

STATUS of WOMEN NEWS

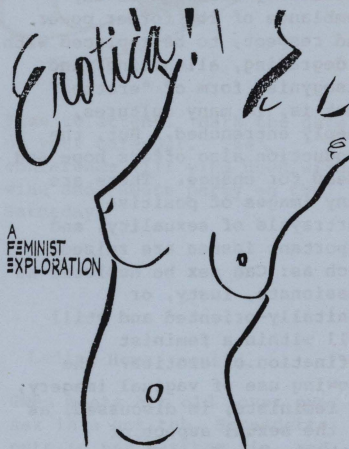
August, 1985

Reclaiming Our Eros . . . One Tool

By Jan Boutilier

For over five thousand years as "daughters of fathers" we have had to adapt to a masculine-oriented society. We have had to repudiate our feminine instincts and energy patterns, and consequently have found ourselves unable to express the values that are important to us because we can't understand them ourselves; we are only aware that we are dissatisfied with what is forced upon us in our culture. Our Eros has fallen upon years and years of neglect and decay.

But our desire to return to, and redeem, what the patriarchy sees as a dangerous threat--that is, our wholeness, our strength, our spirituality, our Eros--is becoming an important and essential need. We are beginning to listen to, and intuitively respect, our own Eros--or feminine nature--knowing it is something that controls us from deep within, despite the fact that the patriarchal ego, to earn its instinct-disciplining heroic stance, has used every weapon in its power to maim or derogate it.



Women Against Pornography (Victoria) have put together a 60-minute slide/audio production that is an attempt to remind us of our once-proud HERitage, and in another way it is a useful tool to help us better understand how we were (and are) alienated from it. It is entitled EROTICA! A Feminist Exploration, but it is not, nor is it meant to be, an erotic art show. It is an exploration, and explanation, of what happened to a vital part of our Eros--our female sexuality that was once

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worshipped as a primary life-force.

The slides graphically document how our female sexuality has been systematically and ruthlessly stripped of any semblance of its former power and respect, to be replaced with a degrading, alienating, and misogynist form of "erotica" that is, in many cultures, deeply entrenched. But, the production also offers hope and ideas for change. There are many images of positive portrayals of sexuality, and important issues are raised. Such as: Can sex be depicted as passionate, lusty, or genitally-oriented and still fall within a feminist definition of erotica? The growing use of vaginal imagery, by feminists, is discussed, as is the sexual aspect of motherhood. Context--an issue common to both erotica and pornography is analysed with the hope that viewers can better understand this important issue that has been the pornographer's ally and legitimate erotic artist's foe.

It is a tool to help us regain a sense of our worth, and a tool, that will, hopefully, give us a direction to go in. It is available for rent by calling WAP at 386-3975.

WAP is organizing a Take Back the Night March and Dance on Friday, Sept. 20 at 8 p.m. sharp, meeting in Centennial Square to march south to the White Eagle Hall on Dock St. Get in the spirit and come dressed as your favorite heroine. Fee for the dance is \$4 with costume, \$6 without. Prizes are being offered for the most political heroine, the most obscure heroine and the most creative costume. Any questions about this WAP benefit? Call Jan at 388-9974.

Close Encounters

Ladies Home Erotica, Ten Speed Press, \$13.50.

The Kensington Ladies Erotica Society call themselves "an improbable group of women...who embarked on an experiment." They wanted to write women's erotica, the kind without victims and women's helplessness. They claim they were not always successful, but in most of their stories where fantasy and reality are indistinguishable women are neither victimized or helpless. In the "RSVP to Henry Miller", Grandma Ruth masturbates on her sunny patio, commands her rapist to do what she wants, then runs off to play with her grandsons. There is a surprising element of violence when one woman kills her husband.

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Conference

Workshops at the SWAG Conference on Oct. 25 and 26 at the University of Victoria will encourage women to abandon their passive stance and shape a better world for tomorrow.

Take Hold of the Future is the theme around which the conference coordinating committee is centring the many interesting workshops planned.

To date the following workshops have been confirmed: Nairobi Report, International Networks--East/West and North/South, the Future of Women in Politics, Time/Worksharing; Women, Unions and Technology; Career Planning, Speaking Our Peace, Work Co-operatives, LETS Skills Exchange and Reproductive Technology.

There are more: Healthy Living, The Return of the Extended Family, Friendship Networks, Goddess Power in Our Lives, Self-Directed Learning, Feminist Institutions, Changing Stereotypes of Aging, Creating Intimacy, Cultural Transitions, Self-Help Networks and Housing and Land Co-operatives.

The keynote speaker will be announced in the next newsletter as will the names of the workshop leaders.



Plan to attend. Mark the date on your calendar. The conference will wind down with a wine and cheese party on the Saturday.

Ladies Home, cont'd.

Gwen meets her old lover over sex in a hot tub, Bernadette puts in her Warthog Pie, and Sheila has a sunny, sexy vacation in Hawaii without her husband and teenage children. From "Awakening" to "Games We Played", the women explore themselves--and make their readers laugh. Webster defines erotica as "literary or artistic works having and erotic theme", and erotic as "tending to arouse sexual desire". Ladies Home Erotica fits this description; it is not a book to read at the breakfast table--unless one is having breakfast under very special circumstances!

Jan Kenyon

Feminine Positive on Film

By Jerri Lee

The NFB Studio D film, Speaking Our Peace celebrates women's values according to co-directors Terri Nash and Bonnie Klein.

"This film tries to do two things," Klein told a Toronto Sun reporter, "to communicate a sense of urgency, that we are doomed if we do nothing and to inspire women to bring some different values into the global arena: the skills used in the home and in the community, the solving of problems creatively.

"It is a validation of women's traditional skills and that is reflected in the film's form and content. Women are talking about issues where before no one noticed. Women were invisible. Women are not expected to be in films like this."

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Klein says: "We could have made men look bad...but instead, the women that we chose to focus on are beyond rage. They're not strident."

Different in tone from the impassioned plea in the Oscar-winning If You Love This Planet, also from Studio D, this film offers the cool logic of those women who are beyond rage--physicist Dr. Ursula Franklin who describes the arms race as a symptom of a "do what I say or else" mentality; and there's Muriel Duckworth who sees the struggle for peace as a lifetime commitment; Dr. Rosalie Bertell, nun and expert on low-level radiation, finds radioactive waste in a suburban backyard, and political analyst Solanges Vincent who connects the arms race with Third World poverty. Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar demonstrates her faith in the power of women to change the world.

"The world is in the grip of the masculine negative, to use Carl Jung's term," says Nash, "We have to start valuing the feminine positive in both men and women."

The feminine negative, she says, is passivity and powerlessness.

"Women have to break their silence."

Feminists in History

"Canada needs women leaders who aren't afraid of being called names. Women can save civilization, you know. We are an intelligent, compassionate, just species." So said pioneer feminist Emily Murphy who in 1916 was named the first woman police magistrate, not only in Edmonton, but in the British Empire.

Canada Post this spring issued two commemorative stamps with portraits of feminists Emily Murphy and Therese Casgrain to mark the decade for women. Unfortunately, they are 32 cent stamps and unlikely to be used much since the postal rate hike.

Therese Casgrain who fought for the women's vote in Quebec and in 1920 founded the League des droits de la femme (League for Women's Rights) is remembered on the other stamp. The Quebec National Assembly had voted against twelve motions for the women's vote. In 1938, Therese Casgrain succeeded in having the women's right top vote included in the Liberal Party platform, the party won in 1939 and honoured its commitment a year later.

Emily Murphy wrote novels under the name of Janey Canuck. While she was named magistrate in



Role Models
Madame Therese
Casgrain (top)
and Emily Murphy

1916, some argued that women, according to British Common law, were persons only in matters of pains and penalties, not in matters of rights and privileges and therefore this meant Emily would not be magistrate. She resolved to tackle the BNA Act--a battle that took 13 years and eventually saw her joined by four other feminists--Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Edwards.

Emily Murphy died in 1933 and Therese Casgrain in 1981 leaving us with a legacy and inspiration.

STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION GROUP

The office is located at 213-620 View Street, Victoria. Please drop in. Our resource library is open to the public and we have feminist journals from across the country. Watch our bulletin board for upcoming events of interest to women. Phone 381-1012

Take note

Vancouver Women in Focus Society is a national feminist distributor of films and videos made by and about women. Members might be interested in having a copy of the catalogue of the productions available on the social, economic, cultural and historic status of women. If so, contact Vancouver Women in Focus Society, Suite 204-456 West Broadway, Vancouver, V5Y 1R3 or phone 872-2250.

Abortion stories are wanted by the Childbirth by Choice Trust, a pro-choice educational organization compiling experiences with illegal abortions. The stories will be published and confidentiality will be respected. If you are willing to write or tape your story contact: Leslie Pearl, Childbirth by Choice Trust, 40 St. Clair Ave. E, Suite 310, Toronto, M4T 1M9.

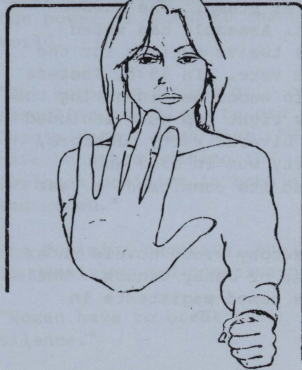
SWAG member Avis Rasmussen has just published a small book of illustrated poems called Saanich Fields. An artist and teacher, Avis wrote the book as a tribute to those wonderfully productive fields in Saanich where as a child she picked daffodils and strawberries. It's her second book--the first was published in 1975 and called Charms of the Seashore.

Information for Battered Women

The illustration below is from the cover art by Rhona Loftson on an information booklet for battered women produced by SWAG and funded by the Legal Services Society of British Columbia, the Public Interest Research Group and the B.C. Federation of Women.

"No More" encourages battered women to call on their own inner strength to remove themselves from painful and fearful situations. It offers practical steps to seeking help from the police and the legal system and explains how to get a lawyer. The booklet provides a list of community resources and phone numbers where assistance can be found. The booklets will be distributed throughout the Greater Victoria area.

NO MORE



Reading and Writing

Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives by John Naisbett, Warner Books, New York, 1982 (\$4.95).

If you have yet to read *Megatrends*, do yourself a favour. It's easy, interesting and positive. Here are some of Naisbett's contentions chosen randomly from the book, just to spark your interest.

The Economy With the coming of the information society, we have, for the first time, an economy based on a key resource that is not only renewable but self-generating.

Economists continue to misguide us because they focus on industrial companies which the author says is like predicting a family's future by watching only the grandparents. The new source of power is not money in the hands of a few but information in the hands of many.

The big-business merger and the big-labor merger have all the appearance of dinosaurs mating.

We need to create a knowledge theory of value to replace Marx's obsolete labor theory of value.

Politics People whose lives are affected by a decision must be part of the process of arriving at that decision.

The failure of hierarchies to solve society's problems forced people to talk to one another--and that was the beginning of networks. Networks offer what bureaucracies can never deliver--the horizontal link.

Women Carpenters make more than nurses because women have always been nurses and men have always been carpenters--and men decide.

Why should a maintenance worker be paid more than a secretary?

Jerri Lee

Among Friends by L.R. Wright, Doubleday and Co., \$19.95.

"...no one was there" is the last line of a poem by Anne McKay that L.R. Wright quotes at the beginning of her novel, *Among Friends*. When the three main characters, Leona, Emily and Marion, find "no one there" in each of their isolated lives, their resultant anxieties centre on familiar and sometimes out-of-control fears.

Wright's personal and very Canadian journalistic background is evident as she tells the three women's newspaper stories separately, then inextricably intertwines them. Their ending is refreshingly optimistic as they come to terms with their loneliness--and the real beginnings of their lives. A delight to read, and to remember.

Jan Kenyon

NEWS

SWAG NEWSLETTER

Training Opportunity

Catherine Winter who has done such a great job as SWAG treasurer will be leaving this volunteer position because of other commitments as of January. This means there will be an opportunity for another woman to train in this part-time volunteer position which involves handling the accounts.

Catherine points out that this is one job you can put on a resume. Some knowledge of accounts and bookkeeping is useful. If you're interested call the office 381-1012 or call Catherine at home 389-2959 weekday evenings.

The SWAG Newsletter is published every second month by the Victoria Status of Women Group. Contributions are welcome and should be brief. Any material submitted for publishing may be edited. Submissions to the SWAG office must include your name and phone number.

OUR THANKS

Thanks to Dallas Hanson, Design Typesetting for her expert advice and assistance and our appreciation to Paul Wheeler, Handicapped Action Committee for so much help.

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