

one of the few occupations still open to women.

The text traces the presumed stages of a woman's life: courtship, marriage, and widowhood. There is also a chapter on spinsterhood, as the eighteenth century saw a rise in the number of women living alone; Hill indicates how difficult a time this was for single or widowed women, given restricted economic opportunities.

Hill explores the consequences of the law on labouring women. Feminist scholars are no doubt familiar with the subordinate position of married women in general under the law, but a lot of working people were never legally married, and so their relationship to the legal system was a very different one from that of the middle and upper classes. For instance, Hill makes a comparison between the costly divorces of the upper classes, and the working-class "wife sales" that continued well into the nineteenth century.

The implications of Hill's conclusions are far-reaching: as for the contraction of women's economic role in the period, Hill quotes one commentator who maintains that women had not even recovered by 1975.² In closing she addresses the relationship of women's history to the rest of history and strongly argues the need for integration. Hill contextualizes her study within the historical tradition; in the preface, she writes that the text "is an attempt to bring [social and women's history] together." Such a project is especially important now in light of renewed interest in the eighteenth century. Solid, grounded, and scholarly, this is the type of text to which one returns again and again. It is rich in fascinating detail, and presents a fine model for an integrative approach to class and gender. Hill begins *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* with reference to Pinchbeck's influential 1930s text. No doubt her own work will fill that niche for years to come.

¹Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. Rpt. London: Virago, 1981.

²Eric Roberts, "Women in the British Economy Since About 1700: An Interpretation," cit. Hill 261.

CARING AND CURING: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN AND HEALING IN CANADA

Dianne Dodd and Deborah Gorham, eds. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994.

by Sara Leiserson

Caring and Curing provides a long awaited collection of contributions on women and health care in Canada. This book reproduces seven historical accounts from 1880 to the present. Caring is linked to the domestic role of women and motherhood which later evolves publicly into nursing, while curing, on the other hand, is related to men. The term "medicine man," is far more common than that of "medicine woman." At present, these restricted ideas are beginning to change and empirical research is showing that the only success stories in healing are the ones where "caring" and "curing" work together.

Academic feminist research on caring has been showing the transition from unpaid informal care to a paid formal one, beginning with the unpaid informal care within the family networks based on marriage. The domestic realm of caring moved openly into the public realm during the First World War when women were needed to take care of the injured. From the start these women "... challenged mainstream medicine by giving nursing care, midwifery and prevention a more prominent place."

The book begins with three authors who explore nursing history. Beverly Boutilier, Meryn Stuart, and Kathryn McPherson offer an enlightening approach on modernized, professionalized nursing and its contribution to health care in Canada. Among other things, their work ex-

poses the fact that professionalization in nursing offered middle-class Canadian women a role in the public sphere with compensation and some degree of publicly authorized skill and authority. However, while nurses' self-identity was challenging mainstream medicine, nurses remained subordinate to physicians.

The next three papers recount the evolution of midwifery in Canada. J.T.H. Connor peruses the views of male physicians on midwifery in the nineteenth century; Dianne Dodd's chapter is interested in the views of the pioneer female physician Dr. Helen MacMurchy on maternity care; and lastly, Denyse Baillargeon surveys a group of working-class Montreal housewives of the 1930s who responded to the medicalization of maternity care.

These accounts show that contrary to popular belief women at the turn of the century were resisting the male chauvinistic medical system. Both Meryn Stuart's examination of a public health nursing project, and Denyse Baillargeon's analysis of a group of working-class Montreal housewives, demonstrate that those women did not passively adopt all the new ways that modern "experts" attempted to impose upon them.

The next chapter talks about an important but neglected group of women, the laywomen health reformers who were the connection between medical professionals and their patients. Their advocacy of health reform, and their advancement of the medicalization of child and maternal health, stresses the origin of public health. Baillargeon notes that the modern version of women's visiting is a result of public health with the emphasis on living a healthy lifestyle, religious commitment, prevention of illness, and a focus on education within the family. We owe to women reformers the visiting nurses' organizations, born to prevent infant and maternal mortality.

The last chapter by Deborah Gorham shows facets of women's experiences as physicians in training and in practice during the second half

of the twentieth century. With the large amount of women entering the medical profession, Gorham wonders what the increase will mean for the women themselves, and for the practice of medicine. The author points out that even today sex segregation is a factor in the medical profession. Generally, women will be found in family practice, paediatrics, and obstetrics and gynaecology, while men dominate the prestigious specializations of surgery and biomedical engineering. Gorham's paper points to the fact that the history of women and health care proclaims significant connections between health reform and feminism.

There is a commonality throughout the book: women were forced to accept the male professionalized model of medicine, but the transition from healing as a domestic role to healing as a male-dominated medical profession did not happen without a fight.

LES SILENCES DU PALAIS

Film en coproduction Franco-Tunisie, réalisé par Moufida Tlatli.

par Jeanne Maranda

Ils sont ravageurs les silences du Palais. Ils sont omniprésents dans ce film où la mère ne sait pas parler à sa fille, où les amants se parlent par gestes, par de silencieuses étreintes, où les couples légitimes n'ont rien à se dire. Pourtant ce n'est pas un film muet, les femmes babillent, chantent, badinent, se taquent entre elles. Elles veulent oublier leur position de subalternes, ces filles jadis vendues pour répondre aux diktats d'une société où régnait la division des classes et des sexes.

Les femmes d'un côté, les hommes de l'autre. Au Palais, les femmes riches en grand décolleté mangent des petits fours, assises en rond dans un grand salon, silencieuses, alors que les hommes coiffés de leur cheschia et

portant kaftan, jouent sur le tapis vert, silencieux eux aussi.

Et dans la cuisine les servantes s'affairent à préparer les grands banquets. Il n'y a pas de chef cuisinier, pas d'hommes dans cette cuisine. Tout en plumant les volailles, les femmes disent leurs frustrations, leur isolement, en même temps, elles se réjouissent d'être ensemble et de se sentir moins seules. De très beaux moments.

Tout le long du film on ne peut que s'indigner du mépris total de la femme qui est exprimé par une indifférence et une violence qui nous surprennent. Même les plus riches sont traitées comme de vulgaires objets de service. Quant aux plus pauvres, les servantes, elles sont constamment au travail, pendant que les hommes flânent, rêvent, mollement étendus et attendent l'épouse ou la favorite. Les hommes sont inactifs sauf quand ils s'approprient le corps des femmes. Que de violence! Leur pouvoir se manifeste jusque chez le jeune couple, alors que l'amoureux de Elia lui refuse l'enfant qu'elle porte sous prétexte qu'elle est chanteuse et ne doit pas sacrifier sa carrière.

C'est un film qui choque en 1997, mais la réalisatrice y a mis tellement de tendresse et d'émotion, elle nous a rendu ces femmes si attachantes, qu'on les prend en pitié et on souhaite ardemment qu'elles se libèrent d'un joug qui a vécu. Elles le méritent bien.

MON COEUR EST TÉMOIN

Recherche, scénario, réalisation, Louise Carré. Production Québec-Tunisie, documentaire de 82 minutes, 1996.

par Jeanne Maranda

Il ya déjà six ans que Louise Carré, cinéaste québécoise, réfléchit à la condition des femmes dans les pays arabes. Une recherche effectuée en Tunisie l'an dernier, l'a fait rencontrer quinze femmes et trois hommes qui ont

accepté de témoigner sur leur condition de vie et leur position face aux édits de la religion musulmane.

A écouter les témoignages des invitées du Mali, de la Tunisie, de l'Algérie, du Maroc et de la sous-secrétaire d'Etat à l'Éducation du Koweït, les femmes du Sud ont fait de grands pas vers l'émancipation. Elles-mêmes ont fait des études universitaires et occupent des postes qui leur permettent d'aider leurs consoeurs, car toutes savent que la liberté et l'autonomie des femmes arabes passent par l'éducation. Mais il reste beaucoup à faire et elles sont sûrement nombreuses celles qui comme la jeune Najat Lahrim du Maroc, quitteront leur profession pour épouser un musulman. La tête couverte de son "hijab", Najat témoigne avec fierté. "Je lui suis soumise, c'est mon devoir, je suis fidèle au Coran." Et le témoignage de Issa Diakite du Mali, polygame qui se vante d'avoir quatre femmes, toutes très utiles pour faire fonctionner sa ferme. "Elles sont travaillantes et ne posent pas trop de questions!"

Heureusement que deux hommes, Noumedine Ayoush, journaliste au Maroc et Youcef Fates écrivain d'Algérie, tous deux alliés de la cause féministe, nous rassurent avec leur attitude plus progressiste envers les femmes!

Ce documentaire nous donne une image optimiste des femmes arabes parce que les porte-parole ont réussi à s'en sortir et elles croient que c'est possible pour le plus grand nombre. Combien de temps faudra-t-il aux autres, à celles qui vivent encore dans des conditions d'esclavage, de maladie, de pauvreté, sans oublier leurs maternités nombreuses, pour connaître la même liberté? Pouvons-nous les aider à se réaliser?

Les belles images poétiques de ce film nous touchent et nous interpellent. C'est à nous du Nord, de réagir face à ce qu'il nous est donné de soupçonner de la vie des femmes du Sud. Elles sont encore bien loin de leur autonomie.