

something that can just be assessed in a matter of minutes in a self-help book or on a talk show.

And if you think that men aren't included here or don't play a role, you are mistaken:

The men in women's lives - grandfathers, fathers, friends, brothers, bosses, boyfriends, lovers, husbands—have a powerful impact on whether or not women conceive children. Virtually no research has been done on the male influence on a female's maternity, even though some sociologists, including Kathleen Garson, have observed that it is the most important influence of all.

There are a lot of reasons you should read this book. It has only one flaw. The people who need to read this most, the ones that need to be educated about women like Laurie, myself and the thousands of women who, for whatever reason, don't want to have children, won't. It's sad but true.

After reading *Without Child*, I am armed with fact and knowledge that there were others before me that fought this stigma, and I will proudly continue the fight. I now feel not only confident in speaking to others on the subject, but relieved that I am not such an anomaly, that there are indeed lots of women out there living happily and heartily as I am. That I don't need to have children to complete the picture. My picture is complete.

WOMEN'S UNTOLD STORIES: BREAKING SILENCE, TALKING BACK, VOICING COMPLEXITY

Romero, M. and A. Stewart.
New York: Routledge Press, 1999.

**BY CHERYL VAN
DAALEN-SMITH**

In *Women's Untold Stories*, editors Romero and Stewart manage to weave several stories rarely discussed into a comprehensive representation of seldom told components of diverse women's lives. Their title itself is a demonstration of their clear commitment to ensure the voices of women are front and centre. The introduction articulates their project and their forthright confrontation of what they term the master narrative which "subsumes many differences and contradictions that restrict and contain people, by supporting a power structure in which gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and ability all define who matters and how." Far too often, the real stories of women's lives become silenced, distorted, and discredited. In this text, the authors give us raw, unprocessed, and fully contextualized accounts of women's experiences in the voices of the women themselves. Examples of carefully woven narratives include :

- Two African American women's experience of infertility
- Reflections of a self-defined Tom-boy
- Homeless, Black and Female
- Japanese American Women's experiences
- Housewives' experiences of WW II
- Motherhood, Heroin and Methadone: one woman's journey; and
- A white woman's experience in

the civil rights movement

Romero and Stewart's strengths, and there are many, include their attention to diversity within and amongst women's lived experiences. Countless disclosures, thoughtful reflections, and poignant narratives invite the reader to immerse herself in the lives of sisters perhaps not unlike herself. Readers may in fact find themselves, their own suppressed voice, here within the stories of sixteen women who agreed to break their silence, talk back and voice the complexities that permeate their lives and their beings.

What is clear is that this text is a political act on the part of Romero and Stewart: finally giving voice and validity to the lived experiences of women frequently overlooked or misrepresented. In doing so, perhaps this text and its ability to meticulously engage its readers in dialogue with its writers, will invite more and more of us to break our own silences and gain comfort knowing that we are all more alike than we are different.

A PERSONAL CALLIGRAPHY

Mary Pratt.
Fredericton, New Brunswick:
Goose Lane Editions, 2000.

BY JANICE ANDREAE

Mary Pratt's *A Personal Calligraphy* gives voice to her private struggle for solitude. With wit and candor, and an attentive eye for detail, she records the historical fragments of a lifetime spent in the Maritimes. Reprinted also are selections from addresses made at the numerous university convocations and public occasions that merit her attendance; for exam-