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NATIONALISMS: WOMEN AND THE STATE

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FUSE

MAGAZINE

APRIL • 1988
VOL. XI NO. 5

INFORMATION / DIFFUSION
ARTEXTE

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C O N T E N T S F E A T U R E

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Chilean Women. AN INTERVIEW

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Gay Barriers, Gay Games

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Dub poet Ahdri Zhina Mandiela's new cassette

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LETTERS

Precise Perspective

CONGRATULATIONS to Marlene Nourbese Philip on her excellent analysis of institutionalized racism vis a vis the arts funding bodies ('The Multicultural Whitewash — Racism in Ontario's Arts Funding System,' FUSE, Fall 1987). Our own organization has been dealing with this problem over the years but we have never seen it more accurately articulated from top to bottom or put in a more precise perspective, as Ms. Philip has done for the public record by way of her article. Ms. Philip has done a great service not only for Black artists but all artists who find themselves the victims of discrimination and narrow-mindedness.

—Robin Breon
Black Theatre Canada
Toronto, Ontario



FUSE Magazine welcomes Letters to the Editors. Short letters are more likely to be published and all letters are subject to editing.

Second Opinions about Third Cinema

IN THE REVIEW of the Third Cinema Festival, 'Against the Grain' (FUSE, Winter 87/88) Cameron Bailey makes some assumptions about the politics of audience with regard to the festival which are clearly misinformed and derive from his failure to have interviewed any of the festival's organizers, or any of its guest producers (with the exception of Isaac Julien). This is doubly disconcerting in light of the fact that festival director Renate Wickens made her own personal audio recorder available to him expressly for that purpose.

As a result, Bailey makes some irresponsible statements such as 'the festival will have reached maturity when it is organized and programmed primarily by Canadians of 'third world' origin, when it is as much for us as it is for white Canadians.' Besides the fact that there is dangerous essentialism in the claim that Canadians of 'third world' origin will somehow make better festival organizers than the present crew, truly, had Bailey taken the time to ask a few questions while at the festival, or any time before or after, he would have learned that 'first' and 'third' worlds both here and abroad worked together with equal fervour throughout the festival.

Bailey defends his position with the rather lame statement, 'It's a shorter, less troubled link when the people facilitating the communication between 'first' and 'third' worlds have some connection to those cultures they presume to present.' The notion of 'connectedness' between cultures is both complex and subtle, and deserves more serious reflection than his simplistic 'less troubled link' betrays. I agree that problems of access to funding for people who do not reflect the white, anglo-saxon stereotype persist and must be addressed whenever and wherever possible. Ironically, in this case the festival's major funder was initially uncomfortable with the festival precisely because it 'looked white' and funding was only secured upon proof of close colla-

continued page 4 ►

Congratulations

FUSE congratulates writer Marlene Nourbese Philip, whose recent collection *She Tries Her Tongue* has been awarded Cuba's 1988 Casa de las Americas literary prize for poetry. As winner in the English-speaking Caribbean category, *She Tries Her Tongue* will be published by the Cuban institution, Casa de las Americas which promotes cultural relations among Latin American and Caribbean countries. Marlene is the first woman and second Canadian to be awarded this honour.

Errata

The cover image of the last FUSE (Winter 1987-88, Vol. XI, No. 4) was from *My Mother is a Dangerous Woman*, a video tape by b.h. Yael. The still used on the cover was photographed by Vid Ingelevics. We apologize for omitting this in the cover credit.

Also, in Vol. XI, No. 4; Bruce la Bruce should have been named as the co-writer of the review 'Retro Retch,' since he and Su Rynard worked collaboratively on the review. We apologize to Bruce la Bruce for overlooking this.

The Women's Press

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boration with the various communities represented in the festival's programme.

Bailey betrays his lack of understanding when he states, "if the festival is at all for the members of the communities in Canada of the countries where those films and tapes come from, then Toronto, where those communities are largest, is the likely place for it." If Bailey knew half as much as do the 'third world' film and video producers committed to social change who attended the festival, then he could appreciate that a small audience does not mean an insignificant one. The point of hosting the festival in a series of small cities was to reach those communities within smaller cities with a specific interest in the festival who could not or would not travel to Toronto. Groups in Toronto and Montreal were encouraged to invite guest producers to come meet them after the festival and many did.

Bailey's comment that, "When (the festival) is less a showcase, less a riot of catharsis and scopophilia, and more of a link in a chain of communication, then it will have fulfilled its potential," is best commented on by Juan Jose Ravaoli, a film and video producer from Uruguay. Noting that the festival provided a place for producers to meet each other, thus opening up new channels of communication and support between them, he added.

"Furthermore, through the festival, producers like myself can begin to exchange materials with someone from The Philippines, or someone from Mexico. Therefore, the work that the festival initiates doesn't end when the festival is over. We will continue to exchange news and materials with each other thanks to the festival."

The festival is designed (and of course designing the festival is an ongoing process) to meet both an educational and community development mandate. As a feminist, I can say that Bailey is right to raise the question of audience, of "who the festival is for, and why?" But Bailey is simply wrong when he assumes that the organizers of the Third Cinema Festival have not also thought seriously about this issue.

—Marilyn Burgess
Third Cinema Programmer
Toronto, Ontario

Not Quite So Quiet

WHILE CONTEMPLATING a reply to Cameron Bailey's review of the Third Cinema Festival ("Against the Grain," FUSE, Winter 87/88), I noticed that the current issue doesn't have a letters section. Has this been dropped, or have people stopped writing?

Mr. Bailey expressed disappointment that most of the festival's activities took place outside Toronto, where he feels its natural constituency, the Third World community, is located. First of all, about 90% of the festival's programme has played in Toronto in recent

years. The idea of the festival was to bring this material back into the country a second time for an entirely different audience. Catering to this audience presents huge dilemmas, some of which Mr Bailey cites, but nonetheless I think the festival made a valiant contribution to two problems that have to be considered as important as FUSE's preferred concern for cultural self-determination (why do we have to hierarchize these things?): What is to be done about the dismal state of cultural life in places an hour's drive from Toronto? What is to be done about the lack of knowledge of and concern for "Third World" issues outside of the activist cognoscenti?

Finally, I was extremely distressed to read Mr. Bailey's ominous comment that the largely non-Third-World-background festival organizers will "have to go quietly" so that it can be run solely by people of colour. For some reason, "quietly" was the word that really rattled me; thus I'd like to make my departure from cultural activism a little less quiet with this letter. The implications of Mr Bailey's comment are obvious and staggering; I won't belabour them here. I wonder if they are endorsed by FUSE's readers and editors, and on reading Dot Tuer's mea culpa in the same issue ("we must begin to re-evaluate the privilege of our oppositional convictions"), I begin to suspect that they are. I hope that Mr. Bailey will reconsider his position and stop urging the formation of Another Country.

—Tim Barnard
Third Cinema Programmer
Toronto, Canada



Image from Bombay, Our City by Amand Patwardhan

Joe Batt's Arm

I WAS a little disappointed to read in the article "No Support: Nfld. Artists Send Work to France," (FUSE, Dec/Jan 87/88) the comment attributed to Mr. Goudie, that "...we weren't just going to Joe Batt's Arm with it. People were really proud."

It will be a great day for Art in Nfld. when artists can exhibit their work as proudly in Joe Batt's Arm, and all the other arms in Nfld., as they did apparently in Cognac, France.

Yours in the interest of art appreciation.

—Freeman Compton
Clarenceville, Nfld.

Not About Desire



Still from Fourth Person Plural by David McIntosh

I RECENTLY picked up the Fall, 1987 issue of FUSE and read Colin Campbell's review of "Five Video Premieres by Gay Men" (Another World) with considerable interest. I object, however, to Campbell depicting David McIntosh as "courageously" aware of the extreme controversy his video portrayal of father-son incest as "consensual" must arouse.

Few people today deny that children are sexual beings. Few deny that a sexually abusive event can be "erotically charged." This is not the issue. In adult-child sexual relationships the adult exploits the child for his/her own sexual and psychological needs. These relationships are not equal and consensual.

Sexual abuse is not about "desire" or a child's sexuality. It is about betrayal of trust and about power. A child is unwilling or afraid to say no to the father (uncle, older brother, family friend) he trusts and loves. To say no is to risk rejection. Children are dependent on adults for physical and emotional survival. Can the child afford to say no?

For Campbell to object to the "punishingly long reach of Bill C-54" in association with the issue of father-child incest is a red herring. The myriad faults of Bill C-54 do not excuse sexual abuse which, I repeat, is an adult's abuse of power and trust, not a consensual exploration of a child's sexuality.

—Hendrick de Pagter
Vancouver, B.C.

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Bad Sentence

IN THE REVIEW of Dorothy Henaut's film *Firewords* (FUSE, Fall 1987) by Margaret Christakos, one sentence is open to an interpretation that mis-represents one of the writers (Gail Scott) portrayed briefly in the film.

The sentence is "Scott appears handicapped in terms of both French-language level and of theoretical understanding, which ends up suggesting a lot of inactivity on the part of anglophone feminists." It suggests that Scott's French, and her theoretical contributions to *la modernité québécoise féministe* are somehow lacking. This, in fact, mis-represents Gail Scott, who has been bilingual since childhood, and actively engaged for years in post-modernist feminist theory, working alongside women such as Nicole Brossard and Louky Bersianik (two of the subjects of the film). Her work has also inspired other writers, including myself.

While I don't believe that such an unfounded criticism was intended, it's not clear that the sentence refers to the framing of the scenes in the film, not Scott's abilities and contributions. Because it possibly maligns an individual, I don't feel the ambiguity should stand unquestioned in your journal.

—Erin Moure
Montreal, Quebec

The benefit of the doubt you extend is both appreciated and right on the money: my critique was directed at the film's unsuccessful staging of a "candid" discourse among Scott, Bersianik, and Brossard. The scene's awkwardness handicapped all three, and served particularly to undermine (as I describe earlier in the review), "the very fruitful dialogue currently in process between French and English feminist writers in Montreal." This dialogue is the product of a great deal of work done by writers, critics, and publishers from both communities.

— Margaret Christakos

You're Welcome

THANKS VERY MUCH for the plug in the Fall '87 FUSE. I hope you won't mind printing a short correction.

My letter must have dipped into a time warp en route to your mailbox because NAPNOC, the organization listed under my name in your "Letters" column, is a thing of the past. Arlene and I left our jobs as NAPNOC's co-directors in 1983, and one of our last responsibilities was to oversee its change of name to the Alliance for Cultural Democracy. We're still members of ACD — perhaps its only "lifetime" members — but we have no official role as spokespeople or officers. (ACD's annual conference will be held out here in February.)

I'd be very grateful if you'd print a note clarifying this in the next "Letters" column. I know it seems a small thing, but you know how big a small thing can get on the cultural left.

— Don Adams
Ukiah, California

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PRIVATIZATION

Going DOWN the Road

BY SARA DIAMOND

B.C.—In the Depression of the 1930s, the highway became a metaphor for the displacement of an entire generation of youth. Men and women pounded the pavement in search of work and in the fight for social benefits. The work camp boys built the province's road network, dying by the hundreds of tuberculosis. The road also meant possibility

— a future could exist where there was full employment and a life without poverty.

Ironically that the road again emerges as the symbol of futility and future in British Columbia as the Social Credit government bulldozes the Highways Department. Victoria has always had a sycophantic relationship with the British model of the day, cultural

and social. Having followed Thatcher with cutbacks in social services, education, and healthcare and with a successful frontal assault on the rights of labour, the Social Credit government is now privatizing the apparatus of government built up over the post-war period.

Most immediately disturbing is the Highways Department sale. This wing of government is the seat of the recent scandals over Coquihalla overspending, graft, and cover-ups by top government officials. It is now divided into twenty-eight fiefdoms to be sold to the highest bidder. The B.C. Government Employees' Union response was to make a unified bid on the highways contract, arguing that a coherent service was needed and who better qualified to run it than the current six thousand union members working in the sector. Vander Zalm rebutted this argument, blaming the problems with existing services on their current status as government monopolies. He agreed that former workers were best able to do the job and offered

contracts to private companies created by workers in the sector. This has the benefit of dividing the union, as it tries to defend jobs while other employees band together to bid on the same work. As Carolyn Petersen, a successful bidder on the print operations stated, "Now that the employees who have been represented by the B.C.G.E.U. are shareholders in the company she sees no future role for the union." (*Vancouver Sun*)

This underlines the motivation for the sale of public sector assets. It's not the profitability that is really an issue. Highways, hospitals, testing labs, prisons, and government printers are all in the public sector because it is difficult to operate them for profit. However, they are essential to maintaining a healthy, functioning workforce and the flow of both information and capital. In reality, the government will continue to foot the bills (i.e. the taxpayer) for these services in the form of subsidy and direct investment. Privatization allows a gulf between the government of the day and inefficient services. It makes the contractors and not the government the administrators of wage cuts, union busting, and layoffs. It fulfills the ideological imperative of Social Credit thinking — to replace social services with pay-as-you-go services that return Canadian society to the pre-war class system of the last Depression.

Labour, the NDP, and many B.C. residents are confounded by the continued assault on basic necessities. John Shields, head of the B.C.G.E.U. stated that the highways sell-off, "is a recipe for the destruction of the safety system of existing highways." Little will be saved in economic benefits as more is spent on healthcare and the policing of the new companies.

To date the government has sold the Queens Printer and the soil and tissue testing labs. Next in line are highways and the B.C. Systems Corporation where all government records are housed (including personal healthcare files). Soon to follow are liquor stores, some aspects of the medical system such as ambulances, some elements of education, and possibly of the prison system. Many B.C.'rs hope that unlike Margaret Thatcher's longevity, Vander Zalm and his associates will, "Hit the road Jack and never come back no more, no more..." ●

UNIONS

"Not Legally Bound"

BY KARL BEVERIDGE

ONTARIO— The difficulty in writing reports about meetings is that meeting themselves can often test the endurance of those who participate, let alone those who read about them. The annual provincial meeting of the Independent Artists Union held in Hamilton on November 29, 1987 was such a test.

The IAU had recently organized three new locals (Thunder Bay, the Niagara Region, and Ottawa). Exciting as this was, it

created havoc for the meeting. The IAU was suddenly confronted with the pot-holes in its own constitution and the first growing pains. It took a lot of time and sweat to begin to sort out issues of representation, regionalism, and language. All this ended with beer and pizza, and the feeling that the union was becoming more serious and mature.

The next day confirmed this feeling even more. On the afternoon of November 30th, the IAU

met with the Ontario Arts Council to open up negotiations. It was an empowering moment. The Council took the union's contract proposal seriously. They agreed that artists' income was their own top priority. After going over the terms of the contract, the Council agreed to meet again in mid-February to give their response. Items on this historic meeting were carried on CBC and CIUT radio in Toronto. There was even a phone-in show in St. Catherine's on the idea of artists receiving an income.

The next day Christopher Wooten, Executive Director of the OAC, told CBC radio that the IAU's contract proposal challenged the very basis of the Council's existence — the rewarding of excellence in the arts. It seems that Wooten misunderstood the IAU's intention. The IAU fully supports the Council's funding of the arts. What the IAU is proposing is that all artists should be able to enjoy a secure income as well. I would certainly assume, for example, that paying childcare workers would not jeopardize quality daycare.

In late January the OAC informed the IAU that it would not meet to continue negotiations as artists did not fall under the

labour relations act and that the Council was not legally bound to negotiate with the union. The union already knew that the basis of the negotiations was voluntary, and must now consider its options.

Related to this is the question of collective bargaining rights for artists. The federal task force on "The Status of the Artist" put forward collective bargaining as one of its major recommendations. This past fall the Quebec legislature tabled bill C-90 which will give collective bargaining rights to performing and recording artists, and the Federal Government is considering similar legislation for all artists. Similar legislation should be proposed for Ontario (Federal legislation would only cover federal institutions.) Finally, the IAU organized a new local in Guelph which brings the number of locals to six — Toronto (Local 71), Hamilton (Local 10), The Niagara Region, Thunder Bay (Local 13), Ottawa, and Guelph.

For those interested in receiving information on the IAU, the union can be contacted at: IAU, 2nd Floor, 183 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ont., M5T 2R7. Phone: (416) 368-4086. ●



IAU provincial meeting held at Hamilton Inc., Hamilton, November 29, 1987.

Photo: Cees Van Germerden

NATIVE CULTURE

Anti-Olympic Agit-Prop

Peace Movement Drags its Feet

BY JOSIE WALLENIS

Photo: Bill Lindsay

Performance by Rebecca Belmore in support of Lubicon Cree boycott.



THUNDER BAY — One of the great challenges the Peace movement faces is the racism rooted in our history and culture. I try to come to terms with this myself by imagining some countries in the world in exchanged positions. I imagine a church hall in El Salvador, a country at peace. A church hall with well dressed El Salvadorean women and men sitting down to a tasty pot luck dinner. They have come to hear a speaker, who is a political refugee from Ottawa in Canada. He is white.

His wife and children have been tortured and killed by Canadian death squads trained and paid by the government of Costa Rica, a country that is a friend and ally of the government of El Salvador. He is desperate, and aware that he is talking to supporters of the state of El Salvador. He explains lucidly the plight of the Canadian people; starvation, oppression, and death and maiming from Costa Rican bombings.

The group seems to listen attentively but the Canadian wonders if it is even possible that they could care about his people. He wonders this because he had noticed while being driven from the airport that the poor part of town had been full of white people. He had been told that the jails in El Salvador were full of white people, and he had been told that an awful lot of white people committed suicide.

The point of this story is obvious, and can be further illustrated by the dilemma our Peace community found itself in when we were asked to answer the call of the Lubicon Cree to take part in a boycott of the Olympic Torch when it passed through Thunder Bay on January 12th, 1988. It was an opportunity for us to make for the first time a public protest on the links between war and racism.

These links are dreadfully clear. The Lubicon Lake Cree Indians in Alberta are resisting the ancient genocidal policies of our institutions — in this case oil and gas companies. These corporations, with the collaboration of the Federal and Provincial governments, have dug over 400 oil wells, since the Alberta 'oil boom,' on Lubicon Land leased to them by the government. They have destroyed the Cree culture, and are destroying Cree lives. The final travesty was the sponsoring by these same oil companies of the Olympic Torch run across Canada, and of *The Spirit Sings*, a collection of native artifacts gleaned from all over the world to exhibit at the Glenbow Museum, presumably to further oil interests everywhere.

When we consider that the final big explosion could well be triggered off in the Persian Gulf area, where these same oil companies continue to insist on their control of oil for more weapon manufacturing in the white world which goes on killing more and more people in the non-white world, one could be forgiven for hoping that the whole Peace

movement might have galvanized behind support for the Lubicon Cree. However, such was not the case, and superficially the arguments against support seemed plausible enough. We did not want to appear anti-Olympic. This sounded like too much the old lament of not wanting to sound anti-American, a lament shrouding the fear of telling the truth and being ostracized for it. Most people know that the altruistic roots of both America and the Olympics are now myths.

However, here in Thunder Bay we were helped over our hurdle of racism and fear by a young Native woman called Rebecca Belmore. A woman who with her visual and audio art performances is already empowering both Native and white women in areas of North America.

After our white Peace group had tactfully decided *not* to protest at the main midday function at the town hall, we did a tactful leafletting at the pancake breakfast put on by Safeways in a mall. While we leafletted we bent over backwards to make sure people understood we were *not* anti-Olympic. In fact, that was our main message. The point about racism was therefore obscured, and if people learnt anything about the plight of the Lubicon Cree, they would have had to read their leaflets, which experience has shown is not usually the case.

Following this event, (we even had a pancake breakfast) we accompanied Belmore to her protest. She had constructed a life-size wooden frame with signs hanging from it. The signs said: "the Spirit Sings," "Sponsored by Shell Canada," and "Artifact No. 671B." Belmore sat in this frame by the roadside for nearly two hours in a blizzard. She had nothing on her head, and while we ran for shelter at 15 minute intervals for warmth, she sat immobile.

There was a 'Stop' sign on the road in front of the performance frame, and as cars stopped, I watched the people's faces, eyes ahead, trying not to notice the activities. If they had looked, they would have faced the past, present and future. The native traditions of respect for the environment, and community justice are the only survival tactics for the nuclear age, and chasing flames at the bidding of Petro Canada and their ilk have now become suicidal. ●

Photo: courtesy of Barbara Daniel



Rooftop Traffic by Ken Gerberick, installed on roof of Co-op Radio, Vancouver.

ART

Official Vandalism

The Artist meets The Enforcer

BY BARBARA DANIEL

VANCOUVER—It seems this city can no longer support a symphony orchestra. No wonder, if Ken Gerberick's experience is any indication of the city's attitude toward culture.

His audio assemblage, *Rooftop Traffic*, consisted of car parts suspended from a frame erected on the roof of Co-op Radio's headquarters. It was designed to function as a giant wind chime, and was greatly appreciated by residents of the downtown eastside, where it was located. The colourful piece was visible from the street for blocks around the radio station. For the opening, a live broadcast was aired on Co-op's "Newsounds Gallery."

The day after the piece's installation, a city inspector arrived at the station to deliver a notice of infraction of city bylaw 9.1(4)a&b. The notice required removal of auto-body parts, wheel covers, and metal frame from the roof, and an order to

"cease painting auto-body parts on the roof." This was to be done within twenty-four hours. Bruce Girard, Program Director and recipient of the notice, advised Gerberick of the situation. At that point, the assumption was that the inspector foolishly thought the sculpture was part of an auto-body painting operation. Gerberick immediately informed the directors of two art galleries who provided letters of support. He also informed the press, who were quite interested.

Meanwhile, Girard telephoned the appropriate people in the Department of Permits and Licenses, and found out that the contravened bylaw was intended to prevent the erection of signs drawing attention to "commercial or other activity." He then wrote a letter arguing that there was no question of commercial activity. The consumption of art, he continued, is an "activity," but this took place on the street, not on the roof of the

building. According to the bureaucrat, the "activity" was art itself. Girard responded that although the creation of an artwork is an activity, it was over as soon as the piece was completed, and so the only thing that Gerberick's art called attention to was not an activity, but the piece itself.

Girard then took the support letters to City Hall. The next day another city inspector arrived to determine that an auto-body shop was not operating in the building (or on its roof), looked over *Rooftop Traffic* for safety hazards, and according to the artist, "seemed satisfied." Gerberick returned to his studio "thinking City Hall is reasonable."

Meanwhile there had been a communication from the City extending the twenty-four hour deadline.

On the following day, a Friday, yet another inspector appeared on the scene to examine the structure. He deemed it hazardous, and later in the day legal notice to remove the piece was delivered to the station. This demanded immediate action, but Co-op personnel were told that, since municipal employees don't work weekends, the removal could take place any time before Monday morning. Gerberick and his crew arrived at noon on the Saturday with hand tools to dismantle the sculpture. They were too late.

Private contractors, hired by the City, had destroyed with power grinders not only the work, but most of its components. *Rooftop Traffic* was designed for easy dismantling and reassembly; it was to be exhibited at Pitt International Galleries at a later date. Gerberick's lawyer referred to the event as "meanminded vandalism...a reckless, neanderthal approach to bylaw enforcement." The artist is currently in the process of suing the City for damages.

Gerberick, when faced with the destruction of a project that involved more than a year of planning and production, exploded "after years of passive restraint. As an alternative artist, I don't expect to earn even a meagre wage. I do it because I enjoy it and it is very important to me. The sum of \$1,000 (from the Canada Council) is miniscule for a project this size. But I happily do it and I don't like it ruined." ●



LABOUR ARTS

B.C. Mayworks

BY SARA DIAMOND

B.C.—An organizing committee is busy preparing a festival of "culture and working life" to correspond with May Day 1988. Similar to the Toronto Festival (and in fact its namesake), *Mayworks B.C.*, will provide a multimedia array of culture that examines issues of work, organization, and cultural history relevant to working people.

The B.C. Federation has been instrumental in breathing life into the festival with a promised financial commitment and committed staff time. Fundraising and curatorial efforts are currently running hand-in-hand as spring approaches. Planned events include a video festival; film festival; performing arts series featuring local and West-

ern Canadian talent, an evening of East Indian culture, dance and readings; a series of visual arts shows; and an exhibition of crafts and workshops.

The West Coast labour movement has endorsed smaller events such as the *Labour Centennial Poster* series; *Jobs Not Charity* tour of the On-to-Ottawa trek show and individual artists. But this is the first time that a cohesive organizing effort of this scale, involving both labour and the cultural community, has occurred. There is a growing recognition that a healthy labour movement is one with a strong cultural expression. If successful, *Mayworks, B.C.* will initiate what will be the first in a series of labour cultural events. ●

CULTURAL POLITICS

New TACTics

BY PAT WILSON

TORONTO— On January 18, 1988 the Steering Committee of TACT (The Arts Coalition of Toronto) held its general meeting.

The early history of TACT (founded 1985) indicates that art groups, cultural centres, community theatre groups, etc. had similarly gotten together on an ad hoc basis in response to the Hendry report "Cultural Capital," which had been commissioned by the Toronto Arts Council in 1984 and published in January 1985. The report aimed at revealing the relationship between the City of Toronto and its artists, and appealed for the development of an arts policy by the City that would effect long-range funding and economic planning for the future of artist-run centres, theatres, cultural centres, dance groups, and the individual artists of Toronto.

The TACT ad hoc group came together in hopes of making recommendations to the City that were more specific in certain disciplines, and to ensure that the Hendry report did not die.

Members of the original ad hoc group met with aldermen/women (elected reps) and City staff at City Hall. The discussions and debates centred around urban planning, i.e. what was to be the City's role in supporting the arts, what vehicles for that support were available, and how could these vehicles be created?

Presentations were made by over 100 arts groups directly to City Council. After presentations and many meetings with staff at the levels of high finance and politics, TACT representatives began dealing with city elections. Artists made themselves available to attend all-candidates meetings wherein issues of prime

concern to the artistic community were aired publicly on the floor directly to the candidates.

The success of this strategy is included in the records at City Hall and at TACT.

TACT has now re-grouped. More than 50 artist-run centres, theatres, dance groups, film and video groups, festivals, community-based radio stations, and music organizations from Toronto re-joined or joined TACT on January 18, 1988. Minutes of this meeting are available to all arts organizations in Toronto and the Metropolitan area.

TACT is a political action and lobby group for Toronto (and Metropolitan areas.) The Steering Committee has begun to meet and prioritize strategies. Areas of interest to TACT include: halting the suggested (once again) dedication of lottery proceeds to the arts community (provincial problem); increasing the income of artists; increasing the profile of the arts with elected representatives, the public, and corporations; working to increase accessibility to funding and representation for all artists of diverse communities; working for an increased funding base from The City for the Toronto Arts Council; working for the provision by the city and/or the province of more affordable housing and work space for artists' centres and individual artists; and continuing to push for a hotel tax that would be provided back to the municipality and be earmarked for the arts.

The assessment of issues, the monitoring of our elected representatives in Council, the critical path and the time schedule for the unfolding of strategies are underway. ●

ART

None Unturned

Hard Work on the Rock

BY JOAN SULLIVAN

ST. JOHN'S — "It's not an exhibition of art works. I haven't decided how many single pieces will be in it, maybe fifty, maybe one hundred and fifty, but each single piece will be invested with its own significance. Some will be small enough to hold in your hand, some will be ten-foot standing stones, and each will have its own power."

For the past several years, visual artist Pam Hall has been working from stones. She started with representational drawings of them and developed the work through multi-media pieces on beaten paper. She was trying to get at the essence of and uses for stone — its age, its meaning. The work grew larger and larger. *Worshipping the Stone*, held last fall, had pieces twelve feet high and twice that wide. Now she's going to take the artist-run gallery Eastern Edge and work the whole space into an installation piece called "In the Temple."

"It's a three dimensional sketchbook. It will change every day. I'm not doing it to make a thing, but to discover significant relationships."

Hall has been inspired by the Newfoundland landscapes, which she once described by saying, "it's cold, it's old, it's beautiful and it's not pretty." Much of it is wild and echoing, ragged, and for many artists, magnetic in its attractions.

But she also travelled through Scotland and Wales to study standing stones, Druid circles, Stonehenge. These monoliths snared her imagination and she has continued to cultivate those discoveries. Stone means this way. Stone means age. Stone means worship.

The Eastern Edge installation

will be in place for a month, with Hall spending each morning adapting and shifting it.

"It will look architectural, and there will be a long avenue, a cluster focus, a nave/altar formation. The arrangement will echo the fairly traditional temple structure, but it will also go beyond that and into the outdoor monumental structures, such as the standing stones which I worked on."

"It will be natural colours, white, black, and metallic. Any colour in it will be red ochre, or the natural colours of bone and wood. I want it to be sacred and spooky."

Worshipping the Stone was created on beaten paper, which Hall did herself by beating it with stones. When she described that process she used the phrase "rhythmic, like prayer," and this new work will have a core of that concentrated, elevated focus.

"To be very honest, there is a ritual element. I'll be working on it daily, at the same time of day. If I was doing it in a studio, I think I'd still have that structured ritual. I'll work on it in the morning, and come in at night and document it. I don't want to be mixing the two."

But Hall sees this exhibition as more than a glimpse into echoing rites and reverence. She thinks people will have an opportunity to watch the studio side of art, which she considers "is usually mysterious and esoteric."

"This process is about juxtaposition, and resonances. It's about putting things together. It would be done in a studio but no studio is big enough. A viewer interested in art problem-solving, and art decision-making, will see the studio process transferred. That process will become more

accessible. That's a part of the art process viewers never get to see."

When people question her about her work, they often ask "if I have a finished image in my mind when I begin. People are curious about how my ideas develop. I rarely, if ever, start with a finished image in my mind. I'm material-based and process-based. The work responds to things within itself and outside itself."

So, a person visiting every day, or even three or four times during the month-long installation, will have an unusual insight into art-making. "It's not an exhibition of art objects but of art process. This is the very first time I've gone into a gallery without being exhibition-oriented. This is a very personal process, and I think if anything, the viewers will gain some insight and some comprehension into how art practices

develop, and that's a process viewers never get to see."

Followers of Hall's work find in every exhibition a marked growth from the previous one, if only in the work's size. Now this intricate show, "where everything is small sacred, or big scared," is itself both a stage and the results of years of careful evolution. And while this is a new thing for the artist (and probably the city), she already has eyes set on the next phase—outdoors. She plans to capture work from the environment and put it right back out there.

"I am becoming more concerned with the environment around the objects, and the next step is outdoors. In this show I'm working out ideas for the barrens and the beaches. If it wasn't for the winter, I'd be out there now. As soon as the weather breaks, I'm gone." ●

MAYWORKS

A FESTIVAL
OF
WORKING PEOPLE & THE ARTS

Toronto,
May 1st — 7th, 1988.



LOOK for the Schedule of Events at your local bookstores and artist-run centres after April 15th. For more information call Mayworks Co-ordinator Pat Wilson at 482-7423 ext. 169 or 466-6526 (evenings).

VIDEO NEWS

Kim Tomczak

WHILE I don't support festivals charging for entries (this one demands \$50), I thought some people might find *The Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival* of interest, if only for the intriguing location. Videotapes may be submitted in 3/4" only and an entry form with the \$\$\$ must accompany the tape. Productions made between April 1, 1987 and April 18, 1988 are eligible. The categories are too numerous to list here but the deadline is April 20, 1988. Get the entry forms from: *The Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival*, 49 Smith Street East, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, S3N 0H4, tel. (306) 782-7077.



Clark/Hamilton's *Rumplesphinx*.

FEATURE LENGTH VIDEO FESTIVAL — The Video Inn is seeking documentary, narrative videotapes over 70 minutes in length for its 1988 *International Video Festival*. The deadline for submissions is March 25, 1988. International submissions should not be sent by bonded courier, but rather by regular post. Label packages "For Preview Purposes Only, No Commercial Value, Educational Material." A catalogue will be published and artists' fees will be paid for those works selected for inclusion in the festival. Submissions and requests for more info should be sent to: *The Video Inn*, attn. Karen Knights, 1160 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 2S2.



Jean Gagnon and Paul Gauvin's *Puzzle*.

CONGRATULATIONS to Jean Gagnon for his appointment to the *Canada Council's Media Arts Section*. Mr. Gagnon will assume the duties of Video and Audio Arts Officer starting March 1, 1988. Jean Gagnon is a well known video producer who has worked through Videographe in Montreal and he is a founding member of GRAAV, a non-profit video production organization, as well as a writer and curator.

GRANTS to individual media artists are available under the *Ontario Arts Council's Professional Development/New Media Arts programme*. These grants are available to assist professional artists in the improvement of their creative skills through participation in workshops, conferences, or self-defined programmes of study. Professional artists who are residents of Ontario and are already working in new media art forms are eligible for these grants. There were three deadlines: one has passed, but the other two are August 1, 1988 and January 15, 1989. Contact Ingrid Ortwyn at the *Ontario Arts Council*, 151 Bloor Street West, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1T6.

THE Tenth Tokyo Video Festival has announced its winners for this year's festival. Canadian winners include, in the "Works of Excellence" category, Robert Hamilton and David Clark for their tape *Rumble Sphinx*, and in the "Works of Special Distinction," category, Bernar Hebert for his tape *La La La Human Sex*.

THE ANNUAL *Festival International de Films et Videos de Femmes Montréal* is now accepting submissions for this large women's film and video festival. They also have a charge to enter, but only \$15 in this case. Entry forms are available from most of the distributors, or you can write to: *The Festival de Films et Videos de Femmes Montréal*, 3575 Boul. St. Laurent, Bureau 615, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2T7, tel. (514) 845-0243. The deadline is March 1, 1988 for entries (unfortunately I didn't get the info till quite recently). If producers contact the festival a.s.a.p. perhaps late entries might be entertained. Sorry about that.



Andrew Paterson's *Immortality*.

INFERMENTAL, the *First International Magazine on Videocassettes* has two new editions coming up. The first one, *Infermental 7*, has been organized and curated out of Hallwalls Gallery in Buffalo. Request information on *Infermental 7*, from: *Hallwalls Gallery*, attn. Chris Hill, 700 Main Street, Buffalo, N.Y., 14202. Tel: (716) 854-5828. *Infermental 8* is still in the selection/curatorial process. Tapes, preferably 10 minutes or less, may be submitted on 3/4", VHS, Beta or 8mm. Address tapes and inquiries to: *The Western Front*, attn. Hank Bull, 303 East 8th Ave, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1S1. tel. (604) 876-1548.

Stills courtesy of Vitape

ART AFTER THE COUP

INTERVENTIONS BY CHILEAN WOMEN

Interview by Sara Diamond

IN NOVEMBER OF 1987, THE VIDEO IN BROUGHT THREE CHILEAN CULTURAL PRODUCERS TO VANCOUVER AS FOREIGN VISITING ARTISTS. DIAMELA ELTIT IS AN AWARD-WINNING WRITER OF CRITICISM, POETRY, AND FICTION. SHE WORKS WITH LOTTY ROSENFELD, VIDEO AND INSTALLATION ARTIST IN THE PERFORMANCE GROUP CADA. NELLY RICHARD IS A GALLERY DIRECTOR AND CULTURAL CRITIC WHO IS CURRENTLY COMPLETING A BOOK ON POSTMODERNISM IN LATIN AMERICA. ►



THE THREE WOMEN CURATED AN EXHIBITION, *WOMEN, ART AND THE PERIPHERY*, AT WOMEN IN FOCUS WHICH RAN SIMULTANEOUS TO THEIR STAY IN VANCOUVER. ROSENFELD DESIGNED AN INSTALLATION AT THE VIDEO IN, PERFORMED AN ART ACTION IN THE COURTHOUSE, AND PRODUCED A NEW WORK AT THE WESTERN FRONT. THE THREE WOMEN SCREENED SEVERAL PROGRAMMES OF RECENT CHILEAN VIDEOS AT THE VIDEO IN. NELLY RICHARD LECTURED ON THE HISTORY OF CHILEAN ART SINCE THE RIGHT-WING COUP OF 1973.

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW BY SARA DIAMOND IS WITH DIAMELA ELTIT AND NELLY RICHARD. LOTTY ROSENFELD WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF PRODUCTION SCHEDULE DEMANDS.

SARA DIAMOND: Diamela, you worked with CADA, the art intervention group. This group performed its works in working class barrios, the streets of Santiago, over the city in airplanes. Lotty Rosenfeld's performances also occurred on the streets. Why did you choose to take art into the streets in Chile in the 1970s and early 1980s?

DIAMELA ELTIT: It was an ideological and political option, directly related to the socio-political context in Chile. Also, because the members of CADA were not all visual artists, the gallery was not a habitual space for us. There was an intersection of practices that created its own space. The institutionalization of art was put into doubt. All the systems into which we could formerly insert ourselves were not put into crisis. For example, the book as "institution," the gallery as "institution," — so we entered into a practice, for the writers, it was written language. For the visual artists, it was the pictorial language.

The art market entered into a crisis with this sort of work. It created a dialogue and counterpoint to all the institutional work. We did not take part in the institution but we remarked on our absence. Those people in the institutions saw a practice taking place outside of their habitual para-



eters. This was a work of opening, of aperture, and it was very anti-institutional. It was being generated specifically in this time of dictatorship.

SARA: How did this kind of art-making begin to enter into the institutions? It clearly begins from an impulse of counterstatement or critique, yet it ends up in dialogue with, and then internal to the institution. Do the meanings change in this process?

DIAMELA: There's a part of the work that is not recuperable by the institution, which is the action itself. It will never be recuperated because it is tied up in a here and now. It is tied to a present which is not repeatable. But there is another moment which from the beginning had an institutional part. This was a simultaneous one, the methods of registering. Some had, as in the case of video, an institutional form already. The work would be institutionalized into the museum, into the gallery, into the library and that's the paradox which runs through all artistic situations.

SARA: Why were specific sites of intervention chosen? Diamela, why have you chosen, for example, to do your performance work, your readings, in a brothel?

DIAMELA: The selection of space reflects my personal obsessions. my artistic imaginary — it reflects my sexual imagination, my political imagination. All my artistic work, no matter how I come to formulate it, turns around marginal spaces. This conforms to my mental space — I find it liberating.

At that time I was working on a series of questions about writing and about the book. I thought that the book was like a prison, that the works which I was able to formulate oppressed me. It was an extension of my writing work. It was an answer to the purely literary. Not only did I go to the brothel, I read my material there.

SARA: Part of what became an issue for artists in the Seventies internationally was the notion of doing work that was site-specific. I'm interested in understanding the concept of site in interventions like the CADA art action in which you paraded through Santiago with milk trucks, gave out milk in the shantytown (as did the Allende government), placed milk in an alter-

Above: Photograph by Paz Errazuriz.

Left: Action by CADA, *Sobre Arte Y Política*, Chile, 1983.

INTERVIEW

nate gallery to decompose, published a discourse about the work in an opposition journal and also draped the entry to the National Gallery with a white flag. This I understand as specific to a set of codes that refer to a history, both of culture and politics in Chile. What was remarkable was the ability of that work to move through different spaces or sites. The notion of site-specific here (in Canada) is very localized, very site-limited. Can we discuss how site defines the artwork in this period in Chile?

NELLY RICHARD: What makes up the traditional circuit of art production is the network of the gallery, the museum, etc. Traditionally the slogan of the avant garde has been to challenge this network. This slogan is followed, renewed, and reinterpreted by various practices including those of CADA. Naturally, being Chile or Latin America, there has to be a recontextualizing of these terms. All places can become conventional. That is, the museum is conventional, the gallery is conventional, but the **poblacion** (shantytown) can also be a convention, a magazine of the opposition is another convention. All these conventions were backwards because of specific discourses. It's not that one stays in a particular convention or in a specific position outside of a convention, but instead that one works to alter and modify the conventional spaces that one uses. This is said in defence of some of the practices that continued within the galleries and which don't seem to me to be less violating or less subversive for two reasons. First, their way of operating within the gallery can still be a type of alteration, modification, disarticulation of the traditional, academic, institutional notions. Secondly, during this entire period in Chile, certain gallery spaces served as the only spaces where one could discuss or reflect about art and society, about art and culture, art and institutions, etc. They continued being live and necessary spaces.

DIAMELA: To this I would respond by making two points. One is a point which is necessarily political because the gallery under the dictatorship loses its functions. The institutions of art fall into crisis and the means of communication are pre-empted, so there's no way to relate a work to the public. Naturally you can put subversive practices into these spaces but these practices are eaten by the walls, the walls contain them. It's the closing off of the outside — these supposedly public spaces become private.

CADA is not only dealing with that but also with the politics of the gallery. Any gallery has a frame — it has a pre-dictatorship frame and a frame of its own. This is the problem that CADA confronts, the practices within the gallery, whatever they might be. For example, to make love in a gallery, which is something very subversive, is nevertheless reduced by a space which is very distinct from such an intervention within the city. Any act, no matter how transgressive it is, is diminished by the gallery space. It is then linked uniquely to this art circuit.

SARA: In many of the works there is personal physical presence, the use of diaristic text, the physicality of the artists. In Lotty Rosenfeld's work she is ever present — her body, her gesture makes the work, even though this process is partially extracted into a series of linguistic statements. In your performance and video, Diamela, you are constantly present. Is there a relationship between the strong presence of the artist and the disappearance of institutions, individuals, and cultural history?

DIAMELA: This is a very asphyxiated situation, but like all asphyxia it generates a lot of activity. At this historical moment there are many "disappeared." This is a Latin American constant which has not taken place in other countries. The word **disaparecido**, "missing," has become political, just to mention that word is to talk of political death. Paradoxically the works then deal with excessive appearance or narcissism — the self-reference is needed to recuperate the body and to affirm the face. It is a popular expression, to "show face." These works do show face and in a sense give it away like a gift to create a new public sphere.

NELLY: In the works that have the most to do with the body, performance and art actions, the body has the sense of reaffirmation. It is almost territorial — a presence is created which responds to all that tries to annihilate that presence. Curiously, there's another sector of production where there is both the presence of the body that is worked with —



Stills from video *Popsicles* by Gloria Camiruaga, 5 min., U.S.A., 1982 and Chile, 1984.



Still from video *El Padre Mio* by Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, Chile, 1985.

not its presence as reality, but on the contrary all those things which substitute for reality, all the mediations. The photograph as mediation, discourse as mediation, I'm thinking of the work of Dittburn,* where there's not reality or a "real" expressing itself but instead a deconstruction of the mechanisms through which this reality would be signified.

SARA: How have Chilean artists dealt with deconstructing ideological control as represented in history? There seems to be an invocation of historical memory, or fragments of memories, retaining a personal quality.

NELLY: History, that is, the history that causes various practices, is viewed after the coup as fraudulent stories. An official history is constructed or invented which poses itself as original. Contrary to this history which is seen as fraudulent are attempts to deconstruct it through fragmented memory, through individual memory, through biographical memory, through subjective memory. Other important developments in the field of art are artists who took the story of their discipline, for example, the story of painting, or the story of Chilean art, and tried to unfold this history — this academic, official, but "legitimate" past — which was at the same time fraudulent. They confronted the official history with all the stories that it had censored, obliterated, repressed. There are a series of practices whose primary gesture is to avoid this official discourse and to allow all that which is censored to reappear in their interior.

SARA: You describe a location entitled "the margin" where certain practices and groupings are placed. The exhibition at Women In Focus that you curated together is called **Women, Art and the Periphery**. Where are women artists in Chile in relation to this margin or periphery?

DIAMELA: There is a margin stitched by a masculine historical discourse. In this discourse women are marginalized — marginalized in their own history and in this same way on the international level. A woman enters into a determined market through a distinct entrance, as much numerically as in the critical gaze, which is a type of mediation and relation between a public and a work.

In a Latin American country, there is a double marginalization, because our cultures have not advanced on the legal and constitutional levels with regards to women. With the dictatorship comes the concept of rupture — rupture from the institution in order to generate another. But this new institution which is generated does not have the confidence of a collectivity because it is not a history that the collectivity has created for itself. It is in this rupture, though the woman is still marginalized, that she can operate for the first time. In this gap created by excessive power with the intention of affirming history, paradoxically a space is created.

*In her article, "The Photographic Condition" published in *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973* (Art and Text No.21, May/July 1986), Richard writes: "The elements of portrait-ure which Dittburn takes from public life and its ambit of collective visuality which he assembles in his work are generally found photos collected from old magazines or outdated police files... Dittburn employs various pictorial and graphical transferences of materials or supports of visual textures etc., in order to show the chaotic identity-card system to which the portraits he uses belongs. This he accomplishes by re-actualizing the signs by which this obliterated past can be read, by symbolically rescuing a collective memory on the verge of drowning."



Still from video *700 Planos Para Kafka* by Sandra Quilaqueo, Chile, 1985.

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NELLY: With the quantity of fractures, the quantity of destruction of institutions, which resulted from the entire dismantling of the system of significations and of communication — for the first time a space has opened up. It is more hopeful for those subjects which have a more conflicting relation to or are more identified with the marginal. It is an essentially empowering situation for us, for the woman. The institutionality of art and the history of art are the conventions that are being broken down. These are the two frames in which the female producer of art operates — these frames are in a state of total disarticulation. It makes it at least possible for her to rethink herself from a position that is new.

There are productions by some women that do draw in questions about sexual identity or difference, but they do so only as a question. I don't think we can talk yet about a feminine or a feminist discourse which has been elaborated and formalized — these are fields of interrogation.

SARA: To what extent is that discussion informed by the international language of feminism?

NELLY: The cultural context in a country that has been situated in a relationship of dependency and colonization for centuries is that all the concepts and theories with which one works are transplanted and imported from outside. The case of feminism, neo-feminism, and post-feminism is the same case as any object of theoretical transference. One has to select the instruments with which one will rework that material to the local context. What is interesting is not what arrives, what is transposed, and what is transcribed, but instead what is transformed and the ways that it is reappropriated. Feminism as a body of theory has the same vicissitudes as any theoretical body which is also abstracted from the hegemonic discourse of the international scene. This puts into question the original corpus that it was abstracted from.

DIAMELA: This is something which interests me very, very much: how to elaborate a Latin American theoretical space. These discourses don't even contemplate Latin America; they contemplate a common symbolic field, the biological body, but not the distinct psyche. We are a different culture, a distinct mother, maybe we have a very similar father, but the mother is distinct.

The first mother is Indian and the second is mestizo. In this sense there's a disjuncture between European and North American feminism and ours. Ours is not yet constituted and certainly it is not yet constituted because of a problem with the mother. The mothers are different, it can function as discourse but not as practice.

SARA: Who then is the mother?

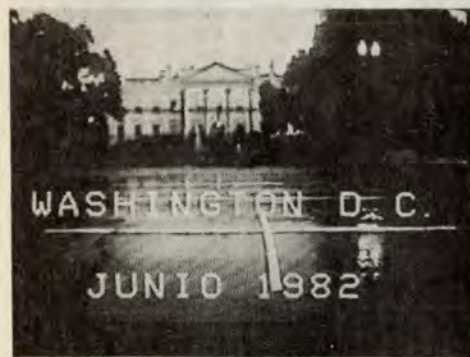
DIAMELA: I think that the Virgin Mother, the original Mother, is the raped mother, the raped Indian mother, raped by the conquest. And the second mother, the cultural mother, is a mestizo mother, a mother which is between the indigenous and the Spanish, a product of a rape. This mother relegates the Virgin Mother, the raped mother, to a state of poverty and lack. All her daughters are caught in this state of lack and poverty. That first mother is outside of history, so we have to think of these two mothers.

NELLY: It is important to look at the mechanisms by which we warp, or give new subversive and different meanings to what is circulated as "international" theories. For example, the theories of Kristeva* about the mother, allow us to think about "the other mother." The other mother is not a part of any of these theories that are circulating, but instead there are theories which are not elaborated from within Latin America, but which nevertheless make possible, by bending the theory, a Latin American thought as well. It's not a dichotomy in which the outside is simply annihilating the chance for Latin American thought.

SARA: We've spoken about feminist cultural theory, and now I'm wondering about other theoretical frameworks. Nelly, you were just at a conference in Peru on postmodernism — what elements of postmodernist theory are being appropriated and reworked in the Latin American context?



Art action in Washington D.C. by Lotty Rosenfeld, 1982.



Still from video *Una Herida Americana* ("An American Wound") by Lotty Rosenfeld, Chile, 1982.

*See Julia Kristeva's "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini" in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1980).

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NELLY: The reformulation and manipulation of these fragments of discourse from the international sphere has to do with a certain evolution of a view about what is Latin American art and culture. For many years, Latin America has thought about what is their "own," but now perhaps it would be more provocative to think in terms of the appropriated. There's not a Latin American essence, nor an art which reflects it and which speaks from the point of view of something inherent.

In respect to postmodernism, for the first time a paradox appears, a very interesting one, which is the following. Postmodernism continues to be a discourse transmitted from the international centres, elaborated in post-industrial contexts which are radically foreign to the reality, both economic and other, of Latin America. So here's this discourse which projects from these centres but which defines itself as a crisis of hegemonies, as a crisis of centralities. It is a discourse which conceives of the margin, the other, the difference, the plurality, heterogeneity, etc. For the first time, we as residents of the periphery receive a discourse which privileges or which seems to privilege our discourse.

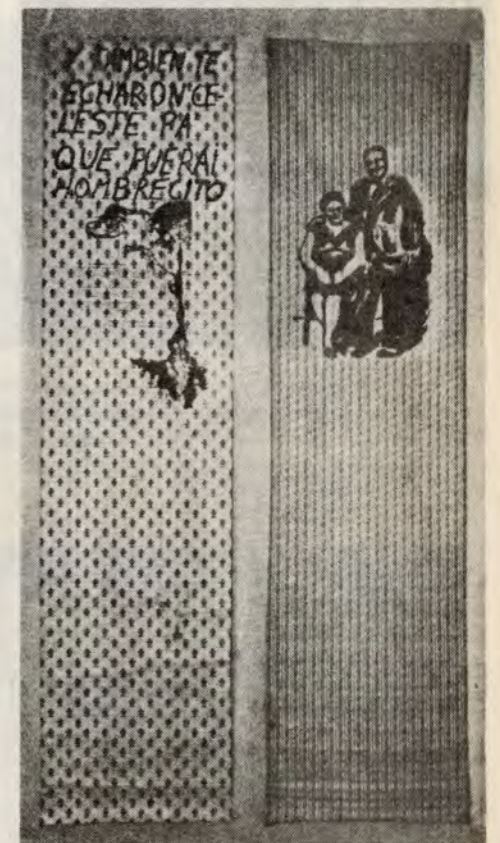
On the other hand postmodernism is a dominant culture — we have to think of it as difference, but **this** difference is already incorporated and theorized in this discourse. A very paradoxical game is produced, a very subtle and very pervasive one. It is an interesting challenge to think of postmodernism from a Latin American perspective. Latin America, because of its very heterogeneous institutions, its mestizo make-up, is full of junctions and transplants. For the first time, Latin America seems to have the privilege to have anticipated the international discourse. Latin America was postmodern before postmodernism was given its name.

DIAMELA: I don't think that it can be said that Latin America has always been postmodern. This seems to me impossible, because in my judgement, in Europe and North America, a rupture is produced between the economy and the state. Take the United States, for example. On the one hand there are the multinationals and on the other hand the political apparatus: the senate, the congress, the house of representatives. The senators in the United States are for putting pressure on Chile but the corporate sector is very much behind the dictatorship. So there's rupture between the discourse and the practice — the practice is broken. All these developed countries use the labour of other countries. The differences created can produce a real revolution. The only way to avoid this is to open up and accept the other culture as different but to continue to make use of this labour power. This is really all to do with the distribution of wealth. It is there that postmodernism is generated. It happens in an economic situation which is very strong, different from our own. We are artisans, craft people, and in being artisans we have psychologically a common body, a collective subject.

NELLY: I don't agree with what you say about a collective subject. You configure it as a static representation of the past. This collective subject revolves around certain contradictions in what is called modernity, which makes uniform and integrates conduct, of patterns of consumption, models of representation, etc. When this modernity comes as an extension of the multinationals and of the multinational market it enters as a shock, as a crash. In Latin America modernity is already metaphorically speaking, postmodern, in the way it enters to collide with the backwardness, the misery, the oppression, etc. What you call a collective subject is not a subject of before modernity but a subject of this modernity in regards to conflict between these different strata of reality such as the traditional subject, the continental subject, the mestizo.

It is also the subject of television, of the multinationals, which configures it as a kind of passive destination. It is all of this together. The collective subject is not just the memorized subject, but one which continues to be moderated, to be disfigured, in the midst of all the contradictions of the international discourse.

DIAMELA: I'm speaking of Latin America as a territory which is more dynamic than can be thought of in that sense, which is in the midst of what the guerilla movements, the economy, play out in Latin America. Latin America is an experimental field of political projects, of economic options.



Detail of *28 Son Mis Dias*, painting by Paulina Aquilar.

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It's not a static object — there's no indigenous subject who is the owner of the land. I'm not looking at this romantically. But I think it's the most experimental continent. After a dictatorship, as the case of Cuba, a Fidel Castro can arise, from one historical moment to another. Nevertheless there is a culture.

NELLY: Yes, but one that is constantly rearticulated and disfigured by the quantity of pressures which are brought to bear from the outside. It is not an unmodifiable nucleus which conserves a memory. This memory is transforming itself.

DIAMELA: But it's a nucleus which maintains itself in a certain stability, I think. We do watch television, and the programmes we see are primarily from the United States.

NELLY: But this is just as Latin American as the person who doesn't watch television. There's a clash, from where the person sees and what they see.

The notion of collectivity I find doubtful because collectivity articulates each installation and makes it a privilege to speak in the name of this collectivity, a collectivity which continually modifies what the institutions and resources are. What marks the dictatorship is an exacerbated fragmentation, a complete destruction of everything that has been the representation of the collectivity. It deflects practical discourses, manners, bodies, identities — the collectivity of which I'm talking about is entirely in convulsion. The political discourses are in crises of reference or in crises of collectivity. So to continue postulating a complete and unified collectivity is false. The challenge for Chile is to think of a political project which can return it to a collectivity. New factors and new processes have entered into the collectivity and new conflicts which might be the woman, the worker, etcetera.

DIAMELA: I agree. But they will be our conflicts, our own political theory, our own feminist theory. When I'm saying "our own" I'm not saying it in a stupid way but in the sense of taking everything that the discourses have advanced and what we have generated ourselves. In this new state, not speaking in a global sense, but in a sense of one country, one group, with our own specific problems we have to keep in consideration the necessity of the collectivity.

We have a popular subject. On the Latin American level there is a popular subject which has its codes, its norms, which is a collectivity and has its own history which is separate from the bourgeois class. In Chile there is a proletarian class and bourgeois class. And at this moment there is a sub-proletarian class, which historically was in the margins of the lumpen — effectively now there is a lumpen proletariat. And very numerous.

NELLY: But to think of a tension between cultural production and the popular subject misses the point of seeing where the possible and viable mediations for these two spaces to meet are.

DIAMELA: Intellectually, I could say all of this, but it's another thing to look at the territory that you live in. What happens to the popular woman, the worker woman, and the sub-labourer woman who now exist. It is with her that we have to look for the equilibrium in all this, to create a new proposition which truly encapsulates her as well.

SARA: Left culture in Latin America has traditionally been involved with trying to create a sense of cultural autonomy. Its referents have been contradictory, including social realism, which is also imported into the Latin American context as indigenous imagery. What is the intersection between the discourse and images that you both produce and describe and the critical culture of the organized left?

NELLY: The institutional left generates an orthodoxy and the discourse of this left is then an official discourse as well. If one believes in creativity as a search for a language which tries to break certainties, which creates



Still from video *Fragil* by Magali Meneses, Chile, 1985.



Still from video *Topologia I* by Soledad Farina, Chile, 1983.

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zones of ambiguity and of meaning — from that point of view there's a conflict between the discourses of multiplicities and the left discourse which calls on a certain linearity. It is from art, during a certain period of a few years in Chile, that the traditional discourse of the left is critically interpreted.

DIAMELA: I would rather speak in terms of my practice as an artist. In Latin America, political parties have functioned as big institutions. From the perspective of the parties on the left, which are the ones that interest me, the discourses have been very simplifying. Specifically because they see popular culture, collectivity, and globality, as very simple. They have been very paternalistic discourses.

I have many problems with the big and terrible institutionalization of many parties of the left, and as such my artistic discourse is in collision with theirs. They are not capable of "reading" me or they do not want to "read" me — I am speaking of this metaphorically. But I'm not antagonistic towards them. I feel that I am a part of them, that's the way I conceive of myself. And I'm fighting because I do not want to leave them.

SARA: What form does censorship take in Chile? What impact does it have on artists? Explicit sexual images are a strong element in a number of works — how can there be works that deal so overtly with sexuality when there is a high level of right-wing political censorship?

NELLY: The most obvious aspect is the most radical censorship, self-censorship, the way that one internalizes the conditions of prohibition. Bureaucratic censorship also exists. It prohibits the circulation of certain publications and restricts the field of operation of certain ideas and thoughts. I don't believe sexual censorship is a state priority. In a regime which is politically overdeterminant, there is a margin of permissiveness, which should be considered maybe as minor zones, compared to a politique which is more concrete.

SARA: I assume that the social project of the regime is anti-homosexual. How can work representing gay desire escape repression?

DIAMELA: Our country is one with many taboos about homosexuality. We have a Catholic inheritance with the notion of sin and this silences public discourse on the subject of homosexuality. There are of course sexual practices, but public manifestations of sex and sexuality are very much repressed. The dominant ideology of our country is of heterosexual origin.

On the level of culture, some of the important art producers have been homosexual, both men and women. Thus they are a part of our culture, and a part of our discourse. For example, Gabriela Mistral, the author who won the Nobel Prize, was lesbian. And her discourse is there, it is published. Recently a conscious gay discourse with public intentions has emerged, which is not the case of Gabriela Mistral, who never spoke. In this case they speak, in their work are the frames of modernism. For example, Davila, uses a gay imagination, a gay vision of the world.

There's much resistance to Davila — he's not an accepted painter. He hasn't been censored because there's virtually no censorship of art at this stage. It's not necessary because all the elements which mediate between art and society have been cut, through the intervention against the university, the intervention into the means of communication. These are asphyxiated spaces.

NELLY: In Chile there are an enormous amount of discourses mediated within the same work. Here we're focusing on one issue, but there's a whole network generated by the same works which makes the gay issue in Chile read as one of the issues of choice. It is not as much in the foreground as we have seen here in Canada.

SARA: What are the venues for video in Chile?

NELLY: There is a fundamental event, called the Franco-Chilean meeting, which is organized by a French ministry, local people, and many institu-



Found photo used by Luz Donoso in *Delito Persistente*, 1987.



Still from video *Yo No Le Tengo Miedo A Nada* by Tatiano Gaviola, Chile, 1984.



Still from video *Confidencias* by Soledad Farina, Chile, 1985.

tions. It is in November, it lasts 15 days and during those 15 days all the video production will pass through this event, everything that has been done in that year. Documentary video, art video, fiction video, theatre, everything is shown there and everything is discussed. And the videos are shown on parallel circuits, for example the documentary video has its own network.

DIAMELA: That is the power that video has in Chile. It is becoming more artistic, where video language is debated, video as option, video as politique. The only artist space which has a concrete censorship is video. There is an office for the censorship of video. Why video? They seem to be clear on the fact that video offers the possibility of multiplication and of alteration of the mass media. All the video which is produced and intended to be shown for any public, any at all, has to pass through the censorship office.

NELLY: There is a strong activity of alternative video, of testimonial and documentary video.

DIAMELA: These ones are not submitted for censorship because they would not be approved.

NELLY: In the video event all the videos must be registered and approved by the censors. The censor does not necessarily say "yes" or "no," but yes with conditions: restricted to those over 14 years old, restricted to those over 18 years old, restricted to those over 21 years old.

DIAMELA: A video of Lotty Rosenfeld's was censored. It was the first one in the history of this censorship office to be banned. The case of Lotty is an exemplary case, because she appealed the ruling — she hired a lawyer and took her case to the Minister of Education and she won. But she did this as a private person, not as a representative of the community of video producers. They had to lift the censorship from this video.

SARA: What are the implications for artists whose work is censored by the Office?

DIAMELA: They immediately demand all of the work. There is a terrible law which is inflicted on you, which is the Law of National Security. If you show a prohibited video, you are breaking this law and if you are caught, it is the jail which awaits you. It's as simple as that. You'd be a terrorist!

SARA: I'm interested in your perceptions of the differences in conditions for artists in Canada as opposed to Chile and in how you see the margin or periphery in the Canadian context.

DIAMELA: The big difference that I've seen in terms of how we work in Chile and how you work here, is that first these are radically different contexts. Here there is an infrastructure and the concept of financing exists. One takes from the institutions the maximum possible. The whole of Latin American art is not protected by institutions and this of course conditions our production.

Another issue is that for as much censorship as you have here, there is a discourse on sexuality, with many pieces and with many ruptures — a very plural discourse can be formed. We have individuals working with the issue of sexuality, but we don't have a discourse, neither around homosexuality, nor around heterosexuality.

NELLY: I'm interested in knowing how Canada sees its dependence in terms of the other international networks. What is the level of consciousness of this marginalization? Canadian art has no presence in the international sphere for example. This must naturally generate in Canada a reaction between frustration and combativeness towards these centres, New York, Milan, Italy, Germany, etc. where the artistic and critical discourse of art takes place. ■



Still from video *El Pan Neustro* by Gloria Camiruaga, Chile, 1987.



Still from video *La Comida* by Sybil Brintrup and Magali Meneses, Chile, 1983.

Dreaming TRADE

LESSONS FROM THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

by Rowley Mossop

I grew up believing the United States was heaven. It seemed to be a land of two-bit hamburgers, ten-cent gasoline, and unfettered opportunity. Its domain extended from the border that my parents crossed on their cut-rate shopping expeditions, to the face of the moon on which American astronauts planted their flag in 1969.

Americans had things and did things — they had cornered the market on significance. Now, looking at the way in which the Free Trade deal has been negotiated, signed, and sold to the Canadian people, it seems that little has changed since my childhood in the Sixties.

I am neither an economist nor a political scientist, but an artist. I see the Free Trade Agreement as a cultural phenomenon. From this point of view, both the deal and the public support it has gained have the look of fantasy and nostalgia. At a point in Canada's history when we have the cultural and economic strength to plan a more just future for our country, the FTA looks more like simple abdication of responsibility. Instead of continuing to articulate our difference from the United States, the Federal Government has acceded to further harmonization.

"We certainly need some changes and new approaches to economic issues. But it is important that we don't simply

turn ourselves over to the control of our neighbours to the south and become politically dependent on them."

—The Very Rev. Dr. Lois M. Wilson from her essay in *If You Love This Country*

To turn an old rallying cry around, the economic is political. Supporters of the deal who declare otherwise are being willfully naive. In any international relationship where one country establishes itself as the dominant economic power, it will also hold the political whip. Even Brian Mulroney has held a similar view. In a speech at the 1983 Tory leadership convention, he said: "Free trade affects Canadian sovereignty, and we will have none of it, not during leadership campaigns or at any other time."

Why did the Tories undertake the deal? There's little doubt that it is the shimmering beacon in the Mulroney government's vision of how Canadian society must evolve to survive in the next century. Leaving aside questions of value, the government can take credit for transforming much of that vision, step by step, into reality. It has signed the freer trade deal, solidified the Meech Lake Accord, and passed a number of bills that will entrench its views of Canada's future. It has done this with efficient vigour — almost overshadowing the scandals that taint

the reputation of several individual Tory M.P.s. A freer, more competitive country, driven forward by market forces unhindered by government meddling, is what Canadians are being promised.

This Progressive Conservative dream for our country looks a lot like that other one which shone so brightly when I was little. Speaking about the FTA to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American president said it straight out:

"Canada and the U.S. will soon be... demonstrating to all humanity that there are indeed no limits to what people can accomplish when they are free to follow their dreams... we're making that dream a reality. It is the American dream."

—Ronald Reagan, as quoted in the *Toronto Star*, 20 November 1988

I am sure that the power of the deal to convince lies in the degree to which Canadians have bought its mythic substance. That power has been amplified and exploited by intense promotion on the part of the business groups that seem to be its greatest beneficiaries. Rhetoric and speculative figuring — on both sides — are obstacles to the extended debate in which Canadians now need to engage. Issues which will focus or blur our na-

tional identity are being swept away by a collective wishful thinking about the positive effects that the deal may have.

Free trade advocates ignore the injustices which disfigure the American dream, and at the same time hold out its most tempting promises for admiration. Difficult issues like "adjustment" and the large concessions won by the U.S. are glossed over. Instead, Canadians are told that the deal means more jobs, prosperity, security, and an abundance of cheaper goods. It is at this level that the nostalgia which has given the deal momentum is clearest.

When the agreement was first reached in the fall of 1987, the popular media scrambled to find clear examples of how it would affect Canadians. At one television newsroom a reporter was assigned to go across the border and find out what Canadians would be able to bring back duty-free. He went to an auto showroom, among other places. When his item got back to the newsroom, showing that new and used cars could one day cross the border without tariffs, an unbelievable excitement filled the air. It's in similar moments of enthusiasm that support for the trade pact begins. So, free traders focus on each part of the deal that seems to turn our yearning for a better and easier world into reality.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has released figures which show in plain terms what the deal can promise to ordinary citizens. Harvie Andre's department published a glossy magazine titled *The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and Canadian Consumers*, and it contains many of the numbers that have been used to sell the deal. Some of them seem insignificant. For instance, a family of four may save between 1.9 and 2.9 cents a week on cooking fats and oils. But others really grab for attention. Canadians are told that once the deal is implemented, a family of four establishing a home could save up to \$8,000. When this figure was

first released, it got wide press and a positive reaction.

But this remarkable saving is based on an equally remarkable assumption: that the family purchases a three-bedroom house and everything in it, all brand-new. The government builds its figure on a family that walks into their new home naked, and buys everything from clothes to bedroom suites to a gas barbecue. This may not be a perfect mirror of reality. The Consumers' Association of Canada, an early advocate of the deal, felt the government was using examples like this one to oversell the FTA. And it toned down its support.

The consumer-benefit figures use some of the same theories to form the basis of other projections. In January, the Finance Department released a study which declared that about 120,000 new jobs would be created over five years as a result of free trade. The study assumes continuous growth in exports, investments, and consumer spending. Taking only the reduction of tariffs into account it leaves aside changes in, among other things, energy and agricultural export policy. And, it includes no estimate of the number of jobs that may disappear because of more active competition from U.S. industry. Even so, the projected number of jobs created is only about one third what the Prime Minister was promising in 1987. At that time he trumpeted the results of an Economic Council of Canada report — undertaken before the text of the deal was even published — which promised 350,000 new jobs.

Graeme Gibson, in his excellent essay in *If You Love This Country*, talks about Scotland's failure to claim its right to an elected Scottish Assembly in 1978. He believes that the Scots missed what was really at stake when they went to vote in the referendum, and that the question of self-determination was never properly debated.

"...and at the heart of the matter, was a colonized people's conviction that they were incapable of resolving the problems of their own community."

He says that the Scots turned away from accepting responsibility for their country's future, turning it over to the English at a crucial time. And Gibson implies that there's a relation between

that decision and the Canadian government's acceptance of the FTA.

In a way, the deal is an easy solution for the Tory government. They appear to make substantial progress in policy. They look like they are in command. What they have actually done is to make their responsibilities for economic planning subject to a treaty with a foreign power. And in so doing, avoid both the decisions that are properly theirs to make, and the consequences of those decisions. What I see clearly is a government willing to abandon policy to chance and greed in the marketplace. October 19 should stand as a clear reminder that the market is not a 'natural' determinant of value as free traders tell us. It is as artificial as any other standard for setting prices.

Support for the deal — as measured in Decima polls — continues to grow. And it seems to be increasing even though a majority of those polled also say that Canada's economic sovereignty will be compromised. The sales pitch has been compelling and effective. That dream of the sweet, free life has tremendous power.

Will it also have the power to overwhelm the long public debate that the trade issue deserves? In the next several months, the government will have to introduce various bills to bring the Free Trade Agreement into effect. The process of passing that enabling legislation will offer the opportunity to forge a clear popular stand. Canadians can resolve to construct an economy to serve social goals, or we can permit the distortion of our society to suit foreign economic strategy.

At the same time that I grew up admiring the U.S., artists and writers all across our country were struggling with the question of Canadian identity. When I began to practice as an artist, I realized that our identity as a nation isn't singular, but is formed by clear and rich voices of difference in our communities. These songs of experience must be heard over the endless sighs of conservative yearning for Reagan's golden vision of a simpler America. ●

Rowley Mossop

SOME
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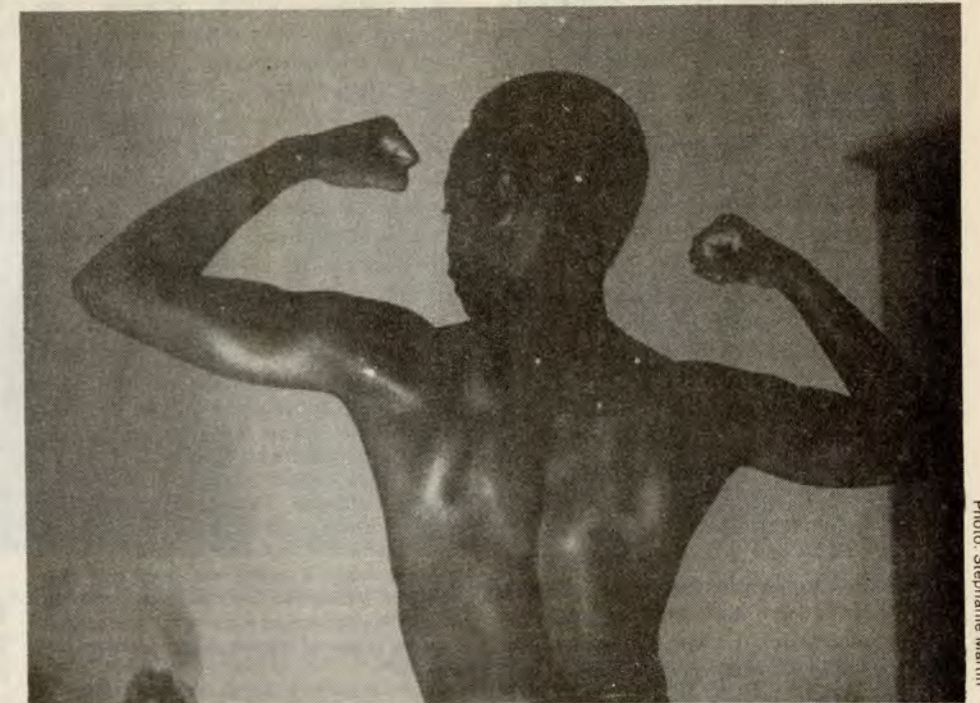


Photo: Stephanie Martin

Still from film *Some Images of Lesbians of Colour* by Lesbians of Colour, Toronto, 1987.

Territories of the Forbidden

LESBIAN CULTURE,
SEX & CENSORSHIP

An overview of works in various media by women.

by Marusia Bociurkiw

THURSDAY NIGHT on Parliament Street, on the fringe of Toronto's gay ghetto. We're in a line-up to a bar. Ten minutes pass, then twenty: we've tried a variety of tactics with the bouncer, from sweet flattery, to out-and-out aggressiveness. Just as we're about to be let in, the cops arrive and do a heavy-handed tour. Thirty women leave (we count them). We're told we have to wait another little while. It's the third time this night the cops have visited ostensibly to check for overcrowding. One of the owners tells us the cops are trying to close them down. In a city with an estimated lesbian and gay population of 30,000, this is the only lesbian-run bar in town. It's been assertively programming feminist films, videos, and music, and has regular women-only nights. The police have "dropped in" eight times in the past week alone.

The state is not neutral, nor is it stupid. It knows that it's culture that keeps a movement alive.

"How many of us have been able to pursue what fascinates us, or ask for what we want, or take risks with our sexual identities?"

"...When we imagine travelling into the territory of the forbidden, we are obsessed with fears of loss. We have been told that social status drops dangerously low for the woman who seeks pleasure..."

IT'S NO SECRET anymore that cultural representations by oppressed groups (women, lesbians, people of colour) exist at the bottom of the constructs of image and text we call culture, forming its least-funded, least-seen layer and sometimes its underground. In this context, visibility is fought for, never freely given, and history is always something that keeps getting lost.

More than a century after its emergence, lesbian culture remains almost underground: the documented history is erratic, the images are few and far between. News of books, shows, films, or videos with lesbian content spreads largely by word of mouth, or through

the small-circulation gay press; mass cultural products with barely legible lesbian signifiers are seen again and again. The lesbian viewer practices what Claude Lévi-Strauss called "bricolage": the piecing-together of shreds of reflection and identity from scant sources available; the bending of meaning to her purpose. The artist who produces lesbian imagery operates in a space that for all its emptiness resonates with freedom, but the opposite pole of this freedom is constriction, and these two factors mark her invisibility. She is often able to speak in more radical and innovative ways than her sisters in the mainstream, because when no one is listening, you can say what you want. But she watches as the larger community mirrors the attitude of the state by ignoring her work while benefiting from its radical or transgressive nature.

We exist as spectacle; we provide thrilling forays into forbidden territories. That's why we're finally being monitored. Some are surprised that it took this long. Others feel like they've been watched since the minute they leaped out of the closet door.

WHILE debates surrounding censorship and alternative expressions of sexuality have been well-synthesized, the recent history of lesbian art practice has not been. Lesbianism has long been "a country with no language" (Adrienne Rich), a culture with a memory truncated and obscured by the workings of oppression. Lesbians have fought for the right to show/discuss/analyze images considered sometimes even by their sisters to be obscene. The anti-porn/anti-censorship debate has loosened up somewhat, evoking for many a re-casting of old fears into a new sexual curiosity; a desire to re-present women as active sexual subjects on women's own terms.

Audre Lorde's important article, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," speaks movingly of the erotic as a source of political strength, "a considered source of power and information in our lives." She sees the suppression of the erotic as dangerous for many reasons:

"In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness... Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change... For not only do we touch our most profoundly creative source, but we do that which is female and self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society."³

This sort of broad analysis is helpful in the wake of increased state censorship. Bill C-54, the draconian federal anti-porn bill (which, at time of writing is in second reading in the House of Commons⁴) does not overtly target lesbian sexuality. In fact, it is oddly egalitarian

in its thoroughness: from breastfeeding to ass-fucking, C-54 grants the state permission to intervene on representation. But censorship means different things to different communities. The historical convergence of censorship laws with feminist organizing around bath raids, equality rights, and AIDS, is no coincidence. By the same token, the preoccupation of a particular strand of feminism with pornography can be seen as the result of feminist backlash. American feminist Anne Snitow presents an insightful analysis:

"...Some feminists seem to be reasoning that if the state is impervious to our attacks, perhaps we can compel its unchecked strength to our service? Maybe, this argument goes, the masculine power structure that resisted the ideology of equality will listen more attentively to the ideology of difference. The anti-pornography movement posits a male sexual drive that is intrinsically violent, different in kind from a more consensual and loving female nature. If equality and gender-blind institutions are unobtainable...why continue demanding equality? Why not demand instead specific recognition in law and custom of women's special nature and vulnerability?"⁵

The semi-underground nature of lesbian culture has made it, in some ways, a difficult target for censorship laws (which is why the police hang out in the bars). But community pride and visibility are on an upswing, especially since the passing of Bill 7 in 1986 (the amendment to the Ontario human rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation); familiarity would seem to breed contempt. More than one hundred gay and lesbian titles have been seized by Canada Customs in the past year, among them *Lesbian Sex* (a self-help sexual manual), *Good Vibrations* (a vibrator manual), *Bad Attitude*, and perhaps most absurd (and racist) of all, *Dzelarhons*, a book retelling ancient Indian legends, by Canadian author Anne Cameron. One of the

legends, about a woman who is forced to marry a bear, was deemed obscene. Women's bookstores and presses rarely have the cash to challenge these seizures on a legal basis, and so suffer enormous losses when they occur. At a press conference of Toronto's Coalition Against C-54, gay rights activist Gary Kinsman said:

"This is a campaign of cultural genocide against a community which has historically been denied images of women loving women and men loving men. These seizures give us a taste of what is to come if the proposed sexual censorship legislation is enacted... We are particularly concerned that the proposed legislation will deny to people under the age of 18 information on homosexuality and lesbianism, and for people beginning to come out, it is essential that such information be available... This bill will be used to set back the struggle for sex education, for safe-sex promotion, for lesbian and gay rights, and for women's equality. We cannot let it be passed."

BUT I DON'T mean to be depressing. Despite these limitations, we can and do make our own culture, and these images and texts represent difference in a way the theory frequently does not. We are visible first and foremost to each other; that visibility speaks a self-created culture that includes social spaces and the ways in which we move, speak, regard, and maintain one another. This culture is rooted in a specific erotic identity that has never gained mainstream acceptance; that, if publicly displayed, invites disgust, voyeurism, and sometimes violence. Because of its autonomy from reproduction and the maintenance of family structures, this eroticism is, when visible, an obvious and likely target for censorship. We are, I think, in a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle ways, being encouraged to go further underground, and to remain there. It's not surprising then, that so few examples of lesbian sexual representa-



Image from photo-essay in *On Our Backs Magazine*. Photographer: Honey Lee Cottrell; Models: Rachael and Elexis.



Photo: Peter MacCallum

Untitled piece by Jude Johnston, exhibited in *Sight Specific: Lesbians & Representation*, March 1987, A Space, Toronto.

tion exist. I will attempt to describe some different voices.

In 1985, film/video-makers Almerinda Travassos and Marg Moores decided to organize a forum for the development of alternative sexual representations. This resulted in "Women's Erotic Film Language," sponsored by the Film Committee at A Space Gallery. Five women artists were each commissioned to produce a short super-8 film.

The evening proved to be a sort of landmark: the different films produced were fascinating and complex, and each evening drew a full house. Three of the five artists were lesbians, and their films ranged from the satirical (*An Apple A Day* by Gay Bell) to the lyrical (*S(word) Swallows* by Lynne Fernie). Of her film, Fernie wrote:

"Because our bodies and the images of our bodies have been used to represent sexuality and sexual service in our culture, I find myself in the situation of wanting to represent and, yet, not wanting to represent explicit lesbian sexuality. Our bodies are, after all, the only language we have to practice sexual pleasure, and they are the same bodies, the same components, of a sexual language that has been used to objectify us..."⁶

Travassos and Moores went on to collaborate on *Frankly, Shirley*, an explicitly sexual and implicitly feminist 10-minute video about two lesbians who are into sex, but not conversation. It combines hot/tender lovemaking with humorous one-liners. The two women's penchant for sex in public places seems to turn censorship on its head: these women defiantly claim public space for their own, and use it as a turn-on for their desires.

After ten years of involvement in the women's community, Moores had a lesbian audience in mind when she scripted *Frankly, Shir-*

ley, wanting to reflect back to lesbians their own language and sensibility. The artist is a little surprised at its wide appeal. "It's not a big tape, it's only ten minutes long, and yet people are wild about it: it says a lot that it's gotten so much attention." She's become very aware of the lack of productions dealing with lesbian sexuality, and feels that a certain responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the few "out" lesbian producers to continue making explicit work. "Theorists are always looking for that 'elusive body of lesbian work.' I'm finally convinced it's not there. Women have to go out and make it themselves."

Its bold experimentation notwithstanding, the absence of work by women of colour in the "Women's Erotic Film Language" project reveals a major shortcoming of the debate around sexual representation at that time. In the intervening years, women of colour in Toronto have demanded to have racism placed on the forefront of the feminist agenda. Coalition work — women of colour and white women working together — with white women being asked to confront both internalized and systematic racism, has affected many communities in the city who have long excluded people of colour, including the art community. Debates which preoccupy this community, censorship among them, must be broadened to include discussion of whose work gets censored — for lack of funds or attention — before it's even made. Feminist theorist Theresa deLauretis refers to sexuality as a term of power, belonging to the empowered. The discourse around sexuality, she argues, ignores:

WHEN I SEE HER IN THE STREET/OFFICE/BAR WE RECOGNIZE OURSELVES AS SIMILAR.
WHEN I ASK HER ABOUT HERSELF WE FIND WE HAVE DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.
WHEN WE SEE HER REFLECTIONS AROUND US WE ARE GLAD WE HAVE OUR NETWORKS.
WHEN WE TALK POLITICS BUT DISAGREE WE STILL FEEL EMPOWERED.
WHEN WE ARE WAITING HER WE UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN.
WHEN I KISS HER IN THE SUBWAY WE GET FURROWED LOOKS FROM OTHERS.
WHEN SHE SAYS SHE WANTS TO MAKE LOVE WITH ME I AM OVERWHELMED WITH DESIRE.
WHEN I PUT MY HAND INSIDE HER COAT WE REVEAL OUR SEXUAL DIFFERENCES.
WHEN I SUCK ON HER NIPPLES WE FEEL INCREDIBLY CONNECTED.
WHEN I REALIZED I AM LESBIAN WE DISCOVERED EACH OTHER.

"the compelling connection between sexuality and the requirements of survival that is the perceived reality of those women whom class and status do not protect... And it is women protected by class and white-skin privilege who have laid out the terms of the critical discourse on sexuality..."⁷

TWO YEARS LATER, the A Space Film Committee produced another "Erotic Film Language" event, this time commissioning work from community groups instead of individuals. Lesbians of Colour was one of these groups. Five women in the group began to meet regularly to work on a film, using the act of taking photographs of one another as a starting point. One of the women, Michele Paulse, recalls the experience:

"There was a lot we wanted to do...it was an opportunity to go beyond stereotypes, (although) it's difficult to create alternatives when that image is seen through racist eyes...We finally produced an 8-minute film depicting women of colour who are also visible as lesbians. The film shows their bodies, it shows their strength."

Paulse feels that the debate around sexual representation is an important one for lesbians of colour.

"We're so shut out: on one hand, the media presents white sexuality, and on the other hand, white lesbians who have media skills speak only from their own experience, so they shut us out also. We're made invisible amongst lesbians."

She does, however, feel it's possible for white women to include women of colour in their representations at certain moments and in certain situations, providing that an analysis of racism is integrated into the work. Perhaps equally important are efforts to channel resources towards women of colour to pro-

duce their own imagery, thus moving from guilt into active solidarity.

One artist who is attempting to find a visual language that incorporates both a lesbian-positive and an anti-racist perspective, is Jude Johnston. Active in the feminist and cultural communities for several years, she tries to place her representations of women within challenging political contexts. Two different photo/text pieces have depicted women of colour as active subjects: one, a battered woman (Shirley Samaroo) "who tried to get support"; another, Renee McCoy, the minister of a gay and lesbian church in Harlem, who speaks about power as the result of working through difference. Johnston's most recent piece (untitled), was in the *Sight Specific: Lesbians & Representation* lesbian art show (A Space, March 4-28, 1987). It incorporated a photo-mural of two women embracing next to a text describing what it is for a woman to love a woman in explicit sexual language. The text is displayed over a photo of a city street: a pre-determined, male-dominated environment within which no signifiers of lesbianism exist. The text becomes fragile and intimate, floating on a hostile plane; the photo next to it (the women embracing) becomes of necessity, tender and private.

Of the connection between censorship and her work, Johnston says,

"I'm trying to explore the relationship between sex and the politics of representation. The state uses sexuality to control us, but we can use sexuality as a way of looking at our culture and how we fit into it... State censorship prevails, and people don't produce their own sexual images; many of our sexual images are received notions. And there aren't a lot of lesbian images because the images are controlled, and are tied into capitalism."

Midi Onodera, a filmmaker, produced an important work three years ago, a half-hour film called *Ten Cents A Dance: Parallax*. The film is remarkable in the carefully balanced and detached way that it deals with three different forms of marginalized sexual activity: two women coming on to each other in a cafe; two men engaging in bathroom sex; and a telephone sex transaction. Like porn, the film seems to separate the erotic from the social, but the detached formalism (the entire film is presented in split-screen) doesn't let us get turned on: it forces us to look closely at sexual exchanges; at the ways in which we obtain pleasure; at the difference in our social locations (lesbians/gay men/heterosexual man/sex trade worker); at the heterogeneity of our desires.

Ten Cents A Dance has been screened widely nationally and internationally, but its gentle open-endedness has sometimes caused problems. At the Grierson Film Seminar in 1986,

the complex meanings of the film became distilled into a single homophobic consensus from most of the participants: that the film was helpful in revealing the general "alienation" and "shallowness" of the "homosexual lifestyle." One participant even felt moved to refer to bestiality as a metaphor for the film's particularly eccentric nature. The situation illustrated the occasional pitfalls of placing representations of gay and lesbian sexuality into a public setting, where homophobic stereotypes have hardly changed — arguably since the late 19th century — and where the ways in which lesbianism interferes with the state's need to organize women into economic units becomes manifest in a dominant, hegemonic attitude towards strong lesbian images.

Onodera has gone on to produce a second film, *Displaced View* (it premiered in Vancouver in March, 1988), which explores the lives of three generations of Japanese-Canadian women. Though topically and formally a departure from her previous work, she speaks of the connecting thread:

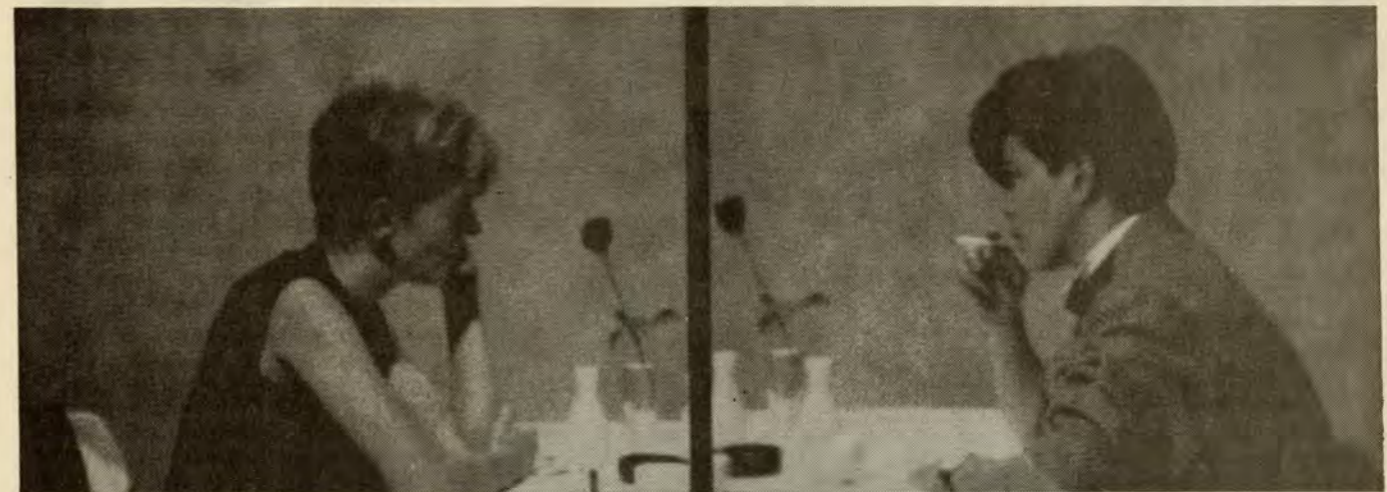
"I found a lot of similarities with the process of coming out (as a lesbian), and the process of reclaiming your culture. I became aware of political issues that encompassed the whole issue of sexuality the more I began to look at issues of minority groups, issues of

racism... It's one of those things you don't talk about. We are talking about a very, very straight community as far as the Japanese or any kind of non-white group goes. You are straight and that's it. You have one thing to cope with and that's your colour. Deal with that... Well, I did a few drafts, sat on it for a while, and said, 'No, there's something missing.' So, yes, it is there, not holding up a banner, but **through** the film. In communicating to my grandmother I found that there are similarities in fighting for something, and that we have a common ground. I can't even begin to talk with my grandmother in person, I have to communicate it in the best way I can, and that's film. I'm sort of coming out to my community and to my grandmother in this film..."⁸

FOR Onodera, as for many women, lesbianism is an identity that overlaps with others: race, class, gender. Mainstream representations remove the complexity of difference and present lesbians as dealing only with relationships, as existing only in the present, without history or memory. Work, money, family background, and culture are also issues that preoccupy lesbians, but which, if included into the image of the lesbian, quite possibly change her other-ness, and begin to remove her from the role of spectacle. She would then become transformed into a more generalized representation: woman, worker, mother, lover. It's not an easy thing to pull off; it's a major deconstruction of a given notion.



Still from film *Working Girls* by Lizzie Borden, 1986.



Still from film *Ten Cents A Dance: Parallax* by Midi Onodera, 1985.

One filmmaker who has attempted such a strategy is New York filmmaker Lizzie Borden. Her most recent film, *Working Girls* (1986), simply places a lesbian into a story (a day in the life of an upscale brothel), depicting her lesbianness as no more or less important than her secondary work — prostitution — or her primary work — artist. The film begins and ends with an image of the woman in bed with her lover: a safe space from which she emerges, but to which she is also able to return.

Another, more recent example (but with different results) is, *I've Heard The Mermaids Singing*, the independently-produced Cannes hit by Toronto filmmaker Patricia Rozema. Though the word LESBIAN is never spoken, the film's narrative-line is more or less based on the love of one woman character (Polly, played by Sheila McCarthy), for another (Gabriella, played by Paule Baillargeon). This love is presented as infatuation, and its implications are ambiguous.

Says Polly, directly to the audience, at the beginning of the film: "I know love is a pretty strong word when you are talking about another woman and she isn't your mother," then adds: "I don't think I wanted to kiss her or all that stuff, but I just loved her." (Sigh.) Gabriella is herself a lesbian, and this too is indicated early on in a scene between herself and her lover (Mary, played by Anne Marie MacDonald). We watch the women tentatively touch and kiss, through Polly's eyes, via a video monitor in another room (part of an unlikely "video art" installation). This scene is difficult to see: the lovers kiss just as they move out of the frame.

It's an interesting way of dealing with voyeurism, but then nobody, except for lesbians,

seems to notice the underlying dyke-content. (Instead, everyone emotes about the film's rather cliché references to "art" and "life"). Unlike Lizzie Borden, Rozema seems unable to find a middle-ground between spectacle and invisibility: because it's never named, the lesbianism becomes erased. It may well be that the commercial success of this film (and of its director) rest on this erasure.

Lesbian porn also attempts to deal with the

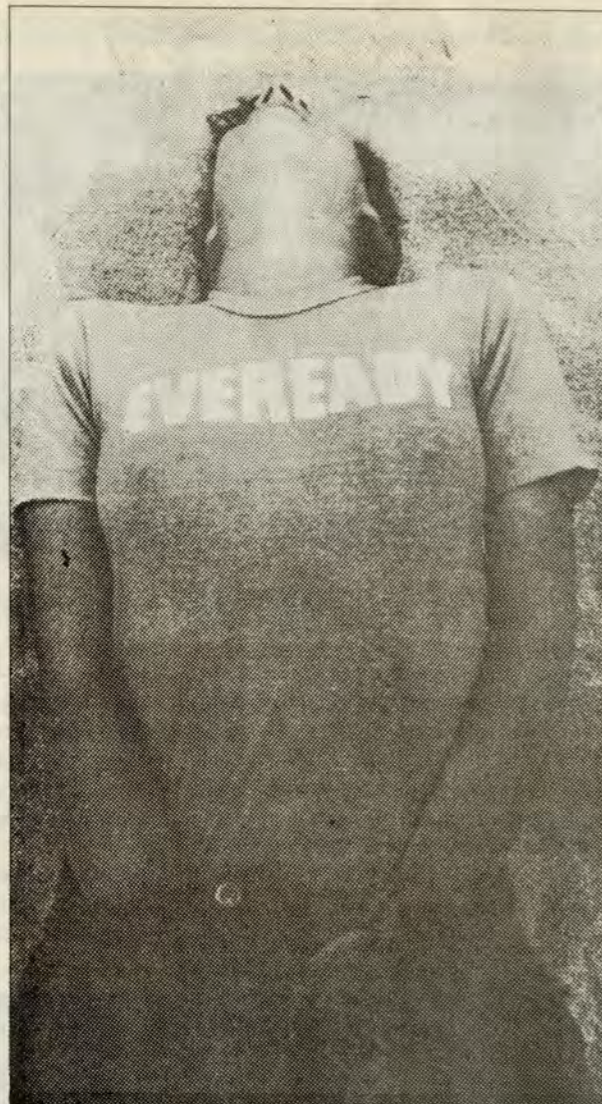
lesbian-as-spectacle dilemma, by creating erotic images created specifically by and for lesbians: an inward-turning that prioritizes fantasy, pleasure, and the reclaiming of an active, pro-sex lesbian identity. The very titles of the two American lesbian porn magazines (there are no Canadian equivalents) — *On Our Backs* and *Bad Attitude* — denote a rebellious and somewhat reactive stance to the anti-porn position of radical feminism. Indeed, the



Still from video *Erotic in Nature* by Tigress Productions.

Still courtesy of C.F.M.D.C.

"We know you're ready,"
image from self-ad in
On Our Backs magazine.



magazines' unabashed presentation of S/M has provoked vigorous debate, with some women's bookstores refusing (though not always unanimously) to carry lesbian porn, and enforcing a separation of the erotic from the social, which weakens both sides.

The most frequent response I've heard to the porn mags is not, "I couldn't handle it," but rather, "it didn't turn me on." The total removal of the stories from day-to-day aspects of lesbian existence seems, for many lesbians, to be problematic, perhaps because we are, as women, so accustomed to deconstructing and politicizing the pornographic image. The need seems to be for porn that doesn't simply transpose gender, but which also includes lesbian culture in some way, and which maybe even has humour and good writing. The questions, "What turns me/us on?"; "Is getting turned on important anyway?"; and "What kind of images can I/we create?" have, as yet, almost no frame of reference, unlike the discourse around gay male porn, which has a history and a thriving industry. Ex-

plicit gay and lesbian sexual imagery produced by artists suffers from economic censorship; there are several proposals by experienced gay and lesbian artists that have been turned down in the past year, but the jury system provides a smokescreen, and proof of a suspected backlash within the arts councils can never be pinned down. The dream of a living wage is a particularly meaningful one for gay and lesbian artists: it would mean both economic and political freedom. In the meantime, the need to organize and strategize around the funding and production of these images is crucial.

Erotic In Nature (Tigress Production, 1985) is an example of lesbian video porn, created for home (VCR) use, and distributed through women-only networks. It seems to be consciously placing itself as an alternative to the role-playing, bondage, and sex-as-opposed-to-love stance of the magazines. Most of the sex takes place on a futon in the woods; there are frequent cut-aways to running water or dappled light on leaves. There's even folk

music. Still, my copy is in constant circulation, because, like the magazines, the images — however predetermined — are lesbian, and they're explicit, and they begin to fill an absence. The sense of reflection, of seeing oneself presented in a recognizable manner, is extremely compelling. And, I would say, an important factor in the development of individual and community identity. As Lorraine Chisholm, co-organizer of the *Woman to Woman* lesbian art show (Vancouver, 1982) has said:

"...The deep realization that you're lesbian comes from understanding that something that is erotic is true. My discovery of my lesbianism was such a revelation that it brought me to question everything else, and to question my own truths: my eroticism was telling me something valid, in opposition to everything that society was telling me. It's a valuable source of power for all women."⁹

IT IS A DIVERSITY OF choices that allows a community to create a strong cultural identity, and to remain above-ground. From the bars to the galleries, lesbian culture always exists in relation to dominant definitions of the taboo, the forbidden, and the obscene, and is fragmented by the power of these definitions. It would be nice to not have to settle for fragmentation — for porn there and theory here and activism there: the separating and dividing up of a movement. Because to have visual pleasure and theoretical pleasure; to represent an identity that is explicitly sexual and explicitly political, would be to have a whole politic, a whole story. One that can't be policed out of existence. ●

Marusia Bociurkiw is a Toronto video artist and a founding member of Emma Productions, a feminist video and production group.

FOOTNOTES

1. From the article, "The Forbidden: Eroticism & Taboo," in *Pleasure & Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, Carole Vance ed., Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
2. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 1969.
3. Published in *Sister/Outsider*, Audre Lorde, Crossing Press, 1984.
4. The House of Commons is now debating bill C-54. Once the bill has passed second reading it will go to a parliamentary committee. It moves next to a final reading and if passed would be proclaimed as law.
5. From the article, "Retrenchment Vs. Transformation," in *Caught Looking*, by the "Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force" Book Committee, 1986.
6. From the programme notes for "Women's Erotic Film Language," printed by A Space, Toronto. The other artists were: Lisa Steele, Kerri Kwinter, and "Positive Pornographers."
7. From *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Theresa deLauretis ed., Indiana Press, 1986.
8. From "The Luck of Daruma: An Interview with Miki Onodera," *Fireweed*, Winter 1987.
9. From "Woman to Woman: Talking Art," an interview by Sara Diamond, *Fuse*, Summer 1983.

Vintage Dogma

ABOO

RODNEY WERDEN

Screened at YYZ, Toronto

January 3-23, 1988

Distributed by V/tape, Toronto

by Jane Farrow

A FEW YEARS AGO a folk musician, renowned in his native Sumatra, was invited to attend the symphony while visiting the U.S. When asked if the entertainment had met with his approval he replied that he had really only enjoyed the very beginning — the atonal, disjointed quality of the sound. His hosts soon realized he was in fact referring to the orchestra tuning their instruments.

Culture can explain the world of difference here — but what would we call it if a white, middle-aged wealthy Bostonian passed such a judgement? Taste? Opinion? Eccentricity? I believe it could be only one of two things: either a failure of hegemonic socialization or a failure on the composer's part to infuse the music with culturally recognizable structures and codes (miscommunication). Rodney Werden's latest video *Aboo* is a strange blend of both these deficiencies. Werden intended *Aboo* as an allegorical tale of spiritual quest. It opens on a raging thunderstorm (chaos). A white, unemployed systems analyst enters an office building looking confused. He meets a well-dressed Black man (Fate) who lets him use his phone to further track down the office where he's to meet a prospective employer (quest for meaning, destiny). The Black man proceeds to mesmerize him with a lush description of his African homeland, *Aboo*, claiming that archeologists have determined that it is the exact location of the Garden of Eden (salvation, peace, the answer, etc.). The *Abooian* entices him with a big salary, to undertake the promotion of

Aboo as a new religious mecca (the hero accepts a challenge, a heroic task). The systems analyst's efforts to drum up business with fundamentalist christians meet with little success. He grows restless and frustrated and dreams about sex (with his secretary) and power (over *Aboo*) (the hero is tested). In another fantasy he speaks with the *Abooian* bureaucrat at an airport and tells him that although the money's good, the job is uninteresting and unsatisfying. The *Abooian* assures him that "sales aren't everything... popularity, achievement medals, none of them will matter...the important thing is to maintain integrity and put out an honest effort." The systems analyst returns to his job, content with this new-found meaning (the hero passes test and restores order where chaos prevailed).

In this telling, *Aboo* is deceptively straightforward; in reality, it is very difficult to follow. The conventionality of *Aboo's* message — i.e. that eternal salvation is more important than the finite supply of material rewards — is obscured by a skewed narrative, notable for its unclear, confused interplay of culturally loaded symbols and referents. For example, the fantasy and reality sequences are not easily distinguished, particularly the airport scene. As well, it is very unclear that the systems analyst is genuinely renewed at the end. It seems that he is merely resigned to the tedium of 9 to 5'ing it within the highly remunerative corporate structure. Most upsetting are

the racist interpretations to which *Aboo* is open: it overtly associates Blacks with the realm of spirituality and superstition; it is simultaneously patronizing towards their nationalist struggles; it is complicitous with the plundering of the capitalist periphery by white tourist dollars and the subsequent export of those profits to other whites in the managerial sector. These readings are far from those intended by *Aboo's* creators. This does not however make Werden's naive or irresponsible manipulation of this iconography any less indictable. Surely 'loaded' symbols or characterizations can be incorporated without exacerbating, unwittingly or not, the constricting aspects of their social definitions.

This is why it is virtually inconceivable that Werden, perhaps of all people, could ask us to see *Aboo* as anything more than a morbid satire of religious fundamentalism and late capitalism. Werden has done some excellent work in the past — his videos demonstrate a honed iconoclastic sensibility as in *Money Talks*, *Bullshit Walks* where he paid prostitutes to 'talk' to 'the camera.' This inspired and radical application of film theory is a compelling documentation of the power relations between johns and pros and, by analogy, the viewer and subject. This haunting work emphasizes the propensity of these 'marginalized' people to survive and be strong. Here Werden has conscious-

ly avoided contributing to the cultural stereotypes of sex-trade workers which reinvent their dependency and masochism.

But *Aboo* does something quite different — it employs a dominant narrative construct (the allegory) to reinforce dominant ideas. By this combination *Aboo* is vintage religious dogma — 'it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.' Salvation in eternity is contingent on a rejection of worldly, material rewards and standards of success. As the core beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism, these concepts have paved the way for the flourishing of history's largest and most powerful states — states that are characterized by highly uneven distributions of wealth. Unmasked, *Aboo's* message is as pompous as it is conventional.

With *Aboo* the viewer is expected to suspend an inordinate amount of 'culture' to get at the meaning, however dissonant. In assuming this capacity in the viewer, Werden commits a logistical error similar to the self-righteous hosts at the symphony who undoubtedly anticipated the admiration and joy of the Sumatran musician. Unfortunately the hosts will view this not as the failure of their music to communicate across cultures but his failure to receive communication at all. ●

Jane Farrow is a video producer, member of Girlco, and studies Social Anthropology at U. of T.



Aboo. Still courtesy of V/tape.

Remote Control

SOLIDARITY FOREVER...?

CHRIS CREIGHTON-KELLY

Performed at Vancouver East Cultural Centre
November 12-21, 1987

"...no power greater anywhere beneath the sun,
Yet what force on earth is weaker
than feeble strength of one,
for the union makes us strong.
Solidarity forever, Solidarity forever...."

by Craig Condly-Berggold

MUSIC TO MY EARS and in battle sung. The lyrics recoil at any suggestion of doubt. The song is a symbolic anthem of grandeur and righteousness sweeping scabs and half-truths aside. Some people instinctively shirk at these pretensions of 'absoluteness.' Union rhetoric serves many myths, and like all cultures, it responds to a need. Union morals challenge and disrupt the individual consciousness engaged in daily social contradictions.

Enter stage left, *Solidarity Forever...?* A question mark looms in the title of Chris Creighton-Kelly's interdisciplinary video-theatre performance about the 1983 mass movement in British Columbia protesting the Social Credit's restraint programme. Looking back four years later, the performance substitutes the passion of events for a sophisticated analysis of the role of media and interpersonal communication within a political event.

In the summer of 1983, Big Bad Billy Bennett's Social Credit government attacked the province's social contract with radical legislation which cut back social service programmes of every kind; reduced government payrolls with layoffs; dismantled the Human Rights Commission and the Tenant Rights Act. Right-wing ideologies danced in their socks, while citizens of B.C. pounded the pavement to re-establish the status quo. Operation Solidarity and Solidarity Coalition organized popular campaigns of protest, turning public sympathy towards direct action. In its last effort to force the government to withdraw the 27 legislative bills, a series of escalating strikes were mounted, and were to lead up to a province-wide general strike. Government workers were followed by teachers on picket duty, and private sector workers were next in line.

At the eleventh hour, the tele-

vision screen beamed a news-flash image into every household, an image which turns my stomach to this day: Jack Munro, executive officer of the B.C. Federation of Labour, having tea with Premier Bill Bennett in his livingroom. The social contract was re-sutured on television and the protest was then called off. The avenues of communication between the rank and file and their leadership had been usurped by the media.

Today, there are still hot debates about what went wrong. How did the brass within Operation Solidarity allow a successful social movement to be stopped cold in its tracks?

Creighton-Kelly's work foregrounds the role of the media as a 'third force' between Solidarity's fightback and the government. On both sides of the stage, six monitors are stacked on top of one another facing askew and towards the audience. The video sculpture designed by Laura Hackett, technical director, plays video loops of television news chronologically highlighting demonstrations, a greatest-hits re-runs of B.C.'s social protest. The tele-video interface with traditional left-wing theatre narrative is on the money, since in this age, social protest movements are mediated through television.

On stage center, four archetype characters — a rank-and-file trade unionist, a welfare mother, a school teacher, and a young idealist lesbian activist — establish a common front against the provincial government. Their story focuses on their interpersonal communication and resulting differences while working together on a leaflet committee for Solidarity Coalition. There are no illusions maintained, the actors do not disappear off set. They talk about issues over coffee, in the livingroom and bedroom, while watching television. Their struggle is not against Bill Bennett & Co., but learning to understand each other's differences. Trying to define what their 'community of interest' is. In one moment of hype they all chant mock slogans. While the characters square off in their prescribed roles, their dialogue is tame. One activist involved in

the real Solidarity Coalition recalled, "there were a lot of profanities uttered in those meetings."

On the surface, there is little interaction between the stage performance and the 'tele-video reality.' The actors do not challenge and rarely engage with the image on the monitors. This is deliberate. It creates a split awareness in the audience between the two forms of representation competing for their attention (the re-created stage performance and the television documentation). Creighton-Kelly has drawn attention to two common categories of symbolic representation in contemporary culture: art and documentation. He leaves it to the mind's eye to blur the reality of the two into a single fiction. Not unlike the events themselves — at the end of a day of demonstration or a shift of picket duty, people hurrying home to watch these events on the news.

Solidarity Forever...? is theatre about Media Politics. The nightmare video loop of Bill Bennett smiling with Jack Munro is a reminder of how powerful one news bulletin, "the third force," can be in the flow of information while events are unfolding. Vertical communication between leaders and rank and file, horizontal communication from group to group within a united front; this play identifies the critical need for a communications media analysis preceeding and during a struggle and not only when its over. In Creighton-Kelly's work, the lines between art and activism are successfully blurred. ●

Craig Condly-Berggold is an independent filmmaker, photographer and works with labour/community groups. He is currently living in Vancouver and is on the Vancouver Mayworks coordinating committee.



Monitor installation view of *Solidarity Forever...?*

Tenants Act Up

UP AGAINST THE WALLPAPER

THE CLICHETTES

Presented by Nightwood Theatre

Factory Theatre Lab

January 16-30, 1988

by David MacLean

HAVING already spoofed male and female sex roles in their collective foray through the landscape of popular culture, it was inevitable that the Clichettes (Louise Garfield, Janice Hladki, and Johanna Householder) would now embody inanimate objects as they focus in on the mounting Toronto housing crisis. *Up Against The Wallpaper* employs the group's infamous brand of zany humour, which uses lip-synch as an appropriation tool that consistently undercuts our desire to read pop music's ideology of mediocrity at surface value.

As with the trio's previous work, the new show derives its context both within, and at a new angle to, that wonderful arena of suburban dreams and garbage that so inspired Warhol and his pop contemporaries. The Clichettes have devoted their careers to the service of big irony. In their original incarnation, way back in 1980, they waged a full-scale comedy war on those stock characters of the early 1960s: the girl groups. There in the angst of a flip hairdo, the power of a new shade of lipstick, and the instant currency and mobility given to the young who were talented, they found the tools to deconstruct the last frontier of male privilege, an era when female pain could be simplified into a three-minute pop song; and in the process, they laid claim to a new feminist analysis outside the codified and rigid rhetoric of a movement in crisis.

With a new irreverence toward the notion of correctness in art, they poked fun at just about everything they could pull out of their cultural grab bag. *Half Human, Half Heartache* established them as



Photo: Ken Martin Photographics

Furniture with a sense of humour: The Clichettes (from l. to r.): Louise Garfield, Johanna Householder, and Janice Hladki.

women who could be serious by being funny.

Presented by Nightwood Theatre, *Up Against The Wallpaper* was written by Kate Lushington with the Clichettes, and directed by Nightwood's Maureen White. To the credit of everyone involved, this new revue is a highly successful piece of political theatre; a brilliant marriage of message and mayhem.

The Clichettes' goal is to expose both the severity of the rent wars, and the panic and confusion that anybody feels looking for a place to live in Toronto. The Clichettes rip down the illusions that are created to glamourize the exchange of property. Where there are winners, there are losers. As Dr. Ira Lifestyle (Garfield) says to a caller on a phone-in show who is desperate to evict her tenants so she can renovate, "I find a wrecking ball through the livingroom is very persuasive."

Up Against The Wallpaper is about the last affordable house in the city. The characters are the very walls, furniture and people who are battling over the house's uncertain future. And they're all dreading the apocalyptic Open House. That may be the most satisfying event in a real-estate agent's life, but spells disaster for everyone else. While agents in perky uniforms set traps for naive clients, a single parent who lives in the house plots her heroic resistance to eviction. Her visiting friend, who's just bought a house, is oblivious to the mounting tension. She's daydreaming about her own climb up the ladder of gentrification. Meanwhile, out on a lawn, violence has erupted among the desperate would-be buyers. Trapped in an unsympathetic system, their pent-up desire explodes, levelling the house.

All of the parts are played by the Clichettes, with Garfield's lamp and Hladki's bean-bag chair being highlights of the evening. Pop songs are mimed, and provide a thread for what minimal dramatic elements there are. The reliance on concept, however, never becomes boring or hackneyed because of the relevance each scenario has to the overall situation, and the cleverness of the performances. The set and costumes provide much of the visual humour, and credit for these outlandish creations must be shared among Renee Van Halm, Shawn Kerwin, Frances Leeming and Denyse Karn. The lamp (Garfield) complains she is not appreciated, and longs for something better: "I love humans with heritage." The rug (Householder) is a spy; and the bean-bag chair (Hladki) is a channeler in the Gestalt of energies: "We could be out-of-body moguls."

At one point in the piece, the three do a kind of aerobic, living commercial for paint, which reveals their concern about the extent to which the surface of an object can at once conceal and expose society's corruption. "Persian Gulf, that's the shade I want to paint the guest room!"

Ours is a culture obsessed with the beautification of every thing as a way of increasing value. The price of this "improvement" — as accommodation prices skyrocket — is that more and more people are denied affordable and secure housing. Co-ops, not condos, should be the developer's top priority. It isn't surprising that they're not. *Up Against The Wallpaper* succeeds at exposing the greed at the foundation of a real-estate game gone mad. The Clichettes' hilarious send-up of this ugly situation makes it seem less threatening. But the final image of the three abandoned pieces of furniture huddled around a bonfire, determined to stick together and survive, issues the message that the only way out of this mess is collective action. ●

David MacLean is a Toronto video artist.

Rights on Paper

SLASH

JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG
Published by Theytus Books
Vancouver, 1985

An Interview by Victoria Freeman

JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG is an Okanagan Indian, an artist, poet, educator, and the author of *Slash*, a novel which documents, through the story of one Indian man, the political and spiritual struggle of Native people in Canada over the last thirty years. She has also written two children's books, *Enwhistekwa* (Walk in Water), and *Neekna and Chemai* (published by Theytus Books, a Native publishing company) and performed her poetry on the cassette tape *Poetry is Not a Luxury*. She has worked extensively with the Okanagan Curriculum Project to develop educational material for Native people, is an active board member of the Seventh Generation Fund, the only Native funding agency which provides non-governmental funding for indigenous groups wishing to pursue self-sufficiency projects, and is co-founder of Owl Rock spiritual camp.

Victoria Freeman: What led up to you writing *Slash*?

Jeannette Armstrong: My work for the Okanagan Curriculum Project, in which we developed Native social study units for grades eight to eleven, a chronology from the 1850s up to the present. Social studies units usually talk about dates and events, but not a personal perspective; there's no in-depth understanding. We decided we wanted works of literature to supplement the units. I had a long discussion with the consultant hired to put the project together. He had brought in some non-Native writers and had a meeting with them about the work of literature for the contemporary unit, and I got really angry at that meeting. I said if we are going to talk about an Indian perspective then we should be talking about writing by Indian people. I said I would go to the tribal chiefs or whoever I had to, to stop this project because I was not going to see our history bastardized again and some non-Indian paid to do it and getting a book out of it. I got up and walked out. After I walked out, they had a heated discussion

and the consultant said "If Jeannette wants an Indian writer to write it, she can goddamn well write it herself." When he spoke to me, I said, "Goddamn right, I'll write it!" I didn't know what commitment I was getting myself into. I'd written a couple of kids' books, but I'd never really thought about writing anything as complex as a novel. It was a challenge, but I was angry enough to go through with it.

Victoria Freeman: How did you go about writing it?

Jeannette Armstrong: I did a really good literature search, then I interviewed people. The research took about a year and a half. The more I researched, the more I discovered that there had been a lot that I had completely misunderstood myself.

I wanted to portray what had happened during the early Seventies, that really militant period of the American Indian Movement and afterwards when that changed to a more positive approach. Having come through that time period myself and having been involved to some degree in the activities, I found that the way that it was being projected by the media and by some of the historical chronicles wasn't close to the truth. I think a lot of the underlying feeling, the motivation behind what happened, has never been understood, even with our own people, and that has caused a lot of the internal fighting.

Victoria Freeman: How was that?

Jeannette Armstrong: There was a lot of misunderstanding between the elected representatives of the bands, whose thinking on the needs of our people was geared to DIA programming and the government structure, and the American Indian Movement people, whose real motivation came from the grassroots. The AIM people were talking about larger reforms than programme reforms. They were talking about changing the whole system, taking more control over our lives, changing a lot of things internally in terms of our attitudes as to who we are as Indian people. That was seen as a threat to Indian bureaucrats as well as to government. In 1975, an internal document of the RCMP said that Native people were the biggest threat to Canada since the FLQ. There was no understanding, no communication between the two groups.

Victoria Freeman: So one of your motivations in writing the book was to make each side clearer to the other?

Jeannette Armstrong: Maybe I'm a little bit biased. I know that people understand the Indian bureaucrats

— that doesn't take a lot of explanation — but I knew the other side really needed some clarification.

Victoria Freeman: At what point did you decide to tell the story from a man's point of view? What made you choose to do that?

Jeannette Armstrong: It was a hard choice for me to make. I really wanted to write it from a female point of view, but one thing that was really clear to me was that it was the young Native male who was at the forefront of that movement. There were young women involved, strong women like Anna Mae Aquash, and some played leadership roles, but they were very unique personalities, whereas with the men there were enough of them that I could generalize and do a composite.

Victoria Freeman: You end the book at the time where some Native people are trying to put Native rights into the constitution. And *Slash* ends up feeling that that is a mistake. I'd like you to comment on that now, since it seems that at least for the moment that initiative has failed.

Jeannette Armstrong: The Canadian government doesn't have any intention of protecting Native rights with the constitution; its intention is to limit Native rights and to bring these rights under its control, under its legislative jurisdiction. I think that is more dangerous to existing Indian rights than not being included in the constitution. Those rights potentially are there, as original sovereign rights, and could be affirmed or reaffirmed to meet Native concerns.

The royal proclamation of 1763 said that lands being colonized by Britain and her subjects in North America would have to be ceded by mutual consent with those tribes; the land had to be surrendered peaceably. The land which was not ceded was reserved for Native people, for them exclusively. Nowhere did it say that these people had to become British subjects or Canadians. The BNA Act did not change their status: it said that the rights that had been approved under the treaty-making process must be affirmed as a responsibility.

In the patriation of the constitution to Canada, all of those agreements that the Crown had made under the proclamation of 1763 and had affirmed in the BNA Act were to be affirmed in the constitution with respect to those rights. Canada took a strong-arm position and said "We will make the decisions as to what that Indian government legislative arm will look like. We will not speak about sovereignty. Sovereignty is a non-issue."

Victoria Freeman: I was particularly struck by a phrase in *Slash*: "We couldn't protect our rights on paper if we didn't practice our rights — it was that simple."

Jeannette Armstrong: That process of understanding, the renewal of that feeling that we are going to determine our own destinies is essential. In the past, I sometimes thought, well maybe it would be better if we all became Canadianized; maybe if we didn't have reservations, people would assimilate into the greater society and there wouldn't be those social problems. Then I began to move around to the cities. I could see



Photo: Redivo Photography Ltd.

Jeannette Armstrong.

that we would remain second-class citizens as long as our skins are brown. Maybe I could make it, maybe not, but a hundred of my relatives for sure can't. They'll end up as fodder for that machine, slaves making it run, and that's not good enough for me. I'm a first-class Indian. I am from this land. And that's what I'm going to continue to be, not a slave to this machine that cares about no one.

Victoria Freeman: How did writing *Slash* affect you?

Jeannette Armstrong: I think I had a naive perception about Indianness in relation to the rest of the world, without a lot of real strength or understanding of where I stood. It was more out of anger that I was Indian, out of resistance, rather than an affirmation that this is what I am. I was saying "I'm not you," which is different from saying "I'm me."

Victoria Freeman: Can you give me some sense of your evolution as a writer and as a Native writer particularly?

Jeannette Armstrong: I never really tried to be a writer. I always thought of myself as an artist. Later I realized that writing is a powerful tool for me as a Native person and a Native woman.

At university, we did some studies of "Native literature." It was non-Native people writing what was supposed to be Native literature and that really bummed me out. Everything I read was always skewed. There wasn't good reliable information about Indian people that I could look at and say, Yeah, that's Indian. That was partly why I wanted to write.

Victoria Freeman: Why was writing important to you as a Native woman?

Jeannette Armstrong: Men have easier access to other avenues for getting some of their understanding across — politics is one way that they express their resistance and are trying to make change. For Native women that hasn't been available, because of sexism; writing has been one of the only tools available to them.

Victoria Freeman: Do Native people use different literary forms than white people?

Jeannette Armstrong: I think so. I was asked to work on a literary anthology for Native writers, and one of the frustrations was that I was only to accept writing within a certain literary format. I found that a lot of Native writing is political oratory. That's where much of the motivation for writing comes from — the wellspring of our writing is oral and political.

I have been collecting ancient oratory, and more recently, our own oratory from this area — beautiful speeches, more like poetry. The poetry comes from trying to put words to concepts that don't exist in English.

Victoria Freeman: What about storytelling? How much crossover is there between storytelling and written literature?

Jeannette Armstrong: Some good stories that were Native storytelling stories have been put in books. But I don't think a lot has been done. There are a lot of Native storytellers across the country who are not literary-minded and not a lot of recording has been done. There was a book that came out of New Mexico called *The Man To Send Rainclouds*; it was a series

of stories of rural Native people, some contemporary, some from the past, and some based on legends — all presented in a storytelling fashion. It's one of the best pieces of storytelling literature that I've come across from a Native perspective.

Victoria Freeman: I'm interested in your perspective on Canadian literature. Are there particular writers that you admire? Do you see yourself as part of "Canadian literature?" Do you feel included?

Jeannette Armstrong: I've never really thought about being a Canadian writer; I've always thought of myself as a Native writer. But I do really admire Margaret Atwood's work. It's not just pretty writing — there's truth. That to me is what literature is: using words well to convey the deep thinking that's hard to convey in words. In terms of Native writers, Leslie Silko and N. Scott Momaday, both American, have influenced me. Maria Campbell, who has shown so much endurance, has given me the courage to write. I recently was fortunate to meet Beatrice Culleton, who wrote *In Search of April Raintree*. I really have a lot of respect for those two women, who have produced novels of real significance in terms of Native literature in Canada.

Victoria Freeman: At one point in *Slash* you talk about "the responsibility of Indian people to educate the ignorant white people about our role as human beings on this earth," and later you write: "You'll be the generation to help them white men change because you won't be filled with hate." It seems you are saying that at least some Indian people have a role as teachers to white people as well as to their own people. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Jeannette Armstrong: North American Indian people have a clear vision of true democracy and empowerment and the rights of people as part of that process — real human rights in other words, the natural rights of people to be able to live on this land and to be able to partake of the gifts of the Creator on this land. Within Indian understanding is the right of every person to be a part of decision-making, the right of every person to be empowered. That isn't being practiced in this country. The distribution of wealth, of ownership, and of skills, is totally lopsided. It's not a democracy. It's always an

"They will find more and more devious ways to steal it from our people and humiliate them with their bullshit social programs in place of what they take. While more and more of our people die off from despair. That's the only kind of settlements they are willing to give us. That's the only kind of respect they are willing to give us."

Excerpt from *Slash*

elitist group that makes the decisions, not for people, not for humanity, but for profit.

If you look at Six Nations or the Sioux people or the Haida, one of the things that is a part of their teachings is to pass on a world intact, that's healthy for the next generation. That's not going to be the case here.

Victoria Freeman: How would you describe the relationship between Native people and the land, the environment?

Jeannette Armstrong: It's one of the things that is really hard for white people to understand and perhaps it's because of the landless situation that European peoples have been forcibly put into by governments, from way back in the feudal system when nobody owned land except the king, up to now — generations and generations of no individual definite connection to the land. There is a yearning to embrace the land and to be accepted as a part of it but it's always from the outside, never the real feeling of wholeness that this is me, this is my land, and my land is as much me as my skin is.

When I look at our land I see something different than a commodity to build a house on or to use to cut trees off of or whatever. It's a living reality that's a part of us, and when our land is violated, it's like raping us, in a worse way than physically; it's like emotional, mental, spiritual rape, and it makes Indian people irrational in their actions when that happens. White people don't understand because they don't feel that connection in the same way that we do. They have to, as Russell Means says, "step into North America and become North Americans, not transplanted Europeans."

The thing that's missing from the political systems of the western world is this spirituality. I'm not referring to religion here; I mean the philosophical world view of rights of the human being, the respect for the earth and how we all fit together. It's that wholeness that needs to be learned by European peoples, by global peoples. For that reason, Indian people have to be strong enough to resist acculturation. We have to be strong enough and loving enough to give it to the world.

Victoria Freeman: I think that's why the book moved me so strongly. It really gave me a sense of how much Indian people have to offer.

Jeannette Armstrong: A lot of the thinking of the environmentalist groups and the peace groups comes from North American Indian thought, although recognition isn't given. The whole face of the world has been changed as a result of coming in contact with North American Indian people. Europeans had no such thing as true democracy, before they encountered the Six Nations. The concept of communism (communal property and ownership) came about as a result of contact and changed the face of the world. But all of it must be learned, not pieces.

When you think about that, it becomes clear what the role of Indian people has to be, regardless of the treatment, regardless of the pain and sorrow, and the things that have occurred. This world is on the brink of oblivion and if the North American Indian doesn't responsibly make changes in a positive way toward chang-



Nogeeshik and Anna Mae Aquash during the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation; AIM activism.

ing people's thinking, there won't be anything left. It can't be through confrontation, through coup or overthrow of government or whatever; it has to be through motivating and empowering people to make those changes themselves. That's the hardest part of it, the part where it's hard to be patient.

Victoria Freeman: Do you think your actual religious beliefs and practices are exportable to white people?

Jeannette Armstrong: It's the spirituality that people need. The practice of religion is only a small part of that spirituality. The thought behind many religions of the world is love and caring and being responsible as a human being to those natural laws the Creator put down for us. That is the spirituality that's available to everyone, but the practice of it in various forms and various ways belongs to certain peoples and I don't think can be interchanged or exported. You as a non-Indian person can never internally feel the things that I do when I pick up the drum and play it, and my connection with that in terms of generations and generations of consciousness that's passed on. I do think that the practice of our spirituality, the living external demonstration of it, can bring into line the spirituality of other peoples. People are just not aware of their own internal spirituality, their own internal godhead. It will take that awareness to make change happen. That's a long-term process. That work, from genera-

tion to generation, is the whole battle of creation.

Victoria Freeman: There's a wonderful passage at the end of the book. To me it's the high point of the book. That's where Slash discovers that he's necessary — that feeling that each person is irreplaceable and that the loss of one person affects everybody.

Jeannette Armstrong: For me, the internal realization of that put everything in my life into perspective and empowers me, the realization that every individual is a critical part of things and how things happen. It's like Thomas Banyacya (a Hopi medicine man) was saying: each of us can become a stone that causes ripples; the ripples move outward. It's a thought that's engendered in Haiku, in Zen thought. We shape the world, each one of us individually. Each one of us has that power. ●

Victoria Freeman is a Toronto writer and editor.

Photo: Kevin Barry McKiernan. From the book *The Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash* by Johanna Brand.

An Emergent Voice

SLASH

JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG

Published by Theytus Books

Vancouver, 1985

"Many of you are talking about losing out to the white man. You talk about losing your culture. It is not the culture that is lost. It is you."

—Old Man at religious conference

by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias

FOR THOSE STILL struggling to find themselves, for those who want to understand more the tumultuous years of Indian militancy (Red Power), there are some valuable lessons to be gained from reading *Slash*. This novel, through the wanderings of Tom Kelasket nicknamed Slash, chronicles the "Indian movement" through the late 60s and into the 70s. Here are some random excerpts—

"We went across some really poor reserves...A lot of young people on the move came from places like that...They weren't interested in the Indian aspect so much: they just needed to identify themselves as Indians and do something about it." (my emphasis)

"How you gonna fight, as you say, if you do the very stuff that you are fighting against?"

"...you in control of what you do...Them Indian ways belong to you...You don't need someone to pray for you all the time. Most of the time if you live right, you can deal with everything that comes along yourself, no matter how hard it is."

The title and the name *Slash* imply *action adventure*: however, this novel is so gently written that the reader misses any of the adventures intended and unfortunately Tom Kelasket becomes another of the world's "youngest elders" full of newly learned teachings and militant rhetoric. And he is ready to philosophize everything. He sees things his leaders and chiefs fail to. He has all the "key questions" and all the right answers. The establishment — white society — is to blame for all his and his people's confusion and troubles.

Our hero attends meeting after meeting, and conference after conference — in fact this

book is full of the meetingist bunch of Indians I have ever come across. Tom, however, does not speak at these gatherings, but always belly-aches about what went on or what didn't happen. It seems our AIMster-gamster is always on the fringe, never actively involved in any kind of the decision-making.

Supposedly he is a keen observer but his observations, between the mad bouts of alcoholism and drug abuse, are questionable. For example — "Most of the old people grumbled at how the witnesses were questioned and how the case was presented." Yes, but how were they questioned? How was the case presented? He tells us, but does not show us these things.

Dates and even the names (real or fictitious) of key leaders could have been mentioned. Such detail would not only have given the character (even though he is a fictional creation) more credibility, but it would give the reader something more to identify with — times and places in the 60s and 70s that are a very real part of our consciousness and North American history.

There are a number of things I would like to know in order to get more of a feel for this guy. For example, is *Kelasket* a traditional Okanagan name? If so what is its English translation? What does the name *Pra-cwa* translate into? The Winter Dance — what does it look and feel like besides "good"? And what are the words to Uncle Joe's song? I'd like to hear them too and feel their power. As it is, I feel cheated out of a really good story.

"Emergence literature" is a stage in the evolution of Native literature as a written art form. It is a process of learning de-

colonization and a very necessary stage in development. Usually it appears as poetry, structured by stanza, rhyme and metre; sometimes short fiction. It is characterized by the strong use of rhetoric, cliché, simile, little or no use of metaphor, and a constant and blatant definition of "self" in the colonizer's term. For example — *I am an Indian* rather than *I am Ojibway*. Better still would be *I am Anishnawbe*. (One of the most meaningful translations of *Anishnawbe* is *Good-of-the-Earth*.) "Indian superiority" and "how the white man has victimized the Indian" are common themes.

"Testimonials" are a feature common to Native gatherings. These public declarations are given to individuals compelled to share their stories, how they faltered and finally how they found meaning and purpose in the Native Way (religion). Again a lot of rhetoric, and again a necessary step in decolonization.

Slash falls somewhere between these two and is much easier to take when read aloud. I've heard Jeannette Armstrong read and although she is a gentle reader, the cadence of her Okanagan accent and her intimate understanding of the story and of Tom Kelasket make up for some of the book's failings. Either way *Slash* shows promise that although those troubled years may not seem to have accomplished much, we made the most important gain of all. *Pra-cwa* says it best — "Maybe we lost the right but what we won was our people back." ●

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias is a freelance writer and storyteller. Originally from the Cape Croker Reserve on the Bruce Peninsula, she now lives in Toronto with her three daughters.



BY
JEANNETTE
ARMSTRONG

A 'Livity' of Resistance

FIRST & LAST
AHDRI ZHINA MANDIELA
EP, Cassette, 1988

by Marva Jackson

DUB POET Ahdri Zhina Mandiela specializes in conjuring images that set limbs in motion through "mind revolution." She's taken her work from stage to classroom and now, to the recording studio.

Speaking of her work, Mandiela says, "Dub poetry crosses borders. The minute it manifests, it has imbedded in it visuals, incorporating specific tunes, rhythmic elements. Dub poetry must be written with both musical and poetic imagery."

The Toronto-based performer and director recently produced her debut poetry EP cassette *First & Last* with help from long-time friend Quammie Williams. A versatile percussionist, Williams augments and juxtaposes Mandiela's vivid dub poetry lyrics with his own musical expression.

"Quammie takes his work seriously so we make a good pair whether it's music or theatre. He loves my poetry and he's been on my back to record for several years. All I do is give him the oral atmosphere or beat and he composes," says Mandiela.

Williams uses hints of ska, jazz, Spanish melodies and lots of reggae influences. The recording is successful because of the mixture and the sensitivity of the band which includes several members of well-respected Black music group Livestock, who've previously worked with Mandiela.

The first poem, "Speshal Rikwes," written in what Mandiela calls "nation language," is the title piece from her book published in 1985 through Sister Vision Press, Toronto. Upbeat reggae rhythms are highlighted by Tony Campbell's steady, understated guitar style and trumpet player Sarah McElcheran's



Ahdri Zhina Mandiela.

laid-back sound. The party atmosphere is complete with four-part harmony backup vocals by Djanet Sears, Marcia Miller, Lisa Cogdill, and Sherie — a joyously incongruous backdrop for Mandiela's explosive dissertation about neo-colonization of the "Third World" and the alienation of Native North Americans. Mandiela is a Caribbean-Canadian whose political attitude is rooted in personal experience. Raised as "an inner city kid" in Kingston, Jamaica, she moved to Toronto with her family at age 15. Feelings of alienation developed for Mandiela from "a sense of losing myself when I left Jamaica,"

prompting the start of her writing career four years later. In 1980 she gave her first poetry performance at a York University cultural show. Since that time Mandiela's work acknowledges few boundaries enveloping performance, poetry, and a basic philosophy rooted in strong family ties and rastafari. "I live as rastafari. I identify as rastafari. It's a 'livity' of resistance. A lot of people think of it as religion, but it isn't. It's Black con-

African vibrations, blues-tinged notes from saxophone player Armando Castagnoli, and Campbell's latin-flavoured tunes on acoustic guitar. Williams also plays keyboards with John Whynot and Bernie Pitters producing a bone-chilling quality. Mandiela wrote "In South Africa Today" at the end of 1985, honouring South African writer Alex La Guma who died while living in exile in Havana, Cuba. "The ANC had a memorial to him at Hart House University of Toronto. People were seated, almost all of them over 50—his peers. I walked in, I was 27 at the time, and I was nervous. All these people were working in the struggle for decades...what struck me at the time was that for me the struggle was so new. South Africa within my consciousness was only a few years old. Why I felt nervous was, you know...how can I get up in front of a group of people and pretend I know...Why they invited me was because of my work. They saw me as an important tool in the struggle. And I knew from then that I had to be that tool and be an efficient tool."

With plans to record a full-length album called *Barefoot & Black* this year, Mandiela still considers poetry to be her art and theatre to be her craft. She's currently directing *Please Do Not Adjust Your Set* by playwright Diana Braithwaite.

"That for me is a truly Black Canadian experience. All Black cast, all Black premise, Blacks taking over the media. Yet it appeals to any audience regardless of ethnic background or age."

Ahdri Zhina Mandiela is concerned with the absence of positive images of "Blacks, Blackness, and Black cultures" within Canadian society. She is one of several who are actively changing negative stereotypes by taking her art to the core, to school systems.

First & Last is one more stepping stone to sending Mandiela's messages even further. ●

Marva Jackson is a freelance writer who hosts a weekly radio show on CKLN 88.1 FM.

Fragmentation Device

ELEPHANT DREAMS
DIRECTED BY
MARTHA DAVIS
17 minutes, 1987
Distributed by the C.F.M.D.C.

by Peter Laurie

IF ANYTHING could be called truly postmodern in an age when everything is being called postmodern, it might be that critical and ironic engagement with narrative itself, with the hegemony of "one damned thing after another." But stories must be told, and in some recent films the negotiation between what is traditionally a linear filmic and narrative language, and the need to undermine this tradition, becomes at once a formal device and a political opening.

One such film is *Elephant Dreams* by Toronto independent filmmaker and photographer Martha Davis.

The starting point of *Elephant Dreams* is the fable of the five blind men and the elephant, in which each constructs a different whole from a fragment: a tree from the elephant's leg, and so on. In Davis' re-reading, similar associations are made, but the fable is teased into a more oblique and suggestive configuration in which fragmentation itself becomes an organizing principle and blindness a metaphor for not-knowing.

Five different storytellers tell five different stories, none of which concerns elephants. Instead each story is a recollection of past experience, lessons learned: each is a fable. Otherwise, the narratives are completely unrelated, and in an act of deadpan formalism, one clip follows another with metronomic insistence: Next!

But with equal punctuality, the seamlessness of narrative and filmic closure erupts as the screen goes blank and is surpassed by a steady parade of

images — grainy footage of elephants, dreamlike fragments — that nuzzle and play off each story in the process of its telling.

The resulting bricolage is rich and anarchic, provoking a complex set of associative links between the text and its sub/versions. One storyteller's account of the time he wrestled with an anaconda is made to join a chain of allusions (fire-hose, tug-of-war match) that suggest the elephant's trunk; its ear is prefigured by another storyteller dreamily waving a large fan as she talks.

In the original fable, the five

blind men were linked by the hard fact of their proximity to *elephas maximus*. Davis' storytellers are linked by their unwitting (blind) participation in the deconstruction of their own stories. And the subject of *Elephant Dreams* is no singular mammal, but a network of representations of elephants, from Babar to Bangkok, whose existence is contingent on the audience's wilful misreading of the narrative form.

The dialectical relationship between set formal strategies and contingency is a familiar element in Davis' work, most recently in *PATH* (1987), a "planned movie," or *Sink or Swim*, a 1987 exhibit of double-exposure photographs at London's McIntosh Gallery. The latter was constructed by shooting a roll of film, rewinding and shooting again, and involves the artist's memory working to associate the two series of shots against a strong element of chance.

A similar reliance on formal strategy underpins *Elephant Dreams*, but has been expanded in order to question the narrative form itself. By planting a

number of oblique references in each narrative that only make sense in relation to the others, Davis provokes a series of disruptions in the tidy logic of linear time. The resulting commotion forces the narrative to speak a new syntax: that of memory, dream association, re/collection.

In a strange way *Elephant Dreams* suffers from its own inviolable sense of tidiness. Its strategy is that of the orderly disruption, the well-timed intrusions: to watch it is to wish that Davis would muss up the medium a little more, to play more dangerously with the authority of the narrative form.

Still, there's a valuable political opening in the way that *Elephant Dreams* incites a plurality of possible readings, and in doing so includes the audience in the narrative act. ●

Peter Laurie is a Toronto-based freelance writer and a graduate student at York University.



Sully, a storyteller in Martha Davis' *Elephant Dreams*.

Still courtesy of the filmmaker

IN MEMORIAM

AN ARTIST WHO (with his friends)
OVERHAULED THE FUNCTIONS
OF CREATIVITY

BUT
REFUSED TO
TAKE ART SERIOUSLY

COUVRE-CHEF(S) D'OEUVRES

"You know, Duchamp used to say in his later years, 'What do you mean I'm famous — my greengrocer doesn't know who I am.' I used to say that I am quite the opposite of Duchamp — only my greengrocer knows who I am. Duchamp added that, 'We must abolish the idea of judgement.' — I have worked it out further, I think we must abolish the idea of admiration."

— ROBERT FILLIOU

ROBERT FILLIOU 1926 - 1987

by Clive Robertson

Robert Filliou, age 61, died last December of resumed cancer in France while secluded in a Zen monastery with Marianne Staffeldt, his long-time mentor, co-worker, and wife.

It is difficult for artists to explain to other artists, let alone to a broader audience, why some artists' lives have been more influential and inspirational than others. It is also difficult, I must admit, to adequately contextualize Filliou's work into the current cultural and political discourse and reality.

Artists of my own generation who have a history of political activism find it very hard to withstand economic compromises — we want a share of the spoils generated by the very privileges and oppressions we are committed to opposing. Quite sensibly, we know that poverty eats away at our imagination, not to mention our innocence, etc.

Filliou in his late thirties made a different choice. He chose to live away from cultural centres, not only because it was cheaper, but because he was convinced that the concept of the avant-garde was obsolete. Filliou and Staffeldt chose a type of artistic freedom that is only possible with extreme wealth or poverty. As a result, being poor, Filliou used this perspective to extricate himself from the familiar intellectual middle-class dilemma,

and against all wisdoms, had fun doing it.

Filliou had learned that Poincaré who died in 1912, was the last research mathematician to have known all the mathematics of his time. From this Filliou suggested what is true for science is probably also true for art — that there is no longer any one person who can tell us what is going on. Inspired by this and his contacts with other artists around the world, he proposed that a participatory network had replaced the concept of the avant-garde and that therefore there could be no legitimate claims for the status of 'art capital' for any one city or cities. It was this simple but radical proposition that inspired and encouraged the formation of networks of artist-controlled spaces in many countries, including Canada. Filliou didn't invent the idea, as it was his theory that such developments occur simultaneously in many different places. He did however provide one of its first articulations by starting a small centre for artistic research in Villefranche-sur-mer, a small town in Southern France with fellow artists George Brecht, Marianne Staffeldt (who carried out a major study in 1966 on the sexual lives of artists), and Donna Jo-Jones. Their centre was opened in 1965 under the name, La Cedille Qui Sourit. It lasted for three years and was a prototype regionally-based,

multidisciplinary artist-run space.

Robert Filliou, like his contemporary and close friend the late Joseph Beuys, has works that occupy serious space in museums. But because Filliou is less famous than Beuys as an object maker and it is more difficult to separate his work from his lived experiences and ideas he will not be so easily remembered.

Filliou's effect on artists that had access to his work and enthusiasm was fundamental, even for those (like myself) who couldn't quite figure out where this utopian-socialist, zen clown fit into the sombre cultural struggles and conservative pendulum of the mid-Seventies. Robert Filliou was an 'action poet,' a former professional economist and participant in the Sixties' international performance/artist/publishing group, Fluxus.

Filliou's major accomplishment in collaborating with George Brecht and other Fluxus artists, was his commitment to humour and inquiry as the least expensive and most radical tools available to artists.

Having just finished Umberto Eco's historical novel, *The Name of the Rose*, I find some pointers that perhaps give immediate clues to Robert Filliou's life. The novel, a 14th-century detective story set in an Italian

The Frozen Exhibition, 1972. Multiple version of Galerie Legitime: Cuvre chef(s) d'oeuvres, Filliou's gallery-in-a-cap. Pun meaning, "it covers up a masterpiece, that is it covers up the brain, or, it covers up works. So in my cap I would be carrying small works of art. In Paris I would walk through the streets and a typical dialogue might be: 'Are you interested in art, monsieur or madame?' And if they say yes, I would say: 'Well you know I have a gallery.' And if they expressed some interest I would say here it is. And then we would look at the works."



Photo: David Hargrave

Benedictine abbey that housed a well-guarded and exhaustive library of books, documents a time when power struggles between the pope, the state, and the 'independent' monasteries were focused on heresies, inquisitions, and allegiances. Certain radical monastic orders were invoking revolutionary movements based upon poverty, upsetting both imperial and papal material excesses. Towards the end of the novel we are told that it is not violent revolution which threatens Christendom, but laughter as expounded in a lost volume of Aristotle's, *Poetics*. As the villain-abbot admits to the monk-hero-detective: "...law is imposed by fear, whose true name is fear of God. This book could strike the Luciferine spark that would set a new fire to the whole world, and laughter would be defined as the new art unknown even to Prometheus, for cancelling fear ... And from this book there could be born the new destructive aim to destroy death through redemption from fear. And what would we be, we sinful creatures, without fear, perhaps the most foresighted, the most loving of divine gifts?"

Robert Filliou and Joseph Beuys were two of many artists from the same generation who understood and attempted to illustrate that if we are serious about social change, justice and equality, then we have to work on ways to change our entire conceptual heritage. And while artists improve matters by using their work and cultural practice to chip away at the

Research, I proposed, is not

the privilege of people who know;

on the contrary, it is the domain

of people who do not know.

Everytime we turn our attention

to something that we do not know,

we are doing research.

institutions of materialism, racism, sexism, and imperialism, we would be foolish to assume that the combined efforts of the 20th century revolutionary movements have done more than barely expose what it will take to create a lasting, just, free, and classless society.

Art is a form of organized leisure. Filliou proposed that "art is good-for-nothing: that is the exchange of the good-for-nothing in one, with the good-for-nothing in another. Good-for-nothing in the sense that for an artist to be good-for-nothing he/she has to be good at everything. Art, as creation, is easy in the same sense as being god is easy. God is your perfect good-for-nothing. What is it that the artist brings to society? What good?

He/she brings a way of life, an art of living. They should at any rate. What should they receive in return? I think the standard national wage for any industrial worker. I think that many artists would agree, that all we need, is to be rich enough to live like the poor." (1967)

Filliou proposed simple and frequently playful strategies, which in anybody's pragmatic books would be dismissed as being utopian. Filliou responded by saying everything has become utopia, including what intellectually seems so easy to achieve, i.e. democracy or socialism. As an artist and a poet he would theorize and put into practice progressive strategies on both a personal and a larger community scale. For example, Filliou proposed that what works is BUILT-IN rather than BUILT-UPON and he pointed to functional technologies that exist in the natural world: the ability to fly, radar, etc. He goes on to say that what is not built-in is the ability to live with oneself and others. "I would propose this as a working definition of human genius: the ability to live with oneself and others in harmony and peace. As this built-in quality exists in very few of us, and in all of us only a brief time. Whole sciences have been built to deal with this: these very sciences of the mind put in doubt our very motives to come out of this bad trend."

One of Filliou's early proposals to secure lasting peace in Europe was to have nations exchange their war memorials.

Robert Filliou was born in 1926 in the French village of Sauve. In Ales ("the Red Town") he joined the communist-led underground (Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français) in 1943. While in Ales he joined the Communist Party and finished the war as a second-lieutenant in the rebuilt French Army, reportedly refusing the Legion of Honour. ("I gave up communism after Tito was ex-communicated from the Cominform.")

He emigrated to America to be reunited with his father who he first met at the age of 20. Living in Los Angeles, Filliou studied Economics at UCLA and gained dual citizenship. He then worked for the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency until March 1954, when he "dropped out" and lived successively in Egypt, Spain, and Copenhagen where he met Marianne Staffeldt.

In 1967 Filliou began compiling a book that was finally published by Kasper König in 1970 under the title: *Lehren Und Lernen als Auf-fuehrungskuenste (Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts)*. This book, with contributions from Dorothy Iannone, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Dieter Rot, Benjamin Patterson, George Brecht, Filliou's daughter Marcelle, and others, attempted to set out challenges both for artists and educators. When the political events of 1968 occurred, Filliou wrote: "I feel no need to change or add to my text. The student's unrest was already mine, their revolutionary, my revolution: 'A refusal to be colonized culturally by a self-styled race of specialists in painting, sculpture, poetry, music, etc.'"

Filliou spent his working life as an artist doing research; "research is not the privilege of those who know, on the contrary it is the domain of those who do not know. Every time we turn our attention to something we don't know, we are doing research."

Filliou carried out many 'research' projects which brought together into his daily work his training (as an economist), and his immense backlog of lived experience. As he said: "I live from and I work for my friends." (And it was not accidental that with the watchful eye of his many friends, Filliou was able to put the last thirty-odd years of his life to good use.)

Filliou coined many words, phrases

Il y a toujours quelqu'un qui fait fortune
quelqu'un qui fait...

BANQUEROUTE

(nous en particulier)

La Cédille qui Sourit tourne encore la
page, et puisque...

La Fête est Permanente

annonce la réalisation prochaine de

THE ETERNAL NETWORK

manifestations, meanderings,
méditations, microcosms, macrocosms,
mixtures, meanings...

La Cédille qui Sourit, 12, Rue de May, Villefranche-s-Mer (a-m)

Poster announcing The Eternal Network, March 1968
(George Brecht and Robert Filliou). "There is always
someone making money, someone going broke (us in par-
ticular)..."

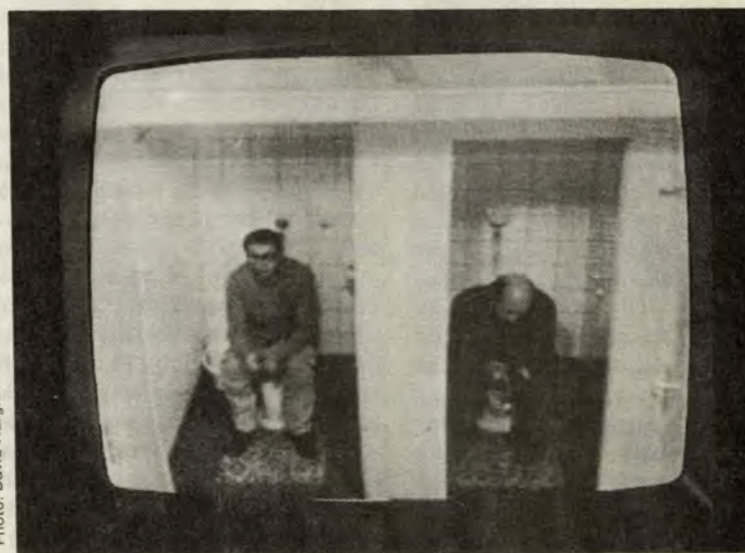


Photo: David Hargrave

What's Happening?, an event/performance by Robert Filliou and
Emmett Williams. 16mm. Fluxfilm, 1967.



Photo: David Hargrave

Artist-in-residence,
Arton's, Calgary, 1977.

VERS UN "VILLEFRANCHE DES ARTS"?

Le passant qui emprunte la
pittoresque rue de May, à Ville-
franche, est attiré par une ardoise
suspendue à la porte d'un local.
En s'approchant, il peut lire ins-
crite à la craie: « La cédille qui
sourit ».

Si la curiosité le pousse à fran-
chir le seuil de cette porte, il se
trouve en présence d'un véritable
atelier où fourmillent les objets
les plus divers.

Cet atelier est le domaine de
deux artistes renommés: Robert
Filliou et George Brecht. En

Malgré le caractère insolite qui
l'entoure, le visiteur, même non
averti, prend plaisir à compiler
les livres, se faire expliquer la
nature des différents objets, etc.
En bref, passe une heure agréable
en compagnie de deux équipiers
d'artistes authentiques dont la
simplicité est signe garant de
talent.

Robert Filliou va pouvoir réali-
ser ses rêves. Déjà, sa présence
à Villefranche est un premier pas
vers la création d'une ville des
arts.

est possible et nous espérons bien
arriver à un tel résultat. En se
qui concerne notre avenir, nous
avons trouvé dans cette rue de
May et dans cette si accueillante
ville l'endroit rêvé pour travail-
ler. Je regrette simplement que
mes occupations, expositions,
conférences, etc., m'éloignent aussi
souvent de ce « coin des arti-
stes ». Nous n'avons pas la pré-
tention de nous imposer, mais
nous souhaitons faire de Ville-
franche une sorte de ville des
arts.



Photo: Henry Durand

"La Cédille qui
sourit" (1966) L.
to R.: Marianne
Staffeldt, Robert
Filliou, George
Brecht, Donna Jo-
Jones — a news-
paper photo
reproduced in
Games at the
Cédilla.

and propositions—one of which was substituting the term 'art' with the term 'Permanent Creation.' He said, "I use this word frequently rather than using the word art, because as I practice art as creativeness, and often I have defined anti-art as the diffusion of the works coming out of that creativeness, and non-art as being creative without caring whether one's works are diffused or not."

With his architect/urbanist friend, Joachim Pfeifer, Filliou built various fullscale models of what he described as a Permanent Creation centre which they called the Poipoidrome (named after the greeting custom of an Afri-

can tribe in which one member begins to ask a series of uninterrupted questions until the other replies "poipoi"). So, as Filliou described it, this Permanent Creation centre was to be based on "fun, humour, depaysement, and good will and participation." Filliou was opposed to the "deadweights" of admiration and leadership. The second of three of his propositions for 'Poetical Economy: Towards a new Standard of Value' was an 'Hommage aux Rates' (homage to failures). The third was 'Célébration de l'Esprit d'Escalier' ('staircase wit': as soon as you leave a place where you were in conversation, you

realize clearly what you should have said or done, but somehow didn't). "Wit should make us smile, or laugh. Feeling too strongly that what we should have said is more important than what we actually did say, can only lead to guilt, or impotence, or both."

I began corresponding with Filliou in 1972 (in 1973 he sent me an erotic 8mm film *Do-it-yourself* for the artist television series, 'A Conceptographic Reading,' but it was not until 1977 that we finally met when he came to do an artist-in-residency at Arton's, Calgary (and thereafter at the Western Front, Vancouver). Marcella Bienvenue and I helped Filliou put together a video version of his book *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, which he titled, *Porta Filliou*.

In his notebook format for *Teaching and Learning* — Filliou had written:

"Why do artists specialize? Problem of time of course. Problem of limits of everyone of interests and aptitudes. But also on the part of the artist, desire to maintain the image he (or she) has created, to impose it fully, and finally to make a living out of it. That is to say, after creating a big enough racket so that there is a demand for his (or her) work to supply it. Then specialization in art would seem to lead to living under the laws of the marketplace. No value judgment there. The artist, working alone, putting his (or her, or their) brains against the whole world is so vulnerable. This is also why artists dislike each other. Everyone feels that any other attitude than his (or hers) undermines his (or her) status — eventually his (or her) income. There follows self-advertising and door-to-door salesmanship...I don't feel a conflict between old art and modern art. We have been creating for such a short time.

Concept of artistic time: Everything happens, and it happens at the same time.

Concept of emotional time: The time it takes to assimilate any one of 'life's lessons.'

Concept of intuitive time: Time runs backwards. What we think of as our future is past. We have left forever what we consider our goal. All life may be the flickering of the light from a dead planet." ►

What is worth remembering about Filliou and a number of his closest contemporaries is that many of them had other careers before they began any artistic activity. Filliou was 37 before he started as a playwright, action poet, assembler, and self-described "bum."

The first work I remember seeing of Filliou's was the script for a performance piece (or that's the way I read it) titled: *Robert Filliou's Whispered Art History*, (this work was registered on twelve-3 minute records for a jukebox, by Knud Pedersen, Copenhagen, 1963). Filliou suggests in his fictionalized art history that art began on the 17th of January, (his own birthday) one million years ago. Each of twelve stanzas covers a period of time and a different month noting the everyday discoveries that might have happened one million years ago, one hundred thousand years ago, ten thousand years ago, one thousand years ago, five hundred years ago, etc.

(First stanza)
Whispered:

It all started a 17th of January, one million years ago.
a man took a dry sponge and dropped it into a bucket of water.
who that man was is not important.
he is dead, but art is alive.
I mean, let's keep names out of this.
as I was saying, at about 10 o'clock,
a 17th of January, one million years ago,
a man sat alone by the side of a running stream.
he thought to himself:
where do streams run and why?
meaning why do they run.
or why do they run where they run.
that sort of thing.
personally, once I observed a baker at work.
then a blacksmith and a shoemaker.
at work.
and I noticed that the use of water was essential to their work.
but perhaps what I have noticed is not important.
Normal voice:
anyway the 17th goes into the 18th
then the 19th then the 20th
the 21st, the 22nd, the 23rd, the 24th,
the 25th, the 26th, the 27th,
the 28th, the 29th, the 30th, the 31st.
of January.
thus time goes by.



Ten years later, Filliou took this celebration of the birthday of art (1,000,010 A.A. After Art) to Aachen and involved the town, in what now would be called a community art project. The aim was to launch: "a worldwide school vacation and a paid holiday for all workers of the world, all-around festivities and spontaneous funmaking." Aachen complied with marching bands, feasts, birthday cakes, and a one-day holiday.

Being an economist, Filliou spent many years working on what he called the 'Principles of Poetic Economy' which he dedicated to the French 19th-century philosopher and utopian, Charles Fourier. Filliou believed that Fourier, "before Marx wrote and before Freud was born, succeeded in reconciling both. Fourier in particular is a precursor of many of the liberation movements that we now see. He is the one who said, "When man runs out of imagination, it's time to turn the world over to women and children." He thought he had discovered the secret of harmony. While I consider the movement for the liberation of women the most important thing that is happening, I must say, I must accept the fact that I have been part of the problem for all the women I have known. The way I present myself is former phallocrat *minable* — former phallocratic trash."

Filliou presented his Permanent Creation as a practice by calling it "work as play" and "art as thought," "because I consider myself an entertainer of thoughts with artworks as exchange of foodstuffs."

Filliou's artistic propositions are much more than an artist's conceptual gags or one-liners. He understood in his 'Principles of Poetic Economy' that a major mutation began with the division of labour, "and that if you come to look at it in a certain way the value of anything is smaller or greater according to whether it increases the division of labour or not." He understood that Marx failed, not in what he said or wrote, but because of the schisms surrounding his acceptance and institutionalization, over which Marx had little control. "If Marx had been a poet instead of a philosopher, sociologist and economist nobody would have made a religion out of Marx and perhaps we could've got from what he said enough elements for a true transformation of society."

Filliou worked on a series of analogues he called the 'Principle of Equivalence' that were objects well-made, badly-made or not made. He developed a progression of five elements that was 40 feet long. He calculated that a progression of 100 elements would have been 10 (power 21) light years. He claimed that this illustrated what he called, 'The Permanent Creation of the Universe' and over 15 years he worked on parallel projects, 'Research on the Origin,' 'Research on Pre-Biology.'

There isn't space to even list Filliou's major endeavours. He obviously remained optimistic that artistic models of thinking and working — "I insist on the term 'working' because it's a practice: we are a people that practice what we speak about" — remained a source of revolutionary potential. ●

Clive Robertson

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GAY BARRIERS games

NEWS & VIEWS FROM THE WEST

by Sara Diamond

Integral to gay and lesbian identity post-Stonewall has been the emergence of strong cultural institutions. These include the commercial variants of bars and baths; rights and social organizations; and cultural expressions such as newspapers, films, videos, literature, and erotica. That these institutions are currently in crisis signifies the extreme pressure felt within the gay and lesbian communities. AIDS and the swing to the new right have combined to form a period of reaction against sexual/social change and towards the repression of non-heterosexual, non-nuclear alternatives. Such pressure is global, but regions such as British Columbia with its right-wing and fundamentalist leadership express an intense reaction against gay and lesbian lifestyles. The heightening of censorship occurs at a time when sexual activity per se becomes proscribed and when physical repression from the state (in the form of quarantine legislation) and by extremists is on the rise. Fragmentation in the face of these conditions is not surprising.

The Health Status Amendment Act (Bill 34) is a sweeping law which permits the quarantine of a person with a communicable disease (read AIDS) or of an individual who tests seropositive and thus potentially has AIDS. It annuls patient-doctor confidentiality by allowing medical-health officers, or

any other person delegated by Cabinet, to have access to all medical records. Cabinet can also define which "person or classes of persons" might be prone to particular diseases and order them quarantined. Quarantine cannot be refused once ordered and runs the gamut from "isolation" (house arrest), to modified quarantine, to full quarantine (concentration camps). Gay men are certainly vulnerable under the law, although the word on the street is that it will first be tested against prostitutes.

The quarantine law is doubly dangerous because there is no human rights legislation for lesbians and gay men in the province. While the human rights code that was abolished with "restraint" in 1983 had not enshrined such rights, a series of test cases had applied general terms within the code to gay and lesbian concerns. At this time, there are neither rights nor precedents which offer protection to gay people. Health is a provincial jurisdiction, and a Supreme Court challenge of the legislation on Charter grounds would be complex (especially given the lack of rights federally). It is also difficult to imagine given that the B.C. organization which usually launches such challenges, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, has been working on the side of the law.

At a time when communications are of the utmost importance, *ANGLES*

Magazine, Vancouver's chatty and comprehensive newspaper, may fold. Its problems stem in part from burn-out, for like most such efforts it is run by dedicated individuals who make sacrifices for the cause. This condition is accompanied by economic hardship brought about by backlash from the gay male and to some extent the lesbian community. *ANGLES* has insisted on publishing articles that are pro-sex and images that celebrate gay male and lesbian pleasure.

ANGLES printed an advertisement which represented two men about to engage in sex, suggesting that it was possible to practice safe sex and still be sexually adventurous and even non-monogamous. Then there was the publication of Von Gleodon's photos of youthful males and Stan Persky's interview with Scott O'Hara, a gay porn star. But the real clincher was the Lesbian Week poster. The poster showed numerous frames of lesbian sexual activity, both partner and solo. It was a visual attempt to meet varying tastes and practices in the lesbian community.

Particularly astounding was the violent reaction from the gay male bar-owners who dumped copies of the issue into the garbage or on the street. Some members of the lesbian community unfortunately designated the poster as pornography, no doubt because the images were explicit. Lesbi-

an celebrity Ferron pulled her interview from *ANGLES*, also terming the magazine pornographic. Gay male club-owners withdrew all advertising in response to the poster. (Just think what will happen to *Fuse* once this column is published.) As one *ANGLES* editor noted, this was a blatant attempt to use advertising bucks to impact editorial policy. Alas, what is signified is not only the depth of misogyny within the gay male community toward women's bodies and desire. The refusal of the community to stand up for its sexuality in the face of right-wing mass media attacks is far more ominous.

To add to *ANGLES'* woes, a new low-key commercially oriented gay paper hit the stands in mid-1987. Called *Q* it centred on personalities, entertainment themes and soft news. As well, a lesbian paper is in the works—it will fill a gap, and represents the emergence of an autonomous lesbian presence, a positive step after years of submergence in the feminist community. However, it should not arise through the death of *ANGLES*, a publication which has reached into varying layers of the community with a commitment to activism and a pro-feminist perspective.

The combination of non-recognition under human rights legislation, government censorship harassment (Customs), the new quarantine law, and accompanying media hysteria endorses overt violence against gay and lesbian targets. On December 9th, 1987, a bomb went off in the stairwell of Little Sisters Bookstore. There were customers present as well as staff upstairs in the store. Vancouver police informed the owners that had anyone been present in the stairwell they would have been blown to bits. Since the bombing a litany of threats have been made against gay clubs. The lesbian bar, The Lotus; gay bars Numbers, Celebrities and Buddies; the owner of the building where AIDS Vancouver is housed have all been victims. An undetonated but live bomb was recently discovered in the vicinity of Little Sisters and a number of bars. The perpetrator of the Little Sisters bombing called the *Vancouver Sun* with the following words, "The bomb in the fag store was just a fucking warning. Next time we're going to finish the job." On February 7, Little

Sisters was bombed a second time. There was substantial damage done to the back area of the building, people in the restaurant were forced to vacate, and the owner narrowly missed being hit by the explosion. At the same time, gay and lesbian organizations in Vancouver report an increase in assaults against their members.

To add to this grisly picture, the B.C. Classifications Branch has focused on gay male tapes in its process of classification and censorship. Many have been removed from the shelf with eager-to-please commercial distributors going the mile and pulling works that they think might remotely be censored. Only several stores in the gay area of the West End still carry a selection of gay male pornography. It's amazing to walk through the over-18 section and see tape after tape of heterosexual anal sex when there is no longer any sign of the homosexual variant. Six months ago a wide selection of gay male erotica was available in B.C.

How will the situation in B.C. turn around? One factor could be the Gay Games of 1990. Now athletics is not something that usually gets my knickers in a knot. But in the context of the attacks on gay and lesbian rights and presence, a politically well-handled Gay Olympics could reverse some of the current hysteria. The Games will bring together gay and lesbian athletes from around the world to compete in team and individual sports. Accompanying the games will be a high-level cultural presentation: main stage performances, film and video festivals, art exhibitions, and the unmistakable reality of thousands of athletes and spectators—Vancouver will be overrun by homosexuality. No wonder right-wing Vancouver alderpeople such as Ralph Caravetti are hard at work trying to block the event.

The Games already have a healthy base. The organizing committee includes prestigious feminists and well-known Canadian athletes. While originally planning to include a small Social Credit presence on the board,

the organizers wisely decided instead to have a politically committed pro-gay and lesbian directorship and to lobby for public support and funding without jeopardizing political control. An equally important decision was the endorsement of the worldwide sports boycott of South Africa. After considerable discussion the games issued the following statement:

The boycott is South Africa's chosen weapon of struggle. We will not counterpose our ideas of non-competitive international sports cooperation to the living movement which has been built by Blacks. The gay games is committed to fighting racism in sports...

We believe our support of the boycott to be a stand in favour of the goals of equality between races, for real cooperation, for demonstrated solidarity between peoples. We believe that it will be understood in those terms by South African gays and lesbians, both Black and white, who share these goals..."

This statement will permit the presence of gay athletes from states critical of South Africa and people of principle who would otherwise have boycotted the Games. The Games will reverse the climate of fear in the community; it will challenge those who equate gayness and lesbianism with disease by providing a positive framework in which to perceive gay and lesbian people while by sheer weight of numbers forcing many Vancouverites to come to terms with their prejudice.

The gay and lesbian communities in British Columbia face a serious crisis. Positive signposts are the increased collaboration between gays and lesbians in their united opposition to the quarantine law, an opposition that will continue now that the law is enacted. While some retreat in the face of growing pressure, many in the community have chosen to persevere, retreating neither in the insistence of their desire nor in their efforts to organize. ●

Sara Diamond

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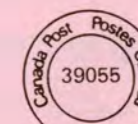
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