

She acknowledges, "I was terrified that without the drug I could plummet again. What if they were right after all? My own mind was too dangerous."

As she learns more about the patients' rights movement and its criticism of psychiatry as a political tool and a means of social control, Millett decides to forswear lithium again. This time, however, her counsel is judicious. She is advised to "drink lots of milk, don't get over-tired, have faith, and tell no one." She weans herself off lithium gradually, with support from fellow ex-psychiatric patients. A year after going off lithium totally, she tells her incredulous friend Sophie. She is productive, happy and quite "normal."

THE WOMEN'S SAFETY AUDIT KIT

By Barbara Hall

As chair of the city's Safe City Committee, I would like to introduce you to the Women's Safety Audit Kit, which is designed for women who feel unsafe out in the city and who want to do something about it.

The guidebook, published by the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) is about making public places like parks, bus stops and streets safer for women — "focusing specifically on preventing sexual harassment and assault." As well, it's about improving safety in semi-public places like your workplace, your apartment's garage, school yards, public washrooms and the transit system — "anywhere that the hair rises on the back of your neck."

Since it was published last year I have used it, together with community-based groups across the city, including the Winchester Park Residents' Association and the residents of Trinity Street here in Ward 7, to identify neighbourhood danger spots.

I believe the kit's emphasis on safety in public and semi-public places is important, partly because it is an area over which the city government has the most obvious jurisdiction, and partly because one third to one half of all sexual assaults occur in urban public space. I believe we in city government have a responsibility to ensure public safety.

The basic idea for the kit is very simple. It says that women know a lot about cities that traditional experts don't understand, perhaps because most architects, planners and police are either men, or are trained to see things from a male perspective. For example, they may not understand what it's like to be a woman alone, late at night, waiting for a bus or walking past a dark alley.

Although the focus of the kit is women's safety, I believe that a city which is safe for women is safe for everyone. Questions such as: "Can anything be done about drug-trafficking, gang violence, pimping, or mugging in this place? What would make it easier for the elderly or disabled to get around? Is the area safe for children?", are all raised.

The kit suggests that you, by yourself if necessary, but preferably with others who share your concerns, go out and inspect the places where you don't feel safe. Take lots of notes and ask lots of questions. What's the lighting like? Would anyone hear you scream? What improvements would you like to see? The booklet is full of helpful tips on how to organize so the information you gather will have the greatest possible impact, as well as ideas on how to get support from your neighbours and other groups.

I have been pleased to do audits with many community groups, and would be happy to be part of any audit you and your neighbours wish to do. Together, we would then see who was responsible for correcting the problems and work to see the changes were made. For more information, contact me at City Hall — 392-7916.

Reprinted from Winter 1990 "Inside our Schools/ Ward 7."

THE BROKEN HOOP

Susan Clements. Marven, South Dakota: "The Blue Cloud Quarterly," Vol. 34, No. 3, 1988

By Maria Gillen

The poems in Susan Clements' *The Broken Hoop* are beautifully crafted, lyrical creations. They are deeply sensual in their earthy awareness of the outer world and fey and intuitive in their ability to capture and portray the inner world. For example,

in "The Vision-Hunter Dies in the Rain," the poet combines these two characteristics smoothly:

*Mother your hands smelled
Like oak leaves — smoothed my hair,
Burning strand after strand,
In the sun....*

Clements describes her mother's "Seneca's hands" which hardened from work in a garment factory.

*For me, you said. Still I smelled
Oak, peeled myself
Naked Soot Streets, a gauntlet
Of stares. But clothes
Are not needed*

*Until the body becomes a wound
And a loneliness.
Only then do we shroud
What will not be touched. This is how
The dead see; this much
Is vision tamed. My hands, too,
Grow hard. Yet, an old scent
Lingers — crushed leaves, decayed
Beetles. No daughter in me,
No flame.*

In other poems, Clements presents the reader with remembered moments treated with gentleness and delicacy; she retreats behind a child's eyes where wonder remains untarnished, as in the moment when she sees her first city while she rides in her father's Chevy and smells "Evening of Paris" on her mother's skin. She's carried up a flight of stairs to visit an aunt whose hair cascades "like moonbeams" and the adults try to teach her how to say the aunt's name, "Grace"; when she says it, Grace becomes both her aunt's name and the grace and beauty of the moment remembered by the woman who knows just how difficult grace is to come by.

In other poems, Clements writes of her Indian heritage, of her grandmother who once walked through the mountains to the "Fire tower" but

*who now lies like a bundle of
thistles, stark silhouette
on her snow-white bed.
I held her thin, brown wrist
and the lingering legends.*

She sees herself, longing for the full knowledge of her heritage:

*Wolf without tears,
I am left stalking bones
where there are no fires.
My hands ache from their clinging;
my half-breed heart chants
for the fall.*

Clements' world is a world populated by scenes from the past, a search for the self in the heritage of her Seneca and Blackfoot forebears and an acute consciousness of loneliness and death. In her universe, people often don't "talk to each other" because they are afraid; their hearts are "hidden," and "In The Suburbs Of Summer" she states:

*Something
Is singing here —
Something, also, wise enough
For silence.*

The poem ends with a statement of loss and compassion:

*You enter me
Out of an ignored
And mortgaged grief.*

Another very strong poem deals with the "Buffalo at Rosa Park Zoo." She addresses the buffalo directly, and connects herself to him, her "Shaggy brother." She says: "Together we've stampeded/ the tract-house suburbs of sleeping America." And in the poem, beautiful and fierce, the reader becomes conscious of the poet's struggle to maintain her integrity against the "lure of endless rooms," "the bribes of food and touch." Despite the sophisticated use of beautiful language, the poet is aware of the dark underside of the universe, and in the final poem in the chapbook, "Snow Country," Clements describes a tender moment between herself and her dying mother; she captures the delicate breathing of the kitten she places in her mother's lap, and the hands of mother and daughter touching as "together we wait, our hands rising up./Listening as my mother's bones fall away/Like spring snow."

In this chapbook, Clements has proven herself to be a poet whose delicate, graceful poems are also fiercely courageous and powerfully moving.

CREATION FIRE: A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry

Edited by Ramabai Espinet. Toronto:
Sister Vision Press, 1990

By Clara Thomas

When I last reviewed a book of poetry by Canadian women, I complained of the lack of representation in it of Third World writers. Ramabai Espinet, working with members of CAFRA, The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, has now splendidly filled a large portion of the gap. The poets represented in *Creation Fire* are by no means limited to association with Canada, however; they come from all over the Caribbean and live there, in Canada and in the United States. One of the most interesting features of this anthology is its portrait gallery — each writer represented by a picture, a few lines of biography and both place of birth and of present domicile. The inclusion of this pictorial record is an especially fine idea: the whole volume is personalized and given a sisterly dimension by its presence. In their informative preface, Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen and Rhoda Reddock, Secretariat members of CAFRA, describe the foundation of the association in 1985 and describe the aims of this group of individual feminists, women activists and women's organizations, "spanning the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean diaspora."

Ramabai Espinet, herself both a poet and a scholar-critic, has provided an informative introduction, tracing the volume's development from its beginning at the launching of CAFRA, through its early difficulties in persuading women to submit their poems, to this final, triumphant (and it *is* triumphant), publication. An essay she wrote, urging women to come forward with the poetry she was positive they were writing, became part of a kit that was widely distributed by CAFRA. Word spread about this forum-to-be; enthusiasm mounted, and finally over 500 poems flooded in, causing the editorial committee a considerable problem of selection. Finally they chose about 200

poems by 115 women for this publication and planned a limited edition of *all* the submissions as an invaluable historical record of the enterprise.

Their most interesting decision was to divide the poems into 12 themes: The Seer; The Artist; The Lover; The Mother; The Exile; The Mourner; The Land; The Region; The Guerilla; The Worker; The Survivor; and The Praise-Singer. In itself this list is a tantalizing menu: the contents of each section fully realizes its promise. Of the final collection Ms. Espinet writes:

I believe the voices of a number of groups previously unrepresented in Caribbean collections have emerged... the overwhelming quantity of the poetry is written in English. But the contributions in languages other than English, although small, are signals of the feeling of commonality experienced by women of the region. We can see here the beginnings of a female crossing of the barriers of race, class, language and history.... Glosses have been provided as adequately as was possible. It would have been ideal for each poet to supply a translation which was satisfactory to her, and this was the first method tried, but on the whole, this was not the case. The glosses have concentrated upon providing meaning and not an attempt to render the work into a facsimile of English poetry.

The combination of these poems and their glosses, while admittedly few, provide one of the chief pleasures of *Creation Fire*, one that is unique in my experience.

There are angry poems here and bitter ones, elegies and love poems, but most of all, throughout all the poems, ring the voices of those who endure, who will be heard, and who will speak in the voices that they are just now finding. Any woman, a member of the CAFRA "tribe" or an onlooking outsider, as I am, will find challenge, strength and an abundantly fresh way of seeing somewhere in these pages. I could quote from many of these poems, for they speak to me beyond their particulars to the universal concerns of all the sisters under the sun. This, for instance, from "Praise Song For My Mother," by Grace Nichols of Guyana: