you can but never forget these are piecemeal reforms for only a piece of the problem. Control over your uterus does not give you control over your body; it is still subject to housemaid's knee and typist's spread and seamstress' squint and lung disease from too little technology on the one hand and too much on the other, from having no control over what technology is used for and what our bodies are used for. Equal pay means little if it is paid for work that could better be done by machines, while our other work, the part that cannot be done by machines, bearing and raising the world's children, is not paid for at all. Similarly with unions - more representation and better unions would be great, but they don't help us in the other half of our double load, the work in the home. We need daycare, every mother and every child is entitled to it, but we don't necessarily want to leave our children for 10 hours a day in order to feed

them without prostituting ourselves to some man. And every wife knows that's what economic dependence on men means, every wife knows that if she doesn't want to serve her husband, especially sexually, she had better have a damn good excuse. Every dependent wife at some time or other has blessed The Curse.

So the central issue in the liberation of women is pay for work in the home. Independence and freedom are synonymous.

We can expect the Corporate Elite, the state in fact, to throw everything it has into the war against this campaign, because unpaid women's work is the kingpin holding together a capitalistic economy. Without the vast reserve labour supply represented by housewives, patriotically willing and money hungry enough to be thrown into the breach whenever necessary, it will be difficult to conduct the imperialist wars that have ensured a handful of corporations' control over most of the world's resources. Without the spectre of needy families at home depending on their paycheques, it will be more difficult to control workers, harder to fight the people's growing demand for control over the uses to which their labour and resources are put. Western style marriage itself, the most effective institution so far devised for inhibiting and repressing the human potential of human beings and turning them into passive adjuncts of military-industrial machines, will crumble of its own intolerable weight when women no longer must support it to survive, when men no longer must support it to ensure the survival of their children.

Selma James did not have time to talk very much about strategies for this battle, though the sections of the Movement in Britain and in Italy that she speaks for are working on the problem. She did say that the first day women walk out of their houses at 6 a.m. and men all over the country phone in to say they can't come to work because there is no one to look after their children will be the day everyone understands how vital women's work is to the economy. On that day women will stop saying, "Oh, I don't work. I'm just a housewife." On



that day they will realize that all other work depends upon their doing theirs, and paying them will have to be a first priority, even if that means we can't afford to go to the moon any more, or drop any more bombs on Asian peasants, or spend millions of dollars a year on advertising products and millions of dollars more devising ways to make them rapidly obsolescent.

But of course that is not, unfortunately perhaps, what paying housewives means. Of course the economy can afford it and still keep up its headlong rush into environmental and social disaster. (That will be a fight we'll have to take on after we've won economic independence. Because in fact we are surviving now. In fact we are living in houses and wearing clothes and eating and taking

in the odd movie. We as housewives must ask for our money like children, whine for it, beg for it, nag for it, connive for it, argue for it, bargain for it, pretend for it, depending on our natures and our marital situations, but we do usually get it, in goods and services if not in cash. It will be no additional strain on the economy to pay us directly rather than indirectly. It is not the financial cost that will concern the people who control the economy, but their loss of control over us and over the men who are made cowards by dependent families. They will never admit that. They will warn the men that what we gain they will lose. They will try to make it look like charity rather than wages. They will attack us through our children - women who "love" their

children would never ask to be paid for the privilege of raising them, and so on. They will do as they have always done, try to divide us along sex, class, and age lines.

But they will lose. Because we do want to love our children and our men and ourselves. And we can fully do that only when we are not a burden on each other, when our emotions are not tied to our survival.

I did not take notes of Selma James' talk. I was too engrossed listening to her and watching her (a delight in itself) to think of it. I have therefore missed all kinds of important things she had to say and mixed her words up with thoughts of my own, but since she came, I imagine, to get us thinking about this issue, I don't think I need apologize.

♀ and more

Denny's....

6. THAT on or about the 19th day of March, A.D. 1973, while on duty at Denny's No. 1, I observed over fifty persons parading in front of the premises when I arrived on duty. The said persons were also carrying signs, handing out pamphlets and

On the evening of February 12, 1973, 15 waitresses were fired at Denny's on Broadway. Waitresses get fired all the time. Why was Denny's different? Because at the time of the firing the waitresses were outside the restaurant picketing the place. The day shift walked off the job at noon protesting Denny's new policy of kicking out coffee customers after 20 minutes. The husband of one of the women was kicked out the day before and was told that if he came back she would be fired. And she was. But as most everyone in Vancouver knows, the story didn't end there.

The picketing hurt Denny's business badly, but Denny's is a huge corporation and was able to absorb the loss. They were able to hire lawyers who applied for an injunction prohibiting picketing. And they got the injunction February 14th. The Working Women's Association organized a public boycott a month and a half before the NDP courts defeated the Denny's strike. There was a set of negotiations between the waitresses and Denny's management. Management offered 2 and 3 weeks severance pay and to pay Rankin's legal expenses. The waitresses unanimously rejected that offer and reiterated their demand that all the fired staff be rehired. Because the staff refused to be bought off, Denny's used their lawyers, their private investigators and their courts to defeat the strike. Denny's charged six of the 200 people involved in picketing with contempt of court. The case was dismissed without prejudice because Denny's couldn't sufficiently identify the defendants. This means that Denny's could improve their case and return to court, with the assurance that next time the picketers would be jailed. (See Helen Potrebko's letter p.5). And we got off on a technicality and it meant the end of the picketing. So Denny's won, with the help of the NDP government/courts. And that's the end of the story. But stories only have endings in fairy tales and history books.



don't  
mourn-

For many of us, it was our first experience of a picket line. And it will not be our last. For women who work in restaurants, insurance offices and banks there are countless untold stories of low pay, arbitrary firings and intolerable working conditions. That is why in October, '72, the Service Office Retail Workers Union of Canada was founded. For the government that grants injunctions against Denny's waitresses will not legislate equality in the work force, and the male dominated unions which betrayed the Denny's waitresses, cannot organize working women.

S.O.R.W.U.C. is based on the conviction that working women CAN and MUST organize ourselves to improve our wages and working conditions. And that is easier said than done. It means that YOU must organize the women you work with. It is as simple and overwhelming as that.



And if you are not working and have some time, we really need people to staff the Working Women's office every day. You can also contribute money to S.O.R.W.U.C.'s strike fund. The Union was founded by two small groups (40) working women and will grow with the continued support of working women.

Monthly business meetings - 3rd Thursday. Call Tracey at 874-3814 or the office at 872-1824

ORGANIZE

# WOMEN WRITERS

by carolyn bell

Women writers. Violette Leduc with Maurice Sachs. Anais Nin with Henry Miller and Dr. Otto Rank. Both needed the consent of men before they could go ahead with the writing that was there in them all the time. Rank and Miller both tried to stop Anais from writing in her Diary which she tells us was her only friend. And Violette sat under an apple tree at Sach's command to write of her youth because Sachs commanded her, "Your unhappy childhood is beginning to bore me to distraction. This afternoon you will take your basket, a pen and an exercise book, and you will go and sit under an apple tree. Then you will write down all the things you tell me." And Violette replied, meekly, "Yes, Maurice." Her first sentence was, "My mother never gave me her hand." The first sentence of *L'Asphyxie*. She remarked that she felt upset when Maurice Sachs gave her his command. Yet she went, she did as she was told, down to the last detail of sitting under an apple tree.

A number of discussions have evolved because I have been reading voraciously women writers, especially Leduc or Nin, and probably the reason I have been devouring most of the works of Violette Leduc and Anais Nin is that their work is uncommonly easy for the neurotic woman writer in me to identify with. When I read Anais, I seemed a beat behind her; I would have a thought or an image, turn to where I had just left her, and there would be my exact experience, one or two pages later, glaring out at me in print. It is most exasperating, because I thought, "What's the use of my writing? It's all been done before, and any attempt I make will not be as good, and besides, no one will believe that it isn't plagiarism." Of course it would not be plagiarism; these women and I share even the unspoken, and even the same thought searing through my brain and out my pen would be a completely different end. But I don't want to get involved in specific passages and scenes. What I am concerned about is why women are producing what they are. Most of Violette Leduc's and Anais Nin's works are very negative, and suicidal, and even the height they reach through their work is temporary. In our North American writers and poets (Sylvia Plath, R.I.P., Margaret Atwood, very scary and Dory Previn, not talked about nearly enough and one

of the most crystal examples of women surfacing...) there is always the Death Trip. And I think the reason we are on a death trip is that we do not think we have a right to create. Millett said it at UBC: "Women are their own worst censors." And that scares hell out of me. Even other women writers I have met since I came to Vancouver from the Prairies are obsessed with the death trip. I know I am. And yet, what is this bullshit about suffering and pain being the only way to great art? What about joy and elation? Yet I admit I fall into this category of "Women Who Produce their Best Stuff when they are Down". I not only fall into it, I wait for the depression like I would wait for a lover, secure in the end result. But a headfuck is not what I am into at the moment. I suppose I rationalize the times I let my depression rule my craft like this: "You are in pain, poor thing, and nobody cares. You are in a vacuum that hurts and nothing matters, so why don't you write and ease your pain?" Now that is sick when the only excuse I can give myself to write is that I am in pain! It is not only sick, it is absurd. A friend and I were discussing this and many other aggravating details about being women writers (two for the price of one) and she is especially piqued at Rod McEuen (who always makes me feel good when I'm down; I trip into Pauline's or Duthic's and read a few of his sweet pomes and laugh my guts out,) and Richard Brautigan, the man whom every little flower child would love to love.



"The bastards have so much space!" quoth my friend. She is right. And yet, even the limited amount of space I have is too much for me. I am occasionally afraid I am not gifted enough, afraid I am not strong enough, afraid because I have been taught to be afraid. But no one, not Atwood or Millett or bloody anyone has any answers. And it is pretty scary when I find that destroying myself

whether physically or emotionally is an easier way out than being what I am, a woman and a writer.

I just looked down at one of the apple boxes that I have been using for book-cases; I had pasted a picture of Sylvia Plath at 18. She is staring at me, she is in a library. There are rows of books behind her and her hair is long and her eyes are deep. That picture is a record of her being here as much as any of the books and poems she left behind. It's a shadow of her, but the shadow is real; it is not disfigured by fear of not succeeding, of not being liked. She looked at the camera, composed her face, perhaps with an image in her mind, perhaps with only the thought in her head that she was looking at a camera, and that it would click. A reality. There is not pain in her face there. I don't want to end up like Sylvia, and I don't want the other women who are my friends to end up like her either. Or Monroe. Or Joplin. Or anyone. It is not necessary to be a female Christ; that is one man's job. I will leave to the men, along with getting drafted and getting killed. I have had visions of myself as a saint, of a deliverer. One of my dream-visions was a Christ trip. It was in High school. Over the intercom came an announcement that there was a special assembly and everyone would please move in an orderly fashion down to the auditorium. As we filed in, I could see that there were some special police or uniformed guards or something. The principal waited until we had all seated ourselves until the murmur died down and then announced, "You see these men along the side of the auditorium. They are guarding the back of it, and both the fire exits. They have told me that unless someone volunteers to take the stage and be crucified, they will kill everyone in the school." I wondered why his voice didn't tremble. And I was out of my seat and up to the front before I knew what was happening. I was stripped naked, and then I was crucified in front of the whole fucking Assembly. I wanted to be. I remember in my dream I felt through all the pain that I had saved everyone, that the agony was all worthwhile. But then I realized, "They had no guns, there were only about 20 of the guards, if the school had said "FUCK YOU!!!" there wouldn't have been a hope in hell for any of them."

I have recently stopped hurting myself with doubts about my right to exist; I know I do exist, and that I have a right to. There may not seem to be any answers, but there are balms. A friend was in the process of letting a migraine headache have its way

with her, because she had been doing nothing else, had not the courage to do anything else, for too long. We talked for many hours, and I told her that she did not need to go through all that pain to make other people know she existed; that I knew she existed, and if she was kinder to herself, other people would know it too. That

was an answer for me, because I had cared, and because I had passed on some thoughts from many sources, and from my own head, and as we talked I could see her relaxing her shoulder blades, and her forehead, and her soul. The only answer for me right now is a lot of kindness for myself and for my friends. How can we make our

way against the pressures that exist if we are, in fact, our own worst enemies? Be kind to yourself. And instead of letting all that fierceness loose in your body and living off the pain, redirect the energy into the love that it is, and put it back into yourself. You deserve it. You are a woman.

# CANADIAN FICTION

*The Love And Marriage of Eve  
In The New Eden by Lynda Rogers*



Having recently seen intolerable social inequities documented in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, Canadian women have entered the revolutionary phase of the struggle for equal rights. Modern science and a universal egalitarian mood have liberated the "new sisterhood" from physical servitude to the life-cycle and cultural servitude in a male-dominated society. The new Eve refuses to accept responsibility for the events which occurred in the old garden. She is demanding the fundamental human right to command her own destiny and she will see that her demands are written into law.

Mirroring the preoccupations of their peers, Canadian women writers manifest an intense concern with feminist themes and the central issues of love, marriage, motherhood and sexual identity. In fiction and in life, they have undertaken the redefinition of the traditional role of women in society which is not a rejection of femininity but the assertion of the right of the artist and the woman to be considered first as a human being.

For the woman of sensitivity and intelligence, restriction to limited modes of acceptable social behaviour is a source of frustration. Thematic neuroticism in the fiction of Canadian women writers is the result of a self continually in conflict with the established structures of society. Femininity is in itself a contradiction. Its polarities of creativity and destructiveness, freedom as a life source and reproductive slavery, tear at the feminine consciousness.

Those women in Canadian fiction who submit to a narrow female definition are all failures as human beings. Eaters of their own flesh, women like Audrey Thomas' Mrs. Thing, Margaret Laurence's Rachel (in *A Jest of God*) and Stacey (in *The Fire Dwellers*) are all neurotic shadows of their own human potentiality.

Revolution is the only alternative to acceptance for those characters whose positive self-image will

not allow them to accept the meagre rations of second class citizenship. Their world must accept them on their own terms. For the fictional characters of Jane Rule, expanded awareness includes the acceptance of homosexuality as one viable alternative to the conventional woman. In the case of Hagar Shipley, Margaret Laurence's magnificent portrait of old age, marriage and motherhood are a means to grace but she refuses to allow them to dominate her.

Margaret Laurence's major fictional characters are a composite map of the Canadian feminine mind and their struggle for personal freedom is in the actual rather than the symbolic mode. Hagar, the old wanderer who rages against the double-fault, geriatric woman; Rachel, barren and involuted like her biblical counterpart; and Stacey, Rachel's married sister whose dispensability as a human being cannot be blotted out either by clandestine love affairs or slugs of gin over the kitchen sink, are all victims of empirical facts of life which make their existence intolerable. While their problems are universal, they exist in a particular time and place and their impatience with the inequities of that existence is the substance of the novels.

The journey motif in Laurence's work is an ironic statement about the nature of the male world her characters must come to terms with, or overcome. She has taken the traditionally male romance motif for the female questor. In her novels, the journey of the soul is enhanced by the particular restrictions of womanhood. The male questor is always unquestionably heroic. For the woman, bound by the restrictions of wifehood and motherhood, the feminine assertion of self over familial obligations has been conventionally regarded as a desecration.

Hagar Shipley's decision to leave her home and her husband have profound social and personal ramifications. According to the conventional wisdom, her heroism resides in stoic acceptance of the failure of the farmer husband to whom she is little

more than a chattel rather than the decision to carve her own path through the human wilderness. The prairie town has decreed that, as a woman, she simply must endure. No wonder she rages.

The question of dynasty is central to Hagar's frustrations. Always she is taught to accept her inferiority as a woman and, always, she refuses. She must fight first her father, then her husband, and finally her son for personal dignity and inner freedom.

A sensualist by nature, Hagar never abandons herself to the pleasures of the natural world that her men claim as their birthright. Although she marries her husband Bram, who is her social and intellectual inferior, because of an intense physical attraction, she despises the sexual bond that ties them, because, within that context too, she must submit. Violation of her body is the objective correlative for violation of her soul, and, like all women who repudiate enslavement of the mind and the flesh in marriage, she rebels.

Rachel, in *A Jest of God* is the inverse of Hagar. Her refusal to assert herself culminates in the grotesque joke of a false pregnancy. Unlike Hagar, who will not be defined simply as wife and mother, Rachel has no other frame of reference for self-identification. The traditional "old maid" of our culture, she is incomplete, a pariah, a freak. She can only accept the married and mothering notion of complete womanhood. If she cannot be that, she will be nothing.

For the homosexual characters of Jane Rule, the problem of achieving the full status of humanity is less and more complicated than it is for their heterosexual counterparts in Canadian fiction. Once the choice to transcend the social distinctions of "maleness" and "femaleness" is made, the Rule homophile is free to function as a person. The difficulties arise from the decision to escape the conventions of a society whose metaphorical prisons are guarded by the women they enslave or to accept them and

# CANADIAN FICTION cont.

live the lie.

At the centre of Rule's neurotic urban landscape is the homosexual woman who, because she is free of the restrictions of motherhood and marriage, is able to love without qualification. To those men and women who try to trap her with the shibboleths of conventional society, she is quixotic, promiscuous, but to those who understand what she has freely given, she has the possibilities of the true christ.

These women, Ann, in The Desert of the Heart, Kate in This is Not For You, and Dina, in Against the Season, have accepted the priest-like function and, although they are not life giving, are the life-force of the novels. The relative success or failure of the novels depends upon the ability of the sexually ambiguous character to hold her world together and to establish the viability of her own formal compassion in counterpoint with the controls of established society.

Evelyn, the older woman in Desert of the Heart, who has come to Reno to dissolve a marriage that never really existed in terms of absolute human relationships, is the victim of her own tortured efforts to satisfy the usual notions of femaleness. Marriage and motherhood are the false and empty warp and woof of her former life, and Ann, the young homosexual girl, presents her with the alternatives which are, for Ann and Evelyn at least, a truer marriage and a truer motherhood. So long as Evelyn allows herself to remain a prisoner of her own fears and formal views, she is an incomplete human being, barren and sterile. When she finally allows Ann to lead her through the uncompromising light of the desert and chooses freedom, she is at last a real woman.

The woman who refuses to marry is a threat to the established order and Reno, microcosm of a hypocritical society, wreaks vengeance on Ann and Evelyn, who survive because love provides their ultimate invulnerability. Ann, the woman, asserts her prerogative to define herself and to determine the nature of her contribution to society. Rule, the artist, like James Joyce and Ralph Ellison, opts for categorical invisibility. Her "non servium" is clear and decisive.

Kate, the disciplined central character of Rule's second novel, This is Not For You, is an Indian, an orphan and a homosexual. Floating about the surface of the complicated world she inhabits, she doesn't really belong, and her loneliness gives her special powers of omniscience.

Her refusal, however, to make any real demands of the not quite real people she encounters in her picaresque journey is a weakness of the novel. Her restraint is the restraint of the work of art. Her refusal to share pain has a stylistic coefficient which is an impediment to understanding. The objectivity and humour with which the girl consistently views her world are defenses which

deny the possibility of tragedy. Compared to the loving rage of Anne, Kate's self denial is a disappointment.

The latest novel, Against the Season, is an even more detailed study of the feminine consciousness, and, although the story is set in a small western American town, once again the world, populated by incomplete people of every age, in microcosm, the setting and characters are unquestionably Canadian.

While she is attempting, in Against the Season, to present a more complex view of thematic femininity, Rule obscures the struggle for recognition of each of her characters by cluttering the set. Although there is an imbalance in her preoccupation with homosexuality and the feminine point of view, it must be argued that the human mind, like the camera, selects and distorts. Hers is only one way of looking at the blackbird.

Childbirth, paradoxical symbol and obsession of every woman whose biblical legacy is its pain, is the metaphorical rebirth of the individual to her own fulfillment. Dina, who unfortunately is not allowed to exercise her natural prerogative to dominate Against the Season, is a homosexual, but she never relinquishes the possibility of actual motherhood. She, like Anna and Kate, is the mirror to whom the female characters look for their own reflection and for the mother of their awakening.

Despite liberalized abortion laws in Canada and the advent of the pill, childbearing is still at the core of the Canadian artist. In her recently published first novel, Audrey Thomas dwells neurotically on the prolonged agony of a miscarriage suffered by her central character, a young Canadian wife living in Ghana with her husband. Mrs. Blood is about the slow and painful extinguishing of a fetal life and the death of a soul.

Very much the wronged and wronging Eve in the New Eden, Thomas's wife is the victim of her own puritanic sense of guilt, conditioned by a mythological past that blamed women for original sin and ordained that she be cleansed by prayer after childbirth. Her guilt bears down on her and expels the dead product of her suffering.

The woman, whose near schizophrenic mind is possessed by Mrs. Blood and Mrs. Thing, her own private devil's advocates, accepts the burden of past guilt in present suffering. She has loved, become pregnant before her marriage to Jason and the dead child is the albatross reminding her of her impurity, her lust and her murder, ("Get rid of it").

Mrs. Blood is pathetic in her refusal to revolt against the vise of past and present that keeps her prisoner in her coffin-hospital bed. Her acceptance is negative and destructive. All she knows of herself is a soulless collage of impressions bouncing off the selfish exteriors of husband, lover and children, and the im-

personal signposts of events in newspapers. She is a prisoner in her bed in her fragile white skin, and, most of all, in the mind of Mrs. Thing, the devil she must expiate in order to live.

Another desperate prisoner of the mind and the flesh is Minn Burge, the grotesquely pregnant reluctant mother of Marian Engel's second novel, The Honeyman Festival. Minn's involuntary ripening is directed more to her own decay than to the birth of the unplanned and socially undesirable fourth child she is carrying with the same grim humour with which she tolerates the rest of her life. Bruised and bloated, she is the apple destined to fall off the tree. Alone in a house full of children who eat her marrow, gobble her brains for lunch, and strangers who are celebrating the resurrection of a dead movie by a dead lover, Minn is struggling to hear the muffled voice of the person who is suffocating in her billowing flesh.

Voices from the past are old movies she plays over in her imagination as her terrible day labours on. Once, before Norman, the husband who is away in romantic Katmandu, the great Honeyman loved her. However, even the softening of a decade cannot obscure the masochistic realities of even her former life. HE was the director and she was the body. The old friends only remember her magnificent breasts. She never was a real person. There is only a small seed of hope in her tiny rebellion against the policeman who bangs on her door at two a.m., her growing bitchery and the willful decision to squat down and give birth in her hall.

In a rather superficial first novel that is barely saved from mediocrity by flashes of wit and insight into the problems of contemporary women, Margaret Atwood attacks the themes of marriage and motherhood from various points of view. At the centre of The Edible Woman is Marion, whose refusal to eat is a refusal to be eaten, to submit to the convention of marriage. The polarities of her forming consciousness are Clara, the mindless mother, whose childbearing is a desperate positive response to a creative vacuum, and Ainsley, the unmarried roommate, who goes forth to multiply as an assertion of her feminine superiority.

Marion, the woman, and ostensibly, Atwood, the poet, arrive at the concept of "poet as mother" as an alternative to the conventional notion of feminine creativity, which is as real for them as the adopted children Ann, in The Desert of the Heart, has never met are for her. At a time when over-population is an overwhelming concern and the instinct for parenthood is being redirected, women are beginning to earn social approval for other forms of contribution. The fully realized character in Canadian fiction, like her social prototype, is emerging from the tangle of neurotic doubts which are the product of our mythological past and a rapidly changing present.

# jess' letters

intro.



Fourteen years ago, when all of us were so much younger and some of you were scarcely born, I received a series of letters from a woman in the same city in which I lived. We wrote each other perhaps because there was no mutually convenient time to talk on the phone or face to face. Or perhaps because we are both most at home putting words onto a piece of paper.

Every so often I fish out the letters and read them; usually at spring cleaning time which is every 3 or 4 years during holidays, or when I'm moving and ruthlessly throwing out surplus stuff. I never throw out Jess' letters, because they seem to be the life of a woman who was struggling and surviving inside a family and getting no recognition for it from that family.

If I had not read her letters I would always have remembered her home as representing everything I thought was good in family life: a place where mutual respect was

always present, with a kind of casual acceptance of the kids --they wandered in and out, the four of them, in various stages of dress and undress when bath or bedtime approached, and treated stray adults as friendly equals. Jess' talented husband was forever propounding some new and wonderful scheme or theory, running his hands through his curling, thinning hair which was always, always in disarray.

Jess was then, when I knew her, quick, capable, plump and ever-smiling. Her quiet voice was frequently interrupted by her own uncontrollable laughter, laughing at herself or the family. Seeing a comedy movie with her was a nervous treat: she anticipated a lot of the jokes and began her hearty laughter before the punch line had been delivered or the final comic motion had been made. Because of her husband's job she often had free tickets to interesting events and would invite me along. I got to know

her four children well through Jess' accounts of them in her letters, or thought I had. They were three very different boys and (at that time) a baby girl whose innovative ways of avoiding toilet training took up a considerable portion of the letters.

Jess' laughter was often rueful; she was struggling to be a writer while raising her family. For over a year she earned just enough money to pay a woman who would keep the baby out of the dining room where Jess typed her scripts and who would do the wash and clean the house and all that stuff. Eventually it all became too much and Jess found that what she was earning was no longer covering the housekeeper's wages. She stopped writing and told Leta she could no longer afford her.

Jess wrote the letter that follows before she had stopped "being a writer" -- the day after one of her sons had mowed our lawn with her lawnmower and I had returned mower and son to her. We were sitting drinking tea in her kitchen when her husband Bill came storming in and loudly said something which seemed uncharacteristic (I forget now what it was) from the man I had pegged as a dreamy intellectual. There he was, exhibiting real human frailty. I was embarrassed and soon left, pretending not to be affronted.

## I SCRUBBED AND WAXED WITH A FEELING OF RIGHTEOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT

Dear Beth,

I have bethought me what life in this family is sometimes like: "Our Village Concert" - a recording given to me in my youth by our own organist, (later broken by my own brother) of "our own village band, accompanying Madame ..." (I forget her name) "who was recently playing the part of one of the R-Rhine maidens, when the wire on which she was suspended broke, hurling her to the stage, and completely spoiling her - ah - aria. However, she assures me that her aria is now as good as new..." etc. We hear the shrieks of the soprano rising occasionally above the out-of-tune efforts of the village band, and the result is excruciatingly funny (because, of course, the listener can take a perfectly detached attitude to the performance, not being one of the performers). Just so do the (metaphorical or otherwise) shrieks and trumpeting and wails of the family strive together, with each one of the six of us striving to express our own little souls, with complete lack of harmony at times. Saturday was just such a day.

Bill arose with fury in his soul about the way he was being forced to fritter his life away without accomplishing anything creative; Peter arose determined not (for a change) to be bullied. Donald in his calm, adolescent and unthinking way invited the friend who is

to Bill the epitome of the bourgeois to join the merry band; I arose determined to erase the guilt of an untidy house by a furious bout of housecleaning; Terry was at his most bumptious, and Julie at her most experimental.

Bill, hoping to shorten the time that the vacuum cleaner would be roaring, rushed upstairs and started to hawl out the boys for having untidy rooms.

"Clear up those papers!" he bellowed at Peter.

"What papers?" said Peter innocently, ignoring the pile of Daily Mails and school books that lay beside his bed.

"Don't answer back!" Bill roared. And he seized the papers, ripped them up and rushed downstairs again to thrust them into the garbage can. Soon afterwards, when Bill had gone out to attack

the garden, Pete came down to the kitchen full of tears and fury. He pulled all the papers out of the garbage can and tried to smooth them out, and then found they were torn and, raging, went and got a handful of Bill's papers which he had left lying around in our bedroom and put those in the garbage. When I rescued them, Pete explained angrily that if he had gone into Bill's room and told him to clear up his papers, Bill would have been just as likely to say, "What papers?" because he was so used to seeing them there that he didn't notice them. With which I agreed, but said that all the same, what was done was done, and it couldn't be helped. So Peter said murderously, "I'm going upstairs to drop a weight on Daddy's head!"

### NOTICE TO OUR READERS

THE PEDESTAL NEEDS YOUR  
CRITICISM AND ENERGY. WRITE  
OR PHONE (684-0523).

ALSO PLEASE SEND US DATES  
OF MEETINGS, GROUPS, EVENTS  
ETC. FOR THE AUGUST CALENDAR.

March 30, 1973

Dear Sisters of the Pedestal Collective,  
I left Vancouver very abruptly, sorry I didn't give any kind of notice. I'm living in San Francisco and I'd like to keep in touch. Eventually I'd like to set up some kind of West Coast Communications System. Is anybody on the paper coming to the Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles in a couple of weeks? If not I'll write an article and send it up.

I finished my article and it's enclosed. I'm sorry but I couldn't get it typed. I hope my writing is readable. Also I'd like a subscription plus January and February and March's issues. \*Judy could you pay for that out of that money?

It's real different living in Amerika, somehow it's a different kind of struggle here and the contradictions in society are a lot clearer and more complicated. Also I think California is the hardest state economically to survive in. I'll probably live here for a couple of years. I'd like people to write about what you are doing.

In struggle and sisterhood,

Connie Marshall,  
308 Montcalm,  
San Francisco,  
California, U.S.A.



Should I rush out and warn Bill? Julie solved my dilemma by making a puddle in the hall. While I was cleaning it up, Peter went resolutely upstairs and carefully dropped a large wooden block about twenty yards from Bill's head, muttering that Daddy deserved a lump on the head.

Bill came in, saw Donald on the telephone and went storming into the hall telling Donald to get off the phone and saying that teen-agers were notorious for hogging telephones, but that it certainly wasn't going to happen in this house. Donald calmly terminated his conversation, and then (still calmly) told Bill that he had been talking to his district manager about some people who hadn't paid their newspaper bill for four months. Donald never gets mad or answers back; perhaps that's why he gets migraine headaches.

There was a lull in the storm after lunch, when Terry and Peter went off to deliver papers, and Donald, Mike (the bourgeois) and Julie went to your house to cut the grass. I scrubbed and waxed with a feeling of righteous accomplishment, and Bill worked at the piano to his heart's content. But with the return of the family (coincidental with your visit) the storm was renewed, and you caught a blast of it. The cacophony of our village concert. It growled away until Bill flung off (saying he never had any fun) to see the play at the Auditorium, which cheered him up no end, though he said it was not good drama.

On Sunday I had my Day Off (which Bill had rashly promised me earlier the week before) and I went for a boat trip to Wigwam Inn. Very hot and crowded with trippers, but still, comparatively peaceful. On the way out, there were two year-old babies, one on either side of me, who tottered precariously near the unguarded edge of the

boat. I kept telling myself that they weren't my babies, and I shouldn't worry whether they fell overboard; but then a nagging little voice kept repeating to me a rhyme that was drilled into me in my youth:

Don't Care was made to care,  
Don't Care was hung.

P.S. Neither of the babies fell in. And Bill took the family to Stanley Park, providing himself (on a loan) with some of the money I had put aside for Leta, and treated them all to a boat trip and hot dogs, etc. so they had a lovely time and all came home in a good mood: our Village Concert was over.

I am now frugally making soup out of chicken bones. No onion. Last week I curiously noted a peeled and shrivelling onion outside our bedroom window, and thought to myself, "What an odd place for an onion. No doubt it was put there by the same little hands that put brooms in the bath, gramophone records in the sandbox, and excretory matter in a purse." And then thought no more about it. Until making the

soup, with the idea that I had one onion in the box with the potatoes. No onion. So, Sherlock-Holmes-like, I put two and two together, which didn't make good soup, until my never-failing intelligence reminded me that I had a package of dry Onion Soup Mix.

Peter and Julie are watching a gruesome show on TV. No wonder Pete gets murderous ideas. Must go. Will you come and watch Spectrum on Thursday?

Love,  
Jess

Now it's fourteen years later and Jess' kids are still much on her mind, but her time is now her own. She has written a book about them which will soon be published. She survived together!

# Letters

Dear Sisters -

Sisterhood is blooming -- cross continentally. I'm sorry I haven't been sending Strawberry Patches but I've been real busy with fields & fields of stuff. Let me send this small donation to keep the wheel turning. It's one of the great ups of my life to get The Pedestal & still feel close to my Vancouver Sisters. Will send stuff soon. Yours - in sisterhood & in struggle & in newsprint.

CAROL DEAR



Dear Pedestal Women,

Here is a little bit of news to brighten up your day (enclosed).

Could this note be passed on to me ole friends - Jane, Lori, Donna, Lynn and anyone else who is my friend. I am alive and living in a very small town in the S.E. on the sea. My isolation here is of enormous proportions but am nevertheless maintaining fairly well. Ian is taking a 1 yr. teachers training course. Emma is now 17 months and is incredibly independent minded - which is OK for her but most likely bodes evil for her parents. I wish I could see all my feminist friends as I say I am extremely isolated here. Biggest news in last 6 months - I got a bicycle - so you can imagine just how eventful my existence.

Anyhow, love to all from me. Write to me. I need it.

Syd.

P.S.

We are coming to Mich. from July to end Aug so if anyone is to be out E. be sure to let me know so we can get together!

# COMMENTS

The Pedestal is changing (again). This issue is late, and we will be publishing bi-monthly for a while. Energy has been low, and several women have left the collective. Not in anger, this time, but out of frustration. We share this frustration, and have decided to try and do something about it.

Many people have criticized the Pedestal for being too isolated and slightly irrelevant. We are trying to change now, because we feel that the Pedestal still has an important job to do. We are a newspaper for the women's movement. We do not want to identify ourselves with a narrow segment of this movement, but try to give an overview of how women are changing, what women are doing, where women are strong. We have lost contact with many people in the last year, and are trying to overcome this problem. In this issue we have reported on several different aspects of the women's movement, but are still far from understanding how we can best serve women. We do not wish to appear to make choices for women. We do not have a hard line to sell you. We said in the last issue that we were learning how to learn. We need your help.

The Women's Centre and Women's Place no longer exist. Working Women lent us use of their office for a month but they are pressed for space themselves. As we go to press the Vancouver Women's Bookstore has rented a space at 804 Richards St. and we will eventually be working out of there. Right now we are free floating, and doing layout wherever we can find a large enough space. Our financial situation is desperate again, and we sometimes find it hard to keep all our bookwork up to date. There is a lot of work involved in putting out the Pedestal, but we are determined not to fold. In fact, we see this situation as an opportunity to examine the problems and correct them - we have no choice!

What we want women who read this to do is think how you can help. Tell us what you think the Pedestal could do. Tell us what you are doing, so that we can spread the word. If you are interested in helping us put out the paper, give us a call, and come to a meeting. You can do as little or as much as you want. No experience necessary!

This paper is not the private property of a few women. It belongs to all the women of Vancouver. Make it stronger. Send money. Send words. Come yourself. We are learning to be stronger, and so are women everywhere. Join us.

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION ACROSS CANADA

- NFLD: The Woman's Place,  
144 Duckworth St.,  
St. John's, Nfld.
- N.B.: c/o Linda Gow,  
Y.W.C.A.,  
27 Wellington Row,  
St. John, N.B.
- Que.: Quebecois,  
3908 Rue Mentana,  
Montreal, P.Q.
- Englishwomen,  
3694 Ste Famille,  
Montreal, P.Q.
- ONT.: Women's Centre\*,  
136 Lewis St., (rear)  
Ottawa, Ont.
- \* has a newsletter
- The Woman's Place,  
-968 University Ave., W.,  
Windsor, Ont.
- Women's Collective,  
300 ERB St.,  
Waterloo, Ont.
- Women's Place\*,  
31 Dupont St.,  
Toronto, Ont.  
929-3158
- MAN.: Women's Liberation,  
c/o Millie Lamb,  
#10, 812 Wolseley,  
Winnipeg, Man.
- SASK.: Women's Centre,  
147-2nd Ave., S.,  
Saskatoon, Sask.
- ALTA.: Women's Centre,  
11812-95 St.,  
Edmonton, Alta.
- B.C. Women's Place,  
1766 W. Broadway,  
Vancouver 9, B.C.
- Women's Centre,  
#414-1029 Douglas St.,  
Victoria, B.C.

## WOMEN'S NEWSPAPERS

- QUEBEC: Quebecois Deboutte,  
3908 Mentana,  
Montreal, P.Q.  
\$3.00 per year
- Feminist Communication  
Collective,  
P.O. Box 455,  
Montreal 215, P.Q.
- ONTARIO: The New Feminist,  
P.O. Box 597,  
Station A,  
Toronto, Ont.  
\$3.00 per year
- The Native Sisterhood,  
P.O. Box 515,  
Kingston, Ont.
- Tightwire,  
(Women's Penitentiary  
newspaper)  
Box 515,  
Kingston, Ont.  
\$2.00 per year
- Windsor Woman,  
76 University Ave. W.,  
Room 603,  
Windsor, Ont.
- ALBERTA: On Our Way,  
P.O. Box 4508,  
Edmonton, Alta.  
\$2.00 per year
- B.C.: The Pedestal,  
804 Richards St.,  
Vancouver, B.C.  
\$3.00 per year
- Priorities,  
c/o 2803 Wall St.,  
Vancouver 6, B.C.  
\$2.00 per year
- Status of Women Newsletter,  
1045 W. Broadway,  
Vancouver 9, B.C.



These three young women are with the South Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Government headquarters in Hanoi. From left to right is the assistant doctor in pharmacy, an artist, and a combatant in the people's struggle.

# SUBSCRIBE

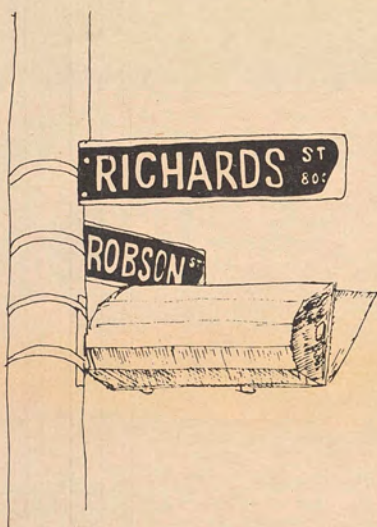
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	1 Women's Theatre Coop. - Film Festival - E. Side 2 Cultural Centre	3	4	5 Women's Theatre Coop. - VCC 12:30	6 FRIDAYS! 504 Movies at S.F.U.	7
Pedestal Meeting Final Copy 11 a.m. 804 Rich.					Health Clinic 6-9:30 1952 W.4	
8 Women's Theatre 9 PM Meat Market July 5-8	9	10	11	12 Women's Theatre Workshop VAG All day	13	14
Pedestal Layout	15 Bookstore Opening 804 Richards	16 S.W.C. meeting 1045 W. Bway 8 P.M.	17 A Good Day For The Beach - Kits of course	18 Working Women's Monthly Meeting 45 Kingsway 7:30 P.M.	19 Health Clinic 6-9:30 1952 W.4	20
29	30	31				
Pedestal Final Layout	22	23	24	25	26 Health Clinic 6-9:30 1952 W.4.	27 If you haven't been to the bookstore - Go!
						28