

d'araignée existe, à travers elle s'écoulent des larmes, «des doigts crochus/découpent la vie pour l'enfant» et

le bois vieilli craque
sans réveiller les abeilles.

Dans la partie nommée *À l'horizontale* éclate une douleur jusqu'alors sous-jacente. C'est l'opposition binaire terre/sol qui va être évoquée pour exprimer la souffrance du jour et l'«odeur de solitude» recélées par les regards dépourvus d'horizon.

La cinquième section, *Fragilité dans l'espace*, retourne aux mots «joués aux dés des ombres» pour exhaler leur fragilité et à la parole «cerceau de silence». Pour l'auteure les mots semblent être en sursis, le poète un acrobate de la contradiction et l'aube une esquisse ou la vie se débat comme un poisson irréel hors de l'eau.

La lecture de ce recueil se fait en filigrane, il nous faut deviner entre les lignes ce qui est dit. Le «je» de l'auteure s'efface, rarement apparaît-il pour exprimer sa soif déversée dans la conscience végétale. En une volonté de distance, ce «je» dissimulé de la femme semble dénoncer l'égoïsme de notre société, qui l'écourte, réduisant son identité à un jeu de salamandre. Dans cette première partie du recueil la parole est cernée de silence, elle exprime, solitaire, le cri de la poétesse dans l'abîme.

La deuxième partie débute par la section, la plus courte du recueil, *Le balancé des tournesols*. Ici, le songe est libérateur de l'ennui, et nous ressentons dans «Point de fuite» une expression de bien-être au contact de la nature, malgré la violence ressentie par l'auteure «à l'assise du verbe».

La section suivante, *Ne freine pas qui veut*, qui est une succession de sept jours, est hermétique. Le rythme est court, entrecoupé d'images parsemées, souvent sans raccord, en une sorte de gratuité. On retrouve toujours le thème de cette solitude qui mène, le septième jour, au retour salvateur de la voyelle «au rythme de la mémoire».

Dans la section *Murmure d'écoute*, l'angoisse de la femme se précise, le «je» si rare revient et nous emporte dans ce que nous partageons en commun, cette peur du vide des rues la nuit. Cette hantise de «l'ombre au longs bras» qui «se faufile», écrit l'auteure, «en mon intérieur barricadé». Le silence, la solitude et la peur mènent à l'angoisse comme à la folie et éloignent du bonheur

je m'accroche aux meubles
parmi les ombres
fusillées.

Des images viennent ramener des échos tragiques

la peur silencieuse
(à ne jamais oublier)
dans les trains hurlant la
mort.

Dans l'avant dernière section, *La salive du rêve*, l'auteure se demande où «la mouette de l'exil/pourrait bien poser/son cri de marée» alors que le langage expire dans la solitude et que le large alimente «ses plis de mers». L'auteure semble être, ici, à la recherche d'un port d'amarre qui donnerait un goût aux songes, un «asile de corail» qui permettrait de fuir l'horizon et ses vagues de douleurs.

L'auteure termine le recueil sur *La brèche du poème*, sur cette «parole friable», grâce à laquelle elle «apprivoise l'invisible».

Je dirais que l'écriture d'Odette Parisien, inspirée par celles de Jacques Brault, Saint-John Perse et Gabrielle Poulin, est pleine d'imprévus métaphoriques, de compositions de mots intéressantes et de contenu sémantique. Cette écriture, où l'image et le sens essaient de battre la mesure, me rappelle la poésie de l'écrivaine franco-espagnole Marie-Jo Arey, prise elle aussi par la mer, mais présentant un rythme moins contenu qui mord visiblement la décharge de la vie. Odette Parisien se veut authentique et son langage imprégné de voyelles, marqué de mer, semble se vouloir, ici, traversier des thèmes de la femme, de l'enfance, de la nature, de la solitude

et du silence. Afin de conclure cette analyse critique je donnerai le mot de la fin à l'auteure qui a su si bien définir son écriture

sans fil sans fin
répand
paroles d'eau
mots de marée.

WOMEN OF THE 14TH MOON: WRITINGS ON THE MENOPAUSE

Dena Taylor and Amber Coverdale Sumrall, eds. Freedom, California: The Crossing Press, 1991.

EACH IN HER OWN WAY: WOMEN WRITING ON THE MENOPAUSE

Elizabeth Claman, ed., Eugene, Oregon: Queen of Swords Press, 1994.

by Norma Harris

Statistics show that by the year 2,000, approximately 4 million Canadian women will be entering, or in their menopause, so the recent publication of two volumes exploring women's experience in this '14th moon phase' of their life, both from a poetic and factual viewpoint, is timely and fills a much needed void.

Women of the 14th Moon takes its title from one of the pieces in the collection by Eleanor Piazza. "If there are thirteen moons in a given year, a woman who has not had a period for a year will begin a new phase of her life upon the fourteenth moon."

The collection leans perhaps too heavily on factual stories which have a tendency to become repetitive.

Thankfully, it is punctuated with good poetry which transforms some of the more mundane realities of menopause into wonderful imagery and removes some of the tedium of hearing about yet another 'hot flash' (or flush), mood swing, excessive bleeding, estrogen replacement therapy, etc., etc.

Menopause, to a woman in 'full flush', pardon the pun, can be an all encompassing absorption, almost an obsession for those who move through it at a snail's pace, experiencing all the symptoms of hormonal surges. For some, their batteries seem half-spent, for others their batteries are on constant charge and they will come out literally crackling with electricity and eager to move on to their new and unencumbered lives.

Most of the women writing in *Women of the 14th Moon* fall into the latter category; the 'whiners' are mercifully few, but most lay heavy blame on the medical professional for a lack of sympathy and understanding of their problems.

Ann Mankowitz, in an interesting essay called "The Neglected Crisis," points out that in the Roman Empire the life expectancy of a woman was twenty-five; in the fifteenth century it was thirty years of age and by Victorian times it was still only forty-five. In light of these statistics it isn't hard to understand why society, history, mythology and religion have been so neglectful of the menopausal woman—why, until now, there has been so little written about this period in a woman's life.

Elizabeth Claman, the editor of *Each In Her Own Way*, has been a little more rigorous in her selection of material than the editors of *Women of the 14th Moon*. The volume begins with two quite vibrant, almost 'bloody' poems, literally written at the full-flood of menopause, followed by two interesting post-menopausal pieces that talk more of memories.

These head up the section, "Blood Journey, The Body's Transformations." The poems are then followed by a "Menopause Diary" by Celia Tesdall, and an evocative poem by Rachel Loden called "The Stripper":

i begin
to pare my body,
rolling the soft breast
down to the belly, over the hips,
peeling down my legs
until my body lies
in a circle around my ankles...

In "Clearing The Path," the second section which deals with changing relationships the writers see their daughters ripen as they themselves age, they see husbands change, as in the wonderful poem by Elizavietta Ritchie, "Clearing The Path":

My husband gave up shovelling
snow at forty-five because, he
claimed, that's when heart attacks
begin.
Since it snowed regardless, I—
mere forty—took the shovel, and
dug. Now fifty, still it falls on me
to clean the walk.

He's gone to warmer climes and
younger loves, who will, I guess, keep
shovelling for him.

The last section of the book, "Matriarchs Grow Old, Wise Women," is perhaps one of the most satisfying sections. Faye Moskowitz has written a moving essay, "The Matriarchs Grow Old, My Models," which relates the passing of an ageing aunt, and records her own feelings about the process of growing old.

A story, "Between Floors," by Hannah Wilson, relates the story of a woman in an Old Folks' Home who finds out by accident how to stop the elevator between floors. Much to the outrage of her daughter, she escapes there when she feels like some privacy either to read or write letters. It's a

touching story which says much about the dignity of old age.

WORKING WITH WOMEN AND AIDS: MEDICAL, SOCIAL AND COUNCELLING ISSUES

Judy Bury, Val Morrison and Sheena McLachlan, eds., London: Routledge, 1992.

by *Darien Taylor*

Working with Women and AIDS is an interesting but uneven collection of essays produced out of four conferences held by the Scottish Women and HIV/AIDS Network between 1988 and 1991.

In the early 1980s, the Scottish public health system "solved" the challenge of HIV and drug use by restricting access to needles. As a result of this disastrous decision, Scotland has a disproportionate number of women infected with HIV compared to other developed countries, many of whom continue to use drugs.

By concentrating on the AIDS epidemic as it affects Scottish women, *Working with Women and AIDS* produces a serious and informative discussion of the issues of women who use injection drugs. But missing from this collection are the issues of visible minority women, of women from various ethnocultural communities, and of lesbians and bisexual women.

Working with Women and AIDS is accurate and current. For women who are looking to educate themselves about these issues, this book is a fair source. But for women who are already working in the field, there is not much that is new. The overall tone is polite and cautious, with certain welcome exceptions, like Edith Springer's strong, angry essay on women with HIV/AIDS in the United States, or

Correction

CWS/ct regrets that in the Spring 1994 issue, the name of Toronto artist Grace Channer was misspelled in the review of Dionne Brand's film, Long Time Comin'