

où il se casse en morceaux silencieux. Doit-on voir dans cette folie passagère, dans le manque de maîtrise de soi et dans l'image d'un simple téléphone portable, un commentaire de l'auteure sur le sort de la femme sans homme, soumise aux gestes et aux faits d'une autre femme?

Les lecteurs avides des oeuvres de Nathalie Stephens trouveront dans ce dernier livre toute la richesse de son style. L'auteure jette la lectrice dans un bourrage de mots qui se battent pour se libérer du corps de manière obsessive. «Cette façon d'écrire est une atteinte à la pudeur,» écrivait-elle avant de se poser la question suivante: «Devant la grossièreté de la mémoire, l'impertinence de l'auteure, comment réagis-tu?» Or l'imposition de phrases longues et ardues défie le sens et indispose la lectrice. Tout au long de son livre, l'auteure nous donne l'impression qu'elle cherche à secouer la lectrice avec ses gros mots, fort inutiles qui servent à soustraire l'âme aux beaux passages dont voici un exemple, poétique: «Le corps en quête de savoir est sans bornes, flirte avec les conventions, fait la cour au chaos, expose ses étendues intimes, l'intuition des mots, l'accouplement des pensées, la huée du pouls à la recherche d'un rythme nouveau.»

Or comment la critique répond-elle à la question posée plus haut? L'auteure peut autant qu'elle le désire réserver son grand talent aux déchets des gros mots ou à des phrases interminables, pourvu qu'elle respecte les règles de la représentation de la langue et ne mène pas en mal la patience de la lectrice et du lecteur.

Où donc est-il passé mon Kamouraska?

DEAR EDITOR AND FRIENDS: LETTERS FROM RURAL WOMEN OF THE NORTH-WEST, 1900-1920.

LIFE WRITING SERIES 4

Norah L. Lewis, Ed. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998.

BY PAM McDERMID

This recent title in the Life Writing series is a great example of our history, both in content and format. More than 100 women speak to us of our history through their letters to the "women's pages" of early 20th-century agricultural newspapers in the four western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia).

It is a fascinating and poignant record, with the issues of the time (racism, property rights, suffrage, etc.) presented in the voices of the women who lived with their impact on an everyday basis. They were not in the forefront of the struggles for change; they were just the extraordinary, ordinary women settlers of this vast part of our country.

The "women's pages" provided a forum for women "as isolated by language, religion, ethnic origin, or deep-rooted prejudices as they were by distance." They expressed their feelings and ideas and learned about the lives of other women in similar situations. The volume also includes some of their photos, an introduction giving an historical context, and a list of additional readings, which encourages further exploration by readers.

Editors of the "pages" were women interested in all aspects of the lives of women and were advocates for improved social, financial, legal, and political conditions. At a time when "women's place is in the home" dominated, the employment of these edi-

tors was, in itself, a strong statement about their interest in changing the status quo.

Women such as Kate Simpson Hayes, first female journalist in the West (*Manitoba Free Press*), Lillian Beynon Thomas who worked closely with Nellie McClung, Francis Marion Beynon (*Grain Grower's Guide*), a dedicated suffragist, and Violet MacNaughton, (*Saturday Press* and *Prairie Farm*, first president of the Saskatchewan Equal Franchise League), understood the problems faced by rural women. They were accessible to women throughout the far-flung communities, and an important source of support. Women's suffrage was not widely endorsed and the editors and their readers added their voices to those of organized labour, feminist reformers and women's organizations.

The letters explicate public issues in a very personal/private way. "I am a very poor woman ... the stamp and paper were given to me by a kind friend.... I live on a farm ... and have most of the work to do for my husband is almost helpless having hurt his back lifting logs" (1900). "I heard a remark made by an Englishman that he would as soon shoot a Scandinavian as an Indian" (1901). "... [T]he time has come when it is necessary for some provision whereby a woman may acquire a homestead without being a widow" (1905). "We decided I should go home and stay with my parents until the birth of our third child After the birth ... I arrived and he told me he did not consider me his wife and to get off his place.... He has not given me one cent" (1908). "I've just discovered that my husband has mortgaged our homestead and the money all paid away" (1912).

"I found men taking work from women and women taking what was left, generally the hardest and the dirtiest.... Now I have made good, people don't seem to think I was unwomanly" (1914). "Before I was married, I worked in an office from 8 to 6 ... I had an occupation....

Now I work from any hour in the morning to any hour at night and I am a woman of 'no occupation'... Are we farmer's wives to be dumb, driven cattle in the eyes of the government?" (1916) "I am only fifteen but that doesn't matter I hope... My mother died last winter, I am keeping house for my eight brothers and sisters" (1918).

By the end of this period, women had achieved the provincial and federal vote with the exception of Aboriginal and Asian women. Some legislation had been enacted to ensure that wives could not be left totally disinherited or homeless. The impact of the devastation of the first world war with its decimation of the male population had begun to be evident and a new period of change began. Throughout, many women derived support from each other through the women's pages and created a history for us to admire.

Dear Editor and Friends would be excellent required reading for any history of Canada, equally useful for a women's studies program and a general interest book for anyone drawn to learning about the proud heritage of Canadian women. The courage and tenacity shown by these letter writers and editors and thousands of other women of that period, made a tremendous contribution to our country. This book helps remind readers of all that we have to celebrate about our grandmothers and women of previous generations.

PAS À PAS POUR CHANGER LE MONDE: MOSAÏQUE EN HOMMAGE AUX LUTTES DES FEMMES DU MONDE

La marche mondiale des femmes en l'an 2000. Montréal: Fédération de femmes du Québec, 2000

PAR JEANNE
MARANDA

En octobre 1998, 143 femmes de 65 pays se rencontrent à Montréal pour préparer la Marche mondiale des femmes de l'an 2000. Les participantes désirent savoir ce que font les femmes d'ailleurs pour combattre la pauvreté et la violence. Elles veulent aussi partager leur propre expérience avec le plus grand nombre possible de femmes. L'idée d'un recueil qui serait une mosaïque d'actions entreprises par des femmes dans le monde entier au chapitre de la pauvreté et de la violence est bien accueilli. Les actions présentées inspireraient d'autres activités d'action populaire et de mobilisation.

En avril 1999, le comité de coordination de la Marche mondiale fait appel par courrier électronique, au comité de liaison international, aux instances de coordination nationale et à bon nombre de groupes participants afin de rassembler des exemples de luttes, de projets et d'actions d'éducation populaire liées aux revendications. Il en reçoit plus d'une certaine.

Les actions retenues pour le recueil sont réparties selon douze thèmes inspirés des revendications et publiés sous le titre «Pas à pas pour changer le monde» sous-titré Mosaïque en hommage aux luttes des femmes du monde. On y parle des économies mondiale, informelle et solidaire, des droits et conditions de travail, des droits et accès aux ressources, d'éducation et de citoyenneté, de violence en temps de guerre et de

conflit armé, de trafic sexuel et de prostitution, de violence conjugale et familiale ainsi que celle justifiée par les traditions et les coutumes. Enfin on parle de santé reproductive et du contrôle du corps et des droits des lesbiennes.

Ce recueil est traduit en trois langues, français, anglais et espagnol et est disponible pour la somme de dix dollars (\$10) auprès de la FFQ au 110 rue Ste-Thérèse, Montréal, Québec H2Y 1E5.

WOMEN AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN CANADA

Manon Tremblay and Caroline Andrew, Eds. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998.

BY CHRISTINE
SAULNIER

The twelve articles in this collection were originally presentations at a conference of the same name held at the University of Ottawa in September 1994. The authors address tensions within feminist activism and scholarship, such as between women's organizations and the government (see Sandra Burt's thorough analysis of the legacy of the CACSW), and regarding the mandate of feminist organizations themselves. Sue Findlay analyzes how the "politics of representation" itself constrains possible strategies because it is really about being recognized by the state. Accordingly, even strategies aimed at "more and better representation" are problematic because they only extend the same politics in which a ruling class of feminists who have skills as lobbyists, policy analysts, etc. is created. The tension is thus over