

rich, strong, ruthless men and poor, wispy, lovely, dependent women. She lives, if one can call it living, with a series of feckless fellows. One, a mildly comic creation, is her husband, vaguely academic and continuously in pursuit of hopeless causes. (If they are not hopeless per se, they become so when Arthur gets involved.) Another is an older refugee, a member of the lesser Polish nobility; and the third is a mad, mad artistic poseur, who creates gallery exhibits by freezing and subsequently displaying the carcasses of city animals killed by cars.

Joan's men are unchangeably childish and annoying, to both Joan and the reader. They are seriously out of place. Joan is a full-blown figure. Her aunt is a lesser creation but still robustly human. Her mother is a mere sketch, but even she has the shadow of a third dimension. The men are not even two-dimensional. They are stick figures. There are, of course, real-life childish men, as there are childish women, and there are men who are richly comic in their masculine conceits—Dickens has a dozen; but to be interesting they must be human.

Joan fakes her own death, leaves her men more or less behind and goes to Italy. At the end of the book she has taken up with a faceless, nameless young newspaper reporter. He is not one-dimensional. He is invisible.

Marian Engel's *Bear* is a small work of great craft, a *tour de force* in the primary sense, a feat of artistic strength. There is no real attempt (or need) to depict the men in the life of Lou, an archivist. They are footnotes to her past.

Lou is assigned to spend a summer cataloguing the library and papers of the old Cary home, a small, eight-sided Victorian mansion on an island in the north. The house and furnishings are charmingly inappropriate to the place, and there is a bear tethered out back. There has always been a bear out back—generations of bears kept by the original owner and his descendants.

The archivist is a modern, liberated woman. She has lacked love, although she and the head archivist have a tacit arrangement, by which they have a physical exchange once a week. Another man in her life is a retired scholar, as carefully cultivated as a hothouse grape. She and he eat steak *au poivre* and sip the best affordable wines, as if their behaviour were being edited for an article in *Gourmet*. She goes north to leave such men behind and in time finds two new lovers, one brief and casual, one not. The casual one is the rough-hewn man who runs the store and gas-line station on the lake. The other is the bear.

There seem to be some judgments in Ms. Engel's story. There is, perhaps, a conclusion that

Canada is essentially a land of rock and water and natural people. Attempts to make it European (or anything except Canadian) have not changed its essence. This is a book about the degree to which a human being can be alone. Lou was on an island before she ever came to the north woods. Lou is a woman. She is a major creation. She is natural, alive and lonely. The keeper of the store on the lake is a man. He is a minor creation. But he too is a natural person, alive and lonely.



Margaret Gibson Gilboord's *Butterfly Ward* is the first work of a brilliant writer. She writes about women in emphatic isolation—many in the women's wards of an asylum for the insane; and she writes with extraordinary insight, sympathy and precision. Her men are, unfortunately, fragments. Her best stories are those in which there are no men at all. In some, such as "Considering Her Condition," the man, though nicely etched, exists only as a bystander. In her weakest story the protagonist is a man, supposedly a father and a frightened husband, but he sees and reacts to the world with the conditioned reflexes of the women in the asylum ward. These stories are powerful and disturbing. In them, the gulf is not so much between the sexes as between the sensitive (or the insane) and the less sensitive (or the normal). It is a gulf as impassable as the line between butterflies and bats.

*Her Own Woman* is about women, clearly established as persons of accomplishment, and it is written by young women of talent. It is pleasingly diversified; the interviewees are liberated people but not militantly monochromatic. Most have satisfying and mutually respectful relationships with particular men. The women include the more or less famous—Judy LaMarsh, a former Cabinet minister; Abby Hoffman, the track star; Madeleine Parent, the labour leader; Esther Warkov, an artist; Margaret Atwood, the author, poet and critic; and Barbara Frum, Canada's top radio personality—and the obscure—Edith McCracken, the interviewer's mother; Kathleen, a remarkably invulnerable young woman, whose last name is not revealed; Rita MacNeil, a singer and composer; and Barbara Greene, a maker of radio documentaries.

The sum is a good deal more than the parts. None of these women are victims. Their vitality and individuality underline the hopeful truth that stereotypes of both sexes exist in bad art, not in life. We can let Madeleine Parent express the fact that *liberation* and *alienation* are not synonyms. She is speaking of Kent Rowley, the man she