

de Women Action:

C'est par le biais des médias que l'opinion publique est façonnée, orientée et renforcée. Pour cette raison, les médias doivent représenter correctement le pluralisme des images et des discours engendrés par la société, en particulier ceux que produisent les femmes, car elles aussi ont le droit de prendre part aux conversations publiques. Il est donc important que les contenus médiatiques respectent la pluralité de la diversité des voix, des images et des paroles qui favorisent l'équité et la justice entre les sexes.

A SONG OF LILITH

Joy Kogawa. Artwork by Lilian Broca. Vancouver, BC: Polestar, 2000.

BY SHELAGH WILKINSON

This is a rare book combining strong and effective art work with lyric and compelling poetry. It is not very often that we find a feminist text that fulfills our need to celebrate the lost heroes of woman-centred myths, read epic poetry that gives us new insights into the strength of stories that have been abandoned through patriarchal selective vision—while providing a visual feast of fine drawings that energize and expand the text.

As teachers in Women's Studies courses many of us have used Joy Kogawa's writing to explore feminist issues and this book is again useful in the classroom—especially so because it emphasizes the need to re-examine the biblical stories, paying close attention to the omissions and selections that have re-told the stories' "slant."

Here we celebrate a woman—Lilith—who is "solid, powerfully down-to-earth ... with a great sense of justice and integrity." Lilian Broca, in describing her choice of female

figure type for these drawings, notes that she uses the strong, physically fit woman of our century rather than the traditional renditions of a Lilith who is pallid, ethereal, selfless—an "angel BANISHED from the house." Because of course Lilith is the archetypal rebel. She refuses to become Adam's helpmate, refuses to be controlled, and is evicted from Paradise—the paradise we all know as the patriarchal family. Left to her own devices Lilith becomes a "demon of the race."

But as Kogawa unfolds her story what a demon we meet. This is a woman whose power and integrity leap off the page—an "evil" spirit who is "needful" if the world is to survive. A demon who will not comply with the current model of commercial consumerism. Lilith, in choosing love over money, help over refusal, peace over controversy, is beyond the control of the powerful. Lilith, by embracing self, strength, integrity, and community, shows us the reality of the archetypal woman.

This re-interpretation of an old story by Joy Kogawa explores a new strand of the myth. Kogawa imagines three tempters trying to influence Lilith "to bow to Mammon's might." And Lilith's refusal is one of the most powerful sections of this epic. As she turns her tempters away—who leave, significantly, "to attend the birthing / Of a more compliant creature," we realize that this interpretation of the myth is offering us a blueprint for survival. And survival of the race may well depend on the newly strong, independent woman who understands the basic needs of all people rather than the specific, monetary, needs of the powerful.

This is a compassionate, cautionary tale told by two powerful artists—one in language that is lyric and soaring while remaining strong and rooted in experience; one in drawings of women whose joy in strength, in the physical, make the transformations suggested by the poetry believable. The moral of this

story is seductive rather than brow-beating and that is what gives it power and credibility. More, it is an epic of our very own, told by two women who know the reality of our lives and who share their wisdom about how we should tackle the problems of this new century. Read it—and imagine how this world would be if it was managed by the spirit of the original Lilith.

GEORGE ELIOT AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Nancy Henry.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

BY DEBORAH HELLER

In *George Eliot and the British Empire* Nancy Henry offers a perceptive, knowledgeable account of George Eliot's complex and contradictory relation to the "pervasive and diverse culture of empire" that was developing in mid-nineteenth century England. At the time, however, no coherent concept of empire had yet been formulated, and thus, Henry argues, the "systemic totality of that culture was not perceived or articulated by those who were implicated in it." Henry's approach to George Eliot's involvement in the culture of empire follows several different paths. She first examines George Lewes's and George Eliot's early reviews of first-hand accounts of life in various imperial outposts, and then discusses at some length the personal involvement of Eliot and Lewes in the emigration of Lewes's two younger sons to Natal, South Africa, which she relates to similar parental undertakings by other well-meaning middle-class writers, such as Dickens and Trollope. Additionally, Henry

explores the place of empire in George Eliot's own fiction, and, finally, offers a fascinating discussion of George Eliot's financial investments abroad.

Henry's mixture of literary analysis and cultural and biographical criticism contributes to a humanly engrossing tale that is also deeply revealing of the culture in which it is situated. Although in their reviews of colonial literature Lewes and Eliot revealed a persistent skepticism toward travelers' glowing accounts of experiences in parts of the world unknown to the reviewers, the couple nonetheless succumbed to the lure of the colonies when seeking positions for Lewes's younger sons that would be "consistent with their middle-class life yet geographically far from it." Ironically, it was the very lack of aptitude with which they credited Thornton ("our Caliban") and Herbert (the "backward one") that determined Eliot's and Lewes's "misguided fantasy" that the empire was just the place in which the sons might make their fortune. Henry's retrospective judgment is that success in such unfamiliar, arduous circumstances actually "required more intelligence, skill, and endurance than they would have needed at home." Yet she manages to tell the sad story of the young men's successive failures and early deaths, as well as their disturbing brutalization by the colonial experience, without either quite blaming or exonerating Eliot and Lewes for their "tremendously wishful thinking."

Exploring the role of empire in Eliot's fiction, Henry is particularly critical of the tradition inaugurated by Edward Said that views *Daniel Deronda* as complicit in European imperialism. She challenges Said's crucial move of turning Jewish characters into "'European prototypes,' inseparable from English Christians in their role as colonizers," emphasizing, instead, their consistent role as outsiders. Henry's argument here is less with Said, whose "brief comments" on *Deronda* do "not [constitute] a close or careful reading of the

novel," than with the pervasive post-colonial tradition of reading *Deronda* that his remarks have authorized. Her own more careful close reading of the novel persuasively calls into question many assumptions that this tradition has uncritically accepted.

Perhaps most original in this fresh and original book is Henry's treatment of George Eliot's own investments in the colonies and of the way in which her very serious attention to these investments has been expunged not only from biographies but also from Eliot's published journals. The result, Henry observes, is to make Eliot appear "less interested in her investments than she actually was." As in Eliot's readiness to view the colonies as ideal spots to settle unpromising sons, here, too, Eliot is presented as a representative Victorian author, increasing her income from writing by investments in colonial companies, which thus made her dependent on the expanding empire. Two aspects of Henry's discussion here are especially intriguing: the first, that, although Eliot and Lewes had sent his sons to Natal, she made no investments there, despite the favorable offerings available; this suggests, Henry observes, "that they could dissociate the daily lives of their emigrant sons and the domestic economy that was helping to provide money for their support." The other is the central role played by John Cross, Eliot's long-time banker, financial advisor, and, ultimately, second husband, in Eliot's colonial investments. Cross's personal involvement in Eliot's careful investment decisions is noteworthy in light of the care he took to omit the vulgarities of "trade" from the posthumous image of George Eliot that he was so important in establishing. Here, as throughout, Henry is able to draw connections that would have been impossible for Eliot herself. Henry's skillful interweaving of biographical, textual, and cultural criticism enables us to see George Eliot and her work in fresh, new ways.

THE HISTORY OF EMILY MONTAGUE

Frances Brooke. Laura Moss, Ed.
Ottawa : Tecumseh Press, 2001.

BY CLARA THOMAS

Laura Moss has assembled an impressively complete scholarly edition of *The History of Emily Montague*, published in 1769. Traditionally, for decades, Frances Brooke's novel was considered "Canada's First Novel": beyond a polite bow in its direction very little interest was shown in its bland epistolary form and sentimental tale. Then, in the '70s, Lorraine McMullen embarked on an intensive study of Brooke, her life and work, resulting in the excellent biography, *An Odd Attempt in a Woman*, published in 1983. Frances Moore Brooke was shown to be a well-known writer, a woman who had left a comfortable, quiet home to take her chances as a writer in the lively literary and theatre scene in 18th-century London. To contemporary readers her life was considerably more interesting than any one of her works, though McMullen had unearthed a considerable corpus. Its climactic period was a sojourn in Quebec with her clergyman husband from 1763 to 1768. *The History of Emily Montague*, set in Canada, was published after the Brookes' return to England.

Now Laura Moss has given us the complete text of the work, taken from the first London edition (4 vols. Dodsley, 1769) and checked against the Scholarly Edition edited by May Jane Edwards for The Centre for Canadian Texts (Ottawa, Carleton University, 1985). More than that, under the headings Background, Documentary, Reception, Critical Excerpts, Commentaries, Endnotes, and Bibliographical List, she has assembled a large cluster of writings pertinent to *Emily Montague*.