Dry Lips oughta move to Kapuskasing

by TOMSON HIGHWAY

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**FUSE MAGAZINE**

APRIL/MAY 1989

VOL.XII No.5

**FUSE MAGAZINE**

APRIL/MAY 1989

VOL.XII No.5
Letters

re: "A Hairstyle is not a Lifestyle" (FUSE, Jan/Feb '89).

I greatly enjoyed reading your well-written and interesting piece, but as a survivor of the fiasco that the late '60's and early '70's turned out to be, I can honestly say that it's an old song to new music. From zoot suits to Karovac, from Jerry Rubin to John Lennon, from James Dean to Hunter Thompson, and on and on, it's been one long line of idealistic bullshit that fades awfully fast once some fat man with a cigar appears on the scene waving a flat full of dollars and mouthing platitudes. Sad to say, I put my money on the fat man once again when it comes to punk. Try these lyrics by Bickle(sic) and the New Bohemians. Apparently Ms. B isn't too fond of thinking, at least that's what she's telling the world: "Drop me in the shallow water before I get too deep. Well, I'm not aware of too many things." (Sung with apparent pride).

J. Paul Porzio, Willowdale, Ontario.

Mea Culpa:

Re: "Northern Light" (FUSE, Jan/Feb '89).

We regret the confusion due to an error in production and apologize to the writer and our readers for the mistakes in the layout of the article.

FUSE welcomes letters to the Editors. All letters are subject to editing.

EXHIBITIONS:

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For those of you who prefer not to preserve your back issues in red morocco leather binding we suggest recycling your favorite magazine. Simply discard the cover and recycle with your newspapers.
Gettin’ on the Good Foot
Hiphop’s Peace Posse
vs Police Harassment

by Myke Dyer

TORONTO — In the past 10 years four studies have looked at the relationship between violence minorities and the police forces in Ontario. A fifth is currently being conducted by the Ontario Provincial Police.

Some of the confirmed participants include: Wilhelm and Burt Heu, Bruce Elder, Rose Lovett, Steve Anker, John Field, William Morris, Stan Brooklyn, Robert Brewer, David Kiem, Pat O’Neill, Michael Snow, Carolee Schneemann, Marjorie Keller, and others.

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N E W S & R E P O R T S

A P R I L • M A Y 1 9 8 9

F U S E
The Hungarian Hall admitted to News that officers from S2 Division called their office and told them "lots of stories." And although the Hungarian Hall did get their licence renewed for a year they can't sign contracts with promoters unless they have the support of S2 Division. This support comes through the division supplying pay checks — officers hired $30 an hour by the promoter. If the division won't agree to supply the pay duties, the event will not take place.

Ron Nelson acknowledges the crowds that come to his shows have their problems: a few bad apples spoil every large gathering. But Nelson makes an effort to control the violent element at his shows, the "bad men" as he refers to it, on his radio program.

"The kids themselves are radically streamlining their acts," Nelson says. "They're realizing peace is the only route to go; the peace police is the only peace worth belonging to. They're seeing more and more the bad man is getting pulled underground because we're mining his souls, taking away the image that he used to have."

Violence and hiphop have always had a bad record together and the association is made even stronger by the massrapers' p.r. powers to understand the role of rap in the black community. Rap and hiphop do not promote violence and drug use, they say. Nelson says that rappers who are sexist and promote it openly. This isn't something new in contemporary music; rappers he regularly plays, like Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions, and Rumble and Big Up, are putting out records that deal with topics directly, trying to prevent young blacks from succumbing to bad influences.

"Drugs, crack, and walking with knaps and guns — I know it's a difficult problem," Nelson says. "But they've ripped off. Ninety-nine percent of the kids who came to the shows were the good ones. It's just the bad men who did what he did that gave us the reputation that led to being closed out of the hall.

Ron Nelson may now see his losses if the lawsuit goes in his favor, however, the balance requirement "would result in Co-op Radio taking in the.CRTC ordered the station to outline "in detail" how it plans to meet the balance requirement. As guardians of the publicly-owned, accessible, the broadcaster's mission is to enforce a narrow interpretation of the Broadcasting Act as it pertains to "balance." The Act states: "The programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should be varied and comprehensive and should provide reasonable, balanced opportunity for the expression of different views on matters of public concern."

At CBC Radio's license renewal hearing in March of 1988, the government asked the CRTC if it was satisfied with Co-op Radio's programming on community access media. For their part, Co-op Radio expressed difficulty that the balance requirement "would result in community access media," the CRTC agreed. Citing its Public Notice 1983-112 on Religious Broadcasting is used as the appropriate way to achieve the objectives of the Broadcasting Act to require that balance be attained by each individual station in the program/production broadcasts. Furthermore, in its decision, the CRTC stated that it was "not satisfied with Co-op Radio's response to the matters of balance and access as raised" and renewed Co-op Radio's license for only three years rather than the usual five years. The CRTC ordered the station to submit a report within six months outlining "in detail" how it plans to meet the balance requirement. Tocically in its decision, the CRTC released on the same day as its decision on Co-op Radio a Pio Notice (1988-161) on Balance in Programming on Community Access Media. For their part, Co-op Radio filed with the Federal Court of Appeal for leave to appeal the CRTC's decision. In January they were informed that this would not be granted. Since then, representatives from campus and community radio have criticized the CRTC position on CBC radio's Media File (04902) and on CBC television (The Journal, 10/02/89).
against the CRTC's Public No­
tice 161 on a number of fronts.

National Campus/Community
Radio Association President John
Stephenson said that the normal
procedure before the issue of
this kind of public process
statement had not been
adhered to in this case. This
is of particular concern to us
because we are ready and
willing to assist the Commission in
the formulation of policy.

The problem for campus/com­munity broadcasters is under­
standing and implementing the “bal­ance” requirement came to the
fore in a panel discussion on
Media File, Puneet Khosla, sta­tion manager for CKLN in
Toronto, Peter House, board
member for Co-op Radio, and
Peter Fleming, Director General
of Radio for the CRTC, could not
agree on what constitutes a bal­anced
debate. Khosla repudiates the
notion that campus/community
broadcasters should take their
cue from the print media on how
to frame debates on issues of
importance to the communities
they serve. "The media, overall,
holds the position that there are
two sides to every story—the way
we operate it is that there are at least
two stories to every side and we
want to bring that out."

Exposing further weaknesses in
Public Notice 161, and in the
Broadcasting Act that it seeks to
clarify, is the ambiguity surround­
ing the notion of a matter of
"public concern." This is signifi­
cant because the Public Notice
states that "not all programming
need be balanced, only that relat­ing
to matters of public concern."

Questioned on the same point,
Allan Rosenzveig, the CRTC
lawyer who handled the Co-op
Radio hearing, told Fuse: "We
don't have a list of topics. We
don't tell stations in advance you
must consider these to be matters
of public concern." He reaffirmed
the CRTC's position that it is the
licensee's responsibility to deter­
mine what is a matter of public
process. However, the Public
Notice goes on to state that "the
Commission may subsequently
review a licensee's handling of
controversial matters, whether in
response to a complaint or other­
wise." Rosenzveig described the
review process to being similar to
a court case, relying on precedent
and taking into account the posi­
tions of the complainant and the
station: "A judge at the end of the
day is going to make a decision."

Co-op Radio, he said, "was judg­ed to be off-side by the Commissions
after considering what was com­
plained about and the station's
response."

In his assessment of the impli­
cations of the CRTC's ruling,
NCRA president John Stephen­
son said that "the biggest worry is
that some stations will no longer
present things that might be con­
traversal but at the same time of
interest to the public and of value
to the community." The NCRA is
drafting a letter to the CRTC
explaining that there should have been
more consultation before it re­
leased Notice 161. Notice and that
Co-op Radio's letter should be
renewed for the full five-year
term. ■

CALGARY — The reputation of
Calgary in the Canadian art scene
has waffled between nonexistent
and negative in the past. Most
artists here have had to learn to
live with the suspicion that if they
were any good, they would be
living somewhere else. But this
fear of being in the art dark has
begun to erode. Replacing it is the
attitude that Calgary is a worthy
city of culture. "The media, overall,
explains. "I don't want to make money, I'd be a
doctor. A lot of us in Calgary feel
while to stay," Hendricks adds.

The strength of Calgary's difficulties have been
going along with the rapid de­
velopment of a cohesive, dedi­
cated and expanding group of
artists. This group has had a
few breaks recently at a forum spon­
sored by the AES/SEGD, a video pro­
duction centre and exhibition
space. This forum, Margins, Mean­ings and Methodology, was in
the format of a four-month wave of
film, video and performance art
that involved the cooperation of
not only the artist-run centres in
Calgary, but also the more re­
owned University of Calgary
Nickel Arts Museum and the
Alberta College of Art Gallery.

The recent move in interest in
the time-based film, video, perfor­
ance art, or photo-arts has been
in response to a barrage of shows: Media Blitz, A Festival of
Film and Performance Art, a
coordinated effort by The
New Gallery, EMMedia, the Calgary
School of Independent Film­
makers and 2nd Story Gallery;
Camera Obscura, a 12-part ca­talogue series on Rogers Cable
18, Elemental Institute at the
Nickel Arts Museum (University
of Calgary), and Performance
Anthology at the Alberta College
of Art.

Critics, writers, curators, art
fund-raising agencies and artists gath­
ered at the end of this four-month
crush to ask why the inter-media
time-based arts are not readily
accepted within the confines of
broad contemporary art prac­tice
in Calgary. Not surprisingly
the issue came down to support,
in terms of both a wider audience
and money. In the first place, there is pres­
sure on Calgary artists to go to
bigger cities like New York or
even Toronto (for the truly troub­
led), in order to make it big. This
pressure, however, is nothing.
With the growth of a more stable
and cohesive art community,
the working environment has become
stimulating. The one thing
missing is stable funding. But as
Nelson Hendricks, one of the
founders of the co-operative series Camera Obscura explained, "If
we want to make money, I'd be a
doctor. A lot of us in Calgary feel
while to stay," Hendricks adds.

Despite a more stable commu­
nity of artists, there remains
the problem of a stable audience.
With this in mind, the question of
money pops up again. Wider audiances infer a wider
funding potential. Typi­
ically, the audience for perfor­
ance art in Calgary has not been
large. In the past, we've seen
that the audience for perfor­
ance art is primarily a club of
people, that if we want to make money, I'd be a
doctor. A lot of us in Calgary feel
while to stay," Hendricks adds.

According to Tirv, who can be
credited for much of the organi­
zation and inception of Media
Blitz, Calgary artists are redifining
their centre. It is not the main­
stream determined by the Canada
Media Fund. "Most events like Media Blitz can be a way of redefining
the centre. It can be here," she
said. "That's just what happened. It's a real change in thinking. I don't
know what brought it about ex­
actly."

The interesting thing about this
situation in Calgary is how
self-sufficiently, the artist-run centres have supported inter-media art.
NEWS & REPORTS

The Crest of A Wave

Nova Scotia Coalition Launches for an Arts Council

by Andrew Terris

HALIFAX — In 1983, the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness and the National Federation of Canadian Women, in concert with the Nova Scotia Women's Coalition, sponsored a provincial cultural policy conference. The conference included an open dialogue among arts community leaders and representatives from various public sector agencies responsible for the funding and promotion of the arts in Nova Scotia. It was aimed at establishing a provincial arts council that would be responsible for promoting and supporting the arts in the province.

The conference was attended by over 150 people, including representatives from various arts organizations, government agencies, and cultural policy-makers. It was timed to follow a meeting in Ottawa of the National Cultural Policies of Canada, which resulted in the formation of the National Creative Arts Policy Council (NCAPC).

The Nova Scotia conference was the third in a series of meetings across the country held to establish a national arts council. The other two meetings were held in Toronto and Vancouver.

The conference included a range of discussions on the role of the arts in society, the need for a provincial arts council, and the potential benefits of such a council. It also addressed the concerns of the arts community, including the need for increased funding and support, and the importance of a provincial arts council in providing a voice for the arts in the province.

The conference concluded with the establishment of a provincial arts council, and the drafting of a provincial arts council charter. The charter outlined the goals and objectives of the council, and provided a framework for its operation.

The provincial arts council was established in 1984, and is now well established as an important and influential voice for the arts in Nova Scotia.
The Gut! IS WHERE I EXPERIENCE RACISM. When a newspaper vendor throws my change at me, simply because I'm black, I feel it in my gut; when I hear of the shooting of a young boy in the back of the head, and know in my bones before I hear it on the radio that he is black, it is my gut that twists and turns; when an agent who has been trying to market my book tells me that publishers are not even interested in reading the manuscript because it features black children, my gut tightens and wrenches. And when I read of the appallingly unscientific and racist theories of Phillipe Rushton of the University of Western Ontario, my immediate gut response is that he should be eliminated—by any means necessary. My heart then aches for my people and the centuries of unrelenting attacks upon our persons and our humanity, my head buzzes with the effort of trying to think my way out of the morass of racism.
And somehow I must contain my gut revulsion for these theories and for this man and his kind: I must bring to bear on what is, in my opinion, a carefully orchestrated plan against African peoples as carefully thought-outso as rigorously articulated reasons why individuals such as he, and ideologies such as he espouses, should be excoriated, from any society of humans we wish to take pride in. My body and its body intelligence, and I include the mind in this concept, are deeply involved and implicated in the practice of racism against me and others—even though I may never be physically attacked. Remembering—although I have never forgotten—that it was for our bodies that we were first brought to this brave New World, the irony of this observation does not escape me.

"Would you let your daughter marry a black man?" While this question has entered the realm of the cliché, it is hard to get more gut than that. The image—it is perhaps more appropriate to say nightmare—conjured up of the white man's daughter in "the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (Shakespeare, Othello) makes the "great two-backed beast" strikes at the heart of white patriarchy—white women being mounted by black men who are, as we all know and as has recently been "corroborated" by Mr. Rushdie, provocatively better endowed. When we lay aside the veneer of scholarship and specious research, how clearly the gut issue presents itself, how efficiently it has hidden itself.

And so it ripples out from the centre—from the gut issue—racism multiplies exponentially and indefinitely until it thoroughly permeates the bureaucracy, the institutions, the arts, culture, education, until it becomes exceedingly difficult to find the gut issue.

Racism is a gut issue. Because it is a gut issue, it is an explosive issue; it becomes at times a murderous issue. Because racism is a gut issue it is a difficult issue to solve, particularly so when it metastasizes quickly and efficiently into the facelessness of systemic racism apparently evacuated of any guts.

When I first conceived the idea for this piece, my intention was to do a piece on anti-racism and the arts. The kernel of the idea arose from a situation that had arisen at a feminist publishing house, The Women's Press, in 1988 and that focused around the issue of racism and anti-racist publishing. The crisis at this press touched—directly or indirectly—most women writers in Toronto, if not Canada.

I was one of the writers whose work had been accepted for publication in the anthology that catalyzed the crisis, and was, over several months, the recipient—at times it felt like the target—of a great deal of correspondence by the two groups that developed at the Press. The issue came to the fore at the Third International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal in 1988, which itself had to confront issues of racism in its organizing of the fair.

My desire to look at the arts in general was, on my part, an attempt to broaden the issue. I wished to move the debate away from The Women's Press and the 'writer-and-voice' censorship debate that had swirled, seemingly interminably, around this very particular set of circumstances affecting this particular publishing house when it attempted to grapple with racism and to establish some sort of corrective to it. I wanted to look at how other arts disciplines and organizations were, if at all, dealing with racism. Once I had, however, identified the gut nature of racism, I had to ask myself whether I too, in taking this approach, was not attempting to move away too quickly from what the gut issue was for me—the very issue that had propelled me in the first place to look at other arts groups and disciplines. I had to return to the gut.

The gut issue for me, an African-Caribbean woman holding a Canadian passport (the Ben Johnson lesson is a chastening one; who attempts to make a living as a writer in Toronto, was that The Women's Press had never published a work by a black woman—or any other woman of colour, for that matter—in its sixteen year history. It was a gut issue when they appeared singularly uninterested in the manuscript of a novel I submitted to them some years ago. And it certainly was a gut issue when in 1985, or thereabouts, a proposed anthology of writings by black women, to be published by The Women's Press, gave rise to criticisms by members of the Press that much of the writing was anthropological, or, in one case, not black enough.

When, in 1987, The Women's Press approached me to submit a piece for their anthology on feminism, Works in Progress, I challenged them as to why I was to be the only black woman in the collection: was this not, in fact, tokenism, I argued to the editor and further, how much of the other work in the collection would address the differing realities of black women or women of colour? This was a gut issue for me, and so was the identical situation raised by my struggle with the Women's Press, and the 'writer-and-voice' censorship debate that had swirled, seemingly interminably, around this very particular set of circumstances affecting this particular publishing house when it attempted to grapple with racism and to establish some sort of corrective to it. I wanted to look at how other arts disciplines and organizations were, if at all, dealing with racism. Once I had, however, identified the gut nature of racism, I had to ask myself whether I too, in taking this approach, was not attempting to move away too quickly from what the gut issue was for me—the very issue that had propelled me in the first place to look at other arts groups and disciplines. I had to return to the gut.

The issue of racism exploded at the Press and became public, my first gut response was: "It's about time—they've had it coming for a long time!" I was to think the same thing as I watched the city convulse over racism over the last few months. It's about time. Except that we get killed and that is a gut issue.

To sum up, African-Canadian women writers—the only group I may presume, albeit tentatively, to speak on behalf of—did not view The Women's Press as a particularly friendly place for their work. It was, in my opinion, no different from the other mainstream presses. Correction—there was one difference: they held themselves out as being feminist and therefore representative of all women, when in fact they represented a very specific group—white, middle-class women. And to be brutally frank, when the issue of racism exploded at the Press and became public, my first gut response was: "It's about time—they've had it coming for a long time!" I was to think the same thing as I watched the city convulse over racism over the last few months. It's about time. Except that we get killed and that is a gut issue.

No one was killed at The Women's Press but there were casualties: some of these had to do with individuals losing their jobs and some to do with the loss of a certain reputation previously held by The Women's Press among the various
literary and publishing networks around the country. Certain booksellers and distributors have, for instance, refused to carry the Press's books. The response of various organizations as well as the media appears to have focused on two issues: the behavior of those members of the Press who perceived themselves as taking an anti-racist stand, and the issue of censorship. In the ensuing debate which the media, print and electronic, have covered, racism has remained a non-issue.

Without wanting to dwell endlessly on a situation that has already been debated excessively both in and out of the media, my limited understanding of the facts that precipitated the crisis at The Women's Press in the summer of 1988 is as follows: three short stories for the proposed anthology Imagining Women were rejected by the Publishing and Policy Group (PPG) after they had been accepted by the fiction manuscript committee. The rejection given by the PPG was that the stories were either explicitly or implicitly racist. The two issues that arose from this action on the part of the PPG were: (a) whether the PPG had the right to reject material already accepted by the manuscript committee; and (b) whether the stories were, in fact, racist. Opinions diverged radically on both issues and eventually led to the splitting up of the Press.

The Women's Press dispute saw the coming together of two gut issues—power and racism—making the situation doubly explosive. What happened at The Women's Press was, in my opinion, essentially a powerful struggle among white women that manifested itself in the issue of racism—it could have arisen over any other issue. That was what my gut told me after attending one public meeting. The fact that racism, as an issue, has remained subsidiary to that of censorship or "the writer-and-voice," confirms for me the general reluctance in Canadian society to tackle this issue. This may appear a harsh opinion; I cannot, however, conclude otherwise in view of the fact that when the issue of racism in writing and publishing finally surfaced, the debate would not be about how to ensure that African, native, or Indian women have access to the publishing resources of a feminist press, but about whether white middle-class women ought or ought not to be allowed, or should be able, to use the voice of traditionally oppressed groups! It is tempting to dismiss the whole matter as ludicrous. It remains, however, a gut issue for me. The unarticulated assumption behind the Press's Anti-Racist Guidelines put out in the summer of 1988, and designed to tell white women how to write in a non-racist way, was that their writers would also be white. At no time were the Anti-Racist Guidelines allied to an affirmative action publishing policy, such as a commitment that the Press would, if necessary, help develop manuscripts by African, Asian, or native women writers, as well as publish a certain number of books by such authors annually, or by a certain date. Both sides are implicated in this charade. The Press's more recent Anti-Racist Guidelines for Submissions stating that the Press "will publish fiction and non-fiction work by women of colour on issues determined by their concerns" represents a small movement in the direction of an affirmative action publishing policy.

I do not for one moment suggest that individuals at The Women's Press were not, or are not, serious about the eradication of racism; quite the contrary; but I do feel that there was insufficient consulting with a wide enough range of black writers to ensure that the views of the very groups on behalf of whom some members were advocating were adequately represented. There is a dangerous and pernicious practice in this society, particularly so that anti-racism has become a growth industry, for white individuals or groups to choose one or two individuals from other ethnic groups and to treat them as spokespersons for an entire group. This practice assigns a monolithic nature to African, native, or Asian Canadians that is non-existent. These groups are, in fact, no more monolithic than are white groups: to see them as otherwise is an expression of racism. I am, for instance, deeply disturbed when I read that Judith Merril has been quoted in Kinetics (December/January 1989) as saying that white women writers in Canada had been "asked by women of colour not to write from the point of view of a woman of colour" (my emphasis). Who are these women of colour? When and in which forum did they make this request? I have certainly not expressed this view. More importantly, no one has ever asked my opinion and yet responsibility for this pronouncement has now been laid at our door. And here again the gut issue—no one has asked us; no one has consulted with us, and everyone blithely decides what is best for us. I do feel it particularly significant that white women writers would decide what is in my best interests as a writer. This is a significant issue, for in anti-racist struggles when, as often happens, problems arise, the tendency is to hold the victim responsible to "solve" the problem. I mean the victim backlash. If I am going to be held responsible then I ought to be a part of the decision making process.

Very simply put, my opinion is that if every white writer were, voluntarily or otherwise, to decide not to write from the point of view of African, Asian or native women, this would in no way ensure access to publication by women. Such actions would do nothing to ensure that our work was reviewed or taken by distributors or even taken seriously. Such simple prescriptions are hollow victories. There is, however, a gnomon crisis—I mean we are advised—that certain members of The Women's Press and their Anti-Racist Guidelines attempted to address. The crisis is that for centuries and for certain cultures, white European cultures have penetrated other cultures. Where Europeans have not murdered they have pillaged; where they have pillaged they have looted; and while doing all these things they have, wantonly or otherwise, destroyed centuries of learning and knowledge. They have barbarized civilizations and cultures; where, because they needed the labour, they declined to wipe out entire peoples, they have appropriated their labour, or the product of that labour,

along with whatever they considered valuable.

The examples of this exploitation are legion, but a couple of outrageous examples will suffice. To begin at the beginning—at least for Westerners—there is increasing white mainstream scholarship which reveals that the so-called "cradle of civilization," Greece, "significantly borrowed culturally (and) linguistically from Egypt and Phenicia." And we do not ask scholars do—All Muslims for instance—accept that Africans along with other races contributed to Egyptian civilization, or whether like Cheik Anta Diop, the late Senegalese intellectual, we are convinced that Egypt was primarily an African civilization, the fact remains that Egyptians were the cultural ancestors of Greece. The obliteration of this fact, as Martin Bernal argues in Black Atlas, is directly attributable to the rise of racism in the nineteenth century. The second example has to do with art and modernism. That the modernist movement in art is heir to African aesthetics is indisputable, yet the commonplace assumption that Picasso is an homage to Picasso's "master" Lam's work, in fact, hangs in the hallway leading to the museum's coat room, and the commentary by the museum's curator suggests it is an homage to Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.

For the white artist/writer/painter/musician—particularly the male of the species—the world is his oyster, and if he or she wants to use Indian, African, or native culture, then why the hell not? What does white mean if it does not mean being able to lay waste and lay claim to anything you happen to set your mind to? That is the moral turpitude at the heart of white "civilization." The mea culpa are long overdue. That was the gut issue—the apparent freedom of whites to appropriate others' work or whenever they wish to, to which The Women's Press Guidelines attempted to offer a corrective; the guidelines could be seen as both a mea culpa and an attempt to right a wrong. And while I do not advocate, for reasons too many to enter into here, proscription against writers writing from voices other than their own, The Women's Press must be given credit for the courage to tackle this issue, albeit not in the most effective way. In a society such as ours where there has been an "ostrich-like denial that a significant problem of racial hostility exists at all," such actions are significant; the opportunities they present for sound anti-racist work ought not to be minimized.
Anti-Racism

Sexism is to racism as feminism is to civil rights; multiculturalism? Black Power? anti-racism? None of those suggestions is satisfactory, and the difficulty in finding the word that corresponds with feminism is linked to some of the difficulty around the concept of anti-racism. Were we being entirely accurate when talking about discrimination practised by one racial group against another, the word we ought to use is "racism" and not "anti-racism." Usage has, however, determined that racism is the word that has come to exemplify that particular practice; it includes and embraces both the individual type of discrimination as typified by the landlord who refuses to rent his apartment to an Indian, as well as the more elaborate philosophies, such as those espoused by Rushton, of white supremacist movements.

The absence of a word that parallels feminism is significant. Sexism refers to the practice of patriarchy; feminism, or womanism as some black women have chosen to re-define themselves, refers to the movement that seeks to empower women through any number of ways. To be feminist, or womanist, would, I assume, at least imply that one was anti-sexist, and I would argue that within the concept of feminism there is the practice of anti-sexism. However, while books and policies and work-places may be anti-sexist, the term feminism means something more than being anti-sexist. There is an element of the positive and proactive implied in the use of the word; feminism is not only against sexism, but in favour of, in support of, in celebration of something.

There was a time when the concept of Black Power would have paralleled feminism, in both its proactive and reactive aspects; a time when those words encapsulated an entire philosophy built on black pride and initiative while also being against the practice of racism. It also, if we are to be honest, struck fear into the hearts of those who ruled. Eventually, the word would become to be too closely associated with black armed struggle, with the Black Panthers and with the three-day presentation to the government of the United States—eventually the word would be evacuated of its more celebratory aspects such as the insistence on the creation of our own images, or the recognition of the beauty of those who had been defined as Other for too long. A very simple yet not so simple thing like an Afro—Angela Davis's Afro—came to symbolize a revolutionarylongitude. But that was long before the flight from black as I call it. There was a time when black was a political colour. The late Walter Rodney, the Guyanese intellectual, argues its meaning brilliantly in The Grounding With My Brothers. His argument is that much of the treatment meted out by the European nations, particularly during their expansionist and imperialist periods, to the world's peoples of colour was similar. Deep differences in culture, colour, language and location, what those countries and peoples shared was the fact that they were not white-skinned which in turn guaranteed their exploitation!

If a Jamaican black man tried to get a room from a landlady in London who said "No Colour," it would not impress her if he said he was West Indian, quite apart from the fact she would already have closed the door to his black face. When a Pakistani goes to the Midlands, he is as coloured as a Nigerian. The Indonesian is the same as a Surinamer in Holland.

The position of the peoples of African descent was, however, argued to be "clearly more acute than that of most non-white groups." It was these black-skinned ones who would lend their colour to name a movement that would attempt to re-assert a balance in the inequitable distribution of the world's resources and power—Black Power.

Black is now empty of its political meaning. A. Sivanandan, Director of the Institute for Race Relations in London and Editor of Race and Class, writes that "black from being a 'political colour' was broken down into its cultural parts of West Indian, Asian, African—and these in turn reduced to their ethnic constituencies." I discern no little racism in this flight, albeit the reasons given usually stress the need to emphasize one's ethnicity. I believe the more insidious reason is the fundamental unthinkingness to be associated with blackness or Africans. While I understand and support the need to emphasize one's ethnicity, I also observe that "white" as a political term and concept is able to encompass both the bland, blue-eyed Northerner and the dark-haired, darker-skinned Southerner. And I hadn't noticed that there was any possibility of missing German culture for Italian culture.

Neither multiculturalism nor civil rights meets the need for a word that contains the creative tension of opposition against, as well as celebration of. While multiculturalism is somewhat descriptive of the ethnic composition of Canadian society, it is a bureaucratic construct and fails to address the power differential that exists among the many cultures. Civil rights remains what it is, a legalistic description of one's rights within a society allegedly governed by the rule of law.

Those who are interested in struggling for a more just society, for essentially that is what the fight against racism is all about—a struggle against injustice, inequity, against freedom for some and for freedom for others—must therefore return to that catch-all phrase, anti-racism. The danger is that people come to believe that there exists an ideology called anti-racism. The reverse is actually more true—there is an ideology of racism which anti-racism attempts to combat in as many different ways as there are spectres of racism. As Sivanandan writes:

There is no body of thought called anti-racism, no orthodoxy, or dogma, no manual or strategy and tactics, no demagogy. What there was in our society was racism, in every walk of life, and it had to be fought—every conceivable way. And because racism was healthful, and stored in different forms in different ways in different times (prejudice and depression) and differing relations (employment, housing, schools), and different places (outer city, suburbia), the ways of fighting racism were also different and legion. Nor were there any short-cuts to its demise. Racism had been a long time in the making and would take a long time to die. "Anti-racism." therefore, was a portmanteau word meant to carry all these differing ideas and ways of combating racism. The important thing, however, was to keep racism from corrupting society in decay.

Anti-racism then comes to include both reactive and proactive actions—actions like the Anti-Racist Guidelines put out by The Women's Press which were essentially reactive, as well as more progressive measures such as affirmative action publishing strategies. To develop these strategies we move from the gut to the head, but I would argue the need always to remember that racism is, and will always be, a gut issue. Anyone who felt that Toronto, or Canada for that matter, did not have a racial problem would have had that belief laid to rest over the last few months. Racism is alive and well and kicking shit in Toronto, in Ontario and all over Canada. All of which brings me to the arts.

The Cultural Faces of Racism

As mentioned earlier, my intention was to look at the arts in general to see whether there had been any attempts made to identify the practice of racism and to deal with it as The Women's Press had attempted to do. To recognize the anti-racist practices or solutions initiated within a particular discipline it was first necessary to identify the nature of racism in each discipline. What follows is an overview of the cultural faces of racism in dance, theatre, music, literature, film and video. This overview is by no means intended to be an exhaustive analysis of all that is happening in those disciplines with respect to racism; nor does it deal with institutions like A Space or other artist-run centres or...
organizations which deserve an entire article devoted to their practices, I was and am primarily interested in how black artists perceive their particular discipline; how racism impinges on them and how they continue to practise their art under such limitations.

I have also looked at the primary funding agencies since their lending policies and in particular their understanding of racism and approach to anti-racism directly affect the survival of the black and non-European artist. With a view to taking the pulse of professional organizations I also looked briefly at two related to writing. As a writer I confess to being particularly interested in these two groups.

I intend the results of my inquiries to be essentially a spring board for further inquiry by artists themselves, by funding organizations and other interested art groups. By presenting the information as I have done, in tabular form, the reader will, I hope, be able to grasp quickly the overwhelming and appalling similarity of the systemic racism that permeates the discipline I looked at. The reader can, as well, for comparison purposes follow a particular area such as training or funding through all the disciplines.

Racism will, depending on the discipline, manifest itself differently in each area. While the black writer, for instance, may have to deal with funding agencies, she also has to deal with the marketplace and the censorship of the marketplace that comes through racism. The black documentary filmmaker, on the other hand, deals primarily with institutions such as the National Film Board; his existence as a documentary filmmaker is much more dependent on such sources of institutional funding than the writer’s. The filmmaker can, after all, always publish her work herself and, as some writers have done, market it herself. Fundamentally, however, the sort of racism in the arts remains constant: the refusal to treat as valid the cultural experience, known and exploited by the artists coming from a non-European culture, wedded to the belief that Eurocentric values are in and of themselves better.

Because racism can be a debilitating experience, it is important that while identifying it, we also record the ingenuity of individuals and groups in getting around or over the hurdles created by racism, so that they can continue to practice their art. The solutions which I have identified are, therefore, as important as the problems I have unearthed. Many of these solutions may be seen as reactive to the wider practice of racism in the arts, because in a black theatre group ignoring its own show, for instance, or a black publisher publishing a work by a black writer, the proactive nature of such anti-race attitudes is visible.

DANCE

COMMENT:
There are amazing black dancers out there (we don’t give them the exposure), and yet part in the other bracket.

PATRICIA WHITE, DANCER

TRAINING:
Students only trained in modern and ballet technique, no training in or exposure to African techniques or African aesthetics of movement.

FUNDING
Indiscriminate, African-based dancers demanded as other, marginalized — no commitment, funding based on evaluation in ballet or modern dance, no exposure to the aesthetics of African dance.

SOLUTIONS:
The creation of black/African dance company such as Drake, Dance, Dance, Dance, created by Chinhoyi Khehla and Sibahle Dube’s group. All these groups are creating or are striving.

STILL TO BE DONE:
• More representation by individuals based in non-African based dance forms or arts councils.

FILM & VIDEO DOCUMENTARY

COMMENT:
There is pressure to make film and video that focuses on a little bit of initiative, a little bit of incidence, a little bit of racism, a little bit of resistance, all other races included, a little bit of business, a little bit of corporate politics, other stories that we tell with the stark realities of social, psychological and human rights from social and human perspective.

PREM/KE RATNAM, FILMMAKER

TRAINING:
Very few aspirations of the student on the part of the teachers and fellow students; underdeveloped and underestimation of students’ work with another audience acknowledge; we respect for professional competence.

FUNDING:
Traditionally negligible; African, Asian, minority culture; work viewed as educational and non-mainstream; “Come back when you’ve made it” or “We made a black film vs. white ones” vs. typical comment; filmmakers not allowed to move out of that ethnic, cultural and racial field for an mainstream issues. Film maker either has to make ethnic, or racially based material, according to their interests, and the interests of her filmmaker.

SALES:
Often told that there is no market for work.

PUBLISHING:
Refusal of publishers to publish works by black authors, reliance on the role of media to review published works by black authors, while ignoring the fact that the black author is publishing a work by a black writer, the lack of interest in block writers or minority writers.

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS:
Lack of response to minority writers and criteria, rejection of work on grounds that it is not literature.

LITERATURE

COMMENT:
The fundamental problem is that in Canada the non-black (white) condition is not a legitimate one, and, therefore, the experiences of black Canadians are viewed in isolation rather than as a part of the whole. In contradistinction, depictions of the U.S.A. black American experience are seen as legitimate and not aberrant.

CLAUDE MARKS, 1975

TRAINING:
Preliminary of literature from non-European traditions which claim to be ‘articulate’; lack of interest in creative writing programmes issues of anti-racism reading round about and about black and white.

PUBLISHING:
Extreme difficulty in obtaining funding by black authors, reliance on the role of part media to review published works by black authors, while ignoring the fact that the black author is publishing a work by a black writer.

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Extreme difficulty in obtaining funding by black authors, reliance on the role of part media to review published works by black authors, while ignoring the fact that the black author is publishing a work by a black writer.
MUSIC JAZZ AND BLUES

COMMENT:
After so many years black musicians seem to be still in the position of making music without reaping the rewards.

ZAHRA MENDIOTHY
Singer/Musician

TRAINING:
Black music was taught generally by whites in universities.

WORK:
Black musicians still perform performances—without getting work which is better paid; reasons given are that black musicians can't read music; whites write black music; whites don't want blacks working with them in social situations; whites don't want black musicians playing black music.

Establish separate categories of the Juno awards for jazz and reggae.

• Pressure radio stations playing black music to have more blacks;
• Additional training in collecting and protecting black theatre;
• More adequate funding for black theatre programmes;
• More relevant training for young actors.

THEATRE

COMMENT:
Conflict exists everywhere—strong feeling; funding; and it is obvious that black theatre is being neglected. If there is a government lottery we need to examine how they are going to change it.

AARON MANZOU/ ACTOR/DIRECTOR

TRAINING:
Black actors trained in standard methods, what they have naturally is trained out of them.

FUNDING:
Marginalization/deficit research, worked with arts councils as amateur and lacking in presentation, work categorized as folk or ethnic.

PERFORMANCE:
Black content not considered worthy of presentation; no level; insufficient funding/costing in mainstream theatre; insufficient performance of script by black actors.

BETTY BAKER/ARTIST

SOLUTIONS:
Formations of black theatre groups like Leonce Theatre Ensemble, Theatre in the Rough, Theatre Four Hundred—all operating on a shoestring; production companies like J'ouvert and Leonce, colour-coded costing companies like Emerald City.

VISUAL ART

COMMENT:
We don't believe in test examination. We feel we can not be evaluted in the gallery scene, even at the alternative galleries except for A Space. It is still a stage to stay within A Space. As artists we suffer from a lack of knowledge of the system and how it works. The upholders of the system refuse to recognize the value of other cultural systems. Our art is not an inferior substance.

BETSY REASON/ARTIST

TRAINING:
Black actors trained in standard methods, what they have naturally is trained out of them.

FUNDING:
Marginalization/deficit research, worked with arts councils as amateur and lacking in presentation, work categorized as folk or ethnic.

PERFORMANCE:
Black content not considered worthy of presentation; no level; insufficient funding/costing in mainstream theatre; insufficient performance of script by black actors; exception added when added by white artists; refused to recognize other cultural languages.

FUNDING:
High level of affirmative action policies, and where: funding for non-European cultural groups.

SOLUTIONS:
Formations of black theatre groups like Leonce Theatre Ensemble, Theatre in the Rough, Theatre Four Hundred—all operating on a shoestring; production companies like J'ouvert and Leonce, colour-coded costing companies like Emerald City.

MUSIC

JAZZ AND BLUES

PRACICE:
Appropriation of images by white artists.

CURATING:
Decontextualization of work as in The Spirit Report of the Homemade Museum or the MOMA exhibition on Printemps; inability to get a certain kind of work into mainstream galleries; too much framing galleries are showing works by blacks and other artists of colour.

CRITICAL ACCEPTANCE:
Failure so partial to critics to recognize both non-European work as well as work in the mainstream: does not have Eurocentric artists on juries; the challenge of Black Abstraction Expressionists with whites.

SOLUTIONS:
Greater networking and support given by organizations like Weavers of Cultivated Black Women; When and Where Is Now.

STILL TO BE DONE:
• Removal funding;
• Better understanding on the part of arts councils, of other cultural languages.

THE CANADA COUNCIL

APRIL• MAY 1989

Funding by arts councils is often the life blood for many artists; without it many visual artists, for instance, could not practice their art. Accepting that we live in a racist society, we can expect that councils, funding bodies, and professional groups such as the League of Canadian Poets and the Writer's Union will reflect the racism present in the society at large. It may not be the aggressive type of racism by commission; it often is the more gentle and therefore more pernicious type of racism by omission; failure to appoint to jury individuals and artists representative of non-European cultures.

The issues facing us when we attempt to analyze critically the workings of arts councils are complex ones and ones which are beyond the scope of this particular exploration, but suffice it to describe them briefly. As demonstrated by the tables above, there is the issue of the representative nature of the juries and boards. There is also the issue of multiculturalism, how it intersects with anti-racist work, and how it works to muddy the issue of racism and at times to obscure it. I have always believed that multiculturalism was concocted in part to diffuse the explosive potential of racism, and look where that got us. Finally but equally important is the composition of the staff of these bodies—how representative they are of the society in which we live, which gets us into the area of affirmative action, or for those who blush at that expression, employment equity.

In order to assess where arts councils and professional organizations are regarding anti-racism and/or affirmative action policies, I sent out the following brief questionnaire:

1. Does your organization have a clearly articulated policy on anti-racism and/or affirmative action policy?
2. In the case of funding organizations does your organization have a clearly articulated policy on anti-racism and/or affirmative action applicable to your funding organizations?
3. If you have such a policy please send materials documenting that policy and please furnish examples of how the policy is implemented.
4. If your organization does not have such a policy, do you see a need for such a policy and have you made any attempts to implement such a policy?

What follows is a synopsis of the replies.

Where They're At: Reports on Arts Councils & Arts Organizations

APRIL• MAY 1989

** There are no comparable programmes for any other non-European cultural groups. For instance, there is no provision made for black artists working in a demotic (dialect) English to have their work assessed externally.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
ARTS PROMOTION DIVISION

These were in response to my questionnaire despite a follow up phone call. The Arts Promotion Division of their Literature and Promotion Program supports Canadian participation in major international conferences on literature of importance to Canada. I myself personally tried to get support for the First International Conference on Caribbean Women Writers, held in Boston in 1988. I was unsuccessful and certainly got the impression that such a conference was not considered to be dealing with "literature of importance to Canada." I protested this long letter to the department suffering the importance of Caribbean women writers in Canada and their importance to the Caribbean Canadian population here in Canada.
I started out this essay by talking about the gut issue of racism—for me at least. I suspect that for the individual white person the gut issue is going to be the giving up of some of the power and privilege they have held for so long, and to begin to view as equals those whom they have long considered inferiors. And herein lies the significance of Rushton’s theories and policies for us, as individuals.

What I am talking about is not an easy thing to do or accomplish, I am not even sure that it’s possible. Many well-meaning individuals, eager to do the right thing, believe that by including the odd multicultural writer into a curriculum, for instance, or tinkering here and there with superficialities, what is needed will be accomplished. What is necessary goes much deeper than these cosmetic changes and will be profoundly disturbing for many.

On a personal level the eradication of racism will require at least a complete rethinking of values. And even that will not necessarily and automatically equate with better and more desirable institutions. It must mean an understanding of one’s privilege as the purveyor of certain cultural representations and the cost of that to others; it must understand an understanding of the political and social underpinning of what we have come to know as knowledge; it ought to mean an understanding of how, in a racist society, tradition, and objectivity, academic and academic freedom become tainted and are used as shields for racism. It means, above all, not just a shift in one’s perspectives, but a shift in the position from which one’s perspectives is formed. It means realizations as times gut-wrenching, gut-twisting change. And who wants to do that? It’s far easier to yield to the forces of inertia; turn on the TV and leave things as they are.

On a systemic level such change must mean the institution and enactment of affirmative action policies on all levels in the arts world, from the marketplace to the arts councils; from the granting process, performance grants, to the union. We live in a society in which our mode of thinking is one of binary opposition: the other/or conundrum. My life or your death. My well-being is not based on the lack of well-being: my wealth or your poverty. Closely tied to this is the concept of scarcity, real or contrived, which is essential to the proper functioning of capitalist societies. We are continually encouraged, by various means, to believe that the satisfaction of one person’s needs automatically means the non-fulfillment of another’s. White middle-class female writers, therefore, can believe that their class and white and non-European writers automatically means the non-publication of their works. Scarcity wedded to binary oppositional thought becomes a deadly combination so that policy makers and arts councils come to believe that the funding of works by black and non-European artists must be at the expense of mainstream cultural representation and the flip side of that, that the only way to ever begin to address the issue of racism, relying only on the practices surrounding the concept of multiculturalism. While I am not suggesting that multiculturalism be abandoned, I am arguing that multiculturalism and anti-racism need be mutually exclusive. What to do.

WHa’ fe do

When I consider the responses of the funding bodies to my inquiries, all of which are for the most part serious and well-meaning, and consider in turn the depth and apparent intrusiveness of the racism as revealed in the tables above, it is difficult not to grow wary. When I hear that in 1980 the reason given for not hiring musicians is that they cannot read music, it is difficult, if not impossible not to feel that this world is living in a time warp. The divide between the reality of the black or non-European artist, and the funding policies of arts councils, between the black artist and the art world in general is so great as to be almost unbridgeable. Automatic and instinctive, the response to the black artist and her work by the art world is one that reveals a profound lack of respect for the individual artist and her or his cultural traditions, particularly when she is the producer of her art. The flip side of this is the cultural appropriation by the white artist of those traditions for his or her personal advancement. And therein lies the danger. It is clear that the arts councils have not even begun to address the issue of racism, relying only on the practices surrounding the concept of multiculturalism. While I am not suggesting that multiculturalism be abandoned, I am arguing that multiculturalism and anti-racism need be mutually exclusive. What to do.
This specious— I am tempted to say magical— belief in scarcity is, as we have seen, an illusion. There is no lack in my mind that European cultural representation can exist alongside cultural representation by black and other non-European artists. We would all be the culturally richer for it as well. But the fear that scarcity engenders that the metaphorical pie is not big enough for us all is shared in what drives many to hold on to exclusivity.

In view of all the forces massed against profound and meaningful change, not the least of which are the powerful media, any change that does take place will, I believe, happen piecemeal, in eras and here there and in The Women’s Press ordeal, or in small epiphanies moments as it does for some in the aftermath of that event. But happen it must.

James Baldwin writes that, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be faced until it is faced.” Racism might never be eradicated, but certainly not will not be eradicated until it is faced, not once, but ever and over again until, I hope, we get to do it with we chuck the whole damn stinking mess out.

Racism is on the rise in Toronto and Canada. The racism that exists and flourishes in the arts is all of a piece with the racism in education, the racism in policing, and the racism in the workplace. Each of these areas has a particular significance to our society and the significance of cultural representation or the arts cannot, I believe, be emphasized too much. It is through cultural representation that the artist re-present the guts and soul of a people: the urge to such representation is, I believe, basic to the human species. The impulse to creativity and cultural re-presentation will, if stymied, continue in more negative ways.

While it is sometimes extremely difficult to do so, I do believe— have always believed— the desirable improvement of the human species. I suppose I must. If I don’t may as well give up. Nadine Gordimer writes that “the writer is eternally in search of entelechy in his (sic) relation to his society.” I go further; not only the writer, but the artist, the human being, the human species, is in search of perfection in its relation to society. However, while heights such as racism, sexism and classism exist, such perfection will continue to escape us. Here in Canada there has traditionally been a reluctance to face the ugly facts of racism—the gut issues; The Women’s Press faced them and suffered many casualties as a consequence. I do believe, however, that the community of writers, and the arts community in general, has benefited tremendously from this painful but necessary bringing to the fore of what we all knew was there all along. The opportunity for enlightening debate, the potential for change, was there, as in the old sense of charity for one’s neighbors—the West Africans call it ashe or supreme goodness—are all there. We must, I believe, seize this opportunity, it might not present itself in quite this way again. Blacks and whites facing each other across flaming barricades in Toronto—that is no longer an unlikely image. I would not have said so two years ago and I hope two years hence I can read this and conclude I was crying wolf. But things must get better. Or worse. They will not remain the same.

END NOTES

1 It is, I believe, no coincidence that Bushmen’s theatre has come to the fore at this point in time in Canada when votes against African Canadians on the inter-racial, and when the stand-off between the police and the latter remains at crisis proportions.

2 This manuscript was to be later accepted for publication in England and, irony of ironies, the new Women’s Press would buy its Canadian rights.

3 African scholars have for years now argued that this was the case; their scholarship has by and large been ignored by white mainstream institutions.

4 All Matter is a distinguished African scholar, author of several books, including The African, based on the T.V. mini-series of the same name.

5 Author of the seminal works The Cultural Unity of Black Africa and The African Origin of Civilization.


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Readers will have noted that when referring to non-European artists I have, for example, referred to ‘African, Asian, and Native.’ With the falling into disrepute of the use of the word “black” as a political concept the writer can no longer rely on its use in describing non-Europeans, although the term is useful in describing non-white as a political concept. The writer can no longer rely on its use in describing non-Europeans, although the term is useful in describing non-white as a political concept.

12 I interviewed representatives from five progressive organizations. Some of the organizations have changed their names. The Multicultural Whitewash, “The Multicultural Whitewash,” Fuse, Fall 1987.

Marlene Nourbese Philip is a Toronto-based writer and poet. Her latest novel is If Herriot’s Daughter, published by The Women’s Press, Toronto.

"Free as last, free as lost, great God Almighty, I'm free at last!" The voice of Martin Luther King trembled with power and passion. A Baptist preacher on national TV, King challenged the conscience of white America. I recall watching the news on TV and seeing black men and women being clubbed over the head by huge Southern cops. My blood was cold. I was angry.

The time had come for Martin Luther King to chant proudly and uncompromisingly his message for equality and justice not only to the African people but to the people of the world it was a special and splendid chant that was heard from the plinm of the drum. Blacks in America and in Canada gained visibility and political power.

During the 60’s, many groups and organizations developed out of this, political and cultural need. One of the most prominent and progressive in the U.S.A. was S.N.C.C. (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), which developed to decentralize the focus of the traditional civil rights base and become known for its dramatic style in grassroots organizing.

Canada, like the U.S.A., was on trial because of inequality and oppressive conditions, racism against native people and immigrants from the Caribbean, and our role in the Vietnam war. Yet, to our extent, it was a time of enlightenment, a time for social, political and cultural change.

The middle-class upper-class white kids were turning their backs on their parents’ values and rejecting their heritage. The discovery of the conscious cells of racism running through Canadian life caused a traumatic reaction, as the discovery of racism would years later. Multiculturalism was being promoted by the government and racism often made headlines in the newspaper. The educational boards were creating multicultural units. Racism in schools was beginning to be more of a problem than the old days. It was essentially that the blacks had learnt their place in society, that they were second-class citizens. When the blacks would try to educate their kids, the teachers would teach them the same thing. Multiculturalism was being promoted by the government and racism often made headlines in the newspaper. The educational boards were creating multicultural units. Racism in schools was beginning to be more of a problem than the old days. It was essentially that the blacks had learnt their place in society, that they were second-class citizens. When the blacks would try to educate their kids, the teachers would teach them the same thing.

And it was inevitable that the inter-cultural empathy would develop between the groups, they will have to extrapolate from the information provided.


Maureen Fitzgerald and Michelle Paulse from The Women’s Press were members of the Popular Front of the Black Caucus. They talked to me about the restructuring and the ideology of The Women’s Press.
Tanya Mars has been a performance artist, editor of FUSE and long-standing staff member at ANNPAC.

I think that one thing that I think is important is that when we look at activists in the political sphere, I think that ANNPAC is one of those groups that has been pushing for the idea of a more equitable world. For me, as a socialist, that involves a transformation of the economic structure, of capitalism. And the struggles of various people to deal with it is very much a part of the movement.

We had a long conversation after we had finished the interviews about the issue of colour. We discussed the issue of race and the struggle of various groups to deal with it. We were saying that they had to give some of that up. Because we were saying that it was something that they didn't want to do. They didn't want to share that position or share that identity to deal with things. And that's how I see racism being an issue of power.

AB: Do you plan to include people of colour on the Board?

RA: ANNPAC did an employment survey about working conditions in Aboriginal centres. Sometimes, we think that we are progressive, but we're not as progressive as we imagine ourselves to be. One of the questions that we asked was what role the individual was. We were interested in finding out the role that that particular candidate had no qualifications at all. No administrative experience and didn't know how to type. So we asked the question, and I think that inability to deal with it is still very apparent in a lot of places.

The truth is that I've never really dealt with the way that it is manifested. And I think that it's different here. It's different here because we know that it's a real issue. Because racism is a real taboo. It's a history North America is not quite ready to deal with racism. The tendency has been for groups to back off from racism, to back off from having to deal with this issue. It is important to deal with it. Because these groups do have a responsibility to deal with the issue of colour.

Ric: We've tried to include people of colour, but I think part of it is dealing with the issue of colour. We've been trying to include people of colour, but I think part of it is dealing with the issue of colour. We've been trying to include people of colour, but I think part of it is dealing with the issue of colour. We've been trying to include people of colour, but I think part of it is dealing with the issue of colour.

Ann-Marie: As a video artist, and managing director of ANNPAC, I think that self-determination is the best way of getting anything. To deal with that, I think that self-determination is the best way of getting anything. To deal with that, I think that self-determination is the best way of getting anything.

AB: Do you think that any group can deal with the issue of race, sexism and sexual preference?

RA: Well, if I were to say that this isn't an easy process, then I think that's what's really important. From the position of power, there are already people who have tended to be predominant here at Women's Press, have got more to say. From the position of power, there are already people who have tended to be predominant here at Women's Press, have got more to say.

AB: How do you see being progressive in terms of ANNPAC?

RA: Well, one of the things that I would like to see happen with ANNPAC is that it would be a more progressive organization. In the 60's and 70's, there was a move to the right. And I don't think that we have seen much difference. I don't think that we have seen much difference.

AB: Do you plan to include people of colour on the Board?

RA: I think that an issue of colour doesn't come into it in a way. If this were to become an officially bilingual organization, it is getting translated, it is getting translated, it is getting translated.

AB: How do you think that groups can deal with the aspect of race, sexism and sexual preference?

RA: I think that groups can deal with the aspect of race, sexism and sexual preference. I think that groups can deal with the aspect of race, sexism and sexual preference.

AB: What advice would you give to other progressive groups?

RA: I think that you bring up a good point. For ANNPAC I think it would be really important to have structural workshops, as well as workshops on intercultural funding.

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RA: I think that you bring up a good point. For ANNPAC I think it would be really important to have structural workshops, as well as workshops on intercultural funding. I think that that kind of action would have to be brought forward to the membership from a centre, we are an organization of organizations.

AB: People of colour have voiced complaints about the lack of support from government funding bodies like the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. If I were to say that it is not enough, that it is not enough, that it is not enough.

RA: I think that you bring up a good point. For ANNPAC I think it would be really important to have structural workshops, as well as workshops on intercultural funding. I think that that kind of action would have to be brought forward to the membership from a centre, we are an organization of organizations. I think that that kind of action would have to be brought forward to the membership from a centre, we are an organization of organizations. I think that that kind of action would have to be brought forward to the membership from a centre, we are an organization of organizations.
Clive Robertson is an artist, contributing editor and founding member of FUSE Magazine. He is currently artist-in-residence at Gatineau College in Ottawa.

CR: FUSE started in 1976 in Calgary as an art magazine that dealt with fine arts including video, performance and arts' books. We moved FUSE to Toronto in 1974. The Body Politic was on and a number of artists, including myself, thought we should use the magazine to do a media analysis of the way the trial was being reported in the newspapers and on TV. We attended the trial and we attempted a legal analysis of what was going on with the issue. It was an issue that was called "Women and Nonviolence" and was based on research that Lisa Steele, who was working at a women's group in Toronto, experienced the issues of women and violence.

AM: What is A Space? And how did this group come into being?

CR: A Space is a revolutionary organization in the sense that it is not afraid to start new trends. It has been hired to monitor the various sections to make sure that at least they give token recognition. And the other major point is what the perception of the arts council is. If you look at their professional development programming, they are really interested in the model that Nova Scotia has where they have a training programme for artists and viable minority groups. Basically the emphasis is, how do you make artists of colour into good, mainstream, white, Eurocentric artists. Now I think if a number of changes to work in a particular mode, that's their decision, but I don't think there should be a policy to do that. If a minority artists want to stay and recognized for work that they may do within their own community, they have a right to it. I don't say that all black artists should make, should produce an autonomous culture, necessarily. I'm just saying that they should have the right to choose. I think that the choice is theirs and that they should have the right to make that decision. It's not up to us to say an individual artist of colour you should do this, it's up to them. It's up to them to take up and make the struggle. They are the ones who should have the right to do that.

AM: I can't really name any off hand. Because I don't have experience in any other organization that does the kind of work that A Space is doing. And I'm not sure what the alternatives are, but I think that's what A Space is all about.

"WHAT THEY WANT TO DO IS CREATE PROGRAMMES THAT WILL GET MINORITY ARTISTS INTEGRATED INTO THE SYSTEM, MAKE THEM MAINSTREAM, WHITE, EUROCENTRIC ARTISTS."

Independent Artists' Union

The Independent Artists' Union is an union for visual and media artists. Its aim is to achieve a living wage and equality of access to cultural resources and distribution for all artists.

Karl Beveridge is an artist, photographer and founding member of the Independent Artists' Union.

KB: The Artists' Union was organized during the major cutbacks in 1975-76, when the Conservative government first came in. As usual, the Canada Council asked artists to come out and defend its existence. A number of us were talking and saying, it's pretty silly that we go out defending the budget of the Council when essentially our benefit from it is minimal, rather than putting our energy into defending the status quo as such, we should begin articulating what our own needs are. Even though CAR/FACT existed, CAR/FACT's vision was essentially to patch the existing system. And we felt that had to be a radical re-evaluation and change in terms of what benefits artists were receiving from society for the work they do. There was a growing recognition through a certain politicalization of the arts, that art isn't just an elite patronage producing type of industry, but that art has social value and has social meaning and that artists and their work should be rewarded for the social value that they produce.

CR: In Calgary? No. Because race wasn't an issue then like it is in Toronto. It isn't an issue in Quebec City in 1975. It isn't entirely that tied into the local experience, but I'm amazed how much of these things are not an issue right now. It's become an issue in Toronto for the first time in a significant political in time. It didn't happen just with A Space, but when Arts Richmond was asked to be on the board of A Space when it was taken over a year ago, it seemed like a really significant time. Alan and Joseph and Edward began to be involved in the visual arts community, it opened the door for people like that, like what was going to happen. I've been away from Toronto a year now. The situation has changed dramatically, there is the question of colour and it has changed in terms of what the racial makeup of people was who could go to clubs in Toronto. "You know you should see there in audience members or now as artists. And I think that once access starts opening up, it's going to be a very different people that are both confronting and confronted by the issues, than something has to happen."

KB: Well they paid lip service to it. "Oh yes, but we have to consider..." But they're not going to move on it very much. They'll move as much as they have to move to keep a liberal face, but I think that, that's not their priority. They would see that this is one place, these people who are on the board of the Art Gallery of Ontario, they're married people, they're not concerned about people, they're concerned about the cultural works. I think we need more membership organizations like A Space. Because the membership determines the organization, the policies that are enforced stay in place over the years. A Space's membership not only reflects the makeup of the art community, but is actually attracting more ethnic and other professional artists through programming. A Space is the only art organization that I am aware of that is actually working on its policy initiatives, policy initiatives in personal and programmes.

KB: What do you mean by proactive?

AM: Proactive is a policy where constant search is actively made to bring in material or people who are not white or considered mainstream.

A Space is a revolutionary organization in the sense that it is not afraid to start new trends.

AB: What are your feelings about other progressive arts organizations?

AM: I can't really name any off hand. Because I don't have experience in any other organization that does the kind of work that A Space is doing. And I'm not sure what the alternatives are, but I think that's what A Space is all about.

THERE IS NO SENSE THINKING YOU CAN CHANGE IT HERE OR THERE, BECAUSE IT IS NOT GOING TO FOO ANYONE. YOU MIGHT DRESS UP YOUR PRODUCT AND MAYBE A FEW WILL THINK IT'S DIFFERENT, BUT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO FOO ANYONE FOR LONG."

Demands for Change

Anne-Marie Stewart acts as a consultant to groups involved in organizational and structural change. In conversation with Ayanna Black, she outlines the issues facing progressive organizations.

AB: I think that the three most significant issues affecting organizations today, and which we'll get to shortly, are usually: (1) the structure, (2) how work is done within the organization and (3) the people who the organization hires, which organizational theory calls "causal determinants." And if you look at the output of an organization, that output is directly related to those major areas. If you are going to make changes in an organization, you have to either solve them or make changes in the people. You can't change your product if you don't make change inside. You could say, I want to make decisions differently, but you can't make decisions differently unless you make changes inside. You have to go back and look at who you hire, who you train, how you hire, how you train and even further back than that. Where do you get your people from, and where do you advertise. But at the same time, you have to be aware of the assumptions inherent in the rules of the organization, the roles for work is done. I'm sure if you took a deep look, you'll find that a lot of those assumptions are based on white, middle-class assumptions and behavior.

AB: What do you mean by pro-active?

AM: Proactive is a policy where constant search is actively made to bring in material or people who are not white or considered mainstream.
In the midst of an unprecedented onslaught on the environment by corporate polluters, public awareness of environmental issues in Canada has never been as high as it is now. A national-wide attitudinal survey conducted by Angus Reid in the summer of 1988 revealed that 83 per cent of Canadians rank the environment as “very important,” with 80 per cent of the respondents willing to spend more for consumer items that are environmentally safe. A whopping 89 per cent believe that private industry does not contribute enough to solving environmental problems. Confronted with an environmentally aware public, consumer product advertisers have taken some unusual twists in recent months in a heightened effort to cover their assets.

Co-opting nature icons for inanimate (and polluting) products is a time-tested strategy of advertising ever since the industry discovered “Marlboro Country,” but lately that tactic has assumed new proportions. A sign of the times can be found in the new ad campaign for Craven A cigarettes. Where once upon a time smokers were depicted enjoying the killer weed in natural great outdoors settings, now the company has taken a more aggressive stance by actually carving the corporate logo into the landscape. The ads show smokers on a golf course where the putting green has been mowed into a huge circle containing the words “Craven A,” or on a beach where a similar transformation has been made on the sandy expanse. The message is like a staking of a land claim, asserting the corporate place in the landscape, but also proclaiming the human “necessity” to rework and transform natural surroundings. In terms of attitudes toward nature, the ads subtly say that corporations have a right to alter the earth.

Where once car manufacturers were content to utilize animal totems merely in naming their vehicles, now the advertising strategy of advertising ever since the industry discovered “Endangered Earth,” a Mercury Cougar ad makes the claim that it is “The Next Breed Of Cat,” apparently meant to replace the actual animal species. The ad adopts a pseudo-evolutionary tone: “The breed begins. Again. Sleeker. Faster. More intelligent.”

A current Nissan Pathfinder ad claims the vehicle is “Half Man, Half Beast,” thereby denying all technological reality. Similarly, the current Audi ad, with its slogan “The Hills Are Alive,” transfers that ecological awareness to the car, making it seem like just another species roaming the planet. Ironically, in the January 2 (1989) edition of Time, whose cover-story was devoted to the woes of “Endangered Earth,” a Mercury Cougar ad makes the claim that it is “The Next Breed Of Cat,” apparently meant to replace the actual animal species. The ad adopts a pseudo-evolutionary tone: “The breed begins. Again. Sleeker. Faster. More intelligent.”

Attributing species-status to polluting

by Joyce Nelson

APRIL • MAY 1989 FUSE 33
Excel in Great Expectations

The 1989 Hyundai Excels have arrived. And each one’s a bundle of joy. Now you can baby yourself with over 50 standard features. That’s more than any car in its class.

You can take comfort knowing your new addition is well taken care of with a 2-year blanket warranty and a 5-year major component warranty. So if you’re planning a new addition, visit your Hyundai dealer. You’ll discover the Excel delivers a lot more car than you’re expecting for a lot less than you think.

HYUNDAI Cars that make sense.

A similar transformation happens in a November 21 (1988) Maclean’s ad placed by the Canadian Nuclear Association. The ad shows a family relaxing on the grassy slopes of a park, while in the background a nuclear power plant (the Pickering Generating Station) is clearly visible. At first one assumes that the ad copy accompanying such a photograph will be decidedly anti-nuclear, since the juxtaposition of this happy nuclear family outing and the nuclear power plant is so ironic and bizarre. But the accompanying ad copy is all about the “safety” of nuclear power. Again, as in the IBM ad, something that does not inherently belong in the landscape and is in fact a major polluter is made to seem like a “natural” feature of the scenic view.

Corporate attempts to naturalize pollution and polluters extends into language as well. For example, a January Toyota ad boasts about “Performance Verging On Meltdown,” twisting the meaning of the word into favourable connotations. A kind of clever reversal of expectations and perceptions, perhaps based on our propensity to merely skim ads. A good example is a recent IBM ad in Maclean’s. The two-page ad shows a photographed scene overlooking Vancouver’s ocean front, with four floating corporate oil rigs dominating the foreground. The ad’s bold copy states: “If You Can See Beyond This, Then IBM Shares Your Point Of View.” The implication is that we need ecological awareness and visionary thinking to move beyond the situation depicted in the photograph; that corporate exploitation of environmental resources is not the answer for the future, and that IBM shares this point of view. But when you actually read the smaller ad copy, you find that it is about the “spectacular view” of the Pan Pacific Hotel recently purchased by IBM, from whose 23rd floor the accompanying window-framed photograph was shot. There isn’t a word about those four oil rigs, which thereby become “natural” features of the view.

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Ford Aerostar ad in Harrowsmith asserts that it is "a sporty Eddie Bauer model...with new Eddie Bauer style," as though associations with this outdoor clothing manufacturer might compensate for an otherwise polluting product.

But the two wireless "environmental" campaigns are the ones currently being placed by Benson & Hedges and Chrysler Canada. Benson & Hedges, the tobacco giant, has adopted two new strategies to provide product appeal. One technique is based on perception reversals. The ad shows a woman with long, dark hair, running a comb through it. Superimposed on her tresses are gold streaks and the Benson & Hedges logo, with the caption "Black and Gold." Despite the fact that one of the things which people dislike about smoking is its lingering odours on the body, clothing, and in the hair, here the company reverses that perception with a seemingly "beautiful" image. In other words: if the nose is offended, appeal to the eyes.

Another Benson & Hedges ad takes an even more aggressive approach by seemingly tattooing natural species with its logo. One recent two-page ad shows a beautiful flower being approached by a Monarch butterfly: one flower petal and both butterfly wings are inscribed with this might seem to be a co-opting of nature iconography and associations, on another level it is a bizarre but bold assertion of nature as corporate enemy: tattooed in advance of extermination.

Chrysler Canada's current ad campaign takes a similar approach. Its two-page magazine ad shows a close-up of the red exterior of a car body with rain drops falling on it. The bold ad copy reads: "Over Time, The Penetrating Force Of A Single Drop Of Rain Will Pierce Metal Like A Bullet." At first glance, the reader expects that the remaining print of the ad will be devoted to the issue of acid rain, with maybe something about corporate responsibility in helping to diminish the problem. But no, Chrysler takes a different tack, portraying nature as the hostile enemy: "Rain is only the accomplice. The real killer is ferric oxide; the deadly combination of water, air, and metal we call rust." The ad goes on to talk about the protective coating applied to Chryslers to combat the seeming terrorist aggression of nature, and its penetrating "bullets."

But perhaps the biggest irony of the new Chrysler Canada ad campaign is its slogan: "Changing The Landscape." No other technology in this century has done more to alter and threaten the planet with the depletion of fossil fuels, the invasion of toxic and acid rain devastating forests and lakes, and contributions to the "greenhouse effect" looming on the horizon. In a hideous and bizarre twist, Chrysler Canada's new corporate slogan simultaneously boasts about such effects, incorporates an environmental buzzword, and promises to wreak further havoc. As their ad makes clear, the "landscape" they care about is the smooth, un-pitted and non-corroded "body" that really counts.

with industry; labour activists, envi­ron­
mentalists and the chairman of a robotics com­
pany. This taking up of quite diverse parts of the
spray paint cans, the spray paint cans as the
artist and writer deal with subjects that could
have easily been expanded further.

One of the most successful groups and one
that was explicitly rooted in place, was John
Scott's video Born Near the US. In this work
Scott tells his story of growing up in Windsor;
the modest aim of the symposium to share infor­
mation and bridge information gaps, there was
doctor that it would stimulate new
work, possibly collaborative efforts. Most
important, however, was the intent to turn the
workshop atmosphere to help establish a di­
rection for the planned November exhibition.

As the weekend drew to a close, there was
a sense that very good presentations had been
made, but that work was about the effort to fit
the specific areas of interest dealt with in the
taller theme. Before the sym­
posium was wound up, a closed evaluation session
was added on specifically to discuss the chal­
lenges and options involved in shaping the
project. There were essentially three direc­
tions that emerged in this discussion: one was to
lighten the focus and create a more manage­
able scope of inquiry for the project; the second
was to simply provide a forum for the audience
to explore related works and essays—without trying to impose a rigid cu­

ratorial grid of interpretative, the third option, and most ambitious, was to use the critical
effect to articulate the connecting threads in the
broad industrial theme.

Mary Ellen Scully Mouse, the curator and coordinator of Industrial Impact, chose to take
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like being swallowed by a garden hose I felt my scalp and neck a passage of pleasure in a sea of "shame"—very "bad girl" marks that I would give my eyes and a highly coveted LOOT t-shirt for now. The much-maligned "The personal is political" was not extended to embrace the right to participate in sexual freedom. Lesbianism at LOOT meant work and struggle and politics and oppression and as, I remember, it had little to do with sex—a platform which, in retrospect, clearly limited both the range and depth of our analysis and action.

The pendulum can swing both ways. Most of the pieces at the Dykes Have Bad Times Too evening had almost everything to do with sex: sexual fantasies and relationship stories and the other women around us thrust tongues into our mouths and stroked themselves sharing our heat and suddenly it was

... and the other women around us thrust tongues into our mouths and stroked themselves sharing our heat and suddenly it was
We are urged to interrogate our own experience and then are punished for doing so. Despite these contrary trends, the DNA Hamlet immediately alienated its audience with the price tag of $100 admission and by the time tickets were $50, and the piece went on for nine hours. The logic of value for money doesn’t carry through when a show’s production values are so low that the audience is not likely to have as much disposable income as the audience attending Cos. The length also fails to look attractive in a city more prone to experimental theatre. It is a shame to watch an audience in a small multiplex quietly hiss and then exit. Despite the fact that this piece and any other performance permits: the freedom to leave. --expensive, the audience was not allowed to leave. Instead you are separated from the back of the theatre and are instructed to leave the theatre with a program in hand.

As the audience emerges from the Theatre Centre at 2 p.m. for a weekend performance, the pattern of alienation continues. The doors are shut: audience members are not allowed to enter the theatre; instead you are separated from any friends and companions, gathered in groups of two to four and taken around the back of the building and up a fire escape.

Still outside, you are met by two women, dressed in black, who stand in front of you and demand: “Who’s there?” and “Answer me. Stand up!” Staring off into the distance, they cry, “Long live the king,” the first lines of Hamlet spoken by two spectators.

The back door to the building is then flung open and, as you enter into the darkness, bright white lights are shone in your eyes. Afraid to walk for fear of falling, you are forced to grope your way around until you gradually ascertain yourself to the strange new environment.

Chairs are scattered throughout the space. Strings of naked lightbulbs hang from the ceiling, at times brightening and dimming. Loud classical music resonates from speakers all around. A loud voice bellows: “Sit where you like! Feel free to move around the space! Do as you are told, or leave!” The voice belongs to one of several men and women uniformly dressed in white shirts and black trousers. Another of these repeats: “Never reveal what you have seen. Your only eye adjust, several levels of platforms can be made out. On one, a large wooden bed comes into focus. Higher up is an area with a couch and chairs. People standing on this level are yelled at for being on the railing. Beyond that, there is some sort of sloped area which a black-corseted woman sits and chats with a boarded man. (She turns out to be a victim of the Underworld, and he is the ghost of Hamlet’s father). Just along from a woman practising samurai moves with a sword starts to slide down a long ramp towards you.

On the opposite side of the space is a woman sitting on a stool in front of a table saw. Throughout the performance, she tears whores, blows horns and points at characters whenever they utter a line from the text of Hamlet that she approves of, noting it down in a small ledger. (She later fingerprint characters who die during the play, giving them a pill to swallow and sending them off to heaven). Beyond her, on the wall, there are several umbrellas and bookshelves to which one can make out the voice of the director, evidently tapped during rehearsals, telling his actors how to play their roles. Further on, as the far corner, sits Hamlet (Andrew Scorer), head shaved, talking quietly to a young woman who seems to be his girlfriend (Kristen Johnson). I find a chair close to them and try to make out what Hamlet is saying as I continue to survey the scene.

Frequently, audience members are moved out of the way of an impending piece of action. Claudia (Sky Gillies), having spent a good twenty minutes devouring an entire chicken, parades around with Gertrude (Shirley Joseph) in circles, accompanied by more loud music, before addressing the masses gaggle below. Polonius (Ed Fielding) pushes his familiar padstow to new extremes by speaking so slowly that it seems certain he will forget his thought before he gets to the end of it. Ophelia goes mad and smears herself with poppies. A funeral march slowly brings her body on, taking twenty minutes to go a distance of twenty feet. Portraits of the dead are mounted on the walls.

Despite its consistently unusual tone, both of Shakespeare’s classic worlds and of ours—something hard to come by in our local theatres—the downfall of the piece was entirely its confused sense of freedom. The overall disorientation of the piece soon made going from place to place within the theatre an act of aimless and unendowed wandering rather than scene exploration. Possible contrast of epic rhythm and image were derailed by the invariable lag of the audience as the event as a whole. The mechanical playing style of the performers, combined with the pushiness of the “watcher” further served to confine the very imagination which a good part of the audience staged to want to free. Finally, I chose the most meaningful sense of freedom: the freedom to leave. —Nigel Hunt

Hunt is a playwright and editor of Theatre.

HER VICTIMS are men lured by sexual seduction into a web of desire which transforms them into blood hunger. Two lesbian lovers, unawares, are suddenly attacked by a man who bludgeons them to death in a fit of jealous rage. Women rise from the dead to take revenge on men.

What is the lesbian vampire stereotype? Is it a warning of the potential excesses of female narcissism or independence, the imaginary female fate gone bereft, "death with the face of love?" What mythical role does the lesbian vampire play?

In both The Hunger, a recent American extravaganza, and Daughters of Darkness, a 60's Belgian cult film, the motive for blood thirst is not vengeance but immortality, in keeping with the traditional vampire myths. The desire for immortality in these two films, however, is culturally inscribed as a specifically female desire for eternal youth and beauty. As if delivering lines from an Oil of Olv commercial, the Countess in Daughters of Darkness asks: "How old do you think I am?" and the casting of Catherine (Chanel No.5) Deneuve in The Hunger foregrounds a cosmetic phenomenon of foreign artistic glamour.

The Hunger crosses scientific empiricism and science fiction, transforming the mythic resonances of the vampire into moral current simply provides an erotic "special effect." Where The Hunger merely plays out the lesbian vampire fiction, using the plot as a thin armature for over-produced mise en scene, this theme is a platform from which Daughters of Darkness launches its parable of romance, family, marriage, desire and linguistic clichés. The two themes diverge significantly in characterization and moral tenor. In The Hunger the simplified characters are destined to fulfill a familiar macabrely thwarting our expectations. The alliance of love and death, figured by the lesbian vampire theme, stages an enigma of perversion/abnormality (primarily in dialogue), characteristic of Dr Sade and Bataille. The psychological and/or manic/feminine underpinning of the characters are never completely differentiated or explained. A semblance of normality, initially represented by the newlywed couple, is continually challenged so that the mythic/Fictional abnormality of the Countess doubles for and is mirrored by the psychological abnormality of Stephen, whose identification with the Countess’s seduction, revealed by his rapture re-telling of her infamous three thousand years of lovers’ conquests, blurs the difference between the ‘real’ and the mythical. Obsessional, ironical, and unexpected twists in the plot obscure information with which we might make sense of the characters, drawing attention to and si
The Façade of Obsession

By Way Of Fiction

Tess Payne

Tess Payne’s new tape, By Way Of Fiction, is the culmination of what could be read as a series of three tapes investigating characters who act and obliterate as a substitute for passion. The Flow Of Appearance, Life On Our Planet, and finally By Way Of Fiction all use a similar structure of dispersive and simultaneous narratives that present characters caught up in “styles” that mimic media representations of fulfillment via form. In Payne’s tapes, the people in the media (in some cases, television and magazines) all have names, but the central characters don’t. In the previous two tapes, we watch people who have mastered “lifestyle” seemingly at the expense of content. They look perfect, cook perfect meals, and chit-chat while doing extravagantly painful looking exercises to mould perfect bodies. However, there are cracks in the seamless perfection of their lives. The farmer being interviewed on television proudly asserts that his 10,000 chickens all have their own cages (no such thing as a “homeless” chicken), but he has to admit that this doesn’t allow them to do anything but eat the constant supply of grains and hormones altering food provided them. A woman having dinner with her roommates confides to her friends how each night someone comes into her room and places cups over her breasts and she can feel the milk flowing, induced just like the automatic milking machines used on cows. One of the women dismisses it as a dream. The woman recounting the story isn’t convinced, but does not seem unduly disturbed by either the event or the dream of the event. The occurrence just seems endless. These disquieting instances barely ruffle the glowing patina they have achieved and so joylessly polish. By Way Of Fiction probes that patina of consumption, revealing a decay of the spirit that is both touching and chilling.

The woman (unnamed) who is the central character is presented in a number of situations that may or may not be fictional. Read literally, she is a woman who is raising her teenager son by herself. She is having an ultimately unsatisfying relationship with a television producer in search of a “concept.” She supports herself and her son as an actress, and as back-up, by what must be supply teaching. She’s keeping her life together, but all is not well. Milton, her lover, longingly eyes provincials, while she develops an affection with an attractive male student in her class. Milton gives her cash for her trip (they take separate vacations) and dismisses her affectation gestures by declaring he has no time for “women.” But she obviously wants romance. At this point, very early on in the tape, we suspect that she is submerging herself into a state of mind that is more fictive than real. She auditions for the part of a prostitute and manages to look and act as hard-bitten as the prostitutes Milton has been ogling. The audition scene is ambiguous, full of descriptive images, but no context. One gets the feeling she could play the part on the street as easily as she can “act” it.

But it is the role of Madame Bovary that begins to consume her. This is where fact and fiction are revealed, by Payne’s Bovary haunts her role; she has got, but next we see her in the classroom, reading Madame Bovary in her class. What is real? Is the class by coincidence studying Madame Bovary at the same time she is rehearsing the role? The class seems real until she walks up to a student making a paper hat during her lecture on metonymy and metaphors and hikes up her skirt to reveal her leg to him and get his attention.

We realize that he is the same boy who has bumped into her at the beginning of the tape while she is in Madame Bovary costume, carrying a basket of apricots. In the novel, Madame Bovary reads and finally believes to be true, is obviously disenchanted with her life. Rather than taking action, she falls into fantasy. One does not sense that she is going to stop using Milton, a cold two-timing cad. Her choices of alternative potential lovers are either unattainable (the gay hairdressers) or dangerous (the student). Milton remains the unenviable reliable partner.

The plan is off. The woman leaves Madame Bovary in By Way Of Fiction.

The tape talks about the roles assigned to women, and the difficulty women, especially older women, have in wayfinding roles reinforced by the media. While Milton has no trouble finding a beautiful young woman as his companion in Los Angeles, the heroine of the tape realistically feels her options are limited.

By Way Of Fiction is an intriguing work. The tape contains the same impeccable visuals and structuring as Payne’s previous two tapes. But where the characters in the other works determinedly fix on their obsessions to see them through, in By Way Of Fiction we see a woman crumbling internally through her need for passion instead of mere surface. Whether she will attain it or not remains unclear. She is surrounded by people who seem successful, but disinterested. Her hairdresser tells her that he has no sex-life. Milton, her boyfriend, listens to the neighboring conversations in the restaurant, bored by his childhood stories. Milton is fixated on California, the exclusion of everything else. She had her part in a movie in L.A., and represents a younger version of the heroine, the cycle is starting again before the woman’s eyes, in her own home. Her son would much rather be in New York with Lisa than with his mother. She invites the hairdresser to correct the situation. She remains very much alone.

Colin Campbell is a senior video artist who teaches video production and theory.
Reclaiming the Body Erotic

BY SUE GOLDING

REVELATIONS IS ONE OF THE MOST PROVOCATIVE AND INFLUENTIAL DOCUMENTARIES IN YEARS. It is also one of the most radical. In its playfulness and radicality it is in part the fact that both Drugs and Harrison refuse to accept the standard anti-porn view that woman is either a victim—or an accessory—to the crime of sexual life. By putting the tease back into strip, they begin to explore the very soul of stripping, drawing out its erotic communication and control with and against the audience. In here, woman is no longer object of something else’s fantasy, not for that matter, simply master of her own; she is intricately the intersection and expression of both. Given their unshaded, and at times deliciously cynical, exposure on this complex and yet erotic soul of strip, their writings emerge quite simply, as a welcome relief.

In one of the best chapters of the book ("Consumer’s Guide to Strippers"), we find a detailed rundown on the "ten distinct types of stripper." Their comments are as insightful as they are brazen, dripping with heat, passion, and, yes, a logic and fortitude that ought to make even the most ardent militant rethink her rigidities when defining the sexual proclivities of women. Here, the reader is treated to a taste of Burlesque Queen ("a star, preserving showgirl traditions with the resolve of ban-the-bomb protesters") to the sophisticated Yiang, the woman who’s always "very much in control—a tasteful sax jazz—all hot and cool." One meets as well the eclectic Dancing Artist as opposed to the anti-traditionalist New Wave Stripper, distinct yet again, from both the Hippie Strippers, those who "don’t equate nudity with sexuality, so they don’t project sexuality when they strip," or the Greaser Mama ("usually good looking with large breasts and small waist"). Sex Kittens are the ones who play "helpless little girl" but clean up on the tips, all the while rejecting the delicate balance they need to manage audience control, sexual communication and fantasy.

This rejection of the stripping soul also comes packaged in two other forms, on the one side, as "Jockette," the middle class dullard but "perfect version of whatever body men are buying this year"; while on the other side, as the Pelvic Wolf, the saddest case of all. These women are "the junkies, the lost souls and the hopeless wrecks of the strip scene, the stripper with the three kids and a husband with a bad back." Finally, we are introduced to the Intellectual Stripper, that kind of woman whose ingenuity, political satire, and sometimes feminist critique fuses with the erotic savvy of her body movements. Instead of fighting against the strip traditions or trying to break out of them, the Intellectual Stripper is the woman who "uses stripping as a forum for her philosophies and politics... who passes her view of life into her act."

But the book is not simply a series of descriptive categories or anecdotal truths which are to be held out to the reader for his or her self consumption. Revelations does something else, something far more radical than—and just as important as—breaking the code of fundamentalist/feminist puritanism or even the old school ascetics long ago rejected. Margaret Drago and A.S.A. Harrison break the code of who (or what) is precisely to be "author" or "reader," or even, stripper. Inter­spersed within the narrative—indeed inter­rupting it—are not just the stories of Fonda Pets, Eve, Drags, Gromov and others, but drop off in certain chapters only to reappear several times later, as if old friends picking up where they last finished without the finality of a "good-bye." We find as well that the voices of the writers are themselves cordoned off from each other. By way of using different type faces the attempt to maintain a private boundary line to authorship emerges. A narrative which begins at once by interrupting itself, correcting itself, dissecting itself.

A profoundly radical concept of "truth" thus emerges, one which is never quite "finished" or homogenized. For in Revelations (who or what) becomes the messenger or the message, the artist or the art, the voyer or the stripper is both author and reader, character and narrative. The disrupted moment, the instability of the "fact" which at one and the same time remains and fuses with the other creates—and, yes, reveals— the "truth." Its fusion is as political as it is erotic; its pleasurable sexuality as historical as it is contemporary. In the case of stripping, this is a truth constituted and exposed through the completely designed give and take of a panel discussion could not help but become polar­ized around the antagonism between a cri­

tique of the news-media—represented by Peter Raymont and largely supported by the audi­ence control, sexuality and responsibility, display the attributes of fiction—of the news-media—are American. (J. Tunstall, 1977, p.36). Here, then, are the three main directives of television news re­portage clearly spelled out for us: honesty, responsibility and entertainment. Of course, the question is: can these three directives live together harmoniously? Can Truth and Fic­tion really survive simultaneously? And just where does this responsibility lie?

It is predominantly the last of these questions that Peter Raymont focuses on in his excellent, award-winning film, The World Is Watching, which premiered last fall at the 1988 Festival of Festivals. Ostensibly about the American news coverage of Nicaragua during the Haiti Crisis in 1980, Peace Accord, this documentary-style film also broaches the broader, ethical issues of the media-media responsibility. But one must ask if this film is about Nicaragua and its struggle for peace, or if it is specifically about the American news-gathering process and news production in general. It is the tension between these two "narratives," these two projects, that produces the film’s inner dy­namic (and, ultimately, accounts for its suc­cess."

But which "narrative" are we responding to? Is it the political force of a pro-Nicaraguan (anti-American) stance, or is it the attraction of a more deep-seated suspicion of the integ­rity of television news-gathering practices? After the second Toronto screening of this film (Feb. '89), at the Saint Lawrence Centre, a panel discussion was held between prominent journalists: Alain Medina and John Irwin (both of the CBC) and Peter Ray­mont, and I attended in this way the discussion could not help but become polarized around the antagonism between a cri­

tique of the news-media—represented by Peter Raymont and largely supported by the audi­ence between the opposing sides of this debate; that Peter Raymont is as much a "journalist" as the other two. After all, there is very little substan­tial difference between The World Is Watch­ing and, for example, the three part series on Central America produced for the CBC by one of these two prominent panelists.

So, clearly, if this film is a critique of news production in general, then it must also be an auto-critique. Obviously the coordination and mechanisms of media production will be dif­ferent for an independent film than they are for a corporate sponsored news programme. And obviously there will be dif­ferent advantages and limitations for each. However, the three-fold directive of effective news coverage is the same in both cases. The great value of a film such as The World Is Watching is its ability to expose the inner workings of television news production, but it must also be an autocritique. That its success depends on the same directives that it is trying to undermine. Each of the two intertwining narratives of this film displays the "attributes of fiction" with its cast of characters, its heros and villains, its hopeful beginnings, its tragic twists of plot, its dra­matic denouement, and its final closure. As Jean-François Lyotard says: "Scientific knowl­edge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative kind of knowledge." (The Postmodern Condition, 1985, p.29).

This is not meant so much as dismissal of Peter Raymont’s film nor is it by any means a call for the elimination of entertainment in this or in any context. Only that the top net­work executives are not the only "gatekeepers" of knowledge and entertainment. The film as "entertainment" carries with it its own particular ideological baggage. Honesty, the first of the three directives, is perhaps, the easiest to understand and verify—this is largely a mat­ter of individual integrity. Responsibility is quite a bit more complicated since it is not always clear who is the actual "agent" of that ideology. Honesty, the first of the three directives, is perhaps, the easiest to understand and verify—this is largely a mat­ter of individual integrity. Responsibility is quite a bit more complicated since it is not always clear who is the actual "agent" of that ideology. Honesty, the first of the three directives, is perhaps, the easiest to understand and verify—this is largely a mat­ter of individual integrity. Responsibility is quite a bit more complicated since it is not always clear who is the actual "agent" of that ideology.
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