

masterful job of selecting, shaping and presenting an amazing breadth of issues and depth of material.

The book is built like a crescendo. It begins with the interiority of women's self-wisdom, moves to the intimacy of love relationships and the privacy of new bondings, and then comes to public statements of art and the agitation of community organizing. The book culminates in the powerful and resonating resolve of the peacemakers:

"We live in a violent culture," Sandra (says), "so nonviolence is a cultural revolution. It isn't just another way to be nice. It is a strategy for political change and a personal lifestyle. I'm a cultural worker and a revolutionary. *I'm not interested in reform; I want a new society to live in.* I take responsibility for that society; I won't let somebody else dish it out to me, or settle for less" (p. 205).

Even the actual word-for-word writing in this book is unusually well done. The writing is simple but very vivid and down-to-earth. I can only imagine the hours of difficult choices it took to condense all these life stories, and to select which brief excerpts from these women's wisdom to quote. But when the authors get to a brief paragraph which condenses the sort of contemporary social analysis I also do professionally, then I recognize especially how simple, cogent and vivid their writing really is. For example, here is their summary of white women's socialization into racism:

Many (white women) were raised on homogeneity—segregated neighborhoods, all-white softball teams. Tonto taught two Indian words, "Kemo Sabbe", and parents read *Little Black Sambo* at bedtime. History books encouraged arrogance—white men "discovered" the New World; Mexicans fought to keep us from "our land";

and warlike Indians tried to stop "our conquest" of the West. Brainwashed by junior high school, whites thought their pink ancestors were the saviors of the world. (p. 193).

The endings of each chapter are especially lyrical and moving. They are summaries that capture the central focus of the chapter but also pack an emotional wallop that leaves you with a high.

I think this is a very valuable book for the women's movement, because it documents in living color the bubbling up of women's lives into wisdom, activism and vision. We all feel it happening—in the hundreds of new books written by women, in the thousands of women who contributed to the Ribbon Around the Pentagon, and in your neighbor who treats her family differently. But now we can see past the veil of our own lives into many others: colored and white, lesbian and straight, young and old, artists and activists, Congresswomen and theatre people and farmers, healers and wisdom-figures. It is an exciting book, an empowering book. I ended this book wanting to cheer, to put out rainbows, to thank all those women for being themselves, for acting out of their own creativity and power to begin a new future here-and-now in their own beautiful way. This is not an experience you want to miss.

Elizabeth Dodson Gray

Voices From The Shadows: Women with Disabilities Speak Out. Gwyneth Ferguson Matthews. Toronto: Women's Press, 1983. Pp. 192. ISBN 0-88961-080-0

The publication history of *Voices from the Shadows* should be known. Free-lance writer Gwyneth Ferguson Matthews undertook to write a paper on the special problems faced by disabled women in Nova Scotia for the Provincial Government in 1981, the International Year of

the Disabled. She interviewed women and completed a seventy-four page report in December of that year but, by March 1982, she knew the government of Nova Scotia was unwilling to publish it. The ensuing publicity included articles in the *Globe and Mail* which caught the eye of the editors at Women's Press. For them the author incorporated her material into a book which was published in 1983.

The style of the final book is a blend of autobiography and interview with conclusions made in a journalistic tone or in a tone appropriate to a report. It is, technically, an example of blurred genre whose effect is to achieve an authentic voice which is never lost in *Voices from the Shadows* and which absorbs the reader throughout the text.

I cannot say that the work was so gripping that I could not put it down; I often had to put it down to wipe away tears or to distance myself because of my anger and that communicated by the author. The description of a Halifax nursing home is shocking. One decries the lack of privacy, neglect of diet, neglect of care and lack of concern for the dignity of these women in a home where simple aids to independence are denied:

"Then let's look at your disability," I continued. "The rehab says you're one of the few who can recover from that type of stroke. How are you doing?"

There was a long pause as she regained control, wiping away the tears. In a shaky voice, she began, "Before I got put in that room, I was starting to dress myself. I could get on and off the toilet alone. But now I've slipped right back. The rehab has said I need a lower bed, so they can teach me to transfer independently, but I can't get one. I'm so fed up, I wish I could die." (p. 117)

Gwyneth Matthews has many examples of the courage of women in such situations and in better ones (in a government run home in the same city, for instance). She looks at all facets of a woman's life — education, dating, romance, sexual relations, motherhood, housing, attitudes to disabled people, labels, accessibility, working and finances. In all these aspects of life the fight to overcome the dehumanizing forces faced by a disabled individual is a continual one. It is almost a theme in this book; it is a necessity the author decries but a quality she admires in the individuals she has interviewed.

The author and the women interviewed are often justifiably angry with the health care workers they have met. The pleasures of sex and motherhood, romance and love, are described in this book as having been found despite the lack of guidance by the professionals who should have helped these women. The tragedy of unemployment and discrimination in the workplace is a continual trial to them:

".... We've got to show people, overwhelmingly, that we want a life for ourselves. Nobody in government really wants to know about our problems," she added, "so we have to force them to know."

"And if we don't?"

"Then we'll always be on the dole." (p. 180)

It was a shame that the Nova Scotia government did not publish the original report in the year planned. On the other hand, we now have an even more effective document which displays insight, creativity and humour in the face of the barriers put up against disabled women in our society.

Hilary Thompson