

critically ill babies at Sick Children's Hospital as evil mothers and torturers and so the only logical murderers. More pervasive and also some distance from the reality of nursing practice, were the premises derived from the well-known stereotype of nurses as the servants or handmaidens of physicians. These beliefs allowed inquiry officials to sustain the view that nurses caring for babies with life-threatening illnesses neither think nor act on their own. Their work is simply responsive to the directives of physicians. In a like manner, no nurses should be credited with possessing expertise on nursing practice since physicians are the overall authorities on all aspects of hospital care.

Mary O'Brien acted as a back-room consultant to RNAO officials involved in representing nursing interests in the Grange proceedings. However, her greatest influence on surrounding events may have come from the lessons in gender politics she provided to Ontario nurse opinion leaders two years earlier. Comprising a critical mass of nurses right across the province, they were much quicker in seeing and speaking to the public on the personal and professional implications of the Grange Inquiry than their colleagues in other provinces. It seems fair to suggest that it was not simply a function of the greater immediacy of events surrounding the Grange Inquiry to Ontario nurses. It was also their greater appreciation of gender roles and the exercise of power. Mary O'Brien's lessons had taken hold.

If she were to deliver her address anew, she would, perhaps, express her despair at how nurses' gains of the 1980s have evaporated in the face of the rapid restructuring of hospitals and the market ideologies driving health care reform. She would also have some trenchant words to offer on the dynamics by which nurses are being squeezed into ever narrower corners by labour practices built on the assumptions that they are mainly a cost to be minimized rather than knowledgeable and skilled practitioners. However, the "we-ness" that she saw as the foundation for the pursuit of good health has not come unravelling. The new politics of nursing which she helped to shape continues to thrive. I believe that she would say about this, as she did then, "my we-ness springs proudly to life."

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MARY O'BRIEN

VIII

Do I think people are shitty?
Well yes I do
but that's all right
as long as I can turn my trenchant
tongue
upon myself.

Do I see around a lot of crap?
I guess I do
and that's O.K.
as long as I can look with mordant eye
into myself.

And strangely, sometimes as I turn
sardonic face
to someone else
I feel, surprised, the brush of lips and
taste
the salt of joy.

XVIII

Scream protest
cut the cruddy clay
from futile feet.
There's no way now
for me to say
 Me, Too
worse than red-necked growling
from those who live
in hot clay graves stretched empty
but we
who might have staged a rendezvous
interlocking
with phantom grace
in conquered space
 that's the gap
 not empty
crammed with little liberals
intoxicated
with complacent draughts of mea culpa.

Comes the revolution
we shall be first
to be lined up
against the wall.