

Week of Reflection

WEEK OF REFLECTION

Thinking With The Heart

Thought should be linear.
 That's what the policeman means
 when I bring the woman to him,
 what he has to offer for her bruises, the cut
 over her eye: *charge him or we can't help you.*
 He's seen it all before anyway. He knows
 how the law changes, depending on what you think.
 It used to be a man could beat his wife
 if he had to; now, sometimes he can't
 but she has to charge him
 and nine times out of ten
 these women who come in here
 ready to get the bastard
 will be back in a week or so
 wanting to drop the whole thing
 because they're back together,
 which just means a lot of paperwork
 and running around for nothing.
 It drives him crazy, how a woman
 can't make up her mind and stick to it,
 get the guy out once and for all.
 'Charge him,' he says, 'or we won't help.'

Out of her bed then, her house, her life,
 but not her head, no, nor her children,
 out from under her skin.
 Not out of her heart, which goes on
 in its slow, dark way, wanting
 whatever it is hearts want
 when they think like this;
 a change in his, probably,
 a way to hold what the heart can't
 without breaking: how the man who beats her
 is also the man she loves.

I wish I could show you
 what a man's anger makes
 of a woman's face,
 or measure the days it takes
 for her to emerge from a map of bruises
 the colour of death. I wish there were words
 that went deeper than *pain or terror*
 for the place that woman's eyes can take you
 when all you can hear
 is the sound the heart makes with what it knows of itself
 and its web of blood.

But right now, the policeman's waiting
 for the woman to decide.
 That's how he thinks of it; *choice*
 or how you can always get what you want
 if you want it badly enough.
 Everything else he ignores,
 like the grip of his own heart's red
 persistent warning that he too is fragile.
 He thinks he thinks with his brain
 as if it were safe up there
 in its helmet of bone
 away from all that messy business
 of his stomach or his lungs.
 And when he thinks like that
 he loses himself forever.

But perhaps you think I'm being hard on him,
 he's only doing his job after all,
 only trying to help.
 Or perhaps I'm making too much of the heart,
 pear-shaped and muscular, a pump really,
 when what you want is an explanation or a reason.
 But how else can I say it?
 Whatever it is you need
 is what you must let go of now
 to enter your own body
 just as you'd enter the room where the woman sat
 after it was all over,
 hugging her knees to her chest,
 holding herself as she'd hold her husband
 or their children, *for dear life*,
 feeling the arm's limit, bone and muscle,
 like the heart's.
 Whatever you hear then
 crying through your own four rooms,
 what you must name for yourself
 before you can love anything at all.

Thinking with the Heart is a poem by Bronwen Wallace, the late Canadian poet and former volunteer at Kingston Interval House, a shelter for battered women and their children.

From our Bookshelves

Highlights of the Dal Women's Centre Library

The DWC has accepted donations from many people over the last two years and now has a library to be proud of. There is a large selection of valuable academic guides, as well as books and journals for personal reading. This summer, our library was categorized and catalogued. Below are the subject areas developed by the DWC:

- Women in Academia
- Spirituality
- Women in Canada
- Politics and Government
- Health
- Herstory
- International Women
- Sexual Violence
- Healing
- Lesbian and Bisexual Women
- Women of Colour
- Women with Disabilities
- Feminist Theory
- Socialism
- HIV/AIDS
- First Nations Women
- Entertainment

Plus, we have a bunch of fiction, from poetry to novels. Our library is deficient in some areas, which we hope to correct by the beginning of second term. If you want to make suggestions, please stop by.

And, hey, by the way we have over 66 different types of journals, dating back to the early 1980's.

Safer for Women, Safer for Everyone
 NFB; 28 minutes

A very realistic film addressing safety on University campuses. The film draws from both a male and female perspective, although most interviews are with women. A cross-section of people on campus--professors, students, library and custodial staff--enter their opinions on campus safety. Participants briefly debate accountability, i.e. is the university responsible for on-campus violence?

"Safer for Women..." touches on issues of verbal and sexual violence, focusing on personal narratives of the threat and fear associated with unsafe campuses. However, there is little discussion of many solutions outside of building audits, lighting, and other safety measures. "Safer for Women..." is a very realistic depiction of safety issues on Canadian campuses.

'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up' Essays in African Canadian Women's History
 Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, and Adrienne Shadd.
 University of Toronto Press.

This book fills what is an all too common void in people's knowledge of Canadian and Nova Scotian history. The different author's survey the experiences of African Canadian women in a number of time periods - early Nova Scotia, the Underground Railroad, the Canadian West, among others.

The authors have done an amazing job of piecing together the experiences of women through primary sources such as church records, census data, letters and community records. In each section, names of individuals are highlighted to mark individual lives, as well as generalities provided.

The section on Early Nova Scotia may be the most interesting. The little that many know about black history in N.S. if considerably expanded. For instance, while you may know that many Black Nova Scotians left for Sierra Leone in the late 1700's, did you know that it was three Black women who set up the first three businesses in Freetown?

Canada's history often hides the history of slavery and racial intolerance behind the more well known history of the United States. We also tend to regard Canada as a place where sexism was addressed early and eradicated. Neither the author of this section nor others mask the history of racism and sexism that was experienced.

Family Values
 Phyllis Burke

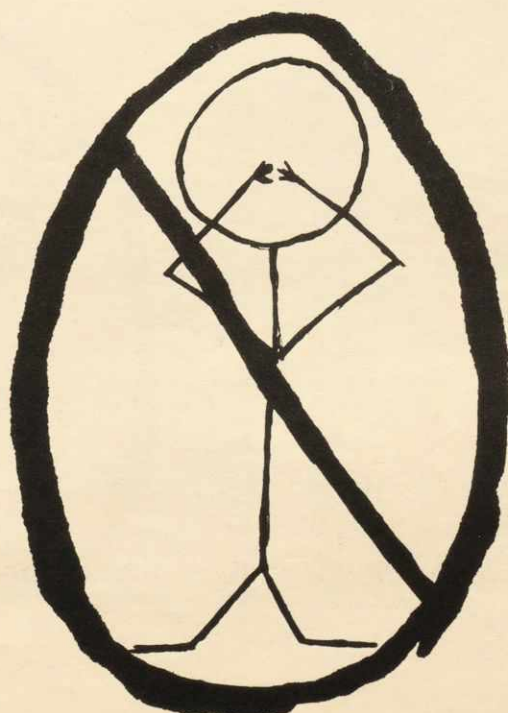
This is the story of the second legal adoption in California. Although this book is told from an American viewpoint, both the human, legal, and political aspects remain valid in our country. In many ways the legal battle Ms. Burke and her partner Cheryl are engaging in takes a backseat to the descriptions of gay and lesbian history, and current Queer Nation activism. The author outlines her initial fear of having a child in a homophobic world. At first she distances herself from the child but herself in the position of being the stay at home parent. Her son Jesse makes the decision himself of who his family is by naming both women "Mama".

The author spends a lot of time describing Queer Nation Meetings. For anyone involved in organizations that are bureaucratic nightmares, her descriptions of this constantly evolving body may hold new ideas. Without so much as a hint of sarcasm. Ms. Burke writes about the Vibe Watchers at this meeting who are responsible for watching the crowd and stopping the meeting of 400+ people if things get out of hand.

Despite the euphoria of Queer Nation meetings and actions, and the large LGB community that these women are surrounded by, there is also coverage of heartbreaking homophobia. For those who are looking for gay and lesbian history, an up-close commentary on modern queer activism or a great family story *Family Values* is for you.

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