

de Women Action:

C'est par le biais des médias que l'opinion publique est façonnée, orientée et renforcée. Pour cette raison, les médias doivent représenter correctement le pluralisme des images et des discours engendrés par la société, en particulier ceux que produisent les femmes, car elles aussi ont le droit de prendre part aux conversations publiques. Il est donc important que les contenus médiatiques respectent la pluralité de la diversité des voix, des images et des paroles qui favorisent l'équité et la justice entre les sexes.

## A SONG OF LILITH

Joy Kogawa. Artwork by Lilian Broca. Vancouver, BC: Polestar, 2000.

BY SHELAGH WILKINSON

This is a rare book combining strong and effective art work with lyric and compelling poetry. It is not very often that we find a feminist text that fulfills our need to celebrate the lost heroes of woman-centred myths, read epic poetry that gives us new insights into the strength of stories that have been abandoned through patriarchal selective vision—while providing a visual feast of fine drawings that energize and expand the text.

As teachers in Women's Studies courses many of us have used Joy Kogawa's writing to explore feminist issues and this book is again useful in the classroom—especially so because it emphasizes the need to re-examine the biblical stories, paying close attention to the omissions and selections that have re-told the stories' "slant."

Here we celebrate a woman—Lilith—who is "solid, powerfully down-to-earth ... with a great sense of justice and integrity." Lilian Broca, in describing her choice of female

figure type for these drawings, notes that she uses the strong, physically fit woman of our century rather than the traditional renditions of a Lilith who is pallid, ethereal, selfless—an "angel BANISHED from the house." Because of course Lilith is the archetypal rebel. She refuses to become Adam's helpmate, refuses to be controlled, and is evicted from Paradise—the paradise we all know as the patriarchal family. Left to her own devices Lilith becomes a "demon of the race."

But as Kogawa unfolds her story what a demon we meet. This is a woman whose power and integrity leap off the page—an "evil" spirit who is "needful" if the world is to survive. A demon who will not comply with the current model of commercial consumerism. Lilith, in choosing love over money, help over refusal, peace over controversy, is beyond the control of the powerful. Lilith, by embracing self, strength, integrity, and community, shows us the reality of the archetypal woman.

This re-interpretation of an old story by Joy Kogawa explores a new strand of the myth. Kogawa imagines three tempters trying to influence Lilith "to bow to Mammon's might." And Lilith's refusal is one of the most powerful sections of this epic. As she turns her tempters away—who leave, significantly, "to attend the birthing / Of a more compliant creature," we realize that this interpretation of the myth is offering us a blueprint for survival. And survival of the race may well depend on the newly strong, independent woman who understands the basic needs of all people rather than the specific, monetary, needs of the powerful.

This is a compassionate, cautionary tale told by two powerful artists—one in language that is lyric and soaring while remaining strong and rooted in experience; one in drawings of women whose joy in strength, in the physical, make the transformations suggested by the poetry believable. The moral of this

story is seductive rather than brow-beating and that is what gives it power and credibility. More, it is an epic of our very own, told by two women who know the reality of our lives and who share their wisdom about how we should tackle the problems of this new century. Read it—and imagine how this world would be if it was managed by the spirit of the original Lilith.

## GEORGE ELIOT AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Nancy Henry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

BY DEBORAH HELLER

In *George Eliot and the British Empire* Nancy Henry offers a perceptive, knowledgeable account of George Eliot's complex and contradictory relation to the "pervasive and diverse culture of empire" that was developing in mid-nineteenth century England. At the time, however, no coherent concept of empire had yet been formulated, and thus, Henry argues, the "systemic totality of that culture was not perceived or articulated by those who were implicated in it." Henry's approach to George Eliot's involvement in the culture of empire follows several different paths. She first examines George Lewes's and George Eliot's early reviews of first-hand accounts of life in various imperial outposts, and then discusses at some length the personal involvement of Eliot and Lewes in the emigration of Lewes's two younger sons to Natal, South Africa, which she relates to similar parental undertakings by other well-meaning middle-class writers, such as Dickens and Trollope. Additionally, Henry