

grated framework on care and justice to two issues in Netherlands law and politics: child custody and health-care policies. These case studies elucidate her approach and provide an interesting comparison to Canadian experience.

Sevenhuijsen's book provides a stimulating account of the potential of integrating care into conceptions of democratic citizenship and social justice. Fundamentally she argues that a feminist ethic of care offers a radical alternative to the liberal justice idiom—a relational image of human nature, not an atomistic, individualized one. Her book makes an important contribution to legal and healthcare issues and more generally to what it means to live, work and participate in a democratic society.

A DANCE WITH DEATH: CANADIAN WOMEN ON THE GALLOWES 1754-1954

Frank W. Anderson. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1996.

BY CHRIS MCCORMICK

Over 100 women have received the death sentence in Canada during its short history, for crimes ranging from theft to murder. *A Dance with Death* is a fascinating account of some of those women. Anderson limits the book to looking at those cases where a defendant was convicted of murder, and where a new trial was not ordered on appeal. In the 49 cases dealt with in this book, the sentences were commuted in 31 instances, and in 18 cases the women died on the gallows.

At the time of writing this book, the author must have been 80 years of age. He received his MSW in 1957, and was appointed to the National Parole Board in 1974.

However, perhaps what most distinguishes his career is that, with his wife Edna, he began Frontier Books in 1960, chronicling western history and winning many awards in the process. It is in small regional presses that the history of Canada is being preserved.

This book is very much a chronicle, divided up into various categories of murder: poisoners, murder for profit, love and profit, and infanticide, for example. It is an easy read, belying with its style its macabre topic. However it is a chronicle written from a point of view that leaves me wanting more. What I was hoping for in reading this book was some understanding of why women commit murder. Most women, when they kill, kill members of their families, but they constitute a small percentage of all murderers. In 1996, for example, of almost 500 cases of homicide that were cleared by the police, 90 per cent were committed by men. If so few murders are committed by women, what drives them to kill their children and their husbands?

In many of cases there are "good" reasons for the lethal crimes that women commit. For example, it is now recognized that sometimes women kill in self defence, even when they are not facing an imminent threat, in reaction to men who abuse them in the first place. Canada is virtually unique in recognizing the so-called "battered woman's defence." Similarly, since 1948, Canada has separated the killing of children under one year of age into the special category of infanticide, recognizing that there might be medical reasons for this crime which require a different treatment from the criminal justice system.

What is novel about this book is the focus on women killers. However, including more of their voices would have fleshed out the accounts. For example, there is the case of Sophie Bosclair, the first woman known to have used poison in committing a homicide. In 1866 she was convicted

of murdering her husband and lover's wife, but we don't know what her words of defence were. Her sentence was commuted to life, her child was taken from her, and after she served her full 20 years she was released with "unsound mind" and died in poverty. We never find out if her crime was motivated by unusual lust or abuse, or if it was more mundane, based in a more common unhappiness or despair.

In the case of Marie McCabe, orphaned at the age of six in 1871, there was little doubt about the motive. She drowned her child in a cistern in 1883 because her employer found it difficult that she was a single mother. She knew that her troubles would only continue as long as she had her child. And while she admitted that she had "done a bad deed," her case was treated with leniency, and after serving over five years she was released into charity. More of the discourse with which her case was dealt would strengthen the account, and help us understand the morality of the time.

In conclusion, while overall we don't get access to the offenders' viewpoint this book is rich with details of cases which would otherwise fade into obscurity. While it would benefit more from the accounts of the women themselves, it includes a great deal that is missing in criminology textbooks.

MURIEL DUCKWORTH: A VERY ACTIVE PACIFIST

Marion Douglas Kerans. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996.

BY JANET FREEMAN

Gloria Steinem once wrote about the lack of positive public role models for western women to look to as they consider their senior years. Canadian women need look no further than *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active*

Pacifist which chronicles the impressive and rich life of a woman who felt she was "just ordinary." At the end of this biography, in 1995, Muriel is 87 years old, and continues to organize and speak, and inspire all who come in contact with her.

The story of Muriel's life is a fascinating account of the making of a "subversive leader" of the Canadian peace movement. She learned to be positive and determined from her mother, who was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement. During her formal schooling, Muriel joined the Student Christian Movement at McGill University and was exposed to socialist teachings and Quaker philosophy. The small group discussions encouraged careful listening to different points of view, and being open to debate. At the New York Union Theological College in the early 1930s, she learned about the links between communism and Christianity.

Muriel was fortunate to find a life partner who shared her political beliefs, and supported her involvement in many social justice groups. Together they joined the League for Social Reconstruction, a forerunner of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation which later became the New Democratic Party. In the 1960s they both left the United Church, disillusioned by the church's stand on nuclear disarmament, and joined the Quaker faith. The marriage portrayed here is also a positive role model, with both partners balancing and supporting each other's skills and enthusiasms.

Through Muriel's many affiliations, the book shows the development and deepening of one person's social awareness, as well as the many opportunities to learn and share political skills. Once her three children had started school, Muriel progressed from volunteer work with the Home and School Association, to paid employment in adult education. She preferred sitting in a circle with a group and coming to con-

sensus, rather than following the hierarchical Robert's Rules of Order. In 1960, she was a founding member of the national women's peace organization, the Voice of Women (VOW). At VOW she brought together her beliefs in feminism and pacifism, and demonstrated her remarkable skills in organizing and leadership.

A central message of feminism is that true social change requires a change in the tools used to effect change. Muriel's story is exemplary because she demonstrates feminist leadership at its best: rather than adopting a charismatic or dramatic style, she "combined skills of attention to detail, patience and good humour. She had a talent for consensus which conveyed to people her genuine belief in their ability to reach a common understanding and to decide on the best course of action."

Her style was one of quiet persuasion and encouraging others' voices. Muriel was president of VOW from 1967 to 1971, at the height of anti-Vietnam war movement. Ever tireless, she moved on to become a chairperson of a citizen's coalition in Halifax/Dartmouth, then a federal NDP candidate, then a founding member and president of CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women), then an international ambassador for peace. In spite of her criticisms of government policies, she eventually received a number of public honours, and seven honorary doctorates.

As the history of a political activist, the book is useful in tracking the development of social movements in Canada. Particularly for those who came of age in the '60s, it is useful to learn about an anti-war movement that pre-dated Vietnam.

Throughout the book are testimonies to Muriel from many of the women (and a few men) who worked with her in so many different organizations. The picture that emerges is one of a woman who is much loved and respected, but also of a woman who represents the best of what it means to be politically active and

committed to social justice for an entire lifetime.

FETTERED FOR LIFE OR LORD AND MASTER: A STORY OF TODAY

Lillie Devereux Blake. New York: Feminist Press, 1996.

BY VERONICA ABBASS

Fettered For Life, a lost novel by nineteenth-century American writer Lillie Devereux Blake, was recovered and published by the Feminist Press to make the novel "accessible to the public and to academic discussion." This edition of *Fettered For Life* contains the original 1874 text of the novel and a comprehensive afterword by Grace Farrell, which attempts to explain why the novel deserves to be recovered. It is the afterword that will be of interest to the academy.

Unfortunately, *Fettered For Life* is not a great novel; it is, at times, not even a good novel. As the title suggests, the focus of *Fettered For Life* is marriage. Numerous minor characters appear in *Fettered For Life* to support Blake's desire to present a realistic portrayal of marriage in a patriarchal society as physically and mentally dangerous to women. The novel provides many horrific examples of marriages where a woman is fettered for life to a husband who abuses her. However, Blake sacrifices too many of her female characters to prove her point, while, at the same time, she works hard to maintain the reader's interest in the main plot: the vicissitudes of Laura Stanley's romantic relationship with Guy Bradford.

Laura Stanley, the novel's heroine, has the potential to be one of literature's great feminist heroines. Laura, who admits that she "always had 'ideas'" that run contrary to the nineteenth-century attitude toward women, has difficulty translating her