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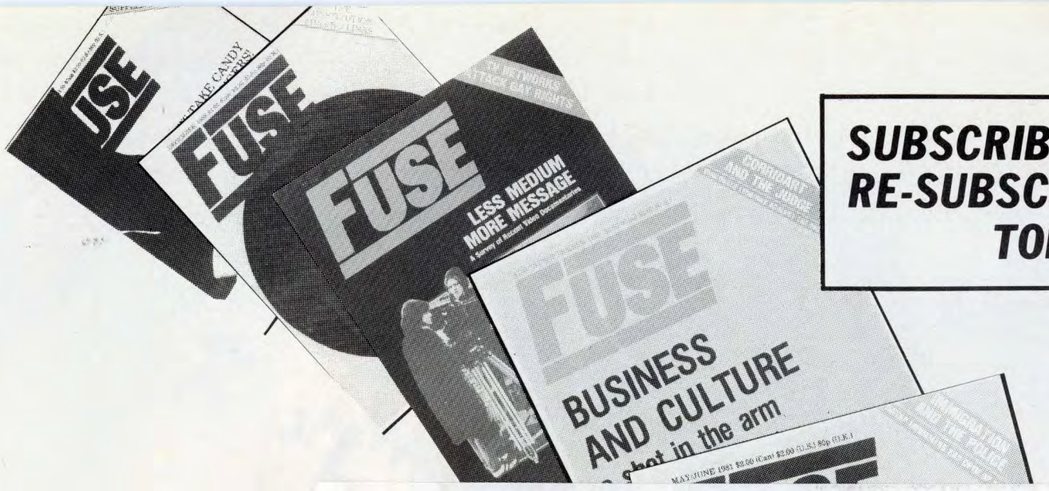

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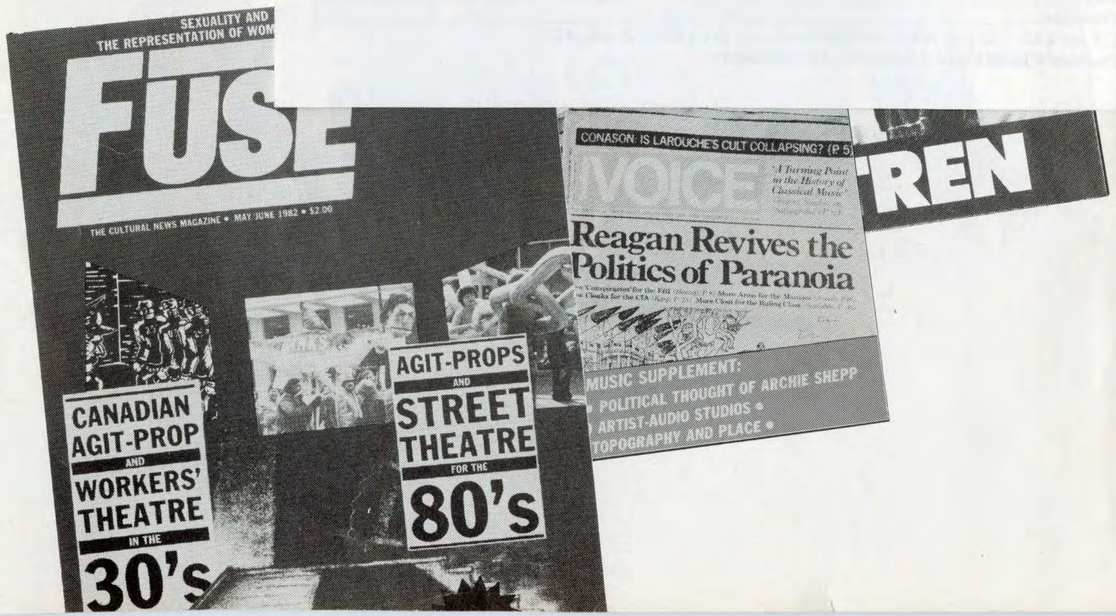

FUSE Summer 1983

FUSE

VOLUME SEVEN NUMBERS ONE AND TWO **SUMMER 1983**

Ric Amis

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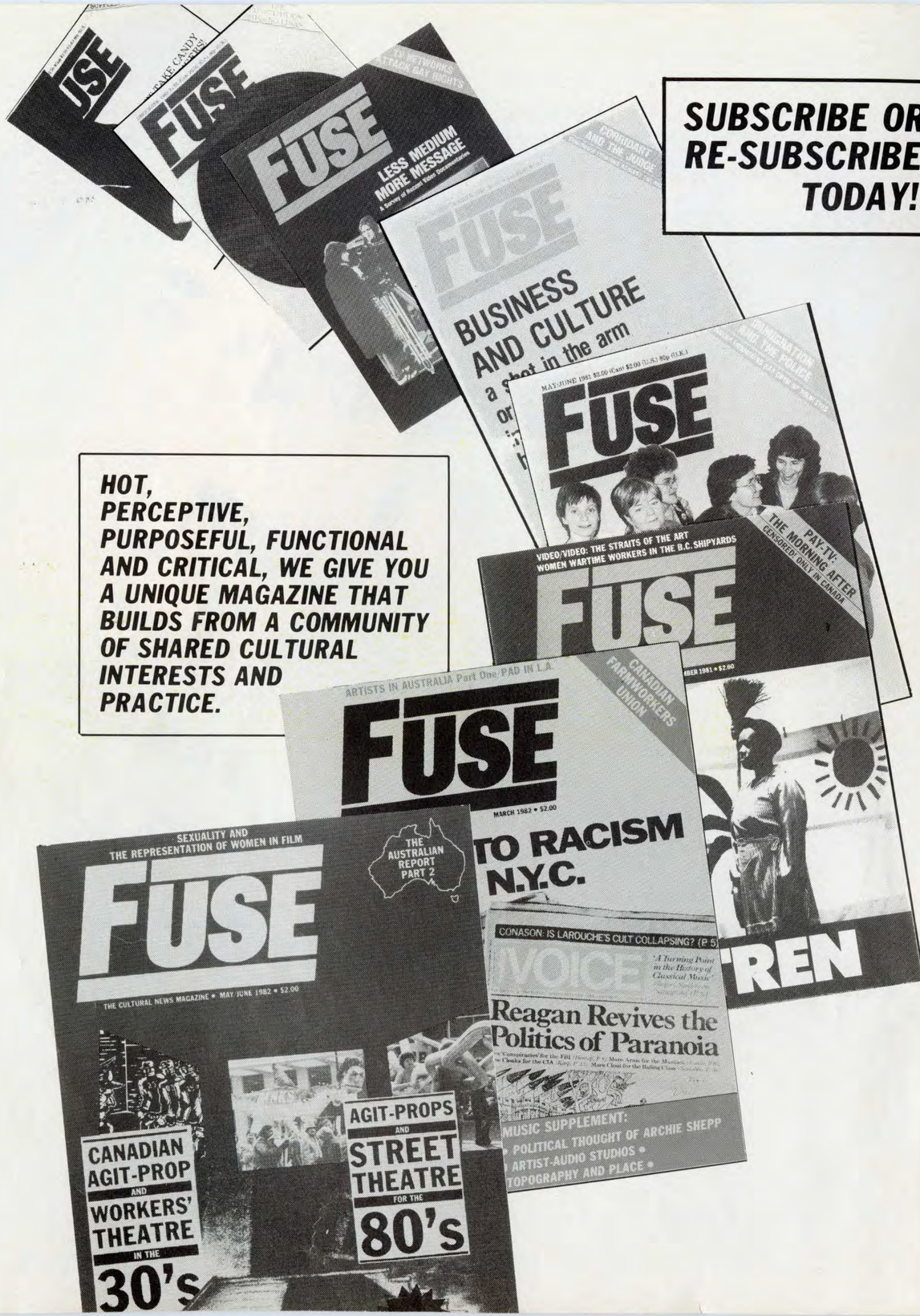

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Ric Amis

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Editorial

"Strident Strawberries" by Joyce Mason, Edible Art Show, Toronto April 30 '83.

Celebratory Vigour and Dismissive Buzzwords

In mid April the most recent issue of **Parallelogramme** was in circulation and the day that I picked up my copy I also received in the mail a letter from the Canada Council, notifying us of the terms and conditions of this year's grant.

In that issue of **Parallelogramme** a transcript of a collective lecture in which I participated was published (entitled "Fuck yous I'm goin' to Bingo!"). In the context of this lecture I had stated that it was necessary to "develop a pride in stridency. . . which is a demand to be heard more than to convince".

In the letter from the Canada Council I was informed that, "In making this assessment, committee members did however have the feeling that FUSE was at times too strident."

Strident; adj. (from latin Stridentem, present participle of Stridere: to creak) — having or making a high, harsh sound; shrill; grating.

As the new managing editor I wanted to share some of my thoughts on this subject. In this, I hope to provide a hint of what my contribution to the 'pitch' of FUSE will be.

Since **FUSE** is published in print form, the meaning of this word can only be applied in its figurative sense. Figuratively, being strident means to be creating a noise (in this context, saying/writing something) which is considered unpleasant to hear. Politically speaking, it is most often attributed to the kind of political voice ("strident feminist", "strident marxist") which is irritating because it accuses, names the accused and allows for no defence.

From my own experience as a "strident feminist" the use of strident in this context is generally intended either to dismiss the critique which is offered, or as a negotiating tool. . . as in "The patriarchy isn't the source of *all* evil" or "Let's just tone this down a bit, make it a little more palatable and I'll allow that there might be a point or two worth considering." Generally however the toning down that happens in these negotiations is such that change is no longer demanded (at best, you can *ask* for it politely).

I have found that working within a feminist community does allow for the making of strong statements. In these statements are the tones of outrage, anger and spirited vengence. For those on the other side of the fence, none of these tones are pretty to listen to. But here we have the question of context and voice — people choosing for themselves what it is that they wish to say, and for the most part what they have been kept from saying. These will at times be strong, untempered and 'irrational' — though I prefer to say *surrational*. These are the unqualified-by-objective-objections statements, and I believe that they are valuable and even essential to developing a voice. I am quite happy to work and write for a magazine that includes stridency and does so in a context which allows for a multiplicity of tone and rigour in the pieces set forth — each of which deserves to be heard.

There is another common use for the word strident, though it is I believe a misuse. This identifies as 'strident', arguments (inevitably of a political nature) which are acused of 'overstatement' or of 'ignoring some of the finer points of analysis'. If this is a complaint it should be stated as such, preferably with examples which might provide constructive criticism to their author or contribute to the development of a debate.

In the end, far from being helpful, a critique such as "Fuse [is] at times too strident" makes one wonder what would be the correct degree of stridency. Is this a stylistic contradiction or a mixed message directive? It also reminds me that one woman's stridency is another's music. And of course I always want to ask — who's clamping down on the strident voices of conservativism and exploitation in the media all around us? Those are, after all, voices that hurt more than just delicate ears!

The context of this 'gentle word' can not be ignored. The context makes it read like political interference — raising the age-old question: whose arm? and how long? It seems that this committee, under the harassing pressures of making relative decisions about the budgets of the country's periodicals, lost their capacity for rigorous and intelligent commentary.

My object in all this is twofold; first, to reclaim the word for its potential celebratory vigour and second, to diffuse its power as a dismissive buzzword.

Are you now, or have you ever been a member of the FUSE group?

It has been a long dark winter, as usual, here in Toronto. In the downtown 'arts community' there has been a lot of thinking, theorizing and a great deal of public talk and print generated. Axes have been ground and voice has been given to ideological and organisational splits, as well as personality and style conflicts in the community.

In fact, much of what is passed off in these "debates" as analysis is the intellectualization of personality conflicts, personal slights and professional paranoias. Although the conflicts often have roots in principles, the bitterness of tone and the tendency towards dismissive constructs belies the stated or implied intention of constructive critique.

As Philip Monk said in his lecture, *Arguments within the Toronto "Avant-Garde"* (published in **Parallelogramme**, April-May 1983), "The problem in our nascent scene is that no institutional analysis can be made in our short history without naming names". To this I would add that it is also necessary to offer specifics and to consider the intent, tone and the context of that which is said and done.

In the spirit of this kind of critique I would like to broach a couple of creaky and obscure swipes that have recently been directed towards this magazine and presumably its supporters and workers. By this I hope to encourage more intelligible communication.

The first is a piece by Andrew Payne which was submitted to **Parallelogramme** and published in their letters column. In the introductory paragraphs "the FUSE group" stands accused of having necessitated his writing, since it is "a large and influential segment of Toronto's art critical community". The "theoretical inadequacies [which] form [its] working assumptions" lie in the "simple minded valorization of work produced by marginal cultures". The "group" presumably is made up of "so-called leftists who have failed to understand political engagement as entailing something other than their own methodological *Stechschritt*." He then proceeds into some 'methodological Stechschritt'ing of his own.

The naming of, without identification of who comprises, such a group is the problem which I want to address because this is, unfornately, not an uncommon occurance. It is related to another phenomenon — the anthropomorphism of the magazine. I cannot ignore that any putdown of FUSE (no matter how trivial) is bound to provide a *more* friendly reading, in certain segments of the artscene, of whatever idiocies one would care to put forth. Fuse has become a buzzword for use by some whose intentions are more closely tied to displays of superiority than to valid critiques of either practice or intentionality.

To respond to the specific dismissives set forth by Mr. Payne; FUSE and the people associated with it may be and are accused of many inadequacies, but valorization of marginal cultures has rarely been pursued in a simple minded manner. The analysis of the construction of margins is, itself, a reasonably 'heady' pursuit and the critique, investigation and even the celebration of practices which are marginalized does take effort.

The evocative renaming of an institution as a 'group' — without naming the individuals — succeeds only in dismissing the practice of any and all individuals associated with that institution. It is a severe form of critical laziness because it does not bother with the particular views, histories, activities, associations or practices of those individuals.

Mr. Payne undermines whatever thoughts he may have contributed, by setting them in the context of this attempted display of his own ego/intellectual superiority.

Another unfortunate example of these 'smartest boy on the block' aspirations came recently in an obscure dismissive (disguised as an editorial) published in the Spring/Summer issue of **Impulse**. The form, placement and catch phrases often found in Artist publication editorials are all present. But if Mr. Payne fell short of constructive criticism, Eldon Garnet has managed to obscure things even further.

Since there is in this writing a ring of familiar bells and since I have been assured by a number of peole that the infamous "FUSE group" is at least part of the intended subject, I decided to follow the old adage "If the shoe looks familiar try it on for size."

The foundation of the argument is built upon the imaginative renaming of the two polarities of possible political positions as liberalism (on the left presumably) and bureaucracy (on the right). I am certain that his intention must have been to goad by adding the further insult of 'liberalism' to the more common attribution of insincerity implied in the term 'pseudo-radical'. It would be difficult for anyone to deal with the criticism of being a 'pseudo liberal' since the concept is a difficult one to get one's head around. The term is defined in the text as, "opportunists who appropriate liberalism to hide their personal ambitions". The only 'pure' liberal is Garnet himself and what we find amongst the "hypocrits" is the appropriation of liberalism — which is after all the appropriation of social democracy, which is the appropriation of socialism and on down the line. If it doesn't make your head spin a bit, it is sure to send a few eyeballs fluttering and rolling back into their respective heads.

There is always the possibility that Eldon is simply making fun of the crazed and polarized rantings of paranoid segments of the arts' community. But when I suggest this possibility (this can't be serious; it must be satire) I receive the answer "No, it's not", accompanied by a sad shake of the head.

Ultimately what gives it away as 'serious' is his direction for the future; Eldon's route out of what he defines as the dead end of "false liberals confronting the entrenched establishment". Eldon is pure; "neither hypocricy nor bureaucracy interests me". Congratulations!

What he proposes as the third way (is

Letters

that anything like a third eye?) is "a form of liberalism which is based on genuine compassion [is that the motivation of an axe hanging over the head of a prone woman*] which if self-directed must not unfairly co-opt the efforts of others [none would accuse Garnet of co-opting feminism, although adoption of the efforts of Vogue and chic advertising to keep women in their place do not seem beyond his grasp] which is not hypocritical [the fewer demands that you make of yourself, the less disappointed you are likely to be] which is not based in old ideologies [Just ignore the history of thought and analysis and invent your own system of dialectics; what matter that only your closest friends will understand what you're talking about] on male/female differentiation [as willing to hold the gun to the head of a naked man as an axe to the head of a prone woman — even if the woman, as more saleable commodity, graces the cover], old dialectics [invent your own], which is not racist [don't talk about anyone but yourself or to anyone but your own kind], not based in class priorities [ignore the question of class thoroughly], or on historical analysis of examples outside our present situation [the present — the here and now — exists somehow in isolation from its history; we have nothing to learn from the experiences of other cultures or from the history or development of those who came before us in our own]".

I doubt very seriously that Eldon really could defend or wish to hold onto the precepts which he has so readily put forth in this editorial; and to give him his due, the situation out of which he wrote the piece must be acknowledged, "I've stood in front of so many self-centred answers only to discover dead centres. So many polarities." The solution to this situation however is not to replace the faulty directives of others with one's own set of faulty directives.

Finally, I would like to point out that whatever their stated intentions people will always fall short of them. This does not necessarily imply hypocricy; to immediately identify it as such is a ploy intended more as a mark of one's own moral superiority than as a desire for a change in this state of affairs.

Hypocricy exists, as do 'pseudo-politicos' and 'pseudo-intellectuals'. Overuse and abuse of the terms simply robs them of their true value.

Joyce Mason

*Cover image of current issue of **Impulse**.

Poor Visibility

So Eleanor MacLean's book **Between the Lines** is just not 'scientific' enough for your reviewer George Smith (Vol. 6, No. 5, February 1983). Smith adopts Ms. MacLean's own definition of human communication as either propaganda, presentation of information, or point of view, and sadly concludes that **BTLs** is 'merely a point of view', thus having limited value. Apparently the book is lacking in the rigorous detachment which Smith attributes to the scientific method, blissfully ignorant (it seems) of the well documented perils of such positivistic assumptions.

Personally I found **BTLs** to be very much an 'information' book, containing a lot of revealing detail about the historical development and economic structure of the media, and providing invaluable critical tools for teasing out the underlying constraints and motivations which shape media content. Rarely has the myth of media objectivity been so effectively put to flight.

Smith unfortunately can't seem to make up his mind about the subject of objectivity. In one paragraph he happily blathers about objectivity as "the unique feature of modern reporting" because for reporters to be less than objective "would be unprofessional". Next paragraph we learn that after all "the production of objectivity is an ideological practice. . .it operates as an interpretative frame."

I propose that Smith's beef with the 'ideology' which he perceives to underpin the analysis and description of media contained in **BTLs** is sorely misplaced. Human perception, our ability to 'see' and ascribe meaning to the world at all, is to some extent an ideological practice dependent on interpretative frames. We are all thoroughly cultural beings, even Mr. Smith, and the untainted actuality, the 'real world', that he so insistently yearns for, cannot exist for us except as a version, shaped according to the implicit values associated with a particular cultural and psychological context, a context which to some extent is different for every individual. Via the socialising process, society provides its members with the 'criteria for encoding reality' (which Smith decries as synonymous with 'ideology') and creates a commonality in the way meaning is ascribed to the raw data picked up by our senses. Without some hermeneutic system of encoding and decoding sense data, we humans would simply be unable to make any sense of the world at all. Which is why the inhabitants of a New Guineau jungle, on being shown a photograph

Editor's Note:
Apologies to Richard Plowright who was not credited for the use of his photograph on the cover of FUSE Volume Six, number 5 (January/February 1983.

for the first time by anthropologist Edmund Carpenter, were unable to make out anything but varying shades of greyness on the paper, being unpracticed in the perception of 2-dimensional images, and why Eskimos can perceive, and have an accompanying vocabulary to name, over fifty types of snow. Such is the influence of our internalised data-encoding systems — our perceptual ideology if you like — in determining how we see the world.

Even the science in which Smith places so much faith is no longer self-assuredly value free and objective in its observations of reality. Since Thomas Kuhn, science has come via relativity and quantum physics to the inevitable realization that the process of observation itself is a dialectic involving the constraints imposed by the technology of the measuring apparatus and the preconceptions and expectations of the observer, at least as much as it has to do with any 'actual events out there'. Scientific language itself carries with it a whole gamut of assumptions about the way the world works. Which brings us to what, in my mind, is the crux of the matter; to deny the implicit relativism and subjectivity in all human perceptions is to be guilty of totalitarian thinking of the most dangerous kind, a kind of thinking which perhaps represents the ultimate human folly and carries clear responsibility for most of the genocide, violence and destruction which has been such an inseparable part of mankind's development and evolution.

Here, I think, we have the essential shortcoming in Marx's interpretation of the social and political world. His assumption that 'the real individuals and their activities' are solely a function of 'the material condition of their lives', a function readily available to scientific observation and manipulation, denies the key interpretative role played by the psyche of the individual in determining his or her perceptions and corresponding actions. How else could capitalism have so successfully spawned a bourgeois working class except by inducing a change in the prevailing perception of social reality so that the act of acquisition became accepted as the ultimate expression of human potential — a very convenient 'reality' for those who own the means of production, of course.

Smith's splitting of hairs over whether the media can be considered as a 'part of the ruling class' because the media in themselves are not 'owners', is highly irrelevant. More to the point is to maintain and encourage the awareness that the media have become the prime informers of our collective internalized value system, our inner world . . . the world which, despite being largely invisible to the kind of empirical scientific observation so beloved by Marx, and Mr. Smith, constitutes the reality we all actually exist in.

Our desire, and our ability, to define and redefine what we perceive as reality is at the root of our most creative acts in art, religion and philosophy. On the other side of the coin, an obsession with holding onto and controlling a version of ultimate truth leads to fascism and soviet-style communism on a societal level, and neurosis in the individual. It is the role of education in its broadest sense, to expose us to as many different perspectives and interpretations of the world as possible, so that we can begin to build up a three-dimensional ideological hologram within which the human potentiality for wisdom and love can flourish at the expense of totalitarian dogmatism — however scientific such dogmatism might pretend to be.

Between The Lines is a valuable contribution to that hologram.

Stephen Garet, Halifax

Author's Response

Mr. Garret has got it wrong. He has not understood my critique of **BTLs** because he has brought to this task an enormous amount of academic baggage (Thomas Kuhn, hermeneutics, and a virulent anti-Marx sentiment) that has simply gotten in the way of making proper sense of the review. What I want to point out is where his interpretive procedures have gone off track.

First, he assumes that in decrying **BTLs'** lack of scientific analysis that I was demanding of the book a "rigorous detachment" and objectivity, thus embracing the assumptions of positivism. In fact, I was doing just the opposite — mounting an anti-positivist attack on **BTLs**. The procedure for creating a positivist account depends on the construction and use of two things: formal categories and objectivity. The whole point of my review of **BTLs** was a critique of categories, which I called frames, and of objectivity. The review, in other words, was a critique of the positivist assumptions of **BTLs** and of modern journalism in general. Mr. Garett must remember that science is not the preserve of the positivists.

How did he come to make this kind of mistake? The problem, I believe, is that he thinks of Marx as a positivist (as, indeed, many Marxists are) without remembering that Marx originally planned to entitle **Capital, Critique of the Economic Categories**. When positivism was getting underway with Bentham, Comte and company and the science of social classification was becoming all the rage (see Foucault), Marx was the first great anti-positivist social scientist. Naturally however, Mr. Garett assumed that because I profess to be following Marx's method that I, too, must be a positivist. His problem in understanding what I meant in my review by 'objectivity' — that is, that my account was somehow contradictory — did not twig him to this error. As a result he fell victim to his own ideological construction of Marx's method as positivist science.

Secondly, he did not understand what I meant by 'ideology'. The problem here is somewhat more complex. Mr. Garett has grasped what Kant pointed out: that man's knowledge is a product of man's mind and on this account, knowing comes to be treated as a psychological process. (Although Kant, himself, dealt with it in terms of its logical presuppositions which he derived with the aid of the transcendental argument.) The difficulties with this form of idealism are well known to philosophers: solipsism, skepticism, and

the problem in Kant of the noeumena. What is critical to this way of thinking about the problem of knowledge is the objective/subjective distinction — the fundamental assumption of all positivist thought. Without this distinction objectivity would be impossible. Mr. Garett, unfortunately, holds to this assumption while at the same time eschewing the objectivity of positivism. The result is that he is left wallowing in the morass of subjectivism and relativity which he thinks of as the bulwark of a free society.

There is, however, a way out of this morass and that is to cast out positivism root and branch. What this requires is seeing that knowledge is not a product of mind, but of society. Or put more specifically, that knowledge in every instance is a product of a form of social organization. To his credit, Mr. Garett is on to this kind of analysis. The reason, for example, that Eskimos know snow differently from the rest of us is not because their minds are structured differently, but because of the way snow enters into the social organization of their lives. Their knowledge of snow (as for the skier as opposed to the non-skier) arises out of the practicalities of everyday life. Similarly, the facts of science do not arise in the minds of scientists, but out of the social organization — the procedures and apparatus — of a scientific laboratory. (See the work of Woolgar and Latour.)

Once it is seen that different forms of social organization produce different kinds of knowledge, it is possible to understand what I meant in my review by 'ideology'. Briefly put, ideology is a form of knowing that is grounded in a particular kind of organization — a ruling apparatus. It is a knowledge that is constructed using categorizing procedures that specifically attend to the work of ruling, administering, and managing. In the same way that the social organization of Eskimo culture produces different knowledge of snow from white-man's culture, so the social organization of an administrative organization produces a different knowledge of the world from that generated by the everyday organization of people's lives. Between these two lies an ideological disjuncture, an organizational line of fault which almost everyone at some time or another has experienced. Think of being at an event and then seeing it covered by the news media. Or think of the conception one has of oneself and then of the way that conception is transformed when one appears on school records, unemployment insurance records, or psychiatric records.

The point of my criticism of **BTLs** was to say that to understand how the media portrays (knows) the world requires an understanding of the social organization of the media — an organization which is part of a bureaucratic, ruling apparatus and hence, is ideological. Merely citing evidence of ownership and control is not adequate to this task, especially when the production of objectivity and such like is far more fundamental to the ruling character of the media as a form of knowing. Moreover, if knowledge is social rather than mental, then to understand how knowledge is produced is to be able to describe its particular form of organization, or of what Marx called its social relation. Mr. Garett believes that this is logically impossible. Marx and I do not. Also, like Marx, I believe that it is only when people understand how their society is socially organized — very often against them — that they will be able to assume control of it and thereby gain their freedom. This is the only work for a genuine social science. By displaying, among other things, the social organization of the ruling apparatus it stands on the side of ordinary people, of workers, women, minorities and the oppressed everywhere.

George Smith

Progress or Appropriation

I would like to add a few comments to Jeffrey Escoffier's insightful review of Dennis Altman's **The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual**. Altman's latest work is useful in popularizing some of the acquisitions of gay liberation theory. At the same time it is fundamentally flawed in its inability to clarify the underlying social dynamics shaping the formation of gay communities, identities and cultures.

One of his central theoretical weaknesses is his misunderstanding of the process of cultural production and reproduction. Altman tends to confuse subordinate and dominant forms of cultural formation. He places on relatively equivalent levels the 'homosexualization' of America (the subordinate culture's effect on the dominant culture), and the 'Americanization' of the homosexual (the dominant culture's effects on the subordinate culture). He defines this 'homosexualization' as the extension of homosexual fashion trends and attitudes to sexuality and relationships in the heterosexual population (see Altman p. 33). He defines this 'Americanization' as the formation of a distinct gay community based on a personal identity and a minority status similar to that of an ethnic group.

Altman manages to confuse a number of distinct social processes. The formation of oppositional cultural forms such as gay culture exists within a context defined by a hegemonic heterosexual culture. This funnels forms of subcultural production into channels that accomodate it with the dominant culture. Forms of cultural production originating in the gay community (for example fashion trends) come to be separated from the gay sexual practices they were associated with. When these cultural forms are marketed to the heterosexual population their roots in gay culture may no longer be visible. They are re-packaged in a neutral or heterosexual context and redefined in terms of the dominant heterosexual culture. These gay cultural forms, through this transformation, can then come to play a role in the social reproduction of the system as a whole, including its hegemonic heterosexual culture. While aspects of 'homosexualization' may take place in some cultural areas, it seems a 'dehomosexualization' is also taking place. Forms of cultural production in the gay community contain not only elements of resistance to heterosexual hegemony, but also moments of accomoddation to oppression (see Greg Blachford, "Male Dominance and the gay world", **The Making of the Modern Homosexual**, Plummer, ed., 1981).

Altman is unable to explain how this "Americanization", or containment of the homosexual is the dominant process at present, and how heterosexual hegemony is maintained in society as a whole. He thereby exagerates the present cultural influence of homosexuality in society. The dilemma for gay liberation remains how to go about building on forms of cultural resistance in the gay community to challenge heterosexual hegemony and the dominant oppressive regulation of sexual life. This would clearly require contesting the 'Americanization ' of the homosexual, and other strategies of accomodation to oppression.

Gary Kinsman, (Toronto)

News & Reports

The Peterborough Three (or Four)

PETERBOROUGH — Three members of the local arts community were sentenced in provincial court on the 25th March, after almost two years of court proceedings. Convicted under Section 39 of the Theatres Act, their 'victimless crime' was to have screened the film **A Message From Our Sponsor**, a short experimental work by Vancouver-based Al Razutis. The film examines techniques of subliminal advertising, and was programmed as part of the *1981 Canadian Images Film Festival* programme.

Susan Ditta, the Festival Director, was fined $300 for her part in what was described by Judge D.B. Dodds as a "shoddy deception". Ian McLachlan, a member of the Festival Board of Directors and a professor at Trent University, was fined $500, while David Bierk, director of *Artspace* (where the film was shown) was let off with a fine of $100. Charges against the filmmaker himself were dropped last June after four days of testimony.

Since the maximum penalty is a fine of $2,000, or imprisonment for one year, or both, these fines amount to little more than a slap on the wrist, but at a news conference held after the sentencing the three announced their intention to appeal, adding that they would have done so even if the fines had been 25 cents. It is the authority of the Ontario Board of Censors that is being questioned here, and it is for this that the case is an important one.

Supreme Court rules censors unconstitutional

The same day that the sentences were read, the Supreme Court of Ontario announced their decision that the Censor Board of Ontario, as it now operates, is unconstitutional. This unprecedented ruling supports the allegation that the Board violates the Charter of Rights because its guidelines are too vague and subject to the whim of officials. It was in terms of these attacks against the authority of the Censor Board, that Counsel for the defence at the *Canadian Images* trial submitted several valid points of

Joe Stable

justification for the course of action pursued by the three.

The defense claimed the Theatres Act unconstitutional by virtue of the fact that it imposes censorship on one art form only, namely film. There exists no parallel in any other form of art, media or communication. Filmmakers are the only artists who must submit their work to a government body for approval before it can be seen. It was also put forward (and this was recognized by the court) that the appeals procedure at the Censor Board contravenes what was described as 'natural justice', in that it consists of nothing more than an internal review by the Board itself, which, as McLachlan remarked, is no appeal at all. Furthermore, it was claimed that the provisions of the Theatres Act which govern the censorship of film for public exhibition constitute an unreasonable and unjustifiable limitation upon the freedoms of speech and expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. According to the Charter, the freedoms of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including the freedom of the press and other media, are subject to reasonable limits — meaning that they are governable by law.

"The right of (public discussion) is of course subject to legal restrictions, those based upon considerations of decency and public order." (Reference Re: Alberta Statutes, 1938, S.C.R. 100)

This raises a number of questions. The definition of 'reasonable' is of course open to any number of interpretations, as too are 'decency' and 'public order'. Further difficulties arise if exemptions are granted in particular cases (i.e. the screening of an 'art film' in an art gallery for a group of artists and 'like-minded people'), since it gives further support to the 'elitist' repute of the arts community. The principal at stake here is that censorship itself is an unreasonable limitation on *everyone's* freedom. In this regard, Counsel for the defence submitted that by issuing 'Special Permits' for some films on the basis of what is loosely defined as 'common sense', the Censor Board has created confusion about its objectives and uncertainty about the standards which it purports to apply.

Commenting on the explicit

The film **Not a Love Story** was granted a special permit on several occasions, while **Message** was refused one. The so called 'logical basis' on which this differentiation stands is 'justified' by the fact that the 'explicitness' of the footage in **Not A Love Story** was 'reduced' by "photographic techniques and a concerned commentary", not used in **Message**. **Not a Love Story** premiered at the Toronto *Festival of Festivals*, a few months after charges were laid in the *Canadian Images* case. It is tempting to conjecture that the defiance of "The Peterborough Three" (sometimes Four) had the immediate effect of pushing the Censor Board to reconsider their ap-

MIDCONTINENTAL

is a quarterly publication produced co-operatively by artists. It includes cultural work, theory and criticsm.

Those involoved in the production of the first issues concentrated on what were increasingly felt to be public rather than private concerns.

In upcoming issues ideas and positions which cannot be accomodated by commercial or other venues will be encouraged.

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and we note . . .

In this issue of FUSE contributing editor, Jeff House initiates a column which will provide a kind of spot check on the mainstream press. Jeff is an immigration lawyer and member of the Ontario Law Union.

Excessive democracy

This column's nominee for Best Boy of 1983 can only be Dick Gwyn, syndicated pontificator in our Canadian media. Gwyn recently did a 'think piece' on the Tory leadership race, so cruelly poisoned by a stream of 9 year olds and rubby delegates drawn to Conservatism by promise of E.T. dolls and Bradors (respectively).

Cogitating on the phenomenon, Dick rejected the easy Nathan Detroit/Boss Tweed parallel, arguing instead that the party was excessively democratic, a result of an infusion of "muddied, 1960's style power to the people rhetoric." Since we have often thought that Joe Clark was really H. Rap Brown in a seersucker suit, we read on, searching for the Godhead of this 'sixties style' drivel. Lo, who would be behind it all according to Gwyn, but that druggy guru of excess, Dalton Camp! Naturally, once we know this, all of us will rush towards the wizard of ooze, Brian Baloney, baron of Schefferville.

Right, left and centre

Long time newspaper freaks will know that print coverage of events is generally accurate in inverse relation to the importance of the subject matter. A hockey game, for example gets accurate treatment, but a war is enveloped in myths. Correct opinion is set by the powerful, and facts which challenge the myths are usually buried. Take for example, the **Globe and Mail**'s latest treatment of Central America, an editorial entitled, "Abuse left and right". The author there compares Guatemala with Nicaragua, finds abuses in both countries and settles for the comfortable 'non-partisan' position which also dovetails nicely with the position of the U.S. State Department.

The documentation of the editorial weights an *Amnesty International* report on Guatemala with a Report of the "Permanent Human Rights Commission of Nicaragua". This latter report it says, "should be required reading for the pro-Sandinista cheering section in Canada". Then follows a punchy catalogue of abuses: "The report details. . . " "The report demonstrates. . . ". Your observer — ever diligent — called the **Globe** to get a copy of this report, only to find that the paper did not possess any copy. They could, however, provide me with the source of the 'story', which turned out to be **Freedom At Issue**, a publication of right wing U.S. stink tank, *Freedom House*.

The article on which the editorial is based, it turns out, is excerpted from the original report. And it demonstrates very little, with such statements as "From the fall of the Samoza regime to early 1980, the Commission received 785 cases of disappearances." Since there is no allegation that these people were arrested, it is hard to know whether the Sandinista government was involved at all, or whether the figures refer to people who left a theatre of civil war, or even to those who moved across the frontier to Honduras to join the counter-revolutionary army. Even *Freedom House's* independent Board of Trustees (Zbigniew Brzezinski, Sidney Hook, Margaret Chase Smith) should recognize that.

Pass the Tylenol, Tony

American humanitarianism has now reached sublime levels when dealing with convicts. Some states now permit capital punishment by injection of lethal drugs into the bloodstream. New Jersey recently passed such a law, but not without opposition from asssemblyman Anthony Villane. This worthy rose in the state legislature to claim that "this amounts to mollycoddling vicious killers, and I object to them being given euphoric drugs." Now there's a guy who means business! No doubt Villane knows whereof he speaks, as in the off season he's a dentist.

Complicity in Canada

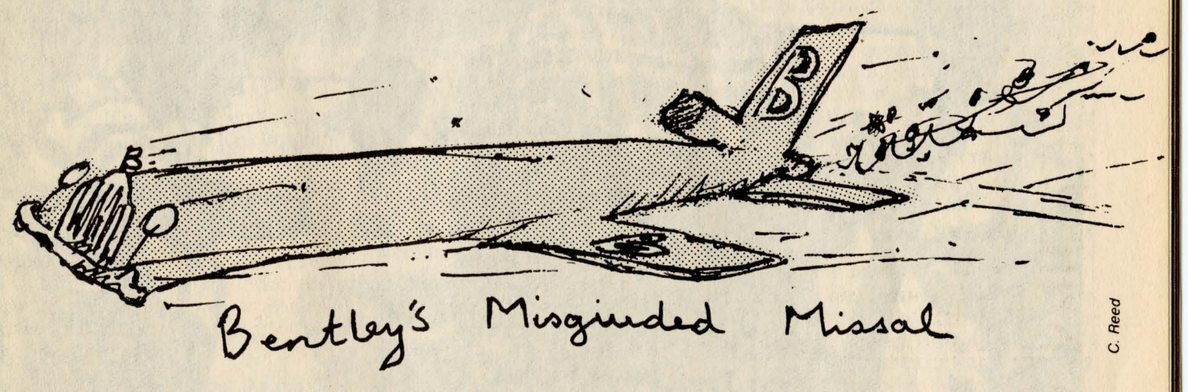
So far, Canada has escaped fairly easily from the growing Nazi scandal, triggered by the deportation of Klaus Barbie from Bolivia, and by the publication of John Loftus' **The Belarus Secret**, which details U.S. efforts to move an entire S.S. Brigade to the Unites States for eventual use against Soviet positions in East Europe, and without concern for the fact that the Brigade had been an Einsatsgruppe charged with killing Jews in BeloRussia. We know that beginning in 1944, Allied policy favoured making deals with Nazis facing prosecution for war crimes; salvation was offered in exchange for information and contacts in East Europe or, as recent documentation concerning Klaus Barbie shows, for willingness to serve the C.I.A. (O.S.S.) in Latin America.

ed by his academic colleagues" during the sixties.

"With his training in polling, Mr. Popkin noticed a number of unobtrusive indicators" (of the fact that the people supported the South Vietnam government). "When you want to know what radio stations people are listening to, you don't ask them; you just look into their cars at a parking lot to see where the dials are set." No doubt Popkin's colleagues, who don't have such a complex view, would carp that only a tiny minority owned cars, or that it might be dangerous to cruise the freeway listening to Vietcong agitprop.

Critical Projections

We close our column with a kick to the slats of **Globe and Mail** art critic John Bentley Mays, for a recent review of the work of Toronto artist Krzystof (just like it sounds) Wodiczko. The latter is known to FUSEees for his critical projections of images on public spaces — a Cruise missile on an Alberta cliff-face, a suicidal knife on a war memorial. So Mays goes into Podhoretzian paroxisms to give us the true duty of the artist. "After all," says Mays, who uses his middle name Bentley, so as to identify with the proletariat, "What artist or



critic is *for* Cruise missiles. . .". "It could be argued" (though do not expect Bentley to say whether he is arguing it) "that the success of Wodiczko's piece is guaranteed by the near-uniform opinions of its mainly art world audience — a rather safe shot for an avant-garde artist." He goes on to say that what should be attacked is not an "obscure war memorial" but "more impressive and influential targets" like — wait for it — "the Ydessa Gallery".

In other words, if artists agree that a certain target is odious, then that target should not be attacked; rather, artists should attack one another and the institutions in which they work. Transferred to the Soviet Union, we would have the art critic for **Izvestia** arguing as follows: 'X has criticized the Red Army; most of the intelligentsia think it deserves to be attacked; therefore, the true avant-garde position is to be silent about the army and rather to attack samizdat publications, which are more "impressive and influential".

P.S. To show that we are not afraid to take on the Ydessa Gallery, we suggest that 1) the stairs are too steep, especially for wheelchairs, 2) coffee is served cold, and 3) orange hair of staff clashes with decor. □

Eggnog and dominoes

Gentle readers who caught Ron Reagan's late show on the Soviet menace were amused to catch his trembly-voiced, nuanced discussion of Soviet/Cuban militarization of the isle of Grenada. According to RR, we need to buy some super-lazers, because the Urssus Major is building an airport on that island. "Grenada doesn't even have an airforce," said the Prez; showing a satellite photo of the new 10,000 foot runway there, "who is it intended for?"

Our eyes glazed over here, recalling similar treatments of mysterious places in **Chariots of the Gods**, but we leapt to life on recalling that the airport being built had been suggested in a study by the World Bank, and is being funded by Canada, Mexico and Venezuela, as well as Cuba. The sinister control tower, it turns out is being built by Layne Dredging of Miami, U.S.A. Furthermore, neighbouring islands have airports of from 9,000 to 11,000 feet, to receive tourists.

But reality need not intrude — after all, Grenada is the centre of world nutmeg production and to quote Krupskaya (or was it Plekhonov), "He who controls nutmeg controls eggnog."

New myths and old realities

It's quite noticeable that anything which appears in the **Sunday New York Times** then reverberates across the Canadian scene in 'informed think pieces', **The Journal** and other outlets. But our hair was raised by the fawning anadina treatment of Fox Butterfield, who authored a major Times re-evaluation of the Vietnam War, entitled, "The New Vietnam Scholarship". This 'new scholarship', interesting enough, seems to be written basically by the same old hacks who supported the war in the first place: Douglas Pike, Robert Scalopino and Stanley Popkin, "whose complex view of the war caused him to be shunn-

While a number of questions have not been publically raised (for example, how, if escape was being offered to the cooperative, were the Nuremburg defendants chosen?), we expect that Canada's press will ferret out government complicity here. If, as Loftus argues, the hotter Nazis were given arranged entry to countries "pliant to U.S. wishes", and if the *Simon Wiesenthal Centre* estimates there are 900 important Nazi war criminals here, is it likely that the Fed's didn't know?

NORMAN 'OTIS' RICHMOND

AFRO-BLUE

Courtesy Charles Burnett

"A need for films about life in general"

KILLER OF SHEEP
producer/director:Charles Burnett
16 mm feature length

There has been an ongoing discussion among New African (African-American) filmmakers about what the content of a film should be. Recently Harry Belafonte pointed out that if Hollywood wasn't ready for historical Black films he'd approach Nigeria and use that oil rich country as a base for his films.

"There are a lot of people who are depending on Africa to pull them out of the doldrums. Harry Belafonte can do that sort of thing. But a Charles Burnett can't. It takes a certain kind of clout... And Nigeria has some internal problems and should be trying to solve those problems instead of making films with that money. I don't know if that is the panacea. I wish it was, if it is I certainly would be approachable and amiable.", was Burnett's response.

Charles Burnett, an independent filmmaker from Los Angeles says that although he'd like to do films on historical figures like Malcolm X or Paul Robeson, "There's also a need for films about life in general. And right now, that's where I am."

Killer of Sheep, recently screened in Toronto at the Alternative Images '83 film series, is about "life in general" in Los Angeles' Black community. It is a refreshing break from the general run of commercial film today. But **Killer of Sheep** "has only recently been screened a few times in the United States and to very small audiences", said Burnett. He compares films of Black filmmakers with "jazz". For over half a century "jazz" artists have been received like royalty all over Europe, but in the United States the music and musicians are treated like stepchildren.

Killer of Sheep like vintage 'jazz' has already begun to take hold in Europe. It won the prestigious critics prize at the *Berlin Film Festival* (Burnett shared the prize with the filmmaker Leo Hurwitz.) But back in the States, none of the major film publications even mentioned the prize.

It is widely believed that Black film didn't come into existence until the 60's. But the first legendary figure to emerge in Afro-American film history was Oscar Micheaux. Micheaux wrote, directed and produced thirty-four films over a thirty year period which began in 1918. Why haven't Black filmmakers of today been able to match Micheaux? Burnett says, "What he (Micheaux) did, indicates that he had strong convictions which a lot of filmmakers today don't have. He was willing to make a lot of sacrifices. His subject matter was much more relevant to the Black experience. Today people are more interested in a profit margin and trying to make another **Star Wars**."

Burnett came out of UCLA's film department and has made several films. **Killer of Sheep**, however, is the first film that has had distribution and

public screenings. The film, produced on a meager budget of $10,000, is not your average fifty yard dash of a film. There are no famous historical personalities, bourgeois Blacks in three piece suits, no CIA, FBI agents or plain black cops defending western civilization against the evils of the Mafia or the communists. Burnett's 'actors' are the people of his old neighborhood and the subject matter is daily life of working class families like those that make up the vast majority of Blacks in the United States.

What makes Burnett unique in this era of glossy commercial fare is that the subjects/content of his film is more important/impressive than the form. Hollywood filmmakers spend millions of dollars on films that look magnificent but say nothing (watching Hollywood movies is like eating Cotton candy — it may taste good but it has no nutritive value). **Killer of Sheep** speaks volumes.

CHECK IT!
Mutabaruka
Alligator Records

"Right now the reality out there is different. We have to write about South Africa, the youth in the ghetto and England", declared Mutabaruka on the Intro of his debut album **Check It!** But this is not new; he always takes a stand. Mutabaruka doesn't fuck around. He's the angriest voice in reggae music since Burning Spear (Winston Rodney). He produces ass-kicking music.

Mutabruka, a 'dub' poet, is an exponent of a genre that blends words of protest with the hypnotic rhythms of rebellious reggae music, in a way that recalls early recording by **The Last Poets** or *Gil Scott Heron's* **The Revolution Will Not Be Televised**. Produced in association with Earl 'China' Smith, this album introduces the artist and his words, particularly his best-known hit, "Everytime A Ear de Soun".

Protesting the conditons of African people world wide, tracks like "Angola Invasion", "Whiteman Country" and "Whey Mi Belang" will endear Mutabaruka to conscious Africans the world over. Several of King Sunny Ade's musicians were recently blown away by the music of Mutabaruka — impressed by the track "Whey Mi Belang" where Mutabaruka argues that he's not a nigger, Negro or a West Indian but an African. "West yes, but I no Indian", is Mutabaruka's cry.

Check It! was recorded at Bob Marley's *Tuff Gong's* record studio in Kingston, Jamaica.

THE WEST AND THE REST OF US
Chinweizu
Vintage, 520 pages, $4.95

If you can find a copy of Chinweizu's book, **THE WEST AND THE REST OF US** guard it with your life. Published in 1975 this book provides a perfect supplement to A.M. Babus's **African Socialism or Socialist Africa?** (reviewed in FUSE, Vol. 6, No. 5).

Chinweizu's work is broken into five main sections: 1) The Global Aggression, 2) The Euro-African Connection: Slaving, Conquest and Colonization, 3) Neocolonial Africa: A Study in Maldevelopment, 4) The African Elite and The Black Condition, and 5) The West and the Rest of Us. The work is full of insights into why Africa and the "Third World" are in the shape that they are in today. Chinweizu is a passionate writer who forcefully maintains that Africa will only gain respect when they have their own bomb; degrees alone won't do. He stresses the need for unity amongst Africans but without directly voicing the socialist solution which Babu argued so strongly in his work.

Finally, the strength of **The West and the Rest of Us** lies in Chinweizu's historical analysis of how the Western powers enslaved, colonized and continue to exploit Africa and the "Third World", not in his vision of the future.

GIL SCOTT-HERON
OSCAR BROWN JR.
Tralfamadore Cafe
Buffalo, N.Y.

Gil Scott Heron and Oscar Brown Jr. have many things in common. Their main similarity is they are both 20th century Griots. Both are master storytellers and seeing them in action at the *Tralfamadore Cafe* only three days apart confirmed this observation.

Scott-Heron opened the show with "Is This Jazz?", paying a tribute to the makers of America's classical music. Dressed in army fatigue, a green and black sweater and a baseball cap, Scott-Heron was in a mellow mood during the first set. Aided by his eight piece *Mid-night Band* he performed mostly songs from his **Reflections** and **Moving Target** albums.

However, he did do a few 'oldies but goodies' like "Winter in America", "Angel Dust" and the anti-nuclear anthem "Shut 'Em Down". Before he cut loose on "Shut 'Em Down" he explained that he had been writing songs about nuclear power since 1974. He jokingly said, "A brother asked me, 'Gil, what are you doing singing about nuclear power? That's not a black issue!'" Scott-Heron chuckled and replied, "He had a point. Nuclear power is an equal opportunity destroyer. If you come in contact with it, you ass will glow — I don't care what color you are."

Scott-Heron opened the second set with "B-Movie" and continued his verbal assault on Ronald 'The Ray-gun' Reagan, Jimmy 'Skippy' Carter and other symbols of American power. Then he went into "No Exit", pointing out that the inspiration for the song came from Joe Louis and reggae music.

Three nights later I was back at the *Tralfamadore Cafe* for Oscar Brown Jr. I hadn't seen Brown in the flesh since the '60's when he was performing songs like "Brother Where Are You", "Bid 'Em In" and "Forty Acres and A Mule". Although the crowd that turned up for Brown was disappointingly small, he still put on a first class performance. Backed by a trio that included his son Oscar Brown III on bass, he proved that he was still full of fire, humour and quick wit. When Brown did the song "But I Was Cool" you knew that Richard Pryor's comedy routine "When Your Woman Leaves You" was inspired by this song.

One of Brown's strengths is his ability to put meaningful lyrics to "jazz" standards. And Brown treated his fans to Nat Aderly's "Work Song", Miles Davis' "All Blues" and others from the book of "jazz". Closing the show with a song called "Bullshit", he too took shots at President Reagan. Rapping during this song he added that "Chicago is in for a rude awakening", making it clear that he was rooting for Harold Washington to become the next mayor of the Windy City.

(And Brown's man, Harold Washington, did become Chicago's first Black mayor.)

AFRO-BLUE, a regular column by Norman 'Otis' Richmond, takes its name from the Black classical (jazz) composition of the same title.

JANEY NEWTON-MOSS AND JOY THOMPSON

VANCOUVER MUSIC SCENE

Janey Newton-Moss and Joy Thompson are programmers for Vancouver's **Co-operative Radio**. For several years they have developed reviews, interviews and analyses of mainstream and countercultural trends in music and provided extensive music programming for a variety of CFRO productions. Both women are centrally involved in "Womanvision", Co-op's popular weekly women's show. Janie is an active member of the *Women's Programming Caucus* at the station. Through **Minimal Music**, their production group, Joy and Janey have provided taped entertainment and disc jockey services for Vancouver benefits and gigs. Joy has organized benefits in Vancouver, including several gigs for minors. Janey worked as a commercial D.J. in English clubs for several years. Both women write for **Kenesis**, a local feminist monthly.

This month they have teamed up to provide FUSE with an overview of the current music scene in Vancouver, incorporating an analysis of its weaknesses and strengths with an eye to its most innovative and progressive features.

It is impossible to see music in isolation from its roots — the socio-economic, ethnic and geographical locations of the musicians who perform and the audiences who consume. Popular music is predominantly the voice of young adults. Where youth live, who they are, what is going on in their lives, will become components of the rock and pop world they inhabit. Youth culture in Vancouver has reacted surprisingly little against its parent culture. Post-war affluence until recently has been mainstream reality. Working class youth, with the exception of a small number of punks and lefties, have seemed upwardly mobile, aspiring towards material goals against a background of cars, ghetto blasters, and the never ending sounds of commercial radio. All forms of youth cultures, from working class Richmond to bourgeois Point Grey, are painfully unrepresentative of either the original owners of this land or the immigrant population, or the real needs of an increasingly economically disenfranchised youth.

In attempting a definition of a distinctive Vancouver musical sound, our first impulse was to deny one existed at all. We both, in recent years, emigrated from a hegemonic cultural movement. In retrospect, we found that after three years we had adopted a typical Vancouver attitude: one of listening to music as an escape, rather than as a reflection of dominant culture or its eruptions. The fact that Vancouver audiences do not seriously analyze or contextualize their music has dictated its content.

If Vancouver has no distinctive sound, it may be due, in part, to its size — the local record buying public being too small to support its own bands — and partly to its position as satellite to the essentially conservative West Coast music industry. Despite these disadvantages, Vancouver does have an active music scene which has provided a glimpse of what the 'Vancouver sound' could be — for example **Doug and the Slugs**, was an underground phenomenon which commanded a mass following before committing their particular sound to vinyl, and inevitably losing their uniqueness in a bid for commercial success. In 1983 the 'Vancouver sound' can be said to be in an embryonic stage.

The hallmark of Vancouver's commercial music scene to date has been macho-rock. Bands like **Loverboy**, **Trooper** and **Chilliwack**, who exude a kind of adolescent frenetic sexuality, can be packaged and marketed like any other commodity. Defiant lyrics such as "Turn Me Loose" which can apply equally to the boss or one's lover, combined with a simple danceable beat and a strong stage presence, have allowed Vancouver bands to find a small but important niche in the international market where the Canadian music industry has a 2% stake. Due to its proximity to Los Angeles, Vancouver is both a potential selling place and a talent spot for the established music industry. Despite the relatively healthy underground scene in San Francisco, the dominant musical force of the West Coast tends to be conservative, non-experimental music played by white boys.

If you want to make it as a musician in Vancouver, the name of the game still seems to be go south or east. The recording industry here is still in its infancy. While bands no longer *have* to go to the States or Europe to record, many choose to do so because they want to work with experienced sound technicians. The resultingly smaller recording community means that Vancouver's engineers and producers get a chance to work with an incredible cross section of musicians. For instance Tom Lavin of the **Powder Blues Band** produced the single "Firing Squad/No Productivity" for a local punk band, the **Subhumans**. This would be an unlikely occurence in a more sophisticated and structured musical environment. Another considerable factor that accounts for the lack of a Vancouver identity in terms of pop music is the "copycat" mentality. L.A.'s stranglehold on the recording industry inevitably dictates what kind of sound will sell. A casual observer of our music scene could be forgiven for thinking that all the sounds generated by Vancouver based bands had been imported.

Maurice and the Clichés are a typical example of a local band which is sensitive to what is being produced elsewhere and which is trying to reproduce it here. At the moment they are in their post-romantic period with a cool stage delivery of some of the more famous tunes originally done by Roxy Music and David Bowie. A recent sold out bill of touring rockabilly bands at the Commodore gave the seal of approval to the city's recent awakening to rockabilly. The most authentic of these is **Rocky Craig and his Rockabilly Kings**, who have been playing the longest and who, despite their name, include a very competent female bass player.

The cowboy craze which until recently dominated the downtown pubs has given way to "pub rock", a label which covers a variety of sounds but usually means little original material.

Vancouver is the home of one of the most successful international folk festivals, now in its sixth year. In fact, if Vancouver can be said to have any type of indigenous music it is more country and western or folk oriented. Interestingly enough, these very distinctive musical forms do surface occasionally in more modern genres. For instance, there are the cowboy punk band **The Singing Cowboys**, the gay country and western ensemble who were a hit at the 1981 Gay Unity Week benefit and **Shari Ulrich** who, having spent years on the folk scene, crossed over to pop with "The One Before The One And Only".

The Soft Rock Cafe, a non-alcholic venue on Fourth Avenue, former hippy heartland, is now the home for the Vancouver Bluegrass Society, as well as a showcase for new dance bands, with a regular Sock Hop to encourage a younger clientele. An oasis in the licensed club scene, the Soft Rock's philosophy, once a reflection of this city's counter culture, has conveniently filled a void created by the puritanical attitude to liquor licenses and minors.

Although there is an established reggae scene (some of the most successful shows at the Commodore in the recent past have been by internationally known reggae artists), it has not emerged as a dominant sound, nor has it been integrated with other musical forms. The pattern of immigration to the West Coast has meant that the West Indian population is small in comparison to other ethnic minorities and tends to live in the industrial outskirts rather than the city core. The composition of the local reggae scene is similar to that of the punk scene with bands breaking up and reforming constantly. An ongoing 'presence' for the scene is provided, via the airwaves, by Co-op Radio's "Reggae Show" and "Carribean Sounds", and by a number of clubs: Fast Eddies on the North Shore, the West Indian Social Club in South Vancouver and the Inner Circle in the downtown area as well as more impromptu events. Sadly the city's only reggae store closed last year which was brought about no doubt by the prohibitively high cost of imports.

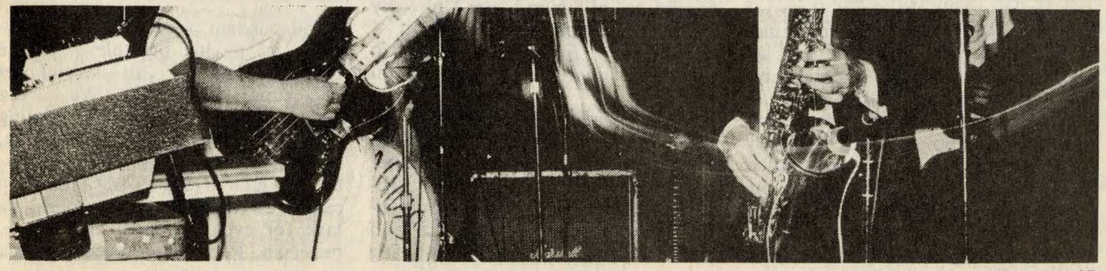
Ska had rarely been heard in Vancouver until introduced, albeit in a diluted form, by the **'B' Sides**, a mainly white band, a couple of years ago. The **'B' Sides** have endured along with **David Raven and the Escorts** because of their reputation for producing good dance music. David Raven left behind his solo career to work with Long John Baldry — doyen of the 60's London blues scene. Raven returned to Vancouver to form his own band, playing a sophisticated blend of rhythm and blues mixed with reggae; Baldry followed later and is seen around town both as a performer and a producer. The **'B' Sides** and **the Escorts** command a loyal following among Vancouver music fans who want a scene and a beat to help them forget about the working week.

As our mainstream music entrenched itself into a complacent, compromised expression of the illusion of the easy life, the original intentions of Rock and Pop obviously needed to be reclaimed. The juxtaposition of politics and music which re-shaped the identity of English youth in the mid 70's was adopted by their Vancouver counterparts as a style and a by-product of Canada's British heritage, rather than as a cultural force. In many ways punk came to Vancouver prematurely; the economic and social conditions which produced it in Britain are only now becoming an everyday reality for Vancouverites.

Punk was inevitably attractive here because of its defiant challenge to the status quo. On importation, however, the craft was left behind and what remained was revolting. In response to the second wave of the British musical invasion in twelve years, Vancouver sponsored, in quick succession, **D.O.A.**, **The Subhumans**, **The Modernettes**, **Bludgeon Pig**, **The Dishrags** and many other less successful punk bands.

Venues like the Smilin' Buddah Niteclub and a barrage of gigs permitted minors for the first time to hear local musicians; the punk scene quickly located itself as a vibrant and above all youthful alternative to the more established music scene. **D.O.A.**'s self-expressed anxieties and hopelessness were an essential part of their attractiveness. What these bands missed was a future vision and a method to obtain it. As critics, they were ruthless and relentless, often at the expense of each other. **Bludgeon Pig**, who after a flashy debut rolled over and died, epitomized the negative aspects of punk: nihilism, self destruction and self mutilation on stage.

The politics of punk are contradictory, particularly in relation to feminism and political change. The Vancouver punk cultural appendages: clothes, language, style, were at best obscurely anti-sexist and at worse overtly misoginist. "Fotopunk", an independant local publication of band photos,



shows women being strangled and advertises bondage gear. The **Subhumans'** "Slave to My Dick" is sung with explicit intention. Most of the early punk bands, including the more sophisticated **Pointed Sticks**, were labelled "Fuck Music". Dim Wit of the Subhumans stated his point of view in a copy of "Fotopunk" thus: "If it's not stiff, it's not worth a fuck". This was a triple entendre, no doubt referring, in addition to the obvious, to the band's name and the Stiff independent recording label. The **Dishrags**, formed in 1978 as Vancouver's first all female band, adopted the macho style of early punk. Later they changed their name and style to that of a 60's girl group and as the **Raisonettes** were promoted by Bud Luxford, the local self appointed punk entrepreneur. The **Pointed Sticks** on their independent E.P. acknowledged women, lending a limited identity with "Somebody's Mum".

No future

The **Young Canadians** recognized the lack of future in punk very early, although they clung to the style of its more positive elements by boycotting the profit oriented recording industry. Unfortunately both these bands folded before they reached maturity; Young Canadian, Art Bergman regrouped with Modernette Buck Cherry to form **Los Popularos** (danceable, hybrid of many styles) and Barry Taylor (ex-Young Canadians) is now with "**e**" (an art pop band).

The significant impact on the Vancouver scene, made by the local punk explosion suggests that working class culture was not satisfied with expensive inaccessible music or commercial macho rock. In this way it can be seen as a progressive step. Punk's legacy has a place in West Coast Canadian history — as the voice of one of the "oppressed" groups: white working class (but still satisfied) young men.

The lack of a homogenized arts community has made the newer forms of music, notably those giving prominance to electronic synthesizers, the least accessible in style and even less accountable to the music public. **'e'** and **Images in Vogue** are typical of the more avant-garde bands who are given credibility because of their esoteric obscurity rather than because of their originality. Located in the lofty confines of the Emily Carr Art School, they occasionally emerge to give multi-media

G.E. McCaw

Pointed Sticks Open Air Concert, Budstock

performance using video, light shows and slide tapes. By choosing to remain producers of electronic experimental music — itself an interesting and exciting sound — they have gained a reputation for self indulgence, which reflects their isolation within the music scene. The is perhaps not entirely fair as local *Musicians' Co-op* and *New Orchestra Workshop* are responsible for bringing to town improvisational musicians of international repute. Unfortunately the choice of venues on these occasions (usually a concert hall at Simon Fraser University or the performing artists's heaven — the *Western Front*) does little to popularize this type of experimental music.

There is a certain satisfaction in following the development of talented and committed musicians. A number of familiar faces are currently providing Vancouver with an experimental sound encompassing jazz and punk influences without the posturing of the art school bands, notably Alex Varty and Rachel Melas of **Animal Slaves**, and Warren Ash, Warren Hunter and Denise Milt of **Rhythm Mission**. These musicians have stayed in Vancouver not because they lack skill, but rather because they have found a place to explore their potential, and in doing so will be instrumental in giving Vancouver a contemporary musical identity.

Distribution pools

Independent recording, an alternative to paying the thieves in the commercial sector, is an essential part of a young music scene. We have a good network of facilities for recording and promoting vinyls. Distribution, however, is still a major problem: running around trying to sell your own records on consignment is an impossible task for even the most enthusiastic musician. Perhaps we need a 'Rock

G.E. McCaw

Tunnel Canary

Pool' such as exists in the States for co-ordinating the distribution of independents on a non-profit basis. Many local bands have recorded with such operations as Black Band Records (Ken Lester of D.O.A. fame), Mo-Da-Mu, Friends (also a record store) and Metro Media. Quintessence Records was the backbone of this network for years until their closure last year. But there are still a number of independent record stores, including a new one, High Life, run by Connie Nowe (Junco Run) and Alex Varty (Animal Slaves).

The underground music world is fine if it's producing records, but the need for illegal clubs and warehouse gigs where you risk being busted or, worse still, trapped fourteen flights up in the event of a fire, is depressing. The most recent bright star in this area is **John Barleys'** Monday night gigs — a gay disco every other night of the week, Barleys is now showcasing two or three bands a week. Lucy's (the old Quadra women's bar) now occasionally opens it doors to men and live music.

Rare doublebill

The circuit of benefits has been a mixed bag for both supporters and musicians. For some bands, the cause is irrelevant, it is just another gig. For some of the audience the need to raise money is more important than support of local talent. Politics and interesting music are rarely a double bill in Vancouver. The left generally has an unexperimental approach to music and some of the more adventurous bands shy away from didactic politics. Randy Bachman's response to suggestions that "American Woman" by Bachman-Turner Overdrive had a political message for Canadians, ("It had none, but when they gave it one, it sold so I didn't mind"), could unhappily be attributed to some of this city's more 'progressive' bands.

Perhaps the key to the polarisation between these two groups is the assumption that in music, class consciousness takes second place to artistic expression. This attitude is little different from the consensual view that encourages this fragmentation. Some of the most enjoyable and profitable benefits recently have been those where the organizers risked alienating the musically complacent left. **Co-op Radio**, which has been trying to shed its 'granola and folk' image for years, pulled out all the stops by offering a triple bill of new wave music at the *Commodore*, and made money. Convincing music lovers that we can support a worthy cause *and* hear some of our favorite bands might, with a little imagination, set us all on the right track.

The historic prominence of folk music and a highly efficient organization have accounted for the success of the *Folk Music Festival*. In a city where outdoor musical events are ac-

tively discouraged it has received more financial support than any equivalent outdoor festival. Although family oriented, its most enthusiastic participants tend to be older and, at $32.00 for a weekend ticket, more affluent than most regular gig patrons. Among other festivals of note were the *Badaz Jazz Festival* featuring Tom Keenlyside (who records with C.B.S.) and other local musicians, including an impressive lineup of female vocalists. The Punk Explosion's "Budstock", masterminded by Bud Luxford in the Gastown area two years ago, was harrassed off the streets by the police and small businesses concerned about the tourist trade. Rock against Radiation, held the same year on a West End beach, suffered a similar fate. Some of the most enjoyable outdoor events last summer were organized by the reggae and calypso producers at Co-op Radio,

Moral Lepers

Marian

Rachel

Bonnie

with D.J.s from the West Indian Social Club; an afternoon of good entertainment from bands and good quality disco was perfect for young and old, black and white and was a refreshing change from the white dominated pop, rock and punk world.

There are three radio stations in Vancouver worth listening to if you want more than mainstream rock music. A 24 hour jazz station, C.J.A.Z., which also promotes some of the bigger jazz events, is a particular delight for insomniacs. Co-op Radio, which is listener sponsored, at times provides some of the most adequately researched and well presented public affairs programming available. C.I.T.R. on the other hand enjoys the prestige of being the only "new music" station in Vancouver. Broadcasting from the University of British Columbia, it is more accessible than many campus based stations. Its programming standards are consistently high and it is often the only place where you can get decent previews of new releases. Unfortunately there is no adequate music press here: we can pay $2.50 for a month old copy of the **New Musical Express** or **Melody Maker** or we can learn about mainstream American music via the **Rolling Stone**, but finding out about our own music is much more difficult. The anarchist fortnightly paper **B.C. Blackout** has an admirable policy of including some of the more obscure musical events, including benefits. For detailed interviews and articles we have to rely on the music antics of the city's two newspapers, **The Province** and **The Vancouver Sun**, or turn to the weekly **Georgia Straight** which has gone though some major changes since the 70's. The **Straight** recently introduced a section on industry information and independent records and tapes. But its editorial policies seem sketchy; it still carries ads for Red Hot Video (a B.C. pornography chain) despite an increasingly active campaign by women's groups to get these places closed. It still has a disappointing tendancy to concentrate on mainstream music at the expense of new bands, and its weekly run down on gigs and "happenings" smacks of trying to party too hard without really analysing what's going on.

Resisting prescribed identities

It could be argued that punk was an expression of resistance to a prescribed male identity (the 'responsible' male). The **Moral Lepers**, an all women band, has used a similar although more flexibly styled form to expose and criticise sexism and traditional female roles, resisting the female music identity of the 'girl group'. The Moral Lepers released an E.P. this Christmas, which unfortunately was their last. Now disbanded, they have nonetheless left an indelible mark. Marion Lydbrook and Bonnie Williamson are already missed as live performers; although, happily for us, longstanding versatile musicians, Rachel Melas, Connie Nowe and Elaine Stef do remain in Vancouver. **The Moral Lepers** had opened the way in Vancouver for accessible feminist and class conscious lyrics. But despite this, Rachel Melas was not credited for her contribution to the **Magic Dragon** E.P., confirming that women musicians remain a threat to the male music world and that women's skills are either invisible or taken for granted. **The Persisters**, also bringing together long standing musicians, have newly regrouped to play rock venues, bringing feminism and positive images of women to a normally ferociously male lion's den. A number of them had played in **Contagious** some years ago, largely to feminist and folk audiences. They have broadened their scope, becoming levers in an area where education rather than re-affirmation has more political power. They now play both originals and 'covers' ranging from disco to **Heaven 17's** "We Don't Want No Fascist Groove Thing". **Quantum Leap**, a new six piece female band, are being eagerly watched. Their strength lies in their contemporary presentation, including slides and synthesizer in the presentation of their original material. While their lyric content is not super progressive, their delivery counters the usual elitist and exclusive persona of many similar sounding bands and is in this respect progressive, and one of their songs, "No New York Yet" confronts the monopoly that the New York Arts scene has on progressive musical styles.

There is a very distinct polarisation between the overground and underground music worlds. To assess Vancouver's potential by either one is to have missed the essential link that gives it its own distinct identity. The music scene here is both looser and more fragmented than in older cities.

Vancouver suffers more than its Eastern counterparts from the label of being culturally isolated. With economic conditions becoming increasingly bleaker, the potential for radicalisation of the oppressed sectors increases, from youth to ethnic minorities. The strategies of counter culture, specifically the 60's West Coast hippy movement, have proven to be ineffective by their isolated and sometimes moralistic stance. To effect political change through a cultural medium does require a conscious process, as the women's bands in Vancouver have demonstrated. This process involves the risk of speaking from the conditions of our lives to the conditions of our allies. The fact that a post punk women's band can provide an original song on an independently produced E.P. about the experiences of Chinese immigrant labour, suggests that 'cultural isolation' is relative to what you wish to associate yourself with. Far from being culturally isolated, the Vancouver music scene is beginning to produce its own unique sound. □

Arrogance sits on the shoulders of
the bureaucrat
Protecting the interests of the Aryan
race
"Where are your papers?
How long are you staying?
How much money do you have?"

Do you get it?
Do you hear what I'm on about?
Anger creeps up slowly
Crouches inside
It rots your gut if you don't let it out
It's mummified

Isn't it enough to make you wanna
kill?
Do you have your ticket to New
York?
Oh Mecca, Mecca is that what you
want?
Or did you move to the country
To be a peasant again?

—(Lyrics from "China Rag",
Moral Lepers, CAPAC, 1982)

Elaine

Conny

Clubs & Venues

The Railway Club, 1406 Woodland Dr.
Lucy's, 1055 Homer.
John Barleys, 23 W. Cordova.
The Commodore, Granville St.
City Space, 343 Railway.
The Smilin' Budda, 109 E. Hastings.
The Gandy Dancer, 1222 Hamilton.
The Luv-A-Fair, 1275 Seymour St.

Record Import & Specialty Stores

Rave Records, 741 Lonsdale, North Vancouver.
Black Swan, 2936 W. 4th Ave.
Zulu Records, 1869 W. 4th Ave.
High Life Records 1317 Commercial Drive.

Studio's & Promoters

Metro Media, 1037 Commercial Drive.
Mo-Da-Mu, 374, 810 W. Broadway.

VANCOUVER DISCOGRAPHY

Moral Lepers "Turn to Stone" Mo-Da-Mu. E.P., 374 W. Broadway.
Magic Dragon "Emotional Landscape" E.P., Friends Records, 319 E. Broadway.
A.K.A. "Red Therapy" E.P., Ocean Sound, Seouldog Records, c/o Friends Records.
Images in Vogue "Educated Man" Produced by themselves. E.P.
Moev "Cracked Mirror, Rotting Geraniums & Sunday Crisis" E.P. Go Records.
Vancouver Independence "Compilation Album" Friends Records.
Droogs, No Exit, M.E.C. Includes **B Sides** Album, **Si Moncey, Subhumans. Young Canadians** "This is Your Life" E.P. Quintessence.
D.O.A. "Something Better Change" Album.
U-JZERKS "Killing Joke" Album. Polygram
Los Populos "Burn Free" E.P. Record Records, 3725 W. 11th.
S4-40 "Selection" E.P. Vancouver.
The Vegi Band "Vegi" Album.
David Raven and The Escorts "Stab in the Dark" Album.
Animal Slaves, Junco Run, Fifth for Forty, Compilation E.P., Mo-Da-Mu, Box 374, 810 W. Broadway.
Pointed Sticks "Perfect Youth" Album, Quintessence.
Subhumans "Incorrect Thoughts" Album, Friends Records.
Female Hands "Female Hands" E.P., Independent.
Rocky Craig and the Rockabilly Kings "Love's Got A Hold", Baby Blue.
Secret V's "Simply Secret V's", "No Life Like It", Useful Records, 719 Pender St.
Popular Front "Doomsday Army", Mo-Da-Mu.

SUSAN STURMAN

THE LONG HAUL

In December 1980, *Fuse* published an introductory profile of the women's music industry in the U.S. (and Canada), which concentrated mostly on women-run record labels. In this piece, Susan Sturman discusses the role and goals of producers and promoters in the women's music industry.

In the vision of cultural drought evoked by Reaganomics, with vast arts cutbacks and ever-shrinking "discretionary incomes," concert production has become a risky business. The fact that women are hit even harder by the recession makes it doubly amazing that the women's music industry, and with it women's music production, is managing to survive at all. Though economics are and must be a major concern for many at this time, independent women's music producers are meeting the challenge with an encouraging degree of optimism, creativity, energy and success. And, for the most part, they are trying to make decisions for financial survival which are politically responsible rather than merely expedient. Women who have forged the bonds of support and co-operation with other women, through years of work in the women's movement, are finding that these feminist values matter now more than ever if what we have created is going to survive. And in some ways, the long term efforts we have made in learning to work together, painful as it has been and sometimes continues to be, are beginning to reap some benefits.

There are basically two kinds of production happening in the women's music circuit — independent concert production and festival production. Over the years, many changes have occurred in the organization of local independent production companies and in the running of the festivals. In the industry's beginnings, the East Bay Area of California (Oakland, Berkeley) established itself as a kind of mecca for women's music. Both **Olivia Records** and **Redwood Records**, the two top women's labels, are based there. **Wise Women Records**, no longer in existence, was a major label based in New York. In the early days, it made sense to be where the recording industry expertise was — Los Angeles and New York. But there has been a gradual move away from the California/New York connection as women's independent production companies spread across the country. In fact, the New York base has all but disintegrated. Now, just about every major city in the country has its own production company, if not more than one. Boston and Washington, D.C. are the two east coast cities which have seen the most vital growth of women's production over the past few years.

A process of decentralization has begun, as regional networks develop. This article will describe some of these, primarily the **Eastern Regional Producers Network**. Festival production, as we shall see later, is also following the regional trend.

Business and politics: a delicate balance

The financial crunch has forced women's independent producers to take a hard look at the ways in which they do business. For some, this has meant structural change; many production companies which started out as collectives are now run essentially by one or two people. Women who came to production from a strong base in political activism have had to make some difficult decisions in abandoning collective process. *Ceci McLay,* who runs **Detroit Women's Music**, a women's production company, describes her experience: "I started as a political organizer, working with a group of women to hold a Take Back the Night march in Detroit. Out of this, a group got together to produce *Holly Near*. I like the stimulation of these events — that's what got me hooked on production. Gradually I became the focal person of the group. I came to it with a lot of political experience — working in collectives, etc. — but I soon learned the difference between politics and business. Of necessity, **Detroit Women's Music** had to become more of a business."

"I was really motivated — I had a full-time job from it. It's hard to commit yourself if you're not paid, and I found myself picking up, through default, media and box office responsibilities. In some ways, no one took leadership in the collective, and it was difficult for us to be effective as a group. Now I'm the sole 'proprietor', though I am working to get a functioning board together to help make decisions, and to solicit more financial aid."

Tight money affecting the women's recording industry is also having some negative effects on producers and promoters. A case in point is the recent decision by **Olivia Records** not to renew their contract with *Penny Rosenwasser* of **Roadwork**, a women's booking, promotion and local production company, (more about that later) which was handling booking and artist development for **Olivia's** two top-selling artists, *Meg Christian* and *Chris Williamson*. Because of finances, **Olivia** wanted to train their own in-house person to take over the job. Essentially, **Roadwork** had helped develop the two artists' careers (over a period of four years), to the point where they had become the main financial support for **Olivia**, and for **Roadwork** as well. After all this work, **Olivia** decided not to renew their contract.

"I think it's the case of a more expedient than sensitive decision being made", says *Ceci McLay*. "I am a bit dismayed. I think some of the expedient decisions being made on a business level are having an effect on the political directions and content of the music. Many women I know feel that *Holly Near's* latest album, **Speed of Light** (Redwood Records — owned by Near), is disappointing in terms of lesbian content. I understand her desire to reach a larger audience; the reasons are political, but also economic. You can put a lot of energy into something for years and not get

paid what you are worth, but your energy will dissipate. Then you have to start making money. **Redwood** has said, 'Look, we've got to make money. Therefore, Holly will tour.' I hate to say it, but sometimes I feel that while originally this music was supportive and healing, now it's just business."

Economics may be affecting the relationship between the record companies and producers somewhat adversely, although opinions vary. Some producers have more contact

Irene Young

Meg Christian

with record labels than others. The labels often help to supply PR material. **Redwood Records**, in particular, puts out excellent promotional material; they consistently get national media coverage, and publish tour schedules in national magazines, which is helpful to the local producer. But some feel that the record companies are riding on the backs of producers, while producers take the risks. "**Olivia** relies on producers," says *Nancy Poole*, a Regina-based sound technician and producer, "but they don't feel the need to have any responsibility to them beyond supplying the artists and the PR. **Olivia** contracts cover performers, not producers. They are there to sell **Olivia** records and to facilitate artists. When a producer loses money producing on the their artists, it's not **Olivia** who has to suffer the loss, or the consequences."

For a small local producer like *Ceci McLay*, the risks get harder and harder to take. It's a struggle to keep from losing money and the tendency is to book artists that are a sure draw. This leads to a situation of "false conservatism" on the part of the producer, who would like to produce other artists, but cannot afford to gamble. For Ceci, one attempt at a solution is to try to pull in different audiences through cross-community outreach. Another is to hire out the company to produce concerts for other groups. This reduces risks. Even so, she feels additional support is needed.

"My optimism in the past had made me plan event-to-event, but given the money situation now, it seems I'll have to secure additional funding in order to survive. I feel the need to do more networking, outreach with other independent women's production companies. I could approach city and state councils for the arts, but I haven't been going for these monies because of the red tape involved. **Detroit Women's Music** needs to ask for additional support from the audience, the community, but few people are aware of how critical our financial situation is. I feel like if I scream for help, I can only do it once, or people will stop listening. So I'd prefer to ask for help consistently and gently."

Producer's network

Polly Laurelchild who runs **Allegra Productions** in Boston/Cambridge, is one of the founders of the **Eastern Regional Producers Network**. The Network, or others like it, may prove to be a lifeline for independent regional producers. It began four years ago at a regional producers' meeting in Washington, D.C., organized by a woman who was working as a freelance publicist for production companies in the area. About thirty women attended the first meeting, and the numbers have stayed more or less the same since. The Network represents roughly 12-15 cities (including Toronto, D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Milwaukee) and is always based in D.C., which is itself represented by two or three companies (6-8 people).

The reasons for the Network are many. One is the need to talk to others in order to end isolation. Few cities have more than one production company, and the ones that do often don't keep in touch. Another reason is the need to talk about directions in women's music, to share successes, failures, encouragement, hope, ideas and artist discoveries. Also, the Network attracts women in other aspects of the industry who want to talk to producers (like managers, bookers and stage managers). The Network also allows for group projects; at present they are planning a seven city tour with *Linda Tillery*, a percussionist/singer/songwriter and woman of colour who is one of the most talented and yet underrated performers in women's music.

Out of this network other sub-networks have developed. For example, there are strong co-operative relationships between women in eastern Massachusetts; they plot tours together and then approach an artist's

manager with a co-operative plan. In upstate New York, three cities close together will co-operate with one another and agree for each to bring a different artist, so as not to split an audience for a certain performer.

"We are experimenting with the idea of producer-initiated tours, starting with this *Linda Tillery* project," says Polly Laurelchild. "I don't think it's ever been done before in women's production. The advantages of this idea are that we can decide amongst ourselves our best time for producing an artist, we can encourage an artist who we believe in and promote one who doesn't have aggressive promotion. Such a tour would also result in less wear and tear on the performer because of less erratic tour scheduling. It would also give more time for each producer to link up with local political groups compatible with a particular performer for outreach and co-sponsorship. Or the time to find and hire a steady sound person for a tour."

As a local independent producer herself, Polly has built a successful company through common sense financial planning, and a great deal of foresight and resourcefulness. **Allegra Productions**, which began in 1977, produces between five and eight concerts a year, to an audience which ranges from 200-2,000 people for a given event (*Holly Near* usually draws 4,000-5,000). In Boston, there are generally up to four other women's production companies happening (this is amazing when one considers that there is only one in all of Canada!), plus political or cultural groups who produce one-time events.

Allegra is in a position to take some money risks, but building a financial base has been a struggle. "Our first three years were the hardest, we kept losing money", says Polly. "We never would have survived if we hadn't gotten support from the women's community. We published our budgets and tried to let people know what was going on. We actually started to make a small financial base for ourselves by selling T-shirts." **Allegra** also survives through a tremendous amount of volunteer labour.

Allegra would like to produce more local performers but due to competition with coffeehouses, clubs, etc., it's more or less a money-losing proposition (cf. *Womynly Way* interview, this issue of *Fuse*). One of the Network's goals, however, is to organize smaller tours for regional performers. "One of the other problems with producing someone who is relatively unknown is that in financial terms, the women's music audience is fairly conservative", Polly notes. "They may be politically radical, but they're amazingly reluctant to see someone besides the 'Great Quadrangle' — *Margie Adam, Meg Christian, Holly Near, Chris Williamson*." It is telling that all of these performers are white.

Allegra produces a combination of mixed and women-only events. Polly points out that there are, in fact, not too many performers who still want to play to women-only audiences. Those who, for instance, are into coalition politics, favour a mixed audience. The

Redwood Records

Sweet Honey in the Rock

reasoning is partly political, partly economic. "Also," says Polly, "if you're an artist who is a woman of colour, white lesbians may not be your best support. This is a reality of racism. You may feel that you want the music to reach your community, including men. Third World performers have a less strong base in the white women's community, which doesn't always support women of colour."

For the future, Polly sees "an incredibly healthy trend to produce more than just narrowly-defined 'women's music,' including mixed bands. I think there also needs to be encouragement for smaller performance spaces. Clubs and restaurants supportive of and/or run by women can be a good environment for women performers, especially local ones. Also, concert producers cannot afford to serve the entire expanse of audiences from 100-700. It keeps costs down, obviously, if you don't have to rent the space."

Regional festivals

The development of regional festivals is also crucially important for the development of new talent. *Kim Kimber* is one of the organizers of the **New England Womyn's Music Festival**, and co-archivist (with Toronto's *Ruth Dworin*) of the **Women's Music Archives**.

The **NEWMF** is moving into its third year and has relied on a "fair bit of networking," particularly with the organizers of the well-established **Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.** The **NEWMF** organizers are committed to the development and encouragement of regional talent, including both artists and technicians. "The first year," Kim acknowledges, "one of the considerations for choosing performers obviously had to be 'draw', but the longer that we do the festival, the less it will be necessary to rely on the well known artists. So far it has been our philosophy to feature regional artists on the day stage. We do auditions and try to contact as many women as possible. As well, we have contacts with regional women technicians. The first year we flew in a West Coast team, with *Margo McFedries* and *Boo Price*, for their expertise. But this year we found that there was certainly enough talent on the East Coast, with women like *Nancy Poole* from Toronto and a number of women from Massachusetts.

"Money-wise it makes more sense for the festival producer to have regional access. It also gives local women a chance to work. I think the trend needs to be toward regional festivals. There are many women who can't afford to come from faraway."

The **NEWMF** and the **West Coast Womyn's Music Festival** are indications of a trend back to a more "grass roots" style of production. Many women feel that the national festivals like Michigan have gotten too big and too inbred in terms of featured talent. (Again, the big names are the only ones who can support such a large undertaking financially.)

Expanding women's culture

Amy Horowitz, of **Roadwork**, (based in Washington, D.C.) comes from the school of grass roots production — that's how she got her start. **Roadwork**, which began as an incorporated (non-profit) organization in 1978, is unique in the industry for it combines national-scale booking, promotion and artist development operations with a Washington, D.C. production company firmly committed to local talent.

The decision to base in D.C. has been very important to Amy. "I wanted to be on the east coast, in a non-white city. I felt that it was important for us to exist in the 'real world' outside of the California 'women's culture'. I'm happy we did it — it's the best of both worlds, because we have the California link plus automony. To me, 'women's culture' is exploring what women in different groups do with culture, without imposing values that come largely from a white, middle-class, WASP community."

Amy stresses that even as **Roadwork** co-ordinates national tours, they have never stopped being producers of local talent. "Hard financial times have caused local producers to be scared of risk; they feel very isolated. But I figure that the way to make it through a recession is to network more. . . we can look at how political culture survived through the Depression and learn from that."

Roadwork's creative risk-taking is beginning to open up whole new roads to women's culture. Last year, they received a grant from the *National-International Communications Agency* (which is a Federal agency) to put *Olive Lewin*, an Afro-Caribbean performer from Jamaica, on tour. "I met *Olive Lewin* at the Copenhagen Conference, and I was blown away by what she does," says Amy. "I think that if we call this women's culture, we have to take on what women do all around the world. It's a big task. The whole point of women's culture is based on coalition — we are so many people."

Coalition politics are very crucial to **Roadwork**, Amy explains. "**Roadwork** itself is a multi-racial organization. And our audience base is also a coalition. There's nothing more exciting to me than an audience full of different people who become vulnerable to one another through culture. It's a test of how we will live together. It's both the hardest work and the most necessary.

"We feel like we can reach lots of people without compromising our integrity. It's just hard work, keeping at it, expanding our base of support. If you try something once and it ends up going against your political beliefs, you'll know, and you won't do it again."

At present, **Roadwork** is not doing a lot of individual artist development. They are, however, working in D.C. with *Toshi Reagon* (daughter of *Bernice Reagon* of **Sweet Honey in the Rock**), a multi-talented instrumentalist and singer. And they are working with Canadian artist *Ferron*. They are spending a lot of time producing local festivals; upcoming is a mini-Afro-Caribbean women's festival in D.C. For the second year running, they will be producing the **Sisterfire** festival there, which started last year as a showcase for new artists. Among the newer performers featured last year were **Retumba Con Pie** (an Afro-Latin dance and rhythm ensemble), and **Women of the Calabash** (Afro-American percussion), along with the **Harp Band, Sweet Honey in the Rock**, and writer *Michelle Parkerson*.

Roadwork has also been working on a PBS Special on **Sweet Honey in the Rock** which will be aired sometime in January or February, 1983. Although the recent break with **Olivia** has been a crippling financial blow, Amy remains positive and committed to co-operation among women in the industry: "I think of the bigger picture of us *all* surviving. Even though the money situation is hard, we never got used to having a lot."

I think that most of the women struggling to keep women's music alive and well would agree with her that "we're in this cultural work for the long haul."

Susan Sturman is a musician, writer and graphic artist working in Toronto.

SUSAN STURMAN

WOMYNLY WAY

an interview with Ruth Dworin

The wave of feminist activity in the late 1960's and 1970's saw the development of music as a cultural and political force of great importance to the North American women's movement. Feminists and feminist musicians began to work together to create a context for women's music. Women's productions companies, regional and national women-only festivals and women-only record labels gradually formed and a network came into being. The festivals provide a crucial link for the spreading of music and information among women's communities throughout the U.S. and Canada. The **Michigan Womyn's Music Festival** in particular — a 4-day annual event which draws up to 8,000 women and features numerous women's bands, solo performers, an open stage, and spontaneous and planned workshops and performances — provided such a meeting place. Women were energized and empowered by the freedom from patriarchal controls which they experienced at these events; they returned home and began to produce women's events locally.

The women who formed these production companies or collectives were committed to providing a music and culture which reflected and informed the models feminists were creating. Feminist music, perhaps more than any other popular culture form, is rooted in and politically conscious of its potential to effect change, to communicate the realization that other ways of living are not only *theoretically* possible, but *actually* possible.

The notion of 'women's music', as well as the developing industry which supports it, is undergoing change. As with any cultural and political movement, development and growth brings with it a whole series of questions and conflicts. The term 'women's music' itself is problematic because while it sounds global in scope, in a practical sense it refers to a small clique of largely white performers working in mainly folk/pop musical stylings. Obviously, to be true to the larger vision of feminist politics, women's music must encompass much, much more. Also, audiences for 'women's music' while often politically radical, tend to be stylistically conservative, whereas the musical "outlaws", women who perform rock and roll, punk, free jazz or experimental music, are rarely recognized as "feminist musicians."

As in the mainstream culture, the celebrities of 'women's music' are American, and the Canadian feminist music circuit reflects mostly a one-way stream of U.S. performers into Canada; Canadian women are rarely produced in the U.S. While in theory, radical lesbian feminists in the U.S. oppose their own nation's cultural exportation, they practice their own brand of it through 'women's music' hegemony. Some, however, are committed to breaking down these boundaries (see "The Long Haul" in this issue).

In the late 'seventies, Ruth Dworin returned to Toronto from the ***Michigan Womyn's Music Festival*** *and formed a collective called* ***Sappho Sound****. Because no one was producing women's music or concerts in Toronto,* ***Sappho Sound*** *began to produce the concerts as well. Completely inexperienced at production, the group lost money and folded after two productions. Dworin then formed* ***Womynly Way Productions*** *in 1980 — Canada's only women's production company — and has been producing women's concerts and events since. Recently, in a move toward coalition politics,* ***Womynly Way*** *has been co-producing events with other political and cultural groups.*

The full time staff of ***Womynly Way*** *are: Ruth Dworin, Karen Morgan and Francie Mezei. Nancy Irwin, Sharon Carne, Keltie Creed, Nancy Poole, Lynn Waddington, Charlene Roycht and Hillevi Rossman work on individual events on a contact basis.*

Susan Sturman: Could you talk a bit about how Womynly Way was founded and how you operate? I know you don't operate as a collective.

Ruth Dworin: I learned from my experiences in Sappho Sound that it is difficult to do sound or production collectively. There are people who are good at some things and they should have the freedom, control and power to do them. Womynly Way is founded on the idea that everybody doesn't do everything well, so we figure out who does what well and give them control over that area. Another thing I've learned from years in collectives is that there's always one person who's the fanatic — who has the most emotional, personal investment in seeing something happen — and it's a good idea for that person to be the overall co-ordinator. For Womynly Way, I'm the fantatic.

SS: How do you balance autonomy and it being mostly "your baby" with the idea of everyone working together and feeling that they have a real share in what Womynly Way is?

RD: It's an area of periodic conflict, and all I can say is that we work hard at it. I find people who I can trust to do a good job, and let go of the power in that area. I have enough knowledge about what other people are doing that I'm not ever totally out of touch and, because there are certain overlaps, we're working together and co-operating on many levels.

SS: Let's talk about women performers — in Canada, it seems that performers founder in their own little area — whether East Coast or West — and there's no one really hustling for artists with, perhaps, the exception of Joan Miller (*Heather Bishop's* manager). Some of the individual performers have to do not only their own promotion, but often their own record distribution and production as well. Compare this with the U.S., where there are networks of women producers and promoters who work closely with artists, are amazingly well-organized, and have in some cases made a significant outreach to mainstream music and audiences.

RD: There are several problems with the Canadian music industry. First, we don't have the population centres. You can tour Ohio and hit more major cities than by touring all of Canada. It costs an incredible amount of time, energy and money to mount a Canadian tour because you have to travel so far between cities. It's a lot harder to be a woman performer in Canada; the networks aren't set up. When the active women's movement in a city like Winnipeg consists of about twenty dedicated women, there isn't the energy to run a rape crisis centre, an Interval House, a women's building *and* a production company. If it's going to cost $1,000 to get to their city and do a show, and the women's community has to hold fund-raising events for three months before and after to pay for it, then it's very hard. (Interviewers note: This is no exaggeration. Even a city with as large and vital a women's community as Vancouver could not afford to bring **Mama Quilla II** out without advance fundraising plus splitting the costs between several groups. The band lost money on the tour, and so did some of the organizers in Vancouver.)

This is why, for example, *Ferron* decided to be produced by a mainstream producer; she knows she has to get outside of the women's community in order to survive in Canada. In the U.S., she can tour with feminist production companies (which she is doing) and do fine. In Canada, she has to rely on the folk circuit because the feminist circuit doesn't exist. Currently, I'm the only game in terms of women's production companies in Canada. In Vancouver, feminist artists are produced by Gary Crystal, one of the organizers of the **Vancouver Folk Festival**.

SS: In Canada, women artists on the folk circuit are managing to reach audiences who normally wouldn't pay attention to feminist performers. It's interesting that someone like *Heather Bishop* can be on CBC Radio from the **Winnipeg Folk Festival** as a *feature*, doing lesbian-identified material — there seems to be a crossover happening. Recently you've been co-producing events with other organizations. How did Womynly Way become connected with the Non-Nuclear Network and other alliance groups in the "Reaching Out on the Environment" series?

Coalition culture

RD: I've been interested in coalition politics for a long time. When **Wallflower Order** (a women's dance troupe) was coming with **Grupo Raiz** (a Chilean dance and music ensemble), it was a good opportunity to do a major coalition show between the women's community and the Latin community. It was exciting having two different audiences come together in fairly equal numbers, and it worked really well. The house management was a bit of a zoo and childcare was going nuts, but inside the show the women seemed to love Grupo and the Latin Americans seemed to love Wallflower.

SS: Do you think that cultural events lend themselves more readily to bringing people together?

RD: I think so. The whole raison d'être for Womynly Way is that we believe that culture is a strong consciousness-raising device. Music, dance and theatre is a powerful way to reach people and having a diverse audience is a good way of teaching groups of people things they wouldn't already know. There are two different things our shows need to do. One is to feed those women who are working so hard for the lesbian/feminist communities. Women need this sustenance. But there's also the fact that we need to reach out — we need to make people who work in one area aware that there are other areas which they need to pay attention to.

SS: When you started to pull in audiences other than a strictly women's audience, did you encounter some women who felt "betrayed", or that you were compromising yourself?

RD: There's the old separatist argument about not giving energy to men because they take so much, and trying to raise their consciousness takes much more energy than we're willing to give. But I think that men can come to our concerts and have their consciousnesses raised without it taking

any extra effort on our part.

SS: Do you sometimes feel that as cultural workers you are taken for granted?

RD: To an extent. There are some women in the community who say that we must be making tons of money and that we're making it off the backs of the women's community. People see beautiful, well-produced concerts and they assume that we're making money hand over fist. We really need to start educating people about how much work we do, the kind of work we put in, and the real financial state of Womynly Way. And there are women who complain because *Teresa Trull* wears lipstick on stage. Some of those people have forgotten what it was like in Tornto before we started producing concerts and fail to acknowledge that it's fairly remarkable that we're doing it *at all*. The reality is that if we hadn't had a government grant we would have lost $500 to $1,000 on every show this year, except for the *Holly Near* concert.

Marty Crowder

C.T. (Rowe) and April

Paying the way

SS: Why do you think you've lost money? Is it the choice of performers?

RD: We need larger audiences, and we need to charge higher ticket prices. We can't pay for publicity and pay a performer $1,000 to $1,500 for a show — which is reasonable, considering the amount of time, work and travel expense — much less pay ourselves, and charge people $5 or $6. We do everything as inexpensively and as politically responsibly as we possibly can. We keep much of our publicity costs in the hands of women who work for very little money. We're not paying $400 to the *Toronto Star* for an ad; we're paying $75 to someone who spends two weeks trying to pump the media for free publicity. And, I'm really worried that when we start to charge more, the women's community is going to say, "they're making all this money off the backs of the community, and we won't pay it."

SS: Or *can't* pay it. That's another reality that's hard for us all. Womynly Way seems to mainly produce women who are in the "women's music" community in the U.S. and who have gained popularity through women's festivals. I'm wondering if that might be alienating to Canadian audiences?

RD: We have a political commitment to producing Canadian performers. We produce, basically, those who call us. In terms of the Canadian talent available outside of Toronto — there's *Ferron*, *Heather Bishop*, and *Rita MacNeil*. But I won't produce somebody from out of town who's been here within the last twelve months because we won't get the audience. We produced *Heather Bishop* (with *Laurie Conger*) a couple of years ago. I would love to produce *Rita MacNeil* again. As far as local talent goes, we try to support it as much as possible but every time we produce local artists we lose money. There's a limit to how many shows a year we can afford to lose on.

Crossing borders

SS: When you produce a performer from the States, do you educate them about the differences between our respective political situations? Do you find that assumptions are made on the part of these performers, even as feminists?

RD: We try to provide information to the performers about political differences. We prepared a few pages of notes that explain various economic, cultural and political issues. Some performers take the time to read them and try really hard; others don't bother. *Holly Near* tries really hard; *Margie Adams* tries hard; *Teresa Trull* tried in her own way (by wearing a Maple Leafs hockey sweater); *Wallflower Order* tried and blundered. It's important for that kind of education to happen because, even as feminists, they were brought up in a culture which regards Canada as the 51st state.

SS: Do you think that women in the U.S. would produce and promote Canadian women artists?

RD: I've been working on that. Whenever I go to a festival or meetings of the **Eastern Regional Producers Network**, I plug hell out of Canadian artists. I bring down promotional material and talk about

women like *Heather Bishop* so that when they get a call from Heather's manager, they already have some idea of who she is. It may open a few doors.

SS: When you said, earlier, that you have a commitment to producing "local artists", who do you mean?

RD: We did a show two summers ago that featured *April Kassirer, Linda Ryan-Nye*, and *Sharon and Fran*. Last year we did *C.T. (Rowe) and April*. Instead of production, we do booking for a lot of local artists because we constantly get phone calls from people planning events, and we have a list of artists who might be appropriate. It's difficult with local artists because if somebody plays the Rivoli or the Cameron House and the next week we have a concert featuring them, we won't draw much of an audience because we have to charge higher ticket prices. People can't drink at our events — we've politics about serving alcohol at concerts — so, strictly for economic reasons, we have a preference for doing out of town artists.

SS: What about performers from Quebec, or elsewhere? There are other performers besides *Ferron* that few people know about. Two women's bands that spring to mind — the **Persisters** and the **Moral Lepers**. Is it because Canada is so fragmented regionally and because we're not sophisticated about promoting ourselves?

RD: I think that's true. But it's also hard to promote an artist who doesn't have a record out. Having that disc makes a difference because even with the women's community, you can take that disc to parties and dances, play it and say "Listen, this is such-and-such and I'm bringing her to town." If people have seen an artist's record at the Women's Bookstore or heard it at a friend's house, they're more likely to come to the show.

SS: How did **Spiderwoman** (a Native American women's performance group) do in that context? They're not well known here, and they don't have a record.

RD: Promoting theatre is a different story. **Spiderwoman** made no money. We broke even and they made $300 for a week's worth of performance. We promoted it well, gave away lots of opening night tickets and got a good review in the **Globe and Mail**. And, by word of mouth, people found out that it was a good show and went to see it on the three subsequent nights. That's what you can do with a run.

SS: Was there a lot of outreach done in the Native community?

RD: Yes, there was. Native groups co-sponsored it, and there was a reasonably-sized Native audience for the shows. The same thing happened with **Wallflower Order** — our audiences came by word of mouth and nice poster.

Taking risks

SS: So, you'd take more risks with more unconventional performers if you had a more solid financial base?

RD: Exactly.

SS: Why, for instance, haven't you produced a kind of cross-over act like the **Roches**, who've been produced by a women's production company in New York quite successfully? That's an event that would provide the financial foundation to do other things, since they would attract a sizeable mainstream audience. Do you see that kind of act as a possibility for Womynly Way?

RD: I'd like to start doing more of that. The **Roches** are already being produced by someone else in town, but I could do *Connie Kaldor*, for instance. There's other people who I've running around in the back of my mind who have that kind of cross-over appeal. If I could do more of those kinds of shows, then I could afford to lose money on more shows with local artists. But, it's hard to call somebody who has never heard of you and say, "I want to produce you." I'm not known in the regular music industry, so artists who have had the support of the straight music industry, as opposed to the women's music industry, are going to be less comfortable being produced by me. I have to figure out a way to get my foot in the door.

SS: What about connecting with the arts community, say in a place like **A Space?** They occasionally bring in interesting feminist performance artists like **Disband** (NYC), *Pol Pelletier* (Montreal), and *Martha Rosler* (NYC), to name a few. Many of these events would be of great interest to the women's community, but they're mostly attended by art community people because the promoters don't know where or how to get the word out to women. Have you ever considered co-production with such a group?

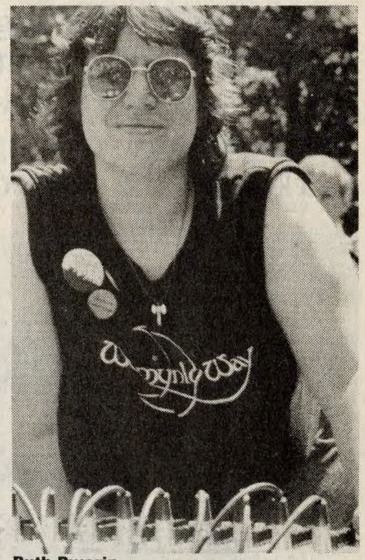
RD: With things that are really experimental, we're willing to do the work and use our contacts. We're not willing to take a lot of financial risk.

SS: What about that old feminist taboo — rock?

RD: The problem with rock is that I can't compete with the local clubs. I'd love to be producing more women's rock and roll from other cities, but producing bands costs a lot of money.

SS: What about a three-piece band like the **Contractions**?

RD: There's lots of that kind of stuff that I'd like to be doing. The other thing that I'd like to do is one or two dances a year. The thing about rock is that you can dance to it. We could hold a dance instead of a concert and bring someone fresh and exciting — someone the audience hasn't seen five times in the past month.



Ruth Dworin

SS: Ideally, what would you do, if you could take the risks?

RD: We would do two to three shows a year that were at Convocation Hall or Massey Hall with people like *Holly* or *Lesley Gore* or the **Roches**. That would give us a firmer standing with the regular music industry. I'd love to be able to afford to go to Quebec and talent-scout, to find out who's doing good work and would be accessible to a non-French-speaking audience. I would love to do a series on Canadian Women Composers where we could make compositional and classical music accessible to people who don't have a vast musical education. I'd love to do a Women in Jazz series. I'd love to produce **Edwina Lee Tyler and a Piece of the World** (an Afro-American funk-percussion women's band) and other music by women of colour. I'd love to produce *Rita Marley*. . . □

CAROLE CONDE

SATIRE AND SONG

The Quinlan Sisters, from Saskatoon, combine *acappella* singing with a tightly choreographed performance to deliver a wide ranging, fast paced political satire. The trio, in fact, is made up of four people. Peter McGehee (whose stage name is Marie Quinlan), is the founder and driving force behind the group. Originally from Arkansas, he moved to Saskatoon in the late '70s. The current

Karl Beveridge

(Left to right) Wendy, Peter and Peggy

group was formed in 1981 and includes Wendy Coad (stage name Peaches O'Cod), a painter, and Peggy Robinson (stage name Fiji Champagne), a photographer. The fourth member is Doug Wilson, who besides managing the group, is a gay activist, and the group's ideologue.

The following interview took place last October.

Carole: Wendy, when did you and Peggy join the Quinlan Sisters?

Wendy: We came in after two previous groups, also called the Quinlan Sisters, disbanded. The first group was two women, Peter and another man, and the next one was Peter and two women. In the last year our repertoire has built up to eighty-five minutes of original material.

Carole: Peter, do you still write all the material?

Peter: Yes, I still write it. The musical part is sometimes solidified in a workshop by the three of us and Doug Wilson, our manager, who helps out with the editing and the lyrics.

Carole: When did the collaboration begin to develop?

Peggy: I think it just progressed.

Wendy: Neither Peggy nor I worked like this before. For the first while we just learned the material with the help of the gin and tonic and a lot of fun.

Peggy: Now we have them after the show. There was also the problem of adjusting the material to fit our voices and personalities.

Wendy: Peter has written tunes that would suit each of us. "Nuclear Engineer" was written this summer, and it fit Peggy perfectly. She sings the lead.

Carole: Peggy, what is your background? What makes it possible for you to get up there on stage?

Peggy: I have a bit of theatre background but it was mostly in high school. I've been involved with the arts since I moved to Saskatoon eight years ago. I went to University there and now do photography. The only singing I've done was on a tour with a group of artists, puppeteers and musicians that went around to schools. I did the singing and photographic documentation.

Wendy: I have no singing background. I'm a painter. I just knew some campfire and war songs that I would sing on long trips. I was at a party and Peter and I broke out into our repertoires. They didn't have much in common but Peter saw possibilities and suggested we get together.

Carole: Peter, you mentioned in the history of the group your frustration at being an actor; that acting didn't allow you to express what you wanted to say. How does music enter into the picture?

Peter: Well first I should say my whole history has been one of jumping into things, both in the theatre and in my own life, and then jumping out of them. I wasn't satisfied with the quality of expression and the limitations on expression within theatre. I had always wanted to be a commercial actor until I became one, and realized the limitations. I'd get cast again and again as the tortured adolescent in Eugene O'Neil or whatever. After three years I knew this was not what I wanted.

So what did I want to do? I quit the theatre and began writing plays. I lived in a lot of places in the States and travelled in Canada searching for what I wanted to do, and how I should be doing it. Suddenly, I wanted to do a musical show, and being gay, I was very aware of gay politics. It was hard not to be when Anita Bryant was on her rampage. I was living in San Francisco at the time. Before then I'd never thought of politics. Coming from an upper middle class background in Arkansas I was never confronted with it. Suddenly I began to be quite aware of it. When you're gay or you're black, disabled, a woman, any of these things, or you hold unpopular anarchist beliefs, that puts you on the outside. I realized, yes, I'd always been on the outside in one way or the other and I'm always going to be. How do I translate that, use that, in a theatrical way? How do I put it on the stage; use who I am, and what I feel effectively? The Quinlin Sisters is the answer to that, at least for now. The idea was to take music, political music, that was not necessarily didactic, but was satirical, farcical, funny yet serious and let that be the basis. From there, make a show that is very Brechtian, with a bare stage, three mikes, three people, simple costumes, simple lighting. The music is simple, and able to influence, and it can be anything — except folk or rock, because that's all done and tired. So what's left? What did I like? I loved musical comedy, swing, the 40's beat, and jazz. So all of this added up.

Carole: How do you choose the specific topics for lyrics?

Peter: Either it's of personal concern to me or it's an idea that continually mentioned by other people. There's another thing; the bottom line is to make gay music. The rest of it all fits together; oppression puts us in the same family. The alternative music influences are Holly Near, Tom Wilson and Chris Tanner. They're all gay singers. I realized the power that was there in alternative music, that our cluture was not being expressed through other kinds of music and it was up to us to make it.

Carole: The music seems to be created for a specific audience. That fits into your earlier definition of the oppressed — gays, blacks, women, and political activists. By running the gamut of political issues do you see your work as preaching to the converted?

Wendy: We have played to many different audiences. We did a tour this summer through rural Saskatchewan. For the most part, our audiences were women over 70, people who have never been out of rural Saskatchewan. We've played in night clubs in Toronto and to the art community. We then may play to the library club of Edmonton or students in Calgary. The audiences have a wide range of interests; from students, older people, women's groups, gay and lesbian conferences, theatre conferences to cabaret-settings. We've often had people come up after, and they may have agreed or disagreed with the politics, but there's been something that's really touched them, something they hadn't anticipated hearing in either that context or presented in that way.

Peter: I think you'd be amazed how people you would expect aren't interested in the content or might be offended by it, find it refreshing. There's also pieces that have very little to do with politics, like "Dead Bodies All Around Me", "Water", or "Spontaneous Human Combustion." But it seems at this time that politics are a very important aspect of life.

Carole: You've played off of the mass media, Hollywood, advertising, pulp novels, and by commenting on, or satirizing them, which has allowed you to reveal the ideology or at least critically examine it. The song "Nuclear Engineer" that Peggy sings, for example, makes a comment on the nuclear question without being rhetorical, and at the same time satirizes county-style formula songs.

Peter: Yes, you're right in what you observed and that song's a good example. Everyone's heard and knows that nuclear power is not good for them. The audience isn't interested in more bad news. But that doesn't mean you can ignore the whole issue. So for the last two years I was thinking how do you do a song on the subject. I decided on a love song about a woman. She finds out that her boyfriend's a "Nuclear Engineer" and her friends don't speak to her anymore. So she lets him go. That becomes the issue, not nuclear power. That's the intention behind all the music — to make that kind of thing

happen. A lot of the earlier music is a bit more didactic, but I think it's still important. Like the song "Don't You Ever Think". It was about racism, sexism, handicapism and homophobia. The song "Job Hazards", which was a very early song, has that same twist to it. In the lyrics going home was to "sleep with a bag over your head please". I'm not advocating that the world's horrible at all. It's not any worse now that it ever has been or will be. Every age, when you learn its history, has its traumas and it's always a matter of life and death. Pessimism is the thing to step out of. The nature of the world is such that everything is not going to be 'perfect'. A lot of people overlook their sense of humour. A great part of my intention with the Quinlan Sisters is to restore a bit of that into all these concerns that are real and are shared, by everyone.

Carole: In collaborating around the production of the Quinlan Sisters have you and Wendy felt it is a satisfactory vehicle to express each of your needs also? There's no doubt that all three of you equally participate in the presentation, but Peter does write all the content.

Peggy: For the most part, I think of the writing and the directing as Peter's art. My contribution is in the performance. That's the part I'm most interested in. I like the work and the writing, and support what it is he has to say. If I make any statement of my own, it's within my own work in photography. I have different concerns.

Wendy: I feel basically the same way, but it does cause problems with my ego. I'm not a writer nor do I want to be. I'm quite secure in myself and with my painting. There is an overlap between the two parts of my activity. I also deal with the human condition in my painting, although I focus on parts of the figure. I think it communicates a lot, like a word or an expression. Performance allows for lots of words and expressions. So it's balancing the contrast between the two, but that contrast comes up in my own work and life too. There are times when I have to let go of a certain amount of control in order to perform. I consider that to be quite a learning experience. As a painter I'm quite isolated, I work as a solitary person in that capacity.

Carole: In that cross-over, you've both experienced an expansion and learning process that you then incorporate into your own artistic production?

Wendy: While some of the sexual issues are not my personal issues, and some of the political ones I've only started to consider after dealing with this material, it's also allowing me to get out amongst a broader grouping of people and that widens my view.

Peter: When this group started I had all that prior experience in writing and directing and was therefore writer and director of the group. In their case performing was a whole new ball game.

I've recently taken tunes I've gotten stuck on into rehearsals to see where it will go. Sometimes that's very frustrating. All three of us spent two out of three rehearsals a week trying to get the tune for the chorus. Everyone wants to kill. It's funny, Carole, that you brought all this up. Doug said to me once, "some day Marie, a woman interviewer is going to tear you apart. Because you talk the most and you dominate it."

Carole: Did you write any of the songs to fit the context you'd be performing in?

Peter: No, because of the diverse places they're performed in. We select the ones that would seem appropriate. For instance we're playing at a Women in Technology Conference in Saskatchewan in November. We have two very strong feminist songs for that. For some reason there seems to be more feminist material in the repertoire than anything else. One is called "Off My Body" sung by Wendy and Peggy. The other one is "Single With Kids". Basically the women carry the lead and do the kids also. I play the horrible man in the monologue. On the abortion song I worked with a woman from Planned Parenthood in Saskatoon. I interviewed people and examined case studies to produce the song. Unemployment is also on my list of songs, so is Trudeau. I've nothing on Trudeau and I'd love to have something.

Carole: With all this touring are you making a living?

Peter, Wendy, Peggy: NO!

Peter: We barely cover our expenses on the road and our food.

Peggy: But it's our new career.

Peter: It's all our new career, and potentially we could be earning a living at it, and in the next while that must happen.

Wendy: Because none of us have any savings left. We live from hand to mouth. When on the road, we're forced to stay with friends and sleep on living room couches for long periods of time. And I'm a painter too; I can't tell you how I ended up in the two least money making ventures there are!

Peter: The Quinlan Sisters are at a point now where if we do three 3-week tours a year to make money, then we can perform the rest of the time because we enjoy it. Also there is a lot of interest at the moment in our doing a recording. We might stay in Toronto over the winter to do it.

Wendy: We've all had the experience of having heard this before and nothing's come of it. But hopefully it's different this time. Tomorrow we're getting union rates.

Doug Wilson

Carole: As the manager, or as Peter put it, the fourth Quinlan, and as a political activist, is there an interrelationship between these two roles?

Doug: Most definitely. My own history has been that of public educator, organizer, and a social activist. I'm now the director of the Saskatchewan Association of Human Rights, working with a number of communities around their concerns for disadvantaged and minority groups. I act as a liason between these groups. Also there's the role I've played in the gay community since '75. I've been the 'public' gay person there and was hired because of my work in that community. So everything I do is inter-related. I'm an open, positive gay person doing a very public job with many different communities.

Something I've realized about my particular involvements that pre-dates my meeting Peter, is seeing culture as a vital tool that can reach out to communicate these different concerns.

Carole: Where did these concerns and direction cross over with managing the group?

Doug: Five years ago, I helped initiate a prairie celebration of lesbians and gay men called Metamorphosis. We have repeated this event every year around Thanksgiving, and it has provided a venue for developing talents as well as the audiences' affirmation, in celebrating culture by open positive people. When I met Peter in '79, he wasn't doing the kind of music he does now. Moving to Saskatchewan and being in a very different political context from the American situation, lead him to write and sing political music.

Peter's music makes us laugh at ourselves, especially as political activists. We're often too serious. I couldn't shake the tunes, and with our deep personal involvement and the skills I'd learned it seemed only natural to begin to manage the group.

Carole: Peter was involved in gay activism in the States. But how much has your wide ranging involvement with other communities rubbed off?

Doug: That's an intangible entity. In Saskatoon, you're involved with the immediacy of all of the issues. That is bound to have an effect. The Quinlan Sisters can get the message out that I spend months and years trying to get across, often much more effectively and to a wider audience. I've been at my job for the past five years and I love it. But there are limitations and the Quinlan Sisters are fulfilling those. This summer the Secretary of State gave money for them to tour rural Saskatchewan for the Human Rights Association. They went into small towns and performed which was an ideal situation from my point of view.

Carole: What are some of your responsibilities in your job as the fourth sister?

Doug: At this point I get the bookings and personal engagements, and I produce them in the sense that I put up the front money to keep us on the road. I'm the only one with a wage. I also do the publicity. I'm the 'leavin in the loaf', you might say. They're very volatile after being on the road for a long time, I absorb the fights, as I'm the energy it gets channeled through. It's an ever increasing collaboration. Business decisions are made in consultation with them.

Carole: You spoke of culture being an important communicating tool. Are you a frustrated performer?

Doug: Oh sometimes I can't wait for one of them to break a leg (laugh). I've heard the act probably a thousand times and living through the writing process. But I realize that I have the skills that can facilitate that juncture of culture and politics, therefore that becomes my primary cultural input — to create the best situation that can happen in.

Carole: What got you into the political arena?

Doug: I was sort of a national *cause celebre* back in '75. The national news and all that sort of routine. I was teaching at the University, at that point in the College of Education. I was supervising second year educational students and at the same time I was organizing the gay academic union. The University panicked at that. They said I was unfit to go on to public schools, but I'd had a good record as a high school and university teacher. So out of this grew a textbook kind of defence campaign organized by my students and colleagues. It was the first time that the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour supported Gay Rights. The N.D.P. gave the students and faculty protection for supporting the fight. I chose not to go back, so for the next two years I was involved in organizing a couple of National Gay Conferences. From the Cultural Conference for gays came the Provincial Lesbian and Gay Mens' Coalition. That became the essential core group which put the outreach programme into operation for rural gay people. We were successful in getting support groups set up throughout the province with a viable system of networks. When the Quinlans go on national radio, as they did last Friday, and sing "Are Straight Folks Normal", I know what it means for that to be heard in rural Canadian homes. Having grown up on a farm I know what it means for lesbians and gay men living in Gander or Peace River to be able to hear that, the positive impact it has. As a publicist, I couldn't feel more pride that in achieving that. To get back to my first public political action. In November we'll be singing at the National Convention of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. It's the full circle, but with the bite at our end.

Carole Conde is a photographer and a member of the Women's Cultural Building Collective.

RHYTHM AND RESISTANCE

maintaining the social connection

Ric Amis

(left to right) Devon Haughton, Lillian Allen, Clifton Joseph

Clive Robertson interviewed poets Lillian Allen, Devon Haughton and Clifton Joseph in March '83, just prior to their departure for England where they attended and performed at the **Second Annual Black Radical and Third World Book Fair** *in Brixton.*

FUSE: How did you come together, how long have you been working together, and where did you come from?

Clifton Joseph: I was familiar with Lillian's work more than anyone else, and I had been working with her for some time on various projects, not only literary but social, political and community oriented programs. She had been doing her stuff over the past decade, and we had been having discussions since the mid 70's on the function of art, what we think it should be, what we are trying to do, the environment we are functioning in, and so on. We had both been giving readings separately, and then we started to be on the same bill together. I had heard about Devon from several people, and then I saw him for the first time at York University, and from that time we all started to work together, with Krisantha,* and moved closer and closer together.

The idea to publish came to me because of Lillian's publication **Rhythm an' Hard Times**. I had never thought of it, I just read the stuff to people to get the work out, but after the success of Lillian's book I thought more seriously about it and that's how **Metropolitan Blues** came about. From there we started to think and talk about some of the other aspects of writing; the process, the marketing and production, how it relates to our political environment. We thought about how we can assist other people in their development too, and how to generate related activities in our community. We now all come under the rubric of *Domestic Bliss*.

Lillian Allen: I met Krisantha at his book launching. Himani Bannerji thought it was important that we meet and read together — she was an encouraging factor in both our writings for years. Then I heard about Devon, and hooked up with him, and we started reading together as a team, because we were doing and saying basically the same thing, from different perspectives. We do continue to do separate things too. I think that what pulled us together was the realization that we needed to organize this stuff. It was gaining in popularity, and we wanted to pull upon the strength of an organized collective to present an organized front. We are still thinking about it — publishing, how we can do more work, how we can make a living out of this and

*Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta is a fellow poet who works and performs with the group, living in Toronto and publishing with *Domestic Bliss*; he was out of the country at the time of the interview.

encourage and involve other people.

Devon Haughton: I had been hearing about Lillian for a long time; the same guy who told Clifton about me also told me about Clifton, and so we started meeting — me, Clifton, Lillian and Krisantha, and a couple of months after my first reading the four of us were doing a show together.

LA: I would hear about Devon in the Spanishtown community of Toronto, in the barbershop and the stores because both Devon and I are from that town, both from large, fairly well known families.

CJ: Basically, all of us were doing our own work, and because of the environment, because of a general wave of poetic activity in Toronto, more and more people, even some of the older ones who had put their books up on the shelf, came back on to the scene. There was a renewed interest in poetry, especially in poetry as performance.

Poetry as performance

I have always thought that poetry needs to be taken out to the people; some of the ways that it is taught in highschool, some of the ways it is analysed by academics are too sterile, so the poetry stays on the counter, it stays in the library turning to dust, and who wants to turn into dust? I have always had an interest in taking it out to the people, wherever they may be. I have seen it as my responbsibility to react to the situation and go wherever people are gathered together to espouse this form of activity to them — not just poetry dealing with our specific context, but any anti-establishment, anti-oppression poetry, a poetry of resistance. It was only natural that we should come together last summer. The activity peaked for us when we all got together, and then in the fall of '82 we started moving on from there.

FUSE: It always seems that when there is a new thrust in music, the poets that are associated with that music are brought up with that musical development. It happened on the West Coast, it happened in the 50's and 60's. Often poets who perform their work are influenced in this way. Do you think that this sort of a community is developing here?

LA: I never thought of it that way, but indeed, it might be a factor. I would say that in our poetry we are saying things that people don't generally associate with poetry or art. We are presenting it in an interesting way too, which has helped the popularity. And, yes of course we are pulling on the musical influences. I agree, it is a factor.

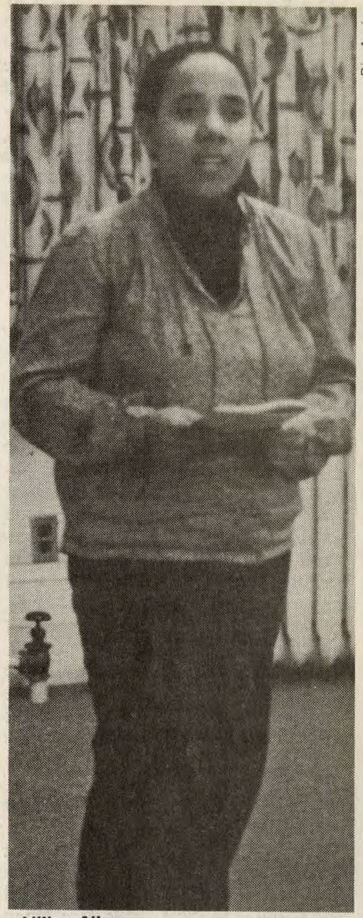
CJ: There is heavy musicality to the poetry that we do. The popularity of reggae over the last number of years, and its international acceptance has laid the ground work for dub poetry to develop, as Linton Kwesi Johnson and others from Jamaica have developed it, from the music itself. There are always musical influences, because we grew up in an environment where music is very important on a day to day basis, so it was only natural that music should be a part of the poetry. In Toronto it's problematic because even the musical bands have a hard time getting their work recognised; on one level there is a lot of popularity, but on another they've come up against stone walls. In Toronto, bands like **Truth and Rights**, and **Gayap**, and before that, **Crack of Dawn** exposed people to music created by West Indians, so it was a little easier for us.

We have a lot of music in the poetry, plenty rhythm, plenty music, and we even refer to musicians in the works. I think one of the reasons for our popularity is that we are able to do two things: we are able to do a musical presentation in a poetic style, and a poetic presentation in a musical style. In this way we manage to get to some places where a musical band might not. The music has laid some of the ground work for us, but the poetry too is making ground, feeding back into the music.

LA: In terms of our work, I think that we all draw from our experiences, our collective and cultural experiences to enhance our message and our performance and the form that we are involved in. The music influence is inherent in the rhythm, but we have gone outside the traditional restrictions and boundaries to call upon our own social, cultural and historical resources, and it is interesting to people who have preconceptions about poetry, they like it.

FUSE: One thing I would like to ask you, since I have seen you a few times, is about the fact that a lot of musicians like to think that they go out of their way to make contact with their audience, and some of them are more successful than others. This seems to be very much a part of what you do; you are not only in very close contact with your audience, but you're informing them about what you do as you go along. I would like to ask you what is happening to you as a group, what are you trying to do, and do you think that you will be able to continue this as you go along? How would you keep it going? What happens to a lot of musicians is that it gets more and more difficult as they get more and more popular, when the pressure is on them to do something different.

Ric Amis



Lillian Allen

CJ: With us I don't think it will be difficult. I myself have always done this sort of thing, mostly not for money — at African Liberation Day ceremonies, political meetings, social benefits, variety shows and so on, just to keep it in people's minds. So, before I even considered publishing, before I considered going to the night clubs and talking to the press, I always had the conception that the work I do must relate to people. They must see it as being useful and having some connection to their hearts when they hear it. Now that there is more interest in the work, we've still kept that contact, and in the last couple of months we've done 4 or 5 benefits. If people are having a meeting and they want us to be there, on a political and

cultural level, then we will be there if we think it's worthwhile. We are action oriented, and because of that, we need to know that the people we associate with are also action oriented and grounded with the people. We are very accessible.

LA: The people who approach us are people who have heard of us and have obviously been impressed or influenced by our writing and performing.

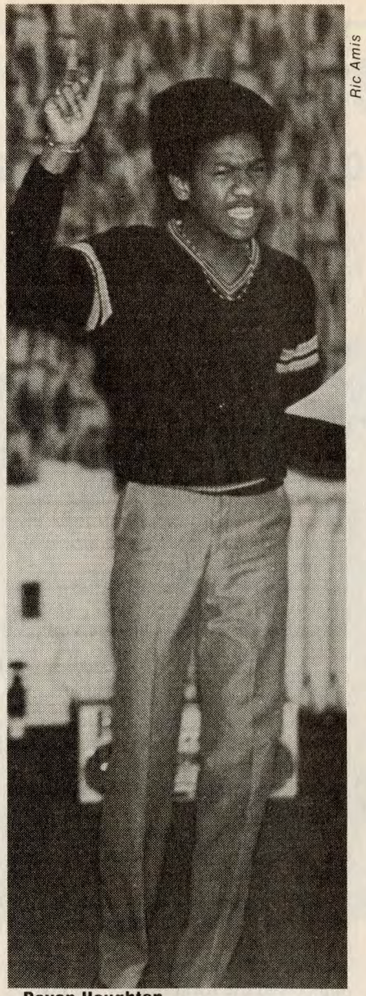
Self-determination

CJ: I think we have a very highly developed sense of history, and we've trained ourselves to notice what our activities relate to. I don't know if success would spoil us, I don't know what we would do if someone gave us a million dollars. I can understand how it happens to musicians who, when they become successful are promoted and get into the top ten, and find themselves taken out of their environment. But because we ourselves control some of the mechanisms, we manage ourselves, we promote ourselves, we market ourselves, it means that we are conscious of how we relate to people. If we break that connection with the people we will become another variation of academia. I don't think it will happen to us.

FUSE: Devon, how did you get involved in this work before you came to Canada?

DH: A long time ago, when I was in Jamaica I used to hear of Linton Kwesi Johnson. At the time I moved around with Oku Onuoru, who was then known as Orlando Wong, and Mikey Smith, and they used to do poetry down at the *Jamaica School of Drama*. If a concert was happening they would go and perform. As I got more exposure to dub poetry I wanted to do something myself; I thought that when I got back to Canada I would hit them with it. Little did I know that Lillian was here already doing just that.

CJ: You can see that Devon has some connection with the writers of dub poetry in Jamaica. In talking about dub poetry in Canada, you'd have to mention Devon Haughton, and you would definitely have to mention Lillian Allan, because they both have had connections with its roots in Jamaica, and have been involved in the earliest developments. It's a different manifestation here, because of the different environment, but they have been influenced by the same poeple who influenced Kwesi Johnson in England and the other dub poets in Jamaica. There are dub poets



Ric Amis

Devon Haughton

developing here too; Ishaka, for example, who plays with **le Dub Sac**.

FUSE: Lillian, at the writers forum, you were talking about the relationship between you as a writer and the other work that you do. Does that mean that you would always want to do other activities?

LA: In terms of some kind of community work and activism, yes, and I actually see my writing and performing as community work. As Clifton was saying, if we were to get rich and famous, we would still maintain a base in the community. In fact, I think a lot of our resources would go into initiating and developing activities like ours. As I see it, writing is part of what I do, but I do have a whole life out there, family, work, friends and lots of other interests, and I would never want to get into writing alone in a room, cut off from this. I want to be connected to people and to a normal life. I am working all the time — I have a full time job — and I consider this to be a stage in my writing. I'm gathering experience and knowledge and understanding to write at some future point.

FUSE: But the job you do informs your writing?

LA: Yes, and I've always done these kinds of jobs. I do community legal work at present. Basically I'm a community development worker. I work in areas of the city where people have very little money and face a lot of obstacles.

CJ: The biggest reading I had was with Lillian in 1978 at a Riverdale Intercultural Council's event. We were both working with the Black Education Project, dealing with some of the problems facing the Black kids who were being streamed into technical, vocational schools, and being set up for work in factories. We were tutoring them, and organizing their parents to make demands on the school system. So when I write a poem like "Freedom Chant", where I'm saying "It is dumb to be asking for your freedom", I mean that it's no good asking, you have to fight for freedom. That particular poem came from my experiences working in community organizations — I'm taking the stance that you have to fight, and the fighting might take different forms at different times, but nowhere has there ever been change by someone just asking politely for it. You have to go outside the framework of the people who have been oppressing you and build your own framework, away from submission and exploitation.

Definitely the work that I have been doing has been community work. I too still do a full time job at a group home, where you are dealing with the kinds of conflicts that develop with migration — when West Indians come here and have to deal with the educational system, the racism inside the schools. We see all of these things.

LA: We feel the need to write about these things, to change the way that the social workers and social scientists have categorized us, and all oppressed people. We are rewriting history, we are redefining ourselves.

Correcting deceptions

CJ: When Devon does "Prostitution", about youth unemployment and prostitution, and when Lillian does "Rhythm and Hard Times" and when I do "Chuckie Prophesy" — we are all

describing situtions we are familiar with. This is why we do as many readings as we do. There have been accusations that we have saturated the market and read too much, but we are only trying to correct the historical deceptions about us. We must see ourselves as people who have understanding, and a job to do, and we will take the poetry to the places it comes from.

People have been fed so many negative perceptions of themselves, that after a while they begin to believe in it. Perceptions of the Black race and tribalism, perceptions of the lack of African civilization, the idea that people come here and just go on welfare, etc. So we see ourselves as having some kind of responsibility in showing people their lives. We want to break out of the system of defining a problem by describing the parts only, and ignoring the roots and causes.

CJ: When Lillian reads "Belly Woman's Lament", it is something that people have experience of, because of the high incidence of teenage pregnancy where the men won't acknowledge their responsibility in conceiving the child. We always surprise people, because often they didn't know what to expect, but they find that they can see themselves in the poetry, it relates to them.

FUSE: When you read Lillian, there is a lot of information in the poetry and a lot of connections to be made. Do you assess the audience beforehand and decide how much to talk about the issues, how much to contextualize?

LA: Yes, we read the audience, we have to. Sometimes we do straight performance, in a night club for instance, where people are three-quarters intoxicated. But when we read at a benefit, where the audience is obviously supportive of us, they want to hear what we have to say. One of the reasons for our wanting to talk about our work so much, probably more than we should, is that we don't have interviews like this and we haven't had too much coverage in the media, so it's our only chance to talk about what we're doing. The work doesn't necessarily need any introduction, because the themes are quite universal, although from a unique perspective. The language might be a bit difficult for some people, but if you listen you will get most of it.

DH: Personally, I don't like giving introductions to the poems; people come to hear poetry, not anything else. You can say something brief, but don't take too long, just let them be in a receptive state, let them be surprised.

LA: It's true that people come to hear the poetry and not the talk, and I think for the most part you should get your message across through the work itself.

CJ: There are times, however, when you have to put things into a framework in order to be understood. I did "Chant for Monk" in front of a group of 7 or 8 graders, and halfway through the poem I realized that half of them had probably never heard of Monk. When the audience is less sophisticated I find it encumbent on the poet to lay some kind of framework for the poems.

LA: I think that the themes are universal, and as far as I'm concerned, Monk is a metaphor for great Black musicians, or great musicians. Monk himself is important in that he inspired the poem, but you're talking about something much bigger than Monk. That's what a poem, as an art form, would bring to the people. It is useful to explain, but the poem should be able to stand on its own.

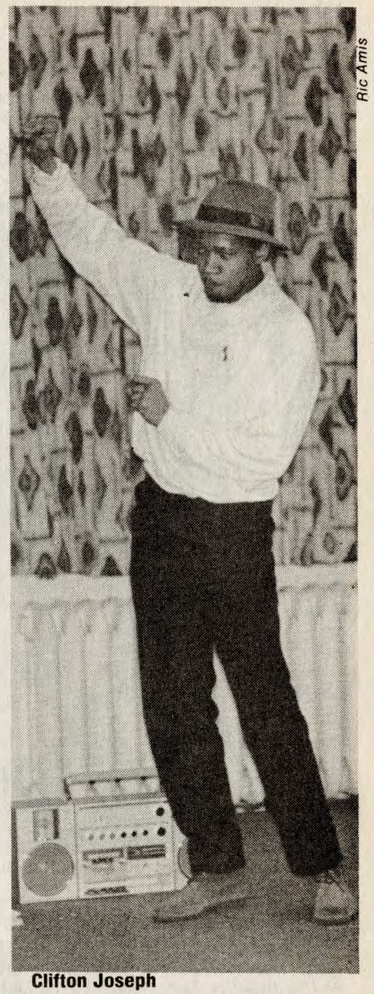
Wearing away the dictates of oppression

DH: Most of the poetry that I write is about oppressed people. It comes from music too. I use a lot of images, mostly of young people, street kids, who are down and out. When I write about oppressed people, it's because that is reality for me; I don't write about people that I can't see. It's no use writing in isolation. If you go down on the street and know the people the reality comes out more.

LA: I hear Devon talking about oppressed people like its somebody else. It's a word that means something 'out there', it's a word that you don't associate with yourself because it means that something is wrong with you.

DH: But most of my stuff is personal too.

CJ: We too are within the sphere of oppression, and it's from there that we address ourselves to the socio-political environment. In some circles we could still be poets if we were to sit down and write about, for instance, 5th century Greece. The Augustans, Pope, et.al. went back to the classic period to find some inspiration, and you were worth nothing if you didn't have that kind of knowledge. It took some of the romantics, Byron, Shelley, Keats, etc. to break out of that kind of form, to a poetry where you are relating to some kind of experience. But even then you are not relating to the people, you're appealing to those who have interpreted the peo-



Ric Amis

Clifton Joseph

ple and have put them into certain kinds of categories — oppressed and disadvantaged categories. We are part of that whole framework and so it's only natural that what we do comes out of that framework. We are concerned about resisting oppression. . .

LA: And we are resisting it in a lot of ways, in what we are saying and how we are saying it. We're wearing away those dictates from that society, so that now those people are saying "What is poetry anyway?" It used to be based on a very strict set of rules, and now they are calling all kinds of things poetry. We have tried to wear away at that particular institution and we're smiling now.

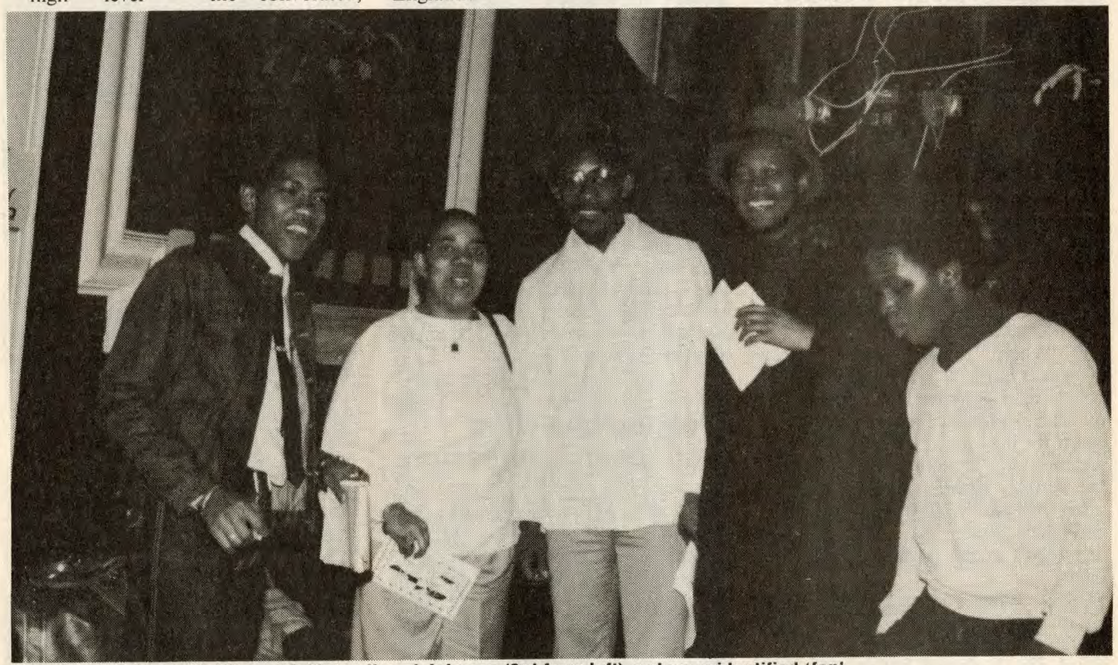
CJ: The categories change. For instance, despite the fact that the beat generation wrote so much poetry, they are still considered to be outside the *real* category of poetry. When university

curriculums are put together, and they have, say, an anthology of 20th century poetry, most of those people who were doing really vital work get left out, the ones who were actually relating to people, working in a social environment. There are two kinds of poetry then, simplistically speaking: one on the "high" level — the convoluted, mystical level, where you are dealing mainly with form — and the other, more vital one where you are in a constant state of flux, you're dealing with the influences of the environment, where the focus is on content.

FUSE: You were talking about those poets who use the classics for their base, but you also have your own brand of classics, like Marcus Garvey, Louise Bennet and Bob Marley, history that hasn't been touched in this context before.

CJ: Yes, but I talk about Monk and Devon talks about racism in the media — you don't hear Bob Marley, or Peter Tosh, or **Truth and Rights**, or **Gayap** on the radio — and Lillian does her readings from Louise Bennet, where she is dealing with the whole aspect of language — this is the language we speak, it is our vital selves and is no different from Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizzle or Shakespeare in their particular contexts; but people see ours as a deficiency. This is the kind of stuff we have to face. So when we read to people and they react, it's the audience that decides, in a way, the forms that you take. You're feeding off them, so you always have a connection with them. If we stray away from that I think we will become more and more mystical, and less intellectually honest.

FUSE: What about the trip to England?



Members of Domestic Bliss with Linton Kwesi Johnson (3rd from left) and an unidentified 'fan'.

CJ: This is the second time around for this *National Bookfair of Radical Black and Third World Books*, organized by *Bogle L'Overture, Race Today* and *New Beacon Books*. People from all over the world come together in an international forum and show what they are doing. We still have to fight with the established publishers and the established critics and press who neglect some of the work we do. An interntional event like this brings all of it together, so we can see for ourselves what is being done, we can exchange. On the 15th of March we will be on the same bill as Linton Kwesi Johnson from Jamaica, who is based in England, Sonya Sanchez, who has been working in America for the past two decades, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o from Kenya. We get a chance to expose what we are doing to other people, and to be exposed to them and their experiences. We can feed each other, because you need that kind of sustenance so that what you are doing is not in isolation.

FUSE: What will you be looking for, Lillian?

LA: I want to make that international connection, some links with others who are doing the same kind of thing on the other side of the world. I'm hoping we will be able to maintain these links — perhaps we can get these people over here. I think that we need this kind of exchange to develop the work. We can share techniques that work, we can support each other's creativity. And we might be able to organized something like what we have done here amongst ourselves, on an international level.

DH: I hope to get the international exposure too. It's a great opportunity to meet and perform with the people I've been hearing about who have been important in the development of my work and who I've never seen.

CJ: It's a big move for us, definitely, because we understand rampant institutionalized colonialism, and we might stay here in Toronto for ever and bounce our heads against the wall. Because of the general situation of artists in Toronto, you aren't really recognized in your own community, you have to go outside of it to be recognized. If you get a review in the New York Times, or the Melody Maker, then the local press will start rushing after you for interviews. This will be a trip for us where we will be able to break out of that milieu, we can show that what we do has international

CHECK IT OUT

I woz walking doun de road
de oda day
a reach de intasecshan
of Bloor an Bay

I site som yout man
pon de line
lookin really kool
an really fine

Ah tek one step forward
no step backward
I sae wats appennin
dey said Its a ustlin
I sae but why de bustlin
an dey said Its ah prosti
prosti
prosti
prostitushan prostitushan

Fifty dollar by de our
aftaward yuh tek ah showa
back pon de line
an yuh feelin really fine

An yuh fi really check it out
really really check it out
an yuh fi really check it out.

Ninty eight per cent
of de youts of today
drap out a school
cause dem coudnt find noh way
fi live up to de standard of society
so many drap out fi face up reality
reality
reality
reality

an yuh fi really check it out
really really check it out
sae one day dey shal defeat de shitstym
yout unemployment
its a yout exploitin.

Devon Haughton

CHUCKIE PROPHESY

im wuk
innah wan smelly
sweaty
stinkin'/dutty FAC'TRY
innah de daytime
nighttime
earlymorningtime
fuh very likkle likkle money
but come de WEEKENDTIME
BACKSIDE: IM FLASHY FLASHY FLASHY

see im poppin style innah im CADILLAC
watch im pull innah de station
fuh some GAS/O/LINE
hear im as he tips im FEATHERED/FEDORA/HAT:
ayyyyyy Jack: fill she up...
wid a dollars' worth of GAS/O/LINE
watch im as he digs innah de pockets
of im THREE/PIECE/GAB/ER/DINE
an shift innah im CHICAGO/GANGSTER/LEAN
im cussin like hell
dat MONDAY will come AGAIN
an interrupt im WEEKEND/PARTY
CONSOLING/PARTLY
DANCING/HAUGHTI-
LY time
in dis here
COLD/COLD/COLD NORTHERN CLIME

TIME WILL COME AROUND
WHEN CHUCKIE'S DISGRUNTLED FROWNS
WILL SEND SKYSCRAPERS/ON/FIRE
TUMBLING DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN TO THE GROUND
IN THESE HERE NORTHERN BABYLON/TOWNS

Clifton Joseph

Lalumba

Lalumba,
Don't be fooled by me or the face that I wear,
The mask I learn for ceremonies and rituals that make of this social reality,
Fools even me sometimes.
Yes, it fools me, because it covers the soft tender African nature beneath my Western coverings.
Know this Lalumba, my brother, and not be scared by my masquerade.
For my heart is yearning to sing, to find your music, to strike the cord and bring the melody of harmony into our lives.
Be gentle Lalumba, when you strum the guitar or beat upon your drum for I am terrified.
I am afraid of our own music, or own song.
I am afraid, Lalumba for my song frightens me.
My feet move to the drums of Angela, Malcolm, Tubman, Turner, Fidel and the many others.
I panic, Lalumba, when I think of the times I've danced to the music of fakers, posers and pimps.
Have danced pleasures into pain, and pain into a barrack
That have furnished me with yet another mask
To hide the fact, that I can feel and, have felt pain and hurting.
I'm paining because of this mask.
I want to tear off this mask, to breathe freely again,
To feel your touch and not the touch transmitted by a mask.
Lalumba, I want to bridge this rift between us.
Would it help if I burn my mask?
Let you touch my face?
Will you touch my real self tenderly with care
And surround it with trust?

Can you, Lalumba, acknowledge my real self?
Can you accept me — Black, African Woman, Mother, Fighter, Sister, Friend?
Must love then follow?
I want you to know that I wait for you, that I anger at you because of the hurt.
I want you to know that you are important to me, and I know that I am important to you, especially when we pain.
Let's bridge this rift between us.

Will you meet me, Lalumba, some place down the road,
Some place on this desert-ridden, God-forsaken strait.
It won't be no half-way, my brother, or no quarter-way.

But just you hit that road,
Just you put your foot on one pebble
Just you hit that road and I'll be there —
STRONG, BLACK, AFRICAN WOMAN.

I'll be coming.

Lillian Allen

poetry reprinted from:

RHYTHM AND HARD TIMES by Lillian Allen
DOMESTIC BLISS by Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta
METROPOLITAN BLUES by Clifton Joseph
ROOTS AN' CULTURE by Devon Haughton

appeal.

We had a good experience with Edward Brathwaite, an international poet. He has just received a Guggenheim Foundation grant, was published by Oxford University Press, is at the University of the West Indies, and is now on sabbatical doing a bibliography of West Indian poetry from the year zero to now. He had been through Toronto a number of times, speaking and reading at conferences, and he never was really exposed to what was happening here. When we heard he was at Harbourfront, we decided that we would organize an event with him, a poetry reception/performance, and he was quite surprised and impressed favourably by the stuff that we are doing. Toronto hasn't had a very high profile in the Black world, in terms of literary achievements.

LA: He said that he never dreamt that this was going on.

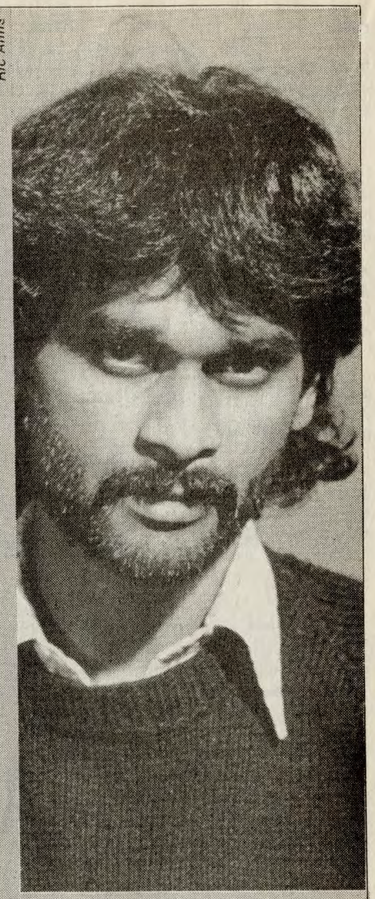
CJ: And when we were all there together, the cumulative effect of it was quite powerful for him. So I think that when we go over to England, people over there, people from the international realm who are not familiar with the stuff that's happening here, will be quite surprised that such a thing is happening the way that it is here. I think we will definitely have a heavy impact on them, because when the four of us get together and do our stuff it has the stamp of Toronto on it, regardless of what some people might think.

FUSE: Let's talk a bit about the publications.

CJ: The burgeoning publishing conglomerate, *Domestic Bliss*, came about because we all associate with one another, and we realized that we had to create an institution for ourselves — that is, we couldn't sit around and wait to be published by a company that didn't exist. I think Lillian's book is very important when we start talking about publishing, because when she brought out **Rhythm an' Hard Times** she was able to sell 500 copies in the space of six weeks. She isn't the first person to publish Black poetry in Toronto, but to do so well with people who don't normally read poetry, to have people coming to her and calling her and buying 3 or 4 copies and talking to her about the poems, this was extraordinary. We thought that something was happening here. Other people have published, and the books have just stayed on the shelves. I realized that I could do the same thing, so I came out with **Metropolitan Blues**, after I met up with Krisantha and Lillian, published under the name of *Domestic Bliss*, and I was able to do the same thing. I have to do a second printing, because I've sold all the copies we printed. And when we print Devon's book the same thing will happen.

recipes for marital stability and domestic bliss

Ric Amis



do we share ideas
where we go
what we do

it seems we only agree
on the stoned silences

between shouting matches

you smoke cigarettes
don't do the dishes
when we eat

all you do it seems
when you come here
is talk on the phone

never at rest

does it look like a phone booth
a walk-in mall off the street
off your journey
you want to go camping
because that's what lovers do
in the commercials

i thought i just finished
going through the dust-kicking stage
ten evictions a year

oh i know we live in the desert

but you eat the same junk food
over and over
see the same yankee movies
over and over

kiss me, you demand
like a cop
saying, hand it over

i know we live in this desert

but don't walk in
with your boots on!

Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta

FUSE: I was going to ask you what the relationship is between *Is 5* and *Domestic Bliss*?

CJ: *Is 5* is really our printer/consultant. They are very supportive of us — they co-published Krisantha's book. It was only natural, after the success of Lillian's book, that we should try to duplicate that success. We have a Black community of about a quarter of a million, which is a little less than ten percent of the population, plus we have a lot of progressives and supporters in other communities. So we have a whole lot of people out there to appeal to. We have read to thousands of people in the past year. We haven't really even started to distribute seriously yet — we have been able to sell a lot at readings. We know we can do it with Devon's book, **Roots and Culture**, which we are about to launch.

Irreversible gains

LA: There are a lot of other people who are not coming out of the woodwork — a lot of young people. They phone us and come around to see us and talk about their writing. We are quite happy for this connection and exchange. In this way we make ourselves really accessible. We intend to keep this energy and momentum going, at least until a large enough body of work is out there to involve and encourage the community, in writing and publishing. In other words, we want to ensure that some irreversible gains are made and people coming after us won't have to start from scratch as we did.

FUSE: What about recording?

CJ: That of course is the next obvious step. We will be going into the studio this summer, as you know, to record with *Voicespondance*. □

GARY SCHELLING

TURN ON THE DRUMMER

repercussions of electronic drum machines

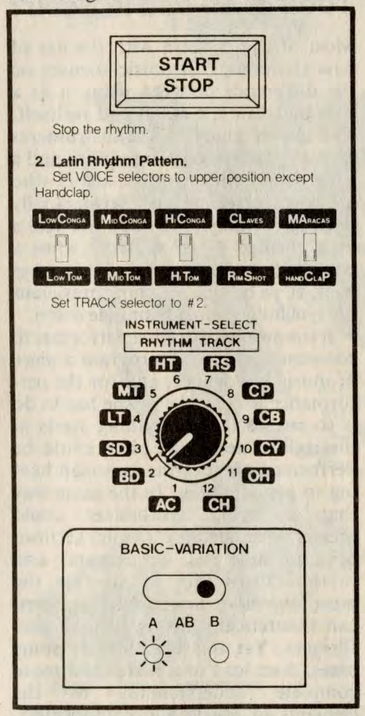
In a society that is obsessed with technology, especially the way it can be used for aesthetic effect, it is hard to understand the amount of opposition to the 'rhythm box' or drum machine. This device, which in the last two years has seen remarkable improvement, has been the object of criticism, not only from musicians (the British Musicians Union recently took a hard line against all forms of music synthesizers) but non-musicians as well. Many of the critics are unclear as to how the devices work — I'm not saying that the whole problem is a lack of understanding (that would be too close to complaints I've heard from human drummers) but in many cases it goes the way of most prejudices. As the owner of one of the little boxes, I've found their new-found popularity in the recording industry interesting and understandable.

Aunt Betty's Wurlitzer

Before I go any further we must make several distinctions. I am going to be talking about rhythm machines — electronic devices which store and recall rhythmic phrases — not electronic drums such as Syndrums, the Simmons drum system and others which can look like everything from a Jetson family kitchen appliance to a universal gym. And even though they are related, when I say 'rhythm machine' I'm not talking about the set of push-buttons built into your Aunt Betty's Wurlitzer Organ so that she can play "Red River Valley" to a waltz beat, although for the longest time that sort of system was the only kind of electronic percussion available.

The first rhythm machine was put together more than a decade ago. It wasn't all that different from what we see today in that old Wurlitzer, except bigger, about the size of a Fender Twin Reverb amplifier. While the device itself is now smaller, the functions and the sound have changed little. The drum machine of today looks like a large calculator, with a number of push-buttons, several selectors, often sliding controls of some sort, and sometimes even winking L.E.D.'s and digital readouts.

Technologically, such a device was inevitable since guitars and keyboards have been electrified for decades. Drumming, with its almost counter-technological characteristic of



smashing things with sticks, was due for some kind of innovation. The main reason it has taken so long is that a drum's sound is hard to reproduce. (Remember the waltz beat on Aunt Betty's Wurlitzer? It often sounded less like a drummer than a tumble dryer. And remember when you hopefully pressed the button for a "rock" beat? Forget it!) The standard drum kit is second only to the piano for a range of fundamental tones. The same technology which made those wonderful little Casio keyboards available for such low prices has made useful rhythm machines possible. In several cases, it is now impossible to distinguish the sound of a real drum kit from that of a rhythm machine. This is because in the more expensive units the sound is, in fact, a digital recording of a drum.

Programming: creative input

But the feature that has made these machines so popular is not their sound, but their programmability. You don't have to choose whether the song would sound better with a "swing", "bossanova", "waltz" or "rock" rhythm; you can create your own and store it in the machine. This feature, allowing creative input from the operator, is what gives it such potential. With some, the elements of the rhythmic pattern are graphically reproduced as you create it, making the device useful as an instructive tool.

Sometimes it's easier to think of these machines as computers that have to be programmed, though the method of programming differs from unit to unit. The Roland TR-808, for example, has a set of keys which correspond to a single measure in a song. With each of the various voices — from bass drums, snares and other typical drum sounds to the less typical claves, hand claps and rim shots — you choose where in the measure you want that particular instrument to sound. The Oberheim DMX has an L.E.D. readout that asks you questions as you go along. With all these systems, there is provision for storing these patterns in the machine indefinitely.

Criminal redundancy or creative freedom?

All the same, there seems to be some hesitation in accepting these machines. Some of this, I'm afraid, comes from the association rhythm boxes have with disco. Their perfect

regularity made them ideally suited to the repetitious, simplistic and often criminally redundant rhythm sections of those mass-produced songs. People like Giorgio Moroder found one or two good dance beats (found I think is the operative word here for rhythm machines were not programmable at this time) and they were set to make, literally, hundreds of recordings.

Most current criticisms of drum machines take one of two forms: the possible obsolescence of human drummers, and the fact that they simply don't sound 'real' enough. The first reflects the concern that these devices will altogether replace human drummers, since you don't so much "play" a rhythm machine as set it up and program it, and skill as a drummer is not necessary. This is true. But what *is* required is a knowledge of what you want in terms of a rhythm; certainly the more intricate the pattern, the more forethought, time and knowledge will be needed to 'write in' the program. In many cases, for just these reasons, it is a drummer who can best do the programming. As well, the rhythm box can and is being used more frequently by drummers themselves to free them a bit from what might be considered the more tedious 'work' in drumming, allowing them to add more polyrhythmic colourings while the machine pops out the regular snare, hi-hat, and kick combinations. In fact, there are drummers who are very enthusiastic about these properties. There are also drummers who have been replaced by such machines, but that is, it seems, a function of the particular sound and/or image which musicians are trying to develop, where a rhythm acts as no more than a foundation to a sound over which they want to exert complete control (more about that later). To sum up, as long as drummers, as musicians, have something creative to add to music, they are unlikely to be replaced by a machine for which creativity is impossible.

The second criticism can be broken down into two: that the actual sound of the drum voices is not realistic, or that the pattern of the rhythms doesn't ring true. The first is certainly an accurate criticism of the cheaper and the earlier units, but as mentioned above, there are machines available which reproduce the sound of a drum accurately because they have stored digital recordings of them. It seems that the more you are willing to pay, the more accurate the sound is going to be. But there is another consideration: the intent of the user. There are many artists who use rhythm boxes just because they don't sound like real drums. David Robinson, drummer for The Cars, uses two different rhythm machines on their latest album for a variety of purposes. If the criticism is that the 'patterns' are unrealistic, more often than not the fault lies with the programmer. Certainly the patterns are regular (that is one of the functions of the device) but repetition is not mandatory since most of the machines allow variations, fills, intro's and extro's to be programmed right in. One machine allows for a whole song — to a maximum of 3,072 completely different measures — to be stored.

Tool, or an end in itself?

Most of the concern with the use of new technology in music focuses on the difference between using it as a tool and using it as an end in itself. The use of many of the instruments now available seems unfamiliar and a little disquieting to those of us who are used to seeing musicians actually playing the music we hear. We feel a little cheated as an audience when a computer or a memory circuit takes over. It's a bit like watching musicians lip-synching their hits on television.

It is now possible for a performer to compose and record/program a piece of music in advance, and for the performance itself all he or she has to do is to ensure that everything starts at the right time — the piece could be performed without the musician having to actually play. In the same way that a string synthesizer could preclude the need for a violin section, devices such as sequencers and rhythm boxes (not to mention the more extensive new digital systems) can theoretically do away with performers. Yet this can, and in some cases, does lead to a better and more complete understanding of the elements of music and composition. This is certainly a worthwhile and memorable experience which can lead musicians/composers beyond monotony and simple gadgetry. The essence of any argument regarding the 'worth' of technology lies in how it is applied and by whom. Music will never become a complete function of technology as long as technology is considered to be functional. Rhythm machines work as a reflection of what they are programmed to do, and they must be seen in the light of the purpose they are to fulfill for the programmer.

Artistic control

For the individual who does not want to have ideas mediated by other performers or musicians, the rhythm machine can play an important role. It gives complete artistic control over the entire process of making music. As an instructive tool — one which allows the operator to discover the workings of a rhythm (much my own experience) the rhythm box is quite remarkable. You no longer have to have the physical endurance, much less the necessary sense of timing or four limb independence. Similarly, it allows the individual musician to better understand the relationship of rhythm to his or her own instrument. When you get right down to it, it makes practicing by yourself much more enjoyable, even (or maybe especially) if you're a drummer. For a group of musicians just getting together to jam, you're still better off finding yourself a drummer — unless you want to be anchored to a single rhythm until someone changes it. But, at the same time, we all know good drummers are hard to find — how many parents want their son or daughter to take *drum* lessons? (In defence of the drummer, one must remember that often the heaviest demands are made of the drummer in most of today's music — if he or she goes off, everyone stops and complains, whereas if the guitarist hits a bum note, things just continue.)

On a personal note, I've found that owning a drum box for over a year now has not only made me a better player but has also broadened my musical tastes by making me much more sensitive to the techniques and subtleties of rhythm, in a year where rhythmic and polyrhythmic invention has become more and more significant. One has to wonder how much this trend in music is a function of the availability of rhythmic devices such as drum machines — acknowledging as well of course the increased awareness of Third World musics. Finally, if music is to be innovative, then the essence of innovation will depend on the degree to which we can use available technology to our own ends; for myself and many other musicians, electronic rhythm devices are a welcome addition to the world of music.

Gary Schelling is a musician, a part time programmer and announcer for CKQM radio in Peterborough, and a student in Cultural Studies at Trent University.

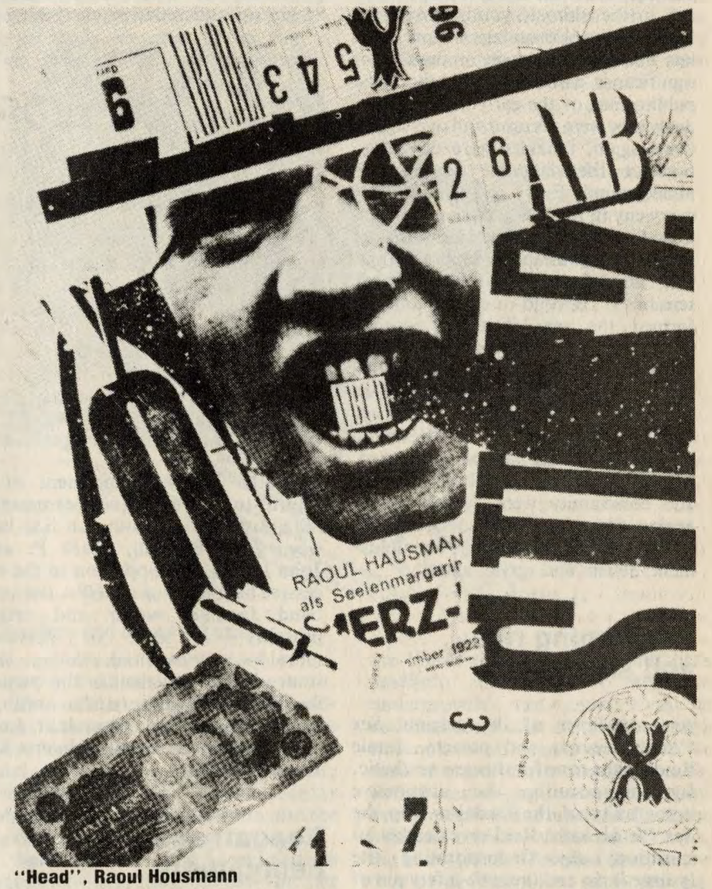
DESCRIBING THE UNDERGROUND

In the beginning there were the manifestoes. Issued in the early 1900's by the Dada movement in France, Berlin, New York and Zurich, and the Vortex group in England, these manifestos were released as underground magazines. They served a small audience, with limited circulation. **SIC** from Paris and **CABARET VOLTAIRE** from Zurich in 1916, **RONGWRONG** from New York the following year and **BLAST** from England (the Vortex group) in 1919, had shared aims — to issue forth the new creed, the new aesthetic, to inform a new culture. This was a collective effort by artists, photographers, writers and poets. All took part in defining this new sensibility, which was, in all, a new way of life. The scene included large social gatherings, openings at new galleries, dada "gestes" and, in England, "blasting", from the Vortex group (disruptions of meetings and lectures, done in as revolting a style as possible). A total halt was called; only the strongest reaction against the preceeding years would do. All this was chronicled, predicted and prescribed in these obscure magazines, publications that can rightly be called the forerunner of the "fanzine".

The arrival of anti-art

This onward onslaught was directed towards the recently passed years of art, i.e., cubism, and the thought informing it, as well as the strived for "middle classness" after the First World War. The magazines proved the perfect platform for the pronouncement of new principals. Radical revisions in thought on subject matter affected form, challenged ways of seeing painting, sculpture, photography, and writing. The nature of the act of making art came up for review. Was it necessary to make something to be conceived of as art? The anti-art stance had arrived.

In the Berlin of 1919, Raoul Hausman hit upon photomontage or collage. It lent itself perfectly to the immediate political and social concerns of Berlin artists such as Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, Richard Huelsenbeck, Paul Citroen, Johannes Baader and others. They approached their work with emotion, energy and anger, forging a new visual language in which a subject matter of social criticism was of prime importance. The work was shown in galleries, issued in magazines and as street posters. Formal concerns were secondary to the content which was found in the issues affecting their lives. A direct attack was launched on politics and middle class morals (or the lack thereof) ranging in treatment from cynicism to hate.



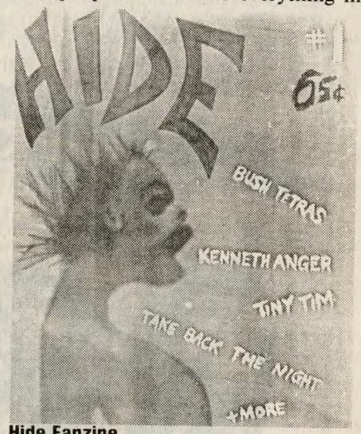
"Head", Raoul Housmann

(Unless one applies a very broad reading of the word 'fanzine', in which case they centered equally strongly on politics, but the two rarely met.) Both early Jazz and Rock'n'Roll, when in underground stages, had fanzine support. Later, homogenized versions would enter the mainstream. Mod and Psychedelic rock also, as movements, sported fanzines, but their use was limited. The 60's was the decade when underground went overground, the two met in the ultimate youth movement. Not until the blossoming of Punk in the late 70's did fanzines regain the kind of significance associated with the small publications of the early 1900's. Suddenly they were *necessary* all over again. Once again, fanzines were needed to organize the discourse of the new underground. Every town in Europe, every city in the U.S., every major centre in Canada had at least one. Fanzines appeared and disappeared at a furious rate, all defining variations of Punk sensibility. Beyond music, Punk informed the sensibilities of writers, poets, artists, photographers and fashion, as it had not since dada. The situation again demanded a denial of the values and concerns of the immediate past, resulting in a desire to communicate with passion and hatred. A sense of danger, moral commitment and community were needed to act against the political and social climate. It was a climate of poverty, unemployment, elitism and sexist values.

Reclaiming rips and safety pins

As a designer of the original *Sex Pistols* records and posters, Jamie Reid set the tone for the new aesthetic. By incorporating the disjunctive typography of the Dadaists into the *Sex Pistols* logo, Reid revealed his inspiration, also incorporating the (painted) rip and (actual) safety pin of Duchamp's "Tu m' " Dada painting of 1918 into the 'God Save the Queen' poster (among other noticeable things). Used to the same ends as the Dadaists — to shock, disturb and offend, the 'punks' offered a much rawer, rough version, one that was highly unlikely to be immediately co-opted into the art or music world.

The first fanzines to emerge in Britain followed this lead. **Sniffin' Glue** issued forth its manifesto every issue with Mark P. or Danny Baker defining and redefining the ultimate creed, the ethics behind each band, each stance, appearance and political awareness. **Ripped and Torn, Stranded, These Things, Scum, Shews, Anarchy in the U.K., Vive la Resistance, Seditionaries** followed, and in all these forms, fanzines were absolutely crucial definers of the phenomena. From the inconsistant Mark P. to the definitive Julie Burchill ("The Boy Looked At Johnny" with T. Parsons — required reading), punk and its hypothesis seemed to sweep up and redefine everything in



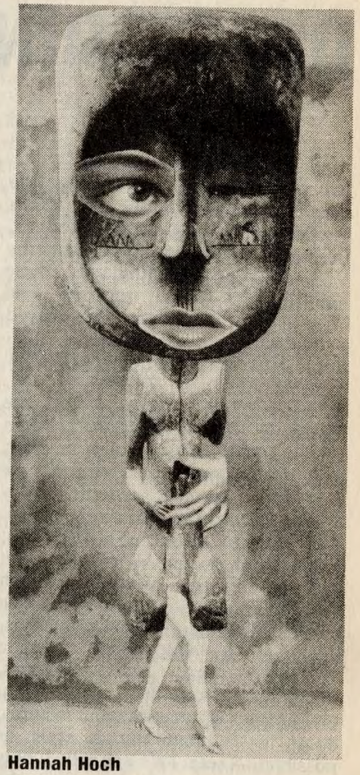
Hide Fanzine

its path. The announcement of a return to morality (not necessarily religious) was the common line between Julie Burchill, Mark P. and John Lydon, in opposition to the excessive hedonism of the 60's. Between band fanzine, writer and artist, morality — a sense of personal moral — was essential. Today, this stance is still prevalent in the current fanzine **God Crazy** (c/o Slim Smith, 2 Castell House Dept. Church St. London, England) or the more diverse **Kill Your Pet Puppy**.

Reagan and other delinquents

In the U.S. **PUNK** (New York) was the first, taking its cue from trashy movies and books of the 50's and 60's, reflecting the essence of being a J.D. (juvenile delinquent). Punk and New Wave etc. in the States, are simply about being 'different', being 'outside'. This stance is easily co-opted back into the mainstream, because it never actually was 'outside'. The 'loner', the 'rebel', the 'outsider' are central to American mythology and to Madison Avenue. Historically, J.D. is just as much a part of America as Reagan.

On the West Coast **Slash** and **Search and Destroy** were more successful, having been inspired by


Hannah Hoch

England before beginning. Utilising the best photographers and intelligent writers, they were of consistently high quality. (Many found the fanzines better than the bands.) Newer fanzines have less direction, and don't seem to refer to any concentrated 'scene'. **Negative Army** (c/o Mike Snider, P.O. Box 1062, Santa Monica, Ca. 90406), for example, is one boy's cry in the dark.

In Toronto, they inevitably took their cue from New York, assuming the same miserable faces and facile posturing that **File** Magazine suggested was very 'New York'. Still, sub-elements of the Toronto scene managed to surface. **Toranna Punks** and **Drones** were the first, along with **Crash'n'Burn** and **Pig Paper**, two rather Americanized versions. At the same time, the importance of Ralph Alphonso writing in **Impulse** on "The Politics of New Wave" can't be underestimated. At a time when a burgeoning scene was fresh, someone was there to attempt to define the inspiration. It became evident in time that aspects of punk and the underground scene would never enter the mainstream and that a regenerating subculture remained vital. Instead the gulf between it and the mainstream widened considerably, increasing the need for fanzines. A second wave — with **Questions and Answers** (the best so far), **Scub Digest**, and **Smash It Up** — and then a third wave occurred and shows no sign of dying. The seemingly temporary 'it's fast, it's easy, do it' fanzine (disposable and momentary) becomes permanent, taking new forms, such as audiotape, and achieving a new credibility (widespread and indispensible).

The need for defining positions has never been more important in Toronto than today. Limitations close in as the 'good-old-boy' stockade stands firm. *The Rent Boys*, *Diatribe*, *Vital Sines*, *Conditioned Response*, *Breeding Ground*, and *Youth, Youth, Youth* are bands that stand firmly entrenched at the helm, and the sexist shit we thought *The Curse* had rid Toronto of in the late 70's, remains. At this point, Chris Jones of Diatribe writes in the Ryerson paper of the 'Toronto Revolution', ". . . Rock music is about sweat and gut reaction." and there is no opposing opinion. His article, extremely misleading, manages to exclude anyone who is not male, white, and in one of the bands of this macho social clique. Revolution indeed! What Toronto does not need are more all-male bands defining their sexuality once again, and offering up cliched political sloganeering. Nick Smash issues the tapes containing and defining this scene.

Stagnation from 'good-old-boys'

Part of the burgeoning fanzine scene that Jones writes about includes Nick Smash's **Smash**, but he mentions neither **The Hanged Men Dance**, which has released a cassette by *Primitive Abstracts*, nor **Hide**, which also releases tapes, nor **Schrik, Sounds from the Streets, The Last Thing, Civil Disobedience, Rapid Sparks, Rip the System**, and **Stubbed Butts And Lovely Money**. For the editors of some of these little 'zines, Toronto is a playground, and they act accordingly, behaving like little boys fighting it out for attention from the 'cute' girls in the bleachers or from each other. Nick Smash has this to say for himself, "...Fuck man — we all know who's number one in this town, eh?[1] Smash It Up-me-Nick Smash.[2]Asshole.[3] Get it straight.[4] Who's been around the longest[5] — on CFNY — had his own radio show — is in the best band in Toronto[6] and led the pack with energy, ideas[7] and results?[8]" (from his notorious letter to Jim S., editor of **The Hanged Men Dance**). Well Nick, we hope it's a joke but just in case, 1. it's not you, 2. forget it, 3. Asswipe, 4. No way, 5. Too long, 6. that's debatable, 7.

Questions and Answers Fanzine

overexuberance doesn't lead to insight, 8. Yeah, let's look at the result.

This whole school of 'good-old-boys' bands and fanzines adds little to the Toronto scene except stagnation and repression. 60's left-wing liberalism and half baked anarchy abound in **Civil Disobedience**, and the rest of the quasi-political fanzines.

Stubbed Money And Lovely Butts is the newswire of the city, however. **The Last Thing** is true and innocent and fun. **The Hanged Men Dance** is intelligent and entertaining all at once — especially recommended when the editor, Jim S. plays Gore Vidal to Nick Smash's Norman Mailer. **Hide** exists to offer the rest of the underground a voice. If this boys' town of **Smash** and his friends is the dominating underground, then **Hide** is the oppositional underground. **Schrik** is Deanna, the 'solitary girl' daring to foray into the frenzy and last (where are you **Rapid Sparks?**). This is more like it. At her best, Deanna is captivating, vital, bitchy and fun. With good photos, it's all new and all there. Just like a girl. **Sounds From the Streets** is the best definition of a fanzine Toronto has. With careful progress, editor Dave has turned a little fanzine into a vital concern. If it chooses to expand its horizons, it could be definitive.

Fanzines have a responsibility to go beyond the lifestyle of a few middle-class white boys who have moved downtown, and when it does, well . . . Based on the same premise as **Blast** and the Vortex group from the 1900's right on up to Mark P.'s **Sniffin' Glue**, a 'cancerous undergrowth' can gnaw away at middle-class ethics, erupting onto the surface and offering alternatives. We need alternatives; to the innocuous, boring electro-pop, to the dull sexist heavy-metal whine and thud, to the brainless criticim of Jonathon Gross, the wishy-washy Toronto Star, to the fads of hedonism and supposed sensuality; and that's just music! We still need politically aware writers and artists, not to shovel anarchist dogma down our throats, but simply to be on the right track, responsible and with conviction, searching out new alternatives, and looking hard, as alternatives often have a way of keeping a low profile — not always out of choice. This is what fanzines do when they're good, gathering together alternatives and providing discourse for the underground community. Defining what is the underground and why. This is what Toronto needs right now.

DAVID AYLWARD

AMATEUR JOURNALISM AND SCIENCE FICTION

Young people who read science fiction nowadays, secure in parental approval and the easy availability of their favorite literature, will hardly believe there was a time when it was little-known, stigmatized, and hard-to-find. The usual comment was: "How can you read that crazy stuff!" and generations of fans evolved a whole arsenal of defensive replies. I like Isaac Asimov's; he says that SF is the *only* literature dealing with the reality of the present — over-population, nuclear war or technological change. Another good answer is to point out the utterly fantastic nature of the questioner's most cherished beliefs: life after death, free will, racial superiority, war as defence, the right to life of the unborn . . . make your own list! The great usefulness of science fiction is that it gives serious weight to situations which have not yet developed or are (in the sense of mimetic fiction) impossible; the reader is forced to speculate, in other words to handle ideas as symbols, not as revealed truth.

The present popularity of SF, then, is something of a paradox. Can a genre that encourages questioning really appeal to so many people? Well. . . crusty old-timers like myself can detect strong elements of stereotyping and wish-fulfilling power fantasy creeping into it nowadays. But there remains a hard core of writers dedicated to the dramatization of ideas, and if the serious readers aren't quite up to producing novels themselves, they can do the next best thing: publish a fanzine. The SF fan magazine has no relation to the slick commercial type of PR mag offered to movie fans. In fact, to be a 'trufan', it is not enough merely to read science fiction a lot — one must belong to a club, attend conventions or produce a fanzine of one's own.

Newstand compromise

A fanzine is usually typed, reproduced on cheap 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper, and illustrated (if at all) with line drawings by amateur artists. But you may never have the opportunity to criticize the crude format, because the chances are you'll never see one. Print runs rarely go higher than a few hundred, and are circulated to the editor-publisher's acquaintances. A fanzine may be sold, subscribed to, or sent by mail, but is not likely to appear on a newstand without compromising its fannish nature and becoming a "prozine". A fan editor is permitted a small profit, but it should be used to further 'fanac' (fan activities). The few ads he or she runs will publicize SF gatherings or books. A well-balanced issue might include a chatty editorial, an interview with a professional writer, convention report, a short story, book reviews, letters of comment (known as LOC's), and some cartoons.

The origins of these publications can be found in the amateur press associations of the first quarter of this century. These clubs had first been formed in the 1870's, after cheap printing presses became available, but the practice of amateur journalism goes back (in the United States) to Benjamin Franklin. Amateur press productions tended to be modelled on respectable journals, and self-consciously adult in tone, in keeping with their readership. In the late 1920's, however, there was a shift in subject matter, type of reader, and format.

History feeds the future

The science fiction fan movement really began in the letter columns of the professional periodicals. **Weird Tales**, the first all-fantasy magazine in English, came out in 1923, and **Amazing Stories**, the first science fiction magazine, in 1926 (there were several earlier efforts in Germany and Sweden). It was through reading each other's letters to the editor that the predominantly young, male, technically-minded readers got in touch. The formation of fan clubs, from this nucleus, was of great importance in the development of the field. A whole future generation of writers was nurtured by them; Ray Bradbury, James Blish, Frederik Pohl, C.M. Kornbluth, Wilson Tucker, Larry Niven and Thomas M. Disch (among others) were fans in their day, and some put out their own 'zines'.

This relation between author and reader is, so far as I know, unique to SF. In what other field do readers go to regular conventions, exchange fanzines, meet their favorite authors (who encourage them to write) — then after beginning a professional career, attend further conventions to meet their own readers and exchange notes with their colleagues? And between these 'cons', of course, there is a steady two-way communication via fanzine letter columns. But a science fiction writer is no "star" — his fans may (and often do) bitterly criticize some of his work.

The Spaced Out Library, Toronto Public Library's science fiction collection at 40 St. George ST., houses samples of some 350 different fanzine titles, and this by no means exhausts the list of all printed. The first SF fanzine seems to have been **The Comet**, dated May, 1930. Over the years, titles have ranged from the institutional, such as **Science Fiction Review**, **Fantasy Commentator** and **Pretentious Science Fiction Quarterly**, through the vaguely astronomical, like **Skyhook**, **Helios**, **Alternities** and **Ad Infinitum**, to the facetious, like **Cretin**, **Spicy Iguana Tales**, **-273°C**, **It Comes in the Mail**, and Damon Knight's famous

(that was a blank space, printer).

Newszines to crudzines

Content begins with professional quality fiction, fine illustration and serious literary analysis (the latter found more often in British and Australian zines)

and descends to libellous interfactional ravings, atrociously written additions to the **Star Trek** canon, and crude cartoons. There are fanzines specializing in British fantasy writers (**Mythlore**), Edgar Rice Burroughs (**ERBdom**), swords-and-sorcery (**Amra**), feminism (**The Witch and the Chameleon**), supernatural fiction (**Whispers**), the French-Canadian SF scene (**Solaris**), media and comics. There are 'newszines' like **Locus** and **Science Fiction Chronicle**, 'personalzines' with nothing but the editor's own writing, and last — but definitely least — the aptly-named 'crudzines'.

As the last term suggests, the production values of the fanzines are quite modest. Ever since the Great Depression, when private printing presses became things of the past, editors have relied on the typewriter for their master copies. Over the years, the messy and unreliable spirit duplicator was replaced by the Gestetner mimeograph, and nowadays, offset printing is not uncommon. Layout is simple: complete articles follow one after the other, and leftover space is filled with 'illos' (often drawn right on the stencil). Photos are not often used, but the best fan artists have nothing to apologize for.

The heart of any fanzine is the letter column. Though most of the respondents are known to one another, this is not to be thought of as a "pen pals" affair. Their exchanges can be quite acerbic. Commentary starts with the shortcomings of the last issue, or one of the books reviewed, but quickly moves to larger issues — philosophic or political. Debates rage for months over matters very far removed from science fiction per se: the existence of God, the war between the sexes, government as a necessary evil, the certainty of World War III.

The 'actifan' — a slightly different phenomenon, as I have said, from an SF *reader* — is typically a young man between the ages of 15 and 45 (though women are increasingly in evidence, some say up to one-third of fans and writers). He may be an only child, will certainly be a voracious reader (not just of SF), and probably is hard up for companions on his intellectual level. Possessed of an enquiring mind, he quickly realizes that the people around him do not wish him to enquire, and seeks a haven in 'fandom', which not only respects 'free-thinking', but demands it.

Despite the wide spectrum of ideas, however, there are certain attitudes so commonly held as to be almost implicit in being a fan (or faan, as it is sometimes written). Knowing nothing else about someone but that fact, one can assume he will be an aggressive individualist but non-acquisitive, and probably in financial straits. Agnostic if not atheist, he is contemptuous of superstition (astrology, scientology, UFOs, etc.) and egalitarian as to race, gender and class. He is suspicious of *all* institutions whether commercial, political or educational. Although impatient of literary standards, he will be widely read — but chiefly in non-fiction or esoteric literature. Intensely verbal and opinionated, he may be insensitive and awkward in the more subtle forms of social interaction. He is iconoclastic, greatly daring in an abstract idealistic way, but in life style more chaotic than creative. He may smoke or drink, but takes no drugs. His chief passion is a love of books. His politics may be summed up as libertarian. Leave me alone, he says, mistaking (as do many of us) isolation for freedom.

Wit and pungency

The only mundane (outsider's) view of fanzines to appear in book form is Frederic Wertham's **The World of Fanzines: a Special Form of Communication** (Southern Illinois, 1977). Better known for his diatribe against comic books in **Seduction of the Innocent**, Dr. Wertham approves of fanzines — particularly for their non-profit and anti-establishment aspects. He applauds their wit and pungency, when so many commercial magazines make a virtue of blandness. But he is careful not to claim too much for them, and his judgment seems to me to be very fair:

"It would be a mistake, however to think that these fan-produced magazines can play a significant role as a counterforce, that they are an answer to the problems of society in any way, or a remedy for its frailties. . . Their claim to attention, certainly not a small one, lies in the fact that they belong to the American cultural environment, that they exist and continue to exist as genuine human voices outside of all mass manipulation."

Unconventional conspiracy

The conspiratorial, unconventional tone of fanzines — as well as their cheaply produced, somewhat haphazard layout — can sometimes be found on the newsstand. The early jazz magazines for example, such as the British **Jazz Forum**, were true fan mags — written by and for enthusiasts of a despised genre.

Then there are the newsletters distributed on street corners by the left-wing splinter groups. They even have the same feeling of embattled cultishness as the SF zines, except that they preach (alas) to the unconvertible. Two examples of a more influential kind of political paper are **I.F. Stone's Newsletter** and Claud Cockburn's **The Week** — both one-man operations. In his auto-biography **A Discord of Trumpets**, Cockburn (father of Alexander, of **The Village Voice**) tells of how he came to the realization that most of the really important news never got into the press. Shortly after Hitler came to power, he bought a mimeograph duplicator on credit and produced "the nastiest-looking bit of work that ever dropped onto a breakfast table." But people read it — especially after Ramsay MacDonald denounced it as a conspiracy.

Cockburn's approach was that "the facts" only emerged when a thoroughgoing political bias (in his case, far left) was brought to bear on the clouds of misinformation available; and that so-called "rumour", if properly sifted, could yield unexpected insights. I.F. Stone's method was slightly different: by analyzing the discrepancies in accounts which had *already* appeared in print (often in obscure publications), he exposed the brutality and incompetence of the U.S. military in Viet Nam.

If we classify as "commercial" any periodical sold publicly for profit, or one that carries a substantial amount of advertising, it is clear that amateur (non-commercial) journalism accounts for a large percentage of the print medium. Local union newsletters, school annuals, poetry magazines — the list is impressive. Ratepayers, tenants, co-ops, hobbyists, athletes and ethnic minorities all produce their own variety of 'fanzine'.

A vital voice

Their appeal is generally for people whose particular interests are not served by commercial publishers. But collectively, they are as vital to an open society as public libraries and a universal system of education. They are the true voice of the people — which certainly can *not* be said of computerized information networks!

I think a very good case can be made for an essential distinctness of science fiction fanzines even from other amateur publications. The primary purpose, even of the worst ones (I might say: especially the worst) is not *to inform*, but *to discuss*. It is the dialogue itself that matters, not just the subject — although the subjects are quite varied. SF readers, for all their sense of alienation, have established a world-wide community: the Americas, Europe (East and West), Russia, Japan, and now China are linked by an interest in this genre which above all deals with the unknown — and the possibility of making it known.

David Aylward, born in England, has lived in Toronto (except for a lengthy stay in Japan) since 1946. He works for the Toronto Public Libraries, translates Japanese, and co-edited a collection of Japanese-Canadian poetry, *Paper Doors* (Coach House Press, 1982).

SARA DIAMOND

WOMAN TO WOMAN

talking art

In the last year and a half Vancouver women have organized two presentations of lesbian artist's work. The latest **Woman to Woman** series ran from October 4 to November 4, 1982. Housed in the *Woman in Focus* gallery, it included two sequences of paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs and installations; workshops on censorship, eroticism and lesbian history; discussion nights for contributors and audience; a literary evening and musical performances.

The central value of these shows has been the exposure and stimulus that they afforded lesbian artists. They allow an arena for art which would be repugnant to dominant galleries and concentrate on providing mechanisms for feedback from those who had seen the work. Audiences included lesbians from within and outside the feminist milieu, participants in the Vancouver art scene and people interested in culture and/or curious about lesbian identity, who heard of the show through straight media channels. Advertisement was city-wide, including radio programs and the **Vancouver Sun** show demonstrated the ways that a vibrant social movement can stimulate cultural expression.

Sara Diamond, contributing editor for FUSE magazine conducted an interview with Betsy Warland, Ellen Woodsworth, Lorraine Chisholm and Cheryl Sourkes. These four women had acted as curators and organizers of the events. Their cultural interests and histories vary widely.

***Betsy Warland** began writing in Toronto about ten years ago. She helped to organize the Women's Writing Collective, providing courses and a support system as an alternative to existing male-dominated learning environments. Betsy was involved in Landscape, an event which drew together women, lesbian and ethnic poets, and later, in publishing Canada's third anthology of women's poems. She is currently organizing Women and Words, a Canada-wide conference of women writers planned for 1983.*

***Cheryl Sourkes** is a Vancouver photographer. She has worked independently in this medium for fifteen years. In this time she has organized both her own and other women's shows.*

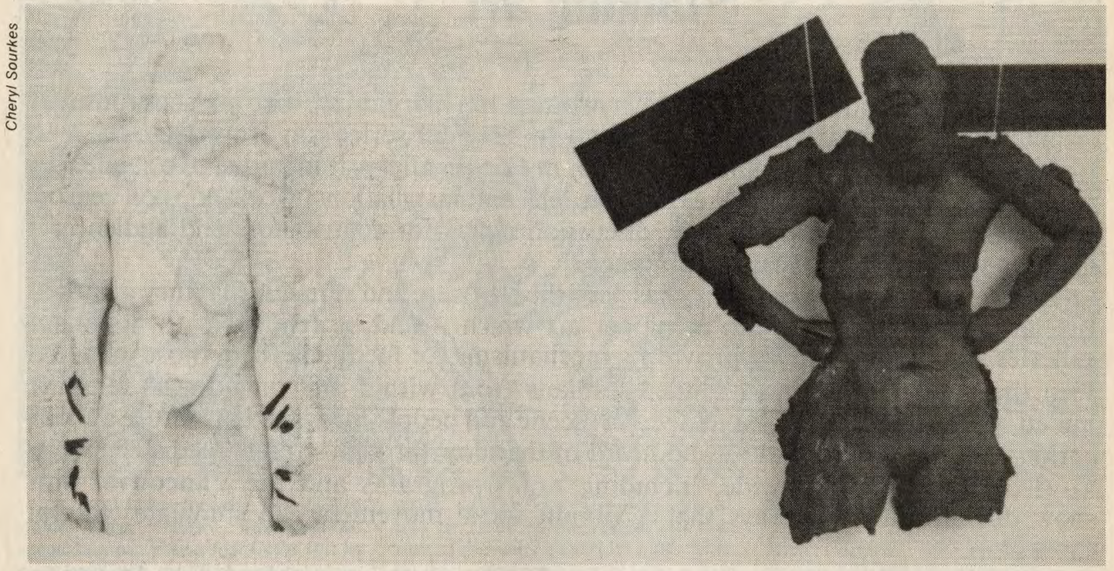
***Ellen Woodsworth** has been active in both the lesbian and women's movement for many years. Through working on Woman to Woman she has come to define herself as an artist as well as as political organizer. Her medium is clay. Ellen feels a strong antipathy to art galleries, considering most art and art spaces to be inaccessible. She has no formal art training and pursues sculpture for the pleasure of creating her own work and sharing others' creativity. She has curated previous feminist art shows in Vancouver.*

***Lorraine Chisholm** studied at various art schools over a nine year period. She became increasingly convinced that art could be a subversive force outside of the art establishment. As a feminist her interest was in art by and for other women. She assisted in organizing Festival '82 in Nova Scotia and became involved with the Woman to Woman show when she arrived on the West Coast.*

The following interview raises a series of relevant questions for lesbian artists. These include: where should feminist and/or lesbian artists locate themselves in relation to society; is art most effective as part of a feminist subculture; on the fringe of society looking inwards to provide a critical perspective; as part of the mainstream? What is crucial to lesbian identity: is it our sexual orientation and sexuality, do we need a broader definition of ourselves; how do we work with patriarchal society's focus on our sexuality in oppressing us? How does lesbian art intersect with women's relationship to culture as a whole? Is our eroticism the root of our creativity; are there other elements to our impulse as artists such as anger or conceptual analysis? How do lesbian artists deal with pornography in creating erotic art; is it possible to provide alternative images of women's sexuality; what role does objectification play in all forms of sexuality? Should lesbian artists challenge a traditional ideology of art as subjective expression and art as consumer items? If so, how? How do we define and engage our audience?

On the behaviour mod ward they had this system where they gave us tokens for doing what they wanted and they took them away for being bad. You had to pay tokens for anything you wanted to do, even taking a bath. I remember I had this green plaid skirt and matching sweater, I used to get tokens for wearing it because they were trying to change me into their idea of a proper woman. So this morning I appeared at breakfast all tarted up and this nurse said, "Oh! You look very nice!" in this really phoney voice she always used for the patients. Then she told me I'd look better if I shaved my legs. I remember feeling all embarassed and stupid, even though I'd decided long before that, that shaved legs were very silly. After breakfast I signed out the razor and went off to the bath. I think at that point I was planning to shave my fucking legs.

Cheryl Sourkes



I remember the rush of blood as I slashed as hard as I could, sort of not looking and then the blood welled up and I sat there and let it run in the bath. After a while someone knocked on the door to use the bath so I got up. I went out to the desk and slapped the razor down in front of the nurse with my bloody hand and said, "I'm finished with the razor." She looked at me real angrylike and said, "You'll be sorry for that." They stitched me up without anaesthetic and I remember that it hurt like hell but I pretended it didn't.

Unladylike Behaviour by Persimon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooley

Where does our art, born of a political movement, represent political and artistic process?

By presenting this interview, it is my hope that discussion will be pursued in future contributions to FUSE, in similar art shows and in future events sponsored by Woman to Woman.

Sara: Where did the idea for the Woman to Woman showings come from, who pulled them together and how did this last show come about?

Ellen: In 1980, the National Lesbian Conference was planned by a group of women in Vancouver. I was working on the organizing committee and decided that I really wanted to do an art show in conjunction with it. I approached Persimmon Blackbridge who I had been working with and had done a Mother's Day show with previously. I came up with the name **Woman to Woman**. We decided to approach *Women In Focus* and luckily they had a two week gap in their programming; so we rented this place. It was a straight hung show that started the evening of the National Lesbian Conference. There were no workshops involved with it. After that was over I wanted to see the evolution of the artists involved and the ways that lesbians looked at themselves. I approached a few people about doing it again. We ended up with a core of people: Betsy, Lorraine, Cheryl and a great deal of help from Lorraine Oades. We decided to go into a gallery that was set up and then to really expand in terms of what kinds of things we had happening. It grew from two weeks to a month, as things really mushroomed. "Memory and Imagination" was the title of the recent show: our daily lives and our evolving imaginations, from the ordinary to the magical.

We wanted people to think that the show was about lesbianism, but we wanted to broaden it out to our daily lives: raising kids, looking for a job or housing, to complex issues.

An unjuried movement

Sara: Why was it an unjuried show?

Ellen: An unjuried show means that anything a person puts in, they decide they want to put in and that is precisely what the lesbian movement is.

Lorraine: I feel very strongly about it being an unjuried show and I also feel strongly at times that there's a place for shows in which you have control over all the work that comes in and the context and the result of the show as a whole.

Maybe it's because lesbians have been silenced for so long and there hasn't been any forum in which lesbians could present their art, or any kind of cultural work, that it was really important that we didn't censor images. There were a lot of different levels of technical expertise. It created an environment where there were lots and lots of images for lesbians to bounce off of, to get ideas from, to be self-critical about.

Ellen: There's been a number of art shows; there's been the **Erotic Art Show** and **Festival '82**. It's been remarkable that very few lesbians worked on either of the two shows in B.C., but even more indicative is that there's been very little lesbian content. Not only are we invisible, but when we try to be visible and approach shows our work isn't selected. So we need to begin to present our own images as we choose them for ourselves.

Sara: What then is lesbian art? Can any of you embroider on a definition of a lesbian aesthetic?

Betsy: There are certain kinds of images and subject matter that have specifically to do with the lesbian experience, that don't translate into any other experience. Because of that they have the potential for new visions and sensibilities and forms. Right now a lot of those have to do with our bodies, it seems like square one as a culture and as an art form. You can have a lesbian who can paint landscapes, but I don't consider that lesbian art right now, I consider that as art that happens to be done by a lesbian.

Cheryl: I think we have the phenomena of 'lesbian and artist', and lesbian artist. 'Lesbian and artist' can deal with any subject matter at all. But the moment you want to say "lesbian artist", you are dealing with energy that has to do with sexuality and sexual identify; that's what we've attracted to this show and the readings.

Ellen: Through the women's movement we've been able to define ourselves as women; but through the lesbian movement we begin to go beyond the stage where the "I" is the only thing that exists, when we reach the lesbian movement we are at the point where "we" exist. We have the self-affirmation, but we also have the affirmation of the other, which is the real turning point for the position of women in society as a whole. The movement of women together really does fundamentally overthrow the definition of who a woman is.

Sara: To continue with the lesbian aesthetic: is there a set of images, an emotional space created by the art, a kind of impact or specific forms that lesbians have chosen? Is there something that distinguishes this art from that of dominant artists or even of other women artists?

Betsy: Without a doubt. Some of the literature in the literary evening was about women making love and the ambience, what happened, the images, are so clearly between two women, it couldn't be mistaken for anything else. There's a reclaiming of words that I've had to disregard, such as 'intercourse'. This was an obsolete word in my life experience and then

Cheryl Sourkes

Becoming the Image by Sara Diamond

going back to the word's etymology, the root of that word is "to run between", so I've reclaimed that word. That actually is a very meaningful word that I've been able to transform into our experience now.

Lorraine: I think that there are some pieces — Persimmon's and Sheila's, for example — that place the maker outside of society and not in an eccentric way at all, but lesbians really are outside. Some lesbians accept the position of being ostracized from society and use energy from that to create their own vision. Did you pick up a sense of defiance in some of the work? I did. And anger, also.

Ellen: I wouldn't say outside of society, because when you incarcerate people you definitely include them in society, in a particular position in society. You either accept society's definition of who you are or you don't and you have to redefine society and then start to create a new society — usually in direct opposition. We become a revolutionary impulse, creating a new society for our own survival's sake. To be a lesbian means that we're — unconsciously but also consciously as we become more active — opposing the system.

Cheryl: Lesbians are a society; we are a community. We recognize each other and we congregate together and we create a culture and we also have the bravery to say NO! to what we were brought up to. You get to make your own rules.

Betsy: To get back to aesthetics as a way of seeing: I think that once your really enter into the lesbian experience the way you see things is altered

forever. An example: one woman was looking at some photographs in the show and they are the inside of sea caves; they are like sandstone. She was a straight woman and she saw them as being fragmented; "this is what the lesbian experience is like, fragmented." I was shocked because what we all saw in those was how the landscape of those caves were like our own bodies, and these were the folds or dark recesses, our vaginas, and they were such shockingly different ways of seeing the same piece of art.

Ellen: I think that anything that defines a group of people primarily — and in our case it's our sexuality, who we're lovers with; that is what lesbian means to most people — that's the first area we'll address ourselves to, because that's where we've had to keep quiet.

Sara: What you're suggesting is that lesbian art is that which is self-consciously lesbian through the artist stating her sexual identity. Did women who don't create art that falls within that framework stay away from exhibiting in the show? Did that focus narrow who your audience is and the ability of the art to speak to a broad range of lesbian experience? Does it require a feminist consciousness to identify with the art you are describing?

Cheryl: The 'lesbians and artists' were part of the audience, they didn't stay away, they simply didn't put in.

Betsy: It seems that the kind of art you're defining can be read, shown or played, if you're talking about music, in the arenas that already exist and the kind of art in this show doesn't have that arena.

Ellen: Once you start to speak of something that hasn't been spoken of you immediately broaden the field. We started last year with fairly abstract images in a two-week show and this year we've done a month long show that encompasses censorship, eroticism, herstory, music, a literary evening, a band and artists' workshops.

Sara: What issues came up in the erotic workshop?

Cheryl: Before we got to the erotic workshop a lot of women talked about various sexual blocks where they needed a forum to express themselves. They would say where they hurt and there was a feeling that a lot of discussion had to happen before that could become unblocked, to get to the erotic energy. People were holding very deep places in themselves and it wasn't the place for it, although it was enough just to hear them say what they would like to talk about. Then we got to the specific imagery that people had brought.

Betsy: When Lorraine and I met each other we were in a film on pornography that Women in Focus had done and a discussion afterwards. I think it was almost all lesbian women there that night. Everyone was very ambivalent about pornography. There was a real reticence to have any images, even if we did them. Lorraine and I were the only two that felt differently from that and wanted to make positive images that we felt good about. One of the resources that we used in the erotica workshop was Audrey Lourdes' essay about erotica as powerful; to me it's a cornerstone of lesbian art because it says that our eroticism is acutally where our power comes from and that the patriarchy has in fact really steered us away from that because it knows that. That's where we have all our vision, that's where we replenish ourselves and that's where we get in touch with our deep knowledge that goes way back; it's where we're transformed. In "Galaxy", I wrote about a certain experience that I had of feeling impregnated by a woman lover; it had never occurred to me that that would happen. Part of the image was that my womb was like a galaxy and the impregnation was like the first moon in that galaxy.

Cheryl: I think that making love and making art come from the same place; it's like a freeing of energy.

Lorraine: The deep realization that you're lesbian comes from understanding that something that is erotic is true. My discovery of my lesbianism was such a revelation that it brought me to question everything else and to trust my own truths: my eroticism was telling me something valid, in opposition to everything that society was telling me. It's a valuable source of power for all women.

Ellen: Just having the workshop is a break from the previous discussions of sexuality for the last six months that have centered on S and M violence between women. It's in the interest of the state to perpetuate violence between women and between men and women, and there's been a lot of money made out of S and M. I'm ecstatic that our art show is able to say, "That's the wrong direction to be taking; what we need to be doing is rejoicing in our sexuality and exploring it."

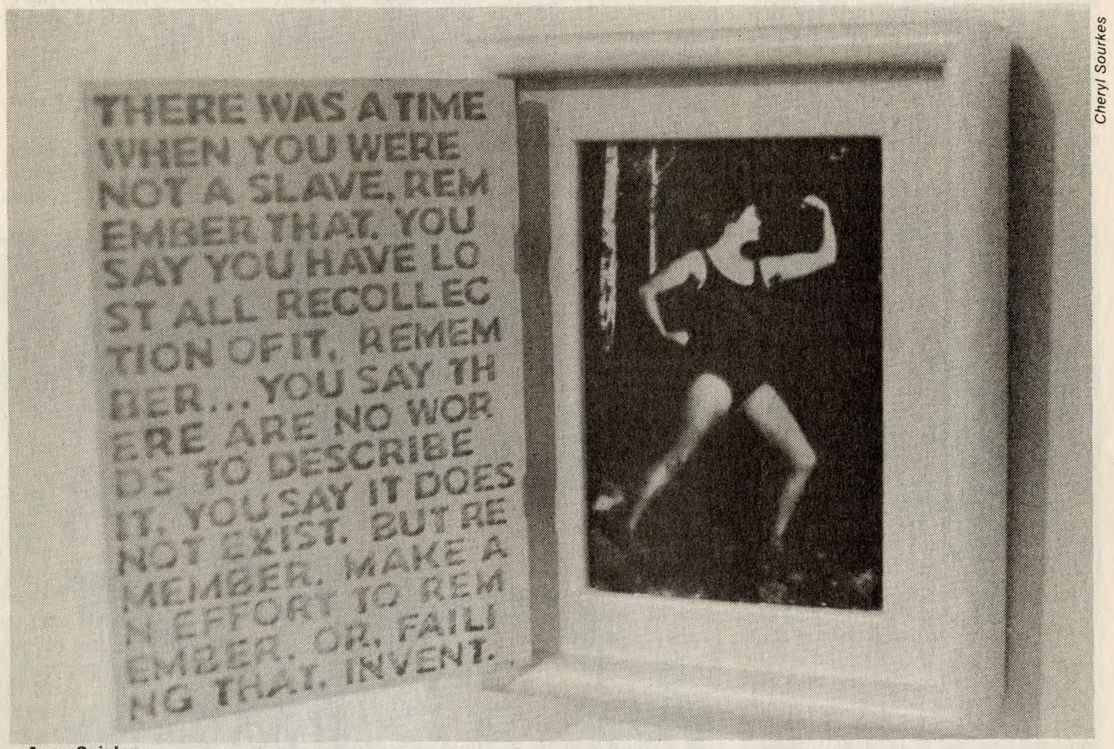
Lorraine: One woman in the workshop pointed out that part of the interest in S and M in the lesbian community comes from the fact that this is the only place that sexuality is talked about.

Sara: Did women in the workshop, or in other workshops during the show, talk about how you deal with creating erotic images when the dominant representation of women's sexuality and bodies, including lesbian sexuality, are pornographic images, created through the male eye for the male viewer? Were there references to strategies in terms of form, content, defining the audience?

Betsy: One of the things that Lourdes says is that the erotic is really joy, so that immediately divorces you from pornography. Also that it is within the context of loving, which again immediately separates you from pornography: there was a discussion of that.

Ellen: We talked about it some but we moved off that quickly into saying what we felt was erotic and looking at the images and saying why we found them erotic. For example, the breast prints, in which this woman just inked her breasts and did prints of herself and her friends. They're remarkable because you look at them, and because the hairs are white and the nipples are pink — they look like a comet going through space and they look like an eye. They keep unfolding and unfolding. You can never see a breast as the same thing again. It seemed easy to move to that once we started to talk about images; if we stay intellectual, we can only go so far.

Sara: I find it difficult to understand how women artists can create erotic images without dealing with pornography through some reference to how their art contradicts existing images of women's sexuality. I am personally conscious that I have been socialized into seeing myself and my lover, to some extent, within an erotic language created by patriarchal domination. So for me, there's a big issue about how we provide the model, when images are always channelled again through mass culture in the way that they are read by people. I get frustrated with art that simply represents women's bodies in aesthetic forms, either literally or symbolically; one of my feelings about the art show was that there were a lot of very beautiful but static images of women's bodies. They were very pure images and didn't seem to deal with the anger, struggle and active process around reclaiming our sexuality. It was another more beautiful, more accurate, but still objectified vision of the female body. That struggle for me represents a lot of my personal process of trying to carve out an identity which comes to terms with my fascination with glamour and dependency on mass culture. I don't think I'm alone in that process. As feminists we might reject those images produced by male-dominated culture but there's always a part of us that moves back into them. There's a level where we have to play with those images, identify with and ridicule them. I don't think we can truly transcend the culture that we're informed by, we'll have to smash the very structures that the culture is based on to really make that transformation.



Cheryl Sourkes

Anne Quigley

Cheryl: In order to make erotic imagery, I have to feel very innocent, I have to be totally immersed in some joyous feeling and forget all these other things that you are saying. So the task is to feel strong and bold and intact and to love myself and than what comes out of that energy is as close as I can get to an erotic image.

Lorraine: The anti-pornography movement has articulated fairly well the problems with pornography. It's important to combat and counterbalance it with a new erotic culture. I don't think that it's going to come out of being against pornography but out of a whole other place which is an alternative place. What we need to develop is a strong lesbian erotic that will include a variety of experiences and expressions so that rather than having the codified system that pornography provides, the erotica comes from different, individual experience. Pornography has some kind of formula; you have to include some violence against women for titillation and a certain kind of degradation. We need erotic images that don't include that at all. The danger with pornography is that you start to reject sexuality as a place where you can make culture from. We shouldn't underestimate the power of images. We've been faced with images that don't in any way affirm a woman's identity, let alone a lesbian's sexuality and we need to create alternative images that women can identify with, sexuality where women can be autonomous with a lot of the qualities that are embodied in the women's movement.

Ellen: We are still very much defined by our images. One of the things that Sara explored in her piece is the fact that we do look at each other's bodies, we do look at what each other wears, we do look at the rings on each other's fingers and what we wear around our necks and how we do our hair. That is aesthetically pleasing or not pleasing to us. As lesbians we've seen each other in so many situations where we've been destroyed. My first experience as a lesbian was on the street or in the Vanport (a former Vancouver lesbian bar), or in situations with women who drank a lot, were extremely unhealthy, wore clothes that were unappealing to me, myself included. To begin to see women who look healthy, who look beautiful, their bodies look really lovely . . . it's just that I can explore another way of looking at a woman and saying, "My God, this woman really likes her body, she's not afraid to play with it, to adorn it, or to move with it in a pleasurable way."

Lorraine: For me, in the show there were a lot of images that were idealized images of lesbians' lives or bodies. I think it's a first step because it's a reaction to the negative images with which we've been presented in the first

place. What I'm hoping will happen in future shows is that more complex images will start to emerge. One of the important things about the show is that it's allowing a context for women to discuss these things and then to develop more complex images which are more mature and include more criticism of the lesbian community or present more contradictions, but it's a process of development.

Cheryl: Because of using *Women in Focus Gallery*, where they're fussy about their walls, we were forced to frame everything and then the first show was called conservative because we framed everything.

Sara: Did any of the pieces grapple with the actual process of art production as experienced by lesbian artists? For example, I recall one discussion about whether it was important for lesbian photographers to refer to their role in the image-making process within their completed photographs.

Lorraine: What I was struck by was that in photographs there is always the presence of the photographer and the camera, it interferes with the moment of what is being taken. I'm always conscious, when I look at the image, of the process that had to occur for that image to be taken. In Cheryl's two photographs (of two women lying side by side on Wreck Beach), I was really conscious that because she took the photograph herself, from the first photograph to the second there had to be this movement where she was adjusting the camera. The process of documentation is implicit in the image; the process both defines the imagery that is being made and interferes with it.

The images that lesbians make are different from the images that other people can make of lesbians, so one of my real interests in the show was seeing the images that lesbians make of themselves.

Sara: There needs to be some reference point for what and who creates the completed product that people are then consuming as an art object. Especially as women and as lesbians because we are turned into objects by the culture, referring to how new images are created and their components would be crucial in fracturing that objectification.

Voices unfolding

Betsy: In the literary evening the readers were put together in dramatic sequence so that the work was unfolding into the next piece. There you had a process you could see before your eyes, the whole evolution and maturity. There's something remarkable in young women's writing because it's so raw and the older women's work is so refined. Because we structured the literary evening as we did, it made the ten of us feel that we weren't performing. We were all interconnected as a community of interest and we got so wrapped up in each other's reading. Someone would end a poem and then five poems later, it was interwoven. I didn't want to do it in the same old way as isolated voices standing up and reading their work. All of us were trying to find forms to structure the showings.

Cheryl: Collective process has been an important part of the lesbian sensibility, the breaking down of the star, the breaking down of the hierarchy, the gathering in a circle and voices coming as they arise.

I felt a change between the first show (first two weeks) and the second show in the second show we took liberties, we left spaces, we turned off lots of lights and made it much darker; we left the ladders in, we tried to let it show more. Images will come because of the experience of being able to show images; work will come from the reading, people will write things that they never thought that they could write before, people who read in the show will expand part of themselves. They will be amazed that they have license from within to go into those areas.

Ellen: I was working on a process piece (in the gallery for the duration of the show) that came out of a personal thing that I was going through as an athlete as well as an artist, about what soccer meant to me and being at the Gay Olympics. It was the first time that I could ever be together with a whole bunch of women and totally be all that I was: the highs and lows and the periods and the emotional breakups and the falling-in-loves. A woman who was a mother and handling three relationships was also able to model. She and her lover worked with me on this piece and as their relationship went through changes and my relationship with her changed, the piece was affected. But that's what being an artists is: you're working with so many emotions that, if it's something that requires other people, you make it or break it with the other people. Also, when you bring it into a public context you put more pressure on it.

Lorraine: The fallibility of doing a work in process is that it can fail; if it's not something beginning with some kind of formula that you know produces results no matter what. That has been a valuable lesson to learn and I don't think that can happen in many contexts. Some will criticize the failure of some of the process projects. Comparing it to a lot of women's art shows that I've seen, they're trying to fit women's art into the mainstream, they're trying to showcase our art "which is as good as your art" and I don't think that's very valuable to women artists. I don't think that's very valuable to anyone trying to make change.

Trauma and conflict

Sara: What themes other than sexuality were represented by the various events and show? What about trauma in relationships, conflict with the straight world for example?

Ellen: The most powerful and moving pieces in the show, people have said that made the show, were Sheila and Persimmon's pieces of being incarcerated in a mental hospital by parents and the police, because the woman was and is a lesbian. The piece is lifesize and done in a raw clay material with shards of glass and different things inserted in it and with writing superimposed over the burnt painting. That piece, both in medium and what is talked about, is certainly one of the most telling of what has happened to lesbians for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Sara: What was subversive about the show?

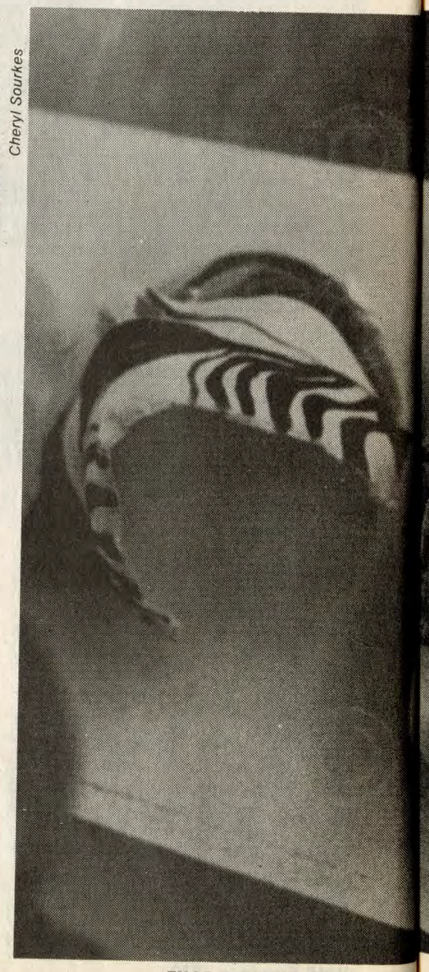
Betsy: We put these posters up and they kept getting ripped down around town. We couldn't go for funding for a show like this. I went into a restaurant and there were all these posters: Tony Bennett and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and I said, "Can I hang this?" The manager of the restaurant came up behind me and she said, "Uh, uh!" I asked, "Why?", and she said, "That's political!" That really sums it up in a way: dominant culture is entertainment, it's not politics, and what we're doing is political. Everything's political!

Lorraine: It got into the Vancouver Sun Entertainment Guide, in our family entertainment section.

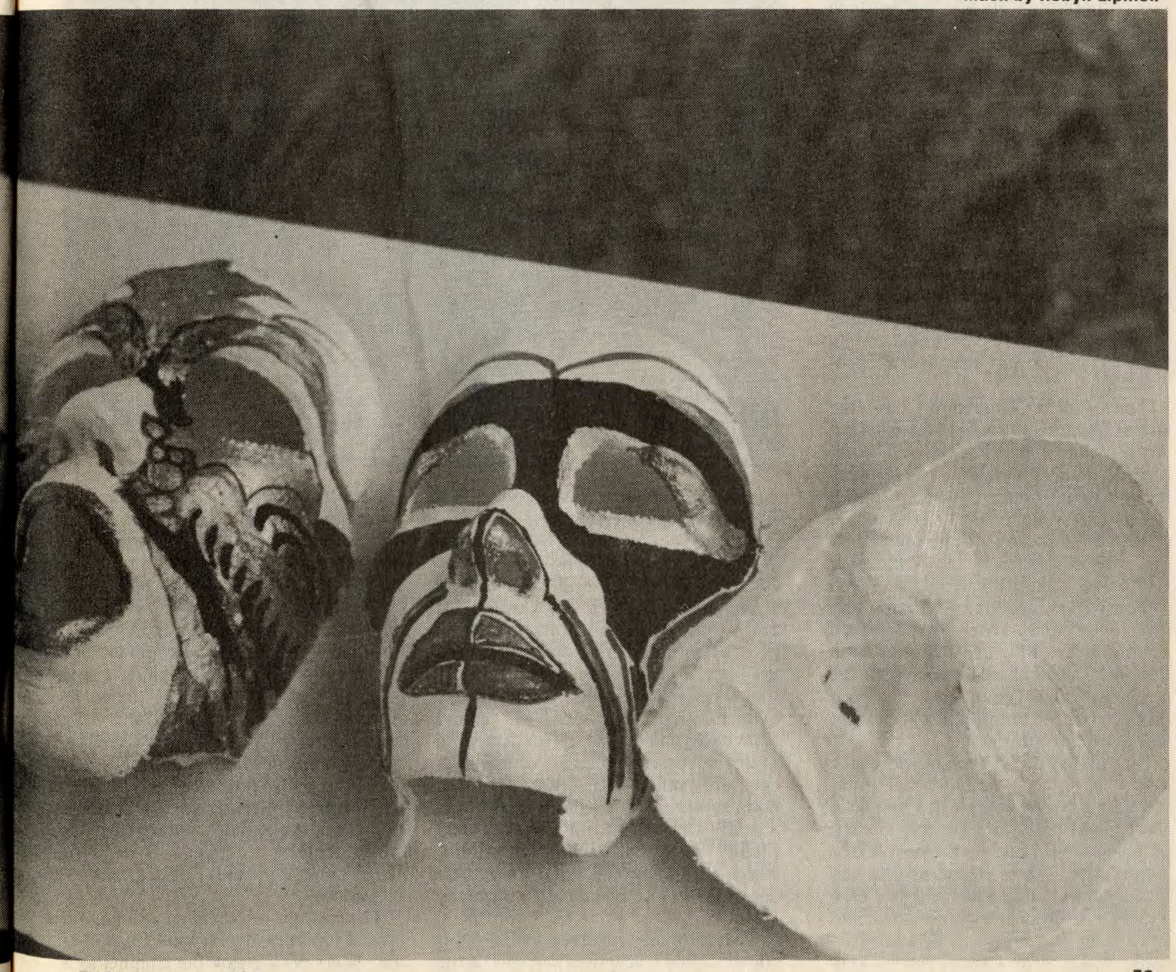
Ellen: A lot of lesbians who are artists were threatened because suddenly we had exposed this previous underground and made the public aware. It can't be that queer anymore when there's a lesbian art show. It subverted our own underground identity.

Sara: What do you see as the relationship between creating art and building a political movement?

Lorraine: I feel pretty strongly that the art show comes out of the lesbian movement. There's a drive for people who are artists to see their own forms somehow developed in the lesbian community. I don't want to be working in a political movement, that's not where my strength is. I'm an image-maker and I want to make them for other lesbians so that they know what being a lesbian is about. For me it comes out of being political to begin with, but the real impulse is to want to make those images. I also think that lesbian artists have a lot to offer the women's movement because I think that we have a different kind of vision that's not solely political and the lesbian political movement needs that kind of vision as well. □



Cheryl Sourkes



Mask by Robyn Elphick

KEN BLAINE

THE SEPTEMBER PURGE

Community television started in the late sixties, as the availability of 'cheap' portable and easy to use video equipment made community television technically and economically possible. Many people who worked on the inception of community channels and the ideas that shaped that development, came out of the movements to democratize the media. This impulse also produced underground newspapers, co-op radio stations, small record labels, film workshops in colleges and even government programmes such as the **National Film Board's** "Challenge for Change" programme.

Over the last decade, in a series of policy statements and decisions, the *CRTC* has elaborated the concept of the community channel as a decentralized, easily accessible facility serving not only geographically defined areas but also neighborhoods and communities of interest (such as ethnic groups). Cable companies were to reserve a channel exclusively for community use, not to be shared with any other service, and to provide staff, equipment and training to encourage public participation in the production and selection of programming.

Vancouver Cablevision has the largest single license area in Canada and this provided a huge budget — by community channel standards — allowing for more and better equipment and a larger staff than other systems could afford. Even so, in 1977, the single central studio operated by **Vancouver Cable Ten** lacked the accessibility and responsiveness needed by so large and diverse an area. The *Neighborhood Television* (NTV) concept, instituted in that year, attempted to deal with the problem. **Cable Ten** opened storefront offices in three communities: Kitsilano, Richmond and Burnaby.

By August 1982 **Vancouver Cable Ten** was a very active community channel, a good example in Canada of what could be done with the concept of television for and by the people of a community. The technical production standards at **Cable Ten** were of a high quality. The audience response to programming was constant and surprisingly large. The **Cable Ten** system

Rogers 1981 Annual Report

Members of National Management Committee, Rogers Cablesystems Inc.

consisted of studios in Vancouver and Burnaby (with one being built in Richmond), the City Hall Bureau, and NTV offices in Kitsilano, Vancouver East and the West End. The central studio in Vancouver was responsible for producing ethnic programming, general interest programming, large projects and the coverage of issues that effected the residents of the entire license area, as well as actual cablecast. The three NTV offices were highly successful in terms of both accessibility and interaction with the community. The Burnaby studio was a newly completed and well equipped facility and the Richmond studio, which was to be the largest and best equipped of the three, was still being built.

The flexibility inherent in the Vancouver Cable Ten system was one of the factors that made the station a success. Issues could be covered from a variety of perspectives, allowing for a variety of programming alternatives. Since there was usually a choice about which facility a community member could approach, almost any production style or approach could be accomodated. For example, topical events calling for a weekly, studio-based format could be handled routinely by central, while neighborhoods might handle issues requiring a feature in-depth format. The ability to pool equipment was a large advantage in meeting special production needs, providing backup facilities with more than one event to cover at the same time in cases of equipment breakdown.

The concept of volunteer production and community involvement was working. Some people saw the channel as a

means of doing community development work and the quality of training that they received also allowed them to move into video production in other areas: working for unions, community service organizations and other alternative video groups.

Ironically the 'success' of the community channel in Vancouver caused problems not found in smaller or less advanced community channels. Overwhelmed by demand, staff had to put volunteers on waiting lists as the ability to train the numbers of people walking through the doors was being stretched

Sheldon Reisler

Volunteers: Dan Greaves & Ron Fisher

to the limit. In addition, widely varying levels of skill and experience of those using equipment do cause maintenance problems; and more programme ideas and requests were being received than could be accomodated.

Benevolent buyers

Vancouver Cablevision is a subsidiary of *Premier Cablesystems*, which was bought by *Rogers Cablesystems* in 1980. When *Rogers* took over *Premier*, optimism was high about the future of the community channel within the new corporate giant. Brian Dodd is a **Vancouver Cable Ten** staff member who was involved in the coverage of the *CRTC* hearing dealing with the takeover application. He says, "at the time everybody on the staff was feeling really good about *Rogers* taking over the company. Ted Rogers was in town patting everybody on the back and making all sorts of promises."

Some effects of the *Rogers* take-over were positive. Staff wages were raised to a reasonable level for the first time. Longer on-air hours gave the station more visibility and the multiple repeats of programming made it more convenient for people to watch community programmes. The increased pressure on NTV to produce larger amounts of programming forced them to become more efficient and allowed for more volunteer activity.

Rogers did meet several of the commitments that it had made in the takeover application. The Burnaby Studio was built, relieving some of the pressure on Central. The Richmond Studio gave the system a magnificent facility. The City Hall Bureau was a large advance in **Vancouver Cable Ten**'s ability to give the public information about civic issues and was often cited as being an important factor in the 1982 Vancouver election.

Support for the take-over application had been actively sought from members of the community who were involved with **Vancouver Cable Ten**. But then came the announcement of the planned closing of the neighborhood offices. Many of those people who had written favourable interventions now regretted their support. Jane Rittenhouse is a senior citizen who was heavily involved in the Kitsilano NTV office. In a letter she wrote to *Vancouver Cablevision* in 1981, dealing with the proposed closure of the NTV office, she says, "at the time of the CRTC hearing in May 1980 I submitted a written intervention favouring the transfer of shares from Premier Communications Ltd. to Canada Cablesystems Ltd. . . . I feel I have been duped. The plans I saw said nothing whatsoever about cutting down on your Neighborhoods Programs which were a brilliant idea."

This decision to close down the neighborhood offices was prompted in part by the corporate bias towards standardized operations. The management of **Vancouver Cable Ten** began to compare their statistics to those of other *Rogers* owned cable licenses. This data included the number of hours of programming produced by each employee, the mixture of remote and studio production, and the amount and type of equipment owned by the stations. Neighborhood Television programme looked very inefficient when judged statistically.

NTV employees produced significantly less programming than their counterparts in centralized studio-based facilities. The Neighborhoods tended to rely on less efficient styles such as single camera and mobile production, rather than studio production.

Jim McDowell, Director of a community centre in the downtown East Side, was heavily involved in the Vancouver East **Cable Ten** office. His letter of complaint was representative of the concerns expressed in most of the letters sent to the Company and *CRTC*. Mr. McDowell stated, "Keeping Cable Ten's neighbourhood offices open in the heart of key communities is essential for two reasons: it gives citizens their only direct access to the television medium and it keeps station staff sensitive to local viewpoints."

David Smith, General Manager of *Vancouver Cablevison Limited*, responded to Mr. McDowell's letter by writing, "You can be certain that we recognize neighbourhood television as a philosophy that works in Vancouver, and as such, it will not be abandoned." He maintained, however, that "Neighbourhood Television has proven to be a success, not because of a storefront office on a street, but by the dedication of the staff and volunteers toward their particular neighbourhood. I'm confident that Neighbourhood Television will continue to be the responsive medium we have come to expect."

In a subsequent letter, McDowell countered, "The thrust of my argument, shared by all the volunteers that I have worked with, and scores of neighbours who use this local resource, was that the neighbourhood office is what makes the philosophy work. Without it, you can churn out all the noble philosophy you want and manufacture artificial neighbourhood programming from a central office, but the 'concept' will be empty and the pro-

grams will have none of the depth, spontaneity and authenticity that now exists."

The community was not divided. Between the time of the announcement, in the summer of 1981, of the closing of the NTV offices and the rate increase hearings, letters poured in from community groups, M.P.'s, Aldermen, the Mayor, volunteers and many members of the public who were regular viewers of the channel.

Volunteers: Bob Lewis & Sheila Adams

Playing percentages

Vancouver Cablevision presented its rate increase application at the May 1982 *CRTC* hearings. **Cable Ten** supporters made many written interventions, opposing the increase because of the NTV cutbacks. The Company had applied for a 21% increase effective as soon as possible, and a further 18% increase the following year. The reasons for such a hefty increase were to boost the profitability of the Company which at 17% was considered inadequate, and to allow the Company to finish the rebuilding of the cable system. This would increase the number of channels that could be carried and make it technically possible to carry Pay TV. A decision on the rate increase application was not expected before mid-summer.

Before that decision was released, the Federal government announced its 6 and 5 budget guidelines policy. The cable industry, knowing that it would fall under these guidelines, announced that it was voluntarily complying with them. *Vancouver Cablevision* asked the CRTC to amend its rate increase application to 6%. Feeling that the amended application voided the commitments made in the original application, they moved quickly in reaction to the prospect of reduced revenues, acting before the *CRTC* released its decision.

The company argued to the *CRTC* that the increase in efficiency allowed by centralizing the NTV offices would make it possible for one person to meet the needs of a neighbourhood. They held that the philosophy of NTV would still be maintained. In the early part of 1982, however, the NTV staff had prepared a recommendation to maintain the neighborhood offices while still allowing for a strong and workable Central. The interdependence of the two types of operations was pointed out. NTV needed Central to produce the general interest, ethnic and large scale productions that would have swamped the neighborhoods. The central facility needed the neighborhoods to provide the localized programming that was almost impossible for a central facility to provide.

At the beginning of September 1982 service was drastically reduced. Layoffs of twenty-two station employees were announced, along with the intention to carry out their original play of 'relocating' the neighborhood offices in the central building. The layoffs were part of the displacement of over one hundred and fifty community channel workers in all cable systems owned by *Rogers Cablesystems Inc.* across Canada. The workers who lost their jobs in Vancouver represented the majority of the production staff of **Vancouver Cable Ten**.

A few days later the *CRTC* announced its decision on the rate increase application, forcing *Rogers* to scrap its plans to close the neighborhood offices. The wording of the decision included a demand that the company leave the Vancouver East and the West end offices open. While the decision was a victory for the community, the lay-offs were a much larger blow to the community channel, as the greatly reduced and demoralized staff lessened the channel's ability to serve its mandate, erasing a great deal of the progress that had been made.

The suddeness of the cutback created havoc. Programming hours were drastically cut, especially at Central where the staff lay-offs had hit the hardest. The lack of enough people both to produce programming and to play that programming back has been deeply felt. Equipment breakdown, always a major problem, reached an astounding level. And with only one person in each of the neighborhood offices, the ability to work closely with the volunteers was reduced.

Tracing the tightening belt

The purchase of *Vancouver Cable* by *Rogers* was part of a large enterprise which continues to expand. (*Rogers* has purchased many cable systems, mainly in the United States.) The expansionist nature of the cable industry is affecting the existence of the community channel concept. While *Rogers* is the most spectacular shopper in the cable industry, this trend is also being followed by many others.

The most immediate problem caused by the rush to expand is economic. Within the *Rogers Company*, the growing movement with the U.S. government to restrict Canadian ownership of American communications industries was viewed with alarm. The Company wanted very much to increase its holdings within the U.S., since potential for expansion of subscribers in Canada was comparatively limited. It was decided to buy as much and as fast as possible, financing the growth through borrowing. At the time the Canadian dollar was weak and interest rates were high, causing a severe shortage of cash. The need to save (redirect) money was probably a factor in the decision to close the three NTV offices, but the flood of outrage that followed this

announcement caused *Vancouver Cablevision* to alter its plans slightly.

Dave Liddell, manager of **Cable Ten** explains the disproportionate staff reductions at the station by saying that there simply isn't enough money to do everything that the *CRTC* wants done. It is his view that the *CRTC* is looking towards Pay TV to provide the economic basis of a strong Canadian production industry. Thus, when faced with limited funds the company decided to throw the bulk of its resources into the marketing of Pay TV.

Tangible benefits

But money is not the only community channel resource that the cable industry would like to use in marketing pay television or in other revenue producing services. Although the overriding concern expressed is that of marketing new services, much of the discussion within the industry has been devoted to the use of community channel personnel, equipment and experience.* And Cable industry interest in getting more tangible benefits out of their community television departments has not been limited to discussion. Over the last few years, *Vancouver Cablevision* has been experimenting with the use of community programming staff, equipment and even the channel itself, for marketing, public relations and commercial production.

Ever since cable companies were allowed to advertise their own services on the community channel, Vancouver Cable Ten staff have been producing and airing ads for a variety of products and services (such as convertor sales and rentals). One of the more amusing of these exercises was a promo that was produced for a campaign designed to sell more cable subscriptions. The cable company offered free removal of the rooftop antenna from the home of anyone who bought a new subscription. Much time and effort was put into creating a slick and funny ad, slated to appear on Cable Ten. The promo was scrapped when it finally occurred to someone that only people with cable already could receive Cable Ten.

Rogers used **Cable Ten** equipment and production people to produce sophisticated tapes to present to the CRTC during the last two rate increase hearings. While budgets for wages and materials used to develop both rate increase productions and the promos for airing on Cable Ten generally came out of separate funds and did not use up any community channel funds, they did affect the operation of the community channel. Equipment bookings for these productions were sometimes given priority over the community channel. Staff tied up in these productions were unavailable for community channel productions.

Another use of the community channel's resources was exemplified by the *Vancouver Cablevision* display at the *1982 Pacific National Exhibition*. The community channel was a featured part of this multi-purpose display. The evident intention of which was to market convertors.

Rogers 1981 Annual Report

Former Canadian Ambassador to Iran, Kenneth Taylor, and Edward S. Rogers

The community television display was a studio style set-up that produced one half-hour of original programming each day. This programming was produced by a person hired for this specific purpose by **Cable Ten** and consisted mostly of light items such as sheep-shearing and cooking demonstrations.

The majority of the time spent on this display was in a demonstratin of a concept called "Video Radio". This imitation of MTV (Musictelevision — a pay TV channel) in the United States was a co-operative effort by **Cable Ten, CFOX**, (a local FM radio station) and the local distribution offices of various record companies. The implication was that this was an example of what would be commercially available on cable in the future. Ads were sold to various other exhibitors at the P.N.E. *Vancouver Cablevision* offered to produce these promos through another experiment in revenue producing services called "Video Communications", an attempt to break into the straight production field.

Community channel employees who worked on this display charged their time to the community channel budget codes. George Fierheller, a company executive, told me that any work done for sales or any other department would be charged to those departments according to an estimate of the time spent doing that work. It was not clear what was considered sales and what was considered community programming. The company made extensive use of volunteer crews. Brian Dodd says, "They were sending volunteers into the P.N.E. to work on what was basically a

*See **Cable Television and Special Programming Services**, published by the *Canadian Cable Television Association* (January 1982).

marketing project. I think that this is an abuse of the privilege of working with volunteers."

Stacking for progress and profit

Another concept, called 'tiering' is also a distinct possibility and one that may encroach upon community programming resources. Tiering is a method of marketing cable services in which several different packages are offered to viewers who would pay for extra channels separately. Under discussion is the idea of having only Canadian channels included in the basic price for cablevision with the company charging extra for American and other channels containing newer types of programming.

Much of the new programming would be alpha-numeric in nature, relying heavily on *Telidon* technology, and carrying information on the stock market, bus and plane schedules, the weather and a limitless number of other subjects. The federal government strongly encourages the development of the *Telidon* system which allows for a great many interactive uses of television which do not fall into the programming area. The government is excited by the export potential and the possibilities for growth in the communications field that this technology suggests.

It is the desire of the *CRTC* to protect and strengthen the Canadian production industry and to promote a form of ecnomic imperialism in the communications field through Telidon. This no doubt has a large effect on its evaluation of cable industry arguments that they need to expand and that they need money to implement new services. The *CRTC* has not been clear in its reaction to the many problems posed by these new developments. When called upon publicly to support the Neighborhood offices in Vancouver the Commission responded with a clear statement that the offices must remain open. However, their record in enforcing stated policies, or the intentions of those policies, has been weak. Cable companies have consistently bypassed guidelines.

The dangers which threaten the existence of the community channel as a useful service are clear:

- The tendency of the cable industry to coagulate into larger and larger companies threatens to reduce the ability of each separate channel to react uniquely to the community that it serves.
- The desire of cable companies to use the resources of the community channel for revenue producing purposes threatens to weaken the commitment of staff and management to serve their community.
- The desire of the *CRTC* to see Pay Television and Telidon succeed threatens its commitment to protect the community channel.

The significance of the cutbacks at **Vancouver Cable Ten** is in the danger that they portend to community programming in general. Mass communication which is responsive to the needs and perspectives of its immediate geographic area (such as local newspapers, independent radio and community television stations) is of vital importance as the communications industry becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of fewer people and institutions. Viewpoints that seldom receive attention on commercial television are the staple of the community channel.

Given that the *CRTC* has the power to hold public hearings on the subject and to formulate and enforce regulations based on these hearings, the only existing avenue for direct citizen participation in these questions of policy, at this time, is through letters and briefs to the Commission.

Ken Blaine is now an independent video producer, director and technician. He was one of twenty-one Vancouver Cable employees who lost their jobs in the wave of layoffs last September.

The UA-Columbia transaction comes at an auspicious time for the Company. Pay television operations in Canada, anticipated to begin in late 1982, are expected to boost earnings progressively over the next few years. All Canadian systems have capacity available for pay television, and will move rapidly to introduce one or more pay services. At the same time, pay television operations in the U.S. have met or exceeded expectations for market penetration. The results indicate that subscriber demand for discretionary home entertainment is still growing rapidly, and recent successes with pay-per-view options in our California systems illustrate the extent of this untapped market.

While pay television grows ever more important, recently implemented rate increases in both Canadian and U.S. systems testify to the strength of the basic cable business. Rate increases were approved in our recently completed system in Syracuse, New York, and in Canadian systems serving Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo and Calgary, among others. Regulatory approval was obtained, with explicit or tacit recognition of your Company's high standards of performance by the approving authority.

We are now fully positioned for earnings growth as the benefit of the investment in an enlarged subscriber potential of over 3 million homes makes itself felt. Our expectation is for an earnings upturn in the medium term resulting from the introduction of pay television in Canada. This should be followed by sustained earnings improvement as systems now under construction in the U.S. mature.

The acquisition of UA-Columbia Cablevision, Inc. (now called Rogers UA Cablesystems, Inc.) has provided an opportunity for your Company to join with a large complement of operating systems in growth markets. Rogers Cablesystems Inc. has a controlling interest (51%) in this new company which will be owned in partnership with United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc. This will achieve the Company's U.S. subscriber target in a way that could not have been accomplished through the difficult and unpredictable process of franchising and subsequent new system construction. It represents the final link in the chain of corporate expansion that has characterized the events of the last two years.

Last year's Annual Report explained that the Corporate expansion program would entail "a significant negative impact on earnings in the current fiscal year." It stated that "to take advantage of future opportunities, the Company must be prepared to sacrifice some short-term considerations for long-term benefits." The 1981 results bear out this prediction.

In accepting short-term reduced earnings to finance expansion, a key consideration has been the limited duration of crucial growth opportunities. The last two years have seen basic changes in the structure of the U.S. cable television industry as major market franchises have been awarded in rapid succession in principal cities across the country. These awards have shaped a new and permanent delivery system for home and business communications in North America. Opportunities for participation have been fleeting and have required rapid and deliberate action in an intensely competitive environment. Your Company's efforts in franchising and system acquisition have achieved a significant position in the new structure of the industry that will serve our shareholders effectively and profitably in the years to come.

Long-term financing for the acquisition of the UA-Columbia interest will involve a plan which minimizes the need for dilution of shareholders' equity or the assumption of excessive debt by the Company. The plan includes the sale of Company interests in non-cable businesses consistent with corporate determination to concentrate exclusively on controlled cable operations. The recent sale of the Company's Famous Players interest underlines the Company's "pure cable" profile. The plan also proposes the sale of tax benefits in existing U.S. holdings, permitting the Company to utilize accumulating tax losses and investment tax credits arising from its recently launched U.S. operations.

Ted Rogers

Edward S. Rogers
Chief Executive Officer

GARY KIBBINS

EIGHT MEN SPEAK

Chris Nielson

Act VI, Workers Court, "you can't take it all out on me: you've got to blame him, too!"
L to R: Andrea Johnson (C.L.D.L.), Moy Mah (Worker Judge), Douglas Sharpe (Guard X), Robert Bean (Capitalism)

I would rather entertain and hope that it teaches than teach and hope that it entertains.

Walt Disney

In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in communist society, the present dominates the past.

Karl Marx

Last July, a 1940's musical **Meet The Navy** sold out five performances at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium in Halifax. Its producer Alan Lund attributed its appeal to "a marvelous nostalgia", and "in these times" he spoke of the need for a theatre of entertainment. "They need to forget about the problems of the nation and think about how fortunate we really are living in this country. When they see the show they will feel a lot of pride in this country", he stated. The **Mail-Star** expected the play "to evoke patriotic fervour".

On November 27 the play **Eight Men Speak**, first performed in 1932, played to a crowd of 70 people at the Argyle House and again on December 3 to 100 at the North End Community Centre. Its see-through illusionism and crude didacticism insisted on remembering some of the invidious methods the Canadian government used to respond to a crisis situation. Section 98 of the criminal code allowed the state to lock up anyone it disapproved of, which in 1932 included the eight leaders of the Communist Party of Canada. Their persecution in Kingston penitentiary included the attempted murder of Tim Buck, the secretary-general. **Eight Men Speak** deals with events which took place during a period which also saw 'the evoking of patriotic fervour' as an antidote to 'problems of the nation' and which led to another in a series of imperialist wars.

As an industrialized practice, **Meet The Navy** functioned through prodding, accessibility, and habit. It was no breathtaking deception, but a response of consumer consciousness, content with its powerlessness, projecting its abstracted condition onto history in order to smother its potency for the present. It made metaphysics out of history and trivialized, if not obliterated the present. The present is the reference point by which history is read; it gives history its meaning. This last year, ten to twenty American nuclear submarines docked at the mouth of Halifax harbour in Shearwater, just out of sight of the city's populace. The visits are concealed from the press to avoid public protest, a policy and an ideological mechanism reflected in the aesthetic policy of **Meet The Navy**.

Scene V of **Eight Men Speak** opens in the Worker's Court. Capitalism — represented by the defence attorney for the guard accused of shooting at Tim Buck — differentiates the British and the Christian from the un-British and the un-Christian. In the 1982 production he is wearing a bow tie fashioned out of an American flag. There is no possibility for the forgetfullness of nostalgia. We are reminded of Canada's transition from a colony to a neo-colony, of the difference between a history in which one is directly and consciously engaged, and an externally constructed history beyond a citizen's (or country's) control. The aesthetic representation of historical reality can promote historical consciousness in a way that conventional written historiography cannot; the latter being dedicated to facticity and the systematized method that distinguishes a 'science'. **Eight Men Speak** is a politicized history, not simply because of its content, but as a result of its *presence*. The numerous times the play directly addresses the spectator links two audiences separated by 50 years.

Buck: *Smash section 98!*
All(a little louder): *Eight Men Speak!*
Popovich: *Smash the iron heel!*
All(still more power in their voices but very tensely): *Eight Men Speak!*
All(taking step forward and pointing through the bars): *. . . to you!*

The immediacy of the theatre is used to counteract the material absence of history, an absence which consumer culture willfully banishes from a materially gorged and, it would claim, thoroughly adequate present.

On "Our Native Land" (**CBC Radio**, October 30), a Native commentator placed Louis Riel in history from the standpoint of a Native person. He stated that Riel's provisional government in Fort Garry, 1868, was the first and only such instance of Native or Metis self-determination in Canada. The 'Hero or Traitor?' 'dispute' is suddenly re-attached to its source in white, academic historiography, while a significant moment in Canadian history is re-engaged with the present. This was not just the result of a correction in factual detail. It arose from an insistence on direct speech (the formal problems of radio notwithstanding in this instance). Another dimension is given to the experience of learning, by directly hearing the speech of a person more qualified to speak on that matter than a 'trained' non-Native historian.

Following the Argyle House performance, Oscar Ryan, a co-author of **Eight Men Speak**, and Toby Ryan, the director of the original performance, spoke to the audience. They recounted instances of harrassment and sometimes brutality of the 'red squads' which gave substance and background to events cited in the play: "I am Nich Zynchuck, killed by a police bullet in my back, killed at an eviction in Montreal, killed to intimidate the unemployed in Montreal, the cannon fodder of the future . . ."

Eight Men Speak demonstrated that a pact of imagination and ideological analysis is more imaginative and thus more entertaining than industrialized entertainment. It is also capable of being useful. The usefulness of **Eight Men Speak** was partially curtailed by the absence of discussion following the second performance at the North End Community Centre. Despite the announced intentions of the production, the discussion was ultimately not encouraged. This was unfortunate as the play's polemics may have been foreign to many in the audience, but also because of the complexity of some of the issues raised. As strongly stated as it was, **Eight Men Speak** could not, for example, be expected to break the image — brutalized as surely by Soviet as by American ideology — that has been forced on the concept of communism, about which the play spoke so unproblematically. Other issues were raised as well by the staging of the play. For example, another addition of the 1982 production was to have a member of the Worker's Court, rather than an insistent

Franklin

Capitalism himself, swear in the witnesses with a bible. A member of the audience was appalled at what he perceived to be an ideological contradiction, and might have raised that issue had he had the opportunity. A discussion might in fact have demonstrated the antithesis of musical/entertainment viewing: people speaking to one another about issues that directly effect their lives.

Most of the members of *Popular Projects Society* are artists from disciplines other than theatre. And while this undoubtedly added to the uninhibited caricaturing and humour, one might speculate that its not being conventionally legitimized in the profession may also, alongside its content, have played some part in its having recently been denied a Canada Council Explorations Grant. A deepening of the bureaucratization of daily life, including art practice, does not fare well for cultural groups living in an economic hinterland, insisting on a politicized content and a community direction. We recall the *Mummers* in Newfoundland, for example, who were informed by the Canada Council that art became politics and thus unfundable when real names were named. Meanwhile their own provincial government, always hesitant, for similar reasons, to support them, was not willing to fund productions outside Newfoundland's five most populated areas. The 'cultural centres' policy was contrary to that of the *Mummers*, who wished to diversify their audience and tour smaller towns. So even though funding for the arts in Newfoundland was already far below the per capita standards, the *Mummers* ceased production after **Some Slick**.

Local cultural efforts like **Eight Men Speak** can aid a knotted present in reclaiming the dimensionality of time, and thus the possibility of change. If we accept from William Lyon Mackenzie that ". . . politics is the science that teaches the people to care for each other", then the uncompromising political explicitness of **Eight Men Speak** might be a means for the project of the artist and that of the non-artist to effectively coincide.

Gary Kibbins is an artist living in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

KATE LUSHINGTON

THE POSSIBILITY AND THE HABIT

Anne Deguise

Pol Pelletier

Brave New Works is a pot luck collection of works in progress and seed shows presented at least once a year by *Factory Theatre Lab* in Toronto. This April in co-production with the *Montreal Playwrights Workshop* they presented to capacity crowds a double bill showcase featuring the work of Pol Pelletier: theatre artist, feminist, iconoclast and one time restauranteur. Those lucky enough to get in were treated to an exhilarating evening of passion, ascerbic humour, inspiration and challenge — a theatrical event unparalleled but not, I hope, without sequel.

The works presented, **My Mother's Luck** by Helen Weinzweig and **Night Cows** by Jovette Marchessault were billed as one of the myriad feminist programs embraced by the *Women's Cultural Building, Festival of "Women Building Culture". Marchessault is best known in Toronto for* **Saga of Wet Hens** which was produced in English at the Tarragon last season, although Pelletier performed **Night Cows** in Toronto in 1980.

In **Night Cows**, the playwright's individual brand of brainburst poetics sweeps the listener along on a night flight of fantastical imagery; lush, sensual, above all, playful, erupting with heady joy, impassioned in its anger, revelling in its hope. By contrast, **My Mother's Luck** offers hard prose — the plain story of real people, an early and autobiographical work, the writing of which, some 20 odd years ago, began the career of its author, then in her forties.

Read the stage directions to the opening of **My Mother's Luck**: a paragraph or so comprising exit, entrance, store, kitchen, stove, stairs, sink, ice box, washing machine, mangle, a girl's books, shelves and paraphernalia of the period. Then, if you are fortunate, attend a performance of the piece with Pol Pelletier and Suzanne Le Moine. There will be nothing but the two women, one wearing eighty pounds of sand bag weights around her wrists, her hips, her ankles, both placed against a high neutral backdrop with a small stick sketch on it, and four chairs facing inwards in a circular arrangement. The sober simplicity of the design (by Ginette Noiseux) is not a compromise to the constraints of a workshop budget, but rather an artistic choice. "What was I going to do?" demanded Pol Pelletier of an eager questioner after the show, "I, who have never held a teacup on stage? I don't do realistic theatre!" Her blunt approach, in divesting Helen Weinzweig's short story of its realistic trappings and directing herself and Suzanne Le Moine in the roles of mother and daughter, led to a brilliantly clear exposition of a striking text, allowing the original language its full rhythm, humour and hard cutting edge while investing the theatrical experience with a powerful resonance and rich dramatic texture.

The daughter, Esther (Le Moine) opens the show, tracing with painful deliberation a chalk circle on the floor around the chairs to delineate the space that encloses her and so it would seem she is about to escape. Crouching, creeping, all angles, limbs and eyes, Le Moine speaks volumes with a mouth that struggles and works but can never say more than "My mother said", a phrase interspersed throughout her mother's conversation as a node, a response, a trigger or a cry. The repetition serves both as a narrative device (the mother replies often to an inaudible interjection of Esther's) and as incantation, to deal with the pain of remembering.

It is the eve of the sixteen year old Esther's departure for Europe to live with the father she hasn't seen since she was four. "I suppose we *should* have a talk before you go" announces the mother, and the stage is set for the unfolding self-justification of her life. For this is Lily, the woman with the weights; an obvious symbol perhaps, first chosen to aid Pelletier in rehearsal, that no gesture should be made carelessly, no actor's mannerism obscure the purposeful physicality of this character. Transferred to performance, they provide an immediate signal to dispense with questions of age and period; it will be the effect of external circumstance made manifest that we see, the essential qualities of these characters, this relationship, here and now upon the stage and resonating in our own experience as women, as daughters, perhaps as mothers too.

It is to both Weinzweig's and Pelletier's credit that Lily, though enormous, is never monstrous, despite the devastating effect she has upon her daughter, whose twitching inadequate attempts to obey and to please her mother are formalised into a dance of agonized indecision. Weinzweig says that people have complained that she has created "a Jewish mother who is not a typical Jewish Mother". But the stereotype can be laughed at, recoiled from dismissed — not Lily. She talks now to the audience, now to her daughter, moving through the circle of chairs, enlisting them to seat former husbands, or clients of her beauty salon, or even a group of young intellectuals who argue over whether Nora was right to leave in **A Doll's House**. At one extraordinary moment she leans across to address a chair where Esther sat a moment ago, but who now looks on from a different vantage point — her older self watching the scene with us, and the layers of time connecting event with the distortion of memory are all at once palpably present.

Pelletier offers us a stunning evocation of a woman rooted in her race and class, yet never stereotypical, one limited and impoverished by a stunted capacity for love in her male-identified world and by a deep suspicion of other women, yet profoundly whole as a human being: huge, towering, inevitable. **The Doll's House** discussion is the pivotal point in her life, revealing all the contradictions inherent in separating socialism and feminism. The uneducated Lily, who has worked since she was nine years old, beautiful and bright enough to attract a left wing intellectual whom after marriage she subsequently supports, argues fiercely on the side of the men that Nora was crazy to leave. "Servants! I said to myself, there's your answer, she had it too good." But from then on she begins to take charge of her own life; having a child instead of an abortion, using her wits and a bit of blackmail to get a divorce and emigrate to Canada, and acquiring her own beauty salon, a bastion of independence through incessant work. Yet her tragedy is never to make the fundamental and obvious political connection to other women's lives in a man's world. She loathes other women for the failure they represent in herself, she alienates the daughter to whom she chose to give birth, despising her weakness and never noticing their similarities; and always, always she revolves around men: protecting them, bailing them out, and wondering why they always let her down. Lily's tragedy is classic in nature, elemental in proportion, and gothic in the effect it has on Esther.

Watching Pelletier one can see her as Clytaemnaestra, Medea; but the stature of her work in both modern pieces though more intimate in environment is on no lesser a scale than the Greeks. She is however a far from tragic heroine, and days have changed since the fate of women and men lay in the lap of the gods. As a woman, she has the warmth and impatient hunger of a crackling flame, as an actress the wingspan of a great eagle and the vocal strength of a bull moose, and as a director the sharp eye for detail of a hovering hawk. In the second piece, **Night Cows**, she plays a cow convincingly, with or without the mask that she wears for part of the journey. Dipping and soaring with shining eyes, she evokes the magical world of the lyrical night cows, giving full voice to their fury and rage as well as their delight. With an impressive list of acting and academic credits to her name, Pol Pelletier was co-founder in 1975 of *Le Théâtre Experimental de Montréal*, and founder in 1979 of *Le Théâtre Experimental des Femmes*, after the men in the former company resigned, to a man. *T.E.F.* has since produced a number of collective creations based on the experience of women, and the women involved have learned to tackle every aspect of production themselves, overturning their former roles as actresses dependent in large part on the favour and creativity of men. Pelletier herself has pursued a fascination with "the power relationships among women and the conflicts that can result", which would obviously draw her to the Weinzweig piece, but she might never have overcome the barrier of its outward realism had it not been for Rina Fraticelli, author of "The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre" (FUSE, Vol.6, No.3) and currently artistic director of Playwrights' Workshop, Montreal, who brought the two artists together. The collaboration has been extremely felicitous and one can hope will pave the way for many.

The poverty of representation of a woman in our world is disastrous. "How can you possibly live and grow and feel and have an imagination under these conditions?" demaded Pelletier in 1980. "Born a feminist", she has since been showing other women the possibilities for change, for creation, for control. Now, in 1983, her goals for the future as stated on a panel at the *Women's Cultural Building* on April 25 are: "To live decently and do enormous shows. I want feminist vision on stage — the whole world. . . the mother and daughter is very important, but it is *not* the whole world."

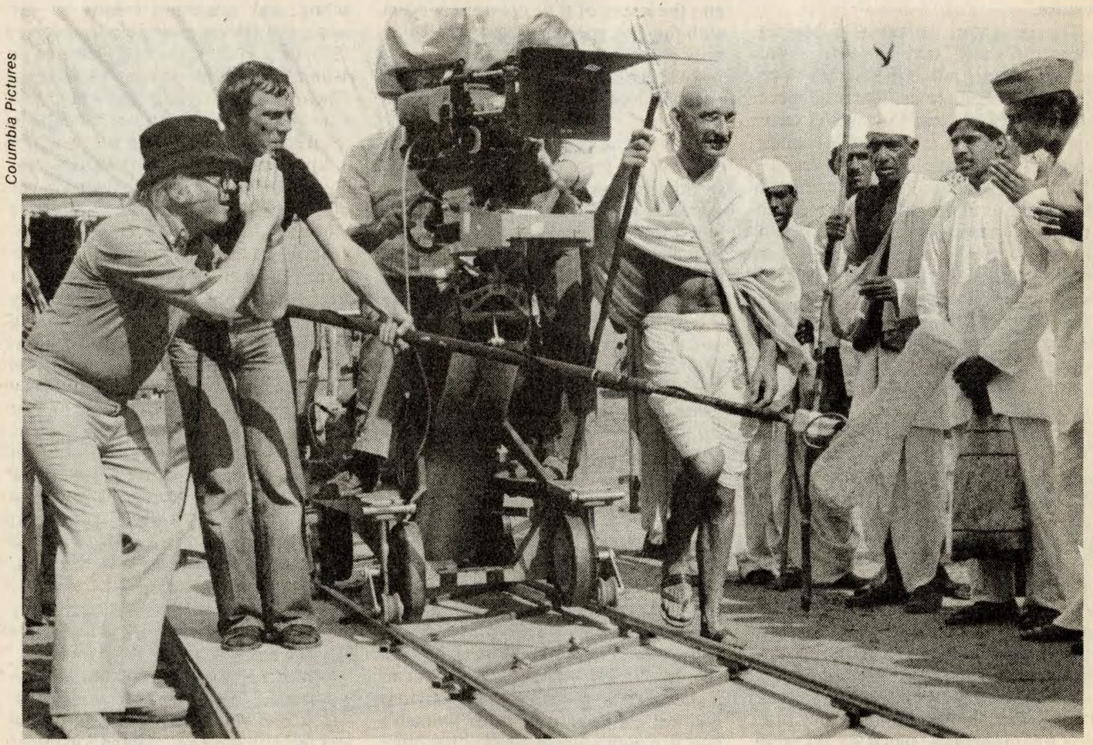
For those lucky enough to see Pol Pelletier's work there is a whole world on stage, a whole other world of challenge and risk and joy. She has shown the possibility, and we are speedily acquiring the habit, of a feminist vision of the world.

Kate Lushington is a freelance director and writer.

JULIAN SAMUEL

THE GREAT MAN THEORY OF HISTORY

Richard Attenborough's GANDHI



Columbia Pictures

What's wrong with this picture?

The myth goes that the British with the infallible help of Lord Mountbatten (then ex-colonizer of Burma) 'gave' India her 'freedom', or so called 'independence'. We are led to believe, if we so desire, that India became an independent country when the British left to fight the war on the homefront. But for the poor and feudally oppressed, the 'transfer of power' merely meant that the colour of the ruling class changed from pinkish-white to Imperial brown. Bronzing of the ruling classes is no substitute for the social, political and economic changes needed for one of the poorest countries in the world.

Gandhi, directed by Richard Attenborough, is supposed to reveal the personal life story of Mahatma Gandhi. The film begins at the end of his life and then returns to the beginning; the time when he was a young Asian lawyer in South Africa and became a leader in resisting the racist policies of the South Africans against Asians. Early Black struggle is not shown in the film. Gandhi is depicted as a spirited figure who, returning to India in 1915 as a hero, is launched into the 'struggle for independence'. We follow his life up to the Partition of India (1947) into West Pakistan (now Pakistan), India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). In this review I intend to demystify the role that Gandhi played in this carving up of the Indian subcontinent.

If we are to accept the lie that it was through an amalgamation of Gandhi's one dimensional passivity, non-violence and vegetarianism and Nehru's 'inherited' political slickness that 'constitutional freedom' was given, then we must side with Mrs. Gandhi's present regime. It was after all with her wholehearted support and £2.5 million sterling—sucked from the Indian peasantry—that the Attenborough project finally got finished.

While this film was being shot a vast famine was ravaging the area surrounding Bombay. And it must be remembered that Mrs. Gandhi's government is funding one of the most elaborate and morally bankrupt building projects the multi-million dollar Asian games complex in Delhi — replete with western style highway fly-overs and high rises. Gandhi, however, in Attenborough's eyes remains a perfect combination of progressive political ideologies (travelling third class rail) and political activism (civil disobedience and vegetarianism).

Religion as language

Another more credible version of this history is that he manipulated religion as language — a language that the masses were well accustomed to — injecting it with political passivity. The religio/politico tactics were informed partly by a fusion of the Christian and Hindu concepts that the original sin could be lifted by orthodox rites of self purification.

Zaeer Masani (*New Statesman*, December 10, 1982), informs us that the catharsis could be affected through "self-inflicted suffering and renunciation. The curse of imperialism, like that of cast pollution, was to be expiated by ritual penance." Gandhi-like civil disobedience was exactly that — very muted and much like the civil American 1960's sit-ins.

At the time when the peasantry indicated that it was ready for an organized overthrow Gandhi, using his papal powers via fasting unto death, suppressed the movement of the liberation forces. Under Gandhi (as under Mrs. Gandhi) the peasantry were told to adhere to the instructions of their landlords, i.e., wait for the British to leave then we will solve everything.

The film completely ignores issues surrounding the untouchables, or of Gandhi's questionable involvement with them. By staying at their homes and eating with the untouchables, Gandhi informed his public of his plans for an egalitarian new India. However, when it came to approving any of *their* plans for unification he simply replied that God would help them. His cynical rejection of their organizations and his interventions on behalf of their rulers (the Raj and other heads of princely states) to quell desires for reform was of course never treated as an issue in this film. The film was a constant slavish aggrandisement of Gandhi himself. His non-violence never went beyond token priest-like sermons and the histrionics of fast until death. Socialism, while dismissed by Gandhi in reality as something totally strange and inapplicable, was not even directly referred to in the film.

His conservative non-violence overruled all progressive tendencies. It was taboo to talk about the takeover of land by the tillers. God would not agree to it and Mrs. Gandhi does not accord with it either. Mrs. Gandhi's government, constantly pricked by revolutionary movements in pockets throughout India, is attempting to use this film to deaden political activity.

Presentation of the Amritsar Massacre (1919) in this film, with the requisite anti-British tone, allows Gandhi's own government to posture objectivity; while the court case and the indictment of General Dyer himself, by his own people, depict the occupying powers as relatively sincere and objective.

Mitigating Guilt

Frantz Fanon in the **Wretched of the Earth** said, "for the colonized person objectivity is always directed against him." One could hardly overlook the applicability of his words in respect to this film. Attenborough, a friend of Mrs. Gandhi for 20 years, does little to analyze the historical determinants responsible for the creation of fascists such as Lord Mountbatten and his Dyer-like pawns. The mitigation of British guilt via the court scene is parallel in political misrepresentation to the establishment and use of the Hindu-Moslem conflict by both the occupying powers and Gandhi.

The pro-Gandhi critic will fall into the trap of arguing objectivity because of the partially anti-British sentiment; the film allows, by use of the court scene, a British self-exoneration. The dignity of this purging of evil elements ties in well thematically with the religious tones of that which the film eulogizes. But the temporary swelling of egos on Portebello Road, (London, U.K.) and other places where Indians and Pakistanis live will soon fade as the Thatcher government and its like continue their support of racist institutions such as the National Front. The anti-colonial tone seems to be thrown in to assuage the Indian nationalists who could not agree to funding a totally pro-British film.

The film suggests that Hindu-Moslem hostility existed long before the British actually used it as a divide and rule strategy. However while the conflict did exist prior to the arrival of the British (the nawabs and other heads of princely states used it and other tribal differences to maintain a stranglehold on the peasantry), its intensification peaked under British rule.

Gandhi's efforts to subjugate the potential revolutionary forces around him, and his exoneration of the role of the Indian feudal and landholding classes, was achieved and is now celebrated in this depiction of his various and regular fasts.

While uprisings could have led to the establishment of systems for the distribution of lands, building of hospitals, and schools, the legacy which remains instead is that of ashrams, police forces and armies. Despite this attempt to use cinema in the fabrication of a Ramaesque and Krishnaesque sense of history, the Indian peasants are showing great courage in defying the present regime. The Naxalite movement, and other struggles in Bihar, Kerala and West Bengal have proven a serious threat to Congress I. The current regime's need to provide India with a false sense of her own history is desperate, and this £2.5 million sterling expenditure seems, in this light, a defensive move.

There is little hope that this English language film will have much of the intended de-politicizing effect. Most of India's 800 million people speak other languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Kannada, Marati, Panjabi, Malyaleam, Gujerati, Sindhi, to mention just a few. The subtitled versions will therefore be recognizable as foreign. The involvement of the Indian ruling class in the making of the film must further reinforce mistrust of colonials like V.S. Naipaul, who maintain their control over the construction and interpretation of history.

Attenborough should have learned from the work of Satagi Ray or Malador's **Simanga**. But he has simply contributed to the extended 'colonization' of India in this culturally and politically specific interpretation of India through the 'great man theory' of history. This is far from a cinema of opposition. Attenborough's **Gandhi** devises a relationship of sympathetic concordance with state structures. His methodology never looks to the side of the victims, and is therefore politically cynical. History from this point of view consists of kings, queens and puppet dictators, and their whimsical lives. Progressive or oppositional readings of the events which besiege a country, work upon the nature of struggles that the common people are waging against unjust governments. Apparently Attenborough, Gandhi, and Mrs. Gandhi remain oblivious to this view of history.

Julian Samuel is a filmmaker living and working in Canada.

MARION COHEN

DARE TO BE A PRIEST

Marion Cohen: *What about the Hollywood movies? — I know somebody who's in Hollywood. He's a director and I've seen how Paramount Pictures operates, a little bit, through him, and it seems that it would be almost impossible to make a political movie.*
Emile de Antonio: *It would be utterly impossible for many reasons, because movies that are made out of there cannot violate, in any way, the views of the people known as companies. You can have* ***Coal Miner's Daughter*** *and that kind of thing, which show poor people and their struggle but then finally it's America, so everything's o.k. in the end. I mean who's Paramount? It's owned by stockholders with a lot of money. It's like saying "Why doesn't the Morgan Bank give money to the poor?" Their idea of a political movie is* ***The Verdict****.*

In The King of Prussia;
Turin Film Corporation; director, Emile de Antonio; with Martin Sheen and the Plowshares Eight (Daniel Berrigan, Philip Berrigan, Dean Hammer, Carl Kabat, Elmer Maas, Anne Montgomery, Molly Rush, John Schuchardt); distributed in Canada by DEC Films.

In the fall of 1980 a group of eight Christian pacifists entered General Electric plant number 9 in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. In this plant General Electric produces metal housings for thermonuclear warheads and the group, who were to become known as the *Plowshares Eight*, were there to commit premeditated acts of vandalism. Using small hammers secreted in their clothing they smashed at some of the metal nose cones. On others they spilled human blood. Then they waited to be arrested and they were not disappointed. The *Plowshares Eight* were tried on charges of robbery, criminal trespass and assault and convicted by a jury of their peers. **In The King of Prussia** is Emile de Antonio's cinematic recreation of the trial and the movie features the original cast of characters.

Emile de Antonio has achieved a reputation as as radical film-maker as a result of documentaries he has produced on subjects ranging from Joe McCarthy **(Point of Order)**, to Richard Nixon **(Millhouse: A White Comedy)**, the war in Vietnam **(In The Year of The Pig), and the Weather underground (Underground)**. Like the films which preceded it, **In The King of Prussia** reflects a slice of political life in America. What this film reveals about America in the 1980's is that radical left-wing politics in America are no longer necessarily secular. While **In The King of Prussia** is peripherally about the horrors of nuclear war, the injustice in the American legal system, and the price of dissent in America, the film is centrally about radical Catholic pacifism.

In keeping with the austere spirituality of this theme, **In The King of Prussia** is a visually barren film in which the words and the personalities of the defendants predominate.

De Antonio filmed **In The King of Prussia** during two days between the conviction and the sentencing of the *Ploughshares Eight*. Because of lack of time and lack of money he shot documentary segments of the film in 3/4 inch video and then transferred it to film. Even in the sequences shot on 1 inch tape (the dramatized courtroom reenactment), de Antonio compounds the lack of visual texture by using a glaring cinder-block and tile high school gymnasium as the court room set, a choice which he felt avoided the "phony authenticity" of a real courtroom. In this large, empty room sit the defendants at their long table, the prosecutor at his small table, and the judge upon his bench, each at such distance from the other that the entire scene is impossible to grasp visually at once. The effect is to underscore the isolation and individuality of the players, but to sacrifice entirely the sense of struggle and interplay between them. In a "real" courtroom the prosecution, the defence and the judge are locked in continuous, intimate psychological combat.

In this courtroom the potential vitality of that struggle is absent. De Antonio mounts an essentially static morality play in which a demented judge, a foolish prosecutor, and the eight righteous defendants play out their predestined roles. Nobody in this movie changes his or her mind. Even the use of the real defendants to play themselves deprives this movie of life. Measured against the real people the actors appear artificial and self-conscious. And because we know that the defendants are acting, are repeating their own lines to a camera and are starring in their own movie, they lose credibility. In this process the viewers' responses are compromised as well. De Antonio wants you both ways, knowing what you're seeing is false and believing what you're seeing is true.

The only wild-card in the pack is the jury and their decision to convict does come as a surprise. The *Ploughshares Eight* had argued that they were justified in their minor trespass to "private" property because they had to do what they did to "save the human family" from the "hammers of hell". The judge however prevents them from calling expert witnesses to prove their case against nuclear weapons, and refuses to allow the jury to consider the defense of justification. The jury obediently ignores everything they have heard from the defendants including the substance of what they might have heard from the expert witnesses. The jury convicts the defendants of causing cosmetic damage to the greatest instruments of mass destruction in history. Even given the apparently conservative nature of the community in which this case was tried, the difficult fact is that the jury was not persuaded by the powerful personalities of the defendents, by the strength of their arguments, or by their obvious moral courage. And de Antonio does not

LIKE ME

Courtesy DEC Films

Judge and jury

really try to explain why that happened (the one jury member interviewed blames another jury member). If it happened because of the judge's directions to them, why did the jury show such obedience to authority? That problem, which is surely connected to the problem of the strength of official nuclear propaganda, of the difficulty of psychologically grasping the immediacy of the threat of nuclear war, and of the effectiveness of the strategy of civil disobedience, is largely ignored.

Ritual as opposition

The political purpose of **In The King of Prussia** is to present the defendants and the defence to the larger courtroom, and essentially the only thing you will see and hear in this movie, notwithstanding Martin Sheen's dedicated efforts to portray the wildly incompetent and single-minded Judge Salus, are the *Ploughshares Eight*. De Antonio says that by the time he finished making this movie he was "plunging head-long towards Catholicism" and this admission comes as no surprise, because ultimately **In The King of Prussia** is about saving our souls.

Daniel Berrigan is the real star of this film and he has two scenes which are the central scenes of the movie. The first is an Ash Wednesday ritual in which the defendants gather with their supporters and publicly burn their indictments "for God's sake". The ashes are then used to mark a cross on the foreheads of the supplicants as a statement of opposition to nuclear weapons. The second scene is Berrigan's confession in which he explains why he appears in Court once again facing criminal charges.

Berrigan then explains how he comes from a family with strong moral values and became a Jesuit at the age of eighteen. History has led him to many places and at present he works in a cancer hospital which treats only poor "street people". Berrigan says he could not enter that hospital without understanding the pentagon by which he means, in the vocabulary of the *Ploughshares Eight*, that the pentagon is planning cancer as a universal plague. He hates the humiliation and the degradation of jail, in fact he is afraid of jail, but as a person of good conscience he has to "do these things".

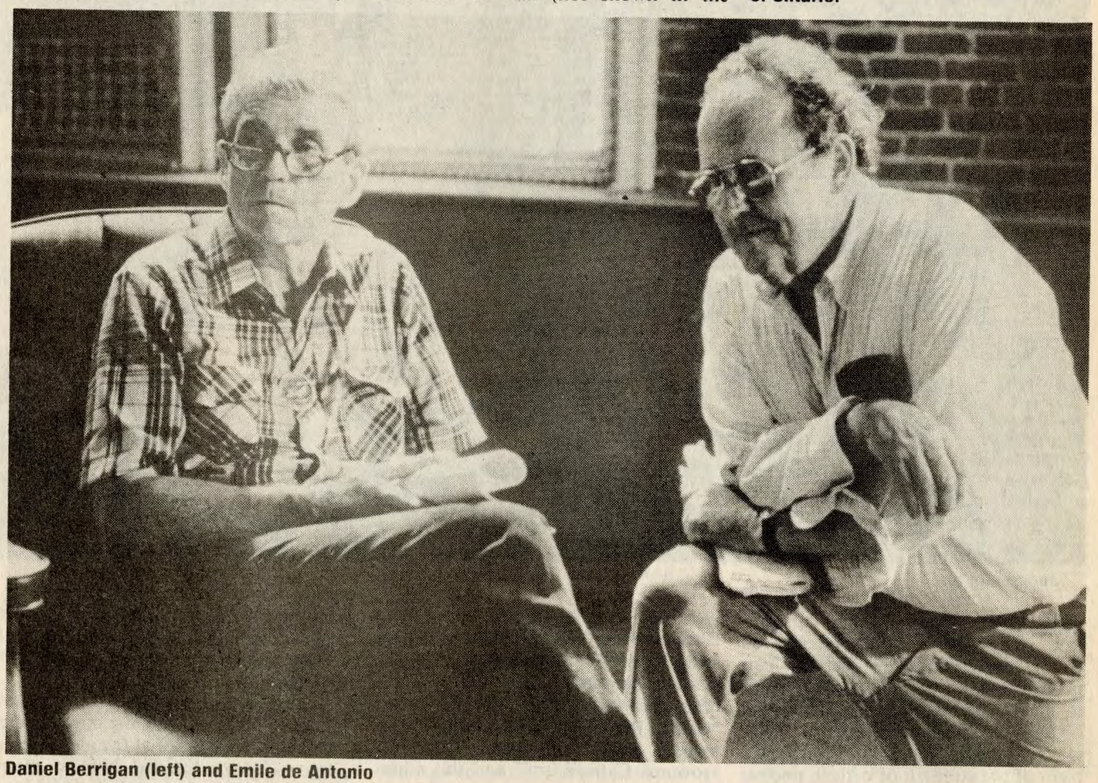
Now in many respects this is a great

and moving speech and we must all agree with the equation of cancer and nuclear weapons. But Berrigan says to the jury, to us, that he and the others "come from somewhere. Our consciences do not operate in a void". And we, the jury, even as we rush not only to acquit Berrigan but to cannonize him, know that "somewhere" is the Catholic church, which has certainly functioned for evil as well as for good in its long history. And why does the struggle against nuclear weapons require "the common discipline of faith and prayer"? Many progressive political movements in North America are invigorated and led by religious figures but so are many of the most reactionary movements. The Catholic church opposes the state on abortions as well as nuclear weapons.

Finally, since this is a political film, one must ask why acts of civil disobedience should have the status of absolute principals of conduct? Is civil obedience the correct method, the method of last resort, to oppose unacceptable actions of the state? Mahatma Gandhi counselled the Jews of Nazi Germany to practice passive resistance. Surely civil disobedience is a tactic which in some circumstances can be effective and in others a form of suicide. And I wonder, if this is the right time and place for civil disobedience, does it have to look like this? When Phil Berrigan refuses to leave jail after he is released on bail (not shown in the movie), when the defendants commit their crime and sing while they wait to be arrested, when the courtroom audience sings as a form of resistance to the arbitrary rulings of the judge which have condemned their comrades, and when the defendants quietly turn their backs on the Judge who will sentence them to 3 to 10 years in jail, is it a mistake to think something is wrong here? Will nuclear war be averted if we leap headlong into the jails of our enemies?

In The King of Prussia is a film in which politics have been colonized by religion.

Marion Cohen is a lawyer practicing in Toronto and a member of the Law Union of Ontario.



Daniel Berrigan (left) and Emile de Antonio

"He wants me as a Christian pacifist. . . absolutely. So I said I think I'll pass. I think I better think it out just a little more. I've spent so much of my life being involved in violence and believing in it. . . The main reason that I'm not a Catholic right now is pride, y'know. How can I now just point my life, I mean what if I die, I can't die as a Catholic. I have to die as an atheist. Y'know I've lived my life as an atheist; I can't. . .people would think I was afraid. The Berrigans do what they believe and they believe what they do. . .And that in itself is an awesome example of what used to be called in the medievil church, the exempem; I mean it's so awesome that I've never known anybody like them, except a few communists I knew when I was young."

E. de Antonio

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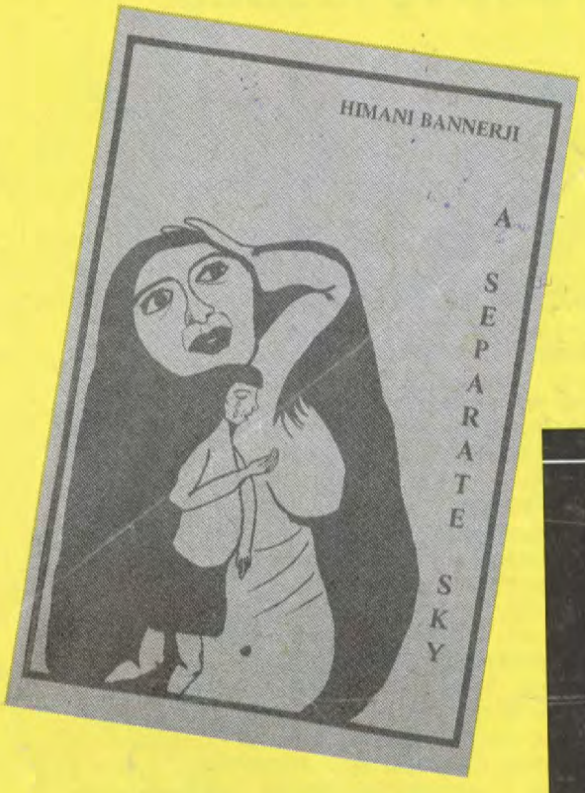

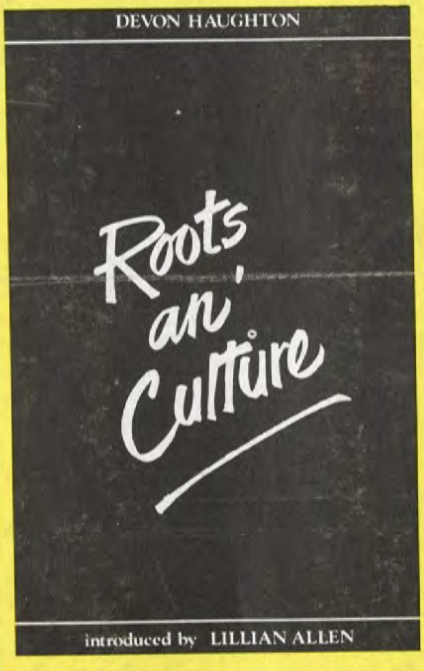

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