

- BRITAIN: CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN THE DOCKLANDS
- JUDY CHICAGO: AFTER THE PARTY'S OVER
- RADICAL QUESTIONS FOR EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKERS

FIFTH COLUMN
FAST FORWARD CASSETTES
THE REGALADO CASE

FUSE

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The Celluloid Closet

Alexis Smith and Melina Mercouri in *Once Is Not Enough* (1975)

FUSE

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Musical Chairs: When Benefits become detriments



A few months ago, I attended an informal and friendly meeting of 'alternative media' representatives who were thinking of organizing a summer coalition dance. Not a benefit, just a good time down by the lake. Names of bands were being solicited (a women's band being one of the sponsoring pre-requisites) and soon enough all those issues of art/cultural production as someone else's *entertainment* came bubbling to the surface. Though FUSE regularly features the views of independent progressive musicians, their work — its production and distribution, we haven't attempted to clarify problems of attitude and usage which plague such musicians and bands.

'Independent' music in Toronto has an unusually hard time (for a city of its imagined zest) forming enough of a hold so that it can flourish. Many of the past 'failures' of local musicians to develop and sustain their own work has often been economically affected by the ways in which we, as members of other production communities, organize benefits or even 'innocently' enjoy a little cheap music-to-drink-by. Though such developing music is always there — as countless tabloids who publish "what's on" listings verify — it's more a result of entertainment fodder, as new bands emerge overnight to replace those who have fallen, broke, in action. Most other

artists would not willingly enter a 'career' span of two, maybe three, years.

So what happens to bands like **Mama Quilla II, Truths and Rights, TBA, The Government, 20th Century Rebels** — to name a few? What about the 'less-known' music that the local establishment and alternative media ignores or sleights as being 'art-music', or 'intellectual', 'cliqueish' or 'political'? Most musicians barely make it to their first record and those who do are usually at the end of a bad relationship rather than at the beginning of a good affair. In case you might think that *pre-popular* music is still the 'race to the top' — and very little local music journalism would ever lead you to believe otherwise — let's once and for all ditch the band-for-fame-and-glory bias. Instead let's look at comparative functions of production and maybe even ways that we can assist those from whom — at benefit time — we expect so much support.

It's helpful to think of independent audiocassette, vinyl or videotape publishing of contemporary *pre-popular* music not as a commodity (that dirty word that we batter each other with in acts of marginal desperation) but instead as the completion of a production cycle: from community, to performance, to dispersal. This not surprising cycle, allows new material to be developed, and, most importantly,

allows old material to be dropped. The published recording (no matter what format or how small the quantity) is the obvious comparative link to other forms of (non-commercial/corporate) artistic production. And the cost of getting there without the back-handed 'generosity' of a record company is, more often than not, prohibitive. As a further comparison, let's not forget that fine artists (performance, video, sculpture, painting, — it has also included improvisational musicians) have gained certain subsidy recognition and 'rights', whereas *pre-popular* music production is still incorrectly seen as being connected to an industrial and commercial base. And the 'excellence test' for such audio production is not whether it's relevant, representative, or challenging but still, — whether or not it sells.

Back to benefits

When organizations within the artist community put on a benefit, video and performance artists and musician friends are expected to pay their social dues. For the video or performance artist, the occasion can be turned into a legitimate 'event' and quite likely will end up on the C.V. and go towards that potential funding application. (Not to suggest, for one minute, any guarantees). For the musician, the benefit might mean a couple of drinks

and the opportunity to be bathed in literally a few more lights. It's also more social exposure, which for the musician quickly becomes useless currency and, in fact, eventually **works against** their interests — as we are particularly fickle when it comes to enduring musical appetites.

When political or social groups or organizations organize a benefit, and quite often use 'entertainment' to soften the politics (that old jam on those crushed aspirins), we get more artist-to-artist 'equality'. When used, the video or performance, poetry or film, becomes the sort of up-stream 'entertainment'. For the former, inadequate physical contexts are ignored for the chance to, "Reach Out And I'll Be There" — to use a common lyric. The musicians, if they're lucky, may get a little money and again more of that down home exposure.

Where is all this exposure leading to? Working on their takings from Queen St. bar gigs (which barely covers equipment and rehearsal costs) such bands have no time to produce, and no money to follow through on the responsibility of their own production. They are marginal to the industry, to the radio stations and, in the end, marginal to those 'inner communities' — artistic, social or political to whom they are supposedly connected. Should they be doing what most of us refuse to do, which for them would be to stand in line outside the doors of the pay-your-own-way-and-provide-our-operational-capital record companies? What about 'independence', and artist-control of the

means of production?

Sound solutions?

There are a number of partial solutions. Cultural organizations should consider sponsoring (or 'investing' in) those bands whom they **identify with**, by providing front money for cassette or record production. Benefits should be planned as real social and cultural events, instead of copy-cat venues with repetitive line-ups (those committee discussions on who "is going to draw the largest crowd for the least money"). And speaking of "draw", go out and listen to younger musicians. We certainly can better spread our below-poverty finances around.

To back this activity up, Toronto still needs its own downtown co-operative community-run radio station. Musicians need it, as do playwrights and poets. So do gays, blacks, women and labour groups. We all need a radio station with a daily news service that is more than jello pudding. And if the fifty or so people that would be necessary to form such a radio station do so, let's ensure that we separate what will be seen as the free political commitment from the economic needs of those, particularly musicians, whom we love to have for free.

- Clive Robertson

Late, again . . .

This issue of FUSE is noticeably late.

The next (catch-up) issue should be out by October 15th, and the deadline for the following issue is November 1st. Based upon the knowledge that we must be doing something wrong, we are surprised at the lack of **Letters** confirming it. Please take the time to let us know.

Joyce Mason

We are elated to announce that we have a new business manager. Joyce Mason comes to FUSE with a broad range of administrative experience. She has co-ordinated many independent Canadian and feminist film programmes, including — more recently — "*A New Look: Women and Film 1982*" at the last **Canadian Images Film Festival**. She has also had an intermittent history of infiltrating federal cultural institutions such as the **N.F.B.** (Atlantic Region) and the **Canada Council** (Film Programme, Visual Arts). Joyce is also a member of the Toronto Women's Cultural Building Collective.

"I resettled in Toronto earlier this year in order to broaden my involvement with, and understanding of, the independent cultural production community and to work with other socialist-feminists. I hoped to be able to put my administrative and organizational skills to work in the service of the cultural and political goals with which I align myself. Working at FUSE is one way that I can pay the rent, do what I want to do, and put some of my skills and experience to good use."

We want in

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

An index would help us to better utilize the fine, unique articles in Fuse on artists' books, audio arts, politics and art, performance and the international art scene. We have books that are reviewed in Fuse, and an index would help us to use Fuse as a book ordering tool.

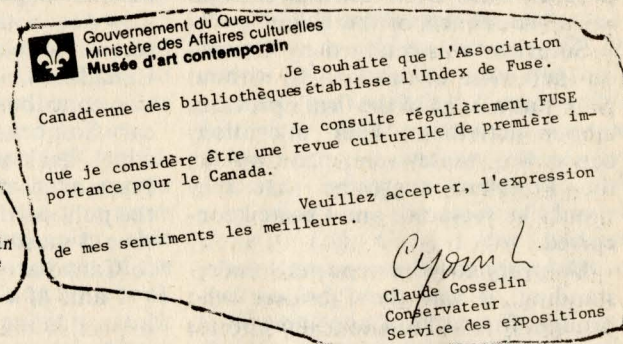
HELP FUSE GET INDEXED!

We need your written support to assist us in getting indexed by the Canadian Library Association. Though FUSE has, in the past, been self-indexed, we need this service so that we can enjoy substantial research access. FUSE is not available from most major libraries across Canada and we feel that indexation could provide the necessary impetus to ensure, as a Canadian magazine, that we are justly utilized.

(It would help, in your brief letter, if you would mention your specific interest in FUSE — and your occupation.)

Please send to FUSE Index, 2nd Floor, 379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ontario Canada M5V 1S5. Deadline: November 30th, 1982.

FUSE September 1982



Letters

Passing motions

While there is little to be gained (and conceivably much lost) by prolonging public discussion of recent upheavals at the Ontario College of Art, certain inaccuracies in your recent report, "Fleck Strike II" (May-June, 1982) should be brought to the attention of your readers.

Dr. Fleck's statement regarding payment only slightly above the minimum wage "as it was never intended that people make a living at these jobs" referred, not to models, as reported, but only to student monitors. This, because it has always been the aim at OCA to spread these monitoring jobs around to permit as many students as possible to earn some money. This policy emanates from the Governing Council (on which students themselves have voting power), rather than from the office of the President.

Regarding the meeting of Governing Council, April 5: "It was moved, seconded and passed that Dr. Fleck dismiss his hired security guards, Securicor" is not correct. There was no such motion. As is customary in prudent labour/management relations, the Governing Council retained legal counsel to represent the College during negotiations, and it was the lawyer, rather than the President, who, in fact, was chief negotiator until the later stages of the process, when Dr. Fleck was brought in, at the request of the Union.

Securicor was retained by Council on the advice of this lawyer, without prior knowledge of the firm's previous labour activities. When allegations concerning these were made public, the President suggested that they should be replaced, and Council concurred.

Contrary to your reporter's understanding, it was the President who brought forward to Council proposals for a modified form of job security for models, prevailed upon faculty members who hire models to accept it, and obtained Council support for this. These actions (carried through during in-camera Council sessions), resulted in the President's return to the negotiating table with the new proposals, on the instruction of Council. This Council, it should again be stressed, is composed of government appointees and members of both the faculty and

student bodies.

On the successful completion of negotiations, this same Council moved and passed a motion of congratulation to the President and his executive assistant, Nancy Hood, for their actions and success during negotiations.

Almost immediately following endorsement of a mutually satisfactory contract by both Council and the Union, the College community presented one of its most successful Open House and Art Week events, attracting record crowds to see an array of excellent student work. The entire OCA community is settling down to normal operations, a climate in which creativity can be nurtured and flourish as it has (with some documented interruptions) for the past 106 years.

We write only in the interests of accuracy and not, as earlier stated, to recreate an atmosphere of mistrust and acrimony, which is the enemy of that creative climate.

Ruth F. Hammond, APR, Director,
Information Services &
Alumni Affairs
Ontario College of Art

Insinuations and innuendos (?)

The May-June 1982 issue of Fuse devoted a good deal of space to an interview with me and a review of my recently-published book, *Stage Left: Canadian Theatre in the Thirties*. You also contributed a short piece, *Historical Sources of Workers' Theatre*, which dealt mainly with the German Piscator theatre and its relationship to the political developments there at the time. I must say I can't see the parallel to Canadian conditions at all.

I am, of course, grateful for your interest in my book and beyond that in the importance of theatre in the society it reflects.

I must, however, take issue with the final paragraph of your review of *Stage Left*. There is the distinct insinuation that I have not told the whole story of that theatre of the Thirties; that political affiliations of members are left out; that I avoid "the failure of ideological struggle upon which Workers' Theatre was based"; that, finally, *Stage Left* is a "source book

littered with clues to be followed by others."

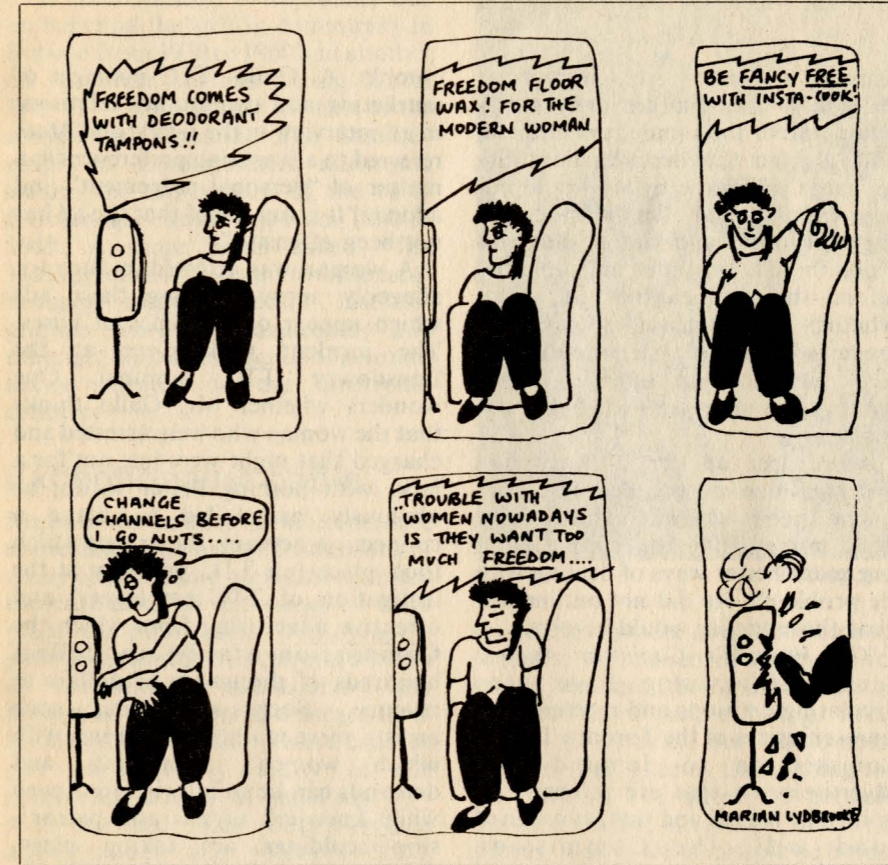
Frankly, I resent all those innuendos of things allegedly hidden or covered-up. *Stage Left* is an authentic memoir of the left theatres in Canada during the Thirties and also at a later stage, during the Fifties. They were all theatres, not political parties. No member who joined those groups was asked about political affiliations or to subscribe to any ideology.

Of course, as in all organized groups, there were probably people who belonged to other organizations or even a handful affiliated to political parties. What is important, however, is that membership in our theatres was determined purely on the basis of each individual's participation and contri-

WAGE CUTS HELP WIDOWS AND ORPHANS!



This is Mrs. Ipperwash. She is a widow. Her husband died 2 years ago in a curling accident at the Granite Club. Her escort is Conrad Fisk. He is 68, he is an orphan. They have extensive holdings in the auto and appliance industries. Profits are up. They are about to order another tub of caviar and another bottle of Mumm's Cordon Rouge. Profits are up. They're eating your caviar, they're drinking your champagne, but they won't forget you. They're going to toast the wage cuts!



bution in a theatrical endeavour with a clear program. People who joined us knew what kinds of plays we were producing, knew our dedication to building skilled stage collectives committed to high theatrical standards which would appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of audiences. These plays spoke to the conditions prevailing in Canada at the time: unemployment, repressive laws, deportations, life in a society which had no answers for its youth — and on fascism, the danger of war, the need for union organization, and the general grinding down of ordinary people by a society which could offer little hope to the majority of its population.

There are no hidden "clues", no subterfuge regarding the work and commitment of the left theatres in this country, to which all members contributed freely and with skill.

Any suggestion to the contrary puts my integrity in question and I resent that most of all. After all, I was there. I was an active participant, organizationally and artistically. The book also contains over thirty interviews with people who were also there and who speak about their exciting experiences in those theatres.

Is it possible for anyone who was

not around at that time, and can only write theoretically about it, to add to that record, or to question all of us who participated? I think not.

I wrote *Stage Left: Canadian Theatre in the Thirties* to record the existence of a popular, vital and unique theatrical endeavour of its times as a contribution to the history of theatre in Canada — about which little was known. In the process, I had hoped also to clear up some distorted ideas that have from time to time surfaced regarding those activities.

Your review of *Stage Left* would, however, much better have served contemporary readers had you more sensitively caught the spirit that inspired our theatre movement of the Thirties, instead of faulting both book and theatre by applying stock political-academic-theoretical criteria to conclude that *Stage Left* is somehow a failed and even evasive treatise. It was never intended as such. It is a personal memoir, not a history.

You are right when you say that it is "necessary reading." I hope your readers will confirm the fact that the story has been told as it really was, in *Stage Left*.

Toby Gordon Ryan, Toronto

Clive Robertson replies: Toby Gordon Ryan's letter points to some serious misunderstandings. I did not in fact question *Stage Left* as "an authentic memoir of the left theatres in Canada during the Thirties . . ." Perhaps being 'greedy' after reading the memoir I did crave for a composite history which would include the political and economic conditions in which workers' theatre and the other arts developed. Such histories, analytical rather than theoretical, do exist as I found when researching German workers' theatre.

My open objective in writing the series of articles on worker's theatre and agit-prop was to point to a Canadian history of collaborative and innovative cultural production that was both politically informed and socially accessible and successful. FUSE, as a magazine produced by cultural producers, is not, I suggest, that much different in its own time from *Masses*, (if I read correctly what the artist-editors of *Masses* were attempting to achieve critically.) As cultural producers, within our own set of social conditions, we clearly are interested in following the footsteps of artists like Toby Gordon Ryan, not biting at her heels.

While I still endorse *Stage Left* as "necessary reading", and further have demonstrated support for Toby Gordon Ryan's desire that artists' should attempt to have control over the writing of their own history, I am concerned with her implied desire to 'own the subject'. She asks: "Is it possible for anyone not around at that time . . . to add to that record?" Of course it is possible and not only possible but essential! If responsible historians had written about the artistic practice and culture of that period — which they haven't, which they didn't — the influential work done by Toby Gordon Ryan and her contemporaries would not have been so well buried for so long.

The shared grievance is not only her rightful place in history, but equally our right to have access to our own cultural history written by those who are ideologically sympathetic, and willing to attempt both 'complete' and 'objective' depictions of the events as they occurred. When finally that history is compiled, Toby Gordon Ryan's memoir will provide, as I suggested, a "source" of references ("clues") that "others" (historians) will sensibly follow.

Rape Culture

TORONTO -- To date this year in Toronto there have been 109 reported incidents of rape. Of seven murders of women only one could be said, by a representative of the Toronto police force media relations division, not to involve sexual abuse. In this statistic are included four heavily publicized cases of rape/murder. The rape and violent beating of a woman in High Park is not included in the count. (In the High Park case police are releasing to the media today, 9 August 1982, a composite picture of the rapist.) Only one arrest has been made so far in these five cases of rape/murder and rape/attempted murder.

Women under arrest

Toronto's 'finest' have been more effective in arresting the women who are taking action against our rape culture. On the morning of August 3, 1982 two women were arrested under the criminal code for allegedly attempting to spray paint the words, "DISARM RAPISTS" on a sidewalk at the corner of Bathurst and Queen. After being held in custody for two hours (just before their release they were strip-searched and a safety pin was confiscated from one of the

arrested. That these women might as easily have been charged under a city bylaw, rather than under the criminal code, is a fact that deserves attention. A charge under the bylaw would not have necessitated the strip-search, finger-printing and mug shots to which these two women are subjected before their appearance in court. Whether the charge is dropped, converted to a lesser one, or upheld by the court, the strip-search, finger-printing and mug shots will have been done.

An officer at the 14th division informed one of the detainees and several friends who had come to drive them home from the station, that "there are better ways of dealing with the problem". He did not outline just what those tactics would involve.

The *Women's Coalition Against Sexual Advertising* have been circulating petitions and meeting with representatives of the Toronto Transit Commission to demand that advertisements that are offensive to women be barred and that, as a sign of good will, the Commission immediately remove the Sanyo ad which is currently plastered on the sides of TTC buses. (The ad depicts a woman laying in a bathing suit with a Sanyo portable tape recorder near her head; the words "PORTABLE COMPONENTS" are written over her buttocks.) The TTC has refused to

comply. Al Gallo, TTC manager of marketing and community relations, in an interview in the *Globe and Mail*, referred to advertising preferences as a matter of "personal judgement" and added, "It is our belief that the ad has not been offensive".

A woman was arrested in June for allegedly spray painting these ads which appear on the sides of buses. The incident took place at the Lansdowne TTC terminal. One wonders whether Mr. Gallo thinks that the women who were arrested and charged that night were just out for a lark, with nothing better to do; he obviously has failed to make a connection between the arrests which took place (on TTC property at the instigation of TTC employees) and offensive advertising from which the Commission stands to collect hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue. Such statements, such arrests, serve to illustrate the ease with which women's complaints and demands can be so fully ignored, even while knee-jerk arrests and patronising scoldings are taking place. Corporation and advertising revenues accumulate, and rape is sensationalized in the press, while attempts to discourage and trivialise the actions of women continue to be made. But *The Women's Coalition Against Sexist Advertising* plans to continue to spray paint the ads and women will continue to produce their own slogans sidewalks and walls. Action continues.

Joyce Mason

Gay Conference

TORONTO — About four hundred people gathered in Toronto the last weekend of June for a conference on "Lesbian and Gay Liberation in the Eighties," a series of panels, workshops and discussions, as well as video and film screenings, art exhibits and a picnic.

Held concurrently was a lesbian and gay history conference entitled "Wilde '82" — a centenary tribute to Oscar Wilde's North American Tour in 1882. A large number of homosexual historians from Canada, Australia and the United States were present, and many gave papers or slide shows of their recent work. Lesbian and gay history projects from Boston, Buffalo,

FUSE September 1982

San Francisco, Chicago and New York were represented, and many of their presentations — especially one on bars and the lesbian community in Buffalo from 1930 to 1960 and another on American soldiers during World War II — were among the best of the conference. Historian Jim Steakley gave an accomplished illustrated lecture on the history of the early German gay movement from 1860 to 1945. A large panel called "The Making of the Modern Homosexual" brought together recent historiographic work by researchers and theorists on the emergence of a homosexual identity in the nineteenth century.

Exceptionalist battle

Much of the balance of the conference addressed issues of sex. Discussions — many of them more useful than is often the case at these gatherings — took place on public sex, pornography, pedophilia and S/M. A strong critique of the sexually exclusionary gay politics of the Seventies emerged from these discussions, and it was a critique put forward by many at the conference. The S/M panel was very well attended. Ken Popert talked about power and roles in S/M, without referring explicitly to personal experiences, for fear of being charged under the Criminal Code. Pat Califia reviewed the history of confrontations between *Samois*, a lesbian S/M group of which she's a member, and various segments of the feminist movement. "It was to be made clear that there is a plurality of positions in the women's movement," she said. Comparing *Women Against Violence and Pornography in the Media* (WAVPAM) to women's temperance leagues earlier in the century, which mistakenly thought banning liquor would improve women's position, she warned that "women have to stop censoring, or letting others censor, other women's sexual practices, and even discussions of those practices. We're not dumb; we can make up our own minds. You can't talk about eliminating power or inequalities in relationships," Califia went on to say, "as if there were some kind of natural, innate sexuality to be achieved. After all, feminism is about giving women power, isn't it? So you don't look at S/M relations and say, 'Is there power here?' — you look and say, 'How is power used?'".

Gayle Rubin from the *San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project* complained of the widespread tendency among organized homo-



Visiting gay and lesbian historians at Toronto conference

sexuals to consider none but their own sexuality: "I'm tired of the battle for sexual liberation being an exceptionalist battle, of people saying, 'Well, what I do is okay, but kiddie porn, torture, drag queens, that's going too far.' What's the difference between that and saying, like people did in the Fifties, that 'if we let people be homosexual, where will the line be drawn? We're not asking for one more exception, but for sexuality itself to be validated. There's no best way to have sex. There's a real variation in what people do, and that variation is mostly harmless.'"

Other women in the audience — and the most sophisticated discussion about S/M took place among women — talked about the dangers of fusing S/M and violence. Such an equation suggests no difference between S/M and street beatings; that, in effect, women like to be raped.

In a forum entitled "Directions for the Eighties," Australian social critic

Dennis Altman expressed relief that the hyperbole attendant on Gay Pride Day in the United States was absent in Canada. "Our politics of the Seventies have been exceedingly limited," he said, "and what bothers me the most about the gay movement in North America is its search for respectability. As we seek respectability, the movement — like this conference itself — takes on the appearance of a white, middle-class world. We know this is not the totality of our community, that this excludes large sectors. I would like to see a movement more radical in the true sense of the word," Altman continued, "one that realizes we can't achieve liberation without large-scale changes in society; one that addresses our personal lives, that begins to talk about serious gay diseases, about alcoholism, about "attitude," and other inadequacies in our relationships; and finally a movement that rethinks our concept of the political, especially our relation to electoral

co-curated by Helen K. Wright and David Mole -----

KENNETH COUTTS-SMITH

INTERVENTIONS: A RETROSPECTIVE OF ARTEXTS

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Outside 'The Sun' offices, Toronto

Ric Amis

Gerald Hannon

politics."

A similar critique was made by Jim Monk from the **Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario**: "The movement wants into electoral politics at a time when many, including myself, are jumping ship. There are a lot of needs in the community which aren't being met, most obviously those of the generation that's absent from this conference: gay youth." Monk suggested that while we've neglected them, gay youth have become "ideologically conservative. We have to stop waiting for them to come to us. There's 600 high schools in Ontario that have to be leafleted with gay-positive information."

Sue Golding and Chris Bearchell of Toronto both spoke about the need to put sex back on the agenda in the lesbian community.

Rob Pistor from the **COC** in the Netherlands suggested ways his organization has broadened its programme in recent years. Given the critical housing shortage in Holland,

many housing activist groups have been formed, and **COC** has participated in coalitions that represent both single people and youth and children. **COC** has also actively worked in the recently-formed anti-fascist movement. Tom Reeves, from the **North American Man/Boy Love Association**, also called for the gay movement to work toward setting up youth buildings. "Let's bring back into the movement the transvestites, prostitutes, transsexuals, youth, minorities and elderly," Reeves concluded. "Where are they? They're not in this room today."

Despite the obvious obstacles, the conference managed to achieve a useful and fairly advanced discussion of diverse issues. It's unfortunate that some of the enviable organizational skills that were everywhere in evidence that week hadn't been turned toward bringing in more of the Toronto homosexual community.

Alexander Wilson

Those artful Bronfmans'

On the 14th of June, 1982, at a press conference given by the Quebec Minister of Cultural Affairs and the Quebec Minister of Revenue, Phyllis (Bronfman) Lambert was given a personal tax exemption of just under a million dollars this year. For a prominent stock-holding member of a family that owns conglomerates such as **Seagrams** and **Trizec**, you'd imagine that that kind of tax break would be a little more difficult to obtain than it was. Especially from a province suffering such fiscal disorder that government employees' promised pay raise for this year has been bumped into a bouncable retroactivity effective August 15th — the same day that tax return cheques are dated.

Mrs. Lambert, an architect, has a 'philanthropic' penchant for the construction of private foundations. The **Canadian Centre for Architecture** is one of them, as is **Heritage Montreal**. More about the latter later. The former is housed at the moment in the office of Lambert's private practice, and will move in late 1983 to the huge **Maison Shaughnessy** — an historic building now in the process of renovation. The Centre will serve "students" and "researchers", though how one becomes a member of a private foundation is always understandably decided by private guidelines.

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Moving \$10 million Privately

What Mrs. Lambert did on June 14th is simple — she moved her ten million dollar private collection of architectural books and photographs 20 blocks from her private home into her private office so that they could become a part of her private foundation. For this she receives a tax break totalling 9% of the collection's value — on the grounds that this donation "enhances Montreal's international artistic reputation".

"Mrs. Lambert's gift will facilitate the instatement of the **Canadian Centre For Architecture**", the press release continues, which, roughly translated from the translation, means that actually the collection will enhance nothing but the capital assets of a private foundation that needs some collateral for renovation loans. There may be some other reason for the tax write-off that I don't know about — something more to it than meets the eye.

Heritage Montreal is a foundation similar to the **CCA**, with specifically Montreal's architectural health in mind. It aids the city in the designation of historical buildings. It is run by Mark London, an urban planner who specializes in the rebuilding of older

ports in harbour cities into tourist traps. Halifax's chi-chi stone restaurants a block away from the College of Art and Design and some of Toronto's **Harbourfront** are bits of London ingenuity. At the moment, London and Lambert are at work with another architect and a social worker to build **Milton Park**, a couple of residential blocks in the expensive student ghetto under the shadow of the monstrous **La Cité/Regency Park Hotel** complex. It is not clear how much of a role the image of **Heritage Montreal** and the **CCA** played in their landing of the contract. But we can see that architectural history is Lambert's personal interest. Contradictorily, one of her **financial** interests is real estate development — in the family business, **Trizec Corporation**, whose Montreal offices are in its **Place Ville Marie** building, dominating the downtown core. She may appear to be philosophically at odds with other family members' demolish-to-develop plans, but without them she wouldn't have the fortune she's now so anxious to shelter. **Heritage Montreal**, in a position to designate areas as out of bounds for development, can easily be seen as a potential tool for developing a monopoly on building in Montreal, if it chooses to put the whammy on territory **Trizec** doesn't have its sights set on. Not that **Trizec** needs that helping hand with all the dough they have behind them.

Systems-a go, go

But Lambert is obviously a systems woman as much as she is a foundations woman, and the two go hand in hand. From what appears to be neglect on the part of other Bronfmans, Lambert seems to keep a close eye on the **Bronfman Foundation**, the grant-giving organization that receives a lot of laudatory comment, much like the as-yet-to-be-useful **CCA**. Most people who apply get in return a letter from Peter Swann, a once great administrator for Toronto's **Royal Ontario Museum**, who allowed himself to be bought by the Bronfmans' offer of a cultural puppet kingdom. His letters tell applicants that what they do is not really applicable. It is a standing joke that one is never told what is funded by the Foundation.

In the early spring of this year, admittedly under the spell of the Lambert media hype, I spoke several times with the **Canadian Centre for Architecture** and **Heritage Montreal** concerning advice for a building project I was curating in Montreal.

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Both parties were interested and meeting plans were made. Being good at my job, I went looking everywhere for funds and advice. I had written Peter Swann outlining the project and telling him that I would contact him shortly to discuss the possibility for financial aid for the project. I was called by Lambert's office the Monday before my Friday meeting with Lambert and London, to be told that the meeting was cancelled and that there was no further interest in my project on the part of Lambert, the **CCA** or **Heritage Montreal**. Surprised, I asked to speak to Mrs. Lambert, who was, strangely enough, in a meeting. I then asked to speak to Patricia Langham, Lambert's assistant with whom I had also discussed this project. I was informed that she no longer worked in Lambert's office and that the woman I was speaking to had taken her place — just that morning in fact.

Worried by that I asked her if she was sure that she had her information straight. She assured me that she had, and that she was reading straight off notes in Lambert's handwriting written in the margin of my letter to Peter Swann. Gee, I said, how'd that get there? She obligingly answered that all applications to the **Bronfman Foundation** passed over Mrs. Lambert's desk for their review. I wrote to Lambert when I'd calmed down a bit and asked her how a letter to the **Bronfman Foundation** could affect so drastically a request for advice and aid from two institutions that purport to have a public service function. Needless to say, I haven't heard from either Swann or Lambert since.

Corporate donations

Someone who did get a reply from one of the two mentioned after a similar merry-go-round-the-foundations is **Artex**. **Artex** is a contemporary Canadian art catalogue and artists' publication bookshop and documentation centre in Montreal. Chosen to represent Canadian culture in 'print media' for the vast **O Kanada** exhibition to take place in Berlin in the fall of this year, **Artex** finds itself trying to raise money to buy books not usually in their admirable stock — that means cookbooks, wildlife manuals and, yes, architectural books. This latter will complement the architectural section of the exhibition, curated by highly respected architectural theorist George Baird. **Artex** went first to Lambert at the **CCA** looking for book

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loans from the Centre or money to purchase items for display. Mrs. Lambert didn't seem to think that this kind of participation was the sort of thing that the Centre was cut out for. One presumes that the Centre (read Mrs. Lambert) was rather more cut out for the kind of international curation that had just passed over her head and into the capable hands of George Baird.

Not wanting to give a flat "no" — at least not directly — Lambert suggested that **Artex** make application to the **Bronfman Foundation**. "What a good idea", **Artex** thought. "They verbally promised us \$1,000 a year ago when we applied and were waiting for the charitable status number that our lawyer tells us we'll have in a week or two." But the Foundation (read Mrs. Lambert again?) wrote back saying that **Artex** was completely ineligible for any kind of support from the **Bronfman**

Foundation. **Artex** wrote on March 3, 1982 to ask if the veto included the money already set aside. No answer second time around. That doesn't help the architectural arm of the Berlin exhibit — in fact, it looks like someone is trying to break it. It is interesting to note that **Artex** has had to move since then. They were in a **Trizec** building, and they received their eviction notice when **Trizec** traded the city the warehouse building that **Artex** was in for the alleyway behind it. The alleyway that **Trizec** came out of the deal with runs the length of a large vacant lot they own, kitty-corner to their enormous development, **Complexe Desjardins**. And of course, if they ever want the building back, they can pressure the city into selling by closing off shipping access to the building from the alleyway. After all, they own it, don't they?

Martha Fleming

Month in May



LONDON, U.K. — Women Live! ('Live' as in 'strive' rather than 'give', that is) is the title given to the culmination of over a year's extraordinary backroom work by Women In Entertainment and, as their programme says, 'launches our drive to transform entertainment in Britain'.

But what does it all mean? Transforming entertainment means re-adjusting our sets — theatrical, TV, music and film — to take into account that the species who hold up half the sky would like to do other things as well. It also means that those who are already 'doing' would like the opportunity to do more, do it differently and do it as a matter of course rather than in the grace-and-favour, nudge-nudge system that currently passes for thought in the corridors of entertainment power.

A (male) theatre director, asked why he'd put on only one play by a woman in over ten years work, said 'We don't cater for minorities'. However, this

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minority accounts for 52% of the population and over 40% of the official workforce — not to mention 100% of child production. The other favoured argument for the apparent inability of women to participate in the upper and wider echelons of the arts is that of quality. Women just aren't good enough — if they were, then of course they would take their rightful place . . . alongside the men who, with talent and excellence oozing from every orifice bring us almost unadulterated pap on all three TV channels: the West End's current crop of bum-numbing drama (63 productions written or directed by men, six by women at press time) and, recently, a crop of films depicting such grotesque violence towards women that even the tabloids began to question whether it was perhaps a bit much. The latest of the genre 'Visiting Hours', even brought the urbane Alexander Walker out in hives. Neither is cinema exactly overflowing with works of pacific genius: 'Chariots of Fire' may well be about the triumph of the athletic will over, inter alia, racism, but it has also a great deal to do with the resurgence of (respectable) British nationalism. Imagine swapping Wilma Rudolph for Harold Abrahams — the declared intentions would be achieved but the *actual* result wouldn't . . .

Then of course there is the music business where, whether it's a record company executive, revered jazz man or good leftie supporter of RAR, their attitude toward women is rarely more thoughtful than that of the apparently parodic Meatloaf with his sweat-stained, beergut rape act. Women are not expected, nor are they encouraged to put anything as threatening as a musical instrument to their lips, much less expect and encourage each other to play them sublimely. So where does the quality argument lead? Inescapably to the conclusion that men do not hold the patent on genius, but that they've cornered the market in powerful mediocrity.

Which brings us back to the end of the tether and 'Women Live' — a month organized by and dedicated to women's work in the arts. The full programme is eclectic, nationwide and largely, of the fringe: the placid manly brows in high places remain, for the time being at least, unfurrowed. This is hardly surprising, given a budget of £3,500 (not a misprint): £3,000 from the Equal Opportunities Commission and £500 from the Greater London Arts Association to get the event off the ground. Ironically, in the great

tradition, this has meant that many women have given their time for nothing in between making a living and running their private lives. The rich, rambling result is thus even more an extraordinary phenomenon. There is wonderful theatre, world class music and scores of films. Out of the woodwork have come technicians and performers who have never before realized each other's existence let alone the possibility of finding work together — and transforming entertainment.

Meant as 'joke'

If Women Live! is to mean anything outside of this glorious month of May, it is *that* transformation that has to come — not the once a year joys of a festival, but the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly work requirements of the participants, who after all, need to live in order to continue holding up their half whilst persuading the rest that they're also entitled to the simple perks of being alive. And it is this aspect that is most worrying. Already a male colleague has said 'Well, maybe we can have a bit of peace now you've had your month'. He meant it as a joke but, as I pointed out (in the way of

— Diana Simmonds
Performance Magazine

A United Front of Cultural Workers in Quebec

Against the background of a crises ridden economy in Quebec, various groups are expressing both their disillusionment and opposition to the often desperate and reactionary moves of the P.Q.. Foremost among these groups are the trade unions, particularly the Confederation of National Trade Unions (C.N.T.U.), which held a popular summit in July 1981, drawing together not only its own affiliates, but representatives of various community organizations. Among the latter were representatives of community cultural groups who formed a united cultural front. The Cultural Workers United Front (Le Front des Travailleurs et Travailleuses de la Culture) (F.T.C.) originally grew out of a series of protests against the Montreal World Film Festival (in which no Quebecois independent films were shown) and the Largilliere exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (on

humourless feminists) the Falklands started out as a joke too. Musicians, electricians, playwrights, designers (journalists even) need work, affirmation and control over their lives all year round. Blowing or singing your lungs out for a month is progress of a sort but it will be interesting to see how many have anything like the same amount of work in October. And, although the stamina of women is legendary, one wonders whether the pushers, pullers and movers of Women Live! could or should continue with this sort of burden. Can they/we keep up the pressure? The taskforce has set sail with, for some of the crew at least, little idea of the fundamental nature of the battles that could lie ahead — or even a destination. No one gives up power easily, least of all the beneficiaries of the richest industry of all (we're talking about entertainment here, not imperialism). Do we simply want a fair share of the action or do we want to reshape that action entirely? Ultimately, if Women Live! is going to be anything other than a wonderfully brave and exhausting gesture, the answer must be the latter and we all know what that means.

which \$1 million was spent, sometimes under questionable circumstances, while cultural funding is being cut).

Although the FTC was formed around issues of national content and economic cutbacks, it does not see itself as yet another lobby group dusting the shoes of government, as seems to be the stock-in-trade of most cultural organizations in Canada today. Its aims, based on a consensus of the groups involved*, clearly articulates the not so radical demands of democratic control (on the part of both the producers and the communities they serve) of the cultural industry (linking together education, health care and culture), and the security of economic livelihood (including minimum wage, job security, right to unionize, health benefits etc.). What is radical about the FTC is that they consider these demands to be priorities and are willing to act on them.

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Not to be outdone by the federal government, the P.Q. Ministry of Culture held its own 'Applebert' hearings on the state of the arts this spring. While most organizations and the odd individual once again dutifully presented their carefully reasoned briefs, the FTC held a large demonstration, culminating in a massive intervention into the hearings itself. The demonstration not only drew attention to the FTC's demands, but publicly criticized P.Q. cultural policy and undermined the democratic

pretense of the hearings.

This demonstration was the first public activity of the FTC, which is still in the process of defining itself. Although it has a set of general demands, the details of these demands (for example, how would a minimum wage be instituted?) and the course of action it intends to take, as well as its relation to other broad based cultural organizations such as SAVVQ (Society of Visual Artists in Quebec), need to be worked out. The FTC is planning to hold a festival and series of

DEMANDS

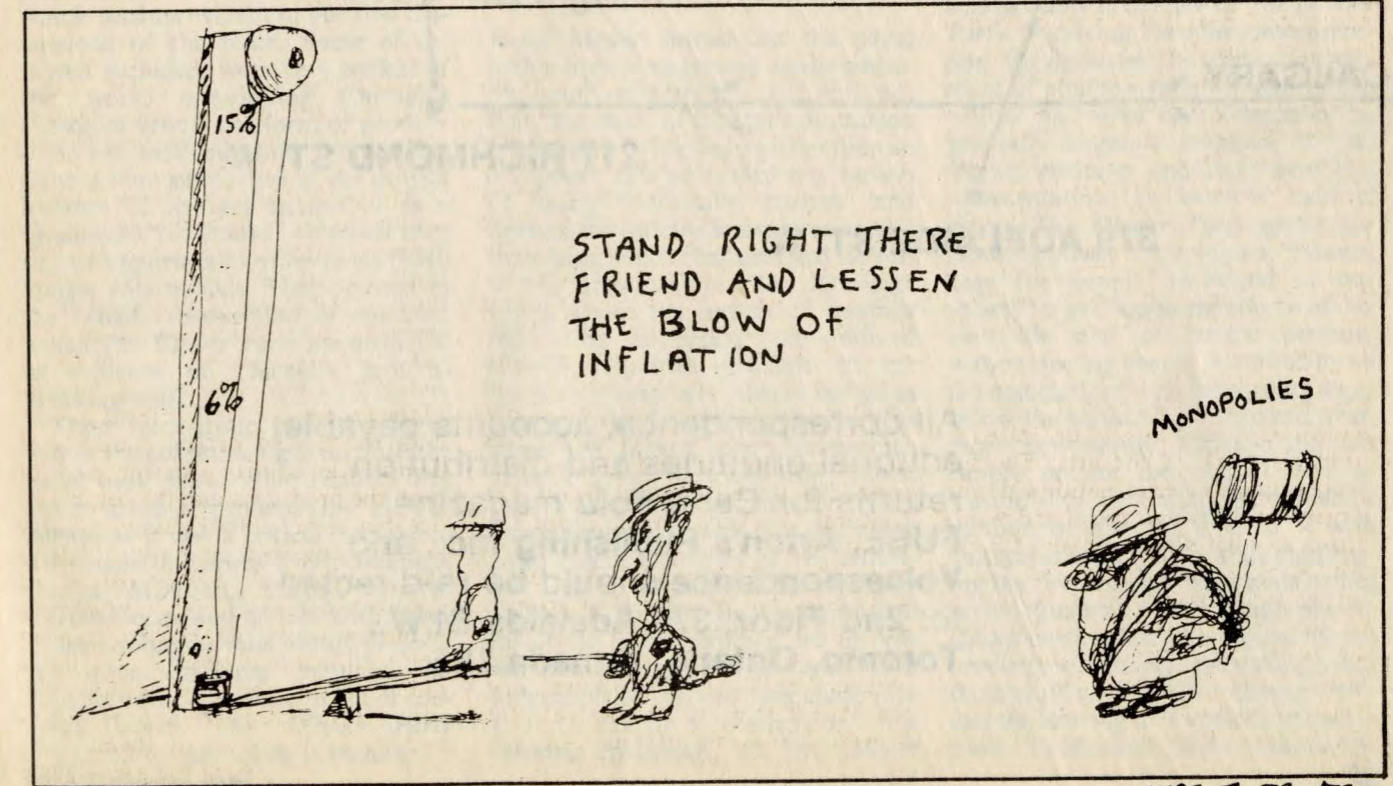
- End to cultural cutbacks
- The increase and indexation of grants.
- The recognition of the social status of cultural workers (job security, minimum wage, health insurance, etc.)
- The right to unionize and union recognition.
- The Development of cultural programs.
- Abolition of censorship.
- The control of culture by cultural workers and the community.

workshops this fall in Montreal, to deal with these questions. Already groups in other parts of Quebec are expressing interest, and the FTC does not see itself as necessarily confined to that province. The issues it addresses, including that of a Quebecois culture, are the concerns of cultural producers across Canada.

Front des Travailleurs et Travailleuses de la Culture, 1447 rue Bleury, Montreal, Que. H3A 2H5

*includes: Les Films du Crépiscule, L'AVECQ (Quebec Association of Film & Video), SMQ (Musicians Union of Quebec), AEPQC (Quebec Association of editors of cultural periodicals), Galerie Motivation V, Café Campus, Kiné-Films and others.

Karl Beveridge

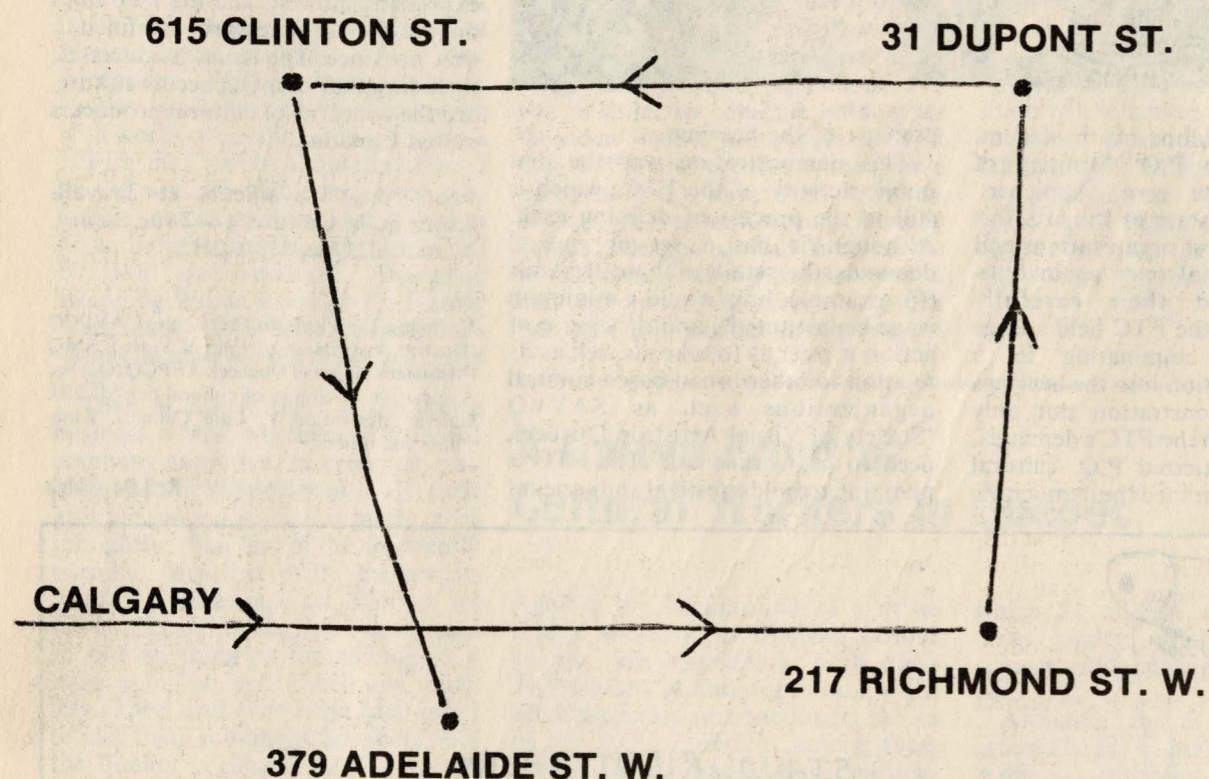


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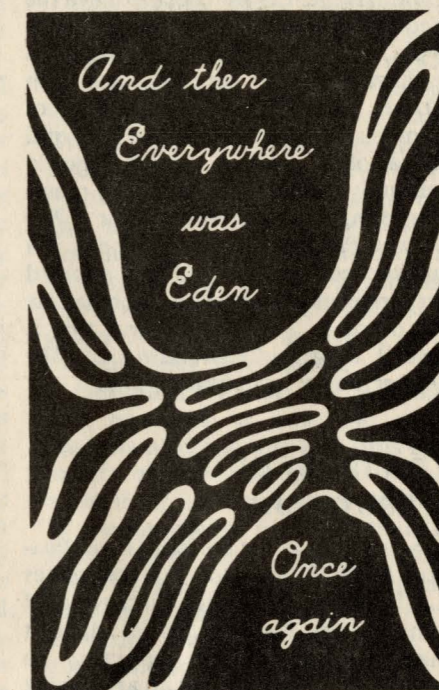
The Judy Chicago Paradox "After the Party's Over"

On June 22, 1982, the Women's Cultural Building Collective (Toronto) presented their first public event — a panel discussion of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* called "After the Party's Over". Organized by a group within the collective which included Rosemary Donnegan, Joyce Mason, Tanya Rosenberg, Kerri Kwinter, Sandra Janz, Carlyn Moulton, Carole Conde and myself, the panel represented the collective's first attempt to "place women's art in a critical context", a starting point for dialogue within the feminist community as a whole about women's cultural production.

For the collective, *The Dinner Party* was an ideal place to begin these discussions. First, and most appealing, was the show's unexpected arrival in Toronto. Judging from the response in other cities, Chicago's work would be well-attended and it is rare that a women's event enters what could even vaguely be called "mass consciousness". But more important, was the divergence of opinion within the collective itself about *The Dinner Party* which became evident in our first discussions of the piece. Some of us, myself included, were very critical of the work, questioning Chicago's choice of venue, her form of production, her aesthetics and her politics. Others were supportive of the project because of its very nature — as a monument to women — which they saw as important in order to establish female role models. They pointed to the broad cross-section of audience which *The Dinner Party* has attracted as evidence of Chicago's groundbreaking work.

These intra-group talks continued within the collective right up until the panel took place. What resulted was not so much a "pro and con" kind of debate as it was a critical discussion, with panel members Kay Armatage, Carlyn Moulton, Varda Burstyn, Carole Conde and myself (with Joyce Mason acting as moderator) presenting often divergent opinions but focused around an issue or set of concerns which *The Dinner Party* suggested to each of us personally.

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Chicago/San Francisco Tapestry Workshop

Taking feminism as a given

Joyce Mason introduced the panel with a little background on the collective and our activities, pointing out that "the basis of tonight's discussion is feminism." As a basis rather than an end-point, this precluded any notion of being 'politically correct' and opened the way for interpretation and theorizing which characterized the rest of the presentations. Kay Armatage spoke about the impact of feminist theory on aesthetics. She outlined several responses possible to the question "why are there no great women artists", including the idea that there have indeed been great women artists but they have just been omitted from male-written art history. While acknowledging this as true and citing some recent examples of 'rediscovered' women, Armatage placed more emphasis not on the re-writing of history to include women, but on "the redefinition of criteria or standards of judgement (of art) so that class, race and sex can be accounted for." She referred specifically to *The Dinner*

Party in its insistence on the use of women's work (i.e. needlecraft, china painting, etc.) to discuss female forms and methodology.

Carlyn Moulton talked about the iconography, the symbols and the "story told by *The Dinner Party*". Stressing the overwhelming religious symbolism of Chicago's work, she criticized the "bloody sacrifice" form which it takes, a form, Moulton says, which is too dependent on hungry gods who need appeasement to ever allow self-determination or fulfillment for individuals. She found Chicago's presentation ahistorical in the extreme, bringing together women from all periods of history with no regard for the effect that this bringing together has on the participants (the 39 women presented) or on the audience, concentrating as it does on "the vertical thrust" of history's progression.

In defense

Despite specific criticisms, Varda Burstyn's presentation on the panel was basically in defense of *The Dinner Party*. Applying Freudian interpretation, she discussed the continuing presence of phallic symbols in our phallic culture and went on to describe the generally negative response to the female genitalia and their symbolic representation in western culture, giving *The Dinner Party* credit for granting power to the vagina. "It is not easy for people socialized in our society to gaze upon the source of our own life and of female pleasure without feeling deeply disturbed by all the associations with it churning away below the surface." Burstyn said that, more importantly, Chicago did not simply present the vaginal form as 'nature' but by linking it to specific periods of history, imbued it with cultural meaning also, thus challenging the tired categories of male equals active equals vs. female equals passive equals nature. She also argued for the necessity of women producing on a large-scale such as *The Dinner Party* and then having that work displayed in public institutions, saying that rather

than being seen as inaccessible to 'the people' at large, these institutions should in fact be part of a strategy by feminists to get work shown (in addition to feminist galleries and spaces).

Before presenting some examples of current feminist art activity, which in her opinion were more effective than Judy Chicago's work, Carole Conde criticized *The Dinner Party* because it "encourages the public's notion of a static, post-feminism to become reinforced at this time when we, in this community, are redefining our feminist politics." She urged that "the polarity of social problems and private ones must be bridged. Sexual self-examination must be surpassed by social sexuality. That means dealing with the social dimensions of women's issues as well as women's perspective on social issues in general."

What follows here is the text which I presented at the panel discussion. My apologies to other panelists for the very brief summation of their papers which I have included in this introduction. *FUSE* readers who would like to read the proceedings of the panel in their entirety should contact *FIREWEED* (P.O. Box 279, Stn. B, Toronto, Canada M5T 2W2), the Toronto-based feminist quarterly which plans to publish all papers plus some additional material in December of 1982.

The limitations of The Dinner Party

Let me preface my remarks by saying that the opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the collective view of the Women's Cultural Building.

So what's wrong with *The Dinner Party*? Why do I, a committed feminist, feel queasy in the presence of a piece of art created by another self-declared feminist? Why do I, who has sought biographical material on women for years, get a sinking feeling every other page when reading Judy Chicago's autobiography *Through The Flower* — the same Judy Chicago who set up the first Feminist Art Program in North America at the University in Fresno, California? Why am I, an artist who claims to be obsessed with questions of audience, so unimpressed with the record-breaking attendance figures generated by *The Dinner Party*? Why indeed? Because the very areas of cultural investigation, production and analysis which Chicago claims for *The Dinner Party* — the representation of women,

their own mythology, the place of women in art, media and society, the clarification of what it means to live as a woman — are the most vital areas of inquiry today. But *The Dinner Party*, unfortunately, has little to add to these discussions.

What *The Dinner Party* does so effectively is introduce the presence of women throughout history and this could have just as well been done in the medium of print alone — an encyclopedia if you will, perhaps available in serialized form at supermarkets. (I'm serious here. The introduction of women's historical presence is a vital educational project which should definitely be undertaken using mass-marketing techniques.) But *The Dinner Party* project, as a whole, is a failure because Chicago has allowed her drive as an artist to overshadow her drive as a feminist. And this is crucial in an interpretation of *The Dinner Party* in feminist terms.

The myth of the artist/genius

In a recent essay in the British publication *BLOCK*, Griselda Pollock makes a relevant point in her discussion of feminist art history: "What does it matter politically for feminists to intervene in so marginal an area as art history, 'an outpost of reactionary thought' as it has been called? Admittedly art history is not an influential discipline, locked up in universities, art colleges and musty basements of museums, peddling its 'civilizing' knowledge to the select and cultured. We should not, however, underestimate the effective significance of its definitions of art and artist to bourgeois ideology. The central figure of art historical discourse is the artist, who is presented as an ineffable ideal which complements the bourgeois myths of a universal, classless Man (sic).

"Our general culture is furthermore permeated with ideas about the individual nature of creativity, how genius will always overcome social obstacles, that art is an inexplicable, almost magical sphere to be venerated but not analysed. These myths are produced in ideologies of art history and are then dispersed through the channels of TV documentaries, popular art books, biographic romances about artists' lives like *Lust For Life* about Van Gogh or *The Agony and the Ecstasy* about Michaelangelo. To deprive the bourgeoisie not of its art but of its concept of art,

this is the precondition of a revolutionary argument." (she is quoting Pierre Macherey here).

There are several points here which help to clarify my criticisms of *The Dinner Party*. First the issue of the artist as a "universal classless Man". Chicago has, of course, replaced Man with Woman here, holding that women are in fact a "class" due to their historical oppression and at the same time maintaining that she herself is classless. While women's historical oppression cannot be argued, their "classlessness" can. Chicago has said that her project was supported by women "from all strata of society, all walks of life." She has also said she was aided by "housewives and students and just women all across the country and around the world in fact." Thus she becomes the ideal artist — classless — just one of the girls. An earlier pre-Dinner Party project of Chicago's however, reveals the hypocrisy of this so-called classlessness of women. Called "Great Ladies", the project began with a series of abstract paintings commemorating Queen Christina of Sweden, Marie Antoinette, Catharine the Great and Queen Victoria. Hardly just a gang of ordinary gals these. One needn't wonder if the women living under the rule of these women felt a classless solidarity of femaleness with them. And what of Chicago's role in this work. In commemorating the ruling class so baldly she assumes the very traditional role of artist as vindicator and decorator of power, I would suggest that a genuine feminist statement about power has been made by many individuals and groups other than Chicago — for instance the Jamaican theatre collective *Sistren*, whose work shows quite directly that women are at times oppressed by other women as well as by men; that oppression, while a shared fate of all women, is also a question of degree. And that while all women's history has suffered the same process of being erased, some women have been more thoroughly forgotten than others.

Homage to the ruling class

The Dinner Party, although less blatant, continues this homage to the ruling classes and the powerful but can effectively (at times) escape criticism by its very encyclopaedic nature. One of the original criticisms that I had of *The Dinner Party* was that no revolutionary women or political women (in a progressive sense)

were included in it. However, when you look carefully, there are a few. For instance, you do find Emma Goldman, but she's on the Heritage Floor, she's not at the table. This is telling when considering a work which presents itself as an encyclopedia of women. It indicates to me an over-riding acceptance of the power structures present all through history. These power structures are not strongly challenged in Chicago's work in anything other than an implicit way.)

So what exactly do I mean when I say that Judy Chicago let her drive as an artist take precedence over her drive as a feminist? I mean that she is basically an integrationist — assuming that the goals of feminism can be accomplished simply by including women into the already existing power structure (whether that structure is the art world or the Church or the state) and that women's presence will somehow "feminize" these structures and thus reform them. She says herself, when describing the banners at the beginning of *The Dinner Party*: "She' — the Goddess, that is, the feminine principle and the spirit within each human being which affirms life — gathers all people before her to witness a vision of an equalized world (symbolized by the equilateral triangle) in which sex, race and class distinctions are erased, and people live in peace and harmony on Earth. *The Dinner Party* expresses the belief and hope that once reverence for the feminine is re-established on Earth, a balance will be restored to human existence and 'Everywhere will be Eden once again.'"

Women's exclusion

I hate to be a cynic, but I doubt that it's going to be that simple. The above quotation, in addition to an unpleasant messianic tone begins to reveal Chicago's overwhelming reverence for traditional art history itself. In an often-quoted entry in her journal in 1975 Chicago says: "My dream is that I will make a piece so far beyond judgement that it will enter the cultural pool and never be erased from history, as women's work has been erased before. . . This is all that matters to me. It's what I've prepared for all these years. It's what I'm on this earth to do." In seeking to enter the "cultural pool" as she calls it, by creating a monument to the feminine principle, which is capable of being housed and exhibited only within a museum, Chicago avoids a direct confrontation with the whole process of history-making — and art

history making. She has, quite rightly, perceived her own exclusion and the denial of female imagery and experience from the male-dominated art world. She then perceived the exclusion of young women art students within the art education system and she went on in her research to perceive the exclusion of women in general from history in general.

The Dinner Party, unfortunately, suggests a remedy for this exclusion which reinforces rather than replaces the prevailing, patriarchal reading of history and culture. It suggests that the Great Man theory can become the Great Woman and Man theory; that monuments are not such a bad thing and all that's missing are Women's monuments. The problem with this analysis is that it is the antithesis of self-determination, the antithesis of cultural democracy and thus, to me, the antithesis of feminism.

Feminism, which has demanded and provided, a new and radical analysis of the family and thus of the nature of power structures and hierarchy itself, is not necessarily informed by the knowledge of the existence of a female pope or a female pharaoh. Female "leadership", within already-existing hierarchies may have a different quality, but it does not guarantee any lasting alteration to the status-quo. Which brings me to the much-touted form of production of *The Dinner Party*. It has been said that Chicago "re-invented a whole new way to do art". I don't necessarily think her method was that revolutionary. Rather it is a further extension of the industrial fabrication method which many minimalist artists employed and continue to employ in the production of their sculpture. The only difference is that Chicago has used the cottage industries rather than heavy industry to fabricate her work of art. But she, like other artists, maintained "full esthetic control" of her project. In spite of the use of feminist concepts such as consciousness raising sessions, *The Dinner Party* was produced within a hierarchy — or as she herself has defined it "a benevolent hierarchy". If one believes that *The Dinner Party* needed to happen no matter what, then quibbling about collective or collaborative production is unnecessary. But it seems to me that the very conception of the piece itself, the methodology of its production and the over-powering persona of its creator places it within the standard art history continuum — which is essentially male and cannot be reformed.

Entering the temple of "high art"

The Dinner Party is, in a very traditional sense, a "work of art" which seeks entry into the temple of "high art", in order to secure for itself (and for its creator) a place in history. This, to my mind, is not a feminist quest. History, art history and language itself are constructs which we cannot simply invade, get 50 per cent parity and expect that feminist ideals will be brought to life automatically.

Earlier I mentioned self-determination and cultural democracy in relation to feminist art practice. By this I mean a spreading out of the creation — not just the manufacture — of cultural images and activity. For example, you could think of a playwright going into a neighbourhood and working with the youth who live there, getting them to perform her play. These youth would have a considerably different experience than if someone went in and assisted these same youth to write and perform their own play about their own lives. I am not suggesting that only the latter is authentic production; both are obviously valid ways of working. The trouble comes when Chicago becomes insistent about the collective or collaborative form of production of *The Dinner Party* while at the same time claiming "full aesthetic control". It simply cannot be done.

In closing, I would say that in *The Dinner Party* Judy Chicago presents a central image — the vagina — to symbolize women. Well, despite the fact that we women all have one, it may not be how we would all seek to represent ourselves. Nor would many of us who are artists seek inclusion in art history the way Chicago has suggested it.

She has said that *The Dinner Party* "represents the fusion of women's ideas from the context traditionally associated with women — that is needlework — to the context traditionally associated with men — painting. It is this infusion of the whole stream of women's history and creative genius into the structure of civilization that *The Dinner Party* is all about." In other words, women's work is women's but civilization is painting. As a definition of civilization and culture, I would have to reject this.

CAROLE CONDE

The Changing Picture What's Going On Behind our Backs?

Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn are two artists currently working with the trades and labour councils, and community action groups in the Docklands area of E. London. They began working together in 1975 while still students. Their first collaborative work dealt with the relative isolation and lack of communication between art students within their own community. The next major work 'The Present Day Creates History' compared the historical development of two towns; one a suburb of London, the other a new town in the coal mining area of Durham. Using residents' old photographic material and personal histories juxtaposed against land developers pamphlets and Government intervention, they put together an exhibition tracing the politics of development in each town. It soon became evident, however, that while people took an interest in the nostalgic value of old photos, they ignored the political analysis and the issues it raised. As a result of this experience, they made a decision to work directly with community and labour groups that were engaged in active struggle.

Carole Conde: How did you become involved in the hospital campaign?

Lorraine Leeson: We had received a film/video fellowship through the Greater London Arts Association to do a workshop in east London. The Bethnal Green Hospital Campaign, was just getting started. There were rumours that the hospital was going to be closed down. They approached us to come up with a campaign video tape. So we set up a workshop with the staff, and taught them to use the equipment. Bethnal Green Hospital is a small community hospital, so the people helping were from the cleaning staff, shop stewards, nurses, right up to the head surgeon, with several different unions involved.

Peter Dunn: They occupied the hospital, threw management out, and ran it for nearly a year. Everyone stayed solid throughout the campaign. They also had a great need for other material, like posters, and we started with ones to go out on the streets, that integrated image and text. In the first one, we were interested in the double play in "Health Cuts Can Kill". We actually cut the photograph to show the violence, and arrived at a montage technique as a means to get across various levels of meaning. It was as

straightforward as that. We hadn't looked at Heartfield at that time. We did an exhibition in the hospital, that was mounted on panels and displayed during the occupation and then it went on to other hospitals. It clearly stated the reason for the occupation, put it into a wider context, and explained why the cuts were happening. They were done in a series: starting off with the international situation and multinationals, the reasons for the crises in capitalism (and then, it wasn't even as bad as it is now), then to the English situation and to the three London hospitals that had been occupied, including Bethnal Green. Later these three hospitals formed a group called the 'National Fightback Organization'. They used our exhibit to mobilize people and gain support.

We had no trouble in obtaining visuals. We'd been taking photos throughout the occupation. We'd been allowed in the operating theatre during an operation to make the video in order to show how clean and efficient everything was and to counter the press coverage.

C.C.: You showed this work in a gallery?

L.L.: We were asked to show in the 'Art For Whom' exhibition put together by

Richard Cork at the Serpentine Gallery in 1978.

C.C.: What was the response of the gallery audience and critics to the piece?

L.L.: "This poison in the wells of art" by Bernard Levin; that was half a page in the Times. They didn't like the roughness of it, saying things like "how dare they bring things like this into the gallery space". We'd wondered about this ourselves, but the hospital staff loved the coverage. It brought more attention to the campaign. We showed four colour-separation posters, eight panels, and a videotape.

P.D.: As the Bethnal Green campaign drew to a close, the Trades and Labour Council (they're made up of trade unionists from different unions in the area, who are involved with the social conditions of life in a particular borough) — Anyway, they approached us, saying they had 100 pounds left, from a hospital that had closed down, to do another set of posters. They wanted health issues to fit into a wider context than just one hospital. We came up with the idea of a visual pamphlet that could be used in health and community centres, where people could spend time reading them.

Once they began to be used all over the country, we dropped the specifics of E. London, or used it as an example. The first batch dealt with mental illness, the background of the National Health Service, the original struggle that took place to set it up, and the need to continue that fight. One of them was an alternative to their 'thirty years' anniversary poster. We showed the other side, it's called 'If You Let Them Eat It', with rats eating the cake. We decided to make this one in four colours to come close to the anniversary print.

L.L.: We tried out different techniques like a photographic set up with stuffed rats. 'Mental Illness is Class Conscious' was actually a displacement; cutting the photo and slipping it sideways. "Quarts in Pint Pots" which was about waiting lists, was a montage of people pouring out of a beer glass, and using a well known phrase 'use your health: don't drink to it'.

P.D.: We sold those at cost price to the grass roots; unions, bookshops and trades councils. We could never get the big unions to buy at the national level, which is what we'd hoped for. Official trade union graphics tend to be very boring and conservative.

C.C.: It might be useful at this point to talk about the structure of the project

as a whole, your relationship to the trades council and how that worked. **P.D.:** With the first posters we'd done all the research ourselves, but the groups who used them now donated their time and research, and helped with the distribution. Once you've actually done something and put it out, people want to help. We were on a steering committee with trade union representatives, members of the Tower Hamlets Trades Council, and the Hackney Trades Council. We would discuss the issues, and come back with a fairly well worked-out draft. They knew our work, so it was a good situation. It was based upon trust. They'd deal with the straight-up politics, and we dealt with the politics of representation. It was a two-way educational process. In the second batch there were three posters on women and health, and one on the multi-national drug companies. The women and health ones were done in conjunction with women in the Politics and Health group. They were to be used in small women and health discussion groups, therefore they would need to raise questions rather than answer them. They weren't to be as direct and didactic as the others, but were to point to the social conditions of health. We then did a four colour

poster called "Passing the Buck". It was done in reaction to the way the multi-national drug companies exploit the National Health Service, the third world, and the market. The funding partly came through the sales of the earlier posters, the printing cost from Tower Hamlets Trades Council and the Greater London Arts Assoc.. It should also be mentioned that we got the printing done by a good socialist printer, who worked nights and did it under the table. The E. London Health posters aren't finished. There is talk of doing one on asbestosis when we get some time. It would be for the Socialist Medical Assoc. These are the same people who were the prime movers in setting up the N.H.S. The government is trying to bring in private practice, while at the same time they're running down the N.H.S.

L.L.: We started this whole project under the Labour government in 78/79, then the Tory government came in and it's been stop and go ever since, due to cutbacks in funding.

C.C.: The work you're doing now concerns redevelopment, while your main concerns to this point seemed to have been with health care.

L.L.: The Tory government said they were closing down Bethnal Green Hospital because the local population

The Changing Picture of the Docklands — "What's Going on Behind Our Backs?"



was being reduced because the Docklands area was being run down. They had moved the docks to containerization down river. The dockers that stayed were unemployed, others moved out to the suburbs. The local small industries that were supported by the docks — engineering, small shop keepers and the whole lot went too. From the late 60s onwards the area became an industrial wasteland. It's a vast area on each side of the Thames that takes up five boroughs. Out of this 'desert' of high-unemployment, very bad deprivation in housing etc., various governments have had differing strategies for redeveloping the area. The Tories had no concern for the people living there. It was prime development land in the core of London; it was the heartland. The Heath government of the early 70s brought in Travis Co. who used to build bridges in South Africa (and we won't go into the politics of that). They did a wholistic study for redevelopment in six months. There was no consultation with the local people whatsoever. They proposed multi-story high-rise office buildings with no regard to decimating what remained of the communities. Then the Labour government came in. They set up a joint committee of all the locally elected Docklands' boroughs and formed the Docklands Joint Action Committee, with consultation from local unionists, action groups, industrialists, tenant groups and so on, to feed their needs into the committee. Plans were drawn up that were to fulfil the needs of public housing, small industry (that would utilize the skills which residents had) environmental schemes (like no high-rises), and lots of parkland in the drained dock areas. This was all begun in the late 70s, by highly organized communities that brought in their own planners. Then the Conservative government got back in, bringing quick commercial development with no public housing, and they got rid of the Joint Docklands Committee. They put in a Development Corporation that wasn't accountable to the local community or the borough. The socialist-based Councils were excluded by an act of Parliament. They are a mini-dictatorship. This was fought through the House of Lords by the communities, (but you know what their class base is).

L.L.: The Development Corporation are civil servants that have planning powers to buy and sell to the highest bidder, which is how property gets into the hands of the multi-nationals, who now own the major portion of the Docklands. They've set up an enterprise zone which means that firms get special tax relief incentives. These multi-nationals exist rate-free and can work on a high profit basis by putting local industry out of business and bringing in their own workforce.

C.C.: So how did you get involved?

P.D.: It was suggested we apply to the Tower Hamlets Arts Committee, who were very radical. The issues were very complex and they had to be put into a visual format that would be flexible, as the issues were changing so rapidly. So in the early stages it was mainly research with the Trades and Labour Council, the tenants and action groups. We decided to work on three levels. First there was production that dealt with immediate issues — leaflets and fly posters, for a quick response. Second was a billboard that dealt with the larger, long term issues like housing, employment, etc. Third is to be an exhibition on the comprehensive history of the docks struggle. The five boroughs have amalgamated and we work through them now. They've set up a committee to decide on things like the site of the billboard, what the main issues are and so forth. We decided to have the billboard change gradually from one image to another, so that this transformation would correspond to the way the docklands are being transformed. We titled the piece "The Changing Picture of the Docklands". It's also related to the physical way in which we produce the piece — each section of the original photo is blown up and laminated on masonite and assembled on the billboard, so that they could be removed and used on other sites.

The placement of the billboard is right in the most active community, in the midst of their shopping area, in Wapping. This means they will see it at least once a week, and they'd be able to relate to the subtle changes taking place.

L.L.: We never realized how time-consuming the project would be. We've only been funded each of us part-time for half a week. They're huge images, 18 x 12 feet each. We're also producing the artwork for the next ones, and the posters for immediate needs. I mean, to be realistic, we need full-time funding for another year to work through the whole broad range of ideas that are in the billboards.

C.C.: Could you go into the specifics of what's going on in the two images on the billboards?

L.L.: In the first image we're raising questions, not spelling anything out yet, but only implying the issues. It's

not a single idea you'd grasp immediately but it encapsulates the issues. It's dealing with the results of the last ten years of government consultation that are now in the dustbin. It's no exaggeration, they've all been scrapped. Then there's 10 years of opposition that is portrayed on the corrugated iron (which is the symbol of the present Docklands). As places come down and become derelict the corrugated iron goes up, so it symbolizes that decay.

The Development Corporation is hiding behind a facade, so the statement 'What's Going On Behind Our Backs' implies this facade of pseudo-consultation.

P.D.: The second image, and how the first is transformed, is done by taking the panels down with the corrugated iron on them. This will happen in three stages. At the second the caption will read 'Big Money is Moving In'. You'll see a cityscape of high-rises and commercial office blocks that you begin to realize is made out of money. In the next stage you'll see that these huge pound notes are beginning to crush the existing community. The local people are being pushed over the abyss and the secondary caption reads 'Don't Let Big Money Push Out The Local People'.

L.L.: There will be a third one to replace this. In one stage, you'll be down at the bottom of the abyss looking up and it's titled 'The Scrap Heap'. The scrap heap will be the people, council houses, jobs lost, etc. We've begun the photography for this one but haven't finished the collage yet. From the second to the third it will be a total change. It will go from a pan down to a cut, in filmic terms. We're dealing with layers of meaning as we've done in all our work and using montage to deal with all these different levels, to juxtapose one against the other.

P.D.: It's also using the materiality of the thing to show that it's actually a picture.

L.L.: It's the same device as with the health cuts poster.

We've done a rough for the fourth image. It will be on the theme of the use of the river. It will say that the river is the heart of the Docklands. We want to be fairly flexible in order to deal with the issues as they come up. The Joint Docklands group just did a pamphlet on housing and it might be more appropriate to go straight into that at this point. We can't plan too far ahead in order to keep on top of the Development Corporation's next move.

P.D.: Since the works have gone up, we've begun to get interest from the other boroughs, who now want their own billboards. We've spoken to the Greater London Arts Council, who have a very radical council in now and are opposed to the Development Corporation. They're very supportive of culture that's active on a community and grassroots level. So they're very interested in backing the billboards for the other boroughs. We already had planned on this possibility because the effects on the communities are very similar. It's the Docklands as a whole.

C.C.: How do the two of you work jointly on a project?

L.L.: On all of the projects there's discussion between us on everything we do. On the Bethnal Green work and on the first batch of E. London Health Posters we actually physically worked together on each image, on the second batch we worked separately. I worked predominately on the first billboard and Peter on the second. Then obviously we worked back and forth. We have different working methods. Peter does drawings and works to those. I just get an idea which might start out as a vague sketch and then I get straight into photographs. Our influences are possibly somewhat different, I feel very close to the work I

was doing in experimental film and structural photography. I'm very interested in the materiality of the thing.

P.D.: I'm interested in the materiality as well. In 'Big Money', what predominated was a rekindling of interest in picture making that came out of painting. Things like light and space. By using the montage, careful interest was placed on the composition and tonality by mosaicing it together. So it's like painting with photographs.

C.C.: How influenced by mass media has your work been?

L.L.: You have to respond to advertisements! Also Heartfield, as his work is also socially based content that has been collaged. We consciously analyze them. But our work operates differently. Advertisements seek to mythologize a product. It masks the underlying social and economic factors of the product — its marketing, its production, so on and so forth — making it into a mythological object which is desirable. What we're doing is, of course, the opposite; which is to reveal the underlying economic and social structures. So we're breaking down that whole ideology.

P.D.: I'd say, we were more influenced by the art world, but not necessarily by contemporary artists.

I don't feel that Heartfield has been a big influence although there was a point when we'd begun to make montages that we became conscious of him.

L.L.: As strange as it sounds I felt more influenced by performance art, not in the form of their work, but in terms of the way they saw art as a totality. You have to look at the whole process. By making a performance fit the context, the whole thing is seen as the work. So we said okay, if we're going to make the work fit the context, then the next question is, what context and why?

So the main difference between ourselves and advertising isn't in the images at all, it's in the structure and the way we operate. Fifty percent of our work is about the way it comes about, which is why we emphasize that part even before we get to talk about the images. Advertising imposes its images on the community whether the community wants them or not. There are certain historical analogies, that are useful to think about; the whole notion of what a transitional practice is that's to say, a practice which tries to operate from a socialist point of view, in a capitalist society. Obviously it can't be a totally socialist practice. It has to be transitional; towards socialism. You look at practices that



The Changing Picture . . . "Big Money is moving In"

have operated during this period, like the culture being produced in the third world. Or you go back into history and look at the transition say from slave-based society to feudalism. For example, the Christian cultural movement which was ideologically opposed to Rome was an oppositional practice literally operating underground. It was opposing the ideology of Rome with an alternative ideology which became the basis of feudalism. It also moved away from a context of high culture into a more popular folk cultural context. The objects produced were not for the patricians of Roman society. They were almost like multiples — icons and crucifixes and all that. The whole 'objectness' of them was of less importance than their ideological content. You'll not get much room to operate in the context you're opposing and you'll actually need to build your roots in the new structure which is emerging. That's why we began to operate with the grass roots of the working class organizations. If opposition's going to be built, that's where it's going to begin, and the practice should grow organically with that.

C.C.: Why would you then show in galleries?

P.D.: There are different sites of struggle. First there are students and people who are interested in this area of work and they don't get access to it any other way.

L.L.: There is a role the galleries have of documentation, with all their flaws.

P.D.: Magazines fall into that category too. There is an ideological battle to be fought in the art world. By intervening in it, you're bringing in all the things that normally operate outside of that context, like political and social issues, which the art world would rather not deal with. It's doing a Duchampian thing, where he brings the toilet from the outside. We're doing that except we're not inventing it very much. The shit is still in the pan.

C.C.: How would you explain the fact that you're able to get support, not just financially, but for the type of work you do?

L.L.: Tower Hamlets has this very democratic arts committee which began in the early 70s. It has exploded since and if you're not careful there are times when you think there is some kind of cultural revolution going on here. There are things like the community bookshops which include the publishing of local peoples work. Murals that, for a change, have political content, like the battle of Cable Street mural, which is based on a local uprising against fascism in the '30s. There are poster workshops, community resource centres with open access to local people. *Camerawork* is here also, but their services are on a slightly different level. They're open to schools and individuals etc. They have a gallery space for radical work, their magazine, a whole series of workshops and discussion groups. Very close to them is *Four Quarters Films*. They link production and exhibitions in a similar way to *Camerawork*. Then

there is the *Half Moon Theaters*. They started off with a project that had local peoples theatres that's linked to that. The old 'New Halfmoon' deals with different productions.

P.D.: They put on a work by Brecht as well as local people's work, so you get this intermingling of historical left theatre, together with stuff that's come up through local peoples' theatre as well.

L.L.: There's the Tower Hamlets Arts project. They're a community arts group that goes into schools and playgrounds to work with young people, on an out reach basis, to do theatre, plus a number of touring groups.

C.C.: The content of the work is very progressive. Is that because it's very concentrated here?

P.D.: There are a number of reasons for that. This area has a long history of being a large working class area, where waves of immigrants have come and it's in the heart of the city. There are lots of artists who work in an elitist way living here also. The reason this Arts Committee has largish funding for the arts, came both out of a struggle by cultural producers, who needed funding to produce the work related to the communities needs, together with a council which had a cultural policy that believed very strongly in supporting those same needs. This area has been solidly Labour since the war, or maybe even before that. There's a certain degree of entrenchment in a political sense, but in culture they've certainly been supportive. ●

The Battle of Cable Street, 1936 Mural depicts major defeat of British Fascism

There are several artists and arts groups working with the community in the Tower Hamlets area of East London. Among those already mentioned by Peter Dunn and Lorraine Leeson in the preceding interview is Dave Binnington. He has been working for the past two years on a mural depicting the battle of Cable Street. The mural is situated on the actual sight of the event on the wall of St. Georges Town Hall on Cable Street. It measures 55' x 65'.

The image is based on historical documentation, for the most part eyewitness accounts obtained by Binnington himself. The following is a description of the event itself written by the artist.

OCTOBER 4th, 1936 — A crowd, estimated between two and three hundred thousand people, assembled around Gardiners Corner, Leman Street and Cable Street in London's East End. Their object was, by physically blocking the streets with people, to make impossible the proposed march by the British Union of Fascists led by Oswald Mosley.

Approximately 3,000 Blackshirts assembled over a mile away near the Tower of London. They were ultimately not allowed to proceed from this assembly point. A decisive victory against fascism in Britain was won at what has come to be known as the Battle of Cable Street.

Although the "riots of Cable Street" happened over a wide area around Whitechapel, it was in Cable Street that the most intense street fighting occurred. Barricades were built across the street and the walls were covered in variations of the slogan "they shall not pass". Bricks, bottles, household rubbish and even the contents of a chamber pot were thrown from windows and roof tops by local people resisting what they regarded as an invasion of their street by the police.

Despite the concerted efforts of between 6,000 and 7,000 police, including the entire mounted corps of the Metropolitan Police, a path for the fascist march was not cleared. The popular will prevailed — this intensely provocative march through Britain's

largest Jewish community did not take place. The Blackshirt contingent never left their point of assembly and played no direct part in the Battle of Cable Street.

Carole Conde: Did you go to art school?

Dave Binnington: I've had six years of art school. I was lucky that I went to quite an old fashioned art school just at the time that art schools were going to hell. I went on to the academy schools. It was great, for there was an entirely catholic range of taste from the crazy constructivists up to life room.

C.C.: Did you make a break with that and go into modern art?

D.B.: That was late 1960's. Luckily I escaped the process. There is an entire generation of artists who can't draw, because of that whole era. It seems tragic really. I then spent a couple of years reading a lot and had a job. I was doing paintings at this time but no way

of using them. I was doing expressionistic imagery. I'd scrubbed the art world way back, scrubbed it as a quite irrelevant area to work in. It seemed quite obnoxious. I hadn't any theoretical angle. I was just offended.

C.C.: So now you're alone in your studio producing socially relevant work!

D.B.: Well junk, really. The mural work came about through a lucky collection of accidents. I'd heard about the really early community murals in Chicago. The really good ones. I met an Australian couple on route home from Chicago. They had slides of the 'Wall of Respect', all the early Bill Walker murals. I was impressed by that. The idea that you could do a Rivera, now, and you don't need the whole state apparatus giving you walls, but that you could take walls. That was a breakthrough.

C.C.: What about the form and content of the work?



Dave Binnington

Cable Street mural sketch design

D.B.: I was impressed by Walker and Mark Begovin, but no other Americans. It was a brilliant start that has been totally squandered. I think that's tragic.

C.C.: In N.Y. the community worked on the murals with city kids helping for summer employment.

D.B.: I'm very critical of so-called community murals. I think the concept is more important than the product. In a lot of communities that is a good way to work. But in other cases the end-product has a lot of effect on what people expect from artists. People's low expectations of artists are fed by living with a mural that was done in three weeks, costing a couple of hundred quid, because it brightens up the neighbourhood. It offends me to have it debased, as it is, by third rate artists who get out of the responsibility of the problems of creating a new image, by saying it is "community art" and it isn't that important. There was one group going around here calling themselves 'Hit and Run Murals'. It's a very insulting form of work, for the end product and the community.

C.C.: What was the first mural you got involved in?

D.B.: The one that's on the fly-over on the overpass of a three-lane highway. The first mural was initiated at the right time, in 1974 and it took us a year to get it going. We got grants from anywhere and everywhere. Then no-one had heard of murals. It was very early. We were all, at the same time, working parallel. There was a guy in Yorkshire, a group in south London all who were starting off.

C.C.: What kind of a community was it in?

D.B.: People either drive by it or walk by it. It wasn't a neighbourhood, hardly anyone lived close by. We thought that it was a safe area. It was largely copping-out of the social involvement. It was going to be a quick and easy job. We hadn't any idea how to go about it at all.

C.C.: With the other artist, did you work jointly on the drawings?

D.B.: Desmond Rushford. He worked on one wall and I took the other. We agreed on the themes. He did a wall on labouring and construction workers. I did one on white collar and clerical workers. It grew in quite an alarming way. The people who gave us cash demanded longer-lasting paint. So we went to Courtauld which is a restoring college. A guy there said "I remember some guy in the thirties that we made up some paint for and nobody's used it since." So we thought, *wunderbar*, that's it. It's an absolutely superb

medium. They had a small sample. This is the same stuff I use now.

C.C.: How were you supporting yourself then?

D.B.: I was a bus driver, driving American private school kids, I painted in between, it was a bare living. Desmond was teaching at a prison.

It's new!

C.C.: Were your styles similar?

D.B.: Yes, we painted in vaguely similar styles and had similar likes. We worked on that project together for three years. It was, in all, three and a half thousand square feet. We were a year-and-a-half getting grants and approvals and learning which door at city hall to knock down. It was a real learning process. That was why I felt I had to deal with the white collar thing. I was so impressed by going in weekly to the county hall with miles of corridors and rooms packed with ladies who sort paper. It was mad, insane. In the last year-and-a-half we got grants to live on and I gave up driving and took up the mural full time. It got enormous press coverage, either love or hate, no half way. It was a bombshell. We had no local Council support. They hated it. Politics and art, no way! We got a large grant from the Arts Council of Great Britain. We had a guy on one of the juries who thought what a great idea. It's new! Who cares whether it's Left or what. That helped it off. Once it was going and there was scaffolding up there, we just said we've got no more money, it's half done, and it will look awful if we stop now. We got some from private trusts. We got odd hundreds from local groups.

C.C.: So how did you get started on the next mural?

D.B.: There was a guy who lives on Cable St. He had been trying to get a mural started.

C.C.: Maybe if you could start off with some history of Cable St. before we get into the mural.

D.B.: Oh christ! The content? It occurred in 1936. This was the largest Jewish ghetto in Britain. It was the time of growing European Nazism, Hitler and Mussolini, it was all growing then. In Britain there was an extremely clever and able leader, Sir Oswald Mosley, who had started in the Labour Party as a 'radical', left and then started what grew into the British Union of Fascists. He was a progressive and radical and then he turned into a fascist. It was a very powerful and growing party in '34. At a time of

no jobs, no work, the depression, his group looked extremely appealing. They had glamorous uniforms. Slowly he became more and more anti-Jewish and planned a major, national march through the Whitechapel area. But there was very widespread local opposition; from all the National Union groupings to the Communist Party, who were quite strong in east London at that time.

C.C.: In east London with the factories and docks there, was it mainly a working class area at the time?

D.B.: Yes, there were factory workers, dockers, a large Jewish area, Irish Catholics, also the rag trade workers. So the main constituents for the C.P. came from here. It was a very tense area. North of the Borough was white protestant. It is now a strongly racist area. South of the Jewish area were the Irish Catholics. He was going to march right through the Jewish area, but he was met by a crowd of 200,000 people. It's slightly further north from where the mural is now situated, all the streets were chock-a-block. He was gonna go down and the Law tried to clear a path with sticks and horses to lead the 3,000 Blackshirts through but failed. They thought, we'll send them along Cable St. which is a fairly narrow street. The Fascist leaders had a lorry waiting for them, but it was quickly overturned and the community poured rubbish on top creating a barricade. The Blackshirts never left their assembly. So this war that took place was between the local people and the coppers, right here in front of the building where the mural is. There were hundreds of arrests and the coppers were hurt even though they were on horses, riding into them. This was the last occasion where clubs were used because it was recorded on film and it looked so bad it was quite terrifying. The whole incident created a law that prevented the use of uniforms by anyone on public demonstrations. So it completely stole all the fascist's glamour. The unemployed who before had these shiny black uniforms, now were completely demoralised. Typically a British solution and it worked, absolutely. In the nick of time too. The Fascists had been really growing.

C.C.: How was the mural location obtained and the support for it started?

D.B.: A good deal of local residents came up with the wall, the subject, and a possibility of local Council helping. The community center the mural is on, was already established with photography workshops and silkscreening

workshops, etc. It's used a lot by social workers and radical community leaders. They had just set up, as I was finishing the Fly-over mural. It was a case, again, of luck.

'Solidarity' symbol

In 1976 there was a huge race riot in Brick Lane near here. The local Council thought, what a wonderful symbol to record their solidarity with the Black constituents, to show what had happened in the 30's, and how the Jews had beaten them blah, blah, blah. So the Council, after a year of haggling, agreed to buy us the scaffolding, erect it, then do the finishing of the wall. The grants were there for the arty bit based on my credibility. So it had to be the local Council who paid for the materials. So it was the same old hoo-ha that it was last time. It was about a year and three quarters from the time the guys came up and asked, to the wall being rendered ready to paint. So, 'til now it's two-and-a-half years. During the first sketch we had to do the sketches and designs, have local meetings, etc. The whole way of working at a cartoon was long and extended. Arriving at a sketch was a very organic thing, it grew very slowly and nicely, there were hundreds of them that would be four feet across.

C.C.: How much involvement with the community around the work would there be?

D.B.: Everyone knew it was occurring and I leafleted a thousand houses here



Dave Birmingham

twice.

C.C.: What were you asking them?
D.B.: I was asking them to come along and comment on the sketches. I was using the sketches as a catalyst. They'd go, "oh, well, it's alright but," and it's the 'but' you've got to listen to. They had such low expectations of it. Making up these leaflets and local liaisons looks good in your grant application but it doesn't work that well. Quite a lot of people came out to the meetings but learning occurred more on a one-to-one basis.

C.C.: The cartoon that you did up as a poster, when was that done?

D.B.: That was done in 1979 and it has changed a fair bit since then. At another stage, after this one, I did another cartoon which I then used to project on the wall. I used an extremely strong overhead projector and I enlarged sections of the drawing onto acetate with India ink and projected these. The projected images were maybe only a fraction off but that would make it a yard off at the other end. So even the production of it onto the wall had an effect on the finished piece. So it grew and changed. The greatest problem in long term work is to keep fresh, to get out there and work on it and to keep taking risks. It has got to change or I get very, very bored.

C.C.: How did you determine the specific images in the mural?
D.B.: Everything in my mural is based on an eye-witness account. I went around and asked. I got one person who lead me on to the next by saying, "oh, yeah, I know George was there too." So this occurred the whole time. It

(Detail) Cable Street mural sketch design

would be word of mouth in the pub, and I was working in the community centre for a year and loads of people came telling stories. That's where it works.

C.C.: What about the airplane in the mural that's not on the cartoon?

D.B.: That was added because it was the first occasion that the police used aerial reconnaissance. I found this out later and I incorporated it. But I wouldn't include it if it didn't look right.

C.C.: It's usual in murals to collage content together. How do you see this working?

D.B.: It seemed essential to keep the aggression and dynamism, for it's extremely hard to get a crowd looking dynamic. So I turned it into a circle as I wanted it moving around. I've worked from photographs and worked on many, many portraits. I put up a sign saying free portraits and I drew hundreds of the neighbourhood people but they all wanted to keep them. You also can't choose who you draw. The ones that fit I used.

C.C.: How has the mural, as it was going up, been accepted?

A lot of looking

D.B.: This is not a popular project with anybody at the moment. It was initiated with the Labour government in power and lots of local Council spending. We now have a Conservative government implementing huge cuts. This is still going because it was already underway, while others are being scrapped. This community centre is being cut. You get quite legitimate complaints saying why spend it on the arts and not on old age pensioners. In this immediate vicinity the people have been so brutalized that it's incredibly hard for them to form a community. There are enormous amounts of people on unemployment, and it has the worst mental health record in all of Europe. Numbers of them are dock workers and the rag trade, that's all closed up. It's a very, very oppressed area. You can't expect a mural to get them enthusiastic. The way the community functioned best was the stories, the content, and first-hand knowledge. What I'm doing, I hope, is leaving an image which is going to slowly work on them and give them pride, when they glance at it every week or so, and occasionally see something new. I'm really into works that can stand a lot of looking at. You've got to raise standards and expectations by giving people the best you're capable of.

JODY BERLAND

FAST FORWARD Melbourne's collaborative cassette magazine

Fast Forward is a cassette magazine produced in Melbourne, Australia. Its first issue appeared in 1980; since that time, as its editors explain below, its scope and distribution have broadened. Though similar publications are now produced in Britain and the U.S., **Fast Forward** was the first regular cassette magazine for independent popular music, and continues to provide a model for other recent and more mass-distributed versions of cassette publications. Each issue carries interviews with both local and overseas musicians, and music by known bands and by other groups unheard of beyond their local communities. The magazine's accompanying printed pamphlet provides basic information about each band, including its contact address and the name of its members, histories and comments, and various blurbs, graphics, and miscellanea. A single issue costs about \$4.00.

Fast Forward is produced in a rented space over a warehouse by its two editors, Bruce Milne and Andrew Maine, and a designer, Michael Trudgeon. But on the Sunday afternoon in May when I arrived with borrowed cassette recorder to talk to them, the two large rooms were filled with about twenty friends, who had come to help compile Issue #11 — to staple and fold the booklet, fold a guide to past issues, to compile the supplementary postcards celebrating the current issue's theme — sex — on behalf of the gay community, and to insert these, with cassette, into the bright red plastic cover. The two editors share an extensive background in music criticism,

production, and distribution, through their involvement in Australia's independent radio, music magazines, and records. However the project is obviously boosted by a general atmosphere of mutual aid in the music communities of Melbourne, in particular, and other cities across Australia. In our interview, the editors talk about the network of independent labels, music shops, and publications through which bands and musicians produce and communicate. It gives a sense of the energy and proliferation of independent music in Australia, and the extent to which its various forms have moved beyond the tightly controlled "bland pop and putrid boogie" of mainstream Australian and Anglo/American rock. More extensive documentation of this movement has become available with the recent publication of **Inner City Sound**, a copiously illustrated history of post-punk music in Australia; Milne also collaborated on this publication, which is edited by Clinton Walker and published by Wild and Woolley (P.O. Box 41, Glebe NSW 2037 Australia). But to hear the actual sound, **Fast Forward** has no substitute.

The flexibility by which various technologies have been adapted for the production and reproduction of music works is characteristic of Australian new music in recent years. Innovations range from the cheap reproductions of locally centred rock bands (in record singles as well as magazine cassette) to the more esoteric investigations of experimental



music, using synthesizers, cassettes, computers, telephones, etc. (especially cassette recorders); the focal point and testing ground for these is the Clifton Hill Community Music Centre in Melbourne, where the sharing of technological resources — and of diverse audiences — has made experimental music more accessible. **Fast Forward** selections give some indication of the degree to which these areas have influenced each other, leading to some provocative hybrids in art/rock investigations of popular musical and of social conventions in sound.

Fast Forward's primary contribution is still its mode of production; it's technical, rather than critical. Music publishing in Australia hasn't gone beyond the usual fan-mag hyperbole, leaving something to be desired in the area of critical discussion in the popular press. But there is still a milieu where social presence and critical consciousness can co-exist with some success, and **Fast Forward** is an ideal

source for its music. In the long run, this success will partly depend on whether the criterion of "independence" also defends these directions — rather than projecting itself as another myth. So far, **Fast Forward** has lived up to — and extended — the intentions of its inventors: to subvert rock myths and to encourage new developments and outlets. The crucial question of to what extent this technological populism can maintain its independence from the imprints of commercialisation thus invites some optimistic speculation about the future of Australian music.

Fast Forward may be ordered by writing to them at P.O. Box 251, Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia 3065. Subscription rates are (in Australian currency) \$18.00 (3 issues), \$36.00 (6 issues), \$54.00 (9 issues) or \$70.00 (12 issues) for overseas orders, sent first class airmail. Back issues are all available. A guide to contents of back issues accompanies Issue #11. Tapes can also be sent to them at this address.

Jody Berland: So this is **Fast Forward** #11 that we're currently compiling. How many will you produce?

Andrew Maine: We'll do 1,200 today, and that'll see us through for a couple of weeks. We hope to get out about 2,000.

JB: That's the current distribution?

AM: We'll be definitely getting rid of another 400 within the next month, so we hope to get out about 2,000.

JB: That will be the most that you have produced — 2,000?

AM: (Reading from a chart on the wall): 1650 of #10; 1500 of #8-9; 1300 of #7; 1200 of #6. But they all keep selling. Especially once the new issue comes out, there's a rush for older ones. We just keep producing them.

JB: Where do they go?

AM: In Australia, they go to independent record shops, music shops.

JB: How many of them are there?

Bruce Milne: In each of the major cities there are three or four shops. In Sydney and Melbourne there are probably about twenty shops. We used to have a wider distribution but we opted for the smaller ones, because it's so slow getting the money back when you go for the large scale. So we prefer to go for the small scale where we usually get our money quicker, and hope that a lot of people subscribe.

JB: How many subscribers do you have now?

AM: I'm not sure how many there might be. I think a hundred. It's not a lot.

JB: Are they all in Australia?

AM: No, two-thirds of them would be Australian.

JB: And the rest of them would be mostly from the U.S. and Britain?

AM: Yep. South Africa, Britain, USA, Sweden . . .

JB: So you don't have any from Canada yet?

AM: No. Like I was saying to you the other day, Canada's a really unknown quantity in this country. We have got access to so many overseas independent markets, it's quite surprising that that one in particular seems vacant.

AM: But you'd think there'd be some awareness of them over here, you know? And there just doesn't seem to be. I've seen maybe three compilation albums come out of Toronto, and one out of Vancouver, and that's all; and they weren't particularly inspiring ones. So I imagine there's a lot more going on.

JB: Do you have things sent to you from other countries because of people's awareness of **Fast Forward**,

or do you also do your own scouting?

BM: We do some. We've got a guy in England now, and we've got a few people in America who are on the look-out for us, just on a free-lance, no not free-lance, they don't get paid, just when they feel that something might be worthwhile, and in Sydney of course we have someone.

JB: So people send you tapes, and you listen to them and decide whether you want . . .

AM: It varies. Sometimes they'll send us a cassette, sometimes they'll send a record, sometimes they'll just say look we've got something, do you want it. In most cases it's cassettes, yeah, and we usually write back and say, have you got a dub from your master on reel-to-reel, because just quality-wise it's best for us to use it because of the number of dubbing processes that have gone between our master and the actual cassette you get in the shop. It's best to start off with a reel-to-reel tape.

JB: And how do you select them; what kinds of sounds are you looking for?

BM: I don't think we've got any one set that we're looking for, our interests are pretty eclectic.

AM: And it is personal taste to a certain degree, but given that our tastes are fairly eclectic it becomes then an issue of quality. But even that's a personal decision. I don't mean quality of the tape, but quality of the music.

BM: I feel pretty strongly about the independence of it.

JB: Do people that you record have recordings on other labels? How does that work?

BM: Well, we're not a record label at all, we're really strict about that; we're a cassette magazine. If we like the band we might have a photo and an article, and some music; we don't keep the copyright on anything we use.

JB: So if they publish something in a cassette magazine, it doesn't have any relation to record contracts or copyrights.

AM: Well, they keep the copyright, and they sign a thing allowing us to use it in that particular issue, but, as has happened sometimes, people take notice of it, and the group ends up releasing it.

JB: Can you say more about the kinds of bands that would be of interest to **Fast Forward**?

AM: It gets back to the issue of independence. We're interested in independent music, and in being part of a world-wide network trying to communicate across the world and to set up systems of distribution and

information, transference, and we see ourselves really strongly as part of that. We'd like to think that we can succeed through distribution overseas, and through advertisements for independent records, and so forth.

JB: You are talking about an international network, but what about the music? Do you think there's something specifically Australian about the idea of **Fast Forward** itself, or about the kinds of musicians that are recorded?

BM: I think Australia's been brewing for a long time. There's never been anyone looking at it, so you've got a lot of people who have been working for a long time without being hyped up too quickly. Innocent (an independent Melbourne label), and people like that, have been working very hard and slowly learning how to do things. See, we've got really a lot of different styles that have had a chance to mature, and we feel pretty strongly that the rest of the world is just going to have to take notice before long.

JB: Why do you think there are so many bands here? In Melbourne and Sydney particularly, there are just hundreds of bands. Do you think that this is something particular about what's going on here.

BM: I don't know; I think partly Australia is one of the few countries where you can actually live on the dole. It's not a very good living, but it's not like starvation, like if you're in England, and so a lot of people are out of work and on the dole, and how they get into music — I don't really know why there are so many bands in Australia. There certainly are a lot more in England, where everybody seems to be in a band.

JB: What other outlets do Australian bands have for their music, besides **Fast Forward**?

BM: Well, they can make an independent record . . .

JB: How many independent labels are there?

BM: There's quite a lot, but not many continually going.

JB: Are they really independent?

BM: Well there's one like **Mushroom**, for example, which you know has number one hits every week.

JB: That's the biggest one, isn't it?

BM: Right; and they go through the biggest distributor in Australia, through a major label. I don't know if you'd call that independent or not. Then there are ones that are put out by bands, on a shoestring; they just put out one record, and they invent a record label to put it out on, and distribute it to their friends . . .

AM: There's a network of independent



record shops all around Australia that's very much in contact with itself. A band puts out a single on their own label — they set up their own label, pick a name, put a record out. There is a network that exists, and they can distribute through it if they do the legwork.

BM: There's also a lot of good radio in Australia, and radio that's very interested in anything that's happening. I don't think anywhere else has (this). America has to some extent, but all the public stations have been around for so long that they've become really bland.

JB: Most cities in Australia have at least one, sometimes two stations that play a lot of new music. That's quite unusual, I think — at least compared to Canada.

AM: Yeah — compared to England too, I think, where the media is so controlled. I don't know what it's like in Canada as far as independent stations that are non-commercial, non-government owned stations (go).

JB: Well, there are a lot of non-government owned stations, but that doesn't mean that they're committed to playing . . .

AM: No, I didn't mean that, but in England it's all government-owned, except for one or two.

JB: And (government) can actually control what goes on the radio, they can decide that certain things can't be played, like the Sex Pistols, or groups like that.

Do you think that **Fast Forward** also contributes to them, by making people . . .

AM: I hope so.

BM: We're very much, especially in the earlier issues, into destroying any myths about making music, printing information about how to make records, how to make cassettes.

JB: Can you talk about that a little bit. You give instructions on the use of cassette technology and so forth in making music. Last night I was talking to Warren Burt and Les Gilbert (two Melbourne electronic and environ-

mental composers), and they were talking about the importance of making whatever technology that they come across accessible. This seems to be a common attitude, that whenever you learn something new, or acquire access to different types of technology, to make sure other people hear about it, and learn how to use it if that's what they want to do.

AM, BM: Yes.

JB: How long has that been going on?

BM: I guess everything springs from 76-77. You have this explosion around the world, including Australia, and musically it was a sort of back-to-basics, and anyone can do it, and a lot of people from then got involved and knew nothing, just coming on brick walls the whole way, so a lot of them went through the frustration, and had to find out how to do things.

JB: Did you have any models for **Fast Forward**?

AM: When we started, no, nothing.
BM: Now, there's hundreds of magazines.

AM: Not quite hundreds. (Well, there's a lot). When we came out, there had been a couple of other cassette magazines, but at the time we hadn't heard of them. Like the Audio Arts one, which you know, and also somewhere a thing that Bruce read about Andy Warhol coming across one around '65 or something. But basically we were for almost a year the only cassette magazine of its sort in the sense of its quality, and the amount of issues that we produced, and its distribution, in terms of its being worldwide and so on. Of course now SFX, in terms of numbers, is producing somewhere between 60 and 90 thousand now. But then SFX is completely different; they're more commercially oriented, in a sense they would never get away with putting the sort of stuff on that we do.

JB: Like what kinds of things?

AM: The independent stuff.

JB: You mean just the sound of the music?

AM: Yeah, they have to have a lot of big-name bands to attract people to buy, just like an ordinary music paper in that sense.

JB: What happens when this starts to become, as it probably will, a much more widespread and popular form of distribution for the bands? How do you think that would affect you if that came about?

AM: Well, I think always the leader at the beginning of something has a strong chance for maintaining some sort of viability, as long as you're doing a good job, which I think we are. So I don't think we're going to disappear, just because of something like that.

JB: Oh, no, I wasn't suggesting that you would disappear, but that you would occupy a different place if there was; would that affect what you print, or would you go on as you are?

BM: We do change from issue to issue; we always think about what we're doing, but I guess the basic gist of what we're doing won't change, the thing about independence, and giving the bands a chance that normally wouldn't have a chance, that have something worth hearing, all that side of it — that'll certainly stay. It's the more surfacey things, like presentation, which change from issue to issue, sometimes very, not so noticeably.

JB: You've got the magazine part printed in more of a book-form now, instead of the fold-out form. Before it came as a fold-out, almost like a poster and was very hard to read.

BM: Yeah. We just have to slowly go along, as we can afford to have more

pages printed, or a different format. It's partly economic.

JB: The reason that I'm asking that is that the whole history of independents is that they start out in a very independent manner, and then become a kind of market research, and something else starts up that reflects part of what the original group might have been doing, or might be able to do. What they're doing gets taken over by the more commercial . . .

AM: Sure.

JB: Have you thought about that?

BM: Yes, I've certainly thought about it in different circumstances. I've got an independent record label, **Au Go Go**; it just exists to show Melbourne bands, young ones, just how easy it is to make a record. If I'm presented with a tape, and I like it, and think I can make my money back, I'll pay for it. Some of the bands come in and say, we want to put out on **Au Go Go**, and we'll pay all the costs, and we'll take all the profits, and I just coordinate it, just to break down the whole myth of making records and being in a band. And that's where we started out from.

JB: Where do all those records go? Do they go to the same places as **Fast Forward**, basically, to small independent record shops?

AM: Basically.

JB: Do you think that among the people listening, there are new people gaining access to these bands, or do you think the audience stays more or less the same? Do you think the audience for such bands is expanding?

BM: In some ways it's reached a peak. I tried with a record last year. Well, I've been doing it for three years or so. I put a record out, a really straight pop one, and experimented with what it'd be like to have an independent hit. It was a Melbourne group

JB: I was wondering if you could give some background in terms of how you started out; what kind of equipment you had to assemble, what procedures you had to go through, in case we can inspire someone in Canada.

BM: Well, we were lucky in that Andrew and myself had experience from radio. In fact we were doing the demo show on radio, bringing together the demo tapes for the station — for Triple R — both of us had had experience working for music magazines.

JB: That was **Roadrunner**?

BM: Yeah, I was one of the co-editors; also just writing for other ones, and I'd had the experience with a record label, and I enjoyed them all — except that I was never really satisfied with it. I always seemed to be jumping from one

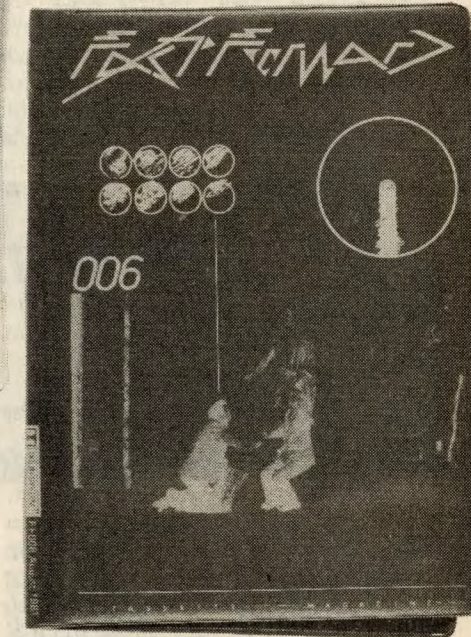
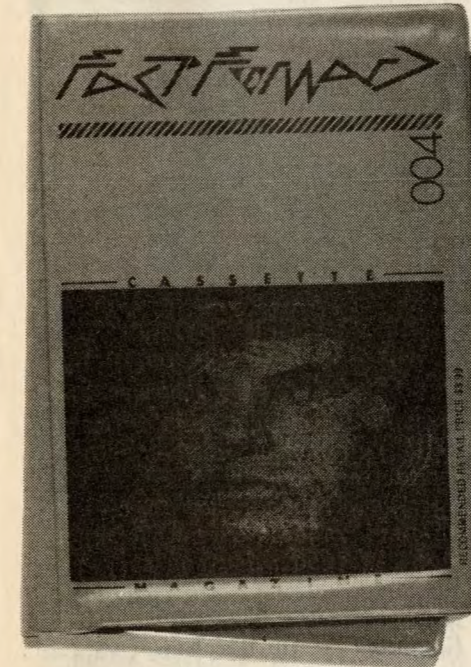
to the other. Then we sat around talking about starting up a small magazine one night, and Andrew suggested putting flexi-discs in it, and then we talked about putting cassettes in it, and as we started talking about that it occurred to us that we could throw the emphasis onto the cassette. It seemed incredibly obvious, at the time; we couldn't believe it hadn't been done. We just sat, and were going!!! — you know — We just said, right, a cassette, you could have it recorded in an afternoon, you could run off the number you have to sell, you could have it out in the streets the next morning. And when we started working on it we met up with Michael, who does the design, he's a very cluey person, and he started talking about ways of designing it. The first thing he said is, a cassette is very boring, it's the biggest problem we've got, it looks really boring. We should give it a shape which is not like a magazine, and not like a cassette, it's something totally new. And the first ones we did were the poster folded in a 7x7 shape with the cassette dropped in. Our first one was how we were going to get the shops to stock them, and our people to understand it. So it looked like a single, and it fit into the single racks, which was a place in the shops where it could go. And then as soon as we could afford to, we were looking for other forms of packaging. Andrew and Michael, on a suggestion from Keith from Missing Link (independent record shop in Melbourne) went around to every packaging company in Melbourne, and just got off-cuts. Just off-cuts of all sorts of different packaging things, they got tin cans, and prime rubber, and chicken take-away boxes, just all sorts of different packaging forms, sardine cans and everything. Then they sat down and went through every form, and one of them was a plastics person who said he's got 50 different colours of plastic and if you'd give him a shape he'd come up with it. He could make it up. So then Michael set about designing the present folder.

JB: It's a great design.

BM: Well — I love it. I love holding it — it's the size of a paperback, tall as a single — and it's just incredibly functional. It opens up, and it's all revealed to you, and yet you know that there's a lot more hidden inside. It looks so good when you get 5 or 6 different coloured ones set together.

JB: Where do you get the cassettes themselves?

BM: The reason we could afford cassettes in our magazine in the first



place was because, working in a record shop, one of the major record labels were offering their pre-recorded cassettes that hadn't sold. They were bulk-erasing them, putting blank labels on them, and then selling them again very cheaply. They said 30c each, but it worked out to be about 55c if you bought 200, so those were the first ones we did. The problem was that it wasn't very good quality tape, because they'd give you pre-recorded cassettes all the time, it wasn't very good, and also you'd get different timing on every cassette, so Andrew had to sit down and run through every cassette to find out if it was long enough. They were all pre-recorded albums that had to be deleted. So we kept that going until we could afford to get them professionally run off.

JB: Do you buy cassettes in bulk?

BM: We don't even buy them. We take our master reels down to the place that transfers them. It's a studio that bought a bulk tape-making machine. It just runs off these huge reels of cassette tape, and another machine cuts them up and slips them into the cassettes. And slowly we've been able to increase the quality of the cassettes we use, and the length of the cassettes. The first issue was 40 minutes long,

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and now we're up to 90 minutes. That's

JB: Will you stay at 90 minutes?

BM: I think so. 90 minutes is pretty long. If you get any longer, it's just too much. Also, it's so much work for us to get 90 minutes of tape every 6 weeks.

JB: Do you sell a yearly subscription?

BM: We sell by different rates. We suggest that people can buy subscriptions at lots of 3.

JB: And you need to encourage more people to subscribe.

BM: Yep. Subscriptions are very important because you cut out the distributors and the record shops. So you get a lot more per issue. Also, we're getting paid in advance through a subscription.

JB: Are you making enough money?

BM: On paper we are. We're always in debt. We're not making enough to pay anyone. We're making enough to cover our costs. We should be making enough to pay the phone bill, and half the rent for this place. Things will get better. Distribution is so hard — you can get an order from America for 300 copies, and send them over; 4 months later we're still waiting for the money.

JB: Do you have one distributor there?

BM: Well, we'd like to work with just one distributor, and at the moment we are; it just makes it a lot easier.

JB: Is this Systematics?

BM: Yeah. It makes it a lot easier, and they'll work harder for you if they've got the exclusive distribution. So we hope to be able to continue.

JB: You were in the States recently. Were you collecting tapes?

BM: I didn't so much collect tapes as just organize people or groups to get something together and send it over.

JB: And have they done that?

BM: Yeah. There's been a lot of feedback.

JB: Do you hear any difference between American and Australian music?

BM: I find a lot of the — I don't know if electronics is the word, but the electronic-based music from America is really corny. A lot of it sounds like — Boys with Toys is the expression we use. I think that in Australia it's a lot better, working within that field, like the **Innocent** stuff; it's just a lot more advanced.

JB: In terms of the use by musicians of the technology itself?

BM: Yeah, and the thought that's gone into it. I guess in Australia, especially with the **Innocent** things, there's a lot of that, of taking away the myths of those things rather than trying to create fantasies.

FIFTH COLUMN



photos by Sarah

As part of its focus on independent production FUSE has published a number of revealing interviews with bands from various social groupings. This interview with **5th Column** is part of that ongoing series which has included **The Government, TBA, Mama Quilla II, Truths & Rights** and **the Gayap Rhythm Drummers**.

Clive Robertson interviewed Fifth Column in March and July, 1982. The following is an excerpt from the second interview. Fifth Column is **Caroline B. (vocals, keyboard), Janet M. (guitar and vocals), Kathleen R. (bass) and Gloria B. (drums)**.

FUSE: So, where will you soon be playing?

Kathleen: Cabana Room, and maybe Start Dancing. In September we'll tour Southern Ontario in London and Guelph.

FUSE: Who would you like at this point to be your audience?

Caroline: I don't think it requires any particular age group.

Janet: We want to play next at Start Dancing because there people are in their teens, who in the past seem to have been really responsive to our music. They dance — which people don't normally do when we play.

Kathleen: We have a diverse audience — the art crowd, Scarborough kids,

some women, a few skinheads, some fashion-conscious people but there's no reference point for that particular group with us.

FUSE: Well, who do you enjoy playing for?

Janet: The Funnel was a good audience, but that was for a different reason — we had shown great films by John Porter and they distracted from us completely.

Kathleen: That was our fault. I would personally hope more women would come to see us but I don't think we would have a particular appeal to a feminist audience or those who perceive themselves as being that audience. It's partly to do with the way in which we perform and the way we integrate our concerns about being women and our political concerns in the music. It's not statement-oriented but more question-oriented. But I would like to see more women come and see us.

FUSE: You mentioned your choice of presentation in comparison with other women's bands or other women in bands. You said you avoided both 'cheesecake' and its opposite . . .

Kathleen: . . . 'Ballbreakers' I guess? We're not contrived but we do exclude certain things.

Janet: Such as?

Kathleen: Cheesecake. We choose not to do things in our performance. It's not there in our sensibility in the first place.

FUSE: When you performed at the

Cabana Room (in March) you also had films as a backdrop, what content were you trying to signify?

Kathleen: With the films we had limited ourselves, we found out that we have to be more selective and think more about the effects of showing film simultaneously. We are thinking of making more specific films that can be used as props rather than as a parallel activity.

FUSE: How does the music function in relation to the verbal and visual content — is it literally connected or is it what music you can play?

Janet: It's partly what we can play. We are in the middle of reconsidering some of our music which is a little slow, a little lulling — so we are responding to the positive reaction to our music which is to provide more up-tempo songs. People like 'Pick-Ups' which is a simple but punkier song that we do.

Kathleen: We have eliminated songs which we don't enjoy as drudgery becomes highly visible on stage.

Janet: We're also overhauling old songs.

Caroline: The music usually comes first, the lyrics never do unless they're powerful enough to demand accompaniment. If I am singing about something angry I like to get it over with in a way.

FUSE: Musically, Gloria's drumming is certainly something which structurally chops the music into rhythmic packages.

Kathleen: Its a considered approach that still provides us with a regular rhythm.

Caroline: The first time it became distinctive was for the song 'Dry Goods' which dramatizes court cases and so forth. The drums started sounding like an execution. When we write music we use code-names. At first it was a convenience so we wouldn't forget parts. Names like "the race", "the lull", "the swing", translating verbs. "Pendulum" is another one.

FUSE: It sounds like improvisational codes, for a dialogue within the band.

Kathleen: Initially it started as being quite the opposite from improvisation. We were concentrating so hard individually that we couldn't hear what each person was doing. Just the din of rock music when you're practicing in a shitty space with bad equipment doesn't allow much critical analysis. We're past that stage — what people might identify as an improvisational or jazz feel is also due to not having much rock background musically. We're not formalists by any means, we use a much more emotional description of music. Janet and Gloria have some traditional musical understanding, Caroline and I know what a bar is . . .

FUSE: That's the place where you play?

Kathleen: Yes. It's like language developed between twins, it's hermetic.

Janet: We use the verbal codes after we've constructed the music to modify

the arrangements.

FUSE: So is it easy to pinpoint musical influences?

Caroline: Satie.

Kathleen: We don't particularly share any common musical taste.

Janet: My guitar riffs have often come out of classical exercises that I have modified. That's my reference point.

Kathleen: I think the way in which that integrates in the whole band is very different from say the usual prog rock band that desires to be musically authoritative using traditional musical influences. It would be a negative if everyone in the band had a desire to be a classical musician but Janet's contribution works well.

FUSE: What about the lyrical content?

Caroline: Most of the songs are from the vantage point of the voyeur, looking into a situation sympathetically. Whether you can benefit from the described situation or help depends on whether you, the onlooker, is in trouble — that's the Fifth columnist position: the spy. We attempt to be courteous to the listener — allow them their own conclusions, We don't take stances like: "We hate this, and we like that, and this is cool". Our attitude lyrically is well this is going on — these are ways we can or cannot solve these problems.

Kathleen: Individually we may (or can) be very didactic people. If you're considering radicalising the situation, or taking a position politically that's fine — it becomes incorrect to attempt to persuade people through a choice of products which can themselves be ideologies: "You can be an anarchist

or the new right this year" whatever, we're not interested in posing another ideology and seeing if people's ideas align with ours. We are more interested in people considering their own situation and doing what they need, criticizing the culture from a human(ist) perspective.

FUSE: So are you saying that you are not cynical and manipulative, but instead hope that your ambiguity won't lead to manipulation. Don't you think people would like you to resolve your own fictions?

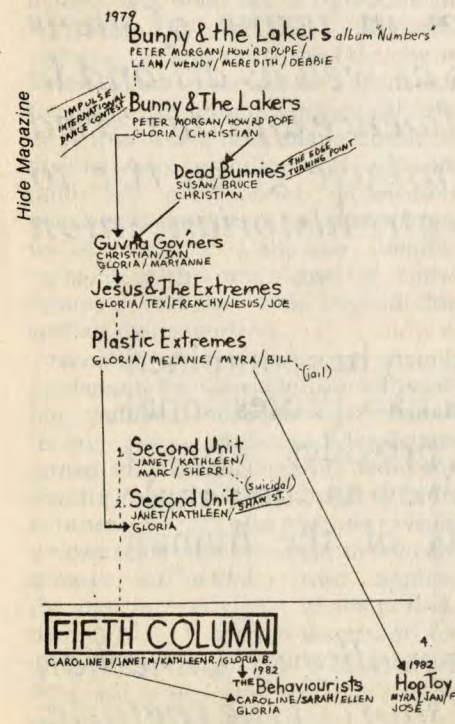
Kathleen: They could. There's a difference being on a stage and saying something to a group of people from a group of people — that's often not considered in discussing a band. How can we, as a group, inform people and expect them to accommodate our position? If people really want to know what we really think about these things they can come and talk to us. On a lot of matters Caroline and I will be in conflict and similarly the other band members. So we're not trying to hide behind what might be seen as the inconclusiveness of our music.

FUSE: How disposable are your songs?

Kathleen: We want them to be documented, but we also need new material for our own and our audience's interest.

FUSE: How do you feel about playing benefits?

Kathleen: It depends. We've done many. Economically at our level we cannot afford to lose money. I certainly don't think that doing benefits for exposure is the best idea around.



THE INVISIBILITY FACTOR

Status of Women In Canadian Theatre

This report has been shortened and edited for publication.

CHARTS BY JOSS MACLENNAN

During the past twenty years we have witnessed the beginning of the development of a truly indigenous Canadian culture, and, in particular, the flowering of Canadian theatre. We have also witnessed in Canadian society as a whole a growing confidence that the sexual barriers, restrictive sexual roles, are disappearing, that women are on an equal footing with men in terms of their participation in the public sphere: in politics as well as art and in business as well as culture. The climate of confidence and increased expectations of the opportunities for women have given rise to such assertions as the following with which theatre historian Anton Wagner concludes his 1979 anthology:

The removal of some of the barriers of this century has combined since the late 60's with the growth of Canadian professional theatres to create a situation that now provides women dramatists with most of the same opportunities as their male counterparts to analyze almost all aspects of the human condition.

Such a perception is, in fact, dangerous. The reality of Canadian women has, as this report will show, fallen far short of the rhetoric.

1. The Undernourished: Women, Theatre and The Canada Council

It was Massey whom Louis St. Laurent's government asked to chair the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in 1949. Massey and his fellow commissioners toured the country, heard 1,200 witnesses, and delivered a report that stated the problem clearly: Canada had an undernourished cultural life.

Robert Fulford, *Saturday Night*, March 1982

applicants, 683* or less than one-third were women. (Table 3.)

Obviously such a disproportion goes a long way in explaining why so few women were awarded grants: a primary factor in the relatively low female recipient rate for Canada Council grants was the failure of women to apply. In this light, a 33% recipient rate for women may seem to take on a new, even benign appearance. The conclusion easily drawn

from these two sets of figures is that, with a 30% applicant rate and a 33% recipient rate, women are more than

*The number 683 refers to the total number of applications by women and not necessarily to the total number of different women who applied. We can safely assume that the actual number of different women represented by these figures was much lower, based on the likelihood of repeated applications over the 9 year period. It would be most valuable for future research to know the recidivist rate on applications.

In the nine-year period between 1972 and 1980, the Theatre Section of the Canada Council disbursed some \$3,172,648 to individual Canadian artists. This support took the form of 996 awards and grants ranging greatly in the dollar value and prestige each carried. They included the relatively small and specific Project Cost Grants and Travel Grants; Short-Term Grants which support artists at work on a project for a period of up to three months; and the prestigious "A" and "B" Grants which allow recognized artists to devote themselves to their work for a full year, without interruption.

As Table 1 illustrates, women were awarded 327, or 33% of these grants. The total value* of the grants to women was \$960,348, a figure which represents 30% of the total funds disbursed. Using the 51% of the population which is female as a guideline for parity, these figures indicate a clear disproportion in the Canada Council's disbursement of financial support (and the professional recognition which accompanies it) to men versus women in the Canadian theatre. Isolated in this way, however, these figures reveal very little beyond this surface disproportion.

Women are a minority among applicants for Canada Council funding. Table 2 illustrates the ratio of female to male applicants for all categories of individual grants from the theatre section of the Canada Council between 1972/73 and 1980/81. While we can see a slight increase in the percentage of women who applied through the early part of the period, overall there is a gross disproportion of female to male applicants: of 2,106

*Note that the grant value figures are based on an average, not the actual figures.

FUSE September 1982

TABLE 1

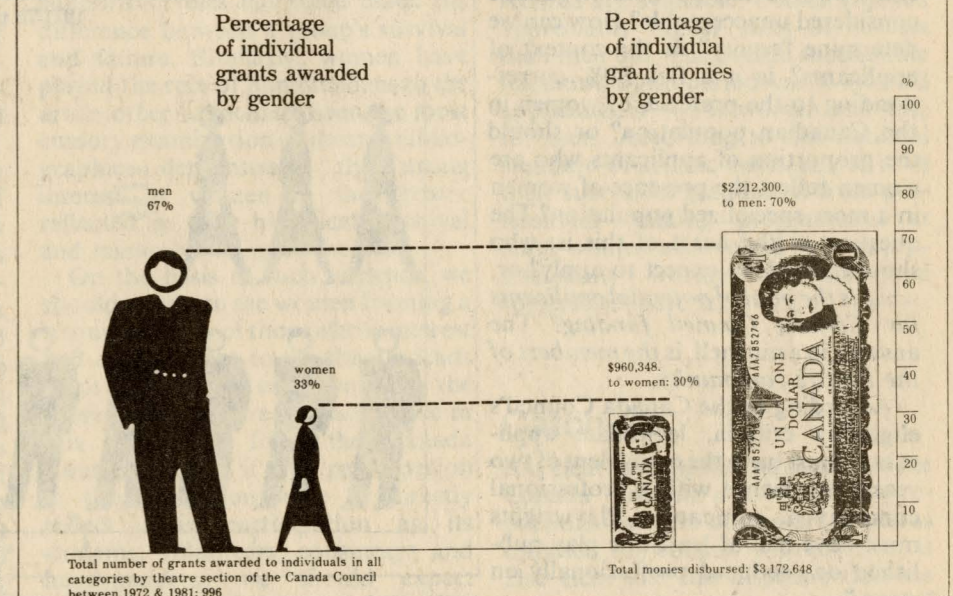
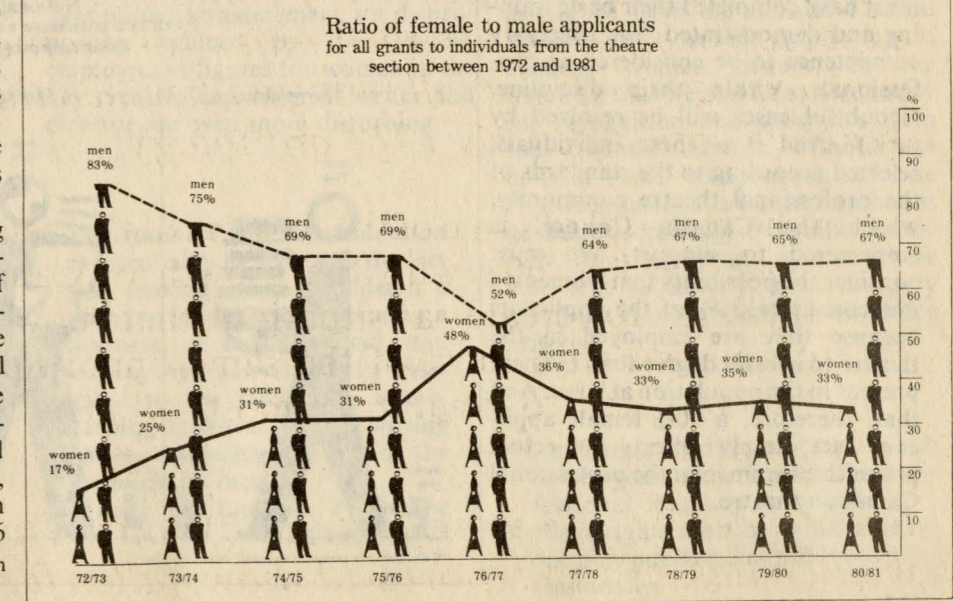


TABLE 2



adequately served by the Canada Council. It would then be almost natural to close this question here, stating simply that: *women were a minority among recipients of Canada Council theatre grants because women were a minority among applicants for Canada Council theatre grants.* In fact, however, the low applicant rate, far from providing a significant explanation, itself constitutes the most serious and complex question we have to address.

What if you gave a party and (almost) nobody came?

Why should any more than a third of applicants be women? On what basis can a 30% female application rate be considered unacceptable? How can we determine "equity" in the context of applicants? Is it a flat 51%, corresponding to the presence of women in the Canadian population? or should the proportion of applicants who are women reflect the presence of women in a more specialized population? The question at the heart of this is: who should/could we expect to apply? or, *what is the pool of potential applicants for Canada Council funding?* The answer, in a nutshell, is *the members of the theatre community.*

According to the Canada Council's eligibility criteria, legitimate applicants "must have the equivalent of two years' experience with a professional company or companies. Playwrights must have had at least one play published or produced professionally on stage."

The minimum eligibility requirements also specify that candidates must have completed their basic training and demonstrated "the necessary competence to be considered as professionals within their discipline. (Doubtful cases will be resolved by jury.)" And it is these individuals, selected according to the standards of the professional theatre community, which the Canada Council is empowered to support. We must consider the possibility that women do not constitute 51% of the applicants because they are employed in the theatre to a lesser degree than they are present in the population at large. And that, therefore, a 30% female applicant rate simply reflects the **actual** presence of women in the professional Canadian theatre.

Aspiration vs. Legitimation in the Theatre

Women form a distinct minority among those employed in the capacities of playwright, director and artistic director in the Canadian theatre community. As **Table 4** illustrates, of 1156 theatre productions staged between 1978 and 1981 across Canada, only 10% were written by women, and 13% directed by women. Only 11 of the 104 theatres examined were led by women artistic directors. At Canadian theatre schools the employment picture for women is not much brighter. Between 1979 and

1982, women comprised between 20% and 30% of the faculty at Canadian conservatories and undergraduate theatre departments; in the graduate departments, they were even less visible, and fading each year: 28% in 1979/80, 20% in 1980/81 and 19% in 1981/82.

Similarly, among jurors for all individual theatre awards at the Canada Council women comprised only 24% between 1972 and 1981. And while no exact correlation can be found between the percentage of women jurors and the female success rate in any given year, the fact that so few women were considered qualified by the Council to judge awards com-

petitions is a sharp reminder to women of their low status in this field.

It is clear from all this that among Canadian artists who are endorsed and supported by the Canada Council, represented on Canadian stages and employed at Canadian theatre schools, women are a small minority. But the real injustice of this lies not so much in the marked numerical disproportion between the male and female employment rates in this field, as in the distressing disproportion which exists between those women who *would* work in the Canadian theatre and those who are *permitted* to do so.

All Dressed Up and No Place to Go/Aspiration

While there is no single path to the profession of playwright or director, nor any single indicator of vocation or ability, the enrolment and performance of women in professional training programmes gives us one gauge of their career aspiration.

Over the last decade, women have consistently formed a majority of students enrolled in performing arts programmes in Canada. And this majority has, in fact, grown substantially over the decade. Statistics Canada figures show that in the 1972/73 academic year, women comprised 58% of the student body in the performing arts; by 1980/81 that figure had increased to 68%. A similar pattern is visible among the numbers of graduates from these departments. In 1970, 50% of the bachelor's and first professional degrees were issued to women; by 1980 women received 74% of these degrees.

Since these professional training programmes provide a key pool for the theatre constituency, how can we explain the gap between the growing majority presence of women as students and their equally dramatic absence from the profession itself?

Always the Bridesmaid, Never the Groom

Although women have traditionally been involved in the arts, keeping the majority of local cultural organizations alive through volunteer work, only 21% of the appointments related to the arts within the Secretary of State have gone to women.

- Lyse Champagne, "Not How Many But How Few", *Women and Culture* brief, 1981

majority among theatre consumers. According to a 1975 study commissioned from the Ontario Arts Council, women were 60% of the audience members at theatre productions staged in the Metro Toronto and surrounding area. (Book and Globerman - *The Audience for the Performing Arts*, Ontario Arts Council, 1975). A similar study of the Edmonton region placed the female audience membership at 58%. (C. Padfield, *The Performing Arts in Edmonton*)

Women also constitute the majority of voluntary workers in the theatre as in other cultural activities. Both in the professional and in the undervalued sphere of amateur and community theatre, the volunteer labour provided overwhelmingly by women in supportive roles has often made the difference between a group's survival and failure. Similarly, women have played the role of handmaidens to the art in other capacities. Even the most cursory examination of theatre bibliographies demonstrates the strong interest of women in the theatre reflected in their historical, archival and research studies of the art.

On the basis of such evidence, we should expect to see women forming a strong majority of those whose interest and commitment to the theatre leads them to seek both employment in the professional theatre and assistance in this endeavour from the Canada Council. In fact, if their participation in the profession were to directly reflect their participation as its students, volunteers, consumers and handmaidens, we should expect women to comprise not 51%, but between 2/3 and three quarters of the theatre employment figures. In the light of such an assessment, the disproportion evinced by the 10-13% employment figures for women in the key creative capacities of writer and director are even more disturbing.

The roots of this discrimination can probably be traced to the fact that making art is considered a primary function, like running a business, or a government, and women are conventionally relegated to the secondary, house-keeping activities, such as writing about, exhibiting, caring for the art made by men.

- Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Centre*, 1976

But we have been dealing thus far with questions of quantity and not quality. Is it possible that, though women in great numbers demonstrate in all these ways a strong interest in the theatre, they do not (at least not in comparable numbers) possess that measure or quality of talent which distinguishes the enthusiastic amateur and competent student from the gifted professional?

While talent and quality in the arts are not easily definable or quantifiable, we can hope to find, in the patterns of women's performance for professional awards from the Canada Council, some practical indications of their ability as determined by professional juries.

For five of the nine years for which records are available, women enjoyed appreciably higher rates of success than men did. The overall success rate for the nine year period was 46% for all applicants; 47% for women and 45% for men. According to this national standard of artistic merit, as well as in their successful graduation from professional training programmes, at least, women were found to be as professionally worthy as men, and sometimes more so.

Catch-22

It is clear that the theatre section of the Canada Council provides a disproportionate degree of support to men as opposed to women. Moreover, it is also clear that this disproportion has its roots in the underemployment of women in the profession. Women cannot receive more proportionate assistance from the Canada Council because they cannot apply for it. Finally, women cannot, in the numbers that we should expect, apply for recognition and assistance from the Council because without the consent and co-operation of the theatre industry as a whole, no amount of interest, training, and ability on the part of individual women were sufficient to **qualify** them to apply given the Canada Council's eligibility criteria.

- Applicants must have the equivalent of two years' experience with a professional company or companies.
- Playwrights must have had at least one play published or produced professionally.

TABLE 3
Applicants to Canada Council by gender
1971/72 to 1980/81

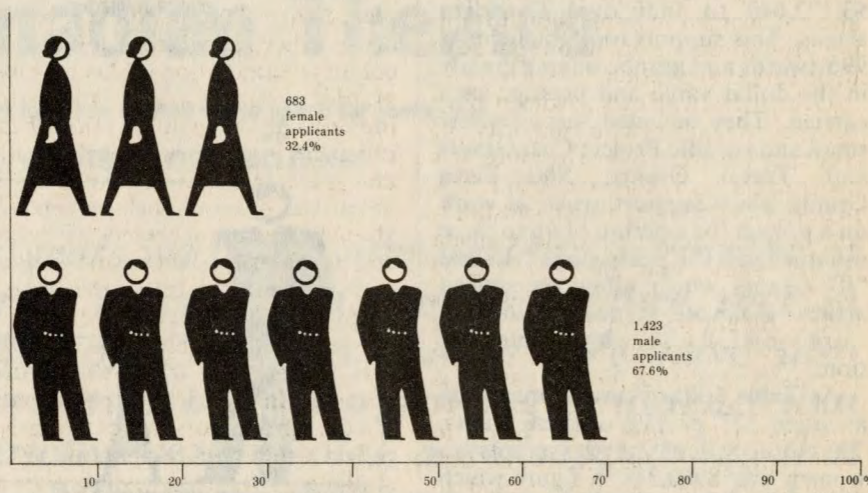
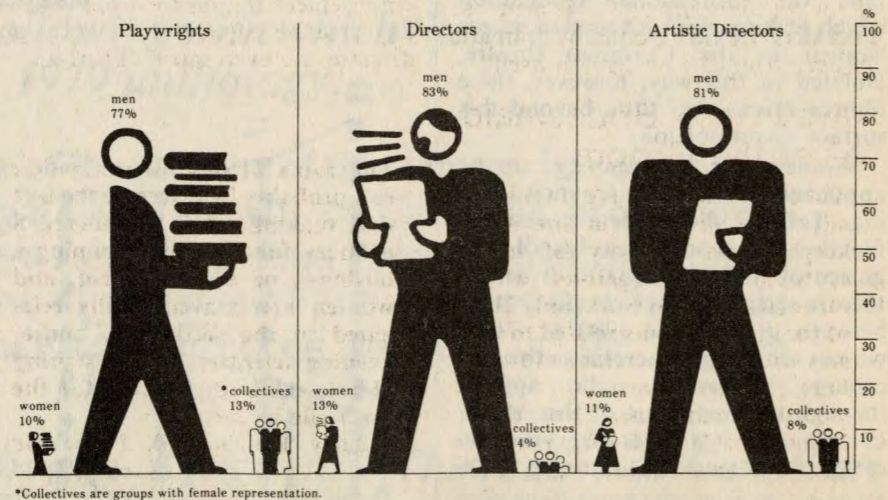


TABLE 4
National Survey
Of 1156 productions staged at 104 Canadian
theatres between 1978 and 1981.



2. Theatre Training: The Chicken and the Egg

Though the men and women did not differ in the quality of their work as rated by the faculty, there were differences in the way they perceived their work and future careers. To the question, "Do you think of yourself as an artist?" most of the women said "no" (67%), but most of the men said "yes" (66%). While 40% of the men thought their work superior, only 17% of the women thought their work superior.

- Sharron Corne, *Women Artists in Manitoba, 1981*

In her study *Women in the American Theatre*, author and scholar Helen Krich Chinoy brings a new perspective to the litany of traditional explanations for the absence of women from the professional theatre (women are conditioned to be passive; the theatre is an active medium; "women can't write for the theatre. period."; "women are overprotected from the experiences of life from which drama is drawn"; "generic female inability," etc.). In a chapter entitled "Where are the women playwrights?" Chinoy points out that the very phrasing of this question is misleading: this is not, she says, a question the women dramatists themselves would pose;

The women writers themselves see things differently. They wonder what there is about the theatre as a medium that has kept women from full participation. Theatre, as a highly public expression and a risky investment, they realize, has been outside of what has been defined as women's sphere. Playwriting is a skill that can only really be learned as part of a group working together in a highly technical physical plant, and they know that women have not usually had access to the camaraderie of the professional theatre.

O.K. Who Forgot To Bring The Women?

This shift in emphasis is crucial to understanding the nature of the problem. Chinoy's emphasis points up the critical fact that one simply cannot be a playwright without the consent of the theatre community. And obviously this applies equally to the field of

directing. For neither a playwright nor a director can practise her craft in isolation from the complex of human, physical and technical resources which constitute the basic materials of the art of theatre. This constitutes a practical conundrum: one cannot be employed by a theatre until one is qualified; and one cannot become qualified until one has had the theatre experience.

Admittedly this is a problem faced by every inexperienced theatre artist, male and female; but in view of the extreme disparity between demonstrated interest of women in theatre and their employment levels, it is obvious that women as a group suffer far more acutely from this problem.

The worst sources, not only of discrimination, but of the tragic feelings of inferiority so common among women artists, are the art schools and college art departments . . . most of which have few or no female faculty despite the plethora of unknown male names.

- Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Centre*

The difficulty of the crucial transition from the role of student to the role of professional should not be underestimated. Apart from the new competitive pressure which stems from the simple fact that there are far fewer professional opportunities than there are aspiring artists, the actual work of advancing one's fledgling career is very different from that of studying. Not only must one continue to develop and apply one's skills, but one is now required to find or create the precious situations in which to do this.

The key to making the transition from student to professional lies in establishing credibility. Until such time as talent is perceived as existing, it does not exist; it is an intangible. Credibility is established through recognition and recognition can come only through the current community.

This transition is frequently accomplished through the assistance of a network of introductions, recommendations, contacts composed of former classmates, teachers, and their professional colleagues: that is, the "old boys' network."

One appeal of the theatre to writers has been the relative camaraderie it provides; the play-

wright puts words on paper alone, but the work is brought to fruition in company, with the help of actors and directors. Male exclusion of women from this camaraderie, perhaps more than any other single factor, has been responsible for the lack of a female tradition in playwriting similar to that which exists in both fiction and poetry.

- Judith Barlow, *Plays American Women: The Early Years, 1981*

Needless to say, women in general have been alienated and excluded from this system of validation. There are a number of reasons for this, not the least of which is the previously cited minimal presence of female peers and colleagues who might help bridge the gap between the world of school and that of the professional theatre. This "invisibility factor", the relative absence of women from the power structure of the profession, has practical ramifications for women beyond the considerable psychological obstacles which result from the impossibility of (literally) seeing themselves in the roles to which they aspire.

In a country that has long worshipped British and European drama at the expense of its native drama, and that has consistently relegated fine women novelists and poets to the lesser ranks of the literary pantheon, it is not surprising to find . . . women playwrights viewed as a curious aberration. In fact, women have made a significant contribution to (our) theatre. Women writing for the stage in this country today are heirs of a neglected but not negligible tradition.

- Honor Moore, *The New Women's Theatre, 1977*

This negation of the contribution of women is reflected in every aspect of professional training. In spite of the numbers of strong female dramatists in Canada, there is little likelihood that students will read and perform plays written by women. And this is the case in spite of the fact that plays by women tend to offer more and varied roles for actresses and thereby

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provide a simple solution to the continuing "problem" of too few female roles. Moreover women students must content themselves with waiting, hoping and competing for the very rare rich female roles which might be assigned. In fact they're forced to settle for the more typical fare of female stereotypes: women-according-to-men. Nor are the texts they are assigned to study likely to contain the records of the contribution of women to the history either of the international or the Canadian theatre.

Given this context, it is not surprising that for anyone who chooses to study at either of Canada's two conservatories, there is less than a 15% likelihood that they will be taught by women. (And no possibility, at present, that their schools will be directed by women.) If they choose to pursue their theatre training within university programmes, their chances "shoot up" to about 25%. At best, the ratio of women on faculty tends to be the inverse of that of women in the student body. What's good for the gander, apparently, is good for the gander.

One isn't just up against one's own feelings as a woman. One is up against a whole external establishment of a man's world created for men, by men where the rules are entirely theirs.

- Quoted from a Canadian director

A great many of the professional theatre women I interviewed in conjunction with this study attributed their first professional opportunity or primary source of professional support to other women. A comparison of employment levels in the national survey and in theatres directed by women supports this experience, contradicting the stereotype of women as natural antagonists in professional life. While there are no doubt significant individual examples of the opposite, (that is, of particular women finding great encouragement and artistic support from men), the picture as a whole is best presented by the employment figures: where a woman is the artistic director of a theatre, the probability of a woman being hired as playwright or director is two to three times (depending on the position) greater than in the national survey. (See Table 12). This support of women by women does not necessarily reflect an active or conscious programme of support or solidarity, but simply, in my opinion, a remission or

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reduction of sexism. One example may help to illustrate the subversive effects of this perceptual handicap within the educational system:

At a small open meeting held in conjunction with this study, two theatre students were present. They were moved by the presence of over a dozen professional theatre women, and they shared with us some of the difficulties they were experiencing as students. They told us that concern was raging in their department about the "problem" of the enrollment of such a large proportion of women students. At the time of the meeting, the chairman was proposing, in what he apparently considered to be in the best interests of his female students, that female enrollment be limited to a percentage which would reflect the real possibilities for their eventual employment.

We must wonder just how widespread such thinking is in our theatre schools, and whether this is typical of the "mind set" encountered by female theatre students during their professional training. This incident illustrates the unquestioning acceptance of limited employment possibilities for women as being somehow axiomatic. The wrong questions are being asked. Such a view successfully removes any responsibility for altering the state of affairs. Viewed in this way, as some sort of natural law of the theatre, the status of women in the profession can never radically improve.

A recent study on theatre training prepared under the aegis of the Canada Council betrayed a similar

degree of gender blindness. The 1977 *Report on Theatre Training in Canada* had no questions nor comments to offer concerning the training or professional needs of women. Though the research involved a survey of Canadian theatre training programmes and 710 questionnaires to Canadian theatre artists (493 male, 307 female), in none of the 70 pages was there any analysis of the findings on the basis of gender. You can't find what you don't believe exists. But this is not surprising given the fact that the chair and all committee members were men. Predictably enough, the committee's researcher, that traditional low status, work-intensive position, was held by a woman.). On the subject of the difficulty of providing adequate training for directors, for example, the authors of the report offered the following neanderthal comment:

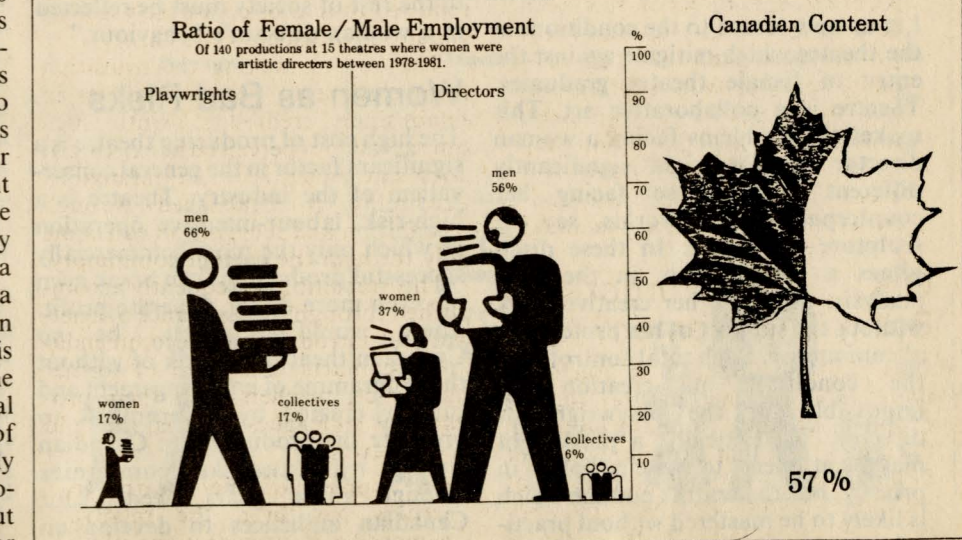
The neophyte director is in an unenviable position. He is expected to assume leadership of the group, but he may be woefully unprepared for this position at the helm. The fact that some have succeeded in this situation proves only that leaders are born not made.

- *Report on Theatre Training in Canada, 1977*

Such a statement provides little encouragement to women who might be more likely to feel confident in their own leadership potential were they provided by their theatre schools with the valuable example of women teachers/leaders/directors.

TABLE 12

Theatres with Women Artistic Directors



For in the transition from student to professional, aside from the "boost" of introductions and endorsements, students carry little with them into the fray apart from the bank of practical experience and the armour of confidence and artistic self-worth. But the conditions of credibility that would establish such confidence are essentially non-existent for women. Without role models, either as peers or mentors, women operate on the basis of functioning invalidation of their artistic existence. Thus lack of con-

fidence and even failure are, to a very high degree, built in.

We have learned from the flourishing of Canadian culture in the 60's and 70's that the historical excuse — "there simply isn't any" — masks a different set of cultural values: i.e., "there aren't any Canadians who can write/direct/act/design of the calibre, and in the style, of the British/American standards we have chosen to legitimize." The implied incapacity of theatres/juries/schools to "find" sufficient female representatives can

have no more obscure a source.

Canada has a theatre which is almost free of the need to turn a profit . . . given that fact, our young artists should be guided towards a sense of values that are both appropriate and fulfilling for a non-commercial situation. We believe the fulfillment of this potential begins with the young artists.

- Report on Theatre Training in Canada, 1977

3. Employment Patterns in the Canadian Theatre Industry

The theatre industry, like other cultural industries, operates through a hierarchical structure in which artistic and administrative decisions are largely in the hands of men. The situation exists not as a result of a massive and conscious conspiracy among men to put women down, but as a far more complex consequence (part conscious, part unconscious) of received assumptions about relations between the sexes, based on an ideology which assumes that the biological differences between men and women must necessarily mean that their fields of social activity must be different, and that men's work is more socially important than women's work.

- Michelene Wandor, *Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, 1981

Let us now return to the conditions in the theatre which mitigate against the entry of female theatre graduates. Theatre is a collaborative art. This makes the problems facing a woman director or playwright significantly different from those facing her counterpart in the worlds, say, of sculpture or poetry. In these disciplines a woman can, in the final analysis, carry out her creative work without the support of her professional community. Such total control over the conditions of creation are impossible for the playwright or director. Theoretically, a playwright may be at liberty to write her plays in privacy, but the craft is not one which is likely to be mastered without practical experience. And a completed play

does not yet really exist until it is "on its feet", or living on stage. In recognition of this, a playwright can neither become a member of the Guild of Canadian Playwrights, her professional association, nor have her work published by the Playwrights Canada, until the work has been professionally produced twice.

For the director the situation is even more severe. There is no work alone. Directors are therefore totally dependent for the conditions of their employment upon the support and power of a complex of professionals. This — an extremely tenuous position for anyone — is particularly difficult for women. As Michelene Wandor points out in her study of sexual politics in the British theatre: "In the day to day rehearsal a woman director needs to confront the assumption that authority can only be male, and that the way women are expected to behave in the rest of society must be reflected in a woman director's behaviour."

Women as Bad Risks

The high cost of producing theatre is a significant factor in the general conservatism of the industry. Theatre is a high-risk, labour-intensive operation in which only the most commercially successful productions can break even or, even more rarely, generate profit. There would, arguably, be no Canadian theatre to speak of without the programme of encouragement and subsidy created by governments to promote the production of Canadian works by Canadian companies through those years needed for Canadian audiences to develop an appreciation for their new national

theatre. And even the Stratford festival, whose box office capacity virtually qualifies it as a tourist attraction, requires over half a million dollars in subsidy from the Canada Council, in addition to extensive support from other private and public sources.

During the heyday of the Provincetown (Playhouse), 1916-1922, roughly one-third of the plays produced were by women. Women were also actively involved in play selection and direction, as well as in the business end of the theatre. Interestingly, when in later years a reorganized Provincetown seemed more concerned with commercial success than artistic experimentation, participation by women dropped.

- Judith Barlow, *Plays by American Women*, 1981

What makes a woman a risk now is that there haven't been women before; the historical exclusion from the mainstream of theatre thus becomes an intangible factor affecting a board of directors' or artistic director's decision to risk their money, resources, or artistic reputations. Once again it's a chicken-and-egg predicament.

Consequently, we must dismiss as naive the notion that the emancipation of women in the Canadian theatre — or perhaps more accurately, the emancipation of the Canadian theatre with regards to women — could consist in anything as simple and uncomplicated as throwing open the stage doors to the gifted young talent — or throngs of them — who might have been waiting in patient readiness to seize their

moment upon the stage. It is no single closed door, but a series of diverse and deeply systemic obstructions which define the exclusion of women from the Canadian theatre.

Where women are (most emphatically) not: The Group of 18

Although women have made their mark in the theatre, it hasn't been easy for them to do so on Broadway or in the mainstream theatre.

- Helen Chinoy/Linda Walsh, *Women in the American Theatre*

Given the high financial risk involved, it is more than ironic that the worst offenders in terms of the employment of women are to be found among that group of theatres which receives the highest level of Canada Council subsidization. As Table 5 shows, among the group of theatres which receives \$150,000 or more annually from the Canada Council, women enjoy even worse prospects for employment as playwrights, directors and artistic directors. Among this privileged "Group of 18" theatres, Canadian audiences can expect to see plays written by women only 7% of the time, and productions directed by women a mere 9% of the time. During the three years to which these figures refer, only two theatres had women artistic directors.

A few of the theatres in this group, such as Centaur and Théâtre du Rideau Vert, had employment records which approached or improved on the national average (Table 4), but they were exceptional for the group. Some, like the Globe Theatre, The Manitoba Theatre Centre and The Vancouver Playhouse, produced no plays written by women between 1978 and 1981; others, like the Bastion Theatre, The Shaw Festival, Theatre Calgary and Toronto Arts Productions hired not a single woman director. At Theatre London and Theatre New Brunswick, no woman was employed as playwright, artistic director or director between 1978-1981.

Obviously, the government's subsidization of this class of theatre does not benefit women; nor, one must conclude, was it intended to. Just who does benefit, however, is not clear. The Group of 18 theatres, in addition to its extremely poor record of employing women playwrights, directors and artistic directors, also enjoys the dubious distinction of producing the

lower proportion of Canadian plays of any of the groupings of Canadian theatres we examined: barely more than half of the national average (see Table 10). And this while drawing approximately 57% of the Canada Council's total subsidy to theatres! (See Table 11.)

Theatre for the Young

In Canada, theatre for the young has tended to suffer the same sort of neglect and professional condescension which it does in so many countries. Whether it is because of this low status, the commensurate budgets, or whether it stems from the tradition-

al association of women with children, the employment of women at children's theatres is much higher than in the national average. At 41 theatres studied over the same three year period (Table 6), 25% of the productions were written by women and 30% were directed by women. This represents an employment rate which is approximately twice what women experience in the theatre in general, and more than three times their rate of employment at The Group of 18.

There seems to be another factor involved in this relatively high female employment rate, and that is the high proportion of female artistic directors at theatres for the young.

TABLE 5

The Group of 18.

Those theatres receiving \$150,000 or more annually from the Canada Council

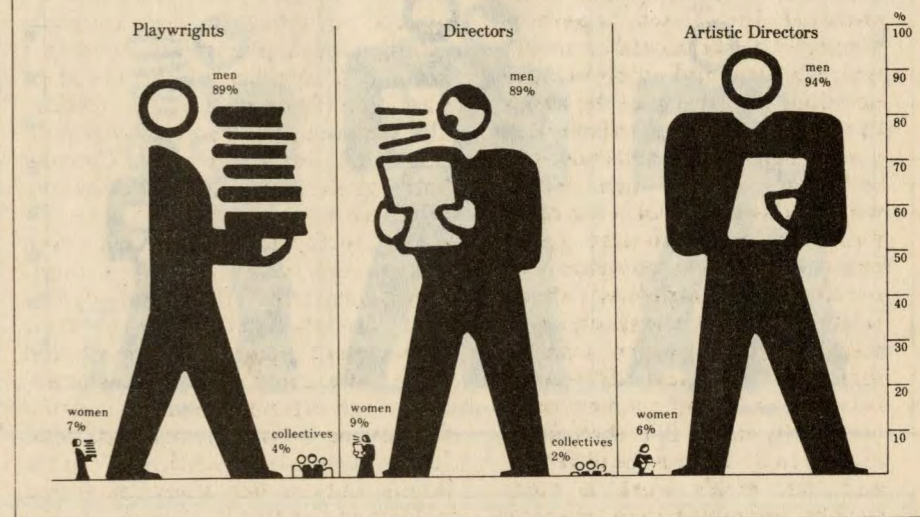
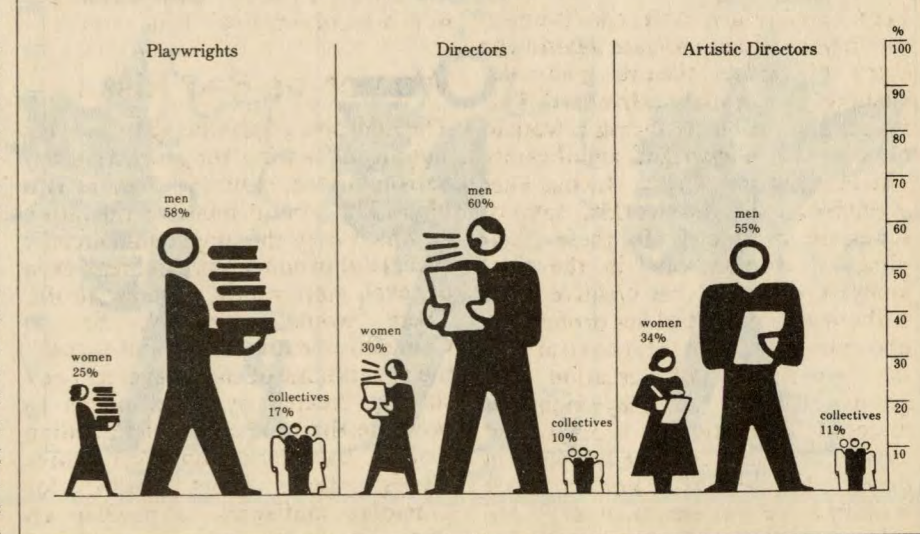


TABLE 6

Youth Theatres of 391 productions at 41 Theatres between 1978-1981



We can best begin to describe some of the conditions affecting the employment of women by comparing the national survey group, the Group of 18 and the youth theatres, in several respects, over a three year period from 1978-1981.

Women Artistic Directors

In the national survey of 114 theatres, 11% had female

artistic directors. In the group of 18 theatres, only 6% or slightly more than half this percentage had female artistic directors. In the youth theatres, a relatively impressive 34% of the theatres were led by women.

Women Playwrights

An average of 10% of the plays produced in Canada between 1978 and 1981 were written by

women. Among those plays produced at the Group of 18 theatres, however, only 7% were written by women. At the 41 youth theatres surveyed during this period of time, 25% of the plays were written by women. (One might have expected the presence of the Stratford and Shaw festival theatres in the Group of 18 to bias, unfairly, the percentage of plays written by men. After all, it is the mandate of these theatres to produce works of Shakespeare and Shaw. Yet removing these two theatres from the sample seems to have little effect on the ratio of female to male playwrights whose works are produced by the remaining 16 theatres. Of 298 productions staged at those theatres, 265 or 88.9% were written by men, and 23 or 7.7% were written by women.)

Women Directors

A similar pattern describes the employment of directors at these three groups of theatres. Based on the national survey, Canadian audiences might expect to see theatre productions directed by women an average of 13% of the time. If they attended the Group of 18 theatres exclusively, however, this likelihood dropped to only 9%. On the other hand, if they attended youth or children's theatre they would have a 30% chance of seeing theatre directed by women.

Canadian Content

An average of 50% of the plays produced at the 114 theatres comprising the national survey were written by Canadian playwrights. However, the production of Canadian works, like the employment of women, was not evenly distributed among Canadian theatres. At the Group of 18 theatres, only 26% of the plays produced were by Canadians; that is barely half the national average. On the other hand, an impressive 82% of the plays produced by youth theatres were written by Canadians. (Here again, one might have expected the presence of the Stratford and Shaw festivals to

Gentlemen's Choice

Theatre boards will rarely admit publicly to prejudice against employing women as directors, but the experience of younger women points to strong resistance.

- Michelene Wandor

It is normally the artistic director who selects the plays his theatre will produce that season, and the director who

will cast and direct them. Sometimes this is done in consultation with a board of directors, or with the theatre's administrator; sometimes not. For financial reasons as well as aesthetic ones, the artistic director himself will (if he is a director) direct a number of the productions himself, saving his theatre the considerable expense of additional freelance salaries. This fact, then, will influence the employment rate of female directors at any theatre. So in the

Group of 18 theatres the very low employment rate enjoyed by women directors is related to the low rate of female artistic directors at this category of theatre.

The relationship between freelance employment and artistic directors is more complex than this, for in spite of the fact that artistic directors are rarely writers, there is a visible relationship between the gender of the artistic director and the gender of the playwrights whose works are produced.

TABLE 7

Artistic Directors
Female/Male Ratio

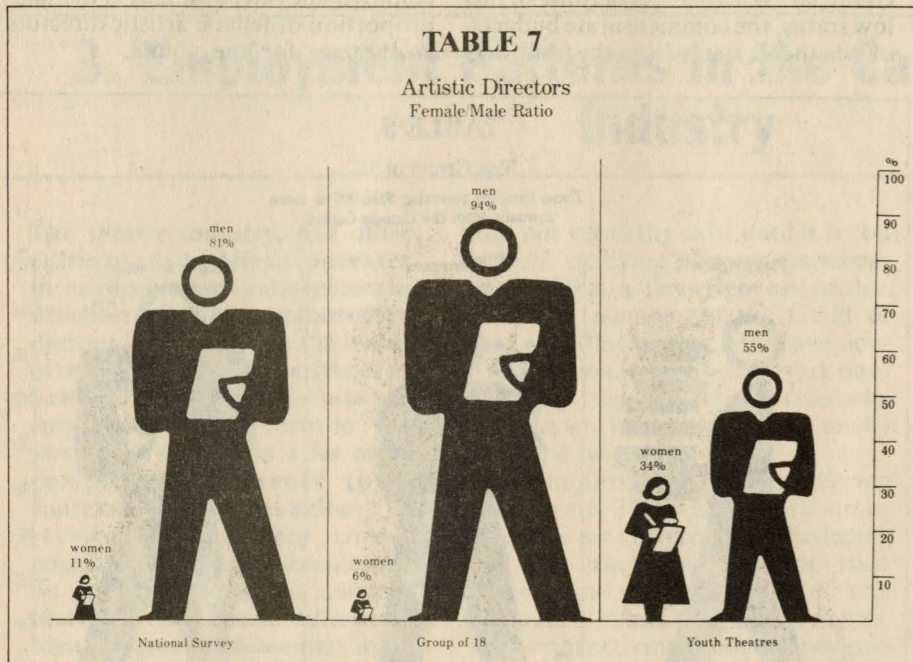


TABLE 8

Playwrights
Female/Male Ratio

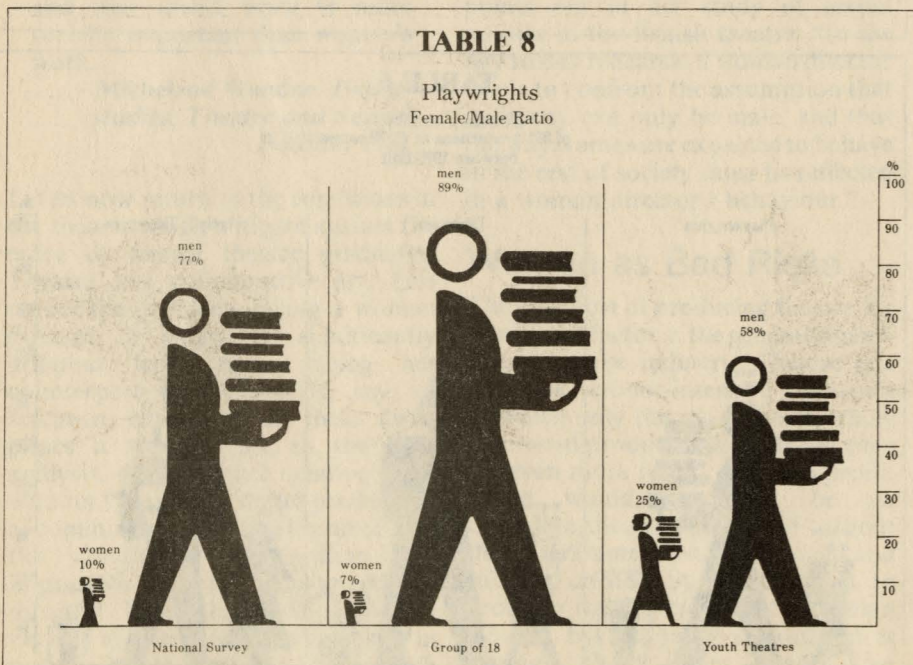


TABLE 9

Directors
Female/Male Ratio

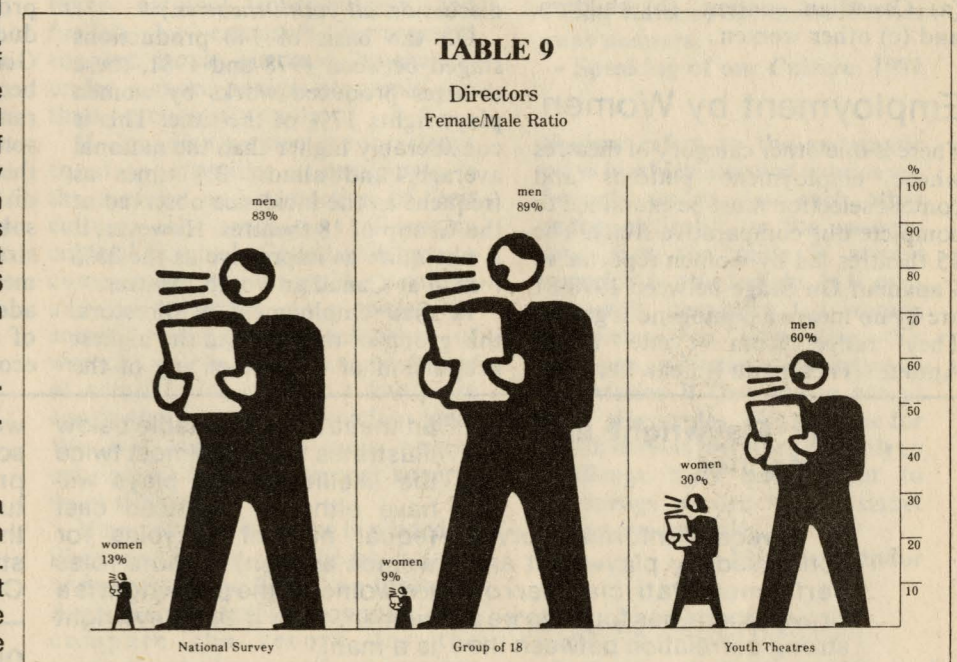
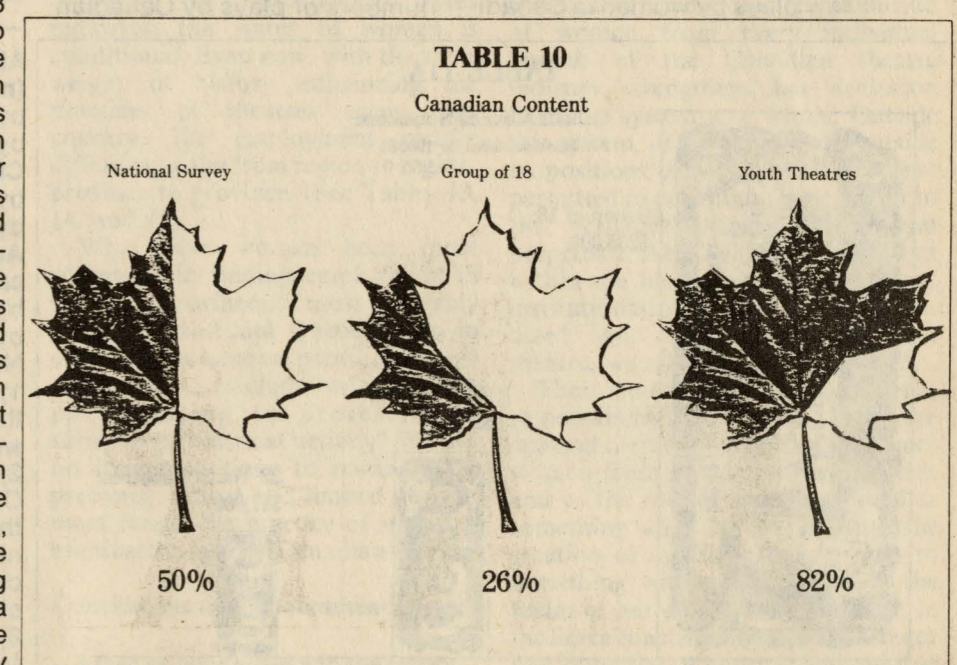


TABLE 10

Canadian Content



unfairly bias the proportion of Canadian Content produced by the group as a whole. Yet, removing the productions of these two theatres from the group has surprisingly minimal effects on the proportion of Canadian works produced by this group of Canadian theatres. Of 298 plays produced during this period at the remaining Group of 16 theatres, only 29% were written by Canadian authors.)

Canada Council Subsidies: The "Most Favourable" and the Rest

In its first year, the Canada Council spent \$749,000. In 1981, it spent \$43.7 million. During the 1980-81 period it disbursed \$8,089,500 of these funds to 120 Canadian theatre companies. The mean subsidy to each theatre company was \$26,500. The Group of 18 theatres comprised the top 15% of theatres funded by the Council, sharing among them almost 57% of the total funds (\$4,591,000) for a mean subsidy of \$235,000 per theatre. Clearly, these theatres enjoy "the most favoured status" in terms of subsidization at the federal level. The remaining 85%, or 102 theatres on the Council's rolls shared the remaining 43% of the funds (\$3,498,500). Of the 41 youth theatres whose employment patterns we have been examining (that is, those youth theatres whose seasons are reported in *Canada on Stage*), only 22 were funded by the Canada Council in this funding year. These theatres received a total of \$497,000 (or 6% of the total fund) for a mean subsidy of \$17,000.

Vive la Compagnie

The stories these charts and figures convey is staggering. Women are under-represented in the Canadian theatre in terms of numbers and in terms of power. They are also under-subsidized, both on an individual basis and in terms of their presence at subsidized theatres. The same can be said of Canadian content in our theatres. In fact women tend to be present in a theatre in inverse proportion to the money to be found there, and in direct relation to the presence of (a) Canadian content, (b) children, and (c) other women.

Employment by Women

There is one other category of theatres whose employment patterns and content selection must be examined to complete our comparative study. The 15 theatres led by women reported in *Canadian On Stage* between 1978-81 are by no means a homogenous group. They range from Yvette Brind'Amour's Theatre du Rideau Vert, one

of the Group of 18 theatres, to the Newfoundland Mimmers; from collective to traditionally organized theatres; and include play development centres, like Vancouver's New Play Centre. Despite the diversity in aesthetics, politics and the extent of their federal subsidization, they present a particularly interesting profile as a group. We are referring here to those theatres in the National Survey (11%) which are led by women. (They are drawn from this category only and readers should note that this therefore excludes from our present discussion *all youth theatres*.)

On the basis of 140 productions staged between 1978 and 1981, these theatres produced works by women playwrights 17% of the time. This is considerably higher than the national average, and almost 2½ times as frequent as the incidence observed at the Group of 18 theatres. However, it is not quite as impressive as the 25% record at Canadian youth theatres.

In their employment of directors, this group of theatres had the highest proportion of women of any of the

groups examined; 37% of the plays staged at these theatres were directed by women, a figure which would corroborate the especially close connection established above between the gender of the artistic director and the likelihood of employment for women. Audiences attending theatres led by women artistic directors could expect to see plays written by Canadians 57% of the time. Though not as impressive as the 82% likelihood at youth theatres, this is nonetheless much higher than the national average of 50% and well over twice the proportion of Canadian plays produced at the group of 18 theatres. Given the fact that Canadian plays because they are outside the historical range of "classical theatre", represent something of a financial risk to theatres, it is significant that this diverse group of theatres with a mean subsidy of \$37,500 annually demonstrated such a high level of commitment to Canadian content. With the added consideration that the presence of women constitutes an additional economic "risk" in the current climate,

The Playwright and the Performer

In a recent informal survey conducted by playwright and performer Patricia Carroll Brown, there was found to be a strong correlation between the lack of employment for women actors and the production of so few plays by women in Canadian

theatres. As the table below illustrates there is almost twice the likelihood that plays will have either a balanced cast (equal number of roles for women as men) or more roles for women if the playwright is a woman, than if the playwright is a man.

It would seem obvious, then, that the production of greater numbers of plays by Canadian

women is a more appropriate solution to the perennial problem of inadequate opportunities for women actors than the quota system for women students considered at one Canadian theatre school.

Of 496 plays listed in Playwrights Canada 1981 catalogue, and current supplement:

All plays with balanced casts or (more female characters)

by Men - 354; 94 (30%)
by Women - 142; 74 (52%)

Children's Plays

by Men - 30; 9 (30%)
by Women - 58; 28 (48%)

Adult Plays with balanced casts or (more female roles)

by Men - 324; 85 (26%)
by Women - 84; 46 (55%)

Note:

- 1) 28% of plays published in this listing were written by women.
- 2) only 27% of plays written by Canadian men (according to this listing) feature equal numbers of male and female characters or more female characters.
- 3) Of 88 children's plays, 66% (or 2/3) were written by women.

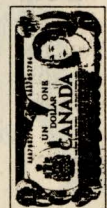
TABLE 11A

Canada Council Subsidies:
Mean subsidies for 1980-81

Group of 18:
\$235,000



All Theatres:
\$26,500



22 Youth Theatres:
\$17,000



the achievement is doubly impressive.

Economics and the Status Quo

A theatre led by a woman is a rarity in this country. Indeed, they are becoming almost an endangered species. In the 1978 *Canada On Stage*, 15 women-led theatres (General category) were listed; by the 1980/81 listing, only 13 were included. In the weeks it has taken me to write the pages of this report, two women-led theatres have closed their doors; in each case difficult economic conditions were cited as the central factor in the theatres' closing.

In their submission on behalf of the Guild of Canadian Playwrights to the Federal Policy Cultural Review Committee (Applebaum-Hebert), Susan Feldman, administrative director of the Guild and Ken Gass, playwright and former artistic director wrote:

... in the past few years we have seen a levelling off of the production of new plays, which has been coincidental with the general economic recession and government spending cutbacks and freezes. In the past few years we have seen some theatres close, fewer theatres that are willing to produce new works, and certainly fewer theatres willing to produce experimental new work or take what they consider to be risks. There is clearly a spiral effect at work where the economic situation of a theatre controls the economic situation of the playwright, which in turn controls the artistic quality and nature of plays being produced which in turn leaves the public with less access to the Canadian theatre and damages the cultural life of the country.

This conclusion was reinforced and echoed in the findings of the investigation into the condition of freelance writers conducted by Brian Harrison for the Directorate of Communications. The playwrights in the survey, were asked to list the most important factors in the limiting of their success:

The two factors identified most often both pertained to the dearth of production facilities, outlets or theatres and the fact that theatres produce established plays rather than attempting new works.

- Freelance Writers in Canada

Nature/Nurture

In the light of all this data, it is increasingly obvious that the employment of women in the Canadian theatre, like the development of a Canadian tradition in theatre, is the result not of any arbitrary law of art or nature, but rather of particular conditions and factors which are, to a great extent, within our control.

The next generation of Canadians will inherit a body of dramatic works and the beginning of a theatrical tradition which was born of a period of fierce national consciousness and fuelled by extensive government support. It was nurtured, by chance, under a more benign economic sun than we currently enjoy.

If Canadian women are to achieve equal opportunities to participate in the creation and protection of their culture, the conditions influencing cultural activity in Canada will have to come under serious public scrutiny and we will have, as a nation, to commit ourselves to nurturing of women's works with the same degree of commitment evinced a few years ago in the support of Canadian men. We will require the same means: substantial and unequivocal government subsidy.

If any further evidence is needed to illustrate the fact that the poor status of women in the Canadian theatre is due to no "natural law", one need only compare the record for the employment of women from province to province. Obviously, as the great disparity in employment rates indicates, the status of women is conditional. Even now, with the same weight of history influencing the practices of theatres across our country, the employment picture differs radically from region to region, province to province. (See Tables 13, 14, and 15).

Why have women been more successful in finding employment in certain provinces, most notably Newfoundland and Quebec, than in others? How have we permitted whole provinces to exclude women from participating in professional, subsidized theatrical activity? We can no longer continue to reward, with precious, critical and limited government funds, the practice of such discrimination against Canadian women.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All of us have a stake in the future direction of Canadian cultural policy: the quality, the vitality, the

very meaning of our lives, and of our children's lives, will be influenced by it one way or another. Therefore, all of us should have a say in what that direction should be. What kinds of cultural opportunities, facilities, and products do you look for that you now lack? What are the problems or drawbacks of those you have? What are the challenges for your community and your country in the coming decades? These are the kinds of questions, among others which to the (Federal Cultural Policy Review) Committee invites your answers.

- Speaking of our Culture, 1981

Sexism refers to the systematic ways in which men and women are brought up to view each other antagonistically, on the assumption that the male is always superior to the female. It is consequently necessary for women themselves to internalize this ideology and believe themselves to be inferior if they are to accept their given roles. The struggle for feminists was therefore not only to challenge male power, but to encourage women to counteract their own passivity.

- Michele Wandor

Deus ex Machismo:

In the final analysis, the problems of women in the Canadian theatre are systemic in nature, and the exclusion of women from every individual branch of the Canadian theatre industry strengthens her exclusion from the system as a whole. Outside this system, or more precisely, outside its positions of authority, women are permitted to contribute their labour to the activities which sustain and perpetuate the Canadian theatre; but within the hierarchy of professional, institutionalized, adequately subsidized and culturally legitimized theatre, we are effectively excluded.

Their removal from the positions of responsibility and authority within the cultural hierarchy effectively excludes women from the definition of artist, and as the role of artist is defined as something alien to her identity, the creation of art has come to refer to something which occurs outside the realm of her experience. It is here, in the fierce constraining of the substance and potential of cultural activity that the Invisibility Factor — the absence of women from significant roles in the

work of producing a national culture — has its most serious and enduring effect on the Canadian society as a whole.

The Canadian government must recognize the existence of sexism and its detrimental effect on the culture of our society, as well as the impact of sexism within the current vocabulary

of cultural images available to Canadians. From this recognition must come a serious and concerted effort (as extensive and powerful as those to protect bilingualism and biculturalism, and to nurture the development of indigenous traditions in all the arts) to begin the long task of reversing the patterns of systemic

discrimination against women in Canadian society. Such an effort can begin in earnest only with the introduction of affirmative action and equal opportunity programmes empowered to effect significant change at every level of the theatre industry. ●

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PATRICIA GRUBEN

**Channel Four:
 British film co-ops make TV?**

A few weeks ago I was in England, sitting in a converted stable that houses the Oxford Film Workshop and talking to its co-director, Lynne Fredlund. She was telling me about Channel Four, the British ITV channel that goes on the air in November. Channel Four was undertaking to support the regional film co-ops with direct grants for salaries and equipment. "That's rich," I said. "Nice P.R. — they'll throw around a couple thousand pounds and write it off as goodwill and a sop to the grant-aided sector."

Lynne said, "No, it's more than a few thousand pounds." I said, "Oh, so you mean they'll pay people to work their butts off making films because they're dying to get on TV, and then they'll have cut-rate regional programming to fill some kind of content quotas? What time of the morning will it be on, anyway? And then after a year or two, they'll go back to the government and say, "We can't fill these quotas, the workshops are full of Commies that don't understand production values. Our technicians are complaining."

"I don't think so," she said. "They seem to be committed to community programming and broadcasting different points of view. And the union, the ACTT, has written up an agreement that we just ratified at the Independent Film Association's annual meeting. It protects the filmmakers and crews, but it also recognizes that people in the co-ops really want to work in a different way from a conventional professional crew."

From here to TVdom

I said, "Oh", again, and went away feeling that because Oxford is a small academic town, people there must be naive about the devious methods that govern commercial television. Probably, Lynn Fredlund and her colleagues across the country had a big letdown coming. Channel Four's hype sounded suspiciously like the fake altruism spewed out at CRTC hearings from here to kingdom come.

I went on to visit several other film production co-ops, in Swindon,

Salisbury, Bradford and Nottingham, as well as **Four Corners Cinema** in London and the **London Film Co-op**. These are presently run with minimal funding from the British Film Institute and the Regional Arts Associations. In the smaller cities they tend to be mostly access centres, although the production communities they serve have close ties both within and between the towns. In London, where there are several co-ops, they are able to specialize more along lines of political or formal concerns. I saw several films made through the workshops — some looking like our own Golden Age of low-budget drama, some quite sophisticated in their awareness of how formal technique can deliver political messages.

I talked to people everywhere about Channel Four. Many of them had applied for the programme, either to be blanket-funded under the Workshop Declaration, or with proposals to

provide a proper base for production with full-time wages for staff members. The Labour government was willing to commit 5-10 million pounds a year (\$11-12 million). They would start with ten groups and work up to thirty or so. Then the Conservative government took over, and that was the end of that.

Then the Independent Filmmakers' Association (IFA) told the BFI that it should be taking a greater interest in that sector. The BFI doesn't have the money to do much, but it has put small amounts of capital into the workshops. The BFI Production Board has sometimes supported single projects, but in a fairly conventional way; and they've recently started a small fund to support workshop production.

When Channel Four was approved by Parliament, it was given the mandate to produce **innovative** programming. The IFA then proposed

Channel Four's hype sounded suspiciously like the fake altruism spewed out at CRTC hearings from here to kingdom come.

make specific films. Although no one knew quite how the programme would work, they all seemed to have confidence in Alan Fountain, the commissioning officer at Channel Four. He had been a regional arts officer in Nottingham and, they felt, had enough experience working with the co-ops to understand what their problems and their strong points were. The worst thing anyone could think of to say about Channel Four was that they didn't have enough money to fund everyone.

Finally I spoke to Fountain himself. He explained in some detail how, from his point of view, the system is meant to operate.

"To understand Channel Four," he said, "you have to look at the background. A few years ago the Labour government was interested in funding the film workshops properly." The Meecher Proposal was meant to

that Channel Four set aside 10% of its annual budget for the workshop network as an autonomous source of production.

Jeremy Isaacs, the chief executive of Channel Four, did not support funding on that great a scale, although some of his Board members did. He appointed Alan Fountain to suggest ways of dealing with the workshops. The ACTT, in consultation with Fountain, the BFI, and other interested parties, came up with the Workshop Declaration, which sets out the criteria for workshop eligibility, salaries, etc.

Under the Workshop Declaration, the Channel has now come up with two kinds of funding. One is a capital allotment of 100,000 pounds for equipment; the other is a sum of 270,000 pounds to support the groups with salaries of 8,000 pounds (\$17,500) a year for each of four full-time staff

members at every workshop, who will run the workshop and produce a variety of films and/or tapes over one, two or three years of the renewable contract. The prime focus of their work will be production; but they will also engage in distribution, exhibition, education and other sorts of community-oriented activities, financed by Channel Four. At the end of a year, the workshops will report back to the Channel, which will then have the option of negotiating plays of the finished work for an additional 15% of production costs. Workshops which are not fully funded under the Workshop Declaration may receive smaller amounts of 5,000-10,000 pounds for equipment and production.

ACTT waives standard contract

In addition to direct support of the workshops, Fountain has been commissioning work from independents, including workshop groups, on an individual-programme basis. These commissions come under the regular

ation funding. "The idea of the slot for the first year is a representation of an alternative culture of which independent film and video has been a part," says Fountain. "It represents some of the main political, cultural, ideological concerns of that sector."

For instance, one section will be a series on sexuality made by feminists. Another will be a programme about Latin American cinema, along with a series of recent Latin American films. A proposed subject is the way that Northern Ireland has been represented by British television, foreign television, and independent film.

There are obvious disadvantages to slotting a programme of highlights from the Regional Workshops, in terms of attracting an audience. However, scheduling independent work under specific issues will enable Fountain to programme different sorts of work with a thematic relationship. "My hope is that various sections within society will be interested in the subject area that will enable them to often see (in conventional terms) quite difficult material, by bringing different sorts of material together." The other

Isaacs has a strong commitment to funding by blacks, women and youth for their own markets. This has particular relevance to the workshop area.

ACTT agreements, although workshop members before now have not been able to join the union. Fountain is hoping that he, the workshops, and the ACTT will be able to negotiate a new agreement for commissioned work that will acknowledge the particular conditions under which workshops operate. This will mean that a workshop crew can work collectively, in smaller groups, and can take the time needed to experiment with the medium or to develop rapport with documentary subjects. The ACTT has already agreed to waive their standard contract for a certain number of hours per year of community programming, in order to allow non-professionals to be actively involved in production.

Some of the workshop films and tapes will be integrated into general programming, but in the first year at least, most will be fitted into a special late-night slot with a budget of 1.5 million pounds a year. This will include both directly commissioned work and (in a year's time) the results of the first wave of Workshop Declar-

ation funding. "The idea of the slot for the first year is a representation of an alternative culture of which independent film and video has been a part," says Fountain. "It represents some of the main political, cultural, ideological concerns of that sector."

problem, the late-night time, will have one advantage: the show can vary in length from 25 to 100 minutes, depending on its content. Avant-garde film will be represented next year by a series on the work of six British filmmakers — for example, Malcolm LeGrice. Each programme will begin with a half-hour segment with the filmmaker, followed by a selection of films, of up to feature length.

After the first year, Fountain hopes to be able to integrate the independent work more fully into Channel Four's schedule. "Ideally the programmes should feed into all sorts of different areas of the Channel, which is what I argued when I first got here. When it became clear that that wasn't going to happen on any great scale, it then seemed important to have the independent slot rather than not to have that space at all. But I hope it would gradually dissolve and all these programmes would become main areas of the Channel."

Fountain has received about fifty proposals and wants to support eight.

To do this he needs twice as much money as has been set aside for the first year. He has asked the Channel to double his budget, citing the merits of the proposals that have come in.

This approach to funding the workshops is evidently not going to save the Channel any money. Based on projections about the amount of work that a funded co-op can turn out in a year, Fountain reckons that even without the capital expenses, he will end up paying about 50,000 pounds an hour for the resulting work. The only area, he says, where it will be cheaper than private enterprise is drama. This is because for instance the ACTT Features Agreement calls for a minimum 20-person crew, and the workshops will be able to operate with smaller numbers. "But the officers of the union know that, and they're quite committed to that themselves, because they could control how much of that happens and the rate of its development." Presumably a revival of low-budget features made for television would bring some benefits to the union as well as to actors and of course to Channel Four. "But it is a sort of cultural and ideological commitment, really. Or experiment. The economic drive behind it doesn't really exist."

Why would a commercial television network, especially one just starting out, make a cultural and ideological commitment that has nothing to do with profitability and involves many factors of risk? In Canada, a mandate from the government to be innovative and socially accountable has certainly not produced anything of this sort from the broadcasters, even those that are publicly funded.

Fountain cites two influences. The first is Jeremy Isaacs, formerly a freelance producer and once head of programming at Thames Television. In his career he has been on the left side of several fights over controversial programming; his departure from Thames coincided with a flap over a show on police brutality in Northern Ireland that was supposed to run while the Queen happened to be visiting Belfast. In the Sunday Times of London, Isaacs is quoted as saying, "If television isn't prepared to say to people, 'the world is a bit different from what you thought; the world is a bit harsher than you were prepared to accept,' then television isn't alive and it isn't worth working in."¹

Isaacs has a strong commitment to funding production by blacks, women and youth for their own markets. This has particular relevance to the workshop area.

The other factor is the way the Channel is funded. It is neither under direct government control like the BBC, nor is its financing intimately tied to advertising revenues. It is co-owned by the Independent Broadcasting Association, which oversees the existing ITV Channel as well as Channel Four. And its income will derive from a percentage of the combined revenues of itself and the existing channel. Thus it will neither be directly competitive for a greater share of the advertising dollar, nor will it be directly answerable to the advertisers for the content of its programming.

And in Canada?

Why can't a programme like this be adapted for Canadian television? The PAY-TV channels are looking for programming; they have Canadian content regulations to fulfill; and they promised in their submissions to promote Canadian culture. Moreover, they claim that the PAY pie was split so many ways, they'll all be in competition for the same product and the prices for acquisition will be driven sky-high.

Unfortunately, the answer to that question seems to be contained in my original skeptical response to the supporters of Channel Four.

In choosing to support discretionary PAY-TV (with which the viewer chooses to pay for a particular channel) rather than a universal system (with which each cable subscriber is docked an additional charge on top of the basic cable fee), the CRTC has effectively directly tied programming to cutthroat competition for a limited audience. Their means of doing this is to out-dazzle CTV with newer movies, pornier soaps, or 'more exclusive' variety. The CRTC has further collaborated with the sensationalist motif by virtually prohibiting PAY-TV licensees from doing public affairs broadcasting, to prevent competition on that level with the no-pay networks.

Between the two national licensees, First Choice and C-Channel, there is a perceivable difference. First Choice will show movies like *Private Lessons* and variety with Barbra Streisand. C-Channel (C for Culture) will show movies like *Breaker Morant* and variety with Maureen Forrester. In addition, First Choice is bidding on the soft-core soap operas that have been bubbling up out of CFTO and Global studios all spring; and C-Channel is contemplating thinking

about considering a programme on great masterpieces of fine top-notch video and film art to be tentatively titled *The Best of the Best*.

Both the national PAY channels paid lip service to regional development in their applications. First Choice promised 25% of Canadian programming would come from the regions; C-Channel (a.k.a. LAMB) offered 20% of all programming. They consider their plan to tape Shakespeare at Stratford to be a good example of innovative regional production. While commending First Choice on its 'willingness to seek out creative talent from all across Canada... and to assist in generating programme proposals and to respond to regional needs,'² the CRTC did not build that requirement into the licensing conditions — except in the case of one thing First Choice did not offer and was not prepared to do, — a 24 hour-a-day French schedule in Quebec.

The CRTC has further collaborated with the sensationalist motif by virtually prohibiting PAY-TV licensees from doing public affairs programming.

There has been some hope held out for indigenous programming on the regional level. Not in Ontario/Alberta where OIPT and ALLARCO seem to be on a collision course with First Choice over *Smokey and the Bandit Part XIII*. Or in B.C., where World View Television will have a multicultural audience so fragmented that it cannot afford to commission anything more ambitious than talking heads.

But Star Channel in the Atlantic provinces made contact with NIFCO (Newfoundland Independent Film Co-op) and AFCCOOP (Atlantic Filmmakers' Co-op) in Halifax some time before applying for their license. In fact, NIFCO allowed Star Channel to use some of its work in its presentation to the CRTC and, along with the Newfoundland Arts Council, appeared at the hearings to promote the idea of broad-based development of local programming for PAY-TV, without explicitly supporting either of the two regional applicants.

In his application, Finlay MacDonald of Star Channel offered to provide 50% Atlantic regional content. CRTC took the bait, noting in granting the license that it "was favourably impressed by the applicant's creative approach to

regional programming which draws heavily on Atlantic Canada's diverse and distinctive experiences. It also notes the applicant's plans and financial commitments for the development of regional creative and production resources, both human and technical."³ However in its wisdom the CRTC reduced Star Channel's obligation from 50% Atlantic to 50% Canadian content; Maritimers sometimes regard the two categories as mutually exclusive.

MacDonald has \$750,000 to spend on production before going on air in February 1983. At a recent meeting in St. Johns, thirty independent producers from Newfoundland took their proposals to him: for taping Mary Walsh's stage play *Molly Bloom*; for a weekly video version of Mike Jones' political radio soap opera, *Oil in the Family*; for another radio crossover, a music show called *The Wonderful Grand Band*; as well as ideas for original drama and

documentary.

In addition, Gordon Pinsent has appeared at NIFCO with an idea for a low-budget drama series which he is proposing to First Choice as well as Star Channel. The programmes would be produced in the Maritimes with local crews (Mike Jones said he wouldn't dare bring a crew in from outside), with Pinsent directing and performing in several of them himself.

MacDonald has already committed himself to some local work. On condition of getting his license he contracted to buy Bill McGilvray's *Aerial View* (which was also sold to Channel Four), although once the license came through he tried to renegotiate at a lower rate. He is now dealing with John Doyle of NIFCO over *Extraordinary Visitor*, which has to do with the arrival of John the Baptist in Newfoundland. And he has contributed \$2,000 toward the purchase of a Steenbeck for AFCCOOP, a move which is faintly evocative of Channel Four's methods.

Cheap programming

In the Atlantic provinces, the co-ops are among a very limited number of potential producers, and probably the

cheapest. Liaison with them could be seen as a means of acquiring low-cost material to fit the CRTC's guidelines on regionalism and fill in air space, leaving prime time and larger budgets for the big movies that are the hook for every discretionary system's sales pitch.

On the other hand, people in the Atlantic provinces seem to take a peculiar interest in programmes from their own region about their own concerns. According to Mike Jones of NIFCO, the most popular CBC show in Newfoundland is **The Wonderful Grand Band**, which features local musicians. Another favourite is the radio version of **Oil in the Family**, which is broadcast daily on CBC and has recently been picked up by ten of its stations across the country. It is conceivable that people could be drawn to Star Channel by popular local programming.

The biggest problem with Star Channel is that it may never get on the air. The cost of equipment is so high compared to the potential income from subscribers that to some observers Star Channel seems even less viable than the other PAY-TV licensees. According to Sandra Gathercole, a former CRTC member and media consultant, the whole system of discretionary PAY-TV is doomed; it's a ploy by the cable companies to get the licensees to pay for the expensive hardware needed to scramble signals to non-subscribers. With this technical capability, the cable companies would then be in a

position to transmit U.S. Pay and cable channels to Canada at a far lower rate than Canadian Pay TV can afford to charge for its own channels.

This is dependent on the outcome of the Cornerbrook lawsuit presently in the courts, testing the legality of such transmission. If the case is resolved in favour of the cable company, Discretionary Pay-TV licensees would be in effect the agents of their own destruction, bankrupting themselves to pay for the equipment to carry competing channels from the States that will drive them completely out of business.

The alternative to Discretionary Pay-TV is the Universal system. Rather than charge \$15 a month to subscribers, a Universal Pay channel would be financed by a surcharge of \$2.50 or so on the basic cable rate and would be available to all cable customers automatically, eliminating the need and therefore the expense (approximately 60% of total expenditures, as compared to 20% for programme acquisition) of scrambling the signal to non-subscribers. Because it would not be dependent on direct subscription appeals but would be financed through a blanket fee, it would be in a comparable position to Channel Four: independent rather than government-owned, but not directly accountable to advertisers.

Universal Pay-TV was the first type of license offered by the CRTC; midway through the application process, the rules of the game were changed to pro-Discretionary and the

one Universal applicant left in the game was shut out. Now, having already granted six channels, the CRTC has promised to re-open the hearings in the fall for Universal system applicants. As any Universal channel would put the Discretionary channels into more trouble than they already have, they are likely to intervene strenuously on grounds of unfair competition.

Deflective sop?

Most observers believe that the CRTC's promise to reconsider Universal is a sop to deflect the massive protests made by the film and television production community after the litter of licenses was granted. It's highly unlikely that a Universal license will be approved in the immediate future.

From the point of view of the Canadian independent film- and video-maker, the next few years of PAY-TV offer little hope for access and even less for dialogue over programming elements. Access under the present circumstances of Discretionary PAY means filling in the corners of the schedule for exploitative rates to fulfill content regulations, or adapting to the perceived market for soft-core soap or mainstream variety; or, at worst, a scenario of broken contracts and wasted effort as the PAY networks come crashing down.

The most hopeful projection Gathercole can make is that in five years' time when most or all of the Discretionary channels have gone bankrupt, the concept of Universal PAY will be revived and a CRTC sobered by the fiasco, and in opposition rather than collaboration with the cable barons, will make good their intentions for Canadian content by licensing a group more accountable to the public interest than to the banks.

By then, the model that Channel Four is initiating for cooperation with the workshops will hopefully have some mileage and some credibility. At that point it might be possible to admit that sort of thinking into Canadian consciousness.

¹ "Jeremy Isaacs: The Fourth Man?" *Times Sunday Magazine*, 10 August 1980, p.47.

² "CRTC Gives Reasons for Choosing First Choice for Pay TV," *Cinema Canada*, April 1982, p.10

³ "Alberta, Ontario & Atlantic Canada Get Regional Pay Systems," *Cinema Canada*, April 1982, p.15.

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The Regalado Case ... leaves a bloody trail through the pristine snows of Canadian civil liberties

On January 5th, 1982, Victor Regalado, a Salvadorean journalist, attempted to cross into Canada from the United States at Blackpool, Quebec. Regalado had visited Canada before, and was aware, in a general sense, of comments made by high government officials here extolling our humanitarian tradition as it applied to Salvadorean refugees. He was also more than aware of the sinister equation used by the U.S. government to turn down Salvadorean refugee claimants; according to the U.S., the Salvadorean government does not persecute its citizens. Rather, goes the line, it is "extremists of the right and left" who perpetrate the daily murders that scar El Salvador's present. Logically, then, since one ought not to fear the government in El Salvador, no Salvadorean can be said to have the requisite "well-founded fear of persecution" which defines a Convention refugee.

As a result of this general awareness of the distinction in policies of the two governments, Regalado made his way through the United States without contacting immigration officials there; he was "an undocumented alien." In contrast, he made no attempt to enter Canada by stealth, but rather presented himself forthrightly at the border crossing, stating that he wished to be considered a Convention Refugee.

Border officials prepared the required "Section Twenty Report" which required Regalado to present himself to an Immigration judge, or adjudicator, in two days time. They did not tell him, though they might have, that Canadian law makes it impossible to make a refugee claim *except* in the hearing presided over by such an adjudicator. Then, the boom fell. An immigration officer, punching Regalado's vital statistics into a computer terminal, became excited, and summoned his co-workers to view the data being thus generated. Shortly thereafter, Regalado was handcuffed and taken directly into the custody of U.S. officials. The Salvadorian, who was subject to immediate deportation in the U.S., watched nervously as the

border officials of the two nations conferred privately. Regalado never discovered what the Canadians told their American counterparts. For him, the result of the conversation was a short trip to the closest U.S. County jail, where he was told he would be deported to El Salvador.

Immigration border officials have no power to deport or exclude a person from Canada. They have a duty to assure that entry is adjudicated, and may detain or require a bond to be posted to assure that a person appears for inquiry. In Regalado's case, however, officials used a section of the Immigration Act pertaining to those who are "residing or sojourning" in the U.S. Such people, according to the Act, may be asked to stay in the U.S. until an adjudicator "becomes available". In fact, that

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section of the Immigration Act causes little controversy when the person being asked to wait on the U.S. side is an American resident, or a visitor with a visa. Its use is entirely inappropriate when the person being asked to wait on the American side is a refugee claimant who cannot trust the U.S. authorities. Through the efforts of several lawyers, American officials finally consented to allow Regalado his day in a Canadian court, and he was returned to Blackpool for his Immigration "inquiry".

The purpose of such an inquiry, from the point of view of Canadian officials, is to establish that a person

who is the subject of the inquiry has no right to come into Canada. Normally, a specific accusation is levelled against such a person, as for instance that he or she "is inadmissible because he or she is not a genuine visitor". A person with active tuberculosis would be accused of being medically inadmissible. Once the accusation is made, it is the obligation of the person accused to prove that the accusation is unfounded. Again in the normal situation, this is done through the calling of witnesses, the examination of documents, and the like.

Security certificate

The accusation which Immigration had prepared against Victor Regalado was something unusual. It was that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Victor Regalado would, while in Canada, "engage in or institute the subversion by force" of a government. Not, it should be noted, the Canadian government but *A* government. Our officialdom had something else waiting for Regalado when he returned for his inquiry. It was a Security Certificate, a document which, when signed by two named Ministers of the Crown, "is proof of the matters stated therein." In other words, Victor Regalado would not be given any specifics of the allegations against him, and would also not be allowed to disprove those allegations. The Security Certificate was binding on the adjudicator. The "inquiry" was completely blocked by the Certificate. One can most easily envision Regalado's situation by thinking of a criminal trial, in which the burden of proof is not on the Crown, but on the defendant, and in which the authorities can simply foreclose all defence by producing a document, signed by themselves, stating that "the defendant is guilty as charged". Here, Immigration Minister Axworthy and Solicitor General Kaplan had signed a Certificate stating that the Salvadorian was inadmissible under S. 19 (1)(f), 'his presence in Canada being detrimental to the national interest'. No particulars were given, despite energetic efforts by

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the defence to find out why their client was being expelled.

Under the complex asylum provisions, the deportation order which otherwise would have been made does not come into effect until after the refugee claim, called an examination under oath, is made in another forum. Usually, this process can take from six to eight months, so the decision by the Adjudicator as to bail is an extremely important one. By law, a person is to be released unless it is unlikely that he or she would return to receive the final decision, or, is a danger to the public. The representative for the Immigration Commission strenuously argued that Regalado should not be released, basing himself solely on the Security Certificate. Despite numerous defence witnesses who established that Regalado had no violence in his past, and had never even supported violence verbally, the Certificate was taken as all the proof that was needed, and Victor Regalado was incarcerated at Parthenais Jail, Montreal.

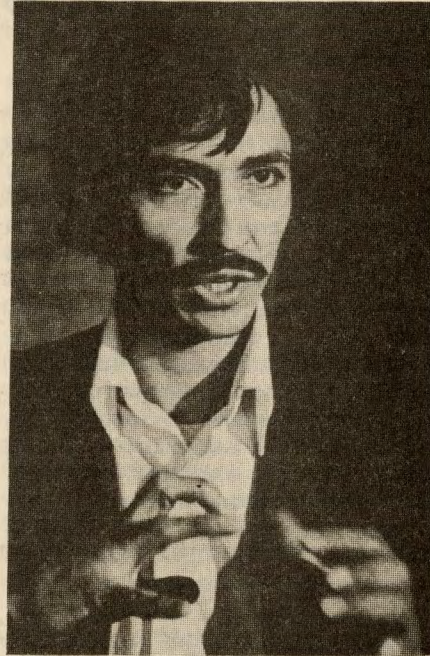
As the adjudicator read his decision rejecting all the offered evidence, and accepting the Minister's certificate of his guilt, Victor Regalado interrupted for the first time in the long proceeding. "Sir," he said, "Does your decision mean that I am a political prisoner?" The adjudicator turned bright crimson, swallowed several times, and stammered "Not in my opinion." Regalado was then removed to jail, where he pursued his claim to be a refugee.

From this point, the defence began to pick up steam. A strong current of revulsion swept over Quebec public opinion, and a Freedom For Victor Regalado campaign began. An influential editorial in *Le Devoir*, dated January 16, 1982, titled "Une Mesure Totalitaire" helped to crystalize opinions in the middle class, French-speaking milieu. Meanwhile, Regalado's canny lawyer, Noel St. Pierre, began to use the weekly "Detention Review" procedure to focus public attention on the case as never before. Week after week, influential Quebecers testified in Regalado's favour; and every week the reviews became more and more crowded, with print and electronic media journalists vying for space and for interviews.

Pressure slowly began to build within the Liberal Party, as local MP's were deluged with complaints. Meanwhile, NDP Immigration Critic Dan Heap demanded that Axworthy release Regalado, cancel the Security

Certificate, and agree that Regalado would never be deported to El Salvador, or to the United States, where his liberty would also be in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, Regalado's evidence concerning persecution of himself had been considered by the Refugee Status Advisory Committee, which decided, on February 5, 1982 that the Salvadorian *did* have a well-founded fear of persecution, and *was* a refugee to be protected by the terms of the United Nations Convention on Refugees.



This decision placed Minister Axworthy under intense pressure. Church and political groups demanded to know whether Canada, now that it had conceded that Regalado was right in fearing that his government would persecute him, nonetheless would deport him to that same regime. Five days after Regalado was awarded Convention Refugee status, Axworthy responded to a further Dan Heap question in Parliament by undertaking never to deport Regalado to either El Salvador or to the U.S. He maintained, nevertheless, that Regalado would be kept in jail pending all appeals, and refused to withdraw the Security Certificate.

The two victories, one following another in rapid succession, galvanized the defence team, and the public of Quebec. A petition signed by 22 Quebec personalities demanding his release was followed shortly after by a new petition, signed by 116 notables. Shortly after, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a resolution in support of the Salvadorian. Statements of support were made by such luminaries as

Adolphe Proulx, Archbishop of Quebec, and Warren Allmand, ex-Solicitor-General of Canada.

About face

Finally, after nine weeks, the Federal Cabinet instructed the Immigration Commission to argue for Victor Regalado's release. Adopting the defence arguments of the previous weeks almost verbatim, the Ministers' representative, Mr. Duval, stated that Regalado was not a danger to the public, and that the Certificate did not state that he was. Duval distinguished between a person who is dangerous, and one who is likely to overthrow "a government" by force. Nonetheless, the Minister's representative demanded stringest conditions of release, including a \$20,000 bond, and a requirement that Regalado not leave the Montreal area.

Adjudicator Michael Meunier scathingly attacked the Commission's about-face, complained in general about the use of Security Certificates, and released Regalado without any condition restricting his freedom. He asked for no bond money. That afternoon, Victor Regalado walked out of Parthenais jail a free man.

His freedom, however, was not yet secure. Unless his deportation was overturned on appeal, he would eventually have to leave Canada. At this point, Solicitor-General Robert Kaplan (perhaps aware that Regalado would never work on his campaign organization) delivered a vicious attack on the Salvadorian. Regalado, he claimed, had engaged in certain activities prohibited by law (he did not specify these), was financed by a foreign political party, and had been the accredited representative of *Prensa Latina*, the Cuban press agency, "which is known to be directed by a foreign intelligence agency".

This was the first knowledge that Victor Regalado had received as to why he was subjected to his ordeal. The attack caused great interest in the defence team, moreover, because, as far as was known, Kaplan's remarks were simply false.

Regalado had never been accredited to *Prensa Latina*, but rather to *Agencia Latina*, which no one had ever accused of being tied to the Cubans. Apart from sloppy misstatements, there was also a smear quality to Kaplan's claims. Note, for example, that he never accused Regalado of working for a foreign intelligence agency, nor even of knowing the "fact" that *Prensa Latina* is "controlled" by the D.G.I. Instead, vague prose and

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unsubstantiated allegation is used to warn his supporters away.

Regalado's defence team reasoned that if Kaplan could indulge in loose talk in the public prints, he could surely divulge the same information under oath, subject to cross-examination. Since the Security Certificate had originally been justified on the basis of the deep secrecy which must surround the allegations themselves, how, they reasoned, could Kaplan now refuse to repeat the same information under oath?

Defence lawyer Giuseppe Sciortino struck upon the remedy of calling Kaplan and Axworthy at the appeal hearing where Regalado's fate was to be decided. Predictably, however, both Ministers refused to comply with the subpoenas, sending instead government lawyers to argue that everything the Ministers knew came from "secret reports". When Sciortino pointed out that the reports were evidently not to secret that they could not be selectively summarized, or mis-summarized, in press releases which served the Ministers' political interest, Board Chairman Jean-Pierre Houle responded: "The law says that if you cross-examine the Ministers, it's against the national interest."

The Ministers were never forced to testify. That result is presently being appealed up the ladder of Federal Courts, with the outcome very much in doubt. In two or three months, Victor Regalado will know whether Canada can be a refuge as well as a prison for him.

Bloody trail . . .

Whatever the outcome, the case leaves a bloody trail in the 'pristine' snows of Canadian civil liberties. Although adjudicated on legal principles which predate the new Charter of Rights and Liberties, there is certainly no guarantee that the new legislation would make another Regalado case impossible.

Perhaps Dominique Boisvert of the *Ligue des droits et libertés* said it best in *La Presse* of February 5th: "Did you know that in Canada it is possible to be jailed for more than a month without ever being accused of anything, and even without having the least idea of why you are in jail?"

That possibility remains, not only for refugees like Regalado, but for all landed immigrants as well, who can be imprisoned without trial under S.40 of the Immigration Act, for "crimes" such as the allegation against Regalado.

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In fact, the only protection against misuse of National Security legislation is public opinion, not law, as the Regalado case makes plain. That has been the pattern with numerous cases in which the government has invoked a nefarious threat to keep people such as Gabriel Kolko, Andre Gunder Frank, Istvan Meszaros, Steven Salaff and Dr. Frederica Luchsinger out of Canada. Once the public has become aroused, the government has relented in almost every case. Needless to say, no demonstrable threat to Canada's

security has ever been shown to follow the reversal of these decisions.

And so with Victor Regalado. He has been at large in Canada since March 10th, nearly six months. The Dominion still stands, and Regalado has done nothing more threatening than express confidence that the government will "discover their mistake and let me stay". The odds are that with a continual pressure from Canadians, the government can be made to do just that.

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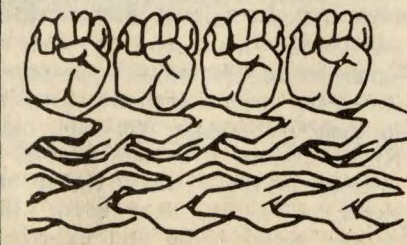
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SARA DIAMOND

Blueprints for Survival Artists construct The Civil Defense Information Centre

Vancouver's status as a major target area has led to an increasing need for information facilities to provide the public with blueprints for survival from nuclear attack. Current data forecast two to three megaton warheads targeted at the Vancouver-Victoria area. (Civil Defense Information Centre, Press Release, Jan. 1982).

When the *Vancouver Sun* printed this statement verbatim they believed that they were excerpting from a press release by the federal government. In fact, they were providing an advertising channel for a multi-media anti-nuke exhibition created by three Vancouver artists, Laura Hackett, Dean Mitchell and Daniel Werger.

The three recent graduates of Emily Carr College of Art, working in collaboration, sought to create a show which would grasp at the growing public fear of nuclear annihilation. Their two week presentation (Feb. 1-14, 1982, Unit Pitt Gallery, Vancouver) combined performance, video, sculpture, architectural media, slides and blueprints within the gallery space and a media and leafletting assault without. They were unusually successful in their ability to educate a mass audience, rupture traditional gallery space and in their generation of mass media coverage. In this interview, FUSE talks to Laura Hackett and Dean Mitchell.

Sara: How did "Blueprints for Survival" come about?

Laura: The show came together with three working artists who have all been concerned over the years about the nuclear issue. We wanted to deal with it through the medium of art, with whatever focus we wanted to take individually and collaboratively under one space. The big concern was: what aspect of the nuclear issue did we want to focus on? We came to the realization that you have to deal with all aspects of the issue because they are all linked. You can't separate disarmament from uranium mining, or nuclear power. We read a lot of information that isn't accessible to everybody, so we tried to simplify it and make it as elementary and communicable as possible. By creating enormous four by five blueprints we could do visual imagery and written information in large scale. It made it much easier to absorb than if you were to read books and books of the same information. We regionalized the information. We had a lot of references to articles from the local newspapers, as well as magazines, editorials, cartoons. Humour was an important part of the show because we realized that the issue

is so serious that another method of allowing or helping people to absorb the information was to put in a humorous element.

Dean: Humour was a way to release all this pent-up anxiety about the issue.

Sara: It's certainly struck me that people can easily become cynical or hopeless about nuclear war. Did you try to offer solutions to people through the show?

Laura: During the evenings we had different groups come in: those who had been directly politically active with the issue, people like the **Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility**, and **Women Against Nuclear Technology** to speak from a feminist perspective, individuals who had a lot of information about B.C. Hydro, people who could talk about a more global, international context. One fellow talked about multinationals and the **Trilateral Commission**. The feminist perspective was really important to me, as was the indigenous perspective: so many Native Indians are being abused by uranium mining. It was an educational experience as well as an event which people could come and experience visually. We had a hand-out which

described what you can do. It was put at the entrance of the show and it talked about individual approaches to taking action and about joining groups. There was a concern about not maintaining that overwhelming feeling that so many people have about the nuclear issue which is, "What the hell can I do about it. It's so devastating, so enormous, I can't do anything." Which is a myth because internationally, everybody collectively working together has had impact. The fact that the Geneva peace talks have evolved, that's enough to see that something has been brought about by the general public.

Sara: How did the nuclear issue emerge as an important arena for you to intervene in, as artists?

Dean: It seems to be a really immediate concern. Things are continuing to escalate. The stalemate that in the 1950s they wanted to achieve kept on escalating into the 60s and on into the 70s. Now we're having a whole new round of the military arms race. The economics of it are just one aspect. It overtakes human needs. The money that goes to build a bomb is not going to education or food stamps for the poor. It superimposes itself onto

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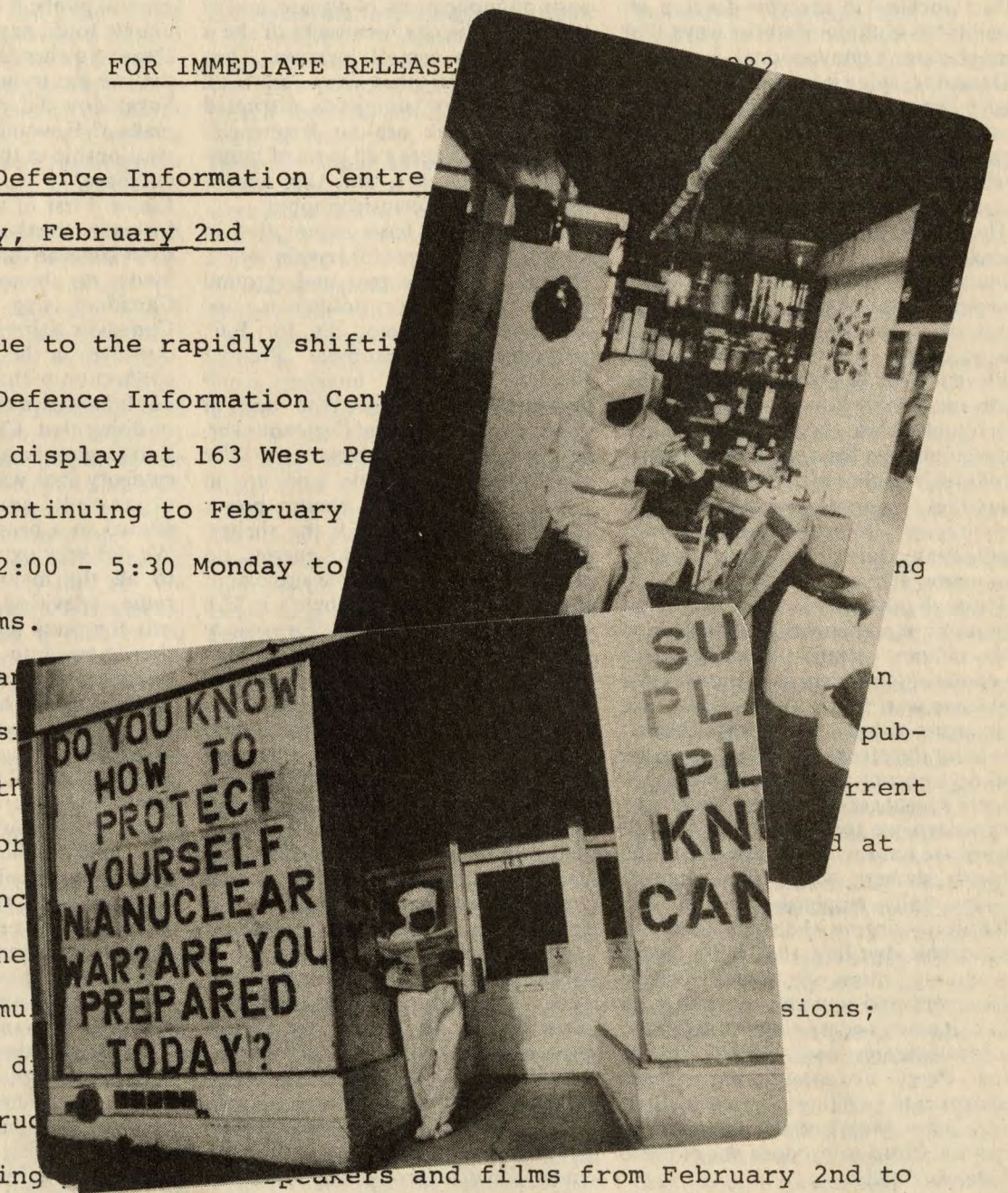
Tuesday, February 2nd

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information display at 163 West P
2nd, continuing to February
from 12:00 - 5:30 Monday to
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speakers and films from February 2nd to
February 13th. For more information about the program of eve-
ning events, call the Civil Defence Information Centre.

- 30 -



everything. It's not just like you're anti-war, or a pacifist, or you don't like nuclear power. It's partially all those things, but it affects people who have nothing to do with it whatsoever.

Sara: You can see the mobilizing power it has in Vancouver; the fact that 35,000 people would come into the streets when there hasn't been a demonstration of that size for years.

Laura: We're just part of many people. But working in art you develop an ability to communicate in ways that maybe aren't conventional.

Dean: Or saying it in another way that isn't just another fact or figure. Like you said earlier, there's a numbness that sets in. People saying, "I can't deal with the bomb myself." The show was done as a conscious collaboration. This is also referring to the art world itself.

Laura: We had access to a lot of material. One of the pieces that stood out was a government document that is accessible to the public. It's called, *Eleven Steps to Survival*. It gives you information on how to protect yourself in a nuclear war, how to deal with the onslaught of a blast, what kind of procedures you should take, what kind of supplies you need to stash away into a cubbyhole in your basement to potentially survive for fourteen days or more. It's a lot of myths and lies. Through other research we discovered that this pamphlet was an extension of the military mentality because it was promoting the concept of survival in a nuclear war. It was telling you about the cause of war but it wasn't acknowledging the effects of war. We decided to do a parody on the book, which we knew would generate antagonism. The approach we took was to first of all simulate our own design of one of the bomb shelters which they suggest. They really emphasize the nuclear family syndrome, the single family, a suburban dwelling that has a spare pingpong room or corner in the basement and you can redesign it to have it ready and waiting. As we know, a lot of people simply don't live like that. People live communally, in large apartment buildings, in congested situations. Most people economically cannot afford to produce one of those hideaway halls.

Dean: It's generating the idea that the bomb shelter will save you when they're not talking about all the other stuff. There's no way of venting all those poisonous gases that are going to build up, all the wastes. What are you going to do for water after the fourteen day rations that they suggest you have are used up?

Laura: It's an ironic book because they talk about the kind of diet you should have. It's a 1950's diet, that has not been updated. Throughout the book they keep reinforcing the necessity to have a battery the rest of the city because he or she is located in a central location. They don't tell you that in a blast all radiowaves are completely disrupted and that there are no frequencies whatsoever. There's all sorts of implications of disease, and the rest of the city because he or she is located in a central location. They don't tell you that in a blast all radiowaves are completely disrupted and that there are no frequencies whatsoever. There's all sorts of implications of disease, and they ignore people who are claustrophobic.

Sara: There's a basic assumption in all this that system will remain intact.

Laura: There are two underground fallout shelters for politicians, one located in Nanaimo; it's for B.C. politicians, for example Premier Bennett, different ministers, and departments. It's like the one in Ottawa — called the Diefenbunker, because that's who created it. The concept is that people who are in power will be able to resume power when they come out of the shelter. There is no money, no energy, no thought being put into the survival of the Canadian public. There's a \$2.8 million budget for the Emergency Planning Department. \$1.8 million goes into employees' salaries and another one million goes into producing information for the general public. Xeroxing. And who do you know who has access to that information? We had to look for days to find it. It isn't in your corner store.

Sara: By focusing on the shelter were you trying to reach people around their own personal survival in order to get them into looking at the broader issues, the context?

Dean: It's the only stage in the whole cycle from mining, to research and development, to bombs, to nuclear power, that people are allowed to actually participate in. Some sections of the public are still picking up food, buying bricks and sandbags. Most people aren't preparing for it, they know about it through the media, on T.V., various movies that are coming out now, and people don't want to deal with it. Thus, it's a weak link in the chain. We can expose that weak link so that people whom it's meant to help can see it isn't helping them and then they can take that reflective action back and use it.

Laura: What they are trying to do is

put our priorities into petty domestic concerns. So everybody's preoccupied with themselves, with their own survival, in an alienated way, because those who *can* afford a bomb shelter will have one and those who *can't* won't: "tough luck Charlie"-type mentality. Those who continue to build bombs and proliferate nuclear technology, in whatever manifestations, can continue to do so while the general public is completely naive and unable to do anything.

Dean: So there's an information gap that we are trying to address.

Sara: How did you convey this information? How did you construct your relationship to the public at large as an audience?

Laura: First of all, our tactic was to formalize the show. So we called it *The Civil Defense Information Centre*. We made no bones about using the Canadian flag because we're all Canadian citizens. We wanted to put ourselves in the position of having a connection with others of the general public; we used the flag as our method of doing that. *Civil Defense Information Centre*, being the title, put us in a category that was legitimate, formal, organized, something that was related to a broad section of society. We did very extensive press mailings to all the major media sources, in radio, television and newspapers. It was the press release that formalized the show into not giving it any reference to artists. I set up a message recorder at my house because we had to have a contact number. This recorded message said, "You've contacted the Civil Defense Information Office. There's no one here at this time, but if you'd like to leave your name and number we'll get back to you as soon as possible." A flood of calls came in: CBC, the newspapers. They didn't wait for a return call. They were so ticked off because they wanted to move on it; they thought it was hot stuff. They went and called the *Emergency Planning Department* in Victoria and they said, "We're trying to get through to your Vancouver office, in reference to this show", because they made this automatic assumption that we were a government display. The use of the Canadian flag created a stir but at the same time brought in a large amount of our audience. The audience was diverse. It was school groups, university groups, senior citizens, businessmen, businesswomen, political allies, artists, basically everybody. There was no one category that was attracted to our show. People's response was remark-

able in its diversity. Some came in because they wanted to get plans for their own bomb shelter, some came in because they had seen the sign outside and were furious. People came in because they were totally enraged at the idea that the government set up a survival outlet. People also came in because they were intrigued about hearing about it through the media. Once the media got hold of it they broke the ice and they mentioned that it was an art show and these people had generated this innovative method of attracting the public. By the way, "civil defence" is an obsolete term. there is no such thing as civil defence as a Canadian department, so it wasn't a plagiarism. People were looking for a government department which doesn't exist.

Dean: It may be partially the way that we are conditioned to respond to the flag. Authoritarian conditioning.

Sara: That was my response. When I saw the poster I was just horrified. I thought, 'Nuclear war, El Salvador, intensified international conflict, internal unrest all escalating and there they (the government) are blatantly going out there and preparing the Canadian public to accept it and build their own bomb shelters.'

Laura: We had so many people with that same point of view come into the show ready to just lay into us. We defaced the whole gallery. We made no reference to it being a gallery. We wiped out any identification of the Unit Pitt (gallery) so that it looked like a rented space, a storefront. There was a Canadian flag on the outside of the building. The huge bay windows at the front of the gallery we covered with paper and on the paper were four major questions pointed at the public who would drive by, walk by. It was in enormous print. One said, 'Do you know how to protect yourself in a nuclear war?' and another said, 'Do you have a good survival plan for your children at school?' and another said, 'A good survival plan is one you know, one you can carry out.' Which is a direct government quote. And another said, 'Do you know what radiation sickness is?' When you enter the gallery you get a completely different impression than from the outside. It doesn't have the formalized office image that you might expect a government outlet to have. There's no person dressed in suit and tie or secretarial type to greet you at the door. It's an art show. There's a video installation, we set it on a Japanese podium with Japanese rice curtains to remind us of the evidence of nuclear

devastation, and a video show about the nuclear research facility at University of British Columbia called *Triumph*. In one corner there was a simulated bomb shelter. It was filled with all kinds of personal items and stocked with all sorts of miscellaneous food and containers and things that you want to cherish. On all the walls we had these large blueprints, these were the parodies of the *Eleven Steps to Survival* handbook. There was a slide presentation: images of people and nuclear weapons and war weapons and images that reminded you of war, historically and in the present tense, as well as wonderful city shots of Vancouver.

Dean: It could have been any city. Those were in colour and other shots were black and white, sort of archival. We had a set of colour and black and white slides to set off what was going on as a background. There was a radio in the shelter with static on the radio. Then sandbags all over the place, to give an idea of the methods of protection.

Laura: There were so many sources that ended up phoning Emergency Planning. Well, Emergency Planning didn't have any idea about the show. They were completely flabbergasted, they didn't know what perspective we were coming from: were we endorsing their perspective, were we an extension of them, or were we antagonists? They had to bring over an investigator to check out the show and by doing so they were presented with something that was definitely alternate to their point of view, because we were definitely anti-government in our stand. So this fellow came in to look at the show, and shortly after, we received a cease and desist order from the Justice Department. It said that we were misusing the Canadian flag which was a copyright symbol and represents the Queen's services: we should remove our flag from all our literature. Our rebuttal was that we would felt-pen over all the Canadian flag symbols on our literature with a lovely clear red felt pen. We refused to take the Canadian flag off the front of the building. We also made mention that if they were so concerned with our use of the Canadian flag, they might consider investigating businesses like MacDonald's or Safeway which are as Canadian as apple pie. We didn't hear any more from them. There were a lot of spin-offs from the media because they all of a sudden began to enjoy the joke. They started to do their own investigating. The Vancouver Show has a controversial debate with a

physician, Tom Perry, who represents *Physicians for Social Responsibility*, and Fred Cooper, who is the federal *Emergency Planning* representative in the west. The first question the mediator asked Fred Cooper was, "What is the government doing to protect Canadian citizens in the event of nuclear war?", and he said, literally, "Nothing." Then he asked a question of Tom Perry, "What would happen if a one megaton bomb dropped on Vancouver?" The guy went on for a good five or ten minutes describing the devastation. It was hilarious, because the producer on the set was trying to tell him to shut up because he wouldn't stop talking. The impact of one government official who supposedly represented the public's safety and a doctor who we know has a legitimate, defensible position in society just had an amazing impact as a presentation.

Sara: What was the response of people from the art community to your work?

Laura: There was one group that came in from the art school and the question posed to all the students was, "Is it art?" They had to analyze it in terms of its qualifications, can it be categorized as art? That was the conflict with a number of artists: they called it political propaganda, regurgitation of information. A lot of artists that did come in were grateful to see a show like this because it broke some barriers that had been in existence in the art community and legitimized the overtly political in their work.

Sara: What about people who were looking for plans for a bomb shelter, people who might endorse Canadian foreign policy, the arms race?

Laura: We would end up talking about the facts about bomb shelters, there isn't much evidence that bomb shelters are a viable alternative for survival. Some people walked away, they didn't get the information they wanted. Other people were in a controversial state about it: they wanted to survive, they have the impulse to live.

Sara: What art forms did you use to enhance communication with an audience that was unfamiliar with a formal art tradition?

Dean: We tried to make it as tangible as possible. It was found-object stuff. We built the (shelter) really fast, in two days, and it looked like you could build it yourself pretty easily. We had an architectural cutaway, so you could see it whether you went in it or not. It was like you threw stuff in, you were in a real rush, you heard the siren and you had to get down to your shelter. "Oh My God, I forgot to put the clothes down there! Who's got the

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Art Censorship Trust Fund



The Art Censorship Trust Fund was established to help offset public education and legal expenses in defense of freedom of expression.

Film and Video Against Censorship (FAVAC) is a group of producers, exhibitors and distributors of independent non-commercial videotape and film, which is dedicated to changing the censorship laws in Ontario. The Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society (OFVAS) is currently challenging the Ontario Censor Board under the new Canadian Constitution. Both FAVAC and OFVAS are supported by the Art Censorship Trust Fund. The Trustees of the Fund are: June Callwood, Anna Gronau and David Poole.

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radiation suit? I thought you had the radiation suit!"

Laura: "Put the rice crispies in a jar!"
Dean: "That will keep them longer. I hate stale rice crispies!"

Laura: It was a whole menagerie of crap. But it was an installation, to me it was a sculpture. It evoked all sorts of thoughts and emotions. We had plastic flowers because real ones wouldn't grow or survive, we had container after container of dried, bland food. We had images, paraphernalia, memorabilia, things that are important in your life that you don't want to lose. It certainly didn't reflect a legitimate bomb shelter and it didn't give a sense of endorsing the bomb shelter concept. It seemed like a bomb shelter would be an absolutely useless alternative. And then the

blueprints—we had been cutting out articles in the paper, drawings, and getting information from all sorts of outlets and accumulating them in large formats, so that there was all sorts of tidbits on one sheet that you could absorb and see one facet of. It was to educate. It was dealing with plutonium and what plutonium is and what happens when a bomb drops on Vancouver. Then the element of the international conflict: the anti-Americanism, the anti-Russian mentality. One was called, "Who can afford Step Number Four, an easy bake oven?" with the bomb shelter.

Dean: Each of the drawings loosely represented a page out of the handbook. But only loosely — we moved in and out of the format. They weren't precious, they weren't precious

things on the wall, they were things that you could relate to on a day to day basis. A blueprint is a very inexpensive print-making process, they were large, four feet by five feet, and they just had slats of wood in very bright colours, surveyors' colours, on the bottom keeping them flat, and they weren't special, so that you had to get over the form to get at the content. There was certainly form in how we chose to put them on there, how we displayed them, how we lit them and where they were in the space. But there weren't any stumbling blocks to either reading, or looking, or laughing, or talking about them.

Laura: There wasn't a price tag.

Dean: There wasn't a big, long introspective title.

Laura: We had no acknowledgement of name. It wasn't done by so-and-so. There wasn't all the conventional processes that most art galleries and artists promote: that identification, commodity.

Dean: The main stumbling block was: how do we as artists turn this very charged information, technically and emotionally, into art and how do we get this out to the people who we would potentially want to talk to through this art?

Laura: We defaced the front of the building, so that we brought it out into the street. I know that many people who came by that building saw the questions. If you're asked a question and it's so enormous and confrontational and it's so contrasting to the rest of the urban visuals, it might have some impact. Bringing the art out into the street was important—that's why we had handouts. We did a lot of postering. We had all these groups come in and do talks, it was nice for them to have an atmosphere that was complementary to the discussion on opening night. We had Red Cedar Band singing and playing music, it was really powerful and just packed with people. People were becoming part of the space and they weren't treating it as a gallery in a conventional sense. They weren't stiffly walking around making sure that nothing fell off the wall. Everyone was sprawled all over the place and there was so much interaction going on.

Laura: We did two versions of postering for the show. One was a really formal legitimate straight-laced poster with a Canadian flag on the top. We were able to penetrate all sorts of mainstream places where you ordinarily wouldn't be able to hang an art poster because it had no relevance. We did another poster which said,

"Future radiation area, no loitering", and there was a radiation symbol on it and it gave the same information as the other poster, but it would attract a different crowd.

Sara: Could you describe the process of constructing the show, it sounds like you did a tremendous amount of research and conceptual work to pull it together.

Laura: We were wanting to do a videotape on Triumf nuclear research facility. We went up there and the fellow that showed us around the plant, was an articulate physicist/computer scientist and had been working there for seven years. He talked about radiation always being a breaking-down process, never a building-up. He talked about the Atomic Energy Commission, they're the ones who gauge dosages of radiation in all nuclear facilities in Canada and yet they don't really have a safe dosage. They don't know what a safe dosage of radiation is, particularly when you have an ozone layer that doesn't protect us anymore and you have x-ray overdoses in hospitals and you've got other outlets that give you radiation. All the employees that work at Triumf are allowed so much radiation per year and the radiation impinges itself on badges and you can figure out how much radiation dosage the individual's received. They've (Triumf) been responsible for dumping radioactive waste in the harbour, carting radioactive materials through the residential sections of the city, storing radioactive wastes in the math building at UBC, so no one knows how many students or professors have been exposed. It made me angry. This fellow was a born-again Christian and he introduced us in the plant to about five other men who were Christians—that was what he acknowledged they had in common. He would negate responsibility for his actions because he was a Christian, because God took it in his hands, "When you're a Christian, death has no significance" and in a sense through the course of the tour he was talking about legitimate, respected, legalized suicide. He can acknowledge that they don't have a safe dosage, he's allowed so much radiation and if he works there it's cumulative, all radiation is cumulative. That experience was the start of the show. I wanted to do a videotape on Triumf because I had heard all these scummy things that they were involved in. Nobody ever talks about Triumf; same with Toronto, there's a Slowpoke reactor in the middle of the

city but no one talks about it.
Dean: So it was emotional triggers that started it.

Laura: And then it went into 'Let's investigate some more.'

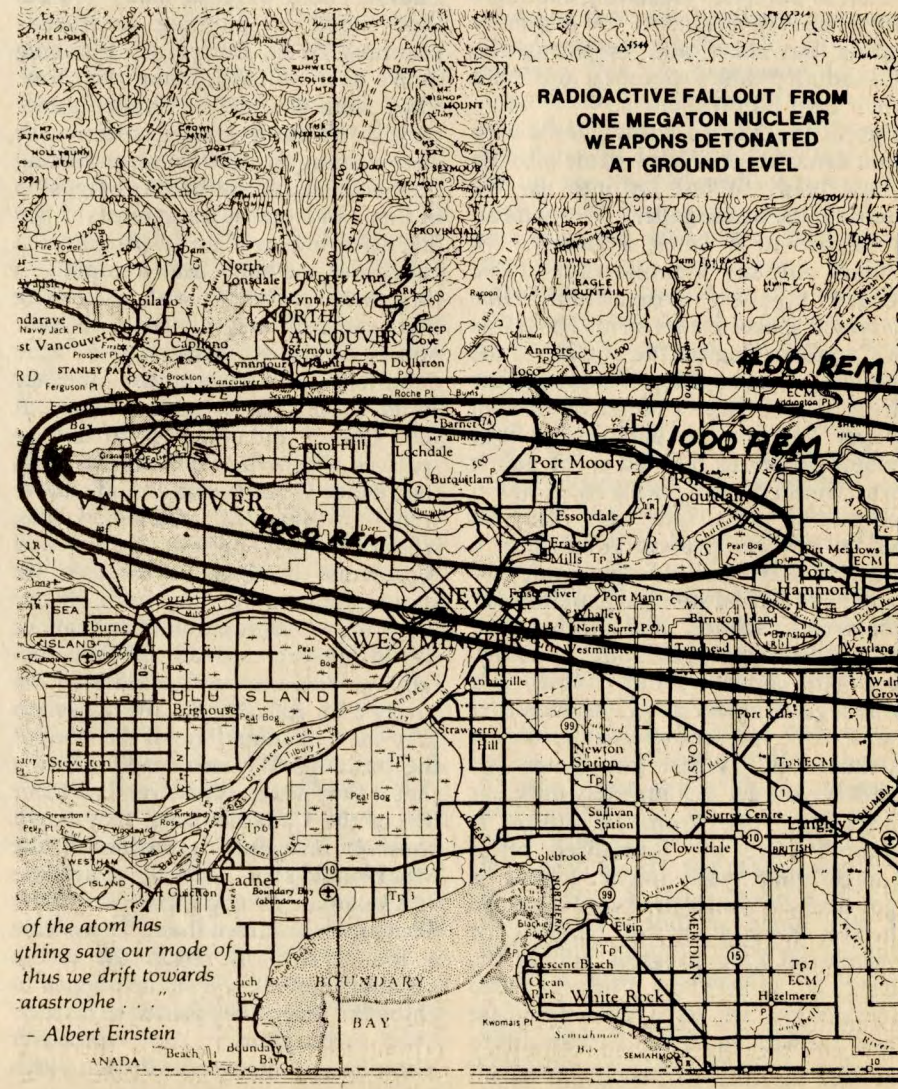
Dean: A lot of it was also questioning, 'Can and do we want to make art out of this?' Then, we want to, so how do we? Obviously, we're not well-versed, we're not scientists, we're not technicians, we're artists, we're almost like funnels for the things that we've seen. We made these yellow posters based on the actual thing that they've got up at Triumf which says, "No loitering, radiation area", we just added the "future". Same symbol except it had the amount of radiation you could absorb in an hour there. They're only allowed fifteen hundred milyar a month. One scientist down from where we were shooting had forty milyar every hour. If you stayed there an hour you'd get almost a daily dose. And that's just an arbitrarily-set limit.

Laura: There are enough resources of professional people; their information is an alternative. Particularly Helen Caldicott, who talked about what you can do. She, as an individual, has done a remarkable amount of things: she stopped all nuclear power in Australia, there's no atomic weaponry stored there; she had an effect on French testing in the Pacific. All these sources generated the focus that we took. You go into a library and there are just stacks and stacks of books from both perspectives. We did find a lot of pro-nuclear, but it was always tainted because it was either somebody working within the military or a scientist funded by a research foundation which was run by the Ford Foundation. The majority of anti-nuclear information came from qualified origins and perspectives. The information and statistics are emerging everywhere.

Dean: Part of it was realizing that it was a personal issue, it was something that affected you while you were doing it. It's not like a still life that's on the table that's away from you. It's coming right from the inside, so you're angry and scared. There were three people who got together, Laura, Daniel and myself. That was the nucleus. There was a second layer of people who did a lot of the press contacts. They are more directly political and have those connections. We sent the press release out as a feeler, and it was taken seriously.

Laura: It was imperative to have a support group to give emotional support, critical analysis and endorsement.

4000 REM: All people will die within hours.
1000 REM: All people will die in one-two weeks.
400 REM: 50% of people will die within a few weeks. The remainder will suffer from radiation illness; vomiting, loss of hair, infection, etc. Survivors may suffer from leukemia and other cancers as well as genetic damage.



way of life is anti-individual, anti-social and anti-human.

'Anti-human' becomes an all-pervasive concept which is linked to all aspects of existence. We never have a second of relief from the claustrophobic, chaotic and alienating objects built by capitalism which operate and decay wherever we go. Vigo, so puzzled and incapable of finding what he calls the "solution" or "meaning" until it is far too late, has clearly been retarded by the man-made mountains of junk (storeys-high buckets of Kentucky-fried chicken, lined up in a vast lot, are perhaps the most powerful) which surround and threaten to engulf him. At one point, as he rises in a glass elevator over the city, the muzak plays the Beatles song "Here, There and Everywhere". Commodities live; people and the nature from which we spring are in the final stages of retreat.

Fate of sexuality

Appropriately then, *Criminal Language* is also centrally concerned with the death agony of our fundamental impulse to live and love, and with the fate of sexuality in our culture. Without once slipping into the trap of voyeurism, without ever allowing a vicarious thrill to enter into the filmic text, *Criminal Language* pursues the consequences of the commodification, or if you prefer, the objectification of people, to its logical conclusion in the sexual realm. Clearly asserting that women are special victims of this process, the film has the courage to insist that men too are destroyed in this 'game' of their own making. While there is no end to the images of phallic knives, guns, bombs, while penises flash on and off in between images of war and storm-troopers, other images and the final use of Vigo as outraged protestor indicate that men too lose in the phallic deathdrive of patriarchal imperialism, for after all, they too lose their lives.

Fairly early into the film it becomes apparent that the death-film's victims are people who have been abducted by the gang of proto-zombies, and that the film-within-a-film is a record of their torture. When with Vigo we finally arrive at the gang's hideout at the end of *Criminal Language*, we re-experience the torture, but this time by watching the gang's actions and hearing the words of the victims, never by seeing the victims themselves. For this re-enactment, the camera focuses on each member of the gang as he or

she (one woman) watches or participates in the death-scenes. Buchbinder's and Owen's script and direction make the meaning of the sequence unequivocal as they show each character going through the twitches, whimpers and convulsions of mutilated psyches forcing on to others what has in some literal or symbolic way been forced onto them. There is no pleasure here, not even for the torturers. They are unable to experience any sexual release. Isolated, each in different parts of the room, two burst into murderous acts before the victims can even attempt to put their instructions into practice.

In addition to this brilliant treatment of the effects of sexual commodification and brutalization, the death-film strand, with the separation between the silent, disembodied film and the vocal, very much embodied last enactment, makes a point so fundamental that its persistent denial in much of the discussion about pornography and sexuality continues to astound me: Porn, including the violent variety, many of the most chic filmmakers and artists contend, is nothing more than fantasy. As such, it is harmless, benign, even beneficial. No so, says *Criminal Language*: Violent pornography is an expression and reinforcement of misogyny. It is also a set of real acts, real social relations and has material, tangible, economic and physical effects on real people. It is based on sexual exploitation, alienation and often gross coercion. It may be perceived as something similar to certain inner representations or fantasies by those who consume it, but it is lived experience of a very particular kind for those whose bodies are used to produce it, and a lived experience of another kind for those whose capital is expanded when they film, photograph and market it.

Criminal Language is not a film filled with lightness and hope. Indeed, as I was watching it, I thought that perhaps its greatest weakness lay in its unrelieved bleakness, the sense of total compromise, total corruption, total powerlessness. But Buchbinder and Owen snatch their film from the jaws of nihilism and despair at the very last moment, in a moving and powerful way. Vigo, the ambiguous detective hero, has been tied up and forced to watch both the filming and the torture of the victims. Dreadfully upset, he manages to loosen his bonds only when it is too late to avert the murders. Still he retrieves his weapon and holds the gang against the wall. At this point,

the film almost grinds to a halt for the very last series of frames. In an amazing depiction of struggle, conveying more than anything the feeling of trying to run or scream in a dream when muscles and vocal chords refuse to respond, we watch as Vigo manages somehow to utter the agonized, protracted words, "Nobody is ever going to see this" as he slowly and painfully tears the film out of the camera. Thus the compromised figure is partially redeemed through anger, through action and through his monumental struggle to break out of the ideological bonds which enslave him as surely as material ones do. Vigo's pain, the sweat, the tears streaming down his face, his decision to act at last, all of these frame what has gone before and translate it into a call — tentative, defensive and at this point barely articulate — for action against passivity, for love against hate, for life against death.

Radical questions for experimental filmmakers

The successes and occasional flaws of *Criminal Language* put into high relief a number of strategic and tactical issues confronting radical experimental filmmakers. For the last decade, more or less, one of the most influential theories in film circles (insofar as any theory has been truly influential with filmmakers themselves) has been the current which uses concepts taken from semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Althusserian marxism — the so-called structuralist school. In the English language, this theory was first generated in England, under the impact of the parent stream in French cultural and political theory. Although structuralism has encountered native traditions in experimental and independent filmmaking on this continent (which I am not qualified to discuss) nevertheless I can see its negative impact on radical British experimental films and on some British-American collaborations. Some examples would range from the early Mulvey-Wollen collaboration *Riddles of the Sphinx* to the more recent Clayton-Curling co-direction of *Song of the Shirt*, Sally Potter's *Thriller* and *Sigmund Freud's Dora*, by Pajczkowska, Weinstock, McCall and Tyndall. All these share what I consider to be fundamental failures stemming from their adherence to the dictates of the theoretical paradigms promoted by *Screen*, and its friends and emulators.

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Criminal Language

The failure can be summed up in one sentence: None of the people with whom these films are centrally concerned, **and in whose names they purport to speak**, would be engaged by or able to understand what these films are trying to say. Despite ideological pretensions and intentions to the contrary, there is, as a result, something very exploitative and condescending about these films. This may not disqualify them from the category 'good experimental' but it does knock them out from the category 'good radical' in a very important way. I think it is useful to try to figure out what the underlying problem with the theory is, because it has practical consequences of some magnitude for filmmakers who want to be both radical **and** experimental.

Under the influence of semiotics, psychoanalysis and marxist cultural theory, much of the recent critique of mainstream film has focused on problems 'beyond', as it were, such elementary issues as sexual objectification, positive versus negative role models and the moral values implicit in the consequences of a traditional, unfolding narrative. Films which try simply to substitute rounded women characters or more positive narratives for the usual partial and deformed concoctions that Hollywood produces, so the argument goes, nevertheless partake of and perpetuate bourgeois and/or patriarchal ideology because the form of the film — including such aspects as its point of view, the activity or passivity it grants to the audience, the cultural signifiers it employs, the very conventions in which character development and narrative are embodied — is itself

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laden with these values. These insights are very important and they point to the necessity to examine more than just what psychoanalysis would call the manifest (immediately apparent) content of films, but to look also at the 'latent' (more hidden but for that very reason, very powerful) content of the cultural artifact.

Manifest and latent, ideology, form and content — these are not the levels at which there are problems in the structuralist current, at least, not **per se**. Nor, as Breton or Brecht or Godard have argued and shown before, in very different ways, do these insights work against the production of radical cultural commentaries — plays, films, poems, paintings — of great effectiveness. The problems with the structuralist school lie rather with their more general conception of 'consciousness' (a term that includes the unconscious in its scope) and with its specific relation to ideology. Whereas, for most radical thinkers, the dominant ideology, encoded in language, symbols, myths, is (despite longevity and intransigence) ultimately a human construction and therefore amenable to human action, that is to change; for the structuralists, 'ideology' or language constructs us. For them, all human relations (including the infant-parent dyad) are so thoroughly imbued and overdetermined by this ideology that no aspect of human existence is ever seen as evading or escaping, even partially, these formative influences. Consequently, no aspect of human consciousness (unconscious, preconscious or fully conscious) is anything more than a product of the dominant ideology. Because this theoretical system gives

to what it calls the 'Symbolic' (capitalized along with other categories such as the 'Father', the 'Law' and the 'Phallus') more weight than the realities themselves (the father/a father/your father/men/laws/the legal system, penises/objects which partake of their shape and connote their social power); because the distorted representations of these realities are seen as fixed to the point where it is impossible for people to have any true perception of external objects and social relations; because emotions are seen to do nothing more than embody the unconscious attitudes flowing from this state of affairs, feelings (or should I say the 'Emotional') are discounted as a potential reservoir of any progressive, subversive force. Only 'Science' (read theory, structuralist theory) has the ability to illuminate our condition and to set us free.

No identification

As a result, the so-called art which has been produced under the aegis of this system has lacked, discouraged, refused a certain kind of emotional connection with its audience. Because the feeling of pleasure, and therefore its opposite, are regarded as something completely constructed around the seductive gratifications of ideology, artistic means of appealing to and mobilizing pleasure are rejected virtually whole hog. Not only are visual, aural, rhythmical pleasures eschewed but also the emotional pleasure involved in the processes of identification which for so long have formed such an important part of cultural endeavor.

After ten years or so of this stuff, whether one is trying to evaluate the results from the point of view of marxism-feminism-psychoanalysis without the structuralist filters, or as an artistic practitioner, or as a potentially moved and committed (but at the very least an intelligent and minimally self-aware) member of an audience, it should be clear that we do in fact have feelings, emotions which can work in our favour, which provide strong impulses towards revolt against an oppressive reality, which prod us to rethink and challenge the dominant ideology. It should also be clear that there have been all too many theories which different currents in the revolutionary movement have passed off as liberatory when in fact they have covered for a reformist and even profoundly reactionary attitude to people, politics and the world. Indeed,

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it has been the very ability of many people to deny their emotional intuition that suggests something very, very wrong with a number of these theories — whether in relation to issues of political democracy, cultural freedom or obscurantist theoretical production — that have allowed so many emperors to pass by in their new wardrobes, sometimes to comic effect sometimes to tragic.

As the other left and feminist psychoanalytic thinkers have argued (from Reich, to Marcuse, to Dinnerstein, to Chodorow) most of us do have feelings which can work for us — feelings rooted in the first instance in memories of care and empathy, a sense of belonging and relatedness, of a non-fragmented early sexuality, of a body sustained by nurturing and stimulating physical and psychological influences, of that magical joy in the beauty of the world, before our thrill in being alive was dulled by existence in alienated, polluted society. These feelings co-exist with others which have been more directly formed and influenced by the hierarchical arrangements of pleasure and power in a classist, sexist, racist society. What is evil about directly repressive art is that it both encourages these more negative feelings as well as attaching the threat of terrible consequences to the idea of our living out our positive ones. Co-optive art is problematic because it validates some of the positive feelings but then attaches them to false solutions. But as far as I am concerned, no solution is more false than one which denies these feelings altogether. And in one way or another, many of the films which have been influenced by the structuralist school have done just that. The end result is that the films, like the theory itself, become opaque and internally-referenced, and need an initiated interpreter to be read.

Critical inducement

Narrative, identification, humour, genre conventions are among the forms that have been rejected by the structuralists. But *Criminal Language* shows that these conventions can be used in such a way as to provoke pleasure in the attempt to make sense of a film — that feelings can be marshalled to induce a critical attitude on the part of the audience towards what has traditionally been embodied in these conventions. So, for example, the hyper-stylized lighting, camera angles and dialogue of the film-noir sequences please us because they

remind us of all those older sultry dramas, but they also tell us in a clear, way what problematic values those dramas perpetuated. On another level, the juxtaposition of genres and the three-sided mystery which the film sets up allow us to have pleasure in attempting to 'put together' the 'plot' of the film, while showing us how plots work to convey a false and manipulated sense of reality. Finally, the feelings of horror, anger, revulsion and sorrow are also validated in their rightful places, not denied or, what usually amounts to the same thing, relegated to the consciousness laboratory.

A strategy which employs our emotions by asking us to experience them and then to look at them, allows filmmakers to make films which work both as contributions within a specialized discourse and as contributions to an ongoing process of radical intervention in larger social layers. I hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with a dialogue among specialists which does not reach a larger audience, so long as it does not purport to be about and from the point of view of 'the workers', 'ordinary people' and the like. I think it is dishonest and false for specialists to equate their own modes of perception, which by definition they have analyzed, refined, and in some senses transformed, with those of non-specialists. Even Sally Potter's lyrical *Thriller* is a problem in this light. The process of ideological investigation which she attributes to working class women through the mechanism of Mimi the seamstress' de- and re-construction of her death in the opera *La Bohème*, is not a process which belongs to or truly reflects the ways in which such women's consciousness operates. It is the studied, belaboured, intellectualized and stylized process of the full-time cultural worker, complete with all the attendant pleasures: sexy French accent, barefoot androgynous dancers in a garret, lots of arias stopping and starting, lots of stark poses. Likewise *Song of the Shirt*, a three part deconstructed docu-drama about women clothing workers in England from the seventeenth century to the present, would drive contemporary garment-workers out of a theatre in a half-hour, indicating that their impulses are healthier by a small margin than those of the audience at the Canadian Images film festival, who waited politely for the break between parts I and II to exit in droves. And *Sigmund Freud's Dora* suggests that the way women can escape sexual

harrassment and repression is through books, discussion and theory, when these forums are usually open to working class women only after a sense of rebellion and some action have already been experienced. Far better would be films that explore the dilemmas of the radical filmmaker in translating what she or he has learned about perception into a language which can appeal to and interact with what ordinary people have learned about reality.

Criminal Language is a useful example to specialists because, though flawed and at times quite rough, it goes a long way toward succeeding in working at both the specialist and non-specialist levels. Buchbinder and Owen do not think that they have been influenced by the structuralist school. As far as *Criminal Language* is concerned, Buchbinder talks about Brecht, Barthes and Godard as important European influences, and Chick Strand as an important contemporary American one. At the same time, he also insists that all the films he has ever seen influence him, whether or not they act as models for his own work. What is important here is that Buchbinder is working from a common cultural pool of shared images, conventions, myths. He does not cut himself off from what he shares with all the people in his society, but works within the common language — in this case the criminal language of all pervasive capitalist ideology. Made at the California Institute of the Arts, with mentor Don Levy, *Criminal Language* has already won some important recognition. It has been shown at festivals in Ann Arbor and Atlanta where it has taken prizes, at the Lille festival of short and documentary films, at the Paris Cinemateque, the Cinemateque d'Alger and at Cannes. One small contribution to the great reiver of subversion, it is a harbinger of good things to come. ●

Varda Burstyn is a writer, therapist and political theorist currently teaching film theory at York University, Toronto.

CRIMINAL LANGUAGE. Film by Amnon Buchbinder, John A. Owen III. 16mm, B&W, 35 mins, 1981. USA.

CRIMINAL LANGUAGE is available in Canada through the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Toronto. In the United States and elsewhere, contact Film Librarian/California Institute of the Arts, Valenda, CA. 91355, USA.

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VALERIE HARRIS

The Nerves Exposed: Sexual Violence and the Art of Glenda Wharton

For her most recent New York show Glenda Wharton transformed the artists' space into a combination torture chamber/surgical ward. Upon entering you felt immediately that you were in the environment of the powerless. The lighting was stark, clinical. The colors were red, white and the pale green of bile. The walls were covered with drawings, paintings, sculptures and projections that were compelling (and to many viewers repelling) visual statements on the degradation and distortion of female sexuality. Three sculptural pieces commanded the floor space, one of which appeared to be a kind of respiratory instrument. Its attachments included over a hundred tampons, a hot water bottle, feathers, candles, fur, and numerous little jars containing egg-shaped forms. One of the most riveting constructions, and the one in which all the other elements of the installation would seem to culminate, is a mutilated, dismembered figure of a woman in an upright, satin-lined coffin, arched with red roses. The deteriorating form is almost one with the coffin, which also serves as altar, the white satin lining as wedding dress. It is an image of the bride as a sort of sacrificial lamb. An image of the crucifixion of woman.

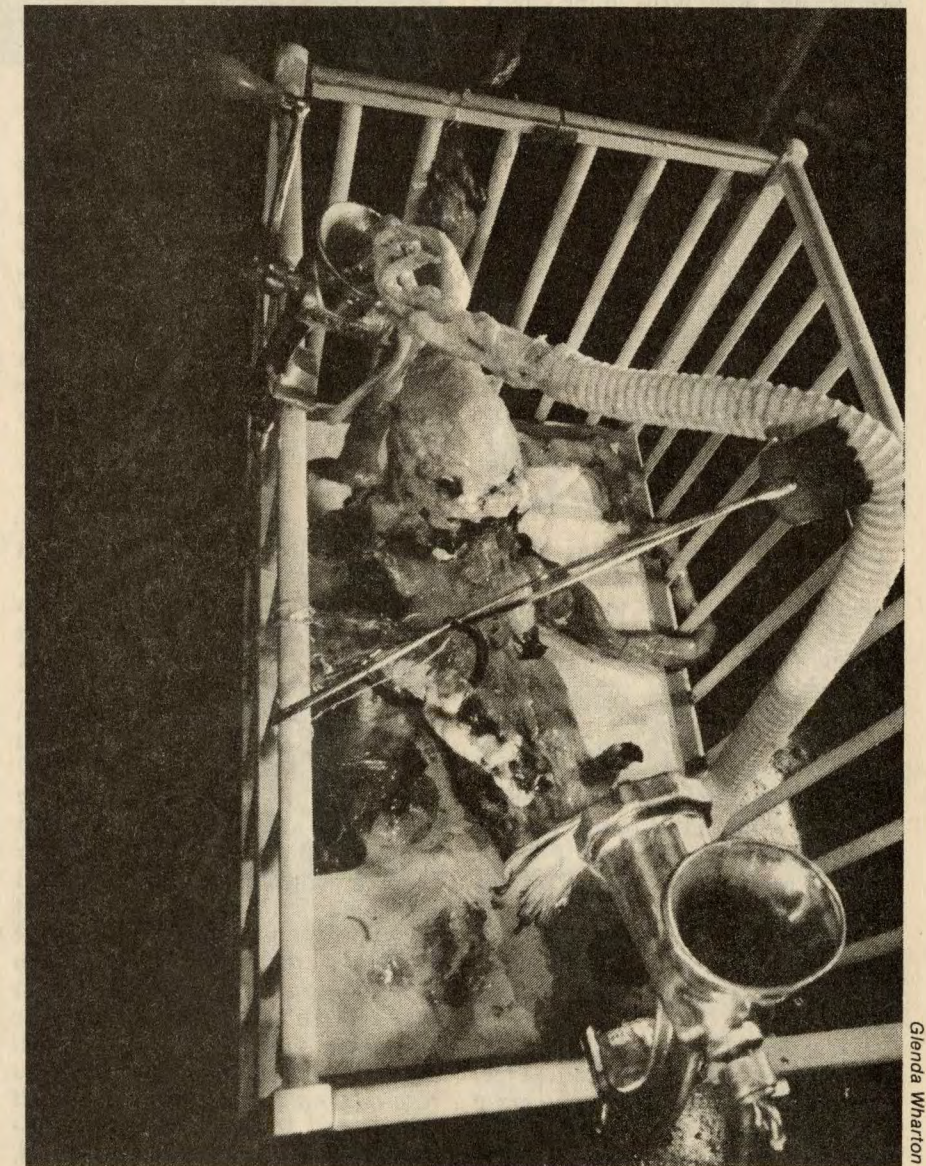
Writers, most notably Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, Alice Walker and Gayle Jones, have already confronted the physical and emotional violence with which black women have lived. Gayle Jones focused on sexual violence in her first novel, *Corregidora*, but even more explicitly in her second, *Eva's Man*. The protagonist, Eva Medina tells her story from her cell in a psychiatric prison, five years after committing the 'ultimate' sexual crime: castrating her lover with her teeth. But from beginning to end Eva's story reveals a lifelong series of sexual abuses, and the author's obsessive concentration on this motif makes one painfully aware that for many women sexual assault is part of their daily existence. Jones doesn't hit you with hard core rape.

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Her references are to a young girl being fingered by an older, familiar man and his scaring/swearing her to secrecy as if they'd shared something; to being explored with a dirty popsicle stick by a neighbourhood boy; to a man beating a woman for no reason other than that she's "his woman"; to being greeted in the street with salutations like, "Hey, Sweetmeat," "Hey, Slim Goodie," "Can I have

some?" and "Hello . . . Hello . . . Fuck you, bitch, you don't look like shit anyway;" and finally, being rejected sexually by your lover because you're menstruating and that's "nasty".

In a 1977 interview in *The Massachusetts Review* Jones allowed that "in many ways, *Eva's Man* is a horror story." It reveals all the subtle and overt ways women are sexually victimized, detailing succinctly the violence



Untitled (?) 1980. Clay and mixed media

Glenda Wharton

inflicted, the malignant, external acts. The internalized results that might occur — shame, guilt, fear, sexual self-rejection — are only hinted at. It's at this point that Glenda Wharton's art goes beyond the limitations of literary interpretation, for her drawings, sculptures and paintings are a visual manifestation of this inner turmoil. Her imagery is as potent and jarring as a scream.

Glenda Wharton grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and like most of us, links her past to her present via a string of hazy remembrances and a few very specific incidents that were of profound emotional impact. Her family was poor, and Glenda was always drawing. An older brother, the other artist in the family, committed suicide at 16. Glenda was five, and remembers seeing the body, the tiny bullet hole in the temple, and the red light of the ambulance. She remembers, too, being sexually fondled at age 8 or 9, by a friend of the family and being told she'd get a whippin' if her mother found out; her other brother's sporadic fits of violence and her mother's oppressively silent endurance; her dread of going to the store because she'd have to pass "the corner boys"; and at 15 the turbulent desegregation of the Winston-Salem school system.

Black Panther protection

"Their idea of desegregation was to close all the black inner-city high schools and bus us out to rural white schools in Klan country. We were furious. There were boycotts and riots, with whites bringing shotguns and surrounding the school, cops tear-gassing us, stumping us and throwing us in jail. When the violence was at its worst, the only members of the black community who came out to support and protect us were the Black Panther Party. I was very impressed by this and started working with them. I designed a lot of their posters and leaflets and that's when I first began to see art as a means for political expression."

For a time the Panthers provided Glenda an alternative image to the fear and passivity she perceived in others of her community who were in fact dependent upon the whites for their jobs and livelihood. But the Panthers couldn't end the oppression or stamp out the fear, and after almost two years



Untitled (?) 1980. Clay and mixed media

of political activity Glenda was becoming disillusioned. She was expelled from school and her parents forbade her to have anything further to do with the Party. A guidance counselor got her accepted into the North Carolina School for the Performing Arts, and it was there that she refocused her energies into a more personal art, which for her, had always been a refuge.

In 1977 Glenda began to work on the theme of women and masochism. She says she related masochism to a kind of self-hatred, or a hatred of one's impotence. "I'd always been aware of the use and abuse of women by men — from my brother's violent attacks on my mother, through my sister's bad marriage and bad experiences of my own — and the acceptance of it: The next day we all acted as if nothing had happened. But that was the existence of black people in the south anyway. I remember the Jim Crow signs, of being put out of places or having to sit upstairs in the movie houses. When you're being dehumanized you have to hate yourself for not striking back, or not being able to. The frustrated, impotent way of reacting to that is to turn on your own, or yourself, instead of the real forces." The work progressed from drawings of big-bodied, masked women gouging at their breasts to paintings of forms that were distinctly female but beyond

immediate recognition. She began to use her materials in an increasingly aggressive manner as she made a personal realization of her own victimization and its relationship to her sexual identity, and reacted against it. As she became more aware of what was happening in the work, she decided to go with it, to confront her own life experiences and attempt to abstract them. The work was well under way when she returned to her studio one day and found it had been vandalized. Shortly afterward she destroyed most of what was left. "The destruction was not done in a moment of rage. It had something to do with another invasion of my privacy, but more with a deliberate feeling of wanting to destroy those stylized images, to purge myself of them. I knew more clearly now what I wanted to do." Her aim was to create an environment that would have the feeling of an experimental laboratory, an indication of her own feelings of sexual victimization as well as a play on her experimentation with form and process. She committed herself to being brutally subjective.

"I wanted to deal very honestly with myself, to confront what embarrassed me, my guilts, my complexes. I wanted to work from my instinctive impulses and of course that I'm a black woman raised in the south influenced those impulses. I looked at my feelings of being prey to a hostile society, and at the violence that had always been a part of my family. The image I got was

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of a rabbit being skinned, all the nerves exposed."

This clinically precise image led to the creation of a form that is repeated, with striking variations in physical and emotional condition, throughout the total piece. "It's my image of a human form that from its conception has existed in a hostile space that has shaped it, twisted it, mangled it. A mutant who's not allowed to develop naturally, a symbol of vulnerability." Glenda's thematic form could be described as basically asexual in appearance: it is white, bald, fetal. But its eyes are smeared black rings, its mouth a vicious, lipstick-red gash. Among its numerous representations we find it as a baby girl with an open pair of scissors next to its head; imprisoned in a playpen to which a meat grinder is attached; orally and anally shafted through by phallic tubing; trussed-up in a broken down basinet, its stirrups legs twisted this way and that, its bloody, mangled genitals criss-crossed by two large band-aids; and in ruins, crumbling in the rose-strewn altar/coffin. In several Siamese twin versions including one which within the context of the rest gives the impression of woman (mother) and fetus as one, bound in a perpetually excruciating straining to be free of each other.

Self-portraits in X-ray?

Because the figures are white and the artist black, the pieces have been erroneously interpreted as symbolizing or advocating a violent hatred of white women. Glenda, with her brown skin, carefully applied lipstick, Kohl-rimmed eyes and waist-length hair admits that they are closer to self-portraits in X-ray.

"Before the pieces were even as aggressive as they are now, a woman stopped in, put her hands to her face and said she was shocked and furious that I would make art like this. That was confusing because of my deep empathy with these images. I never meant them to be merely grotesque. Whatever literal connotations of violence the work has I feel it does imply compassion."

But it's hard to discern compassion on first encountering the total work. First impressions are likely to convey disgust with all aspects of female sexuality including menstruation and childbirth, aversion to the penis as weapon, the deliberate mutilation of fetuses, and the heterosexual act as a cycle of self-torture and degeneration. It takes a closer examination of the

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contributing elements to ease one's initial discomfort. "Compassion is demonstrated in the juxtaposition of images: the texture of the tampons, the plastic enclosing this womb-shaped thing, the pink hot water bag for warmth, these egg-shaped forms in jars with fur around the jars to protect the fragile things inside. The feathers symbolize flight and a desire for freedom and the candles represent ritual, with some of them buried down to indicate a ritual repeated. These are poetic elements for me, metaphors for a variety of emotional recollections. They also provide a variety of tactile experiences which in turn provoke a lot of different emotions . . . My aunt died of uterine cancer, a long, terrible disease. I associated the tampons used in this piece not only with the regular menses but with hemorrhage. All the tampons used here couldn't have stopped my aunt's hemorrhaging and that was an obsessive image. Now, I don't expect anyone to be able to interpret anything that literal, but I think that if people open themselves to the work it somehow suggests that kind of compassion in an abstract way."

Glenda moves around the studio, pointing out certain pieces and relating them to her feelings about sexuality and her own sexual identity. "The total work has many themes for me but I think what holds it all together is that aspect of vulnerability or sexual victimization. Some of it relates to how a woman is seen, as an object that something is done to, something owned. In the drawings this is transformed into receptacles for sperm, or things pushed in against one's will . . . these drawings here relate to the vulnerability of a female child, with the phallic shapes sodomizing these little frail figures that are just bounced in the air, without weight or substance . . . Tampons are used in this piece to express the shame some women feel about menstruation. I know I was terrified when I first menstruated. I thought I'd done something really bad, that something terrible was going to happen and I'd better not let Mama see this. But you see, my mother never talked with us about sex. Even now, if I wanted to talk with her about it she would be embarrassed to death. And that influenced me to do the first masochistic drawings, the notion that women are ashamed of their sexuality. The figure in the casket has some of the same features as those drawings, the same masked face, the gouging of the breasts, trying to take away that which

is feminine in you . . . I always use tubing in the sculptures for a phallic suggestion but it has other connotations as well. Here it is phallic and at the same time an organic, intestinal thing being ripped out of you . . . here it's used in a clinical, machine-like way, suggesting automation, which relates to how most men deal with women — in a masturbatory manner, rather than to the whole woman."

She moves to the painting of the thematic form as baby girl in frilly dress, the open mouth of the scissors aimed at its head. She says that most people see this as an abortion piece but I question if it could symbolize, in addition or instead, the aborted natural appreciation of woman's sexuality.

"When I first started it was a baby figure in a little casket with a little dress and little gloves and little socks. Then it started changing. I added the scissors because as a child I used to have an image that would just flash in my head and terrify me. It was a pair of scissors clipping the tips of my mother's breasts. I don't know what it meant but I think it had something to do with the first time I saw my mother naked. She was older, and her body looked so strange to me . . ."



Before leaving the space I ask Glenda how she feels about exposing such intimate emotions in a public work. "What kept me from dealing with this imagery before was my concern with how people, particularly my family, would react. But I needed to explore some very personal traumatic experiences and my responses to them in a way that would be emotional, rather than about emotions, so I expect people to react in an emotional way. I want it to disturb you because this kind of violence exists in your world. The political posters I used to do shouted "Stop Police Oppression" or "Stop the Violence in South Africa." This piece is in a way shouting, "Stop This Violence on Me!"

Valerie Harris is a dramatist and journalist who frequently writes about the art and politics of third world women.

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The Celluloid Closet A roster of screen kisses

The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies

by Vito Russo
New York: Harper and Row, 1981
276 pp., illustrated. Index

"For much too long, film aesthetics and film criticism, in the Anglo-Saxon countries at least, have been privileged zones, private reserves in which thought has developed along its own lines, haphazardly, irrespective of what goes on in the larger realm of ideas. Writers about the cinema have felt free to talk about film language as if linguistics did not exist and to discuss Eisenstein's theory of montage in blissful ignorance of the Marxist concept of dialectics."

Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*

"Everywhere I went for more than three years, the same misconception arose with a disturbing regularity. At dinner parties, at family gatherings, at lunches in Manhattan and on picket lines in Berkeley, on the beach at Fire Island and on lecture tours in the Midwest," says Vito Russo about his new book, *The Celluloid Closet*. The misconception? That the book would be an exposé of the history of gays and lesbians working undercover in Hollywood. His agenda runs the gamut, as Dorothy Parker would say, from A to D, and if it is any indication of where Russo went for his research, then it is little wonder that the book is so lacking in political perspective. I'm surprised that Russo didn't catch on and change the company he was keeping — but then, look at all the scary things that happened to Dorothy when she left the farmyard. Granted, a list of gay and lesbian screen images, intended or found, is still, unfortunately, a bold event in itself. And judging by the unsettlingly rave reviews, the book is needed by gay and straight communities, academic and non-academic alike.

This book is about the mainstream American cinema, in which gays and lesbians have been used and from the creation of which their real lives have been excluded. It is impossible to even approach self-definition within the black hole of a Hollywood that makes



Madchen in Uniform (1931)

the homosexual image impossibly other. And as has been pointed out in feminist film criticism over the past several years, it is perhaps not even possible for the apparatus of film — with its physical, social and economic trappings — to depict the actuality of the physical body of women and the lives they lead. In a different way, this is true for homosexual men and lesbians as well. From a necessarily satellite location, Russo has taken up a disturbingly passive monitoring position.

The book thus devolves into a roster of screen kisses, and spotting someone else's idea of a faggot is basically a validation of that someone else's titillated expectations — expectations created by the industry itself. Chapter One of this book lists early, ostensibly pre-conscious representations of homosexuals in American film. Chapter Two is a litany of what the American censor board excerpted that could be considered indicative of homosexual activity. Chapter Three is an enumeration of the ways in which gay and lesbian content was qualified and censored by filmmakers themselves after the lifting of the bureaucratic tip of a much more institutionalized censorship iceberg. Chapter Four seems to be whatever was left in the card index that Russo hadn't shuffled into the boxes he then scantily embellished into earlier chapters. The book ends up with a startlingly

uninformed praise for the major American television networks' approach to homosexuals.

Roughly chronological, the book consequently denies any real analysis of the material presented. Limited to separate films, and separate scenes within them, Russo's discourse ignores the fact that this kind of dissection is important only as a tool to then effect relations between those scenes. His analysis is never consistent or constant enough to indicate what implements he's used or to help to give them over to his general readers so that they can better understand some of the ways in which to look at gay and lesbian imagery in films, or even how to find it.

With the exception of a few confused gestures and some quotes from other writers, Russo's book is completely without a ground in gay politics, nor does it ground the films in a world social and political climate. It doesn't even place them enough in film history to create a critical cinematic context. Pornography — which may not be a part of the mainstream at Manhattan lunches but is definitely a very large portion of the film market — is never mentioned, and would have afforded a clearer connection to the questions of economy which play such a large part in film image creation.

Russo seems to miss completely the fact that the misrepresentation of gays and lesbians in film is in fact the correct representation of our position

in society. There is an unresolved tension in the book between what Russo rightly states is the representation of homosexuality by sexual acts alone, and the dearth of real homosexual life of which sex is a part in a similar but naturally more socially complex way to that of heterosexuals. Claiming that gays are looking for homosexual sensibility and not homosexual characters, he also bitterly complains when characters which are obviously homosexual or lesbian (to those who are looking) don't evidence this fact by sexual contact. Not realizing that it is between these two apparent contradictions that the real political problem of sexuality and representation lies, the book fails to leave anything behind it but a smoke that obscures the fire it indicates.

"Gay sensibility is largely a product of oppression, of the necessity to hide so well for so long. It is a ghetto sensibility, born of the need to develop and use a second sight that will translate silently what the world sees and what the actuality may be. It was a gay sensibility that, for example, often enabled some lesbians and gay men to see at very early ages, even before they knew the words for what they were, something on the screen that they knew related to their lives in some way, without being able to put a finger on it." This sort of centric romanticism of interpretation excludes the heterosexual pole and dispenses with the consequent gap that can often explain volumes. The lack of discussion of the double meaning of sexual code indicators (what means something to a gay or lesbian person may mean something entirely different to a straight person) also ignores the problem area between 'the act' and 'the life'. At once divisive and freeing, definition in difference is one of the central questions of film and interpretation. His reduction of this issue to the above statement also relegates bricolage to a kind of furtive, second rate activity, instead of one that film invites itself. Having to look for something doesn't mean that it's not there, and most of the pleasure is in the hunting anyway.

Throughout the book there are recurring themes that should have been dealt with much more intelligently. One is the chorus of bars in the films. Of the kind you drink at rather than the kind you spend time behind — though both understandably haunt the book — Russo lists appearances in films as varied as *Call Her Savage*, *Advise and Consent*, *The Killing of Sister George*, and *Cruising*. They present the ghetto as a physical fact, as

if gays are only gay there, which of course makes us less frightening. The camera becomes a zookeeper of sorts, both privileged and protected by architecture. In his discussion of *Call Her Savage*, the bar scene only brings out Russo's confusion between film-life and real-life illegality. Attempting to 'explain' the appearance of the bar he states: "The underworld life as a haven for homosexuals is a staple of music and literature, and of course this reflects the reality of most gay experience which has been limited to expression in ghettos of one sort or another from the beginning of time. The gay ghetto has often been connected with the underworld to the extent that wherever illicit activity flourishes, organized crime moves in to control it and turn a profit."


Well of course, we all know that this is the sort of sentimental stuff that was used to justify films like *Cruising*. With his 'factual' commentary, Russo entrenches the Hollywood representation of the ghetto as merely a physical thing — more believable than the challenging and less representable network that it is. A literal interpretation damns gays and lesbians to an isolation only relieved by physical proximity, and Russo conspires with

our naming-by-placing, helping to 'put us in our place' so to speak.


Another unexplored theme is that of the homo-suicide in films. Dealt with only as the requisite divine retribution of the sinner, Russo condescends to his readership and ignores a more in-depth analysis of film catharsis. Narrative structure often demands the death of the character which, mise-en-abime, embodies the evil which is carried by all other characters implicated in that narrative. A classic example of catharsis is one that he cites without comment — that of the Hepburn character in *The Children's Hour*, who walks out of the cemetery right past her ex-fiance after burying her would-be lover, Martha.

Russo warns us of his myopia about sex roles earlier in the book. "In Richard Jones' *Yankee Doodle* In Berlin (1919) . . . Bob White dresses as a femme fatale, playing up to the Kaiser in order to obtain information of a secret nature . . . The use of female sexuality by a male hero suggested that feminine qualities are just a tool." Most 'qualities' designated as feminine within the culture are just tools. Russo unwittingly opens up a Pandora's box of gender and role definition including questions of service and its re-appro-


TODAY at



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CO-STARRING *Miriam HOPKINS* · *Fay BAINTER* · *Karen BALKIN* AND INTRODUCING

Because of the mature nature of its theme — this motion picture is recommended for adults only.

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Ad. copy for second film version of "The Children's Hours" (1962)

priation for defense, as well as pin-pointing some of the problems of drag as potentially an agent of freedom which implicitly underlines the social norms.

"America's ostentatious fascination with the difference between masculine and feminine behaviour and society's absolute terror of queerness, especially in men, continued to be served by the requisite sissy." It would seem to me that the mere lack of lesbians in films at all indicates that they are much more socially terrifying than gay men. At least representations of relationships between homosexual men can include, however maliciously and misrepresentationally, questions of power and male institution which are less culturally challenging than the radicality of a member of society attempting to define herself outside of its central tenets. Here he has again confused film fear — the captured, the defused — with real life fear.

The same sort of confused and confusing liberalism is evident in Russo's discussion of Leontine Sagan's *Madchen in Uniform*, made in the early thirties in Germany. It concerns the relationship between a student and her female teacher in a private school for the daughters of Prussian Army officers. "*Madchen in Uniform* attacked conformity and tyranny over people's minds and emotions, using lesbianism as a means of rebelling against authoritarianism just as Lillian Hellman used it in *The Children's Hour* to attack the use of powerful lies as weapons." In that homosexuality inherently attacks the status quo, it seems to me that "authoritarianism" and "lying" were there to represent that status quo — if anything used by the filmmakers to codify and metaphorize the social position of homosexuality rather than vice versa.

Continuing, he says of *Madchen*, "One of the few films to have an inherently gay sensibility (why couldn't he use the word 'lesbian here', I mean just once, it wouldn't have been so hard, given the content!), it is also one of the few to be written, produced and directed by women. Thus the film shows an understanding — missing from most films that touch on lesbian feelings — of the dynamic of women relating to women on their own terms." Is something inherently lesbian because lesbians make it? Further, and more generally, is it possible for women to relate to women "on their own terms" in our society? This may have been partially true in the collaboration of the filmmakers, but it is not necessarily what they

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collaborated to portray in the film.

Many of the lesbian films in this book (mainly because most mainstream films portray lesbians in this way) are qualified by youth or confinement or, in this case, both — no wonder they're "deranged." The women in *Madchen* are isolated from men by their fathers, who wish them to grow up virgins with a certain degree of education. In terms of "women relating to women", quite obviously these women are there because of their men, so they are definitely not relating on "their own terms". This is also a class question, in regard of location. Prisons, on the other end of the social spectrum, are equally class defining in their 'reason' for the qualifying confinement from 'the opposite sex'. One element is meant to be so rich it's decadent, the other so poor it's deprived. But class is another untouchable in Russo's eyes, apparently.

The book ends with a grim foreboding that television can do the trick that film apparently can't, and Russo is here even more unquestioning of the medium under observation. Glossing over the importance of independent production, Russo claims that television is "more vulnerable" to "activist pressure than was the motion picture industry", because it is "subject to regulation by the Federal Communications Commission and to the reactions of its advertisers and vocal public opinion." The extraordinary illogic of this statement given the overwhelming swing to the right amazes me. The Federal Communications Commission is the Reagan administration, advertisers are multi-nationals which profit most from the economic base of the nuclear family, and vocal public opinion is most strongly heard from the heavily financially backed Moral Majority. "A film may have to be a hit, but when a television show flops, there is always next week and another subject." Above and beyond the naiveté about the Neilsons, Russo ignores the fact that there is also more possibility to reinforce given social roles in a weekly show.

It should be noted that with the exception of the factionalization of Quentin Crisp's life (*The Naked Civil Servant*), all the television programmes cited by Russo as commendable are fiction; scripted, manipulated, directed, charmingly complicated fiction, qualified by its mere form. *The Naked Civil Servant* as a 'biography' of sorts, is the biography of a man who, as Russo admits, "makes public hay of the fact that he is not a gay

militant, but he may in fact have been one of the first gay activists in his own passive way. Italics mine. Two documentaries which go unnoted are CBS's *Gay Power, Gay Politics*, and the state-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Sharing the Secret*. They remain the unqualified truth in the public eye because they are 'documentaries'. But any fool knows that there's no reason to make a documentary unless you also want to make a point.

George Smith, a Toronto graduate student at The Ontario Institute For Studies in Education and the past Chairman of Canada's *Right To Privacy Committee*, is working on a thesis analyzing the CBS production. To quote from an excerpt which appeared in FUSE Magazine March/April 1981: "The result is a series of images and conceptions divorced from reality — a kind of life in TV land. In this case, CBS's account of the gay community fails to include, for example, Black, Asian or Hispanic gays. There are no older people. And what is of particular interest, there are no women. It is a cardboard community of white, mostly middle class, "macho" men, where the elite spend their time at cocktail parties and the rest simply walk the streets and cruise the parks in search of sex." Smith later clearly indicates the way in which editing and direction in the programme is virulently anti-gay.

In the same issue of FUSE, John Greyson dissects *Sharing The Secret*. Called "Telling Secrets", Greyson's article omits one secret that he possibly didn't know; that one of the five men 'interviewed' for the 'documentary' was in fact an actor. So much for Russo's great white hope.

Though it is important to know what was cut from films and why, what was originally scripted and which actors turned down parts or took them demanding certain cuts, this book is a peculiar mix of jumbled history and halfbaked analysis. Listings are a primary stage of research, and I would have hoped to see something done with the hordes of information that Russo has carefully gathered. Let's hope someone else does — but quick. It's too bad we don't know yet what form of representation, if any, there will be after the radical re-ordering required to free homosexuality from the kind of marginality that necessitates both this book and a better one.

FUSE September 1982

The Bus Show Transit workers know what they like

Claire Kujundzic is a Vancouver artist. Her past work includes community and political posters, individual works of fine art, educational slide shows for unions which made use of her drawings and graphics. As well as participating in numerous one-woman and group shows, she has worked with Persimmon Blackbridge, a feminist sculptress. Together they organized a showing of political women artists' work and statements on their art and politics. Claire Kujundzic is currently a member of the East End Artists' Association, a support group for Vancouver women artists.

The Bus Show, Claire's most recent work, was displayed in the bus drivers' cafeteria during safe driver award ceremonies. Her pieces explore and integrate the bus traveller's relationship to the outside world from three different perspectives: the interactions between bus travellers, the impact of the interior of the bus as an advertising space and the view of the outside world in transit. Within these themes her images describe the isolation of bus riders from one another and the sense of community amongst common groups of travellers, the absurdity of commercial messages played against the real concerns of mothers with children, workers, older people and tired shoppers, and the varieties in social and physical bus environments in working class and middle class communities.

Kujundzic used a range of art techniques to develop this sense of contrast and integration. In a linocut, a man reads a newspaper while a woman peers over his shoulder, a shift worker sleeps while children play. This print is alternatively collaged against a "walk for peace" demonstration, a pencil drawing of aimless unemployed men seeking work outside the Millionaire Club and simply foregrounded on newspaper. Motion and interaction on the buses is caught with line sketches, characters are explored with detailed pencil drawings or cartooned. Ads are superimposed into the pencil drawings.

FUSE September 1982



On the Bus — "Walk for Peace" (linocut) (1982)

In both the content and exhibition of **The Bus Show** Kujundzic aims at providing working class people with a reflection of themselves absent from dominant gallery art and mass media. By incorporating the **Buzzer** (B.C. Hydro's publicity hand-out), graffiti and local bus signs she creates easily identifiable images. The daily and often unconscious world of the bus traveller becomes complex and delightful.

Claire decided to show her work in the drivers' cafeteria after two bus drivers' viewed her pieces and encouraged her to make them accessible to other transit workers. She wanted to experiment with alternatives to traditional gallery space in the hope of communicating with her

chosen audience: riders and drivers. By fitting the exhibition into the awards ceremonies, Kujundzic hoped that drivers would feel more comfortable with an unfamiliar exposure to art.

They were responsive to the show but not drawn by the same issues as commuters (graffiti, crowded conditions, the Buzzer). The transit workers wanted to see themselves at work, not only their working environment. Claire plans to continue this series, depicting the drivers. The combined pieces would examine both aspects of a public service: the pressures and strengths of working with that "public", especially in a time of cutbacks and the experience of the consumers.

Claire Kujundzic

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Track Two Police role on a diet?

Track Two directed by Harry Sutherland. 90 minutes. KLS Communications, 1982.

Track Two is the police appellation for the Toronto gay ghetto — as distinct from Track one, an adjacent prostitution area. It is also the name of a new feature-length documentary film by Harry Sutherland, Gord Keith and Jack Lemmon, three men who made a 1977 short named *Truxx*, about a police raid on a Montreal bar. **Track Two** ambitiously tries to trace the trajectory of gay politics in Toronto — and in general, it's the history of recent gay politics in most North American cities — from the incipient organizations of the early Seventies to the electoral strategies, the state harassment, and the demonstrations of the last two years.

It is a history, needless to say, that is

largely characterized by attacks on our homosexual communities; and by our defenses, at first feeble but increasingly formidable as our identities have coalesced and we've become more encouraged by our political maturity. Thus the film recalls, with interviews, stills and footage, the Emanuel Jaques murder and Anita Bryant's visit in 1977 and 1978, the raids on the Body Politic, Mayor Sewell's defence of the gay community, the municipal elections of 1980, and finally the bath raids of 1981, and the demonstrations that followed them. The film rightly centres on the year of the raids, for they mark a watershed for the modern gay movement in this city, just as the gay riots of 1980 in San Francisco marked the 'coming of age' of gay politics in the United States.

Much of the footage is in the form of

a valuable document on the raids themselves, police surveillance and infiltration, and the response of the community. For that information alone, *Track Two* is as valuable a documentary as I've seen on the briefly resurgent gay activism of the late Seventies (I make these qualifications because I'm unsure of the further possibilities of those politics at the present time).

The most valuable scenes are perhaps those with the cops themselves. The public hearing that the police administration was forced to call after the raids is aptly shot: the inexorable commissioners sit silently frowning before the muted outrage of municipal politicians and community activists, having already decided, before the meeting, not to recommend an inquiry into the raids. When the cops finally do speak, it's on a CHCH-



TV debate, which Sutherland managed to film in the studio. Asked by **Right to Privacy Committee** (an organization unfortunately underplayed in the film) spokesperson George Smith about anti-gay sentiment in the city, both among the police and the populace, the head detective — every bit the faceless functionary — opined that he himself knew several homosexual waiters and hairdressers, that they were quite acceptable people, and that what's more he thought that most people in Toronto had no objection to homosexuals serving their food or cutting their hair.

Missing analysis of Police organizing

Given the inevitable focus on the bath raids and demonstrations, it's the police themselves who emerge as the film's principal subject. But the analysis of police power and its relation to minority communities is not what I'd hoped for. Considering the quality and quantity of research that's been done in the last seven or eight years on police conduct in this city, and the relatively high profile of the police-community debate in the public mind, we might have been given a little more to think about in terms of how police activity organizes and controls urban populations: What are some of the particulars of the police budget, for example? What kinds of surveillance and harassment do the cops do in other communities? And finally, what's the relation between the Toronto police and the Ontario government? (Attorney-General Roy McMurtry is mentioned only once in this film, and only verbally.)

Further post-production work on the film might have cleared up some smaller but more obvious problems: the police commissioners are not identified by titles, as are the others at the public hearing; Lenora Johnson, widow of a West Indian man killed by the police, is identified only by name — thus leaving her support of a large gay rally with no context within the film; and the repeatedly mentioned War Measures Act of 1970 is never referred to visually. These are small points, but they make me wonder how useful the film will be outside of Toronto, and to some extent they lessen its historiographic value.

When all is said, though, **Track Two** is undoubtedly a competent documentary, and deserves the wide and enthusiastic viewing that marked its opening in Toronto. ●

FUSE September 1982

Some of these Stories Prisoners of our hormones?

Some of These Stories are True directed by Peter Adair. 27 min. Adair Films, 1981.

Three stories: Some of them happened, some of them were made up. All of them are about power and physical proximity between men.

Tito Perez talks about jail: the psychiatrists, the cell, the threat of sexual contact with other men. He talks about a man who wanted to rape him. Tito resists ("I didn't want to be a woman, I'm a man") and seriously wounds his attacker, who ends up being raped in the prison hospital. "Now I'm king, and he's a woman; I couldn't see myself put in that damn category."

Lucian K. Truscott, IV went to West Point in the Vietnam years: "Violence was something I never liked, but power fascinated me." At West Point it was power, its rules and honour codes, that was passed from men to boys, as well as the ability to practice "the art of the exercise of violence."

Haig's ribbons

Truscott was annoyed by mandatory chapel on Sundays, and complained to his regimental commander that the requirement was unconstitutional. That commander was Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Truscott's reminiscences — the strongest segment of the film — are fascinating both as gossip (though poking fun at Haig has become less rewarding since his fall from power) and as a kind of off-hand analysis of how men deal with one another. Haig's office, as Truscott describes it, is wonderful: models of tanks and Huey helicopters, plaques covering the military green walls. His uniform jacket is hung on "one of those valet hangers rich people have in their bedrooms, next to his desk, facing you, so you could see his ribbons."

Truscott tries to pressure Haig legally into getting the regulations changed. Haig retaliates by continually charging Truscott with minor violations that result in his having to meet

with Haig in his office several evenings a week. Sometimes little is said; Haig is charming. Other times he's angry. "He'd go through three personalities in 15 minutes, and was constantly straightening the eagles on his shirt buttons." Truscott is flattered yet baffled by all the attention. Finally, he attempts to construct an understanding of their relationship: he concludes that somehow, it had to do with an attraction between them, "that there was a sexual component to the power exchanged between men that was never acknowledged. In those days, sex permeated West Point like a fog. It was like **Playboy**: you opened it up to the centrefold, and there was power: everything else was just filler."

At the last meeting they have, Haig is fatherly, even intimate. And then he bursts out: "**Listen**. You do away with mandatory chapel here at West Point, the next damn thing you'll have is women, and one of them will get pregnant, and they'll have married housing. Then we won't have West Point anymore, all we'll have is a goddamn college. Get out of my office, I never want to see you again."

Michael Revson is a nuclear weapons engineer who thinks people should have pity on men — "we're prisoners of our hormones." Aggression, it seems, is as inevitable between humans as between Dobermans (he has one): "When two Dobermans meet in a park, they either go for each other's throats, or one exposes himself in submission."

Revson's story is a recollection of several days on a jury, during which he and another man confront each other and in turn intimidate the entire jury. The story turns around the tension of physical contact — that of "coming to blows" — and both men are afraid of the intimacy that this might paradoxically imply.

The remarkable thing about this short film is the subtlety of the narrative structure. **Some of These Stories are True** is a short and modest film. Its analysis of power and masculinity is as tentative and subtle as the casually told stories themselves.

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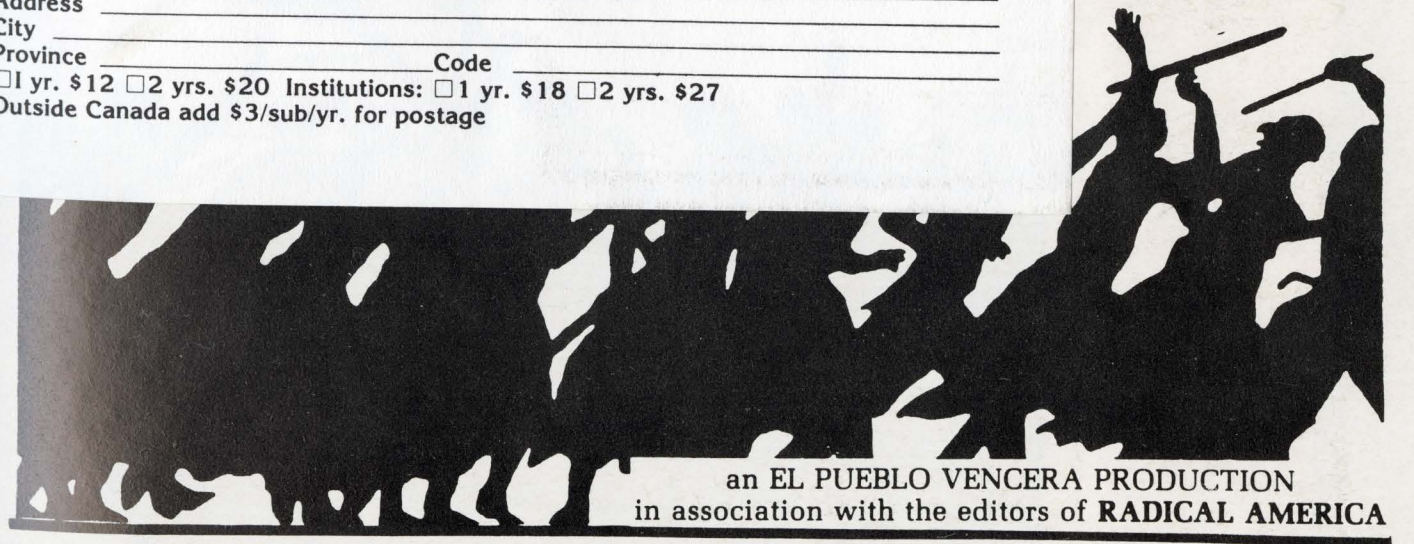
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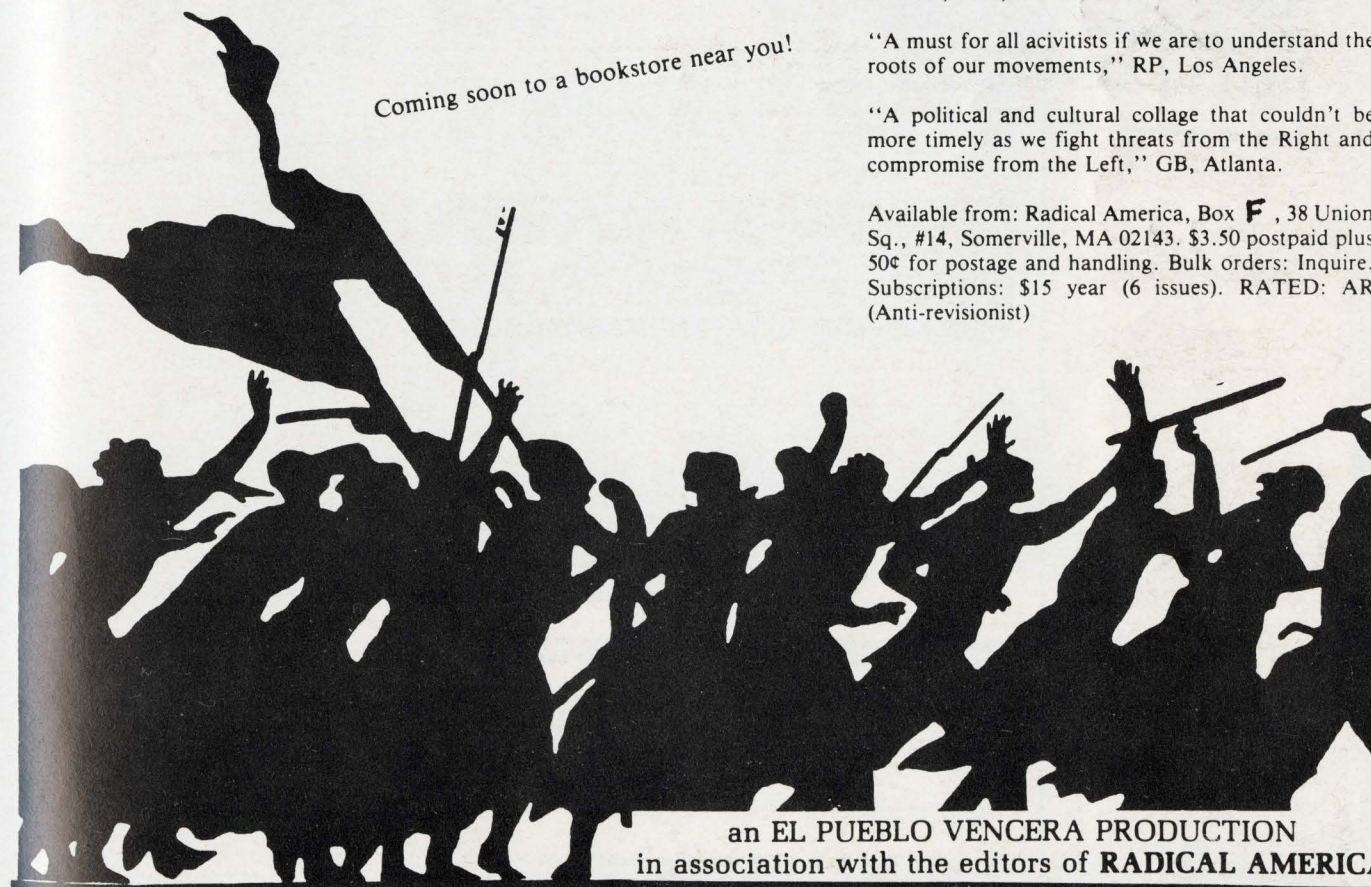
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