

Maxine Tynes: the quintessential woman

by Steve Vernon

"Maxine Tynes is a woman/teacher/poet whose life is shaped by the pride and passion of her own strongly held beliefs and an absolute commitment to her personal politics." - Sharon Fraser, *Atlantic Insight*.

"Her poetry sings and it soars and there is a genuine compassion and love for people in her work that really stands out." - Ted Plantos, *Cross Canada Writing Magazine*.

"Who am I? I am a black woman writer whose voice is essentially feminist, and who is always looking at and amplifying who I am." - Maxine Tynes.

On October 8th, Maxine Tynes, People's Poet, gave a reading in the Special Collections Department of the Killam Library, in support of the Canadian Literary Collections Project, packing in a standing-room only audience.

Maxine has lived her life in

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and her heritage extends as far back as the times of the Nova Scotia Black Loyalists. Her first poem, "Pro Patria", was broadcast on television when she was seventeen. She is a Dalhousie graduate, and in addition to being published in the *Dalhousie Review*, she won the Dennis Memorial Poetry Prize. In 1986 she became the first Afro Acadian to sit on Dalhousie's Board of Governors. Her first book, *Borrowed Beauty* was published by Pottersfield Press in 1987. In 1988 she was awarded the Milton Acorn People's Poet of Canada title. Since that time she has published two other books, *Woman Talking Woman* (1990), and her latest work *Save The World For Me* (1992).

Listening to Maxine Tynes read her work was a pleasure better experienced than described. Her voice rang with the authority of conviction, and all of the building power of the Fundy tide.

*Some South Shore Maritime sometime
free from the city of everything
the road is soft and high and low
and endless in its route of
trees and sky. "Sea And Sky"
from Woman Talking Woman*

The reading was followed by an open-mike session which allowed aspiring artists such as Brenda Wagner, Lisa Comeau, and Eleonore Schonmaier an opportunity to read. 'Multi-kudoes' to the joint organizers of the event, Nancy Minard and Ian Colford, for putting on such a successful reading, and for giving local poets a much needed venue.

This was the first in a series of readings comprising Dalhousie's Creative Writing On Campus campaign; a series that will include such notable writers as Lesley Choyce,

Andy Wainwright, Susan Kerslake and others. Astrid Bruner is the next guest speaker scheduled to read in November.

Here is an interview with Maxine Tynes.

Q: Is there another book in the near future?

A: Yes there is, it should be coming out sometime in 1993, through Lesley Choyce's Pottersfield Press.

Q: A few of your critics have spoken of your technique as being rather limited, sometimes even repetitious, depending more on the sheer momentum of emotion rather than the refinement of craft. What's your view on this?

A: D.H. Lawrence had his limitations. Margaret Atwood had her limitations. Leo Tolstoy had his limitations. My reading world has to deal with this, it is a given, it has to be, and in places where they feel I fall short, then they will have to look elsewhere. I have a holistic view of literature, in which the answers cannot be found with any one single author, there has to be others to fill the gap.

Q: In 1988 you won the Milton Acorn People's Poet Award, and, like Milton Acorn, a great deal of your early work seems to be related to current trends, causes, and events; whereas your later work appears to be moving into a different direction, dealing with broader, more all encompassing issues. Was this a conscious decision, and if so why?

A: Well, first of all, I feel this is a misleading supposition, my work has

always been grounded in the world as it affects me, the larger world that we all must live in. I grew up around meal time conversations that dealt largely with topics and concerns beyond the immediacy of my own backyard, and while it is true that in *Woman Talking Woman* I have tried to move in a different direction, I would rather view it as a movement in tandem, rather than away from.

Q: How did you feel about working with Lulu Keating on her film, "In service" (as based upon your short story), and have you any plans for future film projects?

A: I'd love to commit some more work to film, I've always felt my writing was a highly visual quality, little snapshots of reality that would lend themselves well to film. Lulu and I were old friends, but for a long time we both felt that our creative roads were separate and it took a long time before we came to the decision to combine our voices. She (Lulu) is a gift to the Nova Scotia film world, a down to earth person with her eyes fixed firmly upon the heavens, she really thinks more broadly than you would realize, she doesn't guard what she has, or save it strictly for the critics, she's always willing to share whatever she has to offer.

Q: In 1986 you became the first Afro-Acadian to sit on Dalhousie's board of governors. Since that appointment, what sort of progress do you feel has been made?

A: Very little, not enough, really. Like every institution, the university moves cautiously, taking baby steps, when larger measures are called for.

Announcing The 4th year of The Lester Pearson Institute's Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch Series Fall 92 Programme

October 27 Mr. Richard Watuwa
The Ugandan Economy: Post Idi Amin

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My Revolution and Air China

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The Tuesday Brown Bag Lunch Series is held weekly from 12 noon to 1 pm. in the Seminar Room of the Lester Pearson Institute, Dalhousie, 1321 Edward Street. All discussions are open to the public. Bring your lunch and help yourself to coffee. The Series is sponsored by DAL-Outreach, which is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency's Public Participation Programme.

...Leonard Peltier

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aware of the fraud during the hearings. John Trudell, former AIM spokesperson, captures Canada's official attitude, "Those perjured documents weren't used to justify Leonard's extradition, they were used to rationalize it. Indians are about as wanted up there as they are down here."

Right now, however, 50 MPs led by Warren Allmand, Canada's Solicitor General at the time of the extradition, have demanded a new and fair trial. Peltier is about to enter hearings which will determine if he gets a retrial. This is perhaps the first time in history Canadian MPs have officially intervened in a US hearing. Allmand and NDP member Jim Fulton are also trying to have Peltier returned to Canada for a legitimate extradition hearing.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR LEONARD'S JUSTICE

Leonard Peltier Defense Committees are broadening the awareness of this miscarriage of justice. Beyond petitioning for a retrial, they are demanding a full investigation into the case.

Recently the Students' Union of Nova Scotia and national student organizations in Canada, the US and UK, mobilized by the Halifax-based Peltier Student Solidarity Network, joined Desmond Tutu, the World Council of Churches, various branches of the U.N. and other advocacy groups demanding justice for Peltier.

Pressure from such supporters recently prevented Peltier from being transferred to the U.S.'s ultra-maximum security prison in Colorado where communication with the outside world is barred. Without access to a lawyer he was charged guilty for inciting a riot.

A Peltier Defense co-ordinator, explained they lost contact with him when he was thrown in the "hole". "The authorities are afraid of him being freed, and would like to shut him up," she said.



Faxes and phone calls from around the world flooded the prison. As Peltier was taken in shackles to the bus to be transferred, the order was suddenly rescinded and charges were cleared with little explanation.

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