

The brief appendices are practical, although not exhaustive. They include samples of agendas, announcements and descriptions for short or extended workshops, lists of organizational, written and audiovisual resources (all U.S.). The final appendix is a 10-point list entitled "Helping people to deal with terrifying films."

I participated in a despair and empowerment workshop in Winnipeg in October, 1982, facilitated by At The Foot Of The Mountain, a feminist theatre group from Minneapolis (some of their work is available on videotape—write to them). It has made a real difference in my life. I still find this a truly dreadful topic to work on. Each time I begin a project (such as writing this review), I go through my own scenarios of nuclear holocaust. I replay and embellish a scene from a fire in which my neighbour was badly burned. We all stood on the lawn, while the fire fighters worked; the paramedics came, and gently and expertly cared for my friend. I stayed at the hospital until I knew she would not die; she stayed there for 3 months. But suppose we all were burned, the flames were all along the street, there were no fire fighters, no paramedics, no hospitals, no water. I see myself (unscathed, of course) helplessly watching friends and neighbours with blistered skin and melted hair (as hers were) and eyes. I can do nothing. What I feel then is black cold despair. But since the workshop, I can crawl out of this pit by reaching out to friends and recalling our shared love and strength. I am left with hope and the ability to try. Although I feel like an inadequate vehicle, I no longer feel as if I am acting alone. We all can do what we must. Only by working through this process am I free to write, to act.

A direct benefit of despair and empowerment work is that it helps us to appreciate life and each other in ways that we cannot when we are trying to avoid thinking about the awful ways we and our near and dear are likely to die. As Macy comments, this work "increases our awareness not only of the perils that face us, but also of the

promise inherent in the human heart....Whether our efforts to heal our world succeed or fail, we live then in so vivid a consciousness of our community that the most obvious and accurate word for it is love. And that seems, in and of itself, a fulfillment."

This book is a real lifesaver. I recommend it for anyone who teaches, and for anyone who knows how to read, loves anybody, and wants to live.

Reweaving the Web of Life. Feminism and Nonviolence. Pam McAllister (ed), *Philadelphia: New Society Publishers 1982*, Pp. 440.

Put into the feminist perspective, nonviolence is the merging of our uncompromising rage at the patriarchy's brutal destructiveness with a refusal to give in to despair or hate or to let men off the hook by making them the "Other" as they have made those they fear "Others."

— Pam McAllister

Reweaving is a collection of essays, interviews, stories, plays, poems, songs, artwork and photographs by 54 American and one Canadian women and two men. All are activists working for peaceful social change and a feminist society. A number are professional academics, writers, artists; some work as organisers, mothers, and other kinds of radicals. Some have explicit religious connections: I noticed Quakers, Catholics, various unspecified Christians, Jews, and born-again pagans (as Brigitte in my group — Cronies — describes herself). Some want equality and integration, others believe this impossible. Some work in men-free environments, others work in mixed groups. Some see women as biologically or spiritually more peaceful than men, others look to training and interests as explanations. Some would use physical force for self-defence, most would not. Nearly all would agree that feminism and nonviolence are fundamentally

linked and mutually transforming; that we must resist structural and institutional violence (inequality, racism, sexism, environmental assaults, etc.) as well as direct violence (war, violence against women, all forms of physical attack). Nearly all would point out that pacifism is not passive, that nonviolence is not powerless, and that power means a good deal more than power over others or domination. There is empowerment, born from love and rage, from our determination to save and to create, to say no to death and hate and yes to life and each other. This kind of power is based in mutuality, shared resources, affirmation, creativity and self-determination. As Jo Vellacott points out, it is re-source-full. It is self-renewing, connected to the Source, always full.

In this collection, nonviolence refers to “a specific method of struggle, a particular way of transforming relationships.” Nonviolence is the norm, violence the aberration. Nonviolence is an active force, satyagraha, or truth force. In reference to the varied attitudes to physical force expressed in the collection, McAllister quotes Gandhi’s dictum: “It is better to resist oppression by violent means than to submit, but it is best of all to resist by nonviolent means.” But these women would do still more: move from resistance to recreating. *Reweaving* takes seriously the existence of a web of life of which we are all a part. It is our task to mend the rents and to reweave the torn connections. As spinners, menders and weavers, we engage in the recreation of life and of ourselves.

Pam McAllister is a writer whose work centres on two interconnected issues: violence against women (rape, battery, porn, all aggression) and pacifism and nonviolence (Gandhism, Quakerism, peace movements—feminist and otherwise). For McAllister, a persisting dilemma has been how to reconcile our anger, our determination to refuse being victims, the necessity to fight back, and the knowledge that our fight must be based on tools to build rather than weapons to destroy.

Most of us have had the experience of transforming anger into energy to act. That kind of energy is not necessarily a renewable resource: we burn out. How can we tap into a source of power that recreates itself and gives us more juice as it flows through us? One of the central themes of the book is the process of feminist nonviolence as a wellspring of joy and self-regenerating creativity based on love in lieu of anger. If that sounds mushy and mystical, it isn't. It's shown to be tough, strong and effective.

The publisher is also worth noting. New Society Press is the publishing outlet of Movement For A New Society, a loosely organised group of collectives, cooperatives and individuals developed over the last fifteen years in the United States, with Quaker origins and a deliberately feminist and egalitarian perspective. It is aimed at building a new society from the ground up, rebuilding people and relationships: interpersonal, emotional, spiritual, political, economic, etc. They put out a variety of useful materials (pamphlets and books, many of them guide-books or how-to-do-its) on nonviolent direct action (in several senses) and social change.

The individual pieces in this collection are mostly brief although there are some longer essays. Each item is prefaced by a short commentary introducing the author, describing her experiences and present circumstances, and placing her work into context in the feminist nonviolence movement and in the book. The book is organized into two major sections of about 200 pages each, followed by a brief chronology of the events mentioned in the text, an excellent selection of further readings, and an index.

The first section deals with theoretical explorations of feminism and nonviolence, masculinity, war, women and peace, feminist resistance to patriarchy, the meaning and varieties of power, sexism in the mainstream peace (and other) movements, feminist critiques of mainstream nonviolence theory and practice (including sacred

cows like Gandhi and King). The second half of the book deals with the application of feminism and nonviolence to a variety of concrete issues such as anti-war, anti-nuclear, peace, and tax resistance movements, self defence, interpersonal relationships, anti-racism, reproductive choice, childrearing, economic justice, and the entitlement to life of the other creatures of the planet.

Reweaving is meant to be a starting place. It has, in fact, been followed by a British collection edited by Dorothy Thompson (*Over our Dead Bodies*, Virago, 1983). Jo Vellacott, the lone Canadian contributor to *Reweaving*, says she is thinking of editing a Canadian volume (contact her at Simone de Beauvoir Institute). McAllister intended the book to serve specific purposes. The first is to interconnect feminist pacifists (for lack of another term) and put us in touch with each other's work. The second is to show feminists that we should concern ourselves with the issues of violence and nonviolence. The third is to make it more difficult for peace activists to exclude violence against women from their agenda, showing it to be an issue inextricably linked to peace work.

This book is difficult to excerpt. I'll describe a few examples chosen at random (close eyes poke finger method). For instance, Marion Bromley writes about her encounters with sexism in various social change movements. She is a feminist radical pacifist with a thirty-year commitment to nonviolent direct action. She was involved in the development of CORE and several peace groups such as Peacemakers in the 1940s and has worked in these fields ever since. As she describes it, all too often women did the work, men did the "actions." Feminist peaceworkers now find these patterns intolerable: she writes of their rejection, not only of the unequal division of labour, but of macho styles of interacting and working based on competition and proving "opponents" wrong in order to "win." We must uncover and reclaim our heritage as peaceworkers, she says, and describes dozens of activists from Mary Dyer (a

Quaker hanged on Boston Common in 1659) to Martha Tranquilli (a Mississippi nurse jailed a year for tax resistance in 1960) to fifteen women she names among the many jailed for draft board raids, etc. in the 1970s.

Mab Segrest, described as a Southern lesbian on the collective of the journal *Feminary*, interviews Barbara Deming in her Florida home. Deming, a lesbian who has been involved in anti-racist and nonviolent movements for decades, had a tremendous influence on a number of the contributors to *Reweaving*: McAllister acknowledges her as a mentor. For Segrest, if Deming could accept the humanity of white Southerners, then Segrest could not deny the humanity of men:

The analogy [between racist Southerners and men] struck at the heart of my experience—however much I resisted its implications, its tendency to deny me immediate female superiority and easy answers.

Deming talks about satyagraha as "clinging to truth", of seeking that truth however messy and incomplete, and of the lies upon which the power of men is based: that "we women only exist if they give us life, but actually they invented this lie out of fear that if they're not in possession of us *they* don't exist." She discusses the view that men are psychopathically afraid and incapable of taking the risks to become human, arguing against a final solution of complete separatism by citing Andrea Dworkin's comment that if we accept the dangerous notions of biological determinism and biological superiority, "we become carriers of the disease we must cure." Deming discusses her life and early involvement in peace work, her evolutions as a lesbian feminist pacifist, and dealing with anger/fear/love.

My copy of *Reweaving* opens to Ellen Bass's poem because I have read it so often. Her poem is about her hope to save her daughter, her and her

husband's peace work, and her outrage at the lies of world leaders who claim they want peace as they push us to war. She calls for a meeting of all the mothers of the world, who will summon all the world leaders. The mothers will force the men to admit to their own children that power means more to them than the children's lives. "Kill them yourselves" the mothers tell the men, put your hands on their necks and choke them, hundreds of necks, until you are sick at what you are doing and cannot lie about it anymore. "I want to see them weep", she writes. "I want to hear NO MORE. I want to hear MY CHILD WILL NOT BE MURDERED. MY CHILD WILL LIVE."

I found Barbara Zanotti's piece on military training and masculinity insightful. She describes how woman-hating and a linking of sex and aggression are deliberately inculcated in men during military basic training. Men must be dehumanised to become predictable and obedient soldiers. If they thought, or more accurately, if they felt about what they were doing when they kill people, they might not be able to carry out orders. If their targets become cunts, wops, geeks, and not people, and if their own feelings of belonging and human caring are restricted to their buddies' survival and well-being, then these men become killing machines. The links between sex and violence, that so horrify us in pornography, flow naturally from this kind of training. What happens on a grand scale in military training happens less spectacularly in everyday male socialization. A foundation of masculinity is a pathological misogyny and fear of closeness; another foundation is the separation between action and consequences, between thinking and feeling, between self and other.

For those of us who have agonized over the dilemmas of working in a sometimes-sexist peace movement with men who could use some peace work themselves, there are several articles in this vein. Caroline Wildflower writes of her experiences in 1960s Quaker (and other) anti-

nuke movements, in draft resistance and anti-Vietnam work, and in co-op houses. She describes the formation of feminist pacifist discussion groups in the early 1970s and the eventual development out of these sources of Movement For A New Society. She is still a Quaker, currently living in a Catholic Worker Hospitality House in Seattle where she is involved in anti-Trident and feminist peace work.

The final piece in the book is an excerpt from the Women's Pentagon Action Unity Statement. "Through us, our mothers connected the human past to the human future.... We know there is a healthy sensible loving way to live and we intend to live that way...among our sisters and brothers in all the countries of the world."

I see this book as useful for a number of purposes. First, as a guide and an introduction to feminist pacifism, it is superb. It had tremendous impact on my circle of friends when we got our hands on it last year. Jo Vellacott had told me about it while it was in press, but when *HERIZONS: A Manitoba Women's Newsmagazine*, our local (and excellent) journal gave me a review copy, I was not at all prepared for what I found. I circulated it, we talked about it, and in very short order it spread through sections of the feminist community, acting as focus and inspiration. Several of us had clashes with men in the disarmament movement over feminist issues and sexism, etc. and felt the need for a feminist activist support group, and a feminist pacifist peace group, to name but a few issues. *Reweaving* helped us to clarify what we were already beginning to do.

It is also excellent as a teaching resource, for women's and peace studies, and can be profitably used in a variety of humanities and social science courses at the secondary and university level. I have used it for education and social work students as well. It contains one of the best (in the sense of clearest and most effective) collections of material on masculinity I have ever encountered.

Thus, it is also a good resource for men dealing with men's issues (gender constrictions, violence against women, homosexuality, homophobia, and taking responsibility for their and their brothers' violence) in support groups and other organizational settings. It is also useful for men's studies courses, and by that I mean both those which pretend to be about people but are really just about men, and those which are admittedly and deliberately concerned with the male experience, masculinity and so on. I find it also an important spiritual and intellectual resource, in that it forces and helps me to think and feel deeply, and to share these experiences with others.

At the risk of sounding a bit gee whiz-y, I think this book is one of the most important works of the late 20th century. *Reweaving* is a good (if profoundly moving and disturbing) read. Buy it, give it to your mother, father, friend, enemy. Read it, talk about it, and help to write another one.

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