

lations of abusive events.

The cyclical nature of abusive behaviour and the emotional instability it creates in the receiver are both illustrated. Captured is the process of brainwashing through isolation, degradation and crazymaking (creating inconsistencies); depicted is the process of conditioning and shaping of the behaviour (walking on eggshells) by intermittent reward and punishment. The abused woman enters a state of memory fragmentation and learned helplessness as a survival adaptation. Most of her energy is focused on the perpetrator as a function of self-preservation. This leads to loss of the feeling of the self and dependency on the abuser.

If you have ever worked with the abused woman, you know that when you offer her literature on abuse, she will report that she forgets what she has read before she finishes the page. According to Bucci (1997, 2001)<sup>1</sup> we process and store experiences in two channels: nonverbal (sensory) and verbal (linguistic). Painful, unacceptable emotional experiences are stored in their original, mainly non-verbal form, before they are referentially connected to the verbal mode, contextualized and named/translated into language. Therein lies the difficulty of verbal therapies. Abused women struggle in trying to access painful, repressed emotions and the scope of their experiences of abuse. They have never translated and memorized most of these experiences in a linguistic form.

*Dragonslippers* presents visual cues, triggering any survivor's own fragmented and repressed memories. It also offers language for the unspoken, providing validation and making the abuse (especially emotional abuse) visible and "real." Recognition, confirmation and validation by the witness are crucial steps in recovery.

The book also provides a rare glimpse into abuse across the class fence. Availability of resources that money and higher social class offer guarantee socioeconomic protection

and privacy. Only shocking extremes of the abuse, the ones resulting in death, reach the media and the public domain. In contrast, lack of resources and high economic stressors in poor families make them subject to public visibility and scrutiny. Because they seek or are approached by public agencies for intervention, their privacy is relinquished. Despite the class differences, this book confirms that partner abuse is universal. It follows predictable patterns and escalates on a continuum, generating universal psychological defense mechanisms as strategies for survival in the abused women.

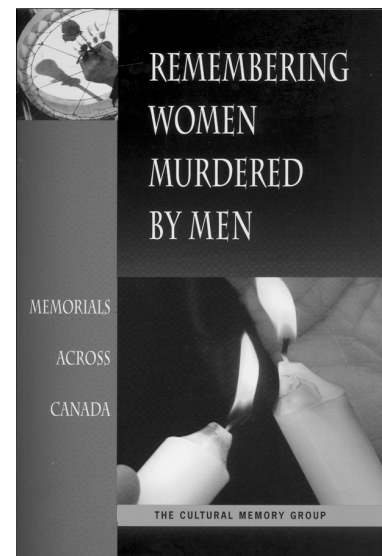
*Dragonslippers* strings the abusive events together, representing the unsightly, unseen narrative of the abuse. Like Ariadne's thread it leads Roz out of the labyrinth of the abusive relationship, into the light of seeing and understanding. Such narrative is an invaluable tool for Roz and any abused woman out there. By reclaiming memories and establishing a survivor narrative, healing and transformational change can occur.

#### References

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## REMEMBERING WOMEN MURDERED BY MEN— MEMORIALS ACROSS CANADA

The Cultural Memory Group  
Christine Bold, Sly Castaldi, Ric Knowles, Jodie McConnell, and Lisa Schincariol  
Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006

#### REVIEWED BY SUE BUCKLE

When it comes to memorializing women murdered by men, how do individuals and communities balance the tension between the need to remember, the desire to forget and the yearning for an end to violence against women?

*Remembering Women Murdered by Men – Memorials Across Canada* is a significant analysis of more than 30 such memorials and the needs, desires and yearnings that brought them into existence, often despite compelling odds and seemingly monumental challenges.

The *Cultural Memory Group*<sup>1</sup> has accomplished much in this book, creating a literary memorial that is both historic and dense with social

significance about the complexities of collective memory making.

It mourns the women who were murdered and serves as a testament to the commitment of those moved to take action.

From their collective academic, research, social justice and front line violence against women (VAW) experiences, the authors researched and analyzed the purpose of each memorial and examined the complex processes of planning, decision-making, negotiating and financing associated with their creation.<sup>2</sup>

The authors explicitly favour “feminist memorializing” that expects VAW memorials to be activist in nature, impacting public policy makers and provoking individual and collective action. However, they do not minimize the inherent value of those memorials which, either by intent or compromise, do not fulfill an activist purpose.

*Remembering Women Murdered by Men* is rich in reflections and observations that are both subtle and transparent. Through their own collective voice and the words of others, the *Cultural Memory Group* asks questions and shares public and private statements about memorializing that soothe, simmer and provoke.

It's clear that the composition of the community that creates a memorial undertaking influences everything about it: its purpose, use, design, symbolism, location, and inscriptions. The book demonstrates how participatory memorial making can consolidate a community in a show of unity or divide it as the process unveils conflicting values and intolerance.

The challenge quoted by a Montreal journalist during the creation of the City of Montreal's memorial to the 14 women murdered at L'Ecole Polytechnique is common: “Relatives, police and university and city officials, though united in shock and mourning, could not always agree on how or what to remember.”

Should a community be inclusive in the process or as in one commu-

nity “move fast before controversy could gather?” Inviting public consultation amounted to inviting backlash and risked the demise of some memorials.

Memorials were found in very public places where they touched the lives of those who entered their space. They served as sites for vigils and ceremonies while being targeted with vandalism and anger. Some were found tucked away in quiet places which on one hand was ideal for individual contemplation and mourning and on the other an excuse to hide femicide from society's public view.

Memorials have taken the form of boulders, polished granite, benches, work tables, trees, art, plaques, gardens, sculptures, walkways and sophisticated monuments to satisfy symbolism, budget (between \$500 and \$300,000) and compromise. Each memorial in the book is described in meticulous detail.

The authors analyzed and critiqued the language of the memorials, the naming of victims, the declaration of gendered violence, the recognition of sponsors and the words of dedication on the inscriptions as they are “potentially their most explicitly consciousness-raising feature”:

the slippage from opposing to supporting the status quo can be as small as a word spoken or kept silent, a name remembered or forgotten, a subtle shift from active to passive voice.

An engaging element of *Remembering Women Murdered by Men* is the *Cultural Memory Group's* transparency in its own processes:

Working within a feminist research collective is slower, more arduous, more challenging, more companionable and ultimately more rewarding than working alone as each unspoken assumption is interrogated, each procedure, practice and phrase is subject to scrutiny,

and each observation raises the stakes and level of discourse.

They also displayed an effort to be sensitive to “difference and differential power across race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and ability.”

Recognizing that “the feminist perspective that drives our analysis does not necessarily translate across cultural difference”, the authors respectfully invited First Nations Women to voice their own memorials within the pages of the book.

*Remembering Women Murdered by Men* serves as both a bold reality check for anyone contemplating a memorial in their community and an inspiration to guide a community in its own meaningful memory making.

<sup>1</sup>The *Cultural Memory Group* consists of Christine Bold, Professor of English at the University of Guelph; Sly Castaldi, Executive Director of the Guelph-Wellington Women In Crisis; Ric Knowles, Professor of Theatre Studies, University of Guelph; Jodie McConnell, Human Rights and Equality Advisor; and Lisa Schincariol, PhD candidate, Communications and Culture, York University.

<sup>2</sup>Memorials in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, The Pas, Chatham, London, Guelph, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Moncton, Riverview and Bear River and the names of the murdered women honoured by these remembrances are addressed in this book.

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