

but the widowed Gertrude seems to be there only for other people to love: she is an object, not a subject. Iris Murdoch is quite capable of stabbing at sexism with brilliant sharpness. In *Henry and Cato*, while John Forbes thinks complacently about his abhorrence of the domination of men over women, he is at the same time remembering how he had pushed and manipulated his daughter into an unwanted and unsuitable education. "He had always fought for women's liberation," he thinks "...but there was a kind of invincible stupidity in the other sex which simply asked for bullying." Such stupid self-satisfaction on the part of apparently intelligent males is shown to be almost invincible because it is so profoundly unconscious.

Such placing is lacking in *The Good Apprentice*. The women in the novel are only half-realised and for the most part assume too easily a mythical significance (as in the scene where Mark's mother and her two friends seem to merge into the three Furies bent on punishing a new Orestes). This deficiency, the lack of any sense of what it means to lack power and privilege, robs the novel of some of its potency, which is unfortunate as it succeeds so brilliantly in portraying on a personal level. The lack of this dimension has the effect of making the love of goodness seem sometimes merely a game, an expensive toy, an indulgence of the privileged.

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Working Women in South-East Asia: Development, Subordination and Emancipation. Noeleen Heyzer. *Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986. Pp. 145*

Working Women in South East Asia examines the relationship between economic development, subordination and possibilities for women's emancipation in six countries. Before entering into her account of working women's

lives, Heyzer provides a brief theoretical overview of women and development, and establishes her rationale for limiting her study to women working within poverty. Then Heyzer examines the forms and bases of women's subordination. Changes in agricultural production are shown to weaken women's authority, increase their work burden, and exclude them from newly organized bureaucracies and institutions. Plantation agriculture, based on a need for male migrant labour, forces women into sole responsibility for reproduction, social isolation, and limited wage labour opportunities. Adverse social conditions, predominantly alcohol abuse, further women's oppression.

Simultaneously, migration to urban centres results in the concentration of women in subsistence production based on a traditional domestic division of labour which holds them in the "informal economy" — the poorest economic sector. Urbanization in conjunction with tourism leads to massive increases in the trade in female sexuality where women remain trapped by coercion, violence, and a lack of viable alternatives. Migrating women also are drawn into the lowest ranks of the industrialized work force and there they stay. The overall consequences of urban living, Heyzer argues, are the marginalization of women in all economic sectors, serf-like working and living conditions, deteriorated health, and an inability to break through the structural barriers which deny women participation in decision making.

Traditional and externally imposed cultural forces undermine opportunities for emancipation and advancement. Sexual ideals and behaviours are rife with contradictions. While some women migrate from rural areas to escape traditional patriarchy, in the cities they are caught in the net of foreign demands for sexual licence. At the same time, religious groups and state institutions seek to limit women's social participation, arguing that rapid social change and disorientation requires adherence to traditional roles and

“family values”. According to Heyzer, the prevailing sexual ideology upholds a double standard and provides ambivalence and contradictions for women undergoing rapid social change. Thus it offers sociocultural support for retaining developmental policies which either ignore women or rationalize their domestication and subordination.

Heyzer concludes with a look at the possibilities for emancipation which, she maintains, require the consolidation of women across class barriers. Emancipation is seen to depend upon the ability of women to create consciousness at regional, national and international levels; strategies of collective child rearing; fundamental changes in the economic structure to alleviate poverty, and education and training to create a highly skilled, flexible work force which can take advantage of new technology and wider employment opportunities. Underlying each of these strategies lies the singularly essential requirement of conceptual reconstruction which will allow women to respond creatively to their situation.

At bottom, Heyzer treats the problem of subordination as a cultural-attitudinal dilemma. For her, the relative autonomy of cultural factors from the political economic structures provides the key for impoverished women. In short, the struggle for emancipation is that of creating a new vision of equality based on sensitivity and concern; and ultimately, the reordering of society according to the “ethics of care”. Only through cultural reconstruction will gender cease to be an organizing principle of an oppressive social structure. Here lies the weakest link of her argument. As she acknowledges, poor women have little time for consciousness raising, nor do they have the training need for advancement.

The book is an ambitious task for it analyzes the causes and realities of working women’s oppressions *and* the necessary strategies for their liberation. Not content with a macro analysis of

this broad field, Heyzer attempts to examine “real life situations” and then to contextualize the empirical within the cultural, political, and economic forces which confine women to devalued and demeaning labour and marginal social roles. The breadth of her theoretical project is balanced by her comparative approach. Specific cases from six nations illustrate her arguments while comparative references to other developing nations bolster her perspective. The overall effect is to make the reader aware of the diverse realities of South East Asia, and thus to the need to go beyond the generalities of developmental theories in both explaining subordination and strategizing for its overthrow.

If Heyzer is to be faulted it is for trying to do too much at the expense of what is apparently crucial to her task; the depiction of the “essential dimension of human interaction at the everyday level”. In such a short book, (135 pages of text) the successful combination of macro and micro analyses requires a sharp focus rather than a broad comparative approach. What is lost in this instance is the opportunity for the women to speak for themselves and thus to give insight into their own perceptions of their oppression and strategies for attaining equality. This is particularly salient in the face of Heyzer’s conviction that the future lies in women’s self mobilization and consciousness raising. Without these insights, Heyzer’s call for peaceful social reorganization predicated on a code of ethics remains ethereal idealism: the internal struggle inherent in consciousness raising does not take shape within these broad, externally oriented parameters.

Still, *Working Women in South-East Asia* offers a valuable introduction into a critically important subject. It does draw together structural commonalities from diverse experiences and thereby offers a good sense of the disjuncture between working women’s realities and government and/or bureaucratic promises of women-positive development strategies. Heyzer’s writ-

ing style and her systematic analysis make this book a prime choice for undergraduate courses in women's studies and international development.

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The Book of Fears. Susan Kerslake. *Ragweed Press, Charlottetown, 1984, Pp. 128.*

Susan Kerslake's collected short stories *The Book of Fears*, published by Ragweed Press, brings together some haunting tales of the vulnerabilities of human beings in a world of concrete and machinery. Frail human beings face chaos; they feel lost and out of place in a fast-moving world: "She hated the way people pushed and walked at her on the street three abreast so she had to step or stumble off onto the grass. Kids on bikes whizzed by, endangering her. Toys, scooters, wagons, skateboards clogged the cement. Radios blaring from cars, stereos blasting from houses." (p. 90). Friendless women ("Push-Me Pull-You", "choices", "Trust", "Mirror, Mirror", "Sweet Grass", "Did you Ever", "The Rules") and men ("Billy", "The Wrong Story", and "Skye") look for comfort or meaning in their lives through television programmes, office routine, and memories in a disordered world where nature and humanity are as hostile as the machine, and where alienation rips holes in the psyche of those who would seek their spiritual selves.

The Indian boy on a dreamfast is mocked by echoes: "... Wistfully, his eyes reach after it, 'But I didn't have a chance to know you; what are you, my spirit? Let me look once, just once...' 'let meee,' howls the echo." (p. 125). Ultimately he is ridiculed by death:

Chants the fortunes, "ho ho, he-ye, ho ho he-ya, he he he he he..."

Softly to himself. The cave whispers back because no one else is there.

"He-ye, he-ye, he-ye"
He listens; he cannot hear the echo.
"he he he he he"
The cave is silent. (p. 125)

Frequently images of cameras, camera lenses, television screens, windows and mirrors express loss of self and lack of spiritual awareness. These cold, unfeeling, flat reflections seem, magically but ironically, to catch and hold dreams, like this deadly illusion in a mental hospital: "A window. The outside. I am afraid to look. He might see me look. They might put me in a room without windows. 'Do you dream?' The dream world is not here but out that window, shivering in its glistening, high gloss frame." (p. 27). Kerslake's imagerly, though recurrent, is not repetitive, for her situations are varied and her personae varied.

The Book of Fears was nominated for the Canada Council Award for Short Fiction in 1985. It deserves the nomination for its controlled writing and memorable imagery: "Old settled on her face slowly, silt from within. Her body was a dead, heavy think discouraging the quick spirit, muddying the colours under her wings." (p. 91). It is only occasionally flawed by too sudden a transition, as in "Sweet Grass", or by images that don't quite work, as in "Push-Me Pull-You".

From small runs by enterprising publishers like Ragweed good things like this book can come. Look at the success of New Zealand's Keri Hulme. Her novel *The Bone People* (1984), published first by the feminist Spiral Collective, is now internationally published and was nominated for the Booker Prize. Hulme's concerns, like Kerslake's, are for the outcasts and outsiders who are searching for a spiritual home in an alien world. Though not a unified narrative group of stories like Sandra Birdsell's *The Night Travellers* (Touchstone), *The Book of Fears* is gripping and absorbing, in its deadly observations of modern life and of the women trapped in it.