

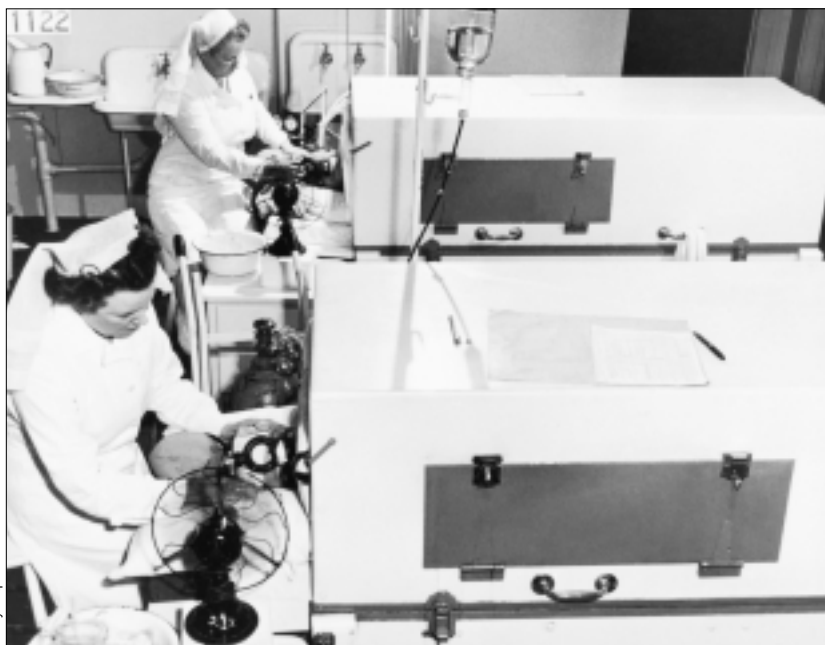
This is hardly surprising in a writer. He is intrigued by the process of history-taking and by how the history is amended and polished as it ascends from the quick and pragmatic first pass in the ER. He is also fascinated by diagnostic processes, as when the cardiology resident "plugs into her stethoscope and lowers her head down over the man's chest. Tick. Tick. Tick. Shush. She's picking his lock, his safety deposit box." This is powerful writing.

This book makes me, as a physician, both proud and ashamed of what I do. Buy it and read it. Give copies to your physician friends. You will laugh, cry and sometimes curse, but you'll be all the better for it.

John Stewart

Montreal Neurological Hospital and
McGill University Hospital Centre
Montreal

One thousand words



Fever therapy room, Christie Street Hospital, Toronto, March 1945

Lifeworks

Stepford mothers

Motherhood issues are the subject of a collaborative installation on view at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria until March 19. In *fieldnotes from maternal territory: An Exhibition about Mothering*, Vancouver-based artists Jill P. Weaving and Margaret Naylor probe our expectations of a role that is becoming increasingly politicized by the combined pressures of economics, technology and societal change. The exhibition was first mounted by the Surrey Art Gallery in the winter of 1997-1998.

Naylor's mixed-media sculptural pieces express in narrative and symbolic terms the "apprehension and doubt" that surround the mother's role as "nurturer," "teacher" and "protector." Her hand-built, quasi-architectural models are metaphors for mothering as "a cultural construct, shaped through repetition of language, images and design that carry with them certain ideological positions."



Margaret Naylor, *Treehouse* (detail).
From *fieldnotes from maternal territory*
"There is no basic [mother], no fixed identity, but only a construction in progress."

weaving's contribution includes a Web site (accessible at aggv.bc.ca) for the Department of Maternal Affairs, a fictional government agency that regulates reproduction and childrearing. In weaving's dystopian vision, children are conceived in vitro from genetically manipulated gametes and implanted in "mombots," robotic clones of the biological mother. Through a simulated pregnancy, the real mother can enjoy the "maternal thrill of hormonal change" without interrupting her career, while the development of her fetus is monitored through the mombot's transparent womb. The mombot raises the child within parameters approved by the state, managing all domestic and maternal duties with superlative ability and cheerfulness until the child enters school. Then, sensing her redundancy, she returns to the DMA in her state-issued minivan for decommissioning. In the gallery installation, a series of 29

cartoon panels narrates the case of a deviant mombot who disguises herself as a human.

The satire is extreme, but the dilemma it describes is familiar to many



Courtesy Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC

jil p. weaving, ... to be continued (detail). Panel # 2, 46 cm 34 cm. From *fieldnotes from maternal territory*

women struggling to position themselves within a shifting field of values and demands. Amid the many constructions of motherhood — ranging from greeting-card sentiment to the medicalization of pregnancy to the appraisal of mothering as "time out" — many a working mother has been reduced to a mombot.

weaving and Naylor preface the exhibition with quotations from feminist theory, but they also take pains to represent motherhood without a mediating critique. A "room of honour" displays more than 150 photographs, on loan from the general public, of mothers and their children. In inviting these contributions the artists have attempted to reflect the diversity of the community and to counteract their own psychosocial

biases. One of the challenges of feminism is to avoid replacing one set of values with an equally repressive alternative. Another is to refute stereotypes while maintaining an entitlement to some of the very attributes — femininity, for example — that stereotypes exaggerate and thus deride. weaving and Naylor's awareness of these challenges prevents this intensely political work from becoming reductively so. Mothers



Courtesy Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Clemie Hoshino, mother and piano teacher, with children. From the *fieldnotes from maternal territory* "room of honour"

may be social constructs, but that doesn't mean they aren't also real.

Anne Marie Todkill
Editor, The Left Atrium

Empathy

She may have shared the virus unknowingly —

galactorrhea, etiology unknown — breast milk expressed on exam shot upward into my eye.

Today, we sit together eye to eye physician to patient roles assigned.

Her face, pitted and scarred so much cocaine her eyes deep with despair her viral load high, so high.

She tells me how it is for her this cocktail — stomach sickness bone weariness no energy fear. She weeps.

I listen and wait and empathize with her, but I know.

Ruth Elwood Martin
Vancouver, BC

In May 1999, 12 months postexposure, the author tested negative for HIV.

Out of Mexico

The Montreal showing of *Mexican Modern Art 1900–1950* moves to the National Gallery of Canada on February 25. This challenging exhibition presents nearly 200 paintings, sculptures, prints and photographs by overlapping generations of artists inspired by the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and its aftermath. Organized in four sections that explore early modernism, the postrevolutionary period, the growing importance of lithography and photography, and evolving traditions in painting, the exhibition demonstrates that the artistic renaissance of the first half of the 20th century went far beyond the Muralist movement and that Mexican contemporary art did not suddenly begin in 1950. *Mexican Modern Art* will continue in Ottawa until May 21.



Roberto Montenegro, Fisherman of Majorca, 1913 (detail). Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes Collection.