father's sister, unmarried, 80 years old, actively involved all her life in causes, especially in the fight for women's rights and Mary O'Brien, the practical nurse-housekeeper, who looks after her physical needs and supports her emotionally as she grows weaker and less able to do things for herself.

In the final reckoning, however, it is Ella, the girl with whom she shared a year at the Sorbonne before either one was married, who means most to Laura. Their passionate attachment to each other, which had never had a physical consummation or even a tacit admission of its physical overtones, has survived the years of separation and of widely different lifestyles. When Ella arrives unexpectedly, it is obvious that Laura had been waiting for her coming to make her final reckoning and at last to understand her mother. She dies content — but not before she and Ella have made a statement about the bonds between women, their strength and enduring quality. Unfortunately, the intrusion of the final statement makes for an awkwardness in the book's ending. Sarton had already conveyed her message. As Laura tallied her relationship with each of the women in her life, the message grew clearer and clearer. It did not require a deathbed proclamation beyond the moving fact of the reunion of the two friends. In an earlier conversation with Aunt Minna Laura had said, 'What I begin to see is that women have been in a queer way locked away from one another in a man's world. The perspective has been from there . . . All that is changing and perhaps women will be able to give one another a great deal more than ever before.' Laura's 'real connections' had led her to know the importance of women to one another, the power and the wonder of love and friendship between women, the need to share the experience of being women, the difficulty that mothers and daughters had in sharing that experience.

My reservations about *A Reckoning*? I have already mentioned the forced nature of the last few pages, the driving home of the point already well made. I also found myself being annoyed by the stereotypes: the homosexual son who was, of course, an artist — or to put it the other way around, the artist who was, of course, a homosexual; the young lesbian writer who was afraid to publish her first novel because it would endanger her lover, a teacher, and who was encouraged by Laura to publish, whatever the sacrificial price; Daisy's young Jewish lover and her discomfort in the presence of his parents because she was gentile. (Why is it necessary to have a token Jew in every novel?) In spite of these reservations I found the book interesting. The story is told totally from Laura's point of view. As a result, it is easy to empathize with her, to pass the last months of her life with her. The absence of mawkishness compensates for the bits of rough writing at the beginning and the end. I am an animal lover and I appreciate the way in which Sarton treats Laura's feeling for her dog, Grindle, and her cat, Sasha, from whose companionship she derived love and comfort. There is no irony, condescension or attempt at Freudian interpretation. Sarton uses music effectively and Laura's love of poetry as part of both setting and characterization. Throughout there are sketches of characters and events that are instantly recognizable as being real: of Daphne, untidy, once beautiful Daphne, who had wanted to be a veterinarian and ended up as an aide in an animal hospital; of a children's birthday party at Brooke's home; of Ben's embarrassment when Laura tries to tell him of her feelings for Ella. The minor characters who appear briefly are presented as Laura sees them: Cousin Hope who is irritatingly good, kind and self-effacing; Jim Goodwin, the doctor who admires Laura and helps her over the rough spots; Harriet, the young author; even Laura's colleagues at the publishing house. They illustrate Sarton's skill in quick portraiture, one line drawings.

And so *A Reckoning* is not depressing. It is about a turning point in the life of an intelligent, humane and courageous woman. It could have been cloying; it could have been horrifying; it could have been clinically detailed. It is none of these. Instead, it differs from many of this decade's novels by introducing us to people who genuinely care for one another and for other living things and who are kind because they care. It has been criticized as 'a woman's book'. What's wrong with that?

And They Took Themselves Wives: The Emergence of Patriarchy in Western Civilization

David Bakan,
San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.
Johanna Stuckey

'Patriarchy' is a word much used today to mean 'male domination'. However, it actually means that and much more, for it comes from two Greek words meaning, respectively, 'father' and 'rule'. 'Patriarchy', then, signifies 'rule by father or fathers'; it is a system under which fathers, actual or representative, dominate and control women, children, and younger men. However modified it is in actual practice, it is one of the prevailing myths of our modern Western world. Patriarchy structures not only marriage and the family but also our societal institutions — educational, medical, economical, political, and so on. Teachers, doctors, company presidents and executives and politicians function (and are treated) as paternal authority, even in the rare instances when they are women! And religion validates the whole structure by appeal to the Judaeo-Christian 'God the Father' and the patriarchal Bible.

David Bakan's book, *And They Took Themselves Wives: The Emergence of Patriarchy in Western Civilization*, examines patriarchy as it is presented in the Hebrew Bible. His reason for his interest in 'the notions of marriage and the family in the Bible' (p.1) stems from his conviction that the Bible is the '"written constitution" for the institution of marriage' in Western civilization (p.2). In pursuit of this aim he examines certain 'beneath-the-surface themes', which, he maintains, 'are gaining dominance at the present time' (p.3). These 'themes' lead Bakan to argue that 'there are strong traces of a prior matrocentrism, with matrilineality and perhaps even matriarchy, in the text' (p.66).

Undoubtedly, he is right about there being traces of matrocentrism in the Hebrew Bible. Not only is it full of explicit references to the Goddess-centred religion of Canaan, clearly a rival religion to that of the Hebrew God, but also it contains passages that point to an original importance of mothers, especially in matters of marriage and descent. These 'themes' justify Bakan's subtitle, though I should be happier if he were to substitute 'the Hebrew Bible' for 'Western Civilization', for there is, to my mind,

no clear evidence that patriarchy emerged in Western Civilization everywhere in the same way.

There are, indeed, many possible explanations for the emergence of patriarchy (assuming, of course, that it was not always with us). One explanation is that patriarchy is an adaption to environmental conditions. Nomadic herders for instance are, according to anthropologists, fiercely patriarchal as are cultures like the Eskimo that depend solely on hunting for subsistence. Hunters and gatherers, on the other hand, tend towards egalitarianism, and even, in lenient environments, towards mother-centred organization. Since social structures seem to depend to some extent on control of food resources and that control on environment, patriarchy in this theory becomes one of a number of possible human responses.

Another explanation traces patriarchy to the early identification of Woman with Earth, with Land. According to this theory, when the plough was invented and males took over agriculture from women, men began to assert ownership of the land they cultivated. It follows, then, that they would assert ownership not only of women but of their offspring.

Yet another theory argues from the discovery of paternity and it is this theory that David Bakan espouses. He argues that 'the basic theme, and seeming preoccupation, of the Bible as a whole is paternity' (p.12) and that the Bible was composed 'in a period following the discovery of the role of the male in conception' (p.13). During this time the patriarchal view of marriage and the family emerged. Further, with other students of the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy (such as Bachofen), Bakan clearly sees patriarchy as progress.

Bakan's book is, it seems, his response to the emergency of contemporary feminism; in it he attempts to show that the Hebrew Bible 'constituted an important step in improving human quality by making men into carers for children and facilitating large-scale social organization' (p.175). Under patriarchy, Bakan argues, men's involvement with children 'effeminized' them, in that, through understanding their biological role in reproduction, they became like mothers. Indeed, so anxious is he to prove his case that he is willing to amend the Hebrew text freely to support it.

There are several difficulties with his argument, for underlying Bakan's position are some unwritten assumptions. First, he assumes that it is 'unnatural' for men to care for children; that, if they were not aware of their biological connection with children, they would have nothing to do with them. This latter assumption is patently false; in cultures other than patriarchal ones, men do involve themselves with children, whether or not they are aware of paternity. Second, Bakan's use of the word 'effeminize' points to the fact that he is accepting as given the distinctions of sex-role stereotyping; that is, patriarchy (and awareness of paternity) makes men into something they are not. This assumption too is questionable. Finally, Bakan's statement that patriarchy (in the Hebrew Bible or otherwise) results in men's caring for children is not generally valid, for under patriarchy through the ages, men have not 'normally' cared for children. So, then Bakan appears to be arguing that women should be grateful to patriarchy for getting men involved with children to the extent that they are or have been.

The problem is, I think, that Bakan has not really understood patriarchy. It is not, it seems to me, concerned with making men (as fathers) into nurturers; rather it is concerned with establishing men as *owners* of women and children. Patriarchy and paternity do not 'effeminize' fathers; they validate their ownership claims. So, finally, *And They Took Themselves Wives* does not in itself do much to help us understand 'the emergence of patriarchy in Western civilization', nor does it throw a great deal of light on patriarchy.

Nevertheless, it does have redeeming qualities. First, because of Bakan's bold approach to a revered subject and his occasional really exciting insights, his book both annoyed and engaged me. Second, he advances a number of stimulating ideas and theories and ranges over a wide variety of topics: sexuality, divine impregnation, family roles, virginity, fidelity, incest, and the like. For instance, in a very involving section he suggests that both baptism and circumcision are, separately, substitutes for infanticide. He is nothing if not provocative on the underlying 'matrocentric' themes of the Hebrew Bible and its radical, anti-establishment undercurrent. Most important of all, Bakan is never boring.

Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir and The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children

Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir

Charlotte Vale Allen, McCelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1980, pp. 255, hardcover $14.95.

The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children

Florence Rush, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980, pp. 226, hardcover $14.95.

Merle Wallis Bolick

I should have known from the subtitle — 'A Very Personal Memoir' — that *Daddy's Girl* would not do what I wanted it to. *Daddy's Girl* is a first-person account of the author's sexual victimization by her father, which began when she was seven years old. In a talk at the York Women's Centre in November, 1980, Vale Allen expressed the hope that the book would help in future studies of incest, and certainly, she gives an honest account of what it felt like, to her, to submit to his attacks and the blackmail by which he enforced her silence. For example, she tells of what seems to be a common feeling of being 'split in two and paranoid' (Rush, p. 10):

> I could feel myself splitting, becoming two quite different little girls: one was the sharer of The Secret . . . The One was evil, mean, capable of everything bad. The Other was the little girl who played hopscotch and double-Dutch . . . . I set her out on her best behaviour, in the hope someone would see and value her. (*Daddy's Girl*, pp. 97-8)

She dwells especially on feelings of being physically ugly and morally dissolute, unlovable and on the conviction that she had been deprived of a childhood.

A work of integrity, *Daddy's Girl* could give