

after all, is that ancient mythic imagination to a modern writer. At the same time, this practice is one that probably endears her to many of her women readers, since some of the narrative gaps in the ethnographic accounts would seem to demand some woman-centered commentary. What happens to an unsophisticated and unarmed woman travelling alone in the far north who is discovered by a group of men? She probably gets raped, maybe even gang raped, then possibly gets pregnant. When she manages to escape to an inhabited area she will have to explain the source of her pregnancy, and this will cause difficulties for her and her child. This is the kind of experience Cameron explores with great sensitivity in "Dzelarhons." The mixture of the naturalistic and the supernatural do not blend well, and the lengthy string of events finally dwindle into didacticism.

The two historical tales, "The Bearded Woman" and "Ta-Naz Finds Happiness," escape this criticism but might well draw another kind, since Cameron assumes the existence of matriarchal societies and does not carefully enough distinguish between matriarchal and matrilinear/matrifocal. The stories are of interest because in them Cameron imagines how matriarchal societies might have functioned, and she suggests how patriarchal invasions might have been resisted at both the personal and social levels.

Although "Dzelarhons" is intended as a collection of native myths, the section I like best is the very personal "Forward" where Cameron explains her relationship to Klopinum, a Salish story-teller who lived on a reserve near Cameron's childhood home in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. This provides Cameron with an important opportunity for self-explanation as she has been criticized by anthropologists and, more importantly, by some natives, for her appropriation of native stories, natives are understandably chary of the possible cultural imperialism of white writers who have too often used native legends without permission of the groups to whom the stories belong. Cameron has been far more careful about this than most white writers; for example, all the royalties of *Daughters of Copper Woman* have been donated to native projects. She avoids the mistake she made in *Copper Woman* where she claims to have received permission to tell the story of a secret matriarchal society from "a few dedicated women" who "prefer not to be publicly named or honoured." In *Dzelharhons*, Cameron demonstrates her connection to a native tradition and names her informant. We are told that Klopinum recognized Cameron's gifts, taught her stories, then encouraged her to devise her own methods for telling them.

It was not expected that I use the very same words she used, but it was expected that whatever words I chose, the rhythm was to be as strong and as regular as the waves or my own breathing, and the heart of the story be unchanged.

Throughout the collection of stories we discover this refrain: "This is not the song she sang, but is one like it." In this way Cameron establishes herself as source of the stories' style and assumes the right to modify the content.

There is no question that the little girl from Nanaimo who was always "making up stories" has become one of the great story-tellers of our time. To anyone concerned about the ways one group appropriates the experience and achievements of a subordinated group, Cameron's use of native materials remains a problem. Even if the royalties for *Dzelarhons* were to be handled as they are at the Press Gang Publishers, it is still Anne Cameron's professional reputation that profits from the publication. Yet, at what point can a gifted and successful writer make a living from her work? Cameron has in many important ways devoted herself to the service of natives and their culture. I do not have the answer to this dilemma; but, I think we should see it as one, even as we appreciate the value of the work.

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Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920. Marta Danylewycz. Paul-André Linteau, Alison Prentice and William Westfall, editors. *Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987, Pp. 203.*

As Professors Linteau, Prentice and Westfall point out in their moving preface, this study represents "an important contribution to the history of Quebec and the history of women" (p. 12). Thanks to their commitment and diligence, the scholarship of historian Marta Danylewycz, whose life was tragically cut short just when she was beginning to exert a considerable influence on her profession, is now accessible to a wider audience. Using Marta's doctoral dissertation, which was completed in 1981, her own notes for revising the text, and the several articles she had subsequently published, the editors have succeeded in bringing to completion a cohesive, well-documented and very readable monograph.

Taking the Veil is an outstanding example of the potential of feminist scholarship to reshape our understanding

of the past. By focussing on Quebec nuns, a category of women previously ignored by lay historians, rendered “other worldly” by the hagiographic tradition of Church-generated history, or reviled in contemporary *Québécois* literature, Marta’s pioneering work challenged a number of assumptions about why women entered religious orders, and about their relationship with lay women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Quebec. Drawing upon an impressive array of published and unpublished sources, Marta provided new insights into why the number of nuns in Quebec increased so dramatically from 650 in 1851 to 13,579 by 1921. Through a careful examination of Quebec society, she challenged the “integrationist” model of sociologist Bernard Denault, who attributed the rise in religious vocations to the surplus of young women of marrying age in nineteenth-century Quebec society. According to Denault, many women could escape marginalization only by joining a convent, and subjecting themselves to male clerical authority. Not only does this explanation negate the role of women’s spirituality and initiative in the growth of religious orders, it also overlooks the many opportunities and advantages that communal life offered to women who enjoyed so very few in lay society.

Marta’s own explanation for the extraordinary growth of female religious orders in Quebec is much more complex. On the basis of a detailed study of the educational and employment opportunities for nineteenth-century Quebec women, she argued that convent life afforded women of ability a supportive environment in which they could pursue activities and careers closed them in secular society. Using the biographical sketches of nuns who, between 1890 and 1920, joined two quite different religious orders—the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame*, a teaching order founded in 1658 and the *Soeurs de la Miséricorde*, a community established in 1848 to attend to unwed mothers and their infants—Marta provided several impressive examples of the occupational and social mobility that could result from taking religious vows. Consider, for example, the case of Sophie Dubuc, a girl who worked in a Boston factory, but later rose within the ranks of the Congregation of Notre Dame to the highest position of Mother Superior (p. 99). Nonetheless, attentive as she was to the dynamics of class, Marta cautioned that women from middle and upper class backgrounds were more likely to hold positions of authority within the Congregation than those from working-class backgrounds. This tendency was reinforced by the creation of a separate group of nuns, the *soeurs converses*, within the Congregation in 1888. Drawn primarily from poorly-educated women of the lower classes who did not possess the skills necessary for teaching, these religious sisters were rele-

gated to the performance of manual work, and denied a say in the direction of the community’s affairs. In comparison to the full-fledged members of the Congregation, the recruits to the Sisters of Misericorde were also less likely to be drawn from the upper strata of Quebec society. This difference, Marta postulated, was due to the more controversial and less prestigious work in which the Sisters of Misericorde were engaged, and the requirement for all nuns in that order to perform physically taxing work. Thus, young French-Canadian women appear to have carefully selected orders whose membership accorded with their own social and economic backgrounds.

By using documents generated by the nuns themselves, Marta gave convent women their own voices, to describe their experiences and motivations in their own words. Thus, while employing various techniques of contemporary social history to place convent women in their broader social and cultural context, she was respectful of their claims to have been “called” to religious life. In one of the most innovative sections of her study, that dealing with the development of Marian ideology and practices in nineteenth-century Quebec (pp. 39-46), Marta identified a significant cultural phenomenon that most certainly reinforced women’s piety and attraction to convent life. Similarly, her detailed examination of the importance of the convent boarding schools to the recruiting efforts of teaching orders such as the Congregation of Notre Dame sheds light simultaneously on the convent and the surrounding community. She aptly demonstrated the coalescence of individual family needs for assistance in child rearing, especially during times of crisis such as the death of a parent, and the interests of the religious communities. Thus, “boundaries dividing the home, school, convent, and even the Church had to be tenuous, ambiguous, and permeable” (p. 130).

These complex ties between family and convent underlay and informed the relationship between lay feminists and nuns in Quebec at the turn of the century. Frequently graduates of convent boarding schools who married sent their own daughters to the same teaching order to be educated. Indeed the pursuit of higher education for women provided lay women and convent women with a common cause, one that was finally realized in 1908 with the establishment of the *Ecole d’enseignement supérieur pour les filles*. Ties between the two groups were also strengthened by their cooperative venture in charitable work, which both groups considered to be women’s work, empowering women and legitimizing their participation in social issues. By documenting the various personal and institutional contacts between leading French-Canadian feminists and *religieuses*, Marta argued persuasively

against a long-standing interpretation that presented the nuns, through their control of education and social work, as an impediment to the development of a French-Canadian feminist movement. As she pointed out, over half of all groups affiliated with the *Fédération nationale St-Jean-Baptiste*, the umbrella organization established in 1907 by francophone lay feminists, were directed by convent women (p. 139). The close ties between lay women and nuns were most graphically illustrated by Marie Lacoste-Gérin-Lajoie, one of Quebec's foremost feminists, and her daughter, Marie J. Gérin-Lajoie, the first graduate of the *Ecole d'enseignement supérieur*. One of the first women in the province to obtain formal training in social work, Marie J. subsequently established a new religious order, the *Institut de Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil*, with the specific objective of supporting lay women in their social welfare work. Despite the concerted effort of male Church leaders to discourage close relations between nuns and lay feminists, Marta concluded that an alliance emerged between the two groups that substantially altered their previous relationship.

As all good historical studies should, this one not only provides us with many new and fascinating insights, but also raises a number of significant questions and suggests new avenues of research. In the brief conclusion, for example, it is suggested that the historical framework currently used to describe the evolution of the church in Quebec society between 1837 and 1960 is inadequate because "this broad time frame, divided into segments of expansion, consolidation, and erosion of the Church's power, does not take into account changes of particular relevance to women" (p. 159). It is indeed regrettable that Marta did not have the opportunity to elaborate on this idea, and to work out her own chronology. What is needed is more comparative analysis of the experiences of the women and men who entered the church, and especially of the relationship between lay and convent women after 1920. With regard to the expansion of female religious orders, one wonders about the impact of the arrival of large numbers of French nuns at the beginning of the twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1914, seventeen such orders were implanted, accounting for nearly one-third of all female orders established in Quebec during the entire period from the Rebellion of 1837 to World War I (p. 47). Indelibly stamped as they were by their lost struggle against the secular and anticlerical forces of the French Third Republic, and initially lacking personal and family contacts with Quebec lay women, it is highly unlikely that they were supportive of French-Canadian lay feminists. What of those orders that were founded in Quebec, but outside of Montreal, in centres where lay feminism was notably weaker? Unfortunately, Marta's analysis of the

alliance between lay women and nuns is limited to the case of the rather elite *Congrégation de Notre Dame*, and as she herself indicated, even within this community, not all members were happy with their leaders' profeminist initiatives (p. 144). In fact, only a handful of nuns were openly supportive of social feminist objectives (p. 154). Consequently, some of the generalizations about the impact the feminist movement brought to bear on women's religious communities require refinement.

Another topic that merits further examination is the demographic context in which the rise of religious vocations occurred. While critical of much of Denault's analysis, Marta appears to have agreed that late nineteenth century Quebec women were less likely to marry than women of previous generations. Citing a drop in the provincial marriage rate from 9.0 per one thousand of the population in 1830 to 6.6 in 1880 (p. 52), she suggested that over-population, economic hardship and emigration led many French Canadians to reject marriage. Yet the same demographers who provided those statistics indicate that the marriage rate declined consistently only after the mid-1880s and only until 1910. Therefore, 15 of the 26 religious communities bounded by women in Quebec were established prior to this decline. Moreover, since the marriage rate is directly influenced by many factors, including the age structure of the population, a decline may not necessarily indicate a rejection of marriage by those of marrying age, but rather a decrease in the proportion of the total population they represent. In fact, the data presented (p. 53) clearly indicate that the percentage of Quebec women who were married by the age of forty was remarkably stable over the entire period from 1851 to 1911; *i.e.*, approximately 80 percent. There is no doubt that Quebec women were delaying marriage by the late nineteenth century, but the vast majority continued to wed. These observations suggest the need for additional research on the relationship between marriage patterns and the growth of women's religious communities.

In her work, Marta succeeded not only in illuminating the individual lives of the nuns belonging to the orders she studied, but also in raising fundamental questions regarding the interaction of demographic, economic, social and political factors that helped shape the decisions of those who chose the veil. Through her revealing examination of the relationship between lay women and women in the religious communities, she widened the scope of women's history in Canada significantly. It is encouraging to note the number of graduate students and others who have been influenced by her work, and are currently engaged in studies of nuns in other orders and their relationship to

women in lay society. That would have given Marta great pleasure.

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The Unexpected Universe of Doris Lessing: A Study in Narrative Technique. Katherine Fishburn. *Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985, Pp. 184.*

Although Katherine Fishburn's study of the narrative technique developed by Doris Lessing in her novels of science fiction was first published in 1985, this work has received remarkably little attention in the standard academic publications of book reviews and notices. As far as I have been able to ascertain, only *Studies in the Novel* provided space for a full review by Betsy Draine (see fall 1986, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 322-326). In her own book length study, *Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) Draine demonstrates both her knowledge and understanding of the importance of Doris Lessing's work, and her competence to judge Fishburn's study. She concludes in her review that "Katherine Fishburn's *The Unexpected Universe of Doris Lessing: A Study in Narrative Technique* lives up to its title admirably.... [Fishburn] has produced a critical study as valuable for its insights into Lessing's individual works as it is useful for its contributions to literary theory" (p. 326).

On the negative side, two brief book notices appeared. R. J. Cirasa in *Choice* (see September 1986, p. 20) contends that not only is Fishburn's critical judgement at fault in attempting to show in Lessing's narrative techniques a significance where none exists, but also, by implication, Lessing's overall prose style in her science fiction is lacking in value. According to Cirasa, had Fishburn compared Lessing to "Conrad or any number of Lessing's contemporaries both in and out of science fiction," she might have seen the error in her literary theory. While gratuitously acknowledging the importance of Doris Lessing as a writer, Cirasa finds nothing in Fishburn's study which confirms that importance. Judging the book to be nothing more than a "standard thematic explication," Cirasa concludes that Fishburn's failures to follow a standard comparative critical methodology, and to write in an equally standard approved prose style renders the book "unrewarding" (p. 20). Cirasa's brief but damning book notice demonstrates a limited notion of what are the appropriate forms and functions of literary criticism. The tone is reminiscent of that patriarchal academic arrogance which,

while priding itself on scholarly "objectivity," nevertheless condemns what it does not understand or what cannot be made to fit a neatly prescribed critical criterion. Cirasa's article reflects the outmoded attitudes of establishment critics who rarely, if ever, open themselves to an awareness of new and different critical perspectives. Like the "officials" in Lessing's science fiction, Cirasa gives us the final word—"Not recommended!"

The only other book notice appeared in the *Science Fiction Chronicle* (see August 1986, p. 47). While dismissing Lessing's science fiction as of little interest to those in the field, this notice does acknowledge some merit in Fishburn's attempt to analyze Lessing's "four volume series of science fiction." Suggesting that the study will be of no interest "to those who have not read the novels," this reviewer seems not to have read either Lessing's novel nor Fishburn's book; for reference is made to Lessing's four volume series of science fiction (p. 47). In fact, the Canopus in Argos series consists of five volumes: *Re: Colonised Plant 5, Shikasta* (1979), *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* (1980), *The Sirian Experiments* (1981), *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (1982), *The Sentimental Agents* (1983); and further, Fishburn justifies as belonging to the genre of science fiction the two earlier novels, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971), and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). Fishburn carefully analyzes in detail seven of Lessing's novels while indicating throughout her study those elements of science fiction appearing in *The Four-Gated City* and other earlier works.

Because Katherine Fishburn's comprehensive study has been so ill-served by the standard reviewing process, it seems important to try again—two [or three] years after its publication date—to give this book the attention it deserves. In order to get an accurate assessment of critical works dealing with any aspects of Doris Lessing's fiction, one must turn to those critics who are prepared to suspend final judgement and who are also aware of different critical perspectives and of the growing body of feminist criticism. Lessing's purpose, after all, is nothing short of a total transformation of the world. It is not surprising, then, that those academics and critics committed to protecting and supporting our traditional literary institutions have great difficulty in understanding and accepting the validity of Lessing's polemic novels. Betsy Draine is a critic who represents a new and different perspective. In her review in *Studies in the Novel*, she assesses many of the critical works cited by Katherine Fishburn, and she effectively shows that Fishburn, too, by virtue of her scholarly background, her experience in science fiction, and her