

## Women and the Media in Developed Countries

In the developed countries of America and Europe, women's involvement in the Media constitute a wide topic. Information about it is widely disseminated within Western countries and abroad; in this capacity it becomes accessible to women of developing countries.

In this article, I shall deal with four aspects of this involvement which seem to be of particular interest and significance: 1st, Research work; 2nd, Rehabilitation of women's achievements in fields which have been neglected by men historians; 3rd, Women's theater as a means of publicity; 4th, Women's international magazines.

1) Research work on women is particularly active in the United States. The **Women's Studies Quarterly**, published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, Nos.3 & 4, 1986, presents detailed information about the National Council of Research on women as a "Consortium of centers and organizations which provide institutional resources for feminist research, policy, analysis and educational programs through its 50 member centers established in U.S. universities." "It links over 2000 women and men scholars and practitioners." "The Council works also to strengthen ties with centers of scholarship abroad and to join with national and international groups in pursuit of humanistic goals, free from biases of race, class and gender." The publication which is in our possession gives the names and the addresses of the 50 or more research centers, followed by detailed information about the function, scope and activities of each, for example, in presenting the South Institute for Research on Women, (SIROW), University of Arizona, it gives the address, the name of the director and that of the executive director, defines the institute as "a research and resource center serving scholars primarily in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah... promotes collaborative, interdisciplinary research focused on South Western problems or populations... identifies and disseminates research on women in the southwest, maintains a clearing house detailing the work of over 500 scholars... publishes a newsletter that features columns on funding and deadlines for grants, current research, conferences, publications, awards and fellowships, etc."

Besides information about the research centers, which covers 16 large pages, the double number in question devotes five pages for "Opportunities for Research and Study", including lists of fellowships, affiliated scholar programs, grants and internships sponsored by member centers of the National Council for Research on Women.

2) Rehabilitating women's achievements in neglected

fields. *Signs*, the journal of women in culture and society, published in Vol.12, No.3, Spring 1987, a long article about the recent development of women's history and the resurgence of intellectual history. It is a review essay by Elizabeth Fox - Genovese, entitled "Culture and Consciousness in the Intellectual History of European Women" pp.529-547 of the number.

Most significant in the field of women's intellectual history has been the recent publication of the translation into English of Christine de Pisan's "The Book of the City of Ladies" and of Caroline Bynum's "Jesus as Mother." Also, Marina Warner's book on Jean of Arc, seen in a new perspective and "The Essays of Joan Kelly", reprinted from Joan Kelly, *Early Feminist Theory and the "Querelle des Femmes" 1400-1789*. While Joan Kelly in her feminist theory claims for modern feminist thought "a rich, coherent and continuous tradition that began 400 years before the French Revolution, Bynum claims that a special tradition of female mystical authorization provided women with an alternative to clerical power in a period characterized by both greater ecclesiastical institutionalization and a growing sense of man's likeness to God."

In the field of music, women succeeded and still succeed as singers and performers; the same is true of their role in theater and drama. Women have also produced a number of composers who were ignored by men historians, until the appearance of a book by Elizabeth Wood, (*Sings Vol. 13, No.2, Winter 1988*), entitled: "Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150-1950," ed. by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana University of Illinois Press, (1986).

We still need a book on women in the field of painting and other graphic arts, a topic which has been neglected by historians for patriarchal or misogynic reasons, the same which made them overlook women's output in many other fields.

3) Women's Theater as a means of publicity. In the same magazine (*Signs*, Vol.12, No.3, Spring 1987, pp.548-567), an article by Jane Mass introduces a new development in feminist activity under the title: "Women's Theater in France."

Started in 1970 by a group of women, headed by Catherine de Seynes, this theater organized a company mainly formed of women, which explored women's lives in several productions: *Femme, la Ballade de Maman Jones, Couples*. Another group called "La Carmagnole", was created in Canada, England and the States, dramatizing the oppression of women and the ridicule of feminist ideas (1975).

Two major productions brought "Theatre au Feminin" to the attention of critics and public in 1978. First, the production of "La Soeur de Shakespeare" (Shakespeare's sister) and Michele Foucher's spectacle, "La Table" (The Table). The first work takes its title from a passage in Virginia Wolf's "A Room of One's Owns", in which the author theorizes that, if Shakespeare had a talented sister, she would never have been an author. The text was improvised by a group of women and men who presented the familiar tyrannies still suffered by women in a world indifferent to their aspirations and desires and the enormous courage needed to break the wife-mother-servant-goddess created by patriarchal society. "The Table" was staged by Theatre Gerard Philippe de Saint Denis. It toured all over France in 1979. It speaks of traditions associated with eating and the table, traditions and practices that define woman's place in society as well as female culture.

The so-called "La Teatre de la Carriera" formed in 1978, dramatized women's revolt against "the conventional virgin-mother-whore roles assigned to women in traditional theater." "Saison de femme" depicts six stages in the life of a typical Occitan (from Southern France) girl named Aurette. The authors do not blame men alone for turning Aurette into an unhappy housewife, they also blame the mother and grandmother who incubated in the girl's mind notions of woman's inferiority. Some plays were drawn from mythology, reinterpreting mythic figures like Helena, Jocasta, Penelope, or legendary ones like Tristan and Iseult, Indian Sakundeva. The story of Joan of Arc was dramatized from a feminist point of view; also the lives of women writers and artists, of heroines like Camille Claudel, an artistic genius who was persecuted by her family and ended her life in a psychiatric hospital.

The lives of Arab women were dramatized through the novel of Nawal Saadawi, the well known Egyptian feminist, "Firdaous, une voix en enfer" (Firdaous a Voice in Hell), follows the painful life of Firdaous from genital excision, through an arranged marriage with a brutal old man, to prostitution.

4) Women's International Magazines. The best known of these magazines are the following:

1- WIN, Women's International Network News, published in U.S.A., "An open participatory quarterly by, for and about women, reports on women's rights around the Globe, 187 Grant St. Lexington, Mass. U.S.A.

2- **ISIS International**, published in Italy and Chile. A woman's information and communication service, promoting communication channels among women all over the world, publishing:

a) **ISIS International book series**, providing a channel for women to contact each other and build up networks; 2 books each year, produced jointly with one or more women's groups in the Third World.

b) **Women in Action**, produced by the staff of ISIS International, 4 times a year, in Rome (English edition) and in Santiago (Spanish edition). It "gives news and information about groups, conferences, events and resources — What is happening in the women's movement World Wide."

3- **On the Issues** "a feminist, humanist publication dedicated to promoting political action through awareness and education, working toward a global political consciousness, fostering a spirit of collective responsibility for positive social change, eradicating racism, sexism, speciesism, and supporting the struggle of historically disenfranchised groups powerless to protect and defend themselves." Published in Forest Hills, New York.

4- **Outwrite**, Women's Newspaper. Published by Feminist Newspaper Ltd. Printed by East End Offset Ltd. London. Deals with women's problems, demands and needs all over the world. "A montly newspaper which campaigns against women's oppression in all its forms, covers news and features on women's struggles and achievements internationally."