

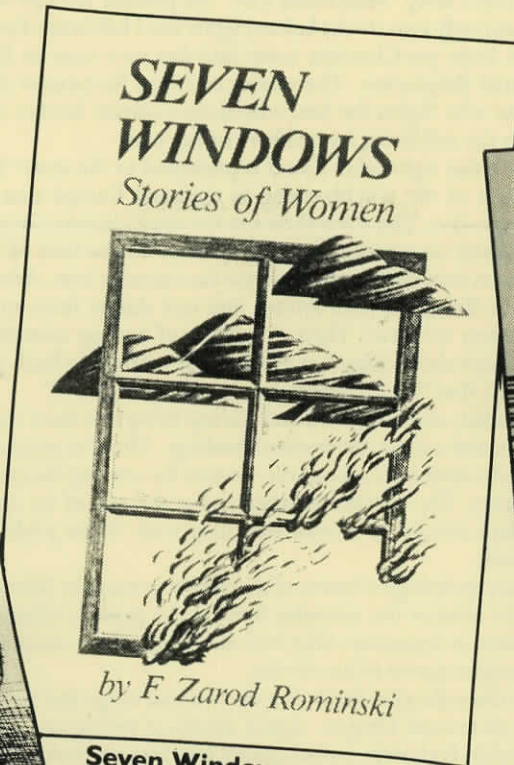


presents
Short Stories and Poetry by feminist writers.



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Crones' Own Press is a woman-owned, feminist publishing house, which offers the writings of mid-life to older women to readers of all ages. Since the inception in 1981, publisher Elizabeth Freeman has worked to make Crones' Own Press a unique opportunity for women writers. Choosing to focus on the work of women frequently overlooked by the mainstream, she has created a truly feminist business which not only respects the writing, but also the writers. By giving artistic control to the author, as well as setting up

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JUST RELEASED!

SEVEN WINDOWS, Crones' Own Press, 1985, \$7.95

In Zarod Rominski's story "Halloween Fire," the peasant woman Anastasia (who has lost her husband only two weeks before) lights the Halloween fire, continuing a ritual that reaches from pre-Christian times into her own time in Eastern Europe before the Industrial Revolution. The stories in Zarod Rominski's *Seven Windows* come from a writer who "lights the fire," who dares a certain kind of imaginative act that links her with the still-living layered lives of her past.

The farthest back this sight takes Zarod is presented in the story "Bitter Pride," a fictionalized account of the witchburning in medieval Europe that left only one woman in the village alive. The story shows in the most extreme form the effects of the Church's misogyny on women's lives—as well as on the lives of the poor. The Bishop and the Baron control the village where the narrator lives. After hard winters with little food, the Bishop "always looked into our skinny faces and told us how much closer to heaven we were." There is a group of healing women in the village who reject the Bishop's definitions that it is evil "for women to heal, poor people to take pleasure in life"; that "life and pleasure come from the devil."

The spring crops fail; and the Baron and Bishop bring in a third member of their Trinity, a Physician, and outlaw the women's healings. Afraid to attack the Baron and stirred up by him, the men turn against the women for causing the crops' failure and burn them in a frenzy. The narrator escapes, and at the end of the story she has retreated into the dark woods, a survivor searching with "bitter pride" for the other survivors, her friends.

Zarod makes the psychological terror of the witchburnings in "Bitter Pride" all too believable. She also renders the everyday lives of the peasant villagers in medieval Europe as well as later in Anastasia's time with amazing realism, an imaginative vision I consider the strongest aspect of her fiction.

Other stories in the collection show Zarod's fictional range and versatility. "Truth-Telling Season" is set in rural Oregon. Again, details of setting and dialect make the story totally believable. It's lighter, ballad quality provides a refreshing change of tone, as two sisters get revenge on a rapist through truth-telling salts and a back-store poker game. In a contemporary setting, "Scapegoat" opens a difficult window onto the life and death of a paranoid old woman.

Taken together, these stories demonstrate impressive range and ability. Elizabeth Freeman of Crones' Own Press has shown excellent judgement in publishing this first book of short stories by F. Zarod Rominski.

—Mab Segrest

Mab Segrest is a former editor of *FEMINARY: A Feminist Journal for the South* and author of *My Mama's Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays on Southern Culture*.

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When in the mid-70's I published a small quarterly newsletter as an organ of the Older Women's Network, I realized there was a large unheard group of women out there. Poetry and writings about their lives poured in. Access to print media by women is limited. My goal is, in a small way, to let women tell their stories in their own words. In addition, writers and poets need to have some control over how their words are presented. Although I have limited resources and energy I will continue to adhere to these principles.

