

ill-paid in comparison with their husbands and brothers, knew they could earn more in the mill than outside it. Courtauld responded to those social activists who wanted the state to regulate and limit hours and conditions of work by defining the protection of his dependents as his own patriarchal duty. He and his family also provided entertainments (Lown describes "a factory festival" in 1846), services (a workplace kitchen was established and later withdrawn), and advice (concerning the prevention of disease and drunkenness) to "their" workpeople, while, at the same time, regulating wages and discouraging union organization. The mill workers responded to this treatment, within the limits of their situation, by developing their own strategies of resistance.

Patriarchy shaped not only the factory but also the home life of Halstead workwomen. Their husbands and fathers, and even their landlords, benefited both from their incomes and from the domestic services they provided. The women usually continued with their jobs despite the demands of marriage, childbirth, and caring for elderly relatives. In Lown's words, "men's patriarchal status was cushioned by women's employment" (p. 77). When concepts of Victorian respectability began to enter the consciousness of working-class men, it was their wives who were charged with the duty of creating and managing respectable households despite the scarcity of financial and community resources.

This book is a piece of very fine historical writing. Lown has worked, creatively and effectively, with a wide variety of sources. Methodology is never permitted to obstruct the narrative, which moves smoothly and persuasively, from example to argument, to characterize the experience of women and men working and living in Halstead. She explains the technical details of the making of silk in the various periods so that the attentive reader can understand just what was going on. At the same time, she never loses sight of her overarching analysis concerning the relationships of class and gender. The argument about the pervasiveness of patriarchy is built up chapter by chapter in the body of the book, so that when the theoretical conclusion is reached, the author's contemporary feminist analysis fits convincingly with an historical account developed on the basis of archival research for a specific industry. There is no easy answer to the question of which factor — class or gender — predominated in the construction of women's

subservient position in the Courtauld mill and in Halstead households, but rather an insistence on the way these elements interacted, in certain lives, in specific communities and industries, within a particular historical period. Although Lown's is a rigorously ideological investigation, deploying the concepts both of the politics of gender and the politics of labour, it is also a very subtle, nuanced analysis of patriarchy and capitalism in a specific historical context.

Leslie Howsam
University of Toronto

Talking Peace: The Women's International Peace Conference. Susan C. MacPhee. *Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1990, Pp. 182 paperback.*

Having devoted almost five years to participating in and studying the planning, implementation and aftermath of the 1985 Halifax Women's International Peace Conference for my doctoral dissertation, completed in 1988, on "Feminism, Peace, and International Politics: An Examination of Women Organizing Internationally for Peace and Security," I am delighted that Susan MacPhee's journalistic chronicle of this important event in the history of the Canadian (and international) women's peace movement is now available. *Talking Peace* is a faithful recreation of those five days in June 1985 when 350 women from Canada and 32 other countries gathered in Halifax to assess the sources, levels, and forms of violence in the world and to talk about what women can do about it.

As a popular treatment of this event, the strengths of *Talking Peace* lie in its accessibility, its illumination of the many individual and "ordinary" women in Canada and around the world who made this conference possible, and its extensive reliance on actual quotations from the conference organizers and participants, allowing these women to speak for themselves. It also captures well the central tensions of the conference such as the conflicting perspectives on security among First World and Third World women as well as the problematic relationships women have with national governments.

MacPhee rightly emphasizes two major transitions in the direction of the conference as a result of these tensions. The first was a shift from a more narrow concern about nuclearism that a number of white,

middle class, Western women brought with them to a broader analysis of insecurity, arising from the structural violence of imperialism, capitalism, militarism, racism, and sexism, which most viscerally plagues the lives of Third World women living in both the so-called "developing" and "developed" worlds. The second major change in conference direction occurred with the decision, advocated particularly by Third World women, to promulgate formal resolutions that condemned specific governmental policies and actions. While the international conference organizers had envisioned a more non-partisan process in which women would "negotiate peace" on the basis of their commonalities as women without regard to national boundaries, Third World women insisted that an international peace conference hosted by Western women which did not take sides in matters of inter- and intra-state conflicts would be useless to them in their struggles against either their governments or governments engaging in foreign intervention.

MacPhee suggests that, as a result of their relative privilege, white, middle class, Canadian women naively assumed that there would be no need to grapple with the very real issues that divide states and women in international politics or even the question of security for international delegates, a number of whom came to the conference at great personal risk. She also notes that this naivete was somewhat surprising given that the organizers were veteran peace activists who were used to challenging government policies. Nevertheless, privileged Canadian women had the luxury of ignoring the fact that the price of subversion is higher in some parts of the world than in others (and greater for some women than for others), and they tended to labour under the illusion that their own government was more benign. This misplaced confidence began to erode during the conference in the face of revelations that the Canadian government is hardly representative of women's interests, is particularly oppressive to non-white and poor women, engages in a variety of imperialistic and militaristic activities, and, moreover, placed a number of funding restrictions on the conference, attempting to ensure that the conference would not be too radical and that no ongoing international women's organization for peace would result.

Although the strengths of *Talking Peace* lie in the fact that it is a popular, journalistic treatment, this is also the source of its weaknesses. It does not claim to

be much more than a chronicle of ideas and events, but, like all narratives, it emphasizes some aspects at the expense of others, producing only a partial and even, at times, distorted picture. The distortions that tend to be reinforced by *Talking Peace* are related to its ahistorical and decontextualized approach to women's peace organizing. True, it provides some historical data on the genesis of the Halifax conference in the minds and activities of its organizers; however, it does not place this particular event in the context of women's international peace organizing over the last century. There is no question that this prodigious herstory inspired this contemporary initiative, but neither the organizers nor the author spent any time reflecting on the divisions within previous women's peace movements that might have enabled organizers to be more sensitive to how not only gender, but also race, class, and nationality structure women's consciousness, solidarities, actions, and options.

In addition, *Talking Peace* is guilty of the same criticism that was made of the National Film Board documentary, "Speaking Our Peace," which was screened at the conference. With all of its focus on individual women who organized and participated in the conference, *Talking Peace* fails "to bring in the perspective of collectivities and communities" (p. 158). MacPhee does refer to the creation of the Canadian Coalition of Women's Groups to sponsor the conference as well as to the regional mini-conferences across Canada that preceded the international conference, but she does not deal with the very different orientations, expectations, and energies each women's group and mini-conference represented. In the absence of any analytical discussion, based on feminist postmodernist insights, about the multiple and hyphenated feminist communities (such as liberal, radical, cultural, socialist, nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, or some combination of these standpoints) that contributed to the regional mini-conferences and the final international conference, MacPhee's individualistic account is a very reductionist one, glossing over the kinds of ideological differences and struggles among women's groups that should have informed the basis of the international conference.

Moreover, MacPhee tends to further homogenize even when she does point out the differences between First ("developed" world) and Third World ("developing" world) women. Women of colour within Canadian society as well as Western feminists with an

anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist analysis were more ideologically in tune with Third World women than with their other Canadian sisters. Similarly, middle class or elite women form the First, Second (the then Communist world), and the Third Worlds tended to have more in common with each other than with non-elite women from their own or other countries. Finally, there were tensions between Western cultural/spiritualist feminists and socialist feminists from working-class and trade unionist backgrounds over questions of "feminine" and "masculine" styles of "negotiating."

If there was a rather solid dividing line between First World women (read white, middle class or elite, Western women in the "developed" world) and Third World women (including most "developing" world women and many women of colour as well as some labour, working-class, and poor women who live in the "developed" world), it was drawn over the issue of nationalism. As Cynthia Enloe has so powerfully revealed in her new book, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 1989), the hardest thing to be in this world is a feminist nationalist. On the one hand, you must resist the notion purveyed by male nationalists that feminism is an alien and divisive force in the struggle for national self-determination, and, on the other hand, you must avoid allying yourself too closely with a supposedly global feminist agenda that is designed by largely white, middle class, Western women. The organizers of the Halifax conference had hoped that women could transcend their nationalistic identities and embrace a global feminist agenda for peace. This was read as a totalizing move by women who were not willing to negotiate away their still unfulfilled right to national self-determination even though they recognized that national independence did not necessarily translate into women's liberation or peace.

Enloe argues persuasively that nationalism will continue to be problematic for women as long as it remains a masculinist construction which insists on women's self-sacrifice on behalf of the male-run collective and its state-to-be or state-that-is. It will also remain problematic for peace as long as peace is construed as an insistence upon global homogeneity and an intolerance of difference. Looking back at the Halifax conference and all the events that preceded and followed it, these were spaces where diverse women

did (and will continue to) talk about multiple definitions of peace, security, non-violence, nationalism, and feminism, instead of settling for the totalizing search for "true security."

Anne Sisson Runyan
State University of New York at Potsdam

Talking Back: Thinking Feminist — Thinking Black. Bell Hooks, *Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989, Pp. 184.*

After the publications of *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* and *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, Gloria Watkins has once again taken to print, this time to "talk back." Using her pen-name Bell Hooks, Watkins continues to establish herself as one of the most outspoken black feminist theorists with *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist — Thinking Black.*

"Talking Back" is, in two ways, the symbol of Hooks' ongoing struggle to mature as a writer. She herself defines "talking back" as something that set her apart from other children in the Southern United States of the 1950s: "It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion" (p. 5). While this early act of defiance liberated her from the silence imposed on little girls, "talking back" in the present context also enables Hooks to deal directly with some of the quite severe criticism she encountered over her two previous books.

Talking Back is made up of twenty-five short essays which address a variety of issues; in each essay, however, facets of racism, sexism and elitism are the main focus. In one interview reprinted in this book, the author ties all of these aspects together in one sentence: "I think that a lot of my analysis comes back to an insistence upon interlocking systems of domination, something that I occasionally refer to as a 'politic of domination'" (p. 175). While her conviction of the existence of such a "politic of domination" is well communicated, the individual articles occasionally do not make these connections obvious. Clearly, to point to the varied expressions of domination in each of the twenty-five pieces would be redundant; however, the brevity of the essays cannot excuse a sometimes apparent lack of cohesion.