

sisters will be able to solve that persistent problem – lack of time. A more equitable distribution of housework and child care may ultimately be a partial solution, but it won't help single mothers and won't take care of the domestic work or business work for women writers living alone, who can't afford secretarial or domestic help. More and better day care centres, at affordable prices, are of course a top priority for women with young children, anywhere in the work force. We need not deceive ourselves that this is a top priority for men in our society. Perhaps in the future men may really come to understand that child care is their responsibility, too, and that good child care is important because children are important, as well as the fact that mothers working at other jobs not only need help but have a *right* to it.

Quite apart from the electronic experiment I've been discussing, I want to take another look at the statement that women writers are "conditioned not to participate in the machinery of a culture." I am certainly not taking issue with Professor Davey here. Indeed, when I first read those words, I thought, sadly, *how true*. The statement is thought-provoking because it is almost universally believed, not only about women writers but about women in general, all women, and it is believed both by men and by women themselves. In an abstract sense, women have all too often had a self-image of being a *klutz* as far as machinery is concerned, and men have all too often believed that women just aren't very good at learning any kind of technology. A quick look at history and reality shows otherwise. For a long time, and even now, the operation of such machines as typewriters, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, has been seen as "women's work," as have the jobs of telephone operators and many other jobs involving complex machinery. What people operate the computers in your neighbourhood bank? Not the (male) manager. The tellers, who are almost all women. Women have operated machinery in factories since the industrial revolution. For many years, it was difficult for women to get into medical schools, but it was acceptable for them to become lab technicians, working with highly sophisticated machines. During World Wars I and II, women in their tens of thousands went into heavy industries and also into work involving an understanding of the

most intricate technology, and at the end of those wars, were told to get back into the kitchen (which they'd never left, having done, as usual, more than one full-time job). The prairie farm women of my generation and older worked alongside their men and were no strangers to the operation of machines. What is the common denominator here? It is, I believe, that women have always operated machinery of all kinds, *when it was to the advantage of society for them to do so*, while at the same time believing in the abstract, a myth (women aren't much good with machinery) that in particular ways *they knew to be untrue*. Secondly, the jobs women have done, involving machinery, have almost always been *lower paid and of lower prestige than those held by men*.

I hope in the future this situation will change radically, as it is already beginning to do, although not rapidly enough. I hope women will have the confidence and the strength of purpose to learn the operation of whatever kinds of technical equipment they choose, and will assert vigorously their right to whatever opportunities the technology may offer. Finally, and most of all, I hope that women will take a decisive part in choosing how and when the machinery of the future is to be used, and for what purposes, in order that machines of increasing intricacy may be used for human benefit and convenience but never seen as gods, and in order that the human values of caring and compassion and conscience will prevail. I am not in any way excluding men from this difficult struggle, but men, whatever their stances or philosophies, are already involved with the new technology, at higher levels and in greater numbers than women are at the present time. I hope for a greater balance in the future.

Who will teach our children what it means to be human? Humans will.

In my novel, *The Diviners*, the protagonist, Morag, receives a symbol of her ancestors, a symbol that also points to the future, a Scots plaid pin with the motto: "My Hope Is Constant In Thee."

To women in the future, I have to say: *My Hope Is Constant In Thee*.

Margaret Laurence is the author of five novels (including The Stone Angel and The Diviners, two short story collections, three books of essays and criticism, and children's books. A distinguished recipient of many awards and honours, for several years she has worked actively in the peace and disarmament movement.

ELEGIE FEM-ELLE

Toutes naissantes, certaines sans corps
D'autres les coeur étouffé et parfois
presque mort
Toutes les forces nous ont
immuablement
écrasées
Et cependant vivantes, nous savons
du moins créer

Retrouver ce qui ne nous fut jamais
offert
Le rendre meilleur parce que nous
l'avons découvert
Sachant que la Vie est notre unique
moitié
Offrons-la intacte à chaque mutilée.

Nicole Durand

LE TEMPS

Chaque chose en son temps, répétait ma mère devant mes tentatives d'affranchissement. Tu es trop jeune encore, précisait-elle de sa voix douce. Jamais elle ne criait.

Que cette phrase m'exaspérait . . . Trop jeune? alors que le sérieux de mes seize ans m'apparaissait évident. Ma maturité, hélas! restait invisible aux yeux des parents. Mes protestations se butaient à leur infailibilité. Un mal généralisé chez eux, m'affirmèrent mes amies adolescentes qui, tout comme moi, supportaient mal l'incompréhension de leurs aînés.

Et le temps qui prenait son temps. Indomptable, mon impatience! La vie me semblait si terne en comparaison de l'activité incessante des adultes.

A vingt-et-un ans, l'interdit levé, le mariage accompli, le rythme de ma vie ira de pair avec les obligations ménagères et les soins à donner aux enfants, ces grugeurs de temps. — Tu es chanceuse, me disait-on, tu n'as pas le temps de t'ennuyer. On oubliait l'ennui qui vient avec la routine.

Je rêvais d'un temps qui m'appartiendrait en propre. Il est venu. Parcomieux. Indifférent à ma gourmandise. Insensible à ma nostalgie.

Renouer avec la lenteur du temps. Retrouver l'enfance. Perdre la notion du temps!

Alice Desaulniers