The enigma in the collection remains Mona Harrington's provocative essay, "What Exactly is Wrong with the Liberal State as an Agent of Change?" Harrington seeks not to defend individualistic, atomistic liberalism, but to reform and reconceive liberalism itself as potentially favourable to and compatible with feminism. In the face of inter/transnationalism, Harrington expresses a valid skepticism about the motivations behind the Gulf War and the implications for future international efforts. She fears the lack of democratic control associated with internationalism, especially where a global police force designed to combat so-called international anarchy is concerned.

Harrington proffers the sovereign liberal state as a viable instrument for "women, racial minorities, and the poor to disrupt the reigning hierarchies of privilege." Welfare liberalism is Harrington's touchstone within the liberal tradition as she asks for feminist faith in states as potential servants of the vulnerable, as benevolent mediators of conflict between opposing groups in society.

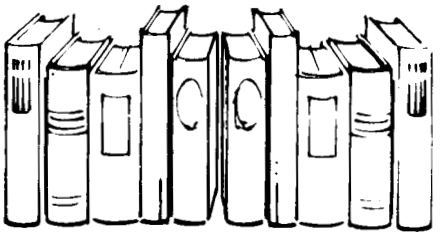
What Harrington fails to address is the original impetus behind the welfare state: to facilitate the accumulation of capital. In effect, the state's interest has always been to serve the interests of capital, whether through *laissez-faire* free trade policies, protectionism, or Keynesianism.

Furthermore, Mary Ann Tetreault reminds the reader that liberal democracy is predicated on the public/private dichotomy, which forces the extreme privatization of the family. How could liberal democracy be transformed to be liberatory and feminist? Although compelling, I cannot concur with the argument that the liberal state could be an agent of feminist change; however, I welcome and am refreshed by such an insightful and unique plea in its favour.

Also drawing upon the Gulf War is "The Quagmire of Gender and International Security." Rebecca Grant brings the question of feminism and IR to a focal point: What difference will the increasing numbers of women in the military make to a feminist epistemology that takes women's experience as its starting point? She cites danger in unreflective incorporation of women's experience into feminist theory when there may be little actual difference in women's and men's experiences in the military.

Granted, the question is valid and the essay succinct and timely, especially since it comments specifically on an undertreated topic by feminists, Desert Storm. In her illumination of the ambiguity of the experience of women, and the impossibility of "finding a pure source of the experience of women," she neglects to mention what unique experience women did encounter as soldiers in Desert Storm: sexual violence. Is this not a crucial unresolved question? Despite overall uniformity in military experience between the sexes, women were reportedly in grave danger at night on their *own* military bases. In the end, while I agree with Grant's conclusion that "women's experience" will have to be filtered and reflected upon to formulate a feminist perspective, I think she overlooks in sexual violence a possible site of difference in experience.

Gendered States is postmodern and feminist insofar as the authors agree that in their treatment of such feminist themes as women's experience, the public/private dichotomy, and the transformation of society, there can be no single privileged viewpoint, no centralizing and universal truth, no one theory that can account for the realities of all women. Rather, the multiplicity of feminist voices in *Gendered States* begins to expose IR theory, in R.B.J. Walker's words, as "one of the most gender-blind, indeed crudely patriarchal, of all the institutionalized forms of contemporary social and political analysis." Perhaps the next critique of Western-centric IR discourse could be offered by Third World feminists, who would undoubtedly add valuable and different perspectives to the excellent beginnings in *Gendered States.*



WOMEN AND IRISH POLITICS

Christine St. Peter & Ron Marker, eds. *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18 (1) 1992.

by Wendy Schissel

Even someone as untutored in Irish culture as I am cannot escape the conviction upon reading this special issue of *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* that to write about Irish women is, inevitably, to write about Irish politics. Every article in the volume uncovers the coupling of parochial institution(s) with nationalism which miscarries for women—who, it appears, continue to be disciplined, punished, and silenced in Ireland in spite of (or perhaps because of) a century of feminism. What is intriguing from a comparative Women's Studies perspective is the multitude of ways in which the critics and poets in this special issue have revealed and challenged the realities of life for generations of Irish women.

The first four articles provide a longitudinal view of Irish women's confrontations with executive and judicial branches of government. Dana Hearne discusses the divisions amongst suffragettes during the First World War which resulted in the subsuming of pacifist ideals by Nationalism and Unionism: the militaristic and paternalistic government. Although women over thirty years of age (and men over twenty-one) were enfranchised in 1918, Frances Gardiner argues that enfranchisement was but a minor step in a difficult, "unfinished revolution" against conservative laws that have continued to prevent women from full participation in the State. An example of such legislation is treated in detail by Maryann Gialanella Valiulis. The Juries Act of 1927 proposed to remove women from jury service because they seldom turned up for duty or were seldom impaneled when they did. In a language of pathology ripe for deconstruction, legislators argued that women who were prepared to serve on juries were "abnormal"; "real women" knew their place was with husbands and children. Despite the collective efforts of feminists, the bill became law—in a *Free State!* The litany of such legislation in

Ireland is alarming, so it is no wonder that Ailbhe Smyth writes with impassioned optimism of the meaning of Mary Robinson's presidency for Irish women.

In a second grouping of articles, Madeleine Leonard and Eileen Drew speak of the micro-economics of daily living for Irish women. Leonard describes the collective efforts of women in Belfast to counteract poverty and unemployment. She argues that the humanistic concerns of women in the workplace "may have a radical edge equal to that of the economistic concerns of men, by which industrial militancy had been traditionally judged." Drew examines the part-time, and usually female, worker in Ireland. As in all parts of the industrialized world, legislators and protectionist unions have been slow to acknowledge the contributions of part-time employees and to respond with protective regulations.

The part of the special issue which I find most intriguing, though, is the triad of articles devoted to the politics of the female body. Pauline Johnson and Vicky Randall offer historical and comparative perspectives, respectively, on the issue of abortion—perhaps the most volatile and oppressive issue for women in this century in any country. But my highest accolades, despite my disciplinary interest in the articles on literature which round out the volume, go to Jo Murphy-Lawless's Foucauldian analysis of obstetric practice in Ireland. Structurally, the article reveals the best of theoretical analysis and qualitative research, using a single case study of one woman's dubious triumph over a medical institution possessing frightening power—the maternity hospital. As Murphy-Lawless points out, there are no winners in such contests. Mary Dunne suffers not only for a dead child and its brain-damaged twin, but also because her defense reveals her belief in the claim of incompetency of delivering women which is the thesis of the discourse of obstetrics. Irish obstetricians, too, are victims of a discourse that prescribes a maximum of twelve hours for delivery and a text-book approach to childbirth.

As a journal published at the University of Saskatchewan, the editors have justly chosen to include the work of two local graduate students who represent the next generation of Irish scholars outside of Ireland. Their articles prove that the study of Irish literature and feminist criticism flourishes on the prairies. Catherine Gutwin's bold critique of a Yeats Summer School in Ireland denounces the complete absence of feminist criticism from seminars and lectures; she concludes that "academia doesn't necessarily represent what's available, but recognizes and teaches what it approves." To read the remaining articles on Irish literature is to realize that as elsewhere, women's literature has too often been marginalized. Shawn Mooney, another University of Saskatchewan graduate student, argues for the need for reevaluations of even recent biographies of the literary partnership of "Sommerville and Ross" (Edith Sommerville and Violet Martin) in view of the generational controversies about lesbianism between turn-of-the-century "New Women." Patricia Boyle Haberstroch discusses the current debates about literary politics and the issue of marginalization of women's texts. The recovering of women "hidden from history," she says, is akin to a "Rising and a Renaissance." Ann Beer's article on the celebration of maternal thinking in Medbh McGuckian's poetry completes the volume. The nurturing values held to be inviolate by parochial institutions are reborn in erotic, humorous, and compassionate metaphors. In truly feminist terms, the patriarchal opposition of motherhood to career is rewritten: "physical and artistic motherhood ... become the stimuli and symbols of each other."

Like all life-affirming structures, there is a circularity about *Women and Irish Politics* that unites the articles of the text. The umbilicus which nourishes them is the poetry of Eileán Ní Chuilleáin, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Ruth Hooley, Eithne Strong, Eavan Boland, and Medbh McGukian. The *touch* of effective editing is apparent not only in the choices of the poems but in their placements as well. One juxtapositioning is particularly apt: Eithne Strong's poem "Spring: Concerning Shape," speaks of student dissection of dogs as a part of the cyclical pattern of education which "proceeds / holding links of blood and root and force." Strong's poem follows the Murphy-Lawless article on the discourse of obstetrics in which dissection is the final word in the powerful language of medicine.

I cannot recall when I have read a journal from cover to cover as I have this one. I believe that its value for those interested in Women's Studies lies, outside of claims to national interest, in what it offers of eclectic and multi-disciplinary feminist research. This special issue might prove an interesting text for a Canadian and/or comparative Women's Studies course.

ASSERTIVE BIBLICAL WOMEN

William E. Phipps. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992.

by Rev. Louise Mahood

William Phipps is a professor and chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Davis and Elkins College, Elkin, West Virginia. He is author of *Influential Theologies of Wo/Man* (1980), a book that explores 5 major theologians' unChristlike treatment of the status of women. He has published other works including *Genesis and Gender* (1989) and now *Assertive Biblical Women* in 1992.

In his forthright manner Phipps states from the beginning that he is not a Progressionist who supports the notion that the status of women in society has improved over the ages. No; rather Phipps believes that women's status was better in the past and that we ought not to dismiss earlier times as more oppressive of women than today. Nowhere, however, does Phipps acknowledge that his position can inadvertantly romanticize an earlier time, a time none of us lives in, and of which none of us can speak from experience. Phipps announces his bias, declares that he will only examine some women of scripture, and compare them to contemporary figures to aid our understanding.

For Phipps, assertiveness is "self-expression that enhances both individual freedom and social responsibility." Women of the Biblical era had little opportunity for self-expression per se. Of-