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PRINT POLITICS: CONFLICT AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING AT TORONTO'S WOMEN'S PRESS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

of

The University of Guelph

by

THABA NIEDZWIECKI

In partial fulfilment of requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

September, 1997

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ABSTRACT

PRINT POLITICS: CONFLICT AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING

AT TORONTO'S WOMEN'S PRESS

Thaba Niedzwiecki
University of Guelph, 1997

Advisor:
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This thesis is an investigation into the intersection of print and politics at Toronto's Women's Press, which was the first women-run feminist publishing house in Canada when founded in 1972. Through their textual output and organizational practices, the Press functioned as a locus for challenge and change both inside and outside the feminist community. By analyzing the Press's history, and one of its most lucrative publications, the *Everywoman's Almanacs*, I seek to provide a case study that addresses the questions raised by actively political publishing. I consider the work of the Press in the multiple contexts of publishing history, evolving feminist politics, the debates and organizational structures informing Women's Press productions, and the genre characteristics of the *Almanacs* themselves. I conclude that feminist collectivity, anti-racism, and community representation enact slippage that challenges a simplistic understanding of the phrase, "the freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Yay, it's my thesis!

Thanks to my family, Phet, and Ash, I've put deep thought into this, and I haven't had a complete mental breakdown.

Thanks to Susan and Christine, I have finally had my work proofread before I handed it in. Not only that, but there's a conclusion to boot!

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Introduction

When it was formed in 1972, the Toronto Women's Press was the first publishing house of its kind in Canada. Run by a small, non-profit collective of women, the Press published books with feminist approaches and subject matter. The publications produced by these women, and the processes by which they were brought to the marketplace, served to link the printed word with an activist-oriented, political community as well as to wider general and academic audiences. In making these connections, Women's Press's work was reflective of and responsive to both internal and external forces: on the one hand, publications put into print the Press members' ideas and interests; on the other, they created a dialogue between readers, the Press, and the women featured in their pages. The key to my inquiry in this thesis lies in teasing apart the underlying issues and politics at the Press by analyzing the history of the publishing house and their textual output through a case study of their most lucrative publications, the *Everywoman's Almanacs*.

Finding Women's Press

In 1996, I started my Master's at the University of Guelph. I had applied to Guelph to study post-colonial literature, but after arriving I decided I wanted to study something closer to home than the Caribbean, Indian, and New Zealand writers I had been working on to date. I felt that research on local issues would provide me with a perspective from which I could speak knowledgeably, and that I could utilize sources easily within reach.

Personal interest and experience also played a strong role in my selection of a topic. I had been on the editorial board of the *Queen's Feminist Review* for the past three years, and my work with the *Review* had caused me to ask serious questions about how academic theory, politics, and everyday practice fit together. For the final

paper of my feminist literary theory course, I had undertaken a case study of the *Review*, looking at the issue of men and feminism. The *Review* had had a women-only policy the previous year, and when I anonymously submitted a poem, one of my co-editors said, "this can't have been written by a woman!" I had wanted to put my own experience under the microscope provided by feminist theory, and this same impetus lay behind my subject choice for my thesis this year, since a major instigator of thought had been the conflict our editorial group experienced while working on the *Review*. Perhaps above all, I wanted to give myself the opportunity to explore why conflict between feminists could be so hard-hitting and cause such deep soul-searching.

A desire to educate myself was also important on other levels: I wanted to work on a hands-on, practical topic that moved from the page to actual production and practice. I wanted to give sustained attention to "anti-racism," a term which I had only recently become familiar with. In terms of the approach I wanted to take, I was keen to bring together my training as an art historian and as a literary critic, and to try out alternative forms of research, like oral history-telling, that feminist academics had drawn my attention to.

Having these thoughts in mind, I approached a few different people inside and outside Guelph's English department. Susan Brown sparked my interest by suggesting I look into the "split" at Women's Press. My preliminary research then consisted of finding out what the Press was, and what issues had been at stake in the split. I decided that examining the Press would provide ample opportunity to talk about the themes that were important to me, so I began to assess what background information I would need in order to contextualize the conflict at the house. Each subject that I came up with led directly to another, but in the end it became clear to me that there were four main areas I wanted to focus on: publishing, feminism, anti-racism, and the *Everywoman's Almanacs*.

For each of these areas, I needed to go through a similar process of research. I began by reading widely to give myself a strong grounding in each subject--in the case of publishing, I looked at books and articles dealing with everything from Gutenberg to feminist publishing on the internet. The kind of historical reconstruction I have undertaken, particularly in Chapters One and Two, provides the foundation for this thesis, and is important because little research has been compiled on these subjects as they intersect with each other. From another perspective, this reconstruction is essential to making sense of the Women's Press split, and sheds light on the polarized positions that exist today among past Press-members. My historical work serves, then, to provide a background of information against which the Women's Press story is played out, and contextualizes the issues within their milieu.

Organizing Analysis

In my organization of this thesis, I have sought not to provide a full survey of Women's Press's work, but instead to chart the impact the house has had through a selective case study. I begin in Chapter One with a broad chronology of women's involvement with publishing in the West since the advent of the moveable type press. I also start to explore why feminists saw printing as a strong political tool, and how they began to make use of it in achieving their own "liberation." Women's work in the male-dominated publishing industry has a long history and has provided women with opportunities to have influence upon the production of books. The importance of the second-wave feminist movement in this context was to focus women's attention on their gendered relationship to textual materials. "Print politics" could then be understood on two levels: first, there were politics and ideological alignments underlying the processes of the traditional publishing industry; second, presses had the capacity to function as political tools because they were places where women could enact what they understood to be feminist practices, as well as create and disseminate radical materials.

In Chapter Two I take a critical look at the enactment of print politics at the Women's Press, and focus on an exploration of the conflict that arose as a re-assessment of "sisterhood" and a re-examination of feminist community was brought about by the controversy over (anti) racism at the Press. Echoing and responding to the discussions and arguments that were taking place in the women's movement during the 1980s, some women involved with the Press began to look at how a feminist organization could perpetuate inequalities based not on gender, but on cultural and racial difference. At the Press, collective members positioned themselves differently, and their critiques ranged from charges of censorship to systemic racism. I wish to explore and unpack this conflict by describing how the debates were played out at the Press, and how they were related to issues being dealt with in the movement on a wider scale. In author Marlene Nourbese Philip's words, "the crisis at the Press touched--directly or indirectly--most women writers in Toronto, if not Canada" (Philip, "Gut Issues," 15). My interest lies in describing how and why it may have done so. Why was the crisis important to the feminist community, and why was it so painful?

As Eileen Cadman describes in *Rolling Our Own*, feminist publishers had started out in the industry with the goal of creating a positive space for women's work. Women who opened feminist publishing houses wanted to provide alternatives by breaking with the standards set by mainstream presses and "male-stream" businesses:

> [feminist publishers] wanted to see women's culture everywhere, and to change the accepted ways of working, hence they refused the traditional notion of employer / employee, and attempted to break hierarchical relationships. (Cadman 28-29)

In their struggle to make their processes match their politics, feminist publishers like Women's Press established collectives instead of hierarchies, and emphasized politics over finances. These alternative systems were not limited to the

organizational structure of Women's Press, but also encompassed the style and substance of the books they produced. The challenge, then, lies in exploring what happened when feminists enacted these changes. I am particularly interested in addressing how Women's Press was eventually criticized for failing to assess and address power differentials, and how this failure was seen to be a result of the very structures they had set up in order to counter mainstream modes of operation.

Given the scope of the issues I am dealing with, I have not tried to pin down "the whole story," but I have worked to bring together and then analyze different representations of the conflict at the Press. Once I had decided to focus on the *Almanacs*, and had a better understanding of women's history in the publishing industry, I approached women who had been involved with the Press in order to gain insight by hearing their verbal representations of the events that had unfolded. I wanted to interview the players in the story because I wanted to underscore the lived experience of feminist practice.

The stories of the women I interviewed vividly describe complex experiences of trying to turn theoretical approaches of feminism into active practice. I was able to interview three women officially, and to talk casually with several others about their work. Unfortunately, several of the women who produced the 1989 *Almanac*, which I concentrate on in Chapter Four, were unreachable, and current Press members who are facing a harsh financial climate had little time to offer. I feel, in this sense, that my work is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The interviews I conducted have served, nonetheless, as substantial resources, particularly because they convey a strong sense of atmosphere and a suggestion of what was personally at stake for Press members. They also mirror the process of production for the texts I have been dealing with: the *Almanacs* were built around oral history-telling in which the words of individual women served as the foundation.

The work I did to attain these stories underscores in a concrete way the key issues in contemporary feminist publishing: financial instability and personal politics, in particular. When I started to try and make contact with the Press, I wrote to them. Not having received a response, I telephoned and left several messages. I dropped by their office, but to no avail. Finally, I tried email, and received the following reply from Press-member Heather Guylar:

> There is no full-time staff at Women's Press so that's why you probably had no luck catching us in the office because we are not always there. Last year about this time we had to lay ourselves off because a provincially sponsored loan guarantee program was canceled by the government. This left Women's Press and many other small Ontario publishing houses in very tight financial positions. The four full-time positions at Women's Press became very part-time and volunteer. We also moved into a smaller office. It has been a hard year but we have stayed alive. Last year we put out three books when we normally put out eight or nine. This year we hope to put out six by the end of the year. (Guylar April 23)

The absence of some voices may be seen, then, to a certain extent as indicative of the constraints still facing feminists in publishing: dependent, as always, on government grants, but now during a time of deep cutbacks, they are even more precariously situated between the threat of going under and the remote possibility of breaking even.

Everywoman's Almanacs

In light of my questions concerning feminists' work in publishing, and having a concurrent interest in charting how conflict at the Press was played out, I have chosen to focus my discussion on one particular, situated example of the Press's textual output in Chapters Three and Four: their *Everywoman's Almanacs*. The *Almanacs* are small personal datebooks that have been published annually by the Press since 1976, and in their production, content, and design, the *Almanacs* demonstrate the dynamic interconnectedness of art, business, politics, and texts.

My interest in the use of and discourse surrounding datebooks is of long standing, and my own search for a calendar that suits my needs precisely has been played out over several years. I have found some too small, others filled with advertisements, a few too heavy, and still others simply unattractive--my bookshelves are filled with one-year experiments. As a result, I have begun to create my own datebooks: designing them the way I want, spiral binding them so they can be flipped open, adding my own illustrations in the margins. Analyzing the *Almanacs* has brought home to me the highly personal and political nature of an item that records not only daily life, but also stories, thoughts and plans for the future. Time-minding tools like the *Almanacs* are therefore not beyond the realm of critical analysis; rather, as Press member Ann Decter says, they are "a nice piece of social history" and ought to be studied as such.

Most *Almanacs* are centred around a theme, and feature interviews with individual women on their experiences. The members of the "Everyday Collective" that put the *Almanac* together choose the theme for the year, contact interviewees and edit interviews, compile the text, and commission art and design work. The *Almanacs* function, therefore, on a number of different planes. They are both constitutive and expressive of the political views held by women at the Press as well as the women featured in them, and shift in alignment over the years. As a result, they have proved to be a centre of debate and catalyst for change not only at the Press, but also in the wider purchasing and publishing communities.

The *Almanacs* are unique within the oeuvre of the Press in that they were created to forge a new kind of community--one that would bring together purchasers with the women who were interviewed on the pages of the *Almanacs*, and also with the publishing house that created them. In early editions, the focus was on establishing foundations of shared knowledge, both historical and contemporary. As the sub-genre of the *Almanacs* became more refined, the emphasis moved towards personal

and individually located experience-sharing. Shortly after their tenth anniversary, a new use was found for the *Almanac*: it was used to publicly criticize the Press.

This pointed critique got its start when a group of women of Colour, most from outside the Press, began work on the 1989 edition of the *Almanac.* Rather than doing what had been expected--producing a book that celebrated the achievements of women of Colour--they interviewed Press members and past members about racism and politics at the Press. Since the collective undertook this project at a time when major upheavals were re-formulating the structure of the Press, the *Almanac* played a role in the eventual split at Women's Press, which led in turn to the breaking off of several long-term members as they formed Second Story Press. The controversy over the 1989 *Everywoman's Almanac* not only brought issues into light in the media and in the Canadian feminist movement, but also changed, quite radically, Women's Press's organizational structures, caused them to re-define their general philosophy, and re-evaluate how they wanted to move from feminist theory to active practice.

The impact of the *Almanacs* has been strong because Women's Press was able to make use of the political possibilities of the genre of the daily calendar. By virtue of the *Almanacs'* design, content, production, and marketing, they speak volumes about the assumptions and goals of their publishers, as well as the needs and desires of their purchasers. Debra Bricker Balken writes in "Notes on the Publisher as Auteur" that there is a powerful result when visual, written, and political forms of expression are brought together. As the "governing aesthetic and economic force behind a project," publishers can facilitate dynamic interactions and collaborations between artist / writer and reader. Products like the *Almanacs*, because they:

> [do] not privilege a single or monolithic talent . . . cannot be marketed according to the autonomy of the author or artist . . . . [and instead] become part of the body of work or a series that is identified with the publisher. (Balken 71)

In agreement with Balken's observations, I believe that the *Almanacs* are first and foremost products of the Press as a collective rather than of individual authors or editors: for over twenty years they have represented Women's Press to reading communities. They have also documented the importance of feminist collaboration, and have broken down the boundaries between politics and art. In the end, the book--or series, in the case of the *Almanacs*--becomes a monument of sorts, and can stand as "a testimony of our time" (Balken 71).

Implications of Women's Press's experience

The story of Women's Press to date has been a complex one. The issues they have dealt with have not only been in the realm of intellectual theory, but have also had highly personal ramifications. Although the split occurred almost ten years ago, emotions are still raw. The time that has elapsed has smoothed over some of the active frictions, but those who have been involved still seem to carry a sensitivity just below the surface. The rupture that took place called into question long-term members' motivations and politics and meant that all who were involved had to put themselves--their work, beliefs, and visions--on the line in public.

There remain, in my mind, deep questions about the consequences of the split. It has led, first and foremost, to a seemingly unbridgeable gap between Women's Press and Second Story. I wonder about this gap primarily because it has meant that there is little cross-over of ideas from one house to the other. The women who left / were forced to leave maintain relatively strict control over the Press they founded. Does this mean that the complex issues raised prior to the split were so difficult to deal with that their lasting influence has been only to create an even wider gap between feminist approaches to publishing, and between some white women and women of Colour? This may seem to be the case on the surface; however, as I will work to explain, the lines are not drawn quite so neatly between the groups, and the impact of the split can be traced in the later work of each Press.

I am also left wondering about how Women's Press will continue to remodel itself as being on the radical fringe of the publishing industry. Most major houses have come to recognize that there is a market for feminist books, and they are exploiting that market to the best of their abilities. Other small presses devoted to publishing books by people or women of Colour have developed, as have ones focusing on queer issues, theory and writers. The ability of Women's Press to maintain its niche may be hampered, then, not only by cutbacks, but also by ever-increasing "alternative" competition. The choice between politics or business becomes ever-harder to make--or even articulate--in such a climate:

> Socialist feminism is caught in a contradiction. Its politic pulls it simultaneously toward both poles of practice--mainstreaming and disengagement; this sets up, dialectically, both a recurring strategic dilemma, as well as a potential solution to the dilemma of feminist process--maintaining a tension between these poles. (Briskin 279)

At Women's Press, the ongoing changes of the past twenty years have been marked by a struggle to maintain this kind of tension: to walk the fine lines between politics, profitability, radicalism and representation.

The questions that I have raised over the course of my investigation are complex. My goal is to work to address these questions through the use of a combination of theoretical and anecdotal, experiential forms of knowledge and information. What I wish to explore is how, in one particular case, conflict in the feminist movement has been played out in my community, and to take a closer look at the individual and group-based struggles and arguments involved in this process.

Chapter One

Feminism and Small Press Publishing

> The appearance of women's publishing companies is a new phenomenon in a publishing world which has traditionally been controlled essentially by men at the institutional level; it is a phenomenon that challenges the foundation of our culture at the heart of which "difference" does not exist, the masculine having been erected as the "universal" model, and the feminine being denied as other. (Raoult 201)

Marie-Madeleine Raoult's comments, taken from her speech at the "Women and Words" Conference of 1983, summarize in a straightforward and unproblematized way why feminist publishing was developed and the early challenges it faced: entering into a patriarchal business environment, women-run presses attacked the unified facade of a society in which "difference" did not exist. In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of women's historical involvement with the publishing industry, and address in particular how and why women's work with the presses in Toronto changed with the development of the women's movement. My focus will be on the small press and the circumstances that led to the formation in 1972 of the Toronto Women's Press, the first feminist publishing company in Canada. How, in its early development, did the Women's Press seek to address notions of gendered difference, to forge communities, and challenge the mainstream presses as Raoult says feminist publishers have?

We may well begin by considering what use it was to women to become involved with, and eventually take charge of, different areas of the print media. In contemporary Western society, print culture is ubiquitous. While we may think on occasion that books have been displaced in importance by recent technological advances, the fact remains that virtually all forms of media are predicated on literary foundations; film, television and radio are based on written scripts, the internet is text-dependent, and magazines and newspapers remain integral to people's lives.

And books, even in such a competitive marketplace, endure. Despite the rise of computer-based technology, traditional print media remain vital due to their affordability, accessibility, and transportability.

In our print-based culture, books, newspapers and magazines are directly linked to the power of public discourse. With the exponential growth of literacy rates over the past one hundred years, print has become an increasingly important forum for gaining voice, and a tool for achieving political goals. In a sense, to be read is to be heard, and being heard allows for the development of a public profile and a sense of community. The recognition of an individual or group's voice gained by being "in print" is closely related to their relative cultural power: once a group has come to see itself as a community, it may then work to make itself known on a larger scope so that those outside of it may also recognize it. This in turn may lead to new members joining the group, to increased dialogue about the community or the issues it is interested in, or to action being taken to achieve the group's goals. In other words, through print not only is it possible to foster a sense of community, but once in print that community may go on to effect political change beyond its own boundaries. It is with these goals in mind--of opening up space for themselves and achieving political mobility--that women have become increasingly involved in the publishing industry.

Women have historically been influential as authors, journalists and editors; my interest, however, lies in exploring how and why women sought to take control of the business practices that bring writers to the public, practices that have tended to be less frequently anaylzed than the texts they produce. Women's involvement with the publishing industry is hardly a new phenomenon. Since the earliest prints on paper were pressed, women have helped to produce everything from broadsheets to books, and have also taken on jobs in sales and management. Their work grew greatly with the creation of the movable-type press in 15th century Germany (Chinese and Korean craftsmen did develop moveable type several centuries prior to

the European "invention"; however, the technology did not spread greatly within or without their borders at the time). Finding historical records or scholarly descriptions of the kinds of work women have done is difficult, mainly because women were rarely noted in official documents as owners or operators of presses because inheritance and ownership laws were written primarily in regard to men. In some cases, however, where women took public control of the operation of a press after being widowed, their names are known.

In Colin Clair's comprehensive *Chronology of Printing*, women's names appear infrequently, but with enough regularity to suggest that women were likely involved with the publishing industry from its onset as printers, business managers, salespeople, and also patrons. The first dated document printed from moveable type came off the press in 1454 in Germany, and by the end of the 15th century the invention had crossed most European borders, and type was cast in languages ranging from Latin, to Hebrew, to Dutch [fig 1]. The first document known to have been printed at a press owned and operated by a woman was the *Sachenspiegel* of Eike von Repgow, from the house of Anna Rügerin of Augsburg in June of 1484 (Clair 30). Rügerin, like many of the women who would follow her, was the widow of a well-known printer, and carried on the business under her name following her husband's death.

In some areas of Europe, women were expected to support the family business by selling prints. While Albrecht Dürer was in Italy fighting one of the first print copyright battles in court, his wife Agnes and mother Barbara spent their days taking his prints to local markets, and keeping the family finances running smoothly, "since in Nuremberg it was the custom to regard actual sales as women's work" (Hutchinson 83). One can only imagine that women across Europe were similarly employed: some learning to set type in their fathers' shops, others distributing and selling early Bibles, history books, religious texts, and poetry. Yet given their

economic dependence on and secondary status to the men in their lives, it would have been extremely difficult for women to control production from beginning to end. Additionally, as a result of their restricted access to formal education, the vast majority of women had limited literacy skills and therefore could not have a strong influence on the publishing market. A notable exception in this respect were female monarchs and other members of the extreme upper classes: Queen Isabella commissioned the first Spanish dictionary in 1490, while the first known book on midwifery was dedicated to Queen Catherine of England in 1540 (Clair 30; 47).

Early Publishing in Canada

While women still face economic, social and educational obstacles of the same sort even today, important gains have been built on the precedents set by women's early work in publishing. In order to discuss how these accomplishments were achieved in Canada, it is instructive to chart the growth of the publishing industry as it got started first in North America, and then in Canada specifically. I will be focusing my attention primarily on Canadian examples given the scope of my research; however, there remains farther-reaching work to be done in assessing the interconnections between women's work in publishing in Canada, the U.S. and Britain, particularly during the 19th century

The printing press played an important role in the colonies of the "New" World. Settlers and missionaries, particularly, had a vested interest in seeing not only the importation of European texts but local publishing houses set up for a number of reasons. Presses could disseminate governmental ordinances, convey information (relatively) quickly, and could be used to translate religious works into the languages of the indigenous populations in order to enable faster conversion rates. Moveable type was brought over the Atlantic to Mexico City in 1551, but it was over a century before the first American press was set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts by Stephen Daye (Clair 53; 80). The press Daye used had belonged to Reverend Jose Glover,

whose widow had entrusted the press to Daye following her husband's death en route to Cambridge. Based in the growing cities of the East coast, presses flourished in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and New England in the following years, with Boston steadily becoming the centre of activity.

The evolution of the Canadian publishing industry was hampered historically as it is in our own times by foreign influence and domination, particularly by American and British firms. Due to Canada's status as a colony, its early book trade was dominated by Britain's interests; as a neighbour to the United States, Canada faced a competitor with far greater political and economic clout. The vast majority of books were therefore imported, and Canadian publishers were able to develop only a limited market of their own.

Canada's strategies were unlike the aggressively nationalistic ones instituted by their southern neighbour: confronted by an influx of cheaply produced European books, the United States had "refused to grant copyright protection to any books published in Britain [thus] American publishers were free to pirate any titles published outside the United States and frequently [they] paid no royalties to foreign authors for their pirated editions" (Audley 4). From 1891 to the 1950s, copyright was extended--but only to books manufactured entirely in the States. By virtue of these measures, the Americans attained an economic monopoly on book production, and also set up a strong support system for their own writers.

Canada, on the other hand, faced harsher obstacles. Where the U.S. industry had public and governmental support as well as economic strength, Canadian firms had little of either. Despite these difficulties, printers set to work, many starting out by producing broadsheet newspapers and government-commissioned texts, both of which were highly valued in the colony. As Anne Brownell Jameson later wrote in 1838 in *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*:

> Apropos of newspapers--my table is covered with them. In the absence or scarcity of books, they are the principal medium of knowledge and communication in Upper Canada. (Clair 167)

Canada's first newspaper, the *Halifax Gazette*, started printing under editor / publisher John Bushell in 1752. Interestingly enough, Eric Haworth suggests in *Imprint of a Nation* that Bushell's success may have been dependent on the work of his daughter. Known to be a drinker with financial problems, Bushell required steadfast support from his children: Elizabeth Bushell, his daughter, was "trained in printing [and] was an expert compositor and helped to keep regular issues of the gazette coming off her father's press, perhaps when he was otherwise occupied" (Haworth 38).

Having been established in Halifax, the printing industry moved slowly but steadily across the continent from Montréal, to Québec, to Upper Canada, and finally to the Prairies and the West coast. Montréal's premiere publisher, Fleury Mesplet, had made his way from France to Philadelphia before settling in Canada. While Mesplet was jailed for publishing anti-government tracts in his newspaper, his wife Mairie Mariveau continued his work in his absence, and his second wife Marie Anne Tilson worked as a printer after Mesplet died (Clair 87). During the 18th century, Canadian publishing depended not only on the behind-the-scenes work of women, but also that of indentured apprentices and slaves. Unremarked upon in most official records, these people provided the labour necessary to keep the presses running profitably, and presses were known to advertise in their own pages for such "positions."

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a shift had taken place: the work of publishers and printers had become, to a certain extent, separate enterprises. With the rising number of books being published, companies tended to either solicit, edit and distribute books (publishers), or print them (printers). Despite their smaller size and number in comparison to their American competitors, Canadian publishing houses strengthened over time, and came to be centred especially in and around

Toronto. Toronto had several factors working in its favour: "at the time British publishers began to set up branch offices in Canada in the late 19th and 20th century, Toronto was the capital of the most densely populated English-speaking area in Canada, seat of an already distinguished university and of the largest provincial school system" (Gray 29). By 1914 companies based in or with branches in Toronto included the Methodist Book and Publishing House, W.J.Gage, Copp-Clark, Macmillan, Oxford Press, and the newly formed houses run by John McClelland, George McCleod and S.B.Gundy.

The role of these businesses was mainly to distribute and sell imported books, but some did make limited attempts to encourage Canadian talent. An ongoing series of setbacks, however, meant that the process was a slow one. World War One inhibited growth, and was followed in quick succession by the Depression and the Second World War. For the most part, the publishers and their readers had little financial capability to encourage wholesale growth of the industry. During these early years women were involved with publishing, yet while they occasionally entered into positions of leadership, more often than not they were channeled into less prestigious and less well-paid jobs--many were involved with manual labour at the Presses, doing jobs like typesetting, and sewing quires of pages together [figs 2, 3]. As men moved out of clerical and copy-editing positions, women took their places, but their work offered little recognition or room for advancement.

Print media did, however, play an important role in the first wave feminists' struggle for suffrage and recognition of women's basic rights. As the first datebook (among other sources) printed by the Women's Press for the Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective, *Herstory* 1974, suggests, women's work in print was historically important. Frances Brooke, identified as Canada's first woman novelist, had arrived in Québec in 1763, and was shortly followed by women who wrote journals, plays, poetry, and articles, having brought their literary culture to Canada with them when

they immigrated (Sept 10). In the late 1800s, women looked to publishing for employment and empowerment. Those who later took on ground-breaking positions often got their start in the media world: Cora Hind, Canada's foremost grain analyst, began her career as a stenographer and typist when the Winnipeg *Free Press* would not hire her as a journalist in 1882; Emily Murphy, who later became the first female Police Magistrate, got her start writing for the literary section of the *Winnipeg Tribune*; Charlotte Whitton, the first female mayor of Ottawa, cut her teeth as the first woman editor of the Queen's University *Journal* (June 13; Oct 15).

Those at the forefront of activist circles also gained experience through work with the media and then continued to maintain strong ties in order to keep their causes in the public eye. The first official suffragist organization in Canada was originally founded as the Toronto Women's Literary Club by Emily Stowe in 1883, while ten years later the National Council of Women of Canada was inaugurated under the leadership of a woman who had previously been a publicist and a journalist. For English-educated European women, the published written word provided a potent source of strength, and a starting point for further activism.

Non-European women also did important work in publishing but their contributions were even less publicized than most of their European counterparts. One notable exception in this respect was Mary Ann Shadd Cary, an African-American who founded the Anti-Slavery Society of Toronto in 1851 and went on to edit *Notes of Canada*, and the Toronto weekly *The Provincial Freeman* until 1858 when she returned to the United States (April 21). Shadd Cary's work received some later public recognition, and she has been considered an important historical figure by second-wave feminists.

The Beginning of the Women's Movement

The women's movement in Canada made substantial steps forward during the first half of the century. The goal of universal suffrage was realized in most

provinces by the 1920s (save in Québec, where women did not receive the vote until 1940) (April 25). Meanwhile, European-Canadian women also achieved a number of "firsts." Dr. Caroline Brown was the first woman elected to the Toronto Board of Education in 1915; Agnes MacPhail (who was driven to her first political meeting by my great-grandfather) was the first woman elected to the House of Commons in 1921. While Québec lagged behind the rest of the country in its institutionalization of women's rights, provincial women's groups consistently organized for change. Idola St. Jean, the first woman candidate for election in Québec, founded the Alliance Canadienne pour le vote des Femmes du Québec, while maintaining her steady work in the media in radio, and by writing articles for newspapers, magazines, and for *Women's Sphere*, her organization's publication (May 26).

Having achieved the vote through the mobilization of "women" as a distinct and unified group, early rights workers then had to face the economic devastation of the Depression, followed by the demands of the Second World War. Canada's participation in both World Wars sparked a huge change in the options available to women, who were suddenly encouraged to do their part for the war effort and to take on the jobs left available by men who had gone overseas to fight. Women also expanded their horizons by working for the armed forces in non-combat positions, or as medical and administrative aides. Nationalism was, however, of far more importance in the public sphere than any explicitly feminist concerns. Yet with these expanded experiences behind them, women put an increasing amount of pressure on traditional societal expectations of women to be solely wives and mothers.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s a number of problems were brought to a head. Women were demanding (albeit in a quieter way than the later "women's libbers") more public space, and access to opportunities that had previously been available only to men. I would like to turn now to take a look at what positions women took on

in publishing during these times, particularly in the mainstream press, to explicate the friction that resulted from these changes.

Women in Mainstream Publishing

> While at the [University of Toronto] Press, I was never given a title, but in retrospect I would call myself an editorial assistant. I quickly introduced myself to the half-dozen full-time editors who were lucky enough to correspond with the authors whose work I was proof-reading. The editors were able to mark up their copy with penciled characters and meet their authors when they came to town. Peeking into their offices, I enjoyed watching them at work. They were a delight to behold--all girl graduates, young, attractive, nubile (only later would the Press begin hiring male graduates as editors) . . . . I wondered how these young lady editors were able to keep everything consistent and correct until one day I asked one of the prettiest ones her secret. As it turned out . . . she jotted down all the variables on a piece of foolscap which she kept beside her . . . . This simplified things immensely. (Colombo 46)

John Robert Colombo's observations, quoted at length above, neatly outline the pervasive attitudes confronting women in the publishing industry during the 1950s. Sexist, lecherous, and patronizing, Colombo clearly regarded his female colleagues as an attractive, yet unnecessarily detail-oriented kind of window dressing. Perplexingly (to him), these women were "a delight to behold," but were also conscientious hard workers. While they toiled over minutely marked pieces of foolscap and lengthy tomes on opthamology, Colombo spent his time finessing his work: "not actually reading, if [he] could help it, the approximately thirty-five unsolicited manuscripts that arrived on [his] desk each week" (Colombo 48).

The example set by Colombo is instructive not just at the surface level of the overtly sexist attitudes of his time, but also as an introduction to the clear divisions in publishing jobs, split then (as they continue to be in cases today) on the basis of gender. In "A Voice From the Margins: Women, Editing, and Publishing Education," Megan L. Benton provides a concise and personalized description of these divisions at work, writing that she believes women continue to be over-represented in lower-

status positions in the industry not simply as a result of overtly sexist hiring practices, but because the skills required of a copy editor mirror the traditional sociological expectations of women. Reflecting on her experiences as an editor and educator after attending a gender-stratified conference held by the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing in 1991 at Simon Fraser University, Benton writes that the near-compulsory channeling of women into the under-appreciated work of manuscript editing has been because the work offered "an almost classical profile of both the sociological and the psychological aspects of women's work." "In the latter sense," Benton explains,

> young girls are commonly groomed for the kind of subordinate, silent task of "tidying up" another's work that editing entails, for work whose "only aim is to make the writer look as good as possible." Editing requires a deferential demeanour, an ability and willingness to find satisfaction in invisible, usually uncredited skill--something women have tended to become accustomed to in their traditional roles as wives, mothers, caregivers. (Benton 250)

Publishing was one of the few respectable careers that college-educated women could enter into, and once there they were ensconced in jobs appropriate to their socialization and "feminine" talents. On the fringes, they rarely had creative control over the projects they worked on, or the chance to gain public respect and recognition in the way that men like John Colombo were able to do.

The characteristics of the environment these women worked in can be gleaned from publisher Kildare Dobbs' comments, responding to the question "What is worst in Canadian publishing?" by saying in 1967, "Editorial standards. Editorial initiative. Dim-witted old ladies in backrooms instead of bright young talent" ("Canadian Publishing" 5). When women working in publishing were young and attractive, they faced sexist comments and sexual harassment from colleagues like Colombo; when they were older, their positions were undercut by misogynist attitudes like those of Dobbs--in both cases, an utter lack of professional respect might be demonstrated by

their male colleagues. In the United States some women took on key roles--Neltje Doubleday read manuscripts; Blanche Knopf was a Vice-President--but more frequently they were quiet helpmeets: secretaries like Beulah Hagen at Harper & Row, or wives like Ellen Knowles Eayres at Harcourt, Brace--each of whom had enormous influence in the houses they were with, but were rarely publicly noted for their work (Coser 149). On the whole, although the industry employed a far higher proportion of women than most other businesses, even when they made up a strong section of the workforce women continued to be disempowered in comparison to their male colleagues.

Birth of the Small Press Movement

With the consolidation of the major mainstream presses by mid-century, Canada had developed conditions capable of supporting small, alternative presses. The definition of "small" or "little presses," as they were then known, has been a rather fluid one. In most cases, however, the term refers to houses with a limited number of staff (between one and fifteen) and with fewer than twenty books published per year, most with a press run of only up to 3000 copies. Although the small press tends to provide an alternative to mainstream publishing, their relative ideologies are far-ranging and diverse. The first important small press in Canada, according to publisher Wynne Francis, was First Statement. Established in Montréal in the early 1940s, First Statement focused on publishing up-and-coming young Canadian poets like Irving Layton and Miriam Waddington. During the 1950s, Contact Press performed a similar function, with editor Louis Dudek providing a forum for his favourite poets including a young Leonard Cohen (Francis 56). Other small presses commenced work with the goal of encouraging and drawing attention to regional artists and issues. In this vein, the Fiddlehead Press began publishing in the Maritimes, and Alphabet Press in Western Ontario. Both sought to provide space for

local writers who did not have access to the mainstream publishers in the major financial centres of the country.

As James Reaney, founder of Alphabet Press later remarked, literary types with maverick attitudes got involved with the small press to publish innovative works in innovative ways:

> I learnt typesetting, acquired type and got a press because it was the only way to get out a little mag that looked right and didn't cost the moon . . . . you [could] initiate things that no commercial publisher would dare to think of. (Francis 58)

Given a larger reading public eager to support the small but growing number of Canadian writers, small press publishers were able to eke out a living and to introduce aesthetically-sensitive approaches to writing and design.

Small presses provide not only a "healthy dose of intellectual pluralism," but are also "more creative than large publishers" and can "react much faster to changing social needs for intellectual resources than do their giant competitors" (Huenefeld 159-60). What they lack in staff, marketing ability and general security, they make up for by taking the time to produce books that would otherwise go unpublished, or to address cutting-edge topics. From a writer's perspective, small presses also offer a more personalized mode of working, and a greater attention to textual and visual detail.

The major downside to small press publishing houses is their economic instability, which frequently threatens their long-term viability. The original impetus that drives an individual or group to publish, and the bulk of their investment capital at the onset, may be quickly exhausted and unable to sustain them for the long run. Government grants that appear stable may be revoked or downsized following the election of a new political party. Although the personal rewards and satisfaction may be high for small press workers, their business is not a financially profitable one. Even covering basic costs and already-low salaries may strain the limited income provided by small

edition books to the breaking point. And in a marketing--and advertising--focused capitalist market, many small presses lack the time or money necessary to effectively promote and publicize their books.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Canadian government started to become interested in creating initiatives in the form of subsidies and grant programs to encourage the small presses, which were coming to be seen as cultural assets of national importance. The Canada Council began providing money to publishers and writers in 1957, paving the way for a new era of government-supported publishing enterprises. As Beverly Daurio writes in "A Scattering of Observations on Canadian Publishing, Nationalism, and the Writer as Artist":

> About 25 years ago, during the nationalist fervour which surrounded the Canadian centennial, many studies were done which delineated [the marginality of the Canadian writer], and the Canada Council was set up to try and help Canadian artists, including writers, to compete in their own market, by providing them with money for time to work on their art. A couple of years later, this aid was extended to Canadian publishers producing the work of writers of cultural merit [i.e. who were seen to be strengthening "Canadian culture"], to help them overcome the disadvantages of competing with cheaper foreign books. (Daurio 71)

These changes were directly reflective of the spreading movement in the Canadian academic world to endorse and study Canadian writers rather than emphasizing British "classics" or the large American canon. More often than not, Canada Council juries were dominated by academics involved with such nationalistic efforts, who were also helping to create "a core of scholarly aids [supporting Canadian writing]: reference works, resource texts, and learned journals" (Hunter 23).

With this assistance from government funds and academics, small presses multiplied quickly and were able to take on even more adventuresome projects. By the mid-1960s, a number of new small presses had made their appearance, each with distinct goals. Some, such as Quarry in Kingston, arose out of a regional

academic environment and devoted their energy to printing poetry and short stories. Others, including Coach House and The Very Stone Press, produced cutting-edge design-oriented projects by writers like Bill Bissett and b p nichol (Francis 59). Looking back on the time, and on his experiences with the House of Anansi, which was founded in 1967, Douglas Featherling observed:

> There were many other little presses, of course, most of them personal vehicles for their editors, transient and homeopathic, but with some genuine place in the long equation of literature, Anansi was different. It was out to change writing by displacing the old generation with the new . . . Anansi was small in sales volume but big in its goals. Its main ambition . . . was to publish its own people . . . . [However,] there was no unspoken Anansi manifesto, beyond a kind of vague literary liberalism that was more of a sensibility than a philosophy. (Featherling 30 - 31)

Ideologically, the presses tended to embrace a generalized pro-Canadian sentiment, and sought to create space for younger or avant garde writers. Explicitly political motivations were not the driving force. Rather, the growth of the small press was akin to contemporary art movements like fluxus or happenings--each broke down traditional artistic barriers and challenged expectations, but did so without mobilizing either the artist's or viewer's identity as distinctly political.

Small presses, while alternative in some aspects, were not necessarily more welcoming to women than the mainstream houses. The majority of books published were by men, and it is possible that women who had been drawn to small presses because they were anti-establishment would have been even more disillusioned by the ongoing schism between the comparative status and power of men and women.

Women's continued inequality in the industry had much to do with their economic position: women were far less likely to have the disposable income or collateral required to set up even the smallest of presses. There was also little consciousness at the time of women constituting a gendered interest group that might be solicited or sold to by a publishing house (outside, that is, of traditional "women's" markets of

romance novels, homemaking advice and the like). Some women did manage to start up publications with government help. Maisie Hurley founded, edited and published Canada's first First Nations newspaper, *The Native*, in the 1950s, and Mary Panagoosho Cousins edited the first Inuit language magazine, *Inukitut*, between 1958 and 1962 (*Herstory*, 1974, Sept 29). However, the ability to set up their own publishing houses remained an unattainable goal for most women involved in the publishing industry.

Feminists' Entry into Small Press Publishing

> Feminists recognize that language is an essential tool for achieving and maintaining power. (Benton 253)

As the 1960s came to a close and the Women's Liberation / Feminist movement gained momentum, women initiated their move into small press publishing. Their reasons for doing so were diverse, but for most were founded on a desire to see a reflection of their activist awareness and knowledge, and newly gender-aware consciousness in the print media, as well as to recover aspects of women's history that had previously gone unnoted. Dissatisfied with taking subservient roles even in left-wing or alternative groups (being typists instead of manifesto-writers; office organizers instead of firebrand revolutionaries), women had started to form their own organizations based on the premise of universal sisterhood. All women were oppressed under patriarchy, according to the doctrine of the time, and to fight the system they had to come together specifically as women. As an outgrowth of the movement, feminist and women-run presses and publications served to simultaneously consolidate and expand feminist identity, and to provide an ever-increasing set of literary resources.

There were a number of changes in Canada's approach to women's issues that helped set the stage for the first feminist presses. The Women's Bureau at the Department of Labour had been created in 1954, and with the influence of women's

associations and the International Labour Office in Geneva, "anchored a pragmatic feminist viewpoint in the business of the state" (Bégin 27). In the 1960s, the cross-continental feminist movement had an even greater impact on bringing women's concerns to the fore by raising awareness of gender issues and inequalities. Perhaps the most important national reflection of these deep-seated changes was the creation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW) in 1967 following concerted lobbying by the recently-formed Committee for the Equality of Women (CEW) and the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) the previous year (Adamson 252). CEW and FFQ received strong support from women in the media:

> women journalists attached to so-called "Women's Pages" in newspapers, to women's periodicals . . . and to women's radio and television programs . . . promoted the idea, discussing it with their audiences and building support for it. (Bégin 23)

The RCSW served to highlight the inequalities facing contemporary Canadian women, and based on widespread grass-roots discussions made a number of suggestions to the federal government for improving the status of women. Although these suggestions were by no means adapted or accepted wholeheartedly, they provided a focus and starting point for later activists.

In Ontario, the women's movement truly "got going" as part of an outgrowth of the leftist organizing and feminist consciousness-raising that was taking place throughout North America. Women who had first become involved with Marxist groups in a critique of capitalist structures moved towards an increasing awareness of the additional oppression they faced under patriarchy--an oppression that they began to feel would not be solved solely by economic reform (Adamson 253). After the initial endeavours, there was a brief lull in feminist activism in Ontario before the movement gathered steam again in the early 1970s. Where women had started by organizing mass demonstrations and campaigns, they now turned to develop feminist initiatives

in their own communities. Praxis in the everyday sphere became the key, and feminists worked to raise awareness about issues like sexism in the workplace and schools, harassment, and the economic disadvantages facing women.

1972, the year in which Women's Press was founded, was a turning point for this regenerated activism, and the creation of the Press was only one of many events that marked the exponential growth of the women's movement. During the same year women's groups and centres were founded in Guelph, Kingston, Ottawa and Toronto, with others springing up across the province between 1969 and 1973 [fig 4]. Women's centres provided a number of services to the community: they functioned as meeting places and libraries, provided referrals, and their members acted as spokespeople for the movement. In addition, they provided a visible public space for women; feminists now had a locus, an address, a place to call their own.

Organization occurred on other levels as well: the first Northern Women's Conference was held in April, with far greater response than had been anticipated--where 50 to 100 women had been expected, 600 applied to attend (Adamson 274). Women were also making headlines in the political sphere: Jeanette Corbière Lavell challenged the section (12.1.b) of the Indian Act which legislated that Native women who married non-Natives lost their identity as status Indians (Castellano 235), and Rosemary Brown was the first African-Canadian woman elected to a provincial legislature. Women were also making literary history. In March, women who tried to use the offices of the leftist paper *Guerilla* to produce a special edition for International Women's Day (IWD) were forcibly removed by police called by male staff members (*Herstory* March 11). The feminist magazines *Images* and *The Other Woman* started publishing, and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* was released to wide acclaim. 1972 had also been proclaimed the official Year of the Book by UNESCO (Escarpit 5). All told, it was a year of active ferment and activism, marked by a notable intersection between print and popular politics.

The Women's Press was incorporated on March 22, by a group of women who were teachers and students of women's studies at the University of Toronto and members of a Discussion Group #6, a consciousness-raising (CR) collective. The group had collected articles for a book on the Canadian women's movement, and had, as editor Lois Pike later put it:

> tried to find a publisher without success. Dubious about the market for such a book, the publishers they approached were either not interested or suggested major changes in the manuscript. Around the same time, another group of Toronto women came up with the idea of starting a publishing house to produce material by, for, and about Canadian women. (Pike 207)

Women Unite! had been compiled to be published at a small left-wing press, which proceeded to drop the project when they ran out of money (Masters 402). The editors then shopped their manuscript out to the mainstream houses, where changes to the content of the book were demanded immediately. Having no financial assistance from the leftists, and no political aid from the larger presses, the editors built themselves the support system they needed--creating the Canadian Women's Educational Press and publishing *Women Unite!* as their first anthology.

The goals of the Women's Press were delineated in their founding statement, the Oscroft Manifesto, and in the introduction to *Women Unite!* The Press was set up "in response to a need of women involved in the Women's Liberation Movement for herstorical and contemporary material on Canadian women" with "the underlying belief of women's liberation . . . that oppression can be overcome only through a radical and fundamental change in the structure of our society" (FitzGerald 9). By starting their own small press, the collective that edited, designed and distributed their own books sought to provide a service and a political outlet that could not be found in the mainstream presses. Bringing together a theoretical engagement with

and activist commitment to women's issues, the collective had overtly politicized goals at the heart of their organization.

The collective tried to underline their ideological understanding of how society needed to be reformed in the structure and daily workings of the press--to engage in what they understood to be feminist praxis, in other words. This structure was based on the precedent set by the cooperative CR groups the Press had grown out of and emphasized collective work and consensus-building in a non-profit, non-hierarchical atmosphere. Women's liberation activists identified these modes of working as positively opposed to the "male" business strategies employed by mainstream publishers, believing that such alternatives would provide all women with the space to be heard.

Backed by the ideology and organizational strategies of the feminist movement, and encouraged by the demand for Canadian materials, the Women's Press was one of the first publishing houses in North America to be owned and staffed entirely by women and devoted to the exploration of women's issues. Gendered difference was highlighted as the driving force behind the Press. After centuries of involvement with the publishing industry, women had gained the space in which they could define their own goals and provide an outlet for their own politicized community.

Chapter Two
(Anti) Racism at the Women's Press

> It is not surprising then that both in its omissions and commissions racism is an essential organizing device of European (white) feminist discourse--as much as of any other type of discourse. If this were to be effectively challenged it would need the turning of every stone of imperialism. White feminists would have to re-examine the very ground of their historical-social identity, their own subjectivity, their ways of being and seeing every bit of what passes for "culture" or "art." (Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 48)

After achieving early gains, including public awareness of feminist issues and the creation of specifically feminist communities, some women involved with the "liberation" movement began to question its ideological assumptions and inconsistencies. In the case of Women's Press, questions were asked by new members and authors about the efficacy of the house's professed equality of all women as "sisters." The Press claimed to be a place for all women, but had in fact served to reflect only a limited segment of the women's community in its organizational and publishing practices: more often than not, writers and editors were white, middle-class, and well educated. Women's Press began to splinter, then, as a result of the Press thinking of the women it wished to serve as a united entity rather than as a coalition of multiple, unequally situated communities. In response to this perceived disjuncture between ideals and reality, women of Colour and their supporters sought to bring to light what they saw as racist practices at the Press, and to combat these through active anti-racist initiatives. As well, women who had felt un(der)represented in the works produced by the Press struggled to gain a place for their writing and their editing skills. The desire for space in which to speak that had galvanized women's move into publishing in the first place had shifted its configuration but remained central to feminist organizing at the Press.

As a result of these struggles and debates, in 1987 there was a major split between the members of Women's Press which resulted in several long-term

workers departing and starting their own new feminist press. Ideological, organizational, political and personal debates ruptured the collective, and in public view the Press's commitment to consensual decision-making and sisterhood was contested from within. In this chapter I will take a close look at the events and arguments that challenged the status quo developed by the Press in their first fifteen years of existence, and address how an organization that claimed to seek radical social change had come to be seen as at best liberal, at worst deeply racist, and more frequently an unwieldy combination of the two. Because the developments at the Press were reflective of and responsive to ruptures and debates taking place within the feminist movement as a whole, my discussion of the break-up will be contextualized within this larger frame of reference--I wish to trace and analyze the implications of the split as it relates to the larger tensions that were creating friction in the movement as a whole.

Pinning down "the truth" of the split is not possible; what I wish to do instead is to contextualize the conflict as it developed by looking at historical sources, media representation, and personal opinions. My own position is that of a biased outsider: I have not decided to side with one group of women over the other; however, given that my interest is in anti-racism and not "censorship" or appropriation of voice, I will be looking at these materials through a carefully chosen lens. This lens will help, I hope, to bring to light how all "interested" sources--newspaper and magazine articles, essays, and interviews--work together to provide a cross-section case study documenting the powerful conflict that emerged as the feminist movement matured and had to confront the embedded structural inequalities and differences that refuted the existence of a universal woman oppressed solely by patriarchy. Each source embodies a multiplicity of truths moderated by different positions and perspectives, and together they work to construct a web of discourse in the public sphere. The web thus created is not the "whole story"--it is the fine pattern of threads that have

been linked together in the past and continue to be re-connected and re-created in the present. My goal is to discuss how these threads are knotted together, and to describe the subjective representation enmeshed within them.

The break at Women's Press was publicly stated to be centred around questions of racism and anti-racist strategies. However it also reflected a power struggle between long-term members, and other workers who believed the Press required a drastic overhaul, change of focus, and re-assessment of priorities. The bare-bones details form a seemingly concise story that actually bespeaks extremely difficult and complex political questions.

Shortly prior to the break-up, Women's Press decided to publish an anthology of creative fiction entitled *Imagining Women*. An editor was hired, and calls for submissions were sent out. The fiction manuscript group, with several long-term members in its collective, accepted twenty-one stories for publication and went ahead with production. Yet after contracts had been signed with the authors, the Publishing and Policy Group (PPG), an umbrella management committee that had been formed in 1985 to take the place of "the collective," decided that three of the stories were unacceptable because they were racist in their appropriation of voice or of style. Previously, manuscript groups had always had to verify decisions with the PPG prior to accepting stories; thus the fiction editors came under fire for having overstepped their bounds. The PPG, unlike its predecessor, was made up of a high number of new members since policy had changed so that it had to include two members of each manuscript group. The power base of the long-term members who had previously been the backbone of the collective was steadily dismantled as the PPG's membership grew. As a result of the controversy surrounding *Imagining Women*, as well as other ongoing conflicts, Margie Wolfe, publicity and marketing staff person and member of the Press for over ten years, was first suspended and then fired from her position. The locks on the doors to the office were changed, and

together with a number of her supporters Wolfe went on to found Second Story Press.

A more nuanced version of the separation can be seen through an investigation into the development of ideas and changing ideals in the feminist movement between the founding and the splintering of Women's Press. Consciousness-raising techniques had lent the original impetus to feminist organizing and activism, and it was new forms of self-critical consciousness-raising that led to the growth of multiple divisions, alliances and feminisms in a fifteen-year span. The conflict at the Press can be seen as a microcosm of what happened in the movement as a whole when some feminists began asking, "who has the movement been speaking for, and what are the implications of the way it has done so?"

Problematizing "Sisterhood"

> It is necessary to remember, as we think critically about domination, that we all have the capacity to act in ways that oppress, dominate, wound (whether or not that power is institutionalized). (bell hooks, qtd in Weisser 15)

In their critical essay "Women's Press at Twenty," Chris Gabriel and Katherine Scott write that "[e]arly Press members were committed to two key ideas of the North American women's movement: 'the personal is political' and 'sisterhood'" (Gabriel 38). What became increasingly obvious as the Press aged was that these tenets had weak spots: the personal could not sufficiently encompass nor necessarily change the political, and the unity of perfect sisterhood proved to be a flawed conception.

At the heart of the familial battle over sisterhood was the fact that the feminist movement had unselfconsciously spoken for a very specific type of woman and had refused to entertain the thought that conflict between sisters was possible. As Mariana Valverde and others have pointed out, first-wave feminists spoke of a universal woman, but this woman had marked characteristics. Most often middle- or

upper-class, and invariably of European descent, she was worthy of increased rights and privileges. In her important roles of wife and mother (serving, then, as the backbone of both family and nation), she was able to demand respect from men. When feminists did try to include other types of women into their liberatory discourse, it was often at the expense of naming any differences between women by focusing on their more supposedly fundamental, shared characteristics. In the case of the women's abolitionist movement, this process effectively served to obscure white women's complicity and active involvement with slavery by focusing on the cruelty perpetrated by men alone (Muhkerjee 168).

Early second-wave feminists also often thought they were speaking for all women. Looking back, however, many have recognized at least on a very basic level where their insufficiencies lay. As Press member Maureen FitzGerald reflected in a 1987 interview:

> . . . when we have spoken for women, we have often only been speaking for *some* fractions of women. We haven't been speaking for *all* women. I would say that the women we have spoken for are white, middle-class and university educated. (Black 31)

It has been a harsh realization for mainstream feminists to understand that the group they believe they have spoken for is far more diverse and divisive than they have imagined. Yet the danger inherent in not confronting these differences is a wilful, affected blindness. Universal "woman," in her plural singularity, can become removed from history and context. As an abstraction, and a carefully delimited one at that, "woman" is emptied of any "general social context, content and dynamism," takes on a "conceptual / categorical status," and can no longer be linked to "other social and formative relations" (Bannerji, *Thinking Through*, 49-50). In other words, "woman" becomes a false-fronted, ahistorical entity lacking substance for critical analysis.

The sisterhood envisioned and spoken of within the rubric of "woman" did not allow for dissension. In an oppositionally-oriented logic, it had been thought that women as a group would naturally succeed at working co-operatively rather than fractiously as men did. Given that men held the balance of power in the world outside the home, and that their sphere was based on the competition of capitalism and the strength of patriarchy, feminists felt that women working together under the opposite conditions would be able to enact a radically different set of goals and more equitable organizational practices. These ideals proved far harder to achieve than anticipated, as women realized when they began to undertake long-term work as committed feminists. In the surge of fresh anger and revolutionary fervour of their early endeavours, feminists had focused on the injustices exterior to their movement. As the deeply rooted systemic underpinnings of multiple oppressions became clearer, the focus turned to look within. Questions about racism presented evidence that feminists to date had not and could not claim to speak for all women and women of Colour who were drawn to feminism found that their voices were not heard, their concerns were downplayed, and their contributions and skills were undervalued or unwanted.

I use the phrase "women of Colour" advisedly as an umbrella term for women who self-identify as non-white, and who may share the experience of racism. The term does not function descriptively, then, but instead names an identity-based coalition of people from disparate backgrounds. The words "women of Colour," and even the way in which they are capitalized, are highly charged and political. One may chart the movement in the Press's books from naming non-white women as "immigrant women" and "third world women" in early *Almanacs*, to "women of Colour" in later ones. Each term demonstrates a different concept of the identity of the group it refers to, despite the fact that they may have been used interchangeably at times. Using "immigrant" as a blanket term for non-Anglo Saxon women erases both the

long history of their lives in Canada, and paints over the fact that all Canadians save First Peoples are, or were descended from, immigrants. "Third world" suggests a wellspring of contradictions: who has created the categories "first," "second," and "third," and what are the implications of conceiving of Canada as a place that is far superior to the homelands of these women?

The frame of reference by which the term "women of Colour" may be understood, and the conceptual underpinnings it conveys, are therefore closely linked to semantics. Some women who would be considered "women of Colour" are uncomfortable with and unaccepting of the term, perhaps feeling that it refers to a false construct in an awkward way. Himani Bannerji, in *Thinking Through*, utilizes the phrase only inside quotation marks, drawing attention to the un-naturalness of it. Some women also feel the term takes away from the strength they may gain by identifying as a member of a more narrowly defined group with a specific history--women who empowered themselves using the language of the "Black Power" movement might be reluctant to give up the rich associations inherent in the word "Black" for one that lacks positive historical connections. As well, the term may be seen as one half of a binary and therefore imbricated within an oppositional construct rather than a multi-layered one. "Colour," if defined solely as the opposite of "not-Colour" (or "white") is forced to speak and refer to itself only from within an over-arching, exterior frame--it has no identity entirely of its own, on its own terms.

Despite these misgivings, "women of Colour" has become recognizable and familiar to a wide cross-section of people, and has been embraced by some women like those who edited the 1989 *Almanac*. However, even where it is used, capitalization varies. I use "women of Colour," following Linda Carty's choice in her introduction to *And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada*, which was published by Women's Press in 1993. However, it is important

to note that this is not consistent in all works by the Press: *Dykeversions* uses "women of colour," and the 1989 *Almanac* uses "Women of Colour."

Women of Colour at Women's Press

Since the feminist publishing houses were seen, in part, as mouthpieces for the movement, women of Colour viewed their own absence from materials produced to date as being politically telling. In a roundtable discussion of *Fireweed*'s guest editorial collective for their 1983 special edition by and about women of Colour, Himani Bannerji remarked:

> [t]here is talk about "coming from the woman's perspective, coming from the woman's standpoint" [at Women's Press]. It seems to me very empty, this standpoint, because I do not know who this woman is that they are talking about. (*Fireweed* Guest Collective 9)

Influenced by writers like bell hooks, June Jordan, and Angela Davis, and supported by their own theoretical and experiential knowledge, women of Colour like Himani Bannerji organized to make space for themselves and to force the feminist movement to see how it had fallen short of its goals: how it could be that a "sister" might not recognize the woman they were talking about.

One of the first points to be made was that oppressions did not exist in self-contained vacuums. Along with facing gender-related inequalities, women might also confront discrimination based, among other things, on their race or class--two categories the feminist movement had, for the most part, only paid lip-service attention to. In some cases where women confessed their limited perspective, but did little work to actively combat their myopia, they could be called to task for statements such as that prefacing one of the first books Women's Press published, in which the authors wrote that their entire lack of attention to Native and "immigrant" women in a women's history of Canada was an oversight, but one which they were not capable of dealing with due to lack of information.

Women of Colour theorists and activists consistently describe the mainstream (white) feminist movement as ineffectual and self-servingly liberal. Professors Himani Bannerji and Linda Carty, and writer Marlene Nourbese Philip all problematize liberal feminism: Bannerji sees liberalism as being unable to provide social analysis or revolutionary potential; Carty characterizes it as un-inclusively politically correct; Philip decries its championing of individual rights and freedoms, and lack of attention to more broad critical analysis. Each expresses a belief that radical intentions cannot be carried through in liberal practices. Liberalism is seriously incapable of dealing with their concerns because it claims to be progressive while being unable to take stock of its own limitations.

Within liberal feminist ideology, women of Colour have been treated patronizingly or as token spokespeople for a constituency that is little-understood and infrequently discussed. Makeda Silvera, co-founder of Sister Vision Black Women and Women of Colour Press, had at first imagined that feminist activism would provide her with the opportunity to pursue gender- and race-related questions. Having gained strength and a sense of self-identity from the Black Liberation movement, Silvera had at first turned to the Black community for a place to publish her writing. She found, though, that mainstream Black newspapers discouraged "serious analysis of issues concerning Black women" and left her "no room to grow, no room to explore" (Silvera 40). In response, Silvera began to think about working with the established feminist press. By 1981 Silvera had "moved into the white feminist literary scene." Rather than a welcome, she

> found the doors of the feminist publications tightly guarded, even shut . . . It seem[ed] as if a Black radical feminist [was] too much of a threat to white feminists and to their protected literary world, a world which, [she] found, does not challenge racism or classism within society. (Silvera 41)

Sidelined, Silvera moved on to founding her own publishing house, with Stephanie Martin in 1985, and it was only several years later that those who had given her a cold shoulder gained a sense of what they had lost out on. As Silvera learned, and as Linda Briskin points out, the power structures in alternative feminist organizations go unanalyzed all too often because the processes upon which their foundations are built go unspoken; they are supposedly fully visible and upfront, yet prove opaque to outsiders:

> the internalized, personal, and often unarticulated character of the norms and practices of alternative feminism make them inaccessible and uncomfortable to women on the outside. This process of exclusion reinforces a politics of isolation and exacerbates the potential for marginalization inherent in disengagement [from mainstream culture and society]. (Briskin 274)

Thus, Silvera was unable to work with the established feminist presses; the system could not accept her because she threatened to expose the underlying assumptions that structured the way the presses were organized, and she felt she could not stay and work within the system because since these assumptions were so deeply embedded, she could not confront them directly and effect immediate change.

Silvera and other Black activists and authors like Marlene Nourbese Philip and Lillian Allen remained involved in feminism; however, as they made inroads they moved from being treated as invisible to being considered token representatives. Though these women had wanted to have attention paid to their concerns, they found that white feminists handled their challenges by watering down their questions, channeling them into special interest groups, and paying them attention only when it was politically convenient to do so. Himani Bannerji quotes Trinh Minh-Ha in this light: when women of Colour are required to act as individual spokespeople, "it is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone's private zoo" (qtd in Bannerji, *Thinking Through,* 63).

Additionally, when women of Colour were heard from, it was more frequently under the softly benevolent banners of multiculturalism or non-racism than under the more rigorous scrutiny of anti-racism. In Canada, multiculturalism has become a legislated government institution. In contrast to the American "melting pot," Canada claims to provide a unique "cultural mosaic"--a mosaic which supposedly allows each individual piece to continue existence in its original (although smaller) form, while simultaneously contributing to the beauty of the overall picture. Officially sanctioned multiculturalism promotes the concept that people from all different backgrounds can come together and appreciate each others' cultures. The shared "culture" of multiculturalism, however, has often been limited to components like food, dance, and storytelling. Within such a limited vocabulary, discussion of systemic oppression and injustice is rendered difficult if not impossible; deeply ingrained modes of perception are treated as easily cured "stereotypes" that with enough education will simply go away.

From a critical theoretical perspective, then, multiculturalism dulls the importance of difference while celebrating it on the surface (see Bannerji, "Multiculturalism Equals Anti-Anti-Racism"). Rather than drawing attention to disparity, it highlights the common good with a "one big happy family" sentiment. For those who face oppression based on their cultural heritage or race, institutionalized multiculturalism can erect barriers that constrict and even deny the possibility of certain forms of discourse. If we can all "get along," if we can all supposedly share in and appreciate each other's cultures fully, there is little room to discuss the more nuanced, troubled grey areas of subtle and systemic racism.

The response from women of Colour that white feminists received following their later attempts at outreach and inclusion were not what had been expected: instead of being congratulated for their insight and thoughtfulness, white feminists were called upon again to confront the racism intrinsic in their approach. One of the

defining moments in the advent of activist awareness of (anti) racism in Toronto was, as Chris Gabriel and Katherine Scott note, the debate that arose when white organizers began work on International Women's Day (IWD) 1986 with the theme of "Women Say No To Racism from Toronto to South Africa." The IWD coalition asked women of Colour for support, and in response, a Black women's collective stated:

> [in] selecting this theme, perhaps [the coalition] was not fully aware of the step it was taking. Simply put, it was seeking to organize Black women! Did the coalition consider how it would have to change to do so? (qtd in Gabriel 33)

Maureen FitzGerald later commented that she had at first been pleased at the wider scope IWD was trying to attain: "[f]or the first time women of Colour were visible and I really welcomed it. For the first time I saw a colleague of mine--a Black woman--wearing an IWD button" (Black 32). She and other white feminists came to see, however, that sisterhood was not quite so simple as wearing a button. The presence of women of Colour brought out heated exchanges, and caused organizers and participants to ask some hard-hitting questions: why hadn't women of Colour been involved previously? could white women organize effectively around the theme of anti-racism? would they listen to criticism from women of Colour? and perhaps most importantly, could anti-racism become more than a catchword, more than a nod to political correctness?

Similarly tough questions faced Women's Press as they began production of *Work In Progress: Building Feminist Culture* in 1987. Edited by Rhea Tregebov, the collection was intended to explore the growing feminist aesthetic, and included essays, poetry and works of fiction. In her introduction to *Work In Progress*, Tregebov wrote that "[t]he question of power has always, I believe, been central to the feminist movement. Most frequently it poses itself as a diptych: how do we empower ourselves without disenfranchising others?" (Tregebov 7).

The control and use of power at the Press and in feminism more generally came under the scrutiny of Marlene Nourbese Philip when she was asked to write a piece for the anthology on the topic of Black women's writing. Philip was forced into a troubling, binaristic position: if she reacted to the question as posed she would be, in a sense, acquiescing to being placed in the role of token spokesperson for a community defined from the outside. If she did not react, she would be giving up a chance to make her voice heard and to address important issues. In addition, she feared that her work was requested so that Women's Press could demonstrate its inclusivity without implementing necessarily (or necessary) radical change. "Denial and response," as Philip put it, are "mutually exclusive" (Philip, "Journal Entries," 74).

Rather than writing a "straight" essay, Philip addressed her concerns head-on by writing a self-reflective piece that described her experience with WP, as well as the thoughts that had arisen over the course of her interaction. "Journal Entries Against Reaction" began with a section entitled "Damned If We Do and Damned If We Don't." Philip explicated that in response to her letter that outlined feminists' "failure to acknowledge race and class as anything more than economic and social categories," she was told by the editors that "as white women organizing an anthology of this sort, we're in a damned if we do and damned if we don't position" (Philip 66). Reflecting on this comment, Philip comes to agree with it: by virtue of their political history and location, white women *are* implicated in systems of oppression whether they like it or not. While they may attempt to redress these injustices, Philip cautions that they ought not expect rapid success because, at heart, they continue to benefit from white privilege--privilege that they have been blind to in many cases because they have focused solely on their own oppression as women.

"Sisterhood," then, may not signify a relationship of equality, but rather one fraught with difference and shifting power dynamics--much like the relationship shared by sisters in actual families, to paraphrase Susan Weisser and Jennifer

Fleischner. Weisser and Fleischner provide an insightful and refreshing perspective in their introduction to *Feminist Nightmares / Women at Odds: Feminisms and the Problems of Sisterhood*, in which they locate the problem of ideal sisterhood as an impediment to constructive debate (Weisser 4-5). Reducing all women to basic common denominators, they argue, precludes complex discussion of real differences and therefore effects a split between theory (all women are equal sisters) and reality (women can and do oppress each other and have nuanced identities). The net result is that feminism stagnates; behind a unified facade it is deeply contradictory.

Intriguingly, Rhea Tregebov's claim that she has questioned the will to power of white feminists seems undercut in light of the inclusion of Philip's essay in *Work In Progress*. Whereas Philip ends her piece without finding any easy answers to the contested notion of sisterhood, Tregebov summarizes:

> [w]orking on this anthology has been an education for me. I began the process of developing the project with many uneasy notions about feminism which I was *able to discard*, with fears that have been assuaged, and with expectations that I have, happily, seen fulfilled. It has been an extremely empowering experience. (Tregebov 7, my emphasis)

How, we may ask, had Tregebov been able to discard her uneasy notions given that Philip's had only begun to be expressed? Apparently, empowerment was achieved through an unflinching focus on the positive--and seen, still, through a rosily opaque lens that softened harsh conflict, making it appear a painless educational experience rather than an emotionally affective, paradigm-shifting challenge.

Discourse of a Public Break-Up

Following the publication of *Work In Progress*, Women's Press met with increasingly loud voices of dissent over its anti-racist initiatives. The production of the 1989 *Everywoman's Almanac* was, as I will outline in Chapter Four, a focal point

for debate, while conflict over the unpublished anthology *Imagining Women* served to finally split the Press.

It is instructive to examine how the divisions were portrayed in different media and by the two factions of Press members to gain an idea of what was at stake in the split, both internally and publicly. The *Globe and Mail* broke the news in their arts section on August ninth under the headline "Race issue splits Women's Press," with the lead-in, "stories by white writers rejected" (Rochon). Journalist Lisa Rochon describes the immediate cause of conflict--the rejected stories--but also includes commentary from women in the "militant" Popular Front-of-the-Bus Caucus (the ten members who had come together in May to express their dissatisfaction with the Press's anti-racism initiatives), Margie Wolfe, a representative from the Writers Union of Canada, and Lillian Allen. Each woman speaks her own interpretation, concentrating primarily on the theme of appropriation of voice. Caucus member Katherine Scott supports the Press, saying, "[t]he best writing comes from your immediate experience," while Margie Wolfe comments that:

> [t]he approach of the caucus to writing is that they feel they have a right to tell a writer what to write about and what not to write about. Does that mean that if I come from a certain background, from a certain age, that I have no right to explore other cultures, other experiences?

Although Allen is quoted saying that "[w]riters who consider they have any commitment toward addressing the inequalities in our society and the exploitation of women of Colour have a responsibility not to take [from other cultures]," none of the women of Colour working at the Press are directly quoted, nor are their efforts at the Press described--they are represented solely by their photographs. Although it is quite possible Rochon was unable to interview these women, their absence creates the sense that the conflict was primarily between white women.

The article also touches briefly on the personal politics involved, detailing Wolfe's firing from her own perspective: "[o]ne day there was a letter in my mailbox that I was fired if I didn't, in fact, quit . . . The next day the doors were locked and none of us [herself and her supporters] were allowed back in." There is no explanation of these circumstances from the position of the Caucus. Included with the article are two photographs, one of Popular Caucus members smiling and looking down at a book together, and one taken of Wolfe and her supporters seated around a table, looking towards the photographer [fig 5]. One group inward-looking, with two Black women at the centre holding a book; one outward-looking, comprised of middle-aged white women. The layout of the article echoes its content: the photos are placed in the mirror-opposite position of each other, they are the same size, and each features five women. The general sense conveyed by the article is that although the split was personally acrimonious, it was not terribly politically complicated: some women were against appropriation of voice, others were pro- liberal freedom of voice; the split was about *one* "race issue," not multiple power issues. The more difficult nature of deeper issues of inequality goes largely unremarked upon.

Two months later, the magazine serving the Canadian publishing industry, *Quill and Quire*, printed an article by Lori McDougall entitled "Women's Press Splits: New House Formed." Likely because readers of the magazine would be publishing insiders, McDougall centred her attention on the implications of the split for publishing and bookselling practices. Women's Press refused to be interviewed, citing fear of media misrepresentation, and therefore much of the content was from the perspective of Wolfe and her supporters. Indeed, on the first page of the article is a photograph of Margie Wolfe with Second Story co-founders Carolyn Wood, Lois Pike and Liz Martin, all of whom are smiling and holding up books from the Women's Press backlist for the viewer to see [fig 6].

McDougall's article begins with quotations from the statements issued by Women's Press members as they made their conflict public, details the difficulties with *Imagining Women*, and then turns to address the changes that have occurred at the Press and public response to these changes. Several publishing workers and booksellers are quoted expressing their discomfort with the process the Press had gone through. Ann Wallace, president of a company with 90% of its titles by people of Colour, said she thought Women's Press was courageous, but that if the changes "were to [have] happen[ed] quietly, and no one knew, it would have been nice" (McDougall 29). Allen MacDougall, partner of the sales company Stanton & MacDougall, said his agency had decided not to represent the Press in light of the conflict because "[w]e don't want to be involved in an internecine battle. It was unnecessary for the internal politics to become external" (McDougall 9). Current Press member Ann Decter suggested recently in an interview that the industry's response reflected their wish not to be put under the same scrutiny as Women's Press. In Decter's words:

> publishing in Canada is like a tea party . . . it's been much WASPier than other [businesses]. Things that would be conflict of interest in other spheres are normal practice in publishing. So they don't want anybody's dirty laundry out there. (Decter)

In addition, there is also the fact that it was a radical, feminist publishing company that aired their "dirty laundry." Not only may the industry have rejected the process because it had been personally harmful to some Press employees, and because it may have threatened their own practices, but also because the fissure at Women's Press was unthinkable within their own hierarchically organized and profit-driven businesses.

In both the *Globe* and *Quill and Quire* articles, the emphasis was placed on issues of censorship rather than (anti) racism, as Marlene Nourbese Philip points out in her article "The Disappearing Debate" written for *This Magazine* in 1989. Philip

concludes that while she personally does not support Women's Press's new guidelines against appropriation of voice, believing the injunction will prove unenforceable and restrictive for writers of Colour as well as white ones, she feels the Press should receive recognition for at least trying to address their own racism.

The media's pounce on censorship, as exemplified in the *Globe* article, has been backed largely by liberalist sentiment. Philip writes that in "liberal democracies like Canada . . . censorship becomes a significant and talismanic cultural icon around which all debates about the 'individual freedom of man' swirl" (Philip 20). Racism, in this context, "is thereby reduced to the level of the personal and presented as a rare form of disease which if treated appropriately--usually with a task force--will quickly disappear" (Philip 20).

The purposefully provocative lead-in for the *Globe* article, "stories by white writers rejected," can also be seen as a form of backlash. Responding to the mainstream media's critical reaction to the writers-of-Colour-only conference, "Writing Thru 'Race'" of 1994, organizer Monika Kin Gagnon told the feminist newspaper *Kinesis*:

> There's a social reflex to racism, which is the backlash. It is dependent on an ideology of liberalism which aracializes [sic] and evacuates power, and which allows an entire politic to be dismissed as emotional and personal. It is the defensive reflex of power and privilege protecting itself. (Wanyeki 20)

In their search for eye-catching copy, writers for popular print media like the *Globe* and *Quill and Quire* play upon liberal attitudes, shifting debate towards the issue of acts of censorship instead of the contested and hard-to-locate topic of systemic racism. Serving conservative interests for the most part, they have a vested interest in the maintenance of the power status quo. When answers are not swift and forthcoming, the arguments become more complex than can be dealt with in a brief article and processed by a reader with a short attention span. Tellingly, the CBC had originally planned to do a feature program on the split. However, after preliminary

research and interviews were done, they decided to pull the project because the conflict was too complex an issue to deal with. The media representation of the Women's Press split can be seen, therefore, as extremely constricted: either the subject was dealt with summarily, or it never reached the public because an easily understandable, logical argument could not be constructed.

In the months following the split, the "new" Women's Press and Second Story Press were able to have their say in the feminist media. In Vancouver's feminist newspaper *Broadside*, the two houses' mandates and guidelines shared a page with the transcription of a statement issued by a Black women's caucus from the Third International Feminist Bookfair held in June 1988. Each statement speaks to issues of (anti) racism and sisterhood: Women's Press published their anti-racist guidelines and an accompanying bibliography; Second Story related their unsuccessful attempt to gain control of books on the Women's Press backlist and welcomed writers and readers to their new house; the Black women's caucus critiqued the Eurocentric organization of the bookfair (*Broadside* 4). The juxtaposition of the three stories under the title, "Raising Race Questions," suggests that issues of anti-racism and publishing were seen as linked and that they spoke to a trend within the movement as a whole. That there was no editorial comment from the paper, or a feature story on the issues raised, suggests that *Broadside* was content to let each side speak for itself without overtly staged mediation or interference (in the form of commentary or interviews)--providing, therefore, in its pages what appears to be an historical document rather than a journalistic story.

The anti-racist guidelines that Women's Press set forth in *Broadside* covered a number of areas. With the expressed wish of wanting to be "truly a women's press," the collective wrote that they wanted to "publish manuscripts which acknowledge or highlight differences between women." Focusing on their decision-making role as publishers, they stated that:

> [w]e will avoid publishing manuscripts which contain imagery that perpetuates the hierarchy black = bad, white = good. We will avoid publishing manuscripts which adopt stereotypes . . . [or ones] in which the protagonist's experience in the world, by virtue of race or ethnicity, is substantially removed from that of the writer . . . [as well as] manuscripts in which a writer appropriates the form and substance of a culture which is oppressed by her own.

Again, however, while Women's Press tried to adjust to new demands, their guidelines were critiqued both by the mainstream media and by women of Colour. In one case, they were taken to task by Marlene Nourbese Philip for following through on a comment she had made in "Journal Entries Against Reaction." Philip had written that magic realism was a style that "those of us from the Caribbean can lay claim to," and in response to that and other similar remarks, one of the stories for *Imagining Women* was rejected on the basis of the author's appropriation of style. However, in her later article "The Disappearing Debate," Philip wrote:

> [t]here is a serious error in this approach. The assumption behind the proscription is that because the style . . . was pioneered in Latin America, it must therefore be entirely a product of that part of the world. Yet much of Latin American culture, particularly that of the middle and upper classes, has traditionally drawn heavily on European culture . . . One could further argue that magic realism is as much an heir to traditions of Surrealism as to the Latin American sensibility and mindscape. (Philip 22)

The ability to "lay claim" to this style, then, may depend on far more than the writer's regional background as first proposed by Philip, and would in fact require a more detailed analysis of the ideology and assumptions lying behind the style itself. The change in Philip's position is theoretically provocative, but also makes for difficulty in mandating publishing policies. It demonstrates, in essence, the hard challenge posed by translating anti-racist theories into action, and once again underlines that there is no "quick fix" solution.

Chapter Three - The Creation of *Everywoman's Almanac*

> A good book is a blessing to a family; it is a silent but effective friend and benefactor, it teaches and admonishes, it counsels and consoles, it points out the narrow way of duty that should be followed and the broad road of sin that should be shunned; it nourishes the mind with good and holy thought, and stimulates to meritous deeds and to good, virtuous lives. (*The Catholic Almanac for Ontario*, 1895)

The merits of a "good book," as related by Archbishop John Walsh in his introduction to the *Catholic Almanac* for Ontario of 1895, are twofold: first, the book serves to teach; secondly, the book should inspire its readers to be moved to action. While the politics and moral perspectives expressed in the *Catholic Almanac* and the *Everywoman's Almanacs* produced by Women's Press are understandably different, these two goals remain constant within the single genre they both belong to. For those involved with Women's Press, the *Almanac* became a space in which feminist thought and issues could be explored and publicized. As a political medium, the *Almanac* also sought to empower its feminist purchasers with information and a sense of community. The work towards education and the process of empowerment was not, however, straightforward nor as conveniently dogmatic as in the *Catholic Almanac.* Negotiating the terms of production, organization, and content of the *Almanacs* has proved to be an area of heated debate and controversy--debate that addressed both obliquely and directly whether or not the Press practiced what they preached as a "socialist feminist" organization.

In this chapter, I will begin to unpack "the *Almanacs*" of Women's Press. Of particular importance will be formulating an understanding of the *Almanacs* as a distinctive sub-genre, and their place in the oeuvre of the Press. The *Almanacs* can serve, in this context, as a point of entry for investigating how the tensions described in Chapter Two were played out textually, and can reveal some of the links between criticism, theory, and feminist publishing-in-action. Overall, I wish to address the difficulties that have faced Women's Press as a feminist business within a capitalist

economy and social system. Which boundaries were Women's Press able to push upon and expand through the *Almanacs*, in particular the 1989 *Almanac*, and which hampered their ability to achieve their visions, both collective and personal?

For the 1989 edition, the Press had intended to have an outside group of women of Colour produce the *Almanac*. The original plan had been to dedicate the *Almanac* to an exploration of women of Colour "winning out." These arrangements were changed by the editorial group when confronted by statements that such a theme would be mis-representing the Press. Ann Decter relates that when the editorial group started out:

> it was going to be an *Almanac* by and about women of Colour, and then part way through the process, somebody they were interviewing said, "why are you doing that? You're going to make Women's Press look like they're working with women of Colour all the time--and they're not."

In response, the group decided, "Ok, let's do an *Almanac* by women of Colour about Women's Press" (Decter). The 1989 *Almanac* broke from tradition in other ways as well; the format that had been developed over the years was reconfigured so that it echoed the past editions, but concurrently raised questions about the template that had been set. In order to understand the place and importance of the 1989 *Almanac*, then, it is necessary first to discuss the establishment of the *Almanac* at the Press, and to document how and why it became integral to the house's annual output.

Genre and Gender

> The category of genre is relevant . . . as the organizational framework which mediates between text and context . . . . Genre, in other words, provides the cultural matrix against which the significance of the individual text can be measured. (Felski 83)

Informational genres like almanacs are infrequently theorized, and the *Everywoman's Almanacs* of Women's Press face an even more marginalized existence, being, as they are, a conglomerate of literary and visual forms and design

elements. From an academic perspective, books like the *Almanacs* enact hard-to-handle slippage between disciplines and traditional genres. The *Almanacs* are functional objects meant for daily use and then perhaps annual disposal, but they also document feminist history, women's issues, and debates. In addition, they bring together oral histories, community directories, and informative short essays, with illustrations and design by women. Libraries appear unsure of what to make of the *Almanac*: the library at the University of Guelph has four random editions on its shelves; Queen's library and Robarts have the two *Herstory* calendars but none of the *Almanacs*. Because they frustrate a system that prefers neat slotting and quick identifications, I will approach the *Almanacs* from a number of theoretical perspectives in order to open up issues for discussion.

Starting at the first level of consumption is helpful: the *Almanacs* are commodities that consumers buy and use. As small press publisher Clint Burnham puts it, "capitalism begins when you open a book"--in other words, all books are linked to economics and business regardless of how removed (as "aesthetic objects") they may seem to be from such spheres (Burnham 5). Although the exchange of cash for a product takes little time, the implications of consumption are deeply political and ideologically-based. Mica Nawa writes succinctly in "Consumerism and its Contradictions":

> consumerism is far more that just economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity. Like sexuality, it consists of a multiplicity of fragmented and contradictory discourses. (Nawa 167)

Nawa's analysis centres on a discussion of the development of consumer society and the role of women within it during the 1950s, but her words underline what we as consumers are often unaware of: that everything from what we buy, to where and why we buy it, and from whom, *means* more than numbers on a balance sheet.

There is no single discourse of supply and demand; rather there are overlapping discourses of desire, need, lack, and satisfaction.

A necessary component of contemporary economics and marketing is the identifiability of a product. In order to sell, a product must be recognizable. It must also work within, for the most part, a system of already-existent products it can compete with. In other words, the competitors of Harlequin romances (like Silhouette), enjoy a share of the market not because they publish the only romance novels available, but rather because their books work within a pre-defined category. Silhouette novels match with the expectations of a "popular romance" that Harlequin helped to pioneer (a plot of eventually-requited love, a cover featuring a man and a woman embracing passionately, standard size and length), and are purchased by the reader because they offer something new within the framework of what is already familiar. Decision-making is facilitated for the consumer while concurrently individual choice is stressed; it's easy to choose when given a set selection, and yet the consumer retains their sense of empowerment because there are still choices to be made within the limits.

In the same way, books in Canadian bookstores are categorized by genre. Fiction and non-fiction are separated, and then further subdivided to include sections on everything from poetry to science fiction, and from biography to cookbooks. The expectations brought to bear upon a genre depend on complex interactions between producer, seller, and receiver. Specific elements are required by the receiver / purchaser of a genre, and in this sense genre is "a technology that is read for truthfulness"--wherein truthfulness depends on the work's ability to meet these expectations (Gilmore 19).

In the genre system, the first-of-a-kind book faces challenges and yet has some advantages. On one hand, it may be greeted with confusion on the part of booksellers and purchasers alike. This in turn may result in reduced visibility and

decreased sales. On the other hand, a book that is hard to categorize but innovative may break ground, set standards, and reap the financial benefit of having created a market where one had not previously existed. Women's Press met each of these instances head-on and successfully built a new kind of sub-genre (within the genre of annual calendars), making it responsive not only to their goals, but also to the needs of the wider feminist community they served. In order to assess how the *Almanacs* were able to achieve this position, to address why they were at times criticized, and why they were eventually chosen as a medium through which Women's Press itself could be critiqued, I would like to turn now to take a look at the roots of almanacs historically.

Developing the *Almanacs*

Almanacs have been in print since at least the beginning of the Renaissance. Sold at fairs and in the markets to members of all classes, early almanacs were made up of three separate publications (Taavitsainen 164). The three kinds were often sold together, but each featured a different set of information: one chronicled the year's astrological events and moveable feasts; one was a calendar of days and weeks; one offered prognostication and advice based on the date. In the following centuries, almanacs came to be produced by specific organizations for "special interest groups." Perhaps most popular and most familiar to Canadians is the *Farmer's Almanac*, which traditionally brought together a calendar with factual lists (weights and measures; prime ministers' names; multiplication tables), amusing anecdotes, and a weather forecast for the upcoming year.

In Canada, early almanacs like the *Catholic Almanac* were produced by the churches, while others were published by activist groups like the temperance movement. *The Canadian Temperance Almanac and Teetotaler's Yearbook* of 1877 provides an interesting glimpse at an expressly issue-oriented style of almanac, with its daily anti-drinking quotes, tobacco excise figures, and alcohol-related crime

statistics. *The Temperance Almanac*, as with others of its kind, was meant for the already-converted: there is little likelihood that the average drunk would have bought it and quickly heeded its wisdom; rather, it would have served to provide inspiration, ongoing education, and rhetorical ammunition for those who had already become (and were trying to stay) teetotalers. Almanacs as a genre have thus been characterized by a combination of practical, anecdotal, factual, and sometimes politicized information in an annually-purchased format.

Two years after it was founded, Women's Press began publishing daybook / calendars for a feminist collective in Saskatchewan. The *Herstory* calendars, which the Press published in 1974 and 1975, focused primarily upon the recovery of women's history: each day was marked by a note about important events from the past of the Canadian women's movement and each week featured a photograph of a noted woman or group [fig 7]. Press member Maureen FitzGerald recalled she had heard that after the two *Herstory* calendars were published there was a contentious split between the Saskatchewan group and Women's Press, although she was not sure what reasons lay behind the end of the partnership. As a result of the break, the Press published the first *Everywoman's Almanac* in 1976.

Even on their exterior, the *Almanacs* are visibly different than the *Herstory* calendars. They are half the size [fig 8], sewn rather than spiral bound, and have a strongly-coloured, coated paper cover. They also emphasize contemporary issues: whereas the Saskatchewan collective writes about their learning process as they searched through archival information and did detailed research, Women's Press presents information with the sense that they are writing about new issues, and that there are no archives that can provide the information they are dealing with. The feeling conveyed by the *Herstory* calendars is that they have been written to provide "the facts" about women's history, and by doing so, give Canadian feminists a sense of where they themselves may have come from. The *Almanacs* convey a different

message, and the first ones in particular are like a women's centre made into print: they are explicitly political in the here-and-now, and provide a kind of community service--offering referrals, advice, and providing a forum for opinionated discussions about issues in the contemporary movement.

Liz Martin, who is now with Second Story Press but was a founding member of Women's Press, reflected back upon the move from the *Herstory* calendars to the *Almanacs*, saying that the Press was searching for a way to get their ideas across, and create something different than just a collection of names and dates. According to Martin, the choice of the word "almanac" was the result of search for a "catch-all term" that "hinted at something more than a calendar" (Martin). Although almanacs had become a less important medium for conveying information as new media like radio and television became more prevalent, the word "almanac" maintained a certain cache and cultural familiarity. Press members who were searching for a term that could encompass and represent the polyglot product they were creating therefore felt that "almanac" would be both recognizeable and yet re-shapeable. As well, "almanac" conveyed the idea that what might otherwise have appeared to simply be an apolitical and purely functional calendar was, in fact, going to serve as a source of information and guidance to its purchasers.

The mid-1970s were, as I have documented in Chapter One, a time of ferment for Canadian feminist activism. Inspired by the growth of the international women's movement, yet aware of their overshadowing by U.S. feminists, women in Canada began to seek home-grown alternatives and therefore started to create and publish their own work. At the same time, art and popular media were being re-appropriated by feminists for their own anti-establishment purposes. Art historians Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker describe this process in *Framing Feminism*:

> In the 1970s economic and ideological transformations in the sphere of artistic production, as well as larger social fields, facilitated a

> coalescing of radical developments in cultural politics with vital forces for social change within the Women's Movement. (Parker xiv)

"A feminist intervention in art" brings about these changes through its initial confrontation of "the dominant discourses about art, that is the accepted notions of art and artist" (Parker 81). With their focus on women's issues and work, both artistic and practical, and their shifting of the limits of genre (bringing together art, politics, and text in an annual calendar), the *Almanacs* of the Press effected precisely this kind of intervention.

One sign that seems to attest to the importance placed on the artwork in the early *Almanacs* was that in 1979 the Press published *Graphically Speaking: Drawings From Everywoman's Almanac* [fig 9]. The introduction to the small paper-bound book states:

> Over the years, we at Women's Press have been hearing from readers of *Everywoman's Almanac* how much they've enjoyed the illustrations . . . [the] thought-provoking drawings have given readers insight into women's struggles in many walks of life; their reflections help express our sense of ourselves and our unfolding awareness of the need for change in our society . . . . Without [the] creative vision [of the artists], the *Almanac* would not have the spark and wit it has; we thank them for their contribution, and dedicate this small collection to them.

Maureen FitzGerald says the book was published to fulfill the requirements of the 1979 Canada Council grant, while Liz Martin says the book was "a labour of love" (FitzGerald; Martin). Either way, the book conveys the fact that illustrations mattered to the Press, and focuses attention on the artists who had been involved with the Press.

The 1976 *Almanac* is a small book measuring 4½ by 6½ inches, as are all those that would follow. Its dark green cover features a starkly contrasting photograph of a young woman's face and shoulders, and the lower-case title, "every woman's almanac 1976: appointment calendar and handbook" [fig 10]. The cover has a significant role to play in relation to the content of the book, as can be seen in a

comparison between the *Almanac* and *Herstory* covers. Whereas the first *Herstory* calendar's cover features a drawing by turn-of-the-century male artist C.W. Jeffries (who also illustrated James Richardson's *Wacousta*) of a pioneer woman stirring an enormous cauldron [fig 11], and the second edition has a drawing of three 1940s-era "Rosie the Riveter" women [fig 12], the photo on the first *Almanac* is of a young woman of the '70s. The covers function then not only as "signposts of a period's aesthetics" as Steven Heller writes, but also as signposts of its politics (Heller 1).

In the short introduction written by the Women's Press collective, the *Almanac* is described as "an appointment calendar and guide book . . . [with] brief articles on some of the main issues facing Canadian women today." The book is divided into three major sections: a fifty-page segment of information and articles, a week-by-week calendar with quotations and small cartoons, and twenty-five pages for addresses and telephone numbers. The "guide book" includes short essays on topics including women and the media, grey power, good day care, Québécoises, racism and sexism, population control, and self-defence. The information given, while wide-ranging and helpful, seems rather haphazardly selected and is structured more along the lines of a long pamphlet than a daily calendar.

In 1977 each month of the *Almanac* was given a theme, and in 1978 the general format of a large photograph at the beginning of the month followed by a single quotation and small illustration for each week was begun. 1979's edition was the first to feature the structure that would become the template for all following years, with an individual interview with a different woman for every month. In the editors' words:

> we have selected these women for inclusion in the *Almanac* specifically because our interest in looking at the real effects of the women's movement over the last ten years led us directly to them . . . Most of them have not been heard from before; few of them have been active in the women's movement; but none of them has been untouched by it.

The interviews were meant to stand as testament to the struggles and successes of women in Canada, and also to address the inequalities still extant in contemporary society:

> We weren't looking for women in power, we were looking for everyday women, therefore the people interviewed were usually activists we'd connected with . . . and it often was a way political themes or political ideas got hashed out pretty quickly. So it always had to be political. And I think it was part of the search for new frontiers. (Decter)

In this way, the *Almanacs* were far more closely allied to the current issues being discussed by feminists than the *Herstory* calendars had been, and tended to emphasize the here-and-now of the movement. Much in the way that feminist journals and newspapers were able to deal with issues as quickly as they arose, the *Almanacs* could key into current topics with more facility than an anthology or book published by the Press that had to have a shelf life of several years rather than a few months. As well, the *Almanacs* had a set design format and fairly limited space for text, which facilitated a shorter time frame for production once interviews had been conducted.

The strength of the *Almanacs* was dependent on the reception they received and the use of the information they conveyed to their purchasers. The *Almanacs* were not political in the way a single manifesto or essay is; rather, their power depended on the interconnected relationships they fostered. In *Against Feminist Aesthetics*, Rita Felski argues that the importance of feminist literary culture "lies not in the development of uniquely 'feminine' or 'subversive' styles of art, but rather in its effectivity [sic] in engendering a relatively widespread and influential politicization of processes of reception as well as production" (Felski 160). The *Almanacs* helped to create this politicization through their development of a feminist community, and by providing a place for women's issues to be heard, and a forum for their artistic endeavours and lifestories.

In addition, the *Almanacs* offered a private and individual space for every woman who used one, thus making concrete and (literally) legible the connection between feminist principles and practice. Inside the community of women in the *Almanacs*, each purchaser had room to plan and record her daily story. Key elements of the *Almanacs* as a sub-genre was their ability to encompass the daily life and experiences of its owner, to create multi-layered spaces for expression, and to foster connections between women's communities. A larger paper devoted to assessing purchaser's use of and views on the *Almanac* would be invaluable; however the scope of this thesis is unable to encompass such a wide subject. One can imagine the richness, though, of a study on used *Almanacs*--how did women make them their own? what marginalia comment on the connections between the purchasers' lives and those of the interviewees?

Money and Politics

Quickly, the *Almanacs* became integral to both the finances and the politics of the Press. In an almost entirely open market, the *Almanacs* served a new niche of consumers: young working or volunteering feminists. When I asked Maureen FitzGerald where the *Almanacs* fit into the oeuvre of the Press, she responded:

> the *Almanac* always had a real political...[pause]...no, it always had a real economic thrust to it. This was the moneymaker at Women's Press. It was all done up until the change in the Press in '88 . . . on volunteer labour.

Estimates of the largest print run vary from twelve thousand to seventeen thousand, but in their heyday, the *Almanacs* were counted upon for fairly serious financial support that enabled the Press to work on less profitable projects. Even after the *Almanacs* were no longer counted as one of the books required for the Press's Canada Council block grant (a grant which supplies publishers with financial support provided they publish a specific number of books per year), the *Almanacs* remained important for the revenues they brought in.

The profitability of the *Almanacs* led, however, to complex discussions and divisions over its mandate. Were the books needed to enact radical feminist ideology at any cost, or should the Press publish a product that would, above all, sell well? Part of the difficulty in dealing with these questions lay in the fact that the Press was, and continues to be, a socialist feminist enterprise inside a capitalist society. Women's Press has been a collectively-owned, non-profit publishing house throughout its history. Until recently the loans held by the Press were guaranteed by the government, and these loans were under the responsibility of the collective rather than individual members--no single group owned Women's Press. Perhaps the impetus behind this organizational structure was related to women's previous experiences in the publishing industry as outlined in Chapter One: women who had faced obstacles based on the traditional regulations in the business may have felt that collective ownership would solve problems of accessibility, and would allow the Press to focus on politics. Making money "under" capitalism, however, often requires strategies that are at odds with second-wave feminist ideals: ownership is a given, hierarchies are expected, purchasers need to be courted, profit is the bottom line.

Lynette Eastland provides an instructive look at the often conflicted nature of feminist businesses in *Communication, Organization and Change within a Feminist Context*. Centred around her participant observation of a collectively-run feminist bookstore, Eastland's book focuses on an infrequently-discussed topic, and the author balances her argument, describing both the pitfalls and benefits of a feminist working environment. Eastland's account of the goals and processes of feminist organizations dovetail neatly with the particular experience at Women's Press. During the 1970s, "women's businesses began to emerge both as an alternative work environment for women and as a means of gaining economic power and independence" (Eastland 20). The work of these businesses was not only to provide feminist-oriented products, but also to further the women's movement:

> from a feminist perspective, then, a feminist business formulated and operated by women is an enactment of feminist ideology. At the core of their purpose is the process of finding ways in the day-to-day working of the business to achieve the goals of economic and political power for women. (Eastland 24)

The trouble lies in the fact that feminist collectives cannot, much as they may wish to, overthrow capitalism and patriarchy; they can neither fully withdraw into a distinct economy, nor have they been able to displace mainstream practices. What they can provide, though, is a limited but important alternative. Therefore,

> a collective structure cannot be considered a means of accumulating wealth for women or an instrument for changing the patriarchal structure of society, but it can be regarded as a powerful model for the enactment of feminist principles in the individual workplace. (Eastland 26)

This distinctive thrust, with its confined yet practical goals, was the reality of the situation at Women's Press, and yet frequently went unrecognized as such. Working inside a profit-driven culture that was discouraging of collective endeavours, Press members were caught time and again, as can be seen in the debates over the *Almanacs*, between wanting to stay true to their political ideals (and even these were fluid and changing) and directing their efforts towards becoming a more professional, market-oriented business. The harsh reality was that socialist feminist goals were hard to implement, and recognizing the disjuncture between wished-for and actual practices proved even more elusive:

> the difficulty in establishing any social / political / economic space outside of patriarchal capitalism means that feminist alternative organizations are forced to reproduce the very norms they have set out to reject, just in order to survive. (Briskin 273)

For Women's Press, the unremarked-upon reproduction of exclusionary norms would lead to the conflict surrounding the 1989 edition of the *Almanac*, and then to the eventual split.

Producing Almanacs

Early *Almanacs* were produced collectively with the result, as Liz Martin explains, that things like design could end up looking a little unusual. Glancing at the 1979 edition, Martin remarked that the cover had been created by a group of women. Martin took the black and white photograph, and then other members had wanted to add strong colours and eye-catching graphics [fig 13]. The cover is striking, but lacks the clarity of earlier editions. In a retrospective look at second-wave feminist publishing in Canada, Philinda Masters commented that such practices as those at Women's Press were the norm in the 1970s when "looking too good was considered taking away from the important stuff" (Webb 99). At the time, anti-design design was seen as a way of fighting the mainstream; in a male-constructed world of glossy ads and glittering promotions, making do with the basics was an overt and recognizable political statement. Women had only recently taken on autonomous "ownership" of the presses, and they wanted to make their work visibly different. In the same way that women were refusing the construction of femininity by wearing less make-up, growing their body hair, and appropriating men's clothes for themselves, feminist publishers tried to counter mainstream aesthetics in print. Blurred lines and crooked type also functioned to reveal the work that lay behind the finished product. Allowing the books to remain "in the raw," without fine-tuning the mistakes or oversights that had occurred during the process of production, could stand as testament to the fact that the book was a built object, and had not come from a prefab, perfect mould (lending a sense to the reader, then, of the labour involved in producing the book).

In addition to needing to take into consideration consumers' needs, the *Almanacs* also had to respond to larger market demands: when the third edition's cover carried a photograph of an older woman hanging up clothing on a line [fig 14], booksellers responded by saying that the cover wasn't effective because the young women who were the intended buyers would not identify with the image (Martin). Given that booksellers had the ability to make or break the book by virtue of their promotion of it,

Women's Press had to re-evaluate their work and examine what an image of "everywoman" might look like when marketed to a specific segment of the population. While later covers frequently included representation of young women, there was also a turn towards painted / printed / drawn covers rather than photographed ones, perhaps as a means of moving into more abstract, wide-ranging solicitation rather than a single kind of identification [fig 15]. What was important was to find a medium that could appeal to a wide audience (even, then, including women who might know little about feminism)--first, to "get the word out," and secondly to "get the money in."

Questioning Interviews

> The aesthetics and the ethics of oral interviews were always a little contentious. (FitzGerald)

The standard format for *Everywoman's Almanacs* came to be centred around a particular theme like "Work" or "Health." The first page of the *Almanac* would include a table of contents, acknowledgments, and an introduction to the theme of the book written in a style akin to an editorial. Each month would then open with a photograph of and an interview with a woman or group of women who would talk about their experiences as they related to the year's theme [fig 16]. Interviews were conducted by Press members, but not necessarily by members of the year's *Almanac* collective. The interviewers were in some cases also responsible for photographing their subjects.

The process of identifying which women would be interviewed reflected Press members' personal networks and political associations. The "Everyday Collective" would re-form annually and begin to discuss possible topics. For the most part, interviewees were friends or contacts of Press members: "the *Almanacs* were part of the real community-basing of the Press . . . somebody here [in Toronto] would say, 'My friend in Vancouver is working with domestic workers'" and then the friend would be contacted and interviewed (Decter).

According to Maureen FitzGerald, the women featured in the *Almanacs* found that they were recognized frequently by purchasers who felt that they knew the interviewees intimately after having read their stories. Such an assumption of access and familiarity was and continues to be encouraged by the way in which the interviews are presented: they are not published as "interviews" at all, but come across as unmediated monologues. The finished product, and that which the purchaser reads, is a concise, interesting, short statement, consisting entirely of the interviewees' words. The questions asked are not reprinted, nor are they referred to within the interview. At no time is the "you" of either interviewer or purchaser addressed; it is as if the interviewees had simply stated their case upfront. In fact, interviews were conducted *as interviews*: a Press member would ask questions, the woman would respond, and both sides of the conversation would be recorded or noted. How were the interviews kept to an appropriate length for printing? "Lots of editing" (FitzGerald). Having completed the interview, the Press member would then be required to edit down her transcription of the interview to make it fit the allotted space in the *Almanac*. The women who had been interviewed were not consulted about the final draft that would appear in the *Almanac*.

What are the implications of this system of interviewing? On the positive side, the *Almanac* interviews convey a sense of immediacy and directness; the women themselves stand out above all. The illusion of direct access works to build a welcoming sense of community that involves the reader, and the reader enters into the story that is being told without having to distance herself from it. The traditional authority of the interviewer is overshadowed by the words of the woman telling her story. In this way, the interviews function almost as if they are micro-autobiographies. However, because the presence of the interviewer is completely effaced, it is not clear what questions led to the statements made by the interviewees. The tricky balance of the situation rests on an assumed

seamlessness, and it is not stated explicitly that the successful flow of the interviews and their relevance to the chosen topic is highly dependent on an interviewer with good editing skills.

Despite these difficulties, the choice to feature interviews that read as unmediated autobiographical sketches can be seen as directly related to the feminist goal of empowering women (although the critique may be made that in "disguising" what were interviews as unmediated autobiographies, the process that was played out at Women's Press was a distinctly liberal feminist one--since we're all "sisters," we can and should have unmediated access to each other's experiences). Helen Buss and Rita Felski both write of the importance of women's self-articulation in a structuralist model based on a centred and grounded concept of the subject. Felski writes:

> The assertion that the self needs to be decentred is of little value to women who have never had a self; a recurring theme of feminist literature is the difficulty women still experience in defining an independent identity beyond that shaped by the needs and desires by those around them. It is precisely for this reason that the autobiographical novel continues to remain a major literary form for oppressed groups, as a medium for confronting problems of self and of cultural identity which fulfills important social needs. (Felski 78)

Why would a feminist press be interested in a sub-genre like the Almanacs in light of Felski's argument? For women who had not had an articulated subject, and who had been absent from the majority of print media, this kind of story-telling, identity-building could provide a sense of stability and community. Practical orientation, not deconstruction, was their first priority.

This structure relates to the debates over the efficacy of the feminist dictum, "the personal is political." Linda Briskin, in her essay "Socialist Feminism: From the Standpoint of Practice," problematizes this catch-phrase:

> the "personal is political" challenges the public / private split as well as the overvaluation of the rational and concomitant devaluation of the affective; it validates experience over expertise and, at the same time,

> de-personalizes / politicizes women's experience; and it provides the basis for a coherent analytical and strategic approach to women's oppression. However liberating, it has often been transformed into an over-arching validation of personal experience which in turn has translated into both a competitive hierarchy of oppressions and an opposition to any kind of "theory." (Briskin 270)

In the case of Women's Press, the interviews created an analogous dichotomy. They were able to locate the political nature of women's "personal" experiences, but they also tended to stay away from discussion of conflict within the women's movement and elided the question of positioning within the process of representation, as can be seen in their down-playing of the interviewers and the interviewing process in the *Almanacs*. Given the kind of work the *Almanacs* began with, this is hardly surprising; the emphasis was, after all, on educating women, and raising their awareness of the women's movement. What proved difficult was the advent of self-critical challenges from inside the movement during the early 1980s. The fit between the form and function of the *Almanacs* became awkward as the finely-tuned calibrations that had been developed were de-stabilized by external critiques. How would the *Almanacs*--and the Press--respond?

It is important to note that an almanac / calendar is, regardless of content, targeted towards a specific segment of the population: people who need to organize their days and plan ahead. In an interview, my question, "who needs a daybook? Not every..." was finished quickly by Maureen FitzGerald: "Not every woman needs a daybook." According to FitzGerald, early *Almanacs* were "directed at feminists and the growing feminist movement, and it became clear that that's primarily where it was used." Liz Martin says that "people we knew bought them." The women who purchased the *Almanacs* would have been, therefore, most likely members of the middle-class (having activist work rather than factory jobs or solely homemaking responsibilities), English-speaking (since the *Almanacs* were published in one language only), and likely fully literate. As one of the only products of its kind on the

Canadian market in the 1970s and early 1980s, the *Almanacs* became de rigeur in certain circles and in some places symbolized a kind of feminist membership: "you'd go to meetings, and there'd be all the *Everywoman's Almanacs* on the table, and you had to be very careful that you didn't walk away with someone else's" (FitzGerald). In this way, the *Almanacs* closely reflected the women's movement at the time: the books did speak for the women who were a part of the movement--the trouble was that the movement itself was limited in its membership.

The size and binding of the *Almanacs* also meant that they were popular with a certain group of women. Their small size meant they could be easily transported in a knapsack, or even a pocket, making the *Almanacs* convenient for young women and students, who moved from activity to activity throughout the day. The very first page in the *Almanacs* emphasized their durability:

> Your *Everywoman's Almanac* will mellow with use. Crack the spine; pages are sewn in signatures and will not *drop* out (as they do in paperbacks held together with glue) or *rip* out (as they do in books with coil bindings). *Handle this book!*

Women's Press, then, called for a different kind of use of their books, and worked to demystify what might be considered an aesthetic object. Women were encouraged to let the *Almanacs* reflect their daily work and struggles. Like the women who bought them (perhaps was the reasoning of the Press), the *Almanacs* were practical, capable of hard work, and could hold up under pressure.

Occasionally, the Everyday Collective would include a questionnaire at the back of the *Almanac* that purchasers could fill out and return to the Press [fig 17]. The questionnaires served a purpose not only for the Press (learning about their customers, thus being able to tailor their product and marketing tactics to suit them) but also for purchasers of the *Almanacs* who could, by responding, feel connected to the Press and have the sense that they were a part of the larger collective / community of feminists. In early editions, the editors responded to suggestions from

purchasers, and this kind of response may have provided the impetus for women to buy the *Almanacs* in consecutive years. If their recommendations were heeded, or even if it appeared they had at least been considered, purchasers may have felt a greater loyalty to something they had helped to create, however indirectly. The momentum behind the questionnaire appears to fade in later editions of the *Almanac* as a sense of excitement gives way to unexamined regularity. Where the collective first responded to the questionnaires in the *Almanacs'* introductions, describing how they would try and put suggestions into action, and commenting on the wide-ranging kinds of people who were buying the *Almanacs*, in later books there was no reply from the Press.

What Women's Press learned from the questionnaires was not only what people liked and disliked about the *Almanacs*, but also what kind of person was buying them. They found that, as time passed, the *Almanacs* continued to appeal to younger women, but were losing favour with older feminists who had moved into desk jobs. A common complaint from older women was that the *Almanacs* could not lie flat on a desk. These complaints and requests were relatively simple to deal with: the Press began publishing both sewn and spiral bound *Almanacs*, in order to try and keep long-term purchasers satisfied and to attract younger women as well.

Later challenges that focused on the ideology of the Press, and not just their design of the *Almanacs*, made it harder for the collective to achieve consensus on how to effectively develop the *Almanacs*. The difficulty in achieving compromise may be seen as a result of Press members' inability to surrender control of their work (texts and organizational structures alike) while striving to appear to do so. As I have documented in this Chapter, the interviews and questionnaires constructed the appearance of interaction and direct access; however, the facade of responsiveness was not supported by the actual practices of the Press. Interviews were invisibly mediated and purchasers' responses appear to have been used as a marketing tool

rather than a source for equal give-and-take. These kinds of masked power imbalances served as points of attack, as I will describe in the following Chapter, for the editors of the 1989 *Almanac*.

Chapter Four

"*Everywoman's* Almanac?" 1989 and Beyond

Women's Press *Almanacs* were founded upon the assertion that they were for "everywoman"; they were the concept of sisterhood made concrete through praxis and purchasing power. As feminists began to critique the assumptions of universal sisterhood, so too did women step back and take another look at the *Almanac*. Everything from the organizational structure of the Press and the Everyday Collective, to the representation of women of Colour, to the themes of the *Almanacs* came into question. In this chapter I will explore in detail the production, content, and reception of the 1989 *Almanac*, which served as a focal point for these conflicts. As well, I will conclude by examining the production of calendars after the split, both at Second Story Press and at Women's Press, in order to document the lasting impact of the 1989 edition.

The past issues of the *Almanac* seem on the surface to be extremely inclusive of women from different backgrounds. A sense of international solidarity with women's struggles is conveyed in early features on Vietnamese women [fig 18] and Phillipina freedom fighters, and women from a number of marginalized groups (disabled women, lesbians, homeworkers, factory workers) are given space to speak. The solidarity with "Third World" women that the Press expressed reflected the concerns of the North American women's movement at the time: women who were fighting against the establishment as feminists saw connections between their struggles and those involved in global conflict. Over time, though, the outward embrace became limited. Once the interviewing format had been established, the *Almanacs* became far more geographically anchored, focusing on smaller networks of people and on local issues.

Certainly some of these imbalances reflect the nature of the changing political issues that were seen as important each consecutive year--during the 1980s,

environmental topics and concern over the threat of nuclear war were more clearly in the public eye than third world solidarity. While noting this, however, it is important also to be critical of the Press's representation of international issues: in some cases, the seemingly outward thrust of the *Almanac* may have functioned to cover up the fact that "home" was much less inclusive of difference, and much less capable of handling differences between women. We might ask on what level the early diversity had been achieved. Frequently issues were handled only when they were *au courant* in the movement, and were "covered" by white women. Without a significant number of women of Colour on staff, it was easier for the Press to "mistake silence for solidarity" (*Kinesis*, June 1994). Liberalist sentiment has difficulty, as I have discussed earlier, acknowledging its own contradictions and ideological bases. At Women's Press, international and minority issues were being treated by women who were not a part of these communities other than by virtue of their shared gender. One group reflecting only their own beliefs leads to little controversy and remains self-satisfied, bonded, and bound. What women of Colour had to say, as time progressed, was that such an approach did not and could not speak for "everywoman."

By 1987, several women of Colour were working for the Press, and Michele Paulse was a paid staff member and *Almanac* co-ordinator. Paulse had been a student at the Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto where Maureen FitzGerald worked, and had at first been hired to fill a summer position. For the 1989 edition, the Everyday Collective was made up of six women of Colour, who began work a year in advance because of their special status as an outside collective. Patricia Ashby, Larissa Cairncross, Jackie Edwards, Rosamund Elwin, Gabrielle Hezekiah and Michele Paulse met immediately with hesitancy on the part of some long-term staff members who did not feel the outside group would be capable of producing and marketing the *Almanac* on their own. The worry and fear the

collective was faced with had much to do with the perceived financial responsibility of the *Almanacs*: "the initiatives from Women of Colour from within the Press to take over that *Almanac* were met with a lot of skepticism, precisely because it was this moneymaker" (FitzGerald). For the 1989 collective, decisions were based on the political importance of the questions they were dealing with, whereas for long-term members, financial stability was seen as concomitantly necessary.

The process of stepping back was hard for those that had developed the *Almanacs*, and yet at the same time they did want to make room for new voices to be heard. Their efforts at anti-racism were seen, despite their efforts, as insufficient. Like Rhea Tregebov, they were in somewhat of a damned-if-they-did and damned-if-they-didn't conundrum: giving up all control would have meant stepping back almost entirely from their past work, and had they entrenched themselves even further, the Press's claim to "socialist feminism" would not have survived for long. They were not "damned," however, by the women of Colour so much as by their own track record at the Press and the positions and identities they had created for themselves. Women of Colour did not turn to the mainstream publishers and demand such drastic changes; they went to a house that *said* they were inclusive. If, as Ann Decter says, Women's Press was "like a communications arm of a political movement," and the radical fringe of the movement at that, then perhaps those who were perceived as resistant to change were no longer thought of as capable of communicating what that segment of the movement wanted to hear.

The criticisms of women of Colour to the *Almanacs* arose in response to the content of the books, but also to the organizational structure of the Press. The initiatives of the 1989 Everyday Collective were resisted, but the roots of the situation they faced could be traced back to other practices at the Press. In the 1989 *Almanac*, and in several articles about the split, women note time and again that in its entire sixteen-year history, Women's Press had never published a single-author

book by a woman of Colour. Not only that, but the structure in place was viewed as resistant to newcomers--newcomers who were more likely, as time passed, to be non-white, given the increased reach of the feminist movement. Three women, including current *Globe and Mail* journalist Alanna Mitchell, joined the Press but then quit after writing a letter to the collective, stating that they felt "you had to be around years and years before you stopped being the new girl" (FitzGerald). Despite these challenges, women of Colour continued to get involved with the Press--a situation that suggests that they felt Women's Press was a place where they could make a difference if only things could be changed internally at the Press.

Women's Press, then, was seen as a point of entry. Radical women of Colour wanted to get involved and felt their work would be of value if certain changes were made at the Press. In other words, Women's Press was not seen as a conservative, "dead end" organization, but rather one that held potential for change based upon the beliefs that it had been founded upon.

1989

The 1989 *Almanac* has a pastel-toned cover, with a line drawing of an "earth mother" overlaid onto a watercoloured background. The title is small, and the image of the woman balancing the sun and the moon in her hands provides the focal point [fig 19]. For the first time, the back cover carries a UPC symbol for scanning at bookstore cash registers. The third page announces the year's theme: "politics and practice," as well as the title headings for each month.

In contrast to the usual format, in 1989 the Everyday Collective chose to interview eleven women, whose comments were compiled by topic and interspliced for each month. Instead of a sequence of contained voices, the *Almanac* is highly worked and presents what appears to be dialogue and indirect argument between the women who were interviewed. For the first time, feminist processes and women's working relationships are actively critiqued. The new format facilitates this critique by

creating space for dialogue as opposed to monologues, and moves, then, from the voice of the individual "sister" to a conversation between a number of sisters. This re-structuring, in turn, leads to a differently situated user: some purchasers might be made to feel uncomfortable by the conflict, sensing it as a critique of their own shortcomings; others might reject it, believing its accusations to be false; still others might agree with the perceptions of the Everyday Collective, and feel that there had been an increased representation of their issues and concerns at the Press. Regardless of what kind of response she had, the individual purchaser was not encouraged to enter into a united and supportive community of "sisters" as she had been in the past, but was given the opportunity to witness, and perhaps participate in, contentious, heated debate mediated by women who clearly did not perceive their treatment at the Press to have been as equals.

The women chosen as interviewees form a diverse group: a couple were long-term members, some newer members; some lesbians, others straight; some white, others women of Colour. Women who had left the Press, in some cases after actively criticizing it, were also interviewed. The six-member *Almanac* group conducted all the interviews and edited them. They then cut segments of each interview together, and grouped them by theme for each month [fig 20]. Unlike every other *Almanac*, there are no photographs of the interviewees; however, there are full-page and 1/8 page illustrations throughout that represent the women's thoughts and perspectives and that were, as I will later describe, politically pointed.

Much of the impetus behind the book seems to be a desire to respond to the Press's earliest statement of aims and purposes, in which it was written that "the Women's Press believes that the oppression of women can be overcome only through a radical and fundamental change in the structure of our society." From Michele Paulse's perspective, as well as from that of many others in the Press, Women's Press no longer fulfilled this mandate. "Women who started it," said

Paulse, "may have been socialist feminist, but since then that philosophy has been carried on in name only" (January 1989). Much of the 1989 *Almanac* serves, then, to expand upon these challenges: was the Press (still) radical? was it effecting change? was it socialist feminist? The organization of the monthly topics is structured historically as well as thematically, moving from a look at "socialist feminism" and the history of the Press, to discussions of "business or politics," to racism, non-racism, and anti-racism, to "visions and directions." In doing this, the collective provides an overview of their critiques, relating them to the past and future of the Press.

For the *Almanac* collective, the issues dealt with in the 1989 edition were not only important or limited to the sphere of the Press alone; instead, there was an understanding that the racism, "defensiveness, resistance and denial" at the Press "were a microcosm of what [the group] perceived within the women's movement, generally" (Introduction 1989). Moreover, the group related:

> we talked about Women's Press in relation to the women's movement and how representative it may be of that movement. Some of our conclusions were: the Press has narrowly represented and defined women and issues relating to women. It is not a radical, but rather a "liberal" publisher . . . It has not re-assessed itself politically choosing rather to continue doing "the work" regardless of how increasingly neglectful it becomes of women's challenges and voices inside as well as outside of it. (Introduction 1989)

Clearly, far more was at stake than just inter-Press politics. The *Almanac* was seen as the crossroads of, as the group put it, "politics and practice." Feminists were enmeshed politically and personally in their work by virtue of this kind of intersecting. Whether they were long-term or new members, critical or criticized, the women involved definitely saw the *Almanac* and Women's Press as a key locus for--and leader of--debate.

As outlined above, an ongoing thread--perhaps even the backbone--of the 1989 *Almanac* was the question of whether the Press was achieving its goals, and if it had fallen short, how it might re-conceptualize the importance of a radical outlook. The medium of the *Almanac* was double-natured in this sense, in that it was still an alternative product for women, but had established itself and been printed for over ten years. Nomi Wall, an interviewee who had been a production assistant in the late 1970s, made a blunt observation in this light: "you can't have a product focusing on politics when you want to sell books across the country. The Press seemed like a contradiction." Michele Paulse commented that the Press ought not to worry about high sales, and that it would be better to focus instead on a strong political message since "radicals are never accepted" (March 1989).

Taken as a whole, the content of the 1989 *Almanac* is jarring when compared to that of its predecessors. Whereas they had underscored the mutual struggles of women under patriarchy, and presented a united front, suddenly there was harsh dissension in the supposedly secure ranks. The images and sketches in the book are particularly pointed in this light. In one, aliens stand outside a locked door labeled "Women's Press," and the illustration is placed next to the quotation: "the reality at the Press didn't reflect the broader reality" [fig 21] . In another, two cartoon women balance books on a scale. The woman on the "political content" side of the balance is depicted tossing books away over her head, while another woman on the "$viable$titles$" side craftily places a book down with her fingertips as she hunches, and glances away to one side with one eye almost shut--looking, in effect, like an "evil" comic book character [fig 22]. Although the comments made by some interviewees attest to the same kind of understanding, the images are more explicit: like most editorial illustrations, they take debate beyond polite mediation and into a bombastic, didactic arena. They therefore demarcate the new arena chosen by the collective, one in which feminists were set up as at odds, rather than working towards

compromise. Had they been labour activists, the illustrators might have been burning effigies; because they were print activists, they moved away from the bargaining table and "burned" those they were critiquing on the pages of the *Almanac* through the volatile combination of image and text.

The way in which the responses are structured in the *Almanac* raises interesting questions. In the case of the 1989 edition, the collective not only edited the interviews, but also edited them to fit together. Each was conducted separately, but was then excerpted and put together with other interviews. As with the previous *Almanacs*, the questions posed are not stated; however, the reader may infer the question related to that month's theme by virtue of the section in which the quotations are used. Because the collective had the clearly stated goal of re-working the *Almanac* and exploring (anti) racism at the Press from a critical standpoint, it is not surprising that the interview-collections are staged in a way that supports their opinions. Given that the responses were from such a diverse group of interviewees, how was the group able to achieve a self-supportive structure like this?

Most importantly, they were able to select sequences within which each quotation might be seen as responding to or building upon the preceding one. Almost every chapter begins with the words of a long-term member, and ends with the words of one of the women who were highly critical of the Press. This pattern changes only in the last two chapters: "Racism" begins with a quotation from Michele Paulse, and ends with ones from women who went on to found Second Story Press; in the final segment on "Visions and Directions," the woman who has represented the long-term members' position throughout the *Almanac* is not heard from--although she has been quoted in every previous chapter.

The content of the comments structured in this way suggests that *Almanac* organizers were setting out specifically to respond to the position of long-term members. In putting this goal into action, the *Almanac* group enacted a notable

reversal of power: where before they felt their voices had been silenced, they now worked to create an arena primarily for conveying their perspective. This reversal was empowering because the women were able to lay claim to space from which they had previously felt excluded.

To a certain extent, the *Almanac* collective was at an advantage when preparing the 1989 edition: one of the women interviewed was also on the *Almanac* group, and it appears she was able to articulate responses that speak to what the other interviewees said. Unlike the rest of the women who were interviewed, she would have been aware of what subjects the collective wanted to focus on, and could therefore tailor her words to suit the plan. In other sections, the interview selections are arranged so that one appears to speak to another. For example, in "The Value of Work," each comment made by Liz Martin is followed directly by one that refutes her statement:

> The reason people put in the volunteer labour [at Women's Press] is because the Press is a place for political debate. (Liz Martin)
>
> It wasn't a place that fostered debate in a very encompassing way. Debate would be limited to two or three members who would be "up" on a subject. (Beth McAuley)

Liz Martin is also the only interviewee whose comments are put in the context of the interviewer's questions. In "What's the Issue," the second quotation begins with the transcription of an interviewer's question about the introduction to *Women Unite!* The interviewer (who is not named) reads a paragraph from the book in which the editors note that the omission of important issues "such as the problems faced by Indian women and women in old age" is "very much a statement of the political context of the Canadian women; our predominant *loci* are the middle class and the university." Martin is then asked if she can "speak to that." By structuring the

monthly sections in these ways, the group sets up space in which the traditional understanding of the Press and its work are actively challenged.

Although the 1989 *Almanac* group criticized Women's Press on the basis of their limited networking, and thus their limited representation of women of Colour, the group itself was limited to Black women. In the conclusion to the *Almanac*, Gabrielle Hezekiah notes this, saying, "we need to be critical of some of our own process." Michele Paulse responds, "at the time it seemed natural to contact just my friends and friends of women at the Press" (Conclusion 1989). That there were no Native, Asian, South-Asian, or South American women on the collective speaks to the difficulty in reaching out--a difficulty similar (yet differently positioned) to that that had been faced by white women. While women of Colour stated that they did not want to be responsible for anti-racist education, they too needed to examine their assumptions and look farther afield for allies.

In a sense, the search--and perhaps it is a liberalist one--for adequate representation is never fully complete. Advances are made, and new groups find their voices, but can still never speak for everyone, or avoid exclusionary practices entirely. Feminists fight to express themselves under patriarchy, women of Colour fight to express themselves under white feminism, and perhaps then some "women of Colour" must fight to be heard because they have not been heard by other women of Colour. The system, then, self-perpetuates because it is being played out on the terms set by liberalist discourse: this discourse supports the belief that somewhere, somehow, "free speech" and adequate representation can be located and then sanctioned as the norm.

Part of the challenge for women of Colour who made early forays into Women's Press and the *Almanacs*, then, was not only to carve out a niche for themselves, but also to make room for others to follow them. To return to the theme of "Politics and Practice," there is a gap that must be bridged between criticism and action. All too

often, as Linda Briskin writes, "the sharp-edged clarity possible at an abstract level of analysis . . . becomes opaque when confronted by the complexities of daily political activity" (Briskin 269).

The *Almanac* and The Split

In the end, the conflict surrounding (anti) racism at the Press proved too powerful, and as I have discussed in Chapter Two, the Press divided: long-term members moved on to form Second Story, and those who had been on the side of radical change stayed at the Press. Certainly the issues raised in the pages of the 1989 edition were personally hard-hitting for those who had been involved. Women's Press, in its own work and words, no longer welcomed some attitudes, but concurrently encouraged a new kind of woman to get involved with the Press.

The *Almanacs* were not a catalyst for public discussion in the same way that the "censorship" of white writers was. There was little written in the mainstream or feminist media about the power struggle in and over the *Almanac*. It is possible that this was a result of the *Almanac's* genre-identity. Where it was perfectly understandable for the *Globe* to address issues surrounding the publication of an anthology--a genre that was familiar and fit easily into the subject matter of an Arts section which could talk politics only under the guise of aesthetic values--the *Almanac* proved harder to approach. This was likely the case for a number of reasons: the *Almanac* was purchased by a small community of women, it was produced "inside" the Press and had not solicited work from the wider writing community, and the conflict within it dealt primarily with issues that could be seen by outsiders as interior to the Press.

Booksellers and others involved with the publishing industry did, however, register their dislike of the 1989 *Almanac*. The manager of the Toronto Women's Bookstore at the time, Patti Kirk, shipped back all copies of the 1989 edition, saying, "I don't approve of the way they're dealing with all the problems. I think it's incredibly

unprofessional" (McDougall 28). In Kirk's case, the *Almanac* represented the strife at Women's Press in a single book. Rather than sell the *Almanac* and foster ongoing debate, Kirk chose instead to register her disagreement with the Press's processes through the strongest action available to her--refusing to carry that year's *Almanac* at her store. Similarly, Judy Sarick, the owner of The Children's Bookstore, decided not to carry any Women's Press titles following the acrimony over the split. Sarick sided with Wolfe and her supporters, and sought to enact economic sanctions against a publishing house that had harmed its members:

> Just as the Press advocates the use of power to make their point, I'm using my power to make my point. It's fine to have a principle, but you don't do it at the expense of people. We were among the first to strongly support Canadian children's books, and I'm sure we've never turned down a Women's Press title. It's a radical departure for us. (McDougall 28)

It is important to note that both Kirk's and Sarick's comments were published in the *Quill and Quire* article on the split, which tends, as I have argued, to take the side of long-term members. However, the Women's Bookstore is no Coles or W.H.Smith--it is actively political, and exists in large part to serve the feminist community. The fact that these stores returned all copies of the *Almanac* demonstrates that it was not only mainstream members of the publishing industry who were uncomfortable with the way in which Women's Press detonated. That it was the 1989 *Almanac* that ended up being rejected seems unfortunate: debate that might have been fostered was shut down when it became too painful for some women to deal with. We may ask, in this case, who held the balance of power and was able to choose to cut off the work of the 1989 Everyday Collective from the women who might have purchased the *Almanac*.

A "Second Story"

"Second Story" enacts suggestive word play with a triple-layered meaning: it may be interpreted as referring to a second level, a tale, and perhaps a different version of events. When Second Story formed, their choice of name suggested each of these possible interpretations, and in doing so, mapped out their relationship to Women's Press. Rather than choose an autonomous, non-referential name, they decided on one that alluded to the split--encapsulating, therefore, print and politics once again.

One of the first things Second Story published was a calendar. The *Women's Daybook* made a sharp break with Women's Press *Almanacs* in their design and content, and therefore in their perceived audience / purchaser. The name itself portrays an entirely different substance: "daybook" connotes a personalized calendar, with an aesthetic rather than political or informational thrust like that of an almanac. Each month begins with a full-page black and white photograph, chosen by a small jury at the Press. To one side of the photo is the artist's statement, which is written by the photographer to fit into the allotted space and is not, for the most part, edited by the *Daybook* co-ordinator [fig 23].

Liz Martin, who had worked on *Almanacs* and had done photography and design work for Women's Press, says that the driving artistic motivation behind the *Daybook* is to explore "the power of the image." Rather than women telling experiential stories in words, it is the photographs that convey the important "information" in the *Daybook*. Some, as Martin says, explore interior issues and achieve "a closer emotional range," while others are more broadly "political." In Martin's understanding, images "can crystallize things that are difficult to talk about" and offer the viewer "a moment in time through history." Their power is "not necessarily transformative, but reinforces ideas already forming in your head" (Martin). Photography, then, has two different "ways" of telling: it can be subtly allusive, and it can be directly representational and concrete. In contrast to painting and drawing,

which have been used more frequently for non-representational or abstract work, photographs often speak difference immediately: in the medium, we are encouraged to see, at a glance, what is "realistic" and accurate visual information.

However, much as we may look past the surface of a seemingly transparent text to address the role of the editor (as in the case of the *Almanacs*), we may also ask, "who is behind the lens, and when do they choose to take the photograph?" The photographer has framed, composed, selected, and timed their work, but the hand or influence of the artist cannot be seen immediately on the exterior. Interestingly, Second Story includes, as I have mentioned, artist's notes accompanying each photograph. The choice to do this may be seen as an attempt to draw attention to the constructedness of the photograph, and to mark the work of the woman behind the camera. This process, however, also allows viewers / readers to look to the text for an further explanation of a photograph, and to bring words and images together to create meaning. The aesthetics of the *Daybooks*, then, enact a subtle re-working of feminist print politics.

The *Daybooks* are large, wide, and spiral bound--they are perfect for lying on desks, but not the best choice for rough-and-tumble knapsacks [fig 24]. I myself received a *Daybook* as a gift when I was in high school (though I hadn't recalled it was a Second Story calendar until I found the same edition when I visited the Press recently). Although I liked one of the photographs enough to cut it out and paste it into my journal, and in fact can call to mind almost every photo that was in the book, I found that the *Daybook* didn't suit my needs on an everyday basis: the cover bent easily, the pages were too large, and I didn't need to write my timetable in by the hour since my classes were already pre-scheduled.

The promotional blurb which is included in Second Story's catalogue highlights why "over the years working women have come to love the *Women's Daybook*" (note

that there is no distinction made between working inside and outside of the home, although the *Daybook* is definitely for women with professional jobs):

> [it has] week-at-a-glance, hour by hour days layout--ideal for busy women . . . [it is] an up-market desk calendar at a very reasonable price combining practicality and beauty . . . [and is] a hugely successful gift item for co-workers, friends, family and clients. (Catalogue Supplement Spring 1997)

In a competitive business, Second Story must market their product to a specific niche of women; in their case they have chosen to focus on older, established professionals. Purchasers are not necessarily inscribed as "feminist," although Second Story is a feminist establishment. Instead, the themes deal with, and the types of images included refer to, "women's" rather than overtly "feminist" issues. This may be seen, in a certain light, as a watering-down of feminist radicalism. However, it also reflects the attempt to reach a wider market; the "giftablity" of books tends to be more important these days than drastic challenges to the status quo (Archer 46). The shift away from anti-design design has been strong, and rawness and rough edges no longer sell as well. The sub-genre of the *Daybooks* works within a marketplace that addresses itself not only to the individual purchaser who will buy a copy to empower herself, but also to a growing number of women who will buy the calendar as a gift for friends, relatives, or co-workers. Currently Second Story has a print run of 9 000 to 10 000 copies of the *Daybook* per year, and are working to push these numbers "a little further" (Martin). Attracting a gift-buying public will aid them in achieving this goal.

Production of the *Daybooks* is also different: Press members / owners created the template, and it has changed little since its inception. Having the same format from year to year makes business sense: it is distinctive and "sticks in people's minds," it builds a profile for itself over the years, and it saves money because it does not to have to be re-designed annually (Martin). Their "sameness," however, means

that the feeling conveyed by the Daybooks is less dynamic. They are comfortable, reassuring, and consistent--rarely disturbing or confrontational.

After experiencing the loss of power and place at Women's Press, Second Story's founders chose to set up a worker-owned business rather than a collective. They are able, then, to maintain control over the products and processes of their Press in a way they could not at Women's Press. Thus, with the *Daybook*, there is no chance that an outside group would be invited to organize the book; nor is it likely that it would ever become a forum for painful conflict in the same way that the *Almanac* did. In this context, the influence of the 1989 *Almanac* is strongly implicit but rarely explicit: the 1989 edition "taught" Second Story's publishers and editors not to work by majority-rules, and not to let outsiders wrest control.

The Almanac in 1997

Today's *Almanacs* are still "Everywoman's," but they, like the Second Story *Daybooks*, have been tailored to suit a particular segment of a bustling market. The 1997 edition is the same size as previous *Almanacs*, but the spiral binding is covered by a flap so that the title of the book can be printed on the spine. The cover art, which does double duty on the catalogue cover (stressing perhaps the importance of the *Almanac* and its strong connection to the work of the Press) is by Belinda Ageda, and features small paintings of photo-booth pictures of young women "taped" against a cloudy blue sky [fig 25]. What it looks like, then, is a painting of what young women might decorate their *Almanac* with--tape, stickers, photos, patches, tacks, bandaids, and scribbles.

There are seven different photo / paintings. On the front cover, one depicts three friends: one with pink hair, one with green, and the other with black hair and glasses. The second is in black and white, and is of two friends embracing. On the back cover, one is of two friends, but is "ripped" in half to separate them; another, above an "out" sticker, shows a young woman with a shaved head pointing to a woman-

symbol tattoo; one is of two girls sunbathing, with the note: "first sexy undies (with Jan) 12 / 97; one shows a sign saying "no wheelchair access"; and the last is a half-cut-off picture of young woman wearing *hijab* with the note across the top of it: "CANADA WK: 12." On the two pages, people of different cultures, religions, and sexual orientations are represented. The common denominator is, however, that they are all young; most look like teenagers.

The focus on young women is not just a marketing tactic for the cover; in fact, the topic of the 1997 edition is "New Attitude: Young Women and Feminism." From the editors' words in their acknowledgments (and reprinted in the promotional listing in the Press's catalogue), the *Almanac* is promoted as:

> a spicy, spunky and fun collection of interviews by young women 14 to 24 . . . These twelve young women strip back the rhetoric and dig up their realities; they share their sorrow and their pride, and entrust with us a sweet sensitivity of their everyday lives. Don't miss these young women grapple with issues that will impact their lives and ours [sic], and shape a future of celebration, resiliency and hope.

While the cover suggests that the purchasers of this *Almanac* are likely to be akin to the women depicted on it, the *Almanac* co-ordinators write in their introduction that this year's edition "is a chance for older women to read what young women think in their own words." The community that is being built through the *Almanac* is interestingly configured: the (somewhat) older women organizing the *Almanac* are providing a medium for connections to be fostered that might not otherwise take place. Older women, who have been "entrusted" with the lives of younger women, will be able to feel solidarity with their younger counterparts as a result.

How has the Press built upon the precedent set by the 1989 *Almanac*? Anti-racism has become an elemental building-block of all the work of the Press. For the 1997 *Almanac*, women of Colour *and* white women were organizers, interviewers, interviewees, and artists. Self-criticism of the Press, however, has never been raised

in the same way it was in 1989. *Almanac* organizers have never again interviewed Press members, nor have they strayed from the traditional style of organizing the interviews. Notably, the interviews in the 1997 edition are said to be "by" young women, not "with" them. The generational tension that seems to be displayed by the *Almanac* may end up causing friction like that over (anti) racist tensions at the Press: teenagers did not have control over the *Almanac* that featured their words and lives. The *Almanac*, then, is in a tricky situation again: it appeals to and features younger women, but is for older ones. A similar imbalance was dealt with by *Fireweed* (who had, in the early 1980s, had a guest collective of women of Colour edit one issue) by inviting a guest editorial group of young, Black lesbians to edit an edition of the journal.

This turn, on the part of feminist organizations, to look at youth is not altruistic: they are not doing it just to be inclusive; rather, as is demonstrated by the theme of the 1997 *Almanac*, the feeling is conveyed that young women are needed to ensure the future of the movement, as well as to purchase the products of radical feminist presses. In a time when "feminist" is seen by some as a dirty word due to numerous backlashes and to public opinion that feminists are men-bashers, and when it is thought of as unnecessary by those who feel that the work of feminism has already been achieved, feminist businesses are realizing that they must actively cultivate the market that might be able to support their work in the upcoming years.

Women's Press must also promote the *Almanacs* to a particular segment of the young female population. The mainstream publishing industry has learned how to address themselves (albeit to a limited extent) to young women, partially because of the work the feminist movement had done in the past to mobilize this group. Now that young women may feel that they are adequately represented by the mainstream, the challenge for feminist presses may be to focus their concentration on smaller

populations of youth who are disaffected by conventional products, and to provide a place for groups that are still marginalized in Canadian society.

Production of the *Almanac* has, however, become ever-more "businesslike" since the 1989 edition. Co-ordinators are hired specifically by the Press, and some of the women involved have little input into choosing the theme for the book, although they may be responsible for interviewing and editing interviews (Tulchinsky). Where the reader survey used to be at the back of the *Almanacs*, there are now order forms for Women's Press t-shirts, and next year's copy of the *Almanac*. In the 1996 edition, the back section also included advertising for feminist journals: *Herizons*, *Kinesis*, *Aquelarre*, *Fireweed*, and *Canadian Women's Studies* all put in ads with subscription information. With full-time employees at the Press being laid off and working only on an occasional or volunteer basis, the Press's ability to deal with responses from their readers, via such conduits as the questionnaires, and their ability to work as a collective based on consensual decision-making have been hampered. The community of the *Almanacs* is growing in diversity of representation, but is no longer a crossroads of sharing between publisher and purchaser in the same way it had earlier been.

Conclusion

When I began my research on Women's Press, I had no idea how far the topic would take me. I had expected my work to be neatly contained geographically and theoretically, but instead I have discovered the wide-reaching interconnections that lie behind an ostensibly straightforward story. My interdisciplinary work has proven challenging, but has, I believe, been profitable. The *Almanacs*, personal anecdotes, artwork, and articles tell a story that moves beyond the page, and grounds itself in the on-going history of daily life, meshed as it is between the political and the practical.

I have also found it a challenge to find intellectual maps in other theorists' work to guide me in my research; in the end, I have cobbled together a number of different approaches. With new subject matter comes an attendant requirement for new techniques of handling the material. My goals have been to establish the terrain in question, and to suggest links for future research. Over the course of researching and writing this thesis, I have come to see the process I have gone through as one of investigation into the holistic "life" of a series of books. I started constructing a history and context for the series, and then examined the conditions under which it was produced, its contents, and the reception it received. What has been most interesting to me is to have thought deeply about our everyday relationships with texts. It is easy to drop into a bookstore, pick up a copy of the *Almanac*, and use it for an entire year. What fascinates me is what lies behind this simple act: how had the book come to be for sale in the first place? What had its publisher intended it to "do"? How had it been compiled and edited?

All too often, publishing is perceived as a completely straightforward business: an author writes a book, and if it is "good," it will be published. In this thesis, I've sought to go behind the entrance doors to Women's Press (literally and metaphorically); to listen in on past meetings and conversations, to read between the lines of text and

design. Having gone through this process, what can I now extrapolate from my research?

Above all, I see the story of Women's Press to date standing as testament to the volatile nature of a combination of print and politics. When women at the Press began publishing, they were confident that they could control their modes of production, and effect the political changes they wanted to make. They had, through their maturing self-identification as an alternative feminist press, recognized not only the politics underlying mainstream publishing, but had also decided to actively use their political bias consciously to achieve their goals—they would enact ideology outright, and in doing so, make changes in their society. Paradoxically, the Press's self-confidence and faith in its political position blinded it to its own shortcomings, and led to Press members being unable to see themselves as actors in a system of institutionalized racism.

The problems the Press faced in making the radical changes they set out to accomplish can be seen partially as having evolved out of a certain understanding of what "the freedom of the press" meant to Press-members. On the "acknowledgements" page of this thesis, I have reprinted a poster produced by the early feminist press, which proclaims, "the freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press." Early on, Women's Press demonstrated that they believed that through their control and collective ownership, the press could be freed of its restraints, and its representation of women could be altered to become more equitable. Press-members also professed their belief that free speech and equal access would be hallmarks of their professional work. In light of the history of women's work in the publishing industry as I have documented it, and the case study provided by Women's Press and the *Almanacs*, it appears that the concept of freedom—of speech or of the Press—may be illusory. Solicitation of manuscripts, editing techniques, publishing and marketing practices all create, as their end-

product, a highly worked text—mediated by processes of inclusion and exclusion based on conscious decision-making—that may be liberating for some; but that is not "free" in any sense of the word.

The liberal belief in the freedom of the press has the effect of negating a nuanced understanding of how politics and print work together on different levels. The Women's Press example demonstrates pointedly that the press cannot simply be used from the outside as a political tool: since the publishing industry functions within complex, interconnected systems of economics, art, and politics, those in the industry (whether they see themselves as mainstream or alternative) are not autonomous agents—they work inside larger structures of "freedom" and "control" that are not easily manipulated or even recognized. Since small presses work within the context of a mainstream capitalist marketplace, they are subject to external forces. This is not to say, however, that a socialist community would provide a perfect alternative. Rather, I would suggest that in any situation, the larger system beyond the individual or single organization must be recognized. Liberal discourse that plays itself out in absolutes cannot describe complexities and ambiguities, and serves in the end to blindly underscore the gap between professed ideals and reality rather than turning to address how such a gap might be bridged with the tools at hand.

The Women's Press collective did come to a somewhat more refined understanding of the Press, and as they did, their textual output changed. When the Press was formed, it was called "The Canadian Women's Educational Press." The first *Almanac*, as I have noted, contained information on topics ranging from breast self-examinations to sexism in the media. The work of the Press in the 1970s was intended to educate a broad spectrum of women, and their books provided direct information and shared strategies for feminist activity on a personal level. Today the *Almanacs* are still political, as can be seen in the example of the 1997 edition;

however, they are not equivalently politicizing—there has been a shift away from the sphere of social activism to individual politics related through women's micro-autobiographical stories.

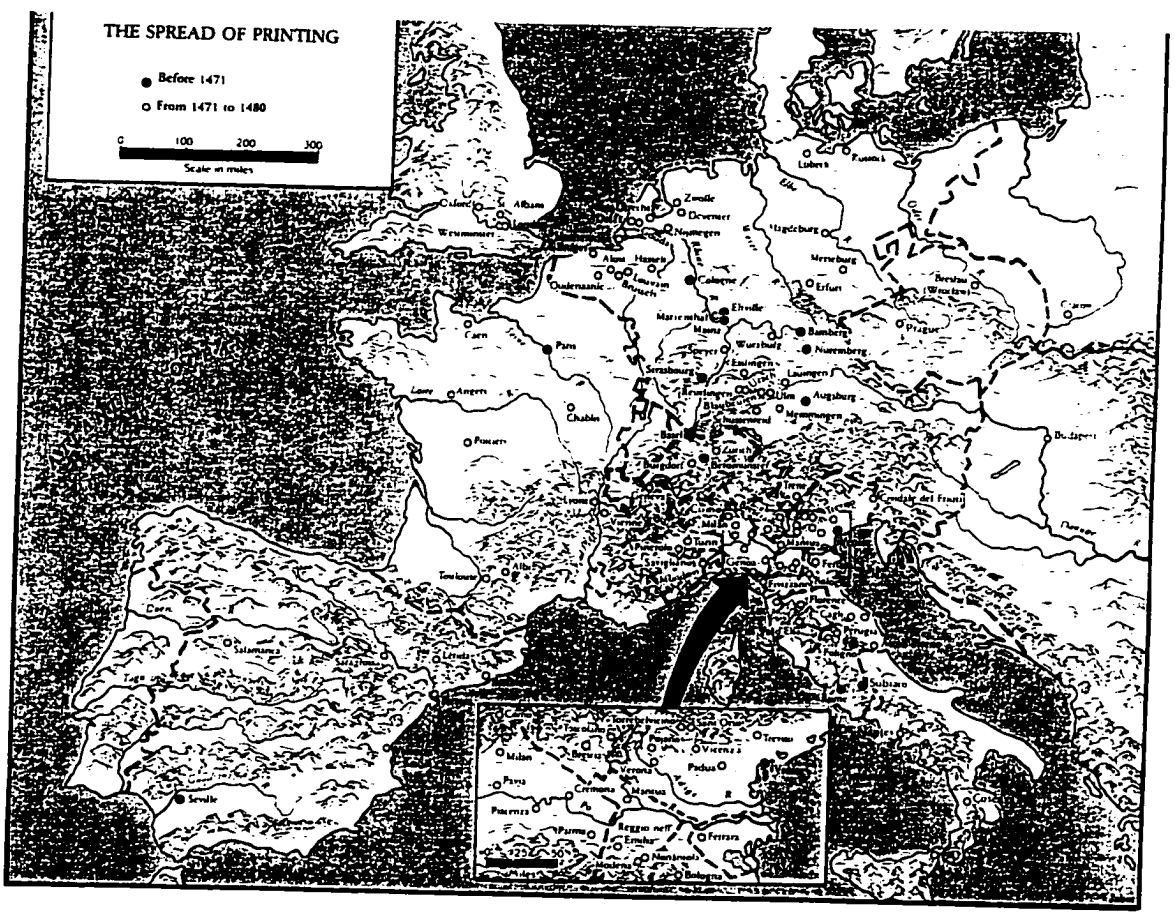
What lesson had the Press learned that made them alter the content of the *Almanacs*? The shift in approach signals, to a degree, a recognition on the part of Press members that the sub-genre of the *Almanacs* provided somewhat unstable ground for direct political platforms and didactic educational materials. The daily calendar format worked more fluidly with storytelling and small-scale community-building rather than broad public mobilization. At a fundamental level, the Press was also forced to recognize that representing women in their local and national community would be challenge enough without having to expand ever outward. The conflict that had arisen over anti-racism at a later stage further underlined this awareness: the role of the *Almanacs* was clarified to be about creating a supportive space for purchasers to learn about the lives and struggles of the women in the society around them.

Questions remain in my mind, however, about the ability of the *Almanacs* to enable feminist activism when they remain focused on identity and representation. Having an articulated subject in the public arena has been, as I have written, important to women who have not previously seen themselves or women like themselves in print. Yet representation can only go so far, and it carries with it the twin drawbacks of paring down individuals into categories, and defining people in binary terms: women are "white" or "of colour," their sexual orientations are catalogued by degree, they are reduced to demographics. Whether the sub-genre of the *Almanacs* can move beyond representation remains to be seen, but the conflict arising over the production of the *Almanacs* has drawn attention to the challenges inherent in representation for political purposes.

The experience of Women's Press also demonstrates that "radical" is a relative term. Early members had thought, given their understanding of society at the time, that their form of alternative practices would remain revolutionary for years to come. Rather than continuing to develop their position, and to suit their radicalism to the times, they maintained a dated definition and understanding of the word "radical." As a result, they found that they were criticized for promoting themselves as something they were not--for saying they were on the cutting edge when they were liberal instead of revolutionary. Thus, the strength of a small, political publishing house--its careful positioning and critical analysis of society--can become diluted when it is not consistently re-evaluated.

To date, Women's Press has played an influential role in the Canadian publishing industry and feminist movement. Through their development of the *Almanacs*, the Press re-visioned Canadian women's secondary status with their focus on marginalia in response to marginalization. The things that had fallen through the cracks of public recognition were brought to the fore: notes that were scribbled on margins, and the doodles and stories of everyday life were recognized and celebrated as culturally, artistically, and politically important. There was, however, at the same time, slippage between the professed ideal of bringing all marginalized stories out from the edges onto the page, and the actual practices at the Press. This slippage stands as testament to the complex challenge of bringing politics and print together.

Fig. 1 The spread of printing: before 1471 and before 1481. (Eisenstein 14-15)



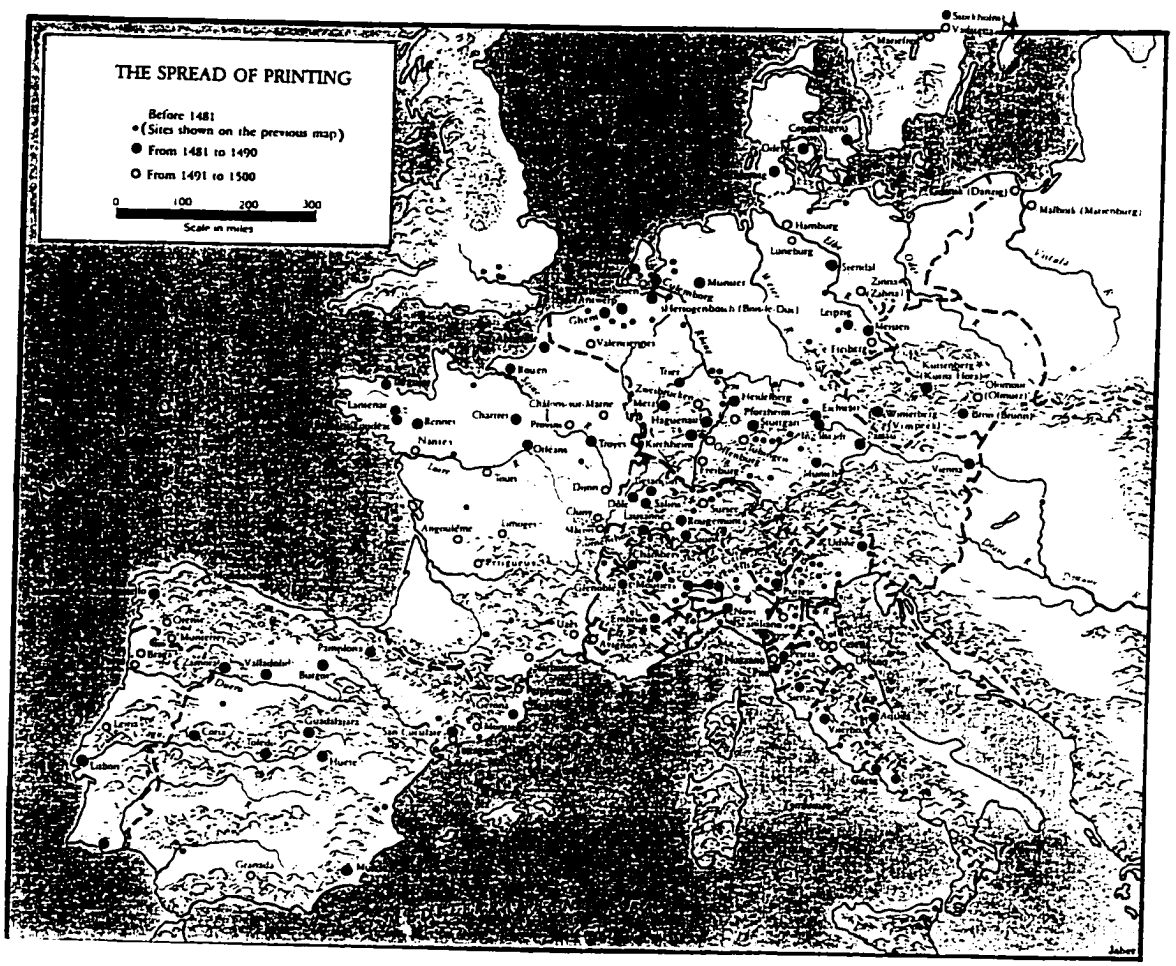


Fig. 2 Young woman typesetting, 1900s. (Wilson 1)

Fig. 3 Woman sewing books by hand. (Van Kleeck 14)

SEWING BOOKS BY HAND

Fig. 4 Founding dates of some Ontario Women's Liberation Groups (Adamson 254)

TABLE 1
Founding Dates of Some Ontario Women's Liberation Groups

Guelph
1969 Guelph Women's Liberation Movement
1972 Guelph Women's Centre

Hamilton
1969 Hamilton Women's Liberation Movement
1971 Group for Equal Rights at McMaster University
1971 Hamilton Committee on the Status of Women
1973 Hamilton Women's Centre

Kingston
1969 Kingston Women's Liberation
1970 Queen's University Community Co-op Day Care Centre
1970 Women's Union
1972 Women's groups meet weekly at Queen's University
1973 Kingston Women's Centre

Kitchener-Waterloo
1971 Kitchener-Waterloo Women's Caucus
1972 K-W Women's Coalition for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws
1973 K-W Women's Place

London
1970 Birth Control and Abortion Centre at the University of Western Ontario
1970 Abortion Action
1970 London Women's Liberation Movement
1973 London Women's Resource Centre

Niagara Region
1973 Niagara Region Action Committee on the Status of Women Ottawa

Ottawa
1969 Ottawa Women's Liberation Committee
1969 Carleton University Women's Liberation Committee
1971 Women's Resource Group
1971 Gays of Ottawa/Gais d'Ottawa
1972 Women's Centre

Peterborough
1970 Peterborough Women's Caucus
1974 Women's Place

St Catharine's
1974 Women's Resource Centre, YWCA

Sarnia
1969 Sarnia Women's Liberation

Sudbury
1970/71 Sudbury Women's Liberation

Thunder Bay
1969 Thunder Bay Women's Liberation

TABLE 1 (*concluded*)

1969 Lakehead University Day-Care Centre
1970 Birth Control & Counselling Centre at Lakehead University
1973 Women's Centre
1973 *The Northern Woman Journal*

Toronto[6]
1966 Toronto Women's Liberation Work Group, a University of Toronto student group
1967 SUPA Women's Liberation Work Group
1968 Toronto Women's Liberation Movement
1969 New Feminists
1970 Leila Khaled Collective
1970 Toronto Women's Caucus
1972 Women's Centre
1972 Women's Press
1972 *The Other Woman* begins publication
1972 Women for Political Action
1973 Interval House Shelter for Women
1973 Rape Crisis Centre

Waterloo
1973 Women's Collective

Windsor
1970 Windsor Women's Liberation Movement
1973 Windsor Women's Place

Woodstock
1973 Women's Centre and Shelter

Fig. 5 *Globe and Mail* article, "Race issue splits Women's Press" (Rochon)

Stories by white writers rejected

Race issue splits Women's Press

BY LISA ROCHON
The Globe and Mail

For the first time in its 15-year history as Canada's largest feminist [illegible] Press is going through a major upheaval that has sharply divided its members. A dispute over writing with alleged racist overtones has sparked a power struggle between long-time members of the collective and a more militant vanguard. The dispute has resulted in legal action, accusations of breach of contract and a lockout.

The controversy erupted over the handling of a women's anthology and the last-minute rejection of three of the stories selected for the volume because of their alleged racist content.

In June 1987, the Women's Press, based in Toronto, issued a call for women writers to submit short stories to be considered for an anthology called Imagining Women. More than 100 submissions were received by the fiction committee, which is mostly comprised of long-time members of the Press. Twenty-one stories were accepted, contracts were signed, and the editing process was launched.

Several months later, the Press' Policy and Publishing Group, which is responsible for final editorial decisions, overruled the committee and rejected three of the stories, saying they were "structurally" racist because in all three, white authors reflect on Latin American or African cultures, sometimes adopting the voices of people of color.

Although there is consensus at the

[illegible]/The Globe and Mail

Caucus members Rona Moreau (left), Rosamund Elwin, Michele Paulse, Wendy Waring, Katherine Scott.

not have the right to assume the voice of a woman of color in a piece of literature. The stories in question had to be rejected, the caucus says, on the basis of racist overtones.

Popular Caucus member Wendy Waring, who is also a member of the feminist quarterly Fireweed, says the move is a reflection of a more global concern for women of color. "There have been black feminists in Canada as long as white feminists in Canada. The question is who got the published voice?"

Added caucus member Katherine

does that place the imagination and where does that place creativity?"

The Writers Union of Canada, acting on behalf of one of the accused writers, has condemned the rejection of the manuscripts as a breach of contract. Libby Scheier, chairman of the union's rights and freedoms committee, said in a recent public statement: "The good reputation that the Press has built up through long years of hard work is now being jeopardized. The internal disputes at the Women's Press

the complex nature of anthologies has allowed for more editorial licence than for other publications. "The anthologies were agreed upon in principle (by the PPG)," says Lois Pike, a member of the fiction collective who also sat on the Policy and Publishing Group. "Then we went ahead to choose the stories."

The Writers Union of Canada has denounced the accusations of racism, stating: "To our mind, such writing is not by definition racist, and the attempt to impose such

Fig. 6 Margie Wolfe and her supporters. Photo from *Quill and Quire* (Mc Dougall 4)

CHRISTINA HARTLING

From left: Carolyn Wood, Margie Wolfe, Lois Pike, and Liz Martin hold copies of Women's Press titles they worked on during their tenure at the Press. The group, in starting its own publishing company, hopes to acquire a portion of the WP backlist.

Fig. 7 *Herstory*, sample of weekly layout (calendar belonging to my mother--note "last day of classes"). (Herstory 1974)

APRIL

sun 14

Ida Sitton speaking at a SEIU meeting: "We do not think that they (men) could have the heart to ask us to enter their old quarters of party politics, for it would need so much housecleaning ... women detest housecleaning, whether men realize it or not; we much prefer to start in fresh apartments and keep them clean," 1916.

mon 15

Alice Wilson, geologist who became a legendary figure and whose will of iron and determination to overcome prejudice and hostility in a "man's field" finally enabled her to succeed, dies, 1964.

tues 16

Lily Dougall, novelist and writer on theological subjects, born, 1858. First annual meeting of the Sask. Provincial Council of Women at the YWCA, Saskatoon, 1920.

wed 17

LAST DAY OF CLASSES

New Brunswick women win the vote, 1919. Dr. Sylvia Ostry is appointed Director of the Economic Council of Canada (chief statistician), the highest post ever held by a woman in govt. service, 1969

thur 18

An organizational meeting for the Sask. Provincial Council of Women is held in Saskatoon and officers are elected, 1918. *Jeanne Mance, North America's first secular nurse, founder of the first* hospital in Ville Marie and one of the founders of this settlement in 1642, is honored by a commemorative stamp, 1973

fri 19

Flair (Gibb) Herching, chairwoman of Communist Party Women's Commission, active in Housewives' Assn and peace movements, born, 1914. Alberta women win the vote, 1916.

sat 20

* Nellie Grenwood Andrews, first Canadian woman to receive B.Sc., graduates from Victoria University, 1884

Alice Wilson started work for the Geological Survey of Canada as a clerk in 1909, and she was determined to become a geologist. But it took her 36 long, struggling years to be recognized as such.

She must fight for herself. In the field, people remember, she was always first: the first to spot a wild flower, a high flying bird, the gathering storm, always the first over a farmer's fence. Of course she was first; she had to be. She must show them that being a woman made no difference to being a good geologist, even if, when she got home, she couldn't eat for exhaustion.

She started doing field work in 1913 but the survey, wanting to keep her in her 'place,' wouldn't give her a car for field work; 'when they were being issued to all the men, they gave her a bicycle.' Undaunted she bought her own car, strapped the bicycle to the side and 'drove off down the Ottawa valley.'

After asking for educational leave from the Survey for ten years without success she was finally given permission to compete for a fellowship. She won and at the age of 45 went to Chicago to work for her doctorate, which she received in 1929. The Survey, however, did not see fit to make her a full geologist until after the war, one year before she retired in 1946.

She continued working, however, until she died at the age of 83. In 1947 she published a book on geology for young people called The Earth Beneath Our Feet. And in 1948 she became a sessional lecturer at Carleton College where she enjoyed teaching and was well-loved.

Fig. 8 Comparison of size difference between *Herstory* and Women's Press *Almanacs.*

Fig. 9 Cover of *Graphically Speaking*.

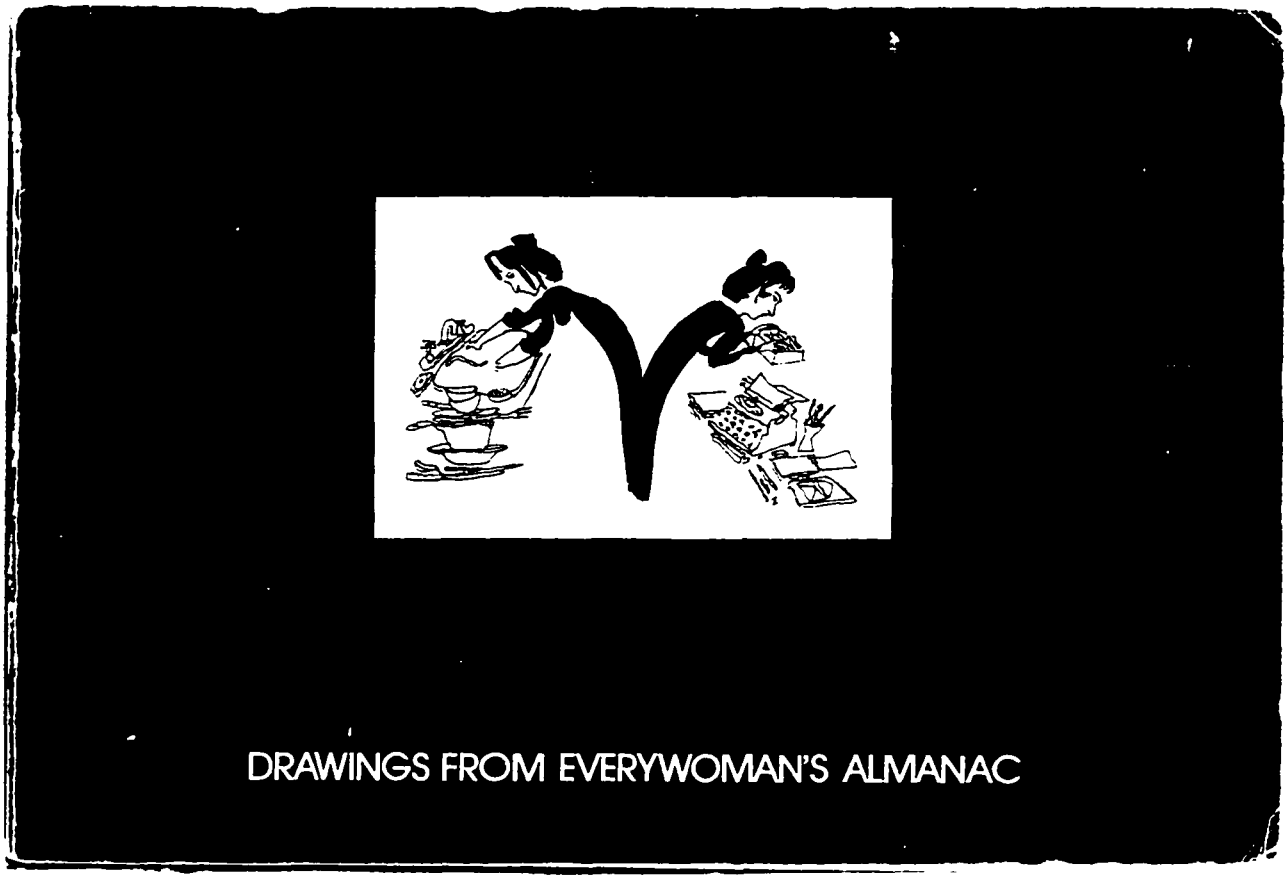


Fig. 10 Cover of 1976 *Everywoman's Almanac*.

Fig. 11 Cover of *Herstory*, 1974.

Fig. 12 Cover of *Herstory*, 1975.

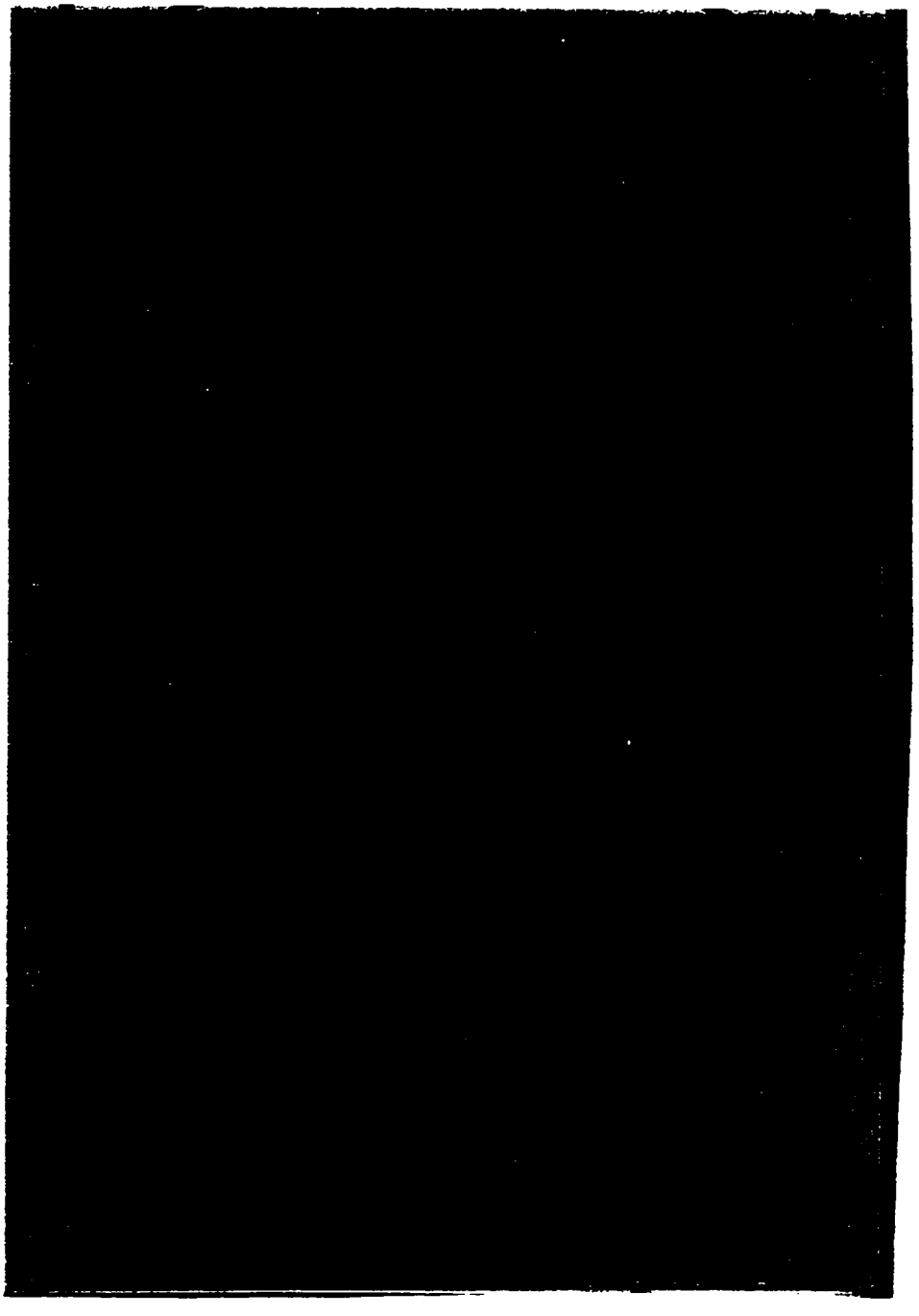


Fig. 13 Cover of 1979 *Everywoman's Almanac.*

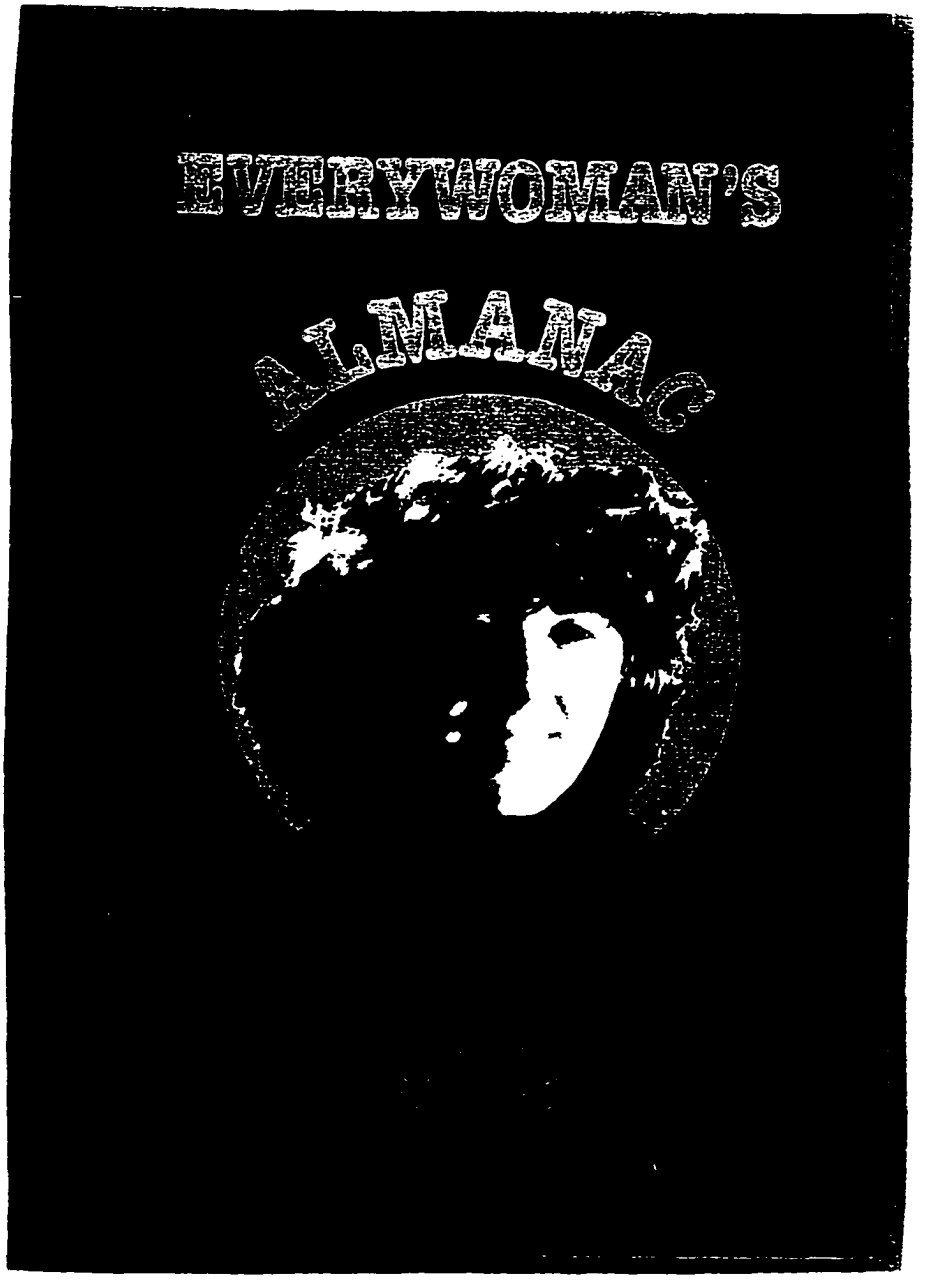


Fig. 14 Cover of 1978 *Everywoman's Almanac*.

Fig. 15 Cover of 1987 *Everywoman's Almanac*. (Note painted rather than photographed figure).

Fig. 16 Sample page of monthly layout for *Everywoman's Almanac*.

CHANGING OUR IDEAS ABOUT AGING

Diane Palmason is a 48-year-old runner and sport administrator, and a founding member of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS). She holds several records in women's Masters' competition (age 40 and up), and ranks twelfth among Canadian women of all ages for the marathon.

In 1954 I ran for Canada in the Commonwealth Games in the longest distance that women were allowed to run: the 220-yard dash. I did all right but I wasn't exceptional. I would rather have been running the mile but I couldn't enter the races. I got frustrated and discouraged. So I quit being an athlete at the age of 16 and did nothing else competitive for 20 years. I was married in 1960, and had four children between 1963 and 1970. During those years I had back problems which caused me to be less and less active, and to gain more and more weight. In 1975 I underwent a spinal fusion, became even more inactive, and ended up at about 150 pounds.

I decided I wanted to get going on a fitness program once I had recovered from the operation. I had no idea of being a competitive road runner; I just wanted to do a little running to lose a little weight. The orthopedic surgeon who did my spinal fusion said that I shouldn't run. I could walk, so I started out walking but I just got bored with that. I began to run a few steps to see how my back felt, and then run a few more steps, and gradually I was running more than I was walking.

And then I saw a report in the *Ottawa Citizen* of a woman who had run the 1975 National Capital Marathon. I was just blown away – I didn't think women were allowed to run more than 220 yards, and this woman had just run 26 miles! That spring, just four months after my surgery, I decided I was going to run the

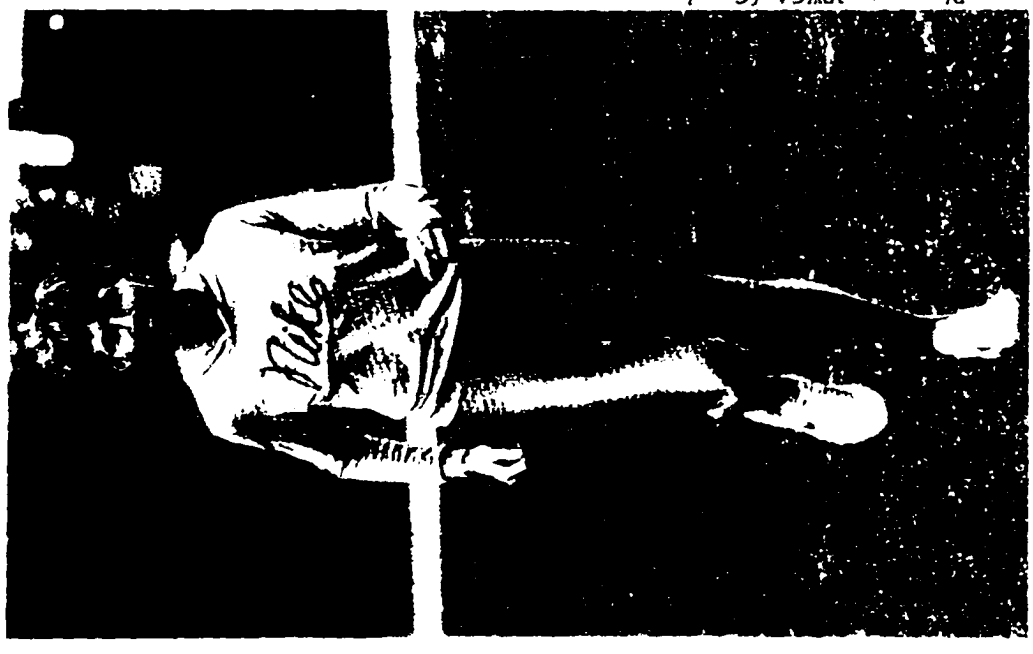
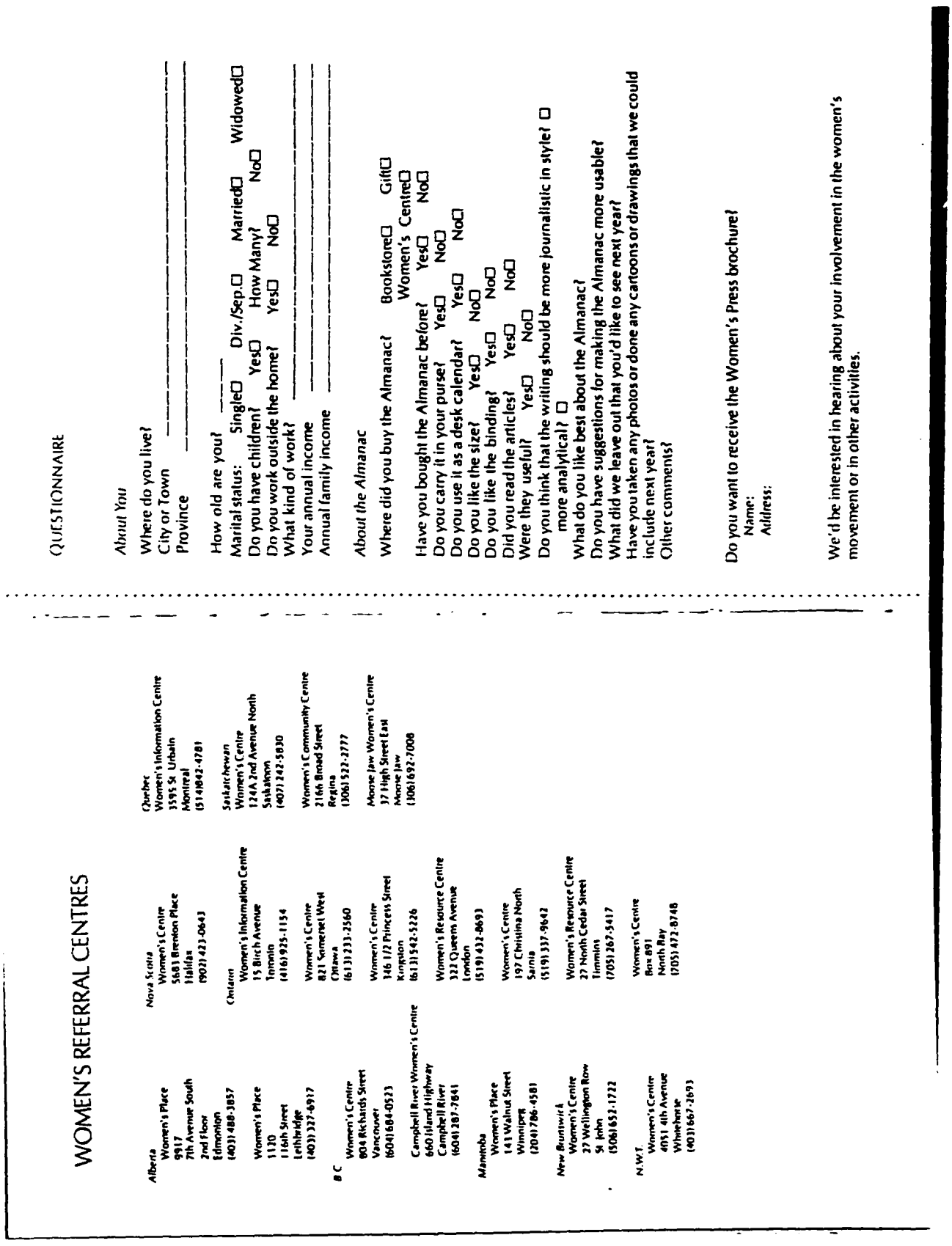


Photo courtesy YWCA of Canada

Fig. 17 Questionnaire included in *Everywoman's Almanac*.



WOMEN'S REFERRAL CENTRES

Alberta
Women's Place
9917
7th Avenue South
2nd Floor
Edmonton
(403) 488-3857

Women's Place
1120
116th Street
Lethbridge
(403) 327-4917

B.C.
Women's Centre
804 Richards Street
Vancouver
(604) 684-0523

Campbell River Women's Centre
660 Island Highway
Campbell River
(604) 287-7641

Manitoba
Women's Place
141 Walnut Street
Winnipeg
(204) 786-4581

New Brunswick
Women's Centre
27 Wellington Row
St. John
(506) 652-1722

N.W.T.
Women's Centre
4051 4th Avenue
Whitehorse
(403) 667-2693

Nova Scotia
Women's Centre
5681 Brenton Place
Halifax
(902) 423-0643

Ontario
Women's Information Centre
15 Birch Avenue
Toronto
(416) 925-1154

Women's Centre
821 Somerset West
Ottawa
(613) 233-2560

Women's Centre
146 1/2 Princess Street
Kingston
(613) 542-5226

Women's Resource Centre
322 Queens Avenue
London
(519) 432-8693

Women's Centre
197 Christina North
Sarnia
(519) 337-9642

Women's Resource Centre
27 North Cedar Street
Timmins
(705) 267-5417

Women's Centre
Box 891
North Bay
(705) 472-8748

Quebec
Women's Information Centre
3595 St. Urbain
Montreal
(514) 842-4781

Saskatchewan
Women's Centre
124A 2nd Avenue North
Saskatoon
(407) 242-5830

Women's Community Centre
2166 Broad Street
Regina
(306) 522-2777

Moose Jaw Women's Centre
37 High Street East
Moose Jaw
(306) 692-7008

QUESTIONNAIRE

About You

Where do you live?
City or Town _____
Province _____

How old are you? _____
Marital status: Single☐ Div./Sep.☐ Married☐ Widowed☐
Do you have children? Yes☐ How Many? No☐
Do you work outside the home? Yes☐ No☐
What kind of work? _____
Your annual income _____
Annual family income _____

About the Almanac

Where did you buy the Almanac? Bookstore☐ Gift☐
Women's Centre☐
Have you bought the Almanac before? Yes☐ No☐
Do you carry it in your purse? Yes☐ No☐
Do you use it as a desk calendar? Yes☐ No☐
Do you like the size? Yes☐ No☐
Do you like the binding? Yes☐ No☐
Did you read the articles? Yes☐ No☐
Were they useful? Yes☐ No☐
Do you think that the writing should be more journalistic in style? ☐
more analytical? ☐
What do you like best about the Almanac?
Do you have suggestions for making the Almanac more usable?
What did we leave out that you'd like to see next year?
Have you taken any photos or done any cartoons or drawings that we could include next year?
Other comments?

Do you want to receive the Women's Press brochure?
Name:
Address:

We'd be interested in hearing about your involvement in the women's movement or in other activities.

Fig. 18 Feature on Vietnamese women in 1976 *Everywoman's Almanac*.

photo from O I S E Women's Kit

VIETNAM

SING AGAIN

Sing so that, in my heart, roars the thunder and so that my fiery blood melts at last these chains.
They are here! The jailors, stick in hand!
Frozen silence, again, in the bolted cell—
Eyes shot with blood, they scream:
"Which one, at this hour of curfew, dares to sing?"

A muted rage drowns our heart,
Our pupils stare at these monsters,
Our strength: a determined silence.

After the rain of interrogations, the rain of blows!
So much flesh in ribbons! So much pain on the body!
Dominating those barbarians, my sister, proud you rise
"Down with terror! Down with the brutes!"
Your hand in mine, my hand tightens on yours,
An extraordinary strength exudes from our bodies so frail!

Barely have they turned their back,
Than our laughter resounds stronger,
And, despising our angered guards, their hatred,
Our choir starts again, harmony more rythmic!

In reprisals for the evening, the following morning,
Older mothers, younger sisters—barely thirteen years old—under blows, are questioned.
Determined silence.

Will one ever know how many of these tortured children,
At the foot of the wall, fell unconscious,
And, coming to life, let themselves be rocked softly by a companion acting as an elder sister?
Crib-song or call from the birth place?

On their trembling lips blooms again the rose:
Chains cannot imprison a smile!
And walls between cells cannot build barricades between hearts.

I have seen, through each tiny slit, a few grains of salt exchanged, a few lemons;
I have seen blood on the stained yellow wall:
"Against the invaders, to reconquer our tomorrow, we are determined!"

Sing Again!
So that in my heart roars the storm
And so that my fiery blood melts at last these chains.

—Hien Luong

27

Fig. 19 Cover of 1989 *Everywoman's Almanac*.

Fig. 20 Sample of revised format for 1989 *Everywoman's Almanac.*

NON-RACIST OR ANTI-RACIST

These terms were first distinguished in Women's Press by a Black woman in late 1987. Since then, in an attempt to have the Press be seen as having had a principle on racism, "non-racist" has been used as a way to describe Women's Press.

There was limited discussion about race, racism or ethnicity [in the History Book Collective]. It took place in a very cursory fashion, by mentioning that there were immigrants or Native women. We read materials by Native women, African and Black American women through the Women's Studies course but we didn't translate it into a perspective on the book. *Ceta*

The Press tried for a long time to be non-racist. That non-racist consciousness has been there in dribs and drabs in many of our books. Lucy George in *The True Story of Ida Johnson* is a Native woman. In *The Seam Allowance* an attempt was made to uncover what Asian, Greek, and Italian women in particular have to contend with being in an industry – home sewing,– which is not regulated. Various small things have cropped up. *Come With Us* had to do with immigrant kids talking about coming to Canada and what that meant for them. That book was non-racist as opposed to anti-racist. *Liz*

The Press has never had a position on Native women's rights that I know of. A white woman involved in Native issues used to be at the Press. That's how issues were taken up. Women concerned about a particular issue would make it their work but the Press as a whole wouldn't have a position on it. *Maureen*

We needed to get information on Native women and really ran up against the conflict of not knowing people because we didn't have those kinds of ties. I think it is correct to say that there probably weren't people who were in a position to do that kind of writing. Some of the women we knew and spoke to were not in a position to take time to write. Writing takes a certain kind of peace and quiet that most activists don't get. *Meg*

The Press has had a non-racist history but it has not been anti-racist. Addressing racism has been slow in coming. *Carolyn*

When I joined, I envisioned changing the Press through challenging the kinds of writing they were publishing. At that time, I wasn't thinking specifically about locating manuscripts from Women of Colour because I was ignorant of the issues that racism poses.

As white women, we don't recognize the absence of Women of Colour until it's pointed out to us. Basically the same criticisms that Women of Colour posed to the Lesbian Manuscript Group had to be aimed directly at specific manuscripts and processes in the larger Press.

That is being done now, but this time it's being done by Women of Colour and white women. *Ellen*

All our recent work on anti-racism is catch-up political work. Why are we behind? *Ann*

There's a lot of resistance to examining what is racist in the Press. Some women don't want to see it. The racism workshops have been really intense. *Ellen*

When I joined, I thought the Press as a whole was making an effort to work with Women of Colour – so that was exciting. It took me a while to figure out that having us in the Press was just one woman's decision and not everyone else's.

During one of my earlier meetings there, I was critical of the Press's "white" books. One of the white women who works

Fig. 21 Cartoon from 1989 edition of *Everywoman's Almanac*.

The reality at the Press didn't reflect the broader reality.

Fig. 22 Cartoon from 1989 edition of *Everywoman's Almanac*.

Fig. 23 Sample page of *The Women's Daybook*, 1997.

MAY

MRS. TADEJ'S HANDS, 1990

MARY-THERESA LAWLOR

We work hard.
You English people, you never work hard.
You never, you never ... you never slave like we.
We were slave. You know what I mean slave.

I scrubbed a lots. My store.
And even before, in the old house.
I scrubbing and scrubbing and washing,
use the lye and all strong soap.
My hands were wore out.
Not only my,
everybody who want to do the good job.

You people too soft.
You don't
how you save you hands.
You can't keep the clean
if you save the hands.

— *Mary Tadej*

This is an excerpt from my book *Some Women of the Porcupine Camps: An Illustrated Spoken History*. I grew up in the 1960s in the Porcupine, a mining community in Northern Ontario now known as Timmins. History told through stories was integral to my family and community. With motherhood, and the telling of stories to my son, I realized that a significant part of history had not been preserved. Typically, the community's history richly recorded "mines and men" but the stories of the women who helped to build the community early in the century had never been documented. My goal was to celebrate and preserve some of this history before it was lost

Fig. 24

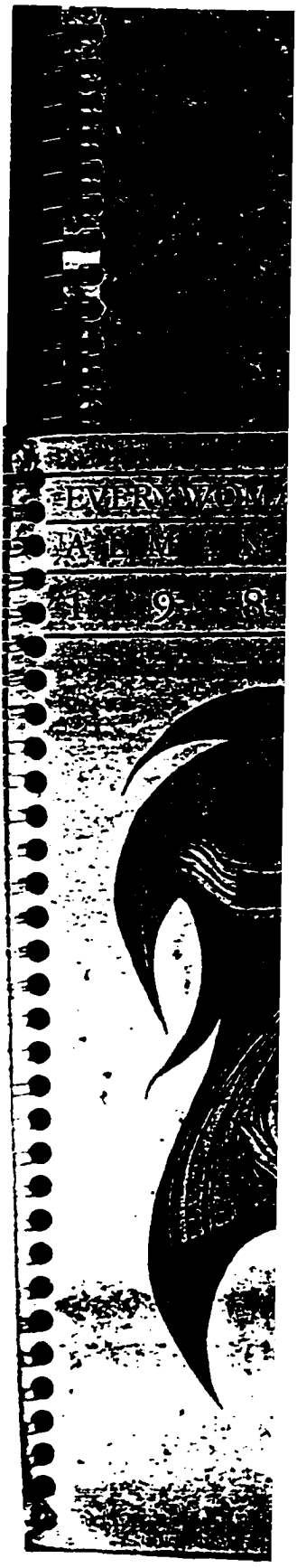


Fig. 25 Cover of 1997 *Everywoman's Almanac* (see following page).

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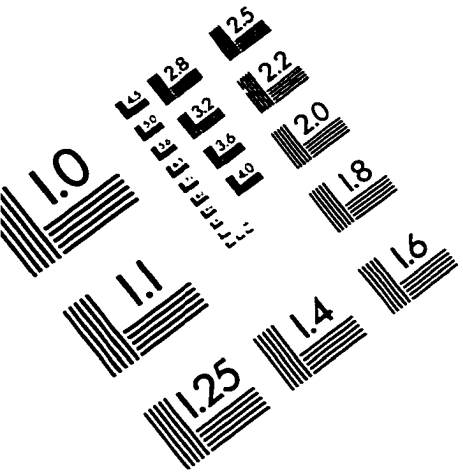

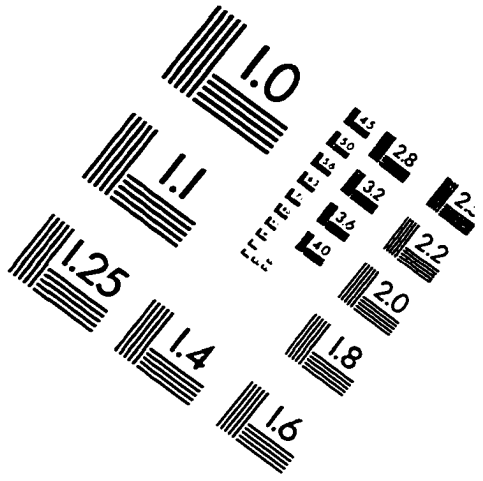

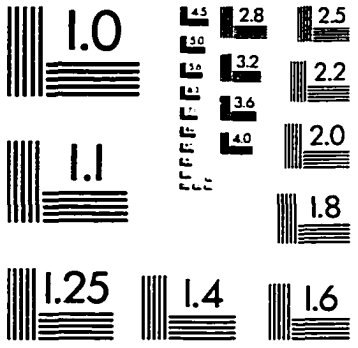

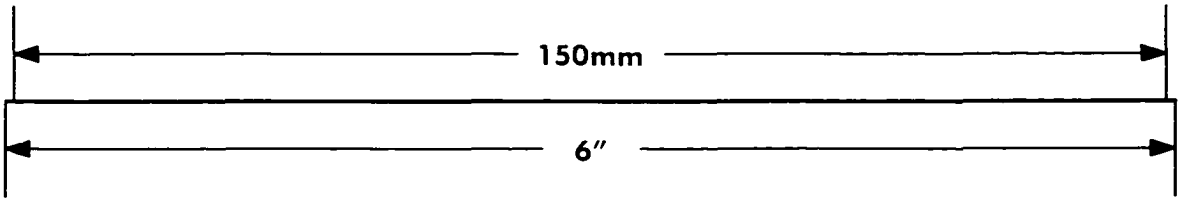

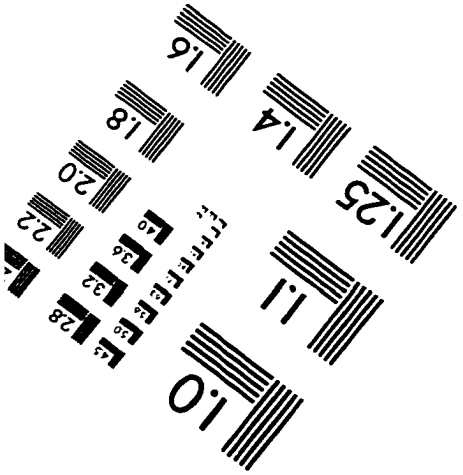

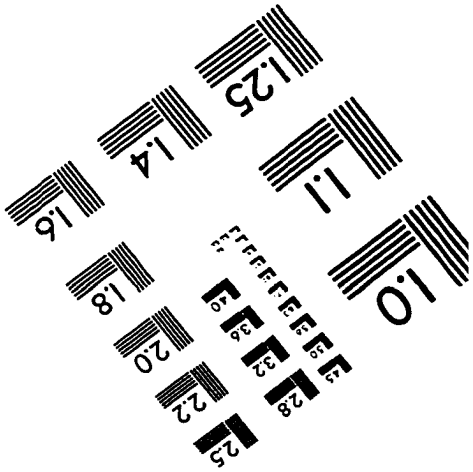

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