

In the Face of Innocence

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Hers was a slim face
ivory bones pearl shadows
a face Modigliani might
have learned to draw from

"He was a remittance man," she said
and shrugged, "sure, I've known
hard times too.
He didn't know a plough from a
scythe, or much else either.
We would've starved
in '32, one room above a store, me
and mother and my little sister, and him
feeling the dust like a personal
affront.
We would've starved
but mother's people still had farms, and brought
what they could
vegetables
up those down-at-heel stairs
And they never looked down on us, nor spoke
ill of him, though mother could have had her choice
of boys who knew farming
Then that Tuesday dinner he threw his bonethin Limoges
clear across the room with fury so precise one shard
grazed mother's cheek
like a goodbye kiss
He swore he'd starve before he'd eat
another turnip—food for pigs—
and walked all the way to Estevan
wheedling pennies (My babies need milk) at every door
to take us home//England was greenstone
greyrain steaming marble baths with
feet and servants scrubbing our skin redder
than sundust and wind I
could pretend I was a princess
And they never looked down on us
not once, I felt right at
home, though Great Aunt Elspeth would correct
my grammar and clear her throat a little loudly when I chose
the wrong fork
No, it's no disgrace
being poor" she said
and shrugged

slim face
ivory pearl
face
learned to draw
pain

regional representatives (regions are delineated in accordance with electoral boundaries) and the chairpersons of ratified subcommittees. Its duties include representing the federation to the public, promoting the objectives of the Women's Movement in B.C. as determined by convention policy and appointing ad hoc committees.

Besides the member groups of BCFW, the federation is structured to allow for subcommittees which are the main action areas of the federation. They are organized around province-wide issues such as employment, health, education, child care and lesbian rights. It is the task of each subcommittee to initiate, develop, promote and implement BCFW policy in its area of specific concern.

Affiliation by groups is achieved by applying to the standing committee in writing, signifying general agreement with the goals of the federation and payment of one month's fees. Individual women who wish to join BCFW may contact the BCFW regional representative in their area to be put in touch with existing BCFW member groups or they may, with other interested women, form a group which may then affiliate.

Much debate in the province is still generated around the role and usefulness of BCFW. On the positive side, the 1979 Convention held in November in Victoria, B.C., attracted 46 groups and 160 delegates. We were actively visible at the Armistice Day Parade in Victoria, when one of our members read over the public address system a poetic plea to remember women and children who had given their lives in men's wars. This type of action has been used many times by member groups representing BCFW, in order to protest pornography and rape.

On the negative side, much work appears to be duplicated. Also, rural women still feel isolated from the lower mainland, where innumerable women's groups exist and support each other. Four member groups have chosen to leave BCFW over issues that they feel they can't support.

While the time has come to re-evaluate BCFW, its structure, its organization and its role, there is no doubt that because of it women have developed a greater sense of unity across the province. It has provided us with the opportunity to meet and work together. Our constitution and policy have become a catalyst and a model for other women's provincial organizations. At the end of the Seventies we're still growing. Better still, we are changing to suit the ever-changing times and looking forward to a new decade.