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FEBRUARY/MARCH 1985

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## Women in Trades

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

Women in Trades was formed in 1980 to provide contacts for women wanting to enter a trade, to give support and encouragement to women already working in non-traditional occupations, and to promote the interests of women facing work-related problems such as discrimination in hiring and promotion, and/or sexual harassment. Women in Trades meets the third Monday of every month at 22 Davisville Ave., Toronto, M4S 1E8. Information about the meetings can be obtained by calling 653-2213.

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

## FUSE

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# Response to M. Lydbrooke

MUCH OF WHAT YOU WROTE IN the letter, "Higher Expectations", published Fall, 1984, criticising my article "Sexism and Racism in Rock 'n' Roll", cannot be disputed, nor would I wish to dispute your information.

I wonder, though, why you are so angry. You seem to resent that I did not write about "subversive", "alternative" rock music (except only to indicate that other things are going on). This is obviously *your* focus and it deserves a separate article. My subject, however, is the mainstream Top 40 part of rock 'n' roll. This is stated clearly in the introduction, the first sentence and throughout the piece. It seems unmistakable and yet you mistook it.

I state that pop music is "crawling" with "overt and subliminal racist and sexist messages." This does not imply that "rock music is inherently racist and sexist" as you infer. To the extent that white guys still get rich at the expense of Black artists, one could infer that racism is built into the structure of the industry, but you are really pushing it to come up with "inherent". What's the point? To educate or to discredit through misreading?

You seem to be a bit 'elitist' in assuming that the FUSE audience you project does not include new readers,

young readers, or readers who are not musically sophisticated. Some pretty sophisticated artists and politicians were quite shocked to read the lyrics of the songs they've been humming along to on the radio, and I think that you've made an error in assuming that artists and cultural workers are aware of the details of the content, although most are aware in general of the sexism in the media. I know I was shocked when I first started putting the lecture together (*Women-Hating, Racism and Violence in the Top 40*). And I've been politically alert all my life.

Perhaps you might consider turning your considerable expertise and energies in a more constructive direction. I would be very interested in your information regarding areas in rock other than the Top 40, and would appreciate an in-depth article from you or anyone on this or any related topic.

And the beat goes on...

—Alix Dobkin  
Saugerties, N.Y.

## Nice to be Missed

WELL I'VE MOVED, AND I CAN'T say whether that's the reason that the summer issue is the last one I've received or not. I daresay you are probably unprepared to comment on that either.

However, the above is my new ad-

dress, and the enclosed is my subscription renewal.

Please don't fail me, as your other colleagues in publishing have done: *This Magazine* never makes it to my door, and *Canadian Forum* (blech) comes but rarely. In fact, only *Saturday Night* is regular, which is vaguely inexplicable given that I cancelled my subscription about a year ago.

When *FUSE* doesn't arrive, I miss the level and variety of debate on issues that aren't even raised in this part of Confederation...you may be responsible for my mental starvation!

So think of me as one of those cute baby seals on the Greenpeace poster, and send me your donation of *FUSE*. It's only fair, after all, this renewal cheque is good.

—Kevin Crombie  
Edmonton, Alberta

## More Housing for Less

I WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE A report in the Nov/84-Jan/85 *FUSE* on the need for more affordable housing. Though the report dealt mainly with co-op housing, the bottom line is lack of affordable accommodation and lack of government concern for the need for low end of market units.

I am involved with the issue of affordable housing. At the London Housing Registry, a non-profit agency funded by the United Way of Greater London, we assist those on fixed and limited incomes in finding affordable rental accommodation. Since our opening in May we have been gathering data and documenting the need for affordable housing in London.

Recently there has been much written about the need for social housing. But in London, at any rate, this need is being ignored so that while more housing is needed for single people on low or fixed incomes, ex-psychiatric patients, single parents and the disabled, the only housing in construction at present in the core area is a luxury adult high rise. To our knowledge, we are the only registry at present in operation.

—Susan C. Koenig  
London Housing Registry  
London, Ontario

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# Loud and Clear

JOYCE MASON  
Co-conspirator for  
CHOICE

I HAVE THE ADDRESS, THE apartment number. I ring the buzzer, announce myself, open the door – quickly before the electronic hum stops – and go up in the elevator. At the apartment door, I am greeted by a face familiar from a meeting a few days earlier. We exchange names again.

"We're waiting for another patient so that you can all go together; come on in and sit down."

We sit, a group of women in a room with a view of the city. We exchange more names, talking tentatively – awkward in this hot-house of personal/political intimacy.

The woman who let me in asks, conversationally, "Was there a police car parked in front of the building?"

"I didn't notice one." Wondering now if I could be so oblivious (careless?) as not to notice I add, "I think I would have noticed."

We discuss various types of police cars – marked, unmarked – it seems an inappropriate topic for women whose bodies and psyches are about to undergo some fairly traumatic hours; I wonder whether I'm being over-sensitive; in any case, I can't seem to remember how to change the subject.

Finally the other woman arrives and we bundle ourselves up for the trek to the clinic. I walk beside the young woman for whom we had been waiting. She tells me of the "beautiful dream" she had last night: "It was about the clinic...there weren't any pro-lifers...and it was really good...it wasn't scary at all...everyone was so nice and so supportive..." The manic anxiety is audible in her voice. The other escort comes up beside me, interrupting, to plan our options for entering the clinic.

Many of the women had not been aware that there would be a van parked opposite the clinic and a policeman with a video camera. We raise our collars, pull down hats, avert our eyes

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from the van.

The anti-choice forces are in sight; they fill the sidewalk in front of the clinic. We steer ourselves between them and the building, as if to pass by. The other escort is in front; I stay in the rear to ensure that we all make it quickly past the picketers, up the steps, past the police guard and into the clinic. It works. We're past them now, at the door, our backs to the street and the camera; the harassment switches to audio track. "It's not too late." "Don't kill your baby." over and over.

While the security guard checks, one by one, for our names on his list, our talking provides the antidote to the yells of those who see each woman now standing on the steps only as incubators for the absolutist world of their imagination.

Inside it is warm and pleasant; women are given forms to fill in; we move to a waiting room; there are not enough chairs. Husbands/lovers, friends and 'escorts' form the overcrowded support group. The patients, now with clipboards and pens, fill in forms with their medical history and read pages of information.

I help a non-anglophone woman (my age) who has three children, to decipher the meaning of Section 251 of the Criminal Code – an awkward and depressing moment for both of us. I am embarrassed to be Canadian, knowing that in the predominantly Catholic country of her birth abortion is not illegal.

For the women that I came with, the wait this afternoon is quite long. I leave them in the waiting room ("I'll probably be back before you're ready to go" I tell them) in order to be with a young woman, her boyfriend and another escort as they leave the clinic.

We decide that it will be less hassle to leave by the back door. The young woman (probably 17 or 18) is visibly shaken to learn that there is a police photographer in the rear parking lot. We assure her that there is nothing to worry about; but a block later (when the other escort leaves to return to the clinic) the woman is grateful for my offer to walk the remaining 1/2 mile with her to the subway.

Her friend, who wants to take it all in stride, seems impatient with her fears. I assure her that the police are not likely to come after her; but that it is an intimidation tactic and so it's normal that she should feel intimidated. I tell her that if she ever has any problems (police or anti-abortion harassment) to refuse to speak to them and to let the Clinic know. By the time we reach the subway she seems a little more at ease.

As I return to the clinic, I wonder – not for the first time – at the cruelty of both these self-styled moralists and the lawmakers who continue to ignore the facts, as well as the needs and wishes of the majority of Canadian citizens. If not by their sisters' historic risks of death in the backrooms, then now, by the brave persistence and dignity of these women who face unwarranted harassment from legislators and looneys alike, the need for access to safe legal abortion must surely be clear.

For everyone who reads this, I ask for help in making our choice LOUD as well.

Joyce Mason

You can make your pro-choice views known by sending a cheque to *The Pro-Choice Defense Fund*, P.O. Box 935, Station Q, Toronto, M4T 2P1, and by volunteering your help to OCAC, P.O. Box 753, Station P, Toronto M5S 2Z1; tel. (416) 532-8193, (or contact your local chapter of Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) or Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL).

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# Women's Round-Up 1984

## The Actors Change but the Script's the Same

CANADA'S FEDERAL LEGISLATORS have been most distracted this year. First the Liberal convention absorbed their attention. Then there was the blissfully short tenure of John Turner's ho-hum wait-and-see government. At the end of 1984, we were treated to daily echoes of "leaks", none of which were good news for women and we still wait to see what the Conservative government actually intends to do. The main political event for women was the tri-party TV debate on women's issues on CBC on August 15. It marked the first time women's issues have been accorded center stage in a Canadian election. It will be interesting to find out which of the "priorities" identified on the tube by Mr. Mulroney will bob to the surface, as policies, of a more-of-the-same-but-more-so government. But for now, from outside the halls of parliament, here is a brief recapitulation of the Canadian women's year of 1984.

### Women in the Work Force

In August the Federal Human Rights Commission made a landmark ruling on a case brought against the CN by the Montreal advocacy group, Action Travail des Femmes. CN was charged with practicing discriminatory hiring procedures and told to recruit women for blue collar jobs until the proportion of women in those jobs will be 13%. This means that CN must hire one woman for every four men. While CN is appealing the decision, it has also appointed Louise Piché as Assistant Vice-President in charge of equity of employment, the highest position ever held by a woman at CN. Although Ms. Piché was a *force majeure* in defending CN's hiring practices before the Commission, there is some hope that she will effect some change. Since the ruling in August, 14 women (and 26 men) have passed tests and have been hired as brakemen (sic).

In early November, Judge Rosalie Abella, a one-woman Royal Commis-

sion on Equality in Employment, published her Report in which she adopted the term of "employment equity" instead of "affirmative action". She claims that the latter is too "ambiguous and confusing". The Report recommends employment equity legislation, obliging the Federal Government agencies to file data annually with a governmental agency such as an enlarged Human Rights Commission. This data would cover hiring, training, promotions, terminations, lay-offs, part-time work, contract work, as well as internal task forces or committees, and the effects which these have on women, minorities and the handicapped. Although the report advocates contract compliance, equal pay for work of equal value, training and the creation of a National Childcare Act, it does not specify timetables or quotas. For this reason, some feminist critics argue that it is simply a weak restatement of what everyone already knows with little en-



Women in Trades: Melanie Robson, pipe fitter

forcement possibility.

Otherwise, it's the same bad old news: women are 41% of the work-force, earn an average of 55 cents for every dollar earned by men, are 72% of the part-time labour force (and not by choice) and the wage gap between women and men has narrowed no more than 11% in the past 70 years. Only 25% of women workers are protected by unions, and the past year has seen their rights attacked through concerted union-bashing by the governments of Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. While it is expected that by the year 2000, women will form 50% of the adult work force, there is no indication that there will be jobs. Even The Economic Council of Canada, not known for rashness, acknowledges that automation costs more jobs than it creates every year.

### The Abortion Issue:

On November 8, Drs. Henry Morgentaler, Leslie Smoling and Robert Scott were acquitted by a jury in Toronto on charges of conspiring to "procure a miscarriage".\* While Dr. Morgentaler, the main defendant, acknowledged that he had indeed broken the law by not performing abortions within an accredited hospital with the permission of an especially appointed committee, he argued that since the law itself is unfair, it was necessary to break it.

While the jury of 12 men and women acquitted him, the Province of Ontario will appeal Morgentaler's acquittal in 1985. Clearly, the abortion issue is not settled in Canada; the so-called "Pro-Lifers" are a well organized and formidable opposition to be energetically countered, but never under-estimated.

### Indian Rights for Indian Women

After promising to bring down legislation redressing the wrongs brought against Indian women by the British North America Act, the Trudeau government reneged at the last minute. After 14 years of struggle, Mary Two-Axe Early and her colleagues are not ready to give up. They will continue, even while the Conservative government remains inscrutable on this issue.

\*Dr Scott and Morgentaler were again arrested on Dec. 19th and 20th in Toronto. As FUSE goes to press, hearings regarding a trial date are in progress.

### The Arts:

As usual, women are over-represented as students in all facets of the arts in Canada, and under-represented in the public eye, in teaching and in other areas of influence. Since women already receive a disproportionately small part of funding for the arts in Canada, one can only expect that the cuts at CBC and the Canada Council will have a severely inhibiting effect on the women's art community.

On the other hand, 1984 has seen excellent women's theatre and art throughout the country as well as the expansion of certain journals like *La vie en rose* and *Herizons*.

### Pornography:

Women across the country have responded to the enormous increase in pornography in Canada (a 1500% increase since 1965) and its intensifying violence against women and children. While the publicity raised against *Penthouse* might have raised some people's consciousness, there is much education to be done on the subject. During the TV debate, Mr. Mulroney suggested that import laws be tightened. It is a contentious issue: while most of those concerned agree that the stuff is murderous, there is a serious rift forming regarding strategies and solutions between people who should be able to unite in action, specifically around the subject of censorship.

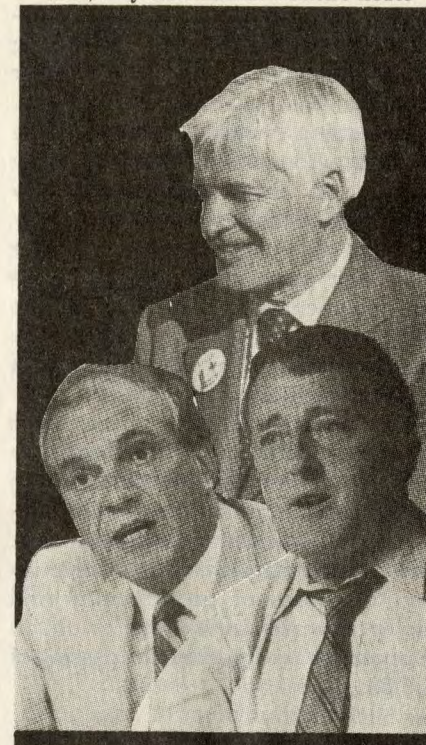
### Cut-Backs and Universality:

In the latter months of 1984, there have been some "leaks" that universality of family allowances and pensions may be eroded, notwithstanding the fact that for many women these pitances are the only discretionary money which belongs solely to them. Rumours and fears about cuts are further exacerbated by Michael Wilson's refusal to eliminate the possibility of cuts in Federal-Provincial transfer payments for health and education. Such cuts would seriously limit possibilities for women.

### Politics:

We have been witnessing the spectacle of Canadian governmental agencies gearing up for 1985, the end of the U.N.'s Decade of Women. There is little evidence that this decade has done much for the neediest women in the

### Well, they talked about women's issues



But will 'B' do anything about them?

world, although it has provided for the already privileged the opportunity to junket around the world. The worry now is that funding for Canada's participation in the end-of-Decade meeting in Kenya this summer, as well as for local celebrations, will come from already existant funding for women's programmes in Canada, thus effecting the budgets of many front-line services to Canadian women.

This was also the year we talked about the "gender gap", which subsequently proved not to be as large as imagined. Strategically, however, the concept served some women well: more women than ever before ran for Parliament, there is an unprecedented number of women in the House now, and there are six women in the Cabinet.

It is clear that although there are some new faces in Ottawa, basic allegiances have not changed; the interests of a small group of men continue to be protected by the Federal government. The women's movement must be vigilant in the short term, but must work on long-term predictive strategies, through developing various scenarios and arriving at the most appropriate positions and actions. It will

be hard to hang on to those gains achieved, often through back-breaking improvisation, in the hard times to come. Canadian women are dispersed over a vast land mass, variegated according to language, culture and class, and have little money for the kind of travel and communication with which men run their affairs. The coming years will be crucial in consolidating women's networking skills into a potent political force.

Greta Hofmann Nemiroff

## Censorship Update

ON DECEMBER 14, 1984 BILL 82, an Act to amend the Ontario Theatres Act, went before Parliament for the 3rd and final reading. It was passed by a large majority. Bill 82 will take effect and become an active law upon receiving "Proclamation", a governmental formality only. The effect that it will have on the community at large is still unknown, as regulations defining Bill 82's policy have not yet been made available to Parliament.

A three day public Committee Hearing regarding the legislation chaired by Al Kolyn, MPP, had been held the week of December 3, 1984 at Queen's Park. At this hearing, OFAVAS (The Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society) presented a brief citing specific clauses of Bill 82 that they saw as potentially harmful legislation. Twelve points were raised including the power of the Censor Board to a) limit exhibitions of a film or video to a specific time and specific place, b) seize goods even if no charges are laid, and c) to revoke or refuse a licence to an organization if it believes the applicant will not comply with the Act. (For a complete analysis/critique of the legislation, see FUSE, Fall 1984, p.5.)

*Feminists Against Censorship* spoke out on behalf of women and artists whose work raises social awareness to the complex issue of pornography and the degradation of women in *Not A Love Story*, and *A Message From Our Sponsor*.

These films, because of their content, were subject to undue restrictions and banning by the Censor Board.



*The Canadian Civil Liberties Association* voiced objections to the fact that under Bill 82, Cabinet can change regulations absent from public scrutiny; they put forth that trafficking of obscene material should be dealt with under the Criminal Code.

Film and video retailers and distributors raised a concern that Bill 82 did not clearly state that retailers and distributors handling approved films and videos would be protected from harassment or prosecution by other law enforcers or governmental agencies.

There were also presentations from individuals. Among these were Dr. Frank Sommers, a psychiatrist, and Professor Wilson of the University of Toronto. They expressed concern that educational videos and films featuring erotica for therapeutic purposes would fall under the same classification as pornography, therefore making these materials unavailable to the public and the therapist. Professor Wilson felt that the U. of T. should be exempted from censorship on the grounds that film and video used for research or as a teaching tool should not be subject to censorship.

As expected several groups, including *Citizens Against Violent Pornography* and members from the Catholic and Anglican sector, came out in favor of the Bill as a solution for pornography and violence.

The following week, on December 13th, a Parliamentary debate was held regarding Bill 82. The only members who spoke in opposition were Marion Bryden, for the NDP, and Liberal Julian Reed. During the debate Dr. Elgie, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, put forth two additional amendments to the Act. The first stated that before entering a private dwelling, a law enforcer must prove to a judge that the place in question is suspected of distributing and/or retailing films and videos. If suspicion is proved, a written court order would be issued. The second amendment stated that an appeal of a Censor Board ruling, other than classification, would now be heard at the Divisional Court level. (Previously, appeals were heard by a panel from within the Censor Board itself, consisting of different Board members than those who made the original ruling.) Both amendments

were passed.

Dr. Elgie, in his remarks to the House, acknowledged that special considerations and talks were now taking place with the U. of T. and other organizations regarding exemptions. Disregarding certain statements made at the previous week's hearings, Elgie contended that Examination by Documentation, (a procedure whereby film and video are examined for prior censorship purposes by means of written documentation only), has proven to be a satisfactory and less bureaucratic method for examining art experimental films and videos.

Having attended the Committee Hearings and the Parliamentary debates, it seemed to me that the government was not seriously considering the presentations, arguments, and comments put forth, but rather using the issues of pornography and violence merely as leverage to obtain support and to expediate the passing of Bill 82.

Nancy Kembry

## New York City: Writers' Conference

**CENSORSHIP STRIKES IN MANY** ways. This fact was well analysed by the keynote speaker of the National Writers Union Conference in New York City, October 19 to 21. Among its manifestations is the kind of censorship which prevented Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel prize winning Colombian novelist, from attending the proceedings. Invited to the conference as one of the keynote speakers, Marquez was denied a visa by the U.S. State Department - a dark beginning for a conference on culture, censorship and the role of the writer in 1984.

The remaining speakers at Friday's plenary session - Alice Walker, Black American author and poet, Ben Bagdikian, author and professor, and Ariel Dorfman, Chilean writer in exile - responded to the question, "Can writers influence our society and our culture?" with a firm yes.

Walker's Pulitzer prize winning book *The Colour Purple* was threatened this year with a ban in Oakland. Among the objections raised against

the book were the stereotypical presentation of Blacks and their language and the sexually explicit nature of the first five pages. These were the same pages Walker's own mother thought offensive and whose language Walker herself had almost censored. In these pages Celie, the main character, describes the rape/incest which occurred in her childhood. "I found it almost impossible to let her say what happened to her", says Walker. But talk Celie did and in her own language which was later judged by some to be obscene and/or degrading to Blacks.

While Walker was aware of the possible ban, she chose to withdraw from the resulting furor: "I felt I had written the book as a gift to people. If they wanted it, let them fight for it. I had delivered it and I was tired." Her concern is with the more subtle censorship which distorts the sense of memories by denying words. The consequences of this censorship are deadly because "language more than anything else reveals our existence. If language is not there we do not exist." That, reasons Walker, is why the language and memories of Blacks, Natives and poor whites are degraded, abused and locked into stereotypes. With Celie, Walker decided to permit the character her own language and her own place in consciousness. For Walker, the role of the writer is that of a "medium" who draws out of the shadow the experience and the language of those whose voice has never been permitted, regardless of its "correctness". Celie's "being is affirmed by the language in which it is revealed...you see Celie's because you see her voice." Often the voice is all that is left of the ancestors and the dispossessed. To suppress it is to kill them completely and to diminish ourselves; to listen to it is to illuminate not only their lives but our own lives as well.

Many external forces conspire to silence or confuse these voices. These include the forces of corporate control which Bagdikian spoke of as well as forces present in the writer's consciousness. As Ariel Dorfman suggested, in his speech, asking if writers can make a difference is indicative of the despair which he felt marks the consciousness of U.S. writers. In Chile words are clearly influential and they are clearly censored. The censorship of

the word is buttressed by the violent censorship of the body which produces the word, by the structural censorship of illiteracy and by the censorship of poverty and hunger. Because of this brutality enforced silence, the word, when it survives, has a strong value. "We do not have to ask," he says "if we make a difference." A page from a Chilean newspaper sharply illustrated this. The page was full of black holes. And he pointed out that in America people suffer from holes as well - "technicolour holes" which produce torpor and doubt over the value of the word.

These "holes" and the monopolization of the media, which Bagdikian had pointed to combine to reduce the content and variety of printed material while presenting a false face of proliferation. They must be fought. But the writer's internal and invisible censors also remain an enemy: the ones who mask and manipulate truth, who erase and domesticate the past. These censors attack what Alice Walker called "the vibrations of the soul carried in the sound and structure of language."

Rachel Vigier

## Culture Cuts

**BY THE END OF 1984, THE** Canadian government (currently a Progressive (sic) Conservative majority) had announced large cuts in many budget areas. Among these, were cuts to cultural agencies. Since the announced cuts will effect the 1985/86 fiscal year, and since there will be a complete budget presented by the government in the spring, it is important that individuals and organisations write to the Minister of Communica-

tions, the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and their local MP's now.

In this regard we thought that it would be useful to present to our readers a letter to Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications) which was prepared by the newly formed Artists' Union (Toronto).

Jude Johnston & Joyce Mason

Dear Marcel Masse:

We, the members of the Artists' Union (Toronto), strongly object to the recent funding cuts to cultural agencies and the rumoured eradication of "arm's length" relationships between the government and the arts. We find it difficult to reconcile the government's current actions with the Progressive Conservative party's stated support of Canadian culture.

In unequivocal words, one of your colleagues, David Crombie, said that the Progressive Conservatives "are committed to maintaining public support for the arts and to keeping up with inflation." Your actions however contradict your party's pre-election statements. A cut of \$3.5 million from the Canada Council's budget does not translate, in any language, into "keeping up with inflation" or even "maintaining support".

Your party has also asserted that, "Cultural development is too vital to Canada's present and future to be denied a clear and permanent position..." The members of the Artists' Union would like to ask how the ideal of permanence has been served by the loss of 1100 jobs at the C.B.C. or the vital importance of culture to Canada's future, by the closing of regional broadcast centres and cutbacks in radio and television production.

You yourself said, at a recent photo

exhibition opening in Toronto, that Canada's artists "are continually revealing the secret that is Canadian society..." In light of the recent cuts and the ominous discussions surrounding the policy of arm's length funding, we cannot help but wonder what secrets of Canadian society the Progressive Conservative Government does not want revealed.

It is clear to us that some facts have been ignored in your decision making process. We must draw them to your attention. Most visual media artists subsist at an income level only marginally above that of old age pensioners; they have poor access to the resources and benefits that most Canadians take for granted. (See page 12 *Ontario and the Arts, the Investment, the Dollars, the Jobs and the Votes*; Harry Chartrand, Research Director, Canada Council, October 1984.) Artists are without security in their work, build up little equity in pension plans and receive minimal assistance for essential health services. Studies indicate that money spent in the cultural sector generates much higher returns than most other tax dollars, bringing in more tourism and creating more job spinoffs. But this subsidy: benefit ration comes as no surprise when one considers how widely and thinly those cultural dollars are being spread. In essence, artists are the ones subsidizing culture. They are paying an unduly heavy price that puts them in precarious economic positions with inadequate health resources and bleak prospects for old age. This foundation of our cultural development, is in danger of crumbling and our culture in danger of compromise.

The members of the Artists' Union (Toronto), demand that the Progressive Conservative Government keep its promises, that the government reinstate the cultural funding support that has already been cut and reverse the trend towards eradication of the government's arm's length position towards cultural agencies. Prove that your government's stated commitment to openness and consultation is not merely empty public relations rhetoric. Keep your commitment to Canadian culture.

Liason Committee  
Artists' Union (Toronto)

**ARTISTS UNION**  
The undersigned, a duly authorized representative of the Artists Union, accepts the application for membership of:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCIPLINE: \_\_\_\_\_

# 7

*By: [Signature]*  
Authorized Representative



# WHO'S KILLING WHO?

DIONNE BRAND, FILOMENA CARVALHO  
KRISANTHA SRI BHAGGIYADATTA

**INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM** – Who are they? A group? An Organisation? A Subsidiary? A Transnational? A Network as the CIA claims?

They got the Pope (almost!) They got Thatcher (almost!) They got Gandhi. They have also got assorted diplomatic personnel face down on various exclusive sidewalks.

And what of KAL007? (Why would you name a plane 007?) And half of the cabinet of South Korea bombed in Burma. And remember Lebanon – the U.S. Army – or peace-keeping farce had to be “redeployed” from Beirut to Fort Bragg (Brag?), North Carolina because of *International Terrorism* (hereafter referred to as *IT*).

We have had names supplied by the corporate list-makers through their daily organs: The PLO (Palestine), the IRA (Ireland), the FLQ (Quebec), ANC (South Africa), Mau-Mau (Kenya), SWAPO (Namibia), Polisario (Morocco), Vancouver 5 (Canada), The Tigers (Sri Lanka), FDR/FMLN (El Salvador), Red Brigade (Italy), Baader-Meinoff (W. Germany), Red Army (Japan), Sendero Luminoso (Peru), Tupamaros (Uruguay), Naxalites (India). There are even terrorist states like Libya and South Yemen. And of course the old “exporters” of revolution: Cuba and Nicaragua. And not to forget Beelzebub, Darth Vader and the eternal forces of evil.

What do these groups have in common? Flora Lewis, in the *New York Times Magazine* (11/11/84), asks: are these resistances to a “perceived tyranny” or do all these blood-stained paths trail to the Soviet Union?

What we are presented of these countries from which these abnormalities arise is that there are no specific conditions which cause the

particular responses which are called “Terrorist”. These countries are supposed to be benevolent, tranquil states struggling to develop democracy under the aegis of the U.S., fighting the forces of darkness, backwardness and their own uncivilized masses. We are then presented with a diagnosis of this global pathology by none other than R.R., the former terrorist governor of California (where and when the Panthers were shot in their beds). The diagnosis: that behind this symptom is another mystification – “Marxist-Leninist Totalitarianism” (“MLT”, “MLT”, echo their satraps abroad sitting around the IMF table approving a \$1.1 billion loan to South Africa!)

Even when, within the thinking of those who present us with these reductions, there are some grudging “liberal democratic” allusions that there might be some grievances, we are told it is nothing that a little land-reform here, some foreign-aid there, some technical assistance or even some U.S. advisors cannot quell. And perhaps some Green (as opposed to red) Revolution to top it off. But...as Amerika the beautiful is reminded, crestfallen:

We give them money  
But are they grateful  
No they're spiteful  
and they're hateful  
They don't respect us  
So let's surprise them  
Let's drop the Big One  
And pulverize them...

—(“Political Science”  
by Randy Newman)

The categorization of Anti-Imperialism as *International Terrorism* means that the users of the term are

cognizant of their own actions as *global*. All of the users' intentions lie in the sediment of the term.

*IT* reinforces the notion that the entire world is a theatre which has to be directed. An uncertain world of budding psychopaths, (that's how the *Globe & Mail's* Vancouver desk characterized the Vancouver 5); Errant lovers (Hinckley Jr. & Jody Foster); Fanatical Muslims, Terrorist Palestinians, Iranian hostage-takers, Inscrutable Orientals and Expansionist Russians.

But what is not *IT*? The IMF, IBRD, GNP, EEC, ACC, are definitely not. ITT and GM and Exxon are not. Argus and Power are not. The Bankers, Manufacturers and Real Estate Associations are not. Nor are the AAA, KKK, Western Guard, National Front, OSS, Alpha 66, Broderbond, Ordine Nuevo, La Mano Blanca... Certainly not the CIA, the FBI, RCMP, MI-5, BOSS, Interpol. Hiroshima wasn't. The forced starvation to death of 3 million Bengalis in 1942, to feed the British war effort wasn't. The CIA-sponsored SAVAK's torture and murder of tens of thousands of Iranians from 1953 to 1979 wasn't. The CIA Director driving around for days with the body of Patrice Lumumba in his trunk wasn't. The mining of Nicaraguan harbours, sonic booms over Managua, financing of contras isn't. Sabra and Shatilla wasn't. Shooting Archbishop Romero wasn't. Rapid Deployment Forces in the Indian Ocean are not. The denuding of the forests and vegetation with Agent Orange, the post-war birth defects of Vietnamese children weren't. The Pope wagging his finger at Cardenal wasn't; nor was his ring-kissing with Botha and Duvalier. Pinochet rounding up

## ABC OF TERRORISM

**A is for Anthropological Terrorism:** Refusing to return countries' monuments. Preserving them as tributes to your pillage. As in the Mask of Benin stolen during the War against the Ashante in 1847. As in the now-called “Elgin” Marbles stolen from Greece. Returning a piece of the Beard of the Sphinx to Egypt on *loan*! Refusing to return the history you stole. Totem poles in the Spadina Subway. Corn rows.

**B is for Bechtel. Botha. Begin. Bayer. and Biochemical Terrorism:** Genetic engineering! Putting that baboon's heart into Baby Fae's body! The Government shutting down the research section of the Ministry of Environment on Red Dye No. 9. The Ministry of Labour refusing to classify the vast number of workplace chemicals as toxic/carcinogenic. The Proliferation of Hard, Soft & Off-the-Counter drugs. Cosmetics.

**E is for Economic Terrorism:** Destroying a country's agriculture and food supplies. Sabotaging its industries and transportation. The IMF, Free Trade, Free Enterprise, Capitalism, etc. **Environmental Terrorism:** Love Canal. Dead Lakes. Dumping PCB's in neighbourhoods or building neighbourhoods on dumps. Melting the ice-caps. Scarrification of the Amazon, and **Ethno-Terrorism:** Multiculturalism. Ethnic Squads. Affirmative Action. Race Relations. Caravan.

**G is for Gender Terrorism:** Rape. Sexual Harrassment. Pornography. Advertising. Rock Videos. Homophobia. Eaton's Catalogues.

**L is for Lexicographic Terrorism:** The Gobbledy-gook Award was given to the Pentagon for calling war “Violence-processing” and Peace “pre-hostilities”.

M, N, O, P, Q, R,

**S is for Spiritual Terrorism:** Moral Majority. The Pope. The Unification Church. Scientology. Pro-Life.

**T is for Technological Terrorism:** Going blind making silicone chips in Free Trade Zones. Canada exporting sensory deprivation equipment. Export of Torture Machinery & experts. Sterilization. Police Television Shows.





thousands in a stadium is not; nor is Britain's export of torture equipment to Kenya again... South Africa bombing Lesotho, occupying Namibia, invading Angola, crippling Mozambique, killing miners, children and laying siege to every African neighborhood is not. White (as opposed to Red) Socialist France invading Chad is not. Japan airbrushing history books on their WWII ventures in China is not. A U.S. jury acquitting Nazis of murder in Greensboro is not. Nor is the killing of Black children in Atlanta...nor that at least 60% of Black children in America live in poverty. Nor is...Nor is...Nor is... Nor that 40% of the population of Canadian penitentiaries is native people; nor the suicide rate in Frobisher Bay. No, racism is not terrorism. Nor is Canada's development of Sensory Deprivation techniques that leave no marks on your body (Amnesty International did not even mention Canada in their Annual Report last year).

The Public Relations men who produce the news are always aware that there are two fronts - the actual location of the war, and their audiences sitting before the television sets. This cultured audience has sat through many reruns of this concept... In America it originated with scalping. This characterization of native American peoples as pathological and less-than-human allowed for expropriation, clearing this land of its inhabitants. The audience was left watching John Wayne mopping up... Europe went to Africa which was filled with Cannibals and Barbarians... movie-watchers were left with Tarzan...and the entire savagery of slavery was obscured...

It is an old scenario to accuse your victim of the crime. Between 1600 and 1900, the population of Europe went from 100 million to 400 million, Asia went from 200 million to 800 million, Africa went from 100 million to 120 million in the same period of time... and the audience clamoured for "population control".

Slavery and colonial predacity financed the Industrial Revolution and the further intrusion of Europe into Asia and Latin America. The world was sectioned off into thirds...Pirates became civilisers, explorers. And four-fifths of the world became tourist spots, movie locations and the exotica of harlequin romances...for who could

love Marcos? And who could believe Pinochet was a swell guy? And who could think Botha was benevolent? And such possessiveness! - "Even if he is a son-of-a-bitch, he is our son-of-a-bitch" (New Deal Roosevelt on Tacho Somoza.)

## How to Identify a Terrorist

It's just like finding a witch. During the Spanish inquisition you threw a potential witch into the water and if she floated, that was proof of guilt. The Inquisition divided the world into believers and heathens and made a lot of money for the Catholic church besides - what style!

How do you find a terrorist, 20th century American style? It's anyone who tries to buy arms to defend themselves in the face of American aggression and covert invasions... If it is discovered, after their invasion, (as in Grenada) that you had far too many 19th century weapons for your 20th century national security - a Museum of Justification, a Hall of Infamy will be created for the free press (who were left out of the war). Trying to shoot down F15's with your rifle will be proof of your guilt. "Why'd they need those guns anyway?" will ricochet from the mouths of the chosen people (chosen to carry weapons, chosen to eat food and chosen to decide who else does), as they pause from riveting the shell of an MX missile.

R.R.'s national security decision directive 138 outlaws the rest of the world. In it the secretary of state has the sole power to name any foreign government, faction or international group as a terrorist and his designation could not be challenged by any defendant or reviewed in any court. Also, in this directive, you can be an assistant terrorist and get a \$100,000 fine or 10 years for "providing support services" (read: humanitarian gestures) to any soon-to-be-named terrorists. Hys-terr-i-cal!

Terrorism is described by the OED (oxford english, that is) as "government by intimidation, as directed and carried out by the party in power in France during the revolution of 1789-1794: Terrorist is "a political term" to be applied to "The Jacobins and their agents and partisans in the French

Revolution...during the Reign of Terror." But as Mark Twain reminds us:

"There were two 'Reigns of Terror' if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the 'horrors' of the minor terror, the momentary terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe compared with lifelong death from *hunger, cold, insult, cruelty and heartbreak*? ...A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by the brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver and mourn over, but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by the older and real Terror..."

—Mark Twain,  
(Commenting on the  
French Revolution)

The nineteenth century saw the development of unions as well as the police in Europe and North America. As someone said once, "This country (Canada) was started by a company! - The Hudson Bay - and they built the RCMP to protect them - stealing them furs as they were." In the U.S., in the latter half of that century, invoking scenes of freed "black rapists", thousands of black people were mutilated and lynched in the years after the Civil War - the so-called "Reconstruction". (That great patriarch of U.S. film, D.W. Griffith, depicted this as the saving of Christian civilization in *The Birth of A Nation*.) These gallant white men would then be recruited into the growing police and security forces of the 1870's and 1880's to quell the rising militancy of the industrial working classes as well as to keep Italian and Jewish immigrants in their place.

It is then "anarchists" and "foreigners" (importing labour troubles from Europe? who are hunted down, tarred, hanged and jailed. It is "anarchists" who are hung in Haymarket Square as workers fight for the eight hour day.

It is a time when the U.S. blows up its own U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbour as a pretext to enter the Spanish-Cuban war. They subvert the Cuban revolution and install themselves (Randolph J. Hearst, the great press-man included). Then, an "anarchist" shoots U.S. President McKinley, and in comes

Theodore Roosevelt and boosted Yankee Imperialism, "walking quietly and carrying a big stick."

It is an "anarchist" who shoots Arch-Duke Ferdinand and starts, supposedly, all of World War I.

Then...we have the October Revolution of 1917. (They've tried to ruin the month of October ever since.) At the same time as the birth of the U.S.S.R. we see the birth of Fascism in the rest of Europe. German troops from Namibia return to the Rhineland.



Those aren't Hippies Harold, **THOSE** are **INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS!!**

Imperialism came home again to roost. In the United States, "Bolsheviks" and "Communists" were the targets of the "Red Scare". Lists of "Radically Inclined individuals" are prepared by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer.

"Prior to the 'Palmer Raids' upon 'subversives', in the Winter of 1919-20, the Attorney General created, in August of 1919, the General Investigation Division of the Department of Justice to prepare the forthcoming dragnet." (*The Yahoos*, Marzani and Munsell), Palmer appointed a young lawyer named John Edgar Hoover to head the new division.

"Hoover's job was a simple one, almost a clerical one; he was assigned the tedious task of preparing a card index and filing system of "radicals", to be available when needed." (Marzani and Munsell) The GID, father of the FBI, collected 60,000 names in "less than 100 days". "Using Hoover's lists,

the "Palmer Raids" were able in one night, (Friday, January 1, 1920) to seize some 10,000 "radically inclined individuals". Within a year they had 450,000 names. This is the same Hoover who would launch a 'reign of terror' on Black activists in the '60s, killing the entire leadership of the Black Power movement - not to mention bugging Martin Luther King's bedroom.

In the 1930's the RCMP was sent to Germany to share Canada's expertise

on reservations with the S.S. Even as western countries and their allies invaded the Soviet Union, initially supporting Hitler and the Axis, Stalin's foreign minister Molotov became an euphemism for every explosive "cocktail" thrown anywhere in the world, a symbol of "Communist International".

In 1934, a "Who's Who in Radicalism" was published in Elizabeth Dilling's *The Red Network* - a fore-runner of the House of Un-American Activities' (HUAC) "subversive lists". (The 1980's version is Claire Sterling's book, *The Terror Network*.) Dilling's list included Mahatma Gandhi, Sigmund Freud, Chaing Kai-Shek and Eleanor Roosevelt!

In the years following WWII and the declaration of the Cold War, we were given HUAC and the Walter McCarran Immigration Act, which among other things defined what a "Communist-front" was, and defined a



"post-card" as a "publication". Recently on PBS's *Newshour* Roy Cohn (McCarthy's lawyer) debating the refusal of visas to four Salvadorean nuns says "Ninety-nine percent of the people turned away by the McCarran Act in the last few years were Khaddafi terrorists" (more leaps, less faith).

Since then, there was the assassination of the Kennedys (Cuba and the Palestinians were blamed). Malcolm X (Muslims were blamed). Martin L. King (a nut was named). There's been the Chicago 7 and the Wilmington 10. Attica and Angela Davis. Anna Mae Aquash and Wounded Knee. The Panthers and the Weather Underground.

It was in the 1970's really that "International Terrorism" entered the news lexicon mainly as the the PLO and the IRA and "hijackers". The 70's were supposedly a time when "radicalism" was out and the "me generation" was in, inside of America. Dissent was marginalized into "terror".

Nowadays the media does not discuss the systematic arrest of Black activists in America. All we are told is that a group advocating a separate state for blacks was rounded up for planning armed robberies in New York State...

Wednesday, November 21, 1984's *Globe and Mail* headline: "Secret Agency keeps data on individual security risks". The information they gather "is used to advise the government with respect to international affairs, security and defence". Are there terrorists here?

In a world of U.S. Militarism and re-constituted concentration camps of mass starvation - the corporate media has to reinforce each day its framing of what violence and crime really are... Famines, droughts, unemployment, poverty, SWAT teams and death squads, are not seen as organised...

Fifty million people starve to death yearly and another 700 million are 'officially' hungry. Every year 100,000 under-nourished children go blind due to a deficiency of Vitamin A (found in carrots, milk and eggs). In Africa, Latin America and Asia (economies reorganised and made dependent), one-third of all children die before they reach the age of five. The world produces 2.5 times the grain needed to feed everybody.

We are left with Moral Falwell and his right-wing church squads wanting

free-speech for zygotes, wanting children to say the morning prayer and consider ketchup as a vegetable at lunchtime... (prayer might help with such a leap of faith).

The expunging of the history of four-fifths of the world is a thing to which we are accustomed. First there was no civilisation other than British Civilisation which made the rest of us barbarians, primitives. Now there is no civilisation other than American



Civilisation, which makes the rest of us underdeveloped, terrorists. The control of history is commensurate with the control of power - if you have power you can name any thing, you can say anything has happened. John Foster Dulles, secretary of state during the McCarthy period said, "There are two ways to take over a country. One way is to send in the army, another is to control its economy."

In 1974, a strategic research group at the Pentagon argued:

Upon this ever-shrinking globe all societies and all cultures are involved in an inevitable struggle for pre-eminence and survival. Those who shape tomorrow's world will be those who can project their image in order to exercise a dominating influence and long range control. If we wish our values and our style to triumph, we are forced to compete with other cultures and other centres of power. To this end the multinational corporation offers considerable leverage. Its

growing arsenal of foreign based businesses work for us day in and day out. It has an osmotic effect which not only transmits and implants American business methods, banking and commercial techniques, but also our legal system and concepts, our political philosophy, our means of communication, our ideas of mobility and a way of looking at the arts and letters proper to our civilization.

—(Quoted at the end of N. Graham, 'Towards a political economy of culture', *New Universities Quarterly* (London) 31(3) 1977.)

In the last five years, possibly more than ever, but certainly since Galileo was vilified for saying that the earth revolved around the sun or Cristobel Colon damned for charging that the earth was round (actually he was only looking for a trade route to beat the British), the geography of the sensibility has been eroded, constricted into seeing and reproducing the world, flat surfaced and tunnel-visioned into "American" and "Un-American". (For the latter, read: IT, Commie, etc.)

A wind of ignorance and self-interest has conveniently swept up many of the exploited of North America into assenting to the spread of this "Americanism", by military interventions into the already-type-cast countries, and by cultural invasion and the economic big stick in the case of others - like Canada. (Note the leap of the imagination, the spatial miscalculation in assessing the Grenada situation; note the salivating glee with which Americans claimed victory over 133 square miles.)

At the nadir of colonialism, when 3rd world states began to assert themselves through armed struggle, when imperialist interests began to suffer enormous losses (as in Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, etc.), International Terrorism was discovered as a construct which would obscure these interests; would galvanise people 'here' against people 'there'; would obscure the like interests of workers 'here' and workers 'there' and would allow the build up of arms, by creating a consensus in America which would offset anti-imperialist struggles through support for a policy of the recolonization of the four-fifths.

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FEBRUARY/MARCH 1985

# WOMEN AND MUSIC

## Networking in Action Report from:

- MICHIGAN
- NEW ENGLAND
- MANITOBA
- NOVA SCOTIA



Sapphire reading "Colours" at the Day Stage, NEMWR 1984

## TWO U.S. FESTIVALS SUSAN STURMAN

FROM THEIR BEGINNINGS IN THE EARLY 1970's, the unique cultural events known as women's music festivals have played an important part in the development of lesbian/feminist culture in the United States and, to some degree, in Canada. The earliest of these took place in Seattle, Washington in 1974, an outdoor festival with an audience of 150-200 women. Since then, smaller regional gatherings have grown into large-scale national cultural events drawing performers and audiences from across the U.S., as well as from Canada and Europe. The largest of these, the Michigan Women's Music Festival, is held annually on land near Hart, Michigan, and has had a record attendance of 10,000 women. Many of these music festivals have expanded their format to include performance, film and comedy, as well as workshops focusing on political and cultural discussion. The festivals also

provide a marketplace for lesbian/feminist artisans, artists, publishers and record distributors, and for those involved in alternative health care. The festivals are also an important communication link and although the relaxed atmosphere does not exactly make for a feminist "think tank", many issues are raised in workshops and as a result of other on-site events which create a buzz in lesbian/feminist circles and in national women's publications throughout the year. This is particularly true of the Michigan festival, partly because of its size and partly because it is looked upon as the festival prototype and trendsetter.

Though the music festivals serve a wide number of objectives, the two main purposes of these events are to promote and build an alternative network of women performers, producers, record labels and distributors, and to give women a chance to con-

solidate strength among ourselves in a respectful and co-operative atmosphere which reflects a kind of "politics in action". The first purpose is largely fulfilled; the festivals do provide a wide audience for women's music. A new performer who debuts at a smaller regional festival may then go on to play a larger one, and thus has an opportunity to make valuable contacts with producers, tour organisers, and record labels, as well as with other women musicians, humourists, and performance artists. Women-run record labels can "showcase" their artists. Record distributors have a ready market for the records of featured performers (as well as others).

The second purpose is less easily realised, given the diversity of opinions and practice in any political movement. At their best, the festivals do achieve a sense of community, through the sharing of work, play and



living space among women. At their worst, they tend to reinforce a parochial, monolithic vision of lesbian/feminist politics and praxis, contributing to a narrow view of what is "politically correct".

The business/economic aims and the political/spiritual aims of the festivals are often in a precarious balance; there is the ever-present angst that one may undermine the other. As the festivals expand in size and popularity, the problems become magnified. While larger audiences allow for greater diversity and increased exposure for women-identified music/culture, they also present a greater organisational challenge. Larger crowds also mean the loss of a sense of community; the setting becomes less intimate.



Day Stage NEWMR '84

As the organisational structure becomes more complex, the women who are organising the event become less visible, and those attending the festival begin to take less responsibility for its existence - taking for granted the large efficient invisible collective which is "running the show". There are in fact very few paid staff members at these events, and these are mostly technical crew for the performances. Almost all the site labour is done by volunteers. Yet the larger the festival the more likely it is that women will approach it as passive culture consumers rather than as active participants. This means less co-operation in helping to run the festival (for example by doing essential volunteer work-shifts). For the women working on the organising collective, the staff, and those on work-exchanges (work in ex-

change for the price of a festival ticket), this means overwork and, often, resentment, thus defeating a major purpose of the festival.

The larger numbers also make for a greater distance between performer and audience, and the "star" mentality manifests itself more openly and disturbingly on both sides. As the entertainment and production at the festivals become more sophisticated and elaborate, more money is needed. Higher ticket prices are the result which means that fewer low-income women can afford to attend, except on a work-exchange basis - reproducing, yet again, a situation where privileged (usually white) women can pay to relax and enjoy the festival while poorer women (largely women of colour) must work all/weekend.

### The Michigan Women's Music Festival

APART FROM THE PRACTICAL problems that growth creates, the larger festivals also experience political/philosophical problems. The Michigan Festival, as the largest and longest-surviving, is almost an institution in itself. As it becomes an institution, its existence also becomes taken for granted (despite constant financial difficulty), and it becomes a symbol of a particular set of values and standards, an arbiter of cultural and political style.

One of the biggest paradoxes of "Michigan-culture" is the term "women's music". In the festival\* context, "women's music" and "women's culture" are synonymous with lesbian/feminist music and lesbian/feminist culture. The overriding presumption of the festival is that the women attending are lesbian, or if not, ought to be. Performers are often castigated for not being overtly lesbian in their lyrics or in public, yet the euphemistic term "women's music" is used to describe what they do. Perhaps it is not so much euphemistic as chauvinistic, for part of the festival mentality is a perception of Lesbian Nation as an insular separatist society, and a certain sense of lesbian moral superiority in the women's movement.

This insularity breeds a jump-on-the-bandwagon conformity of style

\* In using "festival" here, I am referring to the Michigan festival as a model.



NEWMR 1984: workshops at the "Women of Color" Tent

and political outlook, a particular definition of "women's music/culture" that is narrow and largely determined by white middle class women. Attending "women's culture" at the festival is concurrent phenomenon of alternative consumerism through crafts, etc. (which recycles income to women and is thus positive, but which also promotes a certain cultishness) and a "lesbian-is-better" mentality. This chauvinistic consumerism may be a phenomenon which is uniquely American; there is certainly nothing like it in the U.K. or Europe, or even in Canada. Lesbian/feminism, like anything else in the U.S., is not immune to fashion trends, and there is always someone willing to capitalise on them. The result may be more amusing than sinister, but the attitude is nonetheless irritating.

The concept of providing "safe space for women" becomes another issue in the context of political diversity. The question becomes: "Safe space for which women?" or "safe space from what?" There are women, for example, who wish to be in a space free of alcohol and drugs; these are legitimate needs, and there are chemical-free areas provided at every festival. But the fact that the other areas are labelled "chemical-tolerant" suggests that a value judgement is being made. Tolerance is something generally practiced by a dominant group. The usage takes for granted that the majority hold the view that drugs and drink and even coffee are *bad*. But who decides and who sets these standards of political correctness?

A more serious "safe space" debate occurred at this year's Michigan festival around the issue of lesbian s/m. Some women objected to the presence of s/m workshops at the festival, claiming "psychic damage". One of the results was the effective banning of s/m as an issue from the New England Women's Music Retreat (NEWMR), a smaller but important Eastern festival. This included a ban on the selling or wearing of s/m paraphernalia, and a ban on "s/m workshops dealing with practice rather than theory". Women were asked to report "incidents that upset [you]" or those which seemed "in conflict with these policies" to "Central Information" or to festival planners wearing *badges*. Do these women have any business in the bedrooms of Lesbian Nation? Again, who decides these policies? And what does the notion of "safe space for women" really mean when one woman's sexual practice is another's "psychic damage"? Obviously, it cannot mean safe space for *all* women.

### The New England Women's Music Retreat (NEWMR)

OF ALL THE LARGER (2,000 PLUS) festivals I have attended in the U.S., the New England Women's Music Retreat seems to be trying hardest to grapple with the white middle class hegemony of "women's music/culture". Being smaller and in a more formative stage than the Michigan festival, for example, one can see the beginning of moves



Nancy Day, NEWMR '84



"Women of Color" tent,

in directions both good and bad. NEWMR has consistently involved women of colour as organisers, performers and participants at the festival, though this has not been without problems (cf. the previous discussion of work-exchange/ticket prices). This year marked the debut of the "First World" Tent, an area organised by and for "women of colours". The area was a focal point of energy at the festival, and the women participating took positive advantage of it as a powerful organising tool. But racism was more than just a spectre; white performers still got more attention and better treatment from the audience, even though there was a more equal balance of women of colour and white women on the bill this year. Perhaps the biggest insult was to Odetta; the largely white lesbian audience cooled considerably to her expressions of love and solidarity to *men* of colour. The fact that she wasn't a lesbian seemed to outweigh her almost legendary status as a guardian of American Black history and culture.

More positively, NEWMR did make an attempt to feature a diversity of musical styles, performance and humour. Performance artist Janice Perry (aka Gal) added a bit of New Wave urban sensibility to the usually bucolic festival setting. Women of the Calabash, a quartet of singers and percussionists, performed African, Caribbean and Afro-American traditional and modern music combined with strong political messages. But folk-oriented performers like Ferron still

seemed to be most popular with the musically conservative audience. And unfortunately, there are still too few opportunities for women playing electric guitar and/or experimental music to be heard at these events.

One noticeable aspect of this year's NEWMR was the emphasis on "women's spirituality" (the festival was opened with an incantation over the land). This is relatively new, but it is indicative of a particular stream of lesbian/feminist politic over the past few years. Many women from the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment (near Romulus, N.Y. missile base) attended the NEWMR festival, and this group in particular brought a certain spiritual attitude to the festival. Feminists in Britain have been critical of the women at Greenham Common because they see the women's camp as a retreat from out-in-the-streets political activity toward an inward-gazing, naive romance with the Earth/Mother/Goddess. It may be that the latter is the result of a certain frustration with the relative ineffectiveness of the former, particularly against Thatcher's government. In Reagan's America, feminists in general and lesbian/feminists in particular are facing a gloomy and terrifying future. Perhaps it is an attempt to retrench, perhaps it is simply the intersection of "women's culture" and the peace movement, but many American lesbian/feminists seem to have taken a break from street politics and are increasingly putting their energies into "women's spirituality". Unfortunately, as this too is governed by rules of "political correctness", there is a danger of a particular hegemony of belief, a kind of religious Womonopoly, which may be just as oppressive to some as fundamentalist Christianity.

The festivals have done much to promote and consolidate lesbian/feminist politics, but there is a danger of a further narrowing of vision and the creation of cultural monoliths. If we are going to call what we do "women's music" and "women's culture", we are going to have to take on the responsibility of expanding our boundaries to include the diversity and creativity of *all* women; otherwise, it is not worthy of the name. I am hopeful that this is a challenge we can meet.

Susan Sturman is a musician and women's music historian living in Toronto.



# WINNIPEG 1984: OUR TIME IS NOW!

## DIDI HERMAN

THIS PAST SUMMER, CANADA'S first women's music and cultural festival took place in Winnipeg's Kildonan Park. Organised by a group of women calling themselves The Same Damn Bunch, the 'Our Time is Now' festival brought together well over forty performers from across the country. Reviews of the festival have been almost uniformly positive and enthusiastic (see fall issues of *The Body Politic*, *Broadside*, *Herizons*, *Kinesis*, *Rites*, etc.). Reviewers have praised the quality of the performances, the smooth organisation and the warm and casual atmosphere. There certainly is a great deal for the organisers, festival workers and performers to be proud of. The quality of most of the performances were, indeed, excellent. The sound and the stage management were great.

Performers came to Winnipeg from across the country - some more well known than others. Along with the likes of Heather Bishop, Connie Kaldor, Marie-Lynn Hammond and Nancy White, there were "lesser-known" women artists such as dancer Ezzell, jazz musician Janice Finlay, a capella group *Four the Moment*, singers Arlene Mantle and Rita MacNeil, performer/filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin - all in all, a total of over forty performers.

The festival took place in Winnipeg's Kildonan Park on a rather chilly Labour Day weekend. *Our Time is Now* opened with a Friday night concert by Ferron (who then went on to play the NEWMR festival - see Susan Sturman's article on the Women's



Four the Moment

Music Festivals in this issue of *FUSE*), followed by workshops and evening concerts on the Saturday and Sunday.

Throughout the weekend one constantly overheard comments like "they're all so great!" or "The quality of these performances is incredible!" Having attended numerous folk festivals where one ends up listening to mediocre (or worse) performers for the sake of the one or two you really want to hear, the *Our Time is Now* festival was noticeably different in that practically every artist gave an excellent performance.

But when putting together a festival like this for the first time it is not surprising that there were also problems. The fact that there was no on-site camping and no organized accommodation

for women from out of town was one such problem. Another problem, for me, was the presence of men (in the audience - not on the stage).

Given our sparsely populated country, a festival that excludes men may be seen as something financially untenable. Yet, at 'Our Time is Now', the small number of men who actually attended might suggest the possibility that had the festival been women-only, there may have been a much larger turnout of women. But holding a "mixed" festival may have been the desire of festival organisers for any number of reasons. It may also have been influenced by the festival's dependence on government sponsorship. The festival was funded by Canada Employment and Immigration, Manitoba

Culture, Heritage and Recreation; Manitoba Jobs Fund; the Department of Communications; the Manitoba Arts Council and the Women's Bureau of the Secretary of State. While it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions as to what the effects of this dependency were on decisions regarding the festival itself, it is possible that some of these government ministries may have been less than enthused over funding a festival that excluded men.

In Canada, women have very little access to women-only space. The fact that many of us would welcome such opportunities is something to consider when planning future festivals of this kind. In other words, it would be nice not to have to listen to a man belt out "By my heart, be I woman" from the

only once during the entire weekend (from Heather Bishop) remains a disquieting fact. In an of itself, it might be no more than disquieting, but when combined with other circumstances/incidents one began to think it was deliberate. When one group of lesbians in attendance attempted to set up a "lesbian circle", they received little encouragement from some festival organisers. Then unidentified persons aggravated this situation by tearing down posters that these women had put up in order to publicise the get-together/workshop. Some women ended up wearing "lesbian circle" sandwich boards in the theatre.

This situation may have been due to either a need to maintain an aura of "respectability" around the festival



Johanne Mabon

audience, while Ferron sings "Testimony" on stage. Consider that one is looking for a relaxing (or inspiring) weekend away from appropriation (and from ignoramuses).

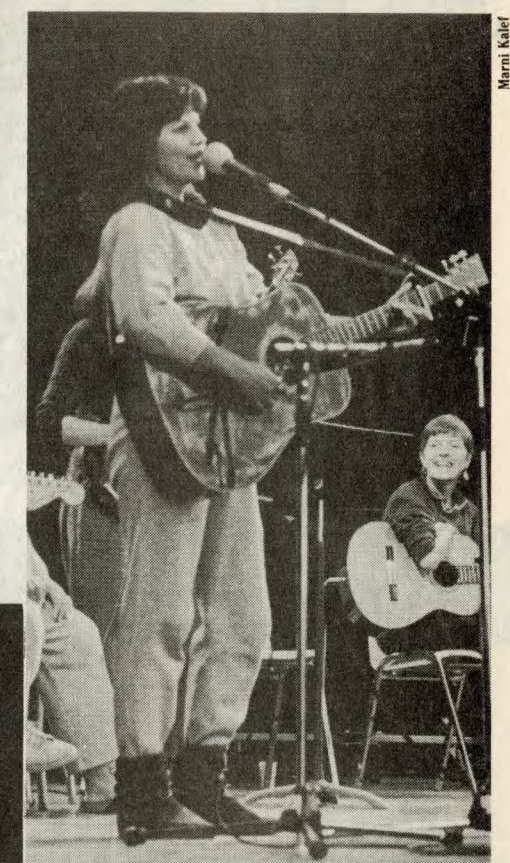
Another problem that characterised this festival was that of lesbian invisibility. Throughout this weekend one had the sense that there was a "please keep it in the closet" feeling in the air - a rather unpleasant situation for women who had experienced or knew of U.S. women's festivals, which are known to be an integral part of lesbian culture.

Some lesbian performers choose not to come out publicly regardless of the setting (a decision which, I believe, should be respected); however, that the word "lesbian" was heard on stage

(witness one performer's reported remark to mainstream media that there would be no "men-bashing" at this festival) and/or to some organisers' homophobia. Either way, it's a serious blow to feminist cultural events.

If feminists envision Women's Festivals to be part of an oppositional culture, it may be problematic to put on such a festival under the full mantle of the state. But it is much more than problematic to allow many lesbians to feel so obviously excluded. (An exclusion which I cannot help feeling was directly related to the appeasement of men - as financiers and as audience members.)

Another point that has been raised again and again in recent reviews of 'Our Time is Now' has taken the form



Barb Spence



Alanis Obomsawin





Maara Haas

Miche Hill

of congratulations to the organisers for bringing women of various cultural backgrounds to the festival. I suppose I was disappointed that congratulations are still necessary. It is as though because 'Our Time is Now' chose to recognize that there are non-white women in Canada to be invited to such a festival, that we're supposed to feel that the levels of participation by women of colour merits our patting ourselves on the back. But praising this aspect of one event (when there are a multitude of white-only events in the women's community), has the danger of being little more than congratulating tokenization; and may serve to obscure the diversity of individual women's culture and experiences that we are still missing - a diversity that this festival, to a large extent, did not reflect.

The facts remain that a large majority of the performers were white; that there were very few francophone

women invited; that, after the first night, bilingual introductions were dropped; that women from many different cultural backgrounds were not represented at all; and that many serious issues, including racism, while being an integral part of some of the performers' own work, were not organised into workshop formats. (Workshop topics tended, in general, to be rather innocuously titled, i.e. "Songs that make us laugh", etc.)

In the end, there is always the issue of audience and in this case attendance was poor. There are many possible reasons for this - some of which have already been mentioned. In addition to these, many eastern Canadian women chose to attend U.S. festivals and many other women simply weren't interested in the entertainment that the festival offered. There will have to be more interest displayed, not just in Women's Festivals themselves, but also in 'unknown' Canadian women

artists if these events are ever to become a permanent part of the Canadian Women's music scene (particularly if they are ever to become financially self-sufficient). The question remains, "Would this festival have been more popular if performers had included a few U.S. 'stars', the likes of Holly Near or Meg Christian?"

Notwithstanding these criticisms and cynicisms, I strongly support and wish to encourage 'Our Time is Now' and the possibility of similar festivals elsewhere in Canada. There is a great need to provide a forum for alternative women's music. This year's festival in Winnipeg went a long way toward providing that opportunity. And I hope that when considering the structure, format and funding of future women's festivals, the problems will be new ones.

**Didi Herman is an office worker and part-time student in Toronto.**

# A Cappella Activism

## by Barbara Lounder

from an interview with Delvina Bernard, Kim Bernard, Debby Jones and Beth Levinson, who are (together)

## Four the Moment . . .

left to right: Debbie, Kim, Delvina and Beth





"FOUR THE MOMENT" IS A FOUR-woman a cappella group from Halifax: Delvina Bernard, Kim Bernard, Debby Jones, and Beth Levinson. The group first performed publicly in 1982, at a Halifax rally against the K.K.K., who were planning to open an office in the region. Since that first performance, *Four the Moment* has continued to move and motivate audiences. Their music is a powerful fusion of social protest and history-singing, expressing the struggle, resistance, and solidarity of people of colour, women, and workers.

Since that first performance at an anti-K.K.K. rally, *Four the Moment* has developed a base of support within the local community of activists, cultural workers, historians, and educators. The relationship is one of exchange and interdependence. The group, and its audiences, can be described as ideally progressive – alternative, oppositional, critical, and engaged. *Four the Moment* has performed at feminist celebrations and benefits, at concerts organized by Latin American solidarity groups, and at cultural events in the Black community of the Prestons. The group has also, on occasion, sung for a general public that may or may not have agreed with its anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-imperialist politics. This past summer, they were invited to sing at a "multi-cultural youth rally" organized in conjunction with the Pope's visit to Halifax. After a series of long and thoughtful discussions, *Four the Moment* accepted. They felt that informing and challenging that audience could be an act of resistance to the repressive policies of the Roman Catholic Church. They opened their set with the explosive anti-apartheid song "Biko", originally written and performed by *Sweet Honey in the Rock*.

*Four the Moment* have also done several recordings for C.B.C. Radio and they performed in the summer of 1984 for the crowds gathered around the Tall Ships docked in Halifax. They elicited an enthusiastic response with their original song, "U.I. Line", which describes the cycle of unemployment and welfare in the Maritimes.

The production of an alternative culture is not without its contradictions and ironies. Debby spoke of the gratification she felt during the C.B.C.

tapings, a feeling that came from having their work validated by a cultural institution. "These people think we're professionals, and we can actually be paid for singing! And this is fun, and we can pretend that we're stars for just half an hour."

Although being stars may not be the aim of the group, they do want their work to be taken seriously. Aside from being performers, they are all employed full time elsewhere – at school or jobs. Delvina explains that

## U.I. Line

Sun nips at my window  
six- forty- five  
Black coffee and a cigarette  
The classified  
Skip a meal that I ain't got  
I gotta be on time  
I don't wanna miss my spot  
up in the U.I. Line

Cutbacks and more taxes  
than we can pay  
We've got layoffs we've got high  
mortgage  
and interest rates  
I've got lots of bills  
but I got no income  
I grab a five or a ten  
from my family or friends  
until my U.I. comes

### Chorus:

Cause we've got no jobs here (I said got no  
jobs here)  
And it's a national affair (our home  
and native land)  
no land of milk and honey (we true  
patriots)  
don't count a damn if we ain't got  
money

So it looks like hard times  
and bread lines, I can't pay my rent  
By the time I pay food bills  
and utilities, my money's done spent  
I spent the last four years of my life  
gettin my degree  
But I'm unemployed, and depending on  
that U.I.C.

### repeat chorus

Well I got some mail the other day  
about my U.I. claim  
And it hit me hard, when I did find  
the rules have changed  
No cheque or no computer cards  
could I find  
So I'm moving from the U.I.  
to the Welfare Line

### repeat chorus

Lyrics and Music by  
Delvina E. Bernard  
CAPAC 1984

she doesn't "necessarily want to pursue music as a career. I'm pretty satisfied to work from 9 to 5 and know that I have bread on the table. But I don't really want to give up music, because it's a way of contributing and saying something about the way we feel... personally, I'd like to keep it at the level where it's still fun, it's not work. If we could build the music, work on our repertoire, and keep producing new material, I'd like to see the group do an album. And maybe we could go away once a year. If we took our vacations at the same time, we could do the festivals, the women's circuit, the university circuit. I'd like to keep it at the level where it's not necessary that everybody give up their jobs and careers to pursue music. They're not mutually exclusive, they can function side by side.

"Maybe because we all started this late in life, we don't really follow this 'rainbow' thing – wanting to sing and get famous." While in Winnipeg for the "Our Time is Now" women's festival, Delvina was struck by the large number of women artists who have succeeded in combining careers in music with other employment and study.

Planning and deliberation are integral to how *Four the Moment* works. Debby explained the process of reaching consensus in coming to a cohesive whole politically. "If there is a group of people, there are always disagreements. If somebody feels strongly against a particular song, then we won't do it." Delvina pointed out that "we don't really do things 'democratically'. It's not like, 'O.K., let's put it to a vote, and 3 out of 4 wins.'" Beth felt that the group's ability to discuss the issues at stake was vital to its power on stage, "because you have to be able to communicate subject matter."

More and more of *Four the Moment's* repertoire is being written by members of the group, or by people close to them. One significant contributor is the local Black poet, George Elliott Clarke. George grew up in the same community as Delvina and Kim. Several years ago, he made an exhaustive tour of Nova Scotia's Black communities. Delvina described this research. "He went all around the province, and talked to a lot of people in the communities. He's looked through archives, he's read, talked... he's a

walking book!" From the collected historical material, much of which was previously unrecorded, came George's own book of poems, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues*, and two songs for *Four the Moment*: "Lydia Jackson" and "West Hants County".

Delvina said that she had first heard of Lydia Jackson in 1982, "when students from Gordon Bell High School (a school which serves the Prestons and the white community in the area as well) did all the research and put on a play. All the events cited in the play were historically correct, and the key character was Lydia Jackson. That was the first time I'd heard of her. The second time was when George came to us with the poem, which we put to music. Apart from the circles of people who know that we sing that song and come to talk to us about it, I haven't come across it, yet."

The same is true of the song "West Hants County", about the Black miners involved in Nova Scotia's gypsum industry. "I always knew that there were gypsum mines in West Hants County, I learned it in grade 6 geography. [But] until George did the poem, I hadn't been aware of the significance of the contribution of the Black people... I had no idea that they had worked in the gypsum mines."

"We've found that people really like 'West Hants County', 'Lydia Jackson', and 'U.I. Line' because they're home-grown."

The model for a cultural practice that is self-generating and interactive is most apparent in the relationship of *Four the Moment* to the schools in the local Black communities. If, as Delvina mentioned, some of the history which informs the back-bone of their "home-grown" music was first encountered in schools, much is also missed. When Delvina went to high school during the 70's, Black students were involved in rediscovering their history and culture. "In the high school I went to, we had what was called an African Club. It was sort of a cultural club, history-oriented. We'd pick a topic and one member would give a spiel, and we'd have a discussion." By 1979, the Club had died out, but "last year, a group of students wanted to start up a club, a Black Cultural Club!" By 1983, however, intolerance and fear of dissent had become the watchwords of

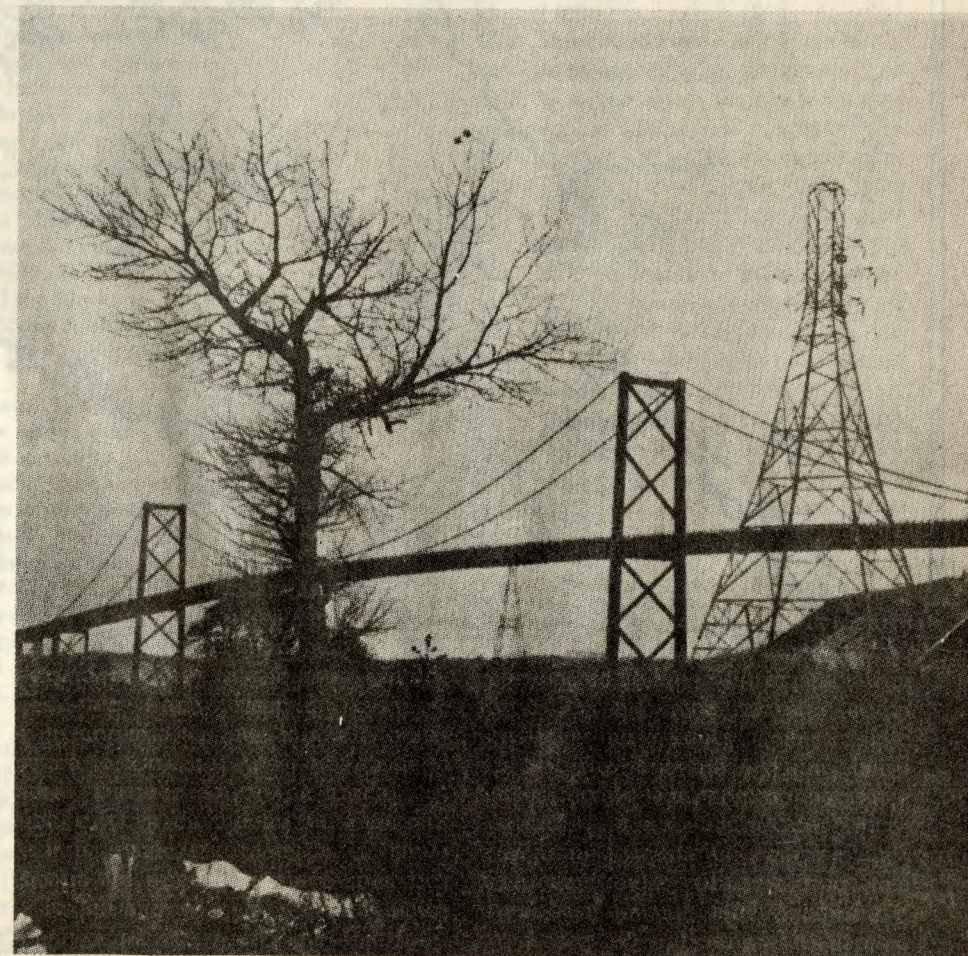
learning institutions; the Administration vetoed the students' proposal.

"I mean – we're supposed to be going forward in time, and it was regressive."

Delvina became involved in the conflict when students asked her to make a presentation at the school. The song "Rock and a Hard Place", which Delvina co-wrote with Harvey Millar, originated in this experience. *Four the Moment* value the role they play as educators, and would like to continue to feed back into the process by doing more performances and workshops in local schools.

The locus for much of the cultural activity now taking place in Nova Scotia's Black communities is the Black Cultural Centre. The Centre, which opened in September 1983, is located in the Cherrybrook/Lake Loon/Preston area. It houses a museum, a library, a workshop area, and an amphitheatre. *Four the Moment* performed at the Centre's official opening, and on several occasions since then.

**An open space that was once a community...Africville, founded in 1915, was uprooted between 1964 and 1968.**



Black United Front of Nova Scotia



## We've found that people really like "West Hants County", "Lydia Jackson", and "U.I. Line" because they're home grown.

Three of *Four the Moment's* members are from the large and "long-standing" Black communities of Nova Scotia. (Beth moved to Halifax in 1982 from Montreal.) Delvina and Kim grew up in Lake Loon, near Halifax. Delvina estimates "the Black community in and around Halifax is about half of the entire Black population in Nova Scotia."

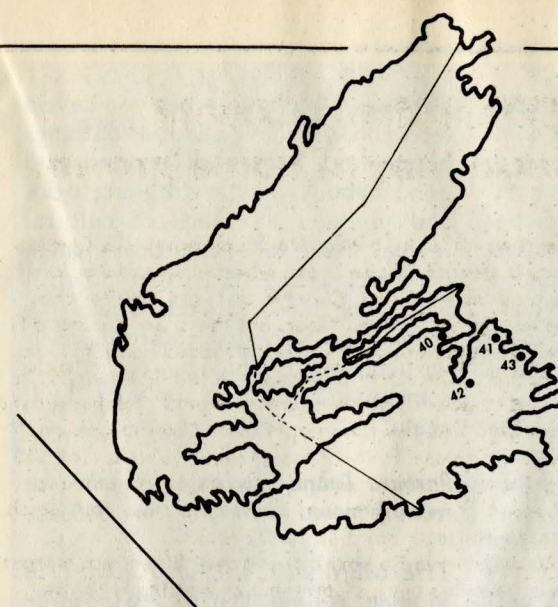
A 1767 census indicates that there was a Black slave population of 104 in the province. Numbers were greatly increased by the migration of over 3500 'Black Loyalists' who had been promised freedom and opportunity by British officials. (During the same period over 1200 Black slaves, owned by fleeing White Loyalists, also arrived in the province.) The arrival of the 'Black Loyalists' marked the first step in the long struggle for the survival and continued existence of some of the oldest Black communities in Canada.

The promises made by the British proved to be empty ones. Less than one-third of the Black Loyalists received land entitlements. Those entitlements that were given were much smaller than promised, and located either in remote regions where land was less fertile, or on the outskirts of White settlements. The three largest out-lying Black settlements were at Birchtown (near Shelburne), at Brindley Town (near Digby), and at Little Tracadie in Guysborough County.

The largest "fringe" settlements were those of East and North Preston near Halifax/Dartmouth. As Delvina put it,

"The Prestons - it's the oldest Black community in Canada. It's where it started." Lake Loon, where she and Kim are from, and its "sister place" Cherrybrook, are smaller communities near the Prestons. Near, but there are distinct differences. "Each community has its uniqueness and its own idiosyncracies... There are differences in family lineages, in names, and in where people migrated from." Delvina went on to explain that "most of the people from Cherrybrook and Lake Loon are descendants of the Loyalists who landed 200 years ago" and that the Loyalists "also made inroads into North Preston and East Preston, but for the most part North Preston was the settlement of the Maroons."

The Maroons were fiercely independent Black rebels from the hills of Jamaica who, after years of warring with the British, were induced to negotiate a settlement. The British officials had negotiated in bad faith, and immediately proceeded to round up 600 of the Maroons and transport them to Nova Scotia. They arrived in 1796, and settled in the Prestons, but most did not stay for long. In 1800, they left for the "free"



West African colony of Sierra Leone. Eight years earlier, in 1792, 1200 Blacks had quit Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone in anger and discouragement over the meagre land entitlements, the persistence of slavery and indenture, and the denial of the vote.

In the years following the exodus to Africa, many Blacks in the settlements began to move into Halifax and Dartmouth. Consequently, "most of the Black people in Dartmouth are people from the Prestons, Lake Loon, and Beechville. The people in Halifax may have migrated from Truro or Africville."

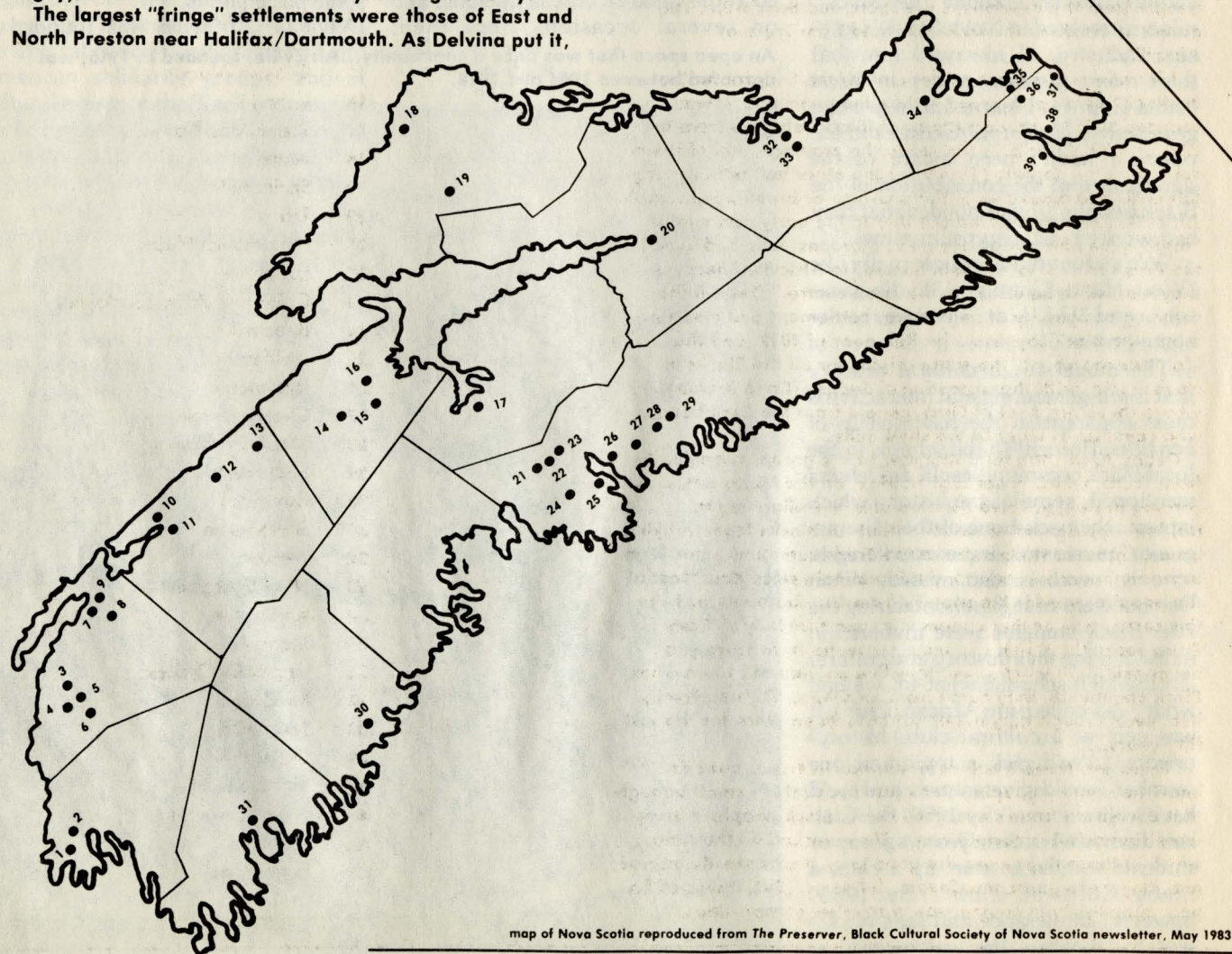
Africville was a Black settlement on the Bedford Basin, north of Halifax proper but still on the peninsula. It was founded in 1815, predominantly by Black refugees from the War of 1812. Over 2000 arrived in the province, half of them settling in the depleted Prestons; the other half either going to existing communities in the province or breaking ground in Africville. Delvina pointed out that in the early community, "there were also people from the Maroons, who had lived in the Prestons... A lot of them moved [to Africville] because they wanted to be closer to the town centre." Despite the seeming complexity of migrations, settlement and resettlement, the Black Loyalists, the Refugees of 1812, and the Maroons represent "the same origins for all the Blacks in Nova Scotia, with the exception of Sydney [Cape Breton] where there are a lot of Black people from the Caribbean, who came up to work in the steel mills."

Debby Jones, the third member of the group, is originally from Truro, which is north of Halifax, on the Minas Basin. According to Debby, Truro developed in a similar way to Halifax - as a point of resettlement for Blacks from outlying areas. "Most of the people in the Truro community are from other communities, and they still maintain close ties. Most of the people consider themselves from Guysborough, or from this community or that community, and that they're from Truro secondly. When you meet someone from Truro you never ask them what street they live on, you ask them what Black community they came from, or where did their family live, even though they might not have been there for the last fifty years...."

"There are three Black communities in Truro, but I don't know how many people - let's just say that it's small enough that everybody knows everybody else. Black people in Truro were connected in certain ways. They worked on the trains, which in those days were the good jobs. It was steady income and they were guaranteed work, full-time. [But] it was still a poor community in comparison with other communities."

### KEY

- 1 Yarmouth
- 2 Greenville
- 3 Weymouth Falls
- 4 Southville
- 5 Hassett
- 6 Danvers
- 7 Acaciaville
- 8 Jordantown
- 9 Conway
- 10 Granville Ferry
- 11 Lequille
- 12 Inglewood (Bridgetown)
- 13 Middletown
- 14 Cambridge
- 15 Gibson Woods
- 16 Kentville
- 17 Three Mile Plains
- 18 Amherst
- 19 Springhill
- 20 Truro
- 21 Hammonds Plains
- 22 Lucasville
- 23 Cobequid Road (Sackville)
- 24 Beechville
- 25 Halifax
- 26 Dartmouth
- 27 Cherry Brook
- 28 North Preston
- 29 East Preston
- 30 Liverpool
- 31 Shelbourne
- 32 Trenton
- 33 New Glasgow
- 34 Antigonish
- 35 Monastery
- 36 Upper Big Tracadie
- 37 Mulgrave
- 38 Sunnyville
- 39 Lincolnville
- 40 North Sydney
- 41 New Waterford
- 42 Sydney
- 43 Glace Bay



map of Nova Scotia reproduced from *The Preserver*, Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia newsletter, May 1983.



1815, it was uprooted between 1964 and 1968. What happened in Africville was that the city expropriated because they wanted the land for the container pier, and for an extension of the bridge...The reason why it's such a big issue is the manner in which it was done. People weren't aware of the development plans; they were offered almost nothing for their land and a lot of that land isn't even in use now for the purpose intended. People were forced to move into public housing."

Debby: "And most of these people had been totally independent. They farmed and they fished, they didn't have to depend on anyone. And all of a sudden they were put into the city and forced to try and survive."

Delvina: "I think that the people who were uprooted from there have fared much worse than the rest of the Black communities. They did studies that showed that the standard of living was so bad there, that conditions were so poor there, but so were all the other Black communities at the same time."

The residents of Africville had petitioned the local government for 100 years for the basic services that neighbouring white communities received. It wasn't until visiting white journalists embarrassed the officials in print, and development proposals made the land look valuable, that the City Fathers decided to take control of the situation. And take control they did. But the sense of community still exists, even though the people themselves have been displaced. As Debby notes, "People who lived in Africville continue to identify themselves as coming from Africville. There are kids who weren't even born then who say they're from Africville."

The lived history of Africville is now being recorded by former residents themselves who are members of the newly-formed Africville Genealogy Society, and *Four the Moment* is working with George Elliott Clarke on a song about the uprooting of the community.

Members of the group discussed their relationship as producers of an alternative culture to political activism. Delvina said, "None of us are really active in the community in terms of organising, but we all feel that the issues have to be supported. We can go

to a women's rally and support it by singing. We can go out to a Black community and sing with them, but we're not necessarily organizing in that community either. We're not aloof, but we're not at all the meetings, organizing marches downtown. That takes a lot of time, and somebody has to do it, but by the same token, there aren't a hundred groups around that sing this kind of music."

I asked Delvina about the comprehensive political view that is apparent in the range of the material they perform. She felt that the group's willingness to "move in a lot of different circles" was responsible for them not assuming a narrow focus. "You know, Beth's Jewish, Kim and Debby and I are Black, and we could get caught on our own bandwagons and never see the whole cause. By being able to move in different circles, we don't get swallowed up by a single issue and figure it is the most important."

When I first talked with *Four the Moment* about the social and economic climate of the region, Debby commented wryly and aptly that "Nova Scotia is in the temperate zone." The waxing and waning of political activism in the Halifax area does raise questions. Does burn-out explain the more moderate political demands of the 1980's?

Looking back, Delvina recalls, "The 60's was when it all happened. After all the uproar in the U.S. and the spill-over in Canada, we started seeing things like African Liberation Day and Black Solidarity Day, and speakers were coming up from the States, and the Black United Front started, and Affirmative Action. The government was getting scared, so they sent social workers, community developers, and they were hiring Black people who could do these jobs."

Debby: "I think people were lulled into a false sense of security. With all the jobs and grants, and L.I.P., people started thinking, 'Well, things are really changing, and there's no sense in complaining now, we're just starting to get things.' But now they see that things haven't really changed that much... And history always repeats itself; whenever there's an economic depression the ones on the bottom suffer the most, and they have to fight to get a little bit of the pie."

Delvina: "You know when you have a recession, you have all kinds of things happening. People sit around and ponder about what they're going to do, and you get all kinds of cultural revival. I see a lot of cultural revival in the Black community right now...It will come back around. That's the stance that "Rock and a Hard Place" is written from: the time has come to do something again - get up and do it again."

**Barbara Louder is an artist who has recently moved to Toronto from Halifax.**

*THE MEMBERSHIP OF FOUR THE Moment* is fluid. When they began in 1982, the group was made up of Delvina and Kim, their cousin Deanna, and Jackie Barclay (who is now their manager). Debby joined the group when Deanna decided to concentrate on other activities. Beth Levinson took Jackie's place singing bass and was recently replaced by Andrea Currie. And Amanda Marshall now sings soprano, since Debby is studying in France.

## Rock and a Hard Place

The time has come again  
when no more should we stand  
for all these passive negotiations

With placards in our hands  
stand like we used to stand  
shake Babylon with a mass demonstration.

Discrimination  
and oppression  
No woman rests  
in this society  
and you and me  
we're caught between  
a rock and a hard place

Marcus, Martin and Malcolm  
be shocked to see where we've come  
not far enough for all of time's passing

We have put off for too long  
the major note in our song  
come join in the chorus to bring back the  
power

Discrimination  
and oppression  
no Black man rests  
in a white society  
and you and me  
we're caught between  
a rock and a hard place

Lyrics by Delvina Bernard  
Music by Harvey Millar ©1983

Ellea Wright



DAPHNE and BETSY

ON OCTOBER 19, DAPHNE MARLATT AND BETSY Warland were in Toronto to launch their new books of poems, *Touch To My Tongue* and *Open Is Broken*, at the Toronto Women's Bookstore. In the days following the launching, they gave a performance/reading at A Space and a workshop which was attended by women writers and visual artists.

While they were in Toronto, Janice Williamson spoke with Daphne and Betsy about their writing and performances, about the connections between the two activities and about the relationship between autobiography and writing.

# Speaking In And Of Each Other

An Interview By  
Janice Williamson

JANICE WILLIAMSON: In your performance/reading at A Space, you read your love letters to each other before you read your poems from *Touch To My Tongue* and *Open Is Broken*. What place do these letters hold for you and what is their relation to your poems? Is it a question of context or of translation, or...

DAPHNE MARLATT: Well it's a little bit of both. First of all, the letters were the place where we could discuss ideas with each other. The excerpts that we chose - and there are a lot more letters than what we read - we chose because they show some of the ideas and some of the books we were reading, some of the sources that underly the writing of the poems. The language in the letters is different, more mundane and less self-conscious than the poems. When I say, "I love you" it's not language conscious of itself, it's self conscious of this other self, body conscious of this other body, soul conscious of this other soul. And the language is subordinate to this feeling which roars through it. But then, when you look at it on the page it is absolutely trite and clichéd. But the poems are saying both "I love you", and "This is what language can do in the service of love", in a language-conscious-of-itself way.

JANICE: When you were reading these love letters I thought of my own jaded relation to romance. How do you feel about your celebration of romance in this work?

BETSY WARLAND: In *Open Is*



*Broken*, I talk about how romance goes back to "made in Rome". That's what its etymology is. For a long time feminists have been suspicious of the concept of romance. What I've experienced with Daphne, however, is a move away from romance to an erotic exchange, not only in making love, but in the language we're using and how the ideas interact.

DAPHNE: There is something I want to add, and that is that the power dynamic between us is different from a heterosexual power dynamic. There isn't a need for the same kind of illusion that goes on in romance. Other than my own self-censorship from long years of being careful with men, there were no obstacles to the expression of passion, because the passionate feeling "runs between us" - to use Betsy's expression - and the us that it's between are two equal selves. One is not the property of the other.

BETSY: And it changes. Sometimes one of us is stronger than the other, and the other is wanting to feel weak. And then it goes the other way...

DAPHNE: Well, we each get to play

the daughter and we each get to play the mother...That's why there is so much mother/daughter imagery running through *Touch*, and the confusion between Persephone and Demeter is a deliberate confusion.

JANICE: Your letters were interesting to me on a number of counts. First, as a kind of alternative document in a long history of love letters and, secondly, as comment on the way women in western culture began writing letters - like Fanny Burney and the 18th century novels constructed in letters.

DAPHNE: I think that part of the feeling of release and excitement is putting the letters - which have traditionally been women's literary mode of self-expression although they weren't considered literary with a capital 'L' - together with the poems which are 'Literary'. The poems are the performance. The letters underlie the performance. And you know when you hear the floorboards creaking, you know that's the stage.

BETSY: There have been letters between lesbian lovers that have been recorded and collected, but we haven't

been able to think of lesbian lovers who created books together that were speaking of the relationship. In every one we can think of, any art that came out of the relationship came from one of the women and not the other.

JANICE: In terms of these letters, what's the relation of your writing to autobiography? And Daphne, in terms of form, your book *What Matters* was written as a journal, with a sense of the everyday in each entry.

DAPHNE: I find them inseparable really. My work has been extremely autobiographical. I think that most women's lives have been so fictionalized that to present life as a reality is a strange thing. It's as strange as fiction. It's as new as fiction. I'm not interested in inventing because what actually happens is so huge and so...

BETSY: ...remarkable...

DAPHNE: Yeah. There is so much to write about in that - what's the necessity of inventing? Whatever it is that writing gets at, it's precisely that remarkable quality of being alive at this point in time. I don't see any way of honouring that quality except by writing directly out of your own life. It's the real I want to get at, in all its facets, in all its multiplicities.

BETSY: This connects with Julia Penelope Stanley's concept of "minus male" and "plus male". Women have been "minus male" in terms of language, and we occupy a negative semantic space. It seems, in terms of moving from absence to presence, that we have to take up semantic space. We have to speak what hasn't been spoken.

DAPHNE: The absence - which you can translate as the suppressed. In terms of women's actual lives, they have always been cast in the realm of the non-verbal, of things so mundane that they don't bear speaking about. The process of breaking through that suppression in your own life is to realize that even the most (so-called) mundane is valuable.

JANICE: There are two references I think of in terms of that suppression. One is Adrienne Rich's notion of silence as "the amnesia of the unconscious" for women. The second is expressed by Lola Lemire Tostevin's poem about how, once woman's tongue was cut out, "it was easy/to introduce/your difference." This is a double notion of silencing which, in

Adrienne Rich's case, is a willful forgetting on some level, as well as a suppression.

DAPHNE: Louky Bersianak has a chapbook about this. She refers to the evolutionary agensis of memory in women, that there has been an evolutionary erasure of memory. And that first of all, before anything else, we have to recover our memories.

BETSY: I agree totally. For me, etymology is one of the routes to do that. When I'm working, I can't write anything right away because - it's like right brain wandering - I start with one word that has incredible power, and other words which don't seem related start to constellate around it.

DAPHNE: In a sense, it's almost like a racial memory, verified in the recording of the relationships of words to various civilizations. There is also a connection between memory and possibility. The invention of possibility which is utopian allows for a new practice. Once you see a new horizon further out, then you can go a little further towards it. I remember reading Adrienne Rich's love poems on the plane back from Toronto to Vancouver and weeping in the middle of the DC7 because, all of a sudden, I realized a possibility of expression that I'd only dimly felt. And that was mind blowing.

JANICE: I was really pleased to be part of the workshop at A Space; what astounded me was the heterogeneity of the work. Previous to the workshop, we'd all been given a project to prepare a piece of work around the etymology of the word 'woman'. What developed was very different for each of us in terms of performance, poetry and different kinds of texts. It was fascinating.

DAPHNE: If we'd had time, we wanted everyone to do a transformation of their own work. Each of us would pull one feature of her work out and, after having heard everyone else's work, we would take a short time, maybe fifteen minutes, each individually transforming that thread. Then we were going to sit in a circle and ask for one person to start, and it would be like a conversation. Whatever that first person read, whoever had something that spoke to that in some way would bring it forward until everyone had sounded what they had to contribute.

JANICE: That process sounds like a

performance of what you've written about the associative process of writing poetry. In "Musing with Mother tongue", the essay at the end of *Touch*, you write about how "sound will initiate thought", and how this form of thought is "erotic because it works by attraction", a "liking, Germanic *lik-*, body, form; like, same". DAPHNE: That's right, exactly. A performance of the relation, the relating, the relationships, linguistic and psychic I guess, since we all write out of our own psychology. But there is a sense of shared psychology too, and part of what is exciting for women in that experience is their realization of how much of a shared psychology there is.

BETSY: In different terms, one that I'm interested in right now, is that wandering quality in the right brain. I'm doing that more and more in my writing. It's interesting to me that both hemispheres of our brains are developed and equally active until we're about two. I think it's no happenstance that as we learn patriarchal language, the left linear brain takes over.

DAPHNE: It's the streamlining of thought processes through rationality, and that's inescapable unless we start breaking up the syntax which a lot of women writers are doing, particularly in Quebec. The notion of difference as distinct from opposition, as developed in Hélène Cixous' work, is that there is a sliding scale of sexual differences with many forms materialized on it instead of bipolar opposites. You can't really separate sexuality from language, even though we try to talk about them, separate them out. You can't separate audience from writing. I guess the most important aspect of this project, or this undertaking, is to sound how everything is related and to reconstruct, in the face of these horrible separations and dichotomizations, the web, the network, the continual flux, the flowing, from one aspect to another aspect.

JANICE: Betsy, you tend to foreground language itself, so your poems seem to disintegrate while you're reading them. But, both you and Daphne use naturalistic metaphors for the female body. I'm curious about how the poetic convention of seeing woman as landscape - what the feminist literary critic Annette Kolod-

ny has talked about as "the lay of the land", a kind of territorialization of the female body - is worked out differently in your work. Part of the difference is that you are women writers, so there is a different positioning, but...

DAPHNE: Obviously one doesn't want to be stuck with the whole image bank that male writers have given to the female. And yet, it's very dangerous for us to totally deny it because we would then deny an important part of ourselves. Betsy and I have talked about this a lot, and we're trying to reclaim it in a way that is meaningful for us. For instance, if I talk about our sexuality as a hidden ground, then I have to make a distinction between ground that is laid out, gridded, cleared for use, dry land versus unmapped, uncharted, untamed land that is wet and swampy and usually discarded. So there is a difference within the landscape metaphor. I have a strong kinship with the natural and it's important to reinstate that in a way that I feel good about. I think that's partly because I'm rooted in the West Coast, where, yes, I have an urban sensibility, but the city is so close to all that is natural.

BETSY: For me this reclamation has revolved around specific words, and where they've taken me. For instance, one connection I make is between the word 'uterus' and the universe, which is quite different from seeing a woman's body like a hill formation. Looking at our sexuality as the generative source is obviously much more comprehensive. There have also been specific words which have been key words in describing heterosexual union, which I've been able to reclaim by going back to the etymology. For example, etymologically, the word 'intercourse' means "to run between". This word then works for whatever gender the relationships are and it's not naturally specific to heterosexual love relationships. Not that it would be, as a lesbian, one of the words that I'd use most often, but it seemed important to reclaim it.

DAPHNE: I want to add that I don't see any way of getting around the link between the sensory and the earthly, the earthly having to do with fertility, plant and animal growth, and all of that. There is a huge sensorium that we walk in the midst of continually, one which I will not deny just because it's



Daphne Marlatt



been designated as female territory by males. It is female territory, but what I want to do is decolonize it.

JANICE: This word 'sensorium'. In an essay on post-modernism, Frederic Jameson talks about Van Gogh's painting "Peasant Shoes" as a "whole new Utopian realm of the senses", "an act of compensation" for their oppression. When I read that, I thought of how your work speaks a female utopian language.

DAPHNE: In order to decolonize language we have to open it out and see all that can be articulated with that



Nancy Birks

language. It is much larger than the little part traditionally assigned to us. For instance, I think the whole exploration of the word lust - the link between the fertility of the plants and of the planet, the tidal return of the reaching growing yearning - is something that we experience every time we make love. And I don't want to divorce it from its natural basis because I think we do that at our peril. It seems that feminist consciousness is one that understands relationship and continuity, and not just a human one. The anthropocentric consciousness is non-ecological and non-feminist.

BETSY: In a way I agree with you, Janice, about the utopian use of language, but for me this use is also very practical. I'm concerned about warfare and economic tyranny all over the world, and I feel that the reason we stand up to read these poems is that there is a feminist sensibility that has been oppressed and absent. I want to make that present to people, and to me this is contributing to a shift I'd like to

see in the world to get us back in balance. The words and sensibility I'm trying to reclaim in this book speak an urgent desire, saying "This has to be present or its over."

I realized that once I was able to say, as I did in my second book, "I am a lesbian," I felt that I could say anything. In my new book I'm addressing my concern around the nuclear holocaust, and I don't think I could have done it before I grounded myself in my own body, and my own eroticism, and started to reclaim the words which enabled me to speak. To ground

ourselves in the erotic is, for me, to be connected to the spiritual, and by going to that generative positive source, we can look at the horrors which threaten us every day.

DAPHNE: Also, as the Quebecoise writers have shown, the utopian is essential as a celebration and an alternative vision to what surrounds us politically. It's clearly present in their writing; all of them approach the utopian in various ways. The only way we can join together is in an affirmative vision, not a negative one. That's the importance of the utopian.

BETSY: I think there must be a conviction in all of us, whether we speak it or not, that the utopian is not only a fabrication, but also a memory in our tissues, a memory of some place that we have been centuries or civilizations ago. So there is that kind of time warp for me. It's not only a futuristic thing, it is somehow connected to where we've come from.

DAPHNE: Or else it's a possibility that runs beside us all the time, and

which we can't see. We have yet to invent the ways of reaching out to it to be there.

BETSY: I feel that I have been there. JANICE: I want to ask you to talk about the titles of each of your books.

DAPHNE: Well, I didn't know what to call my book. At that point it wasn't a book, but a sequence of poems. I said to Betsy, "I have this problem; I don't know what to call these poems. I think they should come from some phrase in the poems." She went through the poems and she picked up phrases that she liked. And out of a long list we both liked "touch to my tongue".

BETSY: I was reading *The Moon and the Virgin* by Nor Hall and I came across the phrase "open is broken" embedded in a sentence. It had a tremendous power for me. I was working with breaking the language open. I think that in order to open places for us, we have to do a lot of breaking.

DAPHNE: I should say more about the tongue. It's the major organ which touches all the different parts of the mouth to make the different sounds - tongue as speech organ. Also, the tongue is a major organ in making love between women. It's an erotic organ and the intertwining of eroticism and speech - lovemaking as a form of organ speech, and poetry as a form of verbal speech.

JANICE: What is your writing's relation to 'sex talk'? We've had institutionalized ways of talking about sex, ways of talking about women's desire - books on "how to have orgasms, how not to have orgasms..." How is the sex talk different in your writing?

BETSY: It's not talk about. It's not 'sex talk'. It's a place that we go to and that we're writing from. I don't get that feeling from most popular or psychological analyses of sexual experience.

DAPHNE: For me, it's not a talking about, but it's a speaking out of. I think of it as an announcing, something that moves through the language. It moves through your body at the same moment as it moves through the language. And it speaks out.

BETSY: I think we've been using new words, or using words that have been used, but using them in another way. I'm naming what this place is like, and that makes all the difference. We, as erotic, sensual, loving human beings have to name what that place is like and the words that are the landmarks

there.

DAPHNE: I'm not sure that I see it as a place because 'place' implies something outside of you, and I don't think it's outside.

BETSY: Oh no, it's a place inside of me.

DAPHNE: You're speaking metaphorically of it. I don't know...space...place...I have to speak of it more in speaking terms...

BETSY: In terms of speaking terms, 'text' shares the same root as tissue.

DAPHNE: ...body tissue...

BETSY: It has to do with the flux we were talking about earlier. For example, one of the words that had power for me was 'surrender'; I felt uncomfortable with its horrible connotations. Then, when I went back and found out that it meant 'to deliver, to completely set free', that's how it felt. It was the opposite from our contemporary usage of the word.

Women have images or words coming up in our minds that we continue to censor and abandon. They don't feel appropriate, and we don't trust them. Also, for women, it's very difficult to break out of the passive position or, as Daphne said, the "being careful" in heterosexual relationships. It can be done, I'm not saying it can't. But for me, never knowing who is going to feel the need to be weaker, to be nurtured, to surrender more, or who's going to feel more aggressive, centred, is very much like life. Because everybody finds sex scary when it comes down to it, what happens in general sex expectations - and s/m and pornography - is an attitude of "we want fixed positions". It's one of the ways we try to deal with our fears, so we'll know what to expect. But what life is really like is a total unpredictability and flux. When people go to that 'place' together, they talk about it in another language, in a different way. I don't think that 'sex talk' is coming from that place.

JANICE: Barthes talks about the pornographic photograph as unary, and the erotic as fissured or disrupted.

DAPHNE: I think that you can't attempt to delineate, to define the erotic, to capture it in still terms. The pornographic always implies a domination of some kind. It's the object set to somebody's use. Whereas the erotic is a moving outward, and simply shows itself. It lies outside the bounds of

domination and use. That's the problem when we're talking about language - we're really talking about two completely different uses of language.

BETSY: And probably can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It has that multifaceted reading.

JANICE: I want to get back to the relation of your writing to reading, the speaking of your language. Betsy, when you read the last poem of *Open Is Broken*, the typography on the page of a series of end brackets marks the speaker's inhalation and exhalation. When you actually perform the poem there is an amazing sensation of pulsation, and of a different kind of flux. And Daphne, you talk about how your poetry looks like prose, but reads like poetry. It's also extraordinarily pulsating language, and reminds me of what Kristeva talks about as the 'semiotic', as something outside the Symbolic, an interruption or, perhaps, an intervention.

DAPHNE: When Kristeva is talking about the semiotic and the symbolic, isn't she talking about the symbolic in terms of the fixed? That is, how the symbolic as symbolic has come to be recognized operating in our language. And the semiotic lies, again, outside the bounds of that. It's what is recognized in the immediacy of coming to it. Whereas the symbolic is always prescribed in some way.

When I'm writing, I'm writing it as I'm hearing it. It comes out in those short bursts. Sometimes it takes a while, sometimes it's very rapid. But, I'm not too concerned with it on the page. When I was writing verse, when I was using the space of the page, then it would get in the way of the words coming out, so that I was getting myself more and more into a straight jacket worrying about how it looked on the page, as much as how it was sounding. Now I find it much simpler, all I have to worry about is the punctuation. I use the punctuation as indications of rhythmic breaks. I'm concerned with how it sounds, with how you speak it, and how it can be heard. I think my writing is fairly oral. What most intrigues me is what I think of as the sound body of the work. What kinds of sounds bounce off, echo off, call up other sounds. How the rhythms elongate or slow down, or suddenly pick up and run. All of that is of as

much concern to me as the content or meaning. I don't think you can separate them. A word calls up another word as much by its sound as by its meaning.

BETSY: Reading the work is essential to the writing. Every time you read a poem in public it's like you've never read it before, it's read in a different way. So you're always finding something out yourself as you're reading. Also, for me, it has a lot to do with space. Literally, the work on the page. Daphne was saying that each word is like a talisman...

DAPHNE: Dropped into a well of silence...

Daphne Marlatt began writing during her association with the B.C. Tish group between 1960 and 1964. Her first book, *Frames: of a Story* was published in 1968. She has published twelve books of poems, and her work, both poetry and critical, has been published widely in Canada and in the U.S. She is co-editor of *Tessera*, a journal of feminist literary criticism, and is currently writing her first novel.

Betsy Warland began writing twelve years ago in Toronto. She helped develop the Toronto Women's Writing Collective which met during the seventies initiating a number of feminist projects including: *Fireweed*, *Writers in Dialogue* and *The Women's Salon*. Her first book was published in 1981, just before she began organising *Women and Words* 1983, the first cross-Canada conference/workshop of women writers which took place in Vancouver in July of that year. She is working on a new book of poems and is the West Coast editor of *Herizons* magazine.

Janice Williamson is currently writing her thesis on feminist poetics at York University. She is a member of the editorial collective of *Borderlines*.

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# Examining Blueprints for a Colour Positive Culture

HEATHER ALLIN

DURING OCTOBER 11-17, 1984, Toronto witnessed the "First Anti-Racist Film Festival in English Canada". *Colour Positive, An International Anti-Racist Film Festival*, was much more than a festival of cultures, a conscious effort to expose racism in our society, an education in the experience of racism, or a visible expression of rights denied. It was an attempt to give voice to peoples of colour whose experiences, daily life, representation and value, have been excluded from much of commercial culture. The festival was organised by DEC Films (Development Education Centre), with help from an advisory board representing "people from across the city, active in fighting racism", and a working group which included representatives from the communities where films were screened. These groups outlined the aims and objectives, the structure for programming and the criteria for film selection.

ACCORDING TO A DEC PRESS release, *Colour Positive* was initiated:

- To develop an understanding of how Racism works,
- To provide a forum for key issues and preoccupations facing our various communities.
- To exhibit important works by third world/minority filmmakers, trying to control our own image,
- To involve participation in producing a festival not about our communities but for our communities,
- To develop ideas of how to work to fight racism,
- To draw links between racism [in Canada] and in other countries.

\*Quotations in this article, unless otherwise indicated, are from the people who work at DEC Films or from their press releases.

Barbara Emmanuel who works at DEC Films said that the reason for the festival was "lack of exposure for films by and about people of colour... We had this idea quite a few years ago and have been keeping our eyes open for films of this nature for a long time... But it's really a basic recognition of the fact that we've not reached out in a conscious way to that community... as effectively as we'd like to. A number of films which we distribute would be classified anti-racist but we've never managed to make it as conscious as this."

Traditional film festivals in Toronto "have been organised and attended by [an] elite." *Colour Positive* was unique in that strong emphasis was placed on involvement with community centres. The overall structure of the film screenings had an importance which could not be divorced from the films themselves. The method of organising the festival had a great effect on the direction, aims and objectives, and functioning of the festival as a whole. The organisers wanted the festival to make us "think, talk and get involved", and its organising structure reflected



from *Colour Positive* promo poster, courtesy DEC films

their conscious efforts to build links between communities.

Members of some communities were supportive of enough of the idea of the festival that they participated in the "working group" - an intermediary group between DEC and the communities. This structure ensured the possibility of 'self-government' for the communities with respect to the festival. Of the twelve locations chosen for the film screenings half were theatres and cultural centres and the other half were community centres and libraries. DEC placed their emphasis in time and money on programming within the community centres. This programming was done either by or with the community itself.

The existence of an advisory board shows DEC's own desire that they not assume control of the festival. "Particularly because the people who work at DEC Films are white", this structure was an attempt to establish a working relationship with people of colour. Members of the advisory board, initially contacted by DEC, included representatives from the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Chinese community, the Board of Education's race relations division, the Native Peoples community and various representatives from the Black communities. The board was primarily involved in defining the aims and objectives of the festival, directing the political focus and often served as a liaison between DEC and the communities.

A few of the members of the advisory board hoped the film festival would be a catalyst for generating film production. This desire was reinforced by the three filmmakers, Chris Spotted-Eagle (U.S.), Michelle Parkerson (U.S.) and Premica Ratnam (Toronto) who were present at the screenings of their works. The filmmakers, in particular, actively encouraged the people in the audience to make their own films.

The hope that more people of colour would produce films reflects the board members' concerns about "popular" media, i.e., the overall racism of "mass" or commercial media. Commercial media largely excludes people of colour. When they are represented, the representations are usually racist clichés.

The *Colour Positive* festival gave evidence of some of the ways in which

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1985



from *Burning an Illusion* (England)

mass media and popular culture practice racism. The news media, for example, validates opinions when given by authorities or people in power; working class people, women, political activists and minority races are generally pigeon-holed within this context. In many of the films shown at this festival, these people spoke. Another operative is the omission, or control, of representations. This fact was often pointed to and examined in the festival's programming. *How Hollywood Wins the West*; *Great Movie Massacre* and *Illusions* all dealt with misrepresentations and constructions of stereotyped images by commercial media and mass culture. A third case in point was to be seen in the sheer number of good films which were programmed (not to mention the ones which weren't shown this time 'round). The absence of such work in the mainstream media is evidence of its exclusion.

According to Barbara, the involvement of communities varied. "Some of the community groups...made the decisions themselves, developed their own

promotional materials, with our assistance, making the event their own. Others would have preferred us to be a stronger voice in recommending the programme for that community, and doing the promotion for them...Film selection and programming, we realize in retrospect, does take some skill and experience. There is quite a delicate balance between the democratic process that is essential for communities (for all of us)" and the power and control which experience inevitably wields.

The Regent Park community groups were excited by the idea of programming films in this context. They felt that the context was politically positive and that the skills, expertise and resources available would give them a larger than usual return on the labour that they would invest in a cultural activity of this scope. Choosing from the variety of films which DEC had researched and found, the decisions were made entirely within the community. The scheduling and programming were done in consultation with DEC. In my conversation with people from the Regent Park pro-

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courtesy of DEC Films



gramming group, Gayle Levins began the explanation of how their involvement came about:

**GAYLE LEVANS:** Contact was made through me, [for Regent Park] and a letter was written to the Residents' Association, who got in touch with the Teen Association, that Karen [St. Louis] works with and the *Black Perspectives* programme, that Max [Pitt] works with. The idea was that those three organizations host part of the festival in Regent Park - in conjunction, of course, with DEC.

**MAX PITT:** We all worked on finding a place, and doing the flyers. The flyer part was tough.

**HEATHER ALLIN:** Was that because it was hard to figure out how to present the festival?

**KAREN SAINT LOUIS:** Oh no, we figured out how to do it, it was just a matter of getting it printed, and having it distributed throughout the Park, and being short a couple of thousand flyers and having it out too late. Had it been done earlier, [the festival] would have had a better response.

**HEATHER:** Why wasn't it done earlier?

**KAREN:** Because of the lack of flyers, and funds to do the flyers and all the stuff that goes with it.

**GAYLE:** The budget for the programme of *Black Perspectives*, the Residents' Association and the Teen Association are pretty minimal. Each budget by no means covers what it should or what's needed. So an agreement was made with DEC that they would cover costs for production of the flyer. But one of the things we didn't think about passing on to them was the size of this community.

**KAREN:** 2,200 [people live here].

**GAYLE:** DEC just hadn't been prepared for that, and they had a lot of expenses associated with the festival right across the city.

**KAREN:** They did one batch. To get out [a second], they had to rearrange the flyers so it would cut down the cost, 'cause it was costing them an arm and a leg, and they didn't have that money.

**GAYLE:** And neither did we.

**KAREN:** And the flyers had to get out there somehow.

**HEATHER:** What was it that interested you about taking it on as a project?

[silence]

Is that a stupid question?

**MAX:** No it's not a stupid question. It's a very interesting question. When I first heard of the film festival, I said, I hope with this one I can sit back and relax; but I guess I was wrong...

**CARL WILSON:** It was to show residents in Regent Park some of the stuff that the committees are doing, and to get their input.

**GAYLE:** There's a lot of struggles that resident organizations go through. [We thought it would be something] people would enjoy, for a break, instead of battling it out with the bureaucrats over a community centre... To do something different and more positive.

As Carl was saying, this community is composed of many different groups of people. The Residents' and Teen Associations' want to be associations for all of the community. We hoped to be able to raise the profile of the three groups, which are resident-initiated and to show films that would be of interest to different groups of people in the community. I think we succeeded in doing that.

Of the three film programmes at Regent Park, two had filmmakers pre-

sent, and one had a performance by *Black Perspectives*, a broad-based cultural group, composed of people from the Park. The filmmakers and the live performance provided a springboard for discussion.

This aspect of politicization or of "making connections" through discussion was important to organizers.

**KAREN:** [We were looking for] things that people could relate to, or have some understanding of, or was a reflection of their cultural, financial, or educational experiences. Something that they could say, "well yes I understand that"...something that would interest them, and that represented the interests of the people in the Park.

**CARL:** Also we wanted to show other cultures. One evening we showed films about Native Peoples. [The films] showed the bad things that people have done to Indians, and how everybody grows up watching westerns and thinking that the Indians are bad. A movie like that [*The Great Movie Massacre*] explains how things get turned around...and tells the truth about them. That was good for people from the Regent Park area to see.

Also, people came from Sherbourne and from Parliament Street...so if they've come once, they know about Regent Park area, and about the Residents' Association, and they might come and help.

**GAYLE:** The issue, as Carl says, of media distortions about people or omission of positive aspects of different cultures, is a big problem. People have become really used to having the truth about them *not* told, and that's true here too. We were also looking for films that would somehow show people working together overcoming problems that they have in common, because that's what these associations are about. **CARL:** Yeah, and so that people can identify issues, in order to fight for those issues...

**HEATHER:** As a politicizing tool?

**CARL:** It's got to be, well it doesn't have to be, but remember they're residents and they're political too, fighting for their rights in this society, right? In the sense that we're just fighting for our rights, and issues that affect us.

**HEATHER:** What sort of response did you get from the people who came?

**CARL:** The night that Chris Spotted-



from *Home Feeling* (Canada)

Eagle was present, there were lots of questions asked. People were pouring out lots of opinions. That night was a success. The first night we had around 30 people, then they would go and tell their friends about the movies showing in Regent Park and the next day we had an even better turnout.

**MAX:** The second and third nights, 75 to 100 people.

**GAYLE:** And *Black Perspectives* did a performance on the last night of the festival.

**MAX:** The performance was a success. We did a piece called "Black" - music and poetry.

**GAYLE:** Also that night the filmmaker of *Burning Bridges* (Premika Ratnam) was there. The theme that evening was women, which was also a focus in part of "Black".

**HEATHER:** How did you structure the evenings?

**KAREN:** We programmed so that we would have enough time for guest speakers or performers or whatever.

**HEATHER:** Was there discussion each night?

**KAREN:** The first night, yeah, because Chris was there and a lot of questions were thrown at him.

**MAX:** And the more interesting the answer, the more interesting the next question was, and it would keep going and going and going.

**GAYLE:** With both his life and his work experience, it was easy for people who have tried to work in organizing in this community to relate. People who live here put an incredible amount into their associations.



left to right: Carl Wilson, Karen Saint Louis, Max Pitt, Gayle Levans



tickets, and the final tab was picked up by DEC.

Barbara described some of the difficulties in the selection of films. "We have been doing the research for a number of years..." Programming in the community centres was based on "reviews and promotional material put out by the filmmakers" and a few previews. "It ended up that communities were having to make decisions about films based on our recommendations, or by going on trust that the film sounded interesting and worthwhile [from the promo material]. There were a few mistakes made - where communities would not have chosen a particular film had they been able to see it before".

Even though programmers made a conscious effort to find and show films by women (in fact these films accounted for almost one-half of the programme) there were still films which excluded women's voices. One example was the Australian film, *On Sacred Ground*. The film depicted Aboriginal peoples' struggles against the attempts of oil companies to mine on their sacred burial grounds. It was an interesting documentary depicting the experience of organizing against State and corporate power. But during the 50 minute film, only men spoke. The exclusion of women's voices here was, however, to my mind, a stigma attached to the filmmakers rather than to the organisers of the festival.

Of the films I saw, an overwhelming number were documentaries. One documented the life and murder of Annie Mae Asquash, a native activist whose murder was covered up by the FBI; another documented the daily experiences of illegal immigrants in Canada, and a number of films depicted struggles of the Black communities in Britain organizing against police harassment, immigration laws, media misrepresentation and stereotyping.

With such a strong emphasis on documentary films, I was curious to know the criteria for selection. According to Barbara, there was a systematic approach which began with "wanting to look at the roots of racism. By including historical films, say on the history of colonialism and moving into current issue, we could begin to develop an analysis of racism as being institutionally based... We wanted to find films that were critiquing... racism in the



from *But Then She's Betty Carter*

school systems and immigration policies - in the institutions of Canadian society while at the same time celebrating the various cultures. Some of the films were more critical or confrontational while others were very much celebratory...music or cultural films.

"We wanted to go beyond the sense of sharing cultures...we wanted to create a debate" and to start connecting separate issues of racism together, making the links into viable stepping stones toward an understanding of racism, in order to fight against it.

The name *Colour Positive* initially suggested to me a festival of films made by people of colour (which weren't necessarily about racism). Along with documentary films, I was expecting to see dramatic films, fiction films, experimental films...films made by people of colour which were anti-racist, but which might be about more than the experience of racism. All of the films I saw, with one exception, were about racism or anti-racism. Even the "cultural" and "music" films that I saw, such as *But Then She's Betty Carter*; *Gotta Make This Journey - Sweet Honey in the Rock* and *Dread Beat an' Blood*, were documentary films. Had there been more dramatic/fiction films, the festival might have stressed more implicitly the fact that racism is not a problem for people of colour to solve. We, white folk, have a lot to do with it. Because the films centred on

people speaking against racism, I was concerned that this emphasis would reproduce the notion that people of colour are defined within the boundaries of discussions around racism. The one exception, *My Perfumed Nightmare* (Philippines), stepped outside this categorization. It was a wonderful experimental/narrative film. It combined fantasy and reality, a sense of humour and an analysis of third world exploitation.

In all cases, the festival guide provided no clear indication of who the filmmakers were in relation to their subjects. Though, according to Barbara, most filmmakers were in fact of the group that was being portrayed in the film. In many cases, I felt that the films were directed at a white audience - 'these things happen to these people and you are a part of the problem' types of film. But in retrospect, I think that when I felt, 'white audience intended', it was because I was in a predominantly white audience. The social and cultural customs implicit in a racist society create places where minority races are excluded while whites feel at home. This is a more subtle form of racism. For example, at the Bloor Cinema, audiences were predominantly white, while when I went to screenings at the Regent Park or Parkdale community centres, I, as a white woman, was in the minority. The Bloor Cinema is located in the Annex (a middle to upper-middle class neighbourhood next to the University of Toronto). It is a repertory cinema that shows Hollywood and European films (fiction and rock music). Regent Park and Parkdale are lower working class neighbourhoods in Toronto.

*Colour Positive* was billed as an "International Anti-Racist Film Festival." There was a connection being made between racism and the fundamental structures of our society - that is, racism as a function of institutional power, be it corporate or governmental. Parallels drawn between institutionalized racism, colonialism and imperialist attitudes were made explicit in such films as *When the Mountains Tremble*; *Blacks Britainica*; *Patu*; *Lousy Little Sixpence* and *Season of Thunder*, to name a few. These films depicted, respectively: the relationship of the Guatemalan government to the

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IN PREPARING TO WRITE THIS ARTICLE, I INTERVIEWED A NUMBER OF people who were involved, to greater or lesser extents, in the organization and planning of the *Colour Positive* festival. I have drawn upon these conversations in the development and writing of "Blueprints". In addition, I would like to include here, excerpts from interviews with Dionne Brand and Richard Fung, who worked in conjunction with DEC during the pre-festival period, and also attended many of the film screenings.

## An Interview with Dionne Brand

HEATHER ALLIN: How did you find out about *Colour Positive*?

DIONNE BRAND: Someone from DEC contacted me about it. I think that they were aware that I was co-authoring a book about racism in Canada, in Toronto, for the Cross Cultural Communications Centre, me and my co-author Krisantha Sri Bhagiyadatta. Also I have worked in the Black community for a number of years ever since leaving school. But someone from DEC contacted me, told me about the films and asked if I would be interested. [Anti-racism is] certainly an area that I do a lot of work in, it's simply a part of my life, partly because of who I am - a Black woman. It's something that hits you every day so it's certainly necessary to deal with it.

It is something that you cannot not take up if you are Black. It may be something that you can postpone, but it's not something that you can't take up. It is something that has to do with your life all the time. It is an historical question and I'm also a writer and it is part of my historical directive to take it up. There is an imperative, given who I am in the world, given the history of the peoples that I come from, to take up racism, because it is an issue in our lives, one has, necessarily, to deal with it.

HEATHER: Did you have an idea of how the festival would affect your community, or other communities?

DIONNE: Sure. I think there is only so much that a film festival can do in struggling against racism. This is not the primary vehicle, but it adds to the discourse. Having those issues raised again adds to the struggle in some kind of a way. Racism is not something that goes away because there aren't public incidents. Racism is part of the culture that we live in - the world culture that has been built around it or that has

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utilized it as a way or organizing people.

HEATHER: Maybe you could expand a bit more on that notion of racism as a way of organising the world. I assume that you are referring to 'colonialism' and 'imperialism'.

DIONNE: Precisely. It is a tool that has been used to organise people, not only through their labour, and as a means for exploiting their labour, but also socially. It's an economic, social and political tool of organisation. Within an imperialist mode of operating the world. So it is not something that goes away, simply because we do not have an incident of a Black person being beaten up or some Black person being publically chastised. It is part of the way we communicate with each other.

The film festival only adds to our constantly having to raise racism as an issue, and constantly having to object to it and struggle against it. This is one of the ways you can do it. It's not marching in the streets, it's not protesting, it's not even attacking more precisely the powers which operate using racism but it is something.

HEATHER: It seemed to me that there

were two kinds of films included in the programme. There were educational (dealing with racism as an institution and/or as incidents) and seemed to be intended for those of us who don't experience racism; and the other kind were those which generated feelings of solidarity and expanded the scope beyond individual incidents - showing that people everywhere experience racism, that it's not an individual thing.

DIONNE: Yes, for example, someone might say, "what do the struggles in Guatemala have to do with racism?" And they have a whole lot to do with it! They have a whole lot to do with the way in which, under this imperialistic mode, people are organised, and what kinds of things are used against them in their struggle to organize themselves, and in exploiting their labour and their sense of themselves as a part of humanity.

Much of what goes along with racism is dehumanization of the person. So I think that what some of the material in the film festival did was to make connections between the various faces of exploitation. And how these are connected with some kind of basic racist ideology.

HEATHER: Do you think that people from other communities cross-referenced, and came to films which didn't pertain directly to themselves?

DIONNE: I didn't attend all of them, but I know that, this is not my experience but, even if one did not experience racism in their countries of origin, and there are some communities like the Chinese or South Asian, who may not have experienced racism in quite the same way as it is expressed in North America, that once they live in North America, it galvanizes one to look for one's natural allies, or who would become one's natural allies, in a struggle against that kind of exploitation, so sure. I think that the various communities are

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aware of those kinds of connections, because if you look at struggles around education for example, you will see that there are already parents who are engaged in the struggle against racism in the school systems, in the curriculum, in terms of streaming. People already make those connections, and in the ways in which people approach the state, be it social services or the police, and so on. Our communities

HEATHER: Did you have any part in selecting the films?

DIONNE: Not really, I got a batch of the film listings and descriptions and so on and suggested a few. But I never had the sort of time to do the screening.

HEATHER: In evaluating, in retrospect, what was really successful?

DIONNE: That it happened!

No seriously, who else would do it, you know? Also they had good crowds

limited amount of time, for example, that my community has to show itself, to see itself on film. If we raise ambiguities in a film, and if this is the *only* film that is going to be shown, and if we raise our own ambiguous lives in it – because it is *not* 'mainstream film' where, for example, white people constantly see themselves on film and they see their ambiguities repeated, they see themselves variously – we, because of the limited number of films that we get to make, or that are made about us, we do not always have the opportunity to show ourselves variously. So what happens is that you end up sometimes with stereotypes. "Oh that's how they are", because everybody is trying to find a definition, you see? Every film that we make has to be perfect, has to express and resolve everything in the 90 minutes. And that's the difficulty of living in a racist society where you don't get opportunities to show yourself in various kinds of ways. So every one picture that appears of you is you. For example, in the newspapers, when someone commits a crime, if it is a Black person, you see a large photograph and what that means, in terms of what is communicated, is the kind of historical image of Black people. However, when we do something else, that does not appear. And so we do not get a chance to show ourselves in the different, in the intricate, in the daily life experience.

But whites in this city get to read their lives from their politicians to their dogs... Your whole fucking life is on this sheet of paper, but mine isn't. So when we deal with media of any kind, it's very tricky. There is a lot of pressure, because if we are not perfect it will be mistaken for the stereotype.

Having discussions after some of the films would mean that we could talk about some of those difficulties.

HEATHER: Do you think that the number and variety of films were representative of Black culture?

DIONNE: They could never be. Think about the amount of films that have been made about Black people in the world and the ones that have been made about white people. They could never represent how we live. They can represent particular portions of how we live, certain things about how we live, certain encounters that we have, but never all of them.

Even to show a film about Black

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people within the context of an anti-racist film festival categorizes our lives already. So those are the only places where our lives appear – even then, even trying as hard as that. This slots you into only a particular realm of human activity. These are the intricacies of having to deal with racism all the time. You only appear on the human stage when you deal with it. Because the human stage is sketched and conducted by people whose interests are not yours. For example in the theatre, when does a Black person get a role?

HEATHER: When they need a Black person.

DIONNE: But when they need a guy who's 50, they use 'anyone' [sic]. It's when they need a prop, not a human being.

At the *Festival of Festivals* I saw a film called *Camera d'Afrique* (Twenty Years of African Cinema) which was about African Filmmaking. I wish I could see more of that, because I realize how I miss seeing myself on the screen. I miss having an image. It's as if you own things when you can make images of yourself.

I think we need as many tools as possible to struggle against racism, and the book [which I worked on] and the film festival were two of the ways of validating, as you say, people's experiences – of understanding that it has an economic, a political and a cultural foundation in the way we live. The tendency has been to think that racism is only a few things like name-calling, or incidents with the police – we, in the Black community, have a special relationship with the police. Other communities have relationships with other state bodies. So in doing a lot of work, I've found that people think that racism is some incident (the things that become news in the imperialist media, because that's what it is, it's imperialist media, not mainstream, 'cause the mainstream is working class people). In the absence of those incidents, they think there is no racism. People even think that if there were no Black people there would be no racism, but that's not true. That's how this country was built, on the backs of Black people, or by ripping somebody off. It is the presence of a particular kind of system that causes racism. Racism is all kinds of shit. □

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## An Interview with Richard Fung

HEATHER ALLIN: How did you get involved in *Colour Positive*?

RICHARD FUNG: All of my work has had something to do with either media or racism. The people at DEC were familiar with the things that I had done, and the type of things that interested me.

Recently I've been working with the Toronto Board of Education in the office of the advisor on race relations. I was contacted by DEC because they were setting up an advisory committee composed of people of colour or people who had worked on racism, who they knew.

HEATHER: Did you think that *Colour Positive* could do something that was unique?

RICHARD: Yeah, first of all the medium of film has a lot of potential for reaching out. When they approached me with the idea of doing work in community centres, I thought it was great because this festival was going to take films out to where people were, rather than expecting them to come to a film festival. It looked like they were really thinking about how structures of communication work, and I was impressed with that.

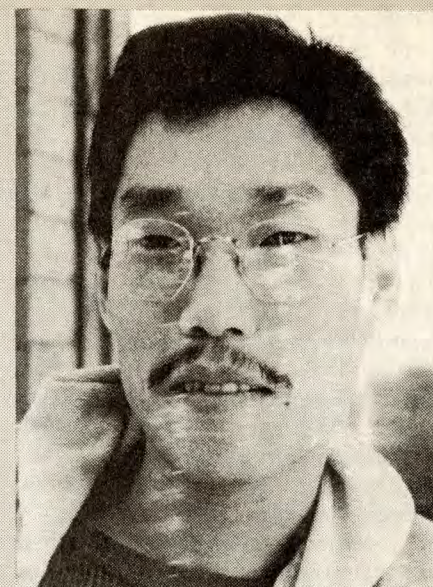
HEATHER: Did you play any liaisoning role between DEC and a particular community?

RICHARD: Not with a particular community...I'm of Chinese origin, but from Trinidad. So I have certain kinds of contacts in the Chinese community and also in the West Indian community. I ended up actually working with DEC...for a few weeks before the festival, doing a lot of media outreach and co-ordination.

HEATHER: Did you have a part in choosing the films?

RICHARD: To a certain extent. People tend to think a festival, any film festival is far more organized than it really is. I know that a lot of things are finalized a day before the festival. So whenever a film came in they would contact me, or I would [phone and] ask them, and if I had time I would go in and have a look at it. So because most of [the board members] are very, very busy, I actually ended up being one of the few who actually looked at the films.

HEATHER: What was it that you



Heather Allin

were looking for when you screened the films?

RICHARD: That they raised the issue of racism well, that they raised it in a constructive way, related to the Canadian situation, did not fall into traps of 'my issue is better than your issue', that they didn't raise issues of racism at the expense of other issues like sexism, or homophobia or national chauvinism... that they were accessible and weren't boring.

HEATHER: In evaluating the festival what do you think was successful?

RICHARD: That it was done! For people to see a whole festival on the issue of racism helps to legitimize your experience. For me, it also helped to maintain, or increase my enthusiasm as a producer of works on these issues. And because the issues were covered in such a broad way. There was stuff on sports, on entertainment and on different ways that racism enters peoples lives.

I was really warmed by the number of people that came out, and the audience reaction. I didn't get any negative responses about the festival actually. Some people had questions about the films, which is great, because I have never seen 'the perfect film'. I was really glad that people were taking the films seriously. I was just sorry that the filmmakers couldn't hear [the criticisms] – especially filmmakers who made films which raised very thorny issues, and should have heard those criticisms.

HEATHER: I was wondering if there was any mechanism where the filmmakers could hear some of the com-

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already know about racism. In the Black community, you don't need to show them a film to tell them about racism, nor the Chinese nor the South East Asian, or anything like that. But it's a beginning. It can build from there. You're never sure that the people who need to know these things are getting to know them.

HEATHER: What was your particular role?

DIONNE: Well I was on the advisory committee which had a mandate to look at the films and to make contact with other community groups, which DEC may not have been in touch with or which people on the advisory committee may have been closer to. So, I did a lot of things like lead people to people, like people in my community, who would sponsor the films or would sponsor the whole festival. And at a couple of the screenings, I did some of the introductions. I guess I was a kind of touch stone for people in my own community, to answer questions about whether these films would be suitable as a way of saying certain things.

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ments and criticisms, perhaps using some of the evaluation papers that were handed out at the end of the screenings. Do you know if that is being made possible?

**RICHARD:** Actually that hasn't been discussed, but it's a very good idea. We should send some of those evaluations to the filmmakers.

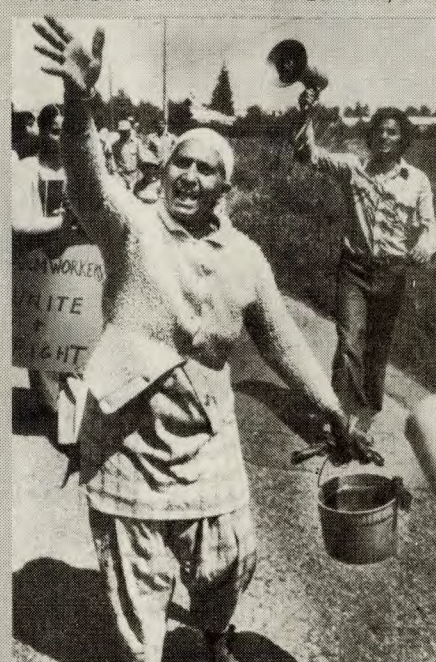
Getting back to what I thought was successful. *Gotta Make This Journey*; *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, I think is one of the nicest video [tapes] or film pieces I've seen because *Sweet Honey* is so incredible and because Michelle Parkerson's film was such a good vehicle for them and who they are. I thought that film was interesting.

I work with the Board of Ed, where we take students from the city [on retreats] to a camp for 4 to 5 days and talk about race relations and racism. *Gotta Make This Journey* was telling Black kids, any kid who sees it, that you do have a stake in education, and when you do become educated it doesn't mean that you have to give up [fighting racism]. One of the main issues for Black parents or Chinese parents...is the issue of streaming. When kids get to be a certain age, [school authorities] decide whether they get to go into technical programs or [into academic programs]. When families come here from, for example, the West Indies, and kids haven't been brought up speaking standard Canadian English or because of cultural differences, people assume we're not as bright as we may be. Instead of encouraging students and working with them, education is lowered to what is imagined to be their level. I think this happens to a lot of working class kids as well. So getting kids to feel like they should study, that education has something to offer them, is important. The video [about *Sweet Honey in the Rock*] seemed to balance the ideas that you have to try and make it even though there is racism, and that once you have made it, you should be working at helping other people and politicizing other people. I think that the best of the work in the festival did that kind of work.

**HEATHER:** What wasn't so successful?

**RICHARD:** I had very few criticisms, given that I know the kinds of personal and financial resources that were available. First of all, the government

should have given lots more money. And it should give more money to filmmakers so that we could have more films in the festival. DEC really needed ten more people working on the festival full time and being paid to do that work. That would have meant that the communities would have been more involved. Some of the communities were left out, for example, the West Indian community. They experience a lot of the very direct kinds of racism, a lot of harassment; there were very few films done about their issues. We managed to get one film called *A Town Under Siege*, about South Hall [an area of London, England], and we had *A Time To Rise* from Canada, and



*A Time to Rise* (Canada)

a new film by a Toronto woman, Premika Ratnam about South Asian women called *Burning Bridges*. In talking with friends at the community centres, they said that it was very difficult to organize the community to get them out to the screenings. That is something I would have liked to work on a bit more, [promotion and encouraging involvement].

If you are developing a film festival for non film buffs, you have to conceptualize it in a completely different way. We did some of those things, like having the community screenings...but also, we still had the normal way of organizing a film festival in our heads, because no one has ever done this kind of festival before. If you are trying to reach people for whom film is not a

priority, you have to imagine that people will only see two or three films, so you have to do your p.r. and programming differently. If you're interested in the Japanese/Asian films, for example, some of those were programmed back to back and if you wanted to see them all, you'd be [in the cinema] all day, and for most people who aren't filmgoers, that is difficult. Programming strategically to connect the issues which were dealt with in the individual films would make clear that racism is not only between whites and people of colour. There are also the different kinds of racism that happen within and among these communities as well, sometimes because of historical tensions - for example, between the Chinese and the Japanese because of the war...or things that have developed here in Canada, because governments or whatever benefit from these kinds of race relations.

**HEATHER:** Cross referencing different films might have made that distinction clearer, and pointed to the old divide and rule...

**RICHARD:** Yes. It would be good to do those mixes strategically and to highlight films that analyze that. Christine Choy's films actually tried to show how the government pitted the Black population against the Chinese population over housing, by bringing South East Asian refugees into Black communities that were already overcrowded.

Another problem was that the mainstream media didn't pick up on the festival. People who were interested in the issue personally took it up, but it wasn't entertainment people who did these things. It was a large event in Toronto terms and the fact that it was given such poor coverage is really an outrage. And it's not because we didn't try.

I think that often, the way the media works is to ghettoize issues: this week it's abortion, next week child abuse, and the next week it might be racism. If those things come up in the wrong sequence, they feel they've already done that issue. Also, they see racism as an issue for people of colour, when in fact it's not. It's the way the media is organized, and the way that people are structured in school. It's easier to continue that way than to think about organizing things in a different way. □

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exploitation of the Guatemalan people, as supported by U.S. foreign aid; the use of the military and police forces to suppress organising actions by black peoples in Britain; the New Zealand government's use of military personnel and tactics to suppress demonstrations protesting the touring of a rugby team from Apartheid South Africa; the buying of Aboriginal children to function as house maids and house boys in Australia in the early 1900's; and Philippine peasants organizing against the appropriation of their land by the Marcos regime, for the construction of dams which would provide energy to U.S.-based multinationals operating in the Philippines.

Imperialism was cited often as both a cause and a method of continuing racism. Intrinsic to racism are attitudes which imperialism thrives upon, for example, extreme exploitation of labour, particularly in third world and non-white countries.

Because of these things, I was struck by the irony of such a high concentration of U.S.-made films. Of the 55 films listed on the schedule, 25 were from the U.S. (see graph). There are reasons/excuses for this. The U.S. film industry dominates the world, par-

ticularly in marketing - even in the marketing of progressive films. Although many non-English speaking countries do have indigenous film industries which are supported by their populations, distribution outside of these countries is seldom a marketing priority - especially in view of the costs of translated and subtitled versions. These films are not accessible to the Canadian English-speaking populations. Even promo material or reviews about films may not be available in English. The cost in both time and money, for the research which would 'unearth' these films and subtitle them for exhibition in Canada is prohibitive.

As Barbara points out, "The fact that we're so close to the U.S. [and, I might add, under the mantle of their cultural imperialism] means that we'd hear more about films from the States" and that has a lot to do with the limitations of programming choices.

But whether in spite of, or because of the festival's limitations, the final question is, perhaps, the one which I asked of the Regent Park programming group: "Would you do it again?"

**MAX:** Of course.

**KAREN:** With a little bit more planning this time though.

**CARL:** It was a good idea, yeah I'd like to do it again.

**KAREN:** People in the Park never have the opportunity to see films like this. Even if it's showing at the Bloor, they're not going to go out there and see it, because it's not been advertised on television. So if you bring it to them they're gonna go, and be a little bit more receptive.

**CARL:** Knowing that there are other people out there that are starving, or with no income, [was a good thing for people in this community to find out]. **HEATHER:** How much time did you have to organize the festival here?

**KAREN:** Three weeks, or a month.

**GAYLE:** In that time period, a lot of other things happen, the board still meets, the community centre steering committee meets, and the Teen Association still meets, and *Black Perspectives* have things that they need to get done, and the legal committee still meets, so...special events get organized on top of all those other things.

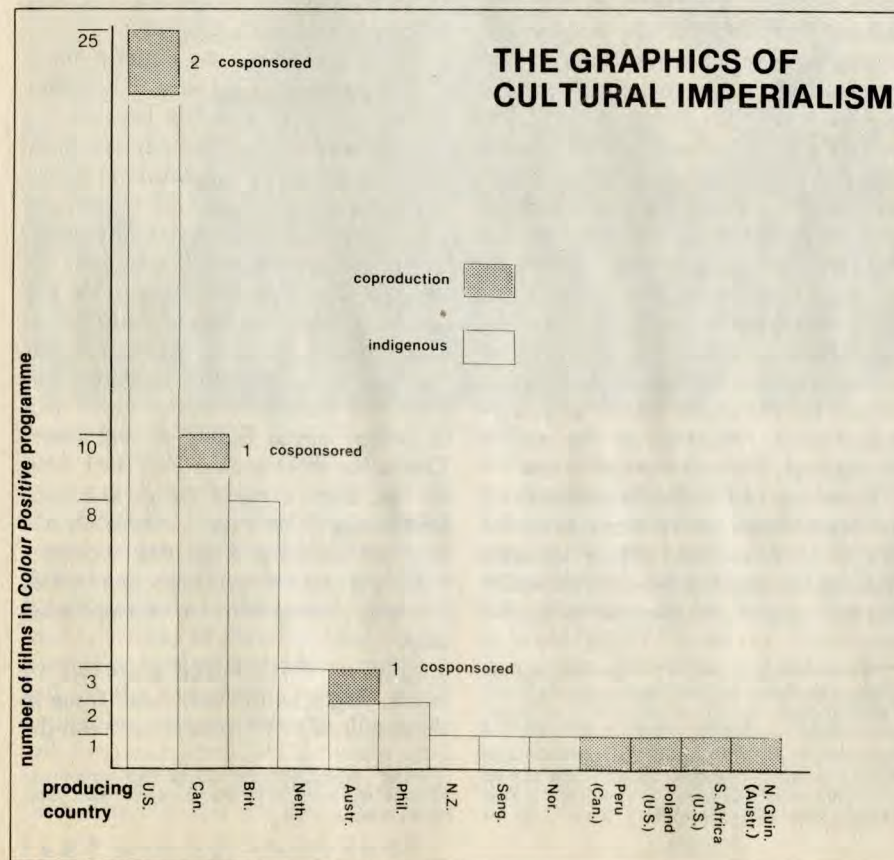
**CARL:** It was important that the people organizing it gained experience, and it's given us motivation to do other things too. To really show that there are happenings going on in the community, stuff that's interesting.

**MAX:** In fact we're thinking of doing some ongoing programming here, [in connection with] DEC, perhaps one evening a month.

**ELVIS PETERS:** In the future...we might end up developing something...have people in this community create their own films, and portray aspects of their lives, and things that really matter, things that are affecting their lives. Because what I see is...we get some stuff that is related, but it doesn't really portray the real aspect of what's going on here...so [when we make our own films] we can have our own scope, our own production, and our own interests depicted.

The large number of films from outside of Canada and the perceived lack of self-representation may, in itself, have widened the motivation to produce indigenous works. In this regard, *Colour Positive* has perhaps made an important contribution.

Heather Allin is a visual artist, member of the board of directors of *A Space* and of the *Incite* collective.





# Impossible Relationships

## Class Relations and Three Crowns...

BERENICE REYNAUD

THE 22ND NEW YORK FILM Festival included four remarkable movies. The two which I will address in this issue, *Class Relations* and *Three Crowns of the Sailor* may never get out of the ghetto of academic screenings and alternative showcases and festivals; the other two are currently enjoying successful, if limited, commercial runs in North America, which is all the more remarkable since one (*Stranger than Paradise*) is the second feature of a young independent filmmaker from the East Village (Jim Jarmusch), and the other (*A Nos Amours*) is the work of a French director (Maurice Pialat) who has had the reputation of being "difficult" and not easily marketable.

I cannot think of four movies more different stylistically, but – sign of the 80's – they all deal with impossible relationships. Bodies miss each others; speeches compete and don't communicate; misunderstandings keep happening; love is impotent to express itself except through blank silences, sullen obsession or bouts of hysteria; and language itself is in crisis.

### Three Crowns of the Sailor

Directed by Raul Ruiz  
France 1984

*The Three Crowns of the Sailor* is only the second film by Raul Ruiz to be shown at the Festival since *Dog's Dialogues* in 1981, yet this Chilean émigré, settled in Paris since 1974, is a most prolific filmmaker. By March 1983 he had made forty-five films, including 19 in Chile (where he directed his first film in 1960 at 19) and 25 in France. He works mainly for French State television, turning out about 7 projects a year, on shoe-string budgets,

year in, year out. In France and England, especially since his compelling *Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* (1978), he has achieved a major critical acclaim.

*The Three Crowns of the Sailor* finds its antecedents in Chilean sea legends (Ruiz's father is a merchant marine captain), Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Cortazar's and Borge's labyrinthine fictions, Welle's *Lady from Shanghai*, Mr. Arkadin, and *The Immortal Story*, Selma Lagerlof's *Nils Molgerson*, *The Flying Dutchman*, the tales of Andersen, and the novels of Stevenson.<sup>1</sup> The principle of an "immortal story" is that of a self-generating fiction – a story that reappears, with small variants, in different harbours all around the world and throughout the centuries. Such stories are told from sailor to sailor in dives, registration offices, brothels or on the deck of their ships, and nobody knows their origin. The story of an old man who adopts a young sailor to make a child to his wife, or the story of the ghost ship are such immortal stories. In either case, each storyteller, each filmmaker picking it up, will give it his personal bias: for Orsen Welles it became a discourse on fallacy and *mise-en-scène*; in the Ruiz film, a quasi-metaphysical reflection on the nature of language, lie, and representation.<sup>1</sup>

The story of the film is narrated by off-screen voices, and it is bracketed by two short black and white sections showing the meeting between the sailor and the student. In these sections, the

<sup>1</sup> "World is a lie," says one of the characters of *Three Crowns of the Sailor*. And later, another says the World is bi-dimensional, i.e., the world is made of images without depth or meaning, without truth, world and cinema are one and the same. Hence the world is a lie. Cinema is bi-dimensional; hence the world, the lie, is bi-dimensional." (Pascal Bonitzer, "R.R. ou l'Art du Faux in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, March 1983.)

off-screen voice is sometimes that of the student, sometimes that of an unknown narrator; in the colour section, it is the voice of the sailor, telling his story to the student. At the beginning of the film, Tadeuz, the student, reports matter-of-factly that he has just murdered and robbed his benefactor, the owner of an antique shop, and that he is trying, roaming the streets after the curfew, to get hired on a departing ship. He meets the sailor, who promises him such a job, but at a price: his unlimited attention, and three Danish crowns. That these three crowns, like Judas's thirty coins, are blood money becomes clear by the end of the movie, when this monetary exchange will have led to the student's and the sailor's immortal damnation.

The three crowns are a mode of exchange between dead men. The sailor borrows them from his captain – a ghost – to give them to his symbolic "father" – a black longshoreman<sup>2</sup> met in Africa, about whom he'll tell us later that "He had been dead many years before our encounter". The student has the coins in his pocket through the entire duration of the film because he has murdered another father figure, his benefactor; and the final exchange between the student and the sailor will cause the brutal killing of the latter. The sailor will become (like the others on the ship) a living dead, a corpse pretending to be alive – eating, drinking, but exuding disgusting worms – while the student will take his place as the only living man on the accursed ship.

Money, this reified signifier of death, might be the only 'real' thing in the movie. The encounter between the

<sup>2</sup> "doker" is the French word. It has been erroneously translated as "doctor" in the English subtitles (which does not make sense at all).

sailor and the student, which gives birth to the fiction, is improbable since they do not exist in the same place: the student in an Eastern European city, the sailor in a South American harbour. Their meeting is the repetition of an earlier one, which had given birth to the sailor's story: his encounter with a blind man who was telling so many lies that one could not even believe the contrary of what he said (unlike the famous Greek syllogism). To the desperate, out-of-work young sailor, he promised a job on the *Funchaleuse*, gave him money while telling him "Never accept money from anybody," then took it back and says "Never give money to anybody without requiring something in exchange." The sailor later learns that the *Funchaleuse* has sailed days ago, and finds the blind

pened to him ("It was the other..."). And later still, the *Funchaleuse*, which had bravely resisted the worst tempests, will sink calmly on a fine day in full sight of the sailor, only to reappear in another harbour, under another name.

The sailor's encounter with the blind man is an encounter with the falsity of representation and the world of money. Money is the *only* item about which the characters of the story do not lie. The blind man's warning was true: the sailor's doom will be the result of his carelessness in accepting money (from the cashier and the captain of the ship) and in giving it without counterpart (the three danish crowns to his African "father").

Money, "this signifier that abolishes all others" (Lacan) cannot be lied

reminded of a text by avant-garde filmmaker Hollis Frampton, which investigates both the role of the father and the nature of filmic representation. A rich man, wanting to keep a record of the entire life of his baby daughter, hires several crews of cameramen to film her day and night; the heiress leads a very active life, and has never the time to watch any of the footage; so when she dies, she orders that a baby be chosen to do nothing in his entire life but watch the movie. That is, *mutatis mutandis*, the situation the sailor finds himself in: because of the gap left by the silence of the father, he must star in a movie, and force someone (the student) to relive/witness it with him, to be the listener for his narration, with his lapses of memory, contradictions, and possible lies.



Jean-Bernard Guillard in *Three Crowns of the Sailor*

man murdered by a gang of angry young men to whom he had promised the same job. The sailor has entered a world where truth no longer exists. After roaming about for hours, listening distractedly to the stories of an old man who may or may not exist, he arrives at a desolate pier; there, ready to sail, is the *Funchaleuse*, with a job available. Later, on the ship, the sailor will see a man jump into the water, and the next day walk nonchalantly on the deck denying that anything had hap-

pened, because money represents nothing: it is pure form. (This is why the debt of the sailor must be paid in *exactly the same currencies* as the one in which he has borrowed.) The black longshoreman burns the banknotes given to him by the sailor ("This is a lot of money, but what I need is three Danish crowns."), and then refuses to exchange these three crowns for another garrulous stream of stories, because "every moment of (his) life would take years to explain." I was

Fiction is possible because of the "wandering of the son". His initial desire to embark on *any* ship is due to the desire to leave his family. During his trips around the world, he will try to rewrite the "family romance" by creating an artificial family: a wife (the delicate, childish prostitute in the Valparaiso brothel, *who works there to pay a debt contracted by her (dead) father*, and for whom the sailor starts borrowing money on the ship), two brothers (the two Arabian thieves), a



son (the Hong Kong professor kept in a state of perpetual childhood), a father (the impoverished longshoreman whose tribe had been elected by God but *who has forgotten the name* of that tribe), and even a substitute mother (one of the men of the *Funchaleuse* "rents" his mother to those in need of affection, and the sailor refers to her as "my mother".) This new family is neither less fake nor real than the original one. When the sailor comes back to his hometown, he finds his house deserted, and is told many conflicting stories about the fate of the people who used to inhabit it: one of these stories depicts him as a murderer, and *all of them assert that he is dead*. Is he really the young sailor that we saw leaving his mother and sister and promising to bring them back "two bicycles, a necklance, some coffee", or is he somebody else?

Puzzled by these constant shifts in meaning, the sailor looks for something real: nudity - absolute, total, integral nudity - and fancies he is going to find it in the person of Mathilde, a dancer who "has made nudity an art", even though in her music hall act she is partially covered with black nylons and bikini. "I want to see you naked. I want to make love," says the sailor when they are alone together. Mathilde undresses, and finally takes off the silver stars that cover her nipples. "I've never seen somebody so naked..." Mathilde smiles, takes of her false nipples, then, off-screen, her false genitals. Horror! she has only *one* orifice<sup>3</sup>, and not only will the sailor be swept away by an "unspeakable" sexual obsession, but he will discover that, in his world of fathomless illusion, total "nudity" is as unattainable as total "truth", that it is impossible for a body to grasp another body<sup>4</sup> and, finally, that "female nudity" is also a cultural construction.

Here then, included among the themes of the film/the story, are: *Impasse sexuelle*; shift in sexual representation (it is useful to remember here that Ruiz was very careful not to take two shots in the same angle in this movie); collapse of meaning; frag-

mented stories made of scraps of other stories; stories lingering in every harbour and every brothel that nobody believes in anymore; stories that have already been told and written but are the only possible discourse before death; plus the constant burden of having to pay the debt of the father, whether he is dead, gone, lying or unconscious; and the recurring, deadly power of money - the fantastic universe of the nameless sailor enunciates the conditions of our modernity.

### Class Relations

Directed by Jean-Marie Straub & Daniele Muillet  
1984

Another "dialogue of exiles", *Class Relations* is the most recent movie of French filmmakers Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Muillet. The pair has produced only four films in French: two features (*Othon*, in 1969, and *Too Early, Too Late*, in 1981) and two shorts (*Toute Revolution est Un Coup de Dé*, from the Mallarmé poem, in 1977, and *En Rachachant*, from a children's book by Marguerite Duras, in 1982). Straub left France in 1958 to avoid being drafted and enlisted in the colonial Algerian war; sentenced (in his absence) to a prison term, he was not pardoned until 1971. The couple lived in Munich until 1969, and then in Rome. Their films are the best example of an authentic materialist reading of a text: they are based on the confrontation between text and landscape. Which means that 1) no attempt is made to "interpret" the text which is read or performed in its absolute literality, and 2) the conflict between text and landscape is not avoided or softened. As Serge Daney has noted, "material resistance itself is a constant theme of Straub and Muillet's work - the resistance of texts to bodies, of locations to texts, of bodies to location". (*Cahier du Cinema*) One striking example is the beautiful Italian landscape shot on a sunny afternoon, with the voices of birds singing and the sound of the wind through the trees, while the voice of an actor reads an excerpt from Franco Fortini's *The Dogs of Sinai* alluding to the mass execution of Italian Jews that took place on the

same spot more than thirty years before (*Fortini-Cani*, 1976).

*Class Relations*, their first film to be shown at the New York Film Festival since the 1975 *Moses and Aaron* is also their most narrative film to date. The "resisting body" in question is that of Karl Grossman, a young German bourgeois "packed off" to America by his parents for having gotten a family servant pregnant; the "resisting text" is Franz Kafka's unfinished novel, *Amerika* (1912-1914), where the Statue of Liberty is described significantly as brandishing a sword rather than an illuminating torch. Kafka, of course, had never set foot in the United States, and this "slip of the pen", while creating a comic effect, gives right away the appropriate tone of the novel: the *Amerika* discovered by young Rossmann will be a realm of pain and difficulties, not of success and enlightenment.

To respect the text, the question raised by the filmmakers was "Where to shoot? In America or in Germany?" Apart from a few shots (the Statue of Liberty - with the torch - a medium shot of Karl in the train taking him to Oklahoma, and a very long shot of the landscape seen from the same train) the film was shot mostly in Hamburg. This information was made available to me from production notes published in the October issue of *Cahiers du Cinema*. During my two viewings of the film, however, it was difficult to decide where each shot was taken, the filmmakers having specifically picked up German locations where the "American look" was predominant: this was, according to them, one of the reasons for which the film was shot in black and white: "In Germany where everything is so American, colours, on the contrary, are not American." (*Cahiers du Cinema*) The shots usually retain the ambiguity of their location, until a tiny detail reveals their Germanity. For example, when Karl is taken to the upper-middle-class neighborhood where his Uncle Jakob lives, the camera pans on a row of houses that could be located on the West Side of New York City, until an unmistakably German tower raises at the end of the shot; in the hotel where Karl works as a lift boy, the back of the elevator bears a sign in Gothic letters; on one of the walls of the brick housing

complex that looks like any lower-middle-class suburb in Upstate New York or New Jersey, there are half-erased graffiti calling for a strike.<sup>5</sup> The same ambiguity is evident in the blending of ancient ("policemen uniforms, cars, interior design, architecture") and contemporary ("electric trains, telephones, modern typewriters") elements. The coexistence of German and American features is born out of the desire to confront the "class relations" in Germany and in the United States. The coexistence of ancient and modern elements arises from the will of comparing the effects, on the lives of those who depend on their jobs to survive, of the economic crisis of 1912 and that of 1983. The text has been left in German, and most of the actors are German; so young Rossmann, so to

enters, are German fortresses within America: the ship that brings him to New York, the house of his Uncle and the villa of the latter's business friends, the Continental Hotel, and even the apartment of Brunelda, the opera singer.

Having been "turned out by his parents just as you turn a cat out of the house when it annoys you", Karl is successively appropriated, then rejected, by various circles of people who do not give him either the space nor the opportunity to do what he wants or be what he likes; while one may recognize in this situation the "existential" Kafkaian overtones as they will blossom in such mature works as *The Trial* and *The Castle*, the Straub/Muillet team uses it as an example of the reification imposed upon human

afraid that the Head Cook, in spite of her kindness, has befriended Karl in order to replace her (the worker as dispensable, for whom any other worker is a potential rival). In the second scene, standing by a window, she tells him the story of her immigrant mother, who walked to her death on a construction site, for having tried a job too hard for her after a sleepless night in the street.

For Straub and Muillet, it is out of question to distort a text, even slightly, in order to endow it with a new meaning; in the case of Kafka's *Amerika*, which, even unfinished, is a long novel, their work consisted in editing it, to keep only its substance (but *no scene* was omitted, except the spectacular show preceding the recruitment at the Oklahoma Theatre). Inevitable,



Kafka's *Amerika* provides the "resisting text" for *Class Relations*

beings by capitalist society. Karl becomes an object to be exchanged and/or discarded at will. An expression comes back often in the dialogue: the dichotomy usable/unusable as applied to human beings and to Karl in particular, as in "This boy is completely unusable!"

Two of the most moving scenes take place in the hotel between Karl and the plain, pitiful girl who serves as the secretary to the Head Cook. She feels so inadequate in her job that she is

though such a tightening heightens a sub-text. Here, a series of "ready-made" advices given by various protagonists to Karl constitute a kind of "syllabus" of the ideology pertaining to this system of class relations: "One must catch any opportunity one gets," says the Uncle's friend to Karl, forcing him to accept an invitation to his villa, which will cause Karl to be chased by his Uncle; "Not everything goes as one wishes" say the old servant in the villa when Karl tries to go back to his

<sup>3</sup> And so have the sailors on the *Funchaleuse*, since they "never defecate".

<sup>4</sup> "one can enjoy only a part of the other's body...one is limited to a small embrace, to taking a forearm, or anything..." (Lacan, *Encore*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1973, p. 26)



Uncle's house and is unexplicably detained by Green; "One can always use good luck" says the Head Cook who has become a chronic insomniac because of all the worries she had in her professional life before reaching her position.

In the novel, these sententious statements are rather inobtrusive and lost in the rest of the dialogue; in the film they are pronounced with particular emphasis.

The acting in *Class Relations* is (relatively speaking) the most "expressionist" in all the Straub/Muillet films (except for the beautiful, neutral performance of Christian Heinisch as Karl, a man unwittingly thrown into a stream of situations he can neither understand nor master, though never losing the good manners of a well-educated young man.) The delivery of the story, on the other hand, is completely unrealistic, quasi-operatic: the rhythm of the speech follows neither the grammatical structure, nor the usual speaking habits of the German people. This emphasizes the artificiality of the text within the setting of the film, brings out the (dialectic) contradiction between the bodies of the actors, the *mise-en-scène*, and this text

which comes from some other time and place. In other words, *Class Relations* is not a "mise en image" (setting into image) of Franz Kafka's *Amerika*; it is rather, a "mise en abîme" or a "mise en conflit".

*Class Relations* is visually compelling. For Straub and Huillet, questions of *mise-en-scène* and lighting are questions of morality, and their filmmaking endeavour consists in finding, for each scene, the right spot from which to shoot. When the angle is reversed, the "strategic point" will remain the same, and so will the lighting (which forces them to put all the light spots on the ceiling). This method is used to draw "lines of force" between the people within a real space, again, in order to confront the materiality of a text to the materiality of a space. "In most movies, space has disappeared. Today the viewers are shown a space which does not exist... It is necessary to raise the question of what is a three-dimensional space." (from "Quelque chose qui brûle dans le plan: Entretien avec Jean-Marie Straub et Danièle Huillet", *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Oct. '84). Such a rigorous way of shooting is costly; the ratio is 1 to 20. It is costly to make a sober-looking movie; and here

it has been done, within a limited budget, at the expense of "show business" and the "lavishness" of set design and *mise-en-scène*. "There has been a choice. We show one elevator, and not forty. There was a director who could have shown forty elevators, he is dead, and the machine that could help him to do it is dead too; it is not Welles, it is Stroheim." ("Quelque chose qui brûle..."). The result in *Class Relations* is striking. In closing here, I will mention only the incredible violence of the reverse angles in the two "trial" scenes of the film: in the first, the dismissal of the stocker in the Captain's study, the people in power (the officers, the Senator/Uncle) are suddenly revealed, inaccessible and unmoveable, at the end of a long polished table; in the second, Karl's dismissal from the Continental Hotel, his increasing alienation under the unfair accusations of the Head Waiter and the Head Poorter is inexorably shown while, half-awake, the Head Cook watches with disappointment and impotence.

Berenice Reynaud is a film critic living in New York City.



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## Packaging A Movement

### Analyzing the Anthologizing of Performance

BRUCE BARBER

#### The Art of Performance

##### A Critical Anthology

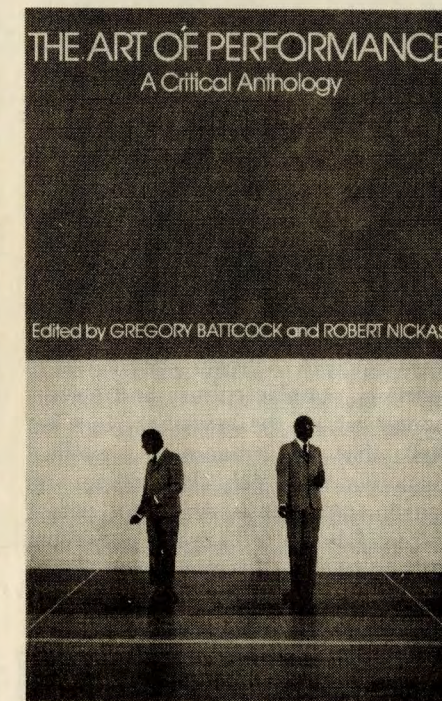
Edited by Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas.  
Published by E.P. Dutton Inc.  
(New York, 1984) \$22.95

THE NAME OF GREGORY Battcock, who died prematurely in December 1980, is almost synonymous with the 'critical anthology' of contemporary art movements. Over the space of nearly twenty years, Battcock, in collaboration with E.P. Dutton Inc., produced an anthology for nearly all the vanguard formations within late modernist visual culture. Far from merely assuming the role of editor, Battcock became the authorial presence behind the texts.

The typical Battcock anthology begins with a summary introduction, laced with epigraphic statements from his chosen authors. The critical essays are linked by short 'interpretive' statements which attempt to underline the importance of the essay published and offer biographical information on the author. Taken as a whole, these annotations often reinforce the summary and packaged information contained in the introduction. And this, irrespective of the content of some of the essays chosen, begins to determine the manner in which the reader comprehends the chosen texts and their subject - the new art movement.

Battcock began his publishing career in 1964 by convincing Dutton to republish Lionello Venturi's *History of Art Criticism*. He followed this with his first anthology, *The New Art* (1966) and thereafter, in fairly regular succession, published six anthologies and a collection of his own essays (a third has been published posthumously). Given the direction of Battcock's

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prolific publishing career, had he lived longer, we could have expected the publication of other critical anthologies with titles such as *New Wave Painting*, or the *New Expressionism*, and perhaps even *New Wave Music*, *Subway Art* and *Breakdancing*, and (perish the thought), *The New Political Art*.

According to Robert Nickas, the co-editor of the most recent anthology *The Art of Performance*, Battcock was working on the manuscript at the time of his death. As Battcock's research assistant, Nickas worked with Dutton editor, Cyril Nelson to publish the volume as planned.

The anthology form has its problems. Apart from the 'packaging' of a movement, which has obvious benefits for the market place priorities of a large publishing house, the anthology's

discursive and summary treatment of the available material on a particular cultural vanguard, invariably leads the inquiring and critical reader to wonder what was left out. And these omissions, coupled with the construction of a pantheon of artists and critics which have been deemed relevant to the form anthologised, contributes to a false closure of the 'movement' and its adherents. The anthology collection confers a shape on the movement, one which is constructed through a series of qualitative 'critical' judgements and subsumed under a mantle of quantitative generalisations. A 'critical anthology' gives us a form of history. While it may not define a movement, it nevertheless describes it and encourages the total understanding of it as a contemporary phenomenon. Perhaps the only action which mitigates against the readers' uncritical consumption, apart from their own intelligence, is the publication of competing anthologies and monographs which later become secondary resource materials for the construction (writing) of history. In this regard, the most disturbing characteristic of the art anthology - particularly, those that are produced, like E.P. Dutton's, for a mass market - is the way they become the staple diet for instruction in fine art studio classes and contemporary art history seminars.

However, the weaknesses of the anthology form can be turned to strengths. If the editor makes apparent the reasons behind the choice of a particular grouping of texts, and better still, places essays together which explicate, elaborate or criticise one another, this can engender a more critical attitude on the part of the reader. Individual works of criticism, particularly those taking the avant-

FUSE



garde as their subject, are not usually homomorphic in character; moreover, critics rarely agree. A good, ultimately useful, critical anthology should reflect this. The best of the Battcock anthologies do (i.e., *The New Art*, *Minimal Art* and *Idea Art*).

The present volume *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology*, unlike the earlier anthologies, is somewhat late to the field; for the past ten years, at sporadic intervals, anthologies and other books dealing with body art and performance have appeared, often accompanying a festival of performance works or conferences dealing with the 'new' form. Since 1979 at least four texts on performance have been produced in Canada alone, including *Performance by Artists* (edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, *Art Metropole*, 1979) and *Performance Text(s) and Documents*, (proceedings from the 1980 *Parachute* colloquium on "Performance and Post-Modernism," edited by Chantal Pontbriand and published in 1981). What is probably required now, is some serious history writing. The Battcock, Nickas performance anthology attempts this and fails miserably. In fact the book, from cover to cover, leaves much to be desired.

To begin, the choice of essays and their organisation into four parts: 1. "Historical Introductions", 2. "Theory and Criticism", 3. "The Artists", and 4. "A Gallery of Performances", call into question the appropriateness of the book's subtitle, "A Critical Anthology". When two thirds of the book is dealing with history, theory and the annotated presentation of performance photo-documentation, it is difficult to confirm the presence of critical voices. In fact only two of the essays, Francois Pluchart's "Risk as the Practice of Thought", and Peter Gorson's "The Return of Existentialism in Performance" could be properly termed critical in the best sense of the word. Yet even these two essays approach the elements of risk, danger and pain, which can be said to characterise a genre of seventies performance, more in abstract theoretical, than critical terms. This is not to say that these essays are not useful, well written, researched, etc., but that they elude both the title and the introduction for the book.

There are, in fact, some very useful essays in the book. Michael Kirby's "On Acting and Non Acting" first published in the *Drama Review* in 1972 is a very important early essay, attempting to provide theoretical teeth to debates surrounding the theatre/non-theatre, acting/non-acting equations in avant-garde theatre, Happenings and other forms of proto-performance art. Annabelle Henkin Melzer's "The Dada Actor and Performance Theory", provides an exemplary historical coverage of the early Dada Suisse soirées at the Cabaret Voltaire – the protagonists, their 'theories' methods and manners of presentation. But as both of these essays deal with history and theory, they point to the arbitrariness of the section divisions of the book. (They are placed respectively in Part 2, Theory and Criticism and Part 1, Historical Introduction.)

Roselee Goldberg's "Performance: The Golden Years" (1983) provides some useful insights into the relationships between the resurgent interest in painting, popular culture and performance art of the seventies, but her thesis that performance is a cyclical phenomenon which "has come and gone in waves, appearing as an irritant and a catalyst when any one prevailing style or art form becomes entrenched", or "an escape hatch from the art



Roselee Goldberg

Hugo Ball: *Elefantenkarawane* (1916)

establishment that the new generation of artists needs" (p.93) is highly tenuous and needs greater elaboration than it received either her or in her book, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present*.

Ken Friedman's essay "Fluxus Performance" is concise as an overview of Fluxus, even given the impossibility of providing such an overview of "...a phenomenon which has grown and changed through over two decades in an art world which usually measures time in months and seasons, only rarely in years." (p. 70). However as an objective and historically authentic overview of a phenomenon which has had little attention paid to it by historians and critics, Friedman's essay suffers through a somewhat indulgent inclusion of his own work. His "Personal Account" (section III) describing in three works the 'typical' Fluxus event, seems out of place in the context of his descriptions of first generation Fluxus artists. As a second generation Fluxus artist who has done much to legitimate the 'movement' in historical terms, Friedman certainly deserves to have his work discussed at length in the annals of Fluxus artistry. But the inclusion of one of his 'early works', "Scrub Piece" (Spring 1956) which pre-dates nearly all of the works he describes in the main body of his text as examples of first generation Fluxus art, is not the most expeditious route to take, to ensure his inclusion in the early history of Fluxus events.

The most curious essay in the first section of the book (Historical Introduction) is Attanasio di Felice's "Renaissance Performance: Notes on Prototypical Actions in the Age of the Platonic Princes". This essay claims that the prototype of "performance work" is to be found in the theatrical spectacle of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The instances he cites of "performance work" from Sigismondo Malatesta to Leonardo and Gian Lorenzo Bernini are historical examples within a theatrical tradition which have their roots in medieval religious festivals and ultimately provide models for the *gesamtkunstwerke* (total art work) of Wagner. Within the literature of theatre history there are numerous examples of texts which provide this kind of lineage, Felice's substitution of the term perfor-

mance for theatre or for dramatic spectacle only reinforces the structural confusion that arises when separate and identifiable histories are investigated for 'like types' in order to authenticate the presence of a nascent historical category – performance art.

This appropriation of the past in order to confirm the existence of a distinct (historically determined) grouping of works in the present, denies the importance of the social and cultural conditions which promote, or in other ways allow the production of certain types of cultural work. The papal and civic commissions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provide a very different context for artists work than the situations in Zurich in 1916, or New York in 1976. To use one instance as a historical prototype for another is difficult at the best of times. To do this in such a gratuitous manner as does Felice in his essay on Renaissance performance, is to ignore those elements which would confirm the specificity of a particular cultural production to a certain place and time.

Felice's assertion that, "the relationship of Renaissance performance to developments in all the plastic arts, in architecture, and in philosophy was not merely causal, performance serving frequently as the highly flexible testing ground for ideas then finding their way into painting and architecture", reproduces the highly problematic notion first introduced into performance literature by Roselee Goldberg – that performance is an "avant-avant-garde" providing the research and development opportunities for subsequent work in the plastic arts.

The business of distinguishing or confirming the interrelationships between various epochs is a necessary task for the formation of a viable history of performance art, but this should not be undertaken in a way which denies the relative autonomy of previous cultural periods and the work of individual producers. Even in our own time, the convenient 'catch all' phrase "performance" conceals more than it reveals. The term performance covers a wide range of work including dance, music, body art, avant-garde theatre, vaudeville, installation work, photo works, video and audio work, film, sculpture, street spectacles,

Joan Jonas: *Double Lunar Dogs* (1981)

poetry, opera, drawing. The fact that the additional defining feature of "live art for an audience" has been loosely used to define performance, also leads to category confusion. *The Art of Performance* does nothing to alleviate the problems of classification. The editors confirm quite plainly in the introduction to the collection that Performance's "lack of strict definition, was not necessarily bad. For a number of reasons it proved advantageous to the artists and to the development of the form. Performance was suited to experimentation in ways that traditional forms such as painting and sculpture with their restrictions and physical limitations, were not, neither could they expect to be. Undefined, there were no rules to break." (Introduction.)

The fact that *all* the rules were broken is perhaps more to the point. Yet during the seventies many so-called performance artists and critics were making fairly strict distinctions between various forms (genres) and the work of individual artists. For instance, in the mid-seventies, the German critic George Jappe and artists Klaus Rinke and Franz Walther were adamant that there was no such thing as 'performance art' in Germany. Their preference was for 'Aktion', 'demonstration' or 'Handlung(en)'. Similar distinctions between traditional dance

and new minimal dance were being made in America in the sixties by Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer; in the early seventies, between poetry and performance and the 'performance' of visual art; and in the late seventies, between theatre and the theatre of visual art. In fact these critical and theoretical distinctions have been made all along by the practitioners and their critics. These are not reflected in the introduction to the *Art of Performance* nor to any major degree in the contents for the book.

There have been definitions; there are definitions and they are continually in the process of evaluation and re-evaluation. The catch-all term – performance and its variants "the art of performance" or performance art, are no longer sufficient vehicles for lumping together the work of Vito Acconci, Joan Jonas, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Wilson, Phil Glass, Richard Foreman, Laurie Anderson, et al.

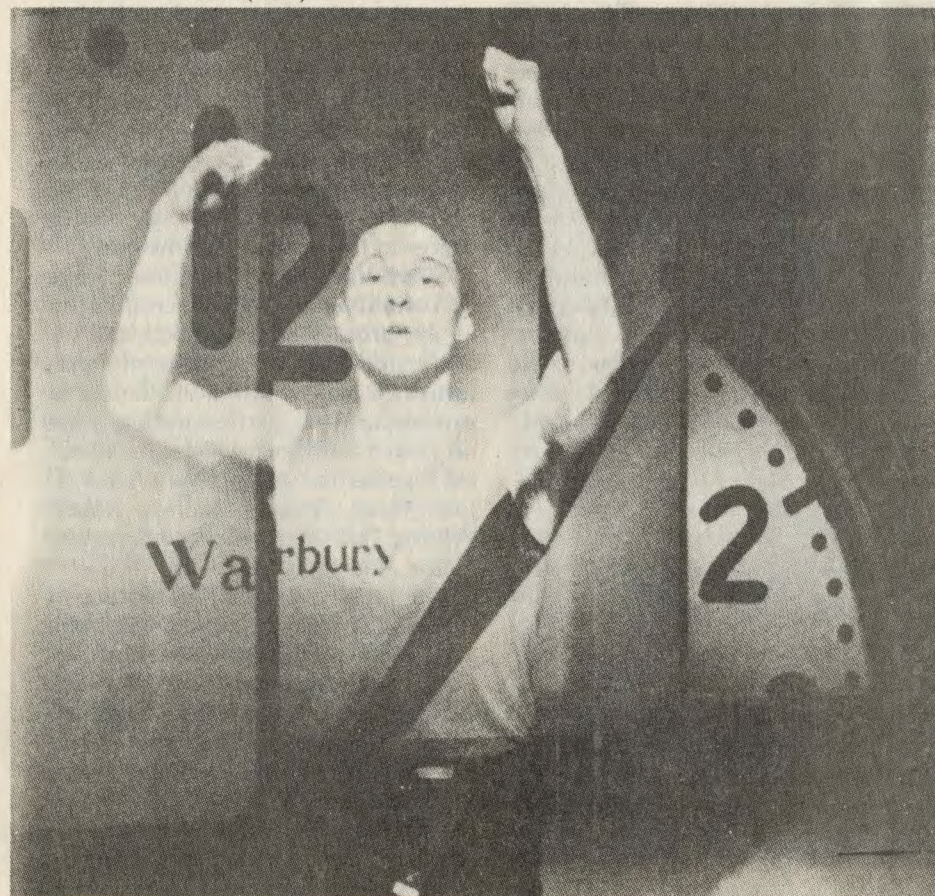
The most disappointing feature of the book is the focus on the work of a small number of (mostly American) artists: Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Terry Fox, Laurie Anderson, Charlotte Morman and Nam June Paik, Robert Wilson, Stuart Brisley (England) and Jochern Gerz (Germany). This belies the fact that Performance as it has been circumscribed by the book is a truly in-



ternational phenomenon, more so than minimalism, or conceptual art, with no clearly established centre of primary activity (although New York as a major cultural centre in the western world would obviously be a prime candidate).

The fact that performance festivals and performance work have been undertaken throughout the seventies in various parts of the world confirms the disparate nature of the form(s), the geographical extent of the phenomenon and the large number of practitioners, beyond the borders of North America or the countries of Western Europe. While a few Eastern European names, (Petr Stembera, Jan Mlcoch and Valie Export), one Australian and a few Canadians are included, a number of major figures are excluded from mention in the book. The Australian artists Stellarc and Jill Scott are at least as well known in their own country and outside as Mike Parr. Incomplete cross referencing is also an annoyance (General Idea appears in one essay but not in the index, Clive Robertson in the Bibliography but not in the main body of the book) while the list of Canadians passed over, could go

Tim Miller: *Post War* (1982)



Luis Greenfield

on. While this is not surprising from a U.S. publication, the number of important U.S. performance people neglected is cause for some complaint: Martha Rosler, Dan Graham (foot-noted only), Paul Cotton, Robert Morris (while Nauman is in), Charlemagne Palestine, Ralston Farina, Yoko Ono, Linda Montano, Motion/The Women's Performing Collective, Diego Cortez, Richard Newton, Nancy Buchanan. This list too could go on and for each artist mentioned here, there is (in my humble opinion) one of lesser historic importance who is mentioned in the book.

If it were not apparant that some attempt had been made to be comprehensive and wide ranging in selecting artists mentioned, my criticisms here might seem niggling. It is hard not to see the "Gallery of Performances" as a correction for the imbalance of material presented in other sections. The "Gallery" becomes a kind of montage of documents - a salon des refusés. It seems that the editors decided that they could not publish the section on the artists with so few represented. They decided to dot the rest of the book with

a number of photographs, often with inadequate descriptions accompanying them. As there is no notation in the introduction that the anthology would focus on the major American artists of the seventies in all sections of the book, one must conclude that they believe the anthology to be representative of the major works of art and criticism of the period.

The narrow choice of artists is compounded by the omission of a number of valuable works of 'performance criticism' by critics such as Moira Roth, Lucy Lippard, Germano Celant, Robert Pincus Witten, Lea Vergine, Lizzie Borden, Max Kozloff and Jack Burnham. Three essays in particular - Kozloff's "Pygmalion Reversed" (*Artforum* Nov. 1975), Lucy Lippard's "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art" (*Art in America*, May/June 1976), Burnham's "Alices Head" (*Artforum*, February 1970) - would have, in the place of "Gallery of Performances", assisted in validating the "Critical Anthology" sub-title of the book.

It is ironic that the editors of *The Art of Performance* have made the disclaimer in their introduction, that "a deliberately haphazard book has been planned" (p. xxii). In fact, in missing the opportunity to provide the *best* in performance criticism, they have in fact produced a haphazard book. While the book does provide "a wide variety of ideas and information", the statement of the editors that their choice of essays does not make "claims for a final explanation" (p. xxii) merely confirms the short-sighted editorialising which has given rise to this volume.

The original meaning of 'Anthology' in literary terms, relates to the gathering of flowers; the best or most choice examples from the blooms available. The present volume does little to reinforce this conception of anthology as the 'collection of the best'!

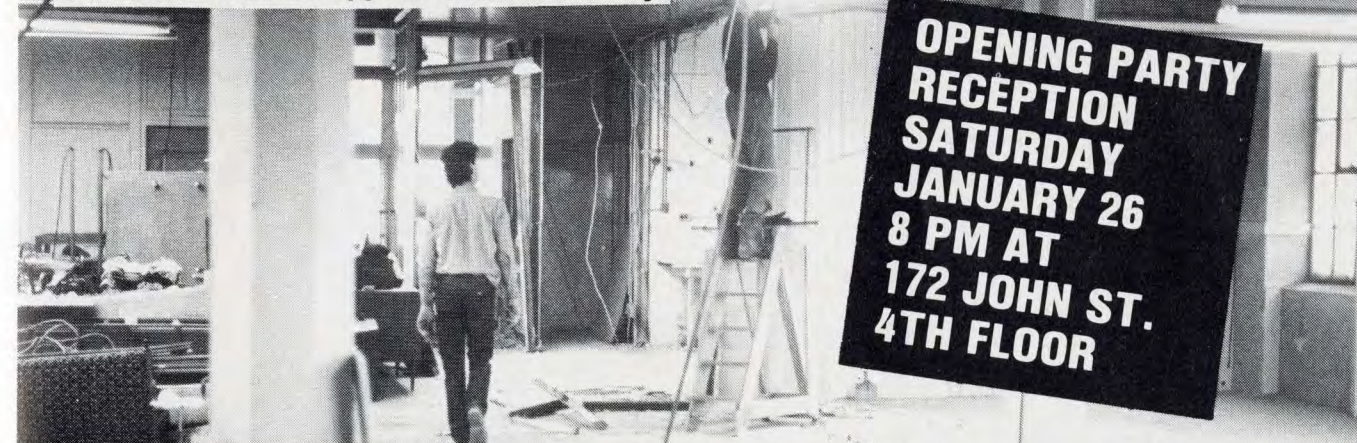
Bruce Barber

Editors note: Bruce Barber (*FUSE's* Halifax editor, currently living in Toronto for one year) has, himself, edited a performance anthology entitled, *Essays on [Performance]* and Cultural Politicization; in the form of a double issue of *Open Letter* (Series V, Nos. 5 & 6, Summer/Fall 1983).

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