

**Book Review: Cunt: A Declaration of Independence  
by Inga Muscio. Second Edition.**

When traveling in Montreal, I came across a book entitled 'Cunt' at the local bookstore. The name rang a bell, however, I could not remember if the bell was inviting me to buy it or warning me away. Unsure of my purchase, I went to the magazine section to think about it. When looking at a copy of the journal I was about to buy, I noticed a review of 'Cunt', praising it and talking about the sisterhood the author experienced by reading this book. I promptly purchased it and read it on the ferry ride back to my home province, reveling in not only the content, but also the looks that I was getting from the elderly couple sitting near me.

The title itself defines the topic of the novel. Muscio is reclaiming the name - the body part - as a way to create sisterhood and to send out "a call to every woman to be the Cuntlovin' Ruler of Her Sexual Universe". For her, the only way to define herself in a word is by defining herself as a body part. She rejoices in the power of words and their ability to define us. She rejoices in the idea that this particular word defines the "rage and hope of all women" (p. xxv). No matter our differences, we all have a cunt.

Muscio recognizes the taboo nature of the title. She discusses her choice of this particular word in several places. The definition of vagina is given (a sheath for a sword) with the proclamation that under that definitions, she "ain't got no vagina". She also discusses how "deliciously satisfying it is to totally snag a reviled word and elevate it to a status which all women should rightfully experience in this society". She has fully recognized the way that the title of her novel, as well as the vein of her thoughts will be accepted and appears to take her delicious satisfaction through all sections knowing that many will be reading the book and feeling the same way.

The book itself is divided into three sections. Cunt: The Word, The Anatomical Jewel and Reconciliation. The first section is quite short, but does give the history of the word Cunt from a term for woman to a reviled insult. The second section is the longest and deals with issues such as reproduction, menstruation, relationships between women (including a "dog chapter" on acrimony), masturbation and orgasm, rape and other such physical uses and manifestations of the cunt. The third section details her reconciliation with herself, her belief system and her physical make up and the rest of the world. She includes a "Womanifesto for the Categorical New Freedom Lady". In the second edition, she discusses the inclusion of transsexuals to womanhood, as well as experiences she has had after the publication of the book. At the end, there is a list of female friendly stores and publications.

The general tone of the book is both upbeat and satisfied. Muscio has taken a subject and extolled her knowledgeable opinions on the matter. Throughout she

fighters for reclamation of a word and extols the reasons why this reclamation is needed as well as reasons why it has not happened yet. Her discussion of pregnancy and her experiences with it are heartbreaking as well as uplifting. She unapologetically lays out her ideas and thoughts in the hopes that she will inspire the reader to do so as well.

I admit fully that I have not adopted her linguistics. Nor have I been able to give this book as a gift to family members, even though I have encouraged them to read my copy. However, I have recommended it to those who are following the reclaimist trail towards their body and their definitions of self. Despite the shock of the title, which may keep many from wanting to read it, it is a book with ideas that will make you think, even if it is only to reject them.