They yelled my name with threats of violence to my body—fists shaking, spitting their anger, eager to use the force of their hands to stop me.
noticeable, has moved away from the
door that separates us from them.
Those purple-ribboned women have
taken care of everything, including me. Shaking, prideful, we smile into
each other’s eyes. Witches all.
I ask the bravest, the woman who
had been most able at the time to
move out with speed, strength, and
clear thinking, to give me the ribbon
from her arm.
I’ve had it for years now, always in
sight in my room, tied on my desk
lamp, tied on the glass handle of my
closet door.
Now it’s gone. It might even have
been me who threw it away in the
haze of my past illness of spirit.
Nowadays, I am often spirited again.
I want that ribbon in my room. It is
in my bones, I want the world to be a
more habitable place for women.
Working against gender oppression
is not an affectation of guilt or long-
ing. It is not a layering that I may
some day shed. It is fundamental to
the meaning of my life. I do see
purple-ribboned women around me
and unless I find that ribbon in these
boxes that will have to do.

Postscript
In January 1988, the Supreme Court
of Canada declared the abortion law
unconstitutional; a violation of wom-
en’s rights. The case before the court
was one of the series of criminal
charges made against doctors per-
forming abortions in free-standing
clinics in Ontario and Quebec.
A few days after I wrote my first
draft of this telling, I unpacked the
purple ribbon. I was jubilant. Tacked
to my bulletin board, it is a rumpled
reminder as I edit.

This is a true story. Nikki Colodny,
psychotherapist and physician, is the
only woman in Canada to have been
arrested and charged for choosing to
practice civil disobedience by perform-
ing abortions in defiance of Section 251
of the Criminal Code. Her ongoing
work as an abortion provider and con-
sultant continues to improve access to
safe, supportive abortion services.

Room of One’s Own
PO Box 46160, Station D
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6J 5G5

Myth, folklore, and fairy tales — the
geography of gender — persistent
desire — literary criticism. Canada’s
oldest feminist literary journal
offers up some of the best poetry,
prose, creative documentary, es-
says, and book reviews around. Get
a little Room of your own:

1994 subscription prices:
Canadian individuals:
$20 for 1 year
$35 for 2 years
Canadian institutions:
$24 yearly
Individuals outside Canada:
$30 for 1 year
$45 for 2 years
Institutions outside Canada:
$35 yearly

Sample issues available
$7 in Canada
$9 outside Canada

Special and double issues
individually priced.

Centre for Women’s Studies and Feminist Research

CONFERENCE

KNOWING

POLITICS

Between Feminist Theory and Feminist Activism

October 27 - 30, 1994
London Convention Centre - 300 York Street, London, Ontario, Canada

Registration fee: employed...$50  unemployed, underemployed, student...$20
For information and registration materials please contact
Centre for Women’s Studies and Feminist Research
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, N6A 3K7
Tel (519) 661-3759, Fax (519) 661-3491

The University of Western Ontario, Canada