



Identity

As she walks slowly on the beach
 She thinks of all her goals,
 the dreams she has to reach.
 Doctor, lawyer, artist, engineer
 So many choices, so much more
 that can be done; nothing to fear.

She bends carefully and sees her
 reflection,
 In the water, crystal clear smiles
 a face of perfection,
 Pearl-brown eyes, noble nose, distinguished
 mouth on a silky face,
 Cream, brown, black, pink colours of
 our race,

She stops suddenly and stares at
 this beauty in the sea,
 My beauty, my grace, my face is
 this only me?
 No, it is only the surface
 As the wind blows her reflection changes
 No longer that perfect body, perfect face.

She is more than face, more than body,
 more than mind,
 She is what she wants to be
 Accepted for what she is, not parts
 not a type, or a kind.

Myura M

Sexism unearthed in funeral homes

by Megan McKay

When I was a little girl my parents used to tell me that I could be anything I wanted when I grew up. They taught me that ability and effort were the qualities that determined success; race and gender could not stand in my way. All of my elders affirmed this, as did my books, my teachers, and my favorite characters on Sesame Street. When adulthood finally arrived, I leaped out into the world with this optimistic attitude. I truly believed that I had power to choose my own profession, and to determine my own lifestyle. I now understand that this is a terrible lie.

When I was 21, I chose to become a funeral director. I attended Kingstec Community College in Kentville to complete the required training, and did quite well. Unlike my male classmates, I was never able to complete an apprenticeship, nor were the majority of my female peers.

Searching for an apprenticeship took me to every funeral home in Nova Scotia, and several in New Brunswick. The following is a compilation of reasons cited to me by Maritime funeral directors, explaining why women are not suited to the

profession. These excerpts are from recent conversations. The speakers are not old men; most are between 30 and 50 years of age. Some are women.

"Truro is not ready for a woman."
 -Ed Varner, Truro March, 1991.

"Truro is not ready for a woman."

"Women can't do the lifting involved" -Les Beasty, Windsor August, 1991.

"We had a woman here once and she didn't last. This isn't women's work." -Alan MacLeod, Shubenacadie February, 1992.

"Women are terrible drivers. I need someone I can count on to back up the hearse. That's a big car for a little lady." -Munro Fraser, Pictou June, 1991.

"We need someone who can do handy work. Women can't drive and they can't shingle a roof." -Mrs. Fraser, Pictou June, 1991.

Why do you want this job? This is not the job for a pretty girl like you."
 -Wayne Weatherbee, Sydney December 1991

"Women. We hire women. Our secretary is a woman." -Don McKay, Halifax March 1991.

"I have a drawer that I call the garbage file. That's where I put women and coloureds who apply. I'm not against you, I just can't hire you." -Wilfred Burke, Halifax October, 1990.

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"What if we hire you and then you get married and want to quit? Or

"This job is too much for emotional women... I don't think there is a place for you in this business."

worse, what if you get pregnant? Then you'll have to quit." -Wayne "Weiner" Fisher, Dartmouth July 1991.

"This job is too much for emotional women. I can see you crying in the middle of a service. I don't think that there is a place for you in this business." -J. Albert Walker, Spryfield April, 1992.

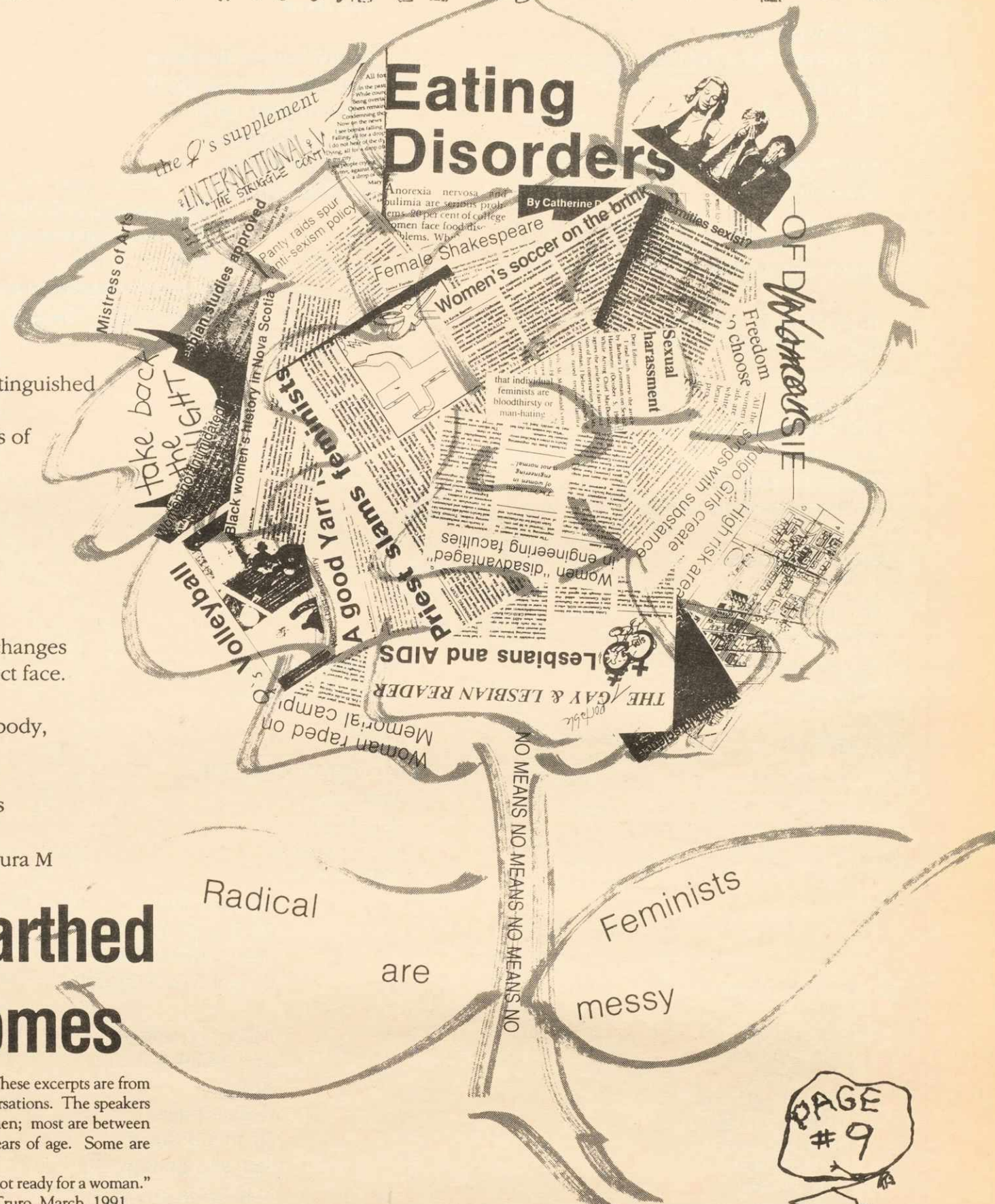
"I think that every funeral home should have one just to serve the

coffee, and that's all people are comfortable with." -Mike Moses, Amherst June, 1992.

"You'll distract my other staff. Those guys won't get a thing done with a girl around here in a skirt." -Ronald Walker, Hubbards July, 1991.

"Women have no place in the funeral business." -R.H. Porter, New Glasgow September, 1991.

All of the men in my class at Kingstec, including one who failed and had to repeat the course, found employment in a funeral home in their hometown. Only three of the ten women who graduated with me are employed today in funeral homes, two of them daughters of funeral directors. Today in Nova Scotia there is one female licensed funeral director and embalmer who is not the wife or daughter of a funeral director. she is employed at Atlantic Funeral home, Bayers Road, Halifax. There are no Black funeral directors in Nova Scotia.



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