

her message and personality forth all the while speaking in pop-culture terms that both fascinate and intrigue.

King Street, a Mecca of concrete contrasted by a few, small, ill-looking, token trees in little grey corporate cubicles. It's a land without pity, sucking the life out through the souls of my shoes as I puff thoughtfully on my cigarette and survey the secretaries in their business suits and Nikes, basking like seals in the sun. Modern seals, with protein drinks and outrageous Visa bills.

This tale is of a girl (Traci — supposedly not her) who is trying to get by in this world filled with a Starbucks on every corner and the continuing pursuit of the all-mighty dollar.

12:13 pm. I extinguish my cigarette and push through the thick slabs of heavy glass that serves as doors. It requires all my strength to wedge them open. I'm sure there's an entrance with normal doors. These doors are probably just here to intimidate people like me and make clients feel important. Mission accomplished.

Trying to deal with her mother's nervous breakdown, Traci visits her father's office in Toronto and relives times of her upbringing where she tried to fit into the family's mould, but ended up being a square in a circling eddy of strange family behaviour:

My father bristled. "If either of you kids ever screamed like that I'd have you in the car faster than you could fart." I wondered if that meant farting in the restaurant would be OK.

Moments of complete honesty and utter nakedness are notes that ring true to most of the thirteenth genera-

tion (those born between 1961 and 1981): "I held special status between Loser and Pot Hole."

This is a book that will not only make you think, make you laugh but will fill your entire senses to capacity, will leave you reeling with light-headedness from Mariko's ability to spin images and fragrances before your very eyes and nose.

If my father was a rock, my mother was that rock candy, pop candy, we used to buy at the convenience store for the thrill of oral demolition. Slick plastic pockets with a smattering of sweet, sour dust that would blow your taste buds to pieces, as you sat on the porch and let them go to town on your tongue. Sizzle Pop Kablam. Rice Krispies on dextrose.

It is a book that will appeal to any 20/30-somethings who has ever felt like they are smarter than their surroundings but the rest of the corporate world just hasn't caught up yet.

At recess, I retreated to the shady spot in the back of the schoolyard with a book and my lunch. I learned that being smart was a suitable explanation for being weird, and I became the best version of smart I could muster. The first lesson of smart: always have a book in your hand.

This book, like the films *Ghost World* and *Clerks*, shows that to be different is still to be celebrated. And if Mariko is going to celebrate it, we are going to be right beside her, with book in hand and a feeling of belonging to an elite, albeit eccentric, crowd.

IS THAT A GUN IN YOUR POCKET? WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF POWER IN HOLLYWOOD.

Rachel Abramowitz.
New York: Random House, 2000

**BY SHARON FERGUSON-
HOOD AND MARIE
TOVELL WALKER**

Rachel Abramowitz, in her book, *Is That A Gun In Your Pocket*, exposes the power that has controlled, manipulated, and destroyed women in Hollywood. She tells us what it is like to be a woman in Hollywood. Abramowitz interviews women who have been there: actresses, directors, producers, agents, and studio producers, and they openly tell how they view the world they live in. The picture they give is not a snapshot view because Abramowitz covered the period from the late 1970s to the present. She interviewed, to name only a few, Jodie Foster, Barbra Streisand, Meryl Streep, Callie Khouri, Paula Weinstein, Sherry Lansing, and Sue Mengers.

Many of the women interviewed shared the belief that their parents played a significant role in who they were and who they became. Paula Weinstein said,

Our parents reflect for us the possibilities of the world. I never knew any other way than to assume that anything was possible and to go after it.

But most of the women interviewed gave mixed reviews of their parents, citing both helpful and damaging interactions. Nearly every one of them talked at length of her many years in therapy.

In Hollywood power was, and still is, very individual. It was the late '80s

before women began to realize that if they worked together their future in Hollywood would be more productive. Meryl Streep was one of the leading figures in pulling women together to work for their own betterment. Barbra Streisand and Jane Fonda played a lesser role in this piece of history. It appeared that there was always great difficulty in understanding what feminism meant, or perhaps that there was no benefit in understanding feminism. Feminism does not support the styles of politics, power or interpersonal dynamics that happen in Hollywood so how could one be a feminist and succeed? Women who wanted even a low-key position in Hollywood had to fight with everything they had to get there. For many years the only ones who succeeded followed the models of male power that they saw around them.

In contrast, Australian women were earlier in finding ways to work together. This had paid off and women were both writing and directing much sooner than women in Hollywood.

There were many women in the American movie industry who wanted to create strong roles for women in movies. As women, they had no power to protect their work, and it was written over by male screenwriters, often at the demand of directors and actors. The stories became strong male movies with women as victims or as the ones blamed for all that was wrong in the world while the men became the good guys, the heroes. Callie Khouri was the first woman to write a script with strong female characters that didn't get changed in the making of the film. She wrote "Thelma and Louise" and insisted that the story not be changed in the screenplay. She wanted to direct "Thelma and Louise" but that did not happen. The film debuted in 1991 and women directors were rare until later in the '90s.

Lansing became the first woman director to survive the "Hollywood old boys club." She attained execu-

tive positions. Lansing is interesting because she attained her success behaving in the male fashion, yet she wanted change for women and she said that women were responsible for ending violence against women.

Lansing might have been successful but most women lagged behind their male counterparts when it came to both dollars and film roles. In 1989, 71 per cent of feature film roles went to men. The combined income of all male actors, at \$644 million, was twice the money paid to all women actors.

Abramowitz goes to great lengths to explain the lives of women in Hollywood. She wants the reader to understand just how difficult this

journey has been. And while she is doing this, she helps us to understand how men and women are defined through films. Not only are the people working in the movie defined through their movies, but also the people who watch movies come to understand society and the world through what they see on the screen. With irony, she also points out that the Columbia symbol is the only female symbol in the entire movie industry.

This book reads like a novel. It is long, and the reader is anxious to find out what will happen when the story gets to the '90s. It is worth the read—all 446 pages. It documents yet another struggle against sexism.

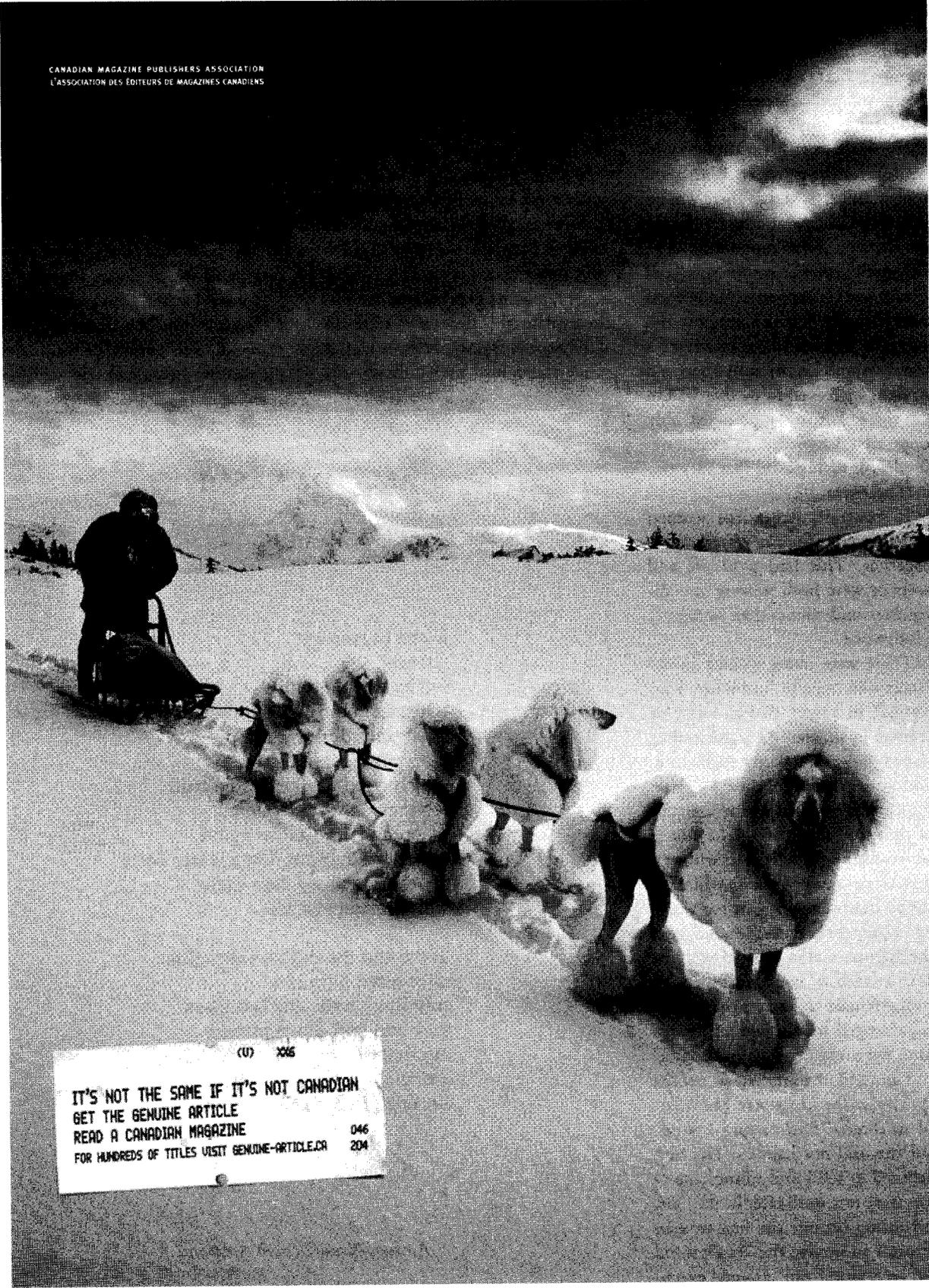
AMANDA NASSIF

Family

In the beginning
silence
fed by the old hands
whispered throughout the hallway
lined with dark wall paper
that bandaged these lips
which cried for the beaten truth
resting in empty corners
where the fire flamed again
others tried to put it in a water bottle
my sister walked past again
still wearing glasses.

In the end the days were nights,
uncovered pain I did
crawling on the cracked glass
they had laid down for me,
numb limbs crippled to these
artificial names bound by blood
clotting some more everyday.

Amanda Nassif lives in Australia.



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