

are studied, researchers need to keep in mind the diversity that exists within this group. As Rubinstein (1987) reminds us, cultural traditions, family orientations, personalities and personal ambitions, sexual preferences, and even demographic factors affect all elderly persons, regardless of marital status.

One of the greatest needs that never-married women have is for more formal supports in later life. Although nearly all of the women had accepted some increasing dependence on others in their current lives, it is unlikely that family and friends could be relied upon for help in the event that more caregiving was needed in the future. As is true elsewhere, such support would not likely be forthcoming (Johnson & Catalano, 1981). Even though family traditions and ties in Prince Edward Island are considered to be strong and are still governed by such basic values as family obligation and family loyalty, these and other values are in a state of transition. More than 7% of PEI's elderly live in government manors or private nursing homes (P.E.I. Department of Health and Social Services, 1981). Most of these persons are never married, widowed or divorced (Statistics Canada, Minister of Supply and Services, 1981).

Perhaps more important is the attitude of the women themselves. Only one woman in this study mentioned the alternative of moving in with relatives which had been offered to her if she could no longer live on her own. Her reasons for

rejecting this offer reflects the feelings of many older persons — she wished to maintain her independence which she valued so highly. Independent living was necessary for these women to maintain their psychological integrity. For women who have remained single, the maintenance of personal dignity and positive self-image in their later years consists in retaining the kind of control over their life-decisions which they have developed and cherished over a lifetime.

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## LILIANE WELCH

### Word Flesh

Morning writing in the spring light —  
crazy, that a pen  
should say, "I love you!"  
to a white page,  
dreaming because the day is long  
the house a quiet void  
and the desk hot with sun  
that a line of letters  
should flip their skirts  
to flash slender legs on the empty street,  
"Be-my-bride."

Ink takes off its clothes,  
paper glows.  
On the mind's shelf  
jars of honey  
hardening to crystals of thought,  
icons of word flesh  
on a breached pale wall.