

caractère généralisé de notre système patriarcal, où la violence faite aux femmes fait partie du statu quo. Comme dit Micheline Dumont, « les femmes doivent avoir le courage de nommer les choses par leur nom ». Nicole Brossard et Andrée Matteau essaient pour leur part de mieux comprendre le système patriarcal politico-culturel en définissant la misogynie, le phallocentrisme, le sexisme, l'anti-féminisme, l'institutionnalisation du coït hétérosexuel et de l'idéologie de la pornographie. Mais Brossard essaie également de comprendre pourquoi cette tragédie s'est déroulée au Québec : dans aucune population de tradition catholique et dans aucune population de langue française, le féminisme ne s'est autant répandu dans la société.

La section suivante, « Violence : petite et grande folie », met la mort des 14 femmes sur un point du cercle de la violence masculine. La violence faite aux femmes, toujours manifestée dans le quotidien, augmente parce que beaucoup d'hommes ont peur de la libération des femmes. « Le carnage », dit ironiquement Paula Synowich, « a conclu de façon macabre la Décennie des femmes ».

Dans « Magistère et magistrature », la section finale, les textes abordent la question de la culpabilité des hommes et celle du soutien aux jeunes femmes. « Le couteau de Rambo, c'est dans le sein de Gaïa... notre mère, notre soeur, notre fille, notre compagne, notre égale. Notre royaume », écrit Paul Chamberland. Enfin, Andrée Stanislas-Cyr écrit au directeur de Polytechnique, dont la fille a évité de quelques minutes le carnage, et lui demande de faire face au sexisme à son école.

Dans le premier poème, Bersianik avertissait la jeune étudiante poursuivie par le tueur : « Ne t'arrête pas pour cueillir / trop rouges / les perce-neige de décembre. » Dans le dernier poème, écrit par Éveillard, le Mont-Royal devient un volcan, une déesse et un cimetière qui témoigne de l'hémorragie du sang féminin. À la fin du poème, Éveillard rêve qu'un jour les femmes et les hommes feront ensembles des bouquets des fleurs sur la montagne : « Et à chaque fleur qu'ils cueillaient / revenaient les femmes qu'ils avaient aimées. » Un petit souffle d'espoir. Peut-être.

À la fin du livre, une question reste ouverte : la demande de Monique Bosco, qu'il y ait une enquête publique sur le

crime au Polytechnique, n'a pas reçu de réponse. Quand on lit la lettre de suicide de Lépine, censurée pour une période d'un an par la police québécoise, cette demande devient plus urgente.

Malgré la division du recueil en cinq sections, beaucoup de textes se répètent. De plus, certains textes, trop analytiques ou trop spécialisés, sont difficiles à comprendre : ainsi en est-il de l'article de Monique Panaccio, « Lépine et les roses : au delà d'Eros ». Par ailleurs, il manque une perspective très importante : celle des femmes immigrées, autochtones et de couleur. Pourquoi 14 femmes sont-elles devenues le symbole national de la condition féminine dans la société patriarcale et non pas une femme nigérienne tuée par son mari dans leur domicile à Montréal? Cet acte de violence fait à la femme / épouse / immigrante n'est-il pas également un geste politique, personnel, social et symbolique ? Aucun texte ne pose cette question.

Néanmoins, *Polytechnique 6 décembre* est un document très important, car il fait partie de notre histoire des crimes contre les femmes, histoire qui, selon Elaine Audet, est « toujours occultée, effacée », au point que nous commençons « à peine à l'écrire ». Donc, LA mémoire, comme « LA justice », dont les rédactrices parlent dans l'avant-propos, est un moyen « de changer radicalement notre vision du monde ». Pour les femmes, se souvenir, cela veut dire SURVIVRE.

Christabelle Sethna remercie Marie-Hélène Sinquin qui a été très exigeante au sujet de la grammaire.

AFTER THE MONTREAL MASSACRE

Directed by Gerry Rogers. 27 minutes, 14 seconds. NFB-CBC production. Order number: C 9190 097.

By Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg

December 6th will forever be etched in my mind as the date of the brutal killing of the fourteen young women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Just as many of us of a certain age will never forget the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22nd, in Dallas, Texas, so

will the date of the Montreal massacre be fixed in the hearts and memories of many of us from now on.

It is hard to believe that two years have passed since Marc Lépine killed these young women. I will not pretend to be neutral on this issue; I am passionately involved. The film *After the Montreal Massacre* brings back the deep pain and anger we must not let ourselves forget with time.

Gerry Rogers directed this powerful and useful short documentary which was aired on CBC's "Man Alive" to mark the first anniversary of the killings last year. Co-produced by the NFB and the CBC, it contains commentary from several reporters, one of the women who was shot and has recovered, a group of students, feminist authors and a sociologist.

It makes no bones about which side of the debate it is on: systemic misogyny and violence against women *versus* Marc Lépine the individual madman gone on a wild rampage. The assumption that this was the isolated act of a psychotic is challenged by those in the film who see it as a logical, vicious expression of male hatred of women. The film provides a consensus that all women are at risk and that there is indeed no guaranteed safe place for any of us today. As sad proof, this past summer, the Toronto area alone witnessed the rapes and murders of females who ranged from a three year-old to teenagers to an older woman raped and murdered in her bed in an old peoples' home. Unfortunately, every region could fill in its own map of similar horror stories.

Journalist Francine Pelletier, one of the members of the former Quebec feminist publication, *La vie en rose*, was on the hit list of those whom Marc Lépine named as his next victims had he been able to finish the job as he had planned. She had to fight long and hard to get the suicide note released by the police.

In the film she points out that for a madman he left a very clearly thought-out message. (His actual letter, published by *The Globe and Mail* on November 27, 1990, stated: "Even if the mad killer epithet will be attributed to me by the media, I consider myself a rational erudite person... forced to take extreme acts... The feminists always have a talent to enrage me. They want to keep the advantages of women, e.g. cheaper insurance, extended maternity leave... while trying to grab

those of the men... They are so opportunistic, they neglect to profit from the knowledge accumulated by men through the ages.”)

The analogy has been made that if the victims were black or Jewish, there would be no problem in identifying the clear evidence of racism and antisemitism. Why, then, is there such denial in naming the hatred of women and its inherent manifestation in routine violence, misogyny and sexism?

Here, the mix of articulate voices covers a number of important issues. Author Rosemary Brown talks of the violence against women as thwarting every attempt to achieve equality, and other widely-held goals for progress, as women live in fear. Feminist activist Charlotte Bunch feels that violence against women in its many forms is the most pervasive and insidious form of human rights abuse. She calls it a war on women, a civil emergency. Sylvie Gagnon, the woman who was shot, says, “Marc Lépine is a symbol of death and hate... he is a problem, not an individual.” Sociologist Linda McLeod describes a new form of playground violence where little boys simulate the rape of little girls, relating it to the popular culture of violence so rampant in the media — videos, cartoons, movies and music. Journalist Jack Todd says that the Polytechnique murders reflect part of a pattern similar to the man who shoves his girlfriend or pinches a waitress’ bottom.

The questions the film raises are those of women’s daily experiences — verbal, physical, psychological, sexual — that fit into this pattern. Finally, many of us who work for peace and justice are reminded of the global connections between violence against women, violence against the earth, and the violence of militarism. We are urged to make those links daily in both our public and private lives.

Immediately, there are ways to deal with prevention. Leona Heillig of the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre provides positive advice for self-protection; in as much as fear can make women feel like victims, steps can be taken to fight back. Recent studies have shown that women have a better chance of avoiding rape if they learn to protect themselves.

Francine Pelletier reminds us that for many young women, there is no turning back the clock. She gives evidence of this by citing the higher enrollment of women

students in the École Polytechnique this year. Both she and Jack Todd talk about the need for men to become involved and take responsibility for education and change. She points to the fact that for the first time men are beginning to speak out about violence to women. Men have to want the same things we do, she says. It is important that our message be the same.

The video, *After the Montreal Massacre*, is available from the NFB and is recommended for use in classrooms, communities and living rooms everywhere. It should be shown to and discussed with young and old alike, with a particular emphasis on the young, and with men who do not understand the fear that women live with on a daily basis, not just in North America, but all over the world.

YOU CAN BE FREE: An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women

Ginny NicCarthy and Sue Davidson.
Seattle: Seal Press, 1989.

By Carolyn Skelly and Sandra Hilliard Fishleigh

The sub-title, “An Easy-to-Read handbook for Abused Women,” is an accurate description of this useful volume. The vocabulary throughout is responsive to the needs of readers with limited literacy skills. It is written at a very accessible comprehension level.

As a self-help manual, this handbook provides a good overview to enable a woman, who has been struggling with an abusive partner, to understand her situation. There are many guided exercises throughout that can help the reader begin to identify incidents of abuse and patterns of control in her life. Many of the exercises offer decision-making processes without making the common error of offering solutions that do not speak to an individual woman’s reality. The manual encourages the reader to define her own problem through useful exercises, and alerts her to the helpful options available. Most importantly, it encourages her to take a first step toward empowerment. In the section entitled, “Leaving and Staying: the Good and the Bad of Each,” discussion follows the exercise that includes what to do if she stays, how to plan for an emergency escape, and preparing

to leave permanently.

For a small volume — 113 pages — *You Can Be Free* has covered many aspects of the whole situation, from “What is Abuse?”, “But I Still Love Him,” “Getting Help” (professional, police, lawyers, counselors) to “You Can Be Your Own Counselor” and “Looking Out For Yourself and the Children.” One chapter is directed to the lesbian reader and, though most of the book is written for abused women who are not lesbians, much of the remaining content can be ‘translated’ for women who are. More and more lesbians are speaking out about violence between lesbians and the homophobia present in the services available to women. This chapter provides specific support to lesbians while it acknowledges the additional obstacles present for lesbians seeking help.

A caution is missing that needs to be placed at the beginning of the book to warn the reader of the danger of leaving the book, and, in particular, any of her written exercises, anywhere that an abusive partner might discover them. The woman’s safety and an assessment of her immediate situation needs to be given more prominence throughout.

The definition of abuse could be expanded for a clearer understanding. Not enough is said about the single assault or occasional assaults. Because of society’s low level of awareness about violence against women, and a woman’s own possible minimizing of her assault, just saying “Battery is not just one hit. It is a pattern of physical assaults, threats, and

