

THE CULTURAL NEWSMAGAZINE

SPRING 1985

\$2.50

FUSE

REVIEWS, REVIEWS, REVIEWS
VIDEO, BOOKS, MUSIC, POETRY, PHOTOGRAPHY

BRITISH VIDEO CENSORSHIP
THE BRIGHT BILL VS THE VIDEO NASTIES

MARXIST LENINIST TOTALITARIANISM
ELECTIONS AND OTHER PROPAGANDA TACTICS



**ART CUTS:
THE BATTLEGROUND**

Credit Where Due

I READ BERENICE REYNAUD'S article in the March issue of FUSE with great interest. I was also disappointed to read that two of the films she mentions at the New York Film Festival were never credited with having appeared before New York at the Festival of Festivals.

It's a small point but a valid one nonetheless. And you don't have to go to the New York Festival to see those films.

See you this fall at the 1st.

Helga Stephenson
Festival of Festivals
Toronto

ticularly well-known in Toronto for its politically committed publishing on women and other subjects. Actually, I begin to realize that it is often the regions, and the smaller publishers who do take on unusual or difficult books, rather than the large publishers of Toronto.

Libby Oughton
publisher, Ragweed Press
Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Thank you for the correction and apologies for the error.

(FUSE)

Apologies

to Connie Kaldor, whose photograph was incorrectly captioned as that of "Johanne Mabon" on page 17 of the February/March issue;

to Suzanne Bird, whose photograph was incorrectly captioned as that of "Barb Spence", also on page 17 of the February/March issue;

and to Johanne Mabon and Barb Spence whose names appeared in captions though their faces were not present in photographs.

—Frances Leeming
production co-ordinator
(Volume VIII, No. 5)

Women in Trades

Women in Trades is an association of women working in trades, including those unionized or self-employed, women students in technical and trades training, and supportive interested individuals.

Women in Trades was formed in 1980 to provide contacts for women wanting to enter a trade, to give support and encouragement to women already working in non-traditional occupations, and to promote the interests of women facing work-related problems such as discrimination in hiring and promotion, and/or sexual harassment.

Women in Trades meets the third Monday of every month at 22 Davisville Ave., Toronto, M4S 1E8. Information about the meetings can be obtained by calling 653-2213.

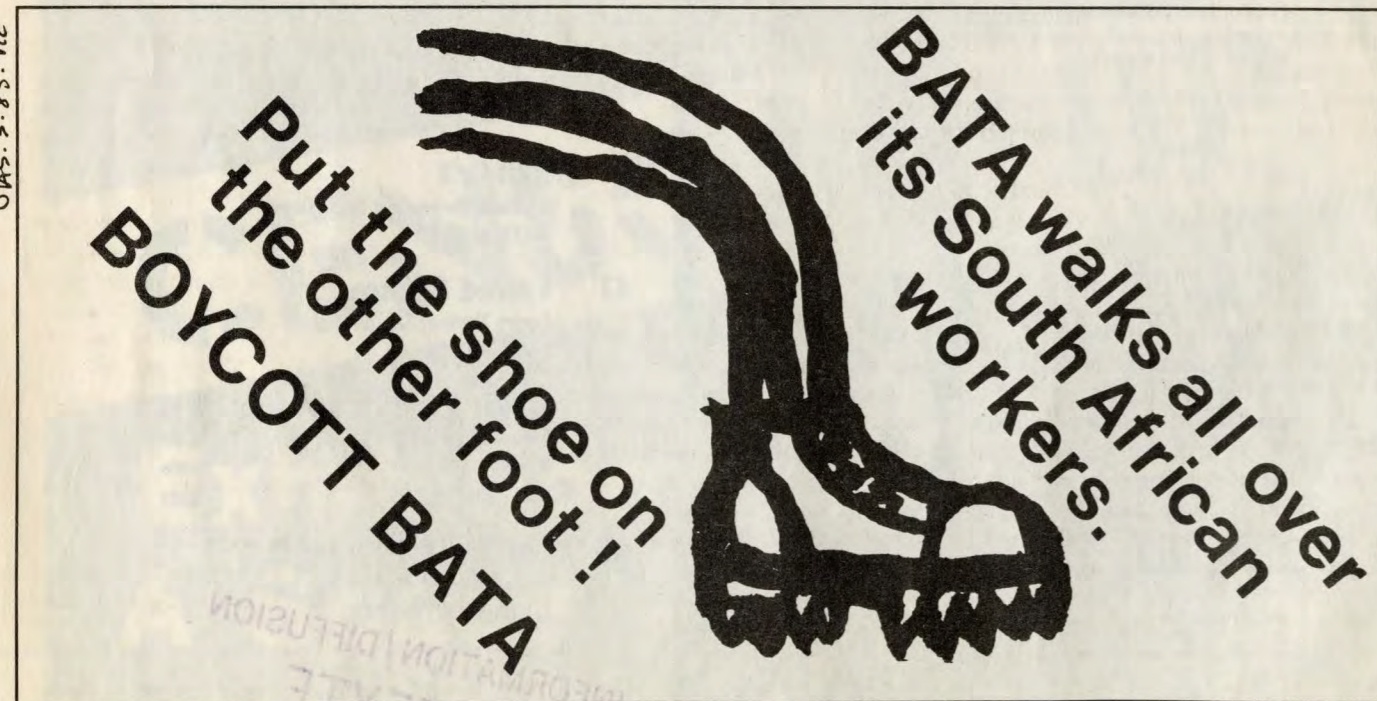
Women in Trades publishes a quarterly newsletter, giving views of issues women face in the work force, descriptions of training courses and counselling facilities, and trade-related news and features.

Central Errors

FIRST OF ALL, MANY THANKS FOR the fine review of Penny Kemp's book, *Binding Twine*. It is a real treat to find a review that treats the book as seriously as we took it, in the editing and publishing.

I would appreciate, however, that in your listings at the top of the review that you would correct the reference to Ragweed Press (Toronto). We publish all of our books out of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, a place not par-

UJAS-5-85-MC



The Battle Ground: What's at Risk

JOYCE MASON



Taking to the streets March 16th 1985, Toronto

DURING ALL OF THE MARCHING, speeches, poster painting and demonstrating that has accompanied recent government cuts to cultural programmes and their agencies, there has been much said about the economic benefits of spending dollars on culture. This is important information, and needs, I suppose, to be repeated. I can't help thinking, however, that it stops short of the mark. For starters, various government commissions have been telling us this for years. Every major survey, Stats Can report and governmental investigation turfs up exactly the same kind of confirmation of what most of us already knew, either from common experience or from common sense. But cuts continue.

One limitation of arguments in defense of cultural funding which center on the economic spin-off benefits, is that the same argument crops up in just about every sector of the economy — from corporate capital on downward — with varying degrees of issue confusion. It is no accident that both participation in Star Wars and interest free loans to DOMTAR are defended in these terms as well. It gives an impression that the government is concerned about issues like poverty and unemployment, without it having to do very much about them.

The truth of the matter is that the current government would rather spend money on Star Wars research and in propping up profits than on culture, SPRING 1985

childcare, welfare, foreign aid or education — let alone on socialist musicians, black poetry, feminist video or political criticism. They are not merely misguided about the economic repercussions. Why should they care if it's tough for a vital indigenous culture to assert itself? or that some of these people will be unable to produce to their capacity? After all, imported American commercial culture is, as NDP culture critic Lynne MacDonald pointed out recently, sufficiently right wing for these guys. When cultural activity is defunded, and particularly when *public arms-length funding* is to be replaced by re-directing \$'s through the programmes of the government departments (as Marcel Masse has clearly outlined is his intentions), the threat to a rich and diverse culture is extreme. Its replacement will be the meager culture of the rich.

Some of us produce culture; all of us consume it, reflect upon it, enjoy it and are enriched by it. In the current political climate, we must all make a conscious effort to actively support the culture that we do not wish to do without and to encourage and seek out the stuff we do not yet know about. This support, to be effective, must be active on at least three fronts.

—Personally, we can actively support, with our time and our money, the events, production and institutions which we need (and here I mean more than just going to benefits);

—Socially, we can draw connections and alliances by talking to others about their economic and political problems, their survival needs and of our own, in an effort to learn as well as to form alliances;

—Politically, within the structures as they exist in Canada, we can write letters and send telegrams (try one per month or one per week) to the major newspapers, your MP's, the minister responsible for your aggravation, the Prime Minister or the Premier of your province.

Although this latter effort is unlikely to change the conservative agenda, we must remember that this is "representative politics" and they will do what they feel they have to do, in order to maintain their power. If enough pressure is brought to bear, concessions can be made and this is a question of survival. Which is why the first two points on my proposed agenda for action are so vital. In the enthusiasm of the historic Artists March and rally of March 16th in Toronto, many began chanting, "The Artists united will never be defeated". However, to this slogan we must add that it will depend on their ability to unite with others and who it is that they do unite with.

Important work is being produced; that it continue to be produced is also important.

Joyce Mason

UNESCO Report Yankees and Friends Go Home

WITH A QUARTER OF ITS \$200 million budget gone (along with the withdrawal of the United States from its membership), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization met during the week of February 11 to 15 to discuss the effect of this development on its continued functioning. Since the U.S. withdrawal, the United Kingdom and Singapore have also withdrawn membership, reducing the budget even further, although not by such a large amount.

With 161 member nations (prior to withdrawals), a staff of 3,344 and 2,400 employees, UNESCO is one of forty U.N. specialized agencies, and one of the largest. Understandably, its impact is felt more by the developing world than by the well-to-do nations of the West.

Its programmes range from the location of mineral resources in developing countries to the administration of the international copyright convention

(which is of direct benefit to the West); in between those extremes lies much of the work for which UNESCO has become known: advising governments on educational policies or low cost housing; setting up national teacher training workshops, eradicating illiteracy; translations of lesser known works from indigenous languages into French or English; publication of dictionaries and grammars of lesser known languages and teaching English as a second language.

The U.S. has been one of the most vociferous of UNESCO's critics. Its criticisms include allegations of politicization of the organization; collectivism; confrontational policies of the Director-General; mismanagement; curtailment of press freedom; and unnecessary involvement in peace and disarmament. The personality, style and politics of the Director-General have also been cited among the fundamental causes of difficulties

and problems at UNESCO.

That Amado Mahtar M'Bow (the Director-General of UNESCO since 1974) is a controversial figure appears beyond doubt. The son of a Senegalese shepherd and former minister of education and culture of Senegal, he is the only Black African ever elected head of a U.N. specialized agency. Nepotism, corrupt practices (maintaining a fleet of cars for his own personal use and rent-free apartments for the use of his relatives), and despotism are some of the charges made about him; he has also been described as brilliant, confrontational and tyrannical.

Of the allegations made about UNESCO, the three most serious ones are probably "politicization", mismanagement and involvement in the "new world information order".

- For UNESCO's critics politicization has meant that the organization has become too involved in issues such as peace and disarmament, human rights and places like South Africa. UNESCO's mandate, they argue, was literacy programs and not politics.

- Evidence of mismanagement is seen in the fact that most (75%) of the agency's budget is spent in Paris, maintaining a huge bureaucracy (in an architecturally superb building, housing priceless works of art by Picasso, and which has in fact become a tourist attraction), and not in the field.

Those defending UNESCO hold that its mandate was never to work "in the field", but in an advisory capacity to member governments, and that this can be best effected by a centralized staff.

- The new world information order was premised on:

- (a) the inequality between developing and developed countries vis-a-vis communications techniques and resources;
- (b) monopolization of news coverage by the big wire services resulting in biased reporting of news from developing countries, and an overwhelming emphasis on disasters, catastrophes, and tragedies - earthquakes, floods, violence;

- (c) the export to these countries, in numbers large enough to warrant the accusation of flooding, of Western films and television programmes - most of which have no relevance to the lives of the majority of inhabitants, are politically biased, morally unacceptable,



UNESCO Assembly at Paris Headquarters

Post Secondary Funding Cuts

AT THE 11TH ANNUAL UNIVERSITIES Art Association of Canada Conference in Montreal last November, a National Task Force was established to examine and report on cutbacks in art education. The issue had been raised in an alarming presentation delivered by Tony McAulay, Jane Buyers and David Wright. (Tony teaches at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario; Jane was one of four Fine Art faculty laid off there last summer; and David resigned as Co-ordinator of their Fine Art program in frustration with the cutbacks.) The presentation included the following unofficial and probably incomplete list of casualties in Fine Art education:



MC

Algonquin College, Ottawa, Ontario: department closed.

Humber College, Toronto, Ontario: programme reduced to two years, then one year, then closed. Silversmithing and drama were also closed.

St. Lawrence College, Kingston, Ontario: programme reduced to two years.

Sheridan College, Brampton, Ontario: department closed.

David Thompson University Centre, Nelson, B.C.: department closed.

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C.: 30% cutback.

Fanshawe College, London, Ontario: four out of eleven faculty laid off and operating budget cutbacks.

Kootenay School of Art, B.C.: department closed.

University of Ottawa, Ontario: budget cutbacks, amount unknown.

Although it is understood that art education is suffering from general education cutbacks, there was concern about the cumulative nationwide impact of what appear to be arbitrary

Marlene Philip

cuts decided at local levels. The widespread perception of arts programs as not being financially viable or as "nice to have when the money is available" was raised as a problem and condemned as being not only shortsighted but, in light of available information, patently inaccurate. Harry Chartrand, Director of Research for the Canada Council, was quoted in support of this:

"The \$8 billion cultural sector is very efficient in using Federal money to create jobs. For example, the \$64 million in Canada Council grants last year generated \$1.4 billion in the economy and created 25,000 jobs."

Another paper presented in 1983 to the Macdonald Royal Commission by the Canadian Conference of the Arts pointed out that the arts and culture in-



Mike Conatole

dustries are the fourth largest employers in the country with revenues in 1980 totalling \$7 billion - bigger than steel, bigger than pulp and paper.

The U.A.A.C. Task Force, which is to "promote and publicise the objectives of post-secondary Fine Arts education in Canada, and...make its findings known to appropriate individuals and groups who are in a position to establish priorities in post-secondary education", was proposed by Virgil Hammock of Mt. Allison University, a veteran of recent skirmishes with the Federal Tax Department. He pointed out the Tax Department had been forced to re-evaluate its attitude towards artists in Canada as a direct result of coordinated political pressure.

When the next U.A.A.C. Conference is held in Ottawa later this year, the Task Force hopes to have gathered the information and support it needs to begin an effective campaign to reverse the present trends.

David Wright

V.A.L. at the V.A.G.

AFTER CONSIDERABLE DEBATE, the Vancouver Artists' League, an organization of artists, critics and representatives from parallel galleries, decided to run a slate for the Vancouver Art Gallery's board of directors. The league was instrumental in challenging the gallery's cancellation of Paul Wong's *Confused, Sexual Views*, in 1984 and had helped to organize a confrontation at the Gallery's Annual



The new Vancouver Art Gallery

General Meeting last year — mobilizing hundreds of local artists and gallery goers.

In the last year, VAL has recognized that the Wong affair was simply the tip of the iceberg. The Gallery operated with an interim director for six months, after Luke Rombout's decision to resign. There is no head curator, little community outreach, no criticism or educational programme, and no acquisitions policy. The Gallery has little relationship to the broader Vancouver community — its large working class, minority, Native and immigrant populations. The VAG's massive structure and conservative shows are like a beacon in the dark recession to the wealthy gallery-goers from Shaughnessy and West Vancouver. It is quickly becoming a museum, not a contemporary gallery.

The VAL's campaign was aimed at challenging the current priorities of the VAG. It was an attempt to bridge the gap between community, or rather, potential community, of the VAG and its administration. Membership has

fallen dramatically, as the new gallery fails to meet its promise of dynamic new programming.

The VAL's programme called for the development of curatorial and acquisitions guidelines that included a broad range of contemporary art; outreach to working class, ethnic and Native communities; the development of educational programmes and critical debate; open communication on the part of the gallery with its membership; improving staff/administration relationships; and rebuilding the VAG's membership

base.

At the AGM in March, many of the four hundred people in attendance echoed the criticisms which had been put forth by the VAL. When the new Board of Directors was announced at the end of the month, it included two of the original slate: Marion Penner-Bancroft and David Mac Williams.

Sara Diamond

Artists Union Formed (Toronto local)

THE ARTISTS UNION (TORONTO local) was formed in the spring of 1984 to provide a collective bargaining voice for the social and economic concerns of artists. The main premise of the union is that artists are employees of the government, since virtually all cultural activity in this country is directly or indirectly dependent upon funds from various government levels. The government, as an employer, has responsibilities to its employees, and it

is the fulfillment of these responsibilities that the union will be bargaining for.

The union asserts that culture provides a social image of Canada, as well as promoting trade and tourism: cultural workers should therefore receive remuneration and benefits.

The prime objective is to make the government provide a living wage for artists. Related demands include health and dental care, injury compensation, pensions, material subsidies, and job security.

Union membership is open to any practicing independent artist and new members are encouraged to actively participate in forming policies and to join one of the union's working groups. (Presently the union is divided into three working groups: research, membership, and legal committees.)

Emphasizing that artists will benefit from outreach and self-education, the union has sponsored a number of events. These include a lecture by Conrad Atkinson regarding the Artists Union in Britain; a discussion of government culture cutbacks with Lynn MacDonald (N.D.P.), Brian Anthony (Canadian Conference for the Arts), and Jim Miller (Artists Union); and a screening of videotapes about the media treatment of the British coal miners' strike.

In addition, when *A Space* gallery was raided by the Ontario Censor Board (now called the Ontario Film Review Board), the Artists Union immediately organized a protest rally at Queen's Park. And, in March, they co-ordinated a protest against cultural cutbacks and organized a Toronto march and rally involving members of various arts and cultural organizations.

The Artists Union (Toronto local) hopes that artists outside Toronto will organize their own locals so that efforts can be co-ordinated on a national scale. Artists in other countries (Sweden, Holland, Ireland) already enjoy various forms of basic living rights and Artists Unions elsewhere (Australia, England) are currently organizing to win these for themselves.

For information on the Artists Union, write to: The Artists Union, 131 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario, M5V 2RW.

Jude Johnston

T.O.'s Cultural Capital

COULD IT BE THAT POLICY-makers in the area of culture and the arts have heard the slogan "act locally, think globally"? The *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* of 1982 stands as a reference book on many shelves, casually referred to as the Applebert report. The province of Ontario produced its report on the arts last year. *An Arts Policy for Scarborough* appeared in 1983. And now the Toronto Arts Council has published Tom Hendry's *Cultural Capital*, a report on Toronto's artistic assets. There are many good local recommendations in Hendry's report. However, it accepts quite uncritically an economic vocabulary that dangerously confuses the issues which need to be addressed in reports on the arts in Canada. If artistic and cultural activity is being justified mainly because of its economic impact, then the human, social and political aspects of art work may be ignored. What would happen if another local report showed that (say) the textile industry has a greater economic impact for each municipal dollar invested in it?

Hendry was trained as a chartered accountant and has worked as a playwright and theatre administrator. He applauds Toronto as a centre for the arts; describes problems such as poor wages and facilities; warns city politicians that this will not do; makes specific suggestions; and applauds again. There is something here for everybody, meaning that the report can be read in several different ways. Local artists will need to exert pressure to ensure that *Cultural Capital* is read in a way that benefits the freedom of art activities rather than the business of the city.

There is intelligent comment in this report on many problems and issues of arts policy. Government agencies and the private sector are reluctant to give grants to new and/or controversial art organizations. Hendry suggests that \$900,000 be earmarked for these projects and \$200,000 for community and neighbourhood arts groups. There are also suggestions which would help these groups pay for their working spaces. There are suggestions for many new facilities, including a museum of modern art. There are ideas for tours

by Toronto arts groups to communities outside of the city.

Hendry even acknowledges that the Toronto Arts Council (TAC), which would administer these programmes, must be independent enough to take a strong position against censorship and the actions of other levels of government. Members of the TAC are appointed by the city. It is suggested that in the future the arts community should itself appoint "a certain percentage" of the members of the Council. Given the crucial role of the TAC, it is important to note that, as it is presently constituted, it is in a very weak position should any conflict arise between it and City Council. Would the TAC consider giving a grant to a Toronto lesbian art gallery if threatened with possible political backlash?

In B.C., the Vancouver Partnership for business and art, for example, has been criticized by artists because it is business-dominated, one-sided and lacking in arts input. The lesson is clear. The only responsive funding bodies and cultural organisations are those democratically controlled by artists themselves.

One can find many ominous passages in *Cultural Capital*. Do we, for example, want a visual representation of Toronto that reflects accurately "the city's collective sense of worth, self-respect, judgement and taste"? What would this mean in practice? And what is "cultural capital" anyway? What is being excluded when an argument is made that by 1999 there will be twenty-five million "attendances" at arts events? What is an "attendance"? How do we react when we are told that small theatres are "research and development" for commercially-viable theatre?

The concept of cultural capital has quite a different meaning in the sociology of art developed in France by Pierre Bourdieu. In *Distinction* (Harvard University Press, 1984) Bourdieu gives a very detailed ethnography of how lifestyle and familiarity with culture serve to reproduce inequalities of social class. Unlike the authors of recent reports on the arts in Canada, Bourdieu acknowledges that school visits to arts organizations will never overcome, by themselves, the influences of social class. Of course school visits must continue, but we must recognize that social position is

reproduced through forms of cultural capital far more varied and far-reaching than those acknowledged in these reports.

There are many excellent local recommendations in this report. But in the end, there is no global vision. Strong democratic artists' organizations will have to struggle for those global thoughts.

Alan O'Connor



TORONTO — 7,000 demonstrators for Choice, February 22, 1985

Choice Update

ON WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 19, 1984 Dr. Robert Scott was quietly arrested on his way home from the Morgenthaler clinic. He was taken to 52 Division, charged and released on his own recognizance. (It is interesting to note that the police were much less heavy-handed in this episode than in the last. The previous arrest was preceded by a raid on the clinic while women were having abortions. Drs. Scott and Smoling were jailed for two days before having a bail hearing and they were released on the condition that they were not to enter or go near the clinic.)

By 9 p.m. that evening pro-choice organizers had sprung into action. The following day 800 people met at Queen's Park to protest the arrest and raised enough money to send the 15-20

women who had been scheduled for abortions at the Toronto clinic that week to Montreal. Dr. Morgentaler arrived in Toronto to be arrested, and was met at 52 Division by a large gathering of supporters. The clinic was closed over Christmas.

In January the action turned again to the courtroom. At the arraignment on January 4, 1985, lawyer Morris Manning attempted to get either a quick trial date set or to stay the charges. He was unsuccessful in these attempts either to have the charges dropped or to have a second trial and jury acquittal before the Crown's appeal. The trial is expected to be in September 1985 and the Crown's Appeal is set for April 29, 1985.

The clinic re-opened on January 7. At a press conference that night, Norma Scarborough (CARAL), Judy Rebick (OCAC) and Dr. Morgentaler announced a new phase in the pro-choice strategy. To the Ontario Tory government: a demand that the charges be dropped. To the pro-choice movement: a call to redouble its efforts to repeal the abortion laws and a call for increased financial support. Judy Rebick announced that she and Dr. Morgentaler would begin a national organizing tour starting with Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton followed by speaking engagements in Kingston, Vancouver and Northern Ontario. (Together with newspaper ads calling for financial support, the speaking tour has raised over \$100,000.)

During the second week of the clinic's 1985 re-opening, a serious case of police harassment was discovered. In a series of front page news stories the police denied the charges of harassment and said that the woman - "Sylvia", had asked them to take her to the hospital.

Two days later, in a taped interview on CFTR radio, Sylvia claimed that she had been physically abused at the clinic, that she had asked the staff to stop performing the abortion, that they hadn't and that she had been refused an escort. Dr. Morgentaler and the nurse present during Sylvia's abortion answered these charges and outlined what had happened, reporting that when Sylvia left the clinic she was calm, hugged the staff and thanked them for their help.

Unexpectedly, the cab driver (Alan

Rosenthal) who had driven Sylvia and her escort home, came forward and, with his story, further substantiated that the police story was untrue. He reported that Sylvia had been in good spirits, friendly with her escort and that she had turned down the police offer to be taken to the hospital. This was all Mr. Rosenthal heard before being told by the police to leave. Sylvia was then taken into her home by the police. Since she is an illegal immigrant it is strongly suspected that she was coerced into denouncing the clinic on the radio the next day.

It is generally felt, however, that this attempt at discrediting the clinic backfired. The story quickly died in the press and, in Toronto, no further harassments of this type have occurred.

In Manitoba, however, Morgentaler and his Winnipeg clinic have had to face attacks on two fronts. The reopening of the Winnipeg clinic was followed by two police raids at the end of March, a week apart. In both raids, police seized the clinic's equipment - raising to three the number of clinics that could be equipped if the NDP government of Manitoba would drop the charges and act on their own

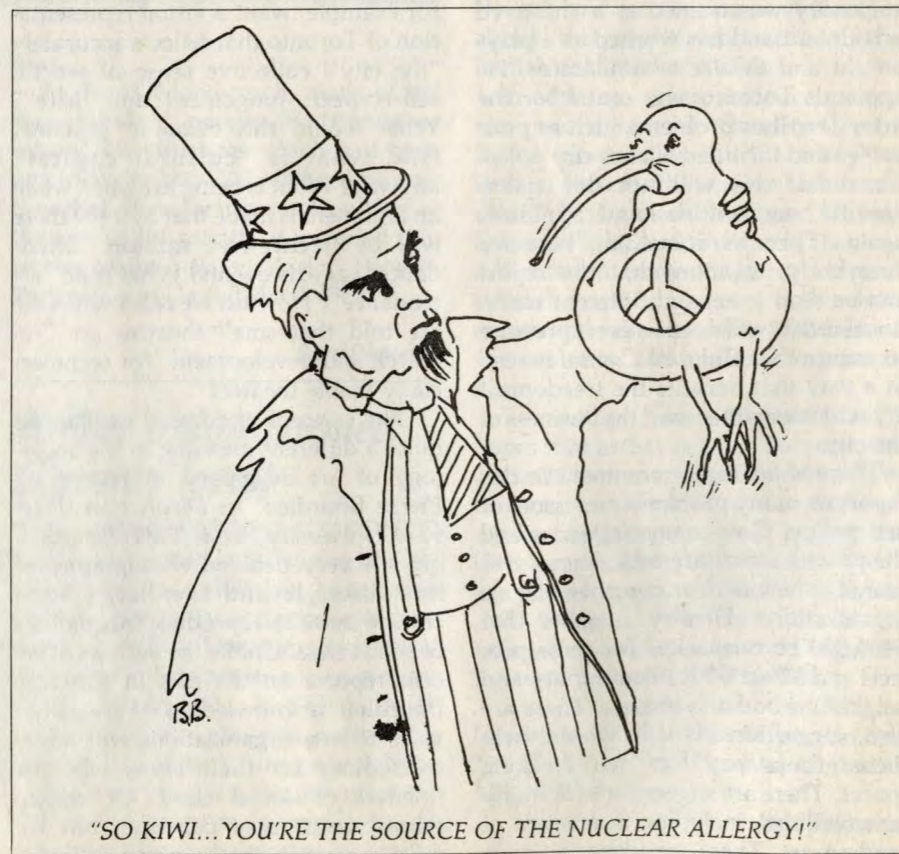
party's pro-choice position.

The other attack in Manitoba has come from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who, in between the two raids, suspended Morgentaler's licence to practice in Manitoba and have since gotten an injunction against his working at the clinic.

Since no local doctors have been willing to perform procedures at the clinic, it operates, for the time being, only as a referral service. While this magazine is at the printers, on April 18th, a hearing on the injunction against Morgentaler will take place.

Pro-choice activity has, in the last month, raised \$3,000 for new equipment for the Winnipeg clinic and the Toronto clinic is now in its fifteenth week of operation. But the legal/political wrangle drags on, as new politicians step into place. The struggle to secure reproductive rights for women is being fought in these various legal cases. The battle will be long and costly. The movement will need continuing financial support, as well as new energies and ideas from those whom it represents.

Louise Garfield



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TRYING OUR HISTORY

JEFF HOUSE

THE TRIAL OF ERNST ZUNDEL ON a charge of "spreading false news" about the genocide of the Jewish people during the Second World War has been a disaster for anyone who wishes to destroy lingering Nazi influences in Canada.

The defendant, an unknown photo retoucher, became a national figure for the first time. His lawyer, himself the leader of a far-right political party based in Western Canada, received massive and sustained media coverage in his chosen posture as a defender of free speech in the national press. Robert Faurrisson, himself convicted in France of falsifying history, was nonetheless able to win accreditation in this trial as an "expert" witness, whereupon he immediately claimed that the gassing of Jews was a "myth". The Court process dignified the racist dreamworlds of various other crackpots, only marginally in contact with reality, with their "views" being reported in the same breathe as those of historians who have legitimately studied the war and the behaviour of the Nazi state.

The blame for that state of affairs must be borne by the initiators of the prosecution, the Holocaust Remembrance Association, and the Attorney-General of Ontario, Roy McMurtry. Most importantly, the strange manner in which Zundel was brought to trial reflects the general hypocrisy of the Canadian government/bureaucracy, which has always had difficulty deciding its attitude towards war criminals residing here. And that uncertainty of purpose comes, of course, from conflicting desires: the desire to punish those responsible for war crimes, and the desire to protect those who made the decision to allow them to come in the first place.

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The Holocaust Remembrance Association laid the charge only after requesting that McMurtry proceed with a different, and more appropriate one, that of "hate literature". When McMurtry refused, the Association consulted lawyers who advised it that the charge of "spreading false news" could be laid, but that it could result in a public relations disaster. Nonetheless, the Association decided to "bite the bullet", motivated in part by an effort to assert leadership in the Jewish community, since the old-line Jewish organizations felt that the publicity would be too costly, even in the event of a conviction. This faced McMurtry with a dilemma. A politician with a large Jewish population in his riding, and with ambitions to become Premier of the province, McMurtry did not have the strength to quash the prosecution without political damage to himself. Rather, he instructed his minions to take over the prosecution of Zundel, thereby engaging government prestige in the outcome. Amazingly, when the trial was over, Sabrina Citron of the Holocaust Association claimed to be unconcerned about the mass publicity generated in favour of the Nazi position, since, she claimed, only those who already believed in Zundel's positions would be attracted by them, regardless of the frequency of their repetition in the media. If that were so, of course, there would be no conceivable basis for the charge in the first place, because no one would have been persuaded by Zundel's publications.

II

IT IS TOLERABLY CLEAR THAT Section 177 of the Criminal Code was

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not intended to deal with falsifications of history. Lodged in that part of the Code dealing with "nuisances", it would be admirably suited to prosecute those who shout "fire" in a crowded theatre. But it is ill-suited to deal with elaborately-defended historical arguments, even of the most specious kind, since the required finding by the jury that the purveyor knew the information to be false can only be made by a kind of leap of faith. (Indeed, it is hard to escape the probability that the jury decision was based not on the evidence of Zundel's belief or lack of it, but on a kind of generalized revulsion. For that reason, the section could never be usable against any truly dangerous minority position in society, because, if the view was prevalent, it would likely be represented in the jury and so no jury would convict.)

Nor are the rules of evidence intended to cover cases involving misrepresentation of history. The legal position that a document is "hearsay", and inadmissible unless the person who wrote it is available for cross-examination, makes perfect sense when dealing with cheques, breathalyser certificates, or an auto insurance report on the causes of an accident. But when dealing with the question of the probative value of a report from Reichsfuhrer S.S. Heinrich Himmler to Hitler, assuring the latter that 363,211 Jews have been executed in a three month period, it cannot be said that the value of the document is nil because Himmler is unavailable for cross-examination.

Finally, even the necessity of eye-witness testimony, central to any fair trial of a recent, allegedly criminal, act, can be questioned with respect to historical events. Most of the witnesses



rewriting history.

of the holocaust were also its victims, and dead men tell no tales; of the remaining witnesses, many were children at the time, and none were able to "eyeball" the whole of the Final Solution, extending as it did over several years and more than ten countries. Finally, the requirement of eyewitnesses may lead us to the legal conclusion that the holocaust occurred, but the Battle of Waterloo did not.

III

THE CENTRAL OBJECTION TO trying history in the courts, though, lies in the adversary nature of the criminal trial. Myth to the contrary, juries in criminal trials in Canada are chosen by rules highly favourable to the Crown; such a procedure may give the government a fairly easy way of establishing its version of history. In the adversary trial, the state and the defendant each pose its version of an event, whether historical or otherwise, and the jury decides whether the state version has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. But there may be aspects which neither defence nor prosecution have interest in elucidating; yet no further source of information, other than the parties, is available.

In the Zundel trial, the defendant claimed that the genocide of the Jews was a lie invented by the Allies for propaganda purposes at a Conference in 1942. The Crown proved that the genocide did occur, and obtained a conviction on that basis. But, despite

the usual usefulness of rebutting a suggested motive, the Crown chose not to rebut the contention that the Allies used the holocaust as war propaganda against Germany. Had it done so, Zundel's argument about the Allies' motive would have collapsed. But so would have some illusions about World War II. In fact, such a rebuttal could have gone a long way to serving as an introduction to the upcoming investigation of war criminals living in Canada, and the reasons why they were able to come here, with official support.

IV

HITLER'S ENTIRE CONCEPT OF his role in the world, and the basis of his strategic understanding of Germany's position in Europe, revolved around the conviction that Germany and Britain must reach an agreement to go to war against, and destroy, Bolshevik Russia. His idea went far beyond the traditional fear of fighting a war on two fronts; rather, it came from his understanding of the "fascist constellation" by which Mussolini, and later Hitler himself, came to power. That constellation involved a grudging willingness, on the part of the established elites, to cede authority to the Fascists or Nazis in order to rid the country of the threat of Red Revolution; it was an alliance of the powerful with the Nazi or Fascist movement to suppress Communism. For Hitler, the Junkers who finally supported him as a

capitalist alternative to socialism in Germany had their international analogue in the lords of the British Empire; he could not imagine that, when push came to shove, the British would prefer an alliance with Stalin to one with Naziism, especially a Naziism seeking "living space" to the East.

This calculation received much support throughout the latter thirties, from the Anglo-German Treaty of 1936, which guaranteed German superiority on the continent of Europe in exchange for a promise not to compete with the British in the naval field, to the Munich Pact, in which a Conservative British Prime Minister found reasons to appease the Nazi designs on Czechoslovakia. That precedent guided Hitler's decision to attack Poland, and he initially refused to take the British declaration of war too seriously; indeed, the first months of the war were cynically dubbed "sitzkrieg" because of the German unwillingness to engage the Western armies in battle.

Indeed, even Hitler's otherwise inexplicable decision to attack Russia in 1941, thereby initiating the otherwise unthinkable two-front war, can only be understood in this context. Only if the war with Russia would cause the Western allies to desist, can the attack against Stalin be understood.

Hitler's decision to exterminate the Jews, long "prophesied" but put into practice in mid-1941, at first caused the Allies little concern. The Polish government-in-exile was the first organization to bring it to the Allies' attention, and their motive, although partially humanitarian, also had its political component. For the Poles, in demanding an Allied War Crimes Tribunal to be put into place after the war, were equally interested in a public declaration that such would be Allied policy. It was felt that such a declaration by the Allies would make rapprochement with Germany that much more difficult, a crucial consideration at a time when such an accord would have been at the expense of a divided Poland.

Here, the massive documentation available in government archives makes it clear that neither the British nor the French were willing to commit themselves to punish war criminals, and neither were willing to single out Jews as victims. One British source summed up the position of the Foreign Office thus: "It is essential to avoid

committing Britain to the same trouble as after the last war about drawing up lists of criminals..." In July, 1941, an internal memorandum of The Ministry of Information, which produced home-front propaganda, gave the following guideline to its specialists: while a certain amount of horror stories were acceptable and, indeed, recommended, such stories "should always deal with the treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents. And not with Jews."

According to the most comprehensive study of British war-crimes policy, *Blind Eye to Murder*, that attitude did not change appreciably during the war. But the resolve to avoid war-crimes prosecution dissolved in 1942, when the Japanese overran the outposts of the British Empire in the Far East. Now, the reports of gang rapes and bayonettings dealt with the flower of the English civil service, and not with bearded foreigners. When Anthony Eden confirmed the truth of the atrocity reports in March, 1942, the British government contacted its American and French allies (the Russians were excluded) and proposed a War Crimes Tribunal.

Of course, once it was decided that war criminals were to be tried following the war, it was obvious that those who slaughtered the Jews would have to be included in the list of criminals, but that is not to say that the Allies stressed this in their propaganda. Rather, as late as 1944, British officials were decrying any emphasis on the genocide as an appropriate propaganda theme. Such an emphasis, according to a report from the head of the Southern Department of the Foreign Office, would require the British "to waste a disproportionate amount of time on wailing Jews".

Instead, the British kept their geopolitical aims at the centre of their war effort. Those aims involved the resuscitation of a pro-Western, anti-Soviet Germany after the war. From this point of view, a hue and cry over war crimes would be inconvenient, given the scale of the crimes — inasmuch as large sections of the German upper classes, the bulwark of the state, were compromised by Naziism and were themselves, depending upon how wide the net was cast, perhaps war criminals.

The Americans entered the war with

a somewhat different sense of direction. Whereas the British were concerned at the outset with a stable industrial Germany of a pro-West slant after the war, the Americans pushed the famous Morgenthau plan, which envisaged an agricultural Germany, a no-man's land between East and West, a state of no political power. From this point of view, there were no policy impediments to a vigorous posture vis à vis war crimes and their perpetrators. Indeed, prosecutions would serve the salutary purpose of justifying, to the German people, their reduction to

from Hitler and the Final Solution (U. of CAL Press, 1984)

Report of the Reichsführer SS to Hitler (see pp. 3, 110n 9, and 129). Item 2c records the murder of 363,211 Jews in the period from 1 September through 1 December 1942 (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz).

Handwritten notes: -NO 3342- (-NO 514-), Feld-Buchdruckst. 111, den 20. Dezember 1942, 4/r

1.) Sonstigen:

a) festgestellte Tote nach Gefechten (x)					
Au. ust.	Ge. feuer:	Öktober:	Nov. über:	Insgesamt:	
227	361	427	302	1397	
b) Gefangene sofort erekuliert	125	202	87	243	757
c) Gefangene nach längerer ein. chünder Zerkleinerung erekuliert	2100	1400	1596	2731	7828

2.) Bandenheifer und Bandenverächfigte:

a) festgenommen	1343	3078	8337	3795	16593
b) erekuliert	1198	3020	6333	3706	14257
c) Juden erekuliert	31246	165282	95735	70948	363211

3.) Überläufer a.G. deutscher Propaganda:

	21	14	42	63	140
--	----	----	----	----	-----

(x) Da der Russe seine Gefallenen verschleppt bzw. sofort verscharrt, sind die Verlustzahlen auch nach Gefangenaussagen erheblich höher zu bewerten. -2- 318 K49

Plate 6 Report of the Reichsführer SS to Hitler (see pp. 3, 110n 9, and 129). Item 2c records the murder of 363,211 Jews in the period from 1 September through 1 December 1942 (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz).

Memo from Reichfuhrer SS to Hitler,

powerlessness and penury. Roosevelt therefore named a dynamic ex-Congressman, Herbert Pell, to the Allied Commission on War Crimes, and Pell set out aggressively to amass evidence for the coming trials.

Between 1942 and 1944, however, as it became clear that the Americans would supplant the British as a superpower in the post-war world, the

American conception evolved towards that of the British. Morgenthau lost much of his influence, and the overriding concern of U.S. planners became how to best confront the Soviets after the war ended.

In November, 1944, Pell read in the papers that due to an "extraordinary misfortune", Congress had refused to authorize funds for his continued work on the Commission. Although he promptly announced that he would be pleased to serve without pay, the U.S. State Department announced his resignation "with deep regret". Although Pell embarked upon a public campaign against State Department officials, who, he said, "do not want to punish Nazi war criminals as thoroughly as they advocate", the life of the Commission was effectively ended. Shortly thereafter, the British representative, Cecil Hurst, also resigned.

Evidence of the new U.S. attitude could be seen that same month in the beginnings of "Operation Paperclip", an organized, three thousand person team dedicated to an intrusion into the part of Germany occupied by the Red Army, with a view to removing Nazi scientists and other experts before they should fall captive to the Russians. The operation was an immense success, and most of the 9000 targeted scientists were in fact spirited to the West. On the other hand, the embarrassing truth was that substantial numbers of these scientists had experimented on human beings, or had inhumanly used slave labour in a manner that caused thousands of deaths. The entire group was brought to the U.S. as prisoners of war to avoid immigration requirements; they were allowed to live freely, subject to a willingness to use their skills for their captors. In appropriate cases, their names were simply deleted from the U.S. Army War Criminals list. Several years later, they were paraded across the Mexican border, and from there got "legal" entry to the U.S.

Late 1944 marks the first date that the Western Allies were to make a covert arrangement with identified war criminals against the Soviets. It would not be the last.

The chief of Nazi espionage against the Soviet Union was General Reinhard Gehlen. While American Intelligence was well aware that Gehlen's hands were anything but clean, it was

their artworks. This is the peculiar freedom bestowed on artists by modernism and it will weigh like a nightmare on the brains of living artists long after they have abandoned the modernist artwork.

Artists are defined by their institutions. But they don't run them. Today, the institutions of art and culture are, like virtually all institutions, deeply instilled with bureaucratic and technocratic values. Undemocratic in structure and social purpose, they are hostile to culture, though they presume to frame the activities of cultural work.

The privileged ideological role of institutions can be clarified by describing their relationship with the State. In Canada, the state continues to stake its claims to being a democracy primarily on the electoral process, and is successful in this, despite widespread cynicism and low voter turnout. Meanwhile, the secondary, 'non-political' structures — institutions, corporations, the organizations of the workplace, and so on — are relieved of this legitimation burden, and are not obliged to structure themselves democratically. Once the claims of democracy in a society are accounted for through government elections, every other social domain can then be declared a 'liberated zone' for the individual to flex his or her rights to pursue individual gain. To curtail that right is then seen to restrict that particular form of freedom defined by capitalist democracy. The relationship between these secondary structures and the State is thus mutually reinforced.* Capitalist democracy should be flush-

* The freedom of secondary structures to act undemocratically is not limited to the internal processes of individual states. They often leapfrog the State into the international arena. There they peddle not only the particular freedoms that can be had within a capitalist democracy, but demonstrate the inviolable right to expand their activities beyond the boundaries of the origin State. This is not to imply that the institutions of art are of the same ilk as the multi-national corporations, but they do share similar traits. A case in point is the recent *European Iceberg* exhibition at the Ontario Gallery of Art. At a press conference preceding the exhibition, the guest curator Germano Celant implied that it was rather base to reflect unduly on the approximately \$400,000 price tag of the exhibition. What the exhibition would accomplish for Toronto's international reputation, and for the concept of internationalism in general, would more than justify the expenditure. Leaving aside the ruinous implications cultural internationalism has for neo-colonies like Canada, what is revealing here is the nature of the processes underlying the decision to undertake such an exhibition. Were Canadian artists controlling such processes, it is rather unlikely, given their own desperate financial circumstances, that they would have thought it possible to provide that kind of money.

ed with pride at its achievements; it continues to successfully hawk democratic rhetoric for democratic substance.

Within the modernist art tradition, the urgent need to critique its institutions is perhaps as old as the institutions themselves, but has run into difficulties. The critique may simply be ignored by the institutions and thus rendered almost invisible. But a more sophisticated weapon which the institutions wield is to integrate the critique into the institution itself. This has some numbing implications. If the institutions of art control the function of the artwork to the extent that any particular work, whatever its qualities might be, is in danger of surrendering its social effectiveness, then the individual artwork can have very little historical value. This suggests in turn that the almost total emphasis which contemporary art criticism places on the merits of the individual artwork is quite off the mark, and only conceals the most historically significant factors affecting art in contemporary conditions. The recognition of these problems becomes part of the critique, which in turn becomes part of the Institution, and so on.

Here, then, are two related reasons for the contemporary artists' lack of gratitude for the institutions of art. They are undemocratically structured, denying to artists control over their activities, and they devalue the historical significance and social effectiveness of the artwork. To deal with these problems, artists have either sought the concrete reform of institutions, or have attempted to organize alternatives. Raymond Williams, in his book *Culture*, has given the name *formations* to those alternative organizations in which cultural producers "have been organized, or have organized themselves", in order to distinguish them from institutions. Formations are "closer to cultural production" than institutions. For this reason, their critiques of institutions and of social processes in general come from a relatively independent position compared to those from within the institutional framework. At the same time, formations can never be wholly independent of institutions. This is in part due to the ideological authority of the institutions, but the more revealing reason is that artists need those institu-

tions. The Institutions are often the sole providers (however inadequate) of badly needed forms of income and of tools of production for artists, as well as the only durable framework on which to base an artistic practice in unstable times.

Simultaneously needing and being stifled by the institutions of art is often seen as an intransigent dilemma, rather than as a particular moment in a historical and dialectical process. One reason for this is the way in which art history has been handed to us in the era of modernism. Artists, grateful for the domain of specialized institutions which modern society has provided for them, often contribute to the stability of these institutions by making their separateness and specialness the content of their artworks. This has in fact, according to standard art history, been the persistent leitmotif of art in this century. But Peter Burger's 1972 work, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, offers an important reassessment of that historical interpretation.

Burger distinguishes avant-gardism from modernism by pointing to the avant-garde's hostility to the institutions of art. The avant-garde were able to see what the period of Aestheticism had accomplished for art, which was to isolate it from other social processes by embedding it in special institutions. The avant-garde sought the destruction of the institutions of art and the "reintegration of art into the praxis of life". Burger judges the advent of this anti-institutional avant-gardist practice to be historically more significant than the passage from the realist to the various non-realist modernist modes of representation, heralded by standard art history.

The usefulness of Burger's thesis lies in the way it assists artists in reassessing their political role. Burger points out that it was Brecht, the alleged paragon of didactic, political art, who clung to the classical aesthetic notion that art was its own end, and claims that it was the avant-garde, allegedly dedicated only to elitist formalism, who wished to reintegrate art back into the praxis of life. Burger writes that Brecht intended,

...to change rather than destroy the theatre as an institution, and thus makes clear the distance that separates him from



from the painting by C.W. Jefferys

the representatives of the historical avant-garde movements...whereas the avant-gardists believe they can directly attack and destroy that institution, Brecht develops a concept that entails a change of function and sticks to what is concretely achievable.

While both the avant-garde and Brecht understood the institutions of art to be an obstacle to their practice, they chose different strategies. That Brecht is cast by Burger as a reformist, however, constitutes a significant reversal of accepted wisdom.

Burger's work also has interesting implications for the dogged opposition to directly political or activist work. Opposition has generally turned on the notion that to engage in social issues directly means that one has only succeeded in stooping to the level of 'ideology' and, what is worse, has

Repression and Self-Direction

The version of art history which conflates modernist and avant-gardist works as a continuous effort to celebrate the institutions of art robs those works of their most significant critical contributions. This mistaken conflation has served to prop up the post World War II institutions, as is evidenced by the works of what Burger calls the neo-avant-garde.

The neo-avant-garde repeat the strategies of the avant-garde, but in a form which is designed to be agreeable to the institutions of art. The genre of 'museum and gallery deconstruction' is probably, in this sense, the ultimate avant-garde pot-boiler. This work is not a return of the repressed avant-garde, but a higher and more sophisticated form of repression, compromising its disguised intentions behind any real desire to undermine the institutions. This explains its 'wink-wink nudge-nudge' aspect (or, more respectfully, its 'irony').**

Artists' activities might be better understood historically not simply in terms of the artworks produced, but also through the artists' relationships with their institutions and, perhaps more importantly, through the formations they create. The contribution of George Maciunas in Fluxus, for example, is not exemplified solely in his systematically nailing down each key on a piano, interesting though that work may have been in its references to taking control of/destroying a tool of cultural production. It is rather in the economic resourcefulness of his publishing and printing; in his efforts to gain control of distribution processes for artists; in his organization of artists' co-ops in Soho, and so on.

The tradition of capitalist democracy has never been particularly well-disposed to self-determination at the level of production; the inability for producers to directly control their productions is one of the principles that this tradition holds most dear. In the area of culture, this process takes the form of mediating production through the in-

** There are, of course, exceptions. The work of Hans Haacke, for example, stands out due to the unusually concrete nature of his analysis, which can be counted as a significant advance both politically and aesthetically.



stitutions of art which are not run by the producers.

The consistent denial of control to producers leads one to question which concept of democracy is in fact operative in capitalist democracies. C.B. Macpherson sheds some light on this question from a historical perspective. He maintains, in *The Real World of Democracy*, that the 'democracy' in the liberal democracy tradition was not the result of political power being demanded and received by those previously without it. It arose for economic reasons, in order to broaden and stabilize participation in the arena of economic competition. Electoral democracy was only implemented when it was seen to be "the logical extension of the competitive market society". The abstract form of essentially non-participatory democracy

which then developed ("one man, one vote") was never a serious threat to the economic principles treasured by liberal society, and is now even less so. The 'other' concept of democracy, based on principles of self-determination and the right to develop one's human capacities free of the determinations of the marketplace was never, and is still not, even on the agenda.

The Parisian art dealer Ambroise Vollard understood this. At the turn of the century he began to regularly pay his artists yearly salaries in order to help regularize production and integrate them into the growing competitive (art) market. The historical avant-garde also understood this, but instead sought ways to oppose it in order to reassert their right to freely intervene in social processes. In 1916, the Zurich Dadaists constructed an alternative

space out of the *Cabaret Voltaire*. Yet the *Cabaret Voltaire* survived only 5 months of operation. There were many reasons for its closing. The very nature of their programme gave rise to divergences within the group, the owner complained that the crowds were too small, no one collected fees, and so on. Nevertheless, through its anti-modernist activities, the *Cabaret Voltaire* became more than an exhibition space; it became an apparatus of production. The audience was often as active as the performers, and often took their place on the stage in order to demonstrate their reaction to the performance, or their means of enhancing it. Despite what artists have come to experience, social convention has it that one gets paid for producing. Thus no admission fees were collected.

It was the emergence of this avant-gardist activity that allowed Walter Benjamin to formulate his well-known thesis from "The Author as Producer" (published in *Thinking Photography*), which goes as follows:

...to supply a production apparatus without trying, within the limits of the possible, to change it, is a highly disputable activity, even when the material supplied appears to be of a revolutionary nature...The apparatus of production will be the better the more consumers it brings into contact with the production process — in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators.

Both the avant-garde project as well as Benjamin's author-as-producer thesis can be read as a protest against the anti-democratic tendency of both cultural modernism as well as capitalist democracy in general. The avant-garde had the significant political insight that modernist autonomy, insofar as it was framed within the prevailing institutions of art, was not a condition of self-determination, but its *displacement* — a modernist *representation* of self-determination. Benjamin's thesis is consistent with this perspective: the democratic principle of participation is posed against the anti-democratic tendency inherent in the social or aesthetic act of passive consumption.

The historical arguments between institutions and the social integration of art are no longer our only issue. We have backed into the much larger

ARTISTS' FORMATIONS — AN ANALYSIS

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

- i) those based on *formal membership*, with varying modes of internal authority or decision, and of constitution and election;
- ii) those not based on formal membership, but organized around some *collective public manifestation*, such as an exhibition, a group press or periodical, or an explicit manifesto;
- iii) those not based on formal membership or any sustained collective public manifestation, but in which there is *conscious association or group identification*, either informally or occasionally manifested, or at times limited to immediate working or more general relations.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- a) *Specialization*, as in the case of sustaining or promoting work in a particular medium or branch of an art, and in some circumstances a particular style;
- b) *alternative*, as in the cases of the provision of alternative facilities for the production, exhibition or publication of certain kinds of work, where it is believed that existing institutions exclude or tend to exclude these;
- c) *oppositional*, in which [those] cases [that are] represented by [category] (b) are raised to active opposition to the established institutions, or more generally to the conditions within which these exist.

social and aesthetic issue of *anti-democratic tendency*, as it effects the institutions of art, and as it effects social processes as a whole. Nevertheless, to inform our current efforts in the face of this anti-democratic tendency may require an examination of the avant-garde's ultimate failure: they did not collect fees; they failed to construct durable organizations based on principles of self-determination and participation; they did not acknowledge their inextricable ties to the institutions they sought to overthrow. They saw themselves as external and marginal forces of opposition, rather than internal forces of resistance.

In examining the relationship of artists to their own organizations, Raymond Williams has provided a helpful classification of the internal organization and external relations of artists' formations (see box, this page). These categories are useful for identifying and distinguishing between existing formations such as collectives and government-funded artist-run centres, as well as between the various artist-run centres themselves. They can also be used to speculate on the brevity of historical formations like the *Cabaret Voltaire* (probably most accurately described by (ii) and (c)), and on what might be required to further their project of returning the control of the production to producers.

But a problem is signaled by an irregularity in the category of external

relations. While 'specializing' and 'alternative' are defined at least in part through references to the artwork, 'oppositional' is not. Instead, the oppositional occurs when 'alternative' is "raised to active opposition to existing institutions, or more generally to the conditions within which these exist." How opposition would then occur is not clear, particularly with regard to how the artwork itself is to contribute to this process. Does this mean explicit opposition, such as that exemplified by museum or gallery deconstruction? Evidently not, as that work can easily be shown to be a neo-avant-garde activity agreeable to the institutions.

The omission of the artwork from the category of 'oppositional' serves to identify one of the conditions under which the avant-garde's project of destroying the institutions of art failed, and under which current efforts to carry on their project cannot succeed. The artwork cannot, by itself, constitute an oppositional act. An oppositional programme must simultaneously seek to gain control of those institutions and formations, by reforming their internal organizations.

Devising a Direction

For artists the immediate tasks regarding self-determination are relatively clear. Within the limits of the possible, artists might withdraw their

services and support from those institutions either not now run by cultural producers, or which appear unreformable. They might consider that they have outgrown the institutions of art which promote what Adrian Piper called the "infantalization of the artist"*** This useful concept — coined not surprisingly by an artist — describes that condition which releases the artist as producer from the responsibilities he or she bears to the social function of their artworks. The infantilization of the artist amounts to nothing less than relinquishing control of the political role of cultural expression.

What makes confronting the anti-democratic tendency much more interesting than the discouragingly unambitious role of the neo-avant-garde, is that, once viewed in its broader social environment, the stakes are really so much higher.

In her new book, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Carole Pateman has critiqued a slew of recent revisions to 'classical' democratic theory. The classical theories, primarily those of Mill and Rousseau, were postulated on the central criterion of participation, that is, maximum engagement by all citizens in decision-making processes, particularly on the local level. The participatory component of democratic theory has been edited out of the recent

*** Adrian Piper, "Power Relations Within Existing Art Institutions", unpublished manuscript, 1983.



revisions for being Utopian, inefficient and out of touch with the times. A revised ideal, based on empirical, sociological analysis, is postulated and, what do you know, it turns out to be the one we now live in.

In this new model of democracy, participation is discouraged; it is found to be 'destabilizing'. Thus, even the voter nomination drives recently undertaken in the U.S. were considered by some, in a horrifying contortion of logic, to be anti-democratic. Imagine the joy in the hearts of the Trilateral Commission when academics, working from an allegedly independent position, came up with the blessed notion that more democracy goes hand in hand with less citizen 'interference'.

Situating issues of democracy at the centre of current problems of cultural production is the result of a specific historical development. For example, postmodernism — to take that slant — has been characterized as "a crisis of cultural authority, specifically of that

authority vested in Western European culture and its institutions" (Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminism and Postmodernism" in *Anti-Aesthetic*). At the same time, one need not feel obliged to make a similar case on purely 'aesthetic' grounds, despite those who consider it a felony to make a case for art practices based on anything else. One could simply make the admittedly *ad hominem* statement that there is nothing quite so aesthetically pleasurable as when the liberatory impulses of human desire confront the legal apparatus.

From the standpoint of production, the process of democratization can include three general approaches. The first occurs when the individual artwork is constructed in such a way as to include the viewer in the 'production of meaning'. A pre-ordained meaning is not built into the work, which the viewer than 'gets'. Rather, the work's meaning requires the active participation of the viewer, and so can be said to have 'no fixed meaning'. But while the

importance of developing this approach cannot be overestimated, it is also fair to say that its practical accomplishments (if that's not too vulgar a criterion to raise), have been rather inflated, and tend to exist more on paper than in the enduring consciousness of viewers. This is due to the controlled conditions under which the work is produced and received within the prevailing institutions of art and culture. This approach, then, cannot expect to attain any measure of usefulness without its being furthered in conjunction with the other two approaches.

The second approach is for the producer to acquire control over production. The third is for those social groups now without them to gain access to the tools of cultural production. Affinity groups based on race, gender, sexual preference, or any self-defined groupings require such access and control in order to develop cultural organizations on their own terms.

There is implied in all this a strategy

of reformism: the democratization of existing institutions, attempting a change which is 'within the means of the possible' (Benjamin), or that which is 'concretely achievable' (Burger, in reference to Brecht). This broad strategy should be seen in comparison to those forms of one-dimensional radicalism (such as that of the neo-avant-garde) which, choosing not to confront the institutions, accept their authority, thus guaranteeing the splendid failures of supposed intentions.

It is, however, useful to maintain a strained tie between pragmatic issues and the Utopian, for invoking the Utopian is an important way in which to further the processes of democratization. As C.B. Macpherson claimed that if a democratic society seeks to maximize a person's democratic potential, then a democratic theory must measure a society's democratic reality *down from a maximum*, and not up from a previous amount, as capitalist democracies are inclined to do.****

It is precisely that maximum democratic potential that is necessary to hold within view, although no two perspectives would be likely to be the same. One brief speculation might be offered up. Artists might finally shed their impossible and peculiarly ethical mission to both critique and salvage culture. With that out of the way, that troubled compensatory, almost guilty dimension of art might disappear, for the vexing questions of audience and of social authority would no longer need to be posed.

Charles Newman claimed that "The most *heartbreaking* aspect of Post-Modernism is...the attempt of the artist to fight his [sic] way back into the culture." ("The Post-Modern Aura", in *Salmagundi*, summer, 1984.) That fight might no longer be necessary, for the lines which served to mark what's in and what's out of culture would have been erased by the democratization of production. No more heartbreaks. And no more impossible, exaggerated expectations placed on a tiny group of ethnic and gender privileged individuals with an average income of \$9,000 a year.

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**** from "Problems of a Non-market Theory of Democracy", in *Democratic Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1973).

SPRING 1985



"Art vs. Law" by David Gilmore Blythe, 1860

FUSE

...The Liberals were determined to go to war. Since Aureliano at the time had very confused notions about the difference between Conservatives and Liberals, his father-in-law gave him some schematic lessons. The Liberals, he said, were freemasons, bad people, wanting to hang priests, to institute civil marriage and divorce, to recognize the rights of illegitimate children as equal to those of legitimate ones, and to cut the country up into a federal system that would take power away from the supreme authority. The Conservatives, on the other hand, who had received their power directly from God, proposed the establishment of public order and family morality. They were the defenders of the faith of Christ, of the principle of authority, and were not prepared to break the country down into autonomous entities. Because of his humanitarian feelings Aureliano sympathised with the Liberal attitude with respect to the rights of natural children, but in any case, he could not understand how people arrived at the extreme of waging war over things that could not be touched with the hand. It seemed an exaggeration to him that for the elections his father-in-law had them send six soldiers armed with rifles under the command of a sergeant to a town with no political passions. They not only arrived, but they went from house to house confiscating hunting weapons, machetes, and even kitchen knives before they distributed among males over twenty-one the blue ballots with the names of the Conservative candidates and the red ballots with the names of the Liberal candidates. On the eve of the elections Don Apolinar Moscote himself read a decree that prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages and the gathering together of more than three people who were not of the same family. The elections took place without incident. At eight o'clock on Sunday morning a wooden ballot box was set up in the square, which was watched by six soldiers. The voting was absolutely free, as Aureliano himself was able to attest since he spent almost the entire day with his father-in-law seeing that no one voted more than once. At four in the afternoon a roll of drums in the square announced the closing of the polls and Don Apolinar Moscote sealed the ballot box with a label crossed by his signature. That night, while he played dominoes with Aureliano, he ordered the sergeant to break the seal in order to count the votes. There were almost as many red ballots as blue, but the sergeant left only ten red ones and made up the difference with blue ones. Then they sealed the box again with a new lable and the first thing on the following day it was taken to the capital of the province. "The Liberals will go to war," Aureliano said. Don Apolinar concentrated on his domino pieces. "If you're saying that because of the switch in ballots, they won't," he said. "We left a few red ones in there so there won't be any complaints." Aureliano understood the disadvantages of being in the opposition. "If I were a Liberal," he said, "I'd go to war because of those ballots." His father-in-law looked at him over his glasses.

"Come now, Aurelito," he said, "if you were a Liberal, even though you're my son-in-law, you wouldn't have seen the switching of the ballots."

What really caused indignation in the town was not the results of the elections but the fact that the soldiers had not returned the weapons. A group of women spoke with Aureliano so that he could obtain the return of the kitchen knives from his father-in-law. Don Apolinar Moscote explained to him, in the strictest confidence, that the soldiers had taken the weapons off as proof that the Liberals were preparing for war.

Gabriel Garcia Márquez
One Hundred Years of Solitude



DIONNE BRAND, KRISANTHA SRI BHAGGIYADATTA

ON THE SUBJECT OF ELECTIONS, Marquez, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, knows whereof he speaks; and he speaks with an intimacy familiar to those of us who have been beaten over the head lately with that much obscured concept 'democracy'. For the last many hundreds of years, while the highly placed have spoken of high ideals for the few, the many have paid for democracy. Plato's democracy, for example, did not consider slaves to have democratic rights. And, when the "founding fathers" of the U.S. were writing the constitution of that "greatest of democracies", none of the rights enshrined obtained for Blacks, women or immigrants. In fact the first elections (shibboleth of democracies) were held some 17 years after the American revolution and it took two more centuries of uprisings, protests, boycotts met with lynchings, killings, racist marauders, Jim Crow laws and other state reaction, for those groups to obtain not only the right but

the opportunity to vote.

Democracy — the flowering of, the return of, the promise of, the spirit of, waves of, a vote for, the world's largest, the world's strongest, democracy on trial, protecting democracy, fragile democracies, the challenge of democracy, etc., etc. It seems that everyone over here wants everyone over there to have it. What with it being so precious, so uplifting. We find ourselves in the midst of an epidemic of elections: from the new parliaments for Asians and coloureds in South Africa to the preferred vote for businessmen and professionals in Hong Kong, all are called "democracy in action".

From El Salvador in 1984, Gordon Fairweather returned. That liberal of liberals, Head of the Federal Human Rights Commission, declared that "democracy was served", after watching the charades put on there by the Reagan Administration. American television cameras presented the evidence of thousands filing up at the

polls; western diplomats are convinced that the surge to the ballot boxes, the smiling natives, denote gratitude for this gift of choosing which of the new configurations of oppression shall have sway for the next several years.

"...a wooden ballot box was set up in the square which was watched by six soldiers. The voting was absolutely free..."

The people cannot wait for these missionaries to leave, so that the gun can be removed from behind their necks and placed finally in their bellies. The American media shuttle off to some other hot spot where they plant the flag of democracy to the tune of the Halls of Montezuma.

Meanwhile, democracies abound under the kind hand of America: the Phillipines, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Grenada and in Jamaica (by "acclamation" or by default), or Pakistan's "shorocracy" — a made for third world only "guided democracy".

The only difficulty with this prover-

America, we are told, certainly, even less, a left. It is actually the right which is being further carved up into a centre, left and right. So that Shultz becomes a dove and Weinberger a hawk. Goldwater, the redneck republican opponent of the "liberal" Lyndon Johnson, is now himself a liberal, opposing the MX. John Turner was left, and Mulroney was right. After the election, Mulroney became left and Coates became right. Any left, even the NDP, gets shoved into the fringes, forcing everyone to constantly shift their seating arrangements. And so the NDP moves right to hold their Centre! And the discourse becomes more beligerent.

So now we have left-liberal, small-liberal, blue-tory and red-tory, libertarian conservative and neo-conservative, the old right and the new right. And the "free world" was asked to choose between Death Squad D'Aubisson and Democratic Duarte, and Fairweather assured us democracy was served (but you should have seen dessert).

In actuality, the right has taken over the discourse, and the left allows them to do so, and the left begins increasingly to speak as if the right owns the discourse. The left (at least in North America) falls into the trap of allowing the right to determine and manage the areas of discussion, the agenda of the political project. In so doing, it has also forfeited not only its constituency — working people, the poor, women — but also provides the conditions for its own elimination. The left is now caught constantly reacting while the right chooses the fight.

Commercial popular culture, from rock videos to soap operas, mirror and perpetuate militarism, racism, misogyny and anti-working class sentiment — all, corner stones of imperialism. Duran Duran runs through the jungle of Sri Lanka chasing and capturing a Black Woman/animal who turns on the lead singer in rapture — racism, rape and primitive civilisation. Russian commies plan to blow up Salem in small town America in the soap, Days Of Our Lives and Latino guerillas people the daytime dramas. An evil empire and radical fanatics threaten the wholesome American way of life.

There is a tendency to become overwhelmed by the physical and seeming pervasiveness of the military industry,

capitalist state control and its attendant culture. Particularly when you live in the teeth of it as we do. You wonder why fifty thousand people marching for peace doesn't stop the cruise; why polls showing that 72% of Canadians support free abortion on demand doesn't keep Morgentaler out of jail; why 84% of the U.S. people (*Newsweek*/ABC poll) feeling that their government should leave Nicaragua alone doesn't stop the arms flow to the contras, doesn't stop the killing of people who are weary of dying; you wonder why everybody (except 800,000 English and Afrikaaners) is against apartheid but nobody's stopping it (except those who catch hell and bullets there everyday). You wonder because this is supposed to be "democracy". Only 'democracy' is a reified concept, one that got disconnected from its concrete self. It is a metaphor. It is not an action; it is like money — usable and therefore essentially worthless.

Actually amid all the hype around it, some of us have never had it and if it is what we have, we don't necessarily want it. We don't want it because we want something else.

The president of Costa Rica spoke first. Like a good social democrat he pleaded earnestly for early elections. Those on the platform listened to him in a glum, disapproving silence, and so did the crowd below. There was no sign of enthusiasm. After a victory in arms against heroic odds, "early elections" is not a rousing slogan in Central America. Another outsider spoke next — the bishop of Cuernavaca, popularly known in Mexico as the Red Bishop. He too failed to arouse interest. Then came the army leader and minister of defense, Humberto Ortega. He began by proclaiming frankly that there would be no elections before 1985, and these words were greeted with enthusiasm by the packed crowd below and even stronger enthusiasm by the middle-class types on the platform, who were thus able to show their disapproval of the president of Costa Rica. It was as though the men on the platform were reassuring the crowd of their loyalty by their applause, and the crowd cheered them back, reassuring them in return. "No elections before 1985" — that was a revolutionary slogan they could understand.

I was puzzled by their response until I remembered what the word "election" meant in Nicaragua. During his long reign Somoza had frequently called elections and had thus legitimized his dictatorship,

if only in the eyes of the United States, by winning all of them with huge majorities. So "election" for most people in the crowd was a word which meant trickery. "No elections" was a promise to them of no trickery.

Graham Green, *Getting to Know the General* (Simon and Schuster)

What we need (Here comes the speech) is a rehabilitation of the senses (common sense to start with); a recovery of the details which we know to be our lives — what's in them, what we actually do and what it means.

When you really look at this 'pervasive culture', it's a few neoned, now electric-fenced, terrorist-proof barracks which generate this massive PR which we're all (at least all here) lapping up. These barracks need more and more fortifications these days — from anti-ballistic missiles, to concrete slabs for stopping suicide attacks. The current militaristic demeanor is only the crude side of liberal democracy, which must be pulled out to bandage the wounds of an economic system unable to give people's lives meaning on the one hand, or to generate new money on the other. We don't call it a military coup here but...that's what happens in the third world when 'liberalizing' gets out of hand.

Being in the jaw of the beast, as we are, sometimes we mistake people resisting for the other side controlling. It's an easy mistake — a cause/effect fallacy. Witness the air controllers' strike and the march of the poor/unemployed in the U.S. Witness the Eaton's strike, First Canadian Place strike, Simpson's layoffs, B.C. Solidarity, the breweries lock-out, Canada/U.S. auto workers split. That's what resistance looks like, even when it seems as if the iron fist is put to it. Struggle cannot be paraphrased into: "Union smashed" or "70% of strikers back at work, Eaton's says" or "Marxist-Leninist Totalitarianism". Those are the headlines of a complicit press. Struggle is an active and educative process, people emerge with an experience and a language to explain what they went through. They also emerge with a resolve to continue, here or on the peripheries.

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BRIT BRIGHT BILL

Private Members Public Tools

Shirley Cameron and Roland Miller

"VIDEO NASTIES", "THE BRIGHT Bill" — the popular nomenclature has made this piece of legislation seem more lurid than the correct, prosaic, parliamentary title — "Video Recordings Act 1984". Bright is the MP who initially proposed the "Private Member's" Bill in 1983, although it is possible that the Conservative government put him up to it.

It is not unusual for a single individual — in this case an MP — to "front" a proposal likely to break new ground on an issue of morality. In his useful treatment of the Video Recordings Act (*The Video Nasties*, ed. Martin Barker, Pluto Press, 1984 — to which we are greatly indebted), Barker refers to previous Private Members' Bills producing Acts of Parliament abolishing capital punishment (1965) and legalising some forms of homosexuality (1967) as examples of similar contrivances. More recently, anti-abortion proposals were put before Parliament under the names of backbench MP's Corie and White, and in those cases, as with the Video Recordings Act, a discredited piece of "research" formed a basis for the campaign of support.

In the case of the Video Recordings Act, a few publicly recognisable figures have also been involved, such as Mary Whitehouse (who has her own National Viewers' and Listeners' Association to monitor offensive TV and radio), Raymond Johnstone (a former organiser of the "Festival of Light" — a moral crusade) and Victoria Gillick, whose recent victory in the Appeal Court has established that young women under the age of 16 cannot be prescribed contraceptives without parental consent. The presence of the private individuals in quasi-governmental campaigns relieves the



Thatcher, as a video nasty (from "The Miners' Videotapes", NUM endorsed, Britain 1984)

government of the role of "initiator".

Martin Barker, quoting from William Whitelaw — who was at that time (March 1983) Conservative Home Secretary — points to that which may hide behind what is presented as liberalism. Whitelaw, in a letter to another MP who was contemplating introducing a Bill to censor video cassettes, wrote: "there is a very real point of principle that it would be wrong to involve the government so directly in matters of censorship". The truth is that government is involved, tacitly, and often most effectively by the private encouragement given to such measures by Ministers, and especially by the Prime Minister.

By accepting the stated arguments behind a proposed piece of legislation, a government may also be able to disguise its own interests in having power over a new area of social activity. Setting aside the declared reasons for wanting to end abortion, or contraceptive advice for teenagers, or the free circulation of video material, we may find that there are other interests being served, of which the government will be fully aware, but which it will not wish to have debated publicly. Such we believe to be the case with the Video Recordings Act.

The ostensible reason behind the legislation in the Act was given, at the outset (in November 1983), as the pro-

tection of children from the corrupting influence of certain types of video works. The chief back-up to the campaign in favour of the Act was the evidence of a report, "Video Violence and Children". The first part of the report was issued from the official-sounding "Parliamentary Group Video Enquiry" (also in November 1983). Brian Brown, Head of the Television Research Unit of Oxford Polytechnic

to the "shock-horror statistics". The most notorious of these claimed that "40% of all children, and almost 40% of all 'under-7's' had seen a video nasty".

Brian Brown points out, in Martin Barker's book, that several factors gave the report a false respectability: the presence of Peers and Church representatives amongst the report's backers (the Methodist and Catholic

But however flawed the evidence, the British press took it as proof. Once the campaign to support the Act had been launched, on the back of the Video Violence and Children report, the government's huge majority in the House of Commons made the going easy. The Act was passed into law in the autumn of 1984, and the Home Office says that it will "probably come into force in March 1985".

In spite of the discrediting of the "violence and children" evidence, the feeling still remains, in the public mind that some good will be done by the suppression of "nasties". All video works that are to be "supplied" to the public will in future need a classification certificate, as films now do.

When one examines the Act, the implications of this new branch of State censorship become a little clearer. To forestall the production of the "wrong" material, the Act defines the type of video work that will need a classification certificate:

- (a) human sexual activity or acts of force or restraint associated with such activity;
- (b) mutilation or torture of, or other acts of gross violence towards, humans or animals;
- (c) human genital organs or human urinary or excretory functions or is designed to any significant extent to stimulate or encourage anything falling within paragraph (a), or, in the case of anything falling within paragraph (b), is designed to any extent to do so."

(para. 2(2) a, b, c)

This is the heart of the definition of a "video nasty", according to the Act. Note the difference between the video designed "to any significant" extent to stimulate or encourage sexual activity, and that which is designed "to any" extent to stimulate or encourage mutilation, torture, gross violence. The extra margin of tolerance in the case of sexual activity is linked to the exemption the Act makes of video supplied for viewing in sex shops. Certain types of video work are exempted from classification at the outset:

- (those) designed to inform, educate or instruct; or concerned with sport, religion or music; or video game(s).

(para. 2(1) a, b, c)

Thus war game simulation videos are OK, as well as money-spinning pop-videos - as long as they don't go too

far into the forbidden areas! And, video works made in the UK for export abroad are also exempt from classification (para. 3(4) iii).

In defining what is meant by the "supply" of a video work, the Act states that a work *must* be classified if it is made available through:

...a supply for reward, or a supply in the course of furtherance of a business.

(para. 3(2))

...business includes any activity carried on by a club.

(para. 22(1))

And the term "supply" is defined as follows:

...[to] supply in any manner, whether or not for reward, and, therefore, includes supply by way of sale, letting on hire, exchange or loan;

(para. 1(4))

The type of video that the Act is intended to suppress is narrowed still further by the exemption of wedding and other videos made, as a record, for the people who took part in the event depicted (para. 3(5)) - provided of course such videos don't include the forbidden subject-matter.

The Act further exempts from classification any video supplied for use:

in training for or carrying on any medical or related occupation

(para. 3(10))

For the purposes of subsection (10) above, an occupation is a medical or related occupation if, to carry on the occupation, a person is required to be registered...as a nurse, midwife, health visitor, etc.

(para. 3(11))

This section leaves videos made for the purpose of sex education in need of classification, and puts them within the purpose of the Act, which finally is defined as:

...determining...whether or not video works are suitable for classification certificates to be issued in respect of them, having special regard to the likelihood of video works in respect of which such certificates have been issued *being viewed in the home.*

(para. 4(1)a)

The central purpose of the Act seems to be the classification of videos, especially those dealing in the "forbidden" subject matter, in respect of their suitability for "general viewing and unrestricted supply (with or without any advice as to the desirability of

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parental guidance with regard to the viewing of the work by (young) children" (para. 7(2)a); or for viewing only by people of a certain age (para. 7(2)b); or for viewing only in a licensed sex shop (para. 7(2)c).

The question of video works suitable only for viewing in sex shops must be one of the most telling aspects of the Act. Paragraph 12 of the Act deals with this exemption, and subsection (6)

have the usual powers of entry (with reasonable force if necessary), search and seizure, and arrest. Offending tapes may be forfeited by court order (paras. 15, 17, 21).

One significant innovation in the application of censorship is introduced by the Act. The Home Secretary may designate "any person", who will then have the responsibility of deciding



from the videotape, "There is a Myth" by Catherine Elwes

defines as an "exempted supply" that made to a person whose business it is to make videos and supply recordings for use in sex shops. So the Act seems to permit, if not actually encourage, the making and showing of videos in sex shops. And based on the only actual definition in the Act of what is considered to be questionable material, it may be deduced that such a video work may depict "human sexual activity or acts of force or restraint associated with such activity" as long as it is "not to any significant extent". The same goes for the stimulation and encouragement of such activity and acts. Whatever else the Act may be intended to end, it will not put a stop to the making of "soft porn" videos.

The penalty provided for in the Act for the supplying of an uncertified video work is a fine of up to 20,000

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"whether or not video works are suitable for classification certificates to be issued in respect of them". The designated Authority will then issue the certificates. The Home Secretary may decide that more than one person should be jointly appointed, or that the person(s) first designated should be replaced by (an)other person(s). The designated Authority will also draw up a tariff of fees payable by those wishing to submit video works for classification. Records will be kept of all works dealt with under the Act. Finally, all of the above powers relating to the designation of the Authority required to carry out the Act's classification provisions are to be subject to parliamentary approval, within a period of 40 days in the case of the Home Secretary's recommendations (paras. 4, 5).

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from "The Miners' Videotapes", N.U.M. endorsed, Britain 1984

(where the research for the report was said to have been based), whose name was attached to the report has pointed out that the report is profoundly unreliable - statistically and academically.

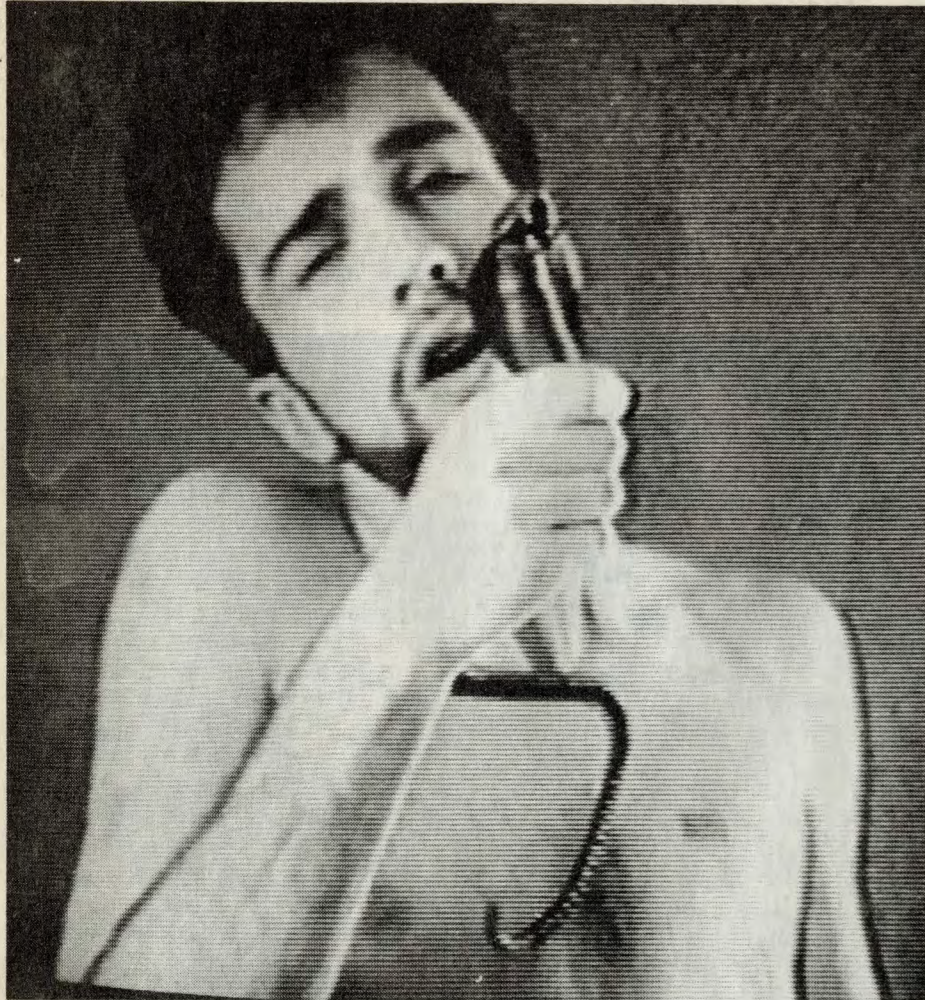
The timing of the report's preparation - paving the way for parliamentary debates on the Act, and the involvement in its presentation of people like Raymond Johnstone (moral campaigner) whose opinions on the link between video violence and children were already well known, together with a suspect methodology, have combined to discredit the report. However, when the parliamentary campaign was launched, a combination of its apparently respectable provenance and the use of schoolchildren as the source of information, immediately gave a spurious credibility

reps pulled out subsequently, worried at the gaps in credibility); the apparently official parliamentary title, (the group was never an official one); and the academic context in which it was prepared.

The report's connection between video violence and young children fulfilled the need of a biased interest group, bent on hitting one particular target. The lengths to which the report's compiler(s) would go in distorting the information may be illustrated by the discovery that one of its claims (that 37% of under-7's had seen a "video-nasty") was probably based on evidence that only 3 children in this age group (out of 46 who responded) indicated that they had seen any video films at all, and that these were all "nasties" (Maureen O'Connor, *The Guardian*, 13/12/83).

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from the video tape, "Jungle Boy" by John Greyson

It now appears (January 1985) that the full implementation of the Act is only awaiting the appointment (and presumably training) of video examiners to work with the newly extended British Board of Film Censors - the "Authority" referred to above. *The Guardian* (Sept. 3, 1984) printed the following:

Several dozen (new examiners) are about to join the ranks (of the BBFC), working in pairs.

Who are they? It seems possible that all are white and most may be men. The rules for part-time work still demand office-hours. Will this produce a range of age, class, and interests representative of our society's view of what should or should not be viewed in our homes? As with all other aspects of this rush to judgement, there is good reason for doubt.

There is also good reason for doubting the initial premises upon which the Video Recordings Act was launched. If the "child corruption" thesis was a transparent pretext, the more solid motivation seems most likely to be a

general wish on the part of the Conservative government to put a stop to the showing, circulation and supply to the public of video works that fall within any or all of the following categories: sex education; feminist works dealing with sexuality; works that portray violence in the cause of opposing it. For example: violence towards women; racial violence; the use of weapons in war (nuclear or otherwise); violence by the police (in 1984, much of the evidence of police violence against striking miners was gathered by "unofficial" video workers); works used by animal rights campaigners to depict cruelty against animals; and any video works that show the naked human body - frontally.

This is no fanciful paranoia. Examples of the films that the proponents of the Act cited in their arguments include: *Scum*, a film shown on British TV dealing critically with the violence used against the inmates of a borstal; and *The Day*

After, which was described by Roger Scruton, a right wing philosopher, as a "particularly disgusting video nasty" (*The Times*, 13/12/83).

Apart from the suspect covert reasons for wanting to exercise censorship on video works, the Conservative government has taken upon itself a most flexible weapon, in the shape of the easily politically controllable "designated persons", the Authority that is to implement the Act. To have censors appointed or re-appointed if unsuitable at 40 days' notice, even if this needs parliamentary approval, introduces an extremely dangerous element of political control. There is also the danger of self-censorship, especially as the submission of a video work for classification will involve a fee and probably the provision of extra copies of the work. The pressures on the independent sector in video production will be considerable. It feels like another turn in the centralised, tightening governmental grip on everything we say, do, watch, and seek to know. Just like the rumoured imposition of VAT on books and other publications, the Video Recordings Act may be an attempt to control knowledge.

As for the exemptions made by the Act in favour of video works produced for sex shop customers, presumably the government's sense of the marketplace has been active, after all sex shops are very big business.

Sadly, there seems to be very little awareness to date of the implications of the Act, amongst women's groups or video workers. Although most of the information in this article has been made available in other forms, few people have reacted. The diversionary effect of the Act's initial campaign, based on the shock issue of child corruption, has caused confusion in the public. And in fact, the most repressive legislation often seems, initially, to be pointing at a different target. But finally, even if the Act is not used in the ways that it could be, as we have postulated, it will be precisely such possibilities (including the perceived threat of police action) that will give rise to self-censorship, thus serving the government's interests, nevertheless.

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Supportive, Exploitive, Appropriative? Five Male Photographers Approach "Women's Issues"

CHUCK SAMUELS

IN THE LAST YEAR OR SO I'VE COME ACROSS SEVERAL PHOTOGRAPHY exhibits or events, all produced by men, that portray women or touch on issues which have been raised by women, such as women's situation in the labour market, birthing, and pornography. I perceive these events as part of a trend, and I'm left questioning why men are suddenly so fascinated with these issues. Are these men genuinely interested and supportive of women's struggle? Or are these issues simply *au courant* and therefore ripe for exploitation? But intentions aside, by presenting photographs of 'women's problems', the men are participating in defining these issues. I would like, here, to examine these photography events (whose common thread is their male authorship, their relationship to women and women's struggle) for what they are saying, both as individual projects and as a phenomenon.

T.N.T.

Travailleuses Non Traditionnelles

Photography Exhibit by Alain Chagnon
La Maison de la Culture
Montreal (March 1984)

ONE OF THE EVENTS ORGANIZED by La Maison de la Culture Côte des Neiges in Montreal to celebrate International Women's Day 1984 was an exhibit of photographs by Alain Chagnon. This exhibit, entitled *T.N.T., Travailleuses Non Traditionnelles* was a documentary project dealing with women working mainly in blue collar jobs. Despite the fact that all of Chagnon's images depicted the same subject matter, his photographs were not, for the most part, visually monotonous. Perhaps it was the ostensibly positive nature of the show, a celebration of women who are workers in so-called 'non-traditional' jobs (welders, mechanics, assembly line workers, bus drivers, pilots, etc.) that maintained our interest; or maybe it was the women themselves who appeared so comfortable, competent and generally happy in their occupations. It could have been the format utilised by Chagnon to portray these women, his handsome prints were presented in an attractive graphic style that helped

keep afloat what might otherwise have been an aesthetically dull show.

There were nine individual images in this exhibit, the remaining sixty or so photographs were skillfully distributed into the remaining seventeen frames. In most cases the format consisted of one large photograph (approximately 20 x 30 centimeters) on the left accompanied by one or two smaller images, each configuration of photos portraying one woman in her work environment. This graphic device offered us a more complex view of each woman and her work than a singular image could and strengthened the idea that this exhibit is more of a social/political statement than a collection of individual masterpieces.

In a set of twenty-four tightly knit images (divided equally into four frames clustered together in two columns, each containing six horizontal 13 x 18 centimeter prints in rows of three) we were barraged by photograph after photograph of women posed in front of their work places looking into the camera, often smiling. Each photo was captioned with the woman's name, occupation and, usually, the name of her employer. There was a message drummed into us here, we were presented with photographic evidence of a 'truth' that could not be

denied. The message read: Women are working in 'non-traditional' jobs. The repetition of this message left little room for reflection or dialogue. In the face of this optimism one would have had to be some sort of kill-joy to bring up such issues as tokenism, job discrimination in hiring, unequal pay, sexual harassment, inadequate daycare or high unemployment rates.

When, in his statement, Chagnon said he was making images of new situations, he overlooked the fact that women have worked in many so-called 'non-traditional' jobs since the turn of the century. Women have been available as a reserve work force whenever there has been a demand for extra (and cheap) labour, such as periods of rapid industrial growth or wartime. Although, when the need for labour slackens (notably when the soldiers returned from overseas after World War II) women have been turned back into the home.

Chagnon also stated that he wanted to present evidence of the capacity of women to work in fields other than those to which they are usually relegated - secretary, nurse, waitress, etc. While, of course, it is always very encouraging to see women working in blue collar areas and presumably enjoying more benefits and higher salaries than most "pink collar" workers, Chagnon's "positive images" imply that all is well, that women are now being accepted as equals and that no further struggle is required. In this regard, there was some unconscious irony in the choices. For instance, there are more than a few photographs of women happily working at Pratt & Whitney Canada Incorporated, a manufacturer of aircraft engines in Longueuil, Quebec. This particular company has had one charge of systematic discrimination in hiring laid against them by Action Travail des



Alain Chagnon

Denise Lamarche, G.M. Assembly Line, Boisbriand

Femmes (a group that helps organize women to gain access to the labour market) as well as several individual complaints by women who were refused blue collar jobs. In fact, Carole Wallace of A.T.F. says that she would be "hard put to name a company that pursues a more discriminatory hiring policy against women in blue collar jobs than Pratt & Whitney". According to Wallace, aside from a small number of token women inspectors (most of whom have since been laid off), women were usually hired at this company to work in one of two jobs, assembly or engraving. According to one of their male employees, when this show was exhibited, the company was no longer hiring women for blue collar labour at all.

To his credit, Chagnon does not glamourize these women. As with most humanistic documentary photography, his subjects were presented primarily as people and secondly as workers and, although their gender was addressed by the very nature of the project, their sexuality was not overtly exploited. What was glamourized in the *Maison de la Culture* exhibit, however, was work itself, and its

availability. Ignored is the fact that due to trends of modernization through automation and computerization the number of blue collar jobs is being significantly reduced and, as always, women workers will probably suffer the greatest losses. Chagnon showed women who work on the assembly line at General Motors in St. Therese which, again according to Carole Wallace, is a company that has been laying off blue collar workers partially because of increased automation on the line. The photographs, however, seemed to say that jobs are readily obtainable and that if a woman is unemployed or working in a low paying pink collar area, it is her own fault.

The women in Chagnon's photographs appeared quite comfortable being photographed while performing their jobs, as if they were somehow used to it. If we remember that women who work in 'non-traditional' jobs always have to prove themselves (at least initially, if not continually) we can understand how they might have become accustomed to this sort of observation¹ and, of course, photo-

¹Pat Armstrong & Hugh Armstrong, *A Working Majority, What Women Must Do For Pay*, Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1983.

graphy has been (and is) used in industry as a mode of surveillance, advertising and reward.²

While women have made some progress in penetrating the blue collar labour market, the situation is far from satisfactory (for instance, in 1981 Canadian women earned somewhere in the neighborhood of 62% of what their male counterparts earned³) and women's entrance into 'non-traditional' workplace is not a *fait accompli*. Chagnon's *Maison de la Culture* show, while succeeding in the portrayal of women as strong and competent also, ironically, provides good public relations material for the employers, at least one of which actively discriminates against women in hiring.

It is unfortunate that the affirming qualities of the photographs would be played down in order to look at the side of the story that Chagnon didn't

²Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," from *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948-1968*, Photographs by Leslie Shedden, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh & Robert Wilkie, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983, p. 249.

³Telephone conversation with Bonnie Shields of the Woman's Bureau, March 30, 1984. There are no separate statistics for the salaries of full-time and part-time workers, but with the data available in 1981, Ms. Shields approximated that 62% is a fairly accurate percentage of what women earned in relation to their male counterparts.

tell us, but sadder still is the fact that it was necessary for Chagnon to omit references to unequal pay, job discrimination, etc., in order to offer us a positive view of women's current position in the blue collar labour market. However well intentioned, *T.N.T.* as it was presented at *Maison de la Culture*, did not provoke discourse, it invoked closure.

Fortunately Chagnon has managed to salvage the project from what Walter Benjamin called "the ravages of modishness". Having realized some of the problems of presenting these photographs out of context, Chagnon will be exhibiting a modified version of the same show at *Galerie Dazibao* from April 24 to May 19, 1985. In that show most of the photographs will be captioned by bits of information such as the low ratio of women to men workers at GM or that one woman who was photographed smiling in her work place has since quit her job because of sexual harassment. These are facts that situate *T.N.T.* closer to *Staying Home*

the side of working women's struggle and away from the side of management to which it previously leaned. More importantly, many of the captions are quotations of the women describing their own experiences, and although their quotes are edited and mediated by the photographer, their voices can be heard as they speak about their struggles, their victories and their losses, altering the overwhelmingly positive tone of Chagnon's first show.

As far as I can tell (I haven't seen all of it), the revised show still skirts some important issues of women's labour, such as daycare, racism (presumably non-white women face an additional set of problems and there is only one Oriental worker included in the show), or the social and economic forces at work pushing women into these jobs, many of which are still pretty close to the bottom of the ladder. Still, the addition of the captions brings the show closer to fulfilling what Chagnon had originally intended it to do.

Staying Home

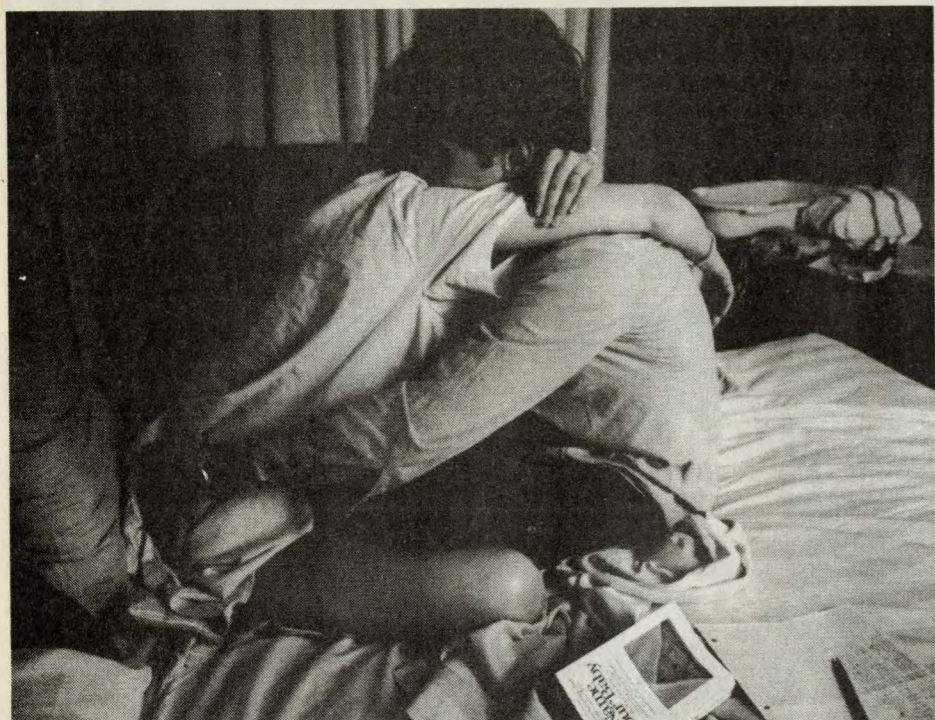
Photographs by Michael Mitchell
Photo Communiqué
(Fall 1983)

WORKING IN THE HOME (HOUSE-keeping, childrearing, etc.) is also a women's issue indirectly referred to by Toronto photographer Michael Mitchell's project *Staying Home*. His work came to my attention in the Fall '83 issue of *Photo Communiqué*. As the title implies, Mitchell has photographed in his home, exploring his domestic or private space. In the colour photographs published in *Photo Communiqué* he takes special interest in the traces of his kids. Their toys, strewn randomly about the home, provide Mitchell with much of his raw material. Little cowboys, indians and their miniature steeds litter a blood red carpet in the aftermath of some imagined massacre. Hovering over the toy corpses looms the empty shell of a doll house perched precariously on a kid-size chair. In the



Michael Mitchell

S. C. W. S. P. E. L. A. E. I. F.



Peter Wollheim

Couple No. 1 of The Birth Report

background a child's foot dangles, amputated by the edge of the frame. In another image a toy boat and submarine seem to have run aground on a deserted beach towel, on which also sprawls a smiling plastic survivor, his white molded body partially obscuring an oversized handgun. The photographs are both playful and provocative, literally toying with narrative possibilities.

Along with the title, the images suggest that Mitchell was able to work on this project between minding the kids and doing the other household chores commonly associated with staying home. However the title is a bit misleading since Mitchell did not in fact stay home; according to an interview published in the same issue of *Photo Communique*, most of the photographs were made when he came home from working late, while his family slept. I think it is unfortunate that Mitchell seems to have passed up an opportunity to deal with how he felt about not seeing his kids during the day or how he feels about his commitment to work outside the home versus domestic commitments. Instead, *Staying Home* is packaged to give the impression that he is dealing with what is often considered women's environment. This project has received a lot of attention. In the issue of *Photo Communique* in question, aside from the 14

page spread on him and his photographs, there was a mention of his involvement in a photo book publishing venture, an advertisement for an exhibit of *Staying Home*, two listings for his exhibits in the calendar section as well as his photographs featured on both the front and back covers. I have, unfortunately, yet to see a woman photographer receive as much attention when dealing with or touching on similar domestic themes in their work.

The Birth Project

Photographs by Peter Wollheim
Text by Valmai Howe Elkins
Galerie Dazibao,
Montreal (November 1983)

THE BIRTH REPORT IS THE TITLE of a book by Valmai Howe Elkins with photographic illustrations by Peter Wollheim dealing with some of the problems and solutions of hospital childbirth (published by Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983). It was also the title of an exhibit that was presented at Galerie Dazibao in Montreal from October 19 to November 20, 1983 featuring Wollheim's photographs with text by Elkins. The transformation of a 234 page book with 52 photographs into an exhibit of just over 80 photographs and roughly 15 pages of text is necessarily

one of aestheticization and condensation. The book deals with complex topics such as the effect of modern medical birthing technology on the people (doctors and nurses) who work with it, as well as the place of midwives, home birth, parenting, paternity leave, etc. The exhibit, unfortunately, tends to oversimplify things, a common problem with condensing/presenting intricate issues into a photography show. However, the exhibit has always been presented in conjunction with talks, films and/or other presentations concerning childbirth in which, presumably, the complexity of the subject matter is restored.

As with the book, the first two captioned photographs in the exhibit compare a calm, homey birthing room complete with its wooden rocking chair, soft light, imitation antique lamp, brass bed covered by a duvet with matching pillow shams in a print that compliments the wallpaper to a tiled antiseptic delivery room with bright operating room lights and all sorts of medical equipment. The photographs seem blandly unobstrusive — as if the different atmospheres of the rooms speak for themselves. Of course, in many ways they do, but as Clare Gutsche pointed out (in *Vanguard*, Feb. 1984), Wollheim's photographs possess an immediacy that lends the viewer the impression of seeing Wollheim's subject matter first-hand. One could easily forget that the images are not neutral, that they are mediated through the photographer by way of choice of lens, distance, cropping, editing, selection, sequencing, etc., but clearly his photographs are tendentious, they support the views advocated by Elkins in her book. The first two photographs serve as a model of what the rest of the exhibit will be: a comparison of birth controlled by the couple (preferably in a birthing room with mate and/or other family or friends, utilizing whatever position is comfortable for the woman, management of pain through proper breathing, little or no medical intervention) versus medically managed birth (in a delivery or operating room, in the "stranded beetle" position (Elkins), feet in stirrups, episiotomy, forceps, fetal monitoring, Caesarean sections). This comparison is illustrated by Wollheim's skillful use of the 'invisible camera' style of documentary photo-

graphy.

The Birth Report focuses on six separate hospital birthing experiences of six different couples. Each couple's experience is represented by a group of photographs accompanied by a written description by Elkins, quotes of the participants as well as an evaluation form filled out by the new parents. The first birth in the exhibit takes place in a birthing room, the second in a delivery room and the following is another delivery room birth, this time after induced labour. The fourth is a second couple-controlled birth that occurs in a case room, the fifth is a Caesarean section and the last takes place back in the birthing room with the grandmother-to-be in attendance.

As opposed to the images of the medically managed births, Wollheim's photographs of the 'natural' births show the physical closeness of the couple, featuring more close-ups of their faces. The presence of the mate is strongly felt, we see him close to his partner, supporting, encouraging, coaching her along, always in control. In one birth, the mate is shown cutting the umbilical cord. In the other, clearly less satisfactory births, a greater distance between the couple is depicted and the baby is often pictured isolated from its mother. This distance culminates in the Caesarean experience which is illustrated with photographs of the father-to-be who, along with the photographer, is in Elkins' words, "exiled to the traditional waiting room." We are shown the frustration of the man who feels the anguish and disappointment of being excluded, having been banished from his privileged position within the structure of the couple-controlled birth and made to share the second-rate experience that most births are implied to be. We see, presumably from the father's perspective, the woman being rolled down the hall towards the operating room. The next photograph, again supposedly from the father's point of view, is of the baby alone in its crib in the nursery, behind glass.

Before continuing, I think an extremely condensed overview of the history of birthing culled from Richard and Dorothy Wertz's book, *Lying-In, A History of Childbirth in America* might help contextualize Wollheim's photographs: before the American Revolution, birthing in England and

America was entirely women's domain. A mid-wife and various women from the families and communities would manage the births. Young women would learn about birth by seeing it first-hand while the older women served to comfort the woman giving birth with their experience. By the early 20th century, midwifery had all but vanished from America due to the appropriation of birth by the growing patriarchal medical establishment. The following observation is made in *Lying-In*:

The exclusion of women from midwifery and obstetrics had profound effects on its practice. Most obviously, it gave obstetrics a sexist bias; maleness became a necessary attribute of safety, and femaleness became a condition in need of male medical control.

Wollheim's photographs, emphasizing the presence of the male partner at the 'natural' births might suggest that maleness is a necessity for a superior birth. They could also argue that a woman should be granted more control over her own body in the company of her man. Seen this way, Wollheim's photographs may be described as yet another masculine voice telling women what they should do with their bodies.

The Birth Report isolates birth from a large context of reproductive rights, which includes a complex of issues regarding women's rights to control their own bodies (including issues of birth control, abortion, domestic violence, sexual self-determination, etc.). In this context, *The Birth Project* appears to have appropriated the "birthing" control issue and limited its context to one in which woman may be empowered within the framework of the heterosexual relationship.

Although they must represent a large percentage of childbearing women in Canada, single, poor, non-white and/or lesbian mothers are all invisible in *The Birth Report*. In the U.S., non-white and poor white women are less likely to receive prenatal care (such as nutritional counseling) than middle-class women who need it less because, in general, they are healthier. Non-white women and infants in America have a much higher mortality rate than their white counterparts.⁴ The option of a couple-controlled birth is either unavailable or

⁴Richard W. Wertz and Dorothy C. Wertz, *Lying-In, A History of Childbirth in America*, Schocken Books, New York, 1979.

simply irrelevant to a significant number of women. In this light, *The Birth Report* appears to be a celebration of white, middle-class, heterosexual couples, a project that essentially maintains the status quo.

Nuit Blanche Matin Rose

By Pierre Crepo
Espace OVO
Montreal (Feb/March 1984)

LIKE WOLLHEIM, PIERRE CRÉPÔ chose to photograph the birthing experience and like Wollheim's, his photographs, also accompanied by texts, are sensitive and beautifully produced images of a woman racked with the pain of labour, but most of the similarities end here. Crépô's exhibit, *Nuite Blanche Matin Rose*, presented at Espace OVO in Montreal from February 14 to March 4, 1984, took a romantic, poetic and very personal approach to his friend Camille's home birth.

Most of the exhibit is made up of photographs of Camille in labour and delivering her child. She is accompanied by a lover, a midwife and various friends including Crépô. There is a passing reference to the absence of the 'father'. Although supported by her group, Camille is clearly the one who is in control, she is experiencing the birth on her own terms. The exhibit, however, focuses on Crépô's impressions. The photographs, while depicting Camille's labour and birth, are also reflexive, speaking of the inner feelings of the photographer.

Although the subjects seem, for the most part, unaware of his presence, Crépô has implicated himself to the viewer through using the following techniques: the inclusion of texts that are frequently autobiographical, a self portrait, photographs taken in his home (of his roommate and of the beer they share on the eve of the birth), a photo of his car in which he will drive to the event, and portraits of most of the participants in the birth itself, in which they gaze into the camera and, of course, at the viewer. In this way, the viewer is always conscious of Crépô's mediation as well as his feelings concerning birth (which remind him of a birth and two abortions in which he was involved). Crépô states in his text that his exhibit is not a

clinical treatment of birth, but merely a pretext to show the irresistible force of life, a celebration of the choice of life over death. I understand this to mean that the choice of birth over abortion is a happier one, as opposed to taking an explicitly anti-abortion stance, but the statement, in the context of current feminist struggles, is, at best, careless.

His photographs, then, are tendentious, promoting a more humane form of childbirth, home birth with a midwife, which is illegal in Canada today. Yet birthing is only half the subject matter of *Nuit Blanche Matin Rose*. The exhibit, with its more blatant claims to authorship and artistry than most documentary work (whose authorship is often shrouded behind a cloud of objective authority), contextualized birth within a sphere of Crépô's own perceptions of life and death. One finds a spattering of romantic prose and poetry, some excerpted from books, others written by the participants. Again, in the text, Crépô himself describes one of the photographs of Camille, leaning languidly against her semi-clad lover, perhaps between contractions, being caressed by several disembodied hands as being "the ballet of the hands [that] frees the flow of energy like a fireball."

There is a certain sexual overtone here, a mystical ecstasy or even a birth orgasm (a popular concept in birthing in the 50's and 60's) implied by the photographs and text. Can a woman 'achieve' this 'birth climax' only in her home, or is it possible in a birth room or even delivery room in a hospital? Should women who don't or can't participate in this mystical experience, who might suffer more banal, earthly pain, feel cheated or guilty? Ironically, it is precisely the mother's guilt of not 'achieving' the 'perfect' birth to obtain the 'most perfect child', that has constantly been manipulated by the medical establishment to make women conform to whatever method of birthing is popular at the time.

As in Chagnon's work, although much less programatically, Crépô establishes a role model by producing 'positive images' of the woman giving birth. Unfortunately, 'positive images' can raise their own problems in that they are prescriptive and feed into the creation of stereotypes. Replacing outdated and counter-productive clichés with new positive ones still ultimately

leaves you with prescriptions. As with Chagnon's work, 'positive images' in themselves do not necessarily support or induce social change and can, in fact, be easily co-opted.

Ars Moriendi (The Art of Dying) A Masque 1980

Slide/Tape show by David Heath
Galerie Dazibao
Montreal (December 1983)

IN DECEMBER, 1983 FOLLOWING *The Birth Project*, Galerie Dazibao presented a potentially autobiographical slide/tape show by David Heath entitled *Ars Moriendi* [the Art of Dying] — *A Masque* 1980. Against a soundtrack of classical music (possibly selected because of the religious authority it lends Heath's deep resonant voice which intoned spiritual texts and poetry), we were shown, among other things, many pages drawn from Heath's personal journals. These journals consisted of writing that was difficult to read since the pages were projected long enough to titillate, but not long enough to absorb. The voluminous texts implied multiple and deeper meanings that we couldn't hope to comprehend in a single sitting. However the images pasted and drawn into the journals were slightly easier to perceive. Among these images were so-called soft porn, soft-focus girlie pictures taken from the pages of magazines like *Playboy* and *Penhouse*. In many of these Heath had intervened, juxtaposing cartoons and other materials to make clear the terrific anger he had harboured towards women which was caused, we were told repeatedly, by being abandoned by his mother at the age of four. (In a hand-out distributed at the projection, the show was dedicated "For Sarah, the unknown mother".)

Acknowledging that pornography is considered problematic by feminists, Heath justifies its use in the context of his work, which he insisted was both autobiographical and fictional, saying that he used the porn to "get through" some of his rage. We may therefore assume that, thanks to the wonderous healing powers of pornography, he no longer feels anger towards women; although, he is still using the porn images and perhaps to gain a certain

degree of attention and notoriety, still using the porn controversy.

* * *

The women's movement has created various discourses that force, or at least allow, women to critically examine themselves and their situation in society and history. But apart from writings by and for gay men, there has been very little in the way of parallel discourses forcing all of us (men) to confront ourselves. Even though it may invoke a certain amount of anxiety, it is probably less painful for us to produce and look at photographs dealing with "women's problems" than it is for us to face our own issues, such as: who does not validate women's work (in and out of the home) and why? Who is responsible for paying women unequal pay for equal work and how and why are we letting them? Who is implicated in the medical system that promotes medically managed birthing, and what do they gain by it? Who is producing and consuming violent imagery (including mainstream entertainment and "art" as well as pornography) and why?

Perhaps our apparent need to define and therefore appropriate "women's issues", at least in the art world, is a way of avoiding more relevant and difficult problems we must face. I don't want to imply that "women's problems" should not be addressed by men. In some ways it is encouraging to see men working in these areas, but there seem to be some problems of exploitation and co-option that exists in work examined here, some of which even depict the issues as something separate from men, although it is clear that without men, sexism could hardly be the issue that it is today.

Near the end of his life, in his autobiography, Malcolm X suggested that any white person truly concerned with the plight of blacks in America, should fight to eliminate racism in white society from within before joining with the black community. It is after this model that I suggest men approach the terrain of women's struggles for freedom.

Chuck Samuels is a Montreal photographer, art student and writer.

I would like to thank everyone who discussed this project with me — without you I would never have been able to articulate and elaborate on the ideas presented here. (C.S.)

SPRING 1985

Sing a Song of Sixpence (and a pocketful of social change)

TONY MC AULAY



Robin Collier

Warfare versus Welfare

By Clive Robertson
Featuring Janet Martin, Michael Philip Wojewoda, Ian Colvin, Elaine Stef, Glenn Schellenberg, Charles Salmon, and guests: Wadi, Andrew James Paterson, Rachel Melas, Gerry Berg, Peter Duffin and Rod Cohen
Voicespondence Records VSP 011

(Portions of the following review came from a two-hour interview for *Turbulence* aired on CHRW Radio Western, London, Ontario.)

I MET CLIVE IN 1966 WHEN WE were both students at the Liverpool College of Art. At that time, Clive was producing optical constructions and studying Constructivism and the history of a revolutionary art in a revolutionary society. Like the Constructivists, his politicization led him to work in many media including the socialized forms of popular music and performance events. Ultimately, this

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led to his ability to work as an editor,* publisher and record producer.

Warfare vs Welfare, released on February 1st 1985, lyrically resembles Robertson's solo album, *Popular Songs*, with more overt references to what he describes as "the re-activated 'counter-culture'," meaning a fresh cultural opposition to the economic class warfare promoted by neo-conservatism.

While art students of today are listening with renewed interest to the recorded music of the Sixties — Cream, Hendrix, Doors, Howlin' Wolf, Joplin, Tina Turner — Robertson has artfully re-assessed that epoch's significance as fertile ground for the expression of social discontent and experimentation. The recent musicology of 'protest musics' is culturally complex, a constant garbarator of what often seems like Black music and white art. Robertson follows the connections between the

* Clive Robertson was a founding editor and publisher of *FUSE* magazine.

FUSE

Velvet Underground and more recent bands like The Fall, between Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Billy Bragg. And the ongoing flow between Linton Kwesi Johnson, John Cooper Clarke, Gil Scott-Heron and rap D.J.'s.

The title, *Warfare vs Welfare*, was first used by Robertson within his performance piece, 'In A Drunken Stupor' which he presented across the country last year. The title refers to a specific analysis which suggests that warmaking industrial nations can no longer afford the 'luxuries' of both warfare and welfare and that governmental choices are now being made in favour of weaponry and profits over education, health and cultural services. In the U.K., the U.S. and Canada we are experiencing the erosion of welfare gains. In developing countries, we witness the IMF's pressure to make short-term economic growth a priority over the development of social services. In essence, the vicious escalation of older forms of class warfare. Robertson's explicit call for a serious re-affirmation of the

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public sector is found in songs such as "There Are No Deficits of Our Creation", which speaks of the protection of high income prosperity provided by an elected conservative majority.

"The anti-patriarchal anthem, "What Can A Man Say?" derides men who "have explosives for brains and possessive pathologies for intellect". "What Can A Man Say?" is both a re-examination and a testimonial of where domestic violence crosses over into public violence.

In the style of Dylan/Cale, "The Peter Principle" points to the new (and shakey) Bill of Rights while documenting artist Peter Greyson's action of pouring red ink on a copy of the Constitution, in protest of Canada's agreement to test the cruise missile.

"Third World Bluespeople" provides a litany of racist fears and weaknesses that are maintained through the heightened process of economic competition. And as a wry comment on the aerobics industry he

mimics, "I'm off to my exercise class getting ready for the war."

"Rhetoric on the Run" is reminiscent of Ad Reinhardt's "rules for painting". It smacks with humour, and, like Reinhardt, Robertson's writing lists the functions of art and its workers. It works for both sides: the artists, and those whose only view of artists has been through mediated mythologies and clichés. It collapses legitimate complaints within a tone of stridency and self-mockery: "artists get sick of hearing the word 'artist'."

Music Industry Arts programmes do not produce artists of this calibre. The ability comes from an individual who believes there is a collaborative necessity to be responsible for each stage of the 'creative act'. Writing necessitates magazines; records need recording studios; both need promotion and distribution and, more importantly, they need a context. In this regard it will be interesting to see if a follow-up to this album — a film of the

song "Up to Scratch" made from photographic animation by Craig Condy-Berghold — will ever show up on *Much Music, Good Rockin' Tonight* and the other Music TV slots.

But Robertson's need for context has moved him outside of the tokenism of either patronage or the commercial marketplace. And his social/political awareness has meant helping to build some of the building blocks. The building process has made possible, in the last three years, the recording and release of the Gayap Rhythm Drummers, De Dub Poets, Fifth Column and Plasterscene Replicas and the Women's Compilation Album — all through the *Voicespudence* studio.

In fact, over a period of ten years, Robertson has encouraged and collectively participated in, if not created, a variety of production and distribution spaces for artists. He has been involved in artists' organisations since 1971 — most recently the *Artists' Union*, which is struggling to obtain a living wage and benefits for artists. All of which brings us back to "There Are No Deficits of Our Creation". In our interview, Clive commented that the 'deficit crisis' reminded him of the oil crisis of 1973, which we could later analyse as primarily a scam promoted by greedy energy industrialists.

Certainly it is now clear to all that Canada has not escaped the harsh effects of conservatism. But, there has been an increasing political awareness since the so-called recession of 1975 amongst both artists and the general public. In his productions and other activities Robertson has attempted to counteract the general lack of access that cultural workers have (as one of many social groupings) to discussions of economic and other issues. With *Warfare versus Welfare* it seems that he has been able to give some of these views an incisive voice.

Warfare versus Welfare was worth waiting for. For Robertson, who has been committed to making art for over twenty years, it is a realization of a personal desire to make records. To reach its potential audience, *Warfare versus Welfare* will need to function in a multitude of variable situations. It will do well.

Tony McAulay teaches art at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario.

Agit-Crit

A Decade of Criticism for Social Change

BRUCE BARBER

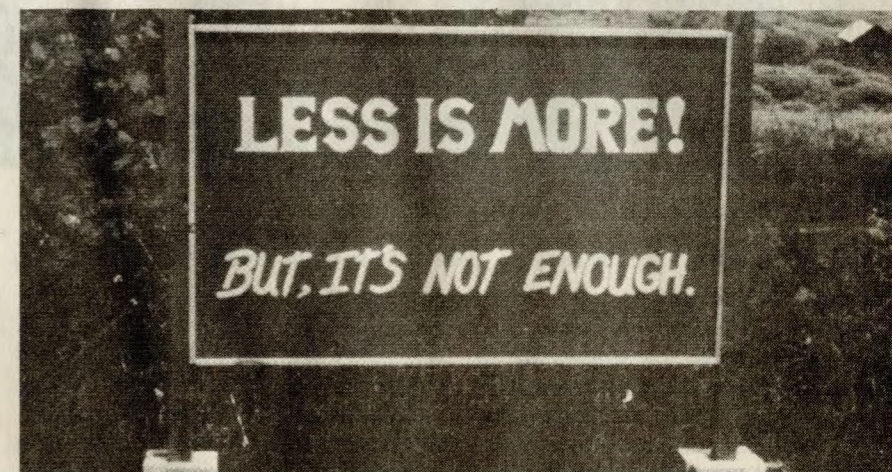
Get the Message?

A Decade of Art for Social Change

By Lucy Lippard
Published by E.P. Dutton Inc.
New York (1984) \$24.50

LIPPARD'S CRITICAL WRITING during the latter half of the 1970's and through to the 80's, as distinct from her 'formalist'-informed writing of the mid-sixties is, as she notes in her forward to this book, "the result of a need to integrate the three sometimes contradictory elements of my public (and often private) life — art, feminism and left politics. *Get the Message?* contains some forty-six written works from this period: essays, reviews, broadsides, slide/lecture 'pieces' (described by the author as "dramatic readings"), a picture essay, as well as a few cartoons and excerpts from comic strips ("Lucy the Lip") — all produced between 1970 and 1983.

The contents are divided into six loosely chronological sections, each prefaced by a brief introductory note. These notes provide a kind of 'meta-text' — insights into the critic at work, epigraphically reconstituting important moments from the recent past — contextualising, where necessary, those points of her career which have led to the formation of attitudes and interests of a theoretical or practical nature. The notes are semi-autobiographical; they document Lippard's politicisation, from the early 70's as a partisan, yet sometimes doubting agent of the Art Workers' Coalition (A.W.C.), through her involvement in the *Heresies* collective (debating the separate ideologies and conflicting strategies of socialist and cultural



Billboard by Robert Hout, 1977

feminism), to the relentless critic of the reactionary Reagan rule times (suffering few fools, unwilling to let any sleeping dogs lie and even struggling with the attacking ones).

Lippard's critical project is *engagé* and, along with many other leading feminists, she has garnered some new projects to add to the traditional ones of the left.

Lippard writes about the work of the cultural left; she champions (advocates) some, but not all, of the work of both cultural and socialist feminists, Marxist and neo-Marxists, the popular culture of the underclasses (proletarian culture), and art of the third world — all work which evidences in content, form, intention or reception, an urge to resist; work which challenges and confronts the inequities and injustices of social and cultural life under monopoly capitalism and imperialist domination. These are loose generalities for Lippard's work and life. Her multiplex career and prodigious energies as leftist critic, and sometime critic of the

left, are a good deal more complicated than this, as she acknowledges with some irony in many of her essays.

Since the late sixties she has also been extremely critical of the art world, its politics, fashions, the art market, dealer galleries, the star system — in a word the *institution* of art. And during the course of the past ten years, partly as a result of her participation in various left cultural groups and organisations — *Heresies*, The New York Socialist Feminists, PADD (Political Art Documentation and Distribution), and *Artists Call* (against U.S. Intervention in Central America), among others — she has turned her attention to broader socio-political issues such as poverty, racism, sexism, media manipulations and propaganda, corporate control, the arms race and imperialism. *Get the Message?* is as much a product of her participation in leftist cultural organisations as it is of her continuing ambivalent role as a high culture critic.

The elements which most clearly

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WARFARE vs. WELFARE VSP 011
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⇒ **plasterscene replicas**

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DOMESTIC DISTRIBUTION:

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A Frida Kahlo billboard by Michael Rios, Gallerie de la Razo, San Francisco, 1978

distinguish her critical projects from those of her (usually male) peers, are her refusal to be tied to a single critical methodology, or to accept the traditional parasitic role of the critic. While she acknowledged in her early criticism, the secondary (intermediary) role of the critic in respect to the production of meaning, her later work, that produced beyond 1975, began to test the critic's role as mediator or sophisticated consumer. By 1979 Lippard had proposed that criticism take on a more primary task; one which openly advocated, from a position of partisan identification, the production and consumption of certain forms of political art. Lippard consciously rejected the distanciation that many other critics would argue is tied to the 'authentic' critical project. Her advocacy stance began with her promotion of feminist work, a separation from the male dominated art world that, she argued early on, was a necessary pre-requisite to the visibility of women both socially and culturally. Now, her advocacy extends beyond the confines of cultural feminism to include all cultural work which she deems socially progressive.

There are some problems in this shift of emphasis from the *adversarial* to the *advocatory*. Lippard is aware of the inherent dangers of the *rhetorical* aspects of advocacy (i.e. dangers of

sloganeering or of reduction). Her propagandising for socialist work is controlled through the use of polemical devices such as the interrogative and the ironic, both of which underline the self-reflexive and didactic nature of her writing. Her criticism is pocketed with questions. The questions she may ask of herself and others in private, are invariably asked of her readers in public. The mode of address is often intimate, the critic openly acknowledging the complexity of the questions asked, yet refusing to allow her authorial authority to intervene and provide the correct answer(s). This is usually left to the readers to assume — *after* they have engaged in a 'dialogue' with the author. The method is less Socratic than Freirian, or probably, more accurately, *feminist*. The techniques Lippard uses in her criticism stem from models of interpersonal interaction and non-hierarchical communication established by feminists and others in the late 60's and early 70's. The interrogatives are preliminaries to interaction as opposed to reaction. Dominant/subordinate relationships are minimised in order to further enhance the constitution of new learning.

There is, however, a shift in the questioning in the essays contained in Lippard's book. Where, in the first sections ("The Dilemma", I. and "Acting

Out", II) the questioning is tentative, almost casual — the result, perhaps, of a pliant yet still critical listening (consumption) on the part of the author (the questions seem to contain qualifiers "but", "if"); in the essays, written during the time of her intense involvement with the *Heresies* collective, the questions become more direct and insistent. It is a measure of Lippard's expertise as a writer, that the questioning in these essays, from around 1975, never enforce the position(s) of the author in a non-dialectical manner and that they rarely engender the kind of opposition from someone forced into the role of adversary, which would precipitate a point of closure in the 'dialogue' constructed between author and reader. In the later essays (from around 1979, especially the "propaganda fictions" and some of the *Village Voice* reviews), the questioning becomes increasingly exhortatory and adversarial, directed towards an audience whose members have exhibited through their complacency or 'neutrality' a complicit alliance with the right.

The difference in questioning in Lippard's work, from 1970 to 1983 is not merely coincidental, or the result of differences in form and context — that some of the texts were produced as lectures (with slides) and some for publication in art magazines or weekly

tabloids. These factors had their influence on her mode of address, but the differences sketched here, regarding the questioning style, probably have more to do with Lippard's own political development and with changes in the U.S. political climate, with the election of Reagan and with the perceived urgency, on the part of the left, to counter a massive swing to the right. Lippard's writing style in her essays of the mid 70's exhibited some of the rhetorical aspects of conventional propaganda, the propagation of ideas through the written word, as distinct from agitation which, in another time (post-revolutionary Russia c. 1917-20), referred more specifically to oral forms of communication.

However, in a 1975 defence of the relation between her criticism and her politics, she wrote, "Talking and writing are two entirely different media, and at the moment, I find talking better adapted than writing to the presentation of political ideas which are not fully formed, ideas which are really questions I don't have the answers to. So I *talk* about 'political issues' and *write* about 'art'." (p.35) The rationale for the conflation of the two into a form of *agitprop* criticism seems to have occurred in Lippard's "Propaganda Fictions", a slide/lecture performance first produced for *And/Or* gallery in Seattle (November 13, 1979) which was subsequently presented in various locations in Canada and the U.S. during the winter and spring of 1979/80.

In a piece published soon after in *Heresies*, "Some Propaganda for Propaganda" (1980), she argued for the erasing of the negative connotations of the term because, as she wrote, "we have to keep in the back of our minds at all times that we wouldn't have to use the denigrated word *propaganda* for what it is, in fact *education*, if it weren't consistently used against us." (p. 114/115.)

She further relates the term *propaganda* to gossip which she argues is "inherently feminist":

It might be seen as gossip, in the word's original sense; *godsib* meant "godparent", then "sponsor and advocate"; then it became a relative, then a woman friend, then a woman "who delights in idle talk", "groundless rumour" and "tattle". Now it means malicious and unfounded tales told by women about other people. All this

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Poster by Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn for East London Health Project, 1978.

happened through the increased power of patriarchal propaganda, through men gossiping about women and about each other on a grand scale (history). Thus, in the old sense, spoken propaganda, or gossip, means *relating*, a feminised style of communication either way." (p. 117/8)

Questioning is an inherently dialectical form of communication and Lippard uses it with great skill in both written and spoken form in order to establish an effective dialogue with her audience/readers. Relating through questioning dispels the authoritarian aspects of idea promotion/propagation, and replaces it with language which attains its goals through more effective (didactically) relational — some would say, educationally sound — methods. For example: the colloquial title for the book *Get the Message?* is slang for "understand the implications?" and Lippard uses this as an ironic counterpoint to the often quoted 'modernist' line: "if you want to send a message...call Western Union" (anon.), a phrase which is intended and used to disarm those who believe that art can in fact convey a message or have some socio-political efficacy. Some of her essay titles also reveal the questioning teacher at work: "I. Some Political Posters and II. Some Questions They Raise About Art and Politics" (1975), "This is Art?: The Alienation of the Avant'Garde from The Audience" (1977), "Raising Questions, Trying to Raise Hell: British Socio-Political Art" (1976/8) and

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"Who's on the First?" (1981).

The best questions are contained in her essays and "dramatic readings", particularly those writings produced with a specific community or a live audience as potential respondents. In one of these, on British socio-political art she writes:

In one way or another, the majority of these artists are using documentary techniques and textual material, though often without the impact that straight photography in the Whitechapel (gallery) gains with apparent ease. This situation raises the question of the *degree* of formal pre-occupation and non-visual packaging necessary to make social art. How detached can you get and still communicate the human necessity of your subject? How involved can you get and make something that still sparks the fundamentally detached experience that makes art thought provoking? (p. 83)

And later in the same essay, she asks:

The fact that many of the works in the Whitechapel show using advertising are not intended as posters but as gallery art gives me pause. It raises another question: When does "confrontation of the dominant ideology" become absorption by the opposition?" (p. 84)

Some pointed questions are also raised in "Some Propaganda for Propaganda" about the enforced separation between social responsibility and artistic production and the failure of *radical chic* political 'messages' aimed at 'undermining' the status quo.

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These issues open a can of worms about satires and "parodies" that aren't comprehensible if one isn't in the know. and continues with,

Ambiguity is *chic and* modernist, lending itself to esoteric theories that inflate the art and deflate any possible messages. A left-wing film for instance, might be a "parody" of macho fantasy films of violence, but in fact uses parody as an excuse to wallow in just that "politically incorrect" imagery. This happens often in feminist art and performance. When women artists use their own nude bodies, made-up faces, "hooker costumes", etc., it is all too difficult to tell which direc-



Photo by Jack Levine, Ocotal, Nicaragua, 1983

tion the art is coming from. Is this bare-breasted woman mugging in black stockings and garter belt a swipe at feminist "prudery" and in agreement with right-wing propaganda that feminism denies femininity? Is it a gesture of solidarity with prostitutes? Is it a parody of the ways in which fashion and media exploit pornography? Or does it approve of pornography? Much so-called punk art (politically aware at one point in Britain although almost never in the United States) raises these questions in a framework of neutral passivity masquerading as deadpan passion. Similarly, a work might cleverly pretend to espouse the opposite of what it does, in fact, believe, as a means of emphasizing the contradictions involved. But how are we to know? Are we just to be embarrassed when the artist says, "But I didn't mean it that way. How naive, how paranoid and moralistic of you to see it that way. You must be really out of it"? Are we to back down because it is, after all, art, which isn't supposed to be comprehensible and isn't just about appearances? Or can we demand to know why the artist hasn't asked her/himself what kind of context this work needs to be seen "right" or "not taken seriously" — to be seen as the satire it really is?" (p. 121)

Lippard follows these hard questions with tentative directions toward

possible changes in consciousness. Her questions continue the debates on a general level — "I'm more interested in encouraging artists to move into such situations so we can see what happens then" (p. 121). Some would wish to criticise this 'soft-peddling' but Lippard realises that while analysis can be a useful prologomena to prevention, it can also be thoroughly alienating and in the end, counter-productive. In keeping with her didactic intentions she wishes to continue and extend the dialogues (conversations) begun with the

Heresies collectives and the New York socialist-feminists. For to do otherwise would be to reproduce the excesses of male (rhetorical) propaganda and so defeat the learning process.

Of her "Propaganda Fictions" (1979/80) Lippard writes: "They were an important watershed in my personal relationship to the art world." She sees them "as an exorcism of some kind — harrowing to perform, sometimes hurtful, but ultimately healing." (p. 192) In this work, Lippard acted as *agent provocateur* — questioning, at times cajoling (propagandising, in her sense of the term) audiences into re-assessing their ideological positioning, their values and beliefs about the art institution, artists and the relationships formed between culture and society. The piece begins: "We all know that art is above it all, Right?... Let's hear it... RIGHT? RIGHT!" From the first interrogative and exclamation marks the piece proceeds with a montage 'battery' of questions, statement, news briefs, corporate statements, statements by political and 'neutral' artists, and is followed by a series of gut-rending accusations, all beginning with "YOU LOUSY ARTISTS". For example:

YOU LOUSY ARTISTS

You never think of anybody but yourselves. You think you're better than other workers. You think anything you do is art. You think every move you make is interesting. Real time. Real Shit. Real snot. Real interesting to who? You don't care to who? YOU LOUSY ARTISTS. (p. 194)

And so on. A litany of incriminations aimed at artists, the art world and capitalist society in general; Lippard enjoins us here, as in the title of the last section of the book, to "Collaborate! Demonstrate! Organise! Resist!"

Get the Message? contains some of the best essays and reviews of Lippard's career: the moving document of her trip to China, "The Ten Frustrations, or Waving and Smiling Across the Great Cultural Abyss" (1980); short reports on Cuba and Nicaragua, "Beyond Pleasure" and "Hotter than July"; the catalogue introduction for the Institute of Contemporary Arts' (London) exhibition which she curated, "Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists"; "Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980"; "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970's" (1980); "Rejecting Retrochic" (1979); "Cashing in a Wolf Ticket (with Jerry Kearns" (1981); and the now classic, "The Dilemma" (1970) which was one of the first essays to come from within the New York art world which attempted to deal intelligently with the issues surrounding a politicised art practice and the social responsibilities of the artist.

Artists and other cultural workers of the left have much to thank Lucy Lippard for. She has provided a voice for oppositional art when there were few voices; she has provided a model of sustained critical engagement at times when many were wavering or falling victim to the power, privilege and neutrality that the art world offers to its success stories. She has spoken out when many have chosen to remain silent, drawn lines of resistance while others have attempted to erase them. But thanks are not enough. The call is out COLLABORATE! DEMONSTRATE! ORGANISE! AND RESIST! Get the message!

Bruce Barber

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Voiced Silence The Poems of Marlene Philip

RACHEL VIGIER

I could
would survive
without all those things
those people — the tribe
the family the land
but I underestimated you
you saved the best for last
you took my work
the word
Logos

Marlene Philip
"Words in Progress (A Work in Progress)"
Fireweed, Issue 17

Salmon Courage

By Marlene Philip
Published by Williams-Wallace,
(Toronto, 1984) \$5.95

WHEN AT THE OPENING SESSION of the National Writers Union conference in New York City, Alice Walker spoke of the "vibrations of the soul carried in the sound and structure of language". I knew I had been given a way into Marlene Philip's poetry. Ms. Philip is a Caribbean poet currently living in Canada. She is the mother of three children, a dancer and a lawyer who several years ago gave up her practice to pursue writing fulltime.* *Salmon Courage* is her second book of poetry and like much of Philip's work questions the nature of speech for those whose voice has been publically denied.

In Western culture language has often been used as an instrument of denial. This is true historically and underlies our present conceptions of language. In ancient Greece speech was seen as the means by which a man became human. It permitted him to move from the private world of 'necessity' to the public world. Slaves and women were excluded from this public

* Marlene Philip is also a contributing editor to FUSE magazine.

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domain as were the facts of necessity relegated to their care: body, desire, need. Consequently, slaves and women were also excluded from the value of speech but not its use. Their language had no public or viable worth as it remained within a private and individual world. This situation whose consequences are still current created a double bind for speech. Firstly speech is cut off from the world of necessity and all that it represents so that body, need, desire are given over to silence. Secondly those who are knowledgeable of the conditions which speech lacks are cut off from speech itself and so the silence surrounding language itself is reinforced. Because of this, speech has over time become an instrument of dehumanization. This is a curious reversal of its original intent and a pattern which is repeated whenever language is isolated from its roots and used as an instrument of denial and exclusion, either of one's own experience or of the experience of the other. The result over time is the loss of language and confusion with respect to the deep sensibilities of human existence.

When those who have been dispossessed by history or by colonialism come to speech a deeply rooted confusion appears. This confusion goes beyond the natural resistance between experience and expression and touches upon the use of speech as an instrument of denial. As a result, the use of speech by the dispossessed becomes more than the wording of experiences; it is the work of probing layers of silence to find a sound or a sign from which meaning can be shaped. Often these sounds are heard in the halting syllables of privately developed languages where silences are deafening and words are ghostly fixations; sometimes the signs are seen in gestures which speak equally of force and

deprivation.

Marlene Philip draws on such a privately developed language and translates its inner resources into a speech which re-educates us in the use and value of speech. She makes speech accept the meanings which arise from her experience of being black and female, from her private and public experience of colonialism and from the knowledge of the black mother whose life and the lives of her children are constantly threatened by the surrounding white culture. Underlying this work is a deep understanding of the political and exclusionary nature of language and its results: the severance of the link between image and word and the consequent "withering of the word".

In *Salmon Courage*, Philip defies these consequences and makes language from her meanings. She does this by rooting the discourse of lost voices, by retrieving fragment by fragment the knowledge which is fast becoming a faint memory, by engaging in a dialogue with those whose existence threatens others and by understanding what authentic actions are left to those who stand on a field mined by unseen forces. This is done with grace and strength despite, as she says, "a language that (is) not only experientially foreign, but also etymologically hostile and expressive of the non-being of the African". ("The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy", *Fireweed*, Issue 17).

Despite its stated threats and hostility, Philip recognizes the language of the colonizer — the Queen's or the King's English — as her own. It is, for better or worse, a language she has been educated in and one which must be returned to the original intent of speech — "to talk with each other". For Philip this means regaining the power of image-making and balancing the

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word/image equation, a feat she accomplishes with healing strength. In her work, words long denied are unearthed from a land which is both friend and enemy, blessing and curse, and expressed in a speech which does not lose the sharpness of the curse nor the sweetness of the blessing. In a very real sense her speech is just and courageous as it looks far into the future and the past to reflect upon the present. Her themes are love, children, life, death, beauty, pain, childbirth, generations; the images spawning salmons, black fruit, branded memories; the meanings clear and resonant — courage, tradition and change through (re)generation.

In *Salmon Courage*, the poet tangles with the tongue which is both her speech and her silence. She turns to the rich world of her island and from this place transforms silence into "sprung rhythm", "syncopated bursts of music, moulding, kneading, distorting, enhancing/a foreign language". Elsewhere she finds the "voice of the lost ones" which triumphs in "Odetta" and gives hope that the power of speech will resonate through its foreignness. "Raw blue words" ride "bareback", "bucking and twisting/in the grip of pure sound", "the voice ambushed/somewhere between the Cape of Good Hope/and the Mediterranean" rides through the cotton fields, the cane fields, the lynch mob, Soweto, Miami and Watts filling its lungs with the breath of its people.

Where silences are stronger than sound the images are carefully transcribed: between friends the silences caught in "dry mouthfulls/of Mazel Toys and Good Luck"; between those who have suffered "branded memories that balk at talk" and the dust which fills "emptied pockets of conversation". Some silences, such as these, have images which project understanding although their depth is still locked in "infinitives of silence". There are however other kinds of silences like those commanded by the loud sounds in "Angola 1981". Here the sound of guns commands silence and mute understanding from the mother whose five year old child has been murdered: "Sudden and loud,/she hears staccato sounds,/knows what they mean in any language". This silence is the meaning behind the confused speech of mercenary Trevor Edwards who does not

know the significance of his own language, nor of the language of Black Ruth of the Bushlands. Says the perplexed murderer: "We would chase her away,/but she always came back./She just kept following,/watching and waiting.../I sure as hell don't know what for".

This mother like many others "knows life comes cheaply/in some places" and like many others she also defies this knowledge as she "shows her bloodied face, bares her/teeth, aspirates the Word and makes it flesh". Defiantly the mothers in Philip's work make flesh and defiantly they threaten to take back what is theirs in "Black Fruit II", a poem dedicated to the poet's son:

You, who carry the memory of sound in your body:
the rush of Victoria's Falls,
the dry winds of the Sahara,
the silence of the rain forests,
talk of Atari, Pacman and television;
I, of survival, sugar, cotton, bills of sale
and vision that is more than eighteen
inches square,
where women don't smell,
are always blonde,
and to be is, not to think,
and white...
I would rather pulverize your soul,
shatter the sound of the Falls,
scatter the winds,
burn the rain forests,
and take your blood back
to where it came from
than let them have you

Here Philip affirms the blood bond whose meanings and responsibilities have yet to be fully deciphered. This bond is evident in the life of generations, of continuity and change, to which all human existence is tied and whose interruption produces lost voices and lost generations. This is the bond which Philip names salmon courage:

...I too am salmon,
whose fate it is to swim against the time,
whose loadstar is to be salmon.
This is called salmon courage my dear
father,
salmon courage,
and when I am all spawned out
like the salmon, I too must die —
but this child will be born,
must be born salmon.

It is also the bond which laughing Isis and Ta-urt "pregnant as a sow/part

crocodile/part lion/part hippo/and all woman" seek to protect as they watch over a "woman/of forty and four weeks gestation" who defies "the boys in white". To an approving and hopeful belch by Ta-urt, this woman pushes for goddess' sake and gives birth — a significant revolutionary act in a world where Lenin, Mao, Fidel, Mugabe and even Sweet Jesus are told "you can't push now".

Philip's poems are full of unseen forces, some like Ta-urt and Isis are friendly and inspiring, others like the Brides of Christ in "A Habit of Angels" are not. In this poem, the disembodied forces are carefully denied and muted, as carefully as the forces of blacks and women in our culture. Nevertheless they remain as faint traces, of "god or woman" and appear fully in "Byeri", the last poem of the book and one which embodies all the themes of *Salmon Courage*. Seeing this figure of her past shut in by plexiglass, the poet questions the "art" gallery which robs graves and proudly displays its spoils in its effort toward cultural hegemony. If the relics of peoples are confined behind plexiglass so will their power be confined and so will they be forced into the mold of the dominant culture, convinced that the past is past, and the power of the relics as dead as the bodies they were meant to guard:

Guardian of relics, keeper of bones,
Fang woman of the flying hair,
You stand on my grave
And become what you once guarded.
You stand on my grave
while two tears of palm oil
creep slowly down my screaming face.

Yet the poet's screaming face, anguished as it is, breaks a silence bringing Byeri to life and assuring us of the continuing presence of the voice, much as a child's cry indicates the capacity for speech. The scream may be inarticulate and undifferentiated but its sound, like all sound, has a significance which cannot always be immediately measured by logos. In the end, the scream, the sound, is important not because of its power to define. It is important because it draws meaning from silence and gives hope that the power to speak is intact.

Rachel Vigier is currently studying dance in New York City.

Making the House Our Own Colonized Language and the Civil War of Words

MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP

BLACK WRITERS AT WORK IN THE English language or in any of the major European (read former colonial) languages are in a difficult position vis à vis the language. Heidegger argued that language was the house of being, our only abode on earth, and that through language being revealed itself to wo/man. In "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy" (*Fireweed*, Issue 17, Summer/Fall 1983), I wrote:

The progenitors of Caribbean society as it exists today created a situation such that the equation between the image and word was destroyed. The African could still think and image, She could still conceive of what was happening to her, but in stripping her of her language, in denying the voice expression, and in denying the voice the power to make and simultaneously express the image, this ability and power was effectively stymied. That bridge that language created, the cross over from image to expression, was destroyed if only temporarily. Furthermore alien and negative images were supplied to replace those recently removed and, irony of all ironies, when the word/image equation was balanced again, this was to take place through a language that was not only experientially foreign, but also etymologically hostile and expressive of the non-being of the African. ...The language therefore served to push the African further away from the expression of her experience and consequently the meaning of it.

This process was in fact the exact reverse of what Heidegger conceived the role of language to be. Stated another way, in the journey across the Atlantic, the African lost her culture, religion, mores and most important of all, her mother tongue. This was replaced by a 'father tongue', the tongue of the white male coloniser; the tongue of the patriarch, benign or ruthless. Several questions arise from

this: can the 'father tongue' be transformed into a mother tongue; is this desirable or should it even be attempted; do the various dialects spoken by the Africans of the New World in fact constitute a mother tongue — a new and different language conceived out of that odd and brutal coincidence of events that brought them to the New World?

In "The Absence of Writing" I also wrote that:

the experience of the African in the Caribbean and the New World is now part of the English collective experience just as England is part, for better or worse, of the African experience (in the same manner, for instance, that Germany will always be part of the Jewish collective experience and vice versa). That experience expressed in the language — a language common yet experientially different for both groups — has been and continues to be denied... If language is to continue to do what language must do — to name and give voice to the experience and image and so house the being — the experience must be incorporated in the language, and the language must begin to serve the re-creation of images...

For too long however we have been verbal or linguistic squatters, possessing adversely what is truly ours. If possession is in fact nine tenths of the law, then the one tenth that remains is the legitimisation process. It is probably the hardest part that yet remains, this reclaiming of our image-making power in what has been for a long time a foreign language, but it must be done.

Surely one of the most overt, explicit and successful acts of subversion has been what has been done to the English language as it passed through the experience of Africans in the New World; a language which once spoke of the non-being of the African and defined her reality as ugly at best and non-

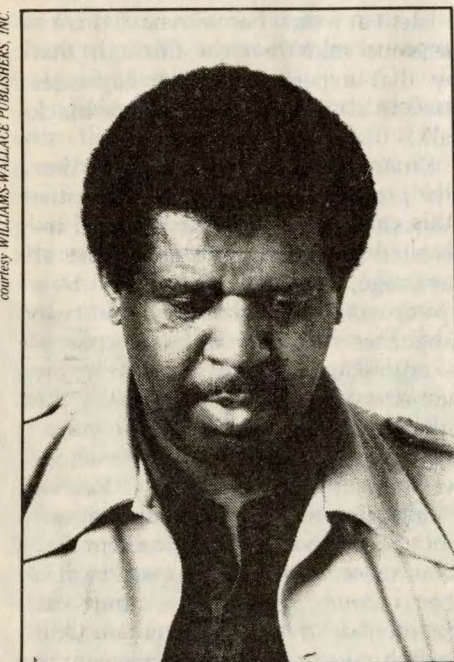
existent at worst, has witnessed this experience take revenge through that by that experience which expresses itself in street talk, hip talk, or black talk.

Straight English or dialect. So has the problem presented itself to the African writer of the New World interested in exploring the experience of language, but the dichotomy is a specious one, since these two languages rule very different spheres — one being the language of safety, the home, comfort and interior spaces; the other being the language of the judge, the standard maker — him to whom we were always accountable. Reconciliation of these spheres of interest, rather than choice, is the problem that faces these writers and to accomplish that, some conscious attempt at destruction of the language (straight English) has to be made. Since we use language to destroy language, what results is a civil war, a house divided against itself, a process I believe to be indispensable if we truly wish to make the house of language our own.

The New World African writer is in a position that is both fortunate and unfortunate: unfortunate because wars, especially civil wars, are particularly costly and there is always the risk of losing the war; fortunate because our historical relationship with language places us in the exquisitely painful position of observing how language functions to reveal or hide us from ourselves. For a writer coming out of the mainstream Anglo-Saxon tradition, this relationship with language has not been as problematic and so it is probably, though not necessarily, easier to take language for granted. The task of the African writer of the New World is therefore to construct a new house of language in which

Africans of the New World can be at home whether it be in straight English, dialect, Black English, Queen's English, or English English — each of these is the result of an experience, part of a collective experience which it is the writer's work to chronicle.

All of the above is a long way around to introducing two Black Canadian poets — Claire Harris, an Albertan of Caribbean origin, and Frederick Ward, who left the U.S. in 1970 to settle in Halifax.



Fred Ward

The Curing Berry

By Frederick Ward
Published by Williams-Wallace
(Toronto, 1984) \$5.95

FREDERICK WARD, NOW A HALIFAXIAN, is a poet whose book *The Curing Berry* attempts just such a marriage of two houses, one black American English, the other, straight English (if such an animal exists). *The Curing Berry*, a collection of poems and prose poems (some of which are excerpted from other works including dramatic pieces), focuses on the experience of Canadian Blacks, recalling the days when American slaves followed the North Star to Canada:

Most I have were my fears and a hatchet
when I
crossed over into Canada...I took my first

night
in liberty high on a tree branch next
of...all
as I could tell, a bird in shivers...

From *All Who Was There*

"What you mooining in the
fields about, Najean?"

And I says it afore I thought who she be.
I blurts it right out:

CANADA!

she slapped me so hard
I come'd erect

Najean

or recalling the pain resulting from the
destruction to Africville:

Africville ain't a place, Africville is us.

When
we go to git a job, what they ask us?
Where we
from...and if we say we from Africville,
we are
Africville!.....
You think they destroyed something.
They ain't.
They took away the place. But it come'd
round, though.

Dialogue No. 3
Old Man (To the Squatter)

There are others: love poems such as
"Sweet Woman"; blues poems or
poems that simply and profoundly
reveal a way of being:

Don't put no rock
on my grave

I carried enough
atop me when
I were in stride.

Finally

Frederick Ward's success lies in his
ability to contain and control, often
within the same poem, the two strands
of experience reflected in the language:
coloniser and colonised, oppressor and
oppressed, meet within the language
and create a tension that never slackens
and a vitality that is constant.

Some parts of "The Death of Lady
Susuma" for instance, would be at
home in any Anglo-Saxon work:

She placed the hairpins in a neat pile on
the
Bannister, stepped and twisted to a
window box,
And snatched a brown leaf from a bluish
red
Fuchsia plant...

But within the very same poem we also

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have:

She gathered herself together as he
approached
The porch stoop — stepped it. He bowed
off his hat
And she lowered her gaze but he weren't
in it.

Like a picture she sit sit in a rocker in the
Doorway barefoot;

and

Once you can put your hand on the bush
The curing berry be there for you.

The tension is often more subtle as in
"Courage" where the overtones of the
blues contrasts with the suggestion of
the more traditional villanelle with its
obsessional repeated lines — "Brewing
a stone/Brewing the stone/Brew the
stone."

In other poems the language, tone,
rhythms and pacing are completely
Black as in "Blind Man's Blues":

My to God, she tried to wave me off—

Papa say:

—O son

—O son

And I don't think she wanted me
to look on my naked papa like that

She throw'd lye
in my face.

and in "My Aunt":

The old woman never gaze
on the intimacies of others

when done afore her in public.
she'd just wander off,

peer at the dirt,
even not press and wiggle the ball of
her foot...

Analysis of these poems evokes
what appears to be contradictory language
— minimalist yet symphonic,
particular or individual yet universal.
The minimalist qualities can be ob-
served in "Untitled":

when forever
passed my way
i stood there (and).
screamed—
"PLEASE
LET ME RIDE!"

or,

O it were contagious contagious and
beautifulbeautifulbeautiful!
Just.

"Lady Susuma's Dream" straddles
both prose and poetry, straight English
and Black English and captures the
rhetorical waves of Black preaching to

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build to the crescendo of the last two
lines:

—Woyi bie! Woyi bie! Welcome!

Welcome!

O Wedo, calling Wedo, O Wedo ther, is
that...

Both this poem and "The Death of
Lady Susuma" evoke the term sym-
phonic in the sense of there being an in-
clusiveness and a scope to the poems
that corresponds to musical works of
this nature.

All great poetry is a private language
which by some alchemical process
becomes a universal language. Put
another way, all great poetry is written
in dialect. (*Poetry Review*, Vol. 74,
Number 2, "Babylonish Dialects",
Craig Raine.) The two statements say
the same thing since vis à vis the
mainstream standard language, a
dialect is in fact a private language,
accessible only to those who understand.
I prefer the phrase private language
since the word dialect comes laden
with much preconceived baggage, and
usually presupposes currency among a
group of people. A poet's private
language is not a currency shared by
many others, at least not initially. This
quality of privacy or dialect is often the
quality of language being used dif-
ferently, newly, strangely, and it re-
quires a particular kind of attention
and concentration. Frederick Ward's
poetry exacts this kind of effort and
repays handsomely.

His is also a poetry which is a
valuable part of that resolution be-
tween the language of the coloniser
and the language of the colonised
which helps to re-present the African
to herself:

To look at myself — whole
And not as a reaction.

It is unfortunate and also frustrating
that the editing of *The Curing Berry*
has resulted in discrepancies between the
contents page and the poems them-
selves, so that for instance Section III,
"A Proud Shadow Awaits the Sun" on
the contents page is in the body of the
book titled, "From: Do Blind Men See
Ghosts". There is no way of knowing
which of these is correct. Also, the fact
that so much of *The Curing Berry* is ex-
cerpted creates in some of the sections a
sense of incompleteness which pro-
duces an overall quality of unevenness,
not in the quality of the work, but in its
presentation. But given the overall

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validity of the work, these are minor
drawbacks.

Fables From the Women's Quarters

By Claire Harris
Published by Williams-Wallace
(Toronto, 1984) \$5.95

CLAIRE HARRIS' FIRST PUBLISHED
work, *Fables from the Women's
Quarter*, is the product of a poet very
much in control of her craft. Like
Ward, she frequently combines the
prose form with her poetry, but with
her the two genres appear in a more
contrapuntal relationship. Both poets
write a poetry full of care — careful
poetry — but Harris' is a much more
sculpted poetry, more contained.

One of the distinguishing qualities of
the age in which we live is the mun-
danity of horror and one of the funda-
mental problems facing the artist today
is how to treat this horror in her work,
how to present it, transcend it and so
heal — one's self and others.

Yes, even horror can be lived out in
poetry. This is not to say that poetry
weakens or diminishes horror — what it
perhaps means is that poetry translates
horror to that level where, lived out
through poetry, it is no longer degrading

—Eugene Guillevic

In *Fables from the Women's Quarters*
Claire Harris attempts just such a con-
frontation with horror and is for the
most part successful in translating it "to
that level where...it is no longer
degrading."

In "Nude on a Pale Staircase", one of
the three longer poems in this work, a
lyric cycle of poems about a relation-
ship is juxtaposed with a 'prose' com-
mentary that suggests that a massacre
has just taken place in Assam:

Massacres in Assam from her childhood a
memory of blue bottles encrust swollen
lips...the mad
thunder of an ancient jeep ruts the dirt
roads small
stones fly

The imagery is often startling in its
clarity, and one instantly recognizes a
truth:

she followed them on this women's duty
watched them
at their beads count off the days contract
with God

FUSE

Now she meets them ...pouring ovr the
eggplant
their noses wrinkling in the sterile air they
circle
they circle the old rituals of food of caste
Their
serious hands give off a small light

Juxtaposing the lyric with the prosaic
works well, although the latter is so
much stronger and more rooted than
the lyric cycle, it overwhelms it. On the
other hand presenting the poem in this
way does successfully convey the sense
of differing and split realities within the
same consciousness.

This technique, with some changes, is
repeated in "Where the Sky is a Pitiful
Tent" and in "Seen in Stormlight", a se-
quence of poems set in Nigeria. In
"Where the Sky is a Pitiful Tent", more
so than in "Nude on a Pale Staircase",
the juxtaposition of prose (and in
this case the material is straight fact-
tual testimony) and poetry appears
to be a way that Harris has chosen to
deal with events that overwhelm by
their horror — events that appear to
defy description, events that will not be
contained by words — in this case
murder and torture in Latin America.

Against a sequence of poems in the
voice of a Latin American woman, she
has juxtaposed, this time almost as a
footnote, a very factual and prosaic
description of events — testimony of
one Rigoberto Manchu — that sur-
round and embrace this woman. Once
again we have the startling imagery:

All night the hibiscus tapped at our
jealousies
dark bluster of its flower trying to ride in
.....
Now I sleep with my eyes propped open
lids nailed to the brow

The effect of this presentation is that
one goes from poem to text and back to
poem and that process serves to
heighten the problem of how the poet
presents events of this magnitude —
which is stronger; which has more im-
pact, poem or testimony; in the face of
such events does it matter? For myself,
I find the testimony more riveting than
the poems which become in fact exten-
sions of the former, and because of its
subject matter — murder and torture —
the testimony stands on its own: "That
was his only crime. He was fourteen
years old... they burnt them." The
poems in this sequence are well crafted
but placed side by side with the testi-

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