

at the national versus the congregational level. Similar analysis of other issues at both levels would have been beneficial in demonstrating the extent to which individual communities (versus theoretical bodies) were responsive to the needs of the women, and to what extent responses hinged on generational differences.

Arguably the most noteworthy accomplishment in *Women Without Men* is Epp's discussion of the refugee women's sexual vulnerability. Once their husbands and fathers had been "removed," Mennonite women were vulnerable both to their Soviet oppressors and to the German officers from whom they sought protection. Epp poignantly demonstrates the limits of their agency, noting how some women submitted to "voluntary rape" or "instrumental sex" to achieve a desired end, e.g. to avoid a more violent rape or to ease conditions for other family members. These rapes, she argues, also "reinforced a gender hierarchy" upon the women who had been forced "out of traditional gender roles." She also explores the close link in her subjects' memories between rape and the threat of repatriation, which has become central to the social memory or master narrative of the refugees, exposing how the survivors at once incorporated and depersonalized the rapes.

Although Epp skillfully outlines the difficulties Mennonite refugees had adapting to Canadian Mennonite society, she could have provided more commentary on their adaptation to the larger Canadian society. Such analysis could have explored, for example, whether the female refugees' life experiences more closely approximated the ideas/experiences of non-Mennonite Canadian women. Despite this small criticism, this book is a remarkable achievement. *Women Without Men* is a successful microcosmic study of wartime dislocation and resettlement, made more powerful through Epp's exploration of the distinctly female experience of forced immigration which these women confronted.

LONG SHADOWS: TRUTH, LIES AND HISTORY

Erna Paris.
Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001.

BY SHARON FERGUSON-
HOOD

Erna Paris, in her book, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History*, takes us to places and incidents in our history that we might not want to go to. She writes about denial and the unwillingness to cope with past history. She also offers hope in a world where there often appears to be none.

The first seven chapters explore war, memory, race, and truth and reconciliation. Paris writes about the atrocities of the holocaust in Germany during the Second World War, slavery in the United States, apartheid in Africa, and the recent effects of war on the people of Yugoslavia and Bosnia. The last chapter talks about new genocide, new trials, and the legacy of Nuremberg. Paris' historical research is phenomenal. In order to write this book, she traveled extensively around the world and interviewed numerous people.

The main focus of her book, however, is exploring how we cope with our past history and how we might look at in order to encourage a positive outcome for the future. She speaks with people who are left to cope with their parents' deeds; with people who directly involved with healing and reconciliation; and with people who are embroiled in present day conflicts related to the history. Paris writes,

By the 1990s, all of Adolph Hitler's categories of sub-humans had been acknowledged and memorialized in one way or another by the German government. But there was one class of sufferers the fuhrer had never

imagined: the children and the grandchildren of his loyal footsoldiers who would bear the burdens of their parents' deed.

More than once Erna Paris speaks of how painfully difficult this research process is. Her book is a pursuit of memory and as she talks with people who are remembering, she experiences their pain and her own as well. She also has to cope with those in denial and their outward expression that nothing happened. While reporting these varied responses, Paris is clear that the past will affect generations to come for a very long time.

A surprise in the book for me is the information that Bill Clinton was the only US president to create a task force to explore the possibilities of America apologizing for slavery. The task force was completed but never recognized as a significant piece of work. No action was ever taken to apologize even though information was collected that proved racism to be rampant.

Forgiveness is a thread that winds its way through the book. One woman interviewed says that, "she sees racism in America as a collective weight that very few blacks can throw off." However, in the midst of that she and many others interviewed in this book feel that forgiveness is essential. Paris discovered that forgiveness means different things to different people, with its focus depending on where one lived or what one was dealing with.

Many people said that too much time is wasted on looking back to the past. They felt that we should be looking to the future. In contrast, Paris argued that we must participate in both the past and the future if we are to successfully live together in harmony.

Paris goes to great length to give background information for every country she explores. She explains the history that has led that country to where it is at today; she explores the politics of the country, both past

and present, its religious standards, and how it is coping with hatred, anger, and resolution. The chapters explaining history are long, but what comes out of that history is awareness of the dozens of dynamics that are happening on four continents. Paris doesn't simplify down to just one dynamic.

The chapter regarding Africa and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is notable: it was while reading this chapter that I realized that theological language, involving words like repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, was being used to express concerns and that it had been used throughout the book, although to a much lesser degree. Collective guilt is another issue on which the book comments at length.

This book is a valuable book. No matter where we stand in relation to the atrocities of our own countries, this work will assist us in a new and broader understanding.

A CHORUS FOR PEACE: A GLOBAL ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY BY WOMEN

Marilyn Arnold, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Kristen Tracy, Eds.
Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002.

BY MEGAN HILLMAN

Though not intended to address any particular act of war or any specific act of violence, the publication of *A Chorus For Peace* is particularly apt at this moment in time, a moment in which a "global war on terrorism" is being waged, a moment in which civil liberties are being curbed in the name of "homeland security." This anthology of poetry, which speaks about domestic and international violence, and which gives voice to

the horrors of war and the pains of its aftermath, claims a space be recognised for women who are its victims, its witnesses, its critics, its survivors. While it is disappointing that the editors do not offer an examination of the position/ing of women's voices within non-violence discourses in their introduction, they do argue for the necessity of listening to women's experiences of violence because they "are too often the helpless victims of that violence." But rather than seeing women as passive in the struggle for peace, what Adrienne Rich has elsewhere called being "muffled in silence," *A Chorus For Peace* is a global gathering of women's voices—whispers, cries, songs, shouts for peace—which demand to be heard and joined.

Divided into eight sections which address such themes as the place of children, motherhood, and nature in war, domestic abuse and sexism, the volume opens with Kate Daniels' "War Photograph," a poem which describes the arresting image of a child, surrounded by the carnage of war, running towards the camera—running to us, the observer, another continent away. Like many in the collection, the poem asks for our participation and requires recognition of our culpability, ending with the haunting lines: "How can she know/ what we really are?/ From the distance, we look/ so terribly human." Many of the poems are difficult to read precisely because of this: they offer little solace, they do not traverse well-worn narrative paths. Indeed, this is not a collection of poems which merely repeat that violence is a negative state; instead, the poems here explore the greater complexities and ambiguities of what it means to live amidst violence: the position of the spectator who is able to turn away; the inability of children to maintain their innocence yet who still find relief in their imaginations; of mothers coping with the every-day details of life, insisting their children wear clean underwear lest they bring shame to the family, while

at the same time singing a mother's lament for a better world; of daughters who long for their mothers but who cannot communicate with them; the intense frustration of wasted time, of wasted space, of wasted lives.

The emphasis on nature in the poems—its constancy, its beauty, its purity—offer to the reader a profound sense of hope in the face of despair, and the final section of the anthology, centring on forgiveness, reminds us that grass grows over the killing fields, that there are still those in the world who believe in non-violence, that peace is an attainable, if delicate, state. By bearing witness to the brutality of humanity and by speaking out against the violence in their lives, the poets collected here demonstrate their courage—rejecting, by the very act of writing, the possibility of being destroyed by the violence around them. As Gloria Gervitz insists, "I am intact."

Scanning a wide spectrum of historical violence and mapping an atlas of pain, the editors have selected poems which index the spatial, temporal, and indeed cultural differences of women's experiences of violence, while also blurring such differences by making no reference to the nationality of each writer. Individual and national narratives are woven together to speak a collective voice of anger, fatigue, optimism and hope, writing in a new grammar which articulates the refusal of women to be silenced in war. They remind us that peace is not merely the absence of violence but a "tangible presence," one which must continually be spoken and reinforced. They remind us that women everywhere are vital in the struggle to end violence, and they encourage women to lift up their voices, for as Meiling Jin writes in "Judgement," an international anthem for women, "My poems are all jagged at the edges/ because I am a woman/ who is jagged at the edges/ I speak only of what I know/.../ a cry for justice./ It shatters the universe."