BOOK REVIEWS

Discrimination: Its Economic Impact on Blacks, Women and Jews by Robert Cherry. Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1989, 235 pp. *$19.95.*

Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale by Maria Mies. London: Zed Books, 1987. 25 pp. *$12.50.*

Locating texts suitable for a course on the "Economics of Race and Gender" is not an easy task. One looks for accessible works that successfully wed theory with empirical evidence, but are not too technical nor too arcane in their language. This work satisfies these requirements.

Robert Cherry's volume on the impact of discrimination on Blacks, Jews and women is particularly well organized for classroom use. Opening with a brief history of economics and socio-economic changes in the western world, he proceeds to lay out the theoretical underpinnings of competing perspectives - conservative, liberal and radical - and their analysis of gender and racial discrimination. After carefully detailing each theory and the arguments raised by opposing critics, the author demonstrates the analysis each theory employs on pressing contemporary issues such as Black youth unemployment, welfare reform, affirmative action programs, comparable worth, Black-white income gaps and Black-Jewish relations. He attempts throughout the book to avoid imposing a personal assessment, a difficult objective to achieve, but one which he largely attains.

Conservatives, as Cherry explains, rely on market forces to provide the solution for inequalities in the labor market. Since the laissez-faire market economy is held to reach an equilibrium, no government intervention is deemed necessary. In this view unequal earnings are not caused by labor market discrimination but are the result of personal inadequacies of women and minorities. In detailing the liberal viewpoint on discrimination the author first identifies the two major traditions in liberalism: one which emphasizes external pressures and supports a broad range of government interventions; and one which emphasizes individual human inadequacies and prescribes limited government involvement in the economy. Though liberals accept the notion of discrimination, the second group tends to agree with the conservatives and points to social and personal "failings" of minorities as a cause of their economic plight. Thirdly, he defines the "radical" approach as one in which discrimination is seen as a means to secure greater profit. In this view, firms in the primary market profit from discrimination and reject government anti-discrimination policies because they benefit from the promotion of racist ideas and dividing workers along racial, sexual and ethnic lines.

Cherry's book provides a survey of a number of empirical studies on racial and sexual inequality in the labor market; these studies address the relationship between education, income and employment opportunities for Blacks, whites, males and females. Michael Reich's study, for example, implies a positive correlation between the level of discrimination and the degree of income inequality among different racial groups. His data also demonstrates that there was no decrease in labor market discrimination in the 1970's. That study is contrasted with a conservative assessment that Black unemployment and especially Black youth unemployment is caused by dysfunctional social behavior or reflects voluntary choice rather than a lack of jobs. Policy recommendations flowing from the theoretical frameworks are also contrasted. Thus, conservative policies include cutbacks in anti-discrimination legislation, welfare eligibility and minimum wage coverage, proposals based on the argument that such programs discourage workers. Whereas conservatives minimize the significance of increased unemployment and racism, liberals stress the structural factors responsible for unemployment, and the radicals emphasize the need of capitalism to maintain a reserve army of labor as a source of the problem.

A similar theoretical framework is employed to explain the sexual division of labor and earning inequalities between men and women. In discussing the impact of discrimina-

tion on women, the author covers quite succinctly the various feminist views, their theoretical underpinnings and the implications of each view for the changing socio-economic conditions of women as well as conservative and current topics such as the feminization of poverty and left-feminist critiques of capitalism and the nuclear family are also detailed.

This volume is both an excellent reference book for general readers and a lucid text for undergraduate students. Its comparative structure enables students to see the implications of various theories through applied research. Timely questions are raised which force the reader to evaluate each viewpoint and examine their own. The clear language and nontechnical approach of the text make it accessible to noneconomists and students with little or no background in economics. Its one weakness is its emphasis on Blacks and Jews ignoring the specifics of discrimination against other minorities such as Hispanics and Asians which also deserve to be covered. The treatment of economic theories may not be rigorous enough for graduate students or undergraduates with a strong background in economics, but as an introductory text for an interdisciplinary course in women's studies or Black studies this is a well-balanced, useful work.

Cherry's book does not provide a detailed analysis of the sexual division of labor or of women's liberation. His analysis of racial and sexual discrimination, also does not take into account the implications of the international division of labor. Maria Mies' book, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on A World Scale*,however, addresses aspects of these issues. She is particularly concerned with the divisions between women in overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries; divisions which are, in her view, caused and exacerbated by the requirements of the global patriarchy and the structure of the international division of labor. While the integration of Thirld World countries into the global economy and the feminist movement throughout the world have generated certain material bases for international solidarity among women, the reproduction of the patriarchal system on a world scale accompanied by development of the current division of labor between advanced industrial countries and the less developed countries, has also generated divisions and conflicts of interests between women in these two groups of countries. She argues that western women as well as women belonging to the middle-class in the Third World are among those whose higher standard of living is based on the exploitation of the cheap labor of poor women and men in the underdeveloped regions of the world. The sexual division of labor, on the other hand, helps to maintain the contemporary new international division of labor due to the role of women as the cheapest producers and consumers in the world market system.

In tracing the origins of the contemporary sexual division of labor, she criticizes those notions based on biological or economic determinism and attempts to provide a different account for the early formation of the sexual division of labor based on control of political power in the community. She then proceeds to explain the relationship between colonization and housewifization. Women, in this process, become a commodity in an unequal marriage market and lose their autonomy over their bodies and lives. This process was particularly exacerbated by the systems of slavery associated with colonization. She refers, for example, to slave women in the Caribbean who were not allowed to marry or to bear children because it was cheaper to import new slaves. Thus, they had no control over their bodies or lives. In another chapter, she provides an analysis for the role of violence against women and explains why patriarchal violence continues to be reproduced in the process of economic development and industrialization.

The socialist bloc is also included in Mies' critical analysis. She argues that women in countries such as China, Vietnam and the U.S.S.R. have been mobilized for anti-colonial and revolutionary movements but after victory are considered to be secondary again. However, the accumulation process in these countries is based on a dual economy with a subsidiary or informal sector consisting of household production in which the bulk of the labor power is female.

This book is an important contribution to the literature in this field. Maria Mies pays particular attention to the interrelations between the contemporary international division of labor and the sexual division of labor, an important factor to be taken into account in developing a theoretical framework for the analysis of the role and position of women in the economic and social structures of every society. Most litera-

ture in this field, including Cherry's book, do not incorporate this aspect to their analysis. Marie Mies does not, however, take into consideration the role of racial segmentation and its implications for the global patriarchal system. Racial and ethnic segmentation of the labor market can serve a role similar to that of the international division of labor between advanced industrial countries and the less developed countries, in creating divisions in the women's movement world wide.

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The Invisible Enemy: Alcoholism and the Modern Short Story. Edited by Miriam Dow and Jennifer Regan. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1989. 256 pp. *$9.50.*

What immediately strikes a reader of these stories is their overall excellence as highly crafted works of literature. One might expect that stories chosen around the subject matter of alcoholism would inevitably include some didactic, overly moralistic sob stories about drunken husbands and long-suffering wives. No story in this collection adheres to that formula. The wives and children and husbands suffer but without self-pity; and their suffering seesaws between anger and desperation, self-recrimination and guilt over their inability to understand why alcoholics behave the way they do.

The editors know the territory since they are both admittedly involved in 12-step programs but have mercifully avoided any and all of the cloying quasi-religious sensibility that has accumulated around certain approaches to the treatment of alcoholism. They obviously not only attend their meetings but also have spent a great deal of time scouring libraries for the most compelling stories on this important theme.

The editors have divided the collection into five broad,comprehensive categories and placed three stories under each: The Family and Alcoholism, Children, Progression, Delusions, and Trying to Stop. Seven of the writers are women and four of these writers write about female alcoholics. Of the remaining eight male writers, three write about female alcoholics, so that almost half concern women. Their arrangement of these principal topics charts quite accurately the progressive descent of the alcoholic into the hell of his/her own life, and how victims follow, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly, in its disastrous wake. In general, the male writers seem less subjective than the women, less personal. What vivifies the women writers is their anger and bitterness not only as victims or survivors of relationships with alcoholics, but as active alcoholics themselves. The most compelling story in this excellent collection is Joyce Carol Oates' absolutely riveting "Blue Skies," in which a teenage girl becomes increasingly embittered towards everything as she helplessly watches her once beautiful, fun-loving mother, "Mum," die of cirrhosis of the liver. She dines in the Greyhound Terminal restaurant and hides out in the local library, constantly formulating and reformulating statements that might make some kind of sense out of her mother's death wish. The few times she criticizes "Mum," she is so viciously bludgeoned by her response, she stops criticizing.

Louise Erdrich's "Crown of Thorns" is certainly the most horrifying story because she involves the reader in the alcoholic surrealism of Gordie, a native American, who is moving into the D.T.'s and thinks he's killed his wife. Susan Minot probably better than any author in the collection pinpoints with savage accuracy the exact moment that the alcoholic retakes control of the family with the whip-crack of the opening of a beer can after he has promised to stop drinking. Alice Adams' "Beautiful Girl" documents the sad dynamics of the aging process of a once lovely women who has been ravaged by alcohol but who still maintains complete control even in a drunken stupor. Indeed, all of these stories compromise a variation on the double fugue of denial-control and how the lives of the active alcoholics, their families, and friends are involved in the counterpoint, consciously or unconsciously.

Both Julie Hayden's "Day-Old Baby Rats" and Tillie Olsen' "Hey Sailor, What Ship?" explore the interior monologues of a woman and a man in the late stage of their drinking where life has become a continuous round of torture chambers, both inside and outside, and the

sufferers can no longer delineate one from the other. It's as though they are both experiencing a nightmare in a waking state, which is the most appropriate objective correlative I know for the life of the alcoholic.

Both William Goyen's "Where's Esther?" and Raymond Carver's "Where I'm Calling From" supply some much needed humor in this collection of some of the saddest stories ever written. The last two stories by Robert Stone and Hortense Calisher are beautifully wrought and sophisticated stories about the heartbreaking inability of the professional helper to help himself (in the Stone story), and (in the Calisher story) a sensitive young man who is taking his sweet mother to her favorite drying out place in Greenwich, Connecticut. In Calisher's "story," the reader gets a glimpse into the lives of wealthy and privileged New Yorkers and the possibility that everyone in the story has been seriously wounded by alcoholism, whether they know it or not.

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You Can Be Free by Ginny NiCarthy and Sue Davidson. Seattle: The Seal Press, 1989. 113 pages. *$6.95.*

This volume, subtitled "An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women," is exactly what it says it is -- a step-by-step manual of assessment and options for battered women. As a short, succinct guide it fills a need that has gone unmet -- for individuals in crisis, in my experience, need help in advocating for themselves, rather than analytical studies of social problems. They appreciate concrete descriptions and recommendations and are not in the best position to absorb theories and statistics at a time of crisis. This guide meets that need by describing the various conditions of abuse and the possible actions the abused may take.

Based on Ginny NiCarthy's larger work, Getting Free, the handbook begins with five brief chapters that answer five basic questions: What is abuse? What is emotional abuse? Why does abuse go on? is it ever right to break up the family? And what do you owe yourself? Since many abused women never require hospitalization, think abuse is only physical, not sexual and emotional, and focus their concern on their children, these questions are key. The answers provide the woman reader with the opportunity to identify herself, look at her situation and think about herself first, as well as to see those steps as a way to help the children. Emotional and sexual abuse are also demonstrated to be as damaging as physical abuse.

The following several chapters deal with the question of staying or leaving the abuser and of obtaining assistance from the police, prosecutors, lawyers, and counseiors. The most important aspect of this section, indeed of the whole book, is that the authors do not blame women for being in abusive relationships or for not leaving them. Working in the domestic violence movement for ten years I have found it a rare occasion when a woman was not blamed (often subtly) for violence or for staying with the abuser. Too often professionals cut services when a woman chooses to remain with a batterer. This book goes one step further (in chapter seven), in helping a woman to strategize about her survival when she does choose to stay, and by encouraging her to develop an emergency escape plan for the future, or for the next incident of violence (pp. 40-41).

For a woman contemplating leaving an abusive relationship there are separate chapters which detail what she may do with, and expect from, the police and the judicial system, as well as how she may evaluate an attorney or a therapist whose services she may want to engage. The authors describe all the possible snafus, what may happen in court (or therapy) with or without an "order of protection" against the abuser, and what actions may be substituted. Too often therapists and social workers speak from an academic point of view, lacking concrete knowledge of how our system actually operates - that the laws are there but they are slow to be applied or are even ignored. NiCarthy and Davidson, on the other hand, anticipate the possible road blocks, and avoid setting up a woman for failure. They provide step-by-step examples of what may happen and what may be substituted when a move fails.

In addition to laying out "how to proceed," either within an abusive relationship or after leaving one, the authors address, in separate chapters, the situation of abused teens and

abused lesbians. They reiterate basic points about abuse, e.g., that abusers are responsible for their actions, that drugs and aicohol are agents not causes of abuse, that abuse involves patterns of control and that homophobia is a factor both preventing lesbians from obtaining help and from realizing it when it is sought. In these chapters, as well as the others, one realizes how thoroughly the authors understand the many faces of domestic violence and that they are drawing on solid experiences. They implicitly understand that abused women do have self-esteem and coping skills. The handbook is thus a tool to enable the abused to realized that too.

Since self-advocacy is emphasized, this is an excellent book for women who choose not to use the services of domestic violence agencies or who do not encounter thorough workers. It is also an educational tool for discussion groups. In stressing an end to isolation - the common plight of abused women whose partners so often demand they give up other relationships - it is very forthright. Separate chapters deal with "reaching out" and "steps to finding friends."

Based on a self-help model with clear echoes of twelve-step programs (e.g., AA, NA, Al-Anon), this slender volume implictly supports change at one's own pace, and control over one's own life while asserting that people are accountable for their own actions (e.g., violence) and that one cannot change another's behavior. Indeed, it may be, as one woman in our battered women's support group recently called it, "a Bible" for the battered.

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Scott, Kesho, Cherry Muhanji, and Egyirba High. **TIGHT SPACES**. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987. 182 pp. *$8.95*

When readers search for the ideal mother in literature, they unearth William Faulkner's Dilsey--Dilsey the nurturer, the protector, and the invincible. When readers search for the ideal man in literature, they turn to Zora Neale Hurston's Teacake -- Teacake the love, the friend, the playmate. There are no such characters in the collection TIGHT SPACES. The creative autobiographical sketches, primarily set in Detroit, are not about the ideal, rather they address the real life struggles of black women to the end of producing portraits of their confinement in America.

Divided into three parts, the 36 pieces form a representative sampling of the situations and conditions that confine black women in America into nonobtrusive spaces. In Part I, "Talkin" Real Honest," the authors present pieces that depict their growing up and apart from their families and men. The piece "Take a Look Over My Shoulder and Be Happy" by Kesho Scott, concerns itself with a little girl who receives a new dress for her 7th birthday and frets over the trouble it will cause between her "dumb" mother -- the "realist" and "unrealist" -- and her daddy who had "problems everywhere." With what Maya Angelou described as the "unbalanced passion of the young," Evie found her mother lacking in spirit,

> *But Mama and I were defenseless, and Daddy was gonna crucify us. We would make him mad with that dress! I ran to hug Mama as she started to set up the ironing board and watch a Count Dracula Movie with John and me. She knew that with that hug I was getting into grown folks business. It was between her and Daddy. She pushed me away saying, "Go get a snack. Dinner will be late." She was so unrealistic! I hated her. How could she talk of dinner? Snacks? Daddy was coming in ten minutes. I couldn't eat cookies!* (9).

Yet the reader discerns that Evie's is an innocent eye narration. Her mother is every bit as shrewd as Evie finds her dumb. Upon the father's entry, the mother "glanced up only a moment, but long enough to take his (the father's) eyes to my dress and back to her ironing" (9). In so doing, the mother quietly directs the father to reconsider his response.

In Part II, "Listen to Me Good, Now," the authors present three pieces which address how they survive the tight spaces of their existence. In "Hush," Kesho Scott suggests that the reader hush or listen for the nurturing sounds of others. In "The Last Dance," Egyirba High presents a dream of flight into one's whole self, and in "Loon," Cherry Muhanji acknowledges the lunatic/nonconventional side of the self as a viable and necessary extension of self.

In Part III, "You Must Be Lyin," the authors

present amazing stories of amazing characters they have known. In the selection, "Talk to the Storm," Kesho Scott reveals that God is a black woman. God reveals herself to the white protagonist, Magen, who, in spite of her extreme need of a god, recoils.

> *Magen saw a black woman with grotesque features: a huge kinky afro; a double, buckshot barrel nose; protruding dark eyes; and a horse-thick neck. She flinched. Fell to her knees.*
>
> *"Scared you, didn't I? Ain't exactly what you have been thinking you God is"* (113).

While the life experiences for each individual author are different, they acknowledge that they are fighting the same war: the survival of the black woman in America. The selections, then, serve as testimony to the concerns of many contemporary black female authors, including Alice Walker and Ntozake Shange (the potential for godhead is within each individual), Gloria Naylor (women loving women), J. California Cooper (the magic strength of need), Toni Morrison (the dissolution of the stereotypical black mother), and Toni Cade Bambara (the magic of education).

Connected by the common threads of friendship and kinship, the stories are as varied and vital as the individual authors' lives. The idea of space -- limited space -- is also a connection for the stories. Collectively, the stories seem to suggest that the lives of black women are both aided and retarded by their mothers and their men. It is principally from the relationships with these two that the tight spaces are created in the lives of the characters. In "Jumpin' to Success," the story of a young pregnant girl who jumps out of a window to avoid her life with her boy-husband who provides no answers, Cherry Muhanji writes of the influences (both mother and man) on the giri. Of the girl's mother, Muhanji writes,

> *Her windows fallin' dark, Momma looked out on a world from eyes that were bein' snuffed out. Without touch and feelin' from Momma, my own life went dark. I felt lost, left and alone, searchin' for a seat on the bus, with Momma the only other passenger on it* (83).

And of the girl's husband she writes,

> *No passion pleased him more or since, than that early passion he had bought with a marriage license that read: Prize heifer -- me, Owner -- him. I loved those hot nights in bed, in love, in passion, until I sensed someone was in danger of dying -- me* (82).

This story, as do others in the collection, suggests that the most vital areas of the black woman's life -- early growth and maturity -- are framed and often thwarted by characters who are themselves too overwhelmed with America's reaction to aid adequately in her development.

Yet the collection is also entertaining. It presents more than confirmation of what a feminist reader might suspect about the psyches of men and the crippling effects of mothers. The pieces are themselves, energetic, witty, fresh, and singularly well written. In "Take It Out," the story of a young woman's struggle with her African lover to keep her baby, Egyirba High writes,

> *John abruptly screeched on the brakes. "Do you think you are the first woman who'sever been pregnant for me?"*
>
> *My insides recoiled, and I was jerked savagely back in time, remembering how life was one long season of winter....*(21).

Similarly, in "The Scales of Superman," Kesho Scott's account of how her friend attempted to live up to her mother's standards, the reader is compelled to reflect upon the observation,

> *All black mothers fashion a love-hate scale for the lives of their daughters. This scale later weighs our lives in grams, ounces, and pounds. The evolving nigger -- colored, Black, Afro-American, African, bronze beauty -- carries a hundred extra pounds of history on her shoulders as she sinks in the land of opportunity* (24).

Although this writing is obscure at times-- "The liquid life of American Black women is taking no form, like mercury in a broken thermometer splattered all over the bathroom floor" (28), the reader might at such times look to the

music of the language, the cadences, to discover the most poignant evocation of the black woman's life. After all, because of her precarious position in America, much of her life remains for many an incomprehensible song.

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The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos
Magda Bogin, translator St. Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1988. 105 pp. *$9.50.*

Since her untimely death in 1974, Rosario Castellanos has become the representative of Mexican women and writers who seek a world of equality in sex, politics and economics. Through her extensive published work (four books of essays, three collections of stories, three plays, two novels, eleven collections of poetry and various publications in newspapers and magazines) Castellanos wrote about women's oppression, the stifling conditions of wives and mothers, the powerlessness of women of any social class, and about the necessity of subverting and destroying these confining molds.

Yet during Castellanos' lifetime, the intellectual Mexican community--with a few exceptions--regarded her as a minor writer, within the tradition of the indigenista literature, a poet of sentimental verses, and someone who made wayward comments on cultural aspects. Of course, other women writers, such as Elena Poniatowska, never agreed with the male mainstream. Poniatowska was one of the first to single Castellanos out as a voice to be listened to, and to act on her words. Besides the interviews and articles that Poniatowska wrote on Castellanos, her introduction to *Meditacion en el umbral: antologia poetica* (1985) is one of the most revealing portraits of Castellanos from a great admirer and a woman who shared many of her ideas.

In her lifetime, Castellanos was better known as a novelist, truly of only one novel, *Balun Canan*, published in 1957, translated into English in 1958, and distributed in the United States in 1959. Soon after, other translations followed, and in 1970 it was made into a film. By the time she died at age 49, the novel was in its fifth printing. She began her literary career writing poetry (1948) and continued to do so until, in 1972, she selected what she considered her best poems from previous publications, and collected them under the parodic title, *Poesia no eres tu* (the other side of Gustavo Adolfo Becquer's poem "Poesia eres tu"). She also included in this last collection four new poems and her own translations of Emily Dickinson, St.-John Perse and Paul Claudel. It is precisely from Castellanos' last publication that Magda Bogin selected the poems to be translated and included in The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos.

The book, published by Graywolf Press of Minnesota, is part of a series of translations from Latin America aptly entitled *Palabra sur* under the direction of Cecilia Vicuna. Three prestigious translators are part of its advisory board: Gregory Rabassa (translator of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Julio Cortazar, Jose Lezama Lima, Mario Vargas Llosa, Luis Rafael Sanchez), Suzanne Jill Levine (Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Severo Sarduy), Magda Bogin (Isabel Allende). *The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos* has an introduction by Vicuna with the very poetic title, "A Heart Crowned with Thorns," in which she approaches Castellanos' life and work superficially. The best part of this very brief introduction is the quotations from Elena Poniatowska and Jose Emilio Pacheco. The choice of verses from Castellanos' work has very little meaning in the context presented. Vicuna's introduction is followed by a two-page "Translator's Foreword" where Bogin, in a concise and precise style, explains her choice of poems and her translation method. She has attempted to grasp the feeling, the spirit of the poetry, and has chosen to use English words from the Romance languages rather than the more precise Germanic root. Bogin is not only a creative writer with a published novel, but also a critical writer with a book on women troubadours. As a translator she brought into the English language the magic of Isabel Allende's language and world in *House of the Spirits.* The result of Bogin's selection of Castellanos' poems is a collection of vibrating poems that seem to have been written just a moment ago. The words are extremely eloquent of deep desire, hidden fears, and a celebration of life and death.

The poems included in this selection

comprise Castellanos' major themes or obsessions: loneliness/solitude, death as an extension of life, and love not as fulfillment but as emptiness, void, loss. Nature is everywhere: the sea, the birds, the flowers, the rain and the place inhabited by the speaker:

> *For you to dwell in I want to prepare a world lit by zephyrs, laurels, phosphores cent algae, unending shores, grottos of fine moss and skies of doves.* (63)

It is not a tame and indifferent nature, but one that manifests the speaker's energy:

> *Perhaps I ran to meet you like a cloud heavy with lightning.* (67)

In a poem like "Wailing Wall," Castellanos sustains the sea metaphor in all its brilliance and extended variations: the salty water, the beach, the waves, the piers, the seashells. By making the sea a representation of the speaker, she not only personifies nature, but makes the listener taste, hear and feel the shattering waves:

> *Thirsty as the sea and like the sea drowned with salt water and deep I come from the abyss to my own lips, which are a clumsy attempt at beach, like exhausted sand weeping for the waves' retreat.* (83)

Her sensory imagery is full of sensuality and intimacy:

> *I taste you first in the grapes that slowly yield to my tongue, conveying their select, intimate sugars.* (59)

> *and I breathed the air hoping to find you and drank from fountains as if to drink you in.* (61)

Loneliness seems to walk hand in hand with love which is never fulfilled. It is not even a fleeting moment, but simply a recognition that love can never be. Love is never sharing but taking from the other:

> *Look around: there is someone else, alwayssomeone else. What he breathes is your suffocation, what he eats is your hunger. Dying, he takes with him the purest half of your own death.*

The emptiness that is left behind once the illusion is shattered is expressed by Castellanos in these verses:

> *Everything remains behind: I learned that nothing was mine: not the wheat, the star, his voice, his body; not even my own.* (5)

In this poet's verses, death is not a fearful sensation nor a threat to end happiness, since that state of bliss was never reached. Death is simply a place to rest, a way to at last get rid of loneliness. Castellanos uses comparisons with life to express the moment of death.

> *If I died tonight it would be no more than opening my hand, as children open their hands to show their mothers how clean they are, clean because they are so empty.11 I take nothing with me. All I had was a hollow that was never filled. (3)*

Some poems like "The Spinster's Day" are so loaded with images of emptiness that the reader feels defeated from the very beginning: alone, ash, howl, rock, fire-eaten trunk, deathbed, opaque, spent. On the other hand, Castellanos' voice is suddenly triumphant when she attempts to find another way for women to be free and human. The allusions are everywhere: literary (Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary), real life writers (Sor Juana Ines, Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson), classical and biblical (Sappho, Mesalina, Mary Magdalene).

The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos is an excellent collection of Castellanos' poetry for English and Spanish-speaking audiences. This bilingual publication not only presents the writer's finest poetry, but allows the author's voice to be heard by a wider audience, one that I am sure will be immensely interested in reading more of this Mexican writer.

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The Graywolf Annual Five: Multi-Cultural Literacy: **Opening the American Mind**, ed. Rick Simonson and Scott Walker. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1988. 204 pp. *$8.50.*

In 1982, Florence Howe argued in her article, "Feminist Scholarship: the extent of the revolution," that we have made substantial progress in the scholarship on women over the last two decades, but have failed to accomplish the transformation of our curriculum that should have resulted from this new body of knowledge.

With few exceptions, the curriculum served up in our nation's schools, K-Ph.d., still assumes that all the humans are men, and all the men are white. In fact, recent educational critics William Bennett, Alan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch, Jr. plead for a return to what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes as a time "when men were men and men were white, when scholar-critics were white men and when women and people of color were voiceless, faceless servants and laborers, pouring tea and filling brandy snifters in the boardrooms of old boys' clubs" (*N.Y. Times Book Review* 2/26/89). These critics decry what they see as a collapse of educational standards and blame all deficiencies, real and imagined, on women's studies, ethnic studies and affirmative action. Those of us who have begged for support for such programs and fought against the increasing marginalization of the new scholarship can hardly believe our eyes when we read such nonsense. But such is the nature of the backlash.

Fortunately, Graywolf Press has made a rich contribution to the counter attack with The *Graywolf Annual Five, Multi-Cultural Literacy: Opening the American Mind*, a collection of twelve essays about identity, denial, oppression, racism, sexism, fragmentation and marginalization--all crucial concepts for a nation that prefers myth-making to history and nostalgia to memory.

In their introduction Rick Simonson and Scott Walker, the editors, assure us they agree with Bloom *(The Closing of the American Mind)* and Hirsch *(Cultural Literacy)* that "our current educational system is desperately wanting of both vision and financing." Yet, they charge, the vision promoted by Hirsch/Bloom assumes an "outdated" world view. "Both writers seem to think that most of what constitutes contemporary America and world culture was immaculately conceived by a few men in Greece around 900 B.C., came to its full expression in Europe a few centuries later, and began to decline around the middle of the nineteenth century." The list of 5,000 names, dates, places, and concepts that first appeared in Cultural Literacy reflects this narrow, monoculturist vision.

Simonson and Walker offer an additional 500 or so words to Hirsch's list because "Hirsch is disturbingly ignorant of some very common aspects of culture." Of particular interest to women are additions such as mastectomy, gynecology, Kate Chopin, co-parenting, Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Zora Neale Hurston, premenstrual syndrome and sexism. I can imagine this list providing entertaining after-dinner competition for the counterculturally literate. The list is fun; the essays are profound.

The opening essay by James Baldwin was first published in 1963. "A Talk to Teachers" urges teachers to "go for broke" in teaching black children that the circumstances in which they live are "the result of a criminal conspiracy" to destroy them. Some of the circumstances Baldwin cites, such as Jim Crow laws, have disappeared, but their effect remains. The majority of black children live in poverty, thousands In neighborhoods devastated by crack, and attend overcrowded schools that teach myths rather than history. Further, insists Baldwin, we ingest a popular culture "based on fantasies created by very ill people...fantasies that have nothing to do with reality."

The closing essay, "Report from El Dorado," by Michael Ventura offers a broader, postmodernist perspective. "Media is the history that forgives....It is the impulse to redeem the past...by presenting it as we would have most liked it to be...." Ventura argues that we know the media lie and they know we know, but we forgive them "be-cause if we accept the lie as truth then we needn't do anything, we needn't change."

Between Baldwin and Ventura are ten essays by multiculturists Carlos Fuentes, Eduardo Galeano, Wendell Berry, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, David Mura, and Ishmael Reed, as well as feminist multiculturists Paula Gunn Allen, Gloria Anzaldua,Michelle Cliff and Michele Wallace. All of these writers have looked at themselves and North American culture from at least two, if not multiple, perspectives. And each argues convincingly, at times brillantly, that our survival as a nation demands that we embrace multiculturalism, that we nurture what Michele Wallace calls a "rainbow coalition of the mind." She urges universities to develop curric-

ula that compare the experiences and development of the various groups that call this nation home. Such intellectual work cannot be done in an atmosphere that values only the traditional and reads only the classical.

For me the rainbow coalition of the mind is best represented in this collection by Anzaldua and Gomez-Pena. In "Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink," Anzaldua tells us that her ancestors, the Aztecs, "did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life." She sees herself as "invoking art" when she writes. And as her essay develops, we witness the performance of her process as a writer. "When I create stories in my head, that is, allow the voices and scenes to be projected in the inner screen of my mind, I 'trance'." The description that follows mixes Spanish and English, presenting a challenge to monolingual readers and reminding us all that "we" are a multilingual as well as a multicultural nation.

Guillermo Gomez-Pena begins his essay by telling us he lives "smack in the fissure between two worlds, in the infected wound: half a block from the end of Western Civilization and four miles from the start of the Mexican-American border...." He celebrates "bordemess" as a Mexican, a Chicano, a Hispanic or Latino, and he and his wife Emilia, who is Anglo-Italian and speaks Spanish like an Argentinian, "walk amid the rubble of the Tower of Babel of our American postmodernity....And it doesn't matter where I find myself, in Califas or Mexico City, in Barcelona or West Berlin; I always have the sensation that I belong to the same species: the migrant tribe of fiery pupils." Gomez-Pena offers convincing evidence for the "borderizatlon of the world," a transformation which he says makes absurd concepts like "high culture," "ethnic purity," "beauty," and "fine arts." He believes "we are attending the funeral of modernity and the birth of a new culture." Quite frankly, in a cultural war with words as weapons, I put my money on Gomez-Pena over Bloom/Hlrsch any day. In fact, long before I had finished this book, I was reassured that all the hysteria-mongering of the traditionalists, the monoculturists, will not drown out the strong, compassionate voices of these writers and hundreds more like them.

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Dear Flora Mac and Other Stories, by Patricia Shirley (Big Timber, MT: Seven Buffaloes Press, *$6.75*).

This collection of short stories in the Appalachian story-teller vein invites the readers into the lives of the characters, making them part of the stories themselves. "The Humdinger" (winner of the Captain A. Burke award for fiction in 1984) tells about a young woman and her love for cars. "Retribution," a tale of murder and abuse in an Appalachian family, won The Appalachian Writers Association Honorable Mention for short story award in 1983. Each story in the collection captures the essence of the Appalachian people. Some reveal dark family secrets and violence, while others reveal the eccentricities of friends, family or neighbors. All of the stories are so personal, that the reader feels a part of Appalachia.

Patricia Shirley accomplishes this inclusion through her title story, "Dear Flora Mae," in which she examines the pleasures, hardships, and chaos of an Appalachian family. The story consists entirely of letters addressed to Flora Mae from her sister Bessie. The intimate tone of these letters includes the reader in the story, making the lives of these characters palpably real. Bessie becomes concerned for her aging father's health and welfare after she discovers him living in

> *"squalor and uproar such as come with Bud and Eulie's lax ways and all them younguns running around. It's a shame and a scandal that a feller eighty-four don't have some peace and a corner in his own house without having to shake a varmit or a youngun outen it."*

Although she recognizes that he is aging and deteriorating, Bessie does not realize that it is the squalor and uproar that gives him life; the chaos of his family vitalizes him by allowing him to participate in life. Patricia Shirley recognizes that although poor, these people take great joy in life.

"Miss Pitts' Last Funeral" won the Captain A Burke Award for fiction in 1979. The story of the town eccentric, told as if the reader were a close friend of the narrator, "Miss Pitts' Last Funeral" examines the life long friendship of a young boy and a middle aged woman. We join the narrator, Jack, on his journey back to Jasper Cove, home to his grandparents and his sum-

mer residence for many years:

> *Sometimes I spent whole summers in the cove;and by the time I was twelve, I knew every ridge, hollow, and farm for miles around. The place that impressed me most was Civil War Captain Isaiah Nathanial Pitts' farm.*

His journey also takes us back into time and memory, to his days of deep and unusual friendship with Miss Pitts:

> *Miss Nellie, a spinster of some forty years plus, became a special friend of mine. She was a good listener for a boy just in his teens... I first got an indication of Miss Pitts' peculiarity with funerals, when my cousin Ben was buried...*

Miss Pitts spent a great deal of time traveling about the countryside in her bright yellow Oldsmobile and attending funerals. Jack, now returning to attend her funeral, used to join her on her excursions. He continues to reminisce, showing us their strong and enduring friendship, one that lasted through his adolescence, his early adulthood, his participation in the Korean War, and into his adult years.

Other stories in the collection include "The Spree," which reveals the long kept and long suffered pain of an unhappy marriage, and the peculiar celebration that this woman holds upon her husband's death. "Poor Elvin" shows us that like any other small town were there is a limited number of people, men and women compete to win the hearts of the few available companions. And "The Initiation" resembles a Hatfield and MaCoy type feud story mixed up with a love affair.

Patricia Shirley lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she recently retired from the University of Tennessee with over twenty-six years of service.

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Green March Moons by Mary Tallmountain. New Seed Press: Berkeley, CA 1987. 32pp. *$8.00.*

Green March Moons is truly one of the most beautifully crafted children's works I have read. It is ironic that a story focusing on the themes of loss of parents, alcoholism, and sexual abuse should be so characterized, but the real beauty of the story can be found in the style of the telling and in the eventual triumph of the main character, Tash, a young Koyukon girl. Independent and courageous, Tash endures the long Alaskan winter in camp, tending her father's trap lines, caring for her mother until the mother, too, dies, and fearing her uncle who grows bold when Tash is left alone without the protection of parents.

The book is only nineteen pages long and that includes six pages of illustrations. The illustrations, sketches by Joseph E. Senungetuk, could stand alone and tell their own tale; they serve not as filler in the text, nor are they arbitrary pictures of insignificant characters or events. Rather, the illustrations portray the essence of each character in the story while setting the scene against the frozen backdrop of the Alaskan late winter. Particularly poignant among the illustrations is the one of the main character's deceased parents, wrapped in gunny sacking and each hung carefully side-by-side in the safety of the pine tree. As in life, the sacks gently caress each other as they await spring and transport to the village.

After reading the book once, I returned to it again, reading it more slowly this time and savoring the construction of the story and of the characters, marveling at how richly interwoven were theme, character, and setting. As I finished the story again, I was truly amazed that the author had accomplished so much in so few pages. Not only does the author manage to create her characters fully and give them life in these pages, she also provides us with a frightening account of sexual molestation and its aftermath. The events following the molestation and Tash's way of dealing with the violent invasion of her self, both physical and emotional, depart rather radically from the traditional approaches to dealing with sexual abuse, approaches we adults have only recently been taught by professionals in the area of child development. For example, contrary to what professional wisdom recommends about mo-

lestation, Tash talks to no one about the encounter. In addition, she engages in no self blame and the perpetrator does not get his just desserts. While all of this seems perfectly appropriate, very realistic (sexual molesters quite often do not pay a legal price for their crimes), in keeping with the character of Tash, and, most importantly, reflecting mental health, strength of character, and enviable coping mechanisms on Tashs' part, it also raises questions about how children reading this book would react to the situation presented by the author.

While New Seed Press's advertisement for the book recommends it for all ages 11 and up, it is clear that there are really two audiences for the book because of its subject matter and because of the unique presentation of the topic by the author. As one audience, the adult, I praise both the style and construction of the tale and also admire the character's courage in the face of loss of loved ones and sexual abuse by a family member. I also recognize that the other audience for the book, the child, may be confused by a situation not at all like that for which we have prepared them with our stock answers based upon the best advice that professional experts can give us. Because the book raises many questions about the emotional aftermath of sexual molestation and also about how it best can be handled by the child, I decided to go to the best expert here, the child. Igave the book to the daughter of a friend of one of my friends; Emily is twelve years old, a straight A student, a creative child both musically and poetically, a writer in her own right. In our discussion about the book, it was clear that she understood perfectly what was happening. Was the sexual molestation clear, I asked? She very quickly turned to the page where it was described and read the paragraph to me. I asked her what she thought of how Tash handled the aftermath and she told me a surprising thing. It wasn't her fault. That Tash didn't tell anyone seems understandable, Emily remarked, implying that sometimes children don't tell and it's not necessarily a bad thing not to tell. Does this mean that our children may not be telling us about such tragic events in their lives despite recent encouragement to tell, and announcements by public figures about their molestation as children? Though not telling represents the best solution for Tash in the story, does it ever represent the best solution in real life, for our own children or for those whom we know? What parent today would be convinced that her child could experience molestation and merely carry on with life without informing the parent? Most importantly thestory skirts the issue of danger to other children whom the uncle could molest if not stopped. We might argue that in the culture presented there was no one to tell, no authorities to be informed who could prevent the event from happening again. In her attempt to place the story within the culture in which the events occured, the author still cannot prevent her readers, especially children, from viewing these events as relevant to their own lives and from modeling themselves after a character, Tash, whom the author has so carefully drawn to be admirable for her independence and her courage.

As Emily and I talked about the book, we agreed that it was a story that raised many questions about how children reading the tale would interpret the events. Emily recommends, and I concur, that the book be read by children as part of a group reading assignment where the opportunity exists for exchanging information and perspective, and where the teacher can provide some direction for discussion, with the issues presented above in mind. Another alternative for reading might be with a parent, if the parent has read the book first and is willing to discuss openly with the child ways of dealing with sexual molestation, death of parents, and alcoholism. In sum, the shortness of the book belies the fact that it is a very complex story with many possible interpretations of the sexual molestation event and the way it is handled by the main character.

In Emily's words:

> *The story was very good and showed the Eskimo's culture in the areas of death, alcoholism and abuse.*
>
> *It dealt with very real issues in a different way. I do have one complaint. It was slightly difficult to follow due to the Indian terms and names. Because of this I would suggest this story to slightly older children simply because I feel it would be difficult to understand for children my age.*

For children Emily's age and older, the events and how the main character deals with them are clearly presented by the author. What is unclear is how the author intends children to use her tale in their own lives should they ever

be confronted with similar events. As adults we need to communicate to our children that there are many good ways of dealing with issues such as death, drug abuse, and sexual abuse; this story represents only one of those ways which may or may not be useful as a model for an individual child.

As did I, Emily recognized the beauty and strength in the construction of the story. While the future for Tash is left uncertain, we are led to believe that her courage and independence will see her through. Despite that note of optimism, Emily sighed, "What a sad story, what a sad little girl to have lost both her parents and been abused by her uncle," evidence that adults and children do not see things quite alike.

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