

nor pontifically, but in sweet tune with the aspirations of women in all walks of life. We need that voice. As a movement, we need your knowledge and your political commitment, your sense and your concern, to mount the necessary critique of and resistance to the robotic technological hysteria of the new baby-

farmers. We need your help to understand the processes and strategisms in which male control of reproduction is being consolidated and how to challenge that. But most of all, we need you as all women need each other, to fight the good fight which will transform patriarchal legalism to feminist justice, justice for us,

justice for our children, and justice for our species.

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Illustration: Jane Northey

## A Report on the 1984 Midwifery Conference "Creating Unity"

**Vicki Van Wagner**

*L'auteure, sage-femme elle-même, fait un rapport sur la conférence des sages-femmes qui a eu lieu à Toronto en novembre 1984 et qui fut présentée conjointement par l'Alliance des sages-femmes de L'Amérique du Nord et le Détachement spécial des sages-femmes de l'Ontario.*

Midwives from across the continent attended this conference held at the

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, in November 1984, as the Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA) held their second annual general meeting. The conference marked the continuing development of this long persecuted female profession, which has been revitalized in the last fifteen years by women's demands for changes in childbirth.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Midwifery Task Force (MTF), the lobby group working towards the legal

recognition of midwifery in Ontario, and included workshops and speeches covering current debates in obstetrics; the technical aspects of practicing midwifery; on working with the diverse populations which midwives serve; and on the political struggle of midwives internationally, especially in Canada and the United States.

A highlight of the conference was the public evening "Midwifery is a Woman's Issue." Sheila Kitzinger, Mary O'Brien and Michele Landsberg all received standing ovations from an overflow crowd. Kitzinger explored the history of midwifery and how, in North America, where midwifery was almost completely wiped out and has experienced its renaissance independently of institutionalized obstetrics, we are better able to see the political nature of the profession.

O'Brien emphasized that birthing practices are part of our cultural definition of womanhood, and discussed the separation in "male-stream" thought of nature and culture. Midwives are mediators in the birth process—mediators between mother and baby, parents and children, doctor and mother, the natural and the cultural. According to O'Brien, midwives, in helping to free women from technological control and alienation in labour, help redefine the relationship of nature to culture, and the power relationship of women to men in our society.

Landsberg, using her own birth experiences, vividly illustrated how the obstetrical system is designed by men to control women and, contrary to the medical mythology, often endangers the health of mother and baby. She drew strong links between the goals of feminists and midwifery supporters: choice, control, and safety in reproductive health care.

Both MANA and the MTF have worked towards creating unity between midwives from diverse backgrounds, and between the many different kinds of people who support the legal recognition of midwifery and aim to mobilize their support politically. The conference was an important step in this direction.

*Vicki Van Wagner is a practising Toronto midwife.*

## LE JEU DES GENRES

*Louky Bersianik*

- un faon / une femme
- un fou / une foule
- un os / une noce
- une caillou / une caille
- une caille / un cahier
- un collier / une écolière
- un oiseau / une noisette

Mais ton rêve tourne au cauchemar. Ton plaisir est gâché par des casseux d'veillée. Tu t'aperçois que dans le jeu des genres tu n'es pas du bon bord. Le jeu des genres devient sinistre:

- un garçon / une garce
- un maître / une maîtresse
- un entraîneur / une entraîneuse
- un saucier / une saucière
- un facteur / une factrice
- un médecin / une médecine
- un cafetier / une cafetière

La plume à la main tu t'aperçois que quelque chose ne vas pas et cela parce que tu es une femme. Tu t'aperçois que ta langue, ton instrument de travail et de plaisir, t'est hostile. Que cette langue généreuse qui génère à l'infini les genres féminin et masculin, que cette merveilleuse génitrice, en réalité est un géniteur . . .

Voilà ton plaisir sérieusement compromis. Avant de jouir dans les bras de l'écriture, il te faudra mettre à jour les strates vulnérables de la langue, mettre au point des stratégies.

"Car, ainsi que le dit un jour l'Euguélionne, qu'est-ce qu'une écrivaine sinon quelqu'une qui répand de l'encre sur la terre . . ." **L'Euguélionne**

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