thinks of both hunger and hurt when she sees PAIN scrawled on a downtown wall. She explains that her body, free in its ability to inhabit two linguistic, cultural and symbolic spaces is "d'expression française." Thus, she translates french into english with a "french accent" so that the text becomes "foreign and familiar at the same time. This doubleness makes target-language readers aware that they are reading a translation by constantly putting them in the presence of otherness." The french and english sections of her own text, however, are not translations of each other. They stand on their own but interconnect, as Irigaray would maintain, like women's lips which touch/speak astride the female cleft/mouth.

Rebellion, for de Lotbinière-Harwood, also means *jouissance*. It is clear from her elaboration of the intertext that this translator depends on a web of women's work/words/worlds to make women visible. As she puts it, the intertext is "a communicating and resonating collective text scriptured in the feminine by feminists rereading and rewriting what other feminists have written and spoken." This "network" which provides a living dictionary for feminist translators is a loving celebration of sisterhood across time and space. de Lotbinière-Harwood urges us to add to this gynergy by rejecting traditional dictionaries which are most often sexist, racist, classist and homophobic, crediting "feminaries" (feminist dictionaries) and footnoting translation strategies. It is this coming together of intertwined women's tongues/sex/texts which is seen as a source of support and solidarity for all feminists. That the translated/rewritten text will, in turn, take its place within the intertext approximates the diffuse, open-endedness of women's sexual desires.

Rebellion is likewise manifest in the new forms of language created by feminist translators. In keeping with women's historical attempts to establish a more women-centred discourse, de Lotbinière-Harwood participates in the co-creation of a structural and ethical feminist grammar. In making women visible in french and in english, she asserts her position as the text's co-creator. The portions of the book which trace de Lotbinière-Harwood's struggles to translate/rewrite women into french and english are fine examples of collective feminist process. She acknowledges that the french language's obfuscation of the feminine is considered, ironically, "correct" french. To subvert "correct" french, she recommends several strategies within the french section, such as, placing the feminine before the masculine in a sentence, forming adjectival accord with the feminine rather than with the masculine, using feminine pronouns rather than masculine pronouns to determine the structure of a sentence if the feminine is numerically a majority. In the english section, different tactics are required to overcome textual sexism. Depending on the context, history becomes herstory, his/her becomes her/his, cunt becomes cleft, other becomes other, author becomes auther. Using the french e to signify the feminine presence, one (woman) becomes one. This co-creation of a structural feminist grammar is bolstered by the co-creation of an ethical feminist grammar de Lotbinière-Harwood urges feminist authors, translators, publishers and reviewers to construct. She argues that author and translator should work in political tandem, that translators be given legal co-creator status by publishers and that reviewers acknowledge translators' work. She urges the feminist community to dialogue about the following issues: could heterosexuals translate lesbian authors? Is an anti-feminist man's translation of feminists acceptable to feminist readers? Should non-natives translate native authors? May an author of colour entrust her work to a white translator? On the five hundredth anniversary of colonial oppression in the "New World," these issues touch upon timely considerations of dominance and diversity.

Despite the reader's possible discomfiture with the essentialist charge levelled against *femininité*, de Lotbinière-Harwood's work is, overall, an ode to *l'écriture féminin* **and** feminism. But although de Lotbinière-Harwood acknowledges in footnotes feminist works which have contributed to her thinking, she does not admit until the end of the english section that "[c]learly, this book could not have been written without an acquaintance with feminist language theory, literary criticism, and translation." Yet, without a firm outlining of that acquaintanceship within the text's body, a reader uninitiated in *l'écriture au feminin* may find her work to be, at times, unclear, disconnected and somewhat egocentric. Neither would the reader find direction in headings like "About jouissance" and "Sextual pleasures." The headings attempt to delineate different areas and ideas in the text but appear confusingly in upper case and lower case, as if compressed into the traditional form for chapter and subtitle delineation.

Because both french and english sections stand on their own, I would recommend this work to french-english bilingual and french/english unilingual readers. I urge english-only feminists, in particular, to read this book. As speakers of the dominant language in Canada, english-only feminists must familiarize themselves with not only québecoise writing but with the process by which it is made accessible via *le réécriture au féminin*. The gynergy this book will generate will hopefully lead to the realization of de Lotbinière-Harwood's three fond wishes: a feminist english-french multicultural and interdisciplinary feminary; a feminist herstory of translation; feminist solidarity. Feminist translators/rewriters like de Lotbinière-Harwood permit feminist communities to re-vision, as she does, a wond(h)erland.

Chamberlain, Lori, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," *Signs* 13.3 (Spring 1988) 454-72.

Jones, Ann Rosalind, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of *l'écriture féminine*," *Signs* 7.2 (Summer 1981) 247-63.

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## INTERIOR DESIGNS

Robin Potter. Montreal: The Muses' Company, 1990.

***By Sharon H. Nelson***

*Interior Designs* is a book of poems about the understanding of sexual politics as a survival technique. The poems explore identity as artifact, the "self" as something less natural than designed. Thus the opening poem, "Conjuration," speaks of appearance, reality, and of invocation, the ability to call a thing into being by naming it, as a powerful force in constructing and resisting reality. Attempted suicide functions as a rite of passage and

a dramatic pivot for the text. Suicide, like his Romantic alter-ego, Death, is drawn as a courtly and irresistible lover.

*Interior Designs* is notable for economy of language, vigorous interaction of images, density of content, and careful design. Though the persona may think of screaming, she never does. In fact, the character comes through by using intellect and political analysis.

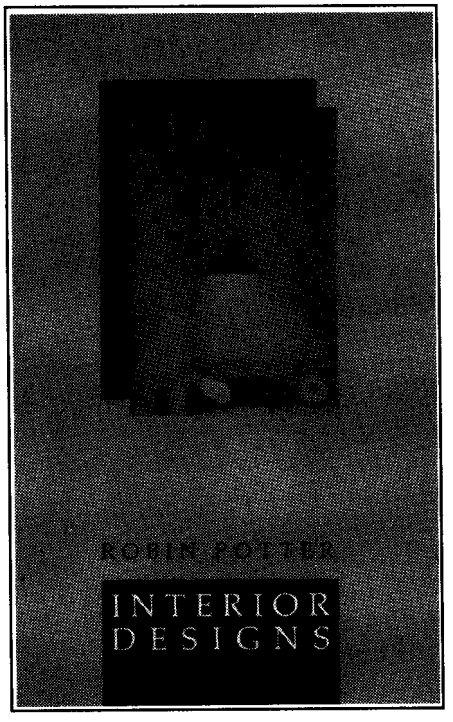
Potter creates a dream-like quality in the text. We are shown psychological violence and cultural constraint, even blood, but it is as if we are watching through water, so that, though we recognize horror, we are not horrified. The creation of fantasy, such as that in the book's short first section, "Domesticated Moon," and the use of symbolic and mythic elements and resonances, creates a safe distance from which to see, analyze, and understand. This intellectual rather than visceral presentation of attempted suicide distances the author as well as the reader from the pain.

In "Consumed," Potter delineates the characters who inhabit the universe of Interior Designs and the dynamics of their relationships, and the themes of consumption, giving one's self birth, and retreat from "reality." Fantasy constitutes the first search for identity and grace, the "design" of an interior that can survive both consuming and being consumed. In the "real" world, even bucolic natural settings, which Potter describes beautifully and contrasts with the "designed," hold terrors, as in the third stanza of "Consumed".

> The cattle in the adjacent field
> fought less than my parents
> muzzled the terrain and my hands with
> soft kisses,
> ignorant of our packing procedures:
> a whole side of beef sliced and minced
> appearing sweet-smelling, moist
> on our kitchen counter. Supplied for a
> year

Fantasy enables us "to transcend" unendurable reality by faith in the Romantic fictions on which young women are fed. But "every man's voice remains too pitted (pithed, pitched", and "It seems—/They don't know how to listen,/ nor when to quit./They have agile fingers, are savage." In the end, therefore, the character retreats to her designed interior: "In my room the fields are wild./Here I remain undefiled."

"Levitation" uses the metaphor of the basket of "a balloon filled with tepid air" to depict rising out of the unendurable world via suicide. The material is handled deftly and delicately, as if the preparations were perfectly normal, the intended journey a pleasure trip. The tone is matter-of-fact, the writing and imagery elegant. This extraordinary poem is followed immediately by "I said I was sorry!", in which the upper case "I" and the exclamation mark serve as a sub-text that denies sorriness.




The rage at being pressured almost to death by the grinding of cultural and familial millstones is expressed in lines almost every woman learns. In learning to speak them, we may learn also, as the persona in the poem does, to enunciate the first person singular, the capitalized "I" of identity with eventually makes a lie of sorriness. From this first enunciation of a consciously feminist "I," the poems reflect an increasing awareness of sexual politics and of the smallness of the space assigned to female normality.

Having used skills and techniques traditionally associated with male culture to rescue herself from its murderousness, in the final poems the persona begins to design a female interior. She discovers a "home" in her own body, a place previously obscured by the promise of redemption via Prince Charming, Suicide, or other exterior constructs. The text asserts that women may discover identity only when we release ourselves from the Rapunzel/ Sleeping Beauty/Cinderella myths, the fatal attraction of cultural mythologies, when faith in the possibility of self-nurturance replaces the expectation of parental or cultural nurturing.

The poems that move the reader through the experience of self-discovery are less artfully dream-like, and therefore more powerful, though no less finely crafted, than those that precede them. The voice is more direct, sharpened by the removal of layers of cultural mythology and symbolic design. The celebratory poems, at first transitional and hesitant, finally full-voiced and joyous, provide a resolution to the drama, which is a sort of morality play and cautionary tale.

In the book's closing poem, "Naming (In Process)," Potter gives up the quiet tone and reticence that have so far characterized many of the poems and gives voice to a lusty cry in celebration of life and the female body. Though this poem departs radically in tone from much that precedes it, here Potter invokes and resolves many of the preceding tensions of image, symbol, metaphor and concept. Thus "the blood that chugs/behind my ears, sanctifies my healing." The final stanza is an invocation of female symbols and a resolution of the problem of nourishment.

> Body—the core, the marrow,
> body—the water that sweeps me into
> flames of recall:
> O red blood, nourish me.
> O red earth, reconstruct my flesh!

With this integration of the body and the blood, grace replaces the unendurable discomfort of bearing the weight of fairy tales and sexist cultural mythologies.

Feminist vision is deeply integrated into the content, construction, and imagery of this text. Potter skilfully carries on the work of envisioning a feminist reality and gracefully expands the body of feminist writing.