

This use of local place names is important. For a moment, in this play, Ile-à-la-Crosse is its own center. It is not marginal. For a moment its place names--and not just the names but the specific features of each place (the fact that there are ditches at the forks!)--are important, are the stuff of history, of mythology. It represents the struggle of the margin to reinscribe itself, reinsert its specificity, against the totalizing force of the center.

One of the most interesting features of these plays is their use of Native language. In the best of these plays we can hear the grain of a collective Native voice that speaks its experience. "Gabrielle" marks a significant advance in this regard. Much of the play is written in Cree (translations are provided in the published text). As important are those passages that bring phrases, expressions, small bits of the Native subversions of English to us: as in the use of that particular all encompassing "Aha!" that bring northern Manitoba back to me. Much of the written text of these plays is stilted and does not convey the sense, but where it does--and "Gabrielle" is a particularly good example--we are afforded a rare pleasure not to be taken lightly.

The other way these plays express a specific Native voice is through their use of Native culture, particularly music. Both "Teach Me the Ways..." and "The Land Called Morning" end with traditional drumming. "Gabrielle" ends with a song, and unlike "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" it is one which serves to affirm the play's political message. "Teach Me the Ways..." is a particularly interesting example. The first conflict between Native and non-Native culture in this play is expressed musically when Sam plays a traditional drum song for Matt:

*The drum is a circle
 The circle is life
 Life begins, life ends,
 Then it begins again
 Like the drum
 It begins again.*

*The drum is the heartbeat
 Heartbeat of our Nations
 The drum is ancient
 The drum is the heartbeat
 The heartbeat is living
 And it's me and it's you...*

This is as good an articulation of the "meaning" of the drum song/dance as one could find. The play uses music, dance, legends and clothes to convey Native culture. Along with the bits of Native language these form a whole that we can call the Native voice. Native theatre, then, can be seen as the dramatic expression of Native voice.

For this reason the play "The Land Called Morning" needs to be called into question. Unlike the other plays in the volume and other Native plays it does not deal with the specifically Native experience. The characters in the play are strongly drawn, probably more so than those in "Gabrielle" and "Teach Me the Ways..." However, it makes little use of Cree culture: the most significant cultural referent in the play is Emily Dickenson, whose poems are read by Anne. A more serious problem is the fact that "success" in the play's terms is equated with Robin's boxing career and trip to the Korean Olympics while failure is associated with staying in Montreal Lake. Success is therefore tied to escape and a non-Native career and lifestyle. While as a message of hope and despair the play makes a powerful statement and one that is important to Native people (as it is to all of us), the characters could easily be non-Natives, the setting any small, isolated community. That may be the intent, to illustrate to Natives and to non-Natives how their lives are not so different as they might assume. In a climate where assimilation is one of the profoundest forces Native people struggle against, such an approach is misguided.

That a Native theatre is emerging/reviving with its own characteristics is a cultural development of profound significance for Canada. The identity and integrity of the country as a whole rests in large part upon the place of Native people and Native culture in it; rest, that is, on the place of the most marginalized, disadvantaged and discriminated against amongst us. The plays in *The Land Called Morning* are not without their weaknesses but inasmuch as they bring the Native voice to us they should not be ignored. The scream of Rita Joe will turn to the cry of Jessica, of Gabrielle, of Matt: "The drum is a circle/the circle is life..."

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The Mother Machine
 by Gena Corea
 Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside,
 1985.

If Freud had been a woman, chances are the words "creation envy" would have replaced "penis envy" in the annals of psychoanalysis. Since the earliest known times men have attempted to compensate for their inability to give birth in some weird and wonderful ways. From ancient times right into the twentieth century, men on almost all continents have practiced *couvade* (from the French word to hatch) when their women gave birth. The custom involved the father simulating symptoms of labour and childbirth. In its extreme forms, the mother returned to her work as soon as possible after giving birth--often the same day, and waited on the father, who remained in bed. In Medieval times, alchemists tried to create life independent of women by combining such ingredients such as boy's urine, blood and sperm. And early scientists and philosophers believed that the sperm itself contained a tiny man, or homunculus, and that the woman's womb was merely a vessel in which that life grew.

But alas, these ideas proved to be merely wishful thinking. Men learned that they contribute 23 chromosomes to the creation of life and little else. Faced with this discovery men might have despaired, but modern science came to the rescue, and offered them new hope for fulfilling their creation envy. First came medicine and the male takeover of childbirth, and more recently came the new reproductive technologies. Through procedures like artificial insemination, In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), and embryo transfer, male technicians have been able to usurp women's procreative powers more fully than ever before. And future breakthroughs which are now in the research stages, such as artificial wombs, cloning, and yes--even male pregnancy, promise to extend this control still further.

In her hard-hitting book, *The Mother Machine*, Gena Corea documents the awesome consequences for women of this takeover. She explodes the myth, widely promulgated by the mass media, that the technologies offer new hope for the infertile. While this myth is extremely seductive for couples who have suffered years of infertility, Corea argues that for the majority of women, the technologies actually bring new despair. At the best IVF clinics, only three out of ten women become pregnant, and of those, close to one third miscarry. Commercial embryo transfer clinics have recently opened in the United States on the basis of only two experimental successes. Nevertheless, the low success rates of these procedures are played down, and the hope is played up.

Corea argues that before the reproductive technologies, a woman could at some point come to terms with her infertility and go on with her life. Now, there's no easy way off the medical treadmill. As long as the technology is there, the infertile woman can tell herself, "Just one more time." Private clinics, which have no incentive to limit the number of times a woman goes through the procedure, sometimes encourage this attitude. In the waiting room of one IVF clinic in Norfolk, Virginia, is a picture of a soaring bird with the message "you never fail until you stop trying."

In my own research, while I was producing a radio documentary for CBC's *Ideas*, I spoke to a number of infertile women who admitted to wishing that the programs didn't exist. One woman in her fourth attempt at IVF told me of the emotional ups and downs women suffer, and how they feel they're on a roller coaster of heightened expectations and dashed hopes. Hopes are raised when a woman is accepted into the program, dashed when the doctor can't get an egg. Raised again when he gets an egg, dashed when it doesn't fertilize or cleave properly. Raised again when he gets an embryo and transplants it into her uterus, dashed when it doesn't implant or she miscarries.

In the process, women are reduced to passive receptacles as doctors manipulate their reproductive cycles through a stunning array of drugs, hormones, blood tests, ultra sound readings and surgical procedures. In fact, women are made so passive through the process that it is extraordinarily difficult to find women in the programs who were willing to speak publicly about their experiences. They are told by their nurses and doctors not to talk to the media, and by and large, they comply. They're dependent on the good will of their doctors to make them pregnant, and they fear that expressing any kind of problem will jeopardize their chances.

Of course, for the women who do give birth, the reproductive technologies are indeed a boon. But Corea argues that the priorities of a medical system that focusses on heroic medical treatments rather than the prevention of infertility are seriously skewed.

The incidence of infertility has more than doubled in North America in the last twenty years. Yet the causes of infertility have never been thoroughly investigated. Researchers know that the IUD, certain drugs and venereal disease have all contributed to the rising rates of infertility in women. They also suspect that environmental and workplace hazards have contributed to infertility in both sexes, but to date, no good epidemiological studies have been done to verify this, and little action has been taken to remedy the situation.

To Corea, this is no surprise. She makes clear the medicine is neither neutral nor benign, but reflects the patriarchal culture that produces it. As a consequence, she believes that reproductive technology increases already strong tendencies in medicine to objectify and dominate women. "The technology is male generated," she writes, "and buttresses male power over women."

Moreover, she argues that in the interests of patriarchy, the technology reduces women to matter. "Just as the patriarchal state finds it acceptable to market parts of a woman's body (breasts, vagina, buttocks) for sexual purposes in prostitution and the larger sex industry, so it will soon find it reasonable to market other parts of women (womb, ovaries, and eggs) for reproductive purposes." Already, the reproductive industry is offering wombs for rent, and fresh and frozen embryos for sale.

Corea's words are strong and uncompromising, and her stance has raised the backs of her critics. Advocates of the new technologies argue that they do bring women new options and choice, but for Corea, choice is invalidated in a society where serious differences in power and authority exist between the sexes.

Besides, those who put their trust in reproductive technology seem to be suffering from a form of amnesia. The new reproductive technologies are an extension of the same medical system that brought women DES, the pill, IUDs, unnecessary hysterectomies and cesarian sections. In the light of this history, there is no reason to believe that reproductive technology is any more benign or woman-centered than earlier technologies.

The Mother Machine is a brave and bold book--well written and well researched. It is especially important at a time when reproductive technology and its commercial exploitation are proceeding more rapidly than our moral, legal and ethical frameworks for dealing with it. If there is a weakness in *The Mother Machine*, it is in its failure to stand back from the issue of women and technology, and examine the nature of science itself. The attempts to reduce woman to her component parts, and to control her reproductive system are a natural outgrowth of a reductionist science which attempts to control and dominate all of nature. At some point we have to ask whether this sort of reductionism doesn't reduce the value of life itself--for both women and men.

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Deep Ecology

by Bill Devall and George Sessions
Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith Inc.,
1985.

The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment

by Neil Evernden
Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 1985.

Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching

by Dave Foreman
Tucson: Earth First! Books, 1985.

Deep Ecology

Edited by Michael Tobias.
San Diego: Avant Books, 1985.

I know it's wrong, but I tend to judge a book by its cover, or at least by the blurbs. I read the author's bio first, to see what they say about themselves, and then the acknowledgements, to see who their friends are. I confess, therefore, to a certain bias, having read that Dave Foreman is a "river runner, backpacker, birdwatcher and bowhunter". Michael Tobias, "writer/mountaineer/filmmaker" with credits like *After Eden* and *History, Ecology & Conscience*, and that Messrs Devall and Sessions are avid backpackers, rock climbers and students of eastern and aboriginal philosophies.

There is of course nothing wrong in these laudable undertakings. Environmentalism is everything you'd expect from a lively political movement: earnest, unkempt and evangelical, pretentious and portentous, in turn silly, sentimental and serious. But it's been around for quite a while. It is time for deeper consideration of the issues. Another set of readings on the environment, another plea to save this or that, another attack on the evils of industrialism just won't do. We've heard it all before and truth to tell it's becoming a bore.

Neil Evernden is the odd one out in this crowd and not simply because he's a quiet Canadian. He presents a clear, cogent line of reasoning. His is not an easy book, but the cumulative effect is dramatic and immediate. After reading *The Natural Alien*, you understand as well as appreciate the contradiction in wanting to preserve nature while shooting at it with arrows and lenses, or touting wilderness while tromping all over it. This book is a must for any serious student of environmental issues.