factors. Second, it tends to pose male dominance as a social system, with a self-contained logic (comparable to a mode of production like capitalism). And because biology provides the difference between men and women, this system called patriarchy tends to rest on biological determinants rather than historically evolved social relations.

Both of these tendencies are epitomized in much of the work in *Capitalist Patriarchy*. Eisenstein poses patriarchy as a mode of (biological) reproduction comparable to the capitalist mode of production, which supplies 'order and control' to capitalism (as if sources additional to proletarianization were needed!). She argues, for example, that it is in 'defence to patriarchal hierarchy and control' that women, who are cheap labour, are not fully integrated into the economy. In fact, they are cheap labour partly *because* they are not integrated. Even more short-sighted and ahistorical is Heidi Hartman's contribution to the book. She argues that male unions were as responsible as other factors for women's segregation in the work force. (Dixon's brief analysis stands in marked contrast: 'proletarian anti-feminism was not the result of stubborn sexism alone; it was principally due to the lower wages paid women and the resulting competition between men and women in the labour market' (31).)

Nancy Chodorow's article on mothering, Linda Gordon's on changing forms of control over woman's reproductive capacities and Mary Ryan's on changing notions of femininity save the collection. All show how forms of male dominance are products of different organizations of production.

While *Capitalist Patriarchy* is a step backward, *Feminism and Materialism* is ten steps forward. The book is a scholarly attempt to develop an historically specific concept of patriarchy, which begins with an analysis of the relations of production. The first theoretical article, by McDonough and Harrison, argues that patriarchal relations are shaped by relations of production, that patriarchy operates through class relations, and that 'patriarchal oppression of women in the family is (most) crucially connected with the need to control their fertility and sexuality' (26). The next article, by Annette Kuhn, extends the discussion to consideration of the psychic relations in the family, between men and women. The role of the state in women's oppression is also considered here. A fine article by Mary McIntosh describes the ways in which the state maintains both the social conditions of biological reproduction, through the support of the nuclear family household, and woman's role as cheap wage worker dependent on her husband. The other articles, some largely theoretical and some mainly empirical, are almost uniformly strong. This book may be the most important one to come out of the Women's Movement.

True Daughers of the North: Canadian Women's History—An Annotated Bibliography, by Beth Light and Veronica Strong-Boag, OISE Press, Forthcoming Spring, 1980.

Barbara Roberts

It is traditional to tell undergraduates in history that 'each generation writes its own history.' Until recently, that meant each generation of men, for the most part, because it was so hard to unearth materials to use to write the history of women. This never made much sense: we are half of humankind, half of society. Yet the invisibility of source materials has been a powerful deterrent.

We need be invisible no longer, thanks to the work of a small group of people interested in women's history who have created numerous compilations of and guides to sources for women's history in Canada. *True Daughters of the North* represents the highest achievement of such creative compilation to date. Strong-Boag and Light have put together an exhaustive collection of published sources, references and research materials relating to women's history in Canada. They include bibliographies, primary sources and secondary sources by subject. In *True Daughters* materials are grouped into the traditional time-topic frames of history: New France, British North America, Canada 1867-1917, Post World War I. The organization of the bibliography makes it easy to use. Indeed, accessibility is one of the authors' primary concerns. Too often, they say, women's history has been 'the preserve of a relative few.' From this perspective alone, the work of Light and Strong-Boag is one of the most important contributions to women's history in Canada.

There is another reason for its importance. *True Daughters* is modestly titled a bibliography, but it is far more. The introduction traces the problems of doing women's history without access to sources, and the development of women's history in Canada. It discusses not only the available sources but also the important debates—current and developing—in the writings. This introduction points out some of the implications of women's history for the Canadian historical tradition as a whole, as well as for more specific topics within the discipline: ethnic studies, labour history, family and household studies, and the history of sexuality.

The information in this guide makes it invaluable to those working in most areas of Canadian history, in addition to its obvious value in women's history. Further, the clarity and grace which I have come to associate with the work of Light and Strong-Boag makes *True Daughters of the North* that all-too-rare item: a delight to have and to use.

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Mouse Woman and the Muddleheads, by Christie Harris, drawings by Douglas Tait, McClelland and Stewart, 1979, pp. 131, cloth $10.95.

Jillian Ridington

Christie Harris spent a quarter of a century writing scripts for the CBC before she turned to interpreting the myths of the Northwest Coast native tribes for young people. *Mouse Woman and the Muddleheads* is her tenth collection of these myths, and her third in the Mouse Woman series. Her experience and professionalism show. Like her other works, this book is clearly and evocatively written. Because Harris never condescends to her young readers, the stories can be enjoyed by those of us who are too old for 'children's books,' but still responsive to a good tale well told.

I am reading of Mouse Woman's adventures in a small cottage overlooking the Gulf of Georgia, a setting not too distant from their locale. The November sky is dull. Lines of cloud melt into the tops of islands, and colours of land, sea and sky blend into a blue-grey spectrum. Amid much subtlety and shadow, Harris' world of half-myth, half-reality, of spirit beings who take on human forms, of events and places shrouded in time and these coastal mists, is easy to believe in. And Harris' respect for the material and mythic cultures of the Tsimshian and Haida peoples shine through the Mouse Woman stories, transforming them from archaic tales into meaningful messages.

The book contains seven stories. Mouse Woman, the tiniest and wisest of grandmothers, is the mediator in each. She is a 'narnauk,' a spirit being capable of transforming herself into any form, or of hav-

ing no form at all. She is 'a friend to young people who have been tricked into trouble.' Her self-appointed tasks are to undo the damage done by the 'muddleheads'—people who will not, or cannot, do things in the 'proper way'—and to 'keep everything equal in the world of human beings and narnauks.' Within the confines of these structured and hierarchical societies, she succeeds very well.

It was once said, and has often been quoted, that myths can tell us everything it is important to know about a culture. For the Haida and the Tsimshian, the important things were respect for tribal elders and parents, respect for power and its sources, respect for all living creatures and the folly of false pride. The stories ground and uphold these values.

The Haida and Tsimshian passed on power and privilege through matrilineal clans. But matrilineal descent was not matriarchy. Women were respected and could hold the highest offices, but they did not dominate. In the myths, women and men are represented as equals. Both are capable of wisdom and foolishness, pride and self-sacrifice, courage and indiscretion. But in these societies work was sex-linked, status was inherited, slaves were captured from enemy tribes and held as menial workers and status symbols, and marriages were arranged by family elders. Such marriages had to be between people of equal rank and differing clans. The wishes of the couple concerned mattered little.

In several of the stories, Mouse Woman has to intervene to avert the disaster caused by a willful young person who seeks to marry an inappropriate partner. 'A people's duty was always to their future'; the carrying on of the clans, the production of children to wear the sacred crests and maintain the prestige of the lineage, was considered to be of greater importance to society than the wishes of individuals.

Mouse Woman believes 'nothing muddles a man's head more than ambition,' and the tale 'The Sea Hunters Who Were Swallowed by a Whirlpool' proves her point. The story takes place just after the Flood, when old chiefs and their heirs have drowned and their status is available to those who can prove themselves worthy. In his pride and ambition, a young sea hunter injures a spirit being in the form of a small cod—too small to be considered worthy of retention and care by the arrogant hunter. The fish is a messenger from the killer whale monster. In return for a promise to supply the monster with berries, the youth is given a taboo; 'Never again will you harm a fish! You will take fish only when they offer themselves to you by floating up to the surface.' He is guaranteed good fortune in sea hunting so long as the taboo is kept. Years of prosperity follow. Gradually, the taboo becomes less strictly adhered to. Eventually, it is disobeyed. Hunter, crew and canoe disappear into a whirlpool. Power is given as a trust; it will be turned against its holder if it is not respected. Taboos are inviolable.

The message of duty over desire underlies all the stories. As antithetical to currently popular values of individual fulfillment and to the feminist ideal of a self-selected life as this may be—arranged marriage is an anathema to any feminist—Harris brings us to understand the basis of such standards in a small-scale society. Whether children will be able to discriminate between the needs of such a society and those of their own is another matter. They may also not notice the absence of stories based on the experience of commoners. Perhaps through the selectivity of early anthropologists—themselves upper-class—from whose collections Harris' work is drawn, or perhaps because of the biases of tribal story-tellers, we are given stories largely limited to upper-class experience. We are left with a desire to know whether the cultural imperatives were as important for commoners as they were for the nobility.

Yet Mouse Woman herself has no class. As the tiny figure whose advice determines the outcome of each story, Mouse Woman teaches the reader that intelligence, sensitivity to surroundings and foresight are more powerful than brute strength. Native children have long learned much that is of value from her examples; so might ours.

At $10.95, the book seems overpriced for its length. The illustrations add to its value, however. Drawn by Vancouver artist Douglas Tait, they are not simple sketches, but line drawings carefully and delicately crafted. They evidence the respect for the Haida heritage that Harris conveys in the text.

Life Before Man, by Margaret Atwood, McClelland and Stewart, 1979, pp. 317, cloth $12.95.

Joan Hind-Smith

The unpleasant jolt that readers receive when they encounter Margaret Atwood's writing arises, it seems to me, largely from her ruthless extermination of sentimentality. If we are looking for touching insights into our sufferings or conceptions of the inherent nobility of humankind, we will not find them in Atwood. Instead, we seem to hear the author's mocking laughter always in the background. She is laughing, not only at her characters when they display foolish hopes of goodness and mercy, but also at *us,* as she picks out our self-deceptions with unerring eye. Who can forget the uncomfortable feeling while reading the final paragraph of her story 'Rape Fantasies,' an interior monologue by a character who clings pitifully to the notion that if only she could have a conversation with a potential rapist, then she could make him see her as a human being?

As a smasher of icons Atwood has no peer and, of course, her purpose is to destroy the shells and masks behind which we hide. *Life Before Man* begins with Elizabeth, one of the three central characters, lying on her bed in a state of shock after learning that her rejected lover has blown his head off. This, the motivating event of the novel, has occurred before the book begins and is responsible for progressive stripping off of protective layers. Elizabeth lying on her back, thinks, 'I live like a peeled snail,' and then, 'I want my shell back, it took me long enough to make.' However, the irony is that naked truth revealed is so extraordinary that no one sees it. Lesje, the other female character, pondering this thinks: 'When the aborigines sighted Captain Cook's ships, they ignored him because they knew such things could not exist. It's the next best thing to being invisible.'

Nevertheless, while hard truths may be good for us, there is something repellent about a writer who allows us not one glimpse of grandeur. I suspect that this feeling is shared because it is odd that Atwood has never received a Governor-General's Award for any of her three previous novels—odd, because she is one of the most stimulating and talked about writers in our midst, she has represented us and our literature abroad and she is prolific. Perhaps we are reluctant to bestow our highest award on someone whose perceptions are reductive rather than expansive. Behind the clever satire lurks contempt. When Lesje, pondering the possible destruction of the human race, considers that humans have it coming to them, we suspect that there is more than a little Atwood injected into Lesje. Her women characters are as remorselessly treated as are her men and Atwood's feminism has always consisted of tearing down the pedestals which make it so easy to rele-