

FALL 1983 \$2.50

THE CULTURAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Feminist Front:
Culture, Politics & Censorship

FUSE



MOVIES:
From the suburbs
To the subversive

This deserves a stiff drink.



Hi there. I'm a male member of the Bronfman family and I thought that it was about time we had a little talk, as we are perplexed by current reports in the socialist press about our involvement in shipping arms to South Africa.

This is not an apology. During the daily workings of our \$15 billion dynasty, we do from time to time make what might be seen, by you bleeding heart liberals, as reprehensible decisions. Our past involvement, through Space Research Inc. (U.S.), in moving \$50 million of howitzer shells, cannons and ballistic testing equipment to South Africa was legitimate not only as a gesture of our international business operations but also because clearly we operated without interference from the governments of Canada, the U.S., Antigua, Israel and South Africa. It's ridiculous therefore to call such action a "crime". Of course the U.N. did initiate arms embargoes both in 1963 and 1977, but governments always ineffectually attempt to meddle in the concerns of business.

As a family, we have been liberationists. We liberated both Canadians and Americans from the inconveniences of Prohibition. We were treated badly as bootleggers, but nonetheless, in 1929 alone the Canadian government received liquor duties and excise taxes amounting to \$60 million, which at the time was twice the amount collected from personal income taxes. We have helped Israel by selling long-range ammunition that proved useful during the Yom Kippur War. We helped raise over \$20 million in Canada for the Six Day War. It's of little concern to us whether or not Israel ships arms or nuclear technologies to South Africa — we keep our friends happy and they in turn keep us where we want to be: at the top.

We have always been given pretty much a free hand

by the Canadian government (ever since we were cleared of various criminal charges of attempted bribery of a Customs and Excise official in 1930). Our liquor empire after Prohibition grew and with it our ultimate power. People listen to us. When the Bronfmans and other were charged with the evasion of \$5 million of customs' duties we beat the rap.

But this is all in the past and our humble beginnings. Since those rough and hardworking early days, we've been able to relax a bit and make some new friends. We can enjoy ourselves and have — like at parties with Danny Kaye and Frank Sinatra, we Bronfmans proved to Frank that not only can we make money but we can sing too. Ask Brian Mulroney; he was there and sang right along, joining in the fun!

All of this is to provide you with some understanding. I've been told that you're considering a boycott. You know, we own so much that it's difficult if not impossible, to identify all of our products. First of all you would virtually have to stop drinking alcohol; whether it's whiskey, vodka, British gin, California or French wine...B&G, Mumm's champagne, and so on. We have major holdings in Bell Canada, Paramount Pictures and MGM. We own sixty per cent of the Eaton's Centre. Vancouver's Pacific Centre and the Toronto Dominion Centre. We control Cadillac Fairview which in 1977 made us on average \$1 million every working day. You name it; it's ours. Hush Puppies, Mack Trucks, radio stations, shopping centres in every major city. We have more than a share of the Bank of Montreal; we're intermarried with the Rothschilds' and their European holdings. In fact you could say that we and our intercorporate friends control the economy.

So here's a word of friendly advice. Face the facts. Apartheid is your problem, not ours.

Seagram's

An advertisement prepared by the Committee of Writers, Artists and Musicians Against Apartheid

FUSE

VOLUME SEVEN NUMBER THREE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1983



Janine Stewart

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Janine Stewart

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from film **WILDSTYLE**

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FUSE September/October 1983

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Editorial



Notes from the sheltered workshop

The week-end before this issue of FUSE goes to press there is a front page item, from Vancouver, in the *Globe & Mail* about 'work poets', complete with three photo-portraits. It is a phenomenological report on the fact that there are people (some actually working class) who make their living at other occupations, but actually write poetry. Furthermore they write about working.

While this fact may come as no surprise to many FUSE readers, it can be seen as a slightly progressive piece of cultural information to be seeping into the mainstream press. There are actually references to "demystifying poetry" to "getting it back on the streets".

There are lots of problems of emphasis and tone in the piece but the main reason that I mention it in this editorial is because of what it does not include. You guessed it: WOMEN. The three photos are of white men, more or less in their mid-thirties, and only one of the twelve poets referred to is identified as a woman.

This summer I spent some time in Vancouver. My primary purpose was to attend the **Women & Words Conference** that was held there from June 30th to July 3rd. There are women poets in B.C. and rest assured, more than a few of them have to work at other jobs to earn their keep. During the conference I heard and encountered a number of poets and writers whose works could easily have been mentioned in this article had it been less 'beer-swilling-hard-working' or 'down and out' manlike in tone.

I bring this up, simply as an example of the obvious gap between mainstream representation of women (and of progressive cultural issues) and the base line assumptions that can exist in our community-directed media when women are allowed to actively participate.

Those working and living in progressive and feminist cultural communities are always coming up against the frustrations and contradictions of theory/ideals in the face of 'reality'. We create our own alternative environments because they are necessary. We want to be able to push forward the level of analysis and understanding, but the 'raised consciousness' that these environments afford — though undeniably necessary — does hold some problems. The analyses are often strategically underdeveloped because the world at large (and the powers-that-be which keep the world in check) hasn't even caught up to the *primary* levels of understanding which are assumed in our 'sheltered workshops'.

The more developed that our organisations and associations become, the hungrier we become for pushing forward frontiers and challenging our internal contradictions, thus increasing the distance between ourselves and the mainstream. 'Well', you say, 'the further the better!' And I am aware of the need for strong alternatives. But if we really want things to change, we must recognize the danger of becoming simply 'alternative' rather than actively oppositional, as well as of isolating ourselves from possible allies.

The attraction of the 'alternatives' is obvious. Covering the same old ground, restating the 'obvious', is at least as frustrating and discouraging as it is necessary and laudible. Though we haven't even the basics (demanding it doesn't make it so), our minds want to race on ahead to the next problem and the next visionary solution. Although they keep building bombs and our energies are consumed in organising and marching, who would not *prefer* to spend their time devising new and

revolutionary ways to spend those military tax dollars on social programmes and life/world development. While we must continue to fight against censorship and against the brutalisation of women, who would not prefer to explore and discover their erotic and communications potentials. But in fact these battles against oppression/regression remain inextricably intertwined with the struggle for expression and progression. And, at our best, we pursue both.

I believe, however, that impatience with this situation and relief from frustration are essential. Our impatience is the reminder that we want to be struggling towards something rather than reacting to abuse.

I had gone to the **Vancouver Women & Words Conference** with the expectation of pushing forward frontiers and developing visions. I had anticipated the strong and strident movement that is possible when there are shared assumptions — the kind of intellectual, social and political leaping and bounding that gives us the encouragement and the strength that we need back in the real world of struggling against opposition. I expected challenges. My experience however was an unanticipated example of impatience and frustration.

Like any large conference or broad-based movement, the levels of analysis of the participants varied greatly. Aside from the frustration of not being able to get beyond the 'defining of terms' in most workshops, the overwhelming scope of the conference was also the probable cause of a final list of resolutions which is almost as innocuous as it is worthy — which is to say that there is nothing there that couldn't probably have been agreed to on the first day. (I say this in spite of the fact that there are a couple of recommendations that I myself

would not have gone along with.)

This situation of frustration and disappointment had to do with my expectations and with my sudden recognition of how far I had rocketed off from the mainstream women's movement... let alone the malestream. I still strongly believe that there are ways of meeting the challenge of popular movements without drifting towards the lowest level of coalition politics. The value in coalition is the exchange of understanding and the development of theory and workable strategy; it is not simply safety in numbers.

There were challenges offered during the conference which will no doubt be pursued and which have wide reaching implications for feminist cultural workers and activists, even though they were not given any particular priority this time round. The major challenge was presented by women addressing issues of racism with the feminist context.

The extent of this challenge is not adequately reflected in the resolution to include women of colour, francophone and native women and women of minority groups on the decision making body of the Society, although this is most certainly a starting point. It is a much more primary challenge to the patriarchal/racist values within our organisations which have not been actively or adequately challenged.

Makeda Silvera, of Toronto, during the Opening Night series of speeches and addresses on the theme of "How Far Have We Come?", took the wind out of the sails of a few congratulatory remarks on progress made and the qualifications of patriarchal indifference and roadblocks, by pointing out additional enemies within the ranks!

She began by describing the male bourgeois structure of the Black community press that did not allow for her feminist voice, concluding:

"In 1981, I was forced into making a decision not to work with the presses in my community. It's not that there is no positive sense of struggle among progressive people in the community, but that struggle does not and cannot take place in privately owned, male profit-oriented papers.

"I then moved into the white feminist literary scene where I thought I could create and publish words: I found the doors of the feminist publications tightly guarded, even shut."

"As Black female writers, we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism.

This requires among other things that you have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color and class." "So often we hear women's publications, presses and organisations excuse all white publications and groups with the cry that they cannot *find* women of colour".

Stroke out the "of colour" and you will hear the voice of liberal apologists in masculinist institutions when they are confronted with the lack of representation and authority given to women. The response is clear and was hauntingly familiar for most of the women in the auditorium that night: "We were never lost".

A list of specific complaints followed and demands that we recognize racism's existence within the feminist community; acknowledge and do something about that racism, and "that you, we must challenge the limits of a horizon which superficially frees some women but leaves the masses of women under the tyranny of silence."

"If there is one oppressed woman in the world not one of us are free. How far have we come? Not half as far as we

intend to go."

This is a problem of course not only found in the middle-of-the-road and bourgeois feminist groupings but on the radical front lines as well, where Black women *have* been sought out and included, but in ways that leave open the questionably token nature of the contacts made. That is, they are asked to address the question of racism (to quote Makeda, "as if it is a Black and not a white problem") or segregated in special anthologies or issues devoted to 'their concerns'.

These efforts, on the part of radical and socialist feminists *are* a beginning in as much as the contact is made and with it the challenge has come and has hit home. And here also is a basis for coalition in its most productive and dynamic form; the exchange of understanding, challenge to preconceptions, and the development of theory and workable strategy.

How large an effort in this direction has been made by white radical and socialist feminists? Not half as great as we need to make.

Joyce Mason

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Letters

Ooops!

The recent article on the Vancouver Music Scene written by Joy Thompson and Janey Newton-Moss was full of misinformation, which has annoyed some of us here in Vancouver.

We realize that this is not necessarily FUSE's fault, but we would like to clear up the fact that the article mentioned that *The Moral Lepers* have disbanded. This is not true! We believe this information is based on a short break we took in the summer of '82—almost a year ago now! We have been playing gigs for the past six months.



Janet Lumb

In April, we wrote to Joy and Janey because they wrote the same thing about us being disbanded in a local paper called *Kinesis*, back in March. You can see why we might be a little annoyed that the "Summer '83 issue" of FUSE comes out without this information being corrected!

Also, no mention was made of the fact that we have a new member (she's been with us for six months actually): Janet Lumb, our saxophone player, and that Bonnie Williams, our lead guitar player, is no longer with us. Other than

that we are the same people.

We're hoping to do some more recording and possibly tour in the not too distant future, so it's important to us that people know we're still around!

There were a considerable number of other mistakes in the same article. To name just a few: *The Singing Cowboys* was not a "gay country and western ensemble" but a band that preceded *Magic Dragon* with Ron Nelson and Rachel Melas (of *Moral Lepers*) and others. The band that Joy and Janey were thinking of was called *Red Tucker*. Also, the photo of *The Pointed Sticks* was taken at a Rock Against Radiation gig, about three years ago; they weren't even in Vancouver for "Budstock" and they disbanded long ago. "American Woman" was a song by the *Guess Who*, not *Bachman-Turner Overdrive*; it is *Los Populos* (not *Los Populos*) and their album is "Born Free" not "Burn Free" and Buck Cherry is in the *Modernettes* not *Los Populos*.

FUSE has done much to give recognition to artists and musicians in Canada so it's a pity this article wasn't more accurate, because Vancouver musicians deserve better than that.

Marion Lydbrooke
Moral Lepers, Vancouver B.C.

Explicit intention

As a former member of the now defunct band *The Subhumans*, and as author of the song "Slave to my Dick", I would like to respond to the unfounded insinuations recently made in your magazine by Janey Newton-Moss and Joy Thompson regarding the above song. In their article, entitled "Vancouver Music Scene" (FUSE summer '83 issue), they at one point attempt to expose the sexism within the Vancouver punk rock scene, which in itself I feel is an excellent idea. However, though there can be no doubt that the local punk community (as well as just about all communities formed within our male dominated society) is inherently sexist to a very large degree and the more people that are made aware of this the greater

the chances for an end to wimin's oppression, I have real problems with some of the examples they use to make their point. In particular my song.

If they had read the lyrics to it, they would have realized that it was neither misogynist nor fuck music, but instead an overt indictment against men's preoccupation with artificial and objectified sexual relations with wimin. I don't deny for a minute that the song is sung with "explicit intention", but the intention that the two wimin are implying and the actual intention of the song are two very different things. I admit that the song was not written from a well developed feminist viewpoint. Though unfortunately at the time I wasn't very familiar with feminism, I was fully aware of how men generally perceive and treat wimin, and the mindless insensitive sexual role that men continuously play. It was from this perspective that the song was written.

I think that the use of my song by Janey and Joy as a kind of sexist epitomization demonstrates a rather careless and superficial approach, on their part, to an important subject. The same is true of the overall article which has many inaccuracies, leaves out a good deal of relevant information, and makes several dubious points. In a situation like this, where one is trying to document a relatively obscure topic with an intricate history, it's very important that the writer(s) be familiar with and have a good understanding of the subject — or at least be working in close communication with someone who does. This obviously was not the case with this particular piece of journalism and so now unfortunately many of the people that read the article and are not familiar with the Vancouver music scene, are likely to have a somewhat distorted view of it. That's a shame.

I only hope that this letter serves to encourage people to check it out for themselves, and that future contributors to your magazine will be more careful, and pay more attention to being objective and factual in their reports.

Gerry Hannah
Oakalla Prison, Burnaby, B.C.

FUSE September/October 1983

Viva la différence!

I was invited to the *Womanfilm Festival* in Toronto sponsored by the **Womens' Cultural Building Collective** and **Canadian Images** on April 15 to present my films and on April 16 to be a member of a panel speaking about women's representation on the screen in imagery and off the screen as a filmmaker.

Phyllis Waugh



Barbara Hammer

I was pleased by the large turnout of the audience for the film screening and the Canadian premiere of *Audience*; I enjoyed the personal presentation by women filmmakers Saturday afternoon; then, the panel. . .

Personally I hoped we would move from the important but safe subject of distribution practices for alternative cinema, but we didn't until the final question and the only one of the evening to raise the controversial issue of subject material: How did being a lesbian influence our filmmaking?

I gave a response that definitely stated difference. Being a lesbian increased my tactile sense in my personal life and in my screen imagery. Being a lesbian made me feel more whole and woman-identified as I was reinforced in my sense of womanhood by loving an other similar to myself. Being a lesbian meant I didn't identify with nor could my work be critiqued by a Lacanian psychoanalytic male mode that centered on the Oedipal complex and the sense of lack of phallus in the female. Contrarily, I said, I had my own theories that mothers held their girl babies to their breasts longer because they had no fear of incest thus increasing the sense of "thereness" of breast (not lack of phallus) and womanhood to their daughters. So women who returned to the breast in lovemaking as lesbians were returning to their femaleness. The wholism that followed for lesbian women was not split or splintered by relating to men sexually but was com-

plete in its 'femalecentricity'.

Barbara Martineau then spoke on how being a lesbian influenced her work by giving her a safe and stable place from which to take risks.

Then and there the problematic of the panel appeared. Each of the four heterosexual women felt they too must answer. Instead of saying how the sexual preference influenced their filmmaking, they, one by one in different words discounted the statements we lesbian filmmakers had just made that our sexuality influenced our filmmaking. Liberal humanist statements such as "in the end I am alone" and "I made work from being a woman (implying that that has nothing to do with who you choose to sleep with) left me feeling uncomfortable. I felt discounted and without a chance to answer. The moderator, instead of seeing that we had finally after two hours arrived at a tension-producing subject that required struggle and analysis dismissed us to a reception preplanned to time. This was a time when flexibility and openness in scheduling should take place.

I am writing now because I was left with things to say. We lesbian women must never be made invisible again. We are lesbian and that makes us different. Viva la différence!

Barbara Hammer, Goddess Films
New York, New York

The other 'Other'

I have just received a copy of Barbara Hammer's letter to FUSE, concerning a discussion of lesbians and filmmaking which concluded a panel held on April 16 during the *Womanfilm Festival*. I would like to add my own perspective about that event, as the "other" Other, or lesbian film maker on the panel. I also felt, as Barbara put it, "left with things to say," things I might have insisted upon saying at the time, things which percolated slowly as I have thought about what happened.

It had been a long day, a long week, a long winter, and the question came late in the discussion: How does being a lesbian influence your film making? My response was more instinctive than considered, though based on a number of considerations — so often lesbianism is seen as a problem, a disease, an "issue" of dubious health, whereas I think it is the response to lesbians by the dominant ideologues which creates the problems. So I spoke positively, of the self-confidence I had gained from my decision to come out, of the value in my life of having a stable relationship

which gives me confidence and courage to take risks. I mentioned some risks I have taken lately, shooting my own footage, editing it myself, daring my own fear of technology, of failing, daring to make irreverent films with little money, risks I have been preparing for over the years, partly by developing my courage as a lesbian woman. I assumed that a predominantly feminist audience and panel would be familiar with the kinds of material, real risks most women living openly as lesbians take daily, and that our common courage would be respected by such a panel in such an audience. I believe most of the audience had such respect, and I was, frankly, shocked at the responses of the panel. One woman described herself laughingly as a "raving heterosexual," another defended her ability, as a straight woman, to love other women, love lesbians, and make films about lesbians. One woman in the audience clapped loudly at that point. It was as if white people were proclaiming their ability to love blacks, men saying they loved women and could make films about women — well, yes, of course.

The dominant culture continually affirms the rights of all people to observe dominant norms. It's fine for women to love women, so long as we're not lesbians. But to love each other as lesbians, to say so, in public, in print, on film, how well-established is that right? Is it seen as a right at all by most people? Ask the Toronto Board of Education, who have acknowledged the needs of ethnic minorities to be represented by advocacy groups, and granted that representation, but denied it to lesbians and gays. Ask Metro Police, or the Ontario Board of Censors about the rights of lesbians and gays.

What I would have liked to say that evening, given more space and time and opportunity for dialogue, was that as well as the positive, self-affirming aspects of my decision to come out, there has been a growing sense of concern and responsibility as a documentary film maker to work towards the just representation of lesbians in film, a goal which seems very distant and difficult to achieve right now. It is not enough, as some of the panelists suggested that night, that we work as women, as feminists, as progressives. If all our images of women are white, young, and straight, if we do not empower those who have not yet spoken for themselves, then our work is inadequate. It is past time to address these questions, and I share the responsibility for not addressing them fully at that panel.

It is impossible, at this point in time, to fund, produce and distribute on the educational circuit a documentary film which shows lesbians as active members of the Canadian women's movement. Nevertheless, I have just finished one film and I'm in the process of completing another which constitute challenges to these unspoken, unwritten assumptions of "our" community. Lesbians have worked hard and been invisible in the women's movement for too long. I hope more women will join me in asserting our right to be heard and seen with no need for self-defensive dismissals by heterosexual women.

Barbara Halpern Martineau
Toronto

Strident Solidarity

Keep up the great work! FUSE is always a fresh and welcome blast of Canadian air... one of the mags I always read right away. Your editorial on "strident" critics reminded me of days past in the underground press when people would say "I agree with what you say. But it's the way you say it..." I finally realized that they didn't agree but used style/form as an excuse for not being upfront.

Yours for another year of strident FUSE!

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News & Reports

Fuse Awards

TORONTO — This summer, on July 13th, FUSE held a multi-purpose event at the Clichettes (feminist performance group) Clubhouse. Launching the magazine's Summer Issue on what turned out to be an appropriately hot and humid night, a gathering of writers, readers and guests were treated to 'fevered' performances by Kate Lushington, Fifth Column, Andrew Paterson, Lillian Allen, Clifton Joseph, Devon Haughton and Clive Robertson.

FUSE's development as a comprehensive vehicle for the promotion and critical appraisal of progressive cultural production has resulted from the magazine's ability to attract informed

(and sometimes angry) writers. Such efforts, naturally, have gone unrecognized by the magazine industry's annual self-serving gala, the *National Magazine Awards*.

To correct such gentrified imbalances founding editor, Clive Robertson selected a sampling of articles from the last three years which have been praised by our readership. The *FUSE Magazine Awards* we presented were:

FEMINIST THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE: "LA/London Lab", by Tony Whitfield and Lisa Liebmann (Nov/Dec '81); "Sistren" by Honor

Ford-Smith (Nov/Dec '81); "The Invisibility Factor: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre", by Rina Fraticelli (Sept '82); "The Possibility and the Habit", by Kate Lushington (Summer '83).

MUSIC: "The Political Thought of Archie Shepp", by Norman 'Otis' Richmond (Mar '82); "Music in Cameroun", by Hank Bull (Mar '82); "The Women's Music Industry, Part Two", by Susan Sturman (Summer '83); "Describing the Underground", by Millicent X (Summer '83); "Vancouver Music Scene", by Janey Newton-Moss and Joy Thompson (Summer '83).

LABOUR: "Jonnie Rankin", by Sara Diamond (Nov/Dec '81); "Canadian Farmworkers' Union", by Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge (Mar '82); "Art in the Workplace", by Jody Berland (Mar '82); "Fleck Strike 2", by Pat Wilson (May/June '82).

SEXUALITY: "Gay Left Politics", by George Smith (Aug/Sept '81); "The Celluloid Closet", by Martha Fleming (Sept '82); "The Nerves Exposed", by Valerie Harris (Sept '82); "Fighting the Right", by Lisa Steele (Aug/Sept '81); "Freedom, Sex and Power", by Lisa Steele (Feb '83).

FILM, VIDEO AND TELEVISION: "Location Shots", by Valerie Harris (May/June '81); "Channel Four", by Patricia Gruben (Sept '82); "Applebert on Film", by Sue Ditta (April '83); "The September Purge", by Ken Blaine (Summer '83); "Radical Questions for Experimental Filmmakers", by Varda Burstyn (Sept '82); "Changeless Channels", by Lisa Steele (March '82); "Oppositional Filmmaking in South Africa", by Keyan Tomaselli (Nov/Dec '82).

IMMIGRATION/THIRD WORLD AND INDIGENOUS CULTURES: "Victor Regalado Case", by Jeff House (Sept '82); "Reclaiming Culture", by Ross Kidd (Feb '83); "The Mozambique Caper", by Jamie Swift and Art Moses (Aug/Sept '82); "Rastafari", by Valerie Harris (Nov/Dec '82).

CANADIAN CULTURE AND POLITICS: "The Corridor Fiasco", by Jean Tourangeau (Aug/Sept '81); "Culture Accounting Practices", by George Smith (April '83).

Each awardee received an award certificate. Following the award announcements, which were made by Clive Robertson, he was presented with a bottle of champagne for his contributions and particularly his articles on artists' politics, including "Don't Take Candy From Strangers" (Nov '80).

Apartheid on radio

TORONTO — With the increasing efforts to isolate apartheid South Africa from the world community, the *Black Music Association of America* has compiled a list of performers, both Black and White, who have performed in South Africa in violation of the United Nations sponsored sanctions.

The list is being circulated slowly through the North American media from various sources. People are being encouraged to boycott concerts. Radio programmers are being asked to refrain from playing records of those who have performed in South Africa. This year in Toronto, there have been pickets at Millie Jackson and Chick Corea concerts — both have been to South Africa.

Two Toronto area DJs, Norman 'Otis' Richmond of CKLN and Milton Blake of CKAR/CKQT in Oshawa have released a statement, along with the list, obligating themselves not to play records by those artists and encouraging other DJs to do the same.

Blake said, "As an individual and a broadcaster I think it is important for me to make a contribution. People must also realize that apartheid is not exclusively a problem for Black people but it is a serious problem for humanity in the 20th Century." If entertainers who play in South Africa are implicitly helping to legitimize the apartheid regime, DJs, radio programmers and concert promoters who promote these artists are furthering that implicit support.

The list, which includes about 150 entertainers and musicians, is a hodgepodge of the predictable and the surprising. There are the white performers whose stars may have dimmed and were lured to the new 'homeland' casinos by the big bucks — Glen Campbell, the Beach Boys and Helen Reddy. There are the high profile types like Frank Sinatra and Olivia Newton-John and a surprising collection of Black performers whom one would have thought had more integrity and responsibility than to perform in South Africa — Ray Charles, Billy Cobham, Wilson Pickett and Curtis Mayfield.

An Honor Roll list is included. These are performers who have been asked to play in South Africa but have refused, those who have announced that they would not go if they were asked, and those who have gone but have publicly apologized. The latter list includes Jimmy Cliff, the O'Jays and George Benson. Blake said that he will play their records.

Richmond, who is a contributing editor to Fuse and entertainment editor of *Contrast* (the Toronto Black community newspaper) said that *Contrast* receives telephone calls every day from people inquiring about the list and information about pickets of concerts.

The response from Toronto radio stations about their participation in such a boycott is sadly predictable. The CBC radio network spokesman, Cec Smith, said with classic CBC ambivalence, "We would prefer not to comment about it."

The rock music behemoths, CHUM-FM and Q-107 responded in typical leave-it-alone-liberalism fashion. Dianne Medley at Q-107 said, "We wouldn't do anything about it. It's too political for us," which is a fairly political statement in its own right. CHUM-FM had no comment.

CFNY, which has declared itself an alternative, had received the list, but Leslie Kross from the programming department said, "It was probably tossed", adding that people at the station were too preoccupied with the recent sale of the station and the process of transferring their transmitter to the CN Tower. Since they've been saying for about two and a half years now that they're moving their transmitter, it's no wonder that spirit is waning from "the spirit of radio".

The one positive response came from Toronto's newest FM station, CKLN. The Ryerson radio station which had previously only been available on cable or closed circuit, started broadcasting in July from a low powered transmitter.

As far as a station wide stand on the boycott is concerned, Anton Leo, CKLN station manager, said that their policy is to let each DJ play what they like. "At this point we're not planning on sitting down with the DJs and telling them what not to play. I think everybody at the station has the same feeling about apartheid South Africa. When Chick Corea released an album that was produced in South Africa I wouldn't play it. However our feelings about this might grow and it's possible that in time we might decide to take a stronger stance."

In the meantime they are putting their money where their rhetoric is. Leo said the station was recently approached by Carling-O'Keefe with an offer to sponsor a show. He said the station declined the offer because Carling-O'Keefe is a subsidiary of Rothman's which is controlled by the Rembrandt Group of Johannesburg.

Martin Cash



Geoff Miles

FUSE September/October 1983

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SNAKES AND LADDERS

FEMINISM IN THE MEDIA

This is the first in a series of columns by Lisa Steele which will examine issues in the mass and alternative media, including film, video, television, print, etc. as they approach contemporary feminist issues.

Discussions of sexuality continue in the alternate press. And as one could have predicted, the most coherent presentations are coming from women who combine a socialist feminist political perspective with analysis of sexuality. In particular, Varda Burstyn's presentation to the spring ANNPAC conference in Kingston, Ontario, entitled "Art and Censorship" (printed in part in this issue of FUSE, p. 84) and Sara Diamond's article "Of Cabbages and Kinks: Reality and Representation in Pornography" (*Parallelogramme*, summer, 1983, p. 12) revitalize the current discussions around pornography and censorship by locating these issues historically and by posing alternative action. Both clearly oppose censorship from a feminist perspective.

But not all news is good news around these issues—even in the alternate press. Two other recent publications, *TKO* (issue no. 3, published out of Fanshawe College in London, Ontario) and *Alternative Media* (vol. 14, no. 2, published in New York by the Alternative Press Syndicate) offer articles whose authors oppose censorship. But there the similarity ends because *TKO*'s Thomas Lennon and *Alternative Media*'s Barbara O'Dair present themselves primarily as civil libertarians and not as feminists. And both of their articles proceed to discuss and critique *not* state censorship but feminists who, according to them, favour censorship.

Unencumbered as they both are by political analysis, their highly personalized accounts of "those women" read like statements of those who have witnessed traffic accidents. Detail upon detail accumulates; no nit is left unpicked in the rush to 'draw conclusions' and, most importantly, to establish who's at fault. For O'Dair and Lennon, it's definitely Women Against Por-

nography — not just the organization but any woman who's against pornography.

Not surprisingly, both Burstyn and Diamond are also critical of the rhetoric and recommendations of much of the Women Against Pornography movement but the range of their analyses reveals an important connection — that both are in fact *informed* by all of the available critiques of pornography. While both may disagree with some WAP strategies, they are able to locate these divergences within a political context which they themselves are part of. They have been engaged in these debates for a long time: Diamond as an artist, a lesbian feminist and a political activist; Burstyn as a feminist and political writer and activist, as well as theorist. I'm not suggesting that this gives either 'authority' above and beyond others; it's just that their recent writings reveal the extent to which they have considered the very complicated issues of pornography and censorship.

Consider Diamond's critique: "Some American feminist writing has tended to pose male sexuality as an immutable, untamable, almost instinctively violent force which must be curbed and suppressed. This attitude is no more than a reversal of the traditional concept of femininity as a 'natural' state with predetermined characteristics. It creates a false dichotomy between a hidden, but somehow intact female sexuality and an unhealthy male sexuality. . .

"The real issue within pornography is how sexism is articulated through representation and further, how pornography is inserted into the general practices of sexuality within a sexist society." Diamond goes on to discuss in detail what she has defined as the "real issues", but not before acknowledging the basis for feminists' interest in examining pornography: "It is not surprising that feminists have gravitated towards pornography to put together the puzzle of how male sexuality functions in this society. After all, it is the only visible, publicly accessible information on the subject." She follows this with a definition: "Pornography is the imaging of sexual experience within a

market framework. As a commodity it expresses industry-perceived male fantasies about sexual pleasure and women's identities as objects for male pleasure." While never simplifying things, Diamond takes much care not to further mystify the already complicated discussions.

Taking the good with the bad?

In contrast is Barbara O'Dair's article in *Alternative Media*, "Sex, Love, Desire: Feminists Struggle Over the Portrayal of Sex". Both O'Dair and Diamond make several of the same points but where Diamond is thoughtful in her analysis and comprehensive and detailed in her critique, O'Dair is more likely to race through her material to get to her 'point' — which is to trash Women Against Pornography. She can only offer a 'what-me-worry' definition for pornography, saying that it is "contradictory. . . It can be sexist, misogynous, misanthropic, upsetting; it can be titillating, thrilling, life-affirming, *fun*. (emphasis original). (That's kind of like saying, "Cars? Well, they can take you to the laundromat or they can squish you. . . So?)

She goes on to say, "Feminists have usually maintained an ambivalence towards the issue of pornography." Well, maybe in her circle, but not in mine. It seems to me that she would have been more accurate to have said an ambivalence toward sexuality perhaps, but definitely not towards pornography. In my view, feminists have been working very hard for many years, not just in the anti-pornography movement but everywhere, to address sexism in advertising, in the mass media and in pornography, to define what is pornography and what is erotic (a singularly unfruitful discussion from my point of view, but it has gone on), and to educate ourselves and men who are interested around these issues. And some of us have always opposed censorship. This is the dialogue and discourse which Sara Diamond and Varda Burstyn have lived through. Neither is

likely to confuse the cat with the lion, so to speak, which is precisely what Barbara O'Dair has done.

O'Dair concludes with admirable intentions: "For feminists, it is not a time for reaction nor a politics of despair. It is a time to relinquish the status of victim and to take *back* sex, in all its variety." And while I share her desire for more openness, O'Dair's words sound hollow in view of her article as she herself seems to be merely *reacting*, in this case to WAP. And while she recommends that feminists "take back sex," she is unable to suggest how this could come about.

Both Burstyn and Diamond would concur with O'Dair in this conclusion but they have specific suggestions for action. Both point to the hate literature

led to the suppression of the *Diary of a Conference*, the working document produced at the now famous conference on sexuality organized by the Barnard Women's Center in the spring of 1982. Women Against Pornography (the U.S. group) played a part in that regrettable suppression. They deserve harsh criticism for this. But O'Dair's telescoped 3-page introduction to her description of this event fails to deliver the polemic she undoubtedly intended because she alludes to too much and offers too little clear argument.

Sue Golding, in the May, 1983 issue of the *Body Politic*, offers the antithesis of O'Dair's methodology on the same subject. Her article, "Dear Diary: How do we learn to 'speak sex'?" begins with a three *paragraph* introduction to

and Titillation: a consumer's guide to lezzy smut" which also appears in the May 1983 issue of the *Body Politic*. Bearchell's irreverent approach to the topic of porn from a lesbian's point of view is personal, engaging and humorous. Nor does she moralize or pull punches. For instance, she makes it clear why she won't distinguish between porn and erotica: "First, because the two terms represent a distinction that primarily runs along class lines: 'erotica' is the rich person's pornography. Most of us do not buy our kicks in art galleries or on trips abroad. We settle for whatever the corner store has to offer. . . And we call it porn."

Unlike Bearchell, O'Dair cannot explain why she defines (or doesn't define) porn as she does; unlike Diamond she

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legislation for prosecuting extreme types of visual pornography. And both make recommendations for the production of positive sexual imagery: Burstyn speaking to a gathering of artists says, "We need art that can serve as a living, breathing alternative to pornography . . . an alternative erotic culture"; while Diamond gets more specific, saying, "There is also a place for imagery which is 'totally concerned with sex'", and suggests some parameters for women who are interested in producing this type of imagery. If the discussions around sexuality, pornography and censorship are to proceed within (and outside of) the feminist community, it is precisely the type of writing presented by Diamond and Burstyn that is called for — arguments which make apparent the author's political point of view, which offer critiques based in appropriate social contexts, and finally which suggest actions and strategies for movement.

I would assume that O'Dair wrote the piece to expose the circumstances which

the Barnard conference events. Golding, who shares much of O'Dair's critique of WAP as an organization and as a 'philosophy', has chosen to be concise in her criticism and is infinitely more effective because of her brevity. She gives her anger short rein and lets the remaining section of her article serve as an elegy for this suppressed document, ending with a call for a "sister volume to this diary". Unlike Diamond and Burstyn, Golding is not writing a theoretical piece about pornography and censorship. She is writing a piece to acquaint her readers with material (the *Diary*) which she supports in the continuing discussions around sexuality. She makes her point.

O'Dair, on the other hand, falls amongst many stools, sometimes trying to argue and build a theory about why feminists should oppose censorship, sometimes trying to nail WAP, sometimes trying to present factual information — she fails at all.

Another article worth mentioning here is Chris Bearchell's "Art, Trash

cannot present a detailed class analysis of sexist society and build a theory and practice which actively opposes censorship for feminists; and unlike Golding, she cannot state clearly why WAP was wrong in the action at Barnard. Instead she can only moralize and draw vague conclusions. This is the reason why I said, much earlier, that she presents herself primarily as a civil libertarian. She simply doesn't provide us with enough information to decide otherwise no matter how much we might be in agreement with some of her conclusions. And the civil libertarian position is the weakest of them all when it comes to analyzing pornography.

The worst ever

Which brings me to Thomas Lennon's article "Women On Pornography", published in the latest issue of *TKO*. To digress for a moment, I will confess that when I first read Lennon's article, I had planned to write this entire column

about it. It is — bar none — the worst piece of writing ever done on the topic in my experience. Luckily, in the intervening weeks, I had the good fortune to find other work which more clearly supports what I am interested in, so I don't have to rant on too much.

But some ranting is in order. First, Lennon quotes Norman Snider, chauvinist extraordinaire columnist for the *Globe and Mail*. Now if that isn't enough to damage his credibility forever in this area of discussion (which is, after all, "Women on Pornography"), I think some of his own words will do. His article, which is introduced with a fairly standard state-of-things description of censorship in Canada, proceeds into a full critique of women's objection to pornography: "(It's mainly the intellectual objection to censorship that interests me here, because it is the linchpin of my other objections. If it could be shown that pornography really is a bad thing, then perhaps we should be prepared to pay the artistic and political price to suppress it. However, the feminist attempt to show this, its case against pornography, is inadequate."

With that as his premise — that porn is in no way bad — he plods through his article, using as his primary text *Take Back The Night: Women On Pornography*, a series of essays edited by Laura Lederer. Using his fine-toothed

'professor's comb' (well-broken-in, no doubt, as Lennon is a professor of philosophy and associate dean at the University of Western Ontario according to his bio.), he searches the scalp of research done on pornography. His conclusions, take my word for it, are of little consequence. He repeatedly moans over the lack of methodology of the studies done, but he himself is hard pressed to come to any conclusions other than that he is against censorship and that not enough research has been done to justify any recommendations around pornography let alone action.

What is more interesting in Lennon's article is trying to figure out why he's transformed into a lecturn-thumping evangelist over this issue. What exactly is his vested interest? A clue is offered near the end of his article when he spins out of his analysis of specific texts and returns to his general area of interest, which is telling women what's going on: "The case of these papers against pornography fails, and because it fails on intellectual grounds it fails on moral grounds as well. It's repeatedly pointed out by the anti-porn campaigners that porn is big business — up to 5 billion dollars annually. What this shows of course is that many men want it very much. Presumably it gives them pleasure. To deny people pleasure without sufficient reason is immoral." Well said Tom. (And not a bad argu-

ment for the international arms trade, the business in deadly chemicals and many other such enterprises.) So, "many men want it very much" do they? One might assume that Tom is one of them. (I do.) He continues: "Just one relevant example will suffice of the failure or inability of women to address what on feminist terms (original emphasis) is an issue of significance. Women object not just to the minimal, sadomasochistic portion of pornography, but to all of it, Penthouse and Playboy included." Well, there's the rub isn't it Tom? Now you've got to take it off the fucking coffee table and build shelves in the garage or maybe even in the closet (oh god what does that mean?) just so you won't get called a sexist. Shit, man, no wonder you're upset. True civil libertarian that he is, Tom ends the article saying, "I'm left broken-hearted."

The real question I have over this article is not how some twisted academic could wrap himself around so many contradictions and make such a fool of himself (that's been done lots, publicly and privately) but why, in the name of reason, TKO printed the resulting piece in the same issue as Andrea Dworkin's "For Men Freedom of Speech; For Women Silence Please". Even classic liberalism has its boundaries. Come on boys, pull up your editorial socks.

— Lisa Steele

and we note . . .

JEFF HOUSE

One law for the flight another for the landed

Canada's latest attempt at a big-league scandal has so far failed to get off the ground. We refer — natch — to the discovery that Cabinet Ministers take family members on freebie flights to hither and yon, and are not above stopping in Miami to take on board aging inlaws, rest-homing there, for awful business flights to the Caribbean.

Most Liberal has been Unemployment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy, who flies his live-in comrade and her two adorables to many nifty places that this department knows only from match box covers. (Questioned by proper reporters, she said she was Ax's "designated spouse" — a category that seems to suggest something less than consent on her part). Now, these notes do not deign to take L.A. to task for living in; no doubt he has ripped the veil off bourgeois morality, and found the cash nexus.

But, we do wonder how the "designated spouse" system, which entitles the Minister's 'live-in' to a nice perk, can be squared with his presiding over an Immigration system which insists more strictly on the legalized family tie. So moral is Canada (outwardly at least) that a resident male, who fathers a child with a woman who is not his wife, cannot sponsor either the woman or her child. 'Wife', in the Immigration Act, means legal wife, and 'child' means child born in wedlock.

Those who can detect a double standard are invited to continue reading this column.

Graphic politics/ pornographic

All FUSEES who dabble through the bourgie press know of the thoroughly green-plants-on-the-lovely-balcony niceness of Toronto Star writer Lynda Hurst. Of late, she's joined the segment of the anti-pornography lobby, arguing for government censorship of smut. We loved her way of disposing of critics who claim that censorship is a slippery slope: she said the "thin edge of the wedge argument" was "nonsense".

Well, two weeks after Hurst hurt us, a Federal judge discovered (in a porn *ed. note: In recent cabinet shuffle, the Ax escaped this particular contradiction, not by changing policy, but by changing portfolios.

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case, of course) that the *Charter of Rights* does not protect the right to read "indecent, immoral, treasonous or seditious material". Then, in early August, the wedge became a bit thicker. The *Committee for Human Rights in Columbia*, a Toronto exile group, were told that they could not import a political video on human rights atrocities in that country.

A customs official allowed that it included "lots of speeches and lots of shooting", but was really propaganda for "a terrorist group". When the official decision to seize the videotape came down, the reason given was that it was "indecent or immoral".

The Vatican connection

The Klaus Barbie scandal continues to titillate, though it's really the tip of the iceberg when it comes to U.S.-Nazi contacts. Two recent reports bear further investigation.

According to the mag *Reform Judaism*, Barbie, and most other Nazis spirited to South America, got there through an underground railway of monasteries. The article relied upon a 1945 report (by U.S. military attaché in Rome, Vincent La Vista, recently declassified). In his report to the U.S. Secretary of State, Vince wrote, "The Vatican is the largest single organization in the illegal movement" of Nazis to South America.

On another front, several French papers have reported that Barbie, during his many years of rather open hiding in Bolivia, had represented Israeli arms firms there. Since this would involve registration with the Israeli government, there may be a little scandal ready to unfold, especially amongst the many Israelis who are disgusted with their country's sales of arms to the worst of the third world dictatorships.

Judging the less worthy

Have all our readers noted the fact that Big John Bowlby has gotten the hoist to the Supreme Court of Ontario? No doubt. But how come no one in the press mentioned his disastrously incompetent work as Chairman of the Law Society in Ontario? The 1983 meeting almost ended in a riot as BJB intoned (on a leftie motion) that "although the motion is properly moved, I am saying the resolution will not go ahead". When someone challenged

the Chair, Bowlby shouted, "I've made a decision for you, whether that's what I was elected for or not".

This burst of wisdom no doubt was the proximate cause of his donning judicial robes three weeks later, the better to sit in judgement of the less worthy among us.

Clear light of authority

All those who have grumbled over a parking ticket owe a debt to Toronto Judge Sid Linden, for explaining it all for us. Seems a parking violatrix appealed her fistful of tickets, reasoning that it's not fair to have to pay three times the cost of the violation merely by waiting to go to court. Also, she thought, it was usury for a \$5 fine to become double that in a mere ten days.

Judge Linden cleared it up: "the penalties . . . are actually voluntary payments that may be made by an offender" to avoid having to go to court. The whole thing is "a kind of voluntary, consensual, self-imposed penalty".

Graduation income

Ever since the United States committed itself to school busing, Black Americans have been attending schools in increasing numbers for longer periods of time. So much so, that they have virtually caught up to whites in actual schooling, according to a massive study by the U.S. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Whites now average 12 years of schooling, and Blacks 11.5. This compares with the figures for 1960, when whites averaged 11.5 years and Blacks 7.5. But the study, which was not reported in Canada's media at all, also showed that all this schooling made little difference to economic well-being. "On measures of income, poverty and unemployment, wide disparities between Blacks and whites have not lessened or have worsened since 1960."

A Black college graduate, for example, makes the same money as a white high school graduate; a Black high school graduate makes slightly less than does a white high school graduate. The report concludes that the "economic gap between whites and Blacks remains wide, and is not diminishing".

and we note. . . is a regular spot check on the mainstream media by Jeff House.

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Responsibilities: overall organisation of feminist arts & media centre; extensive fundraising & grant application; all matters building maintenance, insurance, taxes & accts. receivable; society business & payroll; promoting visibility of centre & publicity of its functions; ANNPAC participation; co-operation with distribution co-ordinator; reporting and accountable to the Board of Directors.

Requirements: awareness of feminist media aesthetics & women's issues; proven effectiveness in fundraising (esp. in alternative arts/women's framework) is necessary.

DISTRIBUTION CO-ORDINATOR

Responsibilities: day to day distribution of video tapes & films; phone, mail orders & shipping; repairs & dubbing; producers' statements; exploring new acquisitions; promotion & publicity of media library (flyers, catalogues, festivals & conferences); developing new areas (i.e. programming for commercial broadcast outlets); good co-operation with centre administrator; responsible to Board of Directors.

Requirements: knowledge of film/video history and theory, alternative feminist aesthetics; experience with video playback, film cleaning/repair equipment, film/video exhibition & distribution are necessary; organisational efficiency & ability to work independently & under pressure.

SALARIES: \$1,200.00 paid monthly, each position.

Please mail resume and direct all inquiries to W.I.F. (address above)
An interview will be necessary; we expect to make a decision by Sept. 30 '83.

FUSE September/October 1983

ART AND CENSORSHIP

All societies have rules about what their members can and cannot do. Indeed, what defines human society is the human capacity to generate a set of agreed upon customs which regulate at the most minimal level elementary aspects of the taking of life and its opposite, the begetting and nurturing of children. Because what we say and what we make are part of what we do, all societies have ways of regulating the expression of their members as well. In simple societies, that regulation is constantly created and recreated as the older generations pass on to the younger the customs which are special to them, and which give shape and meaning to their lives. Taboos against what can be said, made and done do not take the form of state censorship — a form of regulation imposed, as it were, from outside and above the majority of people. Rather the rules operate through a process of social consensus with two complementary facets. On the one hand, taboos are internalized and expressed in commonly held notions of good and bad, permissible and forbidden. They work both consciously and unconsciously, and in the latter sense they lend the psychoanalytic concept of censorship its meaning. On the other hand, taboos are expressed in a set of sanctions which are taken by the natal group when the bad and the forbidden happen, as they inevitably do from time to time.

Elementary morality, embodied in this system of customs, is a necessary, defining condition of human society. If we attempt to derive universal tenets of morality from those rules and customs common to all human groups, we find that basic rules prohibiting murder (killing of kin) and incest (sleeping with too many of them, especially mother) provide the basic social structure that enables humans to co-operate with one another to create social life. Strong feelings about violence and sex are connected to sanctions and rules which are fundamental to our psychosexual history as a species, and they carry with them the weight and power certainly of hundreds of thousands, possibly of

millions of years of species existence.

States, by contrast, are a relatively new creation in terms of our species history, dating back a mere five to seven thousand years. State structures are not universal to human culture, and they represent important changes in social organization. States are manifestations of stratified, heirarchalized societies in which there are some people with wealth, military, and religious (later secular) ideological power, and others who lack these privileges, but whose productive labour sustains those at the top. This is not an ideological point, but a factual one. History reveals that unless there are contradictions of power and privilege in society, humans do not seem to need or to create politico-military structures which are alienated from but which control the mass and expand in the name of "god" or "king" or "country". Contradictions in society mediated by state formations are colloquially expressed in sayings like "one law for the rich, another for the poor", or in the codification of the double standard of sexual behaviour in patriarchal law since pre-biblical times. The existence of the state in any given society expresses a series of contradictions between universal laws which enable humans to regulate their behaviour in the name of egalitarian cooperation and those which work to sustain the power and privilege of those strata who are on top in society.

However, power and privilege do not flourish in conditions of instability, regardless of what dominant class form organizes a given society (slave, feudal, capitalist, or so-called existing socialist). All states have had to contend with this fact, and in it lies the most compelling reason for the personnel of state formations to try to reconcile the advancement of ruling-strata interests with at least some degree of 'satisfaction' of the needs of the labouring classes. Specific relations between the state and the non-privileged mass do differ in important ways however in different political and social systems, so that once the general point is made, discussion can only proceed if we focus on the system in

question.

The system in question

The debates we are having about state censorship today are unfolding in the context of a liberal parliamentary democracy, the political form associated with mature capitalism in the metropolitan centres of the industrialized world. Liberal democracy is predicated upon a real measure of popular support for given governmental teams which can be elected or thrown out of office by an electorate now based on universal suffrage of the national citizenry. The right of 'free speech' or 'freedom of expression' represents in the first instance the need felt by the different political representatives of the privileged strata to protect themselves from overly harsh persecution from one another, to allow for the give and take of the electoral game. In the second instance, it represents a much more fragile and tentative gain: the right of the underprivileged and oppressed to speak in their own voice about what goes down in society. To understand the difference between these two levels in Canada, for example, one need only look at how often members of the Conservative, Liberal or Social Credit parties have been harassed, jailed and/or banned, and compare that with the experiences of people and parties active in the left and the labour movement during this century. To understand the fragility of the latter gain, one need only remember the War Measures Act in 1970 in Quebec and the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War; and also the complicity of successive Canadian governments in most undemocratic undertakings in the Caribbean, Latin America, and elsewhere.

The fact that our memories of 1970 and 1942 are not sharp and clear, that many of us are not aware of the harsh repression of socialists and labour activists in the past as well as in the present, that most of us never think about the conundrum of Third World dictatorships when we think about

'democracy' on Parliament Hill indicates that to those who control information in our society it is important that we believe that we live in the best of all possible worlds in the best of all possible times. This belief sustains the possibility for popular support of non-popular governments.

Liberal democratic states like ours grant great importance to the functions of ideological legitimation at various levels. Budgets and departments and programmes within departments are dedicated to the careful cultivation of the kind of social and cultural activity which encourages people to think of state bodies and norms as genuinely 'public authorities', bodies and laws which represent everyone's interests more or less equally, aiding pluralistic expression and even advancing progressive social change. A thought to various forms of social service and a quick glance at a number of really admirable projects sponsored by the Canada Council verifies the rosy impression.

But what is missing and needs to be brought into the picture are the projects that do not get funded, the larger (so much larger) budgetary allocations of 'aid to the private sector', the activities of the RCMP, civilian 'security' forces and armies, the offices of the attorneys-general, the function of the courts and the ultimate, precise logic behind the seemingly random and endless snafus of government bureaucracies.

In any case, it is important to the existence of liberal democracy that people see the state as a voice and an instrument of the 'whole society' and not of any given, privileged sector. Consequently, any act of state censorship is inherently a rather tricky operation, for it can potentially expose the fact that a state body is acting arbitrarily against members of a given community or society, therefore imperiling the ap-

pearance of neutrality and justice. State censorship is not the favoured but the last resort of an intelligent government body, but it is also a necessary resort in instances where the state feels itself or the larger social order threatened. The nature of the threat may differ. It may be effective political criticism, orthodoxly defined, which has somehow managed to escape its usual confinement in small, fringe media. It may be material which defies important rules about gender relations in sexually explicit terms — material that is also political, as I will explain shortly. It may be material which breaks a combination of class and sex taboos. Or it may be people who have openly flaunted the authority of the state itself, or questioned too loudly the state's right to decide what may or may not be expressed, and need to be brought to heel.

Decamouflaging the contradictions

State censorship is a potentially dangerous act of ideological coercion which can easily appear to contradict the right of freedom of expression, unless the contradiction is camouflaged by popular support. Because all of us share to a greater or lesser extent certain values, ideas and feelings, the state can appeal to us ideologically in its moves for legitimation. These values, ideas and feelings are embedded and expressed in a system of sanctions which take psychological, interpersonal and economic forms, as well as the directly political form of state censorship. (The state needs to censor only that stuff which has escaped self-censorship, family and peer group censorship and economic censorship, as in "there's no market for that".

The ideology which informs these sanctions is an insidious admixture in which the rules all people need to sur-

vive are coopted and skewed in the service of the rules which maintain the privilege of the dominant strata in our society — capitalist, white and male — in their overwhelming majority. In the name of 'social responsibility' and 'community standards' and 'national security' the patriarchal capitalist state appeals to important communal values concerning the abuse of violence and sexuality, while in reality it works to strengthen a social system based on the right to private exploitation not only of the environment and human labour, but of sexuality itself.

No wonder the strictly civil-libertarian anti-censorship strategy which evades or belittles issues of morality and social responsibility is so inadequate to the tasks at hand. Most people are neither artists nor actors in the political arena, more's the pity. The call to defend 'freedom of expression' does not resonate with the same force as the call to reject 'murder' and 'sexual abuse'. For most people the right of free speech is important only in very abstract terms of democracy ("it's better here than in Russia"). In daily life it is almost meaningless given the domination of information and expression by the huge corporations and government and the material they deem suitable for dissemination. Opposition to state censorship, if it is to be effective, must grapple with the kinds of feelings which incline people to support the Mary Browns (Chief censor of the Ontario Board of Censors) of the world. Such an opposition must demonstrate that it is part of a movement which is constructing a different kind of society than the one mediated by the censors. I shall return to this point at the end of this article, but for the time being, I want to move on to consider one particular strategy that has been advanced as a possibility for dealing with state censorship in the arts community.

A Privileged Status for Art?

How should artists situate themselves philosophically and strategically in relation to state censorship? One direction that has been explored is the demand for a special status, an exemption for art from the jurisdiction of the state censors. I disagree with this direction, for several reasons.

If the definition of state censorship is

clear — an ideological intervention backed by coercive means to support the *status quo* and strengthen the authority of the state — the definition of art is not. Beyond saying that art is a form of symbolic production, there are no firm criteria by which we can all agree on or objectively measure what art is. If for example, we try to define

art in terms of its conditions of production, distribution and exchange — we might say that art is produced by artisanal labour, and consumed within relations and spaces which are outside of those of the mass media — we immediately see that material produced within such relations is constantly being incorporated by the mass media, and it

is not at all clear when or whether that material ceases to be 'art'. Likewise we all know the futility of setting purely aesthetic criteria. One person's or one period's beauty or enlightenment is another's kitsch or ugly nightmare. If we set moral values on art, we find one person's nightmare is another's dream. Though we might like to call art that which expresses resistance and opposition, we would be hard put to account for the mountains of stuff which support the dominant or even fascist ideology. And if we set attitudinal values as our yardstick — art encourages people to think, question, evaluate, whereas other forms of representation encourage people to accept, accommodate, nod out — that won't do either, because lots of what some people consider art measured this way, others think to be pabulum or social anaesthesia.

My personal definition of art would be made up of a number of these criteria, but I am opposed to demanding a *legally formalized set of norms* by which art may set off from other forms of ideological production, because I fear (among other things) nas-

ty state policies about what art can or cannot be, like the infamous socialist realism of the Soviet state, or the reinforcement of the less systematically ideologized censorship of capitalist states. Both of these are odious forms of the subordination of art to politics, which I abhor.

I also think the demand of a special status for art is strategically wrong because its rationale misreads the central reason for censorship in the first place. The state reaches out to suppress artists in the same spirit that it reaches out for other kinds of 'agitators' and social 'criminals'. State censorship is not simply a function of offices like Mary Brown's, after all. Decisions to relentlessly prosecute publications like the *Body Politic*, or to go after Canadian Images Film Festival or Glad Day Books to the point of threatening their survival are decisions taken or reviewed at the Cabinet level. Art is not censored because of epistemological, phenomenological or existential qualities that inhere in its 'artistic' nature. Art is censored because of what it is saying about and to the larger web of social relations of which it is an integral part.

For both these reasons I think it misguided and dangerous to demand privileged treatment for art. I think that position simultaneously divides us from potential allies and reinforces the censor — the voice of the dominant ideology — in our own heads. If art wants special status it should forge it out of a special willingness to challenge the *status quo*, to take on what the state represents, and defy it to censor that which needs to be said. Art should criticize, illuminate, agitate, foment, meditate, prefigure, remember, invent anew and transcend; it should give the state the metaphorical finger, and then it should form alliances with other people who have embarked on the same enterprise in their own ways. Art should work in the service of, but never subordinated to, social change: engaged art, an alternative culture in the best sense of the term. But this is just *my* preference — art can be whatever it wants to be so long as it doesn't paint itself into a corner and cut itself off from allies by abandoning them to repression. Ultimately, this would suffocate art itself.

The Feminist Critique

If prior censorship is not the route, nor a special status for art, what is left is to build an alliance against state intervention with other forces who oppose the weight of the dominant ideology and what it represents in our culture as a whole. One would think a natural ally in this undertaking would be the women's movement, the most dynamic social actor of the seventies and, along with the environmental/anti-nuclear movement, one of the two progressive social forces now able to mobilize energy and vision. But the artist-feminist alliance these days is in trouble.

In a series of public actions and campaigns, the women's movement has animated an extensive critique of much mass produced and distributed explicit sexual material — or pornography as it is commonly called. Some parts, although by no means all parts, of the women's movement have come out in favour of state censorship of some of this material; and almost all feminists favour some forms of regulation of the material — both at the production and at the distribution ends. On the other hand a number of

artists and arts organizations have rejected that critique and/or declared that it works as a direct invitation and sanction to state censorship. Because so much censorship has targeted sexual representation, many artists are fearful of and predisposed against the feminist critique. Not surprisingly, relations are strained at best between the extreme poles of the arts community and the women's movement, and still very shaky in the middle ground where these two communities intertwine and overlap. I want to look very briefly at the reasons for that tension, and draw a few strategic points at the end.

The central subject of contention is how to look at and what to do about explicit sexual representation in the mass market — whether through photography, film, video, print or live performance — and its relation to artistic representation and censorship. Feminists have pointed out that the vast majority of readily available porn, soft and hard core, is rife with sexist values. Feminists have argued that this material is an important *agent* of these values, not simply a

passive carrier, and that far from being part of an oppositional current in culture, this material is reactionary. Feminists do not think that this kind of judgement comes out of puritanism. They are concerned that at a time when women are seeking a fundamental renegotiation of the relation between the sexes, a renegotiation which requires the winning of strength and social power for women, our environment has become saturated with images which constitute a direct intervention at the psycho-sexual core of our mass psychology: a clear sub- and counter-text, in directly sexual terms, to what the women's movement is trying to achieve in economic and political terms.

Questions of interpretation

I know many artists, mostly but not only men, reject this reading of the proliferation of porn, but I have never heard a good argument against it,

motivated in terms of a rigorous textual analysis of that material. It amazes me that artists and critics who are capable of the most sophisticated 'readings' of many other kinds of artifacts and discourses, who are able to discern all the signatures and signposts of the dominant ideology at a glance in any other form of mass media, can turn into symbolic illiterates when confronted with just your normal, everyday soft-porn display at the corner store.

To the vast majority of feminists questions of reproductive rights and erotic pleasure — that is questions of sexual freedom — are fundamental parts of the larger feminist programme and vision. They are not objecting to the sex in porn, but to the sexism. They have not lost sight of the fact, however, that through sex the sexism carries a very, very powerful wallop.

In order to deal with strategic issues like state censorship, we must be able to hammer out at least some questions of interpretation. In order to do that we have to find a shared vocabulary for reading the symbols in front of us, otherwise we will be talking at cross purposes and continue to grow farther apart. There are standard systems and methods of interpretation we can use, critical interpretive tools that make our analysis accessible and potentially shared. Of these I think the most useful are semiology, psychoanalysis, marxism and feminism, and obviously these need to be employed with a sense of historical precedent and context, both socially and in terms of the received conventions of the discourse at hand. Semiology is a method devised to identify and decode 'signs' — to understand what meanings are attached commonly and differentially to certain kinds of representations; psychoanalysis is a method which encourages one to search for a symbolic and unconscious dimension to artifacts and representations and to look for connections between sex and power; marxism predisposes one to look for particular arrangements of power as it works between men in different social classes, nations and even races at its best; feminism alerts one to power relations between men and women, as they are played out between people of all classes.

Proper interpretive use of these theories demands an understanding of the social relations in which and by which artifacts are produced, distributed and consumed. And so, in

discussing questions like 'meaning' and 'social impact' we must look at artifacts as part of the field of reality from which they came and in which they intervene.

When feminists look at much at what passes for erotica these days (at mass produced and distributed pornography) they are concerned with all of these dimensions, not just with one or two. To me, and to a large number of feminists, it is the increasing commodification of sexuality that is most troubling, for its dynamics combine together some of the ugliest aspects of capitalism and patriarchy. We are concerned that in the world of public heterosexual sex it is primarily women whose sexuality is bought and sold and primarily men who do the purchasing. Large numbers of women are becoming sex workers out of necessity.

Fantasy and reality

The problem is that what appears as 'fantasy' in masturbatory representations for men is not a fantasy to the women whose bodies are used to make the representations. Here lies a crucial distinction between drawings and literary texts which are unmediated expressions of the producers' imagination, and material in which the producers' imagination is mediated through the real actions of real people within a network of unequal economic power relations. (This point assumes that there is at least the 'freedom' involved in selling sex for a wage. Such a situation does not obtain for truly enslaved women, a point I will take up at the end of this article.) So we worry about the means and relations of pornographic production.

But we also worry about the means and relations of pornographic distribution and consumption, about the fact that as porn pervades all the places around us, the community milk stores and video outlets, the television stations available at the flick of a switch, that all of us — men, women and children — are being bombarded with 'soft-core' images of women which display the following signs:

1. *Youth and slenderness*: feminists have talked at length about the demoralization women experience as a result of sexual stereotyping, and that is indeed unfortunate. Regardless of the stereotype, we simply do not all have similar bodies. But what is far more damaging is the latent content of the stereotype so dominant in porn today. Most human beings grow larger with

age, gain some weight and acquire wrinkled skin and greying hair. Women, even more than men, tend to accumulate fat — it is part of our genetic programming. These characteristics (large size, silver hair, the lines of experience) are still signs of power when associated with men, and are not split off from men's sexuality.

Images of women, on the contrary, constantly split these characteristics off from women as sexual beings, working to diminish the sexuality of older women, and the potential for power of younger ones. We have arrived at the point where the idea of a heavy older woman in postures of sexual abandon is considered ugly (a change even from the pornography of Victorian times, which worked off the premise that everyone did have, underneath, a sexuality that was hidden as a result of the prevailing puritanism). Linking women's sexuality only to adolescent bodies is a socially meaningful phenomenon having to do with the control of women's power. It is least of all an issue of aesthetics.

2. *Accessibility, sustenance and submission*: there are many of these signs, and we can read them well with a little help from social anthropology as well as the other systems I have cited. Three central examples: (a) the ubiquitous smile or coy pout signal non-threatening, cooperative assent to the wishes of the absent masculine voyeur, (b) bared breasts, often uncovered in a motion of the girl's hand, give the appearance of offering up sexual (and underneath/associated with that, maternal) sustenance, (c) posterior and/or vagina, covered or bare, in what is called presenting posture, which is the submissive invitation to aggressive mounting behaviour, a sign read universally and even across mammalian species as one of accessibility, submission and acknowledgement of superior power.

3. *Props of bondage*: (here I am referring to the so-called vanilla porn, not the S/M material) high heel shoes, a form of hobbling akin to footbinding, lace corsets for artificial control of stubborn body contours, and along with heels and tight skirts, impediments for free movement and locomotion; make-up, complete body make-up for that matter, not as an expression of theatrical *joie de vivre* or even mating ritual but as a mask to hide individuality; and of course the complete absence of body hair (except for the well trimmed pubis), the presence of which is associated in all cultures with adulthood, and in western culture with masculinity, sexuality and power.

4. *Absent signs*: the insignia of social power. Where are the last names, the professional statuses, the big cars, the executive suites, the prowess in sports, manual labour or military activities? All these have been found to regularly accompany men's images in *Playgirl* and the few other 'women's magazines' that have and still do exist, as well as characterizing a lot of gay male porn. Where is the strong, challenging, unsmiling, full frontal gaze found in male gay porn? Where is the sweating, determined, instrumental masturbatory posture? Where are the signifiers of powerful, aggressive and independent desire? Indeed, where are all the men? Above all in terms of missing signs, where is the penis?

magic, and retains social power only through its association with big money and armed might. Indeed, I think we need to be clear about this: today's distinction between hard and soft porn (even the words give it away), is not as arbitrary as it seems at first. Since women's sexual apparatus has been fully exposed for a long time now, it is a distinction which aims at maintaining some degree of phallic mystification (eg. in Ontario intercourse is forbidden, in Quebec ejaculation). Insofar as some non and anti-feminist men struggle against the legalization of hard core porn, they are struggling against the banalization of the phallus by its inclusion in the world of everyday life. They are not struggling to protect women.



patriarchal fantasy from *Penthouse* magazine

The penis is absent as the signifier for male power, while a series of its symbolic stand-ins abound: swords, guns, cars, tools, towers. This absence requires some explanation, since the vulva and vagina are now regularly exposed to any Tom, Dick or Harry who wants to flip through the magazine rack. I think the absence of the penis, especially the erect penis, is explained by the rules of our social order which declare that we must not take this particular sign in vain. We must not objectify and trivialize it by allowing it to stick up and out so vulnerably and even ludicrously in public places, the way we have done with women's breasts and genitals. It would lose too much of its mystique, and god knows it can't really afford to lose any more. It has already lost all its

If all these signs are the standard basic vocabulary of soft core pornography, if in certain respects they are continuous with the presentation of women in advertising, television and cinema (which they are), it would be a mistake to think that most hard core porn is in some sense 'better' because it makes erect penises visible and shows women who are active. Most of what I have been able to see of this stuff in New York (magazines, video and film) compensates for the visibility of the penis by stances and actions of sexual service by women for men—always ready to accommodate, even worship the great god unveiled. (Again, I want specifically to address questions of real sadism and bondage a bit later on.) There is no automatic improvement in

porn by virtue of its being hard core, no more 'realism' or 'honesty'. For the most part, that porn is just a further extension of the sexist wish-fulfillment of soft core, and insofar as it is a model for behaviour, penetrates, so to speak, to an even more intimate and precise place than soft core porn. But, as I stated before, hard or soft is not the issue. I have seen a little bit of hardcore material and the occasional softcore spread which, if taken out of their sexist context, could be considered reasonably benign in terms of their messages about gender and sex. I have also seen a lot of erotic representation by western artists and those from other cultures which is explicit in the extreme and which I found not only benign, but positive from that point of view.

Distinguishing sex from sexism

Perhaps the distinction between sex and sexism can be made a little more concrete by comparing the vocabulary of mass hetero-porn to Barbara Hammer's short experimental film, *Multiple Orgasms*. Much of this film is taken up by a juxtaposition of the following imagery: a full-screen, unretouched shot of an open, moist vulva and vagina and a hand working towards and achieving eight orgasms; a range of massive, bare granite rocks; and a strong, lined woman's face, eyes open or closed, but at all times taken up with internal and alternating processes of effort and ecstasy. This film breaks a lot of the patriarchal rules. It shows an older woman, without make-up or smile or concern for the male gaze. It shows an active vagina and vulva in instrumental sexuality, and it associates that sexuality with the strength, eternality and superb indifference of a range of primeval rock. I'm sure Mrs. Brown would not find this film acceptable. And although I do not think she would be able to articulate it, the Ontario censor would also probably find this film objectionable because it breaks a lot of capitalist rules. It was made for next to nothing, it is only a few minutes long, it refuses the usual forms of ideological seduction which virtually define the capitalist media. It defies incorporation and cooption within a large-scale profit system, and unlike *Playboy* or *Penthouse* or any number of porn videos and films made in any number of southern condos, it sells no commodities or life-styles. All it does is challenge these by the implication of

criticism and opposition suggested in the broken conventions that lie shattered around it.

Hammer's erotic representation is political in the sense that it exposes the conventions, and by implication the rules of a complicated set of power relations which grow out of two distinct but intertwined systems of social inequality. Patriarchy, the system of masculine privilege embodied in social, economic, sexual and state relations, is an older system than capitalism. While it has structured capitalism in very important ways — for example, unequal pay access for women and men in the paid workforce, an unpaid female work force in privatized units for reproductive labour — the two systems also conflict, and this tends to weaken them. For example, capitalism erodes really central bases of patriarchal power relations because it needs a smaller workforce than an agrarian economy, less physical strength, cheap labour pools and an ever expanding market for its commodities. (This last factor is responsible for the mass generalization of commodities as different as contraception and video porn.)

All these factors combined both compel and encourage women to take greater control of their reproductive capacities. This development strikes at the fundamental premise of patriarchy — masculine control over women's reproductive and, necessarily, erotic activities. Patriarchy's weakening does not in any simple way strengthen capitalism, however. On the contrary, the experience of the women's movement at both ends of this century has amply demonstrated that when women start to seize control of their sexuality,

they tend to become less docile on the job, and start to question other aspects of economic and social inequality. The growth of working class feminism is a very ominous development from the point of view of a system that is in a continuous state of cyclical crisis, and therefore congenitally incapable of resolving either gender or class contradictions.

Tensions notwithstanding, capitalism cannot simply displace patriarchy. For all of their conflicts, the two systems are now fused into symbiotic relationship, and their tensions must be resolved in such ways as to preserve the general structures of power characteristics of each. The state is the central site for the mediation of contradictions which cannot be resolved without recourse to public debate and action, not only between the dominant strata and the non-privileged, but also between different factions, opinions and interests within the dominant strata. Censorship and the debates about it are part of these activities, and they are focussing on sexual matters at this stage for at least two important reasons.

First, as women gain greater control over their economic and procreational activity, masculine control can no longer be exercised through reproductive control; it thus tends to move over to the field of erotic pleasure. Material independence can be subverted by ideological subservience, and the vernacular of porn is ubiquitous propaganda for that subservience, cloaked in the emperor's clothes of the sexual revolution. The reason that women can be so affected by sexual material — be it in advertising, television, soft or hard core pornography — is the same reason men

are so touched by it. Sexual material has a special charge because it affects us not only sexually but more generally, as it intervenes at pre- and unconscious levels of the psyche where sexuality is connected to other capacities, values and ideas about individual and social behaviour. Censorship of sexual discourse is thus more clearly a political act than it is usually thought to be, and sexual practice is a more political terrain. For the state, sexual material that undermines the capitalist mobilization of patriarchy (or vice versa) is by the same logic politically subversive, and must be brought into line if it gets out of hand.

If it seems that a disproportionate amount of censorship comes down on the arts community, perhaps it is because artists who are self-consciously removed from the immediate dictates of the mass entertainment markets and who are self-consciously dedicated to expressing something about their own (and society's) sexuality find themselves breaking the rules much more often than the people whose material gets churned out for profit in the male market. If the material that gets produced within the artistic milieu is intended as and constructed to be a dialogue, no matter its marginal situation, whereas mass produced porn is a broken, refracted mirror of men's unease about their sexuality and social status, maybe it is easier to understand why art suffers so much more than commercial sexual representation. But as I pointed out earlier, art is suffering because it is breaking that same set of rules that non-artistic endeavours break, not because of some existentially given 'artistic' quality *per se*.

Strategy and Morality

In light of all these considerations it seems to me that artists have a two-fold responsibility, having to do with artistic production on the one hand and political struggle on the other. In terms of artistic production, I would call for more works of an erotic nature which continue to explore and push further the barriers to gender equality and sexual ecstasy. We need works that not only arouse but also enlighten, encouraging us to understand our own eroticism in a whole number of ways. We need art that can serve as a living, breathing alternative to pornography; art which encourages people to pleasure

themselves and each other; to assert their physical, emotional and social needs, and to reflect on those needs at the same time; to understand how they have been shaped by the biographical as well as the historical details of our lives.

This process simply cannot get very far unless more women make sexual representations which are then seen and discussed by women and men. But the sanctions against women producing this kind of material are in fact quite heavy: lack of economic resources, pressure from peers and even the threat of sexual harassment and violence are all difficulties to be faced, quite aside from

the almost inevitable consequence of state censorship. It is thus all the more vital that men too make a commitment to support women's efforts, and to analytically deconstruct their own pleasure and unpleasure, just as women have been doing within discussion in the women's movement for the last ten years. Men need also to try to understand and make clear to others how gender inequality and capitalist exploitation operate in our most intimate lives. They need to criticize the values and methods of the capitalist sex media as ruthlessly and intelligently as they do the values and methods of the other

mass media. In plainer language, this means that men will have to stop defending most pornography, ("if I get off on it, there can't be anything really wrong with it") and freaking out when women criticize it. Men, as well, need to help people understand and overcome erotic alienation.

I say 'people' because men are suffering from the porn proliferation as well, and indeed I believe just as seriously as women in a number of crucial respects. For men as well as for women what is prescriptive is also restrictive ("what kind of man reads Playboy?") and generates anxiety about sexual performance when men's bodies, sexual organs, feelings and desires don't correspond with those depicted in porn today. Porn sets up expectations of female behaviour in response to brittle, stupid notions of 'masculinity' which create distress when not met, causing anxiety and often serious hostility (rape, rape, rape) on men's part. The manipulation of sexuality to invest commodities with prestige and glamour and to sever relations of solidarity between people are both enormous problems for men, as I have discussed at greater lengths elsewhere. (See *Fuse*, "Freedom, Sex and Power", Vol. 7, No. 1.) Although women have raised the first organized voice in protest over the content of pornography, progressive psychoanalytically informed social theorists have long argued its debilitating effects. It is *not* uniquely a 'women's' issue. It is a human issue.

Which brings me finally to political strategies with respect to art, sex and censorship. I will focus on issues regarding sexuality because so far no debate has occurred about whether or even how to defend artists whose work is censored for more orthodoxly defined 'political' reasons. But sex is political too. If it weren't, there would be no need for its political regulation. We must make some choices in terms of appropriate measures to deal with matters of art and politics which do not reinforce already dangerous powers. We need measures that will, on the contrary, undermine the economic and social relations in which the exploitation of labour and sexuality create such regressive gender propaganda.

My recommendations would include:

1) The regulating of working conditions within the sex industry, that is, the conditions under which people sell *their own* sexuality or have it otherwise alienated from them. This would include the regulation of the conditions

under which profit is realized from this commodification, including its distribution and exchange, covering both private and public sectors of the economy and infrastructure.

2) Retraining, a living wage and protection from harassment to all women who are sex workers so that no women ever has to sell her sexuality out of necessity. But as long as women do, we can support the demand for decriminalizing — not legalizing — prostitution and other aspects of the sex trade to stop the victimization of women.

3) Heavy taxes applied to the porn industry.

4) Regulating the places where porn appears. This respects the rights of those who don't wish to look at porn without infringing on the rights of any adult who wishes to obtain it. For example, porn should never be permitted in workplaces because the vast majority of working women experience it as a major form of sexual harassment. And before accusations of 'prior censorship' get hurled at feminists by civil libertarians, let's remember that porn can be easily, cheaply obtained almost anywhere, in video, film or magazine form. It's not as if it's hard to get.

The most difficult part comes when we are up against that two or five or ten percent, some say more, of porn which would be classified as pure hate literature if Blacks or Jews or political prisoners were its subjects. This is the stuff made with enslaved women, women who are not 'freely', so to speak, exchanging their sexuality for a wage, but rather kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured, mutilated and sometimes even killed. This material has lost even the most tenuous connection to 'fantasy' embodied in a woman's exchange of her body for money. This material is the visual record of acts of pure brutalization, and as such it has lost its claim to be protected by the law that claims to protect the freedom of expression. Here there is no 'theatricality', no element of 'performance', no 'exchange of ideas'. Just as we have begun to describe rape as assault, not as sex, we must call this assault, not pornography.

We should forbid all sales of material made from the exploitation of children and enslaved women. We should prosecute those who produce this material with heavy penalties, and we should make exhibitions contexted within educational and community institutions to enable people to understand what it is and what it represents: the very opposite of freedom of expression, the product of terror and sickness.

Developing a vision for the future

But none of these regulations will mean anything unless we collectively raise children who will be able to live lives of greater freedom than ourselves. And that in turn depends not only on the presence of good erotic art, but of good sex education for them, and for us.

The long term solution to sexual problems at individual and social levels cannot possibly lie in returning to the puritanical and repressive norms out of which we have been emerging in the last few decades. Prostitution and pornography are products — the dialectical companions — of that sort of repression. But neither must we mistake the dominant forms of sexualization of our environment as the doors to liberation. As adults we need to learn more about sexuality, how it works, how ours works, how to help our children move beyond some of the scars we have accumulated as a result of our lives and generational experiences.

We need to take appropriate measures to find non-authoritarian ways to regulate sexuality in a public space shared by people of all ages and from many different cultures, respecting our collective needs for coexistence and our individual or generational needs for autonomy. Because the state is not an instrument which will in its existing form act as an instrument of these needs, we need to be very careful about how we use it, and what we call on it to do. We must regulate our public life but we must find the ways to do it which empower large numbers of people to think and act for themselves, and not encourage an alien structure to decide what is or what is not acceptable. For this reason I think militant informational pickets outside porn outlets or strip joints are fine, because they are an expression of feminist opposition to sexual commodification and part of the free flow of ideas. But I do not agree with allowing bodies like the Ontario Censor Board the powers to say what will and will not be seen or said by us.

There are many contradictions and no ideal solutions. But we can move towards better solutions through the creation of an alternative erotic culture, and through strategies and demands which move us towards a society where women and men and children live together without exploitation and domination.

Varda Burstyn* is currently working on a radio series, "Public Sex" for C.B.C.'s Ideas.

*special thanks to David Fujiwara, Susan Ditta and Judith Weisman for their help.

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BUILDING CULTURE WITH A WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

For almost three solid months, from March to June, Toronto was inundated with events and exhibits created by feminists. Thanks to two separate collectives: The *Women's Cultural Building* (WCB) and their festival — *Women Building Culture*, and the *Women's Collective at Partisan Gallery*, who organized *Women's Perspective '83*.

Both festivals provided an astounding variety of cultural activity. There was: Dance, Theatre, Performance, Film, Lectures, Brunch, Panels, Music, Cabaret, Poetry, Painting, T-shirts, Photography, Sculpture, Installations, (Publicity) Poster Works, and Architecture. About 100 women cultural workers were involved in each festival. Newcomers to the community were surprised to discover this many female artists existed in Toronto, though in fact the events had only scratched the surface. Each event, each work of art indicated the presence of others — other performers, other writers, other dancers, other artists. . .

The participants gained a heady sense of the Toronto community. The frequency of the events allowed women to get to know the other spectators, the other artists, creating potential new groupings within the women's community. Things were cooking! — and not in Toronto alone. Word of conferences and events in Vancouver, Edmonton, London and elsewhere circulated on flyers and by word of mouth during both festivals.

The *Women's Cultural Building* is a collective of about thirty active members which formed during the spring of 1982. It should be noted from the outset that, although they have considered the possibility, the WCB *has no building*, and isn't even looking for one. The collective recognized that the administrative and janitorial headaches of an actual building, at this point in their evolution, would inevitably consume the limited resources available and swamp their energies as feminist artists/activists. The discussion led to an emphasis on the word 'building' as a verb

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and the mandate of the *Women's Cultural Building* was re-emphasized: *Building Women's Culture*.

Without an edifice of mortar and bricks, the WCB maintains a quality of subversion, a 'guerilla' building in the sense of 'guerilla' theatre. Like an underground organisation which could surprise Toronto at any given moment with an explosion of female cultural activity. And for two months it did just that!

The WCB had received a grant in the fall of 1982 for the proposed festival. The overwhelming scope of the event required some time to examine matters of theory, principle and the practical priorities for how to organise and what to include. Early in 1983, it was time for action. A prolonged festival was announced with a programme spanning the months of March and April. Although the programme was the product of many discussions, lists and preparatory sessions, the festival itself seemed suddenly to happen overnight. The result was both exhilarating and exhausting for participants and organizers.

Women's Perspective '83 began im-

mediately after the WCB festival ended. A women's collective had formed within *Partisan Gallery* — a space which has been exhibiting political art for years. The open call for submissions had been governed by an interest in content (heroines, violence against women, women and work, war, achievements and daycare, etc.). The response was overwhelming. After several arduous curatorial meetings, the works of 47 artists were selected, including: sculpture, tapestries, paintings, drawings, installations and photographs. Every available inch of gallery space was put to use — covered with art, up to the ceiling — (almost to excess), yet defying any sense of competition between the artists.

Partisan Gallery is not your typical art gallery. It is located in a working class area at Dundas West and Bloor, on the second floor of a light industry/warehouse building. During the festival however the industrial atmosphere of the building was dispelled at the gallery's entrance by an installation by Joss MacLennan; a beautiful, whimsical arch — a disarming creation of cardboard boxes piled on top of each other and papered with pinkish xeroxes of curlers, hands, tampons, a dress and shoes.

Two such festivals back to back may be seen as an invitation to draw conclusions about the present state of feminist aesthetics in Toronto.

To begin, one significant factor throughout feminist art is a preoccupation with the female image: the sexist image and its redefinition. In this regard, Brenda Ledsham's photographs and texts at the *Partisan Gallery*, entitled **Re-Presentations** offered some particularly striking examples: an elegant, bride-like faceless woman draped with a ribbon, having won the title of **Miss Ogyny**; a diptych of the same beige middle class flat, one with a male, the other with a female executive, was a visual



"Miss Ogyny" by Brenda Ledsham

comment on the nature of business dress for the sexes as well as on the commodification of equality. Also as might be expected, the *Women's Cultural Building's* cartoon exhibition, **Pork Roasts**, exploded sexist clichés in abundance.

At a WCB panel discussion, video-artist Lisa Steele, explained that she tries to undermine the female stereotype presented on television by using the mass media/soap opera format, but deliberately populating her tapes with "women who look bad — who look tired", pointing out that the image of the 'nice-looking woman' is so degraded that the notion of reproducing it is

bankrupt.

In many works, however, it is the 'picture' itself which is destroyed. In her videotape, **Sacrificial Burnings**, Nancy Nicol throws one photograph after another into the fire. In the theatre piece **This is for You, Anna** (Women's Perspective), female "victims" fight back with a ceremonial collective razor cut through a snapshot, chosen randomly from a collection. Finally, questions and discussion from the audience at Judith Posner's slide lecture, **From Sex Role Stereotyping to Sado-masochism** (a survey of advertising imagery presented at the WCB festival headquarters), indicated that 'pointing the finger' at the problem/enemy is no longer enough. Thorough analysis and tactics for action are now on the agenda. And tactics were in evidence.

One tactic was the move to redress the balance with positive images. The task seemed mainly to be taken up by theatre and film artists. It took a number of forms: the redefinition of biography (as in Pam Patterson's reincarnation of feisty Emily Carr); Margaret Hornby's work-in-progress about the poet Pauline Johnson; three female musicians pitting their wits against decades of rock music scenes in Jan Kudelka's **American Demon** (directed by WCB member Kate Lushington); and during the WOMAN-FILM festival, several films which paid tribute to the struggles and achievements of women — the documentaries of Laura Sky and Barbara Martineau, and Micheline Noel's tribute to the late Marguerite Duparc (Quebec filmmaker).

Even women who were by no means paragons of virtue — feminist or otherwise — could inspire. Strong women, whose strength may have been perverted by social or economic forces, are being reclaimed. **P4W**, a film by Holly Dale and Janice Cole, represented the women of the Kingston prison in a way which allowed an honest empathy and an admiration for the struggle of these women for emotional survival. And Pol Pelletier's performance of **My Mother's Luck** by Helen Weinzwieg (see FUSE, summer '83) provided the most memorable example of the paradox of admiring the traditionally maligned. The mother portrayed was shouting, raging, burdened by her female experience — a mother none of us would want; and yet, the audience (mostly female) stomped its feet, cheered — invigorated by the combination of both writing and performance that were as honest in the celebration of strength as in the depiction of its corruption.

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A leading preoccupation in both festivals was the attempt to create new definitions, an attempt to create new language. Paraphrasing Rina Fraticelli at the **Women In Performance** panel discussion (WCB), "We must imagine a non-patriarchal vocabulary. It's a bit like being under water and trying to imagine oxygen. But it is there!"

Robin Endre's **Integrated Circuits** is only one example. It was a meeting of theory, theatre and poetry, exploring the possible scope of a linguistic obsession. Written and performed by Endre as a work-in-progress, with slides and design by Joss MacLennan, it gave example of feminist art at its best. Endre, by reclaiming and recreating her British Columbia/Canadian culture in the context of her feminism, is able both to define her world, and her place in it as a writer.

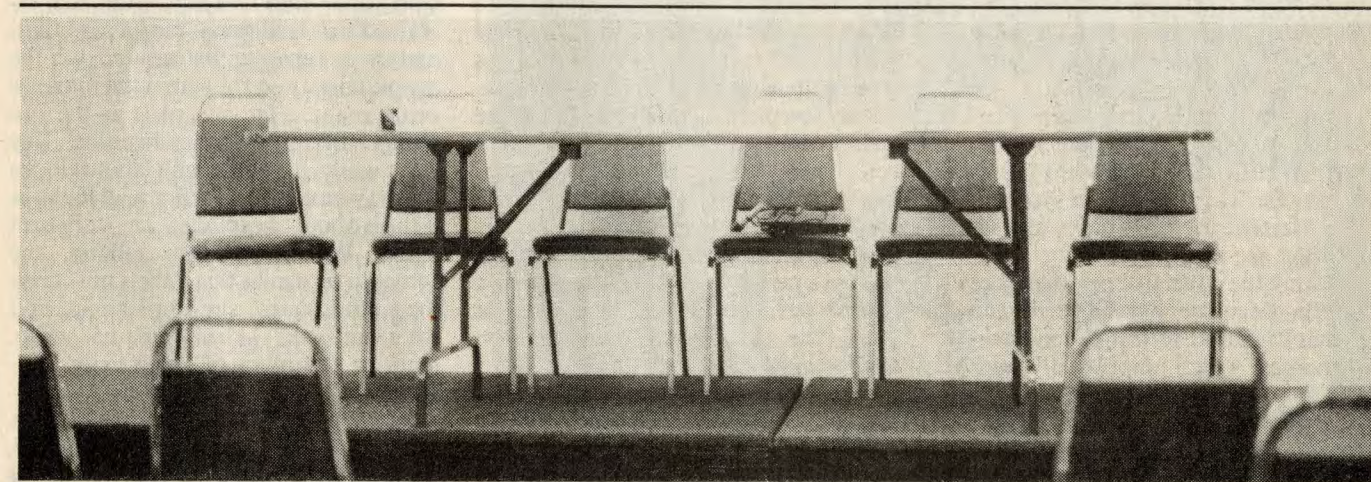
She begins with the false image, slides of B.C. postcards: "My culture was

kitsch to me". She amasses a series of random facts, circling to conclusions — a crab-like movement which she considers the feminist mode of writing, "A woman must go deeper and deeper into her exploration of unrelated facts, until every fact becomes a feeling." Etymology becomes the route to "the libido of language". She prods the male definition/classification of things. It is a feminist necessity, and she invites us to take part, to begin with the renaming of our body parts. She has christened her nipple, Spuzzum. "The renamed body will be the map of Canada".

Ultimately, Endre's 'femspeak' takes her into the world of politics. To create words that do not obliterate in generalization "is the potential contribution of writers in the struggle to prevent nuclear war. . . as important as demonstrations, petitions, pickets. For the possibility of nuclear war is the ultimate attempt to control space and destroy time, for all time."

femspeak
jargon
guttural voiceless
sound
slang
language
originating with
nomads
thieves
whores
gypsies
in Quebec we say
argot
argoter to cut
a dead branch
the semantic cut
cunt
woman's cant
rant
rent
breach deep
and wide
femspeak
woman's span
Lola Lemire Tostevin
WCB reading

from *Color of Her Speech*
The Coach House Press, 1982



Sexuality was not discussed as an independent topic during the course of either festival. Works by, about and for lesbians were included, as a matter of course. Phyllis Waugh attached a comment to her large jagged colourful drawing **Mazed** (at **Women's Perspective**), explaining that this was the last in a series before she came out as a lesbian. The **Women Building Culture Festival** presented a slide show by Frances Rooney on **Finding Lesbian History**, and a work-in-progress by Gay Bell about the confrontation between a gay woman and two straight women. WOMANFILM dedicated an evening to Barbara Hammer's films, which are consciously and explicitly lesbian —

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filmic poems of women's bodies, adventures of Superdykes and celebrations of lesbian/women's sexuality. And, there were many, many images of women holding, touching, loving other women in visual art, theatre and poetry.

However, the question of how lesbianism affects feminist aesthetics did not receive a full airing. The issue was raised directly only during the WOMANFILM panel discussion. In response to a question from the audience, Barbara Hammer said that her work was more female-identified due to her sexual preference. Barbara Martineau felt that her coming out as a lesbian had given her enormous self-confidence and a willingness to take

risks. The heterosexual filmmakers on the panel did not seem to experience their sexual preference as a limitation to their feminism or their feminist aesthetic. And each in their own style said that they did not feel that it had as much bearing on their work as their solidarity with all women, as feminists, did.

In various other festival discussions, the issues of sexual preference, socialization and sexual sado-masochism were raised, but usually in the context of statement — as opposed to discussion. Sexuality — whether hetero, homo, or bi — was, nevertheless, not a specific question explored by the women cultural workers this spring.

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Detail "0530" by Lynne Fernie

Neither of the festivals declared any of the events open to women only. All of them were attended by (a minority of) males. Judging from these festivals, men tend also to be an absent presence in feminist art. Their power system will be criticized, their attitudes attacked, but they are rarely seen.

During the collective performance of *The Euguelionne*, a male voice recited an insulting and seemingly endless list of names which supposedly define 'woman' — slut, fuckee, spinster — but the voice was on tape. The deliberate pacing made the audience squirm. (The same excerpt with a different male voice was used in the performance of *Entrapment*, a performance piece against pornography, at *Women's Perspective*).

Men were missing from the video tapes screened during *Women's Perspective* and from many of the films at WOMANFILM. When they had a role, they were deprived of their usual standards of power. In Patricia Gruben's highly stylized film *Sifted Evidence* (see FUSE, May/June '82), a female tourist is waylaid by a male guide. The female narrator relates the story, the male is voiceless, except for the single scene of physical violence that appears on the screen. The soundtrack suddenly has the voices that we might expect to hear in a movie theatre — but only brief-

ly. It is as if men can only break into a woman's environment by brute violence.

Very few pieces actually took 'violence against women' as their theme or subject. There were exceptions: *Entrapment*, created by visual artist Leena Raudvee and theatre artist Pam Patterson; *This is for You, Anna*, a five woman collective performance; and *Lovespeak*, a very powerful performance piece by Lisa Steele. But significantly, none of these represented acts of violence.

In the exhibits of the festivals, the concept of violence against women received an extended interpretation. Violence was implied, as in Lyn Carter's *Elizabeth I — Ghosts Come Back*, (*Women's Perspective*), in which a heavy stone sculpture of Queen Elizabeth's corseted dress was placed directly in front of a photograph of a naked female torso, as if the unfettered image was still in danger of being crushed by the heavy stone framework, and in Paula Cornwall's *Corsage Series* (re-produced in *Incite*, summer '83). Cornwall's panels narrate the traditional 'first date' of the past (complete with corsage) in such lurid blocks of colour, that the whole experience reeks of pain, the man's finger on the doorbell like the pinching of a nipple.

The feminist artists represented did not utilize the standard violent imagery of mainstream culture/entertainment

(which is so often a celebration of violence, particularly against women). They often chose to create a violent atmosphere by symbolic means, as in 0530, the jarring "Flying Dogs" drawings in grey graphite and mixed media by Lynne Fernie (*Women's Perspective*) and the burnt limbs and heads of baby dolls in Grace Svarre's *Nuclear Holocaust. This is for You, Anna*, deliberately omitted the direct representation of violence although this was its topic. A woman poured milk into a cup, incessantly, the milk spilling over the floor became an effective evocation of violence and bloodshed — through the associations of the maternal and nurturing life-giving fluid, the loss of control/power over one's own body, and the ever present injunction not to weep over that which is lost.

During the festivals, it became clear that feminist art is not uniquely concerned with women, but with empowerment/giving voice. This attitude was most clearly expressed during the WOMANFILM panel, especially by documentarists Martineau and Sky. According to Martineau, empowerment is the goal of her 'little films', as she called them — to give voice and time and space to people who usually don't get any. Laura Sky explained that traditional media asks filmmakers to separate themselves from the people about and for whom the films are being made. Her approach is the opposite, and therefore subversive. Sky (who works primarily with labour) looks for the woman in the office who looks as if she is about to explode if her story isn't heard. When she starts talking, she comes to recognize that "she's not crazy, she's not isolated, she's not stupid, and she's not cute" — she finds her voice. Ignoring the myth of 'objectivity', advocacy becomes the goal instead.

Patricia Gruben represents this spirit of alliance with the central character/subject in another way. In *Sifted Evidence* (see FUSE May/June '82), the female narrator directly intervenes in the action, warning the protagonist of impending doom: "Maggie, look!" The spectator knows which side the filmmaker is on.

Dialogue, communication with the spectator, is another aspect of this and it becomes a theme and a construct as well as a political attitude in feminist art. An inventive example was Renee Baert's audio installation in the *Narratives* exhibition (WCB). The idea of dialogue was brought to its logical conclusion, for Baert's work depended completely on input from the audience. She turned a small closet into a red, womb-like confessional, in which there was a stool, a

mirror and a tape-recorder. The spectator was encouraged to add to the recorded stories by speaking into the microphone, answering the question: "Do you have a story to tell (funny, 'horror' or weird) about your experience as a woman/man that has led you toward or away from feminism?" The installation was extremely popular, luckily. Or perhaps luck had nothing to do with it: the audience *wants* to talk!

Another form of engagement with the general community was attempted by the *Women's Cultural Building*, with the tactic of *Storefronting*. Defined as a way of "intervening between the gallery and the street", installations, displays and wall pieces were placed in windows of a pastry shop, various stores, restaurants and cultural centres. Baert's concept for this, which was executed in conjunction with other WCB members, was an example of the potential of such works. *Newspeak* was an ongoing presentation/posting of clippings from local newspapers, which amounted to a critique of the sexist assumptions of mainstream media attention. The clippings were mounted outside the entrance to the Cameron Tavern. Responses were varied; comments were scribbled over them and some were ripped down, but reaction was evident.

In both festivals, evidence of political engagement was strong; issues of class, feminism, militarism and opposition to nuclear arms were represented. During the *Euguelionne* performance at the WCB festival headquarters, between two of the many vivid and surrealistic scenes, the audience was urged to "fight back!" and handed leaflets concerning the upcoming nuclear demonstration in Toronto (as well as leaflets from the Pro-Choice campaign).

The anti-war theme was especially strong at *Women's Perspective*. Pat Jeffries' painting, *The Peace Movement (Move Fast)* — a black and white skull dashing by apocalyptic horses and colourful protesters — was one of the more haunting examples. During performance weekends of *Women's Perspective*, Cynthia Grant and Kate Lushington each presented performances related to the nuclear threat — Grant incorporating video and excerpts from the writing of Helen Caldicott; Lushington with her chilling satirical performance, *Grief Box*, in which Veronica Mandell, a therapist, advises us on how to 'cope' emotionally after the bomb drops.

Working class/union politics, male and female, was most represented at *Women's Perspectives*. Working women, union women and the history of unions were depicted in the works of

Carole Conde & Karl Beveridge, Connie Eckhert and others. Robin Endres presented a controversial reading from the socialist poetry of Sharon Stevenson, soon to appear in the book *Golden Earrings*. And it was at *Women's Perspective* that musicians Rita Strautins and Lalita Sipolins devoted their skills to a song about cleaning ladies, jazzy improvised music dedicated to Strautin's mother.

It is surprising, therefore, that the tenor of several pieces during *Women's Perspective* was not consistent with the artist's political/feminist underpinnings. 'One off-the-wall' event, *The Bag Lady Benediction Dance*, was a ritual/performance presented by men and women in outlandish costumes, calling themselves The Chong and Virgin Territory. (This was the only event that included men as performers.) I remain troubled by the representation of a 'Bag Lady' as an imaginary vessel of magic powers. It seems to me a glorification/idealization of what is actually dire poverty. It had an air of condescension, however unintentional.

Another example was *Entrapment*, a performance devised by Pam Patterson

and Leena Raudvee. Unfortunately this piece actually insulted some spectators. It is part of an intended series against pornography. Patterson, dressed in a white sack, pretends to be a woman who relies on mascara and mini-skirts for her sense of power. Patterson's parody reminded me of Robin Morgan's self-criticism of her guerilla theatre against the bridal industry; she found that ultimately she had alienated the very women she had wanted to rally. In this context, the following critique from one spectator, Sue Kelly, is an important one:

"As a working class woman who works in an office, I had to continually take offence at what appeared to be a middle class woman/artist's parody of what it is to be 'feminine' and work in an office. The behaviours that she parodies are real struggles for a lot of women — not to discount feminist humour — but, I never felt she and I were laughing together about the compromises we put ourselves through in order to have the privilege of working in a conservative capitalist office."



"Grief Box", Kate Lushington

Humour was in fact one of the strongest elements in both festivals, but was, perhaps, especially characteristic of the *Women's Cultural Building* collective.

They made their first festival appearance at the **International Women's Day** march with a truck dispensing free 'red-hot feminist coffee', and calendar/flyers of upcoming festival events and celebrations; they took up the march with the Feminist Cheer (devised by Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder): "A is for Abortion, Amazons and Art; B is for Believing Bra-Burning Broads are smart!; C is for Collective; D is for Divorce; E is for the E.R.A., Equal Rights and Equal Pay; . . .". They sold a 'terrorist kit' devised by and for feminists: a sock filled with photos of the enemy, a tampon (for terrorists on the go), disguises, including a fake moustache, and a nail file (it is sometimes useful to take advantage of sexist/capitalist stereotyping by disguising yourself as an 'idle secretary' when caught rifling through the secret files), and more. . . . The kit was also flogged at the first major event (and perhaps the most successful single festival event), the **Five-Minute Feminist Cabaret**, which took place on **International Women's Day** (March 8th).

Stagger Lee's (formerly the *Horseshoe*) tavern was packed with women for a startling succession of five minute performances, which ranged from a satirical performance of "Walk Like A Man", by the Clichettes, through theatre, music and stand-up comedy to performance art and poetry. Each five

minutes was received almost euphorically by an audience energized at seeing itself so well represented.

Characteristically, the **Women Building Culture Festival** Headquarters opened with a bunch of jokes: **Pork Roasts**, 250 feminist cartoons, curated by Avis Lang Rosenberg from Vancouver, representing 100 cartoonists from around the world, were exhibited on walls decorated with brightly coloured ribbons. Periodic bursts of laughter, during the weeks that followed, from the visitors to the gallery dispelled any fears that the storefront gallery would be strapped with an atmosphere of sobriety.

The festival closed with the same panache, with the **Edible Art Show/Party**, an open event requiring only that submissions be at least 70% edible content. **Smelt Evening Dress**, by Mara Ravina — a fishnet dress adorned with shiny, smelly smelts — hung from the ceiling. Styrofoam heads covered with noodles, spaghetti and macaroni illustrated the Clichettes call to **Overthrow the Patriarchy**, and Joyce Mason hovered beside her food sculpture, a 'romanticized representation of the female reproductive features': strawberry tits, boiled egg ovaries, a wine filled balloon womb, and an opened papaya with a straw sticking out of it. The whole thing was entitled, **A Feminist Communion or Menstruation Can Be Fun** — a participatory piece. "Drink!" Mason would order and the quailing aficionado would drink, to her delight/relief, Italian wine.



"of course, I have time
for my art."

from the "Pork Roasts" exhibition catalogue

The co-operation of the two collectives gave credence to the concept of sisterhood. The two festivals supported each other with their experience and their publicity, although each had a character of its own.

The WCB's intention was to place work in a "feminist critical context" — to support, criticize and stimulate the work of feminists. Many of the WCB members have a history of working within the political, feminist and the artists' communities. They recognised the need for a structure in which these things could be combined, and had organised a number of events in this feminist context in the year leading up to the festival.

The **Women's Perspective** collective felt its initial task as the formation of a community. As Connie Eckhert, a member of that collective was quoted in an article in *The Clarion*: "From the

outset one of the main principles of **Women's Perspective** was 'collecting dignity'" and, as it turned out, the collective had to fight hard for its self-confidence.

Working as a collective is a challenge in itself, but in this case it proved to be not just a 'feminist ideal in practice'; it was strength in the face of the 'enemy'. And there were tangible enemies within the *Partisan Gallery Steering Committee*. The opposition which was experienced throughout the planning and execution of the Festival led to a number of outraged resignations by gallery members and ultimately to the statement which is printed here (opposite page).

In addition to the lack of internal support, the **Women's Perspective '83** festival was also denied grants by both the Ontario Arts and Canada Councils. At one of its panel discussions the **Women Building Culture** festival was

referred to as a financial miracle. If there is a superlative to the word 'miracle', it should be attached to the financial condition of **Women's Perspective '83**.

The **Women's Perspective** group attributed the grant refusals to their open door policy. . . . believing that the Councils feared some unevenness in the programming. The actual rationales are likely to remain obscure, since in fact both festivals were accessible to new artists. Various events at the **Women Building Culture** festival displayed the same kind of disregard for traditional strictures on programming as existed in the **Women's Perspective** events.

Whatever the 'reason' for lack of adequate funding for these festivals, the excellent response to them in terms of audience numbers proves that there is a need and a place in this city (as well as others) for consistent, unflagging, lively feminist culture.

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM THE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE COLLECTIVE JULY 19, 1983

We are the women who initiated and organized the *Women's Perspective '83 Show*, and the *Partisan Gallery Women's Collective*. Some of us have been long-time Partisan activists, others were new to the gallery as a result of the *Women's Perspective Show*.

Our Collective, which had been operating as part of the gallery, decided at a meeting on June 29th, 1983 to leave *Partisan* and establish the Collective as an independent cultural force in Toronto.

This decision resulted from months of tension between *Women's Perspective* and the gallery Steering Committee. We see the situation as having been a classic case of sexism in action.

At issue was a fundamental lack of trust and lack of respect, on the part of some steering committee members, for the women organizing the gallery's largest-ever show.

We experienced constant badgering over how the show was being organized, nit-picking over minor issues, and the personal harassment of some of the collective members. Compared with other shows (in terms of the right to organize the show with some degree of autonomy) *Women's Perspective* was subject to double standards. Other shows would be given carte blanche go-ahead, while we were constantly being questioned as to our motives and means.

In our view, these were all manifestations of what we had all read about in 60's essays on sexism in so-called progressive organizations.

After months of writing copious progress reports to the Steering Committee, attending monthly meetings and engaging in rancorous debate, and listening to innuendo unparalleled in much of our extensive political/cultural organizing experience, we have come to a position of total lack of faith in the current Steering Committee. We think that it would be impossible for us to carry out our work given the situation in the gallery at present.

We must say that there are members of the Steering Committee and the membership-at-large who have been totally supportive of our work and our right to exist. However, we do not believe that *Partisan* is being run in a democratic fashion. This lack of democracy, which is a result of undue power and control being assumed by some gallery members, stifles healthy debate and hinders any possibility of growth. Until this changes, we believe our situation will be but one of a series of political/organizational feuds. Without underplaying the sexism which has been a crucial element in terms of the problems *Women's Perspective* has had with *Partisan*, we do not limit our criticism to this issue.

We wish to stress that this has been a painful decision to make and that we sincerely regret having to take this action. We had a great deal of hope for working within a progressive art gallery to develop women's cultural activity. However, we believe the direction of the gallery is a long way away from the original *Partisan* manifesto, which we would heartily have endorsed.

We demand the right to organize as women around the issues we define and in ways we see as important. This would not be possible if we were to stay within the gallery, which is a sorry comment on the state of *Partisan*.

At this point, we look forward to the future with a great deal of enthusiasm. *Women's Perspective* is a dynamic and diverse group committed to the creative spirit of women in Toronto. We will continue under the name *Women's Perspective*, to work actively to promote women's culture. We welcome the participation of any women in the community interested in working toward this goal.

the Women's Perspective Collective, July 19, 1983

Aline
Heather Allin
Marusia Bociurkiw
Lynn Hutchinson Brown
Sophia Carmi
Lyn Carter
Cate Cochran
Carole Conde
Maia Damianovic
Moyra Davey
Eve Donner
Connie Eckhert
Lynne Fernie

Carrie Gardner
Gail Geltner
Sandra Gregson
Teresa Griffin
Anna Gutmanis
Karen Stoskopf Harding
Maureen Harris
Pat Jeffries
Eva Ennist-Kopamees
Gail Ledsham
Helen Mackenzie
Joss MacLennan
Carole Mandel

Ottillie Mason
Ingrid Mayrhofer
Dale McDonough
Irma Milnes
Carla Murray
Ellen Quigley
Emilie Smith
Barbara Sutherland
Barb Taylor
Paula Taylor
Bryenne Teall
Rhea Tregebov
Kate Wilson

FINDS AND FRUSTRATIONS

filmmakers programming the Festival of Festivals



Both festivals succeeded due to an extraordinary effort. The actual costs of artists' and organising fees that were *not* paid, do not figure in most listings of income and expenditures. The quality and dedication of the work may seem even more impressive, but it is also more frustrating. The festivals underline the dilemma of working as a politically dedicated artist in a society which demands commercial dedication above all. The invisible costs should not be forgotten or underplayed in our enthusiasm for the accomplishments of "low budget feminism"!

Not surprisingly, when one panel of feminists was asked to name their major obstacle, the answer was clear: Money!

The high energy expended in the festivals must create new energies, must inspire others in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada. The development of feminist culture continues. The *Women's Perspective Collective* promises to generate a new feminist gallery in Toronto. And, although the premises of the *Women Building Culture* Festival Headquarters have long since been rented to others, the sign announcing its

existence is still up there. The WCB collective has for the present, gone underground again — recuperating and no doubt plotting their next action.

Banuta Rubess is a theatre/performance artist living in Toronto and a member of the 1982 Theatre Company.

"Women are working hard these days, Building Culture"

—WOMANFILM flyer

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Canada's distribution/exhibition networks are almost entirely controlled by major U.S. distributors (roughly translated this means big budget Hollywood movies). This leaves Canadians with a domestic cinema which is nearly as inaccessible (and definitely as invisible) to its immediate public as the most obscure of the non-U.S. or independently produced U.S. films. And so, festivals provide us with the rare opportunity to see many films which we will never otherwise see.

Complaints that Canadian filmmakers are not adequately represented in the major Canadian film festivals tend to be obscured by the general enthusiasm of, "At least we get a chance to see a lot of films that would never otherwise see the light of a Canadian projector." And, many of these films do not have and probably never will have Canadian distribution.

While it is unlikely that the festival will ever evolve into one which is uniquely beneficial to independent and home-grown visions — those large corporate and private donations, along with the mainstream press attention will inevitably lead to the hoopla and hype that surround the galas and the 'stars' — at this year's *Festival of Festivals* large portions of the programming have been put together by Canadian filmmakers. The direct benefit to many independent or otherwise obscured filmmakers is that their work will find its way to a large audience in a commercial theatre in Canada, alongside the works of their peers from abroad.

Three major programmes in this year's festival will be delivering this kind of opportunity. Two documentary programmes, one contemporary international and the other focusing primarily on Canadian documentary tradition, are programmed by Jim Monroe and Peter Harcourt respectively. The third is a look at 'Contemporary World Cinema' to which Kay Armatage has contributed her choices of almost twenty films.

I spoke to Kay Armatage and Jim Monroe, hoping to provide readers with some background information on the

context in which the films (and the programme choices) were made, and some leads on films not yet released, which could be pursued in film programming elsewhere. Most of the films included in the series by Kay and Jim are (not surprisingly) made by independents. Many shorts are included in spite of the difficulties which shorts imply in the festival atmosphere — that is, just one more thing to worry about going wrong in each programme slot!

What follows are some excerpts from a conversation with two filmmakers programming for a major festival, which reflect the opportunity and enthusiasm that it affords as well as the acknowledgement that festival programmes are inadequate means of getting to see/show all the films which we would like to see/have seen.

Joyce: Kay, did you have, or give yourself, a particular mandate or focus for the choices you were making in programming?

Kay: Well, I'm having almost no documentary, because Jim has got all the good documentaries that I wanted . . . So mine is more fiction. It's almost all fiction.

Again, I'm sort of schizophrenic about it. I'm going for feminist films, youth films. . .

Joyce: like Charlie Ahearn's

Kay: yeah, *Wild Style*; it's really fun, really fun. . . and some avant-garde films. I'm going to have Babette Mangol's new film, *The Sky on Location* and I'll show that with Peter (Wollen) and Laura (Mulvey)'s film about Freida Kahlo and Tina Madatti. It's a half hour educational film but it's the . . . well you know how well they write! It's the most elegant and clear and perceptive psychoanalytic and semiotic analysis of two artists . . . their careers, their history, their place in politics. . .

Another film — by a woman — that I'm going to show is called *Suburbia*; it's by Penelope Spheeris, whose last film before this was a documentary called *The Decline of Western Civilization* — about punks in L.A.

The films that I saw more of this year than I have ever before are sort of avant-garde/futuristic films, and this one (*Suburbia*) is — not futuristic — but one of your desolate landscape films. A bunch of suburban teenagers who are rejected or run away from their parents for one reason or another, have set up housekeeping — it's an amazing setting actually, a little suburb of government housing built in the 50's and all the people for some reason have been cleared out. Anyway, there are these vigilantes, 'good citizens' — real jock types — who go on a make war on the kids. It's a kind of 'exploitation film'. It's a Roger Corman film, but it's quite great actually. And, the punks are now whitewashed at all; these are not the clean good-looking young kids who put a little blue spray in their hair on weekends and are real gentle souls at heart.

Jim: There is a film that I'm showing, a Dutch documentary which investigates the life of this 'lumpen' punk who in '78 embraced very much the pseudo-rebellion/attack-on-values/anarchistic style. And it looks at his life 3 or 4 years down the pike, when he has a young wife and child and is struggling for accommodation and the stuff of life and holding some very right wing attitudes. (Pinkel)

Kay: Another one of that whole group that I'm choosing, is Amnon Buchbinder's film *Oroboros*. It's a group of six people living in an apartment together and then there's another parallel very stylized story that's acted out by 5 of the 6 people, with Amnon, the sixth, the filmmaker.

I must have seen five films that were the same urban wasteland futuristic — the whole earth is being wiped out — kind of films. Using modern architecture; hotel rooms, motel rooms, that kind of thing. There's *King Blank*, a New York film by Mike Oblivitz, which is another end of the line vision. Most of it takes place in a motel room by Kennedy airport and in bars and stuff.

And there's tons of the 'end-of-heterosexuality' too. I looked at a film, *At the Alamo* which is a sort of Texas ver-

sion of **King Blank**. It all takes place in this bar, the Alamo, in Texas and it's just people sort of raging at each other and men destroying themselves with booze and 'ass-hole'ism and women trying to get the last shreds of life out of them. It is really 'the-end-of-heterosexuality' and it's quite amazing; and there were lots of them.

Joyce: Did you say that you didn't programme that one?

Kay: Yeah, I didn't programme that one, I mean really that was a sort of personal choice because Texas is less — I guess the sensibility of the Texas asshole is less interesting to me than the sensibility of the New York asshole. (laughter)

Studying the terms of power

Jim: Well, getting back to Mike Oblivitz, I also have a film by him. He is a professional cameraman and he's made this film with an academic cum producer friend of his, who happens to be a sort of semiological whiz kid. They are both South African exiles. It's a very experimental film on their homeland, or ex-homeland. It's interesting to see two 'avant-gardists' addressing a very overtly political issue and their treatment of it is very interesting. That's probably the most experimental parameter of my programme.

It's called **Island**, and it's a comment on the power of language, legal terms and definitions of apartheid by that government. The definitions of race, defining whether you are 'coloured', 'black' or 'white' and the legislation that has gone off from that. He does a semiological study of it in terms of power. They use images of everything from Sharpeville through to Sowetto, to the island prison where Nelson Mandela is now being held.

And it's believable because it's drawn very much from their own experience. They're not just a couple of intellectual wankers talking about something halfway across the world.

Joyce: There was another film that you were telling me about in this programme about South Africa . . . documenting a tribe over a period of years?

Jim: It's a cleanly traditional ethnographic film, that was filmed over almost a 30 year period, where they followed the !Kung bushmen from a free-range hunter/gatherer type of existence in the early '50's through to the late 70's when the South African

government had essentially established a reservation for them and they were facing many of the same problems that the Inuit are suffering here, in the north — of being suddenly turned into a wage/welfare kind of existence, the implications of which bring problems to their traditional family and community relationships. The film culminates (of course) in the South African 'Defense' Forces coming into the !Kung village to recruit to fight against S.W.A.P.O. So it's a very interesting and complete ethnographic document over a three decade period.

Any way, South Africa politically, well to say the least, is in a very critical stage and I think that will escalate in the next five years. And these two films give a very interesting take on the situation, from an intellectual standpoint in this avant-garde film and with, I think, the most interesting ethnographic film that I've seen in many, many years.

I was delighted to see both films. I



King Blank

thought that they were very genuine films of a politically loaded situation. They fulfilled all aspects of what really interests me in this programme, which is to provide a view of something that is in the media every day, yet not as a news clipette — an analysis. I think both films were made with a lot of integrity and they stretch from one end to the other the parameters of documentary expression as a film form.

Kay: Also the two focuses are key. The question of language in **Island** and the community and social relations in **!Kung**. These are both key issues in all kinds of political analysis. The !Kung experience is looked at a lot in Women's Studies. It is constantly talked about, because of the changes in relations between the sexes.

Jim: Actually as you say that...that is the core of the film. The central character is a woman and we follow the !Kung tribe through the eyes of this woman. After fifteen years of filming (he wasn't there for fifteen years, but he'd go back because he was an anthropologist who studied that area and he'd go back), in checking through his footage he saw emerge this woman, !Nai who seemed always to be at the centre of things because she happened to be a very dynamic individual, even though in terms of family and tribal structures she was not the leader.

Kay: But from what I've read, it's unlikely that it's an accident — that it happened that this dynamic figure who emerges is a woman, because the change that's talked about all the time is that women had a much more (the old story) the women initially had a much more powerful and dynamic role in a group of people that were mutually dependent.

Jim: Basically, the programme that I've worked out for the festival is a reflection of what was going on internationally. I was a bit dismayed at times, I had hoped to do a fairly thorough survey of Britain and came up with virtually nothing. I don't think that they happen to be on a hot streak. But then I went to Germany and found that it's — especially among the women — it's an amazingly fertile scene. The factor seems to be that they have this very dynamic relationship between independent filmmakers and television. It's all down to these very creative kinds of executive producers who have their egos in line enough not to impose what they want and to let the independent production community sort of go with their stuff. And the results are very in-

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teresting.

While in the States, the 'golden age' of P.B.S. seems to be taking a bit of a beating.

Kay: Did you find many feminist films?

Jim: In Germany? Yeah, I did.

Kay: Because in North America there are hardly any. I mean I've really had to look hard for anything but a very liberal approach to feminism. Lizzie Borden's **Born in Flames** is the only feature length film that I've seen this year with a good strong feminist line. And the other day, when I drove by on my bike and saw . . . and screeched to a halt in front of the Women's Bookstore! . . . I thought. . . is there anything I've overlooked. But I have not seen one film on the issue of abortion, not one! And I hadn't had one film submitted to me on any other hot feminist issue. I'm trying to track down a film that was made for PBS a year ago on abortion but . . .

Most of the films by women that I've seen are . . . well they're not dealing with women's issues per se. The only one, called **Enormous Changes at the Last Moment**, was based on three Grace Paily short stories. It's very good! But, again, I don't think it's unfair to characterize it as a very liberal approach to feminist issues — or to liberal feminist issues. The last story in the film is about a woman who's single, has a good career, a well-established life and she gets pregnant by a young man who she is having a very casual affair with. She decides to keep the baby and go it alone. It's a sort of quintessentially establishment feminist issue.

Financing feminism

Joyce: Doesn't this have to do with who has the money and the contacts to make films? What's the difference in Germany? Is it because women are actively encouraged? Is it because of the critical . . .

Kay: I think it comes from the explanation that Jim gave. There is a market for those films on television, there isn't the market for them here. . .

Jim: One thing that did strike me very much was that in Germany there was the facility for being able to work out film ideas, art ideas, politics. The community that you are in and how it reflects on that process is primarily manifested in these women's films. I

¹The Toronto Women's Bookstore was recently burnt out, due to an arsonist's attempt at damaging the abortion clinic housed in the same building.

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Pinkel; from anarchy to the right wing.

think that they have had the chance to work out a reflection of their maturity, the maturity of their lives and of their politics, and a reflection of the political realities as feminism developed through the seventies. And their films are not victim stories, they are mature political reflections on the issues. I found it refreshing and it seems to me that in the States they just don't have a chance to work this out on film.

Kay: No, they don't.

Joyce: because they are forced into certain formats?

Kay: Well, even amongst the avant-garde where you aren't forced into certain areas because of television producers, there just wasn't very much. And that may reflect that they are dealing with 'broader' issues. But certainly, there are specific and important issues to be addressed.

Joyce: Broader than the German feminists? (laughter)

Jim: Are you saying that there are crisis points in terms of the politics that feminists must face and that you find that there's a lack of agitational propaganda or issue films?

Kay: Well, I can only say that of the two festivals that I went to in a week in New York, I saw very, very few — if any — films like that and particularly not by women filmmakers.

Joyce: Perhaps there is a tendency in North America to attempt to make radical issues seem non-threatening or else to avoid them altogether.

Jim: Well, for whatever reason the films don't exist . . . which is a sad comment on . . .

Kay: Well it's who gets financed, who the grants are given to, etc. etc. But I

still have a few specific hopes. Bette Gordon has a new film.² I'll be in touch with her and Chantal Akerman has a new film.

Joyce: Did she do the musical?

Kay: Yes, it's called *The Eighties*; I'm hoping to get it, but it will depend on whether or not it gets subtitled in time. So if it comes it will be a last minute thing. It will be in one of the T.B.A. slots; it won't be listed in the programme because we can't be sure it will be ready.

Joyce: You spoke the other day about the opportunity for good sized audiences, but also the need to overcome preconceptions of 'boring/didactic' that people carry with regard to documentary film — probably from schooldays and *Encyclopedia Britannica* films.

Jim: Well, I was reflecting on the situation that exists . . . the underpinnings of movies for those who go to see them, for the most part, is entertainment. And documentary is least 'entertaining' of this art/entertainment form where entertainment is the bottom line.

Kay: I think that Jim has chosen documentaries that are interesting in a whole variety of ways . . . for example, one of the films is a completely innovative piece of actuality footage that ends up not really being a documentary except in the sense that it's not fiction.

Joyce: It's not scripted?

Kay: Oh no, it's very definitely scripted. He shot a whole lot of footage — actuality footage — but then put it together in a way that's more like a musical composition than it is like a lesson. It's not 'didactic' in that sense, but it does address specific issues, shows them in a variety of ways and comes back at them constantly in a very poetic and very experimental way. It's Chris Marker's film, *Sans Soliel* (*Sunless*). It's a wonderful film.

The finds and the frustrations

Jim: Chris Marker has always been a very political filmmaker — everything from an analysis of the Cuban revolution at its 10 year mark or Allende's

² Since the interview, a number of films by women have been added to the programme list. Bette Gordon's new film *Variety* is one. It is a narrative feature based on a Kathy Acker novel, about a sort of ordinary middle class woman, who gets a job selling tickets in a porn movie theatre. Through a series of events, initially motivated by curiosity, she becomes obsessed by a man; and gradually begins to transform herself into an object for his desire. It's a very interesting, curious film and the camera work is incredible; it's shot by the man who did *Wild Style* and *Permanent Vacation* and the lighting and colour combinations re like Fassbinder's *Lola*. (K.A.)

Chile or third world issues. He had always done them in, I guess, a didactic and propagandist kind of way. With *Sunless*, as an artist, he is sort of branching out and experimenting much more with form — essentially with the poetry of the documentary genre.

Kay: Also, he's a mature artist at this point. He can handle any form that he wants to take on. He's sixty-five years old and has been making movies for 35 years probably.

Jim: I also discovered that some leading feature filmmakers have interesting documentaries. Bertrand Tavernier has just made a four hour documentary study of the American south, with Robert Parish (an American).

He made it for French TV and so it's just being dubbed into English now. Werner Herzog has looked at America too. Many people have said that he's a much more fascinating man than his movies, and I think that the same goes for his documentaries compared to his narrative (fiction) films. As Jay Hoberman said in the *Village Voice*, he's a much more radical documentary filmmaker than he is a feature filmmaker.

I'm also showing a George Lucas documentary from 1968, on the making of a Francis Ford Coppolla movie, which shows Lucas' considerable skills as a documentarist and also his obsession with the movies.

Kay: and Wim Wenders made a film in Cannes last year with Antonioni, Godard and Spielberg and . . .

Jim: It's finished but there are six languages going on in it and it's a translator's nightmare. They're trying to subtitle it. So accompanying the treasures that you get to see in the final programme is the frustration that we endure of not being able to get and show all these films.

It's also a comment on the economics of it, which effects everything obviously. Many of these are personal visions and independently produced. The price they pay for that unique view is that they don't have the support of the large organizations and large distributors. So it's a struggle on that front as well.

Kay: The frustration of dealing with independents in a festival environment (with deadlines to meet) — for example, say there is a 35 mm film that has just been completed in the States. They have to be able to get a cassette to us and a press kit and photos, because we have this deadline. There isn't the large organization to help them out and they don't have it and they can't do it.

Jim: What we really need is a Festival of the Air.

Joyce: the air? You mean ongoing broadcasts?

Jim: Right, television!

Joyce: Are you going to be able to see each other's programmes or will you be scheduled up against each other?

Jim: Well that inevitably happens. That's the frustration of a festival this size. My experience of programming is that you don't do anything but sort of hold the nuts and bolts together and are constantly worrying about this projector and that schedule and this guest or whatever and meanwhile there's this candy store across the street that you can't get to. I mean, how the hell am I ever going to make it to the Bloor during all this to see a film.

Kay: I've been thinking over your question about 'filmmakers programming' — the only thing that I can say is that it's hard for me to distinguish my interest as a filmmaker from my longstanding interest in film. I can say that I'm more interested in films that take a radical or ground-breaking approach to film as a form than I am to the traditional story well told. I mean that's way down on my list, unless it has some other primary political thrust to keep up.

Update:

In speaking to Kay the day before going to press it seems that she found that film which is, formally, only a "traditional story well-told". It's called *Testament* and was made by Lynne Littman, with Jane Alexander and William Duvane acting the parts of mom and dad in a domestic setting in small town America. There are, according to Kay, some wonderful and sensitively depicted scenes of marriage. "Anyway, the husband goes off on a business trip to San Francisco. And then nuclear bombs drop on every major city in the U.S." . . . "This small town isn't hit (though the father is of course dead) and the next 70 minutes of the film are what happens in the town, and in the family, as the wave of radiation inevitable spreads and people begin dying of radiation sickness.

"It's an incredible film — really traditional formally, and sentimental, and all that (there isn't a dry eye in the house). But it's an incredible film. Since I saw it there are these scenes that keep coming back to me."

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NEW FILMS

NEW DIRECTORS

NEW YORK CITY, last fifth of the twentieth century — In this era of Reaganomics, xenophobia and economic recession, it has become increasingly difficult to distribute "non-mainstream" films, even those which have enjoyed a traditional — if marginal — commercial audience. Though delays and omissions have a history preceeding the last presidential election or the "economic recession", some recent and well known examples include: Wim Wender's long awaited *Hammett* which opened in N.Y. on July 1st, more than a year and a half after having been made available to European audiences; Sam Fuller's *White Dog* which has been entirely blackballed (its producer even forbade the Selection Committee of the *New York Film Festival* to look at it); and Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman* which was finally released last spring, more than seven years after its completion. Akerman's *Toute Une Nuit* was not even shown in a festival in New York, but in the semi-clandestine *Perspectives du Cinema Francais* organised by the French Film Office in February of this year, in the new and smaller auditorium of the *Museum of Modern Art* (two screenings on a Friday afternoon and a Saturday evening in a 229 seat auditorium. Period.).

Of course New Yorkers have the tendency to think that they are culturally self-sufficient, and that their City provides all varieties of goodies that any sound mind could hope for.¹ For these reasons the two windows that annually open on the cinema of 'Others' (i.e., the

1. A popular humour book, *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche*, includes the following line: "Real men don't go to see foreign movies. They think that if it was really important, the film would have been made in English."

Non-Americans) or 'Other Cinema' (i.e., a more "independent" U.S. cinema) have an even narrower viewpoint that their equivalents in Toronto, Montreal, Deauville, Nantes, Tellurides — not to mention Cannes of course, and the now-defunct-but-much-missed *Paris Film Festival*.

The New York Film Festival (NYFF), which opens the 'cultural season' in the fall, is as much a high society event as a test which commercial foreign movies must pass in order to be marketed in the United States.² Recently however, thanks to the presence of *Village Voice* critic J. Hoberman in the Selection Committee, there have been a few independent movies included (*Vortex* by 'New Wave' filmmakers Scott and Beth B., for example).

In contrast, New Directions New Films (NDNF) co-organised by the Film Society of the Lincoln Centre and the Museum of Modern Art in the spring, is a more intimate, more "cinéphilique" festival. Though it usually takes place in the auditorium of the MOMA, the current 'expansion'³ of the Museum made the latter temporarily unusable and the Festival was held in a commercial theatre.

The first impression given by the NDNF 1983 was of its international eclecticism: one Norwegian film, one Dutch, one Spanish, two Italian, two French, two Japanese, one Indonesian,

2. A bad review by the *New York Times* critic of Antonioni's *Identification of a Woman*, after its screening at the NYFF, in spite of the great beauty of the film, appears to have blocked it from U.S. distribution.

3. The Museum is building a new West Wing. In order to raise money, it has sold its "air rights" to a private corporation, (the Museum Tower Corporation) for \$17 million. The corporation is building a 44-story residential condominium apartment tower. It has been argued that such a financial and real estate arrangement was not in conformity with the ethics of a cultural institution.

BERENICE RENAUD



Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads by Spike Lee

two from ex-French colonies (*Jom* by Senegalese, Ababacar Samb Makharam, and *Wend Kuuni* by Gaston Kabore from Upper Volta) and two from Southern India. U.S. "internal minorities" were represented as well: a Spanish-speaking comedy for the Puerto-Ricans (*Dios los Cria* by Jacobo Morales); a farsi drama, (*The Mission* by Parviz Sayyad) depicting with sensitivity the encounter of two Iranians in New York, one exiled by the Revolution and one faithful to Khomeini and Allah; and three independent films produced respectively in Staten Island (the less said about this one, the better), the South Bronx and the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn (*Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads* by NYU graduate Spike Lee) which is a promising 'student thesis' depicting the struggles of a "little black man" when he inherits a barber shop/meeting place/gambling joint, after his partner has been murdered by the 'local' (i.e. black) mafia; and whose wife, a social worker, is assaulted when visiting a difficult case in one of the hideous 'projects' where the city of New York hides its poor.

Only four of the movies included in this series were directed by women. One of them, *La Jument Vapeur* (*Dirty Dishes*), by New York born/French resident Joyce Bunuel, was already five years old. In spite of its intrinsic qualities, it would probably not have been selected had it not starred Carole Laure ("revealed" to American audiences by the atrocious *Get Our Your Hankerchiefs*).

Notably the best film of NDNF was directed by a woman, the Norwegian Vibeke Lokkeberg: *Betrayal; the Story of Kamilla*.

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BETRAYAL; THE STORY OF KAMILLA

Vibeke Lokkeberg (Norway)

Kamilla is a seven year old girl growing up in a small harbour town just after the end of WWII. The streets are still roamed by U.S. "boys" who seem to think that they can buy anything with a few dollars and a few words of English. Kamilla's parents were once well-off, but lost their money because of — actual or supposed — shady deals with the Germans. They now run a shoe-repair/laundrette. Between them a permanent and petty war continues to be waged, in which Kamilla is the bait, the victim and the unwanted witness.

Daddy has a blonde and sexy "assistante" with whom he eventually runs off, while Mommy (played with dry perfection by the director herself) flirts with a travelling salesman, after having stolen some black market money from her husband's cache.

Kamilla, submitted alternately to 'sentimental blackmail', seduction, scolding and threats (by mother and father respectively) simply cannot choose between Mom and Dad. So, what is she to do, when Mom makes her swear "not to tell anybody that I have taken this money" and Dad, loosing self-control, runs after Mom with an axe to make her reveal where the loot is?

Kamilla, however, still believes that love is possible — if not between a man and a woman, at least for a boy and a girl. She spends most of her free time with a sweetheart of her age, Svein, with whom she dreams of going to America. Svein (the son of a 'loose woman') is finally kidnapped by social workers. The unbearable, unforgivable betrayals of which Kamilla and Svein are victims are those inflicted upon them by adults.

The theme of betrayal is strongly underscored by its setting in a country recently defeated, occupied and 'sold off' by some of its own citizens. Betrayal however, also holds a more personal politic for Vibeke Lokkeberg. To be an adult in our society is to have let oneself be betrayed by the pettiness of life; by one's spouse, friends, neighbours, economic failures, bureaucracy and uneven circumstances. It is the betrayal of one's (childish?) ideals, and leads in turn to the betrayal of one's children — a perfect mechanism of



Nina Knapskog as Kamilla

ideological reproduction. These "betrayed" children will in turn betray others, and be well conditioned to expect and allow themselves to be screwed by the economic and political terms of capitalist society.

At the level of 'écriture', *Betrayal* shows a rare degree of rigor. The film, centering around the problem of what Kamilla knows — and what she does not — of adult life in general, does not include a single scene in which she is not

present — either in our field of vision, as an active character (and the talent of Nina Knapskog should be mentioned), or as an off-screen spectator. Hence the 'holes', the gaps, in the story. Like Kamilla, we know (and thus understand) only a part of the grown-ups' lives. And when considering the sad and petty limitations of the existence of these betraying/betrayed adults, one cannot help thinking, like Rimbaud, that "real life is somewhere else".



"through the eyes of an upper middle class female lawyer"

A QUESTION OF SILENCE * Marlene Gorris (Holland)

Last year at the *Festival des Films de Femmes à Sceaux* this film received 1st prize.⁴ *A Question of Silence* deals with the alienation inflicted, by a patriarchal society, upon three Dutch women — a housewife, a coffee-shop waitress and an intelligent, handsome executive secretary. Their oppression results one day in an expression of their frustrations through the apparently gratuitous, and totally unpremeditated, butchering of a clothes retailer.

The ambiguous thematic relationship between money, sex, prostitution, death and power/control is further elicited when the secretary (after the murder is committed) lets herself be picked up by a 'john' who first protests that the price asked is "too expensive" and then, in the hotel room, submits himself to her 'power' — the 'whore'; not the client, appears the 'real boss'.

The killing of one symbolic man points to the themes of isolation and despair (the housewife, in particular, is periodically afflicted with crises of silent catatonia), and of female solidarity and power. (The lynching of the shopkeeper starts spontaneously when the latter tries to stop the housewife from shoplifting luxury dresses; the secretary and the waitress join in without exchanging a word — they won't even know each other's names before being arrested. Other women in the shop silently witness the scene without intervening.)

4. This year the winner at the *Festival des Films de Femmes de Sceaux* was Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames*, a truly remarkable film which will open in New York this fall.

*a.k.a. *The Silence Surrounding Christine M.*

A Question of Silence was generally well received by the women in the audience of NDNF, while leaving men ill at ease. Perhaps they wonder, "Do you advocate killing men as a feminist gesture?" (Ed. note: this begs the questions so often raised in feminist analysis of *man-made* mainstream and narrative films.)

The story is presented through the eyes of a very upper middle class female psychiatrist, whom we see in the first shot of the film cavorting amorously on the livingroom couch with her husband (a lawyer). The shrink has been appointed by the court to decide whether or not these three women are "mad". She will finally decide that they are not, having realized, in the process, that her husband is as much a chauvinist pig as the husbands, lovers, clients, bosses and so forth, of the three "murderesses".

This narrative structure — the effort to 'reconstruct' (off screen, for reasons of decency, the killing being particularly "gory") "what really happened" — focuses the film in a way that leaves me dissatisfied. I do not give a damn about what really happened (I have seen enough murders on film, videotape, photo-montage, etc.); I want to know why Christine M., the housewife, is silent; why the waitress has unexplained crisis of hysteria; why the secretary is so cynical.

The final sequence of this film, however, is a pure gem. During the trial the shrink is asked to give the results of her report. "These women are not crazy", she says. The DA shows signs of irritation: "But, my dear Madam..." The husband leaves the courtroom and slams the door. The DA bursts out: "This case would be exactly the same if

these three women had murdered a woman shopkeeper, or if three men had murdered a shopkeeper." The waitress starts giggling, then the "silent" Christine, then the secretary; then some women in the courtroom (the passive witnesses of the scene in the store) join in, then the shrink. A roaring, mocking ("aren't they stupid!") avenging, irrepressible laughter — their secret weapon against this assembly of men. It is, to misquote Valeria Solanas, a laughter that cuts them up.⁵

The courtroom is cleared.

FONCION DE NOCH/ EVENING PERFORMANCE Josefina Molina (Spain)

There is little room for humour in this film which looks at the alienation of a woman in the institution of marriage in Franco's Spain. The heroine, Lola Herrera, a middle-aged actress recently divorced, after more than 15 years of separation, accepts to meet her ex-husband in her dressing room in front of the camera of the filmmaker.

When she met him 20 years ago, she was — in the Spanish tradition — a virgin but an already successful actress. He, a latin macho, was (and still is) less brilliant in his career as an actor. They were in love, had two children. They both 'cheated' — he, by sleeping with other women; she, by faking orgasms.

When they separated she was in charge of the children, because "he never felt himself a father".

They try to talk to each other, to explain what happened, to accuse Franco and the Catholic Church. Yet, I never felt that the core of the problem was touched. Communication is not risked. Maybe because he protects his guilt, he won't say enough. Maybe because her habitual masochism is too apparent in her tears or her self protection makes her refuse to listen when, sometimes, he might have 'opened up' (about his mother's suicide, for example).

I admire Molina's attempt, the matter-of-factness of her approach, although the movie leaves me with the taste of ashes. This "taste of ashes", if unpleasant, may well be relevant in itself. I recall seeing Christopher Petit's *Radio On* with two English critics who were finding it as boring as I did, until one of them said, "There is a certain relevance in this boredom. It expresses the situation."

5. I am alluding to the outrageously funny SCUM manifesto (Society for Cutting Up Men).

MOURIR A TRENTE ANS Romain Goupil (France)

Mourir à Trente Ans was the winner of the *Camera d'Or*, for best film at Cannes (1982). It is the first time that French cinema has dealt in retrospect with the events of May '68. It moved me deeply. It happens that I'm only slightly younger than Goupil and his dead friend Michel Recanati. I was living in Marseille, rather than in Paris, when the events of May '68 took place. But, we have in common the fact that we had actively taken a hand in the 'movement' while we were still in High School (lycée).

In the famous leftist demonstrations

'platform' of government). The French C.P., thinking the times were not ripe, decided to direct the energies of their militants and sympathizers away from the General Strike and any form of 'adventurist' action and to comply with the "democracy" of the polls.

We had succeeded in terrorizing the bourgeois, but alas, *not only* the "bourgeois". Reaction to the movement and the riots led to the election of one of the most conservative Assemblies of the Fifth Republic. Apart from the depressions provoked by those shattered dreams, the problem was that a class of disenfranchised 'professional revolutionaries' had been constituted — people who had thought for a moment that everything was possible. (I

still too close to us, maybe because of respect for Recanati held by Goupil and his 'witnesses', we cannot get anything more than a 'canned truth'. Recanati committed suicide, may his ashes rest in peace, but why? Why? Why?

At some point Goupil tries to analyze his friend's complex personality; his relationship to the man who was (or maybe was not) his father, etc. But in doing so he does not come any closer to an answer. It is an inadequate response to the broader questions which remain: why did an entire generation of brilliant, generous, ambitious, talented, socially conscious young people become involved in the "gauchistes" groups to the extent of losing their safety, their identity, their independence of mind,

Sociologically, the two most important films of NDNF 1983 were Romain Goupil's **Mourir à Trente Ans** (Half a Life) and Charlie Ahearn's **Wild Style** — in spite of the audiences general lack of knowledge of the milieus depicted.

that — so we thought — terrorized the 'bourgeois' (showing them the incredible force which "gauchisme" represented) there were three leaders: Jacques Sauvageot, from the PSU, student leader; Alain Geismar, 'pro-chinois' leader of the academic body, and Michel Recanati (then 18 or 19) member of the trotskyst "Ligue Communiste" and leader of the lycée students.

Goupil was a close friend of Recanati; he begins the film with the names of all of his former comrades who committed suicide at around thirty years of age and ends the list with the name of Recanati.

Son of a professional cameraman, Goupil was given a super 8 camera when a teenager and began shooting some 'Keystone cops' comedies with his two best buddies of the time — some of this footage is incorporated in the film. Later, when he became involved politically as a member of La Ligue Communiste, which was quite active among young French people at the time (against the wishes of his father, who was a member of the French C.P.), he went to Ibiza to shoot "à la Godard". He did not succeed, but he met Recanati. The riots of May '68 occurred shortly after and he was able to record demonstrations and meetings from the point of view of someone deeply involved in the movement.

May '68 did not produce the socialism we had been dreaming of (anyhow, the various groups had different ideologies and would not have been able to put together a minimal

remember the day when, in the middle of a demonstration, a speaker came and told us "The Elysée is empty, the power is vacant!" What we didn't know then is that De Gaulle was secretly meeting with the army Generals, parked in Germany, to be sure they would remain faithful if needed.)

These 'professionals' had either interrupted their studies — like Recanati, or had been fired from the Academia — like Geismar. They knew nothing but agit-prop, guerilla organization, theoretical speeches and pamphlets. Moreover, they were bitterly divided by the rivalries between the different tendencies of "Maoistes" and "Trotskystes". Several of these groups were dissolved and outlawed; their newspapers were seized and destroyed, their leaders either put in jail or condemned to isolated terrorist action. Some decided to work in factories, only to be quickly ejected or jailed as "trouble-makers". The years following '68 were times of a severe repression.

Through the personal recollections of Recanati's past friends and comrades, (all interviewed with a frontal camera against the neutral background of a dark curtain), the film attempts to reconstruct Recanati's post-May '68 years: the dissolution of La Ligue Communiste, his passage to the underground for a few years, his efforts to learn the skills to get a job, his difficulties in returning to a 'normal life', the death of his girlfriend, etc. And this is where, sadly enough, the movie fails. Maybe because this period of history is

their physical freedom, and sometimes their lives? Why this silence from the most well-known of the surviving militants when they are asked questions about certain aspects of their past? (They are now ecologists, publishers; they write books on mushrooms, on the revival of "Breton" or "Yiddish"; they have returned to their teaching careers or launched independent businesses; some have drifted away to San Francisco or Kabul; some are secretaries or brick-layers. . . but they won't talk about Marx, Mao, Stalin or Trotsky anymore. . .) And why is it that people like me, who were deeply involved in the movement, though without fame or reward, still think it is the most important thing that ever happened to us? I ask these questions to Goupil because I loved his movie, because he can probably understand what I'm talking about, and because I still hope that THE movie about May '68 will be done.

WILD STYLE Charlie Ahearn (U.S.A.)

Wild Style is not Charlie Ahearn's first movie, but it is his first commercial venture. The film, shot in 16 and blown to 35, cost \$250,000, which is about 200 times the budget of any of his previous projects. Ahearn has in the past been likened to a class of young filmmakers living in New York labelled, more or less arbitrarily, "punk", "New-Wave", or "Super 8" filmmakers

(Scott and Beth B., Vivienne Dick, Eric Mitchell, Amos Poe, Becky Johnson, etc.). There was never a real "movement", mostly superficial similarities in style (hand-held camera, unorthodox framing, rough editing, jump cut, deadpan acting), a taste for the same kind of music, and a rejection by the commercial as well as the traditional avant-garde circuits of distribution which made it necessary for these filmmakers to show their works in the clubs around where they lived (Tribeca and the East Village) or where they had musician friends (The Mudd Club, Max's Kansas City, Club 57, The Pyramids, etc.).

When "Punk" became "chic" Ahearn felt completely excluded from the process. Trained as a painter, he had decided to make movies to "increase his

of graffiti artist Lee, and "rapper" Fred Brathwaite, at a time when nobody in New York was interested in *graffiti art*, *rap music*, and even less in the sub-cultural relationship between the two. His admiration for Lee's mural work and his friendship with Braithwaite launched Ahearn on a more ambitious project. During the summer of 1980, he visited the South Bronx, picked up all the actors and locations, and started to raise some money. In the meantime, he introduced a group of graffiti artists to alternative gallery space located in the South Bronx, *Fashion Moda*, leading to the first 'exhibition' of graffiti art, which later travelled to the more "accessible" location of *The New Museum* in Greenwich Village. Little by little, as Ahearn got his money together,

Those elements, however, are marginal. The heroes of the films are those who live according to a "wild style" in the South Bronx, spraying subway cars at night and being chased by the cops, rapping and break-dancing in the derelict streets, being commissioned by local shop-keepers to paint murals on their walls. Like Lee and Braithwaite, all the actors play their own parts (hence a certain uneven level of acting): *Pink*, one of the rare girls to be a "master" graffiti artist, the musical groups *Busy Bees*, *Double Trouble*, the *Fantastic Fives*, etc.

Even though the movie was presented at Cannes this year, in addition to NDNF, Ahearn pretends that **Wild Style** does not "belong" to a festival audience, but to the teenagers whose



Patti Astor and Crazy Legs in Wildstyle

audience, escape the ghetto of the art world, and come to terms with the real world." Hence, he did not want to be confined in an "avant-garde" or "new-wave" esthetics, and he very soon defined his target: the teenagers, especially the Black and Chicano teenagers living in the Lower East Side "projects" or the South Bronx.

In 1979, he completed a super-8 movie, **The Deadly Art of Survival**, an attempt to present, in a fictional form, the exploits of Nathan Ingram (a Black Karate champion) and his students. Ahearn now considers this film — a classic for some film-goers like me — a partial failure, because "the kids expected to see a martial arts movie, and I did not give them one." One of the outputs of the film was Ahearn's discovery

graffiti art, *rap music* and *break dancing* had become "hot subjects".

Braithwaite (who initially was to work on the script), wanting to make a more commercial movie, talked Ahearn into using some of the "New Wave Stars". Patti Astor (the star in Amos Poe's and Eric Mitchell's films) was cast as a blonde, sexy and slightly ridiculous journalist who arrives in one of the most desolate areas of the South Bronx in her luxurious coupe in search of a "story" about rap music; and Bill Rice (an excellent actor with an aging-Bogart-look who has often worked with Scott and Beth B.) as a cynical and embittered TV producer who meets some of the South Bronx kids at an "uptown" party where the journalist has taken them.

culture it represents. True enough, in spite of its exciting rhythm and visual beauty, the movie is often difficult to understand for someone not familiar with the "rules of the game" of this specific culture. Paradoxically, Ahearn's refusal to "shoot a documentary", is also what makes this film powerful. It is not without weaknesses, however, the chief one being Ahearn's quasi inability to tell a story. But, to enjoy **Wild Style** at its best, maybe you need to smoke a bit of grass, let your legs and fingers lead you where the music goes, and realize that, for the first time, graffiti art has found its space, its rhythm, its music, its people.

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SUBVERSIVE FORMS

Melodrama from Sirk to Fassbinder and Beyond

It is Christmas in a small town in the United States. Eisenhower is the *pater familias* of the burgeoning American Empire. A mother is at home, ready to entertain her children who are with her for the holidays. All at once reversals occur: her daughter has a date, her son a party to attend. But it's alright, they reassure her — they have a present for her! Thoughtfully, understanding her widowhood and respectable position in society, they have provided for her an alternative to either boredom or impropriety — a television set. . .

It is summer in a large town in Germany. Adenauer is gone but a series of technocrats have undertaken to continue the fine work of retooling an expansive capitalist society. A mother is at home. She has invited her children to her apartment to meet her new husband. Her man enters abruptly from the next room, resplendent in a three-piece suit. Her family gapes at him for, not only is he twenty years her junior, but he is also a *gastarbiter*, a foreign worker, a black Arab. Hurling invectives at the couple, they depart, but not before one act of physical violence takes place. The woman's son seizes the most precious object in the room and kicks it in: a television set. . .

Now it is autumn in Canada. We turn on our television sets in the afternoon and can see new, 'mature' soap operas from America like *The Young and the Restless* and *Another World*. These and other soaps are hailed by reviewers for their bold handling of previously taboo topics. Abortion, adultery, drug abuse and miscegenation are now dealt with on day-time television series dramas. In the evening, one can tune in to see the outlandish manipulations of modern-day Capulets and Montagues on such shows as *Dallas*, *Falcon Crest*, and *Dynasty*. Branded as salacious fodder for the masses, these late-night soaps have taken the world by storm, outstripping both cop and jiggle shows in terms of popularity.



Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson in Douglas Sirk's *Magnificent Obsession*.

Russell Metty

The Hollywood movie made in the 50s and the German film of the early 70s connect with today's soap operas in that they are all representatives of a structural form known as melodrama. Of all the genres utilised in current narrative entertainments, probably none has endured the critical disapprobation that has faced melodrama. Film noir, westerns, comedies of all sorts from black to screwball have their defenders and their popular iconography. But melodrama — perhaps because one of its central features is the manipulation of emotion — has been attacked as prurient, sexist, and spiritually pornographic. And yet the genre not only still exists but persists in having wide audience appeal. I believe that the extremely wide scope provided by the structure of melodrama makes it a potent vehicle for radical exploitation.

What is melodrama?

Melodrama as a term arises from an odd co-mingling of the French word 'drame' and the Greek word 'melos'. Literally it means drama with song; using this definition it claims many fine works, including the Brecht/Weil collaborative production *Three-Penny Opera*. However, as the great Danish-German-American melodrama director, Douglas Sirk, has observed: "The word 'melodrama' has rather lost its meaning nowadays: people tend to lose the 'melos' in it, the music. . . Melodrama in the American sense is rather the archetype of a cinema which connects with drama."¹

The form of melodrama referred to by Sirk had its origins in the bourgeois plays of the 19th century, although its roots go back much further than that. Famous theatrical examples of melodrama would include the oeuvre of the Austrian playwright Arthut Schnitzler (1862-1931) and popular productions for the Victorian stage like *East Lynne* (1861). Novels that include melodramatic elements would vary in tone and content from Dicken's *David Copperfield* (1850) to Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). In a typical Victorian melodrama a suffering heroine would be seduced and abandoned by a mustachioed villain who would subsequently receive his come-uppance from a stalwart hero. While more sophisticated examples of the genre abound, the essence of the form remained the same. Protagonists were placed in dire circumstances beyond

their control; passions were unleashed and a violent conclusion was reached.

To locate melodrama in its historical context, it's necessary to know that its outlook is one that belongs to the sense of the tragic in life, a property it shares with many other popular structures. Starting with Euripidean Comedy, literary forms have become less metaphysical and more social in their concern. With the coming of the Enlightenment this became concretized in a series of tragic entertainments known in Germany as *trauerspiel*, or 'mourning-song'. In *trauerspiel* the tragic verities are transformed: the hero no longer fights the Gods; rather, princes engage in a brand of melancholy civil war. Accepting elements of the passionplay, *trauerspiel* emphasized Christian theological notions such as submission to destiny and a generalized humility. In *The Origins of German Tragedy*², Walter Benjamin places *trauerspiel* at the beginning of the modern tragic movement. *Trauerspiel* was important for its time: when the rise of principalities was viewed with some fear, a sense of Christian humility was much desired in the princes. A later structural form known as *Schickaldrama*, or 'drama of fate', was a connective element between *trauerspiel* and fully realized baroque tragedy. *Schickaldrama* occurred after the rise of Protestantism had divided German consciousness while the Black Death and endless civil war had increased the feeling of general gloom. The atmosphere of pessimism, the circularity of form and the use of symbolic objects were all appropriated by the 19th century structure of melodrama. By this time, bourgeois culture had displaced royalty and the church as central concerns. Accordingly, melodrama could rely on social phenomena for its subject matter. Sirk has said: "What used to take place in the world of kings and princes has since been transposed to the world of the bourgeoisie. Yet the plots remain profoundly similar. . ."³

The structure of melodrama may best be defined in relation to Greek tragedy, in the Aristotelian sense of the term. In tragedy, the Sophoclean hero suffers greatly in a metaphysical sense: the hero attempts too much, raising the wrath of the Gods, eventually causing his own decline due to a self-awareness of his previously hidden flaws (hubris). The tragic hero is therefore 'divided' within himself. His conflicts are of a subjective nature although the correlative — his relation to the world — is of tanta-

mount importance. Only by his acceptance of his personal catastrophe can he right his wrongs. His death restores harmony to the world.

In melodrama the protagonist tends to be anti-heroic. A victim, he is a little man who is presented to us 'whole'. She or he is in an equivocal state of mind and can often be persuaded to do something potentially disastrous by a charming outsider. The central character in a melodrama can best be described as 'blinded', not merely self-deluded, and will often be unaware of the destiny that will shortly overtake him. Essentially passive, the protagonist's actions are actually *reactions* to situations.

Given the differing nature of their *dramatis personae* we can distinguish between the world views offered by the structures of melodrama and tragedy. In tragedy the world is in a suspended state of precarious harmony. The actions of the hero plunge society — and nature — into a state of profound disarray. One might state that the plight of the hero is one of cosmic relativism. His perceptions, though awesome, are of a subjective nature. It is his hubris that creates the burden that only his death can redress. Melodrama presents a different case entirely. The protagonist is put upon by circumstances that are beyond his or her control. The structure of melodrama is circular. In brief flurries of activity, the character seeks to change events. Even when he or she succeeds in doing so, s/he only find themselves further along the circular pattern. The view of the world in melodrama is generally epicyclic, a Greek term meaning a circle whose centre lies on the circumference of another circle and whose orbit describes that circumference. Whereas tragedy posits a linearity of philosophical content, melodrama is disturbing cyclical.

This brings us back to melodrama in its present state of intellectual neglect. Webster defines melodrama as "a drama with exaggerated conflicts and emotions, (or) any sensational, extravagantly emotional action or utterance". In a world where a character feels trapped, should not extravagant action be defensible? Using the Greek again, 'melodia' or melody is defined in part as "the element of form having to do with the arrangement of single tones in sequence; distinguished from Harmony." It is reasonable to suggest that the singing, or emotional, element that critics find so disturbing in melodrama is precisely the sounding of those individual tones which form a sad melody, close yet nicely opposed to pure harmonic tragedy.

1. *Sirk on Sirk: Interviews with Jon Halliday*, ed. J. Halliday, Indiana Press, 1971.

2. *The Origin of German Tragedy*, Walter Benjamin, tr. Gershom Scholem, Schocken Books, 1978.

3. *Sirk on Sirk*.

Subversive qualities in Hollywood melodrama

The nature of melodrama is imbued with qualities that allow a canny artist to criticise society. Sounding the individual tones of embarrassment, despair, humiliation, and emotional misalliance, the director can draw the audience into the protagonist's desperate situation. Having done this he or she is free to create his or her own individual melody.

Douglas Sirk has observed: "The place of language in pictures has to be taken by the camera — and by cutting. You have to write with the camera."⁴ Sirk directed some of the most outrageous melodramas of the 50s, including *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and *Imitation of Life* (1959). In the former, a dissolute playboy, who had inadvertently caused a doctor's death, reconstitutes himself as a brain surgeon in order to restore the blind widow's sight. Sirk took this delirious material and shaped it into a moving statement of transcendental mysticism. He approached the film as structurally ironic. "It is a Euripidean irony — the theme of Alcestis: one person pacifying death by taking the place of another."⁵ By investing the melodrama with the element of antimony, Sirk was able to heighten the situation and make an admittedly "damned crazy story" into a structurally intriguing film.

During the 50s, Sirk was Universal Picture's most financially successful director. He developed Rock Hudson's screen image, changing him from beefcake into an identifiably stolid Hollywood star. While doing so, Sirk was busily engaged in creating subversive subtexts to Rock's popular films. It was in films like *Magnificent Obsession*, *Written on the Wind* (1956), and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) that Sirk was able to introduce subversive content into the melodramatic contexts. While dealing with apparently subjective concerns, such as love and happiness, Sirk was able to posit an objective critique of the upper classes in *Written on the Wind* and of the bourgeoisie in *All That Heaven Allows*.

In *Written on the Wind*, the life and loves of a Southern oil tycoon's family is the ostensible subject. Sirk shows these people existing by ritual. Characters like the tycoon's daughter and son (played by Dorothy Malone and Robert Stack) sustain themselves by

their pretences and pretentiousness. Stack and Malone exist in Sirkian atmospheres "of desperation, drinking and doubting the values of life and at the same time almost hysterically trying to grasp them, grasping the wind."⁶ Though these characters are tragically divided, they cannot break the circularity of their world. Stack eventually destroys himself and his family, leaving Malone, who has lost her love, Hudson, to run the family business. Sirk observes: "Malone has lost everything. I have put up a sign that indicates this — Malone alone, sitting there, hugging that goddamned (miniature) oil well, having nothing. The oil well which is, I think, a rather frightening symbol of American society."⁷

Although many of his films have happy endings, Sirk established by his mise-en-scene a powerfully critical stance against American bourgeois society. Sirk once claimed that a director's philosophy is in his camera angles and lighting, and so we should read him. His films remain effective because his cinematographic sensibility was so acute. It allowed him to exaggerate emotional effects so essential to melodrama while focussing a critical eye on the false underpinnings of capitalist society.

Currents in modern melodrama

Douglas Sirk's work exists as a paradigm of certain tendencies in Hollywood melodrama. One can cite instances of melodrama in Hollywood from D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1915) through King Vidor's *Hallelujah* (1930) to Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). Melodrama was and is not confined to 'women's weepies'; it subsumes such genres as the swash-buckler and the adolescent protest film. Presupposing a certain blindness on the part of the protagonists can help a director to make critical statements about society. If a character is 'whole' and 'good', what can be threatening but a pernicious outside force? Utilising this strain, Ray was able to make a convincing argument in favor of rebelling teenagers and against a conformist 'older' culture.

During the 70s, melodrama as media phenomena underwent an interesting split. In the States, soap operas began to treat serious topics to the general approbation of the critics. In the evenings,

shows such as *Falcon Crest* and *Dynasty*, starring Sirkian actresses Jane Wyman and Lana Turner, became extremely popular. That the same critics attacked these nightly offerings is an instance of the 'ghetto-ization' effect. What is good for women in the afternoon is not, apparently, mature enough for everyone in the evening. Such sexism is at the core of the intellectual disregard for melodrama.⁸ Film noir relates to men, as do hard-boiled novels by Chandler and Hammett. A wealth of critical literature has emerged to defend these genres. 'Women's weepies', however, and the novels of, for example, Georgette Heyer, have often been treated as subjects for critical disdain. A world of self-assertive or victimized women is perhaps too threatening for some critics. Women who locate their conscious or unconscious revolt within the patriarchal structure will, of necessity, run into critical disapprobation from certain defenders of our presently constituted culture. *Dynasty's* producer Esther Shapiro has said: "In *Dynasty* we use melodrama to make our points."⁹ Instead of *Dynasty*, Shapiro toyed with the idea of calling the series *Oil*, a title that would certainly have tickled the *auteur* of *Written on the Wind*.

Subversion becomes explicit

The tendency in melodrama has been to criticise society from a distanced point-of-view. In Europe, starting with Rainer Werner Fassbinder, a more explicit brand of melodrama has come to the fore. Fassbinder realized that certain qualities inherent in melodrama could be used by him to simultaneously attract a wider audience for his films while presenting the types of texts that he found relatable to his generation. Appropriating much of Sirk's style and many of his symbolically charged props, such as mirrors, windowpanes, and flowers, Fassbinder developed a series of scenarios wherein essentially passive protagonists were destroyed by their repressive culture. Fassbinder went beyond Sirk in that his content, or narrative, was as clearly subversive as was his mis-en-scene, or directorial attitude. Sirk acceded to public and

8. Although Fassbinder was respected for his contribution to 'art-house' culture, he was not immune to attacks concerning his use of melodrama. Richard Roud, in *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary*, found his theme of submission/dominance *distasteful*; critics of *Fox*, in particular, were even less charitable.

9. *Toronto Star*, July 23, 1983.



Hans Epp (Hans Hirschmuller) unwittingly employs his wife's lover Anzell (Karl Scheyet) in Fassbinder's *Merchant of Four Seasons*.

financial pressure to produce in some cases arbitrarily imposed happy endings. Fassbinder, operating under a different set of historical and fiscal imperatives, was able to follow the logic of melodrama to authentically tragic conclusions.

Melodramas like *Merchant of Four Seasons* (1971), *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) and *Fox and His Friends* (1974) dealt with these issues that Sirk's cinema could only hint at through knowing directorial touches. *Fear Eats the Soul* has the other television scene described at the head of this article. Fassbinder intended it to be an homage to *All That Heaven Allows*. In *Fear Eats the Soul*, an older woman, Emmi, falls in love with a younger man, Ali. Again, society, represented here by family and co-workers, strongly disapproves of the match. Of the older woman/younger man theme, common to both films, Fassbinder has observed: "It's the story of two people who are in practically the same situation, who have much the same motives for repressing themselves."¹⁰ However, Fassbinder tightens the screws on the situation. Unlike the solid Thoreauian gardener, Ali is an ignorant factory worker. Furthermore, he is black. Emmi is an unattractive charwoman, not a glamorous widow. These circumstantial changes allow Fassbinder to highlight his central concern in the film, the prejudice that many Germans feel towards the *gastarbeiter*, particularly when they are black. Fassbinder has stated that

10. "Six Films by Sirk," R.W. Fassbinder, tr: Th. Elsaesser, in *Douglas Sirk*, eds. Laura Mulvey & John Halliday, Edinburgh, 1972.

"Sirk's (film) is a kind of fairytale; mine is too but one from everyday life."¹¹ The success of *Fear Eats the Soul* still hinges upon Fassbinder's adherence to the structure of melodrama. He assumes the blindness of his characters much as Sirk did and is able to manipulate an audience by keying them into an awareness of situations that the protagonists are only struggling to understand.

Fassbinder located melodrama in a gay milieu in *Fox and His Friends*. Here Fox, a cheeky proletarian who has won a fortune in a lottery, is systematically manipulated by an haute-bourgeois lover. Blinded by love, Fox is fleeced by his new boy-friend who then abandons him after the money is gone. Despondent, Fox commits suicide. A daring film for its time, *Fox* is more a Marxist critique than a gay liberation tract. The issue of dominance and submission, so critical to Fassbinder, is rendered problematic in both a psychosexual and a politically dialectical sense. The downbeat resolution is in full keeping with both the conventions of melodrama and Fassbinder's tragic sense of life.

Many of Fassbinder's later movies are not pure melodramas. In whatever structure he employed, Fassbinder was always topical, controversial, and dramatic. *Lili Marlene* (1980) turned out to be Fassbinder's final melodrama, and it is a brilliant *mélange* of spies, Fascism, love and song presented in his typically florid style. By that time

11. *Fassbinder*, ed. Tony Rayns, British Film Institute, 1976.

Fassbinder had been able to reach his wider audience while conferring artistic respectability on the previously despised structure known as melodrama.

Future goals

The German film industry is financed in three major ways. One method is to enter into co-production deals with television. The stations provide financing, a future venue for the film and a two-year guarantee not to televise the film in Germany. A second method is through private investors and tax write-off systems. Although private enterprise funds many projects, most are appallingly commercial. Risking money on a fresh talent is perceived to be bad business; spies and sex still sell, as do sequels to the spies 'n sex stuff. The third option open to the aspiring filmmaker is the governmental funding board known as the Film Promotion Office. This Office does provide money to new talent, but only on a limited basis.

If this all sounds familiar, it ought to: German and Canadian methods of financing film production are nearly identical. Of course, obtaining financing here is much more difficult than in Germany because funds are tighter and our proximity to the U.S. problematizes our cultural base. Linguistically, there is no barrier between the States and Canada except in Quebec, whereas the Germans have not only their language but their cinematic history operating in favour of their national industry. Nevertheless, a need for indigenous film production is clearly felt in Canada; that desire only needs proper strategies in order to be fulfilled. In this context, the use of melodrama could provide answers for aspiring Canadian filmmakers. Fassbinder has demonstrated that an audience is there for such films and that it is possible to maintain one's integrity while searching for popular appeal. Melodrama is by its nature small and personal. Extravagance is achieved through gesture, not through massive crowd scenes. *Outrageous* (1977) was a Canadian film which was a financial and artistic success and utilized the structures of melodrama to make subversive statements. As a new Canadian cinema arises in the 80s, other cineastes should investigate the radically subversive elements inherent in melodrama in order to connect with a larger audience.

Marc Glassman runs Pages Bookshop and is a member of the Macadamian Film Society (programming film series at the Rivoli, in Toronto).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

JANE/FINCH OCCUPATION

I suppose any film (documentary particularly) which speaks of ongoing and unresolved social relations, will face being more than what we call a piece of art; it also finds itself to be a tool of sociology and/or another bit of evidence of the occurrence which it describes. **Home Feelings**, the NFB film directed by independent filmmakers Jennifer Hodge and Roger McTair, is certainly relative to this phenomenon and my review will attempt to examine the film from within these points of view. Whether we consider the film to satisfy the attention of art, sociology or event is of some importance to an evaluation of its impact and influence.

A sequence of events unfolded after the release of the film which reflect its sociology — some predictable, some interesting and some alarming (to me anyway). The NFB invited the participants in the film — Jane/Finch community members, the community race relations committee and the police to view the film prior to its premiere at Yorkwoods Gate Library on July 21st. The police and the community race relations committee don't like the film — the former because they say the film shows a negative image of the police and the latter because they say the film shows a negative image of the community. The film was then premiered in the community and the community loves the film. They say it reflects the reality of their lives in Jane/Finch. My instincts tend to go with communities in these kinds of alienations. And mine are shared instincts which have been well honed by the collective history/experience of the Black encounter (Wilberforce to Jane/Finch) with Canadian society.

Sitting in the audience watching the film that evening, I had no reason to doubt those instincts. Comments, as the film proceeded, made it evident that the young people knew the police procedure first hand. They predicted what the police were going to say and talked back at the screen with anger and cynicism. They also knew the procedure at the Manpower office when one of the young men in the film, Trevor Gordon, an unemployed bricklayer, went to ask



Rosemary Brown and son Christopher

for training as an interior decorator. When the Manpower counsellor began to speak there were comments in the audience such as, "she's lousing him up", meaning that the counsellor was trying to undermine Trevor's ambitions.

Sadly, there was a deep cynicism in the audience laughter when Trevor expressed his ambition. It was the cynicism of living in a world where one understands one's relation to labour as always drudgery and only practical for feeding one's family.

The audience, which was primarily people from the Jane/Finch community, recognized the world and their friends on the screen and cheered them on. Clearly they enjoyed this self-recognition and the airing of the difficulties of living in the area.

The panel discussion which followed the film was significant; the film was

seen as 'community action' — an action which had been taken (by the filmmakers) in their project of resolving the problems in their neighborhood. There were insistent questions about what should be done next — were we just going to look at the film and not do something? — where do we go from here? — do we set up a committee or something? It was clear that they did not see the screening as the premiere of an NFB film, but as a community meeting.

The municipal representatives and law enforcers and para statal groups understood that as well, which could account for their pre-premiere petulance. They found themselves under fire from the audience. The alderman for the area was booed off the floor when he told the community that they weren't 'man enough' to listen to him (the audience was at least 60%

female — the community is at least 80%) realising the worst fears of the community that their representatives in government did not give a damn for them.

By community standards (Toronto-Black) the discussion was as ribald, bombastic and outraged as ever. The meeting/premiere was a community event and the film a vindication or at least an affirmation of their complaints about the high profile of the police, the media and social service denigration of the neighborhood and of the survival skills of the women and families in the area.

The great furor raised by **Home Feelings** has muted some very important aspects of the film and dressed a probably innocuous film in controversy and notoriety. Whether the film represents a serious, studied and deep analysis in its approach to the Jane/Finch community will only be revealed as time passes and events reveal the nature of the struggle for a community which the film anticipates but does not show.

Fueling the furor

The furor has been fueled in large part by the petulance of the police division in the area and the apologetic community race-relations committee. The latter, a contrivance of the municipal state set up to 'liase' with the offending community, is made up of conservative and upwardly mobile elements in the community. Their task is largely to serve as the touchstone for police-community relations, to keep things under raps when necessary. The police in the area see law enforcement and their position as protection of anglo-cultural norms. They have a demonstrable/demonstrated blind spot for the changing/changed face of the people of Toronto.

The concentration of police in Jane/Finch is a political decision. It is/was a signal to the community and to the general populace that the police (the society) considered Jane and Finch a potential trouble spot. The coincidence of a high profile police force in a low income area does not need great analysis. People who don't have, need to be watched by those who do.

Nothing happens in Jane/Finch that does not happen anywhere else. Nothing, that is, about how people conduct their lives. Kids are pubescent and cocky and grow up; people have arguments in their families and sometimes with their neighbours, etc.. Jane/Finch doesn't smoke more marijuana than other

neighborhoods, perhaps even less because they can't afford it. So why the concentration of police, why police intervention in everyday activity of a community? What's wrong with a kid standing in a basement parking lot who doesn't want to answer why? — or has no reason understandable to law enforcers.

To the police in Jane/Finch black male youth are potential criminals. To the social services, so are low income mothers, whether they're from Newfoundland or Jamaica. From discussions in the film with police, it is apparent that they see the territory as one to bring under control and keep under constant surveillance. The foot patrol is no kindly policeman looking out for the community. They are an occupying force whose purpose is to root out irregularity and to prevent behaviour which they consider to be suspect — like standing in a basement parking lot or sitting in your uncle's van. A whole new set of activities has been added to the list of what is considered worthy of 'crime prevention' (harassment) in the Jane/Finch community. They include the two just mentioned and such others as looking suspicious, and standing on corners in groups.

When people point out that these 'crimes' are not yet on the books, as the film does, the police start pouting, boycotting films and running their line of reverse psychology about being picked on and misrepresented.

The salt and pepper — black/white cop — patrol, that wildly inventive, deeply creative, great panacea for police-community relations, only exacerbates the situation at times, causing resentment between the Black policeman and the Black community. Constable States, the Black policeman in the film is, after all, a policeman. And Black policemen are known to be a little more eager in their jobs, not wanting to be accused of showing favouritism toward the community. They have an unconscious agenda which involves a commitment to show that they are not like the rest of 'these socially branded trouble makers'.

The other offended party, the community race relations committee, find themselves in much the same position as States. They have said that the film will cause more trouble for the area, that all the 'good' work that's been done will go down the drain, that things have changed between the police and the community. Well, the existence of such a committee in the first place is to challenge these responses. What throws up a situation where the police and community require

arbitration by a third party? In a sense, only the extinction of the committee can prove that there is not problem.

These committees, like other organizations in the Black and other ethnic (non-anglo) communities, harbour/nurture and are vehicles for the political ambitions of these groups in mainstream politics. It is important to note that these aspirations often muddy the water. Very often the pressure is on them to present, for the state, a coherent and improving (in the state's view) picture of the community they represent and to balance this (in the community's view) with the picture of not selling out. But the former impetus is more powerful than the latter. The state's requirements are, after all, that the situation improve, not that the problems be retold. In the process it becomes less important to satisfy the community and more troublesome to explain and pacify ongoing resistance by the community.

Honest shortcomings

The film has to be examined (as film) on two levels. First, on what it says and second, on what it is. What it says seems to be causing a great deal of discomfort, particularly to the police. But in fact the film says nothing new. Nothing, that is, which the Black population of Toronto does not know about the relationship between themselves and resistance. The film also touches on the resistances of women-headed families in the Jane/Finch area and their struggle to make a livelihood and a home in an area whose image has been maliciously distorted by the media and the police. Both have played a part in blaming victims for their victimization, in bolstering vile assumptions about the life of the working class and poor — how they got to be (i.e., deserve to be) poor and working class, and in reinforcing certain myths about immigrants and working class people.

Jane/Finch is given the same attention in the media as a Third World country: only when there's trouble and with the vocabulary reserved for international crisis — tension, turmoil, disaster — spectres of race wars, random violence and illogical discontent are conjured up. So when the community sees a film like **Home Feelings** it says "well at least someone is telling it like it is". Shortcomings of the film are forgiven. Missing is the assessment of how deeply the sub-themes are explored and connected to the main theme; how well the film has been shot; how well the

frames have been composed and selected and if the film moves too quickly or slowly. These questions, if applied to this film, may be answered with reservation.

The film is not thorough in its analysis of life in Jane and Finch. It is accurate, but not thorough. This is the difficulty with the film. It deals with one main issue 'the police' and a number of smaller issues (smaller in the film that is) which are not pursued. The analysis lacks a depth which could have revealed the way in which metropolitan culture stymies the aspirations of the young and eager. There were three women in the film who gave example by their lives

and their battle for family, despite financial and personal hardship. But these were presented in fragments interspersed with the main theme.

There were unattractive 'talking heads' shots and the camera did not move into the *neighborhood*, as it were. It displayed a randomness which belied the 'home feeling' of the title of the film. If you've ever been in an OHC apartment building you would notice the narrow corridors and the low ceilings which informs the inhabitants of their life-style. The film could have used these to illustrate this information. The film did not go into the back yards and kitchens of Turf Grassway nor stay long

enough on the plains of the hangout spots. It displayed a somewhat flat surface instead of longer lensed/three dimensional shots.

Controversy has shielded **Home Feelings** from this kind of scrutiny. But there are still films in Jane/Finch — ones which the police and community race relations committee still won't like, but which the community will. Perhaps the filmmakers will be a little more attentive.

Dionne Brand is a black poet living in Toronto; her most recent publications include *Primitive Offensive*, *Winter Epigrammes* and *Epigrammes* (Williams Wallace Publishers).

CLIVE ROBERTSON

"IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A MOVIE" ?

Black Wax
with Gil Scott-Heron
Robert Mugge, director
Mug-Shot Productions
842 Garrett Lane
Springfield, PA
19064 U.S.A.

Two recent films by American filmmaker Robert Mugge were shown in Toronto this summer for one night only. Both were 'portrait documentaries'; one of heliologist/musician Sun Ra (**Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise**), the other of self-described bluesologist/musician, Gil Scott-Heron (**Black Wax**). Both will be shown again, not during *Festival of Festivals*, but as part of the *Art Gallery of Ontario's* Jazz film series in February '84.

Black Wax added to a thirst for more which I acquired with the discovery of what 'Otis' Richmond has called the "sizzling track", "B-Movie" on Scott-Heron's album **Reflections** ("Afro-Blue", **FUSE** Feb '83). Throughout the film, Scott-Heron talks to the camera, giving the audience neighborhood lessons in global and American politics — in much the same way as the narrator of the BBC's Bronowski series recreated discoveries at their supposed geographical origin.

Having lived in Jackson, Tennessee; Chicago and New York City, Gil Scott-Heron now resides in his own 'city of discoveries', Washington, D.C. The

film opens with and returns to a scene of him walking along the banks of the Potomac — ghetto box balanced on his shoulder, double-tracking his voice to a tape of his song, "Washington, D.C.". He recites, raps, sings and he walks away from the tourist route of the "tourmobile" and into his own neighborhood. The film's title, **Black Wax**, among other things refers to one of the film's locations — a small wax museum which he uses to give accounts of Black history and to provide the effigies for his references to gangster Nixon, 'Oatmeal Man' Ford, 'Skipper' (peanut butter) Carter, and to that original symbol of "someone, at the last moment, coming to save America" — John Wayne.

Scott-Heron, who reportedly initiated many of the scenes in the film, treats the audience as responsible guests in his city and likewise sets clear limitations on any 'investigation' of his own life and daily workings. For example, he does not interact with his neighbors or co-workers in the film and so the 'improvisational' content of the film is limited to the 'intros' to his work in the intermittent concert sequences.

He and his group, the *Midnight Band*, perform a number of his songs during the film: "Washington, D.C.", "Johannesburg", "Winter in America", "Alien", "Waiting for the Axe to Fall", "Gun", "Angel Dust", and "B-

Movie". Elsewhere, he has explained the group's name: "Midnight, even though it seems dark and foreboding is the first minute of a new day. The pre-midnight era — in terms of Black people — was a period of unawareness. Today, there's a new generation of more aware and more conscious Black people. They will teach others."

In one concert sequence, describing his personal discovery of blues literature, he suggests that the earlier forms of Black poetry developed by Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Gene Tulman and others (which are still academically castigated as 'street poetry') "were essentially fine-tuning the blues". His anecdotal description of discovering poetry in the ninth grade is both humorous and critical of the mystique surrounding embellished literature. Not being able to understand, yet still taking for granted that anything published would have meaning, he reports that a typical reaction to this 'poetry' by his classmates would be, "This must be *deep*!". He then defined the term 'deep': "Deep, meaning, 'I recognize all of these words individually, but damned if I can get anything out of the order in which they currently appear.' (conclusion) 'This must be *deep*!'. He adds, "Now, why would you need a *poet* to make things more complex? — two *winos* can make things complex!". Performing his own poems

including "Billy Green is Dead", "Paint it Black", "Whitey on the Moon" and "Black History/World", in the film, Scott-Heron sets the context and their meaning/source is clear.¹

The man is infectious. He's somewhat like Richard Pryor (in concert), Ralph Nader (political consumer advocate), Robert Johnson (Delta Blues legend), Dick Gregory and Joseph Beuys (he claims membership in the 'Common Sense Party'), all housed in the same body. It all amounts to what a cynical critic might describe as the liberal's ideal radical. But, to counter this, Scott-Heron's work as an activist artist, spanning two decades, has given him the reputation of someone who can both educate and entertain, someone who inspires mass trust as opposed to mass hysteria. In **Black Wax**, his ability to politically persuade is achieved through a binding process which makes use of broad humorous/satirical analogies whose effectiveness is based in shared experience.

In his poems and songs, Gil Scott-Heron time and again zeroes in on historical revelations or current issues or on points which need to be made. The point can be as simple as the need for listening as well as rapping, as in "Billy Green is Dead", or the frustration of a reasonable mind in the face of fact, as in "The Ghetto Code (Dot-dot-dit-dit-dot-dot-dash)" which Scott-Heron call "re-morse" code, spelling out, "Damned if I know". "The Ghetto Code", is a poem-as-learning-game, into which he injects, among other things, an account of the CIA's transfer of \$400,000,000 ("give or take a couple million") to Howard Hughes for the covert operation of recovering a sunken Russian submarine (which contained an out of date code book).

Scott-Heron is an Afro-American, and what he has in common with other Americans is the anger and sometimes horror that, "America has rarely lived up to its advance publicity. This is supposed to be a land of freedom, justice and equality. — That's what people are looking for." In "We Beg Your Pardon, America", he wrote, "America leads the world in shock. Unfortunately, America doesn't lead the world in deciphering the cause of shock." This commonly desired ideal of freedom, justice and equality, he says, escaped from George Washington onwards. ("Ironical that the father of this country should be a slave owner.")

¹The Arista album (AB 4197) **The Mind of Gil Scott-Heron** (1978) is worth finding; it contains a separate book of lyrics and poems and is the source for poetry reprinted in this article.

The poem "The New Deal" begins:

I have believed in my convictions
and been convicted for my beliefs.
I have been conned by the Constitution
and harassed by the police.
I have been billed for the Bill of Rights
as though I'd done something wrong.
I've become a special amendment
for what included me all along.

and ends with his review of the Black liberation movement and its demise:

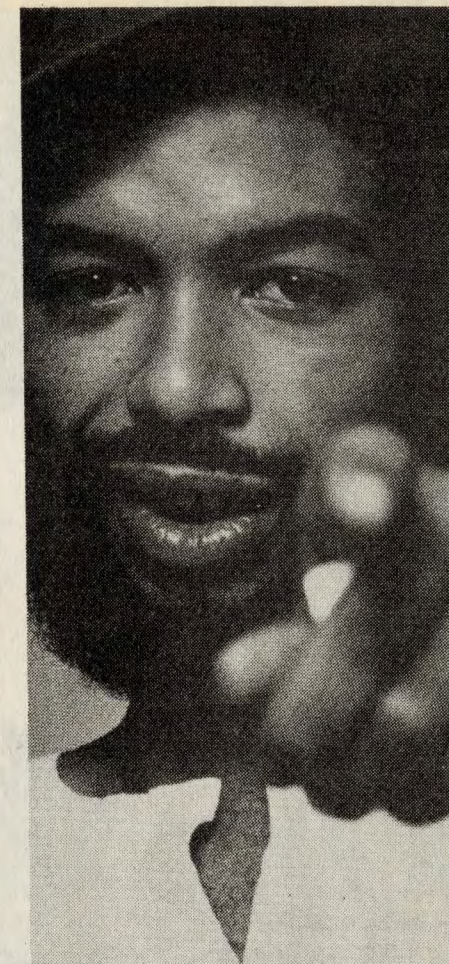
Which brings me back to my
convictions
and being convicted for my beliefs
'cause I believed those smiles
in three piece suits
with gracious, liberal demeanor
took our movement off the streets
and took us to the cleaners.
In other words we let up the pressure
and that was all part of their plan
and every day we allow to slip through
our fingers
is playing right into their hands.

(1977)

In this poem for Jose Campos Torres, Scott-Heron admits the implied mistake of his own temporary self-censorship:

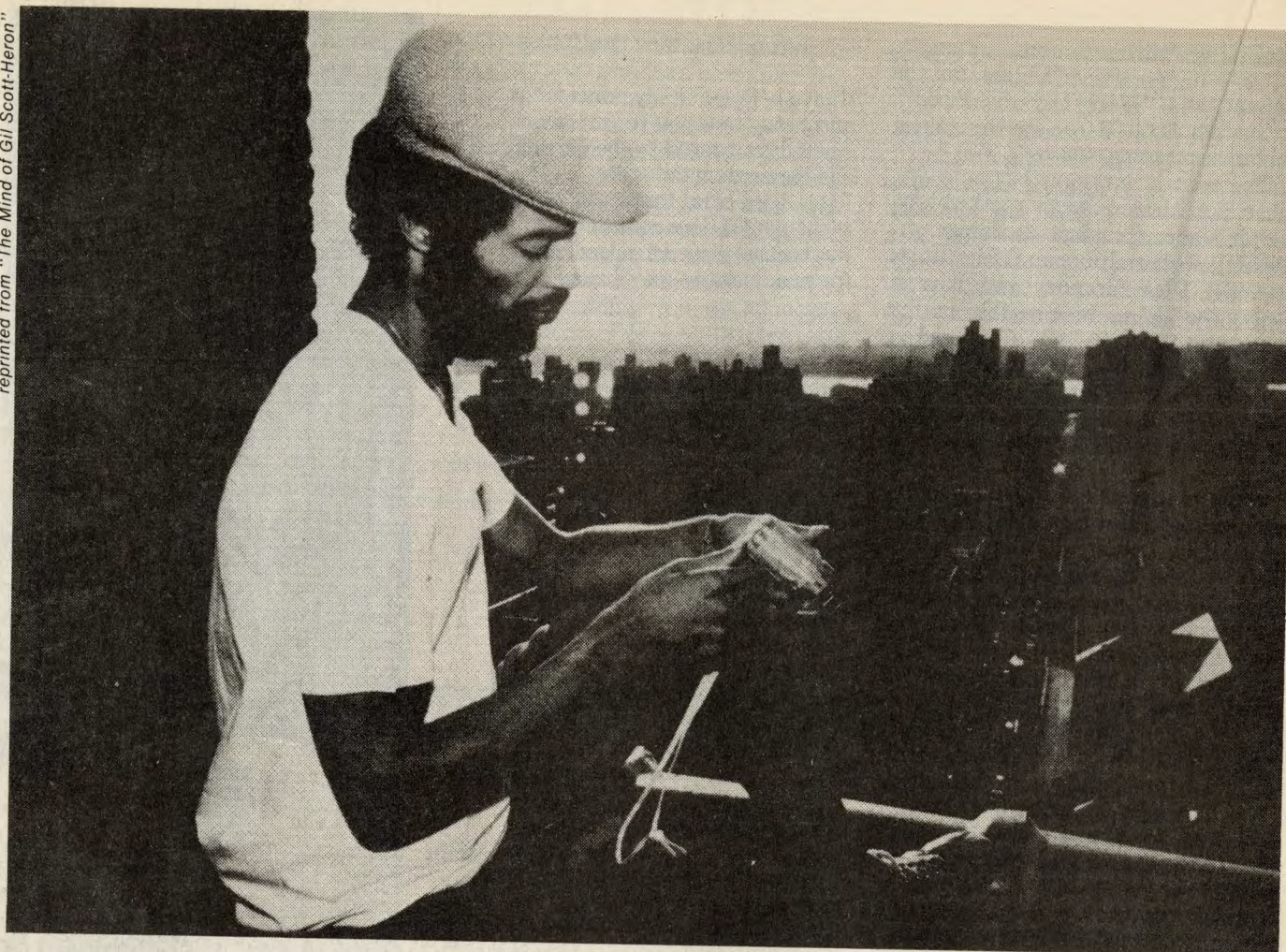
I had said I wasn't gonna write no
more poems like this.
But the dogs are in the street.
It's a turn around world where
things all too quickly turn around.
It was turned around so that right
looked wrong.
It was turned around so that up
looked down.
It was turned around so that those
who marched in the streets
with Bibles and signs of peace
became enemies of the State
and risks to National Security.
So that those who questioned the
operations of those in authority
on the principles of justice, liberty
and equality became the vanguard
of a communist attack.
It became so you couldn't call a
spade a motherfuckin' spade.

(1978)



reprinted from "The Mind of Gil Scott-Heron"

Reagan, for the majority of Americans (remembering that he was elected with only 26% of the registered vote) is just the most recent in a long line of visible power maniacs who have raped the spirit of the American constitution. Some, whom Scott-Heron had directed his creative potential



WHITEY ON THE MOON

A rat done bit my sister Nell.
(with Whitey on the moon)
Her face and arms began to swell.
(and Whitey's on the moon)
I can't pay no doctor bill.
(but Whitey's on the moon)
Ten years from now I'll be payin' still.
(while Whitey's on the moon)
The man jus' upped my rent las' night.
(Cause Whitey's on the moon)
No hot water, no toilets, no lights.
(but Whitey's on the moon)
I wonder why he uppin' me?
(Cause Whitey's on the moon?)
I wuz already payin' 'im fifty a week.
(with Whitey on the moon)
Taxes takin' my whole damn check,
Junkies make me a nervous wreck,
The price of food is goin' up,
An' as if all that crap wuzn't enough:
A rat done bit my sister Nell.
(with Whitey on the moon)
Her face an' arm began to swell.
(but Whitey's on the moon)
Was all that money I made las' year
(for Whitey on the moon?)
How come there ain't no money here?
(Hmmm! Whitey's on the moon)
Y'know I jus' 'bout had my fill
(of Whitey on the moon.)
I think I'll sen' these doctor bills
(To Whitey on the moon.)

© Gil Scott-Heron, 1970.

against (like Hoover, McCarthy, Nixon, Rizzo and the CIA) have acted and re-enacted monumental treasors. Externally, there have been the burdens of Korea, Viet Nam, Watergate and now Central America. Among other Western 'democracies' America, the entity, through the acts of its leaders is a feared/despised force. American 'chauvinism' is believed to be not only the result of the country's position as a global manipulator (through its cultural, economic and militaristic impositions) but also paradoxically because of the attitudes of many reactionary Americans who proudly believe that their Constitutional model is a *fait accompli*. Others (of whom Scott-Heron is one among many) hang on, devising means of opposition to the State's systematic destruction of its founding ideals.

Different fronts, the same battle

Scott-Heron's voice, as an Afro-American artist, is unnervingly clear. "The focus of the struggle has shifted in the 70's. We've become more aware of

Pan-Africanism and international responsibilities. If we recognize that it's all part of the same battle more will be accomplished. Different fronts, the same battle. But it's really about cleaning up your own neighborhood before you try to clean up the city, the state and the world."

While the content of **Black Wax**, admittedly its most powerful element, may seem to carry the film, any film deserves to be judged on its own filmic terms, and this film, as a 'portrait documentary', easily succeeds in its objectives. Finally, though its form and subject are different, **Black Wax** is as emotionally and politically rewarding as the film, **A Time to Rise** (see FUSE March '82). Don't wait for **Black Wax** to come to you; book it!

Now, having heard the records and seen the movie, I hope that Gil Scott-Heron will accept previous invitations for him to travel north — not as the counter-culture hero or as the role model that he undoubtedly is, but as a visiting sum of our parts.

Clive Robertson is a media artist, independent record producer and former editor of FUSE.

FUSE September/October 1983

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO DWORKIN

Right Wing Women
Andrea Dworkin
(Coward-McCann Inc., N.Y., 1983)
(General Publishing Co. Limited, Toronto)
\$9.95

It's the perfect time for a book on right wing women, perfect for critics who have accused radical feminists of being suitable tea-mates for Phyllis Schafley, perfect for us radical feminists who have accepted the fact that right wing women like to trample on our turf — issues of sexuality, the family and reproductive rights. We crave an answer to how it is that we can be so near and yet so far from those women who fight us at every turn. How can they know what the real issues are and consistently come up with answers that consign women to a life of total submission? Some of us have settled for the simple solution to the problem: we're the progressives, they're the reactionaries. But in the meantime, we secretly want to know what makes these deepsixers of the ERA, these proponents of compulsory pregnancy, these formidable enemies of ours, tick.

Anyone interested in knowing more about the Schafleys, the Anita Bryants, the Midge Dectors of the world need not consult **Right Wing Women** for further information. Andrea Dworkin's book is not about right wing women at all. It's not about right wing movements, even the ones whose political currency is presently inflating in the United States; neither is it a book about right wing ideology, although Dworkin does take a few pains to elucidate that. What it is about is how Andrea Dworkin sees the world of women, the real world of rape, violence and intimidation, and why she thinks right wing women react to it the way they do.

The world according to Dworkin is not a nice place: Women exist to fuck and breed and all our institutions work to keep it that way. In order that women know our place, we are denied intelligence, sexual intelligence (one of many intriguing Dworkinisms), and total control over our bodies, particularly in reproduction. We breed and fuck because men — whether they are

Bible thumpers, humanists or leftists — want it that way. When we get too emotional to keep up the good work, we get pumped with tranquilizers; when we get too fat to be interesting fucks, we get pumped up with amphetamines. We are raped, battered and, when we are no longer useful in the fucking and breeding department, we are left to moulder in pathetic old age institutions where corruption vies with sadism as the primary moving force.

Right wing women, says Dworkin, agree. "They have surveyed the world, and they find it a dangerous place. . . they are not wrong. . . they do what they have to to survive". The legal right

men have to rape in marriage tells right wing women that the fundamental experience of women in the world is as the victim of violence. "With all of their new public talk", Dworkin writes, "they continue the traditional silence of women in that they are silent about forced sex in marriage. But all that they do is predicated on a knowledge of it."

And so, right wing women think promiscuity and the sexual revolution are bogus ("they do not see how more force is better than less force — and more men means more force to them"); they view leftist sympathies with women's freedom, particularly the "freedom to choose pregnancy" with



Andrea Dworkin

courtesy Body Politic

FUSE September/October 1983

deep suspicion ("they have seen the left only champion women on their own sexual terms — as fucks; they find the right wing offer a tad more generous"); they worry that "fucking gets you dead" unless you have children, and fear that free abortion on demand will make them obsolete as mothers and therefore valuable only as fucks; they cling to religious ideologies because religious institutions formally honour the special sanctity of motherhood. "They cling to emotional hatreds (of lesbians and Jews, for example) so that they won't kill the men in their lives." According to Dworkin, they have chosen what they perceive to be the lesser of two evils: "Being worshipped is preferable to being defiled and being looked up to is better than being walked on"; they have decided (wrongly, of course, since rape and battery find their most comfortable niches in the household) that prison in the home is better than being easy prey on the street corner. It's wifedom or prostitution for women in the real world, and right wing women know it.

Of course, right wing women don't consciously think this way at all. It's all a figment of Dworkin's fabulous imagination. For one thing, fuck, cunt and the rest of the words Dworkin throws around so cavalierly are parts of her personal lexicon, not theirs. For another, Dworkin's experience with the subject matter sounds as if it is restricted to some random encounters at the National Women's Conference in Houston (1976) and some articles and interviews picked up along the way. If you want to know about right wing women you can learn more from reading the *Playboy* interview with Anita Bryant (May 1978 issue) than from Dworkin's book. But if you want to know about sexism and feminism, *Right Wing Women* is a superb text.

Andrea Dworkin has the ability, and more important, the courage to lay things bare. And she'll take anything on — the hypocrisy of her own generation, the platitudes of the new left, any evidence of a society she believes is defined by *Women Hating*, the title and subject of her first book. Her book on pornography, (*Men Possessing Women*) is the only lengthy text on the issue that didn't get lost in philosophical hemming and hawing and got mad instead. It was an exquisite rant. Dworkin has never been interested in sweet-talking her readers. If you prefer prose that lulls, soothes and spares you painful insight, stay away from *Right Wing Women*. Andrea Dworkin, as usual, gets down.

Radical rhetoric

Dworkin is radical feminism's consummate rhetorician. She is so skillful with her craft that she has the wondrous gift of putting ideas many of us only flirt with, into words that lend the ideas real grit. She gives clarity to the truths we intuit, credibility to notions less articulate writers would botch. She can toss off a definition of femininity and cram it into brackets (*to wit*: "femininity — the apparent acceptance of sex on male terms with goodwill and demonstrable good faith in the form of rationalized obsequiousness") and sum up in a trice why women have never been given credit for intellectual integrity or radical ideas: "No woman could be Neitsche or Rimbaud without ending up in a whorehouse or lobotomized". And her lone paragraph on Marilyn Monroe has a chilling eloquence.

But Dworkin is also guilty of deceptive eloquence, the less virtuous side of the rhetorician. In her study of the politics of intelligence, she reveals herself as a skillful manipulator. She wants to make the point that the same ideas are received differently depending on whether they are articulated by men or women. To persuade us of this truth, she compares the treatment given Mirabel Morgan's *Total Woman* — a book about how women should be devoted to male sexual pleasure — with the treatment given to D.H. Lawrence's various paens to the penis. Not surprisingly, in our culture Morgan is considered stupid and Lawrence is a literary genius. Similarly, although Anita Bryant has referred to homosexuality as cannibalism and Norman Mailer has denigrated homosexuality and masturbation by making the claim that lost sperm is lost sons, she is met with sneers of contempt while he is hailed as a culture hero.

Now at first, this seems to be an inspired comparison, one of those that could create a click in consciousness, and the way Dworkin writes, it is compelling indeed. But get out from under Dworkin's spell and you realize that Mirabel Morgan has written only one silly book, while Lawrence has made a significant artistic contribution, the least impressive of which is his phallocentric material. Anita Bryant has a bad reputation because her only profile in the late 70s was as a crusader against gay rights. And, by the way, Norman Mailer who, like Lawrence, has been prolific outside the realm of sexual politics, is considered a great cultural critic in spite of his hysterical misogyny,

not because of it. Although Dworkin is a reliable supplier of words of wisdom, her readers have to maintain some independence of thinking to distinguish the airtight arguments from the fancy verbal footwork.

Airtight arguments and loose rambles

As it is, there are many airtight arguments in *Right Wing Women*. The prose is crisp and aggressive with the exception of a loose ramble on the subject of homosexuals and Jews. This section is an amalgam of observations snatched from the Houston conference and a curious and cursory analysis of Jewish law and its relationship to Christian fundamentalism. She latches onto the commentaries of Moses Maimonides (a 12th century scholar and philosopher), one of Judaism's most brilliant minds, but constructs her arguments heedless of the fact that Maimonides is not the only game in town. A passing familiarity with Jewish scholarship reveals a huge body of commentary and an equally huge think tank of scholars. It is almost fruitless to develop an argument using just one scholar's notions, even if he is one of the "greats". This chapter generally is out of context with rest of the book and is an apparent add-on to the sections that touch reproduction more closely. Dworkin obviously took a run at the questions of Jews and sexuality because a book with the title *Right Wing Women* wouldn't be complete without it.

But the basic premise of *Right Wing Women* is argued much more closely. The book covers the promise of the right wing to its women, provides an analysis of the institutions that lobotomize (both literally and figuratively) all women, and includes a surprising analysis of abortion which, unfortunately, is probably more relevant to the American than the Canadian experience. (Then, again, maybe I'm not so willing to trash left-wing support on the abortion issue because the matter is coming to the crunch in Canada while I write this.) For the future, Dworkin warns that surrogate motherhood is a new hybrid of breeding and prostitution — inevitable in a sexist society — and that the developing reproductive technologies, test tubes and the rest of the paraphernalia bode for a future in which men won't need women for reproduction and will let us out of our cages only for sex. Farther down the line, Andrea Dworkin's crystal ball

reads gynocide.

This is exactly the kind of vision that causes radical feminists to cheer her on and, quite frankly, scares the shit out of just about everyone else. The distressing aspect of Dworkin's career has been her facility for maintaining her converted readership and her tendency to alienate the rest. This is, I would say, a serious political tragedy. Dworkin actually has a great deal in common with women who want to read her but run: she has a solid grounding in the values and experience of the left and the counter-culture. She knows the economic facts of life (although her analysis, of course, doesn't rely on them) and her critique of the lot of welfare women is idiosyncratic to be sure, but dazzling nonetheless.

She *does* believe that men are a class whose motivations relate to the preservation of their own power and dominance over women and that men make the world a vicious place for us. But she doesn't revel in this awareness. She wishes the world were not as it is. She thinks things could change, that men aren't hopeless. She really wants to change it. And her political strategy, as distinct from her analysis, strives to engage the very women who have a great deal of difficulty travelling in the eye of her intellectual storm.

Dworkin was stunned when heterosexual women perceived her book on pornography as an indictment of heterosexual practice. She hadn't meant it that way at all. Part of the problem lies in her own lines of communication. She has not yet understood that women who have a stake in heterosexuality have to be dragged kicking and screaming down the road to certain consciousness, even if that consciousness does not demand an immediate change in sexual practice. For example, because Dworkin can assert with confidence that rape in marriage is legal in some States, it does not automatically follow that women, even feminist women, experience their lives as a series of violating and violent incidents. If Dworkin could just affix a few connecting paragraphs to some of her great leaps of ideological faith, she'd find more sympathetic readers. As it is, some simply can't keep up with her rage.

But worse things have happened to political dialogue than the intrusion of angry dykes. Fearful readers of Dworkin have to come to terms with the fact that even if they do not experience (or recognize) overt force in their personal circumstance, legal practice still favours their husbands and even, in some places in America, their live-in

lovers, and they have to recognize that society is geared to the social control of women. Andrea Dworkin did not invent rape or the other horrifying things that happen to women in a patriarchal culture. She does, however, pull out all the stops when she sheds light on them.

Much of what Dworkin has to say is too important to ignore until she settles down. And for those that imagine that her radical feminism is predictable, the chapter on anti-feminism will come as a surprise. Dworkin takes feminists and leftists to task as much as she villifies right wing excesses. She challenges lesbians who think their sexuality, by itself, does more than "break a few rules", and scoffs at separatists who have elevated women to the status of nature and inherent nurturers in the same way that the right wing does. Invoking women's moral superiority, says Dworkin, just puts us in another box from which there is no intellectual escape. Dworkin longs for real equality — "a universal standard of human dignity".

You see, radical feminists really are hard to stereotype after all. And angry dykes sometimes say the damndest things.

Susan G. Cole is a freelance writer, member of the *Broadside Collective* and is currently writing a book on pornography.

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THE LAST TEN YEARS

Still Ain't Satisfied!
Canadian Feminism Today
Edited by Maureen FitzGerald,
Connie Guberman and Margie Wolfe
The Women's Press, 1982.

In 1982, the Women's Press in Toronto celebrated their tenth anniversary as a surviving, thriving, feminist press. To commemorate this achievement, the women in the Press Collective decided to publish an anthology. They did; they named it **Still Ain't Satisfied! Canadian Feminism Today** and they sent it out into the harsh patriarchal world. It has done well, very well indeed. But, is this anthology a real success? Yes and no, yes and no.

The twenty-seven articles in the anthology (all but three were written especially for this collection) are intended to "reflect the development and maturation of the women's liberation movement". For the most part, the articles succeed. Because each has been written with integrity and commitment by one or more feminist activists, **Still Ain't Satisfied!** deserves careful and critical attention, especially by activists on the Canadian left. Unfortunately, I cannot here give each article the attention it deserves. I can comment on the collection as a whole and on a few articles. My sincere regrets, since many have intrigued and challenged and

plagued me in the course of this review.

Still Ain't Satisfied! is representative, rather than comprehensive, and as an anthology is, by its nature, selective. To guide and shape the collection, the editors, Maureen FitzGerald, Connie Guberman, and Margie Wolfe, have opted for the "issue-oriented" approach; that is, they solicited articles "representative of the areas in which women have been struggling throughout the decade" and they have organized the articles into three broad sections: issues of sexuality ("Out of the Bedrooms"); issues of labour ("Into the Work Force"); and issues of mobilization ("Onto the Streets"). Within this framework, they have encouraged an activist focus with the recurring themes of strategy, tactics, and strength.

To represent all the issues in Canadian Feminism Today is clearly ambitious, perhaps too much so. The editors qualify their success in the introduction:

"Obvious omissions are specific articles on Québécoises, the family, the right, microtechnology, the anti-nuclear and peace movements, and the special problems of welfare, older, adolescent and disabled women." (p. 13)

Other omissions might be noted as well, but this would only belabour the obvious: no collection could cover

Canadian Feminism completely. However, one might ask, can you really claim, for any collection that leaves out Québec, that it represents a *Canadian* movement?

The editors also note in their Introduction that:

"The women's movement in Canada does not have a single voice, and there is no one ideological line to which all activists adhere. The authors here mirror that diversity." (p. 14)

In fact, the collection is much more ideologically coherent than it takes credit for. The articles were all commissioned from feminists working within the radical feminist or the left-feminist traditions, a practice consistent with the Press's self-identification (elsewhere) as a socialist-feminist press. Further, the introductory article, by Naomi Wall and the concluding article by women from the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) are explicitly socialist-feminist in their political affiliations, their analyses and their strategies. They focus, with urgency, on the integration of the struggle against oppression by sex (patriarchy), by class (capitalism), and by nationality/race (imperialism, hegemony, and racism).

However, the ideological focus which is evident in both the selection of the articles and the framing of the collection is never made explicit in the in-

troductions (general or to each section). The articles reflect a "diversity" but it is within a definite political spectrum; the introductions stay clear of either naming that spectrum or of using the vocabulary of that discourse.

The decision to not make the ideological focus explicit may have any number of good intentions, not least of which may be strategic. The Press has a dual role: as a publisher, they must survive financially and as a disseminator of feminist ideas, they try to attract new audiences. However, the editorial reticence creates some quite serious problems for the feminist reader and may be counter-productive for attracting a wider audience to this type of feminist analysis.

The first problem is a simple lack of background information. For some sections and articles, a certain amount of historical information is necessary. The most serious gap is the introduction for "Into the Work Force". Here, even though the politics of these labour organizations are *implicit* in most of the articles in this section, there is no information given on the ideology or the organizational practices of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU).

Second, because **Still Ain't Satisfied!** has no explicit ideological focus, it provides no comparative conceptual framework in which to place the articles. Each article could be seen (erroneously) as representative of an issue, rather than of a particular perspective on that issue. And even if the discerning reader knows that it is one view, she may not know the nature of the debates surrounding that issue, or the sort of choice being presented to her. This lack of an explicit ideological context makes it very difficult to evaluate the article in terms of the issues as a whole and to compare types of analyses across issues. This creates difficulties for teachers who want to use **Still Ain't Satisfied!** as they will require outside information in order to offer a critical perspective.

Third, in Canada, in an ideological vacuum, the pull of gravity is towards a liberal ideology. The establishment press can be relied upon to focus on those articles which least challenge liberal norms. It seems to me that this has been the case; reviewer after reviewer has focused on Joanne Kate's article on heterosexuality. Kates does not bring issues of class or race into her analysis (it is a personal essay), she is well-known to the media, and she is writing on a most acceptable subject.

Her article, together with the editors' introduction, makes a "quick study" for a busy reviewer and so it goes; articles on working-class, immigrant, or lesbian women remain invisible.

In another way, the discrepancy between the introductions and the articles explains Naomi Black's response in her review of **SAS** for the *Globe and Mail* (Saturday, March 19, 1983). She wrote, "the many women who believe that it is possible to work through the establishment are simply written out of feminism and the movement." She says this, I think, on the strength of the broad claim of **Still Ain't Satisfied!** to represent "Canadian Feminism Today". The collection does *not* represent a liberal or conservative perspective, and the only way to make this clear to the forces of hegemony is to say so.

Naomi Wall's introductory article, "The Last Ten Years: A Personal/Political View" provides, to some extent, a historical framework for the collection. She believes that in the early seventies, feminist activism moved into three distinct areas. Some women joined political parties, as they valued the role of the state in social change. (Of these women, **SAS** has, unfortunately, nothing to say.) Other women, having experienced the radical possibilities of working with women outside the patriarchal mainstream, organized themselves into feminist collectives, and from this base sprang the feminist services. I would characterize Section I, "Out of the Bedrooms" as about these women, their organizing around the issues of reproduction and sexuality. It often reflects their radical feminist theoretical base; that is, their belief that women's oppression is primary and cuts across class and race.

In the third area, women looked to organize the work-force and specifically working class women. These women were committed to broadening the base of the movement along class lines. Section II "Into the Work Force" reflects their experiences, their organizing within the constraints of the trade union movement, and their socialist-feminist perspective; that is, their belief that women's oppression is distinguished along class lines.

Although all of these groups of women were committed to broadening the base of feminism, during the 70's most were white, university-educated, and middle-class. In Section III, "Onto the Streets", we hear from some of the women who have felt excluded from the theory and practice of Canadian feminism of that decade.



*Out of the
Bedrooms*

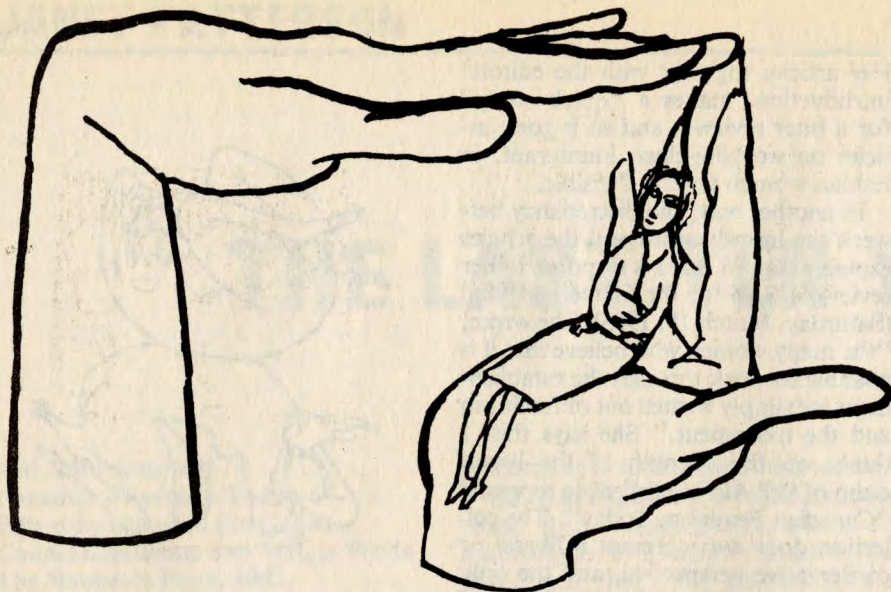
In the 1980's, feminist groups which are organized around the issues of reproduction and sexuality face real troubles — both external and internal. Outside, a triple threat faces the services: the government's (federal and provincial) are demanding more control as a condition of funding; the "popularity" of conservatism seems to be "winning the hearts and minds" of some women; and finally, the media continues to trivialize the issues. Some articles in this section, in their carefulness/defensiveness, reflect this changing time.

For example, Barbara James' "Breaking the Hold: Women Against Rape", concentrates on the tactics of convincing various groups in power of how we can change the rape laws, police attitudes, and media coverage. The defensive strategies reflect, I think, the crisis in funding that has hit rape crisis centres across Canada. Whereas the 70's brought us an analysis of rape and the strategy for self-help, the 80's brings us articles on protection of existing services. Unfortunately, the other issues — grass-roots organization, political outreach, and a fight-back strategy — are not here.

all illustrations from Still Ain't Satisfied! Gail Gellner

Gail Gellner





Jillian Ridington, in her article "Providing Services the Feminist Way" notes that the government's move to funding with strings attached may provide the most serious challenge yet to the goal of non-hierarchical feminist organizations. Most collectives must face the internal force towards hierarchy when differences in participation and expertise threaten to become differences of status. These are dwarfed however, by the government demands for "professionals" who are "accountable". The carrot, social service accreditation, is a powerful one, providing security and accessibility to the community.

Ridington also pinpoints an internal problem of the eighties. She says "Political activism at a level that fits our analysis and our need for radical and rapid change may conflict with the needs of women to whom our outreach is extended." One example is *Rape Relief* in Vancouver which has become "too political" even for the feminist community. The increasing political isolation of some services comes from the proclivity of radical feminists to develop theory separate from the community they serve. Seeing, as they do, the primary categories as being "female" and "male", they sometimes disregard issues of class, race, or historical period.

This tendency in the women's movement has been noted elsewhere. Caroline LaChapelle, speaking for native women in another article, says "Urban white women are viewed as having the luxury to be movement activists without threatening their community." (p. 263) That is, only white English-speaking women don't depend on their communities for survival. The relationship between radical feminist

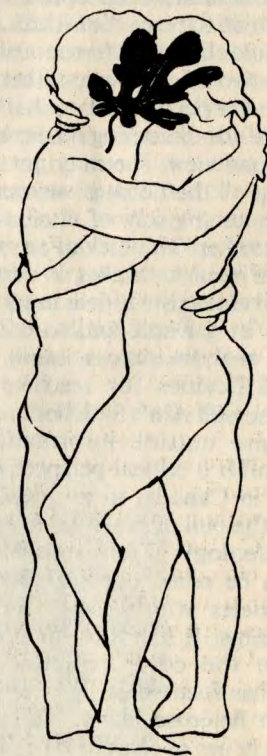
analysis, the feminist services which are thus inspired, and the specific (often conservative) communities they wish to serve is one we must solve. This relationship is at the core of much feminist theory and practice. Susan Cole in her fine article on shelters for battered women, raises some of these issues.

There is, in fact, a tension between the concept of "issue" as that which is raised by a specific grouping of women in a shared situation and the concept of "issue" which assumes to include all women. This is a question of who formulates an issue, and the degree of generalization that is attached to it. The tension lies between the two main strands in radical feminist thought: the specificity of oppression, discoverable through "the personal is political" and the generalization of oppression, developed via an analysis of "woman" as a class. Himmani Bannerji, speaking of *Still Ain't Satisfied!* in Issue 16 of *Fireweed*, says that this tension affects her as a woman of colour.

"There is also the whole question of the book *Still Ain't Satisfied! Canadian Feminism Today* (Women's Press, 1982). It claims to anthologize the experiences of women in the movement for the last ten years in Canada, but actually leaves women of colour and immigrant women under-represented. . . We are made invisible in the mainstream. And there is talk about "coming from the woman's perspective, coming from the woman's standpoint." It seems to me very empty, this standpoint, because I do not know who this woman is that they are talking about. It never comes down to a specific group of women. They talk about women as class, about a particular type of woman, about woman as race, so it leaves you very empty at the end." (p. 9)

On general issues of sexuality, there are two essays: one lesbian, one heterosexual. Eve Zarembo has written a gently subversive essay on lesbian sexuality which she defines as "the primary intensity between women" (with thanks to Adrienne Rich). She differentiates this from lesbian sex and from being a lesbian as a social choice. For me, it named the gift of woman-understanding and gender solidarity that lesbians have given to all women; Zarembo is most optimistic about the relationship between the lesbian community and the women's movement. Her article should be read with Gottlieb's article in Section III, which foregrounds the conflicts between these groups.

Joanne Kates' article "Once More With Feeling: Heterosexuality and Feminist Consciousness" is the only article in the collection with a deeply personal perspective. I found it moving and valuable, although her particular experience seems to be within the context of a long-term committed relationship with a man willing to struggle, and of a secure financial independence — not a context which many heterosexual women have. While I do not question the value of personal exposition, I do question its appropriateness for this anthology; for almost no other "issue" would a personal essay be considered adequate.



Into the Work Force



This section of the anthology is the most cohesive. The shared tradition of trade union struggles provides a common language and history for the contributors. If the reader is aware of this context, this section will probably be the most illuminating as well.

In many provinces, alliances have been made between feminists and "progressive unionists". Their common political goals are local autonomy, democratic decision-making, and a non-hierarchical organization — in brief, rank and file control of the union. Everywhere, these goals are bringing feminists into conflict with traditional unionists. Denise Kouri in her article on "Saskatchewan Working Women" (SWW) says:

"The conservative, reformist-at-best nature of the dominant stream of the union movement in Canada has not welcomed radical non-economist tendencies of any sort within its ranks. Organizations like SWW represent a challenge on both fronts, in countering male chauvinism and in representing a radical tendency within the union movement." (p. 166-7)

Within this progressive-feminist alliance, there is an important tactical debate, seen in the articles written by women within the feminist unions, *SORWUC* (Service, Office & Retail Workers Union of Canada) and *AUCE* (Association of University & College Employees); the article by Sue Vohenka for the *CCU* (Confederation of Canadian Unions); and Kouri's article for *SWW*. The question is — what is the best relationship to mainstream trade union movement — i.e. the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)? After a bitter experience with the Congress, *SORWUC*

and *AUCE* are now demanding an independent affiliation with the CLC while maintaining political autonomy as feminist unions. Given the history and the conservatism of the CLC, it is difficult for this reviewer to understand how this is, in any sense, a practical or serious strategy. The *CCU*, on the other hand, has set itself up as a rival "dedicated to building a democratic and sovereign labour movement in Canada" (p. 142). *SWW* want to be outside the union movement altogether so that in their commitment "to fighting along class lines in the struggle for women's liberation" they can be open to all women, "unionized or not, or employed or not". (p. 164) The *CLC* offers strength, through its money, size, and political influence. The trade-off is loss of local control, through centralization, national constitutions, and business agents. The question for feminists in the labour movement organizations, what is the appropriate trade-off and/or strategy in this context?

On the *CLC*'s side, Deidre Gallagher begins with the argument that many, many find persuasive — the effectiveness of centralized unity. The big unions do win contracts, and some very good ones. She offers an analysis of the barriers to women's involvement in male-dominated hierarchical unions and some strategies for overcoming them. For women working in such an environment, this may be a helpful article. However, there is none of the feminist critique of hierarchy to be found, here.

The issue of the sexual division of labour is central to the socialist-feminist debate. Meg Luxton, in her fine article, "The Home: A Contested Terrain" identifies the primary sexual division of labour (men into wage labour and women into unpaid domestic labour) as "at the heart of patriarchal relations". In doing so, she places the family in the "contested" zone, the source of women's oppression. Strategically speaking, we must win housewives to feminism, although we can only do so if we demonstrate that "a critique of the family does not mean an end to loving, intimate relationships".

In the long run, this means the end of the primary sexual division of labour through its socialization and through twenty-four hour child care. In the short term, it means politicizing the personal experience of housewives (e.g. perceiving the home as a workplace). Clearly there is a tension between the long and short term goals; the tension is caught and kept in Luxton's unorthodox definition of feminist activity as

"when women in the home act to improve the situation of women".

Two other articles, "Rosie the Riveter Meets the Sexual Division of Labour" by Debbie Field and "Women in Trades in British Columbia" by Kate Braid, give the macro-politics and the micro-politics of the struggle to end the sexual division of labour in the workplace. Field, on the basis of her experiences at *Stelco*, offers a number of strategic gems for transforming the male workplace: women, in numbers, should try to pose an *alternative* workplace culture; they should propagate a broad understanding of workplace inequality and should consider the tactics of preferential hiring and preferential seniority; finally, they must express their demands for non-traditional jobs within the context of the broader goal of jobs for everyone. While Braid does not consider these strategic questions, she is precise about how women change as they work and organize in trade jobs.

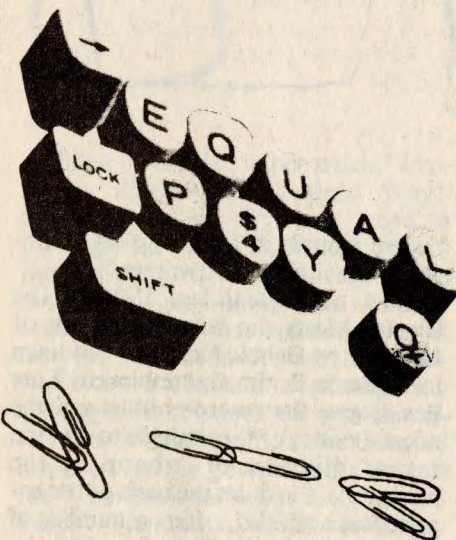
Another article outlines major issues in the workplace and is a handbook to the translation of feminist goals into contract language. Marlene Kadar's "Sexual Harassment as a Form of Social Control" offers a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment. However, as she theoretically views harassment as "one of the levers those in power use to control those who are not" (p. 169), she focuses her analysis on harassment by male employers against female employees. She offers what I consider to be an inadequate response to other forms of sexual harassment, such as men harassing their female co-workers. She says, "This



kind of problem can be dealt with only in the long term, by forcing discussion and union accountability." (p. 177)

There are slightly different tactics for the formulation of demands for workplace equality and demands for equal pay (much like the difference between demanding reproductive rights and demanding abortion). Workplace equality is an integrated political concept which, when put forward by the CCU or by SWW, has an ideological force which can unite and radicalize women. However, it is almost impossi-

Gail Geltner



ble to translate the concept of workplace equality into enforceable contract language. Equal pay, on the other hand, is a specific demand which can be defined in contract language and negotiated even in the most cynical male-dominated unions. Patricia Davitt's article, "When All Secretaries Demand What They Are Worth" provides an insiders view of the civic worker's strike for equal pay in Vancouver, 1981. She offers a "list of lessons" at the end; this list should be xeroxed and put above the desk of every feminist activist in a public sector union.

"Onto the Streets", Section III of *Still Ain't Satisfied*, is made up of articles concerned with "mobilization". It is, in fact, a curious juxtaposition of articles

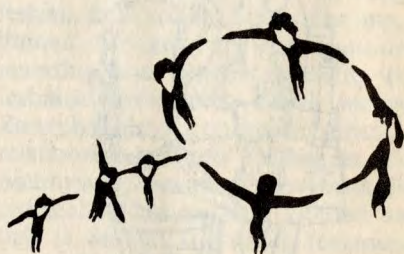
critical of the Canadian Women's Movement (we haven't mobilized certain groups of women), and those on "tools" of mobilization (publishing, education, and art). There is also an excellent end piece on strategy, "What Are Our Options?" "Onto the Streets" is the least cohesive of the three sections of the book and the organization does a particular disservice to the articles concerned with the cultural aspect of struggle.

"But Is It Feminist Art?", by Daphne Read (with Rosemary Donegan and Elizabeth Martin) is itself most conscious of a problematic relationship between movement politics and cultural/artistic creativity. Read explores the complex political relationship between feminist artist, audience, and the work created; she suggests tension, misunderstanding, and neglect are here. Perhaps she is right. In the entire anthology, only Eve Zaremba credits artists with influencing feminist vision. Read cites the "hope and challenge" of Robin Morgan: "No revolution has yet dared to understand its artists. Perhaps the Feminist Revolution will." (p. 288)

Three articles in this section are very critical of the mainstream women's movement. Amy Gottlieb writes on behalf of lesbians, Winnie Ng for immigrant women, and Caroline LaChapelle for native women. They say that the women's movement is seen as expressing the interests of white, middle-class, and/or heterosexual feminists. Ng says "The women's movement is perceived by immigrant women as being essentially a middle-class movement of women in search of self-improvement and access to the top executive world." (p. 253) LaChapelle adds, "White women are often perceived as aspiring to part of the power system that oppresses native people." (p. 261)

Onto the Streets

Gail Geltner



The extent to which these criticisms are valid has become a controversial point in the feminist community. As Naomi Wall noted in her introduction, the Canadian socialist-feminist movement began among white, middle-class, and university-based women but the politics of the 1970's were about broadening that base. These articles say that the socialist-feminist movement has not succeeded and, more importantly, that it has not adequately differentiated itself from the bourgeois feminist movement. The angry voices of these women are critical and they are being heard. Lynda Yanz, in the final article, says, "... hopefully the critiques they are making will have the long-term effect of strengthening our capacity as a movement to represent minority and working-class women's interests." (p. 302)

Still Ain't Satisfied! needed more focus — political and editorial — and a historical context. It does mark where (some of) the English-Canadian, left/radical feminist movement is in 1982 and it offers many practical strategies, tactics, historical notes, critiques, and debates. It is a mirror, though a partial one, showing us with warts and all.

In this sense, it is ironically appropriate that *Still Ain't Satisfied!* leaves this reader feeling exactly that way — *still not satisfied*. But mirrors we must have. Happy Anniversary.

Janet Patterson is a socialist feminist, currently teaching at a community college in Ontario.

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FUSE September/October 1983

"It is late Spring. We are in a small alternative gallery on Queen Street West. We are part of a women's collective showing work at this gallery. It's almost midnight. Our performance is scheduled for the next day. We are told by the gallery personnel that we have been 'bumped' from the space that we had pre-arranged to perform in; with casual politeness they tell us that the women's collective is not as important as other artists that they have been showing; we are also told that essential equipment, already promised to us, may not be available for the performance. Helpfully, they suggest that maybe we just shouldn't perform and urge us not to lose any sleep as we go out the door."

1. Do you have a similar story? What has your experience been with the alternative galleries you've dealt with?

2. Do you have any experience or grievances with issues such as:

- overbooking by galleries?
- lack of organizational responsibility?
- lack of professionalism?
- sexism?

3. What do you think is the cause of these problems and what can be done?

We are presently soliciting information for an article on the current state of alternative galleries — *focusing particularly on women's experiences and/or exclusion from the gallery system.*

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