

athletics do violence to stereotype

Most Canadians are aware that Abigail Hoffman has become Canada's finest female middle distance runner having won gold medals at the 1966 British Commonwealth Games in Kingston, Jamaica, at the 1963 Pan American Games in Brazil, and the 1971 Pan American Games in Cali, Columbia.

Any newspaper enthusiast could relate a few of Abby's scathing comments which seem to have a habit of making the headlines. That she is currently working on a Ph.D degree in political science at the University of Toronto and is the recipient of a Canada Council grant are also well known facts.

However, there is much more to know. Miss Hoffman will be here at the University of Alberta on January 26 to present some of her views on the problems and social pressures of women athletes, one of her favourite topics. She has been quoted as saying, "Most girls are subtly taught to feel they cannot take part in sports and still retain their socially defined femininity. Once the age of puberty is reached girls are supposed to respond favourably to their assigned stereo-typed feminine image. They are generally expected to behave as women before they are, in fact, women physically. The girl who continues to display an active interest in sports beyond age fifteen does so because she is oblivious to these social pressures, because she is aware that she is acting in defiance of her socially defined role or because the quality of her performance is so high that no one really cares."

Abigail is in an excellent position to speak out on women in sport. She has competed in more international games than any other living Canadian - twelve to be exact - and is now aiming for a position on the 1972 Canadian team to the Olympics in Munich. Already at 24, she is a "veteran" athlete; most girls her age having retired from competitive sports long ago for more "feminine" pursuits. Abby is an outspoken woman, saying exactly what she thinks, whether her topic is the Olympic establishment, the medical profession or women themselves.

Miss Hoffman will be speaking in the SUB Theatre on January 26 at 12 noon. Her talk is guaranteed to be controversial and of interest to all concerned with the pressures on women in today's society.

All the women we have written about on this page, plus Dorothy Smith, will be appearing at Women's Week.

Margaret
Atwood

: the cruel politics of human relationships

Power Politics (Anansi, 1971) came along.

by Sid Stephen

The myth of the "lady poet" has been around for a long time: you remember hearing jokes about them years ago, or the odd short story about a frustrated schoolteacher who read Swineburne and poured out her soul in verse, at least until the strong, silent local garage mechanic came along to rescue her. She still writes poetry, of course, but not seriously anymore; there's more poetry in preparing meat and potatoes for John when he gets home, or changing the baby's diapers.

So much for the myth. That's not to say that there isn't poetry in cooking or housework; it's just that for some reason many people seem to feel that it's an either/or situation, and that given the choice between the house in Sherwood Park and the social whirl of PTA and bridge clubs, and being a serious writer with the sacrifices which that requires, a woman will opt for the former any time; I suppose that this attitude is just another weight for women to carry. If you don't believe it, just check out a few back copies of *True Romance*.

The trouble is that too few people take women seriously...and it doesn't matter whether the field is engineering, law, politics or poetry. Which brings me to Margaret Atwood, who is a poet to be taken very seriously.

Ms. Atwood was born in Ottawa, and grew up in northern Ontario and Quebec. She graduated from the University of Toronto, and has since been recognized as one of Canada's best poets. She has had published five books of poetry and a novel, *The Edible Woman*, and was awarded the Governor-General's Award for poetry for *The Circle Game* (1966).

Atwood's poetry deals with duality. She recognizes the opposite qualities which make up reality in our lives, and seeing the struggle which occurs within ourselves she is not surprised when opposition "boils over" to screw up our relationships with one another. She has learned to comment on this, if not to explain it; perhaps it cannot be explained. We say we want to love: we end up wanting to possess. We talk about personal freedom, yet we run into prisons, looking for security. We all want to live forever, but how can you deal with the fact that we all die anyway?

Well, one way is to write poetry about it. Margaret Atwood's reputation as a poet was established with the publication of *Circle Game*, but I think she began to find her voice with the publication of *The Animals in that Country* (Oxford, 1968). In this book she starts a sort of "exploration" that is continued in her subsequent poetry, and I think she found whatever it was she was looking for by the time

We are all involved with other people, but generally we are just not equipped for survival. In "Provisions", Atwood gives her travellers only "thin / raincoats and rubber boots / on the disastrous ice, the wind rising." Because we are all ill-equipped personally, one would think that a means of overcoming the hazards of life would be to get together with one another, one person's strong points supplementing another's weaknesses, but she does not see this happening. As Al Purdy points out in a review of one of her books, there is "very little love for anything" in Margaret Atwood's poetry; I can see how Purdy would arrive at this conclusion, but I'm sure he wrote those words before he read *Power Politics*. One of the reasons we do not get together with one another is because we often confuse love with ownership, and a love that is paternal implies an unequal relationship. This is the sort of relationship Atwood examines in "Attitudes towards the Mainland", in which it is clear



that she rejects the paternal/maternal role and says that even though "Making it solid for me would include / making it solid for you", still, "I can't make it solid." Stand on your own two feet...there may be "very little love", but if love means always having to say you're sorry then it's probably not worth having.

Ms. Atwood's next book, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Oxford, 1970), is a poetic *tour de force*. She assumes the persona of Susanna Moodie an early nineteenth-century immigrant to Canada, and the poems show how the Canadian experience affected her during the course of her life here. The themes of alienation and division occur here as well, but Atwood seems limited in a way by the very persona she has assumed. Moodie/Atwood is still looking for a solution to the problems of inter human relationships, however, as Susanna Moodie turns from pioneer wife to Belleville, Ontario, chauvinist she is finally as estranged from the land as she is earlier from her husband and children - one of which she "planted" in this country "like a flag."

In the same year, *Procedures for Underground* appeared. Many of these poems were written during Atwood's stay in this city, and she sees Edmonton as the cold, flat place it really is. Familiar themes--drownings, leaving and coming back changed, geological time scales and mirrors re-occur throughout the collection, yet its title is misleading: this is not a survival manual, but a coming to terms which becomes more certain towards the end of the book. Compare, for instance, "The Small Cabin" with "Carrying food home in Winter". The latter poem is almost optimistic, because there is an equality

implied between the two lovers which is missing in the former. There are other examples of this in *Procedures for Underground*, and since books of poetry are not put together by accident, I feel the progression is a deliberate one.

The progression leads to *Power Politics*. Here, Atwood has recognized male-female relations for what they are: most often a struggle with no quarter given, one in which only the strong survive, but one in which by the very heat of the battle the fighters become purified in some way, better able to understand the drives which motivate one another. I have changed my attitude somewhat about this collection in the light of Ms Atwood's earlier works; thus I would disagree with the aforementioned Purdy to say that there is love in Atwood's poetry, even in *Power Politics*, but that it is love between equals, a realistic attempt to show how two people can relate to one another on a face-to-face basis, with no concessions made on either side.

Certainly, this sounds brutal; cruel words do pass between men and women, and it is only a feeling of superiority which makes "romance" necessary or even possible. And it is this perspective which I feel Atwood was probably going for all along, and her next collection will probably be an expansion of this attitude. When we start erasing the hide-bound restrictions which exist on the roles of men and women, perhaps we can start relating to one another as human beings.

Anyway, that is what I think Margaret Atwood is all about, at this point. I think her voice is one that we will hear much more frequently in the future, as women become aware of their potential in every field--engineering, law, politics--and of course, poetry.

Elizabeth Jeffress

Dr. Elizabeth Jeffress is keenly aware of the difficulties facing womantoday and her background makes her a particularly good contributor to our forums on women.

Dr. Jeffress received her medical training at Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and her psychoanalytic training at the Philadelphia Psychoanalytic Institute.

Dr. Jeffress has been involved in researching the psychiatric services and their role as a part of a rehabilitation team, and the mental health problems of women in industry. The latter was presented to the Medical Women's International meeting in Australia.

Dr. Jeffress has held a variety of positions during her career, which adds depth to her understanding of women and where they fit in our society.

She was staff physician at University Health Services, Florida State University from 1951-57. From 1958-1970 she worked in a child guidance clinic. She worked there on a part time basis and the remainder of her time was spent working in various other areas.

Kagan and Lewis 1965 found that girls at 13 months showed a preference for high complexity situations. This characteristic of women allows them to experience and integrate a variety of experiences in their lives. This makes women like Dr. Jeffress flexible and innovative persons since they are able to combine so many differing orientations.

The Episcopal Diocese of California is using Dr. Jeffress great diversity since she is currently serving as a member of Metropolitan Planning Board Think Tank.



Lola Lange was Alberta's representative to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Feeling that the Alberta government has not recognized the study as legitimate, Mrs. Lange is heading a provincial action group which hopes to pressure the provincial government into realizing that the report cannot be dismissed and that the recommendations should be implemented.