

## She's a natural woman

I have often felt an underlying guilt for not feeling close to nature nor having any maternal instincts to speak of. Women are supposed to be the more sensitive, holistic, nurturing gender. With the recent revival of goddess religions and even increased awareness of certain tenets of feminism, this sense has only been accentuated.

Recently, I was presented with a novel theory as to the beginnings of patriarchy. The philosopher said it all boiled down to our pre-historic ancestors' efforts to make the spiritual and physical worlds reflect one another. Pagan goddesses were associated with the earth while the sky gods were perceived as male. As human beings developed agriculture, they felt they were gaining control over the earth. Since divinity meant being beyond human control, goddesses were deemed inferior, considering that humans still had no control over the sky. Humans could transform a field into a well-groomed garden, but they still had no way to affect or change the weather.

Ecological feminists point to the importance of recognizing the relationship of environmentalism and feminism. There is "a concern about connections—historical, empirical, conceptual, theoretical, symbolic, and experiential—between the domination of women and the domination of nature," says Karen J. Warren, a respected ecofeminist philosopher. "A failure to see these connections will result in the continued exploitation of both women and non-human nature and in the development of policy, theory, and practice which is grossly inadequate from a feminist point of view."

Both the amateur philosopher's theory on the origins of male domination in society and the theory of ecofeminism are based on the premise of women's association with the earth. Freudian analysts say patriarchy is linked to the denial of sensual experiences and distance from biological processes. The female capacity to give birth has been cited as the basis for asserting that women are closer to the workings of the natural world. Many feminists now question this link, noting that neither the argument pointing to biological factors nor social conditioning supports the notion that women are closer to nature as men.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned theory is flawed in that, according to Starhawk, the author of *Spiral Dances*, a well-known book about goddess religion, "the Earth Goddess is also air, and sky, the celestial Queen of Heaven, the Star Goddess." The term Mother Nature appears to be a misnomer. Emily Erwin Culpepper criticises Goddess centered spirituality for its portrayal of the Goddess as mother which in turn over-emphasizes the place of motherhood in women's lives, thus excluding women who are not mothers.

So, the pressure to be an earthy, maternal woman is not all in my head. The social, spiritual and political implications associated with this image are undeniably real, serious and far-reaching. Though matriarchal religions risk over-romanticizing the goddess as an icon, there are some aspects which are appealing. "The Goddess awakens in infinite forms and a thousand disguises," says Starhawk. Now that is more my style.

Miriam Korn

### Sorry!

The cover photo on last week's *Gazette* featured Neena Sidhu and Geeta Sikka performing at INDISA Night on March 13. The event was not part of the Cultural Diversity Festival. We apologize to the INDISA organizers for not giving their event the credit it was due.

## the Gazette

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## Tired of explaining myself

As I was sitting in the Grad House just the other day I was asked by a friend of mine "Why are all the gay men attractive?" Responding with "There are unattractive gay men too", I explained further. On the weekend I was explaining to another of my friends that just because two people of the same sex are in a relationship that the relationship is not necessarily equal. She had assumed that same sex relationships must be a more egalitarian partnership; this is often far from the truth. I was asked to explain why I dislike the term "homosexual" to another friend, having to explain the clinical origins and oppressive history/purpose of the word. Further I was at a high school a few weeks ago during their cultural diversity festival and students were surprised to find out that I, a queer man, do all the mechanical work on my own car. I was told by more than just a few students "But you don't look gay!", one adding in surprise, "You dress just like my brother!" (What were they all expecting, pink tights and a daisy-embazoned frock?)

All of this contributes to the fact that I am becoming increasingly aware that stereotypes and misconceptions still linger, informing peo-

ple about the lives of lesbians, gays and queer people. This attests to the strength and pervasiveness of institutionalized heterosexism. It manages to fill every pore of society with misinformation and ridiculous stereotypes, all the time reaffirming heterosexual privilege and domination. (I am not placing blame, rather I am making observation based on the knowledge and lack of understand-

### Heterosexuals rarely justify or explain their sexuality

ing the het community has surrounding issues of queer peoples.)

It is interesting to note that heterosexuals are rarely required, or even asked, to justify, explain or educate others of their sexuality. It is a given which, through affirmation by mass media, the corporate sector, educational institutions, etc., does not need to be unearthed or uncovered, while the lives of queer peoples lay buried or hidden, obscured by misrepresentations and inaccuracies.

tations and inaccuracies.

This puts queer people in a defensive position of always needing to explain themselves. Always diffusing their energy and power, instead of directing it towards living their own lives. Always needing to defend their existence. Those who are not yet able to explore their sexuality, as they are forced into seclusion by an oppressive and intolerant society, live a life of complete isolation and alienation or negation and confusion. They are not comfortable with being put in such a defensive position and, realistically, who does or should feel secure in that sort of position?

This may at least expose a little insight into the lives of queer people. I can only speak for myself and from my experience and observation. I cannot speak for all queer people, nor would I ever claim to. I am not addressing specific concerns and questions. I am asking for you to forget the negative and unrealistic portrayals of queer people and try to understand that we very much need to feel as if our lives are real, legitimate and full without needing to constantly justify who we are to others.

Anthony Roberts



## LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

## Co-op blues

To the editor:

I am a second-year commerce co-op student with a gripe.

Among the responsibilities I have obtained here on my work term placement, all are futile and tiresome in nature. Although I can, at times, be extremely busy with relatively interesting work, at most I am a glorified receptionist.

I hold the offices of the Co-op department responsible for the last two (and next two) months of degradation and humiliation. I feel sincerely betrayed. I have paid through the nose — in both finances and high hopes — to attend what I thought was a good program, run by competent and patient people. I know now I was wrong. I, along with approximately 180 other students, have been led to believe that our \$480 was spent well in procuring our work term credit. Well, this 'credit', if they accept it as such, has turned out to be trivial.

I do not speak for all of my fellow students — invariably some will be quite content — however, I am not the only one to see his/her excitement and anticipation transform into disillusionment. Many of the commerce students I have spoken to — those who have been lucky enough to obtain a placement — have expressed great annoy-

ance with their so-called 'practical experience'. When we come together to talk, we don't brag about the responsibilities we have been given or the practical knowledge we are gathering, we console each other on the depressing duties to which we are subjected.

I don't wish to sound like an overly ambitious second year student, aspiring to greatness without first paying his 'dues'. On the contrary, I am a firm believer in young, less-educated minds labouring longer hours, with less perks, and receiving little respect for their accomplishments (some jobs fit this scenario). Our directors have misled us, I feel, and the crimes that have been committed against some of us in this program are few but powerful on young, enthusiastic minds. We have been promised a full placement and pushed towards a job list with expectations of a thorough and realistic experience. According to me, neither has occurred — and these were the strongest selling points.

And now, as I near the end of this black term, I am being subjected to a further indignity. Not only will I write the report — the format of which is nailed down so that a six-year-old would not stray too far from conformity — but also I must recant these embarrassing assignments in a job description (which, as a notice from the co-op office states, "may be different than what was posted when you applied for the co-op position" — thank you, we are more than aware of this). What

they hope to gain from these submissions, I have no idea. I only hope they have mercy on those of us whose jobs have turned out to be nothing more than menial and trivial tasks accomplishable by simpletons.

So I'll close with a warning to those of you considering such a program: either abolish the idea completely or deliberate another university where the cooperative program is very well-established. If, however, you are determined to get a commerce degree from this formidable establishment, Dalhousie, do not rely on the present bureaucracy to provide you with anything other than the academics.

Second-year commerce student

## Don't brand me

To the editor:

I am flattered that Ryan Stanley would devote some four columns of the *Gazette's* valuable space to try and undermine the article I wrote in last week's issue.

I was, however, taken aback by the title of the article, "Beware of paranoiacs".

I consider myself to be a concerned Dalhousie student who has taken the time to read the proposed Statement on Discriminatory Harassment and has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

The *Dalhousie Gazette* is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, the *Gazette* has a circulation of 10,000. \* As a founding member of Canadian University Press, the *Gazette* adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o the *Gazette*. \* Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. \* Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday before publication. \* The *Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. \* The views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff.