



WOMEN IN LIBRARIES

Volume 28, Numbers 3 & 4

The Feminist Task Force—25 Years

December 1999

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD? SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

IN 2000: TRANSFORM THE PLANET

LETTER FROM BEIJING:

LIFE AT HUA XIA GIRLS' MIDDLE SCHOOL

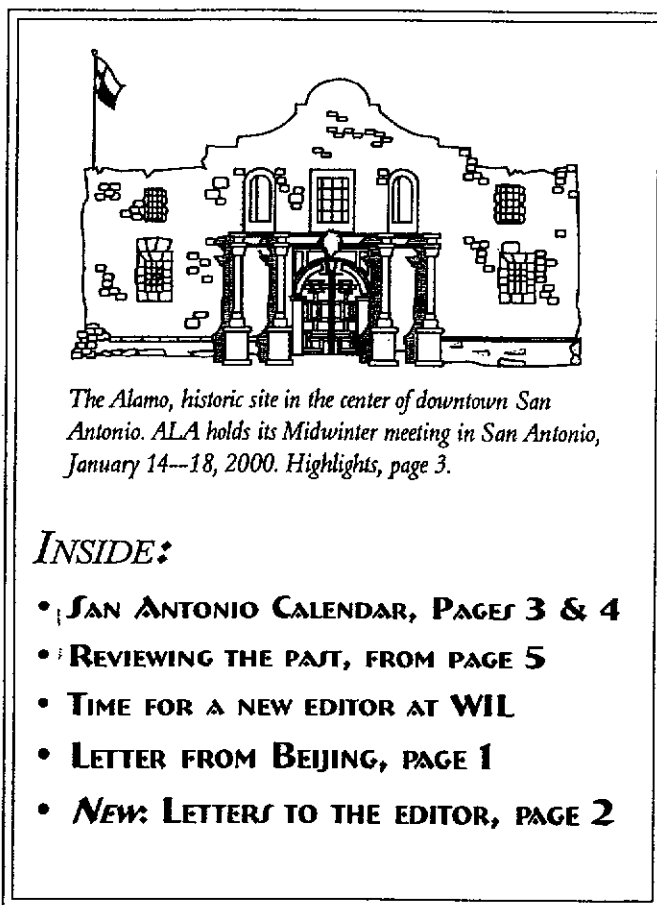
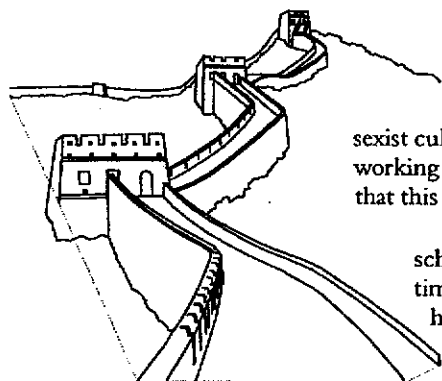
Ed. note: Daisy Tainton, now a senior at Simmons College, spent her junior year in Beijing. Part two of a two-part series on her experiences there.

Hua Xia is the only middle and high school for girls in Beijing, and enjoys this distinction due to the eradication of girls' schools at the start of the Cultural Revolution. It is also the only private girls' high school in all of China to receive government aid. Since its conversion to a single-sex school with the option of boarding in 1995, Hua Xia has attracted more than seven hundred students. As stated in the brochure, a colorful and high-quality document, special courses for girls and international exchange are expected to help the students become well-rounded individuals and become well prepared to enter the next century, presumably as part of the work force.

I worked Tuesdays and Thursdays teaching colloquial English to two classes of more than forty 15- to 16-year-olds each. Their usual Chinese English teachers, Bai and Chen Laoshi, translated when necessary. I also observed two art classes and the self-defense class, corrected homework and interviewed teachers and students.

Previously, I thought that any girls' or women's school was by its nature a good addition to a school system, and would be especially useful in a chronically sexist culture like China's. After working at Hua Xia, I discovered that this is not always the case.

Chinese arguments for female education are many but often confused; using single-sex schools to build equality of the sexes is too revolutionary an idea to be grasped firmly in times of upheaval and, well, revolution. In recent years, women's educational disadvantage has still been caused by parents' ignorance, attitudes towards marriage, poverty, and the idea that girls should stay at home to learn household jobs and perform them rather than



The Alamo, historic site in the center of downtown San Antonio. ALA holds its Midwinter meeting in San Antonio, January 14--18, 2000. Highlights, page 3.

INSIDE:

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our first letters column. Get heard! What does the future hold? Perhaps an Op-Ed page?—Ed.

READER OBJECTS TO BREASTS

In view of American men's fixation on women's breasts, I think that the illustrations on pages 3 and [8] of the Spring '99 issue of *Women in Libraries* was uncalled for.

You perhaps know the old story of the officers at the regimental dance. As they watched the whirling figures, the junior officer said to the senior officer, "Have you ever seen such a site [sic]?" The senior officer replied, "Not since I was weaned."

I hope you can read this. Since I had a stroke several months ago, my handwriting has deteriorated.

Eleanor Herling, B.S.

School of Library Service, Columbia University

PART REVIEW, PART LETTER

The following letter concerns:

Rinaldi, Ann. *My Heart is on the Ground: The Diary of Nannie Little Rose*. Scholastic, 1999.

The letter has been edited to fit.—Ed.

The book is part of Scholastic's Dear America series of historical fiction diaries and is highly problematic. Set in 1880 at Carlisle Indian School, one of the earliest government boarding schools, where children from across the US were taken from their families to be "educated." Many died there; many others ran away and died trying to get home.

In her author's note, Rinaldi says that she visited the school and took many names from the cemetery's headstones for this story. I do not think it even occurred to her that Native American people would object to this. For her, they were just names. To us (I'm Pueblo Indian), the school is a cause of great sadness, great pain; those children died there, abused, away from their families. But the book doesn't tell that story. Instead, [the] main character likes it there, as do many of the other characters, and does not want to return home. Rinaldi says that she's sure the children whose names she used will look down at her from their "Happy Hunting Ground" and smile on her for telling this story.

Nine different women worked together to write a lengthy critique of the book, on line at <<http://www.oyate.org>>. Shorter versions of the review will be published in various places such as *Rethinking Schools*, *Aboriginal Voices*, and *Multicultural Review*. Materials like this affect our efforts to get culturally authentic and sensitive material into the hands of parents and children. Scholastic is continuing to publish in this vein, with forthcoming titles on the Navajos' Long Walk and a Japanese internment camp.

If you have time to read the review, and have any comments or feedback, please get in touch with me.

Debbie Reese, Doctoral Student

University of Illinois

Email: d-reese@uiuc.edu



EXPO CALLS US TO BALTIMORE

Feminist Expo 2000 is set to be held in Baltimore March 31—April 2, 2000. Organized by the Feminist Majority Foundation, it is the second Feminist Exposition and Convention and will emphasize women's advancements during the past century. Events planned include the keynote presentation, "Salute to Feminist Firsts," symposia, workshops, and an exhibit hall. For information on attending or organizing a delegation, email or phone the foundation at expo2000@feminist.org, 703-522-2214.



WOMEN IN LIBRARIES

<http://www.lib.wayne.edu/fff/>

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To subscribe to the Feminist List, send this e-mail message to: listserv@mitvma.mit.edu:

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Send articles, comments, or materials for review, but not subscription questions, to:

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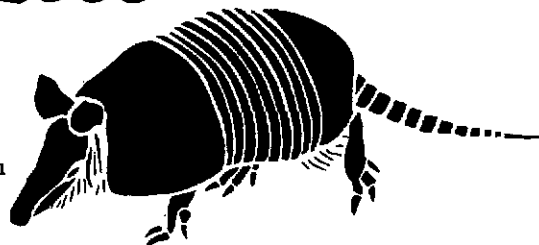
ALA CONFERENCE CALENDAR:

JANUARY 14-18, 2000

SAN ANTONIO

JANUARY 14, FRIDAY

11:30 a.m.--12:30 p.m. ALA Committee on Pay Equity, Convention Center (CC), 213B
2:00 - 5:30 p.m. WSS Awards Committee. Hilton (HIL), La Vista



JANUARY 15, SATURDAY

8:00 - 9:30 a.m. Feminist Task Force (part of All Task Force), Four Points Hotel (FP), RioGrandeBR
8:00 - 9:30 a.m. ALA SRRT Action Council All Task Force Meeting, FP, RioGrande BR
9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. ALA SRRT Action Council I, FP, RioGrande BR
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. ALA Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL), CC-216A
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. GLBTRT Off-site Steering Committee I, Plaza San Antonio (PLZ), Cavalier
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. LAMA Women Administrators, Gunther Hotel (GUNT), Yellow Rose
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table (GLBTRT) All Committee Marriott Rivercenter (MARHQ), Conf. 15
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. GLBTRT Book Awards Committee, Menger Hotel (MEN), Cavalier
6:00 - 8:00 p.m. GLBTRT Social

JANUARY 16, SUNDAY

9:30 - 11:00 a.m. COSWL Bibliography Task Force, CC-211
8:00 - 11:00 a.m. GLBTRT Book Awards Committee, HIL, LaCondesa W
9:30 - 11 a.m. Feminist Task Force Program Planning, PLZ, Conference Ctr. D
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. COSWL Bibliography Task Force, CC-211
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. ACRL Women's Studies Section (WSS) All Committee, Radisson, De Gala B
4:30 - 5:30 p.m. WSS Membership, CC-214C
8:00 - 10:00 p.m. GLBTRT Read-Aloud, MARHQ, Conf. 16

JANUARY 17, MONDAY

8:00 - 9:30 a.m. Feminist Task Force Membership, CC-212B
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. WSS Discussion, GUNT, Yellow Rose General
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. SRRT Action Council II, CC-214D

JANUARY 18, TUESDAY

8:00 - 9:00 a.m. COSWL, CC-210B
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. GLBTRT Steering Committee II, CC-210A

SPECIAL INVITATION:

SHARE YOUR VISION

This special invitation comes to you from Theresa Tobin, Vice Chair/Chair Elect of ACRL WSS and member, Feminist Task Force and Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship—Ed.

You are invited to come help the Women's Studies Section review, re-think, re-envision the relationships among the various women's groups at ALA.

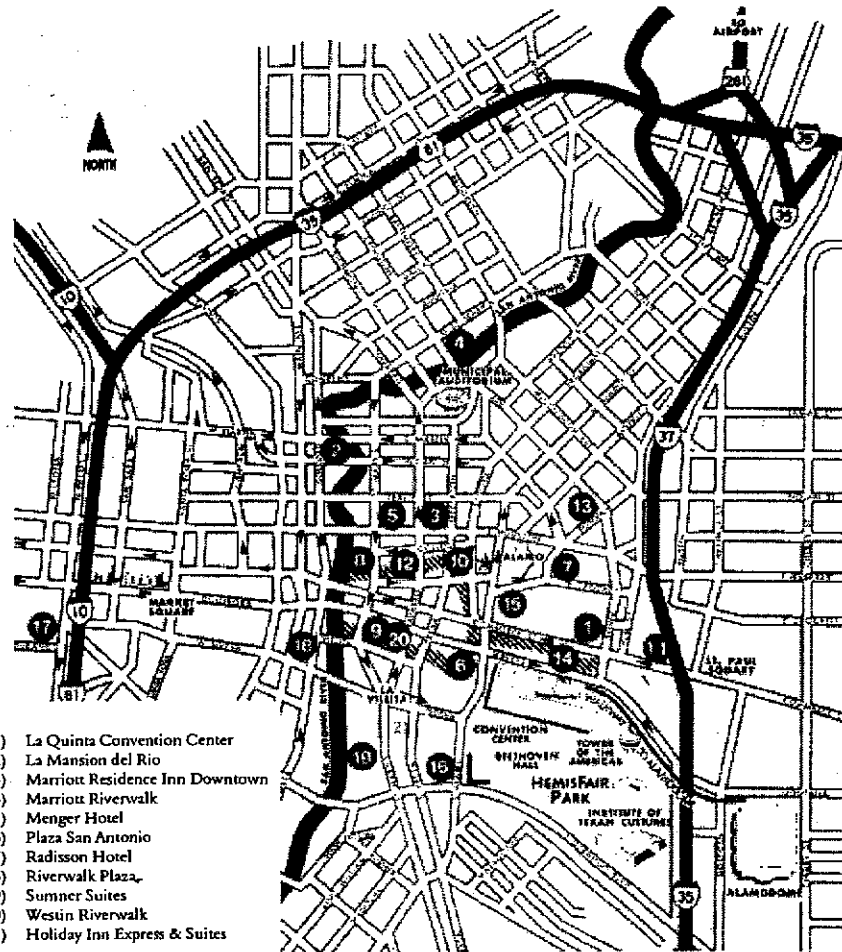
Historically, the ACRL WSS has had strong ties and frequent collaborations with SRRT Feminist Task Force, COSWL, and the LAMA Women Managers Discussion Group members. In recent years, our collaborations have fallen off

and their shadow can be seen primarily in the annual Introduction to Women's Groups at ALA and occasional co-sponsorship of events.

- ◆ Is this what we want?
- ◆ Where should we be going?
- ◆ Have we finished the work of women and feminism in the organization?
- ◆ What is the right balance between the work we do separately and the work we share?

The discussion is Monday, Jan 17, 9:30-11:00, in Gunther Hotel's Yellow Rose Room. I hope to see you there.

SAN ANTONIO DOWNTOWN



SAN ANTONIO HOTEL KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Marriott Rivercenter Hotel | 11) La Quinta Convention Center |
| 2) Adam's Mark Hotel | 12) La Mansion del Rio |
| 3) Crowne Plaza St. Anthony | 13) Marriott Residence Inn Downtown |
| 4) Four Points Riverwalk North | 14) Marriott Riverwalk |
| 5) Gunter Hotel | 15) Menger Hotel |
| 6) Hilton Palacio Del Rio | 16) Plaza San Antonio |
| 7) Holiday Inn Crockett | 17) Radisson Hotel |
| 8) Holiday Inn Riverwalk | 18) Riverwalk Plaza |
| 9) Homewood Suites | 19) Sumner Suites |
| 10) Hyatt Regency Hotel | 20) Westin Riverwalk |
| | 21) Holiday Inn Express & Suites |

NEXT ISSUE: SWAN SONG FOR EDITOR

This old editor has been hanging on for quite a while, and I can't help but feel it's time for a change, both for me and for *Women in Libraries*. After four years in my current term as editor, plus a few before this, volume 29, number 1 will be my last. I've introduced a new look with new typefaces this issue, softening the readers up for a bigger change.

If you like books, if you like to set up newsletters and have everyone know your name, step up the Feminist Task Force meetings in San Antonio next month and see how you can help.

If you aren't coming to San Antonio, you may write FTF's current cochairs, Rosemary McAndrew at mcandrew@crab.rutgers.edu, or Adriene Lim at ab7155@wayne.edu.

If you want to work, we want to see you!

—Madeleine Tainton, ed.

Letter from Beijing, continued from page 1

go to school. As late as 1989, females made up about 80% of un-enrolled school-age children, more than 80% of school drop-outs, and 80% of the three million enrolled but permanently absent from school. At this time 94% of working women were manual laborers and farmers, and need for raising the educational level of women was admitted to be one of the nation's biggest problems.

Parents of Hua Xia students fear that their daughters will be distracted from studies by boys, this will affect their futures in terms of college and careers, and that training them exclusively for college education could well be a waste of time if they do not pass the all-important college entrance exam. The special curriculum for girls (which includes self-defense, cooking, sewing, art and dance) and the tight schedule at Hua Xia take care of these concerns, but as I observed, many of the girls have boyfriends from elementary school who meet them in the afternoons to walk them home. If the girls live at school, they are watched over around the clock by a kind of "house mother" who locks them in at night and inspects their rooms every morning and evening. These girls are either coddled and isolated or feel forced into a situation that doesn't suit them, and guilty about their contact with

boys. Only the most dedicated, who incidentally chose the school of their own accord, can reap the benefits of attending a girls' school by taking initiative and working hard to satisfy their own demands. These girls were already independent,

choosing something new because of their high expectations of themselves. One girl, Zheng Qi, answered my question about what she likes to do in her spare time by giving me a copy of her daily schedule, copied here with minor spelling corrections (see inset).

Among my students, many indicated they hoped to attend college but few answered the homework question I assigned about their dreams of the future. Some students walk the line between giving up their dreams and daring to completely form and pursue those dreams. Even the best students remarked in homework papers that they did not expect their dreams to be realized. For example, one hoped to be a film director, another to study in the U.S. and become a lawyer, but both

were resigned to becoming teachers. One of the teachers told me that those who don't attend college can probably expect to find low-level jobs like peddling merchandise on the street—jobs with little hope for advancement and that others would not choose.
—D. Tainton

MY WEEKDAYS, BY ZHENG QI:

My name is Zheng Qi. I study at Beijing Hua Xia Girls' Academy. I'm in class three, grade one. I come from Yan Shan. I am a resident student. I always stay at the school on weekdays and at home on Sundays. I go home on Saturday afternoons and come back to school on Sunday afternoons.

On weekdays, I get up at 5:50 and wash my face and brush my teeth quickly. Then I do morning exercises with other resident students. We have morning reading at 6:35. We read Chinese on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and English on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Morning reading is over at 7:20. We have breakfast at 7:30. Then I go to the classroom at 8:20. We begin classes at 8:30. We have five classes in the morning. Morning classes are over at 12:10.

I have lunch at 12:10. After lunch I take a nap for over half an hour.

Classes begin at 1:20 in the afternoon. There are four classes every afternoon. Afternoon classes are over at 5:10, and then it's time to play games. We often play basketball, and sometimes we play football. We play games from 5:20 in the afternoon to 6:10 in the evening.

I have supper at 6:30. Classes begin again at 7:00 in the evening. We have three periods of study hall. I often do my homework in the evening. Individual study is over at 9:50. I go to bed at 10:30 in the evening and my day comes to an end.

BOTH ENDS OF THE PENCIL

ACCESS FOR WRITERS

Dotson, Edisol W. *Putting Out: The Essential Publishing Resource Guide for Gay and Lesbian Writers*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57344-033-7, \$14.95.

This slim volume provides an accessible, readable resource for gay and lesbian writers.

Cross-indexed for subject and general topics, the chapters are laid out in clearly defined parameter: the world wide web, book publishers, magazines and journals, newspapers and newsletters, theaters, and agents.

The essays included in this edition give encouragement as well as practical advice. Patricia Nell Warren lists six points to remember when dealing with small presses; Scott O'Hara shares his expertise with budding porn writers. Shannon Turner dispenses pragmatic wisdom for writers who despair of bland rejection letters. She encourages:

While popular wisdom might have it that the truly great writers got where they are because of their exquisite raw talent, my experience has been that self-confidence and persistence are equally important.

This is a must-have for the library of any gay or lesbian writer.
—P. Crossland

December 1999

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

ACCESS FOR READERS

Counterpoise: for social responsibilities, liberty and dissent. Chicago: American Library Association, April 1997. Edited by Charles Willett. ISSN 1092-0714, \$9.00.

Counterpoise is clean, easy to read, and geared for accessibility. Reviews of books, magazines, Internet 'zines, pamphlets, and videos are easy to locate and cross-referenced by publisher, author/title, and subject. To further aid the reader in locating reviews, each is numbered. *Counterpoise* covers all subjects, including World Affairs, Queer Music, Young People, and IGC on the Net. The journal specializes in the work of the alternative presses; the reviews cover the kinds of materials you won't find at the big book warehouses, at least, not on display. For librarians and students in particular, this magazine is an invaluable tool for selection and research as well as an intriguing catalogue for browsing. —P. Crossland

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

WOMEN IN HISTORY

CHEROKEE WOMEN AND COSMIC ORDER

Perdue, Theda. *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Cloth, ISBN 0-8032-3716-2, \$40.00.

Balance—that is the essence of Cherokee women.

Men knew little about the world of women; they had no power over women and no control over women's activities. Women had their own arena of power, and any threat to its integrity jeopardized cosmic order. So it had been since the beginning of time.

Perdue's scholarly work provides a foundation in which to explore the effect of European colonization on the tribe.

There is little information in popular culture to differentiate among tribes, less to illustrate the effects gender made in areas such as decision making, work, marriage, sexuality, and child rearing. The white historians of the time could not fathom the workings of a matrilinear culture; certainly they did not appreciate the system as equal or superior to their own. Perdue systematically covers the importance of gender in everyday life, both sexes having their sphere of influence and neither subordinate to the other.

Unmasking the stereotypes that prevail in film and literature about tribal women, Perdue traces the complexity of gender difference on the culture. Far from restricting women, she builds on the work of earlier historians and postulates that gender roles persisted long after contact with Europeans and provided the Cherokee with an adaptability to successfully resist the loss of their traditions. In addition, their commitment to common landholding and resistance to removal and relocation played a significant role in history, one much under reported. Perdue further debunks the notion that North American "savages" depended predominantly on hunting for their livelihood:

Women had been the farmers in Cherokee society long before Europeans had arrived, yet commentators ignored the importance of agriculture and exaggerated people's dependence on hunting.

Sexual autonomy, taken as a matter of fact among Cherokee women, appalled the Europeans. Writes Perdue, "Sexual freedom, according to Europeans, degraded women, jeopardized civic order, and subverted republican value." The concept of property rights, absent in the communal Cherokee society, provided a balance in both trade and social interaction. This was an intolerable situation to men who considered ownership of property (which included women) as their God-given right.

Perdue gives a balanced, well researched overview of Cherokee women and their place in their culture. History in general often silences the perceptions and contributions of the female half of the population, and nowhere is this more evident than in previously-recorded accounts of Native American history. This book helps fill the void in a concise and scholarly manner.

—P. Crossland

WOMEN'S WORK IN AMERICA

Amott, Teresa and Julie Matthiae. *Race, gender, and work: a multicultural history of women in the United States*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-89608-537-6, \$21.00.

Focusing on economics, the authors use a race, class, gender, and women's work conceptual framework to guide each of the 11 chapters. A comparative cross-cultural perspective is provided on women's work with chapters organized around Native American, Chicana, European-American, African-American, Asian-American, and Puerto Rican women. *Race, gender, and work* examines the quantitative and qualitative differences of women's work in different cultures based on cultural norms, co-residency patterns, type of work, impact of societal change, and the sexual and social division of labor. Discrimination and prejudice in some form is universal, but how it influences women is dependent upon cultural and familial factors.

The book's goal is three-fold: First, to show the diversity of working women's contributions to U.S. economic history; second, to lay out the interconnections and interdependencies of race, gender, and class, with special focus on the processes of exploitation and oppression of women; and third, to emphasize major transformations in the race, gender, and class hierarchies that simultaneously occur with the process of economic expansion.

The authors cover a narrow range of racial and ethnic groups, unfortunately limiting the book. Many smaller racial ethnic groups are omitted, i.e., Cuban-, Korean-, Indian-, and Arab-Americans and indigenous Hawaiians. While a broader approach would have better suited the multicultural premise, the book gives much-needed attention to the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and women's work through capitalist development, helping redress some of the misconceptions and myths that have clouded our understanding of the historical perspective of women's work in the United States.

—J. Kunz

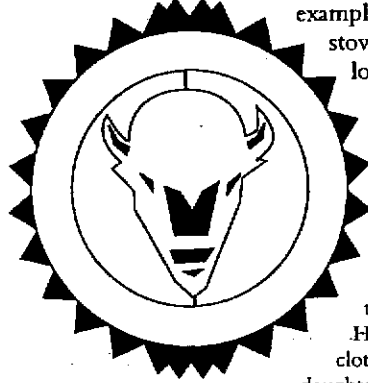
SETTLING THE CANADIAN PRAIRIE

Schultz, Judy. *Mamie's Children: Three Generations of Prairie Women*. Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-88995-167-5, \$14.95.

Mamie's granddaughter, Judy Schultz, shares the history of the women in her Canadian family through their struggles and triumphs. An oral history is being put down, a neglected and nearly forgotten story, remembered. Schultz is telling the story of her grandmother, and through her, describing the difficult life of a small farming family in the early days of Canadian settlement by whites. Family photographs accompany the narrative as we learn of the many children, the conquest of the buffalo, losses through hunger, disease, and the vicissitudes of the weather. The author does not, however, deal with the heartbreaking ravages the busily multiplying white civilization brought to indigenous peoples and wildlife.

brought to indigenous peoples and wildlife. She does note in passing that traces of the buffalo, the wallows and trails, have disappeared.

Mamie had nine children from 1897 to 1918, and worked hard raising them, a workload we can only imagine. An



example: on a wood-burning cook stove, she baked 16 giant loaves of sourdough bread twice a week.

One of Mamie's sons, Uncle Ken to the author, describes her reputation as a skilful seamstress:

People at church use to wonder where the Harris girls got their pretty clothes. Pearl [the youngest daughter] had one dress that was so pretty, everybody asked. They were flour sacks, but Mom fixed them so's you'd never know.

The narrative is both professional and personal at once, though more concern for environmental losses would have been well placed.

—M. Tainton



WOMEN WHO SURVIVE

JEWISH IN CHILE

Agosin, Marjorie. *A Cross and a Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl in Chile*. New York: Feminist, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-55861-176-2, \$13.95.

Agosin writes about herself and her family in this unusual memoir. More of the story is from her mother's point of view, as she imagines it, than from her own. Agosin's mother, Frida Halpern, grew up in Chile, one of a small group of recently immigrated European Jews. A fascinating and unique account of growing up as one of few Jews in a Catholic country, during a time when persecution of Jews was commonplace and when anti-Semitism reached its ultimate outcome, the Holocaust of World War II.

Her Grandmother Sonia

told us that for love sickness one must rub two cloves of garlic in the chalice of the left inner ear, and for foot odors, one should apply an elixir of tigerskin and lentils before midnight. In order to fight against the traffic of sadness, one should forget the word *pogrom*, forget the fire, and hide the Star of David deep within the fearful and moaning breast.

Poetic and lyrical, Agosin's prose is the expression of a fine and sensitive imagination, and her story is alive with sounds, smells, and twinges of pain and joy. The book is a series of portraits of family members and friends, told in words and supplemented with old photographs.—M. Tainton

December 1999

PHOTOGRAPHER PARTISAN REMEMBERS

Schulman, Faye. *A Partisan's Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust*. Toronto, Canada: Second Story, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-929005-76-7, \$19.95 Canadian, \$15.95 US.

A new and harrowing account of survival in the Holocaust. This one is different—a woman is trained as a photographer, assisting in a small business before the war. Schulman appears tough, popular, and talented as a young teenager. Because of her skills, the Nazis decide to keep her around to record their "achievements." Her life is one of great tragedy and great drama, as she lives through the war, seeing many loved ones die and helping others to survive. She joins the partisans and works to help drive the Germans back. The partisans lived like animals in the dirt, homes and beds but a memory. Day to day survival was the sole concern, revenge the driving force.

Horrible massacres and glaring singular brutality, and the rare, moving, acts of kindness. There was companionship yet loneliness, stark anti-Semitism, distrust, and occasional insanity. Of all the Holocaust stories I've read, this one, with its drama and tragedy, together with hope, ability to take action, and revenge, is among the best suited to be made into a movie. Because Schulman is a photographer, she shares a pictorial record of the people and locales.

—M. Tainton

ITALIAN-AMERICAN ENDURANCE

De Rosa, Tina. *Paper Fish*. New York: Feminist, 1996. Cloth, 1-55861-146-0, \$20.00; paper, 1-55861-145-2, \$9.95.

Paper fish is an autobiographical novel about Italian-American experience in the poor, ethnically diverse neighborhoods of Chicago following World War II. We almost live the lives we look in on as De Rosa describes a sensuous and palpable existence. The importance of family, together with its burdens of guilt, expectation, responsibility, and hard work, are brought vividly to life through smell, taste, and sound:

[B]abies [were] born not in the Italy of the white hot sun, children conceived not among the sweet smell of olive trees and figs, the smell of soot and stucco, the smell of earth rich as a dipper of cream, children whose eyes filled not with the yellow square of sun set into the window with white curtains, but children instead stowed into this tiny closet of a street with pinched back porches, the sky folded and pinned like fabric between the buildings.

Feminist Press is continuing its mission of rescuing great novels from obscurity. *Paper fish*, first published in 1980 and out of print for many years, is a driving poetic oeuvre, almost stream-of-consciousness. A new afterword by Edvige Giunta, notes, and a bibliography complete the book's preparation for its introduction into literature courses. Though it is tragic that *Paper fish* was lost to us for so long, we can be thankful for the revival of this masterpiece.

—M. Tainton

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

THE COMPLEXITIES OF STEVIE SMITH

Severin, Laura. *Stevie Smith's resistant antics*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-299-15290-1, \$47.95; paper, ISBN 0-299-15294-4, \$18.95.

Severin gives a very real sense of the breadth of Stevie Smith's work — her poetry, novels and short fiction, criticism and book reviews, drawings, and "boundary crossing" performance art. It is useful precisely because of this insistence on Smith's breadth, and the fact that unlike other studies, it does not concentrate exclusively on her poetry. Severin focuses on the importance of reading various aspects of Smith's work in relation to each other: the poetry and the drawings, the performances and the accompanying music, for example. Reading each aspect of Smith's work as a complex intertext of the others allows Severin to discuss the complexity which is at the heart of Smith's resistance to the domestic ideologies of early twentieth-century Britain. Also interesting is Severin's engagement with Smith's working life—her clerical job at a publishing house specializing in women's domestic magazines, and later work as a book reviewer.

In the early chapters of her book, Severin draws on the work of a variety of theorists. She then provides a reading of Smith's work that both pays close and detailed attention to the texts themselves, and takes into account Smith's own life and the broader social context within which she wrote and worked. This insistence on the complexity of Smith's historical position is perhaps most effective in its reading of Smith's complex relation to feminism. Severin locates Smith as both inheriting many of the ideas and attitudes of Victorian and Edwardian suffrage feminism, and anticipating feminist concerns of the later twentieth century.

Understanding the development and contradictions of twentieth-century feminism is an important project, with easy first-wave/second-wave generalizations often substituted for more thoughtful analysis. In this context, Severin's placing of Smith firmly between first and second waves has implications for feminist criticism which go well beyond the single-author focus of this particular text. —P. Brush

SOON-AH, COMFORT WOMAN/STOLEN WOMAN

Park, Therese. *A gift of the emperor*. Duluth, Minn.: Spinsters Ink, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-21-4, \$10.95.

Soon-ah is a Korean girl of thirteen when she is taken by the Japanese to serve the Emperor as a 'comfort woman' for Japanese troops during World War II. *Gift* follows her from her life as a young girl in occupied Korea through her time as a forced sex worker and her eventual return to Korea.

Soon-ah is picked up in her home village by Japanese soldiers. She is initially forced to work in a south seas brothel for enlisted men, but because of her good skill with the Japanese language is transferred to an officer's facility. She meets Sadamu, a young Japanese journalist, who does not support the Emperor's war efforts. She struggles with feelings of worthlessness and overcomes them enough to fall in love with Sadamu. Together they escape to an unoccupied island, and eventually are picked up by American troops who bring them to Hawaii.

Sadamu returns to the war as an American counter-intelligence officer, leaving Soon-ah to face the legacy of her

time as a prostitute alone. The brutality of all she has seen and all that has been done to her overwhelms her. The Americans she meets do not appear to understand what has happened to her or to other Korean women. Soon-ah attempts suicide, swimming out to sea, trying to leave the past behind and to find Sadamu. Gradually, she heals. Soon-ah returns to a dividing Korea when the war is over. She is very much different from the schoolgirl who was carried away. Her new-found strength lies in her conviction that destructive ideologies and violence are evils with no place in her world. —K. Gerhard

GROWING UP, GROWING OLD

Newman, Leslea. *In every laugh a tear*. Norwich, Vt.: New Victoria, 1998. Paperback, ISBN 0-934678-92-8, \$11.95.

Shayna Steinblatt's grandmother Tzeydl is ninety-nine years old and lives in an apartment in Brighton Beach, until Shayna's parents rather abruptly have her put in a nursing home. This story is about Shayna and her grandmother. They have always been very close, and it is difficult for Shayna to understand how her mother could have put her grandmother in a home. At first she tries to understand, then change, and finally make a sort of peace with the situation. It is she, not her mother, who regularly visits Bubbe Tzeydl in the home.

Shayna spends much of her time driving back and forth, arguing with her mother, and worrying. This is not an easy time in her life. Yet amidst all the chaos, life goes on. She has met and fallen in love with Luz. The love story is a new beginning, affirming life even during a time of sadness.

During Shayna's visits and speaking with her grandmother, it's almost as if I could hear them speaking (the Yiddish glossary at the end of the book is especially helpful). While reading this book I heard definite echoes of conversations with my own grandmother, and doubtless other readers will hear their own echoes as well.

This novel made me laugh, cry, crave matzo ball soup, and call my grandmother. It is touching and very enjoyable.

—B. Jedlicka

QUIRKY OBSERVATIONS

Farrant, M. A. C. *What's true, Darling*. Victoria, BC: Polestar, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-896095-28-3, \$14.95.

M. A. C. Farrant is little known outside of Canada, and that's a shame. This collection of short stories is her fifth, and each page is like a song played on a beautifully-tuned instrument. Farrant is often invited to readings, and you can see why: the stories are meant to be read aloud. Each line catches the sound of the voice.

In "Little Zerotta," a girl fantasizes about her wedding:

"I'm going to have a wedding in white," Zero's now telling everyone, all sharp-faced and eager-eyed. "I want someone I can dress up and put in my very own living room; someone I can vacuum around and dust while he's watching TV then carry off to bed come midnight. I want Alfred Angelo Dream Maker."

Farrant is an expert on the little quirks that make people interesting, sometimes more interesting than they deserve to be. And she deserves our attention for it. —M. Tainton

WOMEN WHO LOVE

HOT STUFF

Tulchinsky, Karen., editor. *Hot and Bothered: Short Short Fiction on Lesbian Desire*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1998. ISBN 1-55152-051-6, \$16.95 Canada, \$14.95 U. S.

Karen Tulchinsky has gathered the work of 69 writers given the assignment of producing a favorite fantasy in 1,000 words or less. The result is a wild romp of a book, suitable for sharing with a lover of long acquaintance or perhaps whiling away time spent in line at the bank, on the train to work, or while stuck in traffic. Those readers who frequent gyms might incorporate this saucy volume in their workout, toiling away on the treadmill, stationary bike, or climbing the stairmaster to eternity.

The subject matter ranges from public nipple piercing and scarification to less intense but equally erotic tales of delicious memories and familiar but powerful sex between long-term lovers. Tatiana Barona de la Tierra writes,

A few really loved me...the sweetest of all, put playful elves on my pillow and left a trail of sparks with every step in "True Cunt Stories." On a sadder note, Spike Harris remembers irretrievable love in "Your Alley." On the occasion of a lost lover's birthday, she muses,

We were two halves of a secret, and now I have just my half...I guess I'm no longer afraid of people finding out about us. I no longer think it's the worst thing that could happen.

T. J. Bryan sets Ma Bell on her ear with a seductive phone call in "Telephone Strip at Bedtime." Age is no barrier to satisfaction as Rita Montana demonstrates in her short, "Covering the Grey." Ages, race, experience, nothing is an insurmountable barrier to these women and the romps they so skillfully and boldly describe in a rainbow of emotions ranging from simple, immediate lust to melancholy love held only in memory. This volume should find a ready audience in the lesbian community; such variety ensures gratification for every reader.

—P. Crossland

LOVERS CONNECT IN TENNESSEE

Stone, Beatrice. *The Sensual Thread*. Chicago: Third Side Press, 1994. Paper, ISBN 1-879427-18-4, \$10.95.

The Sensual Thread, Stone's first novel, tells the story of Lee, a lesbian who moves back to her grandmother's farm on a Tennessee mountain after being involved in a car accident in which her mother was killed. Lee soon connects with her long-lost childhood friend, Kay, also a lesbian, who has recently returned to her family's house on the same mountain. Shortly after they meet again, Lee and Kay become emotionally involved, first as close friends and later as lovers.

This is a fairly familiar story for readers of popular lesbian fiction, and the plot is predictable from the beginning: old friends reconnect, discover they are attracted to each other, fall in love, have passionate sex, carve out a lasting relationship. Stone has, however, embellished this story a great deal by adding elements of extrasensory powers and time travel. Lee

has the capacity to feel what others are feeling, which causes problems in her relationship with Kay. Towards the end of the novel, the two women discover that their relationship mirrors that of two of their deceased female relatives, whom Lee communicates with shortly after being thrown from her horse.

There was little about Stone's writing that I found exciting, but this novel at least avoids some of the stereotypes of popular lesbian fiction. For example, there are no 'evil' male characters, and both women have supportive families. Although the time travel scene—which could have been a fall-induced hallucination—and Lee's gift of feeling what other's feel stretched the imagination a bit, these two devices helped to move the story out of the realm of the predictable.

—W. Thomas

FINDING WHOLENESS

Blanchard, Margaret, editor. *From the listening place: languages of intuition*. Portland, Maine: Astarte Shell Press, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-885349-05-x, \$19.95.

Intuition is a realization of wholeness which is simultaneously internal and external, an insight which gives us everything at once, if only momentarily.

It starts with nighttime dreams explored by a psychic, a therapist, several skilled poets. The lessons progress through symbols, storytelling, and ending appropriately with healing, teaching, and social action. Blanchard does an excellent job collecting these blocks of work and quilting them into a remarkable work demonstrating the interconnectedness of the journey to becoming fully human. Creativity explored not solely as artist, writer, or poet but as an essential part of problem solving and everyday life.

Vicki Gabriner shares her personal fable, "The Good Fairy," which danced out of her head she says as she was eating a bowl of soup. "But when the mind gets quiet and knows it is in a receptive space, it speaks the truth." Her fairy helps a five-year-old child survive the horrors of sexual abuse, wrapping the memories up for a time when they can be dealt with constructively. The cycle from numbness to re-emergence into light is one example of healing through intuition. Lisa Blackburn relates how a group of high school students raised money for her community's Thanksgiving food drive:

...we came up with the idea that his students could make enough ceramic bowls to serve a soup luncheon to the faculty and staff and ask them to donate what they would have otherwise paid for lunch that day.

Blanchard and her contributors remind us that creativity is an essential part of human nature, one that has helped us survive more than any other characteristic we possess.

—P. Crossland

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

PUNCHY POETRY

Davis, Cortney. *Details of Flesh*. Corvallis, OR: Calyx, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-934971-58-7, \$23.95; paper, ISBN 0-934971-57-9, \$11.95.

If you enjoy poetry but are squeamish about the real world or the physical body, then this volume is not for you. On the other hand, if you like to see the inside (and sometimes the underside) of a profession, if you find all aspects of life worthy of your regard, or if you've ever wondered whether the medical personnel you see are truly that socially detached, this will be of interest.

Cortney Davis writes punchy, dynamically physical poetry. Many of the poems center around nursing and sickness, but she also touches on societal ills—the abuse of women and children by men and women, the abuse of men by war, the abuse of mankind by hunger, ignorance and murder. Not all of the poetry is on dismal topics. There are some about love, and the celebration of life. However, the nursing pieces and the ones about death and suffering are the most powerful to me, perhaps because they are closest to the poet's own world, and because many of them reveal things that aren't readily spoken of; for example, being beaten by loved ones (*Suffering*, 3.):

one woman told me it wasn't the blows
but the love lost,
gone as if they peeled your skin,
sucked all the marrow from your bones and now
you walk everywhere hollow.

Cortney Davis is a nurse-practitioner, as well as winner of an NEA fellowship and other awards for her poetry. Nursing and other medical programs could benefit from the kinds of insight that this collection provides. —N. Parker-Gibson

REPETITIOUS, ACHING PHRASE

Pearlberg, Gerry Gomez. *Marianne Faithfull's Cigarette*. San Francisco: Cleis, 1998. Paper, ISBN 1-57344-034-5, \$12.95.

Morning dew, I've learned here, isn't morning dew at all—
it falls at night, while meteors fall.

Pearlberg says her book is "about what remains after we exit the stage." And for those of us who find Marianne Faithfull sultry, thrilling, beautiful, we can understand Pearlberg's theme. Eroticism, pop culture, cigarettes, brand names—literary allusion and word play. Pearlberg's poetry moves, hurts, touches. From "Poison Arrow Tree Frogs":

I knew a girl whose fingers widened at the tips,
like suction pads.
In her lush room I climbed the ceiling
while those fingers climbed my wall
and wet eurythmic music sprayed
a repetitious, aching phrase like
all the sex I'd ever have
and ever want
and ever go to jail
and lose my friends
and civil rights
and safety for.

Sexy, funny, the poems call up distant memories, make you remember things you might rather forget, and make you laugh. This is what poetry should be. —M. Tainton

FIZZY HIGH HEARTBEAT

Taylor, Cheryl Boyce. *Raw Air*. New York: Fly by Night Press, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-9639585-7-7, \$11.00.

The poetry of Cheryl Boyce Taylor reminds me of many things: sun-warmed melon; starting a novel like Mattiehessen's *Far Tortuga* and ricocheting between frustration and understanding; and the fizzy high heartbeat one gets going into a party of mixed friends and strangers, with old lovers thrown in who may be either. She has a clear ear for both the vernacular of Trinidad and of the city streets. She writes of love, of sex, of family, and of alienation, of working too hard and long to do anything else:

ah running three jobs
ah still cahn see
where de money goin.

(from "Plenty Time Pass Fast, Fas Dey So")

The *Raw Air* of the title could refer to New York City and the lack of support and nourishment that Taylor found there as an immigrant teenager. Although she has made a place for herself in the community, in many of the works she both exposes and reviles the barren qualities of hectic urban life. However, the poem with the same title refers to Goree, a Senegalese island where slaves were brought before being loaded on ships, to leaving loved one(s) or lovers, and leaving all home and memory.

Cheryl Boyce Taylor's poetry is vivid, insightful, and novel. The works are saturated with sensory detail, religious invocation of island gods and goddesses, and a range of emotion, from lust to regret, from veneration to vengery.

—N. Parker-Gibson

HER GUARDIAN ANGEL

Brownrigg, Elizabeth. *Falling to earth: a novel*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand, 1998. Paper, ISBN 1-56341-100-8, \$12.95; cloth, ISBN 1-56341-101-6, \$26.95.

Alice has a guardian angel named Phoebe. Phoebe has been around since Alice was born, but hasn't bothered to manifest herself since Alice's childhood. She's rather a flighty angel, and wants Alice to act as amanuensis, writing down to the stories she tells her. Phoebe wants a touch of human-ness. Alice may have a touch of angel-ness.

Elizabeth Brownrigg's first book, *Falling* is well worth the cost of admission. She has written engaging, believable characters (which can't be too easy when you're dealing with a red-headed angel who may not always be completely truthful and has a hankering for the sensual) taking a surreal, rhapsodic cruise to damnation. Or redemption. Or something like that. Phoebe's stories could be expanded into books themselves, and seem to attempt that feat on their own. The language is lyrical, the construction well-paced and balanced, the other characters quirky and human. Alice and Phoebe fly and fall throughout the book in an effort to find their desires, without apparently knowing they are searching for them. It is a novel about a lesbian which does not fall into the dismal chasm of a single facet "lesbian novel."

Falling would make a stellar addition to collections of any literature. It is highly recommended. —K. Thompson



WOMEN OF MYSTERY

FROM OUT OF THE PAST...

Drury, Joan M. *Closed in silence*. Duluth, MN : Spinsters Ink., 1998. Paperback, ISBN 1-883523-29-X, \$10.95.

This is a different sort of mystery. In fact, for about eighty pages, the reader isn't aware that it is a mystery at all. Six college friends are getting together for a reunion twenty years later.

Tyler Jones is a feminist writer and sometime sleuth living in San Francisco. Over the years she has grown apart from the women in her college "gang," except one, Mary Sharon. She is essentially out of touch with the others: Teddie, Rachel, Grace, and especially Julie. Julie once was the love of Tyler's life but broke her heart when she left with another woman several years after graduation. Even now, it seems Tyler is holding onto her pain.

As the members of the group catch up after gathering, they are all surprised to learn that Julie has gotten married and lives in the suburbs with two children. As the women discuss their issues, they find all have their feminism in common but disagree on specifics such as prostitution, classism, and sexual abuse. Thought-provoking discussion, as well as plot twists, follow.

Finally, the mystery begins. Tyler has been involved in two previous murders, which is alluded to, and soon she stumbles upon yet another crumpled form, with an unmistakable hole in his back. For a long time nobody knows, or will admit she knows, who the victim is. Suspicions run amuck. This has all the makings of a classic mystery: a group of people in a deserted place, rainstorms, no telephone, and a missing weapon; it will definitely keep you on the edge of your seat.

—B. Jedlicka

CRIME IN SAN FRANCISCO

Beale, Elaine. *Murder in the Castro: a Lou Spencer mystery*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1997. Paper, 0-934678-87-1, \$10.95.

In this San Francisco mystery, Beale mixes hate crimes, politics, and murder. Lou Spencer, English immigrant and lesbian, manages an agency providing legal help to victims of "gay-bashing." A wealth of colorful suspects crop up when one of the lawyers at the agency is murdered. Other attorneys, neurotic and eccentric clients, and homophobic neighbors turn out to have different combinations of motive and opportunity.

Domestic violence in lesbian families is an issue in Spencer's life as well as at the agency where she works, and Spencer begins to take her first hesitant steps towards a new relationship as she works to solve the murder. Beale keeps you guessing in this nicely-developed, smoothly-written mystery.

—M. Tainton

READING FOR ALA MIDWINTER?

McDermid, Val. *Conferences are murder: the fourth Lindsay Gordon mystery*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1993 and 1999. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-30-3, \$12.00.

ALA is never like this, and it's a good thing! This mystery, first published in England and now in a new American edition, describes a visit to a journalists' union convention. While the story is rather obvious, the conference trimmings make it great fun, especially for those of us who have been to many such meetings. At the beginning of each chapter is a juicy little excerpt from a booklet called "Advice for New Delegates." Tongue in cheek, the booklet offers such gems as

we recommend that all delegates study the new conference standing orders carefully. Then restrain all urges to raise points of order, sit back, and let it all sink in...

ALA really ought to have one. —M. Tainton

DIGGING UP THE DEAD

McKay, Claudia. *Twist of lime: a Lynn Evans mystery*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-934678-88-X, \$10.95.

Lynn Evans is enjoying a working vacation at her friend Sarah's archaeological dig in Belize. The jungle repose is broken when Ann, the loner of the crew, disappears and is found almost unconscious, with a dead poisonous snake next to her. The authorities step in, Ann's body is whisked away, and the next thing Lynn and Sarah hear are autopsy results indicating Ann had cocaine and heroin in her system. At this point Sarah is suspected of using the dig to cover a drug operation, and her well-beloved, ne'er-do-well brother seems to be framing her. Of course, nothing and no one is what they seem, and Lynn can hardly be said to have a peaceful vacation.

This book has a few problems, including weak characterizations, over-abundant coincidence, and a lack of focus. The most glaring problem, however, has nothing to do with the story itself. One would be hard pressed to find many pages in a row without a typo. Spell-checkers just do not catch some things, and they didn't catch them here. Those who know the difference between "your" and "you're" might just be driven over the coral reef by this.

For those readers who enjoy mysteries based on the number of plot twists and hidden identities that are overlaid onto the tale, this might be a pleasurable read. For those who prefer that the twists and surprises actually be woven into the story, frustration may very well replace pleasure. The occasional red herring and obfuscatory coincidence is expected in the mystery genre, but red herrings alone do not make a nutritious meal. Even with a twist of lime.

—K. Thompson

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

➤ A NEW MEXICO STORM

Johnson, B. Reece. *The woman who knew too much: a Cordelia Morgan mystery*. San Francisco: Cleis, 1998. Cloth, ISBN 1-57344-078-7, \$23.00; paper, ISBN 1-57344-045-0, \$12.95.

Billed as the first in a series, this promising mystery is an interwoven tale of two women. Parts of the story are third person from the point of view of Cordelia Morgan, a complex character and the announced protagonist of the series. The second character and narrator for most of the book, Anna Lee Stone, is a writer who feels responsible for the deaths of a group of women who took her feminist works to heart. After dealing with a bizarre murder and the results of chemical experimentation and ecovandalism, the two women's paths diverge again, leaving the women much changed.

Johnson has a knack for evoking the lonely New Mexico landscape, hot and silent except for the buzz of insects or the winds of a storm:

I squat among the small suckers that flourish from the roots of the cottonwoods, knowing the insects, the curling pill bugs, the lizards that scuttle along the rough spines of decaying logs, the skeletons of decomposed leaves that look like a miracle of lacework across the palm. I am crouched inside a glade of slender green leaves, their oxygen heavy with forest smells, the cloying odor of earth and dust.

This mystery is like a New Mexico storm, starting quietly and building to a crescendo of rain and thunder. And at the end, breathless, we wait for the next in the series.

—M. Tainton

➤ MALPRACTICE OR MURDER?

Taylor, Sheila Ortiz. *Coachella*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. Paper, ISBN 0-8263-1843-6, \$14.95.

In *Coachella*, Sheila Ortiz Taylor takes common themes and expresses them in an uncommon way. Common themes like abused wives, dangerous husbands, malpractice, and cover up conspiracies. Yet Taylor's is a tone and a language that make these themes new and fresh, and make us, jaded and tired, sit up and think about them in new ways.

Yolanda Ramirez, a phlebotomist in a Palm Springs hospital, discovers new cases of AIDS are mysteriously on the increase. Independent and smart, she and her family of first and second-generation Americans cope with a life of hard work. Her father is a gardener who knows more than a little about plants:

But you couldn't call the desert dead. Tourists did, with their talk. He heard them in the drugstore where they came smelling of chlorine and coconut oil, their eyes lost behind dark glasses. But if you let her, la yerma, she had a way almost of making love to you. Surprises. Always some kind of flower coming out of those cactuses: yellow, pink, red. And in the winter, the palo verde made her blossoms of amarillo and the canyon filled with bright wildflowers. Just for a while, then gone.

And in the end, life doesn't get any easier. But hope comes.

—M. Tainton

➤ PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Unpunished: a mystery*. New York: Feminist, 1997. Cloth, 1-55861-170-3, \$18.95.

Gilman, best known for *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, was also a prolific essayist, journal keeper, and letter writer. Recently found among her papers at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library was an unpublished typescript, a mystery dated 1929, *Unpunished*.

The murder victim is an abusive con-man, ruling his adopted family, the daughter and grandchildren of another man, with an iron hand. The abused woman and children are prime suspects, as are the servants and a plethora of blackmail victims. The story does not stand alone. The major problem with this work is repetition, and earlier or more thorough editing might have saved us from reading the background story three times: once when the daughter is interviewed, another time when her journal is presented in its entirety, and yet again. The chief value of the book is in demonstrating the meaning of domestic violence in days when women were truly helpless, without legal recourse, education, or money of their own. Gilman also has a gift for character development, giving us believable individuals and relationships in a few quick lines. While not a great novel, *Unpunished* is nevertheless an interesting and moving picture of the past. —M. Tainton

➤ MEET YOU AT THE GRAVEYARD

Marcy, Jean. *Cemetery murders: a mystery*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-934678-83-9, \$10.95.

As this mystery opens, it is Thanksgiving weekend in Belleville, Missouri, and Meg Darcy, dyke PI, is reading about the latest in a series of murders in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. The victims, homeless women, are found propped in the mausoleum doorways of St. Louis cemeteries. In the account of the grisly crime, we are introduced to Detective Sarah Lindstrom of the homicide division. Meg and Sarah had met briefly while on R & R from the army some years ago and again on home turf.

When a friend's beloved aunt is the next victim of the serial killer, it changes the profile of the victims and Meg, hired to investigate the murder, is thrown back into contact with Sarah. The attraction between them is strong—as is the competition.

The cast of characters in this novel is rich: there is Uncle Walter, owner of the security company with a problem with alcohol; Ann Yates, friend, teacher of law, and backer of causes; Ann's brother, Greg Brooks, a Harvard School of Business grad and financier; an attractive but aloof city police detective known as the Ice Queen, or, as Meg's comrade-in-arms says: 'a classic closet case'; and Dr. Rolwing, the administrator of the Gateway Rest Home, whose financial woes and missing medications serve to thicken the plot.

Cemetery Murders is the first collaboration of Jean Hutchinson and her partner Marcy Jacobs, thus the pen name, Jean Marcy, and a fine collaboration it is. Settle in for a good read and begin the process of looking forward to the next Jean Marcy tale.

—R. McAndrew



WOMEN & FRIENDS, WOMEN ALONE

COMING OUT IN JAPAN

Summerhawk, Barbara, Cheiron McMahill and Darren McDonald, editors. *Queer Japan: personal stories of Japanese lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1998. Cloth, ISBN 0-934678-97-9, \$22.95; paper, ISBN 1-892281-00-7, \$16.95.

In Japan, closely circumscribed social, gender, and family roles allow a narrow range of accepted behavior. The editors here have gathered and translated 18 personal narratives; through sharing these intimate experiences, 18 women and men tell us what it means to be sexually "other" in Japan. Each experience is unique, but each tells of the heartbreak of discovering one's sexuality in a culture where "there wasn't even linguistic space to exist in." The editors give us the example, *okama*, one word representing either a gay male or cross-dresser. Only recently, when our English word lesbian was adopted, has there been a word for women homosexuals. Even single people are rejected.

Women have few rights including in employment. One woman describes how she began to attend feminist meetings:

It wasn't because I had an interest in feminism, but rather, because I needed an environment in which people would sincerely listen to me, where I could begin to express my concern and anxieties.

How many of us have needed that! There is a great deal of pressure to marry and remain married; the stigma of divorce is not just upon the couple involved but upon their children, and may even affect the latter's employment opportunities.

The introduction and three appendices include a survey of Japanese lesbians. *Queer Japan* is an interesting and intimate look at life in a culture in many ways very different from our own and in other ways surprisingly like ours. —M. Tainton

MORTON GROVE REVITED

Lynch, Lee. *Rafferty Street*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria Publishers, Inc., 1998. Paperback, ISBN 0-934678-93-6, \$10.95.

This third story about Morton Grove, a small New England town, begins with Annie Heaphy whistling while she works. She'd moved from the city to Morton River Valley, made some good friends, and found a job she loves. She is happy working at the Old Herb Farm, a business which works with developmentally disabled people. Annie does odd jobs, such as bussing employees not on regular bus routes to work.

Annie finds her livelihood in jeopardy when a member of the community telephones her boss, claiming that she saw Annie kissing Lorelei Simski, one of the women who works at the Farm, at a softball game. What the woman saw was not what actually happened. Nevertheless, Annie is asked to take a leave of absence from her job. Since Annie is too strong to play the victim, she is unwittingly thrown into the role of activist.

Lynch paints a good picture of a small New England community. Though this is a small town, the people are by no means homogeneous. Annie has friends of all different ages

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and backgrounds. Even within the town's gay community, there are people who are more closeted than others. There is a lot of homophobia and small-mindedness in Morton Grove. Yet the story is inspirational, showing how ordinary people, who are so different, can still band together and work for change and justice no matter who they are, what they do, and where they live. I look forward to reading the other novels about the people in Morton Grove. —B. Jedlicka

RETREATING FROM THE WORLD

Nealson, Christina. *Living on the Spine: a woman's life in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57601-002-3, \$12.95.

Christina Nealson retreated from the world at the age of 40, seeking solitude, insight, and a level of personal and spiritual discovery she could only achieve through the depths of loneliness. She builds a cabin on a remote mountain, cleverly fitting it out with running water from a spring, solar panels, and other innovations, making her as self-sufficient as she could, with a degree of convenience, and her descriptions make her home appear comfortable, personal, and aesthetically appealing. She divides this memoir of her first year on the mountain fittingly into chapters based on a spiritual cycle defined by changing seasons.

Her life in the mountains is far from easy, her solitude not free of anxiety. A large brown bear appears and disappears throughout the narrative, a thread and a metaphor. In life there is death; there must be death in order for there to be life.

Nealson is sophisticated, interested in philosophy and trained as a psychotherapist. She has a poetic and literary flair; she uses her knowledge of history and myth to fill the book with references to ancient spiritual practices. For example, May 1 is now May Day and May baskets, but was once the holy day of Beltane, season of sex and fertility.

Sexual, sensual, and spiritual in her approach, Nealson explores the cycle of life and death, and shares her observations and thoughts on goddesses and their and her own relation to the earth and mortality. *Living on the Spine* encourages and incites us to do more, to be daring, to learn to know ourselves, to make our own place, and to find our way in the eternal cycle. —M. Tainton

BOUND BY BLOOD

Campbell, Helen. *Turnip blues*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1998. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-23-0, \$10.95.

Mrs. Kuzo, 75, takes a ride to visit Bessie Smith's grave in the company of her friend and neighbor, Mrs. Lemack. Along the way she remembers her life and the love of her family, strange characters bound by blood and intimacy. Campbell has a conversational tone in her writing, her characters sharing memory within memory like an intricate tapestry. Full of Mrs. Kuzo's descriptions of her crazy offspring and extended family, of people long gone and of children still causing her confusion, love and pain, *Turnip* takes us for a ride, too. Make an effort to read this one. —M. Tainton

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

AND IF GEORGIA MET ME . . .

Braid, Kate. *Inward to the bones: Georgia O'Keeffe's journey with Emily Carr*. Custer, Washington: Polestar Book Publishers, 1998. Paper, ISBN 1-896095-40-2, \$16.95 Canada, \$14.95 U. S.

This work is about the friendship that might-have-been, between Georgia O'Keeffe and Emily Carr. They did briefly meet; Kate Braid genius lies in expanding that meeting with poetry, words from O'Keeffe's correspondence, and narrative, into a three dimensional form of art, on the two-dimensional page. Juxtaposing them as friends allows her to also compare their lives, their landscapes and their mysteries. Delimiting their friendship in this way allows the author to explore the intricate skeleton of a loving but not smothering relationship between complex, nonconformist, artistic women. Recommended for women's studies, art, poetry collections, and to anyone who enjoys a beautifully crafted and challenging volume.

—N. Parker-Gibson

BREASTS NOW MISSING

Lazur, Louise, Lily Ann Nielsen, and Catherine Stadem. photographs by Bob Hewitt. *Beauty and the breast: the cost of living*. Anchorage, Alaska: Todd Communications, 1998. Cloth, ISBN 1-57833-034-3, \$30.00.

This book consists of two halves that create a whole: the photographs in the first section are intended to be projected as slides during performance of the play in the second section. The anonymous portraits (no faces) are of women who have had breast cancer and been treated by surgery. These survivors express themselves in the photographs, and the spirit that shows through is not the fear, the pain, or the psychological and physical challenges of cancer, but survival despite difficult doctors, pained partners, and the loss of a part of the body that many women identify with or as themselves. Their individuality, style and humor is evidenced in various ways as they display their their breasts, their scars and their reconstructions.

The play traces five characters through diagnosis, treatment, and recovery or death. Their dialogue is drawn from letters and interviews with 25 women, except for the character named Abby, whose contribution is based on letters from one individual. The characters are well integrated and ring true, expressing the petty annoyances as well as the larger issues of the illness. It is an effective presentation; the photographs, although initially startling and painful to view, are in their own way artistic and beautiful, and the play depicts the entire process with stylish economy.

The book demystifies a frightening and bewildering experience, allowing us to glimpse the experience, showing us that women can not only survive, but live, through it, sometimes triumphantly. If the saying is true that we are as sick as we are secret, this volume should affect healing for many, as speaking with a survivor after a diagnosis begins the process of recovery. Many women balk at monthly exams or mammograms; they are more afraid of breast cancer than of heart disease, although heart attacks kill many more women in a year. This volume illustrates that while the disease is nothing to look forward to, it is also not necessarily or always the ravaging illness that many of us fear. Proceeds from the book go to benefit women in Alaska with breast cancer, through the Alaska Run for Women.

—N. Parker-Gibson

TWO FROM MADWOMAN PRESS

Little, Nanci. *Thin Fire*. Northboro, MA: Madwoman Press, 1993. Paper, ISBN: 0-9630822-4-8. \$9.95.

— *The Grass Widow*. Northboro, MA: Madwoman Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN: 1-886231-01-X. \$12.95.

Two books from one author, both well-crafted yet both very different. From the contemporary military setting of the first novel to the century-earlier Old West of the second, Little strikes two chords, both of which ring true and make each novel a page turner.

Elen McNally-arrogant, intelligent, gorgeous, and destined to have bad timing in her decision to become a lesbian and in her choices of women. This is the premise of *Thin Fire*. Looking for a way out of rural Maine, Elen signs up for a three-year hitch in the Army and gets much more than she bargained for. After a rape and beating by Craig Hogle, Elen, who declares herself straight, finds herself turning more and more to the comfort of lesbian roommate Nikki Cole. Elen's reluctance to change her gender orientation, however, leads her into more misery than she believed possible until a growing relationship with Major Kare Dillinger-her-boss shows Elen the beauty and energy of same-gender sex. The path is still not easy, however, as Elen realizes when she ties to explain her lifestyle to her parents. Yet she continues her journey of self-discovery and education to the point where she becomes a thinker, a writer, a dreamer, and a woman-lover.

Little's crisp prose, careful characterization, and realistic dialog move the reader throughout the highs and lows of Elen's life so skillfully that fiction turns into actual people and places. And the provocative, sexy scenes in which Elen finds and consumates her love bring memories, new perceptions, or both.

Readers who enjoyed *Patience* and *Sarah* and are searching for a vivid Western romance have a real find in *The Grass Widow*. Imagine sweet, pregnant Aidan, sent from her Maine home after a rape because of her embarrassing condition and arriving in Washburn, Kansas, meeting a "whip-slim young cowboy...handsome in that smooth, fine-featured way of certain lean, long-legged, black-haired men." And imagine Aidan's discovery that the "cowboy" is actually her cousin Joss (short for Jocelyn), the only remaining family member after the influenza takes all the other relatives. From there the reader watches these two women create a home and family despite rejection from some neighbors and the hidden anger Joss struggles to fight. As the unborn baby grows, so does their love and understanding. The language provides a feeling of the 1800s the complement the description of the 1876 setting, but once again the characterization and dialog carry readers swiftly through the over changing landscape of the land and the women's love for each other. Little has researched her background as also evidenced by the short bibliography at the end of the book which includes works on historical recipes, homosexual references in the bible, Native American histories, poetry, and lesbian history.

A notation in the beginning of *The Grass Widow* is in the memory of Evelyn Randall Lamoreaux, May 24, 1905—June 20, 1995. I appreciate the woman who may have inspired this novel.

—N. Ward

WOMEN GROWING UP, GROWING OLD

WATCH YOUR WEIGHT, DEAR!

Berg, Frances M. *Afraid to eat: children and teens in weight crisis*. Hettinger, ND: Healthy Weight Publishing Network, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-918532-53-1, no price; paper, ISBN 0-918532-52-3, \$17.95.

Frances M. Berg, a licensed nutritionist and adjunct professor at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine, is also an author and editor of *Healthy Weight Journal*. Her tremendous concern for the health of the country in this country is reflected in this thoughtful book in which she examines the pressure on children in our society to be thin. The weight loss industry affects every part of our society starting with the National Task force on the Prevention and Treatment of Obesity, whose members set the policy on obesity treatment. "Of the nine members, eight are university-affiliated professors and researchers who have financial ties with from two to eight commercial weight loss firms each." It appears that not even former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop can resist the siren song of the diet sellers. Laura Fraser reports "...Koop accepted \$1 million each from Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers for his 'Shape Up America!' campaign..."

What is the impact of a political power structure "bent on shaping women into the ultimate consumers, perennially dissatisfied with their appearance"? An increase in eating disorders, an increasingly malnourished population of children and adolescents, and young people whose focus is not on changing the world but on fixing their bodies.

Girls have never had more opportunities to develop their minds, yet they grow up feeling as though their bodies are being constantly watched. They learn to feel disconnected from their bodies, as if observing themselves from the outside.

This is increasingly true of boys as well who are exhorted to lower their body fat from a norm of 14 to 16 percent to 5 or 7 percent.

Berg explores the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of the weight craziness in our society and gives helpful information towards prevention of obesity and acceptance of size differences. Her goals are realistic, though admittedly difficult to sell in a society in which image is touted as everything and substance of body or character dismissed.

—P. Crossland

LOOKING AFTER THE CHILDREN

Lindenmeyer, Kriste. *A right to childhood: the U. S. Children's Bureau and child welfare, 1912-47*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02275-0, \$49.95; paper, ISBN 0-252-06577-8, \$21.95.

Lindenmeyer leads us on an exciting adventure, exploring the premiere United States government agency for children's rights in *A Right to Childhood*. Following the history of the bureau from its conception within the Labor Department, she conveys the values, goals, and context that "whole child" proponents expressed, to focus social policy on child care and

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welfare. This is an especially helpful study if we believe today's children are tomorrow's adults and leaders.

The Children's Bureau encountered enormous difficulties, including helping and serving the flood of new immigrant mothers and children who in turn faced significant and complex obstacles, such as poverty and language barriers. According to Grace Abbott, one-time Bureau director, the law that created the Children's Bureau gave it:

a very broad grant of power. The whole child was made the subject of its research. The interrelated problems of child health, dependency, delinquency, and child labor were to be considered and interpreted in relation to the community program for all children.

By 1922, Abbott, in her second year as director, established three major goals: 1, legislation to protect children from exploitation in the labor market; 2, implementation of maternal and infant services; and 3, protection of children from the devastating influence of the economic depression which the country was experiencing at the time."

Lindenmeyer also outlines how the Bureau battled its opponents, for to the Bureau's critics, it was socialism at its worst. The book includes public programs and their leaders and community's participation and responses to these innovative programs. Its arrangement focuses on themes and then covers the details of events, failures, and achievements.

Right to childhood is readable and absorbing; it is also especially timely in covering children's rights, programs, and services as the federal government and Congress grapple with radical reforms to social welfare programs. It makes a valuable contribution to historical perspectives on public social services for children in the United States.

—S. W. Weimer

SLOW BUT SWEET

Gilmore, Rachna. *A friend like Zilla*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-929005-71-6, \$5.95.

Dealing with developmentally disabled people is sometimes hard for others without those characteristics. Gilmore presents a sensitive look at a friendship between Nobby (short for Zenobia), a young girl, and Zilla, a teenage girl who is sometimes slow to understand. In this depiction, the child Nobby is the one who is accepting of Zilla and the adult, in this case Nobby's uncle, who rejects the girl because of her slowness.

The characterizations are somewhat flat, either kind and accepting or harsh and rigid. Yet the insights into getting along with others—for example, Nobby's mother's explanation of why the uncle behaves the way he does—allow for a greater understanding of people. A first chapter book, this novel for children ages 8 to 12 is a choice of the Canadian Children's Book Center.

—N. Ward

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

RITUAL OF SACRIFICE

Manresa, Kim. *The day Kadi lost part of her life*. Melbourne: Spinifex, 1998. Text by Isabel Ramos Rioja. Paper, ISBN 1-875559-74-4, \$14.95.

This black-and-white photo essay depicts in painful clarity the experience of a little girl in Africa as she undergoes ritual female genital mutilation (FGM). "It's always been done. You have to do it," says her father, as all of her clitoris and labia minora are removed with repeated cuts of a dull razor blade. *The day* is believed to be the first photographic documentation of the procedure.

Though both Islamic and Christian religions are beginning to influence people of some African countries, FGM continues to be routinely practiced in many regions, particularly Central and East Africa; Kadi's community is probably in this area but it is unnamed. A woman who is not mutilated may not be allowed to marry where FGM is practiced, nor a man to marry an intact woman. In a prologue, Dr. Olayinka Koso-Thomas indicates that the issue is off-limits as far as politicians there are concerned; advocating change may cost them votes. It sounds rather like the abortion issue in the U. S.

The day is mainly photographs beginning with a short essay and prologue and a page describing variations of the procedure. The pictures, arranged in chronological order, portray a girl as she changes from a laughing, cocky four-year-old into a sad and hurt small person with too great a burden of pain. If you didn't hate FGM before, or if you didn't know much about it, this book will change that. If everyone saw this book, the world would be so outraged we'd all be bound to go and snatch those innocent girls away from their villages. We can't do that, so buying this book and sharing its terrible knowledge is the first small step we can take towards eliminating this kind of mutilation: part of the proceeds from the book's sales will go to the British group FORWARD (forward@dircon.co.uk), which is dedicated to eradicating the practice through improving women's health care and conditions.

Koso-Thomas concludes that, with improved education and communications, "The African girl-child may be free from mutilation...sometime in the 21st century." Should anyone have to wait so long? —M. Tainton

FROM INDIA TO ENGLAND

Syal, Meera. *Anita and Me*. New York: New Press, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 1-56584-372-x, \$23.00, paper, ISBN 1-56584-529-3, \$13.95.

Meena Kumar is not really a liar. Her parents immigrated to England from India and adopted other Indian immigrants as family, to the mystification of their neighbors, most of whom assumed they really are related by blood rather than choice. Meena's gift for embroidering everyday events is not meant to be malicious, just a way to spice up the too often bland slice of a school girl's life. "I'm really not a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong." And the group Meena wants most to belong to is Anita's clique of rough-around-the-edges British school girls. Her memories of India are those bequeathed her through her adopted Uncles and Aunties, as well as the stories her parents

keep in the photograph album. The Aunties were the eyes of the neighborhood, nothing passed their hawkish gazes:

Individually, the Aunties were a powerful force, my mother was an Auntie to several kids in her own right too, but together they were a formidable mafia whose collective approval was a blessing, and whose communal contempt was a curse wrapped up in sweet sari-shaped packages.

Rather than the sweet Indian girls, courtesy cousins provided by numerous Aunties, Meena seeks out Anita because

Anita never looked at me the way my adopted female cousins did; ...there was only the recognition of a kindred spirit, another mad bad girl trapped inside a superficially obedient body.

Both Meena and her parents struggle to fight their own battles with racism and the delicate balance between assimilation and identity with their abandoned homeland. This beautifully written novel captures the coming of age of each.

—P. Crossland

DIFFERENT BUT STILL FAMILY

Tax, Meredith. *Families*. Illustrated by Marilyn Hafner. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1996. Paper, ISBN \$7.95.

The narrator of this children's story, Angie, tells the reader about a variety of contemporary, multicultural, multiethnic families. In a warm and humorous way, she discusses such realities as adoption, divorce, stepfamilies, single parenting, and gay/lesbian parenting. The book's message is as Angie tells us, "Families are who you live with and who you love." Full-color drawings illustrate the text. Originally published by Little, Brown in 1981. Highly recommended for most juvenile collections. —B. Redfern

ADOLESCENCE AND BEYOND

Tetu, Randeane. *Flying Horses, Secret Souls*. Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-57601-020-1, \$10.95.

In these 18 stories, both sensuous and real, Randeane Tetu explores the experience of a quirky crowd of country people. Through them, she looks at the difficult times of adolescence, an emotionally intense period of discovery, and similarly the difficult times of old age with its own discoveries. Tetu's words see into the depths that lie under pregnant silences, the tautness of moments.

In the longest of these, the title story, a girl goes visiting with her grandmother:

We visited Grandma's friends, taking them bunches of flowers or vegetables. And I learned from older people the comfort of breaking long-strung, circling memories into pieces that can be borne. Learned that knitting breaks the same round of thought into rows and stitches, walking into miles and footsteps. I was willing to learn from them for they had had grief and memories that circled to the beginning and then replayed.

These well-written, tender stories reveal lives off the beaten path, somewhere in rural America. Mostly from the point of view of young girls, in lines both simple and poetic, Tetu looks into the souls of her characters and reveals us to ourselves.

—M. Tainton

Women in Libraries

ONE OF THE CROWD

Kirsh, Sharon. *Fitting in*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-929005-74-0, \$6.95.

Growing up in the '60s, Mollie has the same problems as her junior high school friends—problems in cooking class, body shapes, etc. But one day her friend Phyllis starts worrying about “looking Jewish,” and Mollie begins to worry about rejection by her non-Jewish friends. Then her teacher decides to make Mollie stay after school every day until she learns to write with her right hand, making Mollie miss her Hebrew class.

All these problems seem insignificant, however, when Mollie discovers that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. She cannot understand why Jews were chosen for elimination and wonders if this can happen again.

In this pivotal year, Mollie learns about some of the worst parts of life and manages to cope with her fears, learning to make up with friends who have been alienated. Most of all, she learns that “fitting in” is not the most important thing that she can do in her life, that sometimes she must think for herself.

The author, a psychologist who grew up in a community with a very small Jewish population, has written a gentle yet thought-provoking novel about coming of age. Although set three decades ago, the situations and characterizations can be current, dialog is believable, and the book is worthwhile for young people ages 8 to 12. —N. Ward

THE COLOR OF FLOWERS

Wilson, Barbara. *If You Had a Family*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1996. ISBN 1-878067-83-4, \$23.95.

Color came first, before things, before words, and more than any other color: yellow. Yellow was pale and bright, butter and fire.

Cory is a little girl with a loving, happy family. Her mother loves life and exuberant flowers, her little brother adores her, and her father is the image of security. When her maternal grandmother comes to visit, the vibrant shades begin to be sucked from Cory's existence. Devastating events gradually paint her life a dull brown, and shades of grey. As she grows older we find her rediscovering the shades of her life and coming to terms with the childhood she lost and the new palette she learns to use.

Wilson deals with a series of sensitive issues in this work, without becoming sentimental or strident. Loss, abuse, lesbianism, anger, and loneliness are all dealt with matter-of-factly, but with compassion. Family relationships, or their lack, intertwine with the way the main character represents her world in colors, paint, and clay. The result is a tightly woven mat of words, with distinct, interlocking designs. The chapters seem to have been written for separate publication, but that is not usually a distraction. —K. Thompson

FOLLOWING THEIR OWN PATHS

Wallis, Velma. *Bird Girl and the Man Who Followed the Sun: an Indian legend from Alaska*. Epicenter Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 0-945397-34-8, \$19.95.

Combining two traditional Athabascan legends, Wallis has recreated the stories from Native American folklore, of two rebellious youths who choose to defy tradition. Wallis is the author of *Two Old Women*, 1993, which was a more acceptable story, because of the triumph of the old women abandoned by their people, as was the custom, and the final outcome: they survive and cause the tribe to change the harsh and cruel practice centuries old. By modern standards, the treatment of Bird Girl and Daagoo is equally cruel, because they choose not to follow traditional ways, and suffer the consequences for living outside their prescribed roles in old Athabascan culture.

Bird Girl follows her own path, defying the ancient way of becoming a wife and mother until forced into it, choosing instead to hunt and follow the men on expeditions to find caribou, the staple of the people's diet. Rejected by both men and women, she sets out to prove that she can survive on her own, only to be forced into slavery, then taken as a wife by the Eskimos. Ancient enemies of the Athabascan, the Eskimos are depicted as cruel and barbaric, with no social system and little humanity. Wallis explains this was the traditional attitude in her tribe, though she depicts women who are kind to Bird Girl and make the captive's life bearable. Bird Girl, at the end, wishes for a return to her family, but, as most cautionary tales go, it is not to be, and she is trapped in a life of unhappiness and misery.

Daagoo, the young boy in the parallel story, is equally defiant, preferring to explore and wander the countryside than to hunt and help his band survive. His path through life forces him into isolation and alienation, even though he travels far and learns many things from the other tribes he encounters. An outcast in his own family, he struggles to make a new life, eventually returning to the people he had left so long before, a wiser man, willing to accept his prescribed role. The parallel stories intertwine as the protagonists follow paths separate but linked.

Modern men and women may find the story old-fashioned, but as Wallis explains in the afterword, she chose not to alter the outcome to make it more politically correct, but kept the ancient story as intact as possible for authenticity. Taken from her own heritage, *Bird Girl* comes across less than a folktale and more as a novel, but the characters are shown in a sympathetic light throughout, which was probably not so in the original tales told to children to keep them from deviating from the traditions of their ancestors. The value of the oral tradition in understanding native peoples is immeasurable, and it is important to preserve these old tales. —L. Meyers

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