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Sipping coffee in a dimly lit downtown restaurant, Mary Daly relaxes with a small group of women professors and students from Dalhousie University. Together we take turns asking Daly questions about feminist rage, the absurdity of patriarchal society and the more practical issue of how radical feminists can survive in a university environment.

Daly nods slowly and answers in a quiet voice. She talks about her own struggles at Boston College where she teaches, her women-only classes and the reaction she receives from male administrators and faculty at the college.

It's been a busy night for Daly. Of her three-day stopover in Halifax, she's spent most of her time in situations just like this—sitting and talking with other women. Later another group of women arrive and sit at the table just across the room from us. They're also here to see Daly and we know she must leave. With a warm embrace she says good-bye. For Daly women-bonding is more than just a theory.

As Daly walks away we continue talking about her Oct. 25 lecture at Dalhousie.

Mary Daly

Nag-Gnostic philosopher addresses audience of Websters, Virgins, Muses, Shrews and Prudes . . .

By SAMANTHA BRENNAN

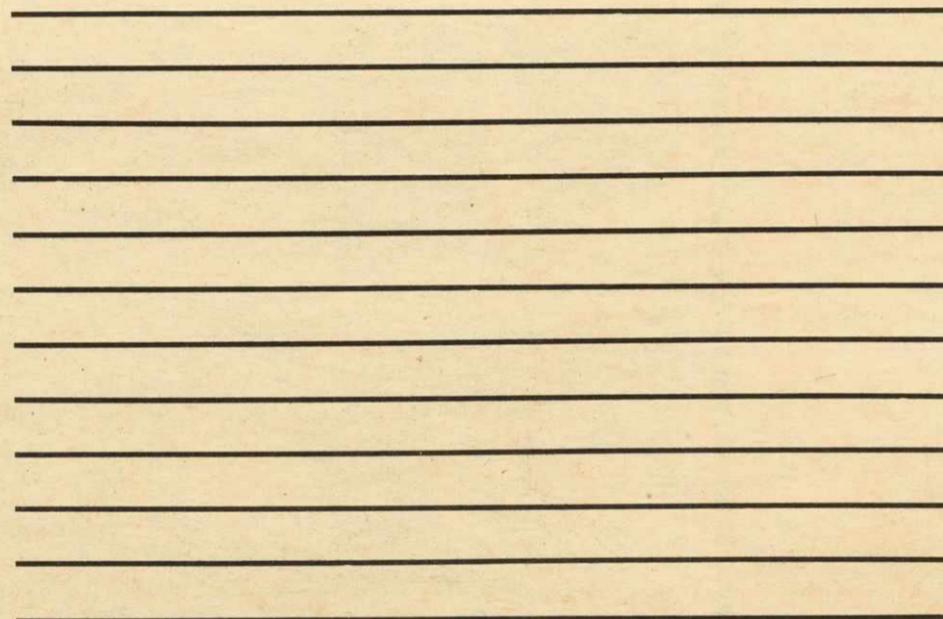
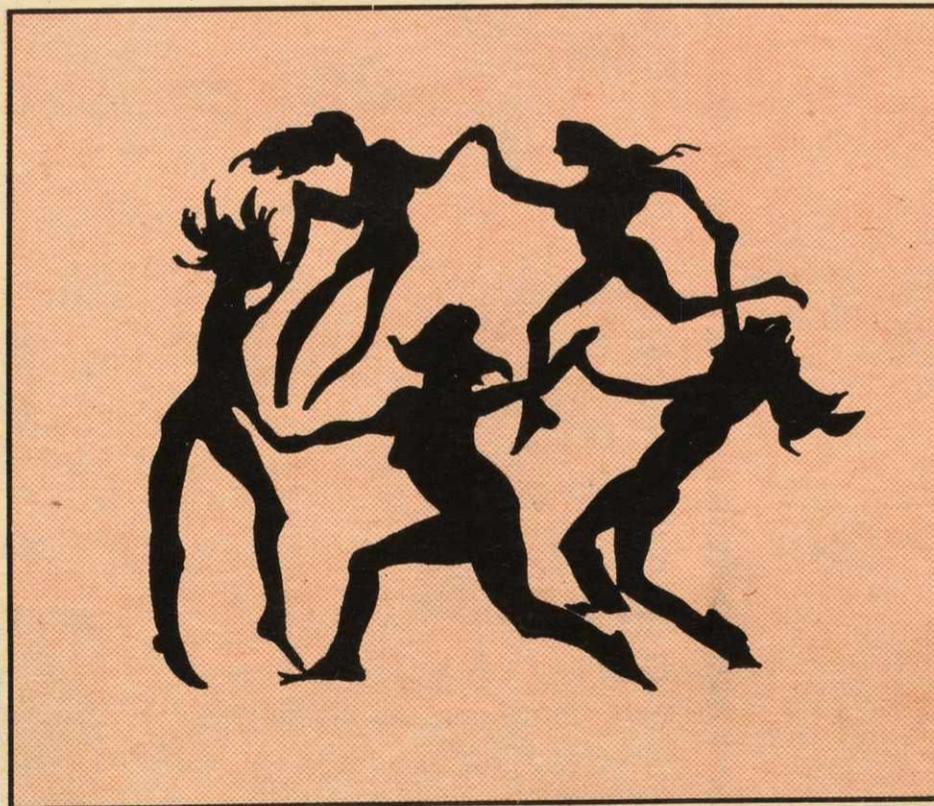


Illustration: Kimberley Whitchurch, Dal Gazette



She walked to the podium on the stage of the Rebecca Cohn auditorium, stopped, and stared at the microphone. Looking up and grinning, Daly begins, "You know how it is with these little phallic things—sometimes they work and sometimes they don't." Hundreds of women laughed and roared. This was just the beginning of an evening with radical feminist Dr. Mary Daly.

She's come a long way from her earlier days as a Catholic theologian trying to reform the church in the days after Vatican II. She now renounces her book *The Church and the Second Sex* published in 1968 as the work of "a reformist foresister."

"I left the Catholic church many years ago," says Daly. "A woman attempting to reform the Catholic church or any Christian church for that matter is similar to a black trying to reform the Klu Klux Klan."

Daly says that through the years her own approach to feminism has changed. She says that at one time she made many appearances on television debating with the "Professor Jones and Smiths" of the world. At one point Daly says she tackled William F. Buckley in a televised debate.

"It wasn't difficult." Daly, who holds doctorates in both theology and philosophy, now teaches radical feminist theory. Her most recent works, *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) and *Pure Lust* (1984) travel beyond the boundaries of these disciplines and into an other-world.

Speaking to the women gathered at Dalhousie, Daly invited us to journey with her past the patriarchally possessed foreground of mainstream society and into this other-world. This world is one that Daly describes as being a place where "women connect with the rhythms of the sun, the moon and the farthest stars, mending our ties with the witch within ourselves who spins and weaves tapestries of elemental creation."

With Daly we move to the country of the strange, home of wild women who identify as women. She says this world is one other than patriarchy that exists on the boundaries of patriarchy.

But her journey, she says, is not a mystical escape from reality but rather a necessary trip if women are to survive.

"We're coming together in the 1980s, a period of extreme danger for women and our sister the earth and all her creatures, all of whom are targeted by the maniacal fathers

for extinction by nuclear holocaust, or failing that, by chemical contamination, by escalated ordinary violence, by man-made hunger and disease that proliferate in a period of deception and mind-rot."

Language, naming and re-claiming words were strong themes in Daly's lecture as they are in all of her works. She says that just as

the gynocide of patriarchy is accompanied by the killing of words by "verbicide," the coming of women's elemental being is accompanied by the awakening of the deep meaning of words. When thinking of words Daly says she "thinks of an Amazon on her horse swinging a double-edged labrys." So, too, words have double-edged meanings for Daly.

Lust is just one of these double-edged words. *Pure Lust*, the name of Daly's most recent work, talks about these two kinds of lust. She says there is the first meaning—"the deadly dispassion of patriarchal males" and then there's an utterly other meaning—"an intense, longing and craving."

Daly says women lack the vocabulary to name our enemies but she has her own suggestions. Naming the enemy, Daly provided the audience with a "prudishly prepared package of precise pejoratives" for patriarchal males—"snools, bores, plug-uglies, hucksters, jabbers, drones, . . ." And she reclaimed names for wild journeying women—"prude, websters, virgins, muses, shrews and scolds."

"The word 'prude,' for example, has fallen into disrepute," says Daly. She says the origins of that word came from the same root as words like proud, meaning also good, capable and brave. "Proud prudes reclaim that word," says Daly.

One word that Daly is labelled with wherever she travels is that of separatist. Although both critics and other feminists refer to her by this word—it's one Daly herself does not use.

For Daly it relates to the whole issue of living in a society of reversals, where everything is twisted and turned upside down by patriarchal logic.

"In a society where women are separated from their true selves it only makes sense they'd call feminists separatists," says Daly. She says that a women-only movement is necessary as long as "phallocracy" is around. This message also gave some idea of what her feminist vision meant to men.

"You see, each man has a battery, sometimes two or three, one in the office and one at home," says Daly. She says women should refuse to be batteries. In this way, says Daly, the patriarchal male is thrown back to his own possibilities and he can stop being a vampire.

The Killam lecture series itself did not avoid the issue of words, naming and sexist language. Dalhousie president Andrew MacKay began by introducing Professor Christine Boyle as the chairwoman of the lecture series committee. Dean Leffick followed in style the next week by referring to Dr. Susan Sherwin as the chairwoman of the philosophy department. It seemed fitting that Daly ended the issue.

After her lecture ended she announced to the crowds that she would "chaircrone" her own question and answer period. It was here that Daly put the politics of women-bonding into action.

"For 12 years it has been my custom when speaking about feminism to only take questions from women," explained Daly. "After all the centuries in which women have been silenced I think it's time now for women to speak."

But her cry for women-only space and time did not convince at least two undergraduate men who approached Daly during the reception after the lecture. Daly stood in the sculpture court of the Dalhousie Art Gallery surrounded by women. Some of the women had questions to ask, thoughts to share and others just wanted to hug her.

The men, obviously angry and upset, pushed through the crowd. One read to Daly from his copy of Jung while the other just stared. They were not happy young men. Daly was not interested in their anger. She looked at them and smiled. "Go away little boys—you are taking my time away from these women." She handled the situation with a sense of sad resignation that comes from years of confronting men like this.

They shuffled towards the door mumbling and grumbling, leaving the women's space and returning to the home of Snoodom. □