

**University of Alberta**

*Branching Out, 1973-1980:*  
Canadian Second-Wave Feminism, Periodical Publishing and Cultural Politics

by

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For the women of *Branching Out*

## Abstract

“*Branching Out, 1973-1980: Canadian Second-Wave Feminism, Periodical Publishing and Cultural Politics*” considers the intersection of culture and politics in the first national feminist magazine published in Canada, *Branching Out: Canadian Magazine for Women*. Published in Edmonton from 1973 to 1980, *Branching Out* was a professional quality magazine produced by volunteers with a mandate to publish literature, art and feminist analysis by Canadian women. This dissertation locates *Branching Out* within the field of Canadian feminism and establishes the political role of alternative cultural institutions such as *Branching Out*.

The first scholarly study of *Branching Out*, this project moves from a close focus on the magazine’s production to an analysis of the political role of cultural institutions to a broader discussion of *Branching Out*’s location within the landscape of Canadian second-wave feminism. Chapter one focuses on *Branching Out*’s staff and organizational structure. Relying on data collected during interviews with *Branching Out* staff members, this chapter outlines the contributions of Susan McMaster and Sharon Batt, the magazine’s founding and long-time editors respectively, and analyzes the challenges that *Branching Out* faced as a feminist magazine operating in a male-dominated, commercially driven publishing industry. Chapter two demonstrates how *Branching Out* challenged the distinction between art and politics and exemplified the political nature of cultural production. Chapter three discusses various strains of Canadian feminism—radical, reform, socialist, cultural—and defines *Branching Out* as an example of cultural feminism, recuperating this term from its derogatory use by radical feminists in order to demonstrate how *Branching Out* disrupts rigid distinctions between art and politics.

This project has four central aims: one, to recuperate the history of a major, western Canadian, second-wave feminist magazine; two, to acknowledge the contributions of the women who worked on this magazine; three, to reinforce understandings of the political nature of cultural production; and four, to build on existing histories of Canadian second-wave feminism. My purpose throughout this study is to understand the contributions that *Branching Out's* unique combination of feminist analysis and cultural production made to Canadian second-wave feminism.

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To my family, for being proud of me. To my brother, Spencer Holowachuk, for your constant support and encouragement and, most of all, for always making me laugh. To my father, Lorne Holowachuk, for instilling in me the value of determination and for teaching by example that playing hard is just as important as working hard. To my mother, Lynn Davies, for always having your nose in a book and encouraging me to do the same and for catching me when I stumble. To my stepfather, Eric Woodhouse, for supporting me and celebrating with me from the moment you joined our family. And to Harvey Quamen, for everything.

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## Preface

I was first introduced to *Branching Out: Canadian Magazine for Women* in 2007 during Jo-Ann Wallace's graduate seminar on the literature of second-wave feminism.<sup>1</sup> At the time, I was a first-year PhD student and my proposed dissertation research was on three California second-wave feminist presses. As the seminar progressed and we compared early second-wave feminist texts from the American, British and Canadian women's movements, I began to question why I had chosen to study American feminist publishing. During this seminar, I realized how little information is available on Canadian second-wave feminism and began to wonder if I should apply my interest in feminist publishing to a more local object of study. The week that we discussed *Ms.* magazine, Dr. Wallace also brought in copies of *Branching Out*—a national feminist magazine published in Edmonton from 1973 to 1980—to provide a Canadian counterpoint to *Ms.* magazine. Once I learned that there was such a substantial feminist publishing venture in Edmonton in the 1970s and that it had fallen out of the historical record, I was hooked. I took my interest in feminist publishing and applied it to a Canadian feminist publication that was produced in the city where I was beginning my research career.

At first I was drawn to the diversity of the material between *Branching Out's* covers. *Branching Out* published fiction and poetry alongside political and human interest features, visual art, legal advice, Canadian women's history, and analyses of the Canadian women's movement. But it was not only this generic variety that drew me to the magazine, I was also attracted to the ways in which *Branching Out*

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<sup>1</sup> This seminar was offered by the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta in the Winter 2007 semester as English 567: Literary History, The Literature of Second-Wave Feminism.

challenged received wisdom about second-wave feminism. One of the central themes that we explored during Dr. Wallace's graduate seminar was how the primary texts of early second-wave feminism challenge the common perception that second-wave feminists were inattentive to difference. My initial interest in *Branching Out* was shaped by this challenge. When I read *Branching Out*, I was struck by the ways in which the magazine both reinforced and called into question the concept of sisterhood. Primarily associated with radical feminist groups, the assertion that "sisterhood is powerful" was a central tenet of second-wave feminism. This foundational claim—which provided the title for Robin Morgan's influential anthology of American feminist writings—is based on the belief that women are discriminated against as a sex-class and need to organize separately from men in order to achieve liberation. That "sisterhood is powerful" was central to radical feminist organizing in both Canada and the United States (although, as I will argue in chapter three, radical feminism, i.e. activism directed towards the root causes of women's oppression, functioned differently in the Canadian and American contexts). In our graduate seminar, we explored how this concept of sisterhood was simultaneously celebrated and critiqued by second-wave feminists.

During the seminar, I gave a presentation on *Branching Out* in which I argued that *Branching Out* readers, producers and contributors challenged the notion that women were a monolithic group. In particular, I cited a 1974 letter to the editor that insists "'Sisterhood' died a long time ago.... There are some issues (birth control, abortion, rape) which are common to all women but the cleavage along class lines has pretty well destroyed the sisterhood notion" (Potrebenko 3). I also referred to letters that requested more material on First Nations women, the exploitation of

immigrant workers, women in prison, women living in rural areas, and sexual orientation. I concluded the presentation by briefly outlining how *Branching Out* covered these topics during its seven-year history. As my first presentation on *Branching Out* indicated, I was initially preoccupied with the magazine as a challenge to the assumption that second-wave feminists were inattentive to difference.

In “Attentive to Difference: *Ms.* Magazine, Coalition Building, and Sisterhood,” Amy Erdman Farrell’s contribution to Stephanie Gilmore’s 2008 anthology *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, Farrell describes her surprise when she first encountered the third-wave feminist critiques of second-wave feminism as “inattentive to difference,” blind to “the plurality of women’s experience,” and unwilling to deal with contradictions (49). As a feminist who came of age during the third-wave, I am all too familiar with these critiques of second-wave feminism; these critiques shaped my early understanding of second-wave feminism.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Farrell, who had experience working with *Ms.* magazine prior to encountering these third-wave critiques of second-wave feminism, I had to revise my understanding of second-wave feminism when I encountered the movement’s primary materials.

Revising understandings of second-wave feminist history is the motivation for *Feminist Coalitions*. The anthology stresses that differences were not “glossed over,” but rather “grappled with” by many second-wave feminists (Kaminski 289).

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, third-wave feminism is itself an extremely diverse movement that is by no means uniformly critical of second-wave feminism. Many well-established critiques of the wave metaphor challenge this metaphor on the basis that it creates divisions between generations of feminists that encourage conflict rather than collaboration. As is evident in Seal Press’s 2006 collection *We Don’t Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists*, edited by Melody Berger, many feminists who came of age after the so-called second-wave are well aware that creating generational divides limits our ability to understand the complexity of feminist organizing in each historical moment and to work together across generations to achieve our feminist goals.

As Farrell insists, the version of feminist history that claims second-wave feminism was “inattentive to differences and complexities” is “simply inaccurate” and that “underlying this version of second-wave feminist history...is an implicit assumption that all second-wave feminist activists and organizations would have been ‘successful’ if only they had acknowledged differences, hybrid identities, and contradictory impulses” (49). Farrell challenges this assumption, arguing that the fact that second-wave feminists “were only sometimes successful—and often failed—speaks not to their indifference but rather to the difficulty of creating and sustaining feminist, progressive movements” (50). My research on *Branching Out*, especially interviews with former staff members, supports Farrell’s argument. As a member of the “new generation of researchers too young to have experienced the movement first hand” (Rees 177), when I began researching second-wave feminism and realized that there was a disconnect between my assumptions about second-wave feminism and the primary material that I was reading, I felt compelled to challenge this limited version of feminist history.

Jo-Ann Wallace and I address the intergenerational dynamics between feminists in detail in “Waves, Tangles, Archaeologies, and Loops: Historicizing the Second Wave of the Women’s Movement,” our contribution to the 2011 anthology *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism and the Liberal Arts*. In this chapter, “we focus on issues related to polemical and theoretical writing to argue for a feminist historicism capable of attending to the generative tangle of feminist engagements in time” (221). We argue that “alternate modes of historicizing require different metaphors” and explore three metaphors—archeology (from Foucault), the

“generative tangle” (from Kathryn Flannery)<sup>3</sup> and the feedback loop (from N. Katherine Hayles)—which “we have found useful in thinking about, teaching and researching mid-twentieth-century feminism” (227). This interest in metaphor influenced my analysis of *Branching Out* and is most prominent in this study’s concluding chapter, which characterizes *Branching Out* as an open door.

As part of our larger argument for a feminist historicism capable of attending to the complexity of second-wave feminism’s historical moment, we observe,

When the second wave is characterized as unaware of or not concerned with issues of race, class, and sexuality, and primarily interested in single issues and liberal values, such as equal opportunity in the workplace, it is easily dismissed as passé by both students and researchers. However, this characterization fails to acknowledge its connection to critiques of liberal feminism that were developed by radical and socialist feminists during the second-wave; consequently, while not unfounded, this characterization of the second wave exclusively by its deficiencies offers a limited vision of what was an extremely diverse movement. (221)

In keeping with this observation, my early research on *Branching Out* focused on how the magazine supplemented this limited vision of second-wave feminism. However, over the years, my interest in how *Branching Out* contributed to more diverse understandings of second-wave feminism evolved to include an interest in the magazine’s regional identity, *Branching Out*’s location between mainstream women’s magazines and radical feminist periodicals, and the field of periodical studies. Just as the context in which I first learned about the magazine, i.e. a graduate seminar on the

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<sup>3</sup> See the introduction for a discussion of Flannery’s “generative tangle” metaphor in relation to feminist periodicals.

literature of second-wave feminism, shaped my initial interest in *Branching Out*, my next major research context led me to explore these three themes.

Between 2008 and 2010, I made three trips to the Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA) located at University of Ottawa's Archives and Special Collections.<sup>4</sup> The most influential materials that I consulted at the CWMA were other English Canadian second-wave feminist periodicals. These periodicals enabled me to contextualize *Branching Out* within the larger field of English Canadian feminist periodical publishing. The CWMA periodical collection, which contains over 900 titles published in Canada since the late-1960s, is mostly comprised of local feminist newsletters. These newsletters are mimeographed and stapled and provided organizing information and feminist analysis to local women's groups. There are also several larger feminist newspapers, such as *Broadside*, *Kinesis*, and *Calgary Women's Newspaper*, which functioned as feminist news sources. As I read through these newsletter and newspapers, I was often reminded of Alice Echols' assertion that the written record of second-wave feminism's "first years is full of elisions, in large part because feminist newspapers did not begin publishing until the early 1970s" (20). While Echols is referring specifically to the history of American radical feminism in her 1989 study, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*, the importance of periodicals for writing feminist history was a refrain that drove much

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<sup>4</sup> During each trip, I split my time between long-time *Branching Out* editor Sharon Batt's 2006 donation and the archives' extensive collection of feminist periodicals. Because Sharon Batt's donation is still uncatalogued, the usefulness of this donation for my research was limited. While the archivist Lucie Desjardin, archival technician Véronique Paris, and clerk Linda Arsenault, all very generously took hours out of their busy schedules to prepare each file that I requested from Batt's donation so that I could have access to this uncatalogued material, because there was no filing system in place and at times the labels on the files bore little resemblance to their contents, it was difficult to locate specific information in this uncatalogued collection. As a result, for the purpose of this study, I have chosen to focus on the magazine's contents and the interviews that I conducted rather than detailed analysis of archival documents. Despite the collection's organizational challenges, I did gather a variety of materials from the Batt donation that I hope to use in future *Branching Out* research projects.

of my research at the CWMA. I observed the ways in which feminist newsletters, newspapers and magazines were records of developments within the Canadian women's movement across time. Taken in isolation, a single issue of a feminist newspaper can be revealing, but when I looked at how periodicals addressed particular topics across time I learned much more about the dynamics present in the Canadian women's movement.

As a result of working with the CWMA periodicals collection, I began to examine *Branching Out's* physical location in Edmonton and conceptual location between mainstream women's magazines and radical feminist periodicals. Unlike the newsletters and newspapers in the collection, *Branching Out* had a high production value. Its glossy covers and high quality photography gave *Branching Out* newsstand appeal unlike any other 1970s feminist periodical that I encountered in the archive. This newsstand appeal was part of *Branching Out's* mandate to bring feminist content to a more mainstream audience than could identify with radical feminist organizing. Another way in which *Branching Out* appealed to a wider audience than other Canadian second-wave feminist periodicals published in the 1970s was by positioning itself as a national feminist magazine. *Branching Out* was part of the movement in Canadian publishing to challenge "the central Canada stranglehold on literary culture" (Butling 226). *Branching Out* did not let its location in Edmonton, outside Canada's publishing centres, prevent it from appealing to a national audience. Instead, as one *Branching Out* contributing editor explained in an interview, *Branching Out* was proof that "the western regions not only had important things to say but they had things to say that were of national significance" (Melnyk).

After turning my attention to the periodical form and *Branching Out*'s physical and conceptual locations, I conducted a series of interviews to gather additional information about *Branching Out*'s story. These interviews represent the third context that had a significant influence on my research. Between February 2010 and June 2011, I conducted sixteen interviews: fourteen interviews with *Branching Out* staff members and two interviews with *Branching Out* contributors. I came into these interviews with a series of questions that were influenced by my coursework (and subsequent research on second-wave feminism) and my archival research at the CWMA. However, my focus shifted as a result of the responses I received from participants. My interviews were semistructured. While I had prepared questions, I was not attached to this script and, during the interviews, I encouraged participants to share any details of their experiences with *Branching Out* that came to mind.<sup>5</sup> In response to participants' memories of *Branching Out*, I amended my study to include an analysis of the political nature of cultural production. Participants often downplayed *Branching Out*'s political significance and described the magazine as primarily a cultural intervention—insisting that *Branching Out*'s most significant characteristic was providing publishing and exhibition opportunities for Canadian women writers and visual artists at a time when few existed. Because I was introduced to *Branching Out* in the context of a graduate seminar on the literature of a political movement, I was initially surprised when participants downplayed *Branching Out*'s political significance. This disconnect between my initial introduction to the magazine and how participants remembered the magazine caused me to explore the radical potential of alternative cultural institutions like *Branching Out*.

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<sup>5</sup> See the concluding chapter for a discussion of memory as a “selective operation” (Butling 225).

I outline these three research contexts—Jo-Ann Wallace’s graduate seminar, archival research at the CWMA, and interviews with *Branching Out* participants—as a means of critical self-examination. In her 1998 book-length study of *Ms.* magazine, *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism*, Farrell explains that “one of the enduring legacies of the feminist movement is the insistence that critical self-examination is crucial to any scholarly undertaking” (13). In keeping with this legacy, Farrell explains her relationship to *Ms.* magazine. I reference this relationship in detail here because Farrell’s relationship to *Ms.* has several revealing parallels to as well as differences from my own relationship to *Branching Out*. Farrell was not “an avid reader of *Ms.* magazine” during the 1970s and 1980s (13). She “first closely read *Ms.* in graduate school, finding it on the tables outside the Feminist Studies office” (13). Farrell explains that she considered herself familiar with the magazine, that it was “simply part of the cultural landscape in which [she] grew up” (13). Unlike my first encounter with *Branching Out*, *Ms.* was already part of Farrell’s cultural landscape when she encountered the magazine in graduate school. She describes how this familiarity resulted in her “earliest impressions of the magazine—as a transparent example of ‘liberal feminism,’ as a magazine that had undergone a jeremiad of sorts, from its early ‘radical’ origins to its corrupt commercial status in the late 1980s” (13). Similar to my own experience encountering primary material from the women’s movement, Farrell recalls, “Quickly, however, those early, false impressions gave way to a more complex understanding as [she] read issue after issue of the magazine” (13). This dichotomy that Farrell sets up between “false” and “more complex” impressions provides me with a framework to examine my early experiences reading *Branching Out*. Initially, I was interested in using *Branching Out* as a way to correct

erroneous assumptions about second-wave feminism; I set up a dichotomy between true and false impressions. However, I quickly realized that this simplistic treatment of *Branching Out* did not do justice to the magazine's complex history and my research grew to address additional themes, including periodicity, the radical potential of alternative cultural institutions, nationalism, the relationship between the amateur and the professional, and the politics of volunteer labour.

Both Farrell's study of *Ms.* and my study of *Branching Out* are part of a growing body of writing about second-wave feminism by members of subsequent generations. However, my experience writing non-participant history (a distinction that, of course, is only relevant when historical actors are still alive to write their own histories) differs from Farrell's because I was familiar with critiques of second-wave feminism as inattentive to difference before I encountered primary material from this period. In contrast, while Farrell revised her initial perception of *Ms.* "as a transparent example of 'liberal feminism,'" her reaction to the magazine was not determined by a blanket critique of second-wave feminism. Instead, she saw *Ms.* as having moved away from its radical origins to a "corrupt commercial status." I note these differences because they illustrate that just as second-wave feminists are not a monolithic group, neither are subsequent generations of scholars who write about this movement. Even though we were not involved in the movement first hand, we still have a variety of complex influences on our engagement with second-wave feminism. Critical self-examination enables us to attend to these differences.

In 2010, Jeska Rees published an article on the challenges of writing about historical events when participants are still alive and able to contest your representation of those events. She notes that much second-wave feminist history

has been written “from the perspective of women who were active” within the women’s movement (177).<sup>6</sup> I struggled with this fact while I was researching and writing about *Branching Out*, but was reassured by the support that I received from the women whom I interviewed. These women were generous with their time and their responses to my questions. Many expressed their pleasure that a younger feminist was interested in the work that they did on *Branching Out*. One woman even told me that my ability “to assess that reality through a totally non-involved point of view” was an advantage (Heaton).

In “Waves, Tangles, Archaeologies, and Loops,” Jo-Ann Wallace and I write about this “problem of temporality” (218). We observe that while temporal distance can “create simplified narratives of past events, it is also—and paradoxically—the case that we can be too close to a set of historical events or debates to see them in their full complexity” (218). In what follows, I have attempted to balance attention to the details of a particular historical moment with the unique perspective that my relationship to *Branching Out* affords me. I am well aware that my version of *Branching Out*’s story is one possible version among many. As Pauline Butling observes in her 2002 article on individual and communal memory, “‘Who is She?’ Inside/Outside

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<sup>6</sup> Rees’s article focuses on the “difficulties in intergenerational communication” in her “study of revolutionary feminism in England” (177). She describes conducting a series of interviews which resulted in some women seeking to “retain control over the narrative of the movement” (186). Ultimately, Rees concludes that “feminists should make attempts to distance themselves from the history being written by a younger generation,” insisting that this younger generation “need to know that history, despite our own lack of experience, in order to influence our present, and we need encouragement, rather than defensiveness or attempts to control our work, to make our way through the challenging and complex world that is the history of feminism” (186). My experience interviewing women about *Branching Out* bears no resemblance to Rees’s work with revolutionary feminists in England. Rees herself admits that “anecdotal evidence from other researchers conducting interviews on Women’s Liberation suggests that the particular group of revolutionary feminists [Rees studied] are particularly keen to advance their ideas, and as such guard their stories more jealously than others might” (186). My interview experience corroborates this anecdotal evidence. None of the women whom I interview jealously guarded their stories. Instead, they were uniformly encouraging of my work on *Branching Out*.

Literary Communities,” other versions of any story “can be formulated based on a reselection and reinterpretation of the data” (228). As the first scholarly study of *Branching Out*, this dissertation is the first step in establishing *Branching Out*’s place in Canadian feminist and publishing histories.

### Introduction: “Thinking about and Making Culture”

In her recent memoir *The Gargoyle's Left Ear*, Susan McMaster, founding editor of *Branching Out*, recalls the events that led her to post the “two dozen day-glo pink announcements” (15) that brought seventeen women together in 1973 to produce “the first national feminist magazine in Canada” (16). Having recently moved from Ottawa to Edmonton so her husband could pursue his studies at the University of Alberta, McMaster found herself alone much of the time and without adequate reading material. The hours she did not spend teaching elementary school on a part-time basis McMaster filled by reading Harlequin Romances, “sometimes two a day” (13). She remembers noticing, “Other than the Harlequins, there’s *Good Housekeeping*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*. *Chatelaine* is still the only Canadian choice” (14). In a conversation with her husband, which she replicates in her memoir, McMaster says that *Ms.* magazine is good but has no equivalent in Canada. This brief survey of women’s magazines in 1972 clearly illustrates the lack of a viable Canadian feminist alternative to mainstream women’s magazines. While regional feminist newspapers were beginning to be produced as early as the fall of 1969 (for example, *The Pedestal*, published by the Vancouver Women’s Caucus), in 1972 there was no feminist periodical publishing venture in Canada that sought a national audience and had the newsstand appeal of *Ms.* or *Chatelaine*.

Into this void, McMaster cast her “two dozen day-glo pink announcements,” and by December 1973 the preview issue of *Branching Out* was in circulation (see figure 1), graced with poems by Margaret Atwood, a short story by Dorothy Livesay, articles on “Indian Rights for Indian Women,” latchkey kids, and champion trap

shooter Sue Natrass, an interview with Margaret Laurence by June Sheppard, and book reviews by Maureen Scobie and Susan Musgrave. McMaster's memoir reminds readers of this extraordinary participation: "This level of contribution and support is astounding for a preview issue of a non-commercial publication. Almost every budding feminist in town hears about it, and wants to help" (16).

Produced exclusively by volunteers, except for a few short periods when meager grants enabled certain staff to be paid small sums, *Branching Out* published feminist fiction and poetry alongside political and human interest features, visual art, legal advice, Canadian women's history, and analyses of the Canadian women's movement. While this list of genres published in *Branching Out* is by no means exhaustive, it gives a sense of the variety of material included between the magazine's covers. As a general interest magazine, *Branching Out* sought to balance the interests of the feminist reader and what longtime editor Sharon Batt refers to as "the average woman" reader in an attempt to appeal to the Canadian "everywoman" ("Feminist Publishing" 13). *Branching Out* staff were aware that this "everywoman" was elusive; nonetheless, they endeavored to appeal to both the feminist community and the general Canadian woman reader.<sup>7</sup> *Branching Out's* unique position between the feminist community and the mainstream and its status as the first national feminist magazine published in Canada make it a vital starting point for telling the story of feminist periodical publishing in Canada.

To date, the most useful introduction to the field of Canadian feminist periodical publishing is Barbara Godard's "Feminist Periodicals and the Production

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<sup>7</sup> This goal of inclusiveness proved to be one of the magazine's central challenges and, after a four-month publishing break from November 1976 to February 1977, the magazine did shift its editorial focus to be more explicitly feminist.

of Cultural Value,” published in the March/April 2002 special issue of *Women’s Studies International Forum* on “Women—Texts—Communities.” As Erin Wunker describes in her 2010 review of *Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture*, a collection of Godard’s essays edited by Smaro Kamboureli, Godard’s “quintessentially well-wrought” introduction to “the history and culture of feminist periodical publishing in Canada” (6) attends to the construction of cultural value in the Canadian feminist sub-field. In doing so, Godard calls attention to the largely unexplored archive of Canadian feminist periodicals.

Despite the multitude of women breaking into print during the second wave of the women’s movement<sup>8</sup> and the volume of writing that was published in the Canadian feminist periodical press, there has been very little scholarly attention paid to second-wave feminist periodicals in Canada and internationally. In the Canadian context, other than Barbara Godard’s work, there is Margie Wolfe’s “Working with Words: Feminist Publishing in Canada” (1982), Eleanor Wachtel’s two reports to the Women’s Programme Secretary of State on feminist print media (1982, 1985), Lois Pike’s “A Selective History of Feminist Presses and Periodicals” (1985), the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women’s *Canadian Women’s Periodical Index* (1985), the Canadian Women’s Indexing Group’s *Canadian Feminist Periodical Index 1972-1980* (1990), and Becki Ross’s “Tracking Lesbian Speech: The Social Organization of Lesbian Periodical Publishing in English Canada, 1973-88” (1992). While these articles, reports and indices are all valuable sources of information on

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<sup>8</sup> This wave of feminist activity began in English Canada in the mid-1960s and in Quebec in the 1940s (see Dumont, “The Origins of the Women’s Movement in Quebec”) and began to decline in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This decline coincided with the decrease of state funding for women’s programs (see Godard, “Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value”).

the Canadian feminist periodical press, they barely scratch the surface of this immense archive of Canadian women's writing.

Developments in the field of book history have brought texts like *Branching Out* into focus as objects of scholarly analysis and led to an increase in research on feminist print culture. However, feminist periodicals, and periodicals in general, are only just beginning to be studied as a unique print cultural form.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the Canadian sources mentioned above, Flannery's 2005 study of feminist literacy practices devotes a chapter to their American counterparts, and the National Women's Library housed at London Metropolitan University recently held an exhibit on the history of British women's magazines (from the 17th to the 21st century) which included feminist periodical publications alongside their more mainstream counterparts. However, the bulk of the scholarship on feminist periodicals has been focused on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century publications. This focus reflects the state of periodical studies, which has been dominated by Victorian and Modernist Studies. Older periodicals are more widely available for consultation since they are no longer under copyright and so can more easily be digitized and reproduced in online repositories allowing scholars around the world access to materials that they previously had to consult in person at a single, or limited, number of archives.

My own interest in second-wave feminist periodicals can be understood as part of a larger trend in feminist scholarship that is re-evaluating simplistic understandings of second-wave feminism. Just as scholars have questioned the assumption that there was a void in feminist activity between the first and second

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<sup>9</sup> See Latham and Scholes, "The Rise of Periodical Studies" and Barbara Green, "The Feminist Periodical Press: Women, Periodical Studies, and Modernity."

wave, several studies have begun to question simplistic understandings of second-wave feminism as homogenizing and insensitive to differences between women.<sup>10</sup> Feminist periodicals offer a valuable antidote to these reductive understandings because of the diverse materials published between their covers. However, feminist periodicals are more than source materials that can be mined for their content;<sup>11</sup> they are primary texts in their own right.

Barbara Godard begins the task of reading feminist periodicals as primary texts in her account of the effects of neo-liberal government policy on feminist periodical production. In “Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value,” Godard identifies feminist periodicals as an area of Canadian women’s writing that has gone virtually undocumented. As Godard describes, “In the upsurge of energy at the beginning of the Second Wave feminist movement, many women’s groups launched publications to communicate with members and often with the general public” (212). Godard’s analysis provides a useful introduction to Canadian feminist periodicals and their role as “spaces for criticism of government policy, for presenting alternative visions of democracy and gender relations” (209). Godard traces the development of feminist periodical publishing in Canada from the 1970s through to the 1990s, arguing that “Changes in the scope and orientation of feminist periodical publishing relate to shifting policy directives of the Canadian State” (209). She identifies the early to mid-1980s as a “high-point in the recognition of feminist

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Stephanie Gilmore (ed.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, Kathryn Thoms Flannery *Feminist Literacies, 1968-75*, Amy Farrell, *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Problem of Popular Feminism*, and Meg Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada.”

<sup>11</sup> This mining metaphor is shorthand for periodical studies scholars’ common contention that material published in periodicals needs to be studied in its original publication context rather than read exclusively for its content. For an account of the growing field of periodical studies see Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, “The Rise of Periodical Studies.”

culture in Canada” (209); to support this claim, Godard points to several factors: the number and range of Canadian feminist periodicals being published in the mid-1980s; the insertion of a constitutional guarantee of sexual equality in the new Charter of Rights (1982); and the 1984 federal election’s televised party leaders’ debate on women’s issues. This high point was followed by a downturn in Canadian feminist periodical publishing precipitated by persistent cuts in state funding throughout the late-1980s and 1990s to both women’s and cultural programs; according to Godard, these cuts explain the “declining fortunes of feminist publishing” (210).

Because Godard is “interested in using the example of Canadian feminist publishing to raise more general theoretical questions about the creation of cultural value” (210), her analysis emphasizes the interaction between feminist periodicals and the market economy. The article is primarily a critique of the neo-liberal “political climate that favours a decreased role for state intervention to counter-balance market-place forces” (210) and a challenge to Pierre Bourdieu’s materialist approach. Godard explores the nature of cultural value and symbolic capital within the Canadian feminist sub-field and exposes Bourdieu’s “lack of attention to gender differences” (210) within the field of cultural production, arguing that “feminist editorial collectives participate in an economy of the gift rather than one of accumulation” (209). She uses gender to question Bourdieu’s emphasis on the value of disinterestedness, arguing that lack of profit does not translate into symbolic capital within the feminist subfield. Godard draws on “Bourdieu’s materialist approach, but [introduces] gender as a category into his complex model of social stratification and so [troubles] his equation of prestige (cultural capital) with disinterest in economic

profits” (209). As Godard explains, “Feminist periodicals show that anti-economic behaviour does not necessarily translate into symbolic recognition in the public sphere” (209). In the process of challenging Bourdieu’s analysis and critiquing decreased state intervention, Godard also provides a useful introduction to Canadian feminist periodicals and begins the task of reading feminist periodicals as primary texts. In order to deepen our understanding of the role that feminist periodicals played in the development of women’s writing and feminist discourse in Canada, we must also study individual titles in detail.

In the March 2007 issue of *PMLA*, Sean Latham and Robert Scholes declare, “Within or alongside the larger field of print culture, a new area for scholarship is emerging in the humanities and more humanistic social sciences: periodical studies” (517). As Latham and Scholes outline in “The Rise of Periodical Studies,” the dominant mode of reading periodicals has been to extract their content, but trends are now shifting towards reading periodicals as a unique genre, as increasing numbers of scholars question the assumption that periodicals are containers for the dissemination of information and instead read periodicals as a unique print culture form that both defines and is defined by its content. Latham and Scholes issue the following rallying cry: “we must continue to insist on the autonomy and distinctiveness of periodicals as cultural objects” (519). However, as Latham and Scholes acknowledge, the sheer volume and range of material published in periodicals make it extremely difficult to generalize about this genre: “Periodicals often range broadly across subjects: a single issue of, say, *Time*, *Vogue*, or *Punch* can include everything from economic theory and political opinion to light verse and

theater reviews” (517). This variety poses an immense challenge for scholars who are interested in periodicals as a genre.

Paradoxically, the very qualities that make it difficult to generalize about periodicals as a genre—that they include multiple authors, forms, and subjects, and have print runs that frequently span several years, or even decades—are the qualities that make periodicals compelling objects of analysis. Because of the various voices and forms that can be found in a single periodical—such as reviews, news reports, poetry, economic and political analysis, and short fiction—and because of their diachronic structure, serial publications tend to offer a more complex vision of history than monographs of the same period. Produced at regular intervals in a physically ephemeral format, periodicals do not have the permanence and weight of a monograph and, because of this ephemerality, tend to promote experimentation. Often founded at moments of political and social upheaval, periodicals can represent the messy first stages of new and emerging ways of thinking.

Studying periodicals to revise our understanding of history is a common feature of Canadian periodical studies, with several examples published in the last decade: *Editing Modernity* (2008), Dean Irvine’s return to Canadian leftist periodicals to question restrictive definitions of Canadian literary modernism in the first half of the twentieth century; Valerie J. Korinek’s study of *Chatelaine*, a “revisionist history of the fifties and sixties, and, in particular, of women’s roles and opportunities as they played out in the pages of Canada’s national women’s magazine” (9); *The Woman’s Page* (2008), Janice Fiamengo’s study of six English Canadian women writers’ contributions to the Canadian periodical press between 1875 and 1915, a study which revises “condescending” accounts of late-19th and early-20th century

women's participation in the public sphere; and the Early Canadian Periodical Project (2006-2012) undertaken by Canadiana.org with the mandate to digitize all pre-1920 Canadian periodicals, which will make a vast array of primary material available that represents the complex first stages of Canada's social, political, and literary history. My own work on *Branching Out* also has a revisionist mandate, demonstrating that 1970s feminist periodicals were more than communication tools, and that their literary and political experimentation requires scholarly attention as an important and overlooked aspect of Canadian feminist, periodical and literary history.

One aspect of Canadian periodical history that has been studied in detail is Canadian little magazines. These publications have received significantly more scholarly attention than their feminist counterparts, though feminist periodicals and modernist little magazines are similar in many ways. In their seminal work on modernism, Bradbury and McFarlane refer to little magazines as “a very useful index of the general level and range of experimental activity in the particular national cultures” (*Modernism* 203). Second-wave feminist periodicals, like modernist little magazines, were also a “very useful index” of experimental activity, presenting a wide range of political and literary content in miscellany form. Modernist little magazine producers and second-wave feminist periodical producers shared an antagonism towards commercial culture and rebelled against advertising-driven, mainstream magazines in favour of establishing publishing ventures over which they had complete editorial control. Because their ideas could not find a home in the mainstream press, modernist poets and second-wave feminists alike founded forms of alternative print culture. By treating feminist periodicals as an archive of Canadian

women's writing, rather than solely communication tools for a now defunct social movement, this study of *Branching Out* helps to revise understanding of Canada's literary history to include the political and gendered voices present in Canadian feminist periodicals.

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In his 1995 article "Theory and Creativity in English Canada: Magazines, the State and Cultural Movement," Ioan Davies outlines the strong connection between magazines and the making of Canadian culture. He argues for "the importance of focusing on magazines/journals as the points where thinking about and making culture interact, and seeing them as signifying vectors of a nascent culture" (16). This connection between producing and engaging with culture is borne out in the pages of *Branching Out*. Reporting on the campaigns of NDP leadership candidate Rosemary Brown and publishing the early poetry of c. m. buckaway were part of the same mandate for *Branching Out* volunteers. This mandate—to showcase the work of Canadian women—had a dual effect: one, to convince readers and producers alike that there was a vibrant women's political and artistic culture; two, to encourage increased production in these areas because *Branching Out* served as proof that women's culture deserved a place in the public domain. We see this dual purpose reflected in Joan and Chesman's 1978 *Guide to Women's Publishing* when they explain how they see their book as both a guide and an affirmation. The guide proclaims both "Look, feminist publishing exists" and "Here's where you can send your writing"; it is both an analytical document outlining the field of women's publishing

and a useful tool to help women break into print. *Branching Out* and the *Guide to Women's Publishing* are both, in Davies' words, "thinking about and making culture."

The idea that magazines were "signifying vectors of a nascent culture"—at the forefront of cultural and political movements just coming into existence—is paralleled in an assertion made by Eleanor Wachtel in her 1982 report to the Women's Programme Secretary of State entitled "Feminist Print Media." In the context of Wachtel's detailed analysis of Canadian feminist periodicals, she asserts that, within the Canadian women's movement, "Print has been circulated as a kind of advanced guard" (28), acting as a specific organizing tool and providing "a visible, tangible correlate for an amorphous movement" (23). This notion of feminist periodicals as an advanced guard within a constantly shifting and changing movement—that these serial publications were on the front lines of feminist activism in Canada—parallels Davies' argument that small-scale magazines are "signifying vectors of a nascent culture." Both "nascent" and "advanced guard" suggest a newness and a coming-into-being that reflects the provisional and ephemeral nature of periodicals, which is the result of their seriality.

Wachtel's use of the term "advanced guard" to describe the role of feminist periodicals within the Canadian women's movement firmly establishes their status as political tools. Though the term "avant-garde" is more commonly used to describe printed texts at the forefront of a movement, "avant-garde" has become a highly aestheticized term. By using the anglicized "advanced guard" Wachtel more strongly suggests the term's military origins, associating feminist periodicals with militant political action rather than solely interventions into the field of cultural production.

Periodicals' ability to function as gathering places for nascent culture, as advanced guards for particular discursive communities, is directly related to their ephemerality. Generally produced for immediate consumption, rather than preservation, periodicals have a transitory quality that encourages experimentation. However, it is important to note that this ephemerality is in contrast to periodicals' ability to sustain critical engagement across time. Paradoxically, periodicals' seriality both encourages experimentation—because a serial publication is a low-stakes publishing venue, i.e., does not require the temporal and financial resources necessary to produce a monograph—and creates a detailed record of this experimentation because of the genre's diachronic nature. Because periodicals tend to engage with subjects and debates across time, they become detailed records of developments within various social and political movements. With the rise of periodical studies since the late 1980s, these records are beginning to be taken up as sources for literary, political, and cultural histories, and as unique objects of study in and of themselves.

In contrast to the weight and permanence of a monograph, periodicals are often spaces where new and emerging ideas are presented and debated. In her 1976 article "The *Canadian Forum*: Literary Catalyst," Sandra Djwa traces the development of Canadian poetry from the 1920s to the 1940s by reading the debates that took place in the pages of *Canadian Forum*. She concludes, "The pages of *Canadian Forum*, then, are a chronicle of the development of modern English Canadian poetry and criticism. The *Forum* was itself a response to a growing nationalist sentiment and it served in turn as a literary catalyst" (24). Similarly, *Branching Out* was a response to a growing Canadian feminist sentiment and served as a cultural catalyst. The pages of

*Branching Out* chronicle the development of Canadian second-wave feminism. I turn now to a discussion of *Canadian Forum* in order to flesh out several key features of the periodical genre that result in these parallels between *Canadian Forum* and *Branching Out*.

In keeping with Davies description of magazines as both “thinking about and making culture,” Djwa characterizes *Canadian Forum* as both a response to Canadian literary and political nationalism and an intervention into this field, an intervention that facilitated the field’s development. For example, Djwa discusses “the *Forum*’s emphasis on the Group of Seven” (10) and argues that “the relation between the new sense of landscape—vast, strong, lonely, northern—the Group of Seven and the new poetry was facilitated by *Canadian Forum* which encouraged both art and poetry” (10). The coming together of art and poetry in the pages of *Canadian Forum* is, Djwa argues, one way that the magazine served as a “literary catalyst.”

In her discussion of A. J. M. Smith’s “The Lonely Land,” published in *Canadian Forum* in 1927, Djwa highlights the magazine’s role as catalyst:

Smith’s poem “The Lonely Land,” originally subtitled “Group of Seven” when first published in the *McGill Fortnightly Review* in 1926, is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the close connection between the two art forms [painting and poetry]. The title, “The Lonely Land,” combines the titles of two earlier paintings: J. E. H. MacDonald’s “Solemn Land” (1921) and “The Lonely North” (1913). Although Smith had not seen the Montreal exhibition of the Group of Seven, he had seen reproductions of their work and he was reading the *Forum* during this period, which, as we have seen, discussed the art in detail and printed woodcuts of northern scenes. (10)

The notion that Smith's poem was in dialogue with an exhibition that he had never seen because he had access to reproductions and was reading *Canadian Forum* demonstrates how periodicals not only record, but also facilitate the development of literary, political and artistic culture. Before literary trends are solidified, and histories written—including and excluding material based on the historian's mandate and location—there exists the material published in periodicals. While periodicals necessarily go through a process of including some and excluding other material based on editorial mandates, because periodicals like *Branching Out* and *Canadian Forum* are multi-genre, collaborative publications that address both the political and the cultural spheres they are much less cohesive than retrospective accounts of the literary and political movements of which they were a part.

As Latham and Scholes argue, periodicals “are by their nature collaborative objects, assembled in complex interactions between editors, authors, advertisers, sales agents, and even readers” (529). This collaborative nature is one of the features that encouraged women to found alternative periodical publications, like *Branching Out*, because the genre encourages notions of collaboration and collectivity that were so central to second-wave feminist organizing. While not necessarily progressive or revolutionary, the fact that periodicals are collaborative objects also contributes to their ability to record political, cultural and literary histories. As Latham and Scholes insist, within periodicals “the changes over time that we call history can be seen in all their complexity, including developments in literature and the arts as well as social and political events and processes” (520).

In her 2005 study of American feminist literacy practices, *Feminist Literacies 1968-75*, Kathryn Flannery makes the important observation that “volatile” historical

moments are often “straightened in the telling” and, as a result, “it becomes more and more difficult to see the initial generative tangle” (22). One of the ways that Flannery redresses this loss in her study is by turning to feminist periodicals because she acknowledges, like Latham and Scholes, Davies, Wachtel, Djwa, and others,<sup>12</sup> that serial publications can be excellent sources for engaging with the complex first stages of history. While Flannery is under no illusion of returning to an originary moment through the periodicals, she nonetheless demonstrates how the history of second-wave feminism can be expanded by taking up its periodical literature.

As multiple genres interact in a periodical (art, literature, politics, criticism, and reviews in the case of both *Canadian Forum* and *Branching Out*), multiple perspectives emerge, and this multiplicity is magnified by the passage of time. Take, for example, the way in which *Canadian Forum* is able to “chronicle...the development of modern English Canadian poetry and criticism” (24). As Djwa illustrates, after being founded by University of Toronto faculty members in 1920, *Canadian Forum* consistently held a prominent place in the development of Canadian letters. At first, the *Forum* published several poems that

belong within that central line of modern Canadian poetry that began to emerge in the 1920s. Largely imagist in technique, this poetry depicted the rugged northern landscape which the *Forum* through its emphasis on the Group of Seven helped to foster. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s when a true little magazine could not be maintained in Canada for any length of time, the literary section of the *Forum* provided this function; throughout the 1940s, after the emergence of *Contemporary Verse*, *Preview*, and *First Statement*,

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<sup>12</sup> Graham (qtd. in Latham and Scholes), Echols, Bradbury and McFarlane, Adamson et al., Korinek, Fiamengo, Irvine, Early Canadian Periodicals to 1920 (<http://www.canadiana.ca/en/projects>).

the *Forum* provided a neutral meeting ground for poets in opposite camps.  
(24-25)

*Canadian Forum* readers were able to follow these developments as they were happening rather than read a synthesized version of the events in a subsequent monograph. All sorts of minor threads that belong to the “initial generative tangle” of a periodical are bound to be lost when the history is recorded. In order to follow these minor threads, we can turn to periodicals like *Canadian Forum* and *Branching Out*. For example, as I explore in chapter two, in the pages of *Branching Out* we can trace changing and conflicting articulations of the relationship between art and politics in Canada in the 1970s.

In keeping with periodicals’ ability to record developments in the cultural field, Djwa describes *Canadian Forum* as “a useful indication of the changing intellectual currents within which modern Canadian poetry and criticism came into being” (11). This function as a record is in contrast to the function of two book publications Djwa mentions in her article. In the following passage, Djwa demonstrates not only how issues discussed in *Canadian Forum* influenced book publications, but also how static these books are in contrast to the serial publication:

one of the most important Canadian literary events of the 1940s, the publication of [A. J. M.] Smith’s anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, was a response to a need identified by early *Forum* contributors, including Smith. It was this collection, informed by aesthetic standards rather than chauvinism that had characterized Campbell’s anthology, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, that was to demonstrate to Canadians the existence of a respectable body of native poetry. (22-23)

Both Smith's and Campbell's anthologies are presented as having singular functions: *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* is aggressively patriotic and *The Book of Canadian Poetry* is championing aesthetic standards. In contrast, *Canadian Forum* is able to present several theses about Canadian poetry across time, as well as both include and facilitate debate and dialogue between positions.

The fact that both books that Djwa references are anthologies rather than monographs calls attention to the relationship between periodicals and anthologies. In order to flesh out this connection and to make a case for studying periodicals in their entirety (rather than content excerpted from periodicals), I turn to Gail Chester's "The Anthology as a Medium for Feminist Debate in the UK," which was published alongside Godard's article on Canadian feminist periodicals in the 2002 special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum* on "Women—Texts—Communities." Chester cites Blain, Clements and Grundy in *A Feminist Companion to Literature in English* on anthologies: "Anthologies have played an important role in feminist writing.... They have identified communities, created and embodied collectivity, asserted multiplicity of voices, and explicitly linked the literary and the political" (195). The same could be said of feminist periodicals, so what distinguishes periodicals from anthologies?

The answer that Chester provides is the anthology's role in canonization. While both feminist periodicals and feminist anthologies may have "a commitment to the presentation of diverse perspectives" (195), they do not hold equal weight in the process of canonization. As Chester's analysis reveals, periodicals are often

source materials for anthologies (196),<sup>13</sup> and thus can represent the initial place of publication for material on the road to prominence within the canon. However, as Chester goes on to argue, anthologies play a much more prominent role in canonization because of the value they are assigned within the literary-industrial complex:<sup>14</sup>

apart from the more explicit functions of anthologies, an important implicit function is their contribution to canon formation.... Because of the hierarchy which exists in the minds of the arbiters of the literary-industrial complex, published material which is collected within the covers of a book is almost always granted higher status than that which appears in a periodical or pamphlet, and thus is more likely to be canonised. (203)

To return to the example from *Canadian Forum*, Campbell's and Smith's anthologies encourage the formation of two different canons: the former aggressively patriotic and the latter aesthetically elite. By organizing material previously published in locations like *Canadian Forum* according to distinct editorial mandates, Campbell and Smith exert pressure on the formation of the Canadian literary canon. Because of the

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the two-volume study *Canadian Women's Issues: Twenty-Five Years of Women's Activism in English Canada* (Pierson et al.) relies heavily on feminist periodicals in the "Document" sections of each chapter. These "Document" sections anthologize historical documents from the Canadian women's movement. Four articles from *Branching Out* are reprinted in *Canadian Women's Issues*. The first volume, subtitled *Strong Voices* (1993), includes Rosemary Brown's "Running a Feminist Campaign" (published in *Branching Out* in 1977) and "Women in Exhibition: The Politics of Pioneering Art Feminism on the Prairies" (published in *Branching Out* in 1978). The second volume, subtitled *Bold Visions* (1995), includes Christa van Daele's "Women's Studies: Time for a Grassroots Revival" (published in *Branching Out* in 1978) and a collection of reader responses entitled "What Did You Think of IWY?" (published in *Branching Out* in 1975).

<sup>14</sup> A play on "military-industrial complex," as Chester acknowledges, the term "literary-industrial complex" is used by Celeste West, "pioneering feminist analyst of the publishing industry," to refer to patriarchal publishing, which "exaggeratedly rewards and encourages the patriarchal construct of the solitary creator rather than more collaborative methods of literary production" (193). It is this same complex that values more permanent publishing forms, such as book publications, over ephemeral forms like the periodical. This system of value is related to the relative low cost of producing a periodical as compared to producing a book. Because of this relative low cost more people have access to the resources necessary to produce a periodical, making this form less exclusive and therefore less valuable to the "literary-industrial complex."

greater value assigned to work published between the covers of books, whether they be anthologies or monographs, than to work published between the covers of a periodical, anthologized writing is more likely to find its way into the canon.

A canon is in many ways the antithesis of a periodical. Unlike a periodical, which includes a range of material that may or may not be deemed significant or worthy of analysis or preservation, a canon is “a body of works...considered to be established as the most important or significant in a particular field” (“Canon”). As the ubiquitous critiques of canon formation indicate, the process of establishing that which is “most important” in a field is a process of exclusion. In contrast, periodicals tend to present the messy first stages before that material which is “most important”—as opposed to simply important enough to be published—has been identified.

In a section of their article entitled “Advertising and the Hole in the Archive,” Latham and Scholes, refer to the relationship between anthologies and periodicals in order to make a case for the importance of studying advertising as well as editorial content. In one of their article’s many moments of definition, Latham and Scholes argue, “Periodical studies can be seen as a subfield of print culture—an especially important and lively subfield. And advertising is a vital, even crucial, part of it. The archival decision to excise the commercial matter from these documents arises from a fundamental misunderstanding of periodicals as unique cultural and material objects” (521). It is within the context of this argument about the vital importance of advertising that Latham and Scholes both distance periodicals from and associate periodicals with literary anthologies: “We continue too often to see [periodicals] essentially as aggregations of otherwise autonomous works, similar to

literary anthologies, which—as Leah Price argues—have themselves been treated as mere ‘containers’ for other print objects” (520). Latham and Scholes simultaneously refer to anthologies as “aggregations of otherwise autonomous works” and include Price’s critique of this characterization; they say that periodicals are distinct from anthologies when an anthology is defined as an aggregation of autonomous works, but that anthologies have, like periodicals, been mischaracterized as “mere ‘containers’ for other print objects.”

However Latham and Scholes go on to rely on the more traditional definition of anthologies and argue that because periodicals have been treated like anthologies, i.e., as aggregations of distinct materials, “archivists, editors, and scholars alike have freely disaggregated periodicals, separating their contents from what Jerome McGann calls their ‘bibliographic code.’ In some cases, this had understandably been a product of the need to anthologize—to provide structure and meaning to the complexity of the past” (521). Here Latham and Scholes are setting up a definition of “to anthologize” that emphasizes the ordering of the past, which is in direct contrast to their definition of periodicals, cited above, which gives the sense that periodicals leave the past, in some sense, untouched. For Latham and Scholes periodicals enable “the changes...that we call history” to be “seen in all their complexity” (520). This somewhat romantic understanding of the periodical’s ability to provide access to the past is in direct contrast to what Latham and Scholes identify as the anthology’s potential “to provide structure and meaning” (521). It is this process of providing structure and meaning that Chester refers to in her association of anthologies and canon formation and that I draw on when I argue, following Djwa, that periodicals like *Canadian Forum* and *Branching Out*, rather than

subsequent anthologies, are better able to record changes in specific debates, whether those debates are about feminist organizing or Canadian literature. Though I recognize the somewhat problematic elevation of the periodical genre over the anthology genre (which Latham and Scholes themselves problematize by citing Price), I am persuaded by Latham's and Scholes' argument that periodicals are more provisional than anthologies, which tend to more clearly impose order on their contents.

It is this provisional quality that enables Djwa to argue that *Canadian Forum* "is a useful indication of the changing intellectual currents within which modern Canadian poetry and criticism came into being" (11). Djwa goes on to outline the political and literary discussions of nationalism, continentalism and internationalism that occur in *Canadian Forum*, concluding that "We find in the pages of the *Forum* throughout the 1920's [sic] many of the national versus international arguments which are to dominate Canadian criticism for the next forty years" (13). Echoing Wachtel's advanced guard and Davies' nascent culture metaphors, Djwa identifies *Canadian Forum* as being, in a sense, ahead of its time, publishing some of the first contributions to a central debate in Canadian politics and letters. Similarly, *Branching Out* is a record of early debates in Canadian feminist politics and culture. My own study of *Branching Out* is an attempt to trace several of the debates featured in this moderate Canadian feminist magazine.

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In addition to recording changing discourses across time (Djwa) and being “signifying vectors of a nascent culture” (Davies), periodicals may also serve as calls to action. The idea that a publication can promote an action is especially strong in the feminist periodicals Eleanor Wachtel analyzes in her report “Feminist Print Media.” As Wachtel demonstrates, feminist periodicals are not simply records of the women’s movement, or sources of information, they lead to particular actions that have effects beyond the publications’ pages. As such, periodicals have the ability not only to reflect but also to shape the feminist agenda: “If people read about sexual harassment, for example, they will have a word for what is already a problem in their own lives. If they read about an urban transition house for battered women, they may organize an *ad hoc* one in their own community” (“Feminist Print Media” 27). This “relation between printed material and action” (28) shows how feminist periodicals influenced the movement’s development by foregrounding particular issues and debates. A clear example of this relationship occurred when *Broadside* reprinted the objectives of Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW): “The effect was to revive and reactivate a WAVAW group that had originally started in 1978, but was currently moribund” (“Feminist Print Media” 28).

Further demonstrating the connection between feminist periodical publishing and feminist organizing, feminist periodicals often grow out of specific events or organizations. While periodicals can precipitate actions, like *Broadside* and WAVAW, specific actions also lead to the founding of periodicals. As Wachtel notes, “A remarkable number of publications began as outgrowths of a conference, status of women meeting, or course where participants wished to remain in contact with each other and continue to create or exchange information” (“Feminist Print Media” 23).

The exchange between printed material and action was not unidirectional, as the “nascent” and “advanced guard” metaphors suggest. Within the Canadian women’s movement, periodicals both led to and grew out of feminist organizing. Wachtel lists several examples of actions/events that led to the establishment of periodicals:

*Women and Environments*, for example, developed from the UN Habitat meeting in Vancouver at the alternate forum for NGOs. *Healthsharing* was formulated by a group of registrants at a “Get to know your body” course at Toronto’s Skills Exchange; similarly, *Room of One’s Own* materialized out of a literary women’s studies course at a Vancouver junior college. A teachers of women’s studies conference in Toronto led to the establishment of *CWS* [*Canadian Women Studies*]; an interdisciplinary women’s studies course at Acadia University prompted its teachers to establish *Atlantis*, in both instances because they recognized that there were too few Canadian materials. In Thunder Bay, Ontario, “In April 1973, a major conference of women took place and the paper was an attempt to keep women who had attended the conference connected. *The Northern Woman* is born.” *Entrelles* also owes its gestation to a conference of the Conseil Statut des Femmes in 1978 in Gatineau/Hull. (“Feminist Print Media” 23)

Each of these gatherings led to a unique publication that both grew out of the original action and was an extension of that action. In this sense, these periodicals are an opening up of the original event/action to a wider community of women. Constantly emerging and folding, feminist periodicals are both invaluable sources for the writing of Canadian feminist history and a unique genre that shaped the women’s movement in Canada.

That being said, it is also important to acknowledge Wachtel's mandate when she wrote "Feminist Print Media" and how this mandate may have shaped her desire to draw a clear connection between feminist action and feminist periodicals.

Wachtel wrote two reports for the Women's Programme Secretary of State on Canadian feminist periodical publishing: "Feminist Print Media" in 1982 and "Update on Feminist Periodicals" in 1985. Commissioned by the Women's Programme, these reports are the most comprehensive accounts of 1970s and 80s Canadian second-wave feminist periodical publishing written to date. In both reports, Wachtel clearly advocates increased state funding for feminist periodicals.

The first report had the following mandate:

The Contractor will prepare and submit to the Women's Programme a paper of at least 30 pages which assesses the social impact and financial context of feminist newspapers and magazines in Canada. This paper will include an assessment of the extent to which the feminist print media contribute to improving the status of women in Canada. The paper will also include recommendations to the Women's Programme for appropriate mechanisms of support to these organizations within the current funding capability of the Women's Programme. (1)

This mandate enabled Wachtel to gather data on a range of Canadian feminist periodicals, but also required her to draw clear connections between the printed word and feminist activism that improves "the status of women in Canada."

Similarly, the 1985 report served "as an update to 1982 study on the state of feminist print media in Canada and propos[ed] new recommendations for funding policy and strategies for joint action where appropriate" (1). Because Wachtel is trying to get

Women's Programme Secretary of State funding for feminist periodicals, she is of course interested in demonstrating how periodicals promote concrete action and change. She answers the question "Why fund feminist periodicals?" by demonstrating the "relation between printed material and action" (28).

An understanding of feminist periodicals as records of change, representations of a nascent culture, and calls to action applies to the entire Anglo-North American second-wave feminist context. What sets Canadian feminist periodicals apart is the nationalistic thread that runs through many of these publications. Several Canadian feminist periodicals were founded in response to the feeling that the movement was dominated by American publications. That both *Canadian Women's Studies* and *Atlantis* were established because groups of women found that "there were too few Canadian materials" ("Feminist Print Media" 23) connects these periodicals to *Branching Out's* origin story. From the beginning *Branching Out* was conceived of as a forum for showcasing the work being done by Canadian women. Founding editor Susan McMaster recognized that there were limited opportunities for Canadian women to publish their work and she wanted to redress this lack by founding a women's magazine. Not only did *Branching Out* address the publishing gap between men and women, it also was a response to the American cultural imperialism that was being identified and resisted by nationalists in a variety of sectors. As Wachtel observes in her 1982 report, "An early survey of *Branching Out's* readership revealed that many subscribed not simply because it was feminist, but *Canadian* feminist" (16). *Branching Out* was responding to both the need for more publishing opportunities for women and the need for a Canadian perspective on the women's movement.

As McMaster asserts in her inaugural editorial's opening claim, "This magazine is by women and for women. Canadian women" ("Branching To?" 3). From this first editorial, *Branching Out* constituted itself as a national magazine. McMaster explains that *Branching Out* will focus on "the work that women in Canada are doing today," will be "a forum for the discussion of subjects relevant to Canadian women," will explore "what it means to be woman in Canada today," and will reinterpret experience "from the point of view of women in Canada today" (3). These repeated references to Canadian women reinforce *Branching Out's* identity as a national magazine.<sup>15</sup> Initially, *Branching Out* constituted itself as a national magazine by publishing work by Canadian women and including content relevant to Canadian women—such as "the effect of certain divorce laws on Canadian women" (3), an example offered by McMaster in her preview editorial. As the magazine's readership grew, the fact that *Branching Out* was being read by women across Canada validated its identity as a national magazine.<sup>16</sup>

By addressing a wider audience than was actively involved in feminist organizing, many feminist periodicals also gave women who were not necessarily politically active access to a feminist community. As Wachtel explains, feminist periodicals are a "lifeline—especially to subscribers in far-flung, rural areas of the

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<sup>15</sup> The preview editorial also distinguishes between being a national magazine and nationalism as a political movement. McMaster insists that *Branching Out* is not limited to either radical or traditional content: "either the traditional problem of how to get and keep a clean house and faithful husband, or the radical political questions which centre around the issues of female liberation and nationalism" (McMaster, "Branching To?" 3). This description suggests that *Branching Out* is intended for women who may or may not be interested in radical feminist or nationalist organizing, but who are pushing beyond traditional notions of womanhood. According to this description, both "female liberation" and "nationalism" are aspects of Canadian radical political organizing. McMaster is careful to point out that *Branching Out* will not be limited to these "radical political questions."

<sup>16</sup> *Branching Out's* identity as a national magazine was often in tension with its location in Edmonton. See chapter one for a discussion of the relationship between *Branching Out's* location in Edmonton and its intention to be a national magazine.

country. Here women feel doubly isolated; often the only feminists in their communities, they have no access to validation of their perceptions or experience, and no arena for actions. They feel alone; *communication* via feminist media is their opportunity to join a larger *community*” (“Feminist Print Media” 24). This notion of feminist periodicals as a bridge between the individual and the group speaks to the vital role that periodicals played in the development of Canadian feminist culture. Wachtel points out that “Most feminist publications have a disproportionately high number of rural subscribers,” and goes on to cite the 1979 *Branching Out* readers survey which “found that more than half of the women who replied had never been a member of a feminist group” (25). Including women who may otherwise have been excluded from Canadian feminist discourse was one of the most important features of feminist periodicals. As Wachtel explains, “Groups are intimidating, require too much time, or are simply inappropriate for the ‘non-joiner.’ But a publication maintains their sense of community, and of being informed” (25). This statement is likely influenced by the mandate of Wachtel’s report, i.e., to determine whether the Women’s Programme should provide funds to feminist periodicals. Wachtel argues that, in addition to precipitating action, feminist periodicals also provide “non-joiners” with a sense of community. Her insistence on this inclusionary function indicates to the Women’s Programme that even women who do not engage directly in feminist organizing benefit from feminist periodicals.

Many of the letters to the editor published in *Branching Out* express precisely this sentiment: readers write in to say that they are interested in the issues the magazine addresses and are excited to read about them because they are not members of communities that encourage them to explore these issues. *Branching Out*

was particularly successful at providing this link between individual women and the larger Canadian feminist community because it circulated more widely than other feminist periodicals due to its newsstand appeal and generalist approach.

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In a section of her report entitled, “The Social Change Role of Feminist Publications in Canada,” Wachtel cites the 1970 Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media: “Magazines, in a different way from any other medium, can help foster in Canadians a sense of themselves” (20). This claim is part of the post-Massey Commission discourse of new nationalism that was articulated in the period leading up to Expo’ 67 and the 1967 Centennial celebrations. New nationalists saw cultural expression as a way, “in the national parlance of the time, to reverse the slide into the American empire” (Edwardson 16). As Edwardson explains in his 2008 study of Canadian nationalism, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood*, “Political devices—particularly the New Democratic Party and, for the more socialist of its members, a ‘Waffle’ splinter wing—were deemed essential to reclaiming national sovereignty, of course, but it was in cultural expression that nationalists identified the means of ideologically liberating a nation indoctrinated by foreign content” (16). During this period of new nationalism, “Canadians were reimagining the ‘imagined community’ into a Peaceable Kingdom, a socialist-leaning nation of equality, multiculturalism, peacekeeping, and a social-welfare safety net directed to ensuring that all Canadians could benefit from the nation’s wealth” (16). This political and economic re-imagination went hand in hand with the ideological liberation that new

nationalists identified with Canadian cultural expression. In contrast to the high culture bias of the Masseyists, according to these new nationalists, “Culture needed to be freed from elite domination and ostracizing paternalism in order to encourage a national project with a wider social base” (17). This expanded understanding of Canadian culture resulted in increased funding opportunities for alternative cultural production, such as feminist and other leftist small-scale periodical publications, by encouraging more than traditional, high cultural production. As Edwardson explains, “Within this paradigm, a comic book such as *Captain Canuck* would thus be worth more to nationhood than any Shakespearian play offered by the Stratford Festival” (17). I am not suggesting that *Branching Out* and *Captain Canuck* have similar cultural significance, but rather identifying them as a part of the same discourse of new nationalism which privileged cultural production as a means of warding off American imperialism.

With the rise of new nationalism, “Refinement mattered less than opportunities for domestic discourse, particularly if the content involved national identifiers—references to the nation conveyed through stories, figures, events, and other elements—capable of situating the Canadian experience and identity” (17). Though *Branching Out* also wanted to be a discerning publication—during the course of my interviews participants uniformly insisted that *Branching Out* was not simply publishing work by Canadian women; it was publishing high quality work by Canadian women<sup>17</sup>—within the discourse of new nationalism *Branching Out* offered a powerful counterpoint to *Ms.* magazine, which in 1980 had “a circulation in Canada

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<sup>17</sup> The notion of refinement is a complicated one within the feminist publishing community because, as I outline in chapter two, amateurism is a double-edge sword for women: it allows them to operate outside patriarchal standards but it also means that their work may not be taken seriously because it does not conform to these standards.

of about 20,000” according to Sharon Batt (“Feminist Publishing” 12), in contrast to *Branching Out*, which in the same year printed 4000 copies (12). Because *Branching Out*’s mandate, as outlined in the magazine’s inaugural editorial, was “to provide a forum for the discussion of subjects relevant to *Canadian* women” (McMaster, “Branching To?” 3, my emphasis), the magazine was an opportunity for “domestic discourse” that, as Edwardson describes, was “capable of situating the Canadian experience and identity” (17), specifically that of Canadian women.

While the rise of Canadian feminist periodicals in the 1970s and early 1980s coincided with a rise in feminist activism internationally, the nationalism present in the Canadian publications, such as *Branching Out*, sets them apart from their Anglo-North American counterparts. British and American feminist periodicals of the same period did not identify with nationalist organizing. During this period the feminist resistance present in Canadian feminist periodicals was often paired up with a resistance to American influence. This pairing at times manifested itself in discussion of what makes feminism in Canada particularly Canadian. This nationalist preoccupation is unimaginable in the American context. Many of the founding mothers of American second-wave feminism had been active in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements. Consequently, American second-wave feminists were often also struggling against American imperialism, especially that associated with the Vietnam War.

It is within the context of new nationalism in Canada that the 1970 Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media could claim that “Magazines, in a different way from any other medium, can help foster in Canadians a sense of themselves” (20). This “different way” of fostering Canadian identity can be

explained with reference to magazines' miscellaneous quality. As the opening claim of Fraser Sutherland's *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines 1789-1989* insists, "A magazine appeals to the miscellaneous imagination. No matter how specialized, the best magazines suggest the fullness and variety of life" (1).

Sutherland goes on to justify this claim with reference to the definition of a magazine: "Although there is no precise or comprehensive definition [...] the maze of definitions that the *Oxford English Dictionary* supplies for the word in applications that have nothing to do with print suggest the printed magazine's essential qualities: it is a warehouse, depot, storehouse, or ship; an ammunition chamber for a repeating rifle; 'a portable receptacle containing articles of value'" (2). This sense of gathering together discrete items as well as the sense of portability and repeatability (i.e. periodicity) are qualities that are often highlighted in studies of periodical publications.

According to Wachtel, a magazine "identifies ideas that are floating loose, assembles them, and in doing so, may place itself at the centre of a movement" (21). This idea that a magazine is a collection of free-floating ideas is very much in keeping with the idea of periodicals as a multi-genre medium. Periodicals are gathering places for ideas that would otherwise remain separate. It is in the process of assembling these ideas into a particular combination that magazines have the potential to place themselves at "the centre of a movement" and, in the Canadian context, "help foster in Canadians a sense of themselves." In "The Rise of Periodical Studies," Latham and Scholes take up the notion of a multi-genre medium and advocate using a collaborative scholarly approach, relying on experts from a variety of fields, to account for the "bewildering points of contact between disparate

areas of human activity” found between the covers of periodicals (528). Establishing periodicals as “rich, dialogic texts,” as cited above, Latham and Scholes explain that periodicals “are by their nature collaborative objects, assembled in complex interactions between editors, authors, advertisers, sales agents, and even readers” (529). These “points of contact” and this collaborative nature are key features of the periodical genre and help to explain why magazines are referred to by Wachtel and in the Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media as potentially central to a movement. In the same way that a physical meeting of people for the purpose of exchanging ideas can have significant effects on a movement, periodicals act as conceptual meeting spaces where ideas come together and are combined in new and exciting ways that have the potential to influence perceptions and actions.

Wachtel’s connection between gathering together loose assemblages and being “at the centre of a movement” speaks to the profound effect that gathering these ideas together in a provisional way can have. *Branching Out’s* themed issues and letters to the editor are two examples of the ways in which magazines are gathering places. A themed issue offers magazine producers the opportunity to gather together diverse contributions on a single issue. And letters to the editor, because they are not often directly engaged with or refuted by the editorial staff, have the ability to represent varying and diverse perspectives on the issues raised by the magazine.

Surprisingly, as Wachtel demonstrates, even small circulation publications are often “at the centre of a movement.” Wachtel speaks to the relationship between smallness and influence:

Social change doesn't usually entail storming the winter palace, but the articulation of ideas by a small group of activists. Ideas are broadcast from narrow sources. Obvious examples are the political philosophy of Marx and Engels or the innovative perceptions of Freud which first appeared in the pages of small journals. The breaking of literary forms was signaled by T.S. Eliot and James Joyce in small magazines. Closer to home, *The Tamarack Review* has for the past 25 years provided a literary home for the early published fiction of writers such as Mordechai Richler, Alice Munro and Timothy Findley. When it ceased publication this year [1982], it had a circulation of 1400, all but 100 of which were institutional (i.e., libraries). One of the most influential publications in the history of Canadian letters was attracting 100 individual subscribers!" (21)

Again, this rhetoric about smallness and influence is at least partially the result of Wachtel's mandate to outline future funding opportunities for the Women's Programme. She must account for why the Women's Programme should fund periodicals with small circulation numbers. However, in doing so, she provides a valuable questioning of the assumption that publications that are ubiquitous are necessarily more influential than those that are less visible.

*Branching Out* editor Sharon Batt engages with this dichotomy in an article entitled "Feminist Publishing: Where Small is Not so Beautiful," published in the Spring 1980 issue of *Status of Women News*, which is "devoted primarily to the Media" (1). While the focus of Batt's article is on "the dilemma of the limited audience" and the resulting struggles faced by feminist publishers, in the process of addressing this dilemma, she also asserts that "smallness does not preclude influence. Once

something is in print, it can be handed around, copied, reprinted, put in libraries and schools, talked about and used by lobbying groups and teachers” (13). In her analysis of “the conundrum of wanting to publish socially significant material and wanting to reach ‘everywoman’” (13), Batt points to an important benefit of smallness: “no big conglomerate is going to move in on our territory, so feminist publications should stay safely in the hands of women” (13). By remaining small, feminist publishers can set their own agendas and have autonomy from patriarchal publishing (though this autonomy also results in a lack of capital, which is one of the central problems of smallness identified by Batt).

Contrasting the national media and the small-scale independent periodical press, Davies claims that “because of [small-scale publications’] fragile existence, individually and collectively networking between people of quite distinct interests, positions and backgrounds has created a set of grounds for discourse where none previously existed” (16).<sup>18</sup> This sense that diversely located individuals coming together can produce cultural innovation is a theme that runs throughout the interviews that I conducted with *Branching Out* participants. Often events and details of the magazine were difficult for participants to recall (more than 30 years after the fact) but they regularly had a strong sense of the personalities and skill sets that

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<sup>18</sup> In making the claim that small-scale Canadian periodicals “created a set of grounds for discourse where none previously existed,” Davies sets up a dichotomy between comprehensiveness and the growth of Canadian culture, arguing that if the act of creating the grounds for discourse performed by small-scale periodicals “is not as comprehensive as the national media claims that it is, nor indeed as some of us would like it to be, it nevertheless indicates the absolute centrality of magazines and journals to the growth of a culture” (16-17). This distinction between coverage and growth is crucial. While the mainstream media claims to be comprehensive, covering the news and culture relevant to all Canadians, the small-scale publications with all of their overt bias and limitations are, according to Davies, what leads to the “growth of a culture.” Ironically, the mainstream press is also limited by its feigned comprehensiveness, which is in fact just a constructed image of what is mainstream. The difference between the mainstream and the alternative press can in a sense be summed up as the difference between covert and overt expressions of ideology.

shaped the magazine. Founding editor Susan McMaster's interest in creative writing had lasting effects on the magazine's content and organizational structure. Personal relationships caused women to become involved in the magazine and, subsequently, influence its content.<sup>19</sup> For example, the strong presence of photography in the magazine is clearly the result of the significant involvement of accomplished photographers Alice Baumann-Rondez and Diana Selsor Palting (now Edwards) early on in the magazine's print-run.

Judith Mirus, who contributed film reviews and worked as *Branching Out's* film review editor in 1977 and 1979-80, describes this influence as a double-edged sword that enabled a diversity of content but led to a lack of editorial focus. Because *Branching Out* relied on women who were willing to volunteer their time, the magazine was limited to—and by—these women's areas of expertise. For example, when she began volunteering for *Branching Out*, Mirus was doing her MA in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta. She was working on New German Cinema. This European focus was outside the Canadian mandate of *Branching Out* but the magazine needed someone to write quality film reviews and Mirus was willing to volunteer her time. As a result, the international German film festival, the Berlinale, receives a disproportionate amount of coverage

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<sup>19</sup> Cultural formations are often dependent on physical proximity. During my interviews with *Branching Out* participants, the ways in which participants' physical and social locations in Edmonton led to their participation in *Branching Out* was a reoccurring topic of discussion. For example, Heather Pringle became involved with the magazine because Linda Duncan was dating Pringle's brother; in residence at the University of Alberta, Barbara Hartmann lived across the hall from an apartment where McMaster spent time; Judith Mirus's work with the National Film Theatre caused her to meet Barbara Hartmann, when Hartmann was working for the Edmonton public library; and Sharon Smith took a photography class from Diana Selsor Palting (now Edwards) at Grant MacEwan. The physical and social locations of these participants had a profound impact on *Branching Out's* content and publishing history.

in *Branching Out*. Mirus notes how the Canadian focus of the magazine is compromised by its ability to attract volunteers with appropriate areas of expertise.

This sense of a somewhat disconnected group of volunteers was corroborated in an interview with *Branching Out* volunteer Sharon Smith. Smith worked alongside editor Sharon Batt from 1978 to 1980 sharing the office work and doing some copyediting and layout. Despite all the time she spent in the office she remembers meeting very few of the volunteers and contributors. She recalls most volunteers doing their work in small groups or alone, over the phone or via the mail. Because these women were volunteering their time, often juggling paid work and family commitments, there were limited opportunities to meet as a large group, which certainly contributed to the miscellaneous quality of *Branching Out*. That said, Smith was also quick to point out that Sharon Batt had rigorous standards for what she was willing to print in the magazine and that the diffuse nature of the group did not lead to compromises on quality.

In addition to Mirus' and Smith's memories of *Branching Out*'s loose assemblage of volunteers, there is Batt's description of more cohesive editorial policies at *Branching Out* in "Feminist Publishing: Where Small is Not so Beautiful." Batt outlines the central shift in editorial policy that took place at *Branching Out*:

The first few years that we published *Branching Out* we aimed for a format that would appeal to 'the average woman' and to feminists too. We deliberately did not concentrate on feminist issues, reasoning—correctly—that to do so would alienate potential readers who were not active in the women's movement. Many articles we published were along the lines of 'an interesting woman I know did this' or 'here's something I've been thinking

about that you might like to hear.’ As it turned out, few ‘average women’ seemed to want to read these affectionate profiles and homey anecdotes. Feminists were inclined to look bewildered, bored or scornful when they read them. Eventually we revised our objectives to make the content distinctly feminist. In my opinion, this editorial shift has resulted in a more coherent, exciting magazine. It has not brought us significantly more readers.

(13)

Temporarily setting aside the problem of readership, which I return to in chapter one, this description of *Branching Out*’s shift in editorial policy is significant for two reasons: one, the policy seems more cohesive than Mirus’ and Smith’s image of a loose assemblage of volunteers suggests; two, the claim that the content was only “distinctly feminist” in the second phase seems to somewhat misrepresent the content published in *Branching Out*. Looking only at the magazine’s editorials in the first year, topics covered include: keeping your birth name, the conflict between taking “liberated” actions and feeling liberated, and a critique of sexist educational materials. These topics would be difficult to define as anything other than “distinctly feminist,” even though they might not be radical.

In its first few years *Branching Out* was much more than a series of articles “along the lines of ‘an interesting woman I know did this’ or ‘here’s something I’ve been thinking about that you might like to hear’” (13). *Branching Out* published compelling fiction, poetry and visual art by Canadian women in addition to feature articles that were more than a series of human interest stories and personal musings, as Batt’s 1980 description suggests. So why would Batt represent *Branching Out*’s content in this way? Likely she was responding to critiques of *Branching Out* made by

more radical feminists (i.e. revolution-based rather than reform-based activists), who would have been looking for more radical content than *Branching Out's* general interest mandate encompassed.

It is also important to note that the shift in editorial policy was partially the result of Susan McMaster returning to Ottawa and Sharon Batt taking over as editor. In my interview with Batt she emphasized McMaster's desire to appeal to a wide variety of women and her insistence that *Branching Out* be a "soft feminist" not a "radical feminist" magazine. Prior to attending the first planning meeting for *Branching Out's* preview issue, Batt had not been active in the organized women's movement. In a follow up exchange to our interview, Batt described how, "prior to coming to Edmonton, [she] had been a graduate student at [the University of British Columbia] where some of the women [she] knew had started consciousness-raising groups," but that she had not joined any of these groups. Batt explained that she "generally had not been a joiner of organizations up to that point in [her] life." For Batt, "leftist and feminist literature was a part of [her] formation" but *Branching Out* taught her "the community activism piece." *Branching Out's* shift in editorial policy from a more general interest to a more distinctly feminist magazine parallels Batt's increasing commitment to this "community activism piece."

As my interview with McMaster (as well as comments made about McMaster by other interviewees) make clear, McMaster was uncomfortable with the label "feminist" and did not see the magazine as overtly political. She admits that the magazine was political insofar as it published work by women, but she was not on the look out for overtly feminist art and writing. This sentiment is repeated by

several of the women who worked on *Branching Out* including Mary Alyce Heaton, *Branching Out*'s business manager from 1974-76:<sup>20</sup>

The magazine's tone was very...mild compared to a lot of the American feminist writing, which I had read. A lot of the Americans' was very strident, very...anti-man. And that was not where *Branching Out* was coming from at all, partly by reason of inclination of the group. We considered ourselves as being out there to promote the work of women artists, more than to espouse a political or polemical stance.

Later in the interview, Heaton said that promoting the work of women artists is a political act, and thus *Branching Out* was in a way political, but it was not radical.

Similar to Heaton's description of *Branching Out* as promoting "the work of women artists" rather than espousing "a political or polemical stance," Aritha van Herk emphasized the benefits of being a centrist, rather than a radical feminist magazine both in our interview and in her editorial to the *Branching Out* Election Primer issue.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to her 1980 *Status of Women News* article, "Feminist Publishing," during our interview, Sharon Batt emphasized the magazine's consistently feminist identity. In a follow up exchange to our interview, Batt insisted, "From the very first issue, the content was feminist and the concept of having a magazine 'by and for women' was feminist." She described how McMaster "was very clear that this was not going to be a magazine of recipes and fashions." For Batt, McMaster's desire for the magazine to be more general interest than radical stemmed from McMaster's passion for "poetry and fiction which tends to resist political labeling." Batt recalled

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<sup>20</sup> In addition to her business manager duties, Heaton also worked with the non-fiction and resource planning groups and helped with layout.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter one for additional information on this issue and van Herk's editorial.

that the group had “many discussions about whether [*Branching Out*] would publish ‘anything that was good’ by a woman, or whether the content had to have some relationship to the politics of being a woman.” As my interviews indicated, McMaster and Batt came down on different sides of this discussion. McMaster was on the “anything that was good” side, whereas Batt was on the content with “some relationship to the politics of being a woman” side. *Branching Out* was always a feminist magazine; however, under Batt’s editorship, the magazine’s feminism became more overt.

The transition from attempting to appeal to the “average woman” to explicitly identifying as feminist, which Batt traces in her 1980 description of *Branching Out*’s editorial policy, is highlighted in Batt’s description of *Branching Out*’s inception in “Feminist Publishing.” Batt recalls,

In the summer of 1973, Susan McMaster, a 23-year-old unemployed teacher in Edmonton, went to a newsstand and couldn’t find a single magazine she wanted to read. Never one to be beaten by circumstance, Sue decided to start a magazine herself. She hand-lettered signs in shocking pink: “Canadian *women’s magazine* needs staff + contributors—literature, photos, art, sports, business, general, everything.” During the month of September over 50 women who saw the signs showed up at one or more of the weekly meetings held in Sue’s living room. Thus was born Canada’s first *feminist magazine*. (12 emphasis added)

Setting aside for the moment how remarkable it was that McMaster was able to attract so many women to *Branching Out*’s initial planning meetings, an important difference in labeling occurs in this description. While McMaster’s signs refer to a

“women’s magazine,” Batt’s concluding sentence calls *Branching Out* a “feminist magazine.” The proximity of these two labels highlights the different editorial vision that Batt developed over the course of *Branching Out*’s seven-year history. While McMaster wanted a generalist women’s magazine, over the years Batt took *Branching Out* more in the direction of a feminist magazine, which is not to say that *Branching Out* was not feminist in the early years, or that it was radical in the later years. Rather, these two modes were consistently present between *Branching Out*’s covers, but they appeared in different concentrations as time passed and increasing numbers of overtly feminist periodicals began to be published in Canada.

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As source material for this study, I relied on textual analysis of *Branching Out*, interviews with *Branching Out* participants, periodical studies scholarship, histories of second-wave feminism, and archival research at the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives (CWMA). As I outline in the preface, at the CWMA I was able to consult a host of English Canadian feminist periodicals that allowed me to identify what was unique about *Branching Out*, i.e. its location in Edmonton, its high production standards, its combination of political and cultural content, its ability to survive for seven years, and its national and general interest mandates. Because *Branching Out* was unique in Canada in the 1970s, I chose not to make sustained comparisons to other Canadian feminist periodicals of the period. In “Feminist Print Media,” Wachtel acknowledges that “Canada’s feminist periodicals manage to display a rich and diverse range of interests and emphases” (12). This diversity means that there is

“remarkably little overlap between publications” (14). As a result, while a comparative approach would provide insight into the feminist periodical genre, for the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus my analysis on *Branching Out*. As Wachtel indicates, after *Branching Out* folds in 1980 “there is no broadly-based national magazine that can rival *Ms* in its appeal” (16) and, I would add, there is no feminist magazine with *Branching Out*’s unique combination of feminist analysis and emphasis on the arts.

Despite its longevity and its status as the first Canadian second-wave feminist magazine, *Branching Out* has completely fallen out of the historical record. Even Judy Rebick’s 2005 history of second-wave feminism in Canada, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, which includes references to several other Canadian feminist periodicals of the period, fails to mention *Branching Out*. One of my central aims in this study is to contribute to the history of second-wave feminism in Canada. Consequently, one of my primary methods of analysis is to examine studies of second-wave feminism in order to illuminate the cultural and political work that *Branching Out* performed in the context of the women’s movement as a whole and to expand our understanding of second-wave feminism.

In order to gain insight into *Branching Out*’s production and organizational structure, I conducted a series of interviews. To prepare for these interviews, I researched oral history methodology. As the editors of *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, explain in their introduction to the reader’s second edition, “For many oral historians, recording experiences which have been ignored in history and involving people in exploring their own histories, continue to be primary justifications for the use of oral history” (3). I was drawn to oral history for precisely

these reasons. Not only did speaking with *Branching Out* staff and contributors enable me to record experiences that were not part of the historical record of Canadian second-wave feminism, these interviews also enabled participants to be involved in the production of this history. Because, as Paul Thompson outlines in “The Voice of the Past: Oral History,” “it is the larger and more successful organizations which normally leave records or commission their own history” (27), when studying texts that have fallen out of the historical record, such as *Branching Out*, oral history is an invaluable source of information.

However, as is repeatedly indicated in the scholarship on oral history methodology, “A story or statement that, in its oral form, is ‘by’ the speaker very often reaches the public in the form of a text ‘by’ the scholar, whether as a life history or as excerpts used by a scholar to illustrate a line of argument” (Gluck and Patai 2). As I conducted my interviews, I was aware of my interventions into participants’ stories. Because I knew that ultimately I was going to use participants’ stories to illustrate a line of argument, during the interview process I was conscious that I was not simply recording these stories. My questions influenced the content of each interview.<sup>22</sup> These stories were produced in the exchange between interviewer and interviewee.

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<sup>22</sup> During the interviews, I did not rigidly adhere to a set of questions. I prepared questions to provide a framework for the interviews, but I prioritized following up on participants’ memories and letting participants direct the conversation, rather than sticking to my script. For example, during my interview with Elaine Bulter, as a result of setting aside my questions and enabling her to direct the conversation, I learned that Margaret Laurence was a staunch supporter of *Branching Out* (see chapter two for details). When I encouraged participants to direct the conversation, I learned things about *Branching Out* that would not have surfaced if I had rigidly adhered to my prepared questions. Nevertheless, there were several core questions that I did pose during nearly every interview (see appendix 1). These questions certainly influenced the themes that emerged during the interviews. At the beginning of several interviews participants insisted that they remembered little about their time at *Branching Out*, but when I prompted them with specific questions, memories would start flooding to the surface. For example, in response to a question about discrimination against women in the art world, Diana Edwards recalled a story about one of her male colleagues at Grant MacEwan

In their introduction to *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai explain how feminist oral historians “have moved beyond celebration of women’s experience to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of doing feminist oral history” (3). Gluck and Patai indicate that, in the past, “Through [feminist scholars] work of framing, presenting, interpreting, analyzing, and making work public, [they had] believed, simply and finally, that [they] were contributing to the larger collectivity of women—making a kind of return. By documenting women’s representations of their own reality, [they] were engaging in advocacy” (3). This limited understanding of oral history’s contribution to women’s history soon gave way to a more nuanced understanding. As Gluck and Patai explain, “as scholars have continued to examine the different moments in the production of oral history, the real separation between narrator and interviewer has become ever more apparent” (3) and, as a result, feminist scholars can no longer “ignore the distinct imbalances of power and privilege that characterize most women’s oral history projects” (3). Contextualizing this shift, Gluck and Patai observe, “Perhaps we were merely discovering on our home turf and from the perspective of our own disciplines what some ethnographers have considered to be the pitfalls of their fieldwork” (3).

As my own experience interviewing *Branching Out* participants indicates, these “imbalances of power and privilege” shift depending on the research context. I identify with Jeska Rees’s observations about these imbalances in “Are You a Lesbian? Challenges in Recording and Analyzing the Women’s Liberation Movement

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Community College (see chapter two for details) and then reflected that she had not thought about that incident for years and that those memories were “just out of what [she] thought would be submerged by now.” I offer this description of my interview techniques in order to illustrate the usefulness of relying on both a structured and a more fluid interview approach.

in England.” In this article, Rees explains that because she is a member of the “new generation of researchers too young to have experienced” second-wave feminism “first hand” (177) who are beginning to write accounts of this period in feminist history, “some of the traditional inequalities identified by feminists as existing between researcher and researched were in [her] case inverted...or equalized” (184). In her research on revolutionary feminism in England, Rees found that “in terms of race, disability, and class, which [she] shared with the people that [she] interviewed,” these inequalities were equalized and that “in terms of age, political experience, and sexual identity,” which she did not share with the people whom she interviewed, these inequalities were inverted (184). In other words, Rees found that rather than necessarily being in a position of power because of her identity as a researcher, she had several identity categories in common with the women whom she interviewed, i.e. race and class, and when there were inequalities between herself and the women whom she interviewed Rees often found herself in a subordinate position. I did not experience the difficulties negotiating inequalities that Rees describes in her article.<sup>23</sup>

However, Rees raises an important point about the position of power that interview

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<sup>23</sup> Rees explains the difficulties that she encountered as follows: “the subject of revolutionary feminism in England is associated far more readily with division between feminists than uncomplicated alliances. Both revolutionary feminists and their critics—and I interviewed representatives from both groups—participated in intense debates around the topics of violence, sexuality, and feminism itself, debates that involved considerable personal investment. Some of the women remained strongly affected by these debates, and the events I asked them to recall and describe were not just of a theoretical or political nature, but also provoked emotional responses. The emotional context combined with an uncertainty as to which ‘side’ I was ‘on’ led two of my interviewees to be very suspicious of what I intended to do with the interviews, and they questioned me before the interviews took place about my life and my motivations, confronting experiences for a young and inexperienced interviewer. This included questions about my sexuality for which I was unprepared” (184). Likely as a result of the differences between the revolutionary feminist activists that Rees interviewed and the more moderate group of feminist publishers, artists and writers that I interviewed, I did not experience any of the difficulties that Rees describes. While *Branching Out* participants were personally invested in the magazine and certainly were affected by their participation in this project, because *Branching Out* was not a forum for the kind of “intense debates” that were common between the groups of feminists whom Rees interviewed, the inequalities between myself and the participants whom I interviewed was not a source of conflict.

participants can be in when they are being interviewed by a younger researcher who was not active in the movement that she is researching. During the interviews that I conducted, *Branching Out* participants sometimes commented on my age and filled me in on historical details that they felt I would be unaware of because of my age. However, participants also second guessed their own memories and insisted that I probably had more knowledge of *Branching Out* or the women's movement than they did because I had been reading the magazine and researching the women's movement recently and their memories are over thirty years old. I refer to Rees on the inversion and equalization of "traditional inequalities identified by feminists as existing between researcher and researched" because her experience highlights the complexity of oral history as a research method. Not only are there inevitably inequalities between researcher and researched, but these inequalities shift depending on the research context.

In their explanation of the various disciplinary influences on oral history, Gluck and Patai indicate that when literary theory challenged "the older historian's tendency to see oral history as a transparent representation of experience," it "made us aware that the typical product of an interview is a text, not a reproduction of reality" (3). An interview is a text that is produced in the exchange between interviewer and interviewee and is not a record of reality. Considering the inequalities between interviewer and interviewee is one way to acknowledge how the interview context shapes the text that is produced during an interview. However, to say that an interview is a text and not a reproduction of reality does not undermine the use of interviews for historical research. As Alessandro Portelli asserts in "What Makes Oral History Different," neither oral nor written sources are reproductions of

reality: “Oral sources are not *objective*. This of course applies to every source, though the holiness of writing often leads us to forget it” (32). In a move that has become common since the original publication of Portelli’s essay in English in the *History Workshop Journal* in 1981 (and was influenced by the rise of post-structuralism), Portelli challenges the distinction between oral and written sources by calling into question the objectivity of both forms. Neither oral nor written sources are reproductions of reality, yet both are valuable sources for historical research.

In *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*, Alice Echols references historian Gareth Stedman Jones who—in keeping with Portelli’s challenge to the objectivity of historical sources—“has observed, history is not coterminous with the past, but consists, rather, of the ‘residues of the past’” (20). Assertions such as this are a common feature of history methodologies, whether they take up written sources, oral sources, or a combination of the two. After acknowledging that “history is not coterminous with the past,” Echols explains that the passage of time affected the interviews she conducted for her study of American radical feminism: “Many years separated my interviewees from the events I was inquiring about, and their recollections were, of course, filtered through the present” (20). Not only do the backgrounds of the interviewer and interviewee affect the text produced during an interview, as Echols’ description of her interviews indicates, the passage of time and the contemporary moment that informs the interpretation of past events also influence the text produced during an interview. In preparing this study, I was aware that I was not creating an objective record of *Branching Out’s* past, but rather constructing a narrative based on the “residues of the past” that I had access to through interviews, textual analysis and historical research.

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This study moves from a close focus on the magazine's production to an analysis of the radical potential of cultural institutions to a broader discussion of *Branching Out's* location within the landscape of Canadian second-wave feminism. In chapter one, I focus on *Branching Out's* staff and organizational structure. Relying on the data that I collected during interviews with *Branching Out* staff members, this chapter outlines the contributions of Susan McMaster and Sharon Batt, the magazine's founding and long-time editors respectively, and analyzes the challenges that *Branching Out* faced operating in a male-dominated, commercially driven publishing industry. Unlike many other second-wave feminist organizations, *Branching Out* was not a collective. Initially, the magazine attempted to operate as a collective, but the challenges of being a volunteer publication soon led *Branching Out* to take a more structured approach. I discuss the dynamics of relying on unpaid labour and the influence of *Branching Out's* location in Edmonton, outside of Canada's publishing centres. This chapter tells the story of *Branching Out's* day-to-day operations and organizing principles. My purpose in chapter one is to demonstrate how *Branching Out's* organizational structure influenced the magazine.

Chapter two demonstrates how *Branching Out* challenges the distinction between art and politics and exemplifies the political nature of cultural production. Beginning with a discussion of the value of amateurism and *Branching Out's* location in-between the amateur and the mainstream, this chapter analyzes several examples of the political nature of *Branching Out's* cultural content and characterizes the

publication of work by women in *Branching Out* as a political act. I analyze readers' responses to the magazine's emphasis on the arts. This emphasis elicited both support and criticism from readers. Readers' conflicting responses speak to the difficulty that *Branching Out* faced in attempting to appeal to a wide range of Canadian women. This chapter also considers *Branching Out's* role in addressing the imbalance between the publication and exhibition opportunities available to men and the publication and exhibition opportunities available to women in Canada in the 1970s. Because this chapter addresses the relationship between art and politics, it also explores how *Branching Out* addressed imbalances between women's and men's political involvement. Consequently, this chapter pays particular attention to four themed issues, two that focus on art and two that focus on politics: Women and Politics (1977), Women and Art (1978), Election Primer (1979) and Special Fiction Issue (1979).

Chapter three discusses various strains of Canadian feminism—radical, reform, socialist, cultural—and defines *Branching Out* as an example of cultural feminism, recuperating this term from its derogatory use by radical feminists in order to demonstrate how *Branching Out* disrupts rigid distinctions between art and politics. This chapter identifies several key features of the Canadian women's movement—including an emphasis on how the Canadian movement differs from its American counterpart; a “commitment to the ordinary political process” (Vickers 40); an ability to create coalitions between ideologically diverse women's groups; and “a political position slightly left of centre” (McDonald 39)—and analyzes how *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary feature section on the “Dynamics of the Women's Movement” both confirms and challenges these characteristics. My purpose in chapter three is to

establish the radical potential of alternative cultural institutions like *Branching Out* and to explain how key features of Canadian feminism are addressed in *Branching Out*; in doing so, this chapter contributes to Canadian feminist history.

Each chapter foregrounds one of this study's three aims. Chapter one's treatment of *Branching Out*'s organizational structure addresses this study's first aim: to acknowledge the contributions of the women who worked on *Branching Out* and to establish *Branching Out*'s place in Canadian feminist and publishing histories. By contextualizing *Branching Out*'s success in terms of the challenges that the magazine faced as a volunteer feminist publication in Edmonton in the 1970s, I hope to demonstrate that *Branching Out* deserves a prominent place in these histories. Chapter two addresses this study's second aim: to reinforce understandings of the political nature of cultural production. That culture is political is a central tenet of cultural studies and an important presupposition that underlies Canadian nationalist discourses; however, within the scholarship on feminism as a political movement and within the women's movement itself, cultural production has often been associated with political quietism. My work on *Branching Out* provides a direct challenge to this view within the context of feminist activism. Chapter three builds on existing histories of Canadian second-wave feminism, this study's third aim, by recuperating the term cultural feminism and comparing scholarship on second-wave feminism with *Branching Out* content that directly addresses the Canadian women's movement. In order to achieve these three aims, I begin with an analysis of the magazine's production.

## Chapter One

### Keeping the “Bobbing Paper Boat” Afloat

When I interviewed Aritha van Herk about her time at *Branching Out*,<sup>24</sup> she described the magazine as a “little ship that was sailing down the North Saskatchewan River amongst all these other dragon boats.” She referred to *Branching Out* as a “little bobbing paper boat trying to make some headway for women and trying to give women a voice.” This metaphor represents several central themes that emerged from the interviews that I conducted with *Branching Out* staff: the importance of *Branching Out*’s location in the west; *Branching Out*’s commitment to making work by women public; and the struggles that *Branching Out* faced operating in the male-dominated, commercially driven publishing world. This chapter relies on interviews with *Branching Out* staff to describe how this boat came to be, who kept it afloat, and how the crew worked together to keep the boat on the water for seven years.<sup>25</sup>

When Susan McMaster first envisioned the magazine in 1973, she placed an ad in the University of Alberta student newspaper *The Gateway*. The ad appeared under the heading “Women’s Magazine” and read “New Canadian Woman’s magazine needs editors and contributors (literature, art, music, sports, francais [sic], everything) and business manager” (15). The ad, published in *The Gateway* five times in September 1973, indicated that interested individuals should call McMaster. Several of the women whom I interviewed described coming across this ad and attending one of the early *Branching Out* meetings. When I asked long-time editor

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<sup>24</sup> Aritha van Herk was a member of *Branching Out*’s staff from 1977 to 1980.

<sup>25</sup> See appendix 2 for biographical information on the women whom I interviewed.

Sharon Batt about those early meetings, she explained “Sue had done a lot of thinking and kind of knew what she wanted to do and was looking for people to work on it basically. And none of us had ever met before.” The group was made up of “a bunch of people who heard about this and showed up” and was based on McMaster’s vision of a national, general interest magazine for and by women. Batt recalled that the women who came to the early meetings were all around the same age, in their late-twenties or early-thirties, and that McMaster was one of the youngest, in her early-twenties. While both older and younger women were involved with *Branching Out* over the years, women in their late-twenties to early-thirties were the age group that predominated. Batt recalls,

A number of us were there because we had partners who had jobs in Edmonton. I think that was part of what made it such an important project, certainly to me and I think probably to some others as well, that they were women who were fairly well-educated and who had some passion to be involved in something and there was really not much happening in Edmonton at the time that we could focus on. And this was something that just by luck, and I think the times we were in, it brought us all together.

Batt’s memory of *Branching Out* as a gathering place for women who were looking for meaningful work is supported by the comments of several other *Branching Out* staff members. Participants often emphasized how few publishing opportunities there were for women at the time and how meaningful it was for them to be involved in a publishing venture that was making work by women public.

Diana Edwards’s description of the sense of accomplishment that came with each issue’s publication is representative: “It was something I cared about and [it]

was so satisfying to see it come out every time...that we'd actually managed to put it together, always on a shoestring of course."<sup>26</sup> The women whom I interviewed consistently paired comments about the sense of accomplishment that they felt working on *Branching Out* with references to the magazine's limited resources. Edwards continued, "Never enough money. Never enough time. And I was working how many jobs, too, and raising kids. It wasn't like we had a lot, or I [had] a lot of time to sit around and talk about what we might do." The limitations of never enough money and never enough time had a significant impact on *Branching Out*. The fact that staff members like Edwards were volunteering their time at *Branching Out* meant that they had to fit their work for the magazine around all of their other time commitments.

Comments made by film review editor and contributor Judith Mirus and by office manager and assistant editor Sharon Smith reveal the diffuse nature of *Branching Out*'s organizational structure. Mirus recalled that Sharon Smith and Sharon Batt were the ones at the *Branching Out* office most often during the period that she worked for the magazine (1977 and 1979-80). Mirus worked independently soliciting and writing film reviews that she would submit to Sharon Batt for review and publication. Similarly, Smith remembered being in the office either alone or with Batt and attending only one board meeting during her two years working for the magazine (1978-1980).

Smith compared *Branching Out* to the publication of an online magazine: "People dropped in and brought something, just the way you might receive an email with something that you're going to use for a publication that's online." Prior to

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<sup>26</sup> Diana Edwards published as Diana Palting and Diana Selsor Palting in *Branching Out*.

working on *Branching Out*, Smith did not know any of the other women who worked on the magazine except for Diana Palting, who invited her to join the *Branching Out* staff when Smith was in Palting's photojournalism class at Grant MacEwan Community College. Smith recalled meeting very few other staff members and contributors during her time with *Branching Out*: "everything came in by mail, hardcopy, to Sharon [Batt] or to the office for Sharon. Everything was edited that way and then sent again." According to Smith, *Branching Out* "came out with no one actually ever being in the office." Granted, Smith did work in the *Branching Out* office during the day (in order to be home when her daughter returned from school) and so she was not in the office in the evenings when other staff members came in after their day jobs to work on the magazine. Nonetheless, much of the *Branching Out* labour was conducted in people's homes and in their spare time, far away from the magazine's office. Because *Branching Out* relied almost exclusively on volunteer labour, with only a few exceptions when specific grants enabled the magazine to pay people for brief periods, staff members generally worked independently.

Despite the fact that Barbara Hartmann was involved in all but three of *Branching Out*'s thirty-one issues, working on layout and as the coordinating art editor, she did not meet many of the magazine contributors. During our interview, Hartmann reflected, "The interesting thing about *Branching Out* is that really there were a lot of women who contributed to the magazine whom I never saw. There were a lot of people who wrote articles and they'd sent [them] in, but they weren't necessarily at meetings or they didn't necessarily come to the office." Hartmann remembered the November/December 1975 (see figure 2) issue as a high point during her time at *Branching Out* because they had received funding from the

Secretary of State Women's Programme that enabled the magazine to pay Hartmann and three other staff, including Karen Lawrence and Sharon Batt, to produce a special issue on International Women's Year. Hartmann remembered the International Women's Year issue as one of the only times when she was able to be in the office on a regular basis with a group of women. She remembers a stronger sense of camaraderie on this issue: "Just because we were working together. Because we didn't have to go to day jobs, because we were actually getting paid, so we were all in the room together doing the work at the same time, as opposed to coming after work and doing it that way." Hartmann's memories of producing the International Women's Year issue are in contrast to her and other staff members' memories of a diffuse group of women working on the magazine in their limited spare time. After McMaster returned to Ottawa in 1975, Sharon Batt was responsible for putting all of these independent contributions together with the help of staff members who did layout (such as Barbara Hartmann and Diana Palting) and who helped out with office work (such as Sharon Smith and Elaine Butler).

Early on in the magazine's history, when McMaster was the coordinating editor, Batt "got involved in everything" at the magazine (telephone interview). During our interview, Batt explained that for the first year of the magazine, she was working full-time for the provincial government and "Sue [McMaster] was pretty much working full-time on the magazine, getting it up and running." Batt remembered working on the magazine around her work schedule at the government, "whatever [she] could fit in" and that she "had become very passionate about [*Branching Out*]." The fact that McMaster was working full-time on the magazine meant that it had a significant impact on the magazine when she had to step down as

editor after the March/April 1975 issue. Batt explained, “It was obviously a big thing to have Sue leave because it had been her baby.” After McMaster left, Batt became the driving force behind *Branching Out*. In my interview with Elaine Butler, *Branching Out* business manager from 1977 to 1979, Butler described the magazine as “Sharon’s baby” because “she was the one who was always there working.” The fact that the magazine is described as both McMaster’s and Batt’s “baby” highlights the importance of the magazine’s two editors and the vital contribution that they each made to the magazine by working full-time without pay. Without McMaster and Batt, *Branching Out* would not have existed or survived for seven years.

Reflecting on her roles at *Branching Out*, McMaster described her most significant contribution to the magazine: “I think that my biggest contribution was the initiation of the project..... I imagined something. I imagined a magazine. I imagined what it might be about. I got excited about it. And then I was able to interest and convince other people that that was an interesting idea” (telephone interview). McMaster’s role as the initiator came up in several of the interviews that I conducted. Mary Alyce Heaton, business manager from 1974 to 1976, recalled that “a lot of the focus of the magazine came from Susan,” emphasizing that “Susan herself is a writer and a poet and felt the need for some sort of outlet that she didn’t find to be particularly available.” McMaster’s interest in the arts and commitment to produce a general interest as opposed to a radical feminist magazine set the tone for *Branching Out*. In McMaster’s words, the magazine “didn’t have a political agenda—that is, we did not have *an* agenda of achieving certain specific goals. We just wanted to open the discussion wide and bring that feminist discussion into Canada and into Canadian arts.” The desire to bring feminist discussion into Canadian arts and to a

wider audience than could identify with a specific political agenda was something that remained consistent throughout *Branching Out's* history. The emphasis on the arts was one of McMaster's lasting influences on the magazine and set *Branching Out* apart from other Canadian feminist periodicals. Because the art side of the magazine was so integral to *Branching Out's* identity, I address this aspect of the magazine's content in detail in both chapter two and three.

Depending on when staff members were involved with the magazine, they placed more emphasis on either McMaster's or Batt's contributions. Generally, participants had more to say about Sharon Batt because she was the driving force behind the magazine for longer than McMaster. Batt worked on *Branching Out* for all seven years and McMaster for the first two. However, participants who were involved in the magazine's early days highlighted the importance of McMaster's original vision.

During our interview, McMaster insisted that an "oppositional view was not [her] view of the world" and that she did not want the magazine to focus on the victimization of the female sex by the male sex. Instead, McMaster saw the magazine as a space for showcasing work by women. Aritha van Herk began working on the magazine in 1977, several years after McMaster returned to Ottawa; nonetheless, she described *Branching Out's* mandate in a similar fashion. In response to a question about the criticisms that *Branching Out* faced for not being radical enough, van Herk explained, "We were trying to be representative in a really broad and yet smart, intellectual way. And we didn't espouse a particular political position. We didn't want to go to the radical fringe in either direction, right or left. We wanted to ask questions that would make our readers think." Similarly, in her 1979

editorial for *Branching Out*'s Election Primer issue (see figure 3), "Feminism: Wallflower in Party Politics," van Herk explains, "*Branching Out* is often criticized for not being political enough. If being political means that we support one of the established and male-dominated parties, we are not. But as we hope to show in this issue, feminism is in itself a political stance and it is becoming increasingly important that we recognize this fact" (2). *Branching Out* did not tie itself either to traditional party politics or to radical politics. Instead, as van Herk's editorial explains, the magazine presented feminism itself as a political stance. Two integral aspects of *Branching Out*'s feminism were showcasing work by Canadian women artists and exposing a wider audience to issues of gender discrimination.

In keeping with McMaster's desire to "open the discussion wide and bring that feminist discussion into Canada and into Canadian arts," van Herk also described the magazine as an open door:

I think that the readership [...] knew that they weren't going to be preached to so much as that a door would open and a range of ideas would be presented to them. I mean, we were certainly considered political enough, in a sense, because we asked questions about what were political issues.

Abortion, choice, they were all issues that we raised. So it wasn't that we sat on the fence and were namby-pamby, but we just didn't say 'Okay, here's what you're supposed to do.' We tried to be more generative and less directive. (telephone interview)

This description of the magazine as more generative and less directive indicates that McMaster's original editorial vision—of a magazine that would appeal to a wide range of women and include a wide range of content—remained consistent over the

years. However, as was to be expected, *Branching Out* struggled to put this ideal of an inclusive, general interest feminist magazine into practice. In the magazine's first anniversary editorial, entitled "One Year Later," Batt explains, "We have been described as a magazine for educated women that ignores the problems that face working women and housewives" (3). Batt responds to this common criticism by conceding that in its first year the magazine has not "covered some of the areas that many readers think vital... among them, the problems of women in prison, women working in menial jobs, and women living in isolated areas" and explaining that "it is difficult to write well about problems one has not experienced" and that until *Branching Out* "can afford to pay contributors a reasonable rate, it is a regrettable fact that most will be women who can afford to forgo payment for their material" (3).<sup>27</sup>

In my interview with Naomi Loeb, she also referred to the limited pool of people who had the resources to work on projects like *Branching Out*. Loeb explained that

initially, when we started out, we were a bunch of middle-class white women, but we envisioned expanding that significantly as we grew and established ourselves. But, again, you can only take one step at a time. The fact that we were even walking and talking was a miracle. But down the road that was certainly...what all of us wanted.... But, when you're all focused on just existing, those kinds of arguments fall into the background."

Loeb was involved with *Branching Out* during the magazine's first two years.

Although *Branching Out* continually had to focus on "just existing," over the years it also developed to include more varied content—in keeping with Loeb's description

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<sup>27</sup> *Branching Out* went on to include articles on the three topics that Batt mentions as examples of topics readers criticized the magazine for not covering during its first year.

of expanding the magazine's scope. Even a brief survey of the topics covered in the magazine's regular law column demonstrates that *Branching Out* tried to include material relevant to women from a variety of socio-economic locations.

The final issue that Loeb worked on, February/March 1976 (see figure 4), was also the first issue that included what would become the magazine's regular law column. In the inaugural column, "Hit 'em Where it Hurts," Linda Duncan recommends that women who have been raped should sue their attackers for damages as a response to ineffective criminal sanctions. Subsequent columns cover the legal status of a common law wife, matrimonial property law, fishing rights for Inuit women, the Federal Human Rights Bill (Bill C-25), domestic violence, medical rights, custody rights for lesbian mothers, the exploitation of immigrant women, women in prison, gender discrimination in sports, equal pay legislation, pornography, labour and family reforms in Cuba, affirmative action, the role of Canadian human rights commissions, and the minimum wage system. As this brief survey suggests, *Branching Out* did step beyond the concerns of "middle-class white women" to include articles relevant to a more diverse population of Canadian women. Of course, the ideal of inclusiveness is an elusive one. Throughout its history, *Branching Out* continued to receive feedback from readers on how it could be more inclusive. As with many second-wave feminist projects, *Branching Out* worked towards but never arrived at this elusive ideal.

For personal reasons, McMaster had to leave Edmonton very abruptly. When I spoke to her about stepping down as editor, she explained, "It had nothing to do with the magazine. It was not that I had in any way lost my commitment to the magazine nor that anybody was trying to push me out. It was truly and entirely

personal.” McMaster described Sharon Batt as “the heroine who moved in to take over and keep things going.” When I spoke to Batt, it was clear that she has a similarly high opinion of McMaster: “Sue was just an incredibly visionary person to decide that she wanted to do this and to have this concept, coming out of Edmonton that we would do this national magazine.” McMaster’s and Batt’s roles as visionary and heroine were echoed by many of the *Branching Out* staff members whom I interviewed. Participants spoke about how incredible it was that McMaster was able to motivate people to produce a national feminist magazine in Edmonton, outside of Canada’s publishing centres, and how remarkable it was that Batt was able not only to keep the magazine going for so many years but also to maintain high standards of quality despite the magazine being a volunteer publication. As Linda Duncan explained, when Batt “decided she wasn’t going to run it anymore, that was it. That was it for *Branching Out*. Nobody else would even conceive of taking it on.”

Although Batt could not recall the discussion she had with McMaster about taking over the magazine, she did remember being ready to leave her job and take on *Branching Out* full-time despite it being “totally unpaid work.” During our interview, Batt exclaimed, “I look back and think, what was I thinking!” The volume of work that Batt took on and her commitment to the magazine was a frequent topic of discussion in my interviews with other staff members. Linda Duncan, well-known Edmonton lawyer and current Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona who was *Branching Out*’s law editor from 1976 to 1980, went so far as to say “Sharon Batt is *Branching Out*’”—a view that was corroborated by several of the other staff members whom I interviewed. In response to questions about the organizational

structure at *Branching Out*, Olenka Melnyk<sup>28</sup> highlighted how integral Batt was to *Branching Out*. Melnyk, who was a contributing editor at *Branching Out* in 1979, was a reporter for the *Edmonton Journal* when she was approached to work on the magazine. During our interview, Melnyk made several comments about the significance of Batt's contribution to the magazine. In a discussion of the magazine's final year, Melnyk explained, Batt "made a huge financial contribution by working without pay, but it'd run out of steam and I don't know what else you do. The rest of us had ideas, but none of us were going to give up our jobs or suddenly give up twenty hours a week each to do whatever it takes to get it on its feet." The fact that Sharon Batt was, for a time, able to work full-time without pay was the primary circumstance that kept the magazine going.

In describing her decision to take on editing *Branching Out*, Batt speculates that others were not willing to take on the position and emphasizes the volume of work that the position entailed: "I don't think anybody else was willing to take it on to that degree, though other people were certainly very involved at that point too.... It wasn't like there were people clamouring to work 50-60 hours per week for nothing." The decision to have Batt take over as editor was supported by the group. Considering the volume of work required by this unpaid position, it is not surprising that other staff members were not clamouring for the position.

Describing the differences between herself and McMaster, Batt explained that McMaster "had much more of a literary bent" and that "from the beginning" McMaster wanted *Branching Out* "to be high quality and...general interest and to have fiction and non-fiction and poetry and photographs." Batt "came in very much on

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<sup>28</sup> Olenka Melnyk published as Helen Melnyk at the time she worked on *Branching Out* and has since returned to her birth name.

the non-fiction side and that was always where [she] felt [her] contribution was.” As their subsequent careers indicate, McMaster’s strengths are in the arts and Batt’s in journalism and activism. McMaster has since become a well-known poet, publishing and editing twenty poetry books and recordings. In addition to founding *Branching Out*, McMaster also started *Vernissage: The Magazine of the National Gallery of Canada* and headed both the Feminist Caucus and the Freedom of Expression committees at the League of Canadian Poets. She is currently the league’s president. As the titles of several volumes edited by McMaster indicate, her writing career has included both feminist and peace activism. Editing volumes such as *Waging Peace: Poetry and Political Action*, *Dangerous Graces: Women's Poetry on Stage*, and *Silence: Women, Violence and Silence*, McMaster’s activism is rooted in the arts.

In contrast, after her work on *Branching Out*, Batt went on to establish herself as a leading social and political activist in Canada. Best known for her breast cancer activism, Batt is the author of *Patient No More*, which has been described as “one of the most comprehensive—and political—books ever written about breast cancer” (Driedger 106). As part of her breast cancer advocacy, Batt founded and was the executive director of Breast Cancer Action Montreal (BCAM). Prior to founding BCAM, Batt spent six years as editor of *Protect Yourself Magazine*, a Montreal-based consumer protection magazine, and two years as assistant editor at Saskatoon-based *Canadian Human Rights Reporter*. Batt held the Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University (1999-2001) and the Elizabeth May Chair in Women's Health and the Environment at Dalhousie University (2001-2003) and is currently a PhD candidate, specializing in Bioethics, at Dalhousie University in the Interdisciplinary PhD program. A member of the Technoscience and Regulation

Research Unit, Batt received a Canadian Institute for Health Research Doctoral Fellowship in Research Ethics and Health Policy to support her doctoral research on patients' groups and pharmaceutical company partnerships. In 2005, Batt won a Canadian Environment Award for her Drugs in Our Water campaign. From her work on *Branching Out* to her breast cancer activism to her current doctoral research, Batt has been committed to feminist activism.

As their subsequent career paths emphasize, *Branching Out's* two editors each brought a distinct set of strengths to the magazine. While McMaster's strengths lay in the creative arts, Batt excelled at writing and soliciting social and political content. Both got their start in publishing at *Branching Out*. When they began publishing the magazine, Batt had not yet become involved in the women's movement and had not written for publication. She described being uncomfortable signing her name to the first article that she wrote for *Branching Out's* preview issue, "Indian Rights for Indian Women," a piece on the Jeannette Lavell case.<sup>29</sup> During our interview, she recalled, "I was quite shy and the idea of writing something and putting my name on it was sort of scary." The subject matter was also a concern for Batt: "I knew how political it was and I had some reservations about getting into Indian politics when I was an outsider." Even though a family connection gave her insight into the discrimination

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<sup>29</sup> Batt's piece (signed "Staff") is an introduction to National Co-Chairman [sic] of Indian Rights for Indian Women Jenny Margetts' article on discrimination against Indian women who lose their status when they marry non-Indian men. As Margetts' explains in her article (also published under the title "Indian Rights for Indian Women") "In April 1970 Jeannette Lavell, who was a member of the Wikwemikong Band of Indians, married a man who was not an Indian. When her name was removed from the Band membership list she protested that this was a violation of the Canadian Bill of Rights which affirms the equality of the sexes before the law. Judge Grossberg of the York County Court concluded that the Bill of Rights had not been violated because Ms. Lavell, upon her marriage, had equality with all other Canadian females" (8). Grossberg's judgement was then reversed by Justice Thurlow of the Federal Court of Appeal, who "concluded that because the consequences of marriage to a non-Indian were worse for an Indian woman than for an Indian man, the Indian Act infringes on the right of an individual Indian woman to equality with other Indians before the law" (8). However, in 1973, the Crown appealed Thurlow's decision to the Supreme Court and "Grossberg's decision was restored"—although "four of the nine judges supported the position of Lavell" (8).

First Nations women faced when they married non-Aboriginal men, Batt was still uncomfortable signing her name to this piece: “I hadn’t worked out some of the politics of claiming my ideas on something that was a bit controversial at that point.” This hesitation quickly faded and by the time *Branching Out* published its first anniversary issue Batt wrote and signed an editorial (referenced above) defending the magazine against charges of elitism and justifying its women-only editorial policy. This editorial concludes: “to those who accuse exclusive female projects of reverse discrimination and to those who say ‘It’s not women’s liberation we need, but people’s liberation,’ we ask, why don’t some of these downtrodden, troubled men make the effort to start a publication that will promote a redefinition of the male role?” (3). In contrast to her unsigned preview issue article, in the first anniversary editorial Batt has no problem signing her name to a piece that challenges the magazine’s readers and critics.

Batt is known for claiming controversial ideas in her breast cancer advocacy work. As Sharon Doyle Driedger explains in her review of *Patient No More*, “Batt is passionate in her critique of the so-called breast cancer industry. She blames medical researchers’ dogged pursuit of treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation for the failure to find the cause of the disease. She also attacks the cancer charities, which, she claims, ‘hold up a rosy filter to breast cancer’” (106). This image of Batt as a passionate advocate for breast cancer patients who challenges the medical establishment to address the environmental causes of breast cancer and questions the role that cancer charities play in patients’ lives is in keeping with the image of Sharon Batt as the driving force behind *Branching Out*. What Linda Duncan described as Batt’s “dogged” determination was one of the key features that enabled *Branching Out*

to survive for seven years despite being underfunded and outside of Canada's publishing centres.

In my interview with Batt, she described *Branching Out* as “a detour that [she] hadn't expected in [her] life or planned” but that while she was working on the magazine she “started to feel that [her] niche was in publishing.” For many of the women who worked on *Branching Out*, the magazine was a place where they gained valuable experience in areas that would influence their subsequent career paths. Barbara Hartmann, who went on to become a successful children's book illustrator, remembers her work on *Branching Out* giving her the confidence to pursue a career as a visual artist. Hartmann was a fine arts student at the University of Alberta when Susan McMaster knocked on her door and asked to use her telephone. Hartmann was living in the HUB Mall residences at the university and McMaster spent time with the people who lived across the hall. McMaster and Hartmann got to know one another and McMaster invited Hartmann to a *Branching Out* meeting. Hartmann remembered offering to help with the art and McMaster responding “Oh good, you can help with layout.” Initially, Hartmann did not react well to being asked to do layout because “the parts of [her] art courses that [she] actually hated were the design courses.” Prior to working on the magazine, Hartmann had no interest in layout, but when she started working on the magazine she quickly changed her mind about design work: “I started doing the magazine and I thought it was really fun because it was an actual project. It wasn't these make up things.” In contrast to her design courses and their uninteresting “made-up” assignments, Hartmann enjoyed her work at *Branching Out* because she was producing a tangible product that was going out into the world.

In addition to layout, Hartmann also did illustrations for the magazine and found women who were interested in exhibiting their work in the visual art essay that appeared regularly in *Branching Out's* Women in the Arts section. Hartmann explained that before she began working on *Branching Out*, she “didn’t have an image of [herself] as an artist” or “doing art as a career.” Being involved with *Branching Out* “opened a door” for Hartmann: “being thrown into just doing the work even though I didn’t know how to do it and coming up with illustrations really gave me the idea that I could work as an artist. And...even then I knew that some of the illustrations that I did were really good.... I think that gave me the idea that I could do this.” Hartmann’s description of her work at *Branching Out* making her believe that she could pursue a career as an artist is in keeping with several *Branching Out* staff members’ memories of the magazine impacting the direction of their professional lives.

Long-time *Branching Out* staff member Karen Lawrence described *Branching Out* as a catalyst for changes in her professional life. Lawrence worked as *Branching Out's* fiction editor from 1974 to 1977 and contributed poetry, book reviews and articles to the magazine from 1974 to 1979. During our interview, Lawrence explained that at the time she was working on *Branching Out*, she was “‘all but dissertation’ in the graduate realm and just started feeling...that academics were out of touch. It was not where [she] wanted to be.” In response to a question about whether or not *Branching Out* led to any opportunities for her, Lawrence reflected, “some of what happened with the magazine was part of what drove me away from academia.” Lawrence did not make a definitive connection between her decision to leave academia and her work on the magazine, but she did characterize her work on

*Branching Out* as facilitating her decision: “I wanted to be more in touch with real life and real people doing real things, I guess, and the university just didn’t meet those needs for me. That might have happened even if I hadn’t been connected with the magazine, but I think it was catalytic in some way.” As Lawrence’s response highlights, it is impossible to isolate all of the variables in order to determine precisely what influence *Branching Out* had on its staff members; however, based on the information that I gathered from sixteen interviews with *Branching Out* staff and contributors, the impact that *Branching Out* had on many women who worked on the magazine is undeniable.

When Heather Pringle became involved with *Branching Out* in 1977, she had recently finished a Master’s degree in English at the University of British Columbia and decided to move back to Edmonton. She described herself as at loose ends at that point. She explained, “I didn’t really know what I wanted to do, although I had a pretty good idea I wanted to get into publishing and writing in some way, but I had no idea how to go about it.” Pringle discussed her situation with her family, specifically her brother, who was dating Linda Duncan at the time, and Duncan “suggested that [Pringle] get involved with *Branching Out* magazine.” These kinds of personal connections were very important for *Branching Out*. Women became involved with the magazine through connections at work, in their personal lives, and in their communities.

During our interview, Pringle explained that after she returned to Edmonton she “had a series of jobs that had absolutely no relationship to [her] interests and [her] dreams and hopes of finding full-time work somewhere in the publishing industry.” In response to a question about how Pringle felt about volunteering her

time at *Branching Out* rather than being paid for her work, she said that the magazine “was a kind of a lifeline” and that her work on *Branching Out* “had more to do with [her] real inner life than the other forty hours a week of paid work that [she] was doing.” Pringle’s description of the magazine as a lifeline and a starting point for her work in publishing industry is in keeping with *Branching Out*’s mandate to provide publishing opportunities for unknown or lesser-known Canadian women writers and artists. Like many of the women whose work was published in *Branching Out*, Pringle’s paid work did not coincide with the work she was passionate about. *Branching Out* was her way into the publishing industry. Pringle explained, “on the strength of the work that I’d done for *Branching Out*, I was hired by another small Edmonton institution which was Hurtig Publishers in Edmonton and that’s how I made my way into gainful employment...in the publishing industry.” Hurtig Publishers, best known for publishing the Canadian Encyclopedia in 1985 and 1988, was established by well-known Canadian nationalist Mel Hurtig in 1967 (Edwardson 148). Speaking about the important role that *Branching Out* played in getting her publishing career off the ground, Pringle went so far as to claim that “the fact that [she] had this experience at *Branching Out*, that [she] was clearly interested in Canadian literature was a kind of a calling card for [her] with Mel Hurtig and so he hired [her] on the strength of that.” The fact that Pringle’s work at *Branching Out* signified an interest in Canadian literature for a prominent Canadian nationalist highlights *Branching Out*’s identity as not only a feminist magazine but also a literary and a Canadian magazine.

Many staff members whom I interviewed indicated, because *Branching Out* was a project about which they felt passionate, volunteering their time was a joy and

they were not concerned with being paid for their labour.<sup>30</sup> Naomi Loeb spoke powerfully about the topic of volunteer labour during our interview. Loeb worked as a journalist at CBC Edmonton during her time with *Branching Out* and went on to become a reporter and TV personality in Ontario hosting and working on several programs at both CBC Television and TV Ontario. From 1974-76, Loeb had several roles at *Branching Out* including production, public relations, promotion, and non-fiction editorial work. Prior to coming to Edmonton in 1973, Loeb had been very active in the women's movement in the United States. After studying languages as an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, Loeb left Canada to attend graduate school at Columbia University, where she earned a Master's degree in French Literature and Romance Philology. After earning her Master's degree, Loeb worked for a year at the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Boston. Loeb's duties at NOW included lobbying the state legislature, running the office, and speaking at high schools as a member of the NOW speakers' bureau. Loeb emphasized that all of this work was unpaid: "I don't say that I volunteered because in my mind it really was work that I wasn't paid for, so it was very important to me that I thought of it as work." Although Loeb also worked without pay at *Branching Out*, she described this work as different from her work at NOW: "I didn't consider it the same at all because I had a paying job by then.... It was a labour of love to put all of the extra hours in." Loeb identifies an important difference between the

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<sup>30</sup> When I asked participants about volunteering their time at *Branching Out*, they uniformly spoke about how they enjoyed their work and did not expect to be paid. Many participants indicated that the goal was first and foremost to generate enough revenue to produce the next issue and that, if the opportunity had ever presented itself, paying Sharon Batt would be the number one priority. In contrast, during my interview with Batt, she explained, "For me, if I was going to do the editorial work, it made more sense to pay somebody to do some of the office work, so that I would be freed up." Batt recalled being paid for a brief period, but did not remember the source nor the duration; it may have been the money that Aritha van Herk remembered setting aside from her Seal First Novel Award to pay Batt a monthly wage for one year.

experience of performing unpaid work when she did not have an independent source of income as opposed to when she did have an independent source of income. Because she also had paid employment, it was not as important for her work at *Branching Out* to be validated by financial compensation; the value of her work was confirmed elsewhere.

Loeb spoke about the problem of volunteer work “not viewed as being as worthwhile...because you’re not paid for it” and how she challenged this view by treating her work at NOW like a nine to five job. In contrast, she did not feel that she needed to treat her work at *Branching Out* like a job “because, by then, [she] was earning money.” The very act of being paid for her labour enabled Loeb to see her time as valuable and, consequently, she could envision her work at *Branching Out* as a “labour of love” and not focus on the politics of unpaid work.

The irony of the women’s movement relying heavily on unpaid labour is taken up by Batt in her 1980 *Status of Women News* article “Feminist Publishing: Where Small is Not So Beautiful.” Enumerating the challenges facing Canadian feminist periodical publications, Batt refers to the problem of feminist publications’ limited circulation numbers and explains,

The financial consequence of this small audience is that feminist publishing is highly subsidized. It is subsidized by grants, by college or university staff and budgets (in the case of academically oriented magazines), by cash donations and, most significantly, by hundreds of hours of volunteer labour put in by both staff and contributors. Note the irony: women as free labour are the most essential ingredient of the feminist publishing industry’s survival. (12)

The fact that the second-wave feminist publishing industry relied so heavily on volunteer labour is ironic because this industry was part of a political movement dedicated to ending the undervaluing of women's labour. Certainly, the ways in which women's labour was being taken advantage of by the feminist publishing industry do not compare to exploitative labour practices that women faced in other industries. The women who worked in feminist publishing chose to perform unpaid work in order to forward a feminist agenda, make work by women public and provide an alternative to the material offered by the mainstream media.

Nonetheless, the fact that the women's movement fought against the undervaluing of women's work but was forced to rely on unpaid labour underscores the many challenges faced by second-wave feminist publications. As Batt explains, "feminist publications come up ranking 'small,' and in the world of publishing, small is not so beautiful" (12). Feminist publications' limited circulation numbers meant that these periodicals could barely generate enough revenue to publish their next issue let alone pay their staff.

Batt served on the board of the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association while she was working on *Branching Out* and, consequently, had experience with the challenges facing not only feminist periodicals but also Canadian small-circulation periodicals more generally. Referring to the size of feminist publications' readership, Batt insists that the "dilemma of the limited audience is not a stigma that plagues only feminist publishers. Literary magazines in Canada typically print fewer than 1000 copies per issue, while political-cultural magazines like *This Magazine* and *Canadian Forum* have circulations between 7 and 15 thousand. It follows that these magazines also rely on grants and volunteer labour" (13). Batt points out that

*Canadian Forum*, one of Canada's longest running magazines, relied on volunteer labour for its first fifty years and had only "one and a half paid staff" in 1980, when Batt published her assessment of the feminist publishing industry in Canada. Batt acknowledges, "In the publishing industry, circulation is key" (12). More subscribers translates into more ad revenue and more revenue means an increased ability to attract readers. As Batt explains, "The greater your revenue, the more you can do to make your magazine look appealing, the more money you have to pay writers and staff, and the more promotion you can do to reach still more readers" (12). Far from the anti-commercial rhetoric of more radical feminist publishers who refused to rely on advertising dollars, Batt acknowledges the value of ad revenue for reaching a wider audience of readers, emphasizing that "the more people there are out there reading your magazine, the more influence it is likely to have" (12).

However, Batt's belief in the value of advertising revenue did not lead *Branching Out* to accept advertising that compromised the magazine's editorial mandate. In my interview with Barbara Hartmann, she recalled that the group requested changes to an Edmonton Telephones advertisement because the drawing that accompanied the ad was "deemed sexist." Similarly, when I spoke with Mary Alyce Heaton, she explained how *Branching Out* worked with a local Edmonton ad agency that had a policy not to place "advertising which showed portions of human bodies." According to Heaton, this agency was run by two experienced ad women and placed some Alberta government ads in *Branching Out*. Heaton insisted that the magazine would have turned down advertising that stereotyped women: "we would have refused to carry advertising that portrayed women as barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen.... We would not continue to portray women in stereotyped roles."

Because periodicals like *Branching Out* were more concerned with the social good than economic value, attracting advertising was not only about increasing revenue and circulation numbers. The relationship between advertisements and editorial content also had to be taken into consideration.

Ryan Edwardson draws a clear connection between consumerism and the periodical press when he discusses the impact of modernity on nationalist uses of culture in *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood*. Edwardson claims, “No medium made clearer the presence of a consumer age than the periodical press” (37). The same genre that Canadian cultural nationalists used to forward a nationalist agenda was also used to sell products to readers. Edwardson draws a parallel between cultural nationalists and advertisers during the Massey Commission era: “Culturalists were not unlike the advertising sector in trying to foster and mould desire for specific products” (58-59). Similarly, where traditional women’s magazines were moulding desires for particular consumer goods, feminist magazines were promoting a social and political agenda.

Batt’s insistence on the importance of advertising dollars for increasing revenue and circulation numbers raises the question of the relationship between feminist periodicals and commercial women’s magazines. As Amy Erdman Farrell explains in her discussion of mass circulation magazines in *Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism*, “Since the inception of mass circulation magazines in the late 1800s, women had been targeted as an important audience, primarily because of women’s roles as consumers” (22). Criticizing mass circulation magazines is an important part of second-wave feminist history. In a section contextualizing *Ms.* magazine’s contribution to second-wave feminism, Farrell

describes resistance to the mass media as a uniting force amongst feminists:

“Whatever differences characterized the women who made up the early women’s movement (and there were many), what connected many of them was an anger that they targeted at the mass media” (21). This anger was part of what caused so many second-wave feminists to found and contribute to feminist magazine and newspapers, creating an alternative communications circuit. Farrell traces this anger back to *The Feminine Mystique*: “Beginning with the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, many activists pointed to the way that mainstream media, in particular women’s magazines, had perpetuated stereotypical images of women as housewives, mothers, and brainless consumers interested only in pleasing the men in their lives” (21). Heaton replicated this critique of women’s magazines when she insisted that *Branching Out* would not include advertisements that portrayed women as “barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen.” Alternative publications like *Branching Out* were a response to the limited representations of women offered by mainstream publications. While *Branching Out* did include content relevant to women with children and women who performed domestic labour, the group was not interested in perpetuating stereotypic understandings of these realms.

As Farrell explains, “activists saw media as both a root of women’s problems and a potential solution” (21). Traditionally, “The publishing industry saw women as potential consumers; editorials, articles, and cover stories never promised to inform their readers to create an informed citizenship, as they did in general interest magazines like *Time* or *Life*” (22). Periodicals like *Branching Out* and *Ms.* sought to repurpose the women’s magazine genre, to remake a genre that encouraged consumption into a genre that created an informed feminist citizenship. In the case

of *Ms.*, Farrell describes this as a “daring move” in light of “the history of women’s magazines, which were clearly designed from their origins as magazines for consumers, not for politically minded women wanting to change the world” (28). However, the case of *Ms.* is significantly different from *Branching Out* because *Ms.* “explicitly set out to make an alliance with the capitalist system, to use the financial resources of advertisers to fund the movement, and to forge a place for itself within Madison Avenue publishing” (3). In contrast, *Branching Out* more closely resembled an arts and culture magazine than a mass circulation magazine. Relying on grants, donations and volunteer labour, in many ways *Branching Out* had more in common with little magazines. While *Branching Out* did position itself as a general interest magazine and could be described as a feminist *Maclean’s* or *Saturday Night* (as *Branching Out* staff did during interviews), *Branching Out* never achieved the newsstand presence of *Ms.*

According to the 1960 report from the Royal Commission on Publishing, little magazines are devoted “mainly to social and literary criticism, but also include original poetry and fiction.” These magazines are published by “small groups of ambitious writers, and often written brilliantly.” They have a “high rate of mortality, attract few readers and few advertisers, yet have their place in the cultural life and hopes of the country” (qtd. in Toolis 2). Commenting on this definition in “*Branching Out* in Edmonton,” Lorna Toolis claims, “This definition does not fit *Branching Out* exactly; its main purpose is literary development rather than social criticism and it is not dependent upon word of mouth advertising; yet this is the most appropriate of the definitions the Commission gave” (2).

The only other extended analysis of the magazine, “*Branching Out* in Edmonton” is a research paper that Lorna Toolis submitted to the Faculty of Library Science at the University of Alberta in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements for Toolis Master’s in Library Science in 1979, the year before *Branching Out* folded. In this paper Toolis argues,

*Branching Out* survived the bleak early years [i.e. the four month publishing break from November 1976 to February 1977] and now is well-known, highly respected and almost financially secure. The unique content and high standards for reproduction were decided upon at the magazine’s inception and have been maintained despite the adverse market *Branching Out* faced until very recently. The history of *Branching Out* then, is a success story. This history shows how a group of untrained volunteers who responded to an advertisement placed in the *Gateway* and the *Edmonton Journal* produced a magazine with high literary and production standards and how they have continued to do so ever since. (4)

Toolis’s evaluation of *Branching Out* in 1979 provides insight into how *Branching Out* was viewed by its contemporaries and the financial position that the magazine was in the year before it folded. Toolis indicates that *Branching Out* was well-known and highly respected, and that it maintained high standards for reproduction and literary content. These are several of the qualities that I argue set *Branching Out* apart from other Canadian feminist periodicals in the 1970s. Toolis’s description of *Branching Out* as a success story the year before it folded highlights that, despite being in an “almost financially secure position,” *Branching Out* could not survive Batt’s decision to stop editing the magazine and leave Edmonton to seek paid employment.

In the annotated copy of “*Branching Out* in Edmonton,” which was part of the Sharon Batt donation to the Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, there is a pencil line drawn beside Toolis’s claims that *Branching Out*’s “main purpose is literary development rather than social criticism and it is not dependent upon word of mouth advertising” and “no” is written in the margin. Despite the dissent that Batt indicates with her annotation, Toolis’s claims do represent a common view of *Branching Out*—that the magazine was more interested in the arts than in “social criticism” and that, because of its relatively large circulation numbers, the magazine did not rely heavily on word-of-mouth advertising. The perception that *Branching Out* was more interested in the arts than in “social criticism” led some to praise and others to criticize the magazine for its emphasis on the arts. These differences of opinion are evident in the readers’ responses to the magazine’s art content, which I discuss in detail in chapter two.

In order to understand why Batt might disagree with Toolis’s claims about the magazine’s editorial focus and advertising practices, we must consider the magazine’s circulation numbers and Batt’s involvement with the magazine’s “social criticism” rather than literary content. During our interview, Batt explained that, even after taking over as editor of *Branching Out*, she was not “involved in making the decisions about the poetry or the fiction.” She said that she “didn’t want to get involved in the fiction and poetry because that wasn’t [her] expertise.” In contrast, Batt felt comfortable with the non-fiction content. During our interview, Batt used the term “non-fiction” to refer to the magazine’s regular content and feature articles as opposed to the “Women in the Arts” section that appeared in each issue of *Branching Out*. One of the features that stood out in Batt’s mind was the interview

that she did with Rosemary Brown for the July/August 1975 issue (see figure 5): “I think that was actually an article that had some impact, that people spoke about it. Years later people would say, ‘Oh you did that article on Rosemary Brown.’ I felt it was quite important.” Rosemary Brown, MLA for Vancouver-Burrard from 1972-84, ran in the 1975 federal NDP leadership race, finishing a strong second to Ed Broadbent. Brown was the first black woman elected to public office in Canada and was well known for her feminist organizing in Vancouver. In a CBC television report leading up to the 1975 leadership convention, Brown was referred to as “the antiestablishment’s new heroine” (“Race for the Leadership”).

Batt interviewed Brown the day after a candidates’ meeting in Edmonton. Batt’s article, “The Radical Tradition of Rosemary Brown,” which introduces her interview with Brown, provides a description of Brown’s position as both a feminist and a socialist. Batt questions the lack of attention being paid to Brown’s leadership campaign. She asks, “why...haven’t we read more about Rosemary Brown in the newspapers? And why did I get the feeling that this pre-convention meeting was just a formality—that Ed Broadbent was inevitably the next party leader?” (16). Batt speculates this lack of attention is a response not only to Brown’s gender and race, but also to her socialism: “the controlling powers within the NDP are not necessarily ready to allow her to test the prejudices of the electorate as party leader. Nor are they all at ease with her feminist views. Perhaps most important, she is ideologically to the left of the present party philosophy” (16). Featuring a photograph of Brown on the July/August 1975 cover (see figure 5), *Branching Out* challenges the lack of attention being paid to Brown by the media and by her own party. Because, as Batt highlighted in our interview, “black women weren’t being recognized in Canada” in

1975, the decision to feature Brown on the cover was a political statement. One of the limitations of Toolis's claim that *Branching Out's* "main purpose is literary development rather than social criticism" is that it underestimates *Branching Out's* overtly political content.

During our interview, Batt recalled that there was more discussion about non-fiction content because the group would have to solicit it, unlike the creative material which was generally unsolicited.<sup>31</sup> Batt explained, "there were always a lot of submissions" of fiction and poetry, but they "did not get that much in the way of publishable unsolicited non-fiction" and that, in order to get content "that was topical and well-written," she had to go looking for it. Batt devoted much of her time to soliciting material: "I was constantly writing letters asking people to send things in and trying to work with them on something that would be suitable." The decision to start publishing themed issues, after the four month publishing break from November 1976 to February 1977, was at least in part an attempt to make it easier to solicit contributions. Batt remembered constructing "theme sheets" that listed potential article topics on a particular theme so that "it wasn't just having to go to individual people and trying to twist their arm to write something."<sup>32</sup> When I spoke to Batt about putting together these theme sheets she originally said that they

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<sup>31</sup> One notable exception to the publication of unsolicited material occurred when Heather Pringle solicited a contribution from Marilyn Bowering for the September/October 1977 issue. In response, Bowering submitted two poems "Two Geese" and "Rose Harbour Whaling Station 1910." During our interview, Pringle described the experience of being a recent English graduate and soliciting contributions from established poets like Marilyn Bowering as "phenomenal." Pringle recalled that she was "always really in love with Marilyn Bowering's poetry" and that the experience of successfully soliciting a contribution from her was "absolutely amazing." *Branching Out* won a National Magazine Award for the publication of "Rose Harbour Whaling Station 1910."

<sup>32</sup> During our interview Batt recalled with considerable irritation that several times a Calgary women's newspaper came out with themed issues on topics that *Branching Out* was planning to cover after Batt had sent out the corresponding theme sheets requesting submissions on those topics. Batt said that the fact that this group appeared to be using ideas from *Branching Out's* theme sheets "really rankled" her "because it was a lot of work to put one together."

were made up by the group but then corrected herself and said that it was mostly her putting together the sheets. Like so many of the tasks at *Branching Out*, because Batt was the one working full-time on the magazine, the responsibility for putting together the theme sheets would fall to her. The group would brainstorm ideas for each issue's content, but the bulk of the responsibility for soliciting contributions often fell to Batt—which is not to suggest that other *Branching Out* staff members did not solicit contributions, especially for issues that were edited by staff members other than Batt. In 1978, Linda Duncan edited the environment theme issue (see figure 6) and Elaine Butler edited the sports theme issue (see figure 7). In 1979, Thora Carlidge, Diana Palting, and Sharon K. Smith edited the fifth anniversary issue (see figure 8), along with Batt, and Heather Pringle and Aritha van Herk edited the fiction theme issue (see figure 9). When Batt corrects herself after claiming that the group would put together the theme sheets, this correction reflects the fact that Batt was the person who ultimately took responsibility for the magazine's day-to-day operations.

Toolis's characterization of the magazine's main purpose as "literary development rather than social criticism" undervalues the content to which Batt felt most connected and on which she spent most of her time working. While *Branching Out* was certainly more invested in "literary development" than many other Canadian feminist periodicals, to say that "literary development" is the magazine's "main purpose" is inaccurate, especially in light of Batt's investment in the rest of the magazine's content. In addition, Toolis's claim reinforces the distinction between culture and politics rather than acknowledging that both the activist and the

literary/artistic interventions made by *Branching Out* are part of a larger discourse of feminist criticism present in *Branching Out*.<sup>33</sup>

In the introduction to “*Branching Out* in Edmonton,” Toolis characterizes “Canadian magazines concerned with the women’s movement” as having a “more radical political stance” than *Branching Out*. She describes Canadian feminist periodicals, such as “*The Other Woman*, *The Feminist Communication Collective*, and the *Calgary Women’s Newspaper*,” as “concentrated on political rather than cultural concerns” in contrast to *Branching Out*, which “treated political events only as one part of the female culture [the magazine was] trying to display” (1). Further distancing *Branching Out* from more traditionally political periodicals, Toolis observes that *Branching Out*’s “production standards were higher than any other comparable Canadian feminist magazine” (1). These claims about *Branching Out*—that it was more interested in cultural content than other publications and that it had higher production standards than other publications—more accurately represent the magazine’s content than the evaluative claim that *Branching Out*’s “main purpose is literary development rather than social criticism.”

As for Toolis’s claim that *Branching Out* was “not dependent upon word of mouth advertising,” Batt’s discussion of circulation numbers in “Feminist Publishing” suggests why she might disagree with this claim. In her explanation of why publications like *Branching Out* could not attract traditional advertising, Batt compares *Branching Out*’s circulation numbers to mainstream Canadian magazines: “*Branching Out* has never had more than 2500 subscribers. We print 4000 copies of

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<sup>33</sup> Chapters two and three both address the ways in which *Branching Out* challenges the distinction between culture and politics and argue for the political nature of cultural production in the context of *Branching Out* and the Canadian women’s movement as a whole.

the magazine, put 1000 in retail outlets, send 2000-2500 to subscribers, and keep about 500 to sell after the publication date or to use for promotion” (12). These numbers made generating significant advertising revenue impossible because, as Batt describes, at the time *Branching Out* was publishing advertisers were looking “for circulations in excess of 100,000 (magazines like *Harrowsmith* or *Saturday Night*) or even 1,000,000 (*Chatelaine*, *Homemakers*)” (12). However, a circulation of 4000 is remarkably high for a non-profit, volunteer feminist publication in 1980. As a point of comparison, Ulrich’s Global Serials Directory lists the following circulation numbers for some better-known feminist periodicals: *Broadside*, 2500; *Fireweed*, 1400; *Kinesis*, 1500; *Room of One’s Own* (now *Room*), 1000. Also, in her 1982 report, “Feminist Print Media,” submitted to the Women’s Programme Secretary of State, Eleanor Wachtel states, “In common with half the magazines published in Canada, most feminist periodicals circulate fewer than 2000 copies” (17). While *Branching Out* was by no means able to attract significant advertising revenue, it was reaching far more readers than any other Canadian feminist periodical when it folded in 1980, which could explain why Toolis claims that *Branching Out* was “not dependent upon word of mouth advertising.” However, as Batt’s comparison between *Branching Out* and mainstream periodicals like *Saturday Night* and *Chatelaine* makes clear, *Branching Out*’s circulation was still incredibly small and so word of mouth advertising was very important for attracting new subscriptions. Mary Alyce Heaton recalled that one of the group’s strategies was buying gift subscriptions for practically everyone they knew in the hope that the people for whom they bought subscriptions would spread the word about *Branching Out*.

As Batt emphasizes in “Feminist Publishing,” because of these limited circulation numbers, feminist periodicals like *Branching Out* had to rely on unpaid labour. In her preface to *Canadian Women’s Issues: Twenty-Five Years of Women’s Activism in English Canada, Volume 1: Strong Voices*, Marjorie Griffin Cohen highlights the contributions of women who volunteered their time as part of the Canadian women’s movement at large. *Strong Voices* is the first volume in a two-volume study of the Canadian women’s movement. Each chapter contains both an analysis of an issue and historical documents related to that issue. Issues in volume one include “The Politics of the Body,” “Social Policy and Social Services” and “Women, Culture and Communications.” Cohen explains that the editorial group chose “to proceed in each chapter not only by providing an analysis of what has happened but also including historical documents of the women’s movement so that women’s diversity could be represented through their own voices” (ix).<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, in the process of compiling these documents, the group found evidence of the remarkable individual efforts of women involved in the movement: “In searching through the documents in the archives of the women’s groups, we could not ignore the unmistakable evidence of the extraordinary dedication and effort of individual women who are often invisible to us because of their work within groups” (x). Cohen’s reference to the importance of individual women contrasts the commitment to collective structures that was common within many second-wave feminist groups. Cohen continues, “Our world has changed and it has been because of the vision, tenacity, and sheer determination that these women exhibited” (x). While Cohen

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<sup>34</sup> This approach is similar to that of Rebeck in *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*. Where *Canadian Women’s Issues* relies on historical documents, *Ten Thousand Roses* gathers together oral histories to account for diversity within the Canadian women’s movement.

does not mention specific individuals in her preface and does say that these extraordinary individuals worked within groups, her reference to the contributions of individual women rather than exclusively focusing on the role of groups within the movement is striking when considered alongside the emphasis that certain strains of second-wave feminism placed on the group over the individual. While I am not suggesting that Cohen dismisses the value of collectives and non-hierarchical organizing, she is breaking a taboo that was prevalent in certain second-wave feminist groups by referring to the “extraordinary dedication and effort of individual women.” Praising the contributions of individual women means that certain women within the sisterhood are being elevated above others.

During my interviews with *Branching Out* staff members, participants had no problem elevating McMaster and Batt above other members of the group. While participants would acknowledge Diana Palting’s (now Edwards) amazing photography, Barbara Hartmann’s wonderful illustrations and the contributions of many other women who worked on the magazine, they consistently emphasized that McMaster’s and Batt’s contributions to the project were extraordinary. This insistence on the remarkable efforts of *Branching Out*’s two editors reflects the magazine’s day-to-day operations. In the beginning, McMaster wanted to establish a consensus-based approach—“There weren’t votes. Decisions were reached by consensus” (telephone interview)—but the difficulties of implementing this approach quickly surfaced.

During our interview, Batt explained the challenge of keeping volunteers: “It was like constantly walking on water and not quite knowing...if everything was going to sink.” This image of walking on water echoes van Herk’s description of *Branching*

*Out* as a bobbing paper boat. The possibility of sinking, of going under, was a constant concern. There was a core group of *Branching Out* staff members who stayed with the magazine for many years, but people coming and leaving was part of the magazine's reality. As Batt described, "People stayed a long time. There were a number of really solid people who stayed a long time and it was kind of amazing how people hung in, but then there would be periods when people would leave." She "got to realize that there would always be people leaving," that she would always have to devote time to working newcomers into the magazine's organizational "fabric." The challenges of publishing a magazine that relied on unpaid labour meant that McMaster's original vision of a consensus-based organizational structure eventually gave way to a more hierarchical approach.

In *Branching Out's* March/April 1975 issue (see figure 10), McMaster introduced a new regular column, "Women in Business." The purpose of this column was to enable women's groups to share "ideas and to learn from each other, from the bad experiences as well as the good" (32). McMaster uses her introduction to the column to solicit contributions from readers: "If you or your group has discovered something worth sharing about funding, group dynamics, administration et cetera, please send an account of your experiences" (32). The "Women in Business" did not continue as a regular column because McMaster returned to Ottawa; as noted above, the March/April 1975 issue is the last time McMaster is listed as a coordinating editor. Nonetheless, McMaster's introduction to this planned regular column provides insight into the organizational challenges that non-hierarchical groups faced.

McMaster explains, “The feminist movement has, by and large, rejected the hierarchical structure of the traditional male-run organization as a model for group interactions. Because we are committed to a common cause, power struggles and wielding of authority seem to contradict our idea of sisterhood” (32). As has been well-documented in the scholarship on second-wave feminism, groups that attempted “to operate as equal partners working toward common goals and making decisions by consensus” faced many challenges (32). According to McMaster, “Often we discover that one or two women are controlling the rest, albeit covertly; that a few of our sisters just never seem to be available when there’s work to do; and that joint decision-making is time-consuming, wearing, and sometimes impossible” (32). The potential pitfalls of a consensus-based decision making model leads McMaster to argue that feminist groups “must temper pure idealism with a little hard-headed business sense” (32).<sup>35</sup> She insists, “We can reject rigid hierarchy as a pattern, but it is naive to believe that any group can function without some kind of structure” (32). Rejecting rigid hierarchy but operating within a kind of structure is exactly what *Branching Out* did.

During our interviews, both McMaster and Batt referred to the importance of relying on staff members’ strengths and allowing them to work autonomously. Batt described her reason for not requiring every editorial decision to be approved by the entire group: “From my perspective it seemed to work better in terms of keeping people, if somebody could do what they were good at and what they were interested in and basically be responsible for the poetry or the photography or whatever it was what they were passionate about. And that, to me, just seemed to work.” Judith

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<sup>35</sup> This argument similar to that of Patricia Preston in “Confrontations” published in *Branching Out*’s fifth anniversary issue. See chapter three for a detailed discussion of this article.

Mirus described this approach as enabling the women who worked on *Branching Out* to use the magazine as a vehicle for exploring their interests (personal interview).

Batt explained, “We were different from a lot of feminist publications in that we never called ourselves a collective.” As Farrell outlines in *Yours in Sisterhood*, “The question of what constitutes a feminist organization has been a central issue among scholars and activists” (38). While some emphasize an organization’s practices, others focus on an organization’s purposes. Farrell cites Patricia Martin who defines “feminist organizations as ones espousing ‘feminist ideology, values or goals’” (38). Farrell elaborates on this definition, clarifying that “an organization is feminist if its purpose or philosophy is feminist” (38). Of course, there are multiple definitions of feminism, which I discuss in detail in my analysis of the Canadian women’s movement in chapter three. However, for the purpose of her study of *Ms.* magazine, Farrell is working with a general definition of feminism as “the commitment to improving women’s lives and to ending gender domination” (195-96).<sup>36</sup> If we rely on Martin’s definition of a feminist organization, “an organization’s goals are more significant than how that organization happens to be run in determining whether or not it is feminist” (38). This definition of a feminist organization clearly applies to *Branching Out*. Every decision may not have been arrived at collectively, but the magazine’s goal was certainly to improve women’s lives and fight gender domination.

Farrell reminds readers that “many feminist organizations, particularly national ones like the National Organization for Women, adopted traditional, bureaucratic, top-down management styles” (38-39). In the Canadian context, the National Action Committee on the Status of women is an example of a feminist

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<sup>36</sup> Farrell does go into detail about different branches of feminism when she locates *Ms.* magazine within the second-wave feminist landscape in the United States.

organization that took a more traditional, hierarchical approach—although, as Patricia Preston indicates in her discussion of the Alberta regional Status of Women group, even within more bureaucratic organizations, groups struggled to be egalitarian and not authoritarian (32). As Farrell explains, “alternative organizational styles” may not have been central to certain organizations, but “the general ideology of inclusiveness and democratic participation has been a major tenet of feminist activism and organizing at least since the 1960s” (39).

In contrast to Martin’s definition of feminist organizations as “ones espousing ‘feminist ideology, values or goals,’” Farrell also references Kathy Ferguson who defines feminist organizations as “those that value and seek to implement at least some forms of egalitarianism and inclusivity” (39). For researchers such as Ferguson, “not all organizations that exhibit characteristics of participatory democracy are feminist, but all feminist organizations, by definition, do exhibit qualities of a collective-democratic workplace” (39). In other words, the goals of feminism are incompatible with an exclusively hierarchical and authoritarian organizational structure. *Branching Out’s* organizational structure supports this conclusion. While not everyone got together on every decision, the values of egalitarianism and inclusivity were central to *Branching Out’s* organizational structure.

Batt remembered the group being criticized for not having a strictly collective structure. People would say that “it didn’t seem feminist” that the magazine had a kind of hierarchy, but, for Batt, that was “part of trying to make the volunteer structure work.” Rather than trying to get everyone together on every decision, groups worked autonomously to prepare particular sections of the magazine. Karen Lawrence remembered feeling like she “had a lot of personal

autonomy” and enjoying this experience: “That was nice for me, being able to have some autonomy to make editorial decisions. Not that we wouldn’t discuss things, or that people wouldn’t say, ‘Oh god, this is terrible, are you sure you want to publish it?’ or something like that. We’d have those discussions.” Several staff members remarked on this play between autonomy and consultation.

During our interview, Heather Pringle described how the fiction and poetry committee chose material for publication. She remembered receiving “towering stacks” of submissions and that whoever was organizing the meeting would copy sets of these submissions for the committee to review: “We all read through them religiously and we had a scheduled meeting up in the offices of *Branching Out* or occasionally it would be in somebody’s home.”<sup>37</sup> Pringle described the experience of falling “in love with a piece” and trying “to advance the cause of that piece and [hoping] that other people on the committee [would] agree,” but that this process of consultation was “never vitriolic. There was never any of that. It was always done in a very friendly, funny and a good way.” Pringle remembered their being a lot of agreement amongst the group.

Pringle contextualized her experiences on *Branching Out*’s poetry and fiction committees in terms of her subsequent work on other periodical publications:

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<sup>37</sup> July/August 1975 is the first issue that includes an office address on the masthead. Prior to this *Branching Out* did not have a dedicated work space. During our interview, Elaine Butler provided a detailed description of the office: “We were in the penthouse, which sounded wonderful. The penthouse of the Windsor Bowl Building.... But essentially it was four walls up on the roof. The rest of it was roof and then there was just one room that was 16 by 16 or 20 by 20, something like that. It was just one big open room and we had huge picture windows on each of the four walls. And in the summer—I think the windows opened so we could get a breeze through in the summer and cool things off—but it could get hot up there in the summer. But in the winter the heat was not adequate. As long as the sun was out, it was perfectly fine, but if it was a day with no sun or you came in at night you had to wear gloves and coats...and you couldn’t use the electric typewriter.... And we had to go downstairs to the bathrooms. Other than that, the view was great because you were looking up all over the south side [of Edmonton] and even in to the north.” Several participants remembered the office’s extreme temperatures and commented on the jokes that they used to make about being in the penthouse.

I think there was a sense that it was kind of a collective and that we were all there for the same reasons and that it was kind of a team approach. I've worked on several magazines since then and *Branching Out* was the only one where that was the case. In more conventional magazines there's always a hierarchy and it's pretty much carved in stone. *Branching Out* was not like that. It was much more collaborative and much more teamwork. It was much more the way I think women tend to work with each other than most conventional magazines are.

Pringle's memories of the poetry and fiction committees operating as a "kind of collective" that relied on "collaboration" and "teamwork" suggests that, while the magazine was not strictly speaking a collective organization, the magazine relied heavily on a collaborative approach.

Pringle acknowledged both the challenges and the rewards of taking a collaborative approach. She explained that "the positive side is that it's fun" and that "no one ever emerges from that feeling beat up by it, that someone pulled rank and that something that you really wanted to see in the publication didn't get in. I don't remember ever feeling that way about *Branching Out*." This image of a group of women working together to make publication decisions represents the ideal of collaborative organizing practices. In contrast, as Pringle recognized, the down side of this approach "is that everyone has to be equally committed to really make that work." When there are varying levels of commitment and people are not "really all that interested in taking part then the structure just doesn't work that well." In order to manage these varying levels of commitment and the realities of staff members constantly coming and going, the magazine did rely on hierarchies. Each section had

a coordinating editor and each of these editors was responsible for submitting material to Batt. As Melnyk indicated in her interview, because Batt was doing the bulk of the work her influence tended to be larger than that of other staff members: “I didn’t feel like anybody was trying to do anything maliciously, but sometimes you would feel that other voices were not heard as much and that’s just the way that it was.” While Melnyk acknowledged that Batt’s influence was greater than others, she also indicated that this situation was inevitable. She explained, “I’ve been part of co-ops and other organizations where people come and talk a lot but they don’t do anything...and then there’s the people who do the stuff so you’re going to have different influence because of that.”

Pringle also served on the Board of Directors<sup>38</sup> and recalled that, at those meetings, there “tended to be more differences of opinion,” in contrast to the fiction and poetry committees. These meetings would include discussions of finances and soliciting content for upcoming issues. Unlike fiction and poetry submissions, which were coming in unsolicited, the group would spend more time discussing and debating the magazine’s feature articles because this content had to be solicited. When I asked *Branching Out* staff about the group dynamics at the magazine, staff consistently said that, while there were heated discussions, debates and differences of opinion, there was remarkably little real conflict at the magazine. Participants emphasized the life-long friends that they made and the fun that they had working on the magazine and did not recall many moments of tension. While there is certainly an element of nostalgia at play in these recollections, participants did consistently stress how congenial the group was. During our interview, Karen

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<sup>38</sup> *Branching Out* assembled a Board of Directors after the four month publishing break (November 1976 to February 1977). The Board was primarily responsible for the magazine’s finances.

Lawrence recalled comparing her experiences at *Branching Out* with the experiences of a friend who worked for Women's Press in Toronto: "I always would get a sense from talking to her that there was very much more role defining and political infighting in that particular group of women that she worked with compared to our group."<sup>39</sup> Lawrence remembered there being "lively debate and discussion" at *Branching Out*, but no intense infighting.

However, there were three disagreements that came up repeatedly during the interviews: a board member resigning over the group's refusal to publish writing by men; the publication of photographs of Tanya Rosenberg's exhibition *Codpieces*; and the publication of "Finger versus Man: A Hands Down Victory," an article on masturbation. In keeping with other staff members' accounts, Olenka Melnyk recalled that, despite one board member's strong feelings to the contrary, there was a general agreement amongst the group that the magazine would not consider revising its editorial policy and publishing content by men: "it was pretty unanimous that this was a magazine for and about women and even though the topics did deal with issues related to men that we didn't want to put up with that kind of tokenism. This was meant to be for women contributors. It wasn't a divisive topic that I could see, other than someone did feel strong enough to resign." This disagreement was significant because it led to a board member resignation; however, it also reinforced the magazine's woman-only editorial policy.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast, the debate over whether or not to publish photographs of Tanya Rosenberg's exhibition *Codpieces: Phallic Paraphernalia* did not result in such a united

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of the conflicts at Women's Press see Christine Kim, "The Politics of Print: Feminist Publishing and Canadian Literary Production."

<sup>40</sup> See chapter two for additional analysis of *Branching Out's* policy not to include work by men.

decision. *Codpieces: Phallic Paraphernalia* was exhibited at the Powerhouse Gallery in Montreal in 1974. Born Tanya Ann Marshall, Rosenberg later worked under the name Tanya Mars and, in 2008, won a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. Photographs by James Shavick of men wearing Mars's codpieces appeared in *Branching Out*'s February/March 1976 issue. These photographs were accompanied by an artist's statement and description of the original exhibition.<sup>41</sup>

The *Branching Out* group was divided over whether or not to publish photographs of Mars's variations on this Renaissance garment. Examples of her variations included "a rabbit fur piece, a Batman, a chessboard, a plastic wrapped meat package" (Introduction to "Codpieces: Phallic Paraphernalia" 13). During our interview, Batt recalled, "There were a number of people who did not want us to publish those photographs. They thought they were...too tasteless or they didn't fit in" to the magazine's more mainstream editorial vision. Batt and others, including Barbara Hartmann, disagreed with the view that the codpieces were tasteless and, in our interview, Batt admitted that she "kind of pushed them through because [she] liked them." This decision to publish the photographs despite staff members' objections upset some people, but did not lead to any resignations.

The introductory editorial comments that accompany the photographs include a description of the debate over their publication: "When *Branching Out* discussed the photos of Rosenberg's codpieces at an editorial meeting, we learned

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<sup>41</sup> In this article, Mars describes the exhibition's opening night as follows: "I had six men modeling. The intention was that they would wear a piece for a while, mingle with the crowd, and change. As it turned out this was impossible. Over 500 people showed up to see what was going on.... We set up a makeshift runway and the models walked to and from the dressing room. There was a strolling mandolin player (without much room to stroll) and taped 15th and 16th century Elizabethan music when he wasn't playing. The codpieces were mounted on the walls in different ways. There were six life size blow-ups (nudes) with codpieces mounted on them; some were mounted on drawings of male torsos; some were mounted on board [sic] with photographs to show how they were to be worn; some were hanging on a coat rack (the feather and fur fashion pieces)" (Rosenberg 16).

first hand just how controversial the works are. Witty social commentary or sexual exploitation? We debated, we argued. Finally we wrote to Tanya Rosenberg and asked what she, the artist, wanted to say when she created *Codpieces*. Following is her reply” (13). Rather than choose not to publish the photographs because the group could not agree, they foregrounded the debate and let the artist explain her motivation behind *Codpieces*. This decision is in keeping with *Branching Out*'s mandate to expose its readers to a variety of content, but it also reveals the difficulty of balancing egalitarian values with a hierarchical organizational structure.

In addition to commenting on the board member resignation, during our interview Melnyk also explained that one of the biggest controversies at the magazine was the publication of “Finger versus Man” by Victoria Powell and Jenifer Svendsen. This article created heated debate amongst the group over whether it was funny or coarse. The article is largely made up of a list of reasons why a woman’s finger is more satisfying than a relationship with a man. Some of the reasons listed include: “You never have to nag your finger to take a bath or a shower before it makes love to you”; “Your finger doesn’t criticize you for not having orgasms, taking too long to have orgasms, or having so many orgasms that it can’t get loose”; and “Your finger will not get you pregnant.” Some of the *Branching Out* staff found this piece amusing and others found it vulgar or, as Melnyk described, “beyond their dignity.” Batt was one of the people who did not want to publish the piece, but she was willing to set her personal feelings aside. When I asked Melnyk about her support for publishing “Finger versus Man” and Batt agreeing to run the article despite her personal reactions to it, Melnyk said that the decision to run the piece was “a tribute to Sharon Batt.” Melnyk thought it was “a really good sign of

democracy” that even though Batt had the power as editor not to publish the piece she agreed to run it despite her personal feelings.

In the issue following the publication of “Finger versus Man,” *Branching Out*’s penultimate issue, the letters page included an editor’s note on the organizational structure at *Branching Out*. Precipitated by another controversy—the publication of Cathy Hobart’s review of Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*—this note explains to readers, “The opinions of our reviewers and writers are not necessarily those of *Branching Out*’s editors” (“Letters” 3). Letters to the editor published in the previous issue indicate that readers found Hobart’s review biased and “unfeminist” (Knowles 2). One letter implicitly characterized the publication of Hobart’s review as irresponsible: “As a major magazine speaking to and for Canadian women, *Branching Out* has a responsibility to engage in constructive criticism rather than take cheap pot shots at a major feminist work as is reflected both in the review and the headline ‘Vaginal Hype’” (David 2). The review begins by describing *The Dinner Party*, both the installation and Chicago’s 1979 book of the same name. Hobart’s review, provocatively entitled “Vaginal Hype,” is supposedly evaluating Chicago’s book, but the review turns into an exposé of the working conditions in Chicago’s studio. Relying on a single source who spent only four days at Chicago’s studio, Hobart describes the working conditions as similar to those of a “common sweatshop.” Hobart is also critical of what she perceives as Chicago’s egocentrism. Not surprisingly, following this scathing review of a much-beloved feminist artist, *Branching Out* readers rush to Chicago’s defense.

The editor’s note addressing this controversy indicates that the “editor and book review editor take full responsibility for publishing [Hobart’s] piece” and

explains, “Our reasoning was that book reviews are by nature subjective and that Hobart presented a valid point of view” (“Letters” 3). However, the editor’s note also acknowledges that readers felt that Hobart’s review “misrepresents facts” (3). The note both defends the decision to publish Hobart’s review and acknowledges that this review is problematic. Ultimately, the editor’s note stipulates that

*Branching Out* does not operate as a collective and each section of the magazine represents the editorial judgment of one person. One member of our editorial staff did in fact object to the review of the book, *The Dinner Party*. Others did not see it prior to publication. If our staff had to reach a consensus on all articles, much of what is printed in the magazine would be eliminated (some of our staff were also in disagreement with the decision to publish the article “Finger versus Man” in the last issue). Our hope is that we can maintain editorial responsibility and at the same time keep the magazine controversial and representative of the diverse viewpoints in the Canadian feminist movement” (3).

This description of how the magazine is produced—of individuals being responsible for single sections and not everyone seeing the magazine’s content in its entirety prior to publication—emphasizes *Branching Out*’s diffuse organizational structure. Reinforcing the note’s claim that the magazine’s content does not always coincide with the views of its editors, this issue’s masthead includes the assertion, “Opinions expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors” (Masthead 2). This issue is the first time that the masthead includes this declaration. The combined pressure of negative reader responses to the Hobart review and the

staff's disagreement over the publication of "Finger versus Man" appear to have provoked the group to clarify the magazine's organizational structure for its readers.

Aritha van Herk recalled that the magazine received a lot of feedback on the "Finger versus Man" article: "That really raised people's hackles, that masturbation is probably more satisfactory than penetrative sex. It was intended to be a bit incendiary, but wow. We got letters about that." Several members of the group wanted to publish "Finger versus Man" precisely because it was provocative and because it added humorous content to *Branching Out*. Melnyk explained, the group that wanted to publish the article thought it "was a hoot" and that the magazine "needed more humour" because "everybody accuses feminists of being really boring and straight laced." For Melnyk, the publication of "Finger versus Man" fought against the stereotype of the humourless feminist.

Another example of humorous content published in *Branching Out* is a satiric news article on the activities of the Women's Independent Separatist Party (WISP), published in the December 1977 issue. "Nation Ponders Unity Threat: Whither WISP?" by Lisa Strata is in keeping with the issue's "Women and Politics" theme (see figure 11). Other feature content published in this issue includes an interview with former NAC president Laura Sabia and an article on "Running a Feminist Campaign" by Rosemary Brown. The "news feature" explains, "The primary objective of WISP is to form a separate country tailored to the cultural and economic needs of women" (2). Published less than a year after the Parti Quebecois won the Quebec provincial election for the first time in November 1976, this article parodies English Canadians' responses to Quebec separatism. The article includes comments from several Canadian men about women separating from Canada:

The realization that women really might separate has shocked and saddened many men. Said one, “Women add a special dimension to the country. It won’t be the same if they go.” Another voiced the militant view that is also gaining adherents: “Who needs them? We’ve given them enough already.” ...Some men are willing to compromise, however, if it will keep the country together. Said one, “They have many legitimate complaints, but if we give them special status within confederation perhaps they’ll be willing to stay.”

(2)

Other highlights among the many parallels that this satire draws between Quebec separating from Canada and Canadian women separating from Canadian men include transforming controversies over language training programs for bureaucrats into controversies over a housework training program for bureaucrats and converting economic concerns into reproductive concerns. The article references “a probing study” that “asked women in all provinces if they favored separation from Canadian men (a) with a guarantee of reproductive cooperation via a sperm bank (b) without such a guarantee” (18). This satire suggests that, like Quebec, women represent a distinct society with unique economic and cultural concerns which are not being met under the current political system.

This play on the separatist movement represents more than a humorous take on Canadian women’s grievances. Questions of national unity were a concern at *Branching Out* because the magazine was committed to being a national publication despite its location in the west. *Branching Out* challenged the preconception that national publications had to come from central Canada. However, the magazine’s desire to appeal to a pan-Canadian audience was mediated by the fact that *Branching*

*Out* was an English-language periodical. Initially, as the ad that McMaster placed in *The Gateway* indicates, the intention was to include French language content; however, *Branching Out* published only one feature article, one poem and one short story in French and no French language content appeared in the magazine after 1975. *Branching Out's* second issue (see figure 12) includes two articles in English on the subject of French language learning—"Français? Mais oui! English? Why not?" about a bilingual school in Beaumont, Alberta and "French Has a Place in the West," which also advocates bilingualism—but ultimately French language content was one of the group's initial goals that became unmanageable as the realities of publishing a volunteer-run national feminist magazine outside Canada's publishing centres set in. That both of these articles on the subject of French language learning focus on western Canada also foregrounds the challenge of balancing *Branching Out's* location in Edmonton with its identity as a national magazine. Physical proximity made it easier to solicit content from Alberta contributors; however, the magazine wanted not only to appeal to a national audience, but also to include contributions from women across Canada.<sup>42</sup>

During our interview, Heather Pringle spoke at length about the significance of publishing a national feminist magazine in Edmonton:

We were coming at this from the point of view of outsiders and I think that in a way that that was really appropriate for a magazine about the women's

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<sup>42</sup> In the responses to the November/December 1975 reader questionnaire published in *Branching Out's* February/March 1976 issue, there is a section on regionalism that includes a comment from an Ontario reader who says there is "Too much emphasis on western Canada (especially Edmonton) in the advertising and some of the articles" and a conflicting comment from an Alberta reader who says "Since I'm a western Canadian I'd like to see lots more articles by and for us." A third reader from Vancouver writes, "More material from women gleaned from all provinces" and others request more material from Quebec and Newfoundland ("Letters" 3). These comments indicate how difficult it was for *Branching Out* to achieve its goal of appealing to women in every region in Canada.

movement. Because the women's movement was all about coming from the margins and the edges into the centre and that's really what *Branching Out* was trying to do too. It was coming from the margins and it was trying to make the women's movement mainstream, to bring these ideas about what it was to a larger group of people. So I think it was actually the perfect place for that kind of magazine, but it also suffered because it didn't have the publishing infrastructure. It didn't have the big pool of people it could draw on because Edmonton was still fairly small at that time.... It was good to be on the fringes. It was good to be from the west. It was good to be an outsider, but there was also a price that one paid for it.

Pringle's description of *Branching Out* coming from the margins into the centre highlights the opportunities and the limitations of the magazine's location outside the mainstream both geographically and in its subject matter. As Pringle indicated, this location outside was appropriate because it reflected the women's movement's goal to bring women from subordinate positions ("the margins") into positions of power ("the centre").

While being physically removed from Canada's publishing centre, Toronto, was challenging when it came to the business side of publishing a magazine, *Branching Out's* location in Edmonton also prevented the magazine from being stifled by the preconceived notions of an established publishing industry. When I asked Naomi Loeb about how the experiences of *Branching Out* staff members shaped the magazine in its first year, Loeb responded

Probably our inexperience shaped it more than our experience, in the sense that very often people who know very little are the only ones who will dive

into a project like this because sometimes if you have people who know too much they can put a damper on things. They'll say, "Listen you guys, this is a great idea but you're never going to get off the ground." So I think our naivety was a great asset frankly.

Similarly, Karen Lawrence speculated that "being outside of the epicentre of publishing in Canada, being out west, being not in Toronto" may have helped *Branching Out* because, as a result of "being isolated," the group "had to do a lot of self-defining, how we wanted things to go." Rather than being limited by a set of orthodoxies, *Branching Out* forged its own path.

As Batt explained, they "didn't pitch it as a western magazine" but being located in the west was an important part of *Branching Out's* identity. Batt recalled challenging a reporter who was doing a story on "how bizarre it was that this feminist magazine was coming out of Edmonton of all places." Batt explained to the reporter that not everyone in Alberta fits the "Stetson hats and boots" stereotype and that it was not strange that *Branching Out* was published in Edmonton because "there are feminists here." Publishing a national feminist magazine in Edmonton meant challenging regional stereotypes.

Olenka Melnyk recalled that, at times, there was a "sense of grievance" amongst the *Branching Out* staff that readers from other parts of Canada did not take the magazine seriously as a national publication because it was published in Edmonton. Elaborating on the magazine's predicament, Melnyk continued, "if we were based out of Toronto obviously we would have had a far bigger subscription base. Although we had prominent Toronto writers supporting us and contributing, we didn't have a whole bunch of Toronto, Ontario feminists subscribing." As

Melnyk explained, it was a “real victory” when a new subscription came in the mail from someone outside of Alberta: “that here we were in Edmonton putting out something that was reaching the Maritimes, Northwest Territories, Ontario.”

Melnyk remembered the new subscriptions being read out at board meetings and that “everybody would kind of cheer.” New subscriptions that came from outside of Alberta energized the group because these subscriptions were tangible evidence that the magazine was achieving its goal of reaching women across the country.<sup>43</sup> Melnyk recalled that there was a sense amongst the *Branching Out* staff that “the western regions not only had important things to say but they had things to say that were of national significance.” When I asked *Branching Out* staff members what they felt the most important aspects of *Branching Out*’s story were, many participants mentioned *Branching Out*’s location in Edmonton. Participants emphasized that it was even more remarkable that *Branching Out* survived for seven years because it was being published in the west. This fact—that the first and only national feminist magazine published in Canada in the 1970s was located in Edmonton—was a point of pride for many staff members.

In response to the question about what they felt the most important aspects of *Branching Out*’s story were, participants also highlighted the remarkable women

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<sup>43</sup> For the fifth anniversary issue, *Branching Out* sent a questionnaire to 650 readers “asking them their views on feminism” (Cartlidge and Batt 18). “Just over 300 women replied” and the resulting article on readers’ perceptions of the Canadian women’s movement includes a “Profile of Respondents to Survey.” This profile contains a breakdown of respondents by region of residence. According to this breakdown, 14% of respondents were from British Columbia, 24% from Alberta, 10% from Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 30% from Ontario, 12% from Quebec, 8% from the Maritimes, and 1% from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon (18). The article detailing the questionnaire’s findings explains that they “deliberately mailed the questionnaire to all subscribers with a rural address (about 300) because [they] wanted the perspective of women living outside urban centres” and that only one in four “urban subscribers were sent the questionnaire” (18). Consequently, this regional breakdown cannot be taken as representative; nonetheless, it does reveal that the magazine had a strong subscription base outside Alberta.

who worked on and contributed to *Branching Out*. Whether it was Elaine Butler speaking about how Sharon Batt “guided this magazine and gave it its life”; Barbara Hartmann telling the story of soliciting artwork from Toti (a Canadian artist now known internationally for her paintings of the Tour de France); Susan McMaster recalling the excitement she felt when they received contributions from big names like Margaret Atwood, Dorothy Livesay, Margaret Laurence, and Marian Engel; or Batt remembering the contributions of lawyer and legal researcher Louise Dulude who would go on to become president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women from 1986 to 1988—participants remembered *Branching Out* as a gathering place for many remarkable Canadian women.

When Aritha van Herk described *Branching Out* as a “little bobbing paper boat” that was surrounded by “dragon boats” and that was “trying to make some headway for women and trying to give women a voice,” she emphasized both the magazine’s fragility and its determination. The “little bobbing paper boat” did not back down in the face of all those “dragon boats.” In defiance of the male-dominated, commercially driven publishing industry, *Branching Out* brought work by Canadian women to the public despite the host of challenges that the magazine faced over the years. *Branching Out*’s success is a testament to the tenacity of the women who launched and crewed this boat and to the desire that *Branching Out*’s readers had for this mode of transportation on the journey to improve women’s lives and end gender discrimination.

## Chapter Two

### “Correcting an Imbalance”:

#### The Intersection of Art and Politics in *Branching Out*

In the 1978 *Guide to Women’s Publishing*, a resource book for information on feminist journals, women’s newspapers and women’s presses in North America, Andrea Chesman describes *Branching Out* as a “general interest feminist culture magazine” with both newsstand appeal and compelling content: “Published in glossy paper with plenty of art and photographs, one is content to just leaf through this magazine at first—afraid that the contents won’t justify the graphics, but they do—amply” (17). This description identifies *Branching Out* as combining two distinct aesthetics: the glossy women’s magazine that lacks substantive content and the amateurish radical feminist publication that lacks the visual polish of its mainstream counterparts. *Branching Out* embraced this in-between location and, from its preview issue in 1973 to its final issue in 1980, delivered a quality feminist magazine to thousands of Canadian readers.

Unlike *Branching Out*, which sought a larger and more mainstream audience and had the production quality to sit on the newsstand next to *Chatelaine*, small-scale feminist periodicals tended to have amateur aesthetics; they were often mimeographed and stapled, in the form of a small community newsletter, or printed as tabloid newspapers. These amateur aesthetics dominated feminist periodicals for two reasons: one, because most feminist periodicals were produced by women with little or no publishing experience and without adequate resources to conform to

mainstream periodical aesthetics; two, because feminist periodicals actively resisted conforming to an aesthetic that valued “gloss” over substance. In some cases due to material circumstances, in other cases an aesthetic choice, these amateur aesthetics, which were common to alternative periodical publications of the period, played an important role in locating feminist periodicals outside of mainstream publishing, transforming the material object’s amateur appearance into a political statement. The amateur appearance of many feminist periodicals was an aesthetic choice not to conflate “gloss” and value.

Unfortunately, these amateur aesthetics led to the charge that feminist periodicals were special interest but not quality publications. In response to this charge Joan and Chesman argue that while “it is true that feminist publishing standards do vary,” this variance “is one of [the feminist media’s] greatest strengths” (4). In their guide, Joan and Chesman express the “hope that women’s publishing will never get so rigid that it can stringently define good and bad, because out of the most casual, most spontaneous expressions, are the seeds for new creation” (4). This hope recognizes the value of feminist publications’ amateur aesthetic because this aesthetic can lead to innovation instead of promoting stagnation. The value of amateurism is one of the defining features of the women-in-print movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than associating the amateur with the unskilled, many feminist media producers saw the amateur as a way to avoid reproducing ideas based on the dominant ideology.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> However, this amateurism can be a double-edged sword. As Godard argues, feminist periodicals’ “amateur status positioned them then outside the dominant publishing industry .... ‘Women artists are all amateurs,’ wrote Mill (1984, p. 340), aligning women with the negative in the binary opposition professional/amateur, public/private.” (215).

Consequently, some readers assumed that *Branching Out* was not political because of its appearance. During our interview, Aritha van Herk explained that because *Branching Out* sat on the newsstand with *Chatelaine* and “was trying very hard to talk to a broad range of women,” it was criticized, especially by more radical feminist activists, for being too mainstream. *Branching Out* was not always successful in straddling the mainstream and feminist publishing fields; nevertheless, the magazine sought to balance these opposing demands

Cognizant of the value of amateurism, *Branching Out* wanted to achieve newsstand appeal while still being open to a variety of content. The preview editorial explains, “the focus will be on the work that women in Canada are doing today. Therefore, we have devoted a lot of space to artwork, photography, poetry and fiction. Some of it comes from grandmothers, some from housewives, some from professionals” (McMaster, “Branching To?” 3). The editorial emphasizes that the preview issue includes work by both “well-known” and “unpublished” writers (3). Rather than rigidly adhering to existing literary, artistic, and journalistic standards, *Branching Out* sought to combine the amateur and the professional. This combination would have been seen by some radical feminists as “selling out” to the mainstream, but *Branching Out* saw combining the amateur and the professional as a way of representing the diversity of female culture in Canada. It is important to note, however, that *Branching Out* also benefited from the inclusion of well-known writers like Atwood and Livesay because they attracted a wide audience.

By having newsstand appeal, *Branching Out* sought to legitimate a more diverse understanding of Canadian women’s interests and culture than the traditional image of women portrayed in mainstream women’s magazines like *Ladies’ Home*

*Journal*. However, meeting professional standards while relying almost exclusively on volunteer labour proved challenging. In 1978, five years after the magazine began production, business manager Elaine Butler had to remind readers of *Branching Out's* reliance on volunteers: "We want to bring readers the best quality possible but because we attempt to produce a magazine that meets professional standards of content and production, many people misunderstand the nature of our organization. We operate on a volunteer basis .... No one on staff gets paid for seeing that the magazine is put together every two months and kept running in between" (3). Readers began expecting the kind of pristine, error-free publication characteristic of mainstream women's magazines driven by advertising revenue, and they conveyed these expectations in letters to *Branching Out's* editorial group. Butler's note to readers is remarkable because it demonstrates that readers were holding this volunteer-run publication up to professional standards, at times even mistaking *Branching Out* for a revenue-driven magazine, which attests to the quality that *Branching Out* was able to achieve. This note to readers highlights *Branching Out's* liminality, its location in-between the politically motivated amateur aesthetic of many radical feminist publications and the consumerist ethos of mainstream women's magazines. *Branching Out* did not conform to typical categories used to classify women's periodicals.

As author of the *Guide to Women's Publishing*, Andrea Chesman is well-positioned to evaluate *Branching Out's* location within the field of women's periodicals. In her collaboration with Polly Joan to produce this guide, Chesman was responsible for compiling a list of women's periodicals published in Canada and the United States and describing these publications for "writers looking for new markets" and "potential subscribers looking for new publications" (2). As a result,

Chesman has a strong sense of the field in which *Branching Out* operated. In a section of the guide entitled “Literary, Art, Cultural and Political Journals: Interwoven Forms,” Chesman performs a genre analysis of feminist periodicals. In this analysis Chesman identifies poetry as “the one art form that appears over and over again” in feminist periodicals (7). Within a movement committed to the principle that “the personal is political,” poetry becomes a vehicle for women to connect their personal struggles with the collective oppression of women. As Chesman observes, “Obviously there was no place for this politically charged writing in the male-controlled literary establishments,” and so “Women began publishing their own magazines” (7). This evaluation of the role of poetry (and of the literary arts in general) in the development and proliferation of feminist periodicals very much reflects *Branching Out*’s origin story and continued mandate.

When Susan McMaster organized the first meeting to discuss establishing a politically conscious women’s magazine, she was taking a creative writing class with Douglas Barbour and W.O. Mitchell at the University of Alberta (*The Gargoyle’s Left Ear* 14) and realized how few publishing opportunities were available to women. During *Branching Out*’s thirty-one-issue, seven-year history, the magazine’s Women in the Arts section included work by well-known Canadian women writers such as Margaret Atwood and Dorothy Livesay, alongside up-and-coming poets such as Marilyn Bowering and Lorna Crozier (then Lorna Uher), but this section was regularly dominated by talented women whose names would never become part of Canada’s literary history.

Beginning with an analysis of Adrienne Rich’s “Toward a More Feminist Criticism,” this chapter examines the relationship between art and politics as

represented in *Branching Out*. I discuss Anita Lerek's representation of women writers in her February/March 1976 article "When I Met the Lady Poets" and compare Lerek's analysis to Jane Rule's 1978 article "Seventh Waves," an evaluation of Canadian and American women writers' relationships to their nations' respective women's movements. Because Rule discusses prominent Canadian women writers, including Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence, her article provides a frame for my discussion of Atwood's and Laurence's contributions to *Branching Out*. Rule's article is also the starting point for this chapter's discussion of literary and artistic standards. This discussion focuses on Karen Lawrence's November/December 1975 article "Enough!" (in which Lawrence argues that women writers need to expand the scope of their work beyond explicitly feminist themes) and on several articles published in *Branching Out*'s 1978 Women and Art issue, which explores the influence of gender on art.

In order to flesh out the relationship between art and politics in *Branching Out*, this chapter analyzes discrimination present in the art world in the 1970s, *Branching Out*'s attempts at inclusiveness, *Branching Out*'s woman-only editorial policy, and readers' responses to the magazine's combination of art and politics. Following Aritha van Herk's 1978 defense of the magazine's policy to review only books by women, this chapter outlines how *Branching Out* was "correcting an imbalance" ("About 'Books'" 39) that arose from a lack of publication and exhibition opportunities available to women and a lack of attention paid to feminist issues in Canada in the 1970s. Because this chapter addresses the relationship between art and politics it pays particular attention to four themed issues, two that focus on art

and two that focus on politics: *Women and Politics* (1977), *Women and Art* (1978), *Election Primer* (1979) and *Special Fiction Issue* (1979).

### **The Poet and The Practical Strategist**

The intersection between literary and activist histories is taken up by Adrienne Rich in “Toward a More Feminist Criticism.” Rich’s essay is an appropriate reference point for this chapter’s discussion of the intersection between literary and activist because of her involvement with the women-in-print movement, particularly as the co-editor of the lesbian-feminist periodical *Sinister Wisdom*.<sup>45</sup> In “Toward a More Feminist Criticism,” Rich entreats “the feminist critic of literature to inform herself not just with training in literary exegesis but in a concrete and grounded knowledge of the feminist movement” and

to consider her work a potential resource also, a resource *for us*, for our movement; to see herself not as writing just for other critics and scholars, but to help make books both ‘real and remembered,’ to stir ordinary women to read what they might otherwise miss or avoid, to help us all sort through which words, in Lillian Smith’s phrase, chain us and which can set us free.  
(89-90)

Rich’s characterization of the feminist literary critic parallels *Branching Out*’s mandate as a general interest, feminist magazine for Canadian women. Like Rich’s feminist critic, *Branching Out* is a resource for the feminist movement, stirring “ordinary women to read what they might otherwise miss or avoid” and helping its readers to

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of Rich’s connection to the women-in-print movement.

“sort through which words...chain [them] and which can set [them] free.” By publishing art and literature by Canadian women and reviewing books and exhibitions by Canadian women in the context of a feminist magazine, *Branching Out* performs a function similar to that which Rich desires from feminist literary critics when she encourages these critics to see themselves “not as writing just for other critics and scholars” and, instead, to root themselves “in a concrete and grounded knowledge of the feminist movement.” *Branching Out* is able to achieve this rootedness by publishing art and literature alongside content that engages with women’s movement issues and with the movement itself. Though Rich’s essay is primarily a call to action for feminist literary critics, in making this call Rich raises issues about the intersection of art and politics and of literary and activist histories that are integral to *Branching Out*’s history.

Rich’s vision for the feminist critic engages with Jan Clausen’s distinction between “the poet” and “the practical strategist.” Rich examines Clausen’s assertion that “the striking role of poetry and poets in the movement has led some women to attribute too much power to words and language, to elevate the poet rather than the practical strategist to the role of spokeswoman” (90). Citing Clausen’s claim that “Feminism desperately needs actions as well as words,” Rich comments, “I share Clausen’s uneasiness about a movement infatuated with language to the neglect of action. I share it particularly because I am a poet who often finds herself assigned the role of spokeswoman” (90).<sup>46</sup> However, both Clausen and Rich acknowledge the

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<sup>46</sup> This uneasiness recalls critiques of cultural feminism as political quietism—critiques that maintain a rigid distinction between culture and politics. Clausen’s insistence on practical strategy and action is in keeping with Alice Echols’ valuing of action over cultural production in *Daring to Be Bad*, when Echols distinguishes between radical and cultural feminism. I take up critiques of cultural feminism

importance of combining language and action. Clausen refers to “actions as well as words” and Rich suggests that the movement should not focus on language “to the neglect of action.” Although Clausen emphasizes the importance of action, she nonetheless makes space for both the poet and the practical strategist.

Even though Clausen makes space for both actions and words, Rich goes on to temper her support for Clausen’s position with the following claims: “But I do believe that words *can* help us move or keep us paralyzed, and that our choices of language and verbal tone have something—a great deal—to do with how we live our lives and whom we end up speaking with and hearing” (90). Despite her expression of uneasiness with the focus on language “to the neglect of action,” Rich leaves the reader with an image of the political possibilities of language, blurring the boundary between “the poet” and “the practical strategist.” *Branching Out*’s content embodies Rich’s belief that “words *can* help us move or keep us paralyzed.” In keeping with Rich’s emphasis on the power of language, the *Branching Out* staff saw the publication of work by women as an important step in changing the status of women in Canada.

During our interview, when I asked Diana Edwards about recruiting women to work on *Branching Out*, she characterized the publication of work by women as a form of action:

I was always looking for women who did good work, whether they were good artists, good writers or good photographers, because it was important.

I think we all agreed on that, that it was important to find the best work and get it out there because there was so much discrimination in the art world, in

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and Echols’ valuing of action over cultural production in detail in chapter three’s discussion of *Branching Out*’s location within the Canadian feminist landscape.

the publishing world. Women weren't seen and heard, so I was always looking for good people.

*Branching Out* was fighting this discrimination in the art and publishing worlds by taking action and publishing work by women. Edwards began working on *Branching Out* because of her work as a photographer. She was first approached by Barbara Hartmann to contribute some of her photographs and then became one of the magazine's photography editors. Subsequently, Edwards worked on layout with Hartmann and later contributed columns and book reviews.<sup>47</sup> Her comments about "looking for women who did good work" identify one of *Branching Out's* ongoing challenges: finding good work by Canadian women at a time when women writers and artists were rarely "seen and heard." Edwards characterizes this lack of visibility as part of the larger socio-political context for *Branching Out*.

In order to provide a frame of reference for her responses to questions about *Branching Out*, Edwards began our interview by describing the socio-political context through personal anecdotes. She explained how she came to Canada from the United States in the fall of 1971 because her husband at the time was doing a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Alberta.<sup>48</sup> At their immigration interview

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<sup>47</sup> In the same interview, Edwards comments that she liked doing book reviews because she liked reading and would get to keep the book if she did the review, which she recalls with laughter in her voice. Edwards remembers, "So when books came in that I was interested in or I thought were significant and that we should review them, then I would write book reviews." This memory suggests the intersection of the personal and the social aspects of working on *Branching Out*. Edwards characterizes writing book reviews as enjoyable because she liked reading and received free copies of books she was interested in, but also indicates that she was looking for "significant" texts, books that *Branching Out* readers should know about.

<sup>48</sup> Several of the women who worked on *Branching Out* were in Edmonton because they were in a relationship with someone who moved to Edmonton to do graduate work at the University of Alberta. Others were themselves doing degrees at the university. The university was an important catalyst for women becoming involved with *Branching Out*; however, in several interviews, participants wanted to distance *Branching Out* from the university, insisting that while many of the women who worked on *Branching Out* were affiliated with the university in a variety of ways, *Branching Out* was not only for educated women.

Edwards began answering the immigration official's questions and was told, "We are still a Victorian country and the man will answer the questions." She goes on to explain that by the time she started working on *Branching Out* she was divorced and "that was a huge thing to do in those days."<sup>49</sup> Edwards describes herself as working several jobs and raising children during her time with *Branching Out*. She recalls applying for a credit card and having her application denied because she did not have a husband, an event which she described as "ironic because [she had] always supported the family."

Edwards goes on to describe employment challenges that she faced in the 1970s and 1980s in Edmonton. One of the jobs that she had during this period was teaching photojournalism at Grant MacEwan Community College. Edwards recalls that her classes always had waiting lists and that she had all of the necessary job qualifications, but that she was never offered full-time employment by the college despite the availability of such positions. In keeping with this exclusion from full-time employment, around 1980, when she was working at Hurtig Publishers as one of four senior editors for the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Edwards remembers discovering that the three female editors were paid less, "a lot less," than the one male editor. After learning about the discrepancy, Edwards and her two colleagues challenged this discriminatory practice. Led by Edwards, the female editors insisted, "We don't

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<sup>49</sup> In keeping with Edwards's characterization of being divorced in the 1970s, Carla Van Oyen Wensel's article "The Peddle: The '70s Divorce and How to Survive It," published in the September/October 1974 issue of *Branching Out*, explicitly questions the contemporary image of divorce: "When you're left up the creek of life alone with your children it's a sink or swim situation, right? Wrong. It doesn't have to be" (39). Wensel's article attempts to convince readers that divorce does not have to be a "huge thing"—that women have the ability to leave unhappy marriages. While the article devotes little time to the underlying socio-economic conditions that limit women's mobility and could be read as dismissing women who feel unable to leave their marriages, it nonetheless is a story of triumph that *Branching Out* readers might find inspirational and that gives several practical suggestions to women who want to get divorced.

care whether you pay him less or us more but we want to be paid equally because he's no more qualified than we are." These stories of being qualified for a job but being overlooked in favour of hiring male candidates and being paid less than male employees are characteristic of a historical moment that also overlooked work by women in the publishing and art worlds, limiting women's ability to make their work public.

Edwards's inclusion of these personal anecdotes—about being dismissed by an immigration official, denied a credit card, overlooked for full-time employment, and paid less than her male colleague—helps to contextualize *Branching Out's* mandate to make women's work public and helps to characterize *Branching Out* as a form of action, an important step in changing the status of women in Canada. The fact that women were, in Edwards words, not "seen and heard" in the art and publishing worlds was part of the larger silencing and subordinating of women that second-wave feminists fought against and that feminists today are still fighting against.<sup>50</sup>

However, as Rich reminds her readers, it is important to acknowledge that all women are not silenced and subordinated in the same way. In her examination of the political responsibilities of the feminist critic, Rich calls on the feminist critic to develop "a clear understanding of power: of how culture, as meted out in the university, works to empower some and disempower others: of how she herself may be writing out of a situation of unexamined privilege, whether of skin color,

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<sup>50</sup> Women in Canada still face many of the same issues that Edwards faced in Edmonton in the 1970s and 1980s. As the film *The F Word: Who Wants to be a Feminist?* recently documented, in Canada, women "make up half the work force but take home 20% less pay" and women hold only "11% of the seats on corporate boards and 21% of the seats in Parliament." Globally, "Women make up 53% of the world's population but own only 1% of the world's wealth."

heterosexuality, economic and educational background, or other” (94). Rich insists that a woman of privilege is not “disqualified from writing and criticizing” but has a responsibility “to admit her limitations” (95). By asking feminist critics to locate themselves in terms of their privileges, Rich highlights the significant differences that exist between women and raises several key questions about the relationship between art and politics.

Assuming the position of her opponents, who criticize her for politicizing art, Rich asks of herself, “*Aren’t you trying to make literature accountable to the winds of political change? Aren’t politics and art disastrous bedfellows? Are feminist critics supposed to judge works by some party line of political correctness?*” (95). These questions are the result of a rigid distinction between art and politics, a distinction that presents itself as politically neutral but that Rich calls into question. Rich insists that “these questions are not as pure, as politically neutral, as they seem to be: they spring from the dominant white male culture, a culture profoundly hostile to the self-definition and self-love of people of color, and/or poor people, and/or white women, and/or lesbians and gay men” (95). Rich identifies the desire to police the boundary between art and politics as a product of the dominant culture and poses an additional question: “*Can art be political and still be timeless?*” (95). This question, in keeping with the other three cited above, also represents Rich’s opponents’ position. To this question Rich replies, “*All art is political in terms of who is allowed to make it, what brought it into being, why and how it entered the canon, and why we are still discussing it*” (95). With this response, Rich offers an alternative to the rigid distinction between art and politics and, instead, explains why all art is political—i.e., because not everyone is afforded the opportunity to make art and because not

everyone's art is assigned equal value. Rich asks the feminist critic to engage in a politics of location rather than claiming to be a neutral observer. In enumerating this politics of location, Rich also expresses a definition of art similar to the one present in *Branching Out's* pages.

In a column published in the February/March 1976 issue of *Branching Out* (see figure 4), entitled "When I Met the Lady Poets,"<sup>51</sup> Anita Lerek comes to the conclusion that "by troubling the order of language and meaning in the artistic domain, the poet can shake up the elements of another order—the value order of the reader" (45). Lerek's column is the first in a series entitled "Headway," edited by Karen Lawrence, which ran until the July/August 1977 issue. In her February/March 1976 editorial, Sharon Batt describes "Headway" as "a space for contributors who have broken a habitual pattern in their ways of responding" and introduces Lerek's column: "Our first contributor, Anita Lerek, describes how her ideas about art and politics changed during a conference of poets held in Toronto" (5). When she first arrived at the "week-long International Poetry festival held in Toronto at the end of October [1975]" (44), Lerek's goal was to define what made women poets unique, but Lerek had a difficult time finding similarities between the women poets at the festival. Lerek observes:

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<sup>51</sup> This title is likely a reference to F. R. Scott's "The Canadian Authors Meet." This poem ridicules the poetess "Miss Crochet" whose "muse has somehow failed to function, / Yet she's a poetess" (3-4). "The Canadian Authors Meet" presents Miss Crochet as a superficial figure rather than a talented poet. In contrast Anita Lerek's "When I Met the Lady Poets" presents the women poets whom Lerek meets at the 1975 International Poetry Festival in Toronto as skilled craftswomen. The title is a commentary on the undervaluing of women poets by festival organizers. The derogatory term "lady" is only used in the article's title and final sentence. Throughout the rest of the article Lerek uses "women" or "female" to refer to the poets at the festival. However, the title elicited the following response from one *Branching Out* reader, who writes a letter to the editor excerpted in the April-June 1976 issue: "Anita Lerek's piece on meeting the women poets was really fine...but 'lady' is a four-letter word to me, like 'role'" (Hopwood 2). This response does not recognize that Lerek's title is part of her critique of the undervaluing of women poets at the festival.

Initially, the only quality the female poets appeared to share was that they were women; it was impossible for me to link them up in any other way.... In neither attitude, life style or performance did any of these poets converge. This initial observation disturbed me greatly, especially in light of my constant search for signs of uniquely female ways of performing and perceiving the world. Their poetry disturbed me as well. The topics and treatment diverged widely, and in none of the works did I sense the voice of an indignant woman questioning the oppression around her. (44-45)

At first, Lerek reads the absence of “the voice of an indignant woman questioning the oppression around her” as a sign that there is nothing political about the women poets’ work or their presence at the festival because there were no “direct allusions to women’s oppression or salvation” (45) either in the poets’ public appearances at the festival or in their poetry. Lerek admits, “Both journalistically and personally I came to a halt. I felt I’d lost the angle for a distinctive women’s poetry. And after all, that was the main reason for my coming to cover the festival” (45). Lerek’s disappointment is in keeping with the essentialist version of cultural feminism, the version that emphasizes the development of a uniquely female culture rather than the political possibilities of cultural production. Lerek is discouraged when she cannot find evidence of this uniquely female culture.

However, as Sharon Batt’s description of Lerek’s column suggests, Lerek’s ideas about art and politics change over the course of the festival. Rather than continuing to look for “direct allusions to women’s oppression or salvation,” Lerek begins to see women’s cultural production as a political act in itself. After coming across a copy of Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Lerek realizes that it was “the desire

for independent and pure artistic expression that brought all the disparate women poets at the festival together” (45). This realization enables Lerek to understand why the women poets at the festival were reluctant to have their work read autobiographically or to explicitly associate themselves with the women’s movement. Lerek explains how she comes to understand “why Atwood and Wakoski so strongly denounced the tendency of readers and critics to weaken the effect of their art through the imputation of autobiographical factors” (45). She recalls Atwood elaborating on “how hard it was for males to believe females capable of making artistic choices. Contrary to the rules of sexual stereotyping, she perceived poetry as a vehicle for evocation rather than for mere self-expression and emotional release. She recommended gardening and screaming as more effective antidotes for those needs” (45). The headway that Lerek made was in understanding why the women poets at the festival did not embody the “uniquely female ways of performing and perceiving the world” that she was looking for when she first arrived at the festival. Lerek’s reference to “sexual stereotyping” mediates her earlier desire to identify the “uniquely female.” She realizes that conforming to principles of “uniquely female” artistic expression can be another form of sexual stereotyping—a new set of orthodoxies to which women must conform.

Lerek describes how it dawned on her “that only by inserting a strong artistic presence into the poetic tradition could women achieve full equality with men in that realm” (45). Here Lerek refers to “full equality with men” in a way that seems antithetical to her earlier insistence on the “uniquely female,” demonstrating that equal rights and radical strains of feminism are not pure; there is play between these

ideological positions.<sup>52</sup> As Lerek moves towards this idea of equality for women in the artistic realm, she cites comments made at the festival by American poet Diane Wakoski. On the surface, these comments seem to contradict Lerek's new position on women artists: "As Diane Wakoski put it, the explicit advocacy of rights can be much more effectively carried out in the political realm: 'Poems don't change laws'" (45). Similar to Clausen's distinction between the poet and the practical strategist, Wakoski also distinguishes between art and activism. However, because Lerek has shifted her focus to achieving equality in the artistic realm, she re-characterizes Wakoski's distinction between advocating for rights and writing poetry.

Because Lerek is no longer looking for explicit expressions of feminist rhetoric, she agrees in part with Wakoski when she says, "Poems don't change laws." Lerek concedes that there is no direct connection between writing poems and changing laws, but she qualifies Wakoski's claim, arguing that "by troubling the order of language and meaning in the artistic domain, the poet can shake up the elements of another order—the value order of the reader. And after all, isn't that where any profound change begins?" (45). This re-characterization in many ways parallels Rich's engagement with Clausen's distinction between the poet and the practical strategies. In keeping with Rich's insistence that all art is political, Lerek blurs the boundary between the "artistic domain" and "another order"—the order of the reader, which stands in for society's view of women and society's capacity to value work by women.

An ever-present theme in the pages of *Branching Out*, the relationship between art and politics is also taken up by Jane Rule in her article "Seventh Waves,"

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of the differences between equal rights and radical strains of feminism.

published in *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary issue (see figure 8). One of the first openly lesbian Canadian writers,<sup>53</sup> Rule published her first novel *Desert of the Heart* in 1964. As Margaret Atwood describes, “*Desert of the Heart*—coming as it did just before the late 60s women's movement—and containing as it did two lovers who were women—made Jane and Helen [Sonthoff, Rule's long-time partner] very famous in [lesbian] circles” (Martin). Despite being propelled into the role of spokesperson for the Canadian lesbian community, in an interview with Sarah Kennedy for *Branching Out's* final issue Rule insists that her writing is not propagandistic, Rule explains, “Both the women's movement and the lesbian movements want literature to be propagandistic, and mine is not” (25). Atwood's description of Rule's novels confirms this characterization: “Her novels were never tracts, however. What interested her was character, in all its forms. The human-ness of human beings. The richness and unpredictability of life” (Martin). Responding to a question about the women's movement's reaction to her work, Rule continues, “there's a lot of complaint. There's also a lot of support. Lesbians want nothing but superwoman to be portrayed. If they have problems, those problems are all coming from outside, and being surmounted, and that isn't the way the world works” (25). As Rule's comment that there is a lot of support for her work indicates, she does not claim everyone who is active in the women's and lesbian movements wants propagandistic literatures portraying superwomen. However, Rule's attempt to

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<sup>53</sup> Rule emigrated from the United States in the mid-1950s and became a Canadian citizen in the early 1960s (Martin).

distance her writing from a particular political agenda does indicate that some readers were searching for a literature that coincided with their politics.<sup>54</sup>

Rule's article "Seventh Waves" also addresses the relationship between literature and political movements. In this article Rule compares Canadian and American women writers in terms of their relationships to their nations' respective women's movements. Rule begins her article with the claim that "Literature and politics have never been easy bedfellows" (16). A more measured expression of Rich's rhetorical question—"Aren't politics and art always disastrous bedfellows?" (95)—Rule's claim could be read as policing the boundaries between culture and politics. However, Rich's use of "disastrous" and Rule's use of "easy" to describe these bedfellows suggests that Rule is being more flexible than Rich's opponents. By describing these bedfellows as disastrous, Rich indicates her opponents' commitment to establishing a rigid distinction between art and politics. In contrast, Rule suggests that art and politics are not "easy bedfellows." That it is not easy to establish a close connection between art and politics does not mean that such a connection is impossible. The rigidity of the line that Rich draws between art and politics is indicative of the inflexible position that she attributes to her opponents, whereas Rule leaves open the possibility that such a connection could be established. This possibility is realized in Rule's article when she tempers her initial claim that "literature and politics have never been easy bedfellows" by suggesting that literature can inform our political judgments.

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<sup>54</sup> While Rule wanted to distance her writing from propaganda, she was certainly involved in political movements. During her 1980 interview with Sarah Kennedy, in response to a question about her involvement in the women's movement, Rule describes how her involvement had shifted since moving to Galiano Island in 1976. Rule explains, "Because I live here on the Island I'm not active, as I was when I was in Vancouver, meeting with consciousness-raising groups and doing seminars. So mostly I'm writing for feminist and gay magazines and papers and, very occasionally, I give a seminar, but it's centered on writing" (25).

Rule begins her comparative analysis of Canadian and American women writers by addressing the problem of orthodoxies. She writes that “movements which have shunned their writers or required them to follow the party line have got the literature they deserve” and goes on to claim that the “women’s movement in Canada, if it were able to dictate to writers, might have made that mistake, but, except for the gallant small publishers...the literature of the movement is published by a press women don’t control” (16). In contrast to the central principle of the women-in-print movement—that women need to control the means of production, to establish a vibrant separatist feminist press—Rule argues that because Canadian literature that is important for the women’s movement is “published by a press women don’t control,” the women’s movement has been unable to require its writers to follow a party line, which has fostered the production of more honest and sophisticated literature. Although Rule does not analyze the limitations placed on Canadian women writers who are forced to work within the established press, her argument raises important questions about artistic freedom and the intersection between politics and literary production.

Rule suggests that “there is an unhappy conspiracy between women and the establishment press in the States, which has encouraged writers to concentrate on a confessional literature of masochistic defeat” (16). She explains that American publishers are “convinced that the mass of women can and will identify” with this confessional literature and that American writers “who began with intellectually adventurous and disciplined works are now anecdotal and personal” (16). Rule diagnoses a similar problem within the American feminist press, observing that writers “who have been fostered by women’s presses are suffering a different but

equally deadly limitation of political correctness. Rita Mae Brown, whose *Rubyfruit Jungle* was too didactic but marvelously alive, gives way to a wooden second novel where characters are nothing but political stereotypes: the young radical and the middle-aged career woman” (16). In contrast to this bleak assessment of American women’s writing, Rule presents an optimistic portrait of its Canadian counterpart.

Rule insists that the “circumstance in Canada is different. Aside from periodical publications like *Branching Out*, *Emergency Librarian*, *A Room of One’s Own*, and the one publisher, *Women’s Press*, the women’s movement has no press of its own to encourage or require conformity to certain political views” (16).<sup>55</sup> While Rule does not consider that the established press in Canada also requires conformity (even if this conformity is not as apparent as that which she identifies in the American context), she does identify a lack of influential orthodoxies in the Canadian context. Rule pays Canadian feminist publishing, and the women’s movement more generally, a back-handed compliment, saying that there is no established Canadian feminist press but that this is a good thing because, as a result, Canadian women’s writing is not defined and limited by orthodoxies. The fact that *Branching Out* was willing to publish an article that claims the alternative communications circuit, which *Branching Out* and other Canadian feminist periodicals and presses are a part of, is extremely limited in its influence suggests that *Branching Out* was less concerned with its own image than with evaluating the state of Canadian women’s writing.

Rule explains that the women’s movement “arrived in Canada at a time when most of the country’s respected writers were women, on whom the movement

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<sup>55</sup> When Rule’s article was published in *Branching Out* in 1979, Women’s Press was not the only feminist publisher in Canada. Press Gang in Vancouver, which by 1973 “had become an all-woman print shop,” published its first book, *I’m Not Mad, I’m Angry: Women Look at Psychiatry*, in 1975 (Pike 213).

belatedly tried to put its stamp. Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro bridled; Margaret Laurence tried to be polite; Dorothy Livesay, an old hand at politics, took it as one more arrow in her quiver” (16). Rule provides several compelling examples of prominent Canadian women writers to support her claim that most of Canada’s respected writers were women during the period when the women’s movement was gaining popularity in Canada. However, her characterization of how Atwood and Laurence reacted to being claimed by the movement is complicated by these authors’ work with *Branching Out*.

*Branching Out* does not shed much light on Alice Munro’s relationship to the women’s movement because her work never appeared in *Branching Out*—though this absence could support Rule’s claim that Munro bridled when associated with the women’s movement. Atwood, Laurence and Livesay, on the other hand, all appeared in *Branching Out* in ways that indicate their support for and willingness to be associated with this feminist publishing venture. While Livesay’s association with the magazine confirms Rule’s claim that Livesay, as “an old hand at politics,” welcomed attention from a new wave of feminist activists, the support that Atwood and Laurence provided for *Branching Out* supplements Rule’s representation of these authors’ reactions to being claimed by the feminist movement. While Atwood’s and Laurence’s support by no means equals an adherence to feminist politics, Rule’s representation of Atwood’s and Laurence’s reactions to being claimed by the feminist movement is complicated by Atwood’s and Laurence’s support for *Branching Out*. Rule’s claims about Atwood’s and Laurence’s reactions are accurate but limited; they offer a simplistic version of Atwood’s and Laurence’s relationship to the women’s movement.

Laurence, Atwood and Livesay all appear in *Branching Out's* preview issue. Laurence writes a letter of support and is interviewed by prominent Edmonton journalist June Sheppard for this issue. Atwood sends the magazine two poems,<sup>56</sup> "Chaos Poem"<sup>57</sup> and "Life Mask," and Livesay sends a short story entitled "The Mother-in-Law." The discussion that the *Branching Out* staff had about which writers to approach for the preview issue is described by McMaster in the opening chapter of her memoir, *The Gargoyle Left Ear: Writing in Ottawa*. Her description of the first meeting relies heavily on dialogue. In this description, McMaster makes reference to Laurence, Atwood and Livesay, as well as several other recognizable names in Canadian literature. She recalls,

In this first meeting, the main problem in the loud babble of excitement is writing all the ideas down. "There's a woman at the university, Aritha van Herk..." "My friend Jane Rule might send something..." "Why don't we ask Margaret Atwood, you never know..." "Or Dorothy Livesay..." "What about native issues..." "Elizabeth Brewster's always helpful..." "Margaret Laurence will be here next month..." (15)

All of the women that McMaster mentions published work in *Branching Out*, but of these women only Laurence, Atwood and Livesay appeared in the December 1973 preview issue. Elizabeth Brewster's work appeared in *Branching Out's* special fiction

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<sup>56</sup> During our interview, Susan McMaster described corresponding with Atwood a high point in the preparation of *Branching Out's* preview issue. McMaster found it remarkable that Atwood sent her two unpublished poems for the magazine's preview issue "just on faith." For McMaster, publishing poetry by Atwood in the preview issue "was a mark of support and a guarantee...of validation in the eyes of the rest of the literary and journalistic community." The preview issue highlighted Atwood's contributions by featuring her name on the cover (see figure 1). Atwood lived in Edmonton from 1968-70, teaching briefly as a sessional instructor in the English department at the University of Alberta (1969-70). This connection to Edmonton may have reinforced Atwood's willingness to support *Branching Out*.

<sup>57</sup> "Chaos Poem" was republished in Atwood's 1974 collection of poems *You Are Happy*.

issue in 1979; Aritha van Herk became involved with *Branching Out* (as a contributor and book review editor) beginning with the November/December 1977 issue; and, in addition to “Seventh Waves,” Jane Rule published a review of Kate Millett’s *Sita* in the November/December 1977 issue and was interviewed in 1980 for *Branching Out*’s final issue. Also, McMaster likely includes the “What about native issues...” comment in reference to “Indian Rights for Indian Women,” the preview issue article by Jenny Margetts introduced by Sharon Batt. As I note in the previous chapter, Margetts’ article addressed discrimination against Indian women who lose their status when they marry non-Indian men—an issue that was brought to the public’s attention by the Jeannette Lavell case in 1970, in which Lavell challenged her loss of status on the grounds that Indian men did not lose their status when they married non-Indian women.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to her two poems in the preview issue, Atwood also published a poem entitled “Is/Not” in the March/April 1974 issue of *Branching Out*.<sup>59</sup> Like the two poems by Atwood in the preview issue, “Is/Not” addresses feminist themes. The speaker commands “Permit me my present tense” (22), a command that coincides with the desire for self-determination present throughout the poem. The speaker tells the poem’s addressee:

you are not my doctor  
 you are not my cure,  
  
 nobody has that  
 power, you are merely a fellow/traveller  
 .....

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<sup>58</sup> This discriminatory practice did not end until 1985 with the passage of Bill C-31, a series of amendments to the Indian Act, which restored status to Indian women who married non-Indian men. For details on continued gender inequities in the *Indian Act* see Megan Furi and Jill Wherrett, “Indian Status and Band Membership Issues,” Parliamentary Research Branch: Ottawa, 1996 (revised 2003).

<sup>59</sup> “Is/Not” was also republished in Atwood’s 1974 collect of poems *You Are Happy*.

permit yourself anger  
and permit me mine

which needs neither  
your approval nor your surprise (6-9, 11-14)

While none of the three poems that Atwood published in *Branching Out* are explicitly about women's liberation, the speaker of each poem struggles with some form of limitation. In the "Chaos Poem," the speaker addresses an ex-lover. The poem concludes, "I have started / to forget, at night I can hear / death growing in me like a baby with no head" (38-40). Earlier in the poem, the speaker assures her ex-lover "I won't cut / anything, I won't leave / sloppy red messages for you" (9-11); however, this assurance that she is not suicidal is mediated by the image of death growing inside her. The expression of the speaker's suffering is directed inward.

In Atwood's second poem in the preview issue, "Life Mask," the speaker describes the experience of having a plaster mold made of her face. The speaker contemplates being broken, "I'm plastered up like hole, a thing / that's been broken" (7-8); being frozen, "my mouth closed / packed in bandages or snow. / O to be frozen" (9-11); and being dead,

#### Voices

circle me as though I'm not here,

this is it, absence  
of love at last, I'm invisible,  
I listen to the mourners  
depart, shuffling  
boots and gloves in the hall.

No such luck. They sit me up, split  
my skull in two.... (13-21)

The speaker longs for the absence of love, for death, but she has “No such luck” and instead rises to wash the plaster off of her face and sees her “hollow / face discarded on the chair” (24-25). These images of being broken, frozen, dead and discarded are not explicitly feminist; however, in the context of *Branching Out* and the preview issue’s articles that do deal explicitly with the women’s movement, these images can certainly be read as a commentary on the inferior status of women in contemporary society.

We can more easily read the themes explored in Atwood’s *Branching Out* poems as feminist because they are published in a feminist magazine. *Branching Out* was not only interested in art and literature with explicitly feminist themes, as editorial comments, articles (such as Karen Lawrence’s “Enough!” discussed in detail below) and comments made by participants during interviews make clear; nonetheless, Rule’s comment that Atwood bridled at being associated with the women’s movement is complicated by the material that Atwood was willing to publish material in *Branching Out*—material that grapples with questions of self-determination and the struggle against limitations (especially limitations placed on women by love relationships) and, thus, suggests that Atwood was willing to have her work read as part of a larger conversation about the status of women. However, because Atwood did not want to be owned by the women’s movement, she can certainly be described as bridling at this association; nonetheless, her willingness to publish feminist material in a feminist magazine suggests that she did more than bridle. Rule is correct that Atwood resisted being owned by the women’s movement. However, Atwood’s reaction exceeded this resistance, as is evident in her support for *Branching Out*.

In addition to publishing her poetry in *Branching Out*, Atwood also demonstrated her support for the magazine by providing signed copies of *Life Before Man* and a “surprise assortment” of “books, posters and mystery memorabilia” that she “personally selected” for *Branching Out* to use as prizes in its 1979 subscription drive contest (“*Branching Out* Survival Contest”). The “*Branching Out* Survival Contest” was not uniformly well-received. One subscriber wrote to say that she was “really disappointed” by the contest, insisting that it “panders to a kind of celebrity worship that [she] would not expect to find in independent, sophisticated, politically aware women. Surely [*Branching Out*] can launch a subscription drive that treats [its] readers with more respect” (Ackerman 3). This negative response to the contest reinforces that *Branching Out* existed in a precarious state because it both promoted work by lesser-known writers and artists and included work by “big names” with the hope of selling more magazines. This letter, published in the first issue of 1980, was accompanied by the following editor’s note: “No disrespect to readers was intended. We wanted to provide a token of appreciation to readers who helped expand our subscription list. The contest and paraphernalia package were meant in a lighthearted vein and not as an attempt to subvert the moral integrity of participants” (“Letters” 3). Atwood’s willingness to be associated with a *Branching Out* subscription drive both indicates her support for the magazine and, when considered in light of this subscriber’s response, dramatizes the difficult position that *Branching Out* placed itself in when it enlisted her support.

Atwood’s support for *Branching Out* is illustrated in a more ambivalent way in the January/February 1975 issue (see figure 13). This issue features Atwood on the cover and an article by Vivian Frankel entitled “Margaret Atwood: A Personal

View.” For this story, Frankel spent five days in Montreal “following Margaret Atwood to most of her official functions and to some relaxed informal ones as well. She was on a speaking tour, giving poetry readings, interviews, and making personal appearances at various places” (24). The resulting article is primarily about the reactions of audiences, readers, and critics to Atwood’s work. Frankel clearly admires both Atwood’s work and her public persona and defends Atwood against charges that she has a “hostile attitude towards men,” that she “finds men threatening,” and that she is a “menacing, tough pessimist” (24). Referring to Atwood’s work and to comments that Atwood made during public appearances, Frankel suggests that these charges are based on selective readings of Atwood’s work. For example, Frankel describes how, in response to the charge that she finds men threatening— “because in some of the love-making scenes of her novels, (especially in *Surfacing*) the heroine finds the sexual act repugnant”—Atwood “explains that she is using a simple psychological device; when a woman (or a man as the case may be) is alienated from herself, making love is an alienating experience. She refers her questioners to the third section of the same book, and to the last section of *You Are Happy*, which show a more positive aspect” (24). Frankel’s defense of Atwood culminates in a discussion of Atwood’s relationship to the women’s movement.

Frankel describes, “When asked if the ‘Women’s Liberation Movement’ has had any influence on her, [Atwood] explains that she had been writing for ten years before her first book, *The Circle Game*, came out” (26), identifying Atwood’s artistic development as preceding the women’s movement. This characterization supports Rule’s claim that many of Canada’s respected women writers had already established

themselves by the time the women's movement was gaining popularity in Canada and indicates that Rule's description of Atwood bridling at being retroactively associated with the women's movement is accurate. However, in keeping with my argument that Rule's description is limited, Atwood's actions exceed this description. Consistent with her willingness to publish her poetry in *Branching Out's* first two issues and her support for the "*Branching Out* Survival Contest," Atwood gives permission for *Branching Out* to publish "Four Evasions," a poem from *Are You Happy* (1974), alongside Frankel's article, and Atwood agrees to be photographed by Frankel for the article and for the issue's cover.

The complexity of Atwood's relationship to the Canadian women's movement is evident in *Branching Out*. Her celebrity is both celebrated and criticized in the magazine's pages and Rule's image of her bridling at being claimed by the movement is both confirmed and supplemented. Rule's image of Margaret Laurence simply trying "to be polite," on the other hand, is more clearly at odds with Laurence's support for *Branching Out*. Rule attempts to distance established writers like Atwood and Laurence from the women's movement to support her argument that Canadian women's writing is not limited by political orthodoxies, but this distancing is challenged by Laurence's letters to *Branching Out*, her interview with June Sheppard, and her financial support for the magazine. Rule may be correct when she argues that Laurence's writing was not limited by women's movement orthodoxies, but to say that she simply tried to be polite when she was associated with the movement is inaccurate in the case of her involvement with *Branching Out*.

Two letters of support that Laurence wrote to *Branching Out* appear in the magazine. The first letter (published in the preview issue) reads,

Dear *Branching Out*, I've been hearing some interesting things about the new women's magazine which you are starting, and I would like to offer you my best wishes and hopes for the publication. We desperately need more and better magazines which explore the special problems of women in all fields and which attempt to overcome the 'second class citizen' attitude towards women which has been so prevalent in our society. Good Luck! (2)

This letter clearly indicates Laurence's willingness to be associated with the women's movement and feminist views. She acknowledges that women face "special problems" and that women are treated like "second class citizens." Laurence expresses similar sentiments in her interview with June Sheppard, which also appears in the preview issue. This interview focuses more on Laurence's views on the women's movement than on her writing. Sheppard writes, "We talked about the women's movement in the context of the place in it of women of middle years" (20), and in the following two paragraphs Laurence insists that intergenerational contact is important for both younger and older women in the movement. Sheppard talks with Laurence about the "good fortune" they both have "as older women to have warm and loving relationships with younger members of our sex" (20). Laurence explains that her "sense of rapport with [younger women] is very satisfying" and that she has "enormous sympathy for [her] younger sisters" (20). The fact that Laurence refers to these younger women as her "sisters" associates Laurence with familiar women's movement rhetoric and indicates that she was doing more than trying to be polite (as Rule characterizes her) when faced with the approval of the women's movement.

In contrast to accounts of intergenerational conflict between second-wave feminists (conflict that, as Jill Vickers argues, was much more prevalent in the

American women's movement),<sup>60</sup> Laurence creates a sense of solidarity with her "younger sisters." She observes that "there are certain problems that women in middle-age have which can be considerably alleviated by discussion with their contemporaries and younger women" (20), establishing connections between generations of feminists. She observes that menopause, sex and child-bearing are all issues that are "not taken seriously by the medical profession" (20) and that both younger and older women can benefit from working with each other on these issues.

In this interview, Laurence also addresses some of the challenges faced by the women's movement: "one of the most difficult things for women to combat is the situation when men don't see that they are putting down women. It's very hard to tell someone to put down a weapon that he doesn't know he's carrying" (21). This claim is an important insight into the difficult battle that second-wave feminists faced not only to fight discrimination against women, but also to get people to recognize that this discrimination exists in the first place. While neither the letter nor the interview specifically addresses the relationship between Laurence's writing and the women's movement, her willingness to be associated with the movement and her insights into the movement create a more complex relationship between Laurence and second-wave feminism than Rule's characterization suggests.

*Branching Out* published a second letter from Laurence in the 1979 Election Primer issue (see figure 3). This letter, entitled "Magazine Passes 'Read' Test," is a glowing review of the magazine. Laurence writes,

I have been a staunch supporter of *Branching Out* since its beginnings and I've seen it grow and expand in scope. You've attained a high quality of

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<sup>60</sup> See chapter three for a detailed analysis of the differences between the Canadian and American women's movements as outlined by Vickers.

excellence—in political and economic articles, in poetry and fiction, in artwork, photography, and layout. My test of a magazine is how much of it I actually read—and I always read *Branching Out* from cover to cover. I subscribe to a number of feminist journals, in this country and in England and America, and in my view *Branching Out* is one of the very best. I congratulate you all, and wish you all possible success in the future. (2)

Laurence has strong praise for *Branching Out*. She finds that the magazine publishes “high quality” work by women across a variety of genres and recognizes *Branching Out* as one the best feminist journals not only in Canada, but also among those published in England and the United States. That she was a “staunch supporter” of the magazine was confirmed by *Branching Out* staff member Elaine Butler.

Butler was *Branching Out*'s business manager from 1977 to 1979, contributing editor for the 1978 Women and Education (see figure 14) and “Women and Art” (see figure 15) issues, and coordinating editor for the 1978 “Women in Sport” issue (see figure 7). As business manager Butler was responsible for bookkeeping and subscriptions as well as other office work.<sup>61</sup> During my interview with Butler, there was one memory that she had about managing the subscription list that she wanted to make sure she mentioned:

I wanted to be sure and put this out there because I don't think anybody realized. One of our biggest supporters was Margaret Laurence, I always felt, because every time we put out an appeal for subscriptions, she would send in

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<sup>61</sup> During an interview Butler recalled that, “Everybody wanted to be a writer or an editor. Nobody wanted to do the grunt-work in the office” and the “fact that [she] was willing to do [office work] was a big relief for [Sharon Batt] because nobody else was.” Other than Sharon Batt and Sharon Smith, Butler was the only participant whom I interviewed who talked about being in the office on a regular basis during the last few years that *Branching Out* was in production.

money for subscriptions, gift subscriptions, renewing her subscription. I think at the time I left she had something like seven to eight years worth of subscriptions prepaid, but every time we asked for renewals she'd send in more money.... There were always little cheques coming in from Margaret Laurence.

Butler remembered thinking, “the magazine isn’t going to live long enough to give [Laurence] back all of the issues” for which she prepaid. Butler’s memories of Laurence’s financial support for *Branching Out* confirm Laurence’s assertion that she had been “a staunch supporter of *Branching Out* since its beginnings.” Not only was she willing to be interviewed for the preview issue, before *Branching Out* had even established itself as a high quality Canadian feminist publication, she also consistently supported the magazine financially and expanded its readership by purchasing gift subscriptions. As Butler explained, a financial contribution “is nice and it’s helpful but a gift subscription counts towards [a magazine’s] eligibility for ad revenue and for what [the magazine] can charge for ads, so what [*Branching Out*] really needed were subscriptions”—which is precisely what Laurence provided year after year, subscription drive after subscription drive. Laurence was a patron of *Branching Out*.

Laurence’s name also appears on a list of people who the *Branching Out* staff thank for “their financial support” during the magazine’s four-month publishing break, from November 1976 to February 1977. This list of names appears after Sharon Batt’s editorial to the March/April 1977 issue (see figure 16), which explains, “Reports of *Branching Out*’s death have been exaggerated—at least a little bit. We can’t really deny feeling rather desperate last fall, when near bankruptcy, understaffed and faltering editorially, we decided to suspend publication” (3). Batt admits that she

“was ready, in September, to walk away from the pressure and frustration of trying to produce a magazine with too little money and too few readers,” but that “the tenacity of the staff members” and the support from readers caused her to reconsider (3). Batt describes how the staff “mailed an appeal for financial support to [*Branching Out*] subscribers” and that they “hoped for a dozen or so supportive letters and worried about how [they] would repay those who demanded immediate refunds” (3). As Batt’s editorial indicates, the staff “weren’t prepared for the volume of the response, or the intensity of some letters” (3). According to Batt, “Many readers sent cheques; others bought subscriptions for practically everyone they knew. Careful notes expressed disbelief that the magazine would cease to exist; help was offered, words of encouragement were scribbled on the back of subscription forms, carefully typed letters spelled out elaborate strategies for survival” (3). Based on Butler’s description, Laurence’s name likely appears on the list of financial supporters because she was one of the subscribers who “bought subscriptions for practically everyone they knew.”

The fact that Laurence was one of the many readers who provided *Branching Out* with financial support during this especially difficult time in its publishing history paints a different picture of Laurence’s relationship to the women’s movement than Rule offers in her article. While Laurence’s support for *Branching Out* certainly does not stand in for her relationship to the women’s movement as a whole, nor determine how she reacted when her work was associated with the women’s movement, this support contributes to a more complex understanding of Laurence’s relationship to the women’s movement than Rule presents.

However, Rule's observation that writers such as Laurence and Atwood had established themselves prior to the rise of second-wave feminism holds true. Even though the women's movement retroactively claimed established Canadian women writers as its own, nonetheless, "Gradually nearly everyone agreed that in one way or another the women's movement in Canada had helped women writers by being a newly honouring audience, by making men nervous enough to want to know what women were saying" (Rule 16). Despite this helpful role played by the women's movement, in her 1979 article Rule insists that "Canada still does not have writers either created or controlled by the movement" (16). Rule celebrates this separation between the women's movement and women writers in Canada when she argues that "no matter how inadvertent this development, it is something we should be profoundly grateful for" (16). Paradoxically, the value that Rule sees in this separation causes her to characterize the relationship between art and politics in a way that is similar to claims made by Rich and Lerek about the intersection between art and politics:

For our women writers, not early curbed into narrow didacticism or personal confession, have developed voices which do accurately describe for us the climate in which we live. They are our historians, sociologists, psychologists. With their testimony we have an opportunity to make more informed political judgments because we have an understanding of our complex and particular culture only a real literature can give. (16-17)

On the surface Rule's article seems to be promoting a rigid distinction between art and politics; however, with this claim that literature helps us to make "more informed political judgments," she aligns herself with Rich's assertion that all art is

political. Rule takes issue with women writers being restricted by political orthodoxies; however, she is not suggesting that there is a rigid distinction between art and politics. By referring to women writers as historians, sociologists and psychologists and insisting that their testimony can help us to understand “our complex and particular culture” in such a way that we make “more informed political judgments,” Rule emphasizes the ability of art to influence political action. While it would be more difficult to conclude from Rule’s article that art is a form of political action, she nonetheless presents the relationship between art and politics in a way that refutes the claim that engaging in cultural production, rather than narrowly defined political activism, is a form of political quietism.<sup>62</sup> By insisting that literature can inform our political judgments, Rule attests to the political possibilities of cultural production.

However, Rule also makes a problematic reference to “real literature” when she makes this connection between art and politics. This reference is in keeping with the elitism that runs throughout the piece. Rule assumes that expressly political literature is less valuable than literature created outside of the confines of specific political movements. Rule never explicitly defines what she means by “real literature.” Presumably “real literature” is the counterpoint to literature driven by orthodoxies, which she attributes to American women writers publishing within both the mainstream and the feminist press. Rule’s elitism is in keeping with her vision of the solitary artist—a vision that is evident when she defines literature as “the citadel of the individual spirit which inspires rather than serves the body politic” (16). This notion of inspiration is in keeping with Rule’s argument that literature must not be

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<sup>62</sup> This claim was often made by radical feminists in their critiques of cultural feminism. See chapter three for a detailed discussion of critiques of cultural production as political quietism.

limited by politics but that it can influence political judgments. Rule creates a one-way flow of information between the artist and the body politic rather than seeing this relationship as mutually constituted and, thus, acknowledging the influences of socio-economic factors on the artist.

This belief in the “individual spirit” of the artist is incompatible with the politics of location that Rich enumerates in “Toward a More Feminist Criticism,” yet Rule is still able to acknowledge the important role that art can play in political movements. She admonishes “movements which have shunned their writers” (16) and “hack away at what is growing tallest in their own landscape” (17). Rule tells the story of Margaret Atwood commenting on “Australia’s lack of honour for its Nobel Prize winning writer, Patrick White” and being told by an Australian, “We cut tall poppies down” (17). Rule uses this story to critique what she refers to as the “colonial mentality” that is “envious and mistrustful of excellence” and feels “exploited and betrayed rather than enlightened by the articulate and intelligent” (17). She observes that women “can be the most frightened and hostile, having borne the exploitation of the exploited” (17).<sup>63</sup> This observation is compatible with Patricia Preston’s argument in “Confrontations,” published in the same issue as Rule’s “Seventh Waves.” Preston argues that in an effort to operate according to principles of equality, women’s groups have a tendency to discourage participants from assuming “any position which could be construed by other women as too

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<sup>63</sup> In keeping with the nationalism of this period in Canadian history, Rule identifies Canada as having a colonial mentality, which enables her to make the claim that Canadian women have “borne the exploitation of the exploited” (17).

powerful” because these groups often “equated power with a negative form of control” (32).<sup>64</sup>

Confronting this mentality that is hostile towards excellence, Rule analyzes Margaret Atwood as a representative example of the writers who are critiqued for their success:

Too many women complain of [Atwood’s] success, the number of times she appears on television and radio and on the covers of magazines. Too few take time instead to read *Lady Oracle* as a survival handbook for that wily underdog, woman, who among the pretensions and pressures of the male world secretly leads her own dubious life. Margaret Atwood is not too good for us. She is, like half a hundred others, good enough. (17)

Rule insists that the women’s movement raise itself up to the level of its tall poppies rather than cutting these poppies down and goes on to argue, “A political movement which defines equality by its lowest common denominator will reject the very power it needs to shape tomorrow” (17). Rather than equating power with a negative form of control, Rule challenges the Canadian women’s movement to claim the power of Canada’s established women writers, echoing her assertion that the testimony of writers can lead to “more informed political judgments.”

Rule’s two arguments—that Canadian women writers operate independently from political orthodoxies and that the women’s movement must value these writers without insisting that they “follow the party line” (16)—come together in her article’s penultimate paragraph. Rule asserts, “In Canada we have a remarkable number of gifted and articulate women who will not be reduced to what New York or feminist

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<sup>64</sup> See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of Preston’s “Confrontations.”

presses think women want to read. They will be our voices if we live up to their intent, severe, humane visions, if we learn to grow with rather than cut down those who have so much to offer us and in our name” (17). Rather than suggesting that women writers have a responsibility to the women’s movement (a relationship that Rule associates with the American movement), Rule entreats the movement to live up to the work being produced by these writers. Rule continues, “It is not a question of whether Margaret Atwood or Elizabeth Brewster are feminists but whether the women’s movement is confident enough to claim their power without reducing it to any sort of narrow political correctness” (17). By presenting women writers like Atwood and Brewster as powerful, and entreating the women’s movement to claim this power, Rule suggests that cultural production can play an important role in a political movement. However, Rule qualifies this claim when she insists that the women’s movement must be “confident enough” to claim this power and not reduce these writers “to any sort of narrow political correctness,” categorizing “politically correct” literature as inferior. Rule’s insistence that literature is the “citadel of the individual spirit” prevents her from valuing literature that she reads as actively shaped by a political movement.

Discussions of what constitutes quality work by women frequently appear in *Branching Out*, in feature articles and on the letters page. One such feature article is Karen Lawrence’s “Enough!” published in the November/December 1975 issue of *Branching Out* (see figure 2). Lawrence was a member of the *Branching Out* staff from 1974 to 1979. During her five years with *Branching Out*, Lawrence worked as fiction coordinator, resource planner, and International Women’s Year special issue coordinator, and was a member of the non-fiction committee. As her biography in

the November/December 1975 issue indicates, “Black Moss Press published a small collection of her poems, and her poetry, reviews and articles have appeared in several Canadian magazines” (“People in ‘This Issue’” 48). Rule’s dismissal of literature driven by political orthodoxies rather than literary standards is in keeping with Lawrence’s argument in “Enough!”—which was published in the International Women’s Year special issue on which Lawrence worked as the coordinating editor.

Just over three years before the publication of Rule’s article, Lawrence argued that women writers need to expand the scope of their work beyond explicitly feminist themes. Lawrence begins her controversial argument as follows: “Someone has to say it—women are writing too many poems about blood and dissolving relationships, about lousy lovers and domestic depression. This criticism, I know, will not be taken kindly: but after reading a great deal of poetry and fiction written in Canada in the past few years, both good and bad, I have to admit to this nagging dissatisfaction” (36). Not pulling any punches, Lawrence launches into a critique of recent publications “devoted to women’s writing” (36). She explains, “Most of them emphasize the need for a special forum for women’s work. While it is true that women must have more outlets for creative work, we must be aware of the fact that not all writing is art” (36). Lawrence realizes that her insistence that “not all writing is art” will not be taken kindly by many readers and says she is “ready for cries of ‘Elitist’ ‘Reactionary’ usually provoked by this criticism” (36). Lawrence acknowledges that the argument she is making may not be a popular one, but that it has a place in *Branching Out* because the magazine was founded on the belief that there is high quality work being produced by Canadian women that is not finding an audience because there are not enough publishing venues open to women.

Lawrence's description of collections of women's writing that emphasize "the need for a special forum for women's work" could be a description of *Branching Out's* editorial mandate. However, in keeping with McMaster's original vision for the magazine, Lawrence insists that work by women be judged according to higher standards than she associates with the collections that she critiques.<sup>65</sup> Lawrence acknowledges the importance of words for "people who are experiencing frustration, pain, loneliness, possibly disintegration of former selves and lives" and insists that the word "is one of the most useful tools we have to communicate ideas and emotions to others" (36), but she is adamant that all writing is not art. Lawrence validates the word as a "therapeutic tool," admitting that "Often it is helpful to write (in letters, poems, songs, diaries) about experiences" and that "many of us reorganize some kind of experience in this fashion everyday. But most of us do *not* create art when we do so" (36). This belief in standards for the production of art could easily characterize Lawrence as an elitist and raises the question of who gets to establish these standards.

For Lawrence, "There is a lot of good poetry and fiction being written by Canadian women today, by writers who can relate the particulars of 'being female' to a wider spectrum of human experience. We should not be afraid to reject writing that does not accomplish this" (36). One of Lawrence's standards for what makes good literature by women is that this writing is about more than the experience of "being female." Of course, the attempt to articulate standards for good art is always limited by the location of the critic or reader who is articulating those standards. As is well-rehearsed in the scholarship on canon formation, what gets published, read

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<sup>65</sup> Lawrence discusses two collections in detail: *Women and Their Writing, Vol. II* (1975) and *Title Unknown: Writing by Ontario Women* (1975)

and studied is influenced by dominant ideologies. Lawrence's assertion that just because writing is about "being female" does not justify its publication in the feminist press could easily be read as reestablishing orthodoxies that the women-in-print movement and the resulting feminist communications circuit were founded to subvert because Lawrence wants to exclude from publication writing that deals exclusively with "being female."

However, the fact that Lawrence says she is ready to be called an elitist and a reactionary suggests that she is well aware of the potential pitfalls of her argument. One of her central concerns, and reasons for opening herself up to accusations of elitism, is that she believes women writers are setting up barriers for themselves: "Too many women are limiting themselves to writing about being women" (36). Lawrence makes this assertion on the strength of her experience both as a published poet and as fiction editor at *Branching Out*:

As a staff member of a women's magazine, I am not sure if this is all that women are writing about, or whether women edit the material they submit because they assume certain material is of greater interest to women's publications. I *am* sure that I would like to see more work by women which covers topics of wider interest, and which approaches women's issues from a fresh, dynamic perspective. (37)

The theme of questioning orthodoxies—which is evident in both Lerek's article on the International Poetry Festival in Toronto and in Rule's article on Canadian women writers' relationship to the women's movement—is one of the driving forces behind Lawrence's argument. She asks women writers not to limit themselves to writing only about their experiences as women, characterizing the exclusive

exploration of “being female” as new dogma that women writers must struggle against if they are going to avoid being ghettoized.

In addition to advocating rigorous standards for women writers, Lawrence asks writers to draw on but not to be defined by their experiences as women. She insists, “Women have a unique perspective and the ability to treat issues other than those we have heard so much about” (37). The problem is not the topics themselves. Lawrence does not claim that there is anything essentially wrong with “poems about blood and dissolving relationships, about lousy lovers and domestic depression” (36). What Lawrence sees as a problem is that “women writers have explored these areas ceaselessly, to the exclusion of other topics of interest and importance” (37).

Lawrence does not only question women writers’ focus on a limited range of topics, she also questions the media’s emphasis on big names in Canadian writing. In her analysis of *Communique’s* 1975 International Women’s Year special issue, “Women in Arts in Canada,” Lawrence criticizes the special issue’s inclusion of information on only well-known writers like Atwood and Lawrence, asking “Why couldn’t they give some exposure to lesser-known, talented artists, performers, and writers?” (36-37). In contrast to Rule’s argument that the women’s movement needs to claim the power of these well-known Canadian writers, Lawrence argues that it is “dangerous” to interview “over and over again the same women who have ‘made it’” (37). Lawrence’s argument that more exposure should be given to “lesser-known, talented artists, performers, and writers” is not presented as cutting down the tall poppies. Nonetheless, her focus on lesser-known writers is in contrast to Rule’s defense of well-known Canadian women writers.

Taken together, Rule's and Lawrence's articles present several of the reasons why *Branching Out* published both well and lesser-known writers. Claiming the power of the tall poppies and encouraging the growth of many others, *Branching Out* was a testimony to the quality of the work being produced by Canadian women writers and artists. When asked about the quality of the literature and art published in *Branching Out*, Diana Edwards responded, "I think we did have high quality. I think that that was one of the things that was important to all of us and I think that we were fairly good at evaluating what was good work and what wasn't and we certainly wanted the best to be out there." As Edwards makes clear, *Branching Out* was about more than publishing work by Canadian women. The *Branching Out* staff wanted to showcase the best work that was being produced. While the staff was not always in agreement about what constituted the best work—as is evident in disagreements over the publication of photographs of Tanya Rosenberg's exhibition *Codpieces: Phallic Paraphernalia* and of an unfavourable review of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*—the magazine's goal was to publish high quality, intellectually stimulating work.

The emphasis that *Branching Out* placed on the arts was not always well received by its readers. The February/March 1976 letters page includes excerpts from readers' responses to a questionnaire that the magazine administered in November/December 1975.<sup>66</sup> In response to this questionnaire, one reader from

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<sup>66</sup> In keeping with a central tenet of feminist periodical publishing, *Branching Out* consistently solicited feedback from its readers. As Kathryn Flannery explains in *Feminist Literacies 1968-75*, feminist periodicals "invited readers to involve themselves actively, to join in the work, not simply as consumers of the word but as creators of the word" (51). This shift from consumer to creator took many forms, including contributing to periodicals, working to produce periodicals, and providing feedback on periodicals in the form of letters to the editor and survey responses. Feminist periodicals regularly emphasized the need for reader participation. In a particularly memorable exchange, Toronto-based radical feminist periodical *The Other Woman* printed a letter "by one of the women from the [editorial] collective who reached such a point of anxiety because [the magazine's] readers had not responded in the form of criticism" ("A Letter" 1). This fabricated letter criticizes the

Newfoundland suggests that *Branching Out* “needs more social conscience. It is too ‘high culture’—we are not all literary” (“Letters” 3). This comment is representative of the criticism that *Branching Out* faced for its emphasis on the arts. However, to indicate that not all readers were responding to the magazine in this way, immediately following the Newfoundland reader’s comments, the letters page includes the following evaluation of the magazine: “*Branching Out*’s high quality and all-encompassing nature commend it. The assumption that the reader is a mature, intelligent, many-faceted human being makes the magazine special” (3). This response from an Alberta reader indicates that other readers were responding favourably to the publication of articles dealing with social and political issues alongside visual art and literature by Canadian women. The first reader complains that “we are not all literary,” whereas the second reader appreciates being treated as a “many-faceted human being” who is interested in a variety of content.

The desire for more overtly political content is also evident in a section of the February/March 1976 letters page entitled “Arts/Politics.” This section includes several readers’ responses to the relationship between *Branching Out*’s political and artistic content. The first response reads, “More emphasis on economic and political issues, less on the arts. If women are to become truly equal they must be at the top of the power structure in significant numbers. Because these areas are so foreign to most women they are afraid to tackle them and stick to the creative areas” (2). In

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magazine for publishing an article that ignored the interests of working and married women and another article that did not deal rigorously enough with issues of sexuality. The editorial collective publishes its comments alongside this fabricated letter, explaining “Though originally written as a joke, the collective took [the letter] seriously because we recognize the importance of feedback which we have not gotten for some months” (“What Are We Doing?” 1). This fabricated letter and accompanying editorial comments illustrated for *The Other Woman*’s readers the importance the editorial collective placed on feedback and its commitment not to disseminate information, but rather to engage in a productive dialogue with its readers—a commitment shared by *Branching Out*.

contrast to the experiences of many women artists represented in *Branching Out*'s pages, this response characterizes pursuing the “creative areas” as taking an easier, more familiar path. For this reader, reaching powerful positions in society is a more urgent goal that *Branching Out* should be supporting rather than encouraging women in “creative areas.”

The line that this reader draws between the “power structure” and the “creative areas” is consistent with several *Branching Out* participants’ memories of the magazine’s goals. When asked about the relationship between the magazine’s political and artistic content, Edwards responded, “In some ways I think that it wasn’t even as much politics as it was getting women published and seen.” This response is a representative example of responses that I received to this line of questioning from several of the women whom I interviewed. Similar to the first “Art/Politics” letter’s distinction between the “power structure” and the “creative areas,” Edwards distinguishes between politics and getting work by women “published and seen.” However, Edwards goes on to qualify this distinction: “Inevitably [*Branching Out*] was political because of that [i.e. publishing work by women], because you don’t overcome discrimination without dealing with the political context in which it occurs.” This comment that publishing work by women is a political act and that *Branching Out* also had to deal with the political context in which artistic discrimination occurs suggests that while Edwards primarily characterizes *Branching Out* as an important publishing venue for women artists and writers she also acknowledges the importance of the magazine’s political function.

Edwards explains that she “certainly had faced plenty of discrimination photographically” and goes on to say that she is “quite sure that every other woman

who was published in [*Branching Out*] also had [faced discrimination], even though she might not have always been aware that part of it was because she was a woman.” This insistence on the discrimination faced by women artists who published in *Branching Out* provides a counterpoint to the letter that characterizes the “creative arts” as a more familiar and by extension a safer place for women to explore. When I asked Edwards if she could remember any specific examples of the discrimination that she faced as a woman photographer, she responded by telling me the story of one of her male colleagues at Grant MacEwan Community College,<sup>67</sup> where she had developed and ran the program in creative photography in the 1970s. Edwards recalls the difficulty she had getting her work recognized because it focused on human subjects and the relationships between them. In contrast, her male colleague did a project documenting the suburbs that did not include a single human subject. Edwards remembers, “There wasn’t one child or one person in it. His was the work that got recognized.”

Edwards explained this incongruity with reference to the lack of recognition for women’s topics. Edwards insisted that women’s perceptions and experiences “were not validated, were not thought important or interesting.” She described this lack of recognition as “a way of keeping [women’s] issues, [women’s] discrimination out of sight. Silencing women’s voices.” Edwards referred to her interest in human subjects and the relationships between them as an interest in women’s topics. These

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<sup>67</sup> Edwards hired this photographer and he taught under her supervision in the photography program that Edwards had developed. Edwards remembered receiving complaints about this instructor from students who said that he “didn’t come to class” and “didn’t actually teach them.” Edwards recalled, “His response was that students should not be so dependent on a teacher.” Edwards accidentally discovered that this instructor, despite being under her supervision and failing to meet his instructional responsibilities, was being paid more than she was. During our interview, Edwards explained that when she asked the Director of Continuing Education why the college paid her male colleague more, the Director responded, “they didn’t think they could get him for less.”

references by Edwards to women's topics provide a counterpoint to Lawrence's insistence in "Enough!" that women writers move away from focusing exclusively on their experiences as women. While Lawrence acknowledges that women have a "unique perspective" (37), she raises several objections to the emphasis on women's topics. In contrast, Edwards's references to women's and men's topics help to illustrate how women were discriminated against in the art world. Edwards concluded her story about her male colleague with the following assertion: "The people in charge of the galleries and in charge of the reviews and so on were men and men's topics were what was important not what was important to a woman." Thus, while Edwards by no means suggested that women limit themselves to "women's topics," her memories of discrimination against women in the art world illustrated how important it was for women to have their perspectives recognized in a professional setting.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, several readers still reacted negatively to *Branching Out's* emphasis on the arts. In keeping with the first letter in the "Arts/Politics" section of the 1975 questionnaire responses, another letter in this section recommends that *Branching Out* focus more "on social and political events concerning women rather than concentrating on the arts" ("Letters" 2). Similarly, one of the other letters suggests that the magazine "should broaden women's horizons not only on a social

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<sup>68</sup> This comparison of Lawrence's article and Edward's interview responses is not meant to suggest that Lawrence failed to acknowledge the importance of women's topics. Rather, Lawrence questions the treatment of these topics as the new orthodoxy: "The last five years have been a period of rich growth for women. We have had many opportunities for self-discovery; we have learned new skills; and most importantly, we have gradually built up the self-confidence which many of us needed in order to live and work happily. Now we seem to be in a rut. No one will challenge the validity of a woman's experience if she is writing about childbirth, wage discrimination, or rape" (37). Lawrence recognizes that important work has already been done and that writing about so-called "women's topics" has helped women develop confidence, but she does not want these topics to become conventions to which women artists must conform.

but a political level. It should be more informative than entertaining” (3). Setting aside the differences in terminology,<sup>69</sup> these two responses question *Branching Out*'s decision to focus on the arts.

However, this section also includes plenty of support for *Branching Out*'s emphasis on the arts. One reader writes, “*Branching Out* is my favourite magazine because of its promotion of women’s arts” and another declares that the magazine’s “poetry and photography continue to be first class” (3). Other respondents want *Branching Out* to include even more art. Two responses explicitly ask for “[m]ore women in the arts,” one of which also asks for “[m]ore film reviews” (3). As with any magazine, readers did not agree on what content they wanted to see in *Branching Out*. Illustrating the impossibility of *Branching Out* pleasing everyone, the February/March 1976 letters page includes many conflicting questionnaire responses. Claims such as “I like the poetry” and “I’d prefer shorter articles” are placed next to opposing statements, such as the “poetry is absolutely meaningless” and “I think your feature articles could be more in depth” (3).

While the letters page often included evidence of both satisfied and unsatisfied readers, this disagreement did not discourage *Branching Out* staff from attempting to appeal to a wide-range of Canadian women readers. The questionnaire response that “*Branching Out*'s high quality and all-encompassing nature commend it” echoes former *Branching Out* business manager Mary Alyce Heaton’s description of *Branching Out*'s inclusivity. While access to the alternative communications circuit to

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<sup>69</sup> The first letter distinguishes between the social/political on the one hand and the arts on the other, whereas the second letter associates the entertaining content with the social level and contrasts the entertaining/social with the political level. These differences attest to the flexibility of terms such as social and political. This flexibility was also evident in my interviews with *Branching Out* participants, especially when I asked them to explain the magazine’s politics or comment on the relationship between the magazine’s artistic and political content.

which *Branching Out* belonged was mediated by women's race, class, geographic location, and sexual orientation, openness was key to the functioning of this alternative print culture, and *Branching Out* was no exception. Consistent with the reader's reference to *Branching Out* as "all-encompassing," Heaton colourfully explains that inclusivity was at the heart of *Branching Out's* mandate:

We were intent upon treating all women as equals. We were intent upon being inclusive rather than exclusive. We recognized that as a publication we had some choices to make, but we didn't regard those as inclusionary or exclusionary. We regarded them as necessity. And so, you could be a contributor from Toronto, or you could be a contributor from boondoggle BC and we felt that your work was to be all judged on the same plain. You ... could be a snotty academic, or you could be an uneducated farm woman. That didn't matter. Your work was all given equal consideration, equal justice. That was what the sisterhood was about.

During the course of our conversation, Heaton referred to *Branching Out's* mandate as "promot[ing] the work of women," putting women's work "in the public eye," expanding the field of Canadian art and letters to include not just "notable women" but "all the others," and "validating" the work by these "others." Heaton repeatedly emphasized the importance of "the sisterhood" and of being inclusive. While the limitations of "sisterhood," as it was conceived in the 1970s, have been thoroughly critiqued by academics and activists alike, it is nonetheless important to note that *Branching Out* took a more inclusive position than mainstream and little literary magazines when it came to publishing work by women.

However, because *Branching Out* focused on art and culture as well as feminist issues, such as abortion, equal pay for work of equal value and daycare, and because the magazine was staffed mostly by well-educated middle-class women, at times the views expressed in the magazine were more exclusive than inclusive. For example, in Marylu Antonelli's March/April 1975 editorial, which explains why she finds Erica Jong's novel *Fear of Flying* "far more exciting" than the events of International Women's Year (IWY), Antonelli makes the following assertion: "the book has generated as much or more excitement among a certain species of woman, well-represented on our staff, among our readership, and our contributors, and in the movement in general, than IWY—the educated, liberated yet still unfulfilled woman" (3). This editorial does elicit some favourable responses from readers, whose letters are published in the May/June 1975 issue. The positive responses to the editorial include claims such as the "last editorial certainly lends some insight to where we are going via the liberation movement and what we will realize along the way" (Mailhot 3) and "Marylu Antonelli's editorial for me was dead on" (Davis 3). However, the strongest reaction to the editorial comes from Vancouver writer Helen Potrebenko, known for her socialist and feminist writing and activism,<sup>70</sup> who did not appreciate Antonelli's exclusionary rhetoric.

Potrebenko's letter begins, "Since we really need a good women's magazine, I had great hopes for *Branching Out* when it first began" (3). She explains how, she feels there are not "enough articles about working women, day care, or even women's liberation in general" and that these feelings "were covered by other

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<sup>70</sup> Titles by Potrebenko include, *Taxi!* (1975); *A Flight of Average Persons* (1979); *Two Years on the Muckamuck Line* (1981); *Walking Slow* (1985); *Life, Love and Unions* (1987); and *Hey Waitress and Other Stories* (1989).

people” in the “About Our Readers” column published in *Branching Out’s* January/February 1975 issue, which, as Potrebenko describes, “printed reader’s comments and criticisms” (3). She recalls expecting improvement after *Branching Out* published these readers’ comments, but that such improvement “didn’t happen” (3). Potrebenko observes that Antonelli’s editorial offers an explanation as to why *Branching Out* did not move in the direction that Potrebenko had hoped it would. She makes reference to Antonelli’s identification of the *Branching Out* staff “with those who have been ‘educated to the level of their choice; they have jobs which are not sex oriented; they have freedom either within or without marriage or family. Yet they are discontent, restless, unfulfilled’” (3). Potrebenko’s response to this characterization of the staff is “Well that’s very sad, but how many such women are there in Canada? 12? 15? 312?” (3). Potrebenko questions *Branching Out’s* decision to publish an editorial that addresses the concerns of a limited number of Canadian women.

Potrebenko’s anger at this limited focus is evident when she insists “‘Sisterhood’ died a long time ago; perhaps I’m the only one who still feels hurt at betrayal by middle-class ‘sisters.’ There are some issues (birth control, abortion, rape) which are common to all women but the cleavage along class lines has pretty well destroyed the sisterhood notion” (3). There is plenty of evidence in the pages of *Branching Out*, and in the women’s movement in general, that Potrebenko is not the only one “who still feels hurt.” There were women who did not find the issues important to them in *Branching Out’s* pages, as is evident in some responses published in the letters pages over the years, and in the January/February 1975, March/April 1976, and the fifth anniversary issue (1979) reports on readers survey responses. The

notion of a sisterhood that Heaton relies on in her description of *Branching Out* is called into question throughout the magazine's history. As the letters pages and readers survey responses indicate, readers often challenged *Branching Out* to include more content by First Nations, working-class and rural women. Despite the staff's desire to be inclusive (evident in their willingness to publish critical comments from readers), the magazine could never hope to live up to the expectations of all its readers—in part because these expectations were so diverse and in part because, as with any publishing venture, *Branching Out's* content was influenced by the social location of its staff members.

Nonetheless, the *Branching Out* staff took criticisms from the magazine's readers seriously and were constantly soliciting feedback from readers in the form of letters to the editor and responses to regular readers surveys. While *Branching Out* did not respond to Potrebenko's letter by radically altering the magazine's content, the editorial for the issue in which Potrebenko's letter appears is on daycare—one of the three issues that Potrebenko indicates she was hoping to see covered in *Branching Out*. Antonelli's editorial certainly did not represent the views of all *Branching Out* staff members. In contrast to Antonelli's editorial, Barbara Hartmann's editorial on the importance of daycare reform takes seriously one of the issues that Potrebenko identifies as important to her and is more sensitive to the fact that Canadian women are not a monolithic group.

Hartmann's editorial begins, "Over the past few years many of the important reforms demanded by women have been realized. Some of us now have the convenience of daycare, better pay and more influential and creative jobs. We're pleased that this has been accomplished, but we shouldn't forget that there is still

ample room left for change” (5). Hartmann acknowledges that these reforms, while significant, have only affected some women and that there is still much work to be done. Focusing on daycare, Hartmann explains, “the increase in the number of daycare centres has done a great deal to relieve women of the sole responsibility of caring for pre-school children. Yet, daycare is still an issue” (5). Hartmann sees the problem as “two-fold”: “First, daycare facilities in Canada fall far short of meeting the demand. Second, the quality of existing services is uneven and, in some cases, questionable” (5). The editorial goes on to analyze these two problems and concludes that “there is still need for change. The concept of daycare is a good one but Canadian standards must be raised” (5). Whether this editorial was a direct response to Potrebenko’s letter or was already in the works prior to *Branching Out* receiving and deciding to publish Potrebenko’s letter is not clear; nonetheless, the letter and the editorial appear separated by a single page in the May/June 1975 issue and this proximity is striking. Potrebenko asks *Branching Out* to include content that is relevant to women other than those who could identify with Antonelli’s editorial and, only one page after this suggestion, Hartmann’s editorial raises one of the issues that Potrebenko puts forward.

The fact that *Branching Out*’s desire to publish material relevant to diverse groups of Canadian women was mediated by the social location and political beliefs of its staff is evident in Antonelli’s editorial. In addition to addressing a specific population of Canadian women, Antonelli’s editorial also challenges *Branching Out*’s separatist policy. Over the years, *Branching Out*’s policy not to publish work by men was both celebrated and questioned by the magazine’s readers and staff. As discussed in the previous chapter, one board member resigned because she disagreed

with *Branching Out's* decision not to publish work by men.<sup>71</sup> In her editorial, Antonelli asserts, "I look forward to the day that *Branching Out* ceases to be separatist and actively encourages contributions by men" (3). This sentiment is repeated in two letters published in the magazine's next issue (May/June 1975). Elaine Mailhot of Edmonton writes, "the question of accepting male contributions for *Branching Out* comes not as a threat but as an enriching source of feedback to achieve a better awareness of ourselves as individuals" (3). Similarly, Kathe Roth of New York writes, "I also wonder at your excluding men totally from the magazine. As a woman without a feminist philosophy to back her up, I think you may be excluding *people* who are good writers or reviewers" (3). While Antonelli, Mailhot and Roth represent opinions that were not commonly found in *Branching Out*, their challenges to *Branching Out's* separatist policy provide another illustration of the difficult task that *Branching Out* faced as a result of its desire to appeal to diverse groups of Canadian women—specifically, *Branching Out's* attempts to appeal not only to women active in the women's movement, but also to a more general Canadian woman reader.

However, as previously discussed, *Branching Out* shifted its focus from attempting to appeal to a general Canadian woman reader to being a more explicitly

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<sup>71</sup> The three exceptions to this editorial policy are "I'll Trust You If You Trust Me" by Harry Rensby (September/October 1974) about his reactions to the women's movement; "The Bone Game" by Karen Lawrence and Derril Butler (April-June 1976), Lawrence's and Butler's accounts of playing the bone game in gendered teams (a game that, according to the article's description, is based on a North American First Nation's game); and "Trial Balloon: The Story of a Course" by Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson and David Morley (6.3, 1979), about a course on women and the environment in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. In addition, the letters page included letters from men, but very infrequently. While no readers' responses to Butler's or Morley's contributions were published in the magazine, reactions to Rensby's contribution were uniformly negative. Letters by both men and women responding to Rensby's contribution were published in the November/December 1974 and January/February 1975 issues. These letters identified Rensby's contribution as narcissistic, sexist and poorly written. The letters criticize the inferior quality of the piece rather than the fact it is written by a man.

feminist magazine. As Sharon Batt explains in “Feminist Publishing: Where Small Is Not So Beautiful,” during *Branching Out*’s early years, the staff “aimed for a format that would appeal to ‘the average woman’ and to feminists too,” but the magazine eventually “revised [its] objectives to make the content distinctly feminist” (13).

While there is plenty of “distinctly feminist” content published in *Branching Out* in the early years, the focus tends to be on Canadian women more generally. The editorial shift from positioning *Branching Out* as a women’s magazine to positioning it as a feminist magazine is reflected both in the magazine’s content and in the kinds of responses that the magazine received from its readers. For example, in the early years, *Branching Out* was more likely to publish content that challenged the magazine’s separatist policy than it was in the later years.<sup>72</sup>

This shift is reflected in Aritha van Herk’s characterization of *Branching Out*’s readers in her 1978 defense of *Branching Out*’s book review section. Aritha van Herk began her tenure as *Branching Out*’s book review editor in 1977. In addition to being responsible for the book review section, van Herk was on the Board of Directors, edited the 1979 special issue on fiction with Heather Pringle, and was fiction editor for the magazine’s final two issues in 1980. She begins “About ‘Books,’” her defense of *Branching Out*’s book review section, as follows: “As book review editor of

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<sup>72</sup> In keeping with this shift, Antonelli’s challenge to *Branching Out*’s woman-only editorial policy is at odds with Melnyk’s description during our interview of the magazine’s staff’s opinions on this policy: “it was pretty unanimous that this was a magazine for and about women and even though the topics did deal with issues related to men that we didn’t want to put up with that kind of tokenism. This was meant to be for women contributors. It wasn’t a divisive topic that I could see, other than someone did feel strong enough to resign.” Because Melnyk worked on the magazine in 1979 and Antonelli worked on the magazine in 1974 and 1975, Melnyk’s interview comments and Antonelli’s editorial comments provide very different images of *Branching Out*’s staff’s opinions on the magazine’s woman-only editorial policy. As Antonelli’s editorial indicates, when she was involved with the magazine in its early years, participants were not as united on the decision to exclude men. By the time Melnyk becomes involved in 1979, the group was “pretty unanimous” about this decision, so much so that a board member who disagrees with this policy chooses to resign from the board rather than continuing to work within these constraints.

*Branching Out*, I have become aware of a point of view which states that by reviewing only books written by women, or books of particular interest to women, we are guilty of the worst of all crimes, sexism!” (39). Before beginning her defense of *Branching Out*’s book review policies, she assures her readers, “This accusation comes from the general public rather than our faithful readers” (39). By suggesting that *Branching Out* readers would not question the magazine’s decision to only review books that are written by or are of “particular interest” to women, van Herk presents a very different vision of *Branching Out*’s readership than the letters published during the magazine’s early years, which challenge *Branching Out*’s decision to only publish work by women. This difference, between the early issues’ letters pages and van Herk’s assumptions about the magazine’s readership, is in keeping with Batt’s characterization of *Branching Out* as more “distinctly feminist” in its later years. This shift in the magazine’s editorial policy was intended to attract more distinctly feminist readers and was a response to the increasing numbers of women becoming involved in the women’s movement.

As Barbara Godard argues in “Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value: The Canadian Context,” the early to mid-1980s were a “high-point in the recognition of feminist culture in Canada” (209); to support this claim, Godard points to several factors: the number and range of Canadian feminist periodicals being published in the mid-1980s; the insertion of a constitutional guarantee of sexual equality in the new Charter of Rights (1982); and the 1984 federal election’s televised party leaders’ debate on women’s issues. *Branching Out*’s shift in editorial policy was a response to the increased visibility of feminist culture in Canada. Representations of *Branching Out*’s readers change over time in ways that are

consistent with the increased recognition of feminist culture in Canada. In 1975 *Branching Out* demonstrated that some readers were unhappy with the magazine's separatist policy, but by 1978 van Herk was able to confidently claim that *Branching Out's* "faithful readers" would never characterize "reviewing only books written by women, or books of particular interest to women" as sexist. This shift in how *Branching Out's* readers are characterized in the magazine is part of the growing acceptance of women's separatist cultural production in Canada.

In spite of this growing acceptance, van Herk still feels compelled to defend *Branching Out's* book review policies against accusations from the "general public" that these policies are sexist. First, van Herk clarifies "the aims and objectives of this column" (39). She explains that a "book review section that reviews only books by women is performing a particular and much needed service" because, in most book review columns, "the majority of books reviewed are by men" (39). She concedes that "men publish more books than women do" but insists that "even if one takes the statistics into account, there appears to be an imbalance" (39). However, the absence of books by women in mainstream review columns is only one of the imbalances that need correcting. As van Herk points out, "high profile books by women are generally given plenty of attention" (39). *Branching Out* reviews these books too, but is also committed to reviewing "the other books, the books that are interesting and important to women but are not interesting and important enough to get the attention they deserve" (39)—i.e. not interesting and important enough according to the mainstream media's narrow definition of what is interesting and important. In keeping with the magazine's commitment to publish work by both established and less prominent women writers and artists, the book review section

covers high profile books and books relevant to women that are ignored by the mainstream media.

With this mandate in mind, van Herk explains that “it is impossible for [the book review section] to deal with all the books by women that do deserve attention. There simply isn’t room, so it is necessary to be selective” (39). The fact that *Branching Out* already has to be selective when choosing which books to review leads van Herk to ask, “Given the fact that we can’t even review all of the books by women that we would like to, should we be worried about not reviewing books by men?”—to which she responds, “I don’t think so. Why usurp precious space when we don’t have enough space to do justice to women?” (39). By insisting that the book review section is already pressed for space, van Herk provides a compelling justification for why the section does not review books by men.

In her penultimate paragraph, van Herk explains the review section’s content in more detail: “we attempt to evaluate, from a feminist point of view and in an original and thought-provoking way, serious books that are relevant to women” (39). The fact that van Herk finds it necessary to describe the books in the review section as “serious books” suggests that she is refuting the assumption that books by women are not serious books. In addition to asserting the quality of the books selected for review, van Herk also vouches for the quality of the reviews: “We try to print reviews that are more than simply opinion—intelligent, coherent reviews that possess some wit and point and entertain as well as inform” (39). Struggling against the derogatory assumption that a review section both written by women and reviewing books by women would necessarily be dominated by opinion rather than critical evaluation, van Herk insists that *Branching Out’s* book reviews are intelligent,

coherent, entertaining, and informative. She continues, “We review fiction and poetry books according to their literary merit and we evaluate other books according to how well they achieve their ostensible purpose” (39). The unstated assumption behind this claim is that a feminist magazine’s book reviews would necessarily review books according to women’s movement orthodoxies rather than merit. Without repeating in detail the denigrating presuppositions that underpin these criticisms of feminist work, van Herk answers several of the accusations commonly made against women’s cultural production: that women’s texts are not “serious”; that feminist criticism is based on opinion not critical evaluation; and that political orthodoxies take precedence over critical evaluation.

The concluding paragraph of van Herk’s “About ‘Books’” reads: “Finally, I reiterate my feeling that, given the service we perform by reviewing only the writings of women, we need not apologize for excluding books by men. We are correcting an imbalance” (39). This assertion that *Branching Out* does not need to apologize for “excluding books by men” because the book review section is “correcting an imbalance” is consistent with the entire magazine’s goal to make public women’s work that might otherwise be overlooked. The theme of “correcting an imbalance” between attention paid to women’s and men’s work is taken up in detail by several of the feature articles published in *Branching Out*’s 1978 “Women and Art” issue (see figure 15).

## Our “Particular Regionalism”

In her review of *Women in Exhibition*, an exhibition of women artists’ work at the Janet Ian Cameron Gallery in Winnipeg, Marilyn Baker emphasizes that “one of the major problems confronting contemporary women artists is the difficulty of obtaining exhibition opportunities” and praises *Women in Exhibition* for providing “space for artists who do not have extensive exhibition records, but whose work, by virtue of its obvious quality, deserves exposure” (11). This assertion that there is quality work being produced by Canadian women artists that is not being exhibited is also made by Cathy Hobart in “Does Art Have a Sex?” and Sharon Corne in “The Politics of Pioneering: Art Feminism on the Prairies,” both published in *Branching Out’s* 1978 “Women and Art” issue. These three articles not only demonstrate that there is an imbalance between exhibition opportunities for men and women artists, but also that there is an imbalance between the amount of quality work being produced by women and the opportunities for these talented women artists to exhibit their work.

The insistence in each of these three articles that there is quality work being produced by Canadian women artists that is not getting the recognition that it deserves is a response to the claim that women’s work is not exhibited because it does not meet predetermined standards of quality. Cathy Hobart contradicts this claim in her analysis of the work submitted to “Women’s Work,” a research project that Hobart and four others worked on that “documented the work of Canadian women artists from 1800 to the present” and is the subject of her feature article “Does Art Have a Sex?” (4). Demonstrating why she is qualified to generalize about

the work produced by Canadian women artists, Hobart explains “after one year the Women’s Work material consisted of five hundred slides of work by women artists, the taped interviews, and notes on over two hundred artists who had not personally contributed slides” (4). Hobart insists, “The overall body of work we collected is certainly of exhibitable quality” (6), and that there is a substantial community of contemporary women artists who want to make their work public.

Challenging the assumption that Canadian women are only beginning to become involved in the art world as a result of advances associated with the women’s movement, Hobart explains “Women’s Work also provides evidence of the existence of women’s art in the past. In fact, nearly half of the women who responded to the survey were over forty, and had been pursuing artistic careers for twenty years or more” (6). This observation is significant because it demonstrates that, despite a lack of exhibition opportunities, Canadian women have been producing art. As Hobart insists,

Invisibility and lack of recognition have not prevented them from continuing to produce art. Since three quarters of the artists contacted by Women’s Work responded by sending slides, letters and suggestions it is obvious that they are not content with obscurity and exclusion from the established art community. Lack of interest does not account for the absence of women artists in commercial and public galleries. (6)

Hobart challenges the assumption that women’s art is not exhibited because women artists are not interested in recognition from the established art community. The problem is not lack of interest nor lack of quality. The problem is with galleries’

discrimination against women artists—although Hobart is optimistic that “public pressure will help end sexual discrimination in this area” (6).

Sharon Corne’s article “The Politics of Pioneering: Art Feminism on the Prairies” provides evidence that public pressure can help end discrimination against women artists. Corne’s article is an account of a protest exhibit at the Winnipeg Art Gallery that Corne spearheaded. The article tells the story of Corne and a small group of volunteers obtaining gallery space for their exhibition *Women as Viewer*, which protested the International Women’s Year funded *Images of Women*, an exhibition that Corne describes as celebrating “men’s stereotyped images of women” (7). Corne cites the announcement for the *Images of Women* exhibition, which explains, “Through the paintings and prints and sculpture of 19C and 20C Canada, we will explore the ways women have been portrayed and perceived” (7). Corne is critical of this emphasis on art about rather than by women. She explains, “Any exhibit which would focus on men’s work *about* women rather than on work *by* women would only reinforce the status quo” (7). Elaborating on the nature of this status quo, Corne observes that the “visual arts field is well documented as a male bastion where women’s art has always been trivialized and rejected. Studies show that psychological and economic barriers still keep women artists from participating significantly in the art world” (7).

The protest exhibit was a “feminist show” (9) that challenged the status quo being reinforced by *Images of Women* and was very well received as is evident in the *Winnipeg Free Press*’s coverage of the protest exhibit. As Corne describes, “The public did not seem to want a moderate approach after all. The show appealed to more people and a wider spectrum than we had ever anticipated” (10). To support this

description, Corne cites Katie Fitzrandolph's review of *Woman as Viewer* in the *Winnipeg Free Press*:

the gallery through no fault of its own has a winner on its hands. "Women as Viewer," the protest show occupying two of its galleries is funny, witty, topical, and provocative. The gallery must be acutely embarrassed that its first real hit since moving...was organized by an ad hoc outside committee with no previous experience. The exhibition it was organized to protest, "Images of Women" is pale and sometimes vulgar by comparison with "Viewer." "Viewer" has proven that Winnipeg will visit the gallery in large numbers if offered a challenging and stimulating show. The gallery should swallow its pride and give thanks that such a show has arrived. (10)

This review is a testament not only to the quality of the exhibit, but also to the positive response from the public. The reviewer's description of *Woman as Viewer* as Winnipeg Art Gallery's "first real hit" in the gallery's new location challenges the gallery's discrimination against women artists. The review demonstrates how a group of amateurs triumphed over the gallery professionals and got the work of contemporary Canadian women artists recognized by the established art world.

This struggle for recognition is presented in the "Women and Art" issue as, in part, a struggle to get women's topics recognized and valued. As the title of Hobart's article "Does Art Have a Sex?" indicates, Hobart is interested in exploring the characteristics that make women's art unique. She explains that the Women's Work "collection shows that there is a type of work produced by women currently working in Canada that is different from men's art and is identifiable by three main characteristics: women's art deals with confines, women's art portrays specific human

relationships, and women's art is narrative" (4). However, Hobart does not claim that these characteristics are essential to women's artistic production. She explains her position as follows: "I do not maintain that all women artists do work that fits these characteristics all the time, or that a male artist never produces a work that exhibits similar characteristics. But the overwhelming amount of work by the majority of artists represented in the collection displays these three characteristics" (4). Hobart is looking for patterns in women's art, not placing limitations on women's artistic production.

Hobart begins her article with an explanation of the influence of gender on art. She observes, "Some art critics and historians contend that it is irrelevant to consider women's art as a legitimate genre because art has no sex" (4). Hobart's article is a response to this contention. She explains, "The sex of an artist probably is irrelevant in aesthetic evaluation. Good art is good regardless of the artist's sex, and artists of both sexes are capable of producing good art" (4). However, while she finds the artist's sex irrelevant in aesthetic evaluation, she insists that this irrelevance "does not exclude the possibility that artists of one sex are producing a different type of work" (4). Despite Hobart's use of the term sex as opposed to gender, she is nonetheless more interested in social and cultural differences between men and women than biological ones. She continues, "Art produced by women will be essentially identical to that of men only if there are no differences between the two sexes" (4) and goes on to insist that these differences do exist: "there are basic differences in social background and outlook which have a direct bearing on the type of art they produce" (4). This emphasis on social background and outlook suggests

that Hobart is interested in the important social and cultural influences on women that cause them to produce art that is different from art produced by men.

This assertion that social and cultural differences between women and men influence artistic production is repeated by Marian Engel in an interview with Aritha van Herk also published in the “Women and Art” issue. At the time of her interview with van Herk, Engel was Writer in Residence at the University of Alberta where van Herk was working on her Master’s degree in English. Engel had recently caused a stir with the publication of her novel *Bear* (1976), about an erotic relationship between a woman and a bear. During my interview with van Herk, she described Engel’s effect on the creative writing community at the university: “[Engel] made a splash. She had an impact. We could talk to her. She was just absolutely down to earth, absolutely grounded” and “aware of what was happening with women.”

In the interview published in *Branching Out’s* “Women and Art” issue, van Herk asks Engel “Do you feel that the fact that you are a woman affects your writing in some way?” and Engel responds, “Oh, yes, it affects the way that I perceive the world very much. It affects my writing because a part of my particular regionalism, if you can call it that, is my gender” (40). By referring to gender as part of her “particular regionalism,” Engel identifies gender as one of the many locations that affects her writing. When asked by van Herk to clarify what she means by “gender as a region,” Engel says that her “gender is important in determining what [she] write[s] about” (40). This notion that one’s gender is a factor in determining what one writes about is in keeping with Diana Edwards’s insistence (discussed above in relationship to Lawrence’s article “Enough!”) that there are differences between women’s and men’s topics.

This might seem like an obvious claim in light of well-rehearsed arguments about the politics of location; however, at the time *Branching Out* published its “Women and Art” issue, the claim that there are differences between women’s and men’s topics was immensely important, as is evident in the frequency with which it is made in the “Women and Art” issue. This claim is important because it enabled the articles featured in this issue to address the art world’s discrimination against subjects, techniques, and forms prevalent in women’s artistic production. In keeping with Hobart’s identification of characteristics prevalent in women’s visual art, Marilyn Baker in her review of *Women in Exhibition* is also concerned with what makes women’s artistic production different from men’s. Baker observes, “In this exhibition no distinctions were made between artists working with traditional craft materials and those using graphic techniques” (10), suggesting that different forms and techniques are important for women artists. Baker explains that there is “good reason” for the exhibition’s decision not to distinguish between traditional craft materials and graphic techniques: “Many feminists reject attitudes that have relegated traditional areas of women’s expression to a lowly position. They feel that it is hierarchical distinctions, rather than the quality of the works, that have led historians to assume that women are insignificant contributors to the artistic record” (10). Calling these hierarchical distinctions into question, “Feminist artists and art historians have taken particular pride in the arts that women have excelled in in the past. They have asserted...the superiority of anonymous quilt art with its great complexities and subtleties, over recent abstract developments in North American art” (10). This example of questioning the hierarchical distinction that values abstract art over quilt art is part of the larger project to value women’s artistic

production present in both *Women in Exhibition* and *Branching Out's* "Women and Art" issue.

In keeping with this questioning of hierarchies of value, in "Diary Keeping as a Feminine Art Form" also published in the "Women and Art" issue, Claudia Christopherson argues for the artistic merit of personal journals. Christopherson explains that because the journal "came to be a form of writing indulged in almost exclusively by women and girls, the form acquired the general disrepute of being 'feminine'—meaning inferior, of little worth, a genre on a plane with mother's day cards" (30). This definition of "feminine" is the definition that the contributors to *Branching Out's* "Women and Arts" issue are challenging when they demonstrate the high quality of Canadian women's artistic production. Throughout the "Women and Arts" feature articles, contributors challenge the notion that women's artistic production is "feminine" when feminine is defined as "inferior, of little worth." By defining what is unique about women's artistic production and demonstrating the value of these unique characteristics, contributors insist that women's work no longer be dismissed as "inferior, of little worth."

Challenging dismissive evaluations of work by women is an integral part of *Branching Out's* mandate to, as van Herk puts it in her defense of the book review section, correct the imbalance in attention paid to the artistic production of women and men. One of the ways that *Branching Out* corrects this imbalance in the "Women and Arts" issue is to function as an exhibition space and include images of several art pieces discussed in the feature articles. In addition to making women's visual art public by including images alongside the feature articles, *Branching Out* also publishes photographs of "Arabesque," Diane Carriere's and Danielle Bouchard's "visual

poetry” (18), in the “Women and Art” issue. Included as part of the issue’s feature section, the editorial comments that accompany the piece describe it as “an example of the ‘visual poetry’ created by Diane Carriere and Danielle Bouchard of Montreal. In their work, the two women strive to create photographic sequences that show the various faces and turns of evolving feelings” (“Arabesque” 18). The description also explains that the photographs of Carriere’s and Bouchard’s “visual poetry” are presented in “fans, puzzles, mobiles, card games and other special arrangements” and that these arrangements invite “interaction with the viewer” (18). The photographs published in the magazine are of a dancer in a long, dark dress dancing high up in a leafless tree, holding on to the branches. Because these images are published in the magazine, they do not invite the reader to interact with them in the same ways as the arrangements mentioned in the editorial description. In the context of *Branching Out*, these images perform a different function. They highlight *Branching Out*’s role as an exhibition space for visual art as well as writing.

Of the seven feature articles on women and the arts, four are about visual art and three are about creative writing. The feature articles, especially the interviews with Aritha van Herk and Marian Engel, indicate that circumstances are better for women writers than for women visual artists. While the articles on the visual arts present women artists as struggling to have their work recognized by galleries, the interviews with Engel and van Herk offer more favourable representations of the situation for women writers. In answer to van Herk’s question “How do you feel about being a woman and an artist now?” Engel responds “Well, generally this is a very good time for women writers. People are becoming interested in what women have to say and how they say it. Women are exploring and doing innovative things,

especially in fiction” (12). In addition to interviewing Engel for this issue, van Herk is also interviewed by Sharon Batt about winning the inaugural fifty-thousand dollar Seal Books First Novel Award in 1978 for her novel *Judith*, which she wrote as a Master’s student in the English department at the University of Alberta. Batt’s interview with van Herk focuses on this early success in van Herk’s career. The presentation of van Herk as a young, successful Canadian woman writer contributes to the overall impression given by *Branching Out*’s “Women and Art” issue that the position of women writers in Canada is becoming increasingly favourable.<sup>73</sup>

This impression is a product of the “Women and Art” issue’s theme of “correcting an imbalance” between attention paid to women’s and men’s cultural production. This theme is based on the premise that showcasing women’s work is a political act. But how does this emphasis on showcasing women’s work relate to *Branching Out*’s overtly political content? The notion of “correcting an imbalance” also applies to *Branching Out*’s two themed issues that deal directly with Canadian politics: the 1977 “Women and Politics” issue (see figure 11) and the 1979 “Election Primer” issue (see figure 3). Like the “Women and Art” issue, which showcases Canadian women’s cultural production and analyzes the influence of gender on art, both the “Women and Politics” and the “Election Primer” issues highlight work being done by Canadian women in the political realm and examine the relationship between gender and political involvement.

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<sup>73</sup> In addition to interviews with Engel, an established writer, and van Herk, an up-and-coming writer, the “Women and Art” issue also includes Mary Ann Erickson’s first published poem, “Nothing Will Ever Shatter Me (for Joan Walls).” Erickson identifies this poem as her first accepted for publication in the brief biographical statement that accompanies the poem. An issue of *Branching Out* that celebrates the success of two published writers also includes writing by a completely unknown poet, true to *Branching Out*’s mandate to publish work by both well and lesser-known Canadian artists and writers.

The “Women and Politics” issue includes four feature articles that are grouped together under the title “Political Power: How and Why” and are described as follows: “Four politically-minded women tell what they have learned about getting power and using it” (“Political Power” 8). The first article, “We Need a National Network of Power Brokers,” is an interview with Laura Sabia by Maureen Hynes. In this article Sabia advocates the creation a “power brokerage” that can help female candidates get elected to political office. She proposes a feminist organization that can work with potential candidates and educate them on how to run successful election campaigns. Sabia acknowledges the pitfalls of working within an electoral system that has oppressed women; however, she insists that “the hard facts are that you either get in there using the same tactics, or you don’t get in” and believes that, once women are elected, they’ll “be different” (qtd. in Hynes 11). This image of working within the existing political system to change this system is both reinforced and challenged by the other politically active women featured in the “Political Power” section. In her commentary on Sabia’s proposal, Hynes is skeptical of working within the existing political system and asks “What are the dangers of seeking representation within a system that has always oppressed us?” (11). Both Sabia’s commitment to working within the existing system to get more women candidates elected to political office and Hynes’ doubts that the existing system can be reformed are repeated in the “Political Power” section.

In the second contribution to this section, “You Have to Run for Yourself,” Patricia Preston interviews Maria Eriksen, “a Calgary psychologist who ran unsuccessfully in the 1975 Alberta election” (12). According to Preston, for Eriksen “altruism...has been a key factor in women’s decision to enter politics” and this

altruism, which is “based on years of conditioning, helps to preclude women from admitting they want power for themselves” (12). In place of this altruism, Eriksen believes that women “ought to honestly want the power and the position and go after both ruthlessly” (qtd. in Preston 12) and that “We need to get women to think of themselves as public figures, to take the power” (13). This image of individual women wanting and taking power is in keeping with Sabia’s vision of women seeking power within the existing political system. Both Sabia and Eriksen discuss the disparity between support for female and male political candidates and advocate women’s involvement in the ordinary political process.

In contrast, in the third contribution to the “Political Power” section, “Power Is Not Electoral,” Jean Burgess, who identifies herself as “a Marxist socialist and a feminist,” rejects “electoral politics in favour of work outside the party system” (14). Because for Burgess “power is not electoral, it is economic control” (14), she is not interested in working within the existing political system and instead proposes non-electoral strategies for forwarding women’s and “working people’s interests” (14). Reinforcing her socialism more than her feminism, Burgess proposes three strategies: “to form and coordinate active political organizations that provide a truly socialist perspective, give real support to working class organizations on class struggle issues and can develop into a viable political option” (14); “to work within existing organizations that have a working class membership and that can have some hope of developing into a working class political force” (15); and “for socialists to integrate [their] policies into [their] everyday lives through [their] jobs, [their] personal relationships and the way [they] live” (15). Burgess is adamant that working

within the existing political system is not an effective way to challenge the oppression of women and of the working class.

The fourth article in the “Political Power” section, “Running a Feminist Campaign,” is by Rosemary Brown who, like Burgess, identifies herself as a socialist and a feminist but, unlike Burgess, believes in working within the existing political system. In this article Brown argues for the importance of more feminists becoming politically active and running for office. Brown presents herself as maintaining her feminist ideals despite working within a political system that has oppressed women. She describes the five “ground rules” that she established when she agreed to run for the NDP leadership in 1975, including “running on the issues of feminism and socialism” and making campaign decisions collectively (17). Brown explains, “If we as women are entering the political stream to do things in exactly the same way that men have done them all along, then our contribution to the quality of life of the women in this country will be very limited indeed” (17).

For Brown, there are important differences between women and feminist politicians. Brown begins her article by defining a feminist as “a person who recognizes that women, solely because of their sex, constitute a separate group in society—a separate group in any segment of society to which they may belong—and are oppressed and exploited thereby” (16). Once she has established this definition, she explains,

A feminist, therefore, takes into the political arena a commitment to change the status of all women in all groups of society. She is very clearly different from the “woman politician” who says that she is a politician with a general commitment to all people. For the “woman politician,” the fact of her

femaleness does not indicate any special concern for the needs of women as a group. A feminist politician accepts that she must explore a new kind of politics, making new demands and representing an emerging constituency, namely women demanding representatives committed to their struggle for true equality in all areas of their lives. (16)

Whereas Sabia, in her interview with Hynes, focuses on a “power brokerage” that would encourage women to run for political office and assist them with their election campaigns and emphasizes the importance of incorporating tactics prevalent in the existing system, Brown emphasizes that feminists can engage in “a new kind of politics.” Brown’s article is accompanied by a photograph of a woman sitting at a table who is pushing away a man’s hat and an ashtray, symbolically rejecting men’s politics. This photograph provides a visual representation of Brown’s argument that women who are elected to public office have a responsibility to improve not only the status of women but also the existing political system. The photograph is paired with a pull-quote: “We must be more than just carbon copies of male politicians” (17). For Brown, working within the existing political system does not mean blindly accepting the strategies prevalent within this system. In contrast, Hynes’ interview with Sabia is accompanied by a photograph of a woman in army fatigues sneaking in to a conference room. This photograph is also paired with a pull-quote—“Feminist caucuses should infiltrate each party” (11). These photograph and accompanying pull-quotes indicate the differences between Brown’s and Sabia’s positions. While both Brown and Sabia advocate working within the existing political system, Sabia’s strategy is presented as a covert attack and Brown’s as an overt challenge.

Brown presents feminist politicians as having “the opportunity and responsibility to kill three birds with one stone: to achieve equality, to improve the calibre of politics, and to improve the quality of life for all people” (16). Brown takes the “general commitment to all people” that she associates with the “woman politician” and adds to the feminist politician’s mandate commitments to ending gender discrimination and improving the existing political system. Similar to *Branching Out*’s goal to encourage women’s cultural production, the magazine also encouraged women’s political involvement. As Brown describes, “When, as feminists, we challenge the political structure, it is because we recognize that politics is part of the vital network through which our oppression is channeled and maintained. If we could but turn that structure around, it could be made one of the most useful and effective tools in our struggle for liberation” (18). Throughout the “Political Power” section of the 1977 “Women and Politics” themed issue, contributors call attention to the imbalance between men’s and women’s political involvement and propose strategies for correcting this imbalance. Just as the “Women and Art” issue challenges imbalances between women’s and men’s involvement in the arts and the disparity between attention paid to women’s and men’s artistic production, the “Women and Politics” issue challenges imbalances between women’s and men’s political involvement and the lack of attention paid to issues relevant to Canadian women, such as daycare, reproductive rights, and equal pay legislation.

However, as Jean Burgess’s contribution to the “Women and Politics” issue indicates, *Branching Out* did not consistently present electoral politics as a viable method for improving the status of women in Canada. In “You Have to Run for

Yourself,” Preston explains that Eriksen is aware that “she leaves herself open to charges from other women that she’s now willing to play the man’s game, the man’s way” (12). The tension between “playing the man’s game, the man’s way,” exploring “a new kind of politics” (16) and working outside the political system is explored in both the “Women and Politics” and the “Election Primer” issues.

In her editorial to the 1979 “Election Primer” issue, “Feminism: Wallflower in Party Politics,” Aritha van Herk questions “the role of feminism in relation to the established political structure” (2). According to van Herk, “Everyone wants to get the feminist vote, but political parties have always used feminism to support parties, never parties to support feminism” (2). Presenting an image of a political system that uses women’s issues to win seats but does not work on behalf of women, van Herk insists that the “politics of feminism are ‘grass roots’ politics. By lobbying, by working for good daycare, in rape crisis centres and with battered wives, we can gain a solidarity that will become much more than a behind-the-scenes movement” (2). She tells readers, “Please think twice when you hear election promises that are directed at women. No one is going to rescue us but ourselves” (2).

Despite the fact that van Herk introduces the “Election Primer” issue by criticizing the ability of governments to improve the status of women, one of the four articles in the “Election Primer” issue’s feature section is “a survey of things women can do if they wish to go beyond voting and become active in elections and beyond” (19). In “A Beginner’s Guide to Political Involvement,” Jo Evans suggests that “women’s detachment from the political process and [their] relative lack of success within the political system are both manifestations of the same sad information gap” and that women “don’t know how to participate effectively” in the

political system (19). Rather than performing a systemic analysis of why women have been excluded from the political process, Evans provides readers with steps to combat this exclusion. She describes to readers how to decide what they want to achieve by becoming politically active, provides strategies for educating candidates on women's issues and deciding which candidate to support, and suggests ways that readers can support candidates during an election, lobby representatives after the election, and monitor and influence the actions of representatives in office. Evans' advice is meant to empower readers to become more politically active in order to increase "government's responsiveness to women's demands" (22).

In contrast to van Herk's editorial, Evans' feature article focuses on working with the state to improve the status of women rather than engaging in grassroots action. The other three articles in the "Election Primer" feature section are less obviously related to electoral politics. Lynn McDonald's "The Evolution of the Women's Movement," the second-part of a two-part series, appears in this section. In this article, McDonald examines the influence that national politics in Germany, Britain, Russia, and France have had on these countries' respective women's movements. She uses her findings to support the conclusions that she drew about the Canadian women's movement in the first part of this series published in *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary issue.<sup>74</sup> The other two articles in this feature section—Carole Swan's "Broken Promises: Fresh Assaults on the Working Woman" and Kathleen Macleod Jamieson's "Human Rights: Indian Women Need Not Appeal"—criticize the federal government for discriminating against women.

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<sup>74</sup> See chapter three for a detailed analysis of part one of McDonald's series.

Swan criticizes the government's employment policies and explains, "Because the federal government has failed to recognize the realities of female participation in the labour force its job creation schemes operate at the expense of women workers" (9). She identifies a "consistent pattern" in the government's policies: "a pattern of discriminatory legislation and policies which will prevent women from participating in the Canadian labour force on the same basis and with the same advantages as men" (9). Similarly, in her article on First Nations women's fight "to regain the status they lost through marrying non-Indians" (11), Jamieson criticizes the "discriminatory legislation" (12) that has led to this loss of status. Both Swan's and Jamieson's articles perform an educative function. They provide readers with information that they can use to challenge the government's discriminatory practices.

This educative function supports Evans' recommendation to readers to "bone up thoroughly" on the issues that they want politicians to address and "to be able to spout facts and logic in the face of every slick verbal trick" (19). By publishing articles on specific feminist issues, such as employment legislation and First Nations women's loss of status through marriage, *Branching Out* attempted to correct specific aspects of the information gap that Evans identifies in her article. When it came to the magazine's overtly political content, *Branching Out* did not advocate a particular political agenda but rather provided readers with information on issues relevant to Canadian women.<sup>75</sup> *Branching Out* did not tell women how to challenge imbalances between women's and men's political involvement and the lack of attention paid to issues relevant to Canadian women. Instead, the magazine performed an educative function, informing readers about the issues but leaving it up

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<sup>75</sup> The magazine's regular law column is a good example of the educative function that *Branching Out* performed. See chapter one for a list of topics covered in this column.

to them to decide whether or not working within the existing political system can improve the status of women in Canada.

As a feminist intervention *Branching Out* did not focus on either radical political action or traditional state politics. The theme of correcting an imbalance, which van Herk outlines in her defense of the magazine's book review column, best describes the nature of *Branching Out's* feminism. This emphasis on equal opportunity could be restrictively labeled as a brand of liberal or equal rights feminism; however, as this chapter's discussion of the "Women and Art," "Women and Politics" and "Election Primer" issues indicates, *Branching Out's* focus on correcting cultural and political imbalances between women and men does not preclude the magazine from also engaging in systemic critiques of power structures and exploring Canadian women's particular regionalisms (to borrow Engel's phrase), i.e., the specific cultural and political locations occupied by Canadian women.

The magazine's interest in these regionalisms is evident in van Herk's editorial "Mythology of Our Own," which introduces *Branching Out's* 1979 special fiction issue. The editorial begins, "Women are remaking their world with words. Women are writing stories, writing good stories, that we have wanted to hear for so long. Perhaps this is one reason why women have such a strong voice in Canadian fiction: we are now creating our own mythology, our own heroines, our own environment" (2). The value of "creating our own mythology" is about more than opening doors for women writers and providing individual women with publishing opportunities. In this editorial, van Herk insists that "when women create their stories and write them down, they are changing the world" (2). In keeping with the intersection of activist and literary/art histories in *Branching Out's* pages, van Herk

introduces the special fiction issue by asserting the political power of cultural production—or, to return to Rule’s formulation, the ability of art to inform our political judgments. In one of the strongest connections between art and politics made in *Branching Out*, van Herk insists,

What begins as an attempt to understand ourselves can develop into a plan for the future. These stories are about *us*, about the things that concern *us*. It is to the possibilities of our world rather than simply the probabilities that we must look. The importance of art as a vehicle for change is undeniable. Fiction can lead us forward, can provide us with a voice and a direction, a mythology of our own. (2)

This unequivocal declaration that art has the ability to alter what is possible in the world characterizes women artists as having an important role to play in fighting discrimination against women. While the periodical form encourages *Branching Out* to publish multiple, at times contradictory, perspectives on both cultural production and political activism, the political power of cultural production is a common theme throughout *Branching Out*. This theme was a feature of many participants’ memories of *Branching Out*’s editorial mandate, of their insistence that making work by women public was a political act.

Because the magazine was published on a semi-regular basis over a period of seven years, it reflects the changing views of *Branching Out* participants and readers over the magazine’s lifetime, yet the intersection between art and politics is a consistent theme throughout *Branching Out*’s thirty-one issues. How precisely the relationship between art and politics is characterized varies over time, but the

political power of the cultural production promoted by *Branching Out* is reasserted throughout the magazine's history.

## Chapter Three

### “Beyond the First Growth of Radical Feminism”:

#### Defining Canadian Second-Wave Feminism, Locating *Branching Out*

*Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, Judy Rebick’s 2005 collective memoir and history of Canadian second-wave feminism, is a valuable introduction to key events, issues, debates, and organizations that defined the Canadian women’s movement. As an intervention into the field of Canadian feminist history, Rebick’s study is an important consolidation of diverse perspectives. By focusing each chapter on “an event or milestone” (xiii)—such as “The Abortion Caravan,” “The Quebec Women’s Movement,” “Changing the Indian Act,” and “International Women’s Day”—Rebick provides readers with information on the major events, organizations, and trends present in the Canadian women’s movement from the 1960s through the 1990s. While Rebick acknowledges that “there is much that this book does not address” (xiii), *Ten Thousand Roses* nonetheless provides important insights into the Canadian women’s movement based on information previously available only to movement participants or through detailed analysis of the movement’s primary documents. Rebick’s commitment to including “a wide diversity of perspectives” led her to interview women from more than one side of an issue where there were differences of opinion within the movement (xiii), which was often. Consequently, *Ten Thousand Roses* provides a valuable starting point for this chapter’s analysis of the women’s movement and where *Branching Out* fits into this field. As a survey of key events and debates in the Canadian women’s movement,

*Ten Thousand Roses* enables me to answer questions about *Branching Out's* place in Canadian feminist history.

This chapter has two primary aims: to locate *Branching Out* within the second-wave feminist landscape and to demonstrate how *Branching Out* both confirms and challenges scholarship on second-wave feminism. In order to achieve these aims, I examine the various strains of second-wave feminism, define *Branching Out* as an example of cultural feminism, and perform a comparative analysis of Jill Vickers' "The Intellectual Origins of the Women's Movement in Canada" and *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary issue (see figure 8). I focus my analysis on the magazine's fifth anniversary issue because this issue includes a feature section on the "Dynamics of the Women's Movement." This feature section represents *Branching Out's* most extended analysis of Canadian feminism. Similar to *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary issue, this chapter explores the dynamics of the women's movement and, in doing so, contributes to our understanding of Canadian second-wave feminism.

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In her introduction, Rebick describes the book as "an oral history, reflecting the mosaic of the women's movement in Canada" (xi). Rebick observes, "Most histories are written from a single perspective. Feminism has taught me that your view of the world depends in no small measure on where you stand" (xi). Rebick's politics of location cause her to gather together stories from a wide range of Canadian women: "Aboriginal, black, poor, immigrant, young and old, lesbian and straight, Québécoise, disabled; from the West, the North and the East; from rural

areas and from small towns” (xi).<sup>76</sup> This commitment to representing Canadian feminism as a diverse movement enables Rebick to challenge the received wisdom that the women’s movement was a straight, white, middle-class movement based on liberal values. As Rebick herself acknowledges, “So much of what passes for popular knowledge about the women’s movement focuses on what was achieved by liberal, middle-class women who already had a certain amount of privilege” (xiii). *Ten Thousand Roses* adds a host of additional voices to this limited history. Rebick recognizes that liberal, middle-class women “did play an important role, but there were many, many others: radical feminists, Marxists, anarchists, black consciousness militants, Quebec nationalists, union activists, left-wing NDPers and plain old kick-ass shit disturbers” (xiii).

In explaining the motivation for *Ten Thousand Roses*, Rebick refers to her recent work with “a new generation of activists, female and male, in the anti-globalization movement and on such projects as The New Politics Initiative, *rabble.ca*, The Toronto Socialist Forum and the Activist school” (xii). While she acknowledges that she “is glad to see the impact of feminism on all this work” (xii), she also laments that “much of the experience of the second-wave of feminism, that of [her] generation, is getting lost” (xii-xiii). Rebick does not admonish the younger generation of activists, but rather calls attention to the lack of information readily available on the Canadian women’s movement: “It is not only that the wheel is being reinvented, which is natural for each generation, it is also that the rich experience of

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<sup>76</sup> Of course, no list of women’s perspectives is going to be exhaustive; it is nonetheless interesting to note that central Canada is not mentioned in the list of regions. Toronto is the assumed centre from which Rebick speaks.

the women's movement, particularly regarding many of the same issues and struggles that preoccupy young activists today, is not easily available" (xiii).

*Ten Thousand Roses* makes more of this information about "the rich experience of the women's movement" available and, in doing so, Rebick also emphasizes how the Canadian women's movement differed from its American counterpart. In her introduction, Rebick discusses how reading Susan Brownmiller's *In Our Time*, "a history of the American women's liberation movement that focuses on grassroots activism" (xii), was one of the events that inspired her to write *Ten Thousand Roses*: "Reading Brownmiller, I was struck by how much more interesting and effective the Canadian women's movement has been" (xii). Rebick's insistence on the Canadian movement's superiority to its American counterpart is in keeping with a key feature of the Canadian women's movement: a preoccupation with distinguishing itself from the American movement. Constance Backhouse emphasizes this comparative approach in the introduction to *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*. In the preface, editors Backhouse and David H. Flaherty claim that "contributors from Canada are more likely than Americans to have knowledge of the development of the recent women's movement in both countries" (x). In her introduction, Backhouse follows this claim up with assertions that American contributors are more "insular" than their Canadian counterparts (3), and that the comparative approach, an "informing aspect" of *Challenging Times* (Backhouse and Flaherty ix), "holds the attention of Canadian writers more obviously than their American counterparts" (Backhouse 7). This preoccupation with how the Canadian movement differed from its American

counterpart is evident throughout Rebick's chapter on Canadian feminism in the 1960s entitled "The Seedbed."

In this chapter Rebick explores the origins of Canadian second-wave feminism. The chapter takes its title from Ursula Franklin's claim that the anti-war women's group Voice of Women was "the seedbed of the second wave of feminism" (3). After discussing the importance of Voice of Women for the development of Canadian second-wave feminism, Rebick goes on to acknowledge that the story of second-wave feminism is often said to begin with the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which gave voice to the growing dissatisfaction of American women in the middle of the twentieth century—"the problem that has no name." Rebick positions the Canadian women's movement as ahead of its American counterpart when she points out that "Canadian women had been reading about this 'problem with no name' for several years by that time [1963]. Doris Anderson had taken the helm of the women's magazine *Chatelaine* in 1957...and begun to publish feminist articles long before the mainstream had a notion of the women's movement to come" (5).<sup>77</sup> In fact, when Friedan asked *Chatelaine* to serialize *The Feminine Mystique* her request was rejected. Rebick cites Anderson's description of this rejection in her autobiography, *Rebel Daughter*: "We discussed it and decided that we had already printed all that stuff" (6). While this rejection represented a missed opportunity for *Chatelaine*, within Rebick's narrative of Canadian second-wave feminism, Anderson's rejection of Friedan's book enables Rebick to position Canadian women's publishing as ahead of its American counterpart.

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<sup>77</sup> For a more complete analysis of *Chatelaine's* feminist past see Valerie Korinek's *Roughing It in the Suburbs*.

Rebick's chapter on the 1960s also includes a comparison of Canadian and American feminists' 1960s beauty pageant protests. As Rebick describes, "Probably the most famous women's action of the 1960s was the protest against the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City in 1968. But a year later, Canadian women carried out an even more effective protest against beauty pageants" (10). As with her references to Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Brownmiller's *In Our Time*, Rebick contextualizes the Canadian intervention in terms of its American counterpart and asserts the superiority of the Canadian version. Judy Darcy, the "protest candidate," tells the story of the Toronto Women's Liberation Movement (TWLM) disruption of the 1969 Miss Canadian University Pageant (10). Darcy recalls how she got herself declared Miss York University and "went undercover to pageant preparations for several days, sneaking out for strategy meetings" (11), and describes what happened the night of the pageant:

Janille Jolly, a member of TWLM, came in from outside chanting and demanding the right to speak. This was being televised. She marched up to the podium and got in a spat with the MC. They stopped filming. She denounced the beauty pageant, and the MC tried to stop her by saying she wasn't a contestant. Then I was allowed to speak. I yelled, "It's true, it's a meat market, and they do exploit women." We marched out singing "Solidarity Forever." We came this close to having Miss Memorial University and Miss Queen's walk out too. (11)

After including this story from Darcy, Rebick moves on to discuss women's movement organizing "to give women control over their own bodies" (11). She does not explain why Darcy's recollection of the Miss Canadian University Pageant

characterizes this protest as “more effective” than its American counterpart. Presumably, Rebick insists that the Canadian protest is more effective because TWLM actually had an undercover candidate infiltrate the pageant, whereas at the 1968 Miss American Pageant women’s liberationists were only able to smuggle in a banner reading “Women’s Liberation” and set off stink bombs, in addition to the guerilla theatre that was performed on the boardwalk outside of the convention centre where the pageant was held.<sup>78</sup> For Rebick’s history, it seems to be enough for her to assert the superiority of the Canadian action rather than proving this superiority in detail. The comparison is a rhetorical gesture that is in keeping with Rebick’s insistence on distinguishing between the Canadian and American women’s movements throughout *Ten Thousand Roses*.

Another theme that arises in Rebick’s distinction between these two national contexts is Canadian feminism’s connection to labour politics. The fact that the protesters march out singing “Solidarity Forever” and that the protest candidate acts as a kind of agent provocateur, infiltrating the pageant and encouraging other candidates to walk out with the TWLM protesters, is reminiscent of the union organizing where Rebick got her start in political activism.

The importance that Rebick places on distinguishing between the Canadian and American contexts is in tension with her repeated contextualization of the Canadian movement in terms of its American counterpart. This contextualization is perhaps most pronounced when she begins her introduction to the *Ten Thousand Roses*’ section on the 1970s with a lengthy paragraph on the American political context in the early 1970s—mentioning the Weather Underground’s “declaration of

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<sup>78</sup> See Jo Freeman, “No More Miss America! (1968-1969)” for a more detailed description of this protest.

war against the U.S. government,” the Kent State Massacre, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, the 11 September 1973 U.S. backed coup in Chile, and the Watergate scandal—before turning to the Canadian context in the second paragraph with the claim, “In Canada, the FLQ also moved towards the increasing use of violence” (17). This information on the American context is certainly relevant; however, it is located in a remarkably prominent place in an introduction to Canada’s political climate in the 1970s.

The bulk of Rebick’s introduction focuses on the Canadian political context and the major developments in the Canadian women’s movement during this decade—including the Government of Canada’s declaration of the War Measures Act on 16 October 1970 in response to the FLQ’s kidnapping of Pierre Laporte and James Cross, the Quebec “struggle between sovereignty and federalism” (18), the fragmenting of the Canadian left, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and the abortion caravan—yet the chapter begins with the American context. By affording the American political context this prominent place in the chapter, Rebick’s introduction dramatizes the struggle against American dominance. More has been written about the American New Left and women’s movement than their Canadian counterparts; American politics and culture are more a part of the popular imagination than their Canadian counterparts. American feminist historians do not gesture towards Canadian histories because of this dominance—a dominance which prevents Canadian feminists from conceiving of themselves as the centre and forces them to acknowledge difference. In this sense, I am not criticizing Rebick for beginning with the American context, but rather suggesting that her repeated references to this context, and her insistence on distinguishing between what is

happening in Canada and what is happening in the United States, call attention to an important feature of Canadian feminism in the 1960s and 1970s as well as today: conceiving of itself as distinct from its American counterpart.

Backhouse references the value that Canadian feminists assign to distinguishing themselves from their American counterparts in her discussion of “The Intellectual Origins of the Women’s Movement in Canada,” Jill Vickers’ contribution to *Challenging Times: The Women’s Movement in Canada and the United States*. Backhouse writes, “Documenting the unusual case of Marlene Dixon, a radical feminist transplanted from Chicago to Montreal in the 1960s, Vickers suggests that American influences were dramatic, but unlikely to take root. For Canadians nurturing their own nationalist apprehensions vis-à-vis the overweening American culture, this will be reassuring” (7). By insisting that readers will find Vickers’ nationalism reassuring, Backhouse presents this nationalism as a lasting feature of Canadian feminism.

This insistence on national difference is part of *Branching Out*’s origin story. When Susan McMaster originally conceived of the idea for a new kind of women’s magazine, she insisted that part of its mandate must be inserting *Canadian* women’s voices into a field that was not only dominated by men’s voices, but also by American women’s voices. The combination of Rebick’s commitment to representing Canadian second wave-feminism as a diverse movement, her desire to begin to record and make available this movement’s history, and her nationalism result in a text that provides important insights into the field that *Branching Out* entered when it began publishing in December 1973.

From its inception *Branching Out* emphasized its ideological distance from small-scale liberation newspapers and traditional women's magazines. In the preview editorial, McMaster refers to *Branching Out's* location within the terrain of the Canadian women's movement when she explains the magazine's title: "Without cutting ourselves off from our roots, we hope to reach beyond the first growth of radical feminism towards an awareness of our female culture" (3). This appeal to a Canadian female culture was an appeal to a wider audience than could identify with *Branching Out's* more radical, small-scale counterparts. While any evocation of a unified "female culture" can be read as problematic because it does not account for the diverse socio-economic positions occupied by women in Canada, *Branching Out* often attempted to account for such diversity alongside its evocations of unity. For instance, in the same editorial that refers to "female culture," McMaster also highlights difference: "We have interviews with women in areas as different as pioneering in Alberta and trapshooting in Mexico. We have articles on topics as varied as the status of Indian women who marry 'out,' innovations in daycare, and what it was like to be a female writer fifteen years ago" (3). In addition, throughout the interviews that I conducted with *Branching Out* participants, many of the women insisted that *Branching Out* accepted art and literature from a range of perspectives and did not limit itself to overtly feminist work. According to these participants, *Branching Out's* mandate was to publish high quality work by Canadian women and that this work did not necessarily have to take up rigidly defined feminist themes (though a review of the art and literature published in *Branching Out* indicates that often much of this work was in fact overtly feminist).

But what does McMaster mean by “the first growth of radical feminism”? And how is she using the term “female culture”? As Rebick makes clear in her introduction to the Canadian political landscape in the 1960s and in the 1970s, this “first growth of radical feminism” is only one branch of the larger women’s movement, the branch that grew out of the New Left. In the concluding paragraph of her introduction to the 1960s, Rebick explains, “By the end of the 1960s, there were three streams of feminism in Canada: VOW [Voice of Women] peace activists; the middle-class mothers and career women who belonged to established groups such as the Canadian Federation of University Women and the YWCA; and the young radicals” (13). McMaster’s comment about reaching “beyond the first growth of radical feminism” positions *Branching Out* as a project that is distinct from work being done by the “young radicals”—such as the Toronto Women’s Liberation Movement women who disrupted the Miss Canadian University pageant.

The distinction that McMaster makes between “radical feminism” and “female culture” relies on terms that were part of larger debates that emerged within the women’s movement in the early 1970s. The women who participated in the “three streams of feminism” that Rebick identifies can be divided into two distinct categories of activists: “those trying to reform the system to improve the status of women and those who believed that a more radical transformation of society was necessary to achieve women’s equality” (21). The Voice of Women activists and “the middle-class mothers and career women” were looking to reform the system, whereas the young radicals, often informed by experiences with New Left activism,

sought a more radical transformation of society.<sup>79</sup> As the movement developed in the early 1970s, additional differences surfaced among these radical activists. As Rebick explains, “Socialist feminists believed women’s liberation could be won only through an anti-capitalist transformation of society. Radical feminists saw patriarchy as the major problem” (21). Within this larger context, McMaster’s claim that *Branching Out* will “reach beyond the first growth of radical feminism towards an awareness of our female culture” (3) could be read as a disavowal of the radical branch of the Canadian women’s movement—as a turning away from political activism and towards cultural feminism.

Cultural feminism is not a term that *Branching Out* participants used to describe the magazine while it was in print and this term did not come up in the interviews that I conducted with participants; nonetheless, analyzing the magazine in terms of the debates surrounding cultural feminism helps to locate *Branching Out* within larger national and international feminist debates. As is often the case with labels that attempt to gather together (and as a result discipline) diverse groups and activities, cultural feminism is an overdetermined term. It was originally used derogatorily by anti-capitalist activists to critique radical feminists as apolitical. One of the slogans that was central to radical feminism’s development was “the personal is political.” For some, especially socialist feminists, this emphasis on the personal was a move away from activism and towards lifestyle politics and counterculturalism, which socialist feminists critiqued as political quietism.

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<sup>79</sup> However, the line between radical and reformist strains of feminism is often blurred in the Canadian context, as Vickers emphasizes when she uses the term “radical liberalism” to describe the operational code of the Canadian women’s movement, which I analyze below.

The left-wing critique of women's groups that focused on the personal is referred to in *Ten Thousand Roses* by a group of Saskatoon feminists Rebick interviewed about self-examination—an important feminist intervention into medical discourse that challenged the objectification of women's bodies, reclaiming knowledge from the medical experts. As Rebick explains, “As a way of reclaiming their bodies and their sexuality, women in consciousness-raising and self-help groups often devoted some time to examining their vaginas” (12). Audrey Hall recalls, “Self-examination was very popular. CBC came to my house, and a group of us got together with our speculums and our mirrors, reclaiming our cervixes” (qtd. in Rebick 12). Denise Kouri explains that “people found it pretty shocking” and remembers “a more traditional left-wing woman saying to [them] one time, ‘While you're looking at your cervix, we're looking at the world’” (qtd. in Rebick 12). The example of self-examination highlights the contrast between radical feminists who looked to the personal in order to develop a sexual politics and left-wing women who focused their analysis on larger socio-economic structures. In response to Kouri's comments about the left-wing critique of self-examination, Gwen Grey claims, “Ah, but we found the world in our cervixes” (qtd. in Rebick 12). This idea of extrapolating from the individual to the group was a key feature of radical feminism. For radical feminists, focusing on the personal was not a way for women to improve themselves as individuals (which was the socialist feminist critique of radical feminism), but rather a way for women to understand the collective, as opposed to individual, nature of their oppression (in this case by the medical establishment) by sharing their stories and understanding the similarities between women (i.e., the way that women have been oppressed as a sex-class).

This emphasis on oppressive structures, rather than individual struggles, defines radical feminism as committed to radical political change, to attacking the root of women's oppression and rebuilding social structures from the ground up, as opposed to the reformist strains of feminism that Rebeck identifies with the Voice of Women activists and "the middle-class mothers and career women." However, in the discourse of the period, left-wing critiques of radical feminism at times conflate radical and cultural feminism and use these terms synonymously. These left-wing critiques take issue with what they perceive as radical/cultural feminism's emphasis on gender to the exclusion of other systems of oppression, on the individual to the exclusion of the collective, and on developing alternatives to oppressive institutions rather than attacking and destroying these institutions.

This conflation of radical and cultural feminism is at odds with McMaster's distinction between radical politics and cultural production in her inaugural editorial. As I conducted my interviews, it became clear that in many cases *Branching Out* participants saw radical feminism as an American import, which they associated with *Ms.* magazine, and that the kind of political action identified as radical was not part of *Branching Out's* mandate to promote Canadian women's artistic and intellectual production. This identification of radical feminism as an American import is in keeping with Canadian feminist scholarship that distinguishes between Canadian and American second-wave feminism, such as Jill Vickers' "The Intellectual Origins of the Women's Movement in Canada" and Myrna Kostash's chapter on early Canadian second-wave feminism, "The Rising of the Women," in her study of the Canadian New Left, *A Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada*. In order to understand the variety of ways that the term "radical feminism" circulated in

Canada and how it differs from “cultural feminism,” I examine critiques of cultural feminism in the American context and compare these critiques with the role that cultural feminism played in the Canadian context.

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Alice Echols challenges the conflation of radical and cultural feminism in her 1989 study of American radical feminism, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*. According to Echols, radical feminism was a movement within the second wave of American feminism that was superseded and eclipsed by cultural feminism, which began in the early-1970s and is marked by increased emphasis on feminist cultural production and decreased emphasis on political protest. In answer to the question “How did radical feminism come to be eclipsed by cultural feminism?” (7), Echols insists that “the women’s liberation movement was not the only radical movement of the ‘60s that succumbed to counterculturalism” (7). This contextualization not only indicates that the shift in feminist organizing towards cultural production rather than radical political change was part of a larger historical trend, but also suggests Echols’ condemnation of this shift. By describing feminists as succumbing to counterculturalism, Echols reveals her bias against alternative cultural production and in favour of more narrowly defined forms of radical political action.

In *Daring to Be Bad*, Echols defines cultural feminism by distinguishing it from radical feminism:

while cultural feminism did evolve from radical feminism, it nonetheless deviated from it in some crucial respects. Most fundamentally, radical feminism was a political movement dedicated to eliminating the sex-class system, whereas cultural feminism was a countercultural movement aimed at reversing the cultural valuation of the male and the devaluation of the female. In the terminology of today [1989], radical feminists were typically social constructionists who wanted to render gender irrelevant, while cultural feminists were generally essentialists who sought to celebrate femaleness. (6)

This clearly articulated explanation of the difference between radical and cultural feminism does not account for cultural feminists, like those women who produced *Branching Out*, who understood their separatist cultural production as a temporary measure to redress a gender imbalance (a vision that is much closer to radical feminism), rather than a necessary expression of essential femaleness. Echols' rigid distinction between the cultural and the political has been challenged by recent feminist scholarship such as Junko R. Onosaka's *Feminist Revolution in Literacy: Women's Bookstores in the United States* (2006) and Trysh Travis's journal article "The Women in Print Movement: History and Implications" published in *Book History* (2008).

Onosaka's study "challenges the notion that cultural feminism necessarily undermined the feminist movement" (2), arguing that "women's bookstores have operated as valuable bases for political actions and lifetime learning as well as for nurturing and sustaining women's lives in the communities" (7). Unlike Echols, Onosaka insists on the political possibilities of feminist bookstores, which might otherwise be characterized as cultural rather than political sites. According to

Onosaka, “The day-to-day operations in women’s bookstores were constructed in large part through the deliberate considerations and persistent political missions of feminists to improve women’s literacy—their abilities not only to read and write but also to publish” (7). Similarly, when I asked Aritha van Herk about *Branching Out’s* political stance, she insisted on the artificiality of distinguishing between culture and politics, seeing *Branching Out’s* cultural intervention as necessarily political.

The artificiality of this distinction was a theme throughout the interviews that I conducted with *Branching Out* participants. Participants would often say that *Branching Out* was not a political magazine but rather a vehicle for Canadian women writers and artists to make their work public. Participants would describe *Branching Out* as a way to redress the gender imbalance in art and publishing and would insist that *Branching Out* was not a political publication. However, these same participants would also identify making women’s art and writing public as a political act in itself.

During the interview process for this study, I discovered that *Branching Out* is primarily remembered by participants as contributing to the Canadian cultural landscape by publishing art and literature by Canadian women writers and artists at a time when few publishing and exhibition opportunities existed for Canadian women. While it is certainly the case that *Branching Out* made an important intervention by operating outside of the mainstream, male-centered publishing sphere to provide women writers and artists with an opportunity to make their work public, *Branching Out* was also an important political intervention. Perhaps because they saw themselves as producing a moderate publication that did not reflect the radical and overtly political factions of the Canadian women’s movement, or perhaps because I conducted my interviews during an historical moment that is hostile towards

feminism, throughout the interviews participants tended to downplay the magazine's political significance and focus on *Branching Out* as a cultural intervention. However, this distinction between culture and politics does not hold up to scrutiny. Both the activist and the literary/artistic interventions made by *Branching Out* are part of a larger discourse of feminist criticism present throughout *Branching Out's* history.

Because it was a moderate publication that emphasized the publication of art and literature by Canadian women, and because it published the early writings of later well-known Canadian women writers such as Lorna Crozier and Marilyn Bowering, *Branching Out's* cultural content has the potential to overshadow the magazine's political significance. However, even though *Branching Out* was a more moderate and literary publication than its radical feminist counterparts, the magazine was nonetheless doing feminist work. *Branching Out* analyzed the Canadian political and cultural landscape in terms of sexual politics and, in doing so, advocated for women.

During our interviews, participants may have shied away from identifying *Branching Out* as overtly political because they were relying on a narrow definition of politics as the activities associated with the state and governance. In contrast, when these same participants identify *Branching Out* making work by women public as a political act, they are relying on an expanded definition of politics as "taking up the struggle against oppression in some way" (12). This is the definition of politics that Dorothy E. Smith provides in her article "Where There Is Oppression There Is Resistance," published in *Branching Out* in 1978.

Whether or not counter-institutions, such as *Branching Out*, are political or simply countercultural is discussed at length by Echols, who distinguishes between radical and cultural counter-institutions. According to Echols,

Radicals believed that alternative institutions would not only satisfy needs unmet by the current system, but could, by dramatizing the failures of the system, radicalize those not served by the system. Rather than working within the system, new leftists and black radicals developed alternative political parties, media, schools, universities, and assemblies of oppressed and unrepresented people. Women's liberationists created an amazing panoply of counter-institutions, including health clinics, abortion referral services, rape crisis centers, and credit unions. (16)

However, for Echols, these counter-institutions contribute to the move towards lifestyle politics within the women's movement. Within Echols' schema counter-institutions are radical if they lead to fundamental changes to the institutions that they are opting out of (as a way to dramatize their failures); conversely, these same institutions can turn into lifestyle politics or counterculturalism, which Echols sees as a retreat from more necessary political action.

*Branching Out* was a counter-institution because it operated outside mainstream publishing in order to highlight the mainstream's shortcomings. *Branching Out's* mandate to redress an imbalance in Canadian publishing originated with Susan McMaster's desire to read more writing by Canadian women and grew into a national feminist publication that featured art, literature, and political commentary while attempting to appeal to the mainstream. This desire to be a newsstand publication problematizes *Branching Out's* status as a counterinstitution.

Unlike more radical feminist publications that appealed primarily to an already radicalized audience, *Branching Out* wanted to appeal to both “mainstream” and already radicalized Canadian women. Consequently, while *Branching Out* was a counter-institution (in the sense that it dramatized mainstream, male-centered Canadian publishing’s failure to make public work by Canadian women), its attempt to cultivate the newsstand appeal of mainstream women’s magazines, such as *Chatelaine*, make it more difficult to see *Branching Out* as a counter-institution in any straightforward sense. While *Branching Out* was not replicating *Chatelaine*-type content, it fought for a place on the newsstand next to *Chatelaine*. Consequently, unlike other Canadian feminist magazines in the 1970s, *Branching Out* physically resembled a “glossy” magazine.<sup>80</sup>

In her 1978 critique of cultural feminism, “The Retreat to Cultural Feminism,” Brooke Williams claims “Setting up ‘alternative’ situations doesn’t really work. Most alternatives reach very few people. They have to struggle just to keep themselves afloat, much less reach out to others” (80). While Williams seems to be overly pessimistic in her description of alternative feminist institutions (in order to support her claim that these alternatives are akin to lifestyle politics that will never lead to the revolution for which radical feminist are fighting) she nonetheless identifies two central problems for counter-institutions: securing resources and reaching people outside the movement. Even a moderate feminist magazine like *Branching Out* had significant difficulty securing the funds to produce each issue and

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<sup>80</sup> In my interview with Elaine Butler, she talks about fighting to get Sharon Batt to spend the money on colour covers in order to increase *Branching Out*’s newsstand appeal. Butler remembers the decision to publish colour covers as a high point of the time that she spent with *Branching Out* because she felt that this move to colour covers would help *Branching Out* achieve its mandate to reach a wider audience of Canadian women.

had trouble reaching a wider audience because it was criticized by readers either for being too radical or not being radical enough.

Sharon Batt refers to this struggle to find an audience in “Feminist Publishing: Where Small Is Not So Beautiful” (as I discuss in the introduction’s analysis of the relationship between a periodicals’ circulation and its influence). In this article, Batt describes “the conundrum of wanting to publish socially significant material that will stimulate change and, at the same time, wanting to reach ‘everywoman’ in order to fuel a mass movement” (12). This desire to “fuel a mass movement” is part of what prevents *Branching Out* from completely opting-out of mainstream publishing aesthetics but is also what connects the magazine to the radical origins of counter-institutions. Paradoxically, this attempt to reach a wider audience by not completely opting-out of mainstream publishing aesthetics makes *Branching Out* in a sense more radical because it dramatizes the failures of mainstream publishing for a wider audience and, therefore, has greater potential to “radicalize those not served by the system” (Echols 16).

In her study of American radical feminism, Echols refers to cultural feminism’s emphasis on alternative institutions as “female cultural nationalism” (243). For Echols, “female cultural nationalism” signifies a retreat into culture—the development of a refuge outside of patriarchal culture rather than taking actions to destroy patriarchy. However, this characterization of cultural nationalism as apolitical is not convincing in the Canadian context. It is easier to see culture as political in the Canadian context because of Canada’s long history of resisting both British and American cultural imperialism and Quebec resisting English-Canadian cultural imperialism. The understanding that culture is political is evident in both the

Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission), appointed in 1949, and the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, appointed in 1963, as well as the cultural activism of new nationalists surrounding events of Expo '67 and Canada's centennial. While culture certainly was used as a weapon by the US during the Cold War, this engagement with culture assumed that there was a robust American culture that could be exported, unlike the Canadian context in which people were questioning the existence of a unique national culture (or cultures) and debating what might constitute this culture.

The Canadian ability to understand culture as political is apparent in Rebick's claim that "women's writing and publishing were indispensable to the feminist revolution" (19). She refers to this cultural activity as "feminist cultural activism" (20) indicating that, within the Canadian women's movement, cultural production was understood as a form of activism rather than a retreat from political organizing. Consequently, while McMaster's claim that *Branching Out* will "reach beyond the first growth of radical feminism towards an awareness of our female culture" (3) does represent a turn towards culture, within the Canadian context this turn towards culture is less likely to be understood as a turn away from politics.

Brooke Williams, a radical feminist who wrote for the American radical feminist periodical *off our backs* and was associated with the New York based radical feminist group Redstockings (Echols 301), begins her 1978 critique of cultural feminism, "The Retreat into Cultural Feminism," with the following assertion: "Many women feel that the women's movement is at an impasse. This paper takes the position that this is due to a deradicalization and distortion of feminism which

has resulted in, among other things, ‘cultural feminism’” (79).<sup>81</sup> Williams reminds readers, “The phrase cultural feminism was originally used to attack radical women who were exposing the allegedly personal issues like sex and housework as political and liberation issues” (79), and goes on to argue, in keeping with Echols, that cultural feminism is “an attempt to transform feminism from a political movement to a lifestyle movement” (83), focusing on the ways in which cultural feminism can create a new “ideal woman” (83), a new essentialism. Within this critique, Williams claims that the “pivot of women’s oppression does not lie in our stars, lifestyles, sense of ourselves, or sex roles. It lies in who has power and who doesn’t” (83). Because Williams is writing at a historical moment when cultural feminism is being identified as a threat to radical feminism and because she is attempting to reinvigorate the radical feminist movement, she fails to acknowledge that the alternative institutions associated with cultural feminism’s “lifestyle politics” can empower women. Instead, she repeats Echols’ association of cultural feminism with a new essentialism and radical feminism with the understanding that gender is socially constructed.

In contrast, my interviews with *Branching Out* staff confirm that counter-institutions like *Branching Out* empower women. When I asked *Branching Out* staff about high points during their time working on the magazine, they often said that completion of each issue was a high point, a time when they felt powerful. They would explain how remarkable it was each time that against all odds they had produced another issue, without experience in publishing, without adequate funds, under significant time constraints. Each time they made public work by Canadian

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<sup>81</sup> In *Daring to be Bad*, Echols says that Williams was the first person she knew to use the term “cultural feminism” to refer to this particular depoliticization of radical feminism (301).

women, work that may otherwise have gone unnoticed, these women felt powerful. The sense of accomplishment that *Branching Out* volunteers felt with the production of each issue could be downplayed as a personal accomplishment associated with mere counter-culturalism—opting-out of dominant institutions rather than attempting to destroy these oppressive regimes. However, Trysh Travis provides another way of reading this sense of accomplishment. Travis’s analysis of feminist counter-institutions, specifically feminist media, challenges the conflation of alternative institutions and lifestyle politics, which was precipitated by the conflict between radical and cultural feminism.

In her 2008 article “The Women in Print Movement: History and Implications,” Travis defines the women-in-print movement in a way that speaks to print’s central, and unacknowledged, role in the women’s movement:

A product of Second Wave feminism, the Women in Print Movement was an attempt by a groups of allied practitioners to create an *alternative communications circuit*—a woman-centered network of readers and writers, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, and retailers through which ideas, objects, and practices flowed in a continuous and dynamic loop. The movement’s largest goals were nothing short of *revolutionary*; it aimed to capture women’s experiences and insights in durable—even beautiful—printed forms through a communications network free from patriarchal and capitalist control. By doing so, participants believed they would not only create a space of freedom for women, but would also and ultimately *change the dominant world outside* that space. (276 my emphasis)

As Travis explains, seizing the means of literate production was about more than creating a separatist feminist publishing sphere; the women-in-print movement was a revolutionary movement set on changing the “dominant world” that was under “patriarchal and capitalist control.” The women-in-print movement, like the radical branch of the women’s movement, was a challenge to the patriarchal and capitalist status quo. Travis’s argument begins by “tying bookwomen’s interest in controlling the means of print production to the larger intellectual history of radical feminism” (277). Rather than one activity among many, Travis demonstrates how women-in-print and radical feminism are ideologically interconnected.

A separatist feminist impulse, the move towards “women-only cultural enclaves” (278), is one of the hallmarks of the women-in-print movement. Travis highlights the separatist feminist impulse in order to firmly establish the women-in-print movement as a radical, not a reform, movement; Travis argues, “While organizations like Donna Allen’s Women’s Institute for the Freedom of the Press worked to open the mainstream media to women, the denizens of the Women in Print movement had little interest in such reformist schemes” (282). According to Travis, women-in-print activists were not interested in equal rights within the mainstream media; for these activists, “Women would never be truly free unless they first seized ownership of the means of cultural production and then restructured and de-hierarchicalized that production, liberating the written word from the material regime that had grown up to enforce the oppressive epistemological and moral structures of capitalist patriarchy” (282). Consequently, the women-in-print movement was separatist in two senses: one, because it excluded men; and, two, because it operated outside the mainstream media. For Travis, this separatism is at

the heart of the women-in-print movement and contributes to the radical nature of this movement.<sup>82</sup>

Adrienne Rich offers a similar representation of the women-in-print movement in the opening paragraph of her 1981 essay “Toward a More Feminist Criticism,” originally delivered as the opening address at the 1981 Feminist Studies in Literature Symposium at the University of Minnesota. In this paragraph she identifies herself as “co-editor of a small lesbian-feminist journal, *Sinister Wisdom*, and as a member of the community of feminist and/or lesbian editors, printers, booksellers, publishers, archivists, and reviewers who met in Washington, D.C., several weekends ago, defining ourselves as ‘Women in Print’” (85). Rich asserts the radical potential of this separatist feminist press when she cites the first call for papers for the Washington conference, which states, “The survival of the women’s movement, as a revolutionary movement, depends directly on that of our communications network” (85). By citing this claim, that the women’s movement’s survival as a revolutionary movement depends on the existence of an alternative feminist press, Rich identifies the women-in-print movement as a revolutionary movement. Using the language of radical feminism to describe what could be dismissed as counter-culturalism, this characterization of women-in-print in Rich’s opening paragraph reinforces Travis’s claim that the women-in-print movement is a radical and not a reform movement.

Rich (in reference to the 1981 Washington, D.C. Women in Print conference) and Travis (in reference to the 1976 First National Women in Print

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<sup>82</sup> Though Travis also acknowledges that these print activists “embraced the theory” of an alternative, woman-only communications circuit but “struggled to put it into practice” (283); their “utopian vision” was in constant conflict with “the workaday routines of print practice” (283), e.g. circulating their products in a capitalist economy and organizing disparate groups of women.

conference in Omaha, Nebraska, which she discusses at length in her article) both emphasize the political possibilities of alternative institutions created by the women-in-print movement. Their emphasis on the political possibilities of cultural production aligns the women-in-print movement with the view that culture is political, which is prevalent in the Canadian context. As I indicate above, this view is evident in state-sponsored inquiries such as the Massey Commission and Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, as well as the importance of cultural production for both 1960s and 1970s grassroots Canadian nationalism and the separatist movement in Quebec. The view that cultural production is political challenges radical and socialist feminist critiques of feminist cultural production as lifestyle politics.

This split—between those who critique cultural production as apolitical and those who valorize cultural production as one of the tools of the revolution—complicates definitions of radical and cultural feminism because both positions have been assigned to radical and cultural feminism in various historical and national contexts. In addition, there is no simple national division between cultural feminists in Canada, who understand culture as political, and radical feminists in the United States, who critique feminist cultural production as apolitical counter-culturalism, as is evident in the formidable women-in-print movements that existed on both sides of the border during the second wave of the women's movement. Rather, the critique of cultural feminism as apolitical has a stronger presence in U.S. second-wave feminism. For this reason, I argue that the term “cultural feminism” can be usefully recuperated for the Canadian context.

Cultural feminism is a useful term because it maintains a connection to radical feminism while gesturing beyond a traditional definition of politics toward a more nuanced understanding of the political possibilities of cultural production. My interest in recuperating the term “cultural feminism” comes out of my reading of McMaster’s inaugural editorial. McMaster’s desire to distance *Branching Out* from radical feminist organizing (which, as I learned during interviews, many *Branching Out* participants considered to be an American import) and the magazine’s role as a counter-institution make cultural feminism an appropriate term to describe *Branching Out*. While it seems inappropriate to refer to *Branching Out* as radical, both because Canadian feminists at times critiqued *Branching Out* for not being politically engaged enough and because *Branching Out* participants saw the magazine’s intervention as distinct from American radical feminist organizing, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the radical potential of counter-institutions like *Branching Out*. Thus, I use the term cultural feminism to indicate a type of feminist organizing that has its roots in the systemic critiques associated with radical feminist organizing while also exploring the potential of counter-institutions both to provide alternatives to the mainstream and to dramatize the failings of the mainstream. McMaster’s claim that “Without cutting ourselves off from our roots, we hope to reach beyond the first growth of radical feminism towards an awareness of our female culture” (3) characterizes the magazine as having roots in radical feminism and branching into the cultural realm. I am recuperating the term cultural feminism in order to highlight this duality.

However, I acknowledge that this use of the term cultural feminism is both specific and unconventional. The more common use of the term is employed by Jill

Vickers in “The Intellectual Origins of the Women’s Movement in Canada,” when she refers to cultural feminism as the “politically disengaged” incarnation of radical feminism (49). In a section on the influence of the American New Left on radical feminism, Vickers writes, “Simply living in a liberated way came to be understood as contributing to a feminist revolution.... This cultural feminism...involves a political quietism completely consistent with the cultural radicalism of the New Left and understandable for women facing the enormous power of the U.S. imperial state” (50-51). Vickers’ use of the terms cultural feminism and cultural radicalism is part of her analysis of the anti-statism prevalent in the American second-wave feminism, which she describes as a reaction against U.S. imperialism. Her association of cultural feminism and political quietism is directly linked to her argument that radical feminism and its apolitical incarnation, cultural feminism, are American imports and that Canadian feminism is characterized by a “commitment to the ordinary political process” (40). I turn to Vickers’ comparative analysis of Canadian and American second-wave feminism in order to provide additional context for my strategic use of the term cultural feminism. In what follows, I compare Vickers’ analysis with representations of the Canadian women’s movement published in *Branching Out’s* fifth anniversary issue.

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As part of her comparative analysis, Vickers demonstrates how intergenerational influences on Canadian second-wave feminism were stronger than American New Left influences. She begins by indicating that scholarship on

Canadian second-wave feminism often describes the movement “as one of ‘the new social movements’ which emerged after the Second World War in the ideological ‘space’ made for them by critiques of the Old Left” and argues that this view “directs us away from uncovering continuities of thought within a country between generations of women’s movements over their century of existence” (39). Rather than focusing on the role of new social movements on the development of Canadian feminism, Vickers is interested in tracing the influences of earlier generations of Canadian feminists on the second-wave of Canadian feminist activism. Vickers argues that “it is as important to understand the forces of continuity in those movements across time as it is to identify elements of novelty which increase the pace of mobilization and change” (39). Tracing generational conflicts is a common theme in analyses of second-wave feminism.<sup>83</sup> Vickers makes a vital contribution to this field by challenging this approach and tracing generational continuities between Canadian feminisms.

Vickers points out, “Many ideas about how to practice feminist politics were transmitted to the New Feminists from a generation of Old Feminists with whom they interacted in a number of sites of activity” (39).<sup>84</sup> Vickers establishes this continuity to support her subsequent argument about how the operational codes of Canadian and American feminists differ. She identifies specific ways in which these ideas were transmitted between generations in the Canadian and Quebec contexts:

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<sup>83</sup> This theme is still being taken up by feminist scholars and commentators today, as is evident in the documentary *The F Word: Who Wants to be a Feminist?* (which aired on the CBC program Doc Zone in March 2011) and in Susan Faludi’s article “American Electra: Feminism’s Ritual Matricide” (published in the October 2010 issue of *Harper’s Magazine*).

<sup>84</sup> Despite Vickers’ capitalization of the term New Feminists, she is not referring to the Toronto-based group that broke away from the Toronto Women’s Liberation group in 1969 and called themselves the New Feminists. She refers explicitly to this group later in her essay (47). See also my discussion of Myrna Kostash’s commentary on the New Feminists below.

“the Women’s Peace Movement, especially the Voice of Women, and women’s caucuses within the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) were sites of interaction. The existence of the suffrage movement in Quebec until the mid-1940s also permitted an intergenerational exchange of ideas, which affected the pan-Canadian movement” (39-40).<sup>85</sup> While Vickers acknowledges that “There is little doubt that U.S. feminist ideas had an impact on Canada” (40)—specifically because of the prevalence of American media in Canada and “the women of the ‘draft-dodger’ generation who came to Canada” (40)—she focuses on the importance of home-grown influences.

She labels the “set of ideas about how to do politics” that Canadian feminists inherited from their predecessors “radical liberalism,” which she defines as embodying “a commitment to the ordinary political process, a belief in the welfare state, a belief in the efficacy of state action in general to remedy injustices, a belief that change is possible, a belief that dialogue is useful and may help promote change, and a belief that service in terms of helping others is a valid contribution to the process of change” (40). This emphasis on working with the state and on the possibility of change connects the branch of Canadian feminism that Vickers analyzes to both liberalism (because work is being done within the existing power structures) and radicalism (because there is a belief that fundamental change is possible)—hence Vickers’ use of the term radical liberalism. She contrasts her definition of Canadian radical liberalism with U.S. radical feminism—“whose views of the politics of the state, drawn from the U.S. New Left, involved a rejection of the

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<sup>85</sup> Despite offering some information on the Quebec women’s movement, Vickers’ focus is on the Canadian movement. She explains, “I will focus primarily on the federal state, examining developments in Quebec only as they influence the pan-Canadian movement” (41).

ordinary political process and were anti-statist in character”—and argues that the “political culture inherited by Canadian feminists of the 1960s” both influenced the Canadian movement and limited the impact of American radical feminism (40). By arguing that there were important intergenerational continuities within the Canadian women’s movement, Vickers challenges the centrality of American feminist influences within the Canadian movement.

However, Vickers also acknowledges that certain radical feminist ideas did take hold in Canada. While she insists that the “commitment of feminists to the welfare state that Canadian women helped to create, and our movement’s multipartisan strategy in relation to the official politics of the state, illustrate that radical feminist ideas were of relatively little importance in shaping these aspects of the movement” (40), she also concedes that “radical feminist ideas concerning the project of creating organizations which ‘bend the iron law of oligarchy’ had considerable influence in Canada within feminist groups and in the development of feminist critiques of mainstream political institutions” (40-41). This concession refers to counter-institutions, such as those associated with the women-in-print movement, and certainly describes *Branching Out*’s location within the Canadian feminist landscape. *Branching Out* sought to “bend the iron law of oligarchy” by providing an alternative to the male-centred mainstream media.

This connection between Canadian alternative institutions and American radical feminist organizing tempers Vickers’ insistence on national difference by acknowledging the importance of alternative institutions in both national contexts. In a similar way, Vickers’ reference to grassroots organizing, in the following

description of the Canadian operational code, acknowledges that certain aspects of radical feminism have been adapted for the Canadian context:

The picture, then, is of an operational code which generally supports involvement in the ordinary political process, tolerance of ideological diversity, encouragement of dialogue and a service commitment, but with a strong strain of dissent ‘from the grassroots.’ This dissent manifests itself most often in terms of approach or emphasis. As Nancy Adamson and her colleagues suggest, most women in the movement believe it must try to tread a path between the extremes of marginalization and co-option. (45)

Referring to Nancy Adamson’s, Linda Briskin’s and Margaret McPhail’s 1988 study of the Canadian women’s movement, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women’s Movement in Canada*, which distinguishes between “institutionalized” and “grassroots” feminist organizing in English Canada, Vickers identifies a “strong strain of dissent” within the Canadian operational code that she labels radical liberalism. Similar to her acknowledgement of the important role that alternative institutions play in Canadian feminist organizing, Vickers recognizes that Canadian feminists’ belief in “the ordinary political process” is not absolute, pointing out the dissent coming from the grassroots. Commenting on the limitations of both institutionalized and grassroots feminism, Vickers calls attention to the dangers of feminism being marginalized (i.e. completely disconnected from the mainstream) and co-opted (i.e. overtaken by the mainstream), emphasizing that Canadian feminists most often operate between these two poles.

While Vickers borrows from *Feminist Organizing for Change* in her analysis of strains of dissent within the Canadian women’s movement, she is also critical of this

study. In keeping with her argument that the Canadian operational code is based on a willingness to engage with “ideological diversity,” Vickers critiques *Feminist Organizing for Change* in a footnote, arguing that Adamson, Briskin and McPhail “assert an ideological distinction between ‘institutionalized’ and ‘grassroots’ groups which ignores the ideological diversity in NAC [National Action Committee on the Status of Women] and the FFQ [Fédération des femmes du Québec]” (293).

Elsewhere in her essay, Vickers insists,

[The] movements which currently relate to the Canadian and Quebec states are characterized by ideological diversity and a capacity for collaborative action despite such differences. This is manifested in the fact that their central institutions, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), are umbrella organizations which regroup other organizations of diverse ideology, size, purpose, and operating style in enduring, if fragile, coalitions, primarily for the purpose of interacting with their respective states. (41)

Vickers analyzes the Summer 1984 NAC Annual General Meeting, demonstrating that there were “four major ideological elements” represented by NAC’s member groups, but that, despite these ideological differences, there was a “a high degree of convergence (67.9 per cent) on most key feminist beliefs and issues and a high degree of intergenerational agreement” (42). Unlike Adamson’s, Briskin’s and McPhail’s study, which emphasizes the difference between institutionalized and grassroots groups, Vickers highlights the ways in which Canadian feminists have been successful in working together despite these ideological differences.

While Vickers makes a convincing case for the coalitional quality of Canadian second-wave feminism, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of her argument that the Canadian second-wave feminist operational code includes “a belief in dialogue and a willingness to engage in debate, not just try to dissolve differences but to understand those that are not dissolvable” (43). As Backhouse points out in her introductory comments on Vickers’ essay, “Whether francophone Québécoises would agree with [Vickers’] assessment is somewhat problematic. And Vickers herself concedes that our alleged tolerance of diversity may fail to withstand the challenge of women of colour, immigrant women, and women of the First Nations” (6-7). That being said, Vickers’ emphasis on dialogue, debate and difference in the Canadian context is nonetheless a useful way for her to make important distinctions between American and Canadian feminisms.

Vickers makes one such distinction when she takes up Bonnie Kreps’ essay on radical feminism, based on a brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women delivered to the commission in June 1968 and reprinted in the foundational Canadian feminist text *Women Unite!*, published by Women’s Press in 1972. Vickers describes how “Bonnie Kreps explained to the commission that ‘Radical feminism is called “radical” because it is struggling to bring about really fundamental changes in our society’” (41-42). Before Vickers moves on to the differences between the American and Canadian contexts, she cites this description of radical feminism in order to acknowledge that there were the similarities between radical feminists on both sides of the border, i.e., that they shared a belief in the importance of making “fundamental changes in our society.”

Vickers then provides a more detailed analysis of Kreps' brief, indicating that Kreps' "description of the women's liberation movement" was also "*inclusive* of other positions including liberal feminism" (42). Vickers explains how Kreps describes "the women's liberation movement as 'a generic term covering a large spectrum of positions'" and divides "the movement into three familiar ideological positions (liberal, left, and radical)" (42). Vickers highlights that, according to Kreps, "all three broad segments have their own validity, all three are important. One belongs in one segment rather than another because of personal affinity with the aims being striven for" (42). The inclusivity that Vickers identifies in Kreps' brief provides support for Vickers' distinction between the coalitional quality of the Canadian women's movement and the factionalism of the U.S. women's movement. Vickers describes Kreps' position as an "early example of the Canadian tradition of integrative feminism," an example which Vickers identifies as "more characteristic than an anomaly" (42).

Vickers highlights Canadian feminists' ability to work together despite ideological differences when she contrasts this "integrative feminism" with conflicts between feminists in the American context. Vickers explains that, "In the United States, the very word 'feminism' was rigorously reserved for the ideas of young radical/revolutionary women," and that many of the women Kreps included in her description of the women's liberation movement, "such as liberal feminists, were defined by U.S. women as 'traditional' because of their reformism. They were also denied the designation 'feminist' because of their acceptance of the ordinary political process and structures" (42). In contrast to this image of a divided American movement, Vickers emphasizes that "quite radical women and groups in Canada

were willing to work with quite traditional groups in these formative years, just as they were willing to accept funding from the state for these projects” (42). The ability to work together despite ideological differences and the willingness to accept state funding set Canadian feminists apart from their radical American counterparts.

However, while involvement in the ordinary political process and willingness to accept state funding are important distinguishing features of Canadian second-wave feminism,<sup>86</sup> there was also a “strong strain” of grassroots dissent from the general statism of the Canadian women’s movement. Just as certain groups of Canadian women could challenge Vickers’ characterization of Canadian feminism as able to create coalitions despite ideological differences, there are also Canadian feminists who challenge the movement’s belief in the ordinary political process.

The dissenting position is represented by Dorothy E. Smith in her 1978 article “Where There Is Oppression There Is Resistance,” published in *Branching Out’s* fifth anniversary issue. Part of the fifth anniversary issue’s feature section on the “Dynamics of the Women’s Movement,” Smith’s article asks, “What is the Canadian women’s movement? Where is it? Who are the women involved? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How should we work? How organize? What directions are being taken? Where should we move next?” (10). In the process of answering this series of questions, Smith asserts:

The women’s movement has always been as much a practice as ideologies. It has always existed in a tension between the two. And now at its height a weakness shows. It comes from the way we have located the practical bases

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<sup>86</sup> Barbara Godard’s analysis of the decline of Canadian feminist periodical publishing in “Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value” demonstrates the challenges associated with relying on state funding. Because Canadian feminist periodicals relied on state funding, these publications were often forced to fold when state funding was cut.

of our work. Much of it has been organized in relation to the institutional structure of the ruling apparatus. To do something about rape it seems that we should work in relation to the police, the courts and the law. To change the way in which women are treated in medical contexts, health education and health clinics and collectives sought to revise and offer alternatives to the medical establishment. But these came to work in relation to the established structures, organized and funded by federal or provincial governments and subject to professional and bureaucratic supervision. Though government funding has been often given for enterprises and on terms which have been concerned with feminist objectives, it always is subject to controls which organize the work in relation to the objectives of the state. In developing political impetus, we have worked generally in relation to the major political parties, in lobbying legislatures and making use of all and any of the practical political means available to us to exert pressure. In the field of education we've worked within the institutional structures that provide the facilities, the connections with those who would learn, the organization and controls of the educational apparatus. And so on. In almost every field. (14)

This catalogue of the ways in which Canadian feminists have “organized in relation to the institutional structure of the ruling apparatus” is accompanied by the following disclaimer from Smith: “I’m not criticizing this. I don’t know how else we could have gone forward. It has been essential and enormously influential. But its location in relation to the institutional structures also means that it is most at risk. The very importance of the work increases the consequences for the women’s movement of the process of absorption” (14). Smith’s critique of the movement’s reliance on the

“ruling apparatus” both confirms and challenges Vickers’ analysis. It confirms Vickers’ analysis because Smith admits that much of the women’s movement has focused on organizing within existing institutional structures, but she goes on to challenge Vickers’ analysis by claiming that this reliance on the “ruling apparatus” is a weakness. Smith addresses the problem of relying on government funding because it makes organizations “subject to professional and bureaucratic supervision” (14).

The “Printed Matter” section of *Branching Out*’s fifth anniversary issue provides examples of the restrictions imposed by such supervision. “Printed Matter,” edited by Sharon Smith, first appeared in *Branching Out* in 1978. The editorial description of this new section informs readers that it “will include news stories of national importance and other short items” (“New Column” 2). The fifth anniversary “Printed Matter” section includes a story entitled “Holding Pattern May Spell End” by Lynne Van Luven about the Lethbridge Women’s Place. This story is primarily about the difficulty of running a women’s centre in a conservative community. Van Luven describes how, according to Eudene Luther, “a past co-ordinator and five-year member of the centre,” even the Board of Directors is “divided between a conservative element, which doesn’t want to ‘offend’ anyone, and a more militant faction, which wants to see the centre take stands and assume a more aggressive profile” (6-7). Van Luven outlines the women’s centre’s struggles and highlights problems associated with accepting state funding. According to Luther, the centre “can’t do anything overtly political” because they are “registered as a charitable organization and the government certainly wouldn’t want to fund a revolution” (7). Not everyone in the community agrees with Luther about avoiding “overtly political” action. The article also cites Karla Poewe, University of

Lethbridge anthropologist, who believes that “the centre should stop depending on government funding and should attempt projects like running its own coffee shop to generate funds and thus be free to take independent action” (7). Taken together, this “Printed Matter” story and Dorothy E. Smith’s critique of working with the “ruling apparatus” represent a challenge to the image of the Canadian women’s movement as pro-statist.

Smith explains the limitations associate with state funding as product of class conflict. In keeping with Canadian feminists’ connection to labour organizing and the left,<sup>87</sup> Smith performs a socialist feminist analysis of class in order to address the problem of co-optation by the ruling apparatus. She explains that “this process of absorption” is “an issue of class” (15), but distinguishes how she is engaging with class relations from how the women’s movement often engages with class relations. She observes that, paradoxically, the movement has “learned to use class to think in terms of individuals” (15). Rather than using the concept of a class to create connections between women, Smith describes how class has been used to divide women based on their economic status rather than unite them as a sex class. Smith explains, “issues of class became means of discrediting the work, opinions, and claims of individuals in terms of their backgrounds or the present location of their activities” (15). Smith offers *Branching Out* readers “another view,” arguing that “Issues of class and class struggle must be seen in some other frame than that of individuals” (15).

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<sup>87</sup> For an in-depth analysis of working-class feminism in Canada and its relationship to the movement as a whole see Meg Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001): 63-88.

Smith insists that the “institutions of the ruling apparatus are in many ways working against the liberation of women” and that, “In relation to [the feminist] struggle, *they are the other side*” (15). She distinguishes between the interests of women and the interests of the ruling class against which women must struggle or risk being absorbed. According to Smith, “A ruling class is not just a relatively small elite working behind the scenes. It is that class which in general in the society dominates and controls the means by which people’s existence is produced” (15). In contrast to Vickers’ image of Canadian feminists working with the state, Smith characterizes the “apparatus of the state” as “integral to the organization” of the “ruling class” that Canadian feminists should be fighting against (15). By setting this ruling class up as “the other side,” Smith challenges the belief in the ordinary political process held by many Canadian second-wave feminists. In this sense, Smith represents the grassroots dissent that Vickers refers to when she characterizes the Canadian women’s movement as committed to the ordinary political process. Smith’s believes that Canadian feminists should address the “problem of absorption” by working with other women rather than with the state (15).

Echoing Vickers’ characterization of the Canadian women’s movement as able to create coalitions between ideologically diverse women’s groups, in her penultimate paragraph, Smith observes that the women’s movement has come to this point in its history “not in a unitary organization, but in forming a society among women of conflict, challenge, criticism, anger and action. It is here that our special experience, particular consciousness, and separate work is raised to the level of general struggle against women’s oppression” (15). Placing an emphasis on “separate work,” Smith takes a separatist, rather than a pro-statist, stand. Emphasizing the

formation of a “society among women,” Smith advocates organizing as a sex class rather than lobbying the state for particular reforms.

However, despite moments of dissent such as Smith’s class-based analysis and Van Luven’s account of the problems associated with accepting state funding, *Branching Out*’s fifth anniversary issue as a whole generally supports Vickers’ definition of Canadian feminism as pro-statist, as willing to work with the ruling apparatus and accept government funding.<sup>88</sup> In addition to Van Luven’s story, the “Printed Matter” section includes two other stories that address Canadian feminists’ relationship to the state. Both articles, “OWL Women Politically Wise” and “NAC Brief Hits CBC,” are by Deb van der Gratch and focus on women’s groups that lobby the federal government. OWL, the “newly-activated Ottawa Women’s Lobby,” is “an umbrella group of local feminist organizations” that wants to change “what they say is the shoulder-shrugging attitude of too many federal, provincial and municipal politicians” (5). This desire to transform politicians’ attitudes implicitly recognizes the Canadian state’s ability to facilitate change.

The article cites OWL member Pat Hacker to indicate who is getting involved with OWL. Hacker says, “I work with grass-roots women—women who have never thought about politics or how it affects their lives. And they’re starting to say ‘I don’t think this should be going on. I’m going to do something about it’” (5). Not only does the article demonstrate a commitment to engaging with the ruling apparatus, it also draws a connection between OWL’s institutional feminism and

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<sup>88</sup> In fact, *Branching Out* received funds from the Women’s Programme to produce this special issue on the women’s movement in honour of the magazine’s fifth anniversary. The fifth anniversary editorial indicates that the magazine received \$2500 from the Women’s Programme (“About This Issue” 2); this figure is corrected in the following issue’s “Errors” section. *Branching Out* actually received \$2800 from the Women’s Programme for the fifth anniversary special issue (“Errors” 3).

grassroots women, saying that both groups are fed up with politicians' "shoulder-shrugging attitude" when it comes to women's issues. Relying on a traditional definition of politics as the activities associated with governance, Hacker insists that women who have never thought of being politically active are becoming interested in the traditional political process. The article demonstrates that it is not only liberal, equal rights feminists who are engaging with the political system, but also grassroots women: "The 40-50 OWL members include staff and volunteers from the local rape crisis centre, the women's career counselling centre and members of the Canadian Association for Repeal of the Abortion Law. They also include university professors, lawyers, government employees and members of NAC's executive" (5). This description of OWL's membership emphasizes the organization's coalitional quality. The organization includes activist and professional women, women working for alternative institutions and within the governmental system.

The second story, "NAC Brief Hits CBC," reports on "a brief presented recently to the Canadian Radio-television [sic] and Telecommunications Commission by the National Action Committee on the status of women" (5). According to van der Gracht's article, "The brief said CBC's English-language programs are grossly unfair in their treatment of women, portraying them as beautiful objects or servants, while men are usually shown as 'active and expert'" (5). The story goes on to describe a *Toronto Globe and Mail* interview with NAC executive member Lynn McDonald, "who helped present the brief" and insisted that "the CBC rarely portrays the realities—housewives who work full time, career women and volunteer workers" (5). In addition to critiquing the CBC's programming, the brief also offers recommendations. NAC "recommended the CBC promote more women to

managerial positions, saying the corporation would improve its programming with such a move” (5). As is evident in this recommendation, the article “NAC Brief Hits CBC” represents the reformist strain within Canadian feminism that Vickers identifies in her analysis and Dorothy E. Smith challenges in her recommendations for radical political action within alternative institutions rather than working with the ruling apparatus.

Another article in *Branching Out*'s fifth anniversary issue that has several similarities to Vickers' analysis is by Lynn McDonald, the NAC executive member mentioned in “NAC Brief Hits CBC.” McDonald's article, “The Evolution of the Women's Movement in Canada” (the first part in a two part series on the women's movement),<sup>89</sup> takes a comparative approach. McDonald argues that the “distinguishing features of the Canadian women's movement and the advantages and disadvantages of these features can best be seen by comparing the Canadian movement with others” (39)—though the majority of this comparison, specifically to the women's movements in Germany, England, Russia, and France, is included in part two of her article, which was published in the next issue of *Branching Out*.<sup>90</sup> She identifies three distinguishing features of the Canadian movement: one, “*a political position slightly left of centre*, progressive/reformist, revolutionary in certain respects, but

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<sup>89</sup> In a footnote to her definition of radical liberalism, Vickers refers to McDonald's “The Evolution of the Women's Movement in Canada,” *Branching Out* 6.1 (1979).

<sup>90</sup> McDonald does not look at the U.S. women's movement in detail in part two of her article, though she does mention it briefly four times in part one: first, in her claim that the “backlash ‘femininity’ movement in the United States has *no* Canadian counterpart” (39); second, in her critique of affirmative action, which she refers to as “an import from the United States” (40); third, when she claims that, with the exception of Quebec, women in Canada got the vote “with much less struggle than in Britain, the United States, France, Germany or most anywhere” (40); and finally, in her discussion of radical feminism, when she claims that Canadian radical feminist groups “were small, and not so successfully vocal as their counterparts elsewhere, notably in France and the United States” (43). The brevity of these four references to the U.S. women's movement and the way they function to distance the Canadian movement from its U.S. counterpart are in keeping with McDonald's nationalism throughout the piece.

with little questioning of capitalistic institutions”; two, “*a solidarity across class lines*, and, to a lesser extent, across ethnic and religious barriers”; three, “*a commitment to the ordinary political process*, public education and persuasion of politicians and parties within the system; conversely, avoidance of partisan politics and radical political theory” (39). McDonald uses the “issue of equal pay for work of equal value” to illustrate both the left-of-centre location and the “tradition of inter-class solidarity” (40) that she identifies within the Canadian women’s movement. Specifically, McDonald discusses Canadian feminists’ opposition to affirmative action on the grounds that “the scheme has not affected wage levels or job opportunities for the mass of women workers” and is seen as helping only “a few well-educated women” (40).

One of the ways McDonald illustrates her third distinguishing feature of the Canadian movement—i.e. “*a commitment to the ordinary political process*, public education and persuasion of politicians and parties within the system; conversely, avoidance of partisan politics and radical political theory” (39)—is to argue that the “main impetus for the revival of the women’s movement came from the mainstream women’s organizations, such as the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, the Federation des Femmes du Quebec, the Young Women’s Christian Association and the Voice of Women” (43). By associating the rise of second-wave feminism with existing institutions, McDonald minimizes the role of grassroots women and emphasizes reformist organizing within well-established institutional structures.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> McDonald’s emphasis on well-establishing institutional structure is in keeping with Vickers’ analysis of generational continuities and influences within Canadian feminism (see above).

This emphasis on institutional structures presents a very different vision of Canadian feminism than the one that Smith advocates in “Where There is Oppression There Is Resistance,” yet both pieces have a place in the “Dynamics of the Women’s Movement” feature section of *Branching Out’s* fifth anniversary issue. The inclusion of diverse, at times even contradictory, understandings of the women’s movement in *Branching Out’s* fifth anniversary issue presents a complex vision of Canadian feminism that does not reduce these contradictory representations and ideologies into a cohesive narrative. Nonetheless, overarching themes and common threads do emerge.

Despite the ideological differences apparent in Smith’s and McDonald’s feature articles, they both acknowledge the influences of left-wing politics on the Canadian women’s movement. In her introduction to the section of *Ten Thousand Roses* on the 1970s, Rebick observes that “One of the most significant differences between the women’s movement in Canada and that in the United States was the importance here of socialist feminists” (18). This fact is reflected both in Smith’s turn to a class-based analysis in the final section of her article and McDonald’s identification of a political position left of centre as one of the distinguishing features of Canadian feminism.<sup>92</sup>

In another contemporary analysis of the women’s movement, Myrna Kostash also draws an explicit connection between Canadian feminists and the Canadian left. Published in 1980, the year after *Branching Out’s* fifth anniversary issue, Kostash’s *A Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* includes

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<sup>92</sup> Vickers also treats this leftist orientation in detail in a section of her article entitled “Canadian Influences on Canadian Feminism,” where she addresses the “forces of continuity between generations of feminists” organizing within the Canadian left (55).

a chapter on the origins of the women's movement in Canada. This chapter, "The Rising of Women," highlights the importance of left-wing politics for the Canadian women's movement. Kostash argues,

in the same way that the Canadian new left as a whole was never as alienated as the American from its socialist antecedents, neither was the Canadian women's liberation movement. For that matter, the Communist party and the CCF-NDP had raised, a generation or two earlier, the issues of women in the labour force, of equal pay, or the right to abortion, birth control and day care. (182)

Because Kostash is concerned with the relationship between the women's movement and the Canadian left, she concentrates on explicit connections to labour organizing. Kostash cites one of the activists she interviewed for the study, who insists, "In the Women's Labour Leagues and the Congress of Canadian Women 'we saw the struggle against capitalism as a struggle that would enable women to take their place as full human beings and citizens'" (182). Kostash concludes that from this earlier "generation of women radicals, the women's liberationists of the Sixties inherited the expectation that the left would advance the cause of justice for women" (182), which meant that "men of the new left were held accountable to the women for their failure to fight for the liberation of women" (183)—that New Left women began to organize separately from men as they increasingly came to the realization that they were not full participants in the political activities of the Canadian New Left. Kostash's analysis of the 1960s New Left faction of the women's movement confirms the leftist orientation of certain groups within the Canadian movement, but contrasts McDonald's presentation of this orientation in *Branching Out*.

In her description of the Canadian women's movement's location on the political spectrum, McDonald refers to the movement as “*slightly left of centre*” and qualifies this characterization with the claim that the movement did “little questioning of capitalistic institutions” (39). In contrast, the activist that Kostash cites associates the struggle against capitalism with the struggle for women's liberation. This association is more in keeping with Smith's class-based analysis in her feature article. Smith concludes her article with the following assertion: “If we work as socialists and as Marxist feminists, our political work links us to the general struggle against oppression, and our relation to the women's movement stretches our grasp of women's concerns” (15). While both *Branching Out* articles affirm the leftist orientation of the Canadian women's movement, only Smith's article does so with the commitment to anti-capitalist organizing that Kostash associates with the New Left branch of the women's movement. Even an overarching theme such as the leftist orientation of the Canadian women's movement is treated in a variety of ways in *Branching Out's* pages. While certain defining characteristics (such as a leftist orientation) emerge, *Branching Out* does not present these characteristics as monolithic, but rather as variously inflected depending on the goals of the piece in which they occur.

In keeping with much of *Branching Out's* content and with Canadian second-wave feminism more generally, one of Kostash's goals in *Long Way from Home* is to distinguish between the Canadian and American national contexts. In keeping with that goal Kostash observes, “Both the American and Canadian women's liberation movements initially began as women's or feminist caucuses within the new left organizations, but the Canadian movement, unlike the American, for all its

splintering and contradictory tendencies, continued to operate within the orbit of left-wing politics” (182). Of the three streams of feminism that Rebeck identifies as active in the late-1960s—i.e. “VOW [Voice of Women] peace activists; the middle-class mothers and career women who belonged to established groups such as the Canadian Federation of University Women and the YWCA; and the young radicals” (13)—Kostash focuses her analysis on the “young radicals” who made up the “women’s liberation movement,” because *Long Way from Home* is a study of the political radicalism of the sixties generation in Canada. Kostash’s use of the term “women’s liberation movement” and not “women’s movement” clearly indicates that she is concentrating on the “young radicals” as opposed to the Canadian women’s movement as a whole.

In her analysis of 1960s feminism, Kostash identifies exceptions to her assertion that women’s liberation groups “continued to operate within the orbit of left-wing politics” (182). According to Kostash, these exceptions “were the New Feminists in Toronto and, later, various lesbian feminist groups” (182). Her purpose in evoking these exceptions is to demonstrate that they prove the rule. Kostash points out that “the New Feminists had a core membership of Americans recently emigrated to Canada” (182), suggesting that these exceptions were the result of American influences. In making this distinction between the radical separatism of the New Feminists and other feminist groups’ willingness to “operate within the orbit of left-wing politics,” Kostash supports the conclusions that Canadian second-wave feminists were able to organize coalitions between groups with diverse interests and that radical feminism was an American import. In her discussion of the Canadian women’s liberation movement’s sustained connection to left-wing political

organizations and groups, Kostash repeats these two features of Canadian feminism, which are evident in both *Branching Out's* fifth anniversary issue and Vickers' academic study of this phase of Canadian feminist history.

The theme of a multi-partisan feminist strategy is evoked by Kostash when she contrasts the “splintering and contradictory tendencies” of the American movement with the Canadian movement’s ability to continue working with left-wing groups—a theme that is present in both Smith’s and McDonald’s *Branching Out* feature articles. Smith calls for the development of the Canadian women’s movement such that “the mass of women in Canadian society take it up as theirs” (15), and McDonald identifies “*a solidarity across class lines*, and, to a lesser extent, across ethnic and religious barriers” (39) as a defining characteristic of the Canadian movement. However, in keeping with the ability of *Branching Out's* anniversary issue to represent a complex vision of Canadian feminism, this theme of solidarity is also challenged in another contribution to the women’s movement feature section. In her article “Confrontations,” Patricia Preston, “former chairperson of the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee, a member of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee and an executive member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women” (34), writes about unaired conflicts within the regional Status of Women groups and between the regional and national groups. Preston questions the fear within feminist organizations of some women having more power than others (32) and challenges the movement to air, rather than ignore, its conflicts.

Preston calls attention to confrontations, conflict and anger within the movement and argues that they “can all be healthy. Each has its place in the women’s movement as in our own lives. Yet we avoid confronting all three and that

avoidance fosters divisiveness” (34). The title “Confrontations” refers to several conflicts that Preston identifies within the Canadian women’s movement: the difficulty of assuming a leadership role within a movement that is struggling to be egalitarian and equates “power with a negative form of control” (32); the problem of regional representation, of how to represent diversity within a region; the danger of co-optation, of regional groups being co-opted by national agendas and of the movement’s lobbying efforts being co-opted by government interests. After being elected to the NAC executive as a regional representative, Preston recalls becoming disenchanted with her new role: “My euphoria at this new regional representation was brief because I soon realized there was no way I could legitimately presume to represent, let alone speak for, all prairie women” (34). In contrast to Vickers’ representation of a strong degree of agreement among NAC member groups, Preston’s article identifies some of the struggles associated with working within regional and national coalitions of women. Though Vickers certainly acknowledges that there were strains of dissent present within the coalitional groups she discusses, she nonetheless places her emphasis on the willingness of diverse groups of women to work together in Canada, in contrast to the factionalism that she identifies in the American context. While this theme of solidarity between diverse groups of women is affirmed elsewhere in *Branching Out*’s fifth anniversary issue, Preston’s contribution provides a valuable counterpoint by cataloging some of the difficulties associated with a coalitional approach.

\* \* \*

In keeping with the definition of periodicals as repositories for diverse materials, both within the feature section on the “Dynamics of the Women’s Movement” and the issue as a whole, *Branching Out*’s fifth anniversary issue provides several examples of the range and diversity of feminist organizing in Canada. In addition to both affirming and questioning Canadian feminists’ commitment to the ordinary political process (in the “Printed Matter” section and in the articles by Lynn McDonald and Dorothy E. Smith), providing examples of Canadian feminists’ leftist sympathies (McDonald and Smith), and engaging with the difficulties associated with a coalitional approach to feminist organizing (Preston), the fifth anniversary issue also highlights Canadian feminists’ belief in the political possibilities of culture. In a review of the 1978 women’s film festival presented by the Powerhouse Gallery in Montreal, Vivian Prost and Nell Tenhaaf present another challenge to Canadian feminists’ commitment to the ordinary political process, arguing that “Less can be gained from acquiring political power for women than from infiltrating the national psyche on the cultural level, through filmmaking and the other arts, where we are searching for our place in the national identity” (51).<sup>93</sup> Expressed in the nationalist terms of the period, this challenge to political activism and turn towards culture brings us back to the ideas expressed in McMaster’s inaugural editorial in 1973. Prost and Tenhaaf encourage women to infiltrate “the national psyche on the cultural level” and to organize separately from existing power structures. These two themes—the subversive potential of cultural production and the value of taking a separatist stand—are both present in McMaster’s initial description of *Branching Out*.

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<sup>93</sup> This notion of film’s ability to infiltrate the psyche recalls Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975). What is unique about Prost’s and Tenhaaf’s formulation is their emphasis on national identity.

In addition to introducing *Branching Out* to its readers, McMaster's inaugural editorial is also a defense of *Branching Out's* decision to exclude men. McMaster insists that "groups that have suffered from discrimination for many years must, we feel, separate themselves for a period in order to gain a sense of accomplishment and self-worth" (3). She informs readers that "We have restricted the production (although not the purchase) of *Branching Out* to women because we feel there is a female point of view toward society and the arts which has not been sufficiently explored by either male-run general interest magazines, or traditional women's magazines" (3). This description of the decision to exclude men from the production of *Branching Out* clearly identifies *Branching Out* as a alternative institution—an alternative to "male-run general interest magazines" and to "traditional women's magazines"—and asserts the importance of organizing separately both from men and from the mainstream. McMaster goes on to say that the "ideal society would be one in which there were no discrimination of kind, whether based on colour, religion, sex, or anything else" (3), but she insists that we are not there yet and so, "for a period," women must organize separately from men—associating *Branching Out* with the fight against discrimination.

In this editorial McMaster presents a kind of provisional separatism that will allow Canadian women discover "what it means to be a woman in Canada today" and to come to "an awareness of our female culture." Struggling against discrimination and providing women with a place to "exchange ideas and gain exposure for their work" (3) are presented as part of the same project. McMaster positions *Branching Out* as an alternative to mainstream publishing and a place where women can fight discrimination and "gain a sense of accomplishment at self-worth."

McMaster's emphasis on the "female point of view" could be read as a new essentialism or a retreat into lifestyle politics (as it might be by Alice Echols or Brooke Williams). A separatist cultural endeavour, *Branching Out* could be critiqued as a form of political quietism because it moves away from political activism and towards female culture. However, this chapter's description of Canadian feminism and recuperation of the term cultural feminism (especially with reference to the women-in-print movement) suggest that alternative institutions like *Branching Out* are also political. While McMaster does not explicitly refer to culture as a weapon in the struggle against women's oppression, she certainly alludes to the subversive potential of alternative institutions. Beginning with its inaugural editorial and continuing throughout its seven-year history, *Branching Out* worked to improve the cultural and political position of Canadian women. As this chapter indicates, Canadian feminists did not always agree on how to achieve their goal of improving the status of women in Canada. Nonetheless, because of its engagement with a variety of ideological positions and its combination of cultural and political content, *Branching Out* is a valuable source for researchers interested in grappling with the nuances of Canadian second-wave feminism.

## Conclusion

### Memory Narratives and Canadian Second-Wave Feminism

One of the first interviews that I conducted for this study was with Susan McMaster. During this interview she told me that *Branching Out* “was an open door.” She speculated, “If I was to name it now I might call it *Open Door*” and described how “many, many, many people walked through that door for the first time, daring to do something they’d never done before: talk about themselves, publish, show their work, assume that what they were doing was interesting.” After conducting several more interviews and spending many more hours reading *Branching Out*, I began to understand the significance of this open door metaphor for my analysis of *Branching Out*. In repurposing the women’s magazine genre and inviting Canadian women to transform themselves from “consumers of the word” into “creators of the word” (Flannery 51), *Branching Out* functioned as an open door. This metaphor encompasses the magazine’s political and cultural interventions, its objectives to promote feminist analysis and to showcase work by Canadian women.

The open door metaphor speaks to the nature of *Branching Out*’s feminism. *Branching Out* was a moderate publication. While the magazine certainly engaged in systemic analysis of power structures that discriminate against women, its focus was on providing opportunities for individual women readers, writers and producers. Whether it was informing readers about matrimonial property law, or publishing an emerging writer’s first poems, or providing an aspiring editor with the opportunity to work on a professional quality magazine, *Branching Out* was a forum for individual

women to step into new roles and to take advantage of new opportunities.

McMaster's description of *Branching Out* as an open door is fitting because it reflects the magazine's moderate approach. Like an open door, *Branching Out* was an invitation to enter a new space, to cross a threshold.

*Branching Out* responded to Canadian women's desire to cross the threshold from consumer to creator, to step through the open door that the magazine provided. *Branching Out* challenged gender discrimination by assigning value not only to the contributions published in the magazine, but also to the work that *Branching Out* staff performed to produce the magazine. When *Branching Out* readers rushed to support the magazine during the 1976-77 publishing break, readers also crossed the threshold from consumer to creator, as they did when they provided feedback on the magazine throughout its history in the form of letters to the editor and survey responses. It was readers' financial support and words of encouragement that brought *Branching Out* back from the brink of collapse.

Throughout its history, *Branching Out* encouraged readers' active participation in the magazine. McMaster's inaugural editorial concludes with an appeal for contributions and feedback from readers that is representative of the many editorial notes published in *Branching Out* that encouraged reader participation: "So please, send us your artwork, your writing, your opinions; submit topics or articles that interest you. Perhaps most important, tell us what you think of our ideas" (3).

*Branching Out* was an open door for readers in two ways: as a method to make their work public and as a way to access Canadian artistic production and feminist analysis. As a feminist magazine with an emphasis on cultural politics, *Branching Out*

provided opportunities for Canadian women to publish their writing and exhibit their visual art and was a source for feminist analysis relevant to Canadian women.

During my interview with *Branching Out* contributor Christa Van Daele, she described *Branching Out's* approach as “inspiring other women to keep writing” and said that the magazine “found a middle-of-the-road” approach. Elaborating on what she meant by “middle-of-the-road,” Van Daele explained, “They weren’t tilting in too literary a direction nor too basic.” The magazine was trying to appeal to a broad range of Canadian women. During our interview Van Daele speculated that, because *Branching Out* “had a softer lens” than other more radical feminist groups, “maybe more people could pick up the content and find their way in.” This description of *Branching Out* as a more moderate publication is in keeping with other participants’ memories of the magazine as generally avoiding controversial or radical content in favour of exploring cultural politics.

In addition to writing for *Branching Out*, Van Daele also worked for Women’s Press in Toronto before and during the period of conflict at the press over the implementation of anti-racist policies. Her connection to *Branching Out* was through Karen Lawrence. Both Lawrence and Van Daele were Master’s students in the English Department at the University of Alberta in the early 1970s. After Van Daele left Edmonton in 1974, she remained in touch with the magazine through Lawrence. Over the years, Van Daele wrote three reviews and one feature article for *Branching Out*. During our interview, Van Daele contextualized her memories of *Branching Out* in terms of her experiences with Women’s Press. In her comments on Women’s Press, Van Daele both indicated the influential role that Women’s Press played in Canadian feminist publishing, as the first feminist press in Canada, and described

how, over the years, the “rhetoric of oppression” began “to turn one women’s group against another” at Women’s Press. These conflicts led to the split at Women’s Press in 1988. The Women’s Press collective was divided over the implementation of anti-racist policies. This public conflict, which was covered by both the mainstream and the feminist press, resulted in several collective members leaving the press and dramatized the difficulties of collective feminist organizing.<sup>94</sup> Comparing Women’s Press and *Branching Out*, Van Daele described *Branching Out* as “a more temperate group” and said that “the Edmonton crowd was a much more moderate crowd.” Chronologically, almost a decade separates the publication of *Branching Out*’s final issue and the split at Women’s Press; nonetheless, by contrasting these two groups, Van Daele highlighted *Branching Out*’s more moderate approach.

This moderate approach and *Branching Out*’s location in Edmonton, outside of Canada’s activist centres, are two reasons why *Branching Out* has been absent from the historical record of Canadian second-wave feminism. Historical accounts tend to favour more radical and controversial forms of feminism. In contrast, *Branching Out*’s general interest mandate and decision to set aside collective organizing in favour of a more structured approach are part of a moderate branch of Canadian feminism.

As Pauline Butling argues in “Who Is She? Inside/Outside Literary Communities,” memory is a “selective operation” (225) and “historical narratives can be reformulated or reinterpreted” (226). During this selection process, often the most radical or controversial accounts command our attention. This study of *Branching Out* reformulates the historical narrative of second-wave feminism by adding a more moderate voice to this history. In her article, Butling reformulates her

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<sup>94</sup> For a detailed analysis of the conflicts at Women’s Press see Christine Kim, “The Politics of Print: Feminist Publishing and Canadian Literary Production.”

personal narrative, shifting the emphasis from her involvement in literary communities to her involvement in women's communities. This reformulation is a "conscious attempt to reshape [her] individual memory and to recuperate a collective feminist history" (225). Because Butling's goal is to recuperate a collective feminist history, she subordinates her involvement in Canadian literary communities and emphasizes her involvement in women's communities in order to "show how female subjects acquire power and agency" (228). In order to support her claims about the contingency of memory and history, Butling relies on Michael Lambek's 1996 essay "Memory as Moral Practice." In this essay, Lambek challenges the distinction between history and memory, arguing that "neither personal memory nor scholarly history [are] literal" (243). According to Lambek, "to the degree that both are narrativized constructs the categorical distinction between them begins to dissolve" (243). Lambek claims that memory (and, by extension, history) is not "a neutral representation, more or less accurate, of the past" but rather "a claim or set of claims" (239).

Having been influenced by these arguments for the contingency of memory and history, I conclude my study of *Branching Out* with the metaphor of *Branching Out* as an open door in order to reinforce a set of claims about the magazine and to emphasize the importance of including moderate voices like *Branching Out* in narratives of Canadian second-wave feminism. Like Butling's conscious attempt to recuperate a collective feminist history, I conclude with this metaphor because it reinforces this study's central aims: to recuperate the history of a major, western Canadian, second-wave feminist magazine, to acknowledge the contributions of the women who worked on this magazine, to reinforce understandings of the political

nature of cultural production, and to build on existing histories of Canadian second-wave feminism.

### **Closing the Door: July 1980**

The final issue of *Branching Out*, published in July 1980, featured a total of eighteen images on the front and back covers (see figures 17 and 18). Each image is of one or two women reading a back issue of *Branching Out*. There are thirty women featured on these covers and each of them is reading one of the thirty back issues of *Branching Out*. There are young women and older women, white women and racialized women, women in the home and women in public, a woman with a young child, and a woman sitting at a piano (identifying her with the arts). These cover images seem intended to convey the variety of women who read *Branching Out* and to attest to the magazine's extraordinary longevity, compared to the short lives of so many Canadian feminist periodicals. By having each issue held by a different woman, the length of *Branching Out*'s history is made more tangible. *Branching Out*'s role as a gathering place for currently and subsequently well-known Canadian women is also illustrated in the magazine's final issue. Prominent Canadian women published in this issue include authors Jane Rule, Marilyn Bowering, Erin Mouré, Heather Pringle, and Aritha van Herk; academics Veronica Strong-Boag and Smaro Kamboureli; lawyer/politician Linda Duncan; and writer/broadcaster Eleanor Wachtel. But what is perhaps most striking about the magazine's final issue is the editorial description of the decision to stop publishing *Branching Out*.

Following the table of contents is a letter from “The *Branching Out* staff,” addressed to readers and accompanied by a five-panel comic entitled “The Last Word on *Branching Out*,” which cites the reasons for folding the magazine (see figure 19). The letter explains that the editor’s ability to “work full-time without pay” is what kept the magazine alive: “After six years without salary, our editor [Sharon Batt] is getting thin and she has resigned to seek paid employment. No one else on our staff is able to work full-time without pay, so *Branching Out* is no longer able to continue” (2). Without that driving force, the magazine was unable to continue. In a final statement to the readers, the staff explains, “We’re proud of what *Branching Out* has done, and the rewards (other than financial) have been great. We don’t regret the time and energy we’ve spent, and we truly appreciate the support we received over the years from contributors and subscribers” (2).

This pride and acknowledgement of support is included alongside a parodic five-panel comic. The first panel, a drawing of a radio, reads, “When last we heard from our heroines the radio was announcing their demise” (2). The second panel includes drawings of several women and stacks of magazines (one labelled “collector’s items”) and begins with the question, “But what precipitated this momentous decision?” (2). Comments made by the women in this panel include “Face it, without a full-time editor we just can’t put the magazine out”; “Yeah, you’re right. But how about if we volunteer for 1 week at a time”; “Good idea! Now I’ll be on holidays for the next 5 months, but when I come back”; “We could always try lottery tickets ... then there’s casinos, bake sales, bingo ... AVON?!!” (2). The panel parodies traditionally female ways of making small amounts of money and the difficulty of finding volunteers that are as reliable as they are enthusiastic. In doing

so, the panel also articulates, in a more heartfelt way, the editorial group's desire to sustain the magazine but the impossibility of doing so without adequate funds to cover production costs and salaries.

In the fourth panel, two mice gossip about *Branching Out*: "PSSST. Hey! Did you hear that this magazine is PORNOGRAPHIC?!!"; "Yup, dirty rugby songs, codpieces, nude cover, nothing pretty, just a lot of weird looking ugly women" (2). These comments parody some of the criticism directed at *Branching Out* over the years and allude to the challenges of trying to produce a feminist magazine with newsstand appeal. Even a moderate feminist magazine like *Branching Out* was censured by readers for being too radical. The comic published in *Branching Out's* final issue is a parodic representation of the real regret felt by the magazine's staff at being unable to secure the funds and the audience necessary to continue publishing *Branching Out*.

*Branching Out* opened a door into a world that valued women's work and, in doing so, challenged gender discrimination. Feminists today are still struggling to create the world that *Branching Out* envisioned. Through the extraordinary efforts of a group of dedicated women, *Branching Out* promoted feminist analysis and showcased work by Canadian women. The magazine's history is not defined by radicalism and controversy, but it does provide us with important insights into the nuances of Canadian feminism. *Branching Out's* combination of feminist analysis and the arts reinforced the connection between women's artistic production and feminist activism. The political nature of cultural production is an important component of Canadian feminist history and *Branching Out* provides us with an open door into this aspect of our history.

**Figures**

Figure 1: Preview Issue, December 1973

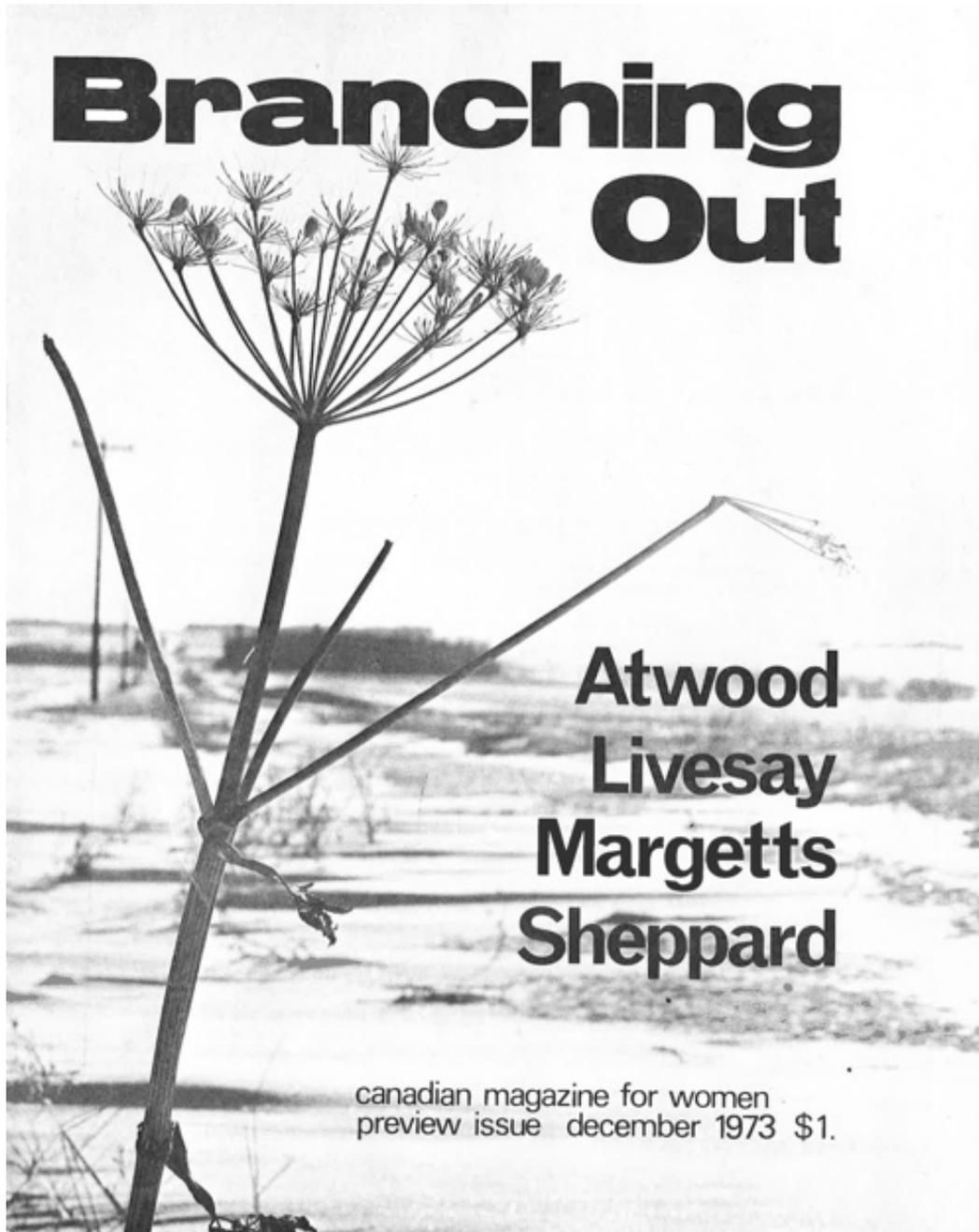


Figure 2: International Women's Year, November/December 1975



Figure 3: Election Primer, 1979

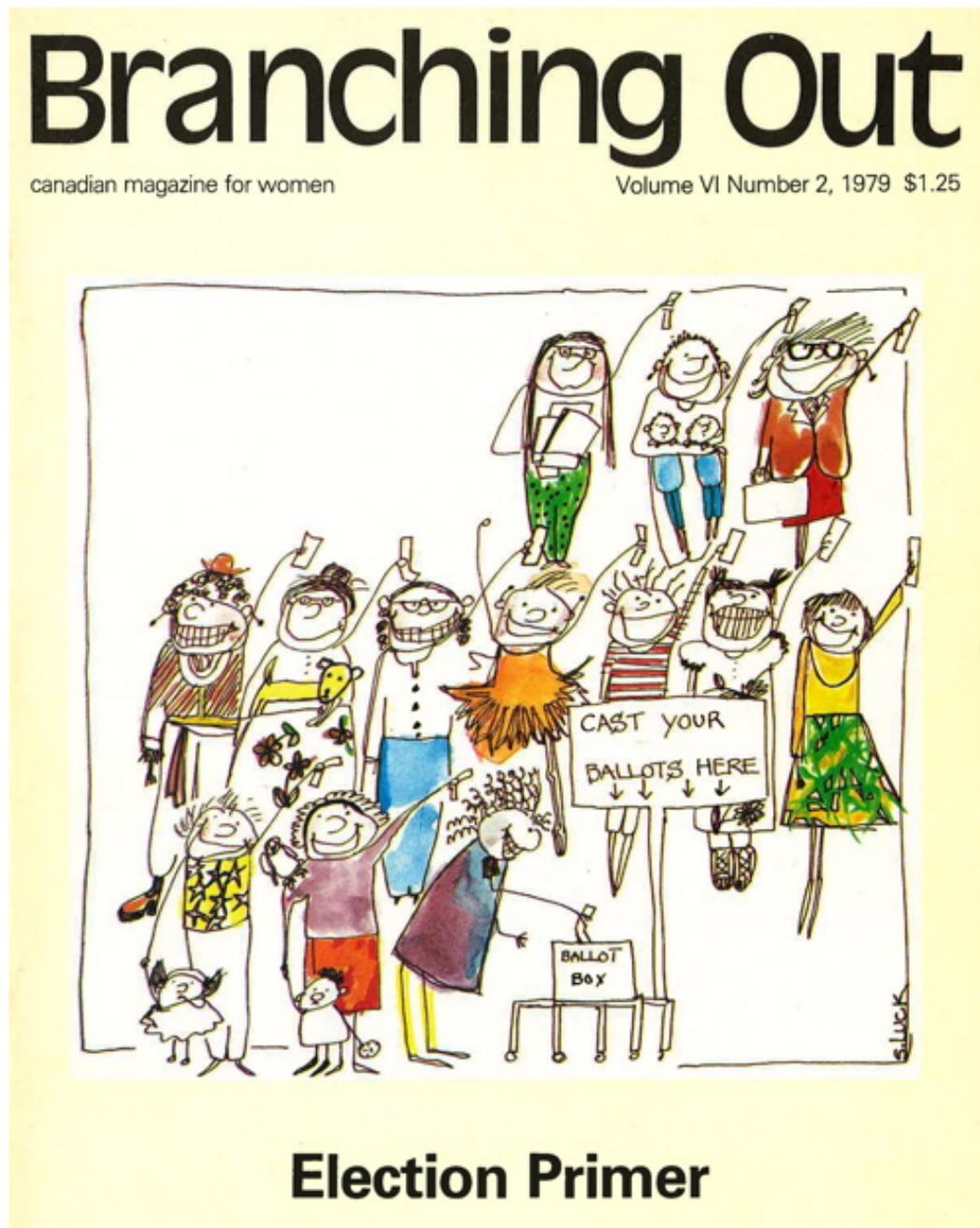


Figure 4: February/March 1976

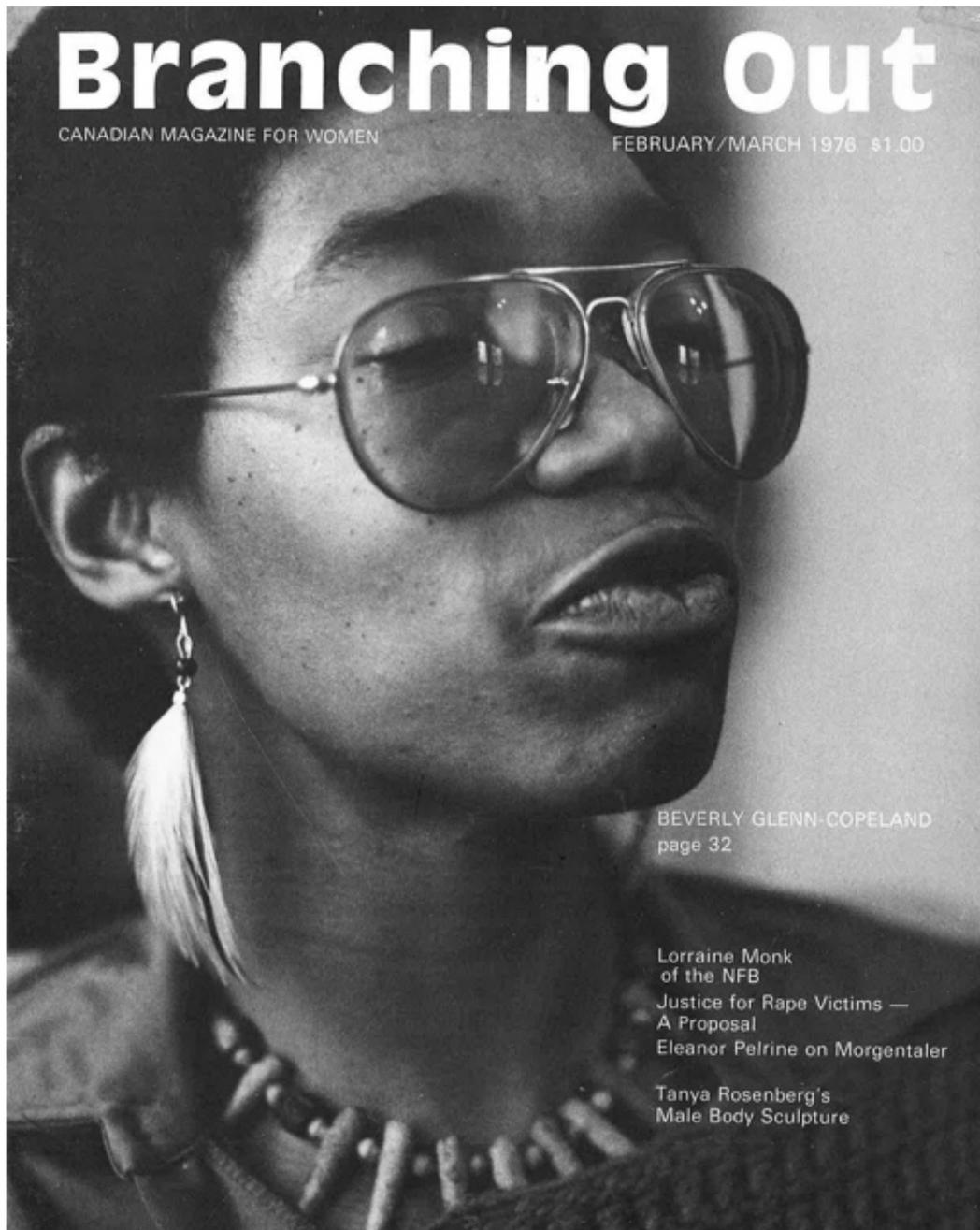


Figure 5: July/August 1975

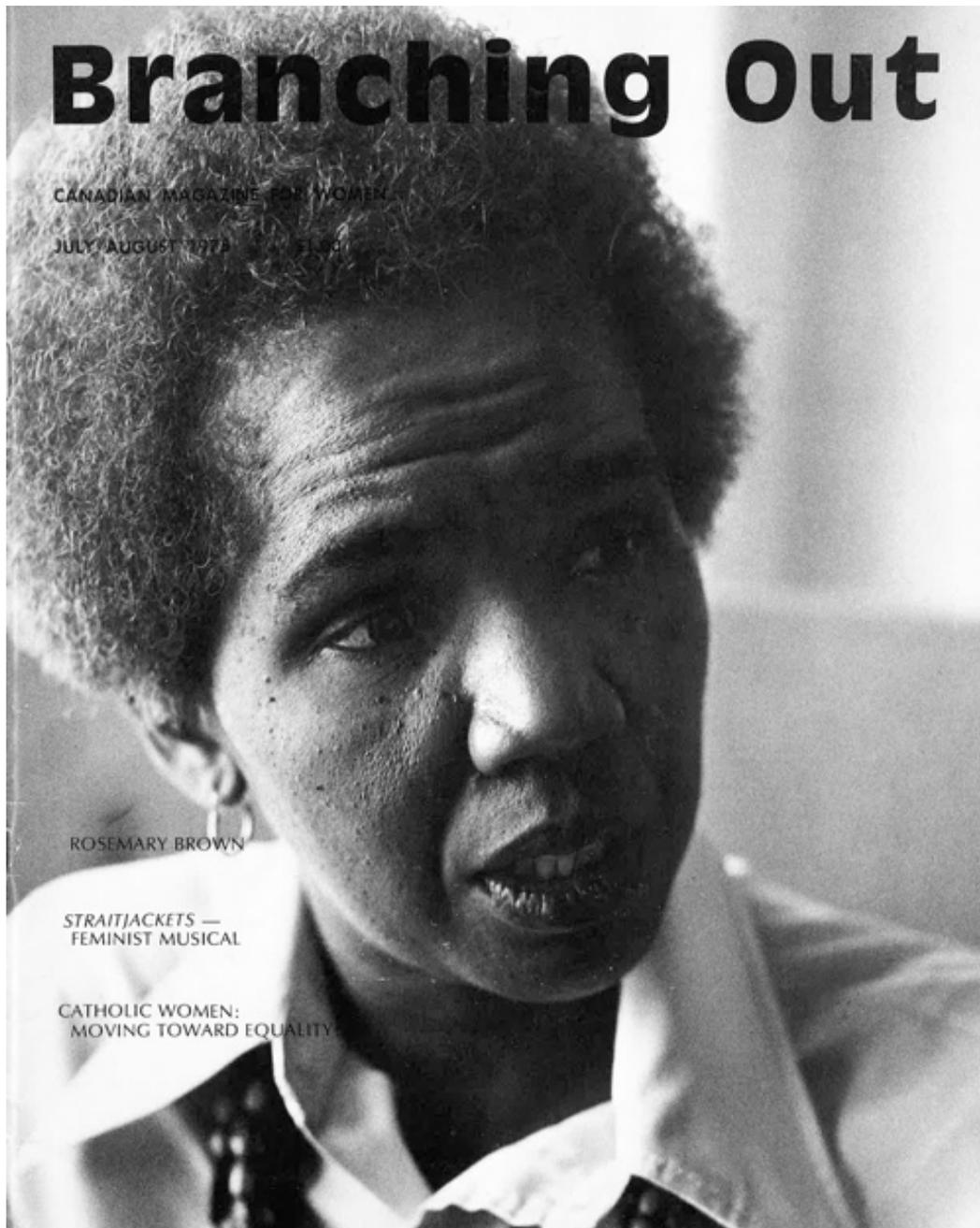


Figure 6: Environment Issue, 1978

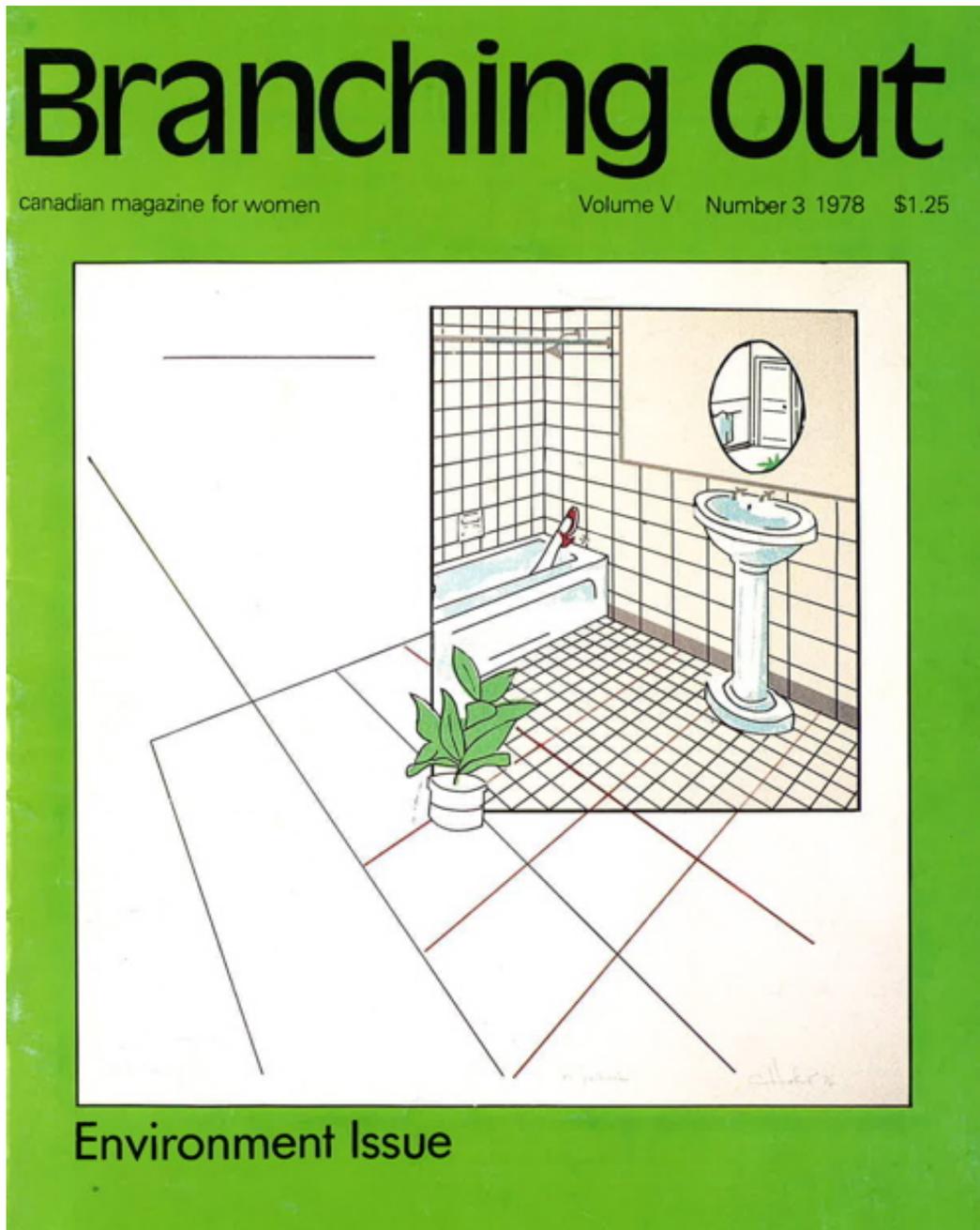


Figure 7: Women in Sport, 1978

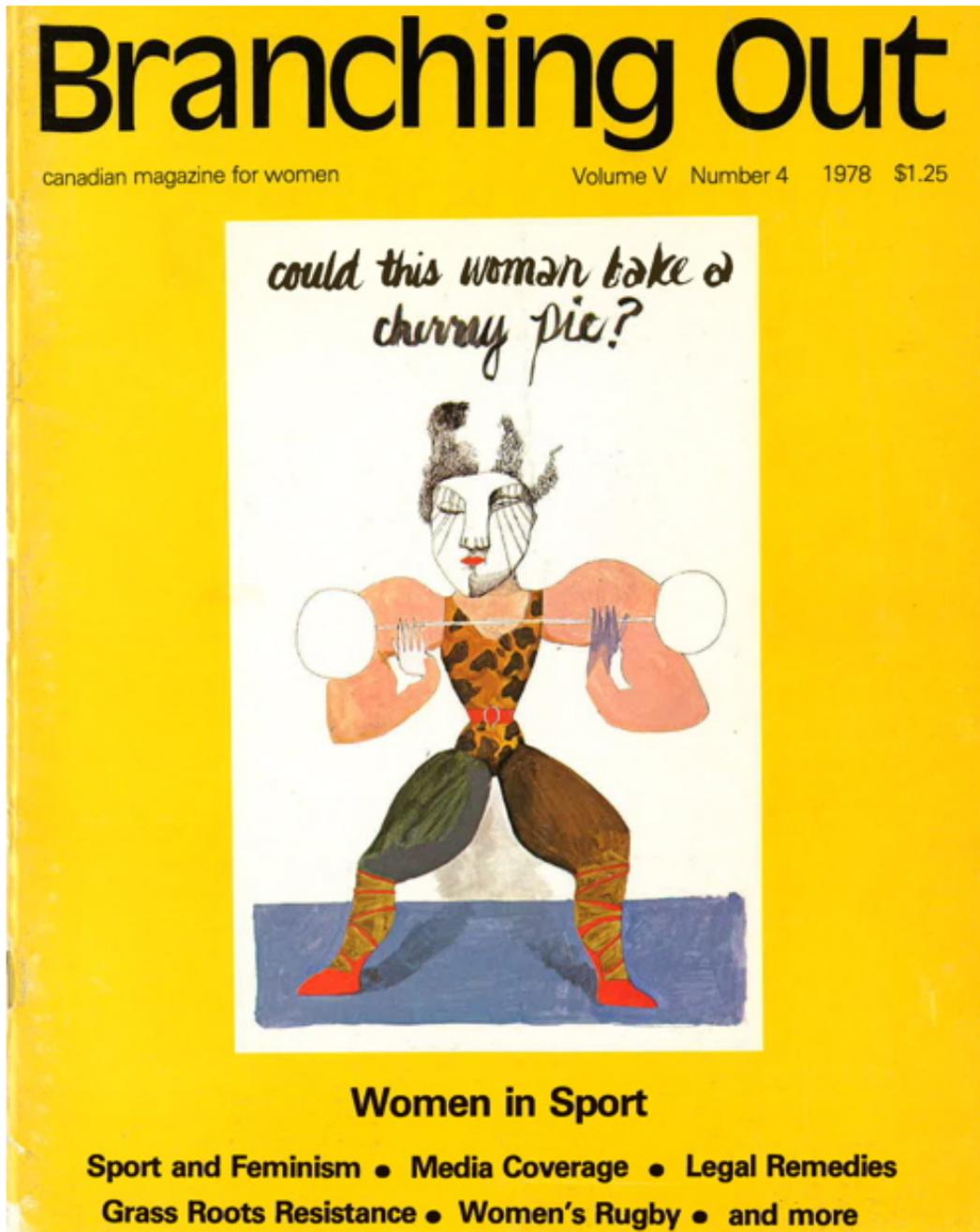


Figure 8: Fifth Anniversary Issue, 1979



Figure 9: Special Fiction Issue, 1979

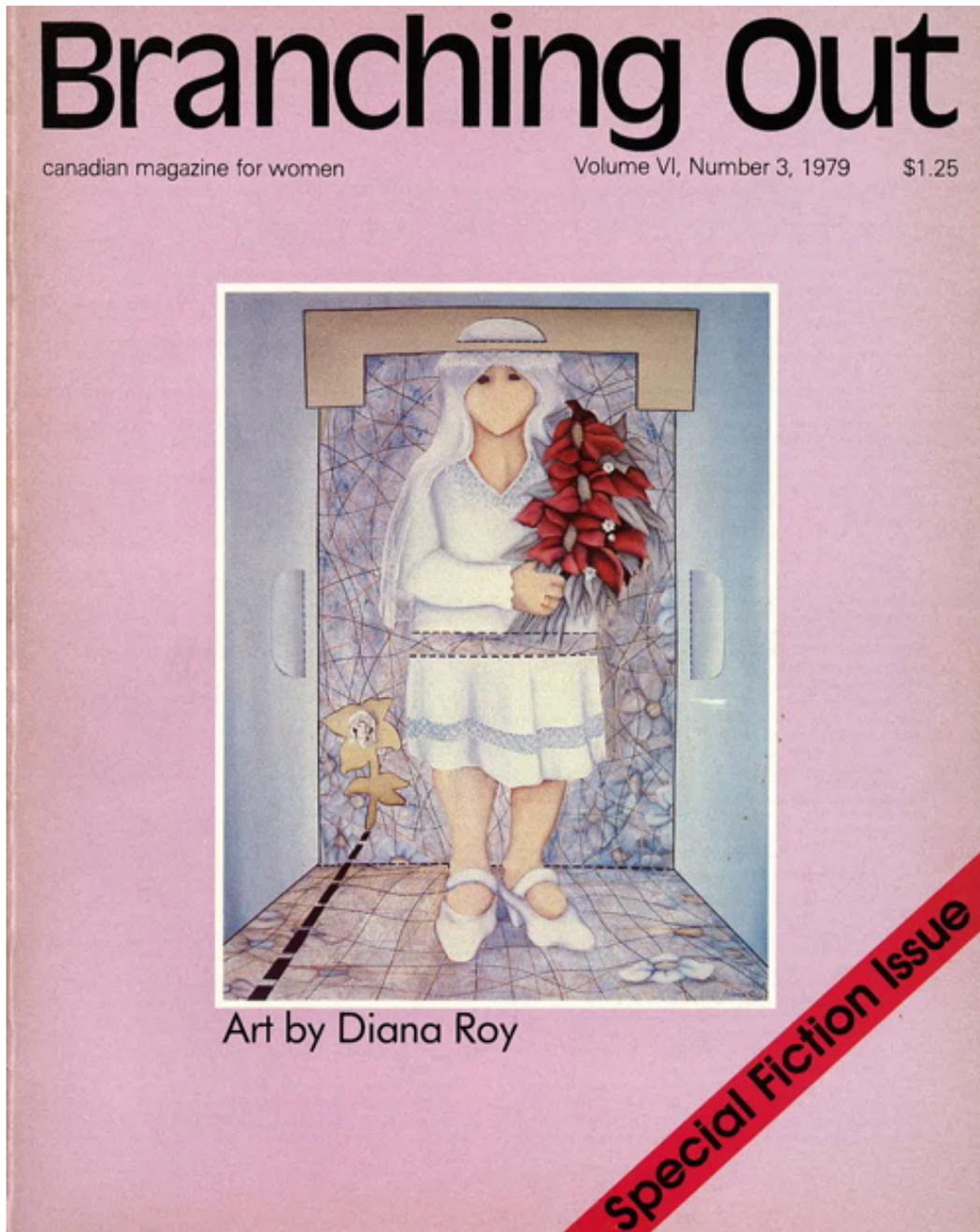


Figure 10: March/April 1975



Figure 11: Women and Politics, December 1977



Figure 12: March/April 1974

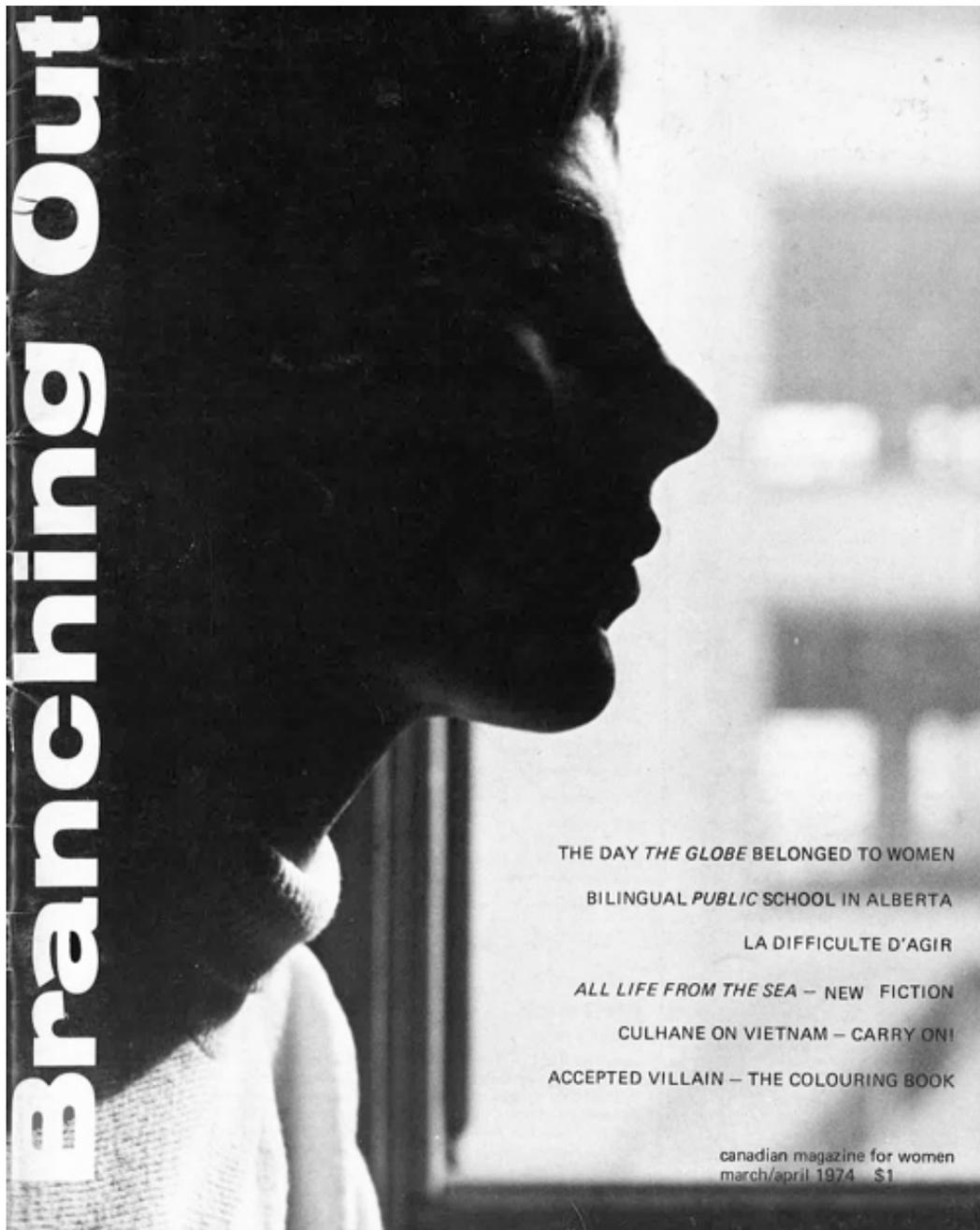


Figure 13: January/February 1975



Figure 14: Women and Education, 1978

# Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

Volume V, Number 1, 1978 \$1.25



## What Did She Learn in School Today?

Heroines and Role

Models

Women's Studies in  
Trouble

"Helping" the Principal  
High School Revisited

## Plus

Fiction — Love on Yonge  
Street

Cuban Women and Film  
Custody and the Lesbian  
Mother

Poetry, Reviews,  
Photography

Figure 15: Women and Art, 1978

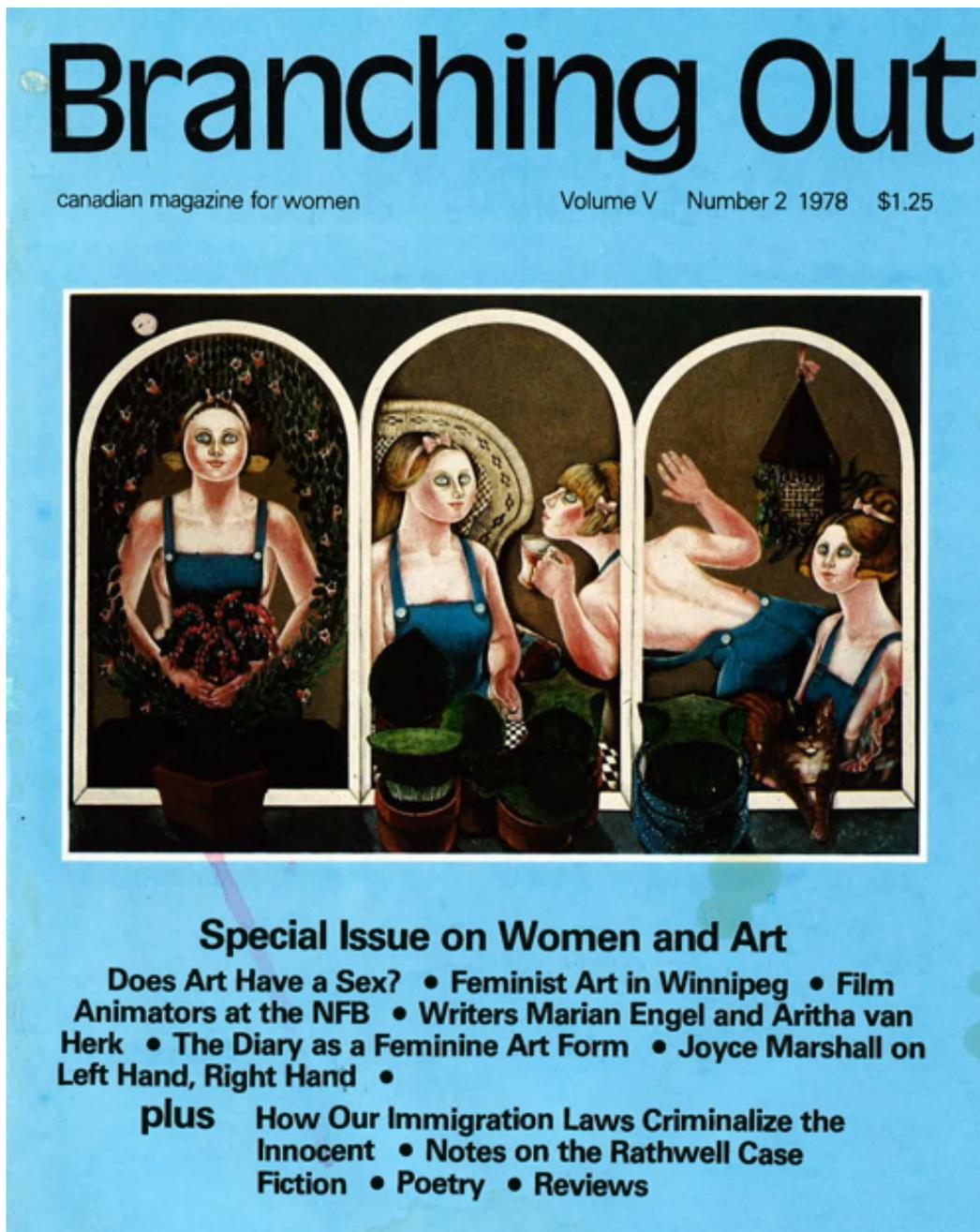


Figure 16: Fashion and Feminism, March/April 1977



Figure 17: Final Issue Front Cover, July 1980

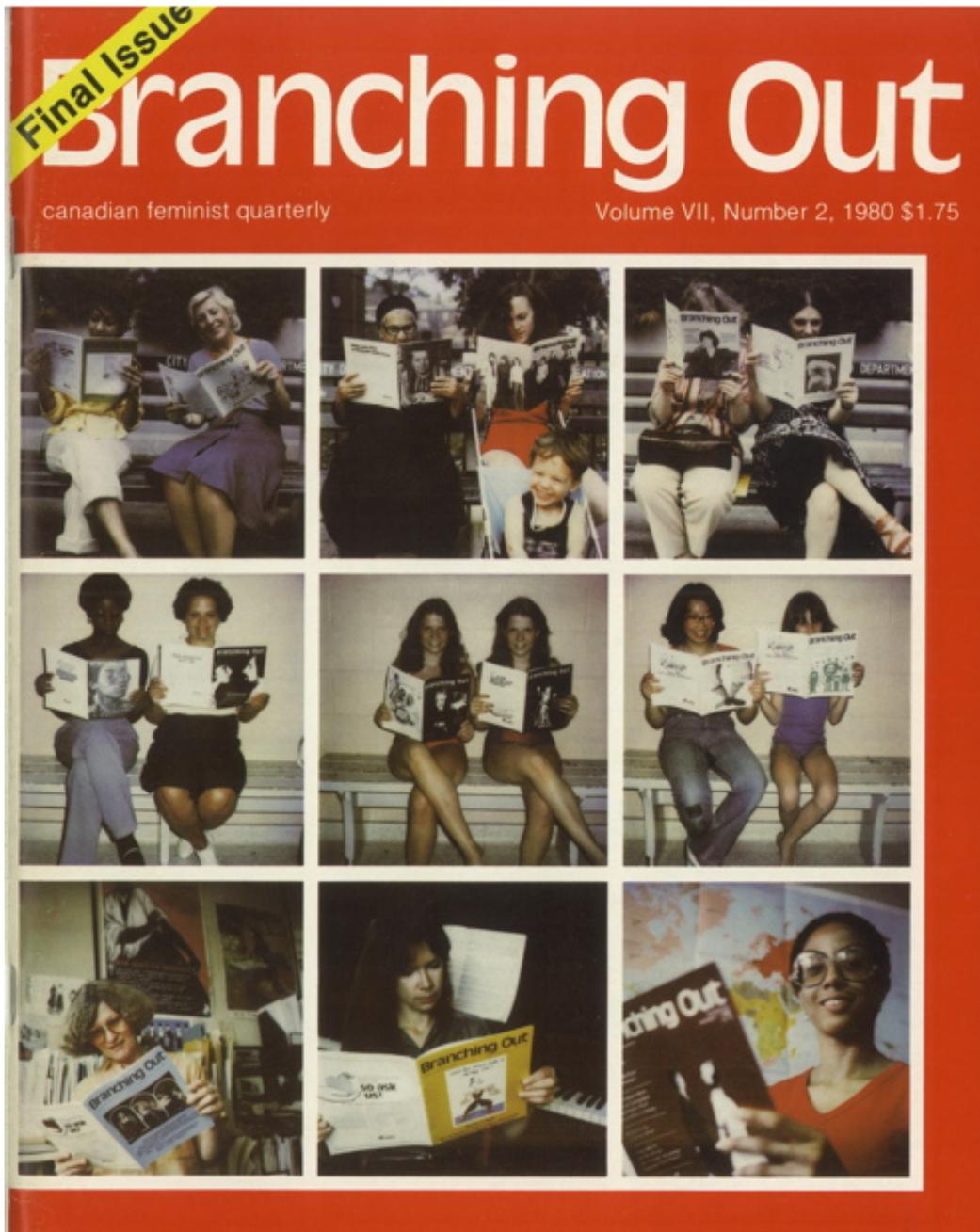
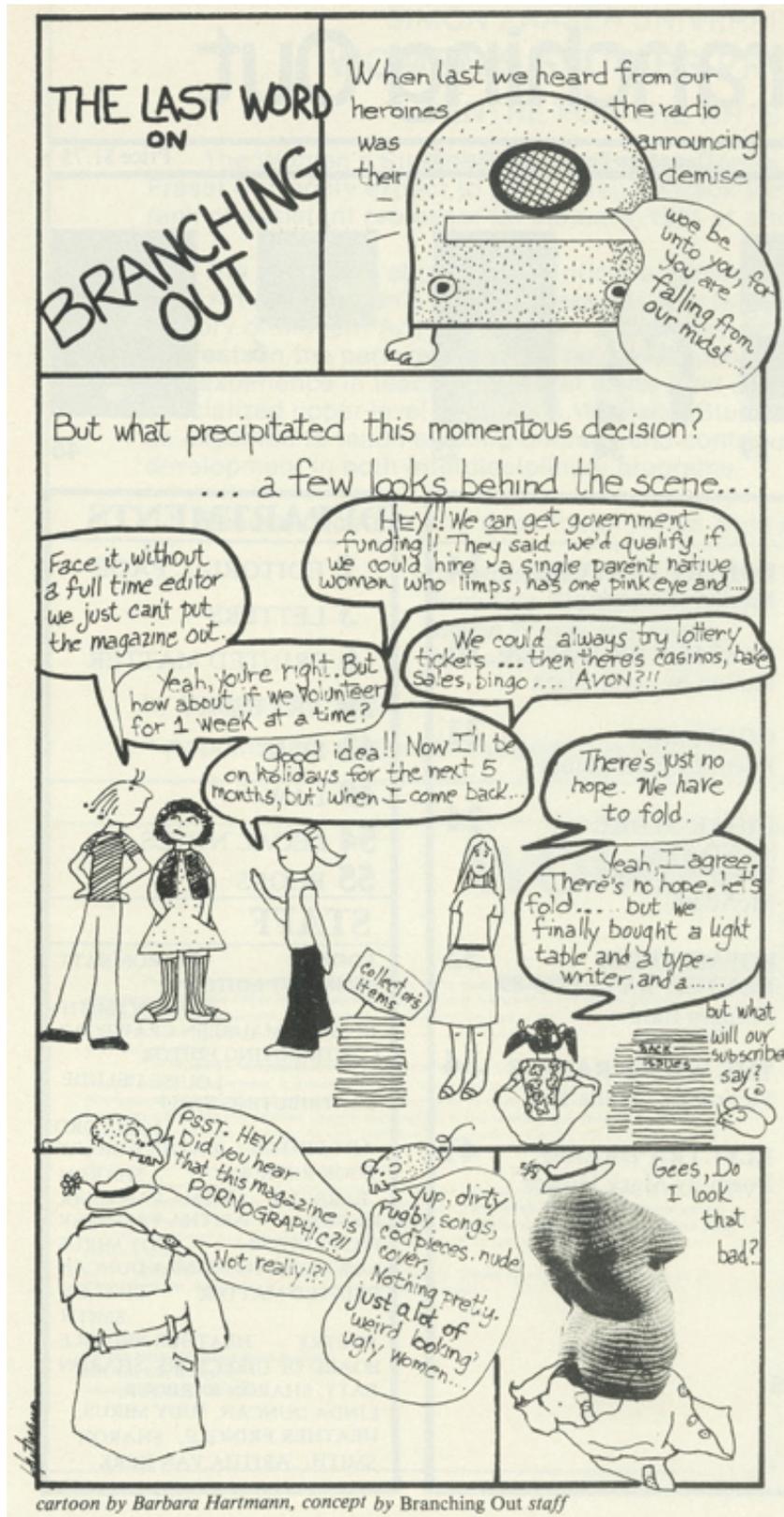


Figure 17: Final Issue Back Cover, July 1980



Figure 19: "The Last Word on Branching Out," July 1980



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## Appendix 1: Core Interview Questions

How did you become involved with *Branching Out*? What were your roles in the magazine's production?

Did you have any previous experience in the publishing field when you started working on *Branching Out*?

Did *Branching Out* lead to any other employment or volunteer opportunities for you?

How would you describe *Branching Out*'s content to someone who has never read the magazine?

How would you define the magazine's political stance?

Was *Branching Out* primarily a general interest magazine, a literary magazine, a political magazine?

How do you think art and politics interacted in the magazine? Did this relationship change over time?

How much was this an Edmonton magazine and how much was it a Canadian magazine?

Who was *Branching Out*'s audience?

What was the organizational structure at *Branching Out*? How were decisions made and responsibilities divided up? How and where were meetings run?

How were contributions obtained?

What do you remember about the writing that you published in *Branching Out*? Are there any pieces that stand out in your memory?

Can you remember any major milestones during *Branching Out*'s production? Any particular high or low points?

What, if any, was your experience with the feminist community, in Edmonton or elsewhere, before and during your time with *Branching Out*?

Thinking about *Branching Out* in relationship to other projects that you've been involved with, how important to you was the time that you spent working on *Branching Out*?

What story of *Branching Out* would you like to see told?

## Appendix 2: Participant Biographies<sup>95</sup>

**Sharon Batt** worked for *Branching Out* from 1973 to 1980 and was the magazine's Editor from 1974 to 1980. Her experience at *Branching Out* continues to enrich her life through lasting friendships, passions and political commitments. She moved to Montreal in 1981 and throughout the 1980s worked as a writer, translator and editor, focusing on feminist issues and consumer protection issues (the latter as an editor for the Quebec magazine *Protect Yourself*). Following a diagnosis of breast cancer in 1988 she began writing about the disease from the perspective of a patient and feminist activist, winning recognition for a two-part radio documentary for CBC's Ideas and for her book, *Patient No More: The Politics of Breast Cancer*. She co-founded the organization Breast Cancer Action Montreal and was active in the early breast cancer movement in Canada and internationally. She moved to Halifax in 1999 where she had a two-year appointment as the Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University and subsequently as the Elizabeth May Chair in Women's Health and the Environment at Dalhousie University. She is completing a doctorate at Dalhousie University on the breast cancer movement in Canada and funding from pharmaceutical companies.

**Elaine Butler** worked for *Branching Out* from 1977 to 1979 as Business Manager and a Coordinating Editor. After *Branching Out*, Elaine Butler did several years of graduate studies in Philosophy and then continued working in publishing as an editor and writer with Lone Pine Publishing and Borealis Magazine. Most recently she has been working as an editor for *Fairy Creek The Musical* and is one of the two composers on this project ([www.fairy creek.com](http://www.fairy creek.com)).

**Linda Duncan** worked for *Branching Out* from 1976 to 1980 as Law Editor. Linda was elected Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona in October of 2008, becoming the second New Democrat MP ever from the province of Alberta, and the only non-Conservative to represent the province in the 40th Parliament. She was re-elected with an increased majority in 2011. She has served as the NDP Environment Critic and is now critic for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Before her election to Parliament, Linda worked as an international environmental law consultant based in Edmonton. She held a senior portfolio as the Chief of Enforcement for Environment Canada, and served as Assistant Deputy Minister for Renewable Resources for the Yukon government. Internationally, she has served as a senior legal advisor to Indonesia, Bangladesh and Jamaica in instituting programs for effective environmental enforcement.

**Diana Selsor Edwards** worked with *Branching Out* from 1975 to 1980, primarily as Photography Editor. While in Edmonton, she worked as one of the senior editors of the then new Canadian Encyclopedia. In 1986 she found and was reunited with the son she was forced to relinquish to adoption in 1965 because she was an unwed mother. Edwards returned to Florida in 1987 to work on a photo documentary about continuing segregation in the South. There, she re-married, to writer Page Edwards. When her youngest child went away to college in 1989, Edwards returned

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<sup>95</sup> These biographies were completed with the assistance and permission of the participants.

to university to complete a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology. Her dissertation research was to gather life histories from 56 women who had relinquished a child to adoption. She taught full time until family demands again intervened. After her husband's death in January 1999, she moved to New Mexico where her daughter Catalina was starting a family. In 2005, she completed an MA in counseling and now has a private practice as a therapist, working primarily with children and families at risk. She is mother to three, stepmother to two, and grandmother of four. She still loves photography.

**Mary Alyce Heaton** worked for *Branching Out* from 1974 to 1976 as Business Manager and a Non-Fiction Editor. She went on to law school in September 1976. Heaton was called to the Bar in 1980 and has been in private practice since then. Most of her work is in family and matrimonial law. After law school she had two children, who are now amazing, independent adults. Over time her community interests have changed and her volunteer work now addresses under-educated and under-employed women and their children.

**Barbara Hartmann** worked for *Branching Out* from 1974 to 1979. Her responsibilities included illustration, layout and design; she was the Art Editor from 1975 to 1979. After leaving the magazine she pursued an art career which included illustrating children's books, teaching watercolour classes through the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension, and exhibiting her work at an Edmonton gallery. In addition, she has completed murals for pediatric units at three of Edmonton's hospitals. Currently she is illustrating books and painting art furniture ([www.barbarahartmann.com](http://www.barbarahartmann.com)).

**Karen Lawrence** worked for *Branching Out* from 1974 to 1979 as Fiction Coordinator and a Contributing Editor. She went on to publish a book of poetry, a screenplay, essays and articles, and two novels; *The Life of Helen Alone* won the Books in Canada Best First Novel Award and a PEN literary award. She worked as a massage therapist and never finished her Ph.D. From Edmonton, her westward migration continued to California. She has lived there since 1979, where she reads, writes, collaborates on book projects, and does freelance editing. Her dreams are mostly about Canada. She has a husband, a son, a male dog, and still considers herself a feminist. Friends from her *Branching Out* days remain profoundly important to her and close to her heart.

**Naomi Loeb** worked for *Branching Out* from 1974 to 1976 as a Non-Fiction Editor and did public relations and resource planning for the magazine. After beginning her broadcasting career in Alberta, she went on to a 20 year career in Toronto with the CBC and TVOntario working in news and current affairs on *The Journal* and her own program, *The Loeb Report*. For the past 10 years she has been teaching English, first at York University, and currently at Seneca College in Toronto.

**Susan McMaster** founded *Branching Out* in 1973 and worked for the magazine until 1977. McMaster was the magazine's Coordinating Editor from 1973 to 1975. McMaster is the President of the League of Canadian Poets and the author or editor of some two dozen books, magazines, anthologies, and recordings with First Draft, SugarBeat, and Geode Music & Poetry. In addition to founding Canada's first feminist magazine, McMaster has organized such projects as "Dangerous Graces: Women's Poetry on Stage" (Great Canadian Theater Company) and "Convergence: Poems for Peace," which brought poetry and art from across Canada to all MP's and Senators in 2001. Recent books by McMaster include *Pith & Wry: Canadian Poetry* (Scrivener Press 2010), *Paper Affair: Poems Selected & New* (Black Moss 2010), and *Crossing Arcs: Alzheimer's, My Mother, and Me* (Black Moss 2009/10), shortlisted for the national Acorn-Plantos People's Poetry award, the Ottawa Book Awards, and the Arc Magazine Archibald Lampman Award for Poetry.

**Olenka Melnyk** worked for *Branching Out* from 1978 to 1979 as a Contributing Editor. Melnyk worked as a newspaper reporter and editor, as well as a freelance writer and editor for many years. She wrote a grassroots history of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (forerunner of the NDP), *No Bankers in Heaven: Remembering the CCF* published by McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Toronto. She is currently communications coordinator for the Early Child Development Mapping Project at the University of Alberta.

**Judith Mirus** worked for *Branching Out* in 1977 and from 1979 to 1980 as Film Editor. She went on to study yoga in India and Canada and has been a certified teaching member of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada since 1999.

**Heather Pringle** worked for *Branching Out* from 1977 to 1980 as a Contributing Editor in the Fiction and Poetry departments and, in 1980, as Poetry Editor. She went on to become a science writer and author. She currently writes for *National Geographic*, *Scientific American* and *Discover* magazine and is a Contributing Editor at *Archaeology* magazine.

**Sharon Smith** worked for *Branching Out* from 1977 to 1980 as an editorial assistant. After working for *Branching Out*, Smith continued her study and work in women's liberation and advocacy and went on to work in various aspects of publishing.

**Christa Van Daele** wrote fiction and non-fiction in the seventies. While maintaining freelance writing ties to *Branching Out*, *Makara*, *Miss Chatelaine*, *Chatelaine*, and *Room of One's Own*, she also contributed to a women's collective that staged plays (Nightwood Theatre in Toronto). With Cynthia Grant, she adapted emerging women's fiction to theatre efforts such as *The True Story of Ida Johnson*, by Alberta writer Sharon Riis. Christa worked with The Women's Press for a number of years in the late seventies and early 1980s, contributing both as a fiction editor and general collective member. She trained as a vocational counsellor at Times Change Women's Employment Centre. Increasingly interested in women's interior lives, she undertook a doctoral degree in counselling and adult education (University of Toronto), collecting and interpreting stories of how a diverse group of Toronto women experienced the act of keeping a diary in everyday life. Since 1988, Christa

has lived in Kitchener-Waterloo with her husband and not far from her grown son, a graduate student in literature. She continues to write about experiments in social change. Her affiliation with the thriving Working Centre community in central Ontario combines all of these passions and results in contributions to *Good Work News* and *The New Quarterly*. She swaps book titles frequently with Karen Lawrence.

**Aritha van Herk** worked with *Branching Out* from 1977 to 1980 as Book Review Editor, and in 1980 as Fiction Editor. She is the author of five feminist novels (*Judith*, *The Tent Peg*, *No Fixed Address*, *Places Far From Ellesmere*, and *Restlessness*), as well as two critical collections, *A Frozen Tongue* and *In Visible Ink*. Her irreverent history of Alberta, *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta*, frames the new permanent exhibition on Alberta history at the Glenbow Museum and Archives; *Audacious and Adamant: the Story of Maverick Alberta*, was published to accompany the exhibit. Her geografiction of feral Calgary, *In This Place*, will appear in 2011. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and she teaches Creative Writing and Canadian Literature at the University of Calgary.