

existing power politics of patriarchal capitalism. Those engaged in the debate for political reasons are implicitly patronised in his work as fools or misguided pedants. Moreover, he uses the terms "pornography" and "erotica" interchangeably without defining them. It seems strange, indeed, that this debate has been largely driven by a guiding precept that deems pornography a monolith. This is, however, far from the case. The most theoretical and academic anthology examined here, *Dirty Looks*, underlines pornography's Janus-faced nature: for women, it functions both as a mode of imprisoning objectification and an outlaw discourse. While Angela Carter foregrounded the fact in *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* that "most pornography remains in the service of the status quo," it is also possible for pornography to function as an instrument that destabilises the official culture.

Just as narratives chronicling female desire have changed the way women see themselves in the world, so too must feminist pornographic narratives be produced in order to counter those already existing, culturally-scripted stories that tend to locate woman in the position of object of desire. Desiring sexual subjects like porn-artist Annie Sprinkle, Susie Bright, and Madonna, have manipulated pornographic representations in a transgressive fashion in a concerted effort to alter prevailing conceptions of woman as passive sexual object. In this debate's terms, however, their non-violent, non-degrading, and non-humiliating representations are more aptly described as "erotic." Women consume an increasing number of pornographic videos, and radical alternations in their content are ongoing. This has certainly generated a variety of responses from feminists which, according to Cameron and Frazer, is a healthy sign—"it is important for feminists to go on analysing and criticizing pornography, if only because it provides such a clear illustration of the themes (transcendence, transgression,

mastery) that are also to be found in the other cultural products" that help to mold our sexualities. The extent to which "pornographers," male and female, are complicit in fostering outdated and debilitating stereotypes must be constantly assessed and criticised if progress is to be made. If our voices are a little weak, our buying power will speak loud and clear.

The ongoing, heated pornography debate, then, is not as misguided as some believe. Miscommunication and an unwillingness to listen have often impeded dialogue. Ironically, feminists on both sides of the question share similar visions of woman's social progress. How to effect these advancements and what our top priorities should be, however, are bones of contention. Nonetheless, there has been consensus on certain issues. For one, the ongoing examination of visual and textual representations of women is a crucial feminist concern that must be extended beyond pornography and fostered along more than academic lines. Furthermore, the "real" people involved in producing pornography have often been left out of the debate. The stigmatisation of women who work in the sex industry has been detrimental to feminist aims. Although he overlooks the importance of feminist critiques of representation, Arcand correctly outlines that a radical shift in attitude towards those women is long overdue: "it has been suggested that the most useful struggle would be to examine the working conditions, form unions, and negotiate collective agreements to address such concrete questions as unemployment insurance, air conditioning, noise, hours, AIDS prevention, retirement funds, and so on. In short, to bring the same kind of help and understanding to the sex industry as has been brought to any other workplace, and to stop seeing it as exceptional."

To best acquaint yourself with the debate, read selections from Itzin's comprehensive volume (it has an extraordinary bibliography), alongside *Sex Exposed* edited by Segal and McIntosh. Despite its refusal to

contextualise the issue in contemporary terms, Arcand's book provides a very good overview of the subject. If arguing the more academic points of a topic like S&M turns you on, read *Dirty Looks*. Diana Russell's *Making Violence Sexy* has a wonderful introductory essay and is especially good on providing experiential material from women involved in the industry. The series of articles outlining various actions, both humorous and grave, that feminists have or should have used in their fight against pornography is innovative and gives one a great deal of food for thought.

If we put our collective purses behind our principles, and foster a concerted vocal and visual offensive on the representation front, pornography can be beaten into erotic submission.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR BODY

Dr. Carolyn DeMarco, Winlaw, British Columbia: *The Well Women Press*, 1994.

by *Rona Achilles*

Carolyn DeMarco is a courageous woman. Trained as a traditional M.D., she veered from the dominant medical model and ventured into alternative therapies. She is now a proficient alternative practitioner with a background in traditional medicine. Even more courageously, she has written a book which presents the treatment options of both worlds in a balanced fashion. For health consumers (usually women) who are navigating their way through mainstream and alternative solutions to medical problems, this book is a gold mine.

"Should I tell my obstetrician that I am seeing a homeopath?" a friend asked me recently. Since I knew the physician personally, my advice leaned towards not telling. Fragmented health care is neither a good idea nor a pleasant experience but surveys indicate that Canadians are increasingly using both mainstream

and alternative or complementary medicine in order to solve their health care problems.¹ The relationship between these two services, overall, is not friendly and is in some instances hostile. Generally speaking the hostility tends to come from mainstream practitioners who may be cynical, uninformed, or threatened by alternative therapies. Negotiating the relationship between these health care services is a quagmire that too many of us are familiar with. We need both. How long will it take before we live in a world that values and acknowledges the merit of both approaches? De Marco's book is a landmark on the road to this inevitable future.

The information in this book is terrific and a welcome addition to the scarce resources for women's health care on this practical level. It includes the usual sections on reproductive health care such as pregnancy, PMS, menopause, and vaginal infections. Of special note is a section on chlamydia, a symptomless (in women) sexually transmitted disease now reaching epidemic proportions in certain age groups. It also includes the not so usual, stressing the impact of emotional burdens and overwork prevalent in so many women's lives in the 1990s. One hour a day to yourself is her golden rule of mental health. (Ha! Now there's a challenge for working mothers!) Particularly welcome is her attention to grief, outlining the numerous losses (e.g. miscarriage or the loss of a dream) women encounter and require time to process in the face of cultural denial of their importance. Other welcome sections provide otherwise difficult to access information about postpartum thyroid problems, gallbladder problems, fibrocystic breast disease, and lesbian health care.

All of the issues addressed are introduced with careful explanations of how problems develop, what research is available, and the various treatment options, both mainstream and within alternative therapies. With such useful content, however, it is unfortunate that more time was not

spent in organizing the material in a more accessible manner. At times the information about research gets tedious and a good editor could have remedied this easily with a different organization of the same material. On the same note, although this fifth edition of this valuable book is more polished than its predecessors, the formatting is not only unpleasant aesthetically but not conducive to easy reading, with one sentence paragraphs and haphazard spacing.

I have one more small quibble. The beliefs that the book is built on include the statement that "Your body is perfectly constructed for your enjoyment and benefit, whether you decide to have children or not." This is a nice sentiment but as a philosophy requires some fine-tuning. It's just not true. Some of us are born with or acquire deficiencies through a variety of different events, biological or otherwise. We are not all born with perfectly functioning organs and balanced metabolisms. Isn't that the wonder of naturopathy, that, for example, a genetically weak liver can be managed through different remedies and herbs? But this is a minor flaw in an enormously helpful and timely effort. I'm happy to have a copy of this book for my library shelf where it now sits next to the *Boston Women's Health Collective* volumes and Mary Breen's *Taking Care*.

¹Canada Health Monitor, March 18, 1991, cited in Mickelburg, 1991, *The Globe and Mail*, March 19, pp. A1, A6; Government of Quebec, *Reform of the Health and Social Services Network*, unofficial English version, December 7, 1990, pp. 28-29.

THE HYSTERECTOMY HOAX

Stanley West, M.D. with Paula Dranov, Toronto: Doubleday, 1994.

by Jan Clarke

The Hysterectomy Hoax focuses on gynecological and treatment infor-

mation for health conditions often treated surgically with a hysterectomy. The aim of this work is to encourage women to become more informed as patients, specifically to "give you ammunition to defend yourself against hysterectomy." (13) The ammunition provided assumes that when women are informed patients, armed with current gynecological and treatment information, they are able to make medical choices and avoid unnecessary operations like hysterectomies.

Stanley West emphasizes that unnecessary hysterectomies should be avoided because a woman's uterus is neither a nuisance nor a useless organ outside of reproduction. By pointing out that hysterectomy is only an appropriate treatment for cases of uterine cancer, West argues that 90 per cent of hysterectomies in the US are unnecessary. This argument is supported by a critical analysis of hysterectomy surgery as an overpracticed and inadequately questioned surgical procedure. This analysis is based on West's clinical experience as a gynecologist, a critical review of the medical literature, and descriptions of health conditions frequently mistreated by gynecologists.

To demonstrate that options other than hysterectomy surgery are often difficult to find, West draws on his patients' previous experiences with other doctors who promote hysterectomy treatment for a broad spectrum of women's health problems. In West's critique of diverse research and studies in the medical literature, he provides some insightful analyses which go beyond conventional medical explanations to include a degree of social analysis. But while many sources are cited, there are no systematic footnotes or complete references listed to encourage further reading. This omission is a serious oversight in a book that claims to offer women gynecological knowledge as a resource for challenging doctors.

While a thorough description of women's reproductive system explains gynecological terms and physiological processes, West should take