

grated framework on care and justice to two issues in Netherlands law and politics: child custody and health-care policies. These case studies elucidate her approach and provide an interesting comparison to Canadian experience.

Sevenhuijsen's book provides a stimulating account of the potential of integrating care into conceptions of democratic citizenship and social justice. Fundamentally she argues that a feminist ethic of care offers a radical alternative to the liberal justice idiom—a relational image of human nature, not an atomistic, individualized one. Her book makes an important contribution to legal and healthcare issues and more generally to what it means to live, work and participate in a democratic society.

### **A DANCE WITH DEATH: CANADIAN WOMEN ON THE GALLOWES 1754-1954**

Frank W. Anderson. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1996.

**BY CHRIS MCCORMICK**

Over 100 women have received the death sentence in Canada during its short history, for crimes ranging from theft to murder. *A Dance with Death* is a fascinating account of some of those women. Anderson limits the book to looking at those cases where a defendant was convicted of murder, and where a new trial was not ordered on appeal. In the 49 cases dealt with in this book, the sentences were commuted in 31 instances, and in 18 cases the women died on the gallows.

At the time of writing this book, the author must have been 80 years of age. He received his MSW in 1957, and was appointed to the National Parole Board in 1974.

However, perhaps what most distinguishes his career is that, with his wife Edna, he began Frontier Books in 1960, chronicling western history and winning many awards in the process. It is in small regional presses that the history of Canada is being preserved.

This book is very much a chronicle, divided up into various categories of murder: poisoners, murder for profit, love and profit, and infanticide, for example. It is an easy read, belying with its style its macabre topic. However it is a chronicle written from a point of view that leaves me wanting more. What I was hoping for in reading this book was some understanding of why women commit murder. Most women, when they kill, kill members of their families, but they constitute a small percentage of all murderers. In 1996, for example, of almost 500 cases of homicide that were cleared by the police, 90 per cent were committed by men. If so few murders are committed by women, what drives them to kill their children and their husbands?

In many of cases there are "good" reasons for the lethal crimes that women commit. For example, it is now recognized that sometimes women kill in self defence, even when they are not facing an imminent threat, in reaction to men who abuse them in the first place. Canada is virtually unique in recognizing the so-called "battered woman's defence." Similarly, since 1948, Canada has separated the killing of children under one year of age into the special category of infanticide, recognizing that there might be medical reasons for this crime which require a different treatment from the criminal justice system.

What is novel about this book is the focus on women killers. However, including more of their voices would have fleshed out the accounts. For example, there is the case of Sophie Bosclair, the first woman known to have used poison in committing a homicide. In 1866 she was convicted

of murdering her husband and lover's wife, but we don't know what her words of defence were. Her sentence was commuted to life, her child was taken from her, and after she served her full 20 years she was released with "unsound mind" and died in poverty. We never find out if her crime was motivated by unusual lust or abuse, or if it was more mundane, based in a more common unhappiness or despair.

In the case of Marie McCabe, orphaned at the age of six in 1871, there was little doubt about the motive. She drowned her child in a cistern in 1883 because her employer found it difficult that she was a single mother. She knew that her troubles would only continue as long as she had her child. And while she admitted that she had "done a bad deed," her case was treated with leniency, and after serving over five years she was released into charity. More of the discourse with which her case was dealt would strengthen the account, and help us understand the morality of the time.

In conclusion, while overall we don't get access to the offenders' viewpoint this book is rich with details of cases which would otherwise fade into obscurity. While it would benefit more from the accounts of the women themselves, it includes a great deal that is missing in criminology textbooks.

### **MURIEL DUCKWORTH: A VERY ACTIVE PACIFIST**

Marion Douglas Kerans. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996.

**BY JANET FREEMAN**

Gloria Steinem once wrote about the lack of positive public role models for western women to look to as they consider their senior years. Canadian women need look no further than *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active*