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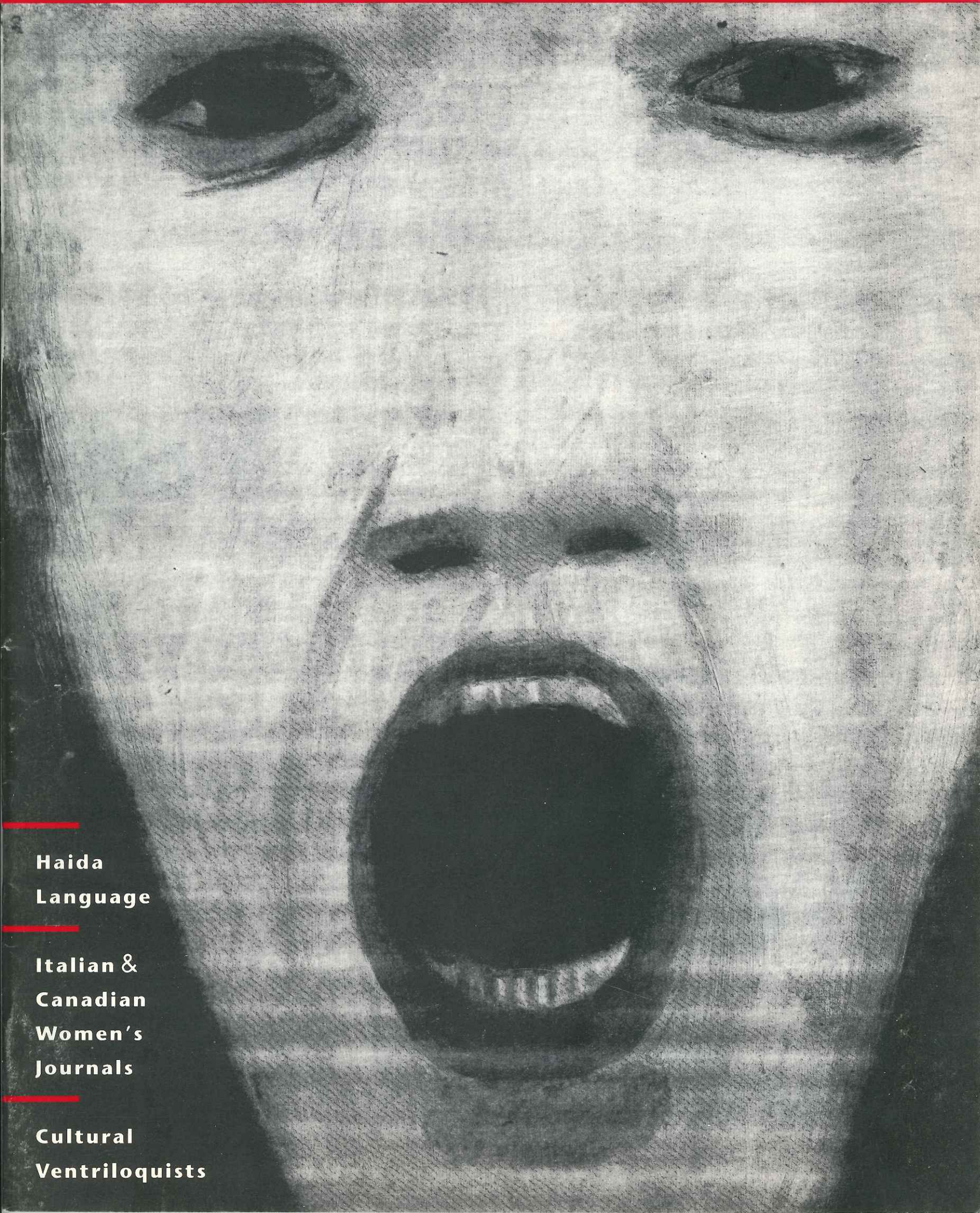
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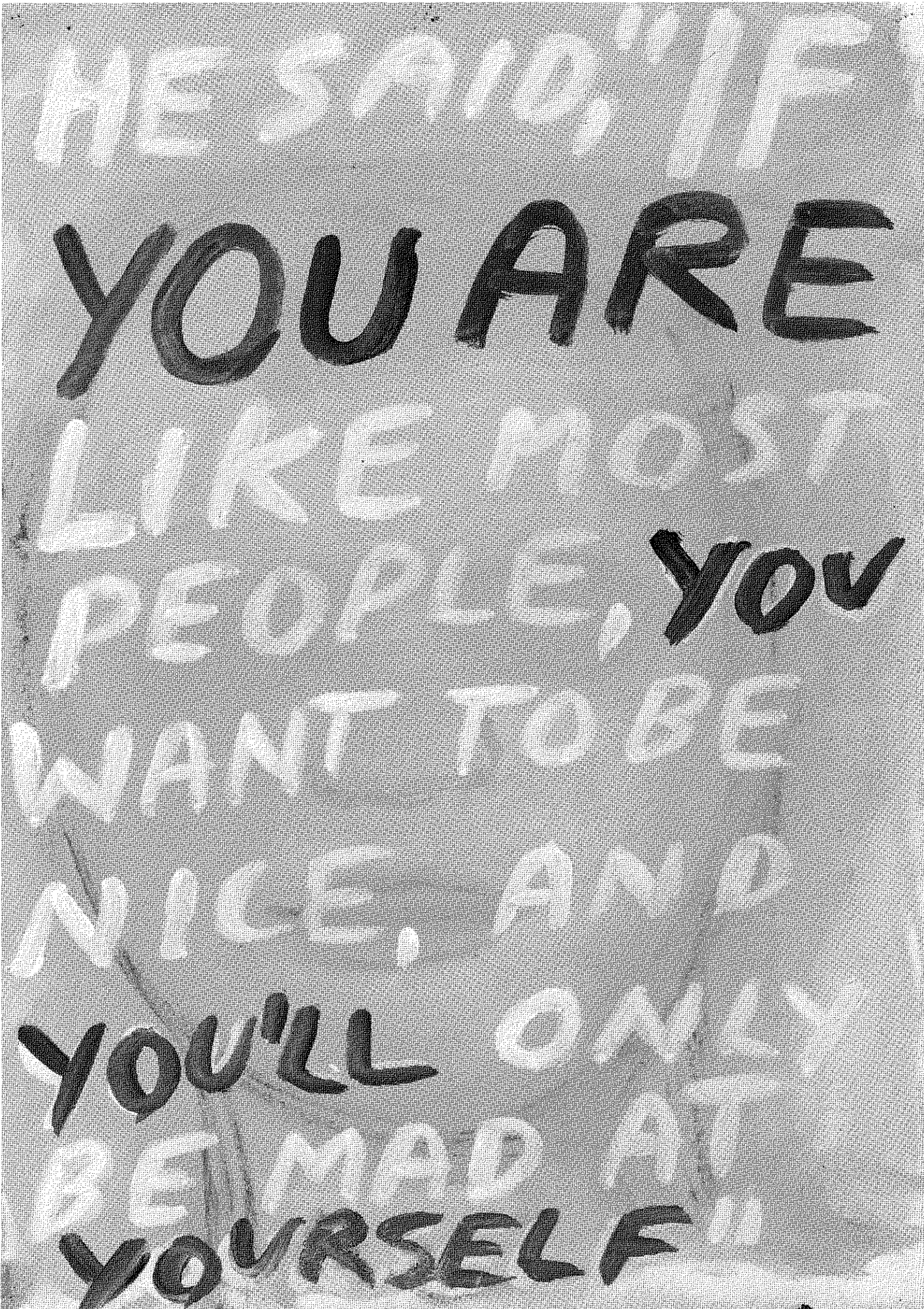
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border/lines fall 1989





John Grierson at the NFB  
— NFB photo

Dear Editors:

In my opinion, the only completely true observation made by Joyce Nelson in her article, "Grierson and Hollywood's Canada" (Fall, 1988, #13), is "that Grierson was far more politically complex than his legend as a left-wing populist would suggest." The extent to which she fails to understand this complexity or to comprehend the real substance of his legend is beyond the scope of this letter. Her book *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend*, from which her article is taken, deserves a thorough debunking by patient scholarship which, I predict, it will receive in due course.

What follows is a brief and impatient reaction to a chapter which wrongly accuses Grierson of playing a principal role in the colonization by Hollywood of the Canadian film business.

Joyce Nelson has written about this subject before with brilliance: her article "Losing it in the Lobby," published in *This Magazine* some time ago, is perhaps the best summary to date of the failure of successive cabinet ministers, from C.D. Howe to Francis Fox, to enact film policy legislation worthy of this country. It details the embarrassingly spineless performance of Canadian officials who have consistently caved in to pressures from the Hollywood lobby.

I think it amazing that someone as well-informed about this story as Nelson would now find Grierson the main culprit responsible for inspiring more than three decades of shoddy performance. She bases her argument largely on the text of a speech by Grierson, "A Film Policy for Canada," published in *Canadian Affairs* (Vol. 1, No. 11, June 15, 1944), from which she quotes two paragraphs. Taken out of context, this quotation seems to support her thesis. The complete text, however, tells a very different story.

Grierson was advising a country with limited resources against public financing of a "Hollywood North," and urging the

continued public support for the use of film in "this bright new field of national information and civic interest" in which Canada could lead the world. On both counts he has proved to be a wise prophet.

First: The persistent longing in some quarters for a Hollywood North, and the branch plant mentality which dreams of it, has led to the waste of time, talent and millions of tax dollars in the production of third rate and mostly undistributable ("unwatchable") movies. An examination of the abuse of the tax shelter in the late 70s and the concurrent rip-off of the CFMDC by the dealmakers would shed light on who the real colonizers were. (Some people with big show biz ambitions who wanted no part of this sham set up shop in Hollywood where they could at least operate without hypocrisy, for example, John Kemeny, Norman Jewison, Ted Kotcheff, Phillip Borsos. Their decision seems to accord with Grierson's "other possibilities for the development of Canadian film production?... far more practical and possible than this dream of a Canadian Hollywood.")

Second: In other spheres — documentary, animation, TV journalism — Canada would become a world leader, as Grierson predicted. In spite of faltering support from the government, it continues to be.

What about good Canadian features? At the time Grierson was advising the government to stay out of "show biz," the country was at war: there were clearly other priorities for film in this country and he foresaw that these would remain for "half a century of five year plans."

It was too early to imagine, even for Grierson, the appearance of another species of filmmaker who would be moved by an impulse utterly unrelated to that of Hollywood North. To name them is to make the point: Claude Jutra; Don Owen; Don Shebib; Robin Spry; Allan King; Peter Pearson; Jean Pierre Lefebvre; Michel Brault; Gilles Groube; Claude Fournier; Gilles Carle; Sandy Wilson; Anne Wheeler; Francis Mankiewicz; Bill MacGillvray;

Denys Arcand; Michael Jones; Patricia Rozema; Atom Egoyan, are some of those who have made films with an authentic voice. To paraphrase Peter Harcourt — they are responsible for "the little film, the personal film, appropriate both to the population and the economics of our country and providing the diversity necessary within North American film and television culture" (Peter Harcourt on Canadian Features, *Canadian Forum* 49, August/September 1984).

This impulse was largely fostered by Grierson's baby, the NFB, where many — most — of these filmmakers learned their craft and produced some of their best work, or from which they received substantial help. Whether he intended it or not, Grierson is responsible for creating the organization which would nourish the beginnings of indigenous feature films. This fact has been overlooked, or ignored, by Nelson.

Truth to tell, most of these filmmakers have had, and continue to have, a tough time of it (Claude Jutra, after he left the NFB, was unemployed much of the time. This has been true for most of his colleagues). The abysmal failure of the government to create a film policy with the teeth necessary to both tax Hollywood's considerable Canadian profits and claim control of our own domestic market, perpetuates a climate in which only a branch plant can flourish.

Nelson's argument begs two questions:

1. Would Grierson, had he continued as Government Film Commissioner, have agreed with the ludicrous idea of the Canadian Cooperation Project? I doubt it. It should be remembered that Ross McLean, Grierson's deputy during the war, and his successor in 1945, objected to the CCP. As Peter Morris has stated: "McLean had also lobbied to decrease American domination of the Canadian film industry, and even proposed the imposition of a quota system based on the British or French models. Hollywood's answer was the infamous Canadian Cooperation Project... but it is

worth noting that McLean." (The National Two, p. 18).  
2. Would the Film Board's production in fact be a friendship with his work, or a secondary work of the should expect to the death he said Film Board

Dear Editor

I am grateful to respond to Nelson's letter. It warrants an answer.

First, Grierson's "Canada" was not printed in the magazine, also the he referred to the same year. Grierson's dressing the feature film in Canada in Hollywood North addressing Canada should try at all. A his Policy, me is why feature picture "[w]hen it Canada is States," Grierson's notion" of Hollywood quoted in book, that should serve

Verrall Grierson's Policy. I quote on document. to a substantial piece by Nelson's words to the Policy for Institutions treat: Media writer, I did ate in its analysis although Verrall's piece by Nelson is apparent work.

Verrall Would Grierson's Government agreed with Canadian Co has already ing "the lu



worth noting that the lone Canadian official to raise his voice in protest was Ross McLean." (Peter Morris, "After Grierson: The National Film Board 1945-1953," *Take Two*, p. 183).

2. Would Grierson have encouraged the Film Board to get into feature film production in a major way? I think not. Although he had developed a close personal friendship with Claude Jutra, and admired his work, he was convinced that the documentary should remain central to the work of the Board. The NFB, he believed, should export its ideas and its know-how to the developing world. Shortly before his death he said, "the greatest export of the Film Board has been the Film Act itself. It's

been translated into many languages, it's become the model of serious intention by the cinema in the service of government, all over the world. The success of the Film Board has been in its helping the Department of External Affairs to present the Canadian capabilities. The Film Board has been important in saying to countries of very different kinds, all over the world, that the film is an instrument of great importance in establishing the patterns of the national imagination." (John Grierson, interviewed by James Beveridge for the NFB film *John Grierson — 1972*.)

The "deep cracks" that Nelson thinks she sees in the legend of John Grierson belong to a figment of her imagination.

Her Grierson bears no resemblance to a person well known to many who are still around and active in the film business. There is no evidence that in writing her book she made any effort to seek out these people, preferring to carefully select quotes from any source which would support her thesis. I find it depressing that Joyce Nelson, who writes with verve and passion about a subject of national importance, would end up presenting a grotesque portrait of an authentic national hero. I hope that eventually she will decide to debunk her own book.

Robert Verrall

Dear Editors:

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Mr. Verrall's letter, which warrants an answer at some length.

First, Grierson's "Film Policy for Canada" was more than just a speech reprinted in *Canadian Affairs* in 1944. It was also the heart of a recommendation delivered to the Canadian government in the same year. Contrary to Verrall's reading of Grierson's words, Grierson was not addressing the question of what kind of feature film industry might be appropriate for Canada in the postwar years, i.e., a "Hollywood North" or something else. He was addressing the question of whether or not Canada should have a feature film industry at all. As Grierson specifically states in his Policy, "The question most often asked me is why Canada does not make her own feature pictures." Recognizing that "[w]hen it comes to movies, good or bad, Canada is a dependency of the United States," Grierson explores the "attractive notion" of "building up one's own local Hollywood" and comes to the conclusion, quoted in *Border/Lines'* excerpt from my book, that Hollywood's studios in the U.S. should serve that function.

Verrall says that my reading of Grierson's Policy is inadequate, in part because I quote only two paragraphs from the document. He ignores the fact that I refer to a substantial piece of scholarship published by Peter Morris in 1986 — "Backwards to the Future: John Grierson's Film Policy for Canada," included in the text edited by Gene Walz, *Flashback: People and Institutions in Canadian Film History* (Montreal: Mediatext Publications, 1986). As a writer, I did not feel it necessary to reiterate in its entirety the lengthy and brilliant analysis already done by Peter Morris. Although Verrall quotes from an earlier piece by Morris published in *Take Two*, he is apparently unfamiliar with Morris' later work.

Verrall claims that I beg the question: Would Grierson, had he continued as Government Film Commissioner, have agreed with the ludicrous idea of the Canadian Cooperation Project? Peter Morris has already answered that question, tracing "the ludicrous idea" directly to Grierson's Policy. I refer Verrall to Morris' work.

Since Verrall considers my portrait of Grierson to be essentially a figment of my imagination, perhaps he will accept someone else's scholarship. In his analysis of Grierson's "Film Policy for Canada," Peter Morris concludes that "John Grierson was a key architect of Canada's marginalization in the film world, and events and policies since his time are simply part of a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Verrall states that my work further begs the question: Would Grierson have encouraged the Film Board to get into feature film production in a major way? Since Grierson felt that U.S. studios like Paramount should "set aside a production unit in Hollywood for the production of Canadian feature films," there is simply no reason to think that Grierson would ever have countenanced the question Verrall raises.

With regard to "the little film, the personal film" that Verrall rightly praises and cites in his list of Canadian filmmakers working during the past 20 years, it is worth noting (as my book does at some length) that Grierson did not value this style of filmmaking. It is well known that he disliked the work of Humphrey Jennings precisely because it conveyed a personal stance, a personal point of view. Much of Grierson's writing, from at least 1935 onwards, rails against "the trivial personal story," "bohemian self-indulgence" in filmmaking, even in a larger sense "the luxury of private deviation in thought and action." Indeed, Grierson's whole philosophy was pitched against the Romantic tradition which upholds the ideal of individualism. As he succinctly stated, "I would call the philosophy of individualism Romantic and say we have been on a spectacular romantic spree for four hundred years." Grierson wanted this spree to end.

Thus, when Verrall states that the impulse towards making small, personal films was "largely fostered by Grierson's baby, the NFB, where many — most — of these filmmakers learned their craft," he should put the credit in the right hands. That impulse, which began to flow in the early 1960s, was in direct defiance of Grierson's stated philosophy of anti-individ-

ualism and the perspective he advocated for NFB films: editorial internationalism. The credit therefore belongs to those at the 1960s NFB who dared to break from the Griersonian tradition of impersonal films with an "internationalist" perspective, which Grierson instilled during the war years.

Verrall states that I did not seek out people who knew Grierson and instead preferred "to carefully select quotes from any source which would support [my] thesis." A quite substantial body of material, including interviews, already exists and provided the basis upon which my text was written. To Verrall's charge I reply that the legend of Grierson has equally depended upon a selection process. *The Colonized Eye* gathers together the overlooked, ignored, and otherwise unselected (or repressed) material on which that legend has depended. If the result is, in Verrall's words, "a grotesque portrait," nevertheless that shadow-side of the Grierson legend has existed alongside the more acceptable version all along. It was there to be recognized in the existing material.

For example, it is a well-documented fact that Grierson was an advisor on the PR use of film to the oil cartel formed by Shell, British Petroleum (BP) and Exxon. Clearly, that role raises significant questions about Grierson's politics. Much of the Grierson legend has depended on overlooking such facts, as though they have nothing to do with his (simultaneous) work in Canada.

But recognizing such connections and implications does depend on the knowledge, the point of view, and indeed, the imagination of the researcher. My own political imagination and point of view do not embrace many of the things that Grierson believed in: especially multinational capitalism and full mechanization as the answer to the world's problems. Verrall apparently holds a different belief-system and an entirely mainstream point of view with regard to Grierson. Thus, it is doubtful that any additional research or citing of facts or argument would make a difference. I salute the tenacity with which he clings to the Grierson legend.

Joyce Nelson



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# The House That Refused To Become A Parking Lot

## Malcolm Reid

*In 1969, I moved to Québec City to become Québec correspondent for the Globe and Mail. My wife Réjeanne is Québécoise, but the old city was going to be new for both of us, for she'd lived all her life in the Montréal area.*

*At first the parliamentary gang was our gang, especially those from the English media. But bit by bit we got into Québec. The decisive event was when we moved to a neighbourhood called Saint-Jean-Baptiste outside the walls and our little girl Joëlle was born at the Hôtel-Dieu.*

*In that first year as a father, I amused myself by painting a mural on the tin siding of our back porch. It was a happy time. Yet we also lived the October Crisis there. Friends came to our apartment from jail to tell us what was going on.*

*I'd largely forgotten my mural since quitting the Globe and moving to a house a couple of blocks away. Then it came back to me, in this way.*

*I was visiting a young man named Richard Couture to encourage him to keep up his fight against the demolition of his house by the hotel developer Marcel Beaulieu. Beaulieu said he needed it to provide parking and boutique space for his hotel, which he had established in this non-tourist part of Québec by slipping around zoning laws. As I looked out the win-*

*dow of Richard's kitchen, I saw the wall I'd painted the decade before, and it too was part of the block of houses acquired by Beaulieu.*

*Before I'd finished my beer, I'd tossed out to Richard the idea of an exhibition, a festival of painting, drawing and sculpture by artists of the neighbourhood, Dix ans de luttes, dix ans d'art. Richard liked the idea and the show took place in June 1988.*

*Works ranged from abstract sculptures to folksy landscapes. The theme that kept coming back was The City. Artists came, activists came, business people came, punks came.*

*As of early 1989, Richard's apartment on the Côte Sainte-Geneviève has still not been demolished. And the fight has spread to a sector up the hill called the Parc Berthelot and down the old road into lowertown, the Côte d'Abraham. There, the high-rise development in prospect is called La Grande Place.*

*Here is a conversation I had with another of the artists who exhibited in June, Line Tremblay. (Line and I recorded our words as we walked the neighbourhood to Richard's place, which might, I suppose, be called La Petite Place.)*

*Back in the cold of February, I'd seen in my mural a happy man going fishing with his dog. There was a pond, and in the pond I'd painted, under the influence of my contemporaries John, Paul, George and Ringo, the yellow periscope of a Yellow Submarine.*

*And hey — this winter, Richard had heat in his kitchen!*

**Malcolm Reid:** Line, when I arrived in Saint-Jean-Baptiste in 1969, the people's movements were just starting. It was mainly a working-class quarter in those days. When did you arrive in the neighbourhood?

**Line Tremblay:** Saint-Jean Baptiste? Well, I'd put it at 17 years ago.

**MR:** And what were you looking for in a neighbourhood like this?

**LT:** Refuge! I was looking for refuge.

**MR:** Why choose this corner of town for a refuge?

**LT:** Simply because there are many people here who resemble me.

**MR:** Artists? Bohemians? Other people in the counter-culture?

**LT:** Exactly.

**MR:** I have the feeling that all that was coming when I discovered the neighbourhood, but that it wasn't yet a fact. There was a thing called "Opération Soleil" — look, there's a courtyard door they painted with a sun, after they'd cleaned up the yard. My impression was that the area would remain half counter-cultural and half working-class forever. I wonder if that's possible... but give me your idea on this. The meeting between social struggles and art, the mixture that was present in *Dix ans de luttes, dix ans d'art*, do you think of that as something that's present in all eras? Do you think artistic creation and social revolt have something which always brings them together? Is it chance? Is it history? Is it something that pops up only occasionally?

**LT:** I don't know...

**MR:** When you arrived in this neigh-

bourhood for you? A  
LT: It was never been  
MR: For me gone toge educated deal with at the sam me to the paintings absorbing at differen the twenti well, great been able of art and work, my or whethe ity in the move tow disconten able to the LT: Yes, th central. It's always thi building a work and committed know I'm making th is always v do is ask ti new words an outside that I don from some inequality. chemical. answer you in my min ist's art... I artists who their work, anybody, a That's my where (it's some succe my work a rate any ro something speech, a d be treated it is put un not touch, silence, a la space... We me to have mummified you can th which is pe almost free there are w work and w with them? the questio kind of wor politicized isn't politica being politi talks to itse cation, we'l forms and p to populari body, even mean? Whe



bourhood, which of the two counted most for you? Art, or social action?

LT: It was always art that I... No... really I've never been able to separate the two!

MR: For me, I guess the two have always gone together for a simple reason. I was educated that way. I was taught we had to deal with politics and social justice... but at the same time, my parents would take me to the National Gallery. I'd see the paintings of the Group of Seven. I was absorbing the idea that the paintings done at different points in history — especially the twenties, the time of Modern! — were, well, great things of life. What I've never been able to tell is whether this marrying of art and struggle was simply my will at work, my wishing them to come together, or whether there was a conjuncture, a reality in the nature of art itself that made it move towards social issues. Are artists a discontented group, perhaps, more available to the left than to the right?

LT: Yes, that's a very good question. It's central. It's close to the heart of what I'm always thinking about. I'm at work slowly building a kind of ethic of art. I look at a work and I try to see if it's the work of a committed hand, or a non-committed hand. I know I'm perhaps caricaturing things, making them too simple. But the question is always working on me. All I can really do is ask the same question over again, in new words. For me, it is visceral. It's not an outside force that makes me draw. It's that I don't want to be subject to orders from somewhere. I don't want to live in inequality. The need to draw is in me, it's chemical. It's very chemical. How can I answer you on this? It isn't all sorted out in my mind. I'm trying to sort it out. Artists' art... But you know, there are so many artists who succeed, who manage to sell their work, and who sell it to anybody. To anybody, any old way, they don't care. That's my fear, a fear I have to the point where (it's crazy to say this) I fear finding some success, because I don't want to sell my work any old way, to anyone, to decorate any room. I couldn't! Art isn't just something decorative. It's a form of speech, a declaration. Art seems to me to be treated as something prehistoric when it is put under glass, when it is labeled "do not touch," when it is kept in an area of silence, a lawyer's office, a nothing space... Works treated that way seem to me to have been killed, to have been mummified. Perhaps I'm in love with art you can throw away, art you consume, art which is popular, widespread, accessible, almost free of charge. Yet I admit that there are works which take months of work and which are superb. What to do with them? I'm perhaps getting away from the question, but how do you link that kind of work with a commitment, with a politicized life, or maybe even a life that isn't politicized, but... but then, everything being political... I don't know, but art that talks to itself in a corner... we'll need education, we'll need linkages between art forms and people. We'll need to find ways to popularize. We'll need to invite everybody, even our aunts, you know what I mean? When I was in art at university, in

my first course, early in the morning, a guru of the faculty said: "Show this to Mrs. Côté or Mrs. Gagnon, and of course they won't understand, we can't ask them to understand." That was maybe five years ago, it hurt me. I don't want to make an artistic work that has contempt for people, yet at the same time the artist is isolated from the world. And the world is commitment.

MR: I know that for me, the great way of solving that one in my head is a liking for print.

LT: Yes! That's it.

MR: I have an idea that that is why you've worked as a graphic artist.

LT: Yes, and that's why I like working on a newspaper.

MR: It seems to me it makes you an artist who has lived one of the essential experiences in art in the modern world. Even when the great, famous painters whose works sell for millions, or the artists who are avant-garde and whose works don't sell, are finally present in society, it is often through art books, reproductions, posters, and calendars. I said to myself: Much of visual art's presence among us is through print, even when, officially, these are fine artists, not graphic artists. And so for me, to bring together my desire to do something social and my desire to enjoy the pure pleasure of line and colour, I make —

LT: Printed matter!

MR: Yes, especially a magazine page. Or a poster. I know that my teenaged daughter Joëlle especially likes the greeting cards you made a few years ago. For the beauty of the drawings, the funny tenderness of the faces, but also because they are cards, they're part of her world. And in *Dix ans de lutttes, dix ans d'art*, didn't we have something of that in that the whole house was a magazine, whose rooms you leafed through?

LT: Yes!

MR: The rooms of the house were...

LT: Public. They were public, out amid the public like a newspaper, because events were taking place in them all through our exhibition. Meetings of committees, meetings over urban issues, meetings with owners and tenants. It was like a TV news-cast, there were kids, people taking care of kids and day care centres bringing in their kids to see the show...

MR: It was a bit like *dazibao*, the public poster-board in China a few years back, where all sorts of viewpoints were pasted up. But a *dazibao* that was full of festive spirit.

LT: Exactly, all of that was happening, all through the two weeks.

MR: And if we never once used the fashionable art word *performance* perhaps we were in a still earlier form called the party. The basic bash.

LT(laughing): Yes!

MR: And music! I was astounded at how many musicians turned up.

LT: Ah! That's the essential element.

MR: I kept panicking. No one wanted to say yes when I tried to set up music, but when the evening came, they just showed up.

LT: Hey, this quarter is full of musicians.

MR: The quarter is full of musicians, and they don't have the places they need to play in. And the occasions. Like us, with our visuals. We lack walls. That's what made me want to organize this thing! I looked at Richard's walls — so high, so empty, so white, so gray. High, high ceilings, square metres and square metres of space, all with nothing on it. And me with my dozens of collages at my place, stashed away, and all my friends with their works stashed away. So I said to myself: Richard has a house problem. And we have a wall problem. If we want to put our colours up on his walls, maybe we have to get involved in his problem with his house.

LT: Aha!

MR: Michel Saint-Onge, a sculptor who joined us halfway through *Dix ans de lutttes, dix ans d'art*, told me he thought we'd had a surprising impact on people in the neighbourhood, arts people and other people. That encouraged me.

LT: It encourages me, too. It gives me a strong desire to organize another event like that one.

MR: Yes, and to create spaces for the kinds of meetings of different clans that we hope for. Create spaces for them even if we aren't yet sure they're inevitable. At least we know we desire the clans to meet.

LT: Yes. Simply wishing for it is already something.

MR: And it's a struggle just to get people to build the base for new kinds of art. Here in Saint-Jean-Baptiste, we are less an "art" neighbourhood than they are in the Old Port; we're more a "save-this-house-from-demolition" kind of neighbourhood. Yet we're really better able to group ourselves than other artists, because we have all that neighbourhood experience with co-ops and citizen's committees...

LT: The kind of event I'd push for would be this kind: you go to it. The children leave the day care centre and go to it. The parents go to pick up their children at it. While they're there, they take it in. And then the shop-keeper that we always buy from hears us talking about it. At the end of the day he locks up and goes to it. It's formidable to organize something like that, an event that gets into everyone's life, children's lives, grandmothers' lives, everybody's lives. That's the important thing.

MR: Isn't there an element here of the very artistic, and also very political, Québec of the 1960s and 70s?

LT: Well, I don't like the idea of going back to something...

MR: I see what you mean. It's okay to preserve something we love. But let's make it work for the future, too.

LT: Precisely. It's something new, too.

MR: Right, and there are kids coming along who weren't even born when Charlebois and Mouffe sang that old song *Miss Pepsi*, about the girl who practised tap dancing and won all the contests:

*I won them all*

*But where did it get me?*

Malcolm Reid's column is a regular feature in *Border/Lines*.



# Some of Our Favourite Magazines

If you are reading this magazine, you are probably interested in the alternate press and smaller publications. We would like to draw your attention to some of the magazines *Border/Lines* takes as its models. The following synopses are quoted verbatim from *Factsheet Five*, a "review of some of the thousands of small magazines published in the world today," which Mike Gunderloy publishes five or six times a year (6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502).

**American Window Cleaner** (\$6 from 27 Pal Creek Rd, El Sobrante, CA 94803): A trade publication which is fun to read — you'll be amazed at how sophisticated the window cleaning industry has become. #14 reports on a new world record set at a recent convention, gives some hints on writing contracts, and of course discusses the latest in tools and techniques.

**2600 Vol.5 #3** (\$15/yr from PO Box 752, Middle Island, NV 11953): The journal for hackers, phone phreaks, and similar folks. #3 has a nice long article on "Outside loops"; that is, all the wiring between you and your phone company, and what fun things you can do with a screwdriver and a lineman's set — for informational purposes only, of course.

**Dirty Plotte #3-5** (\$1 from Julie Doucette, C.P. 553, Succ. C, Montreal, Quebec, H2L 4K4) That'll cover a few issues as this is only 25¢ in person. A comic of sex, urination, and other fun subjects; the calibre may be assessed by noting the story "Tampax dans l'espace" in #4. Other strips feature Kirk and Spock claiming new planets with their urinary ability, sex with snakes, and a wide variety of disturbing images.

**Drift #2-4** (free from #424, 280 Dundas St. East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 3W1) "free, but unused Canadian postage stamps help." Rants and raves and postcards and the words of Fido Dogstoevski. There's no real strong connection between what appears here and anything else, so the title seems rather appropriate. #3 has comments on the state of the world, dogs and

cats, perennial students, books to buy, and more. #4 is suddenly much bigger with reviews and suicide notes and poetry and lots more.

**End Times Newsletter** (Donation to P.O. Box 81526, Las Vegas, NV 89180) A while ago these folks were predicting the Rapture for September 12, 1988. The latest issue explains why that's not a false prophecy: because "prophecy" must come from God, and God doesn't make mistakes, and the world didn't end, so it couldn't have come from God, so it was just human sin. Got it? Good. Then you can wait for the next trumpet of alarm.

**Grub** (\$3 from Dragonfly Farm, Lake St. Peter, Ontario, K0L 2K0) A mix of whatever the members of the Dragonfly community and their contacts felt like writing. This ranges from short fiction to discussions of free trade to anarchist comics to news about Greenpeace to the local cafe to who knows what. There's an energetic and hopeful spirit in most of it and I find *Grub* a fun read.

**I'm Not Boring You, Am I?** (\$1 from Robert Runté, P.O. Box 4655, PSSE, Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 5G5) This is Robert's apazine from FAPA, the oldest continuing science fiction apa [amateur press association] in existence. Since he's working on a sociology degree, it consists of mainly sociological observations of places he's been lately: weddings, graduate departments, rural Alberta, sleazy bars full of hookers. Pretty interesting stuff, and a good eye for description.

**Left Business Observer** (\$2 from 250 W. 85th St., New York, NY 10024-3217) A progressive look at business in the US. #23 includes post-election analysis and a look at the current binge of buyouts. #24 looks at third-world debt from a couple of angles. LBO is also a good source of readable explanations of the Federal Reserve.

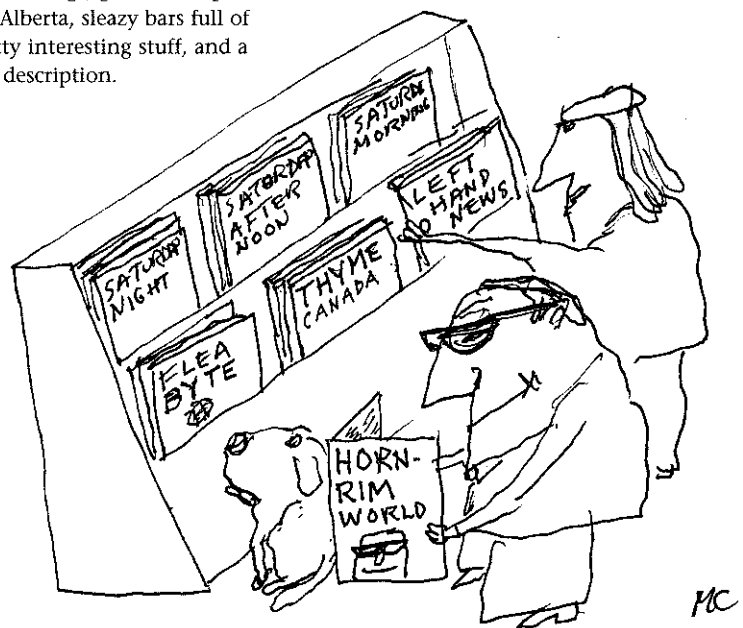
**The Mutants Book of Secret Maps** (#1 from 163 Ludlow St., #1, New York, NY 10002-1516) A group of selected demographic maps, showing such things as "Accidental castrations, annually by state" and "Insects consumed in natural food salads." The whole is presented with marginalia consisting of story fragments and oriental lettering. Bizarre.

**Rail Travel News** (\$24/yr from Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, CA 94709) A little magazine for railroad buffs. Most of its contents are rather uninteresting to outsiders — reports on new routings, trains being repaired, railroad management problems and so on. But #21 also has an interesting narrative from Paul Rayton about a fun-filled Amtrak trip.

**Rear Garde** (\$2 from P.O. Box 1412, Stn. H, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 2M4) The Canadian content tabloid of the music world. Not that they cover only Canadian acts, but the focus is on the Montreal scene, so they mostly talk to bands in or passing through the area... Lots of photos, nice layout, reviews, and local club news round out the package.

**The Squeaky Fromme Scrapbook** (\$5 from Jack Stevenson, 171 Auburn St., #11, Cambridge, MA 02139) Jack's collection of stuff on one of the more curious of the Manson gals. Includes her high school annual photo, news clippings from her attempt to shoot President Ford, psychoanalysis and other coverage from previous books, and an interview done after her escape attempt. Also has a few of Squeaky's letters.

(selected by Peter Fitting)



Mike Constable

## Sue Zi

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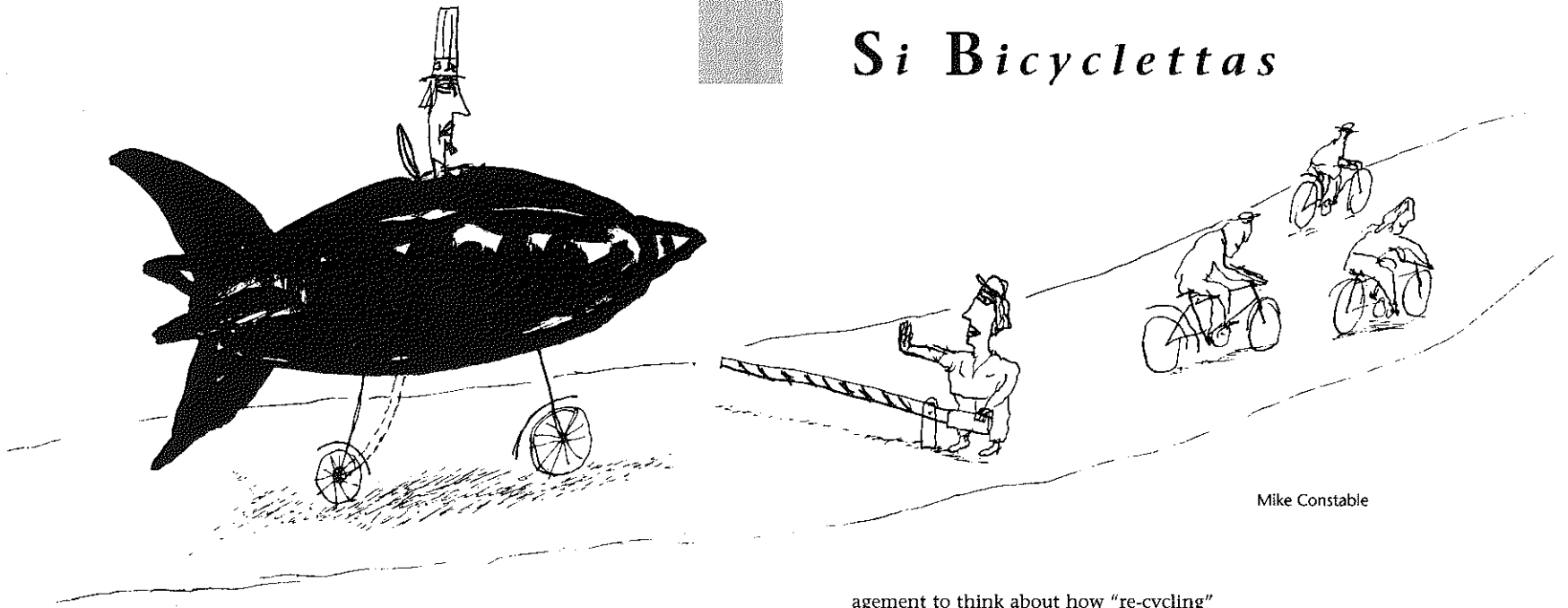
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# No Bombs Si Bicyclettas



Mike Constable

## Sue Zielinski

In 1984, the CIA-sponsored bombings of Nicaragua's oil storage tanks virtually immobilized the country. The sudden lack of motorized transportation which depended on that oil impeded major efforts to provide health care and education to all. Teachers, social workers, and health workers were forced to walk up to 20 miles a day in order to do their work in outlying communities.

Meanwhile, back in the States, Karl Kurz, a Boston area bike mechanic, and Michael Replegle, a Washington based transportation engineer, were devising a plan. They had been disturbed by the U.S. policy in Nicaragua, and decided that sending bicycles would be their contribution to articulating a positive alternative — Bikes Not Bombs. So they enlisted the help of the American Friends Service Committee and shipped 20 donated bikes that they had managed to collect from various garages and basements across the nation.

Since that initial shipment in 1984, over 2,400 bikes have been sent and over three dozen local chapters of Bikes Not Bombs chapters have sprung up all over North America, including a recent chapter in Toronto. The whole campaign has developed as a decentralized network of local activists — primarily community and church groups — who have some skills they want to contribute to saying that there is another way.

But why bicycles? Why not a supply of comfortable walking shoes? Surely they would be easier to ship. Well, because for

the Nicaraguan situation, the bicycle makes sense. It uses five times less energy than walking, and hundreds of bicycles can be built with the resources required to build one automobile. People can maintain a bike with their own skills and sustain it without dependence on large corporations for fuel and other supplies. The bicycle is also a tool which makes possible other kinds of development across a wide range of sectors in the society.

Nicaraguans have also realized that the bicycle makes sense. As a result of Bikes Not Bombs's initially small efforts at "bicyclization," the Nicaraguan government has just bought 50,000 bicycles to give to health workers. This policy is a major statement of independence from the recent push for motorization from U.S. corporations and local elites.

According to Michael Replegle, we are at a crucial time in the evolution of global transportation systems and policies: "A large portion of the developing world is being targeted for increased motorization by the multinational automobile industry. Substantial investments to support this motorization are being made by global lending institutions with the support of local elites."

But at least many of the developing countries still have a choice about the direction of their transportation policy. For this reason, Bikes Not Bombs has spread its efforts into Mozambique and Haiti, and its founders have formed the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy in Washington D.C. to address these global transportation development issues.

Ironically, in North America we've had less of a choice about the way we get around. We've had precious little encour-

agement to think about how "re-cycling" might make sense for us. According to Replegle, "the ideology of motorization in North America has been so successful that very few people have been aware of the extent to which our choices have been constrained by the automobile and the powers that control our transportation policy."

This is why the kind of grassroots growth that Bikes Not Bombs is enjoying is so hopeful. Bikes Not Bombs has been successful partly because the tangible appeal of taking the old clunker that's been hanging in the garage for years and imagining a nurse riding it off into the Nicaragua sunset has overridden some of the political opposition that may have been encountered by sending other kinds of aid.

But most of B.N.B.'s success in Nicaragua and now elsewhere is tied to the bicycle itself. Riding a bicycle means enjoying a lifestyle which values subversive things like individual and political autonomy, time and contemplation, human contact with nature, sustainability, and self-sufficiency. In short, it is revolutionary.

For more information about Canadian chapters of Bikes Not Bombs, call Canadian Action for Nicaragua, at (416) 534-1766, or write to Box 398, Station E, Toronto, M6H 4E3. For general information, or news about new efforts in Mozambique and Haiti, write to Bikes Not Bombs, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, Box 56538, Washington, D.C. 20011, or phone (301) 589-1810.

*Sue Zielinski is an associate member of Border/Lines and works with the Toronto chapter of Bikes Not Bombs.*

# Italian Feminist Journals

## An Overview

On the whole feminism is alive and well in Italy, which does not mean that there is not still much to change in the fabric of society, in the lives of women, in women ourselves. There is, between the richness and quality of the debate going on in the feminist community and its concrete influence in social and political terms, a tension which often becomes a gap, sometimes engendering a feeling of tiredness and impotence. Yet, the debate is rich, its quality is first rate, and there is reason to feel confident if one is a feminist in Italy today.

In the last two years there has been a flourishing of new feminist (or feminist-oriented) publications, of which only a few will be mentioned in my notes. I have restricted myself to publications definable as "feminist" (and radical feminist, at that) in outlook and content, and "journals" in formal terms. As will be apparent, I have made some exceptions, in general privileging "feminist" political issues over formal ones. Another criterion has been that of a nationwide diffusion, not necessarily for the public at large, but certainly in the feminist community; it just would not have been possible to give an account of all the local newsletters, bulletins and even journals proper, often quite interesting in content, but circulated among a restricted audience. Since Italian feminism is very little known internationally, I have tried to offer as much detailed information and exemplification as the need for synthesis allowed; for the same reason I have included a few "has beens," no longer existing publications which are still somehow a living influence.

I shall begin with the "has been" publications, recover from the slight depression that talk of things past always engenders, then give an account of the newest born, and finally list those of longer standing as further evidence in favour of my optimistic view of the vitality of feminism in Italy. Two more remarks: most of these publications, and the exceptions are indeed few, are published either autonomously by the group who produces them, or by a feminist publishing house; none of them has links with the universities or other established cultural institutions, though the women who produce, write and read them often do — there are no institutionalized women's studies in Italy.

Paola Bono



*Effe* was perhaps more a monthly magazine than a journal proper, but its pioneering role in feminist information in Italy, the variety of issues which it explored during the nine years (1973-1982) of publication, and therefore its importance for and influence in the feminist movement, call for its inclusion in this overview. *Effe* was not linked to a specific tendency of Italian feminism: the product of a collective whose feminist identity coincided with the production of the magazine itself, it reflected the evolution, difficulties, contradictions and acquisitions of the movement. Sold in newspaper stands all over Italy, *Effe* greatly contributed to the diffusion of feminist ideas among women who would not otherwise come into contact with the movement's view of questions such as abortion, or violence (from rape to the subtle exploitation of advertisements), or the role of the Church in the oppression of women, not distorted by the sensationalism of mass media.

*Quotidiano donna* (Rome 1978-1983), a weekly sold nation-wide in news agencies, also aimed at giving women autonomous, non-mediated information, and much of what has been said for *Effe* would also apply here. *Quotidiano donna*, however, was not as elegant in design and often more radical in outlook, providing a more "in depth" treatment of themes central to the debate and political action of the movement, seen, as it were more from an insider's point of view than having in mind a larger heterogeneous audience. It also gave space to documents or *ad hoc* articles by different groups, either self-presentations of the group's rationale and position, or comments and proposals regarding specific issues.

*Differenze* was the voice of the Rome-based part of the feminist movement. Founded by five women from three collectives, each issue (12 altogether, from June 1976 to May 1982) was the product of a different group, thus acting as a site of expression and confrontation of these diverse instances. Of particular interest is No. 10, "Sexuality and Money," published in preparation for a conference on the same theme held in December 1979. At a time when the feminist movement was being cornered between marginalization and normalization, it treats the question of women's political presence and action

published in NOI DONNE, May 1988

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from a dual perspective — the foundation of new modes of relation among women; the individuation of ways to approach, use, change the institutions. The title points to the interpretive key adopted for the conference, i.e., an analysis of the economic rules in the light of their sexually connotated basis.

*Orsaminore* (Rome, June 1981-March 1983): Founded by seven women (hence the title, Orsa Minore being the Italian name of the Ursa Minor constellation), seven intellectuals of different backgrounds, bonded by friendship and by a habit of group discussion and analysis of their lives and their context, all politically "on the left" and all involved and/or intrigued by the feminist experience. An "irregular" monthly, *Orsaminore* presented and debated feminist themes, often in a broadly Marxist perspective (i.e., not tied to any orthodoxy), privileging a theoretical approach which would transcend a mere commentary on current affairs, though not forgetting the concreteness of the problems at stake.



International Women's Day March, Venice

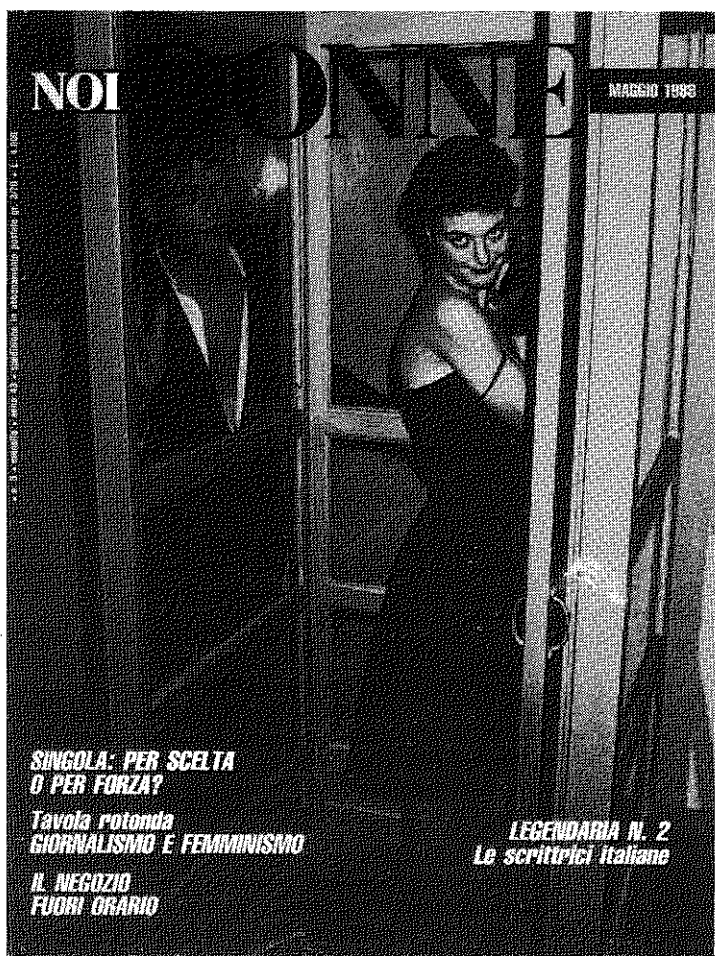
*Manifesta*, the "baby" among Italian feminist journals (its first issue is dated October 1988), is produced by a group of women based in Naples, already well known for their lively and often provocative cultural activity, aimed at a re-viewing and re-founding of interpretive and expressive modes. Language, and in particular the language of the cinema, is therefore privileged as a site of the complex relationship that women entertain with "images" of femininity. Literature, poetry, philosophy, visual art, theology, law, humour, all are given space in *Manifesta's* project to render manifest the richness and complexity of the female universe, and also, perhaps more, its strength and resilience. Significantly, the opening feature of the first two issues is devoted to a reappraisal of the mythical figure of the Amazon.

*Aspirina*, subtitled "Rivista per donne di sesso femminile" (A Journal for Women Whose Sex is Female), first issue November 1987, is produced by the *Libreria delle donne* in Milan. A satirical journal, it publishes jokes, comic strips, short parodic texts, reflecting and commenting, in an ironic and self-ironic manner, on the is-

sues currently at stake in and for the feminist movement in Italy. The capacity for synthesis which often characterizes the comic mode of expression, the pungent wit of most of the journal's collaborators, the skillful choice of targets — illustrating a partisan, caustic view of the patriarchal order (obviously!), of the feminist movement as a whole (not so common), and of the very positions the journal tendentially endorses (almost unique) — combine to make *Aspirina* not only enjoyable and lively but also a valuable though extravagant commentary on and critique of the ongoing debates about (to quote only a few) sexual difference, relations among women, Irigaray's writings, feminist politics, the link with the symbolic mother.

*Reti* (No. 1, September/October 1987) is slightly eccentric among this panorama of feminist journals, in view of its links with a political party; in fact, it replaces *Donne e Politica* as the journal of communist women. It is financially supported by the Communist Party and published by the party-controlled Editori Riuniti. Yet it must be included, for it reflects and illustrates the way in which feminist thought has seeped through and come to influence not "politics" at large (though that has also happened in various forms) but *women* of a specific political allegiance, reshaping their awareness of themselves as women and therefore their self-positioning inside the party to which they belong. *Reti* aims to be a motor of this process; it invites contributions by women outside the Party, actually defining itself as a journal "promoted by communist women, created together with women of different political and experiential backgrounds." Focused mainly on the areas of culture/politics/economics, it debates the possible autonomous modes of action for women with regard to, for example, bio-ethics, the labour market, parliamentary representation, the bi-sexualization of culture.

*Fluttuaria's* first "official" issue dates to January/February 1987, after two xeroxed issues had been informally circulated among feminists in several Italian cities and towns. Produced by an already existing group of women associated for cultural and recreational purposes, who have been in the past and still are influential in Italian feminism, the journal seeks to provide expression for all women engaged in the



construction of an autonomous interpretation and experience of reality. It features articles and notices about cinema, theatre, literature, politics, science, work, sport, medicine, always in the perspective of a female eye looking at and reshaping the world, attempting to give voice to sexual difference as an active principle at work in the perception/creation of reality, at the same time stressing the multiplicity of points of view present in the feminist community regarding such a process and its practical forms: differences inside difference, to be acknowledged and accepted.

*Lapis*, "Percorsi della riflessione femminile" (Itineraries of female thought), born in November 1987 out of a split in *Fluttuaria's* editorial board, testifies to the richness and diversity of such itineraries, but also — perhaps not a positive sign — to the truth of that old proverb "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip." In other words, acknowledging differences might be easy, accepting them and being able to live with them is quite another matter. To outsiders, the subtle political and emotional reasons for the split are not easily apparent. In endorsing the wish for the explication of a wide and varied range of positions, and the necessity of an unprejudiced confrontation and exchange, *Lapis* underlines the importance of the experiential dimension of knowledge, the need to take into account the uniqueness of the

individual subject and the weight of affective processes, their relevance for and correlation to social and political action.

*Noi donne* has undergone a number of transformations since it was founded in 1944 — when Italy was still occupied by the German Army — as a clandestine leaflet of partisan women. When the war ended it became, at first as a bi-weekly, then as a weekly from 1948, the magazine of the U.D.I. (Unione Donne Italiane, Union of Italian Women), an association of left-wing women, mostly belonging to the Communist and Socialist parties. The reasons for its inclusion in this article are similar to those given for *Reti*: feminism is contagious, and the U.D.I. — after strong and at times bitter disagreements with the movement — has in some ways become part of it, severing completely its links with "the father," i.e., the political parties. The magazine has changed accordingly, going through an especially radical phase in 1982-84. From 1983 it has again become a monthly; a typical issue (80-100 pages) includes comments and surveys on current affairs, a dossier on a specific theme prepared autonomously by a group who arranges to take over that space from the editorial board, features on cultural events, book/cinema/theatre reviews. All with a feminist slant.

*Sottosopra* was initially (1973) created by women of various feminist groups in Milan as a space open to the experience and elaborations of the movement in all its instances and expressions, in order to foster communication and debate. Two issues are particularly worth remembering, devoted each to an important nationwide meeting — one about abortion in 1975, the other about "the state of the movement" in 1976. From December 1976 *Sottosopra* becomes the voice of one of the most interesting and influential groups in Italian feminism, *Libreria delle donne* in Milan (see below). Its irregular appearance is linked to the modes and rhythms of reflection of the group, who publish a new issue whenever (and only if) they feel they have come to satisfactorily articulate a position they wish to circulate and discuss. The re-thinking or the relationships between/among women, the need for a bi-sexualization of the world which will allow women to live in it "at their ease"

*qua* women (instead of having to assume male parameters), the question of political representation and of its pitfalls: on these themes *Sottosopra* has sparked a lively, at times ferocious, debate in the Italian feminist community.

*DWF* ("Donnawomanfemme"), founded in 1976 by women engaged in various fields of research inside and outside academia, the first journal in Italy to try and bridge the gap between the culture of the feminist movement (with its emphasis on personal experience, spontaneity, the oral mode of communication) and "traditional" culture (the need for rigorous research, the stress on objectivity) in order to envisage a different relation between the subject and the object of knowledge. The themes of the monographic issues (22 until 1982, plus two more in 1984-85) often were the same being debated in the movement, for example: feminism and institutional politics (No. 4); solidarity, friendship and love between/among women (No. 11/12); reflections towards a feminist epistemology (No. 15) — but re-proposed in a historical perspective, at a more theoretical level and with a view to making known the research on those questions being carried on in other countries. 1986 marked the beginning of *DWF's* new series: a different formula, a different editorial board (though with some continuity), a different graphic project for a more open politico-theoretical journal, actively engaged in the re-evaluation of the feminist experience (and of the knowledge it has produced) as well as, or as a means for, the foundation of a "politics" of sexual difference. Particularly interesting are No. 1, which explores the potentialities of "I like it, I don't like it" as a cognitive category, and No. 4, on the concept of *appartenenza*, i.e., belonging, pertaining, being a part of — a sex, a gender, the feminist movement, an institution...

*Leggere donna*, as the title (Reading Woman) signals, is basically a reviews journal, a sort of Italian *Women's Review of Books*. It also includes: information and comments about the cultural activities of individual women and women's groups throughout Italy (i.e., exhibitions, shows, cycles of lectures, conferences and seminars); feature articles on political issues such as equal opportunities for women (or the case of Silvia Baraldini, imprisoned for

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"conspiracy" in the USA following a trial whose legality raises serious doubts); interviews with women (architects, film directors, scientists) actively and successfully engaged in the professions. Initially a quarterly (1980), after a short spell as a monthly in 1985-86, in 1987 *Leggere donna* became a bi-monthly.

*Memoria*, "Rivista di storia delle donne" (a journal of women's history). Founded in 1981 by a group of women, most of them academics, engaged in the fields of history, literary criticism, psychoanalysis and the social sciences, as a contribution to that re-vision of culture fostered, in Italy as elsewhere, by the feminist movement. Acknowledging the differences of approach and with a view to their potential value for a richer understanding of reality, the editorial board's effort has been that of presenting in each issue a varied range of articles, trying to create a dialogue of positions and therefore a/many potential reading/s which go beyond the sum of the parts. Thus far 22 monographic issues have been published, on, among others, the body (No. 3), experience, memory and narration (No. 8), clothes as goods and symbols (No. 11/12), aging (No. 16); particularly worth noting are also No. 19/20, on the feminist movement in Italy in the seventies, and No. 13, on women's groups in the eighties.

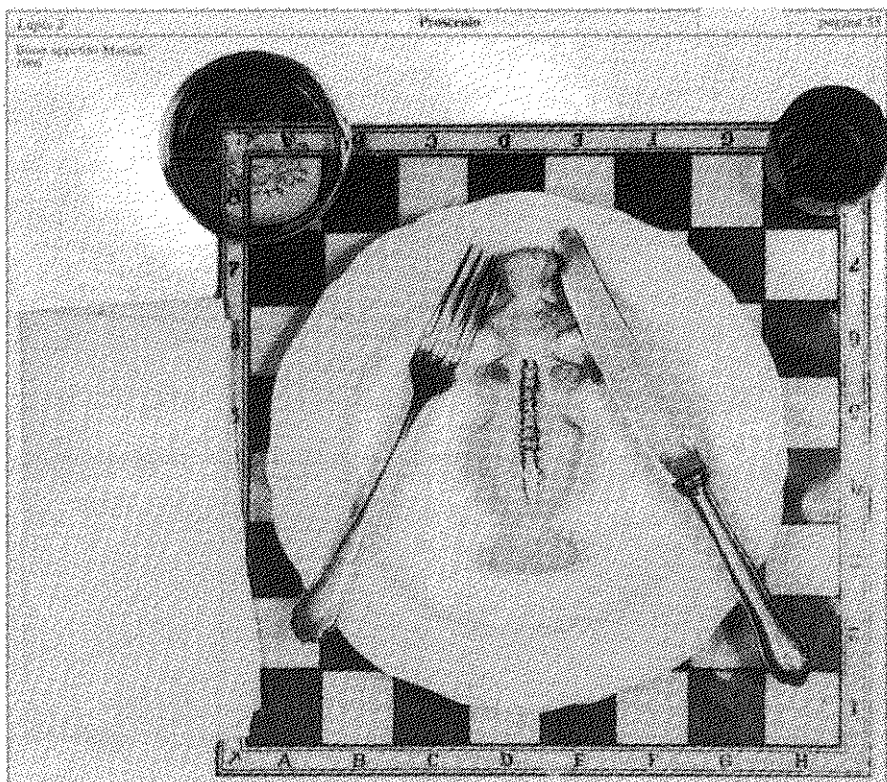
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A few books can be mentioned, which taken together would serve as a valuable

and diversified introduction to Italian feminism. *8 marzo. Storie, miti e riti della giornata internazionale delle donne* (Roma: Utopia, 1987): after an introductory chapter about the history of International Woman's Day, there follows a more detailed analysis of its significance in Italy from the end of the Second World War, to the high tide of feminism in the seventies, and up to the present. *Non credere di avere dei diritti* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1987): "Don't think you've got any rights" is a highly subjective and idiosyncratic history of the feminist movement in Italy from the point of view of a very influential group, the "Libreria delle Donne" in Milan. *Le donne al Centro* (Roma: Utopia, 1988): the proceedings of a conference held in 1986 on a peculiar Italian phenomenon — the existence, all over the country, of numerous women's groups (more than a hundred), which assuming a formalized legal structure have constituted themselves as separate and autonomous sites of sexually connotated research in order to gather, preserve, transmit, produce culture as/for women. *La ricerca delle donne* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1988): also the proceedings of a conference, held in 1987 about the state of feminist research, with very interesting sections on history, philosophy, psychoanalysis.

Paola Bono teaches English at the University of Rome. She is an editor of DWF, *Donnawoman-femme*.

*Buon appetito Marcel*, 1966  
published in LAPIS, March 1988



*Aspirina*, bi-monthly, subscription Lire 15,000 plus postage and handling, Lire 4,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Circolo Cooperativo S. Alermo, Libreria delle Donne, Via Dogana 2, Milano 20123.

*DWF (Donnawomanfemme)*, quarterly, subscription Lire 70,000 (surface mail), Lire 12,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from DWF, Cooperativa Utopia, Via San Benedetto in Arenula 6, Roma 00186.

*Fluttuaria*, bi-monthly, subscription Lire 70,000 (surface mail), Lire 8,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Circolo Culturale delle Donne Cicip & Ciclap, Via Gorani 90, Milano 20123.

*Lapis*, quarterly, subscription Lire 60,000 (surface mail), Lire 12,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Edizioni Caposile Srl, Via Caposile 2, Milano 20137.

*Leggere donna*, subscription, Lire 20,000 plus postage and handling, Lire 2,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Centro Documentazione Donna, Contrada della Rosa 14, Ferrara 44100.

*Manifesta*, quarterly, subscription Lire 28,000 (surface mail), Lire 5,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Cooperative Le Tre Ghinee, Via Posillipo 308, Napoli 80123.

*Memoria*, quarterly, subscription Lire 48,000 (Europe, surface mail) and Lire 60,000 (elsewhere, also surface mail), Lire 13,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Rosenberg & Sellier, Via Andrea Doria 14, Torino 10123. (But the editorial board is based in Via della Dogana Vecchia 5, Roma 00186.)

*Noi donne*, subscription Lire 90,000 (surface mail), Lire 5,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Cooperative Libera Stampa, Via Trinita dei Pellegrini 12, Roma 00186.

*Reti*, bi-monthly, subscription Lire 48,000 (surface mail), Lire 6,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Editori Riuniti Riviste, Via Serchio 9/11, Roma 00198.

*Sottasopra*, Lire 4,000 plus postage and handling per issue, from Gruppo n.4, Libreria delle Donne, Via Dogana 2, Milano 20123.



# Writing Women

## Feminist Periodicals

### An annotated bibliography of Canadian periodicals

#### English Canada

**Atlantis.** The oldest of the feminist academic periodicals, this is an interdisciplinary, bilingual publication with a liberal feminist perspective. Founded in 1975 by a collective including novelist and theorist Donna Smyth at Acadia University, the magazine has more recently been produced by a collective under Susan Clarke at Mount Saint Vincent University. While trying to balance the various disciplines, *Atlantis* leans more heavily toward the social sciences. It has published a special literary issue (4, No. 1, 1978) — the proceedings of the anglo-Canadian section of the Interamerican Women Writers Conference — and a special cultural issue (5, No. 1, 1979) featuring articles on women in music and the visual arts in Canada. While the essays are mainly empirical, *Atlantis* has published some with theoretical orientations such as the work of Jeanne Demers and Line McMurray on the semiotics of feminist manifestos. Book review section of Canadian and foreign books. Bi-annual. Subscription \$15.00 from: Mount Saint Vincent University, 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 2J6.

**Broadside.** This tabloid for activists in the women's movement, from a radical lesbian and socialist perspective under a collective headed by Phil Masters, first appeared in May 1979. It reports briefly on news items relevant to movement politics and offers in-depth analysis of issues of special importance to the Canadian Women's Movement, such as abortion law. International coverage has a special focus on women in the liberation movements of Central America. In recent

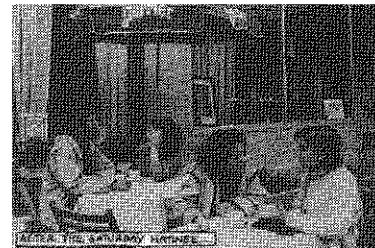
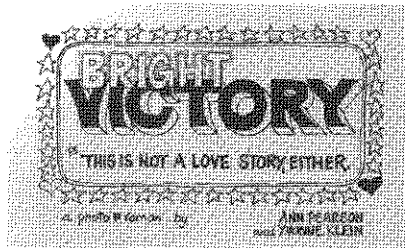
### Barbara Godard

"[A] woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write," wrote Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, a statement which echoes even today. While £500 per annum was sufficient for a writer of fiction then, it would not be nearly enough to support today's feminist journalist and would-be-editor. However, the principles of financial independence and freedom from domestic concerns that Woolf elaborates, remain the material conditions requisite for any feminist writing venture.

One of the constants of the feminist periodical across cultures, is that it exists outside the dominant mode of capitalist publishing, on the margins and in opposition both through its borderline position with respect to the marketplace and its commitment to contestatory ideology. Feminist periodicals are developed to further feminist ideologies, to create new circuits for disseminating knowledges and practices that seek to transform the feminine condition under which women have been subject to systemic oppression: they are not in the business of producing commodity-texts to maximize the profit of a corporation. Signifying practices which challenge the symbolic order, feminist

periodicals also establish counter-institutions that would validate new ways of knowing. Key to this challenge is their existence outside the dominant fiction of the marketplace as a determinant of value. Rather than engaging in a soft sell, feminists foreground their critical and transformative project. They self-consciously aim to produce a position for a specific reading subject, a feminist reader who engages in a critique of dominant reading and, by extension, publishing practices.

Its disinterest in the profit motive is paradoxically both the strength and the vulnerability of feminist publishing. As an alternative to the mainstream press and in exchange for their editorial independence, feminist periodicals enjoy none of the safety nets of dominant practices. Advertising, which is the main source of income for mass market publishing, is directed in women's magazines to produce woman as passive, decorative object, not as reasoning, critical subject. As such, feminist periodicals aiming at large audiences, rivaling such dominant institutions as *Good Housekeeping* and *Chatelaine*, cannot depend on the traditional sources of support — ads for make-up, high fashion, "feminine hygiene" and food — that in/form those



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dominant signifying practices on woman. Other advertisers refuse to place their ads in what they perceive as publications with a limited readership (single gender, that is). Ads from professional women, from women's bookstores, ads announcing women's cultural events, exchange ads with other feminist publications — small, plain, mostly verbal ads — grace the pages of Canadian feminist magazines like *Branching Out*, *Herizons* and *La vie en rose*, which, as almost monthlies, have adopted an illustrated format to appeal to large national and even, in the latter case, international audiences.

It is the format of this advertising which distinguishes these magazines from the glossy creations of marketing agencies, like *City Woman*, which aim at a similar feminist and professional audience, in an effort to recuperate and deflate the political impact of the feminist movement and serve an audience of working women up to the fashion advertising industry. One may find in the pages of these latter a familiar mixture of reporting on women's culture, life styles and profiles, even Eleanor Wachtel on politics ("May Brown, Defeated," *City Woman*, March/April 1979, 56-64) interspersed, however, with perfume, make-up and clothes ads. But one will not find updates on feminist issues such as control of reproductive rights, political rights of native women, or pornography, as in the feminist counterdiscourse.

The ease with which feminist discourse can be manipulated to turn an emancipatory discourse for women into an oppressive discourse on woman, is something of which feminists have long been conscious. The forces of appropriation as in the am-

biguous context when a feminist tries to direct a commercial enterprise — to the mutual dissatisfaction of both groups — are described in Doris Anderson's novel *Rough Layout*, a fiction that gives an ironic inventory of the sad lessons she learned when she tried to take *Chatelaine* down the feminist path in the 1970s while it remained within the fold of the MacLean-Hunter publishing empire. In the novel, Anderson details the compromise a feminist editor is obliged to make in such a context. She defends herself against the charges of one of her bosses ("I have to admit I have doubts about you from time to time. I really have to question myself about your judgement when you run some of the stuff you run on birth control, equal pay, liberalized divorce.")<sup>1</sup> by running the type of Gibson Girl fashion poses he prefers. On the other hand, after failing to establish for her superiors the value of professionalism as sufficient qualification for one of her editors, she asks the woman to wear a skirt or decent pair of slacks into the office so that she will blend better with the new decor which has been planned to make the magazine a trendsetter of taste. The blandness of *Chatelaine* in the 1980s is testimony to the recuperating force of the dominant institution. Just two years ago, the magazine published an article on post-feminism, an ironic post-mortem for Anderson.<sup>2</sup>

Autopsies are currently under way following the cessation in 1987 of two major Canadian feminist periodicals, *Herizons* and *La vie en rose*. *Herizons*, which billed itself as offering "women's news and feminist views," was published by a group of women in Winnipeg. Its original mandate was to engage with local feminist issues

months, often in the form of readers' letters, the paper has debated the question of feminism and racism as manifested in the recent struggle at Women's Press. There are regular substantial reviews of books by women and of films and plays produced on the Toronto stage. An annual review profiles women's films at the "Festival of Festivals." A monthly calendar of feminist and lesbian events in Toronto. Ten issues annually. Subscriptions \$19.00 from Box 494, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2T1.

*Canadian Journal of Feminist Ethics*. Begun in 1986, this academic journal aims to explore feminist meta-ethical theory. Ethics is broadly interpreted to include analyses of the ideology of rhetorical modes of address in feminist critical theory as well as of reproductive technologies. In Volume 2, No. 2 (Spring 1988) the proceedings of the CRIAW/ICREF feminist ethics conference were published. The following issues include an essay on Mary Daly's theory by Eileen Manion among other essays as well as a number of tightly argued book reviews. An issue is planned on the subject of myth. Eclectic, lively and a real bargain. Desktop publishing. Three times yearly. Subscription \$10.00 from: Kathleen Martindale, Women's Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4.

*Canadian Woman's Studies*. An interdisciplinary, academic, bilingual journal, directed at an audience of community colleges and high school teachers. It was founded in 1978 by Mair Verthy and Shelagh Wilkinson. The short, amply illustrated articles of this glossy publication are organized around themes and issues and are frequently prepared by guest editors. They have ranged from the proceedings of a York University conference on teaching women's studies, to women in science, the Nairobi conference, a tribute to Margaret Laurence, women and violence. Articles are mainly descriptive. Abstracts are provided in the other language. Fiction and poetry by women in both languages. Book review section of Canadian and foreign women's books. Quarterly. Subscription \$22.00 from: 212 Founders College, Downsview, Ontario, M3J 1P3.

*Fireweed*. Founded in 1978 by poets Gay Allison, Charlene Sheard, Betsy Warland and visual artist Lynne Fernie, this is a general cultural magazine with a strong mandate to analyse questions of race and class. Organised around thematic issues, it has to its credit special numbers on women of colour, native women, two numbers on class, as well as on subjects such as the theatre, language and humour. The magazine mixes creative contributions by artists in different media with analytical texts from eclectic feminist positions. In recent years, there has been an overlap between members of the *Fireweed* collective with that of the Women's Press which has a Marxist-feminist analysis. Small book review section. Quarterly. Subscriptions \$12.00 from: Box 279,

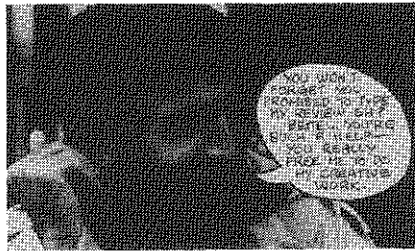


Station B, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2W2.

*(f)lip.* "A newsletter of feminist innovate writing," as it accurately announces itself, the most exciting feminist literary magazine (others include *A Room of One's Own*) was started two years ago to circulate feminist writing stimulated by contemporary feminist theory, especially the work of Words and students of the West Word summer school, one of the concrete institutional changes produced by the national "Women and Words" conference of 1983. Editors Betsy Warland, Angela Hryniuk, Sandy Duncan and Erica Hendry are supported by contributing regional editors. Saucy and stimulating in appearance — hot pink paper for volume 1, turquoise for volume 2 — the newsletter challenges literary conventions and discursive norms. These are poems that look nothing like the poetry we are accustomed to seeing, using all margins of the page as top, as in Marlene Nourbese-Phillip's "She Breaks Her Tongue." Contributors include emerging Canadian writers like Di Brandt and international poets from Australia and Chile, for example. A short selection of the poet's work is published along with "working notes," discussing the poetic process. As well, there is news about upcoming feminist literary events across the country, letters and debates, and the occasional essay or review. Exciting writing. Quarterly. Subscription \$12.00 from: 2533 W. 5th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V6K 1S9.

*Kinesis.* This tabloid, first published in 1972, serves the Vancouver region with brief items of local, regional, national and international news about movement issues from radical lesbian and socialist perspectives. Includes reporting on cultural events and feminist cultural personalities, book, film and theatre reviews, as well as a monthly bulletin and classified section. Ten times yearly. Subscription \$17.50 from: Suite 301, 1720 Grant Street, Vancouver, B.C., V5L 2Y6.

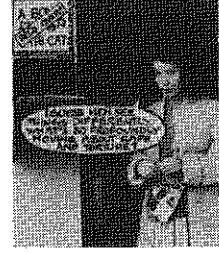
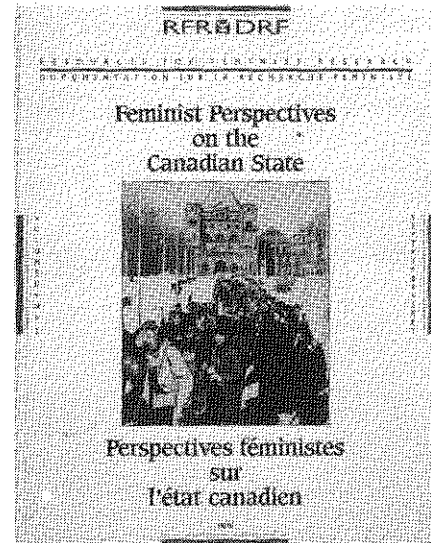
*Our Lives.* Founded in March 1986, this newspaper for black women with national and international content has included among its editorial collective, figures like socialist theorist and poet Dionne Brand, poet Afua Cooper and musician Faith Nolan. It presents short action-oriented articles on such questions as domestic violence and the need for shelters for black women, problems with racism regarding staff policy at the Shirley Samaroo Centre for battered immigrant women, needs for affordable housing, the exploitation of black women who are illegal immigrants. There is also poetry and fiction, some from oral traditions, short book reviews, and position pieces on black feminism. A voice for an active and vocal section of the Toronto feminist scene where feminist theory is mostly produced by creative writers. Quarterly. Subscription \$15.00 from: Box 248, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2S8.



and to this end it published bilingually. Later, it aimed at a national audience and although keeping articles of local interest on such groups as the Nellie McClung theatre collective, addressed general issues like the rise of REAL Women, the role of women in the Canadian Labour Congress, Lauri Conger, feminist popular musician, and the boycott of South African products.<sup>3</sup> But in this, *Herizons* was too successful and it attracted the ire of right-wing women who sought the support of the dominant institution to silence this challenging voice. Financial failure was the ostensible difficulty the magazine could not surmount. Lacking an advertising revenue like other feminist publications, *Herizons* had escaped the cruel realities of the unbalanced budget through the aid of government grants. However, this made it equally vulnerable to the dominant order. The rise of conservatism led to a letter-writing lobby by women's groups like REAL Women against the magazine's subsidy from the Secretary of State. Without it, *Herizons* could not survive past its fifth birthday. That government was at odds with feminist signifying practices has long been clear to members of collectives applying for such aid. In its first applications to the Canada Council under its support for periodicals programme, the Toronto-based quarterly *Fireweed* was judged to have too varied contents to meet the criteria for a good literary magazine. The institutional desire for purity, for upholding the law of genre, has continued to position the hybrid publishing ventures of feminism on the margins.

In the case of *La vie en rose*, published by a group in Montréal, failure was an even greater surprise, though also, paradoxically, a result of its strengths. Indeed, it had been heralded as an amazing feminist success, a magazine which published stimulating articles on a variety of feminist issues attracting both popular and academic support. Feminist scholars came

from France to write theses on this phenomenon! But, as Martine d'Amour writes in investigating its demise, the editors recognized in retrospect that they had lived for seven years on "love and water," while neglecting the commercial aspects of publishing.<sup>4</sup> While they had been rich in ideas, they had been poor in capital and had not carried out systematic subscription campaigns using the natural networks at their disposal, feminist and trade union networks. When the crunch came and they needed to raise the subscription list by 10,000 to assure a monthly print run of 28,000, the editors had only \$15,000 to finance a campaign. To return to a black and white publication aimed at a smaller audience seemed too high a price to pay for the editors who had created the magazine of their dreams. To reorganize the audience that they have no doubt is there, would take initiative and energy, neither of which Francine Pelletier, a founding editor, has to spare. Women her age are hustling to earn a living or overwhelmed by the responsibility of small children.







Many are also engaged in political action. The total commitment necessary to start a feminist magazine would have to come from a younger generation. *La vie en rose* was in fact the production of a generation of feminist activists who are now nearing 40.

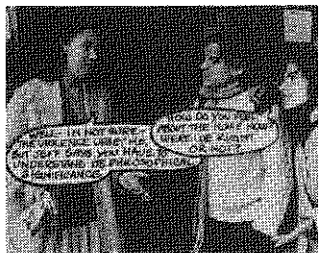
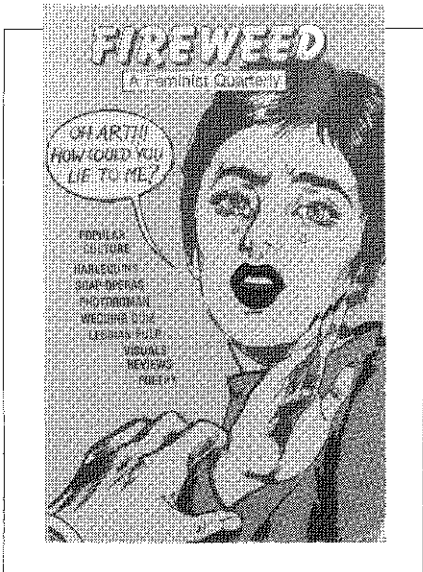
While the conflicting codes of feminist ideology and the dominant publishing industry have occasioned practices which make feminist publications financially vulnerable, the impact of chronic under-financing and the consequent constant scramble for money is greater given another divergent practice of feminist periodicals, namely that of the collective editorial board. Instead of a hierarchically organized body of experts hired to attend to specialized activities, feminist periodicals are run by collectives whose major commitment is to an ideological position. Consequently, they rarely have a business manager with financial expertise to handle a crisis when it arises. More significantly in the long run is the fact that members of these collectives are unsala-

ried. They offer their editorial work on a volunteer basis, re/producing the traditional characteristics of women's work as a "labour of love." From the early 19th century, the question of professionalism was raised with respect to women writers whose amateur status positioned them outside the dominant publishing industry increasingly engaged in the selling of commodities in the form of intellectual property. "Women artists are all amateurs," wrote John Stuart Mill, aligning women with the negative in the binary opposition amateur/professional which was important in the development of bourgeois ideology, professionalization coinciding with the evolution of industrial capitalism to its corporate form.<sup>5</sup>

Refused the professionalism they acquired after much struggle as they now take their distance from the dominant institutions, contemporary feminist editors require rewards of other sorts in the tangible forms of feminist solidarity and the ability to communicate one's vision and influence feminist thought. All feminist collectives experience tensions brought on by the rapid development of feminist thought which has frequently taken feminists into divergent theoretical trajectories from similar starting points. The last six months have witnessed upheavals in the policy of Women's Press in Toronto with a consequent changing of the guard that has seen one group eliminated from the collective by another group, which has taken charge on an explicitly anti-racist platform. Currently, much discussion in the feminist press is being addressed to the interrelated issues, in this case, the institutional racism of feminist groups which thus inadvertently reproduce the dominant order and the political processes of feminist collectives which need to find new mechanisms for arriving at decisions in a group where all members must concur in the majority decision or when consensus rules the decision-making process.

*Resources for Feminist Research.* This bilingual periodical is oriented toward an international community of feminist academics. An important focus has been the provision of research tools. Consequently, the periodical runs bibliographies of the contents of international feminist periodicals, statements by academics of on-going research, requests for information on research topics, an annual book review issue, as well as special numbers organized by guest editors around the current issues in various disciplines or fields of research, such as women and development, women and the law, philosophy, women's writing from Québec, immigrant women, handicapped women, women and language, lesbians. Founded by Margrit Eichler as the *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women* in 1972, the focus is largely on the social sciences and empirical issues despite the presence of literary scholars and writers on the everchanging editorial collectives. The feminist theoretical perspective is eclectic, mainly liberal or radical. Quarterly. Subscription \$20.00 from: OISE, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6.

*Tessera.* Founded after the Dialogue conference in 1981 with the aim of building bridges between the innovative theoretical and experimental writing of Québec feminists and English-Canada and of giving greater visibility to experimental feminist writing and theory from anglophone Canada, this bilingual magazine is the only theoretically oriented feminist publication in Canada. Working mainly from the poststructuralist feminist perspective associated with "new French feminism," *Tessera* has appeared annually since 1984 as a special issue of another literary periodical (*Canadian Fiction Magazine, La nouvelle barre du jour, CVII*): articles are printed both in the original language of composition and in translation into the language of publication of the host journal. Formal experimentation in the writing of creative or theoretical texts is encouraged. In fact the blurring of boundaries between these two genres is the rule, a textual practice which was the subject of No. 3 (1986) on "Fiction/theory." Other topics which have been the focus of individual numbers include "Reading as Writing/Writing as Reading," "Contemporary Feminist Criticism in Canada and Quebec," "Conversations/Dialogues." Contributors include Québec writers Nicole Brosard, Louky Bersianik, anglo-Canadian writer/theorists Lola Tostevin, Smaro Kambourell and Donna Smyth, and theorists Suzanne Lamy and Lorraine Weir. Forthcoming topics include "Translation" and "Gender and Narrative." The editorial collective comprises celebrated feminist writers Daphne Marlatt and Gail Scott as well as several academics. *Tessera* has recently become an independent publication and will appear twice yearly. Subscription \$18.00 from: Department of English, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., V5A 1S6.



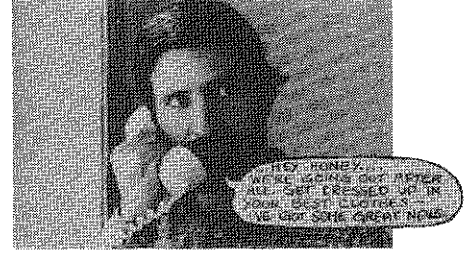
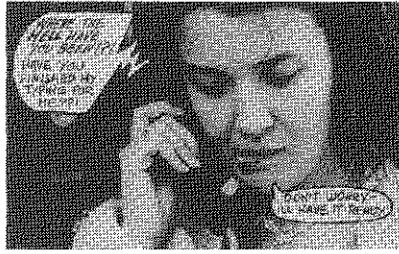
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Québec

*Arcade*. This feminist literary magazine, under the direction of Claudine Bertrand, was originally (1982) the mouthpiece for a creative writing class but now contributors include such well-known Québec feminist writers of poetry and fiction as Louise Cotnoir, Louise Dupré, Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, Anne-Marie Alonzo. Each number is organized around a different topic, such as "feminist eroticism" (13) or "inner landscapes" (15). There are also book reviews of Québec feminist literary productions and the occasional essay on literary theory. Each issue contains an interview with a well-known francophone writer such as Anne Hébert (15) or Chantal Chawaf (14). In light of the invisibility of women's writing, the editor tells us, it is necessary to keep a permanent archive of women's writing. This will advance "the aim of reconquering the space that rightfully belongs to women" (12, 3). At \$10.00 for a year's subscription of two issues, this periodical is a bargain from: Diffusion parallèle, 815 rue Ontario Est, Montréal, H2L 1P1.

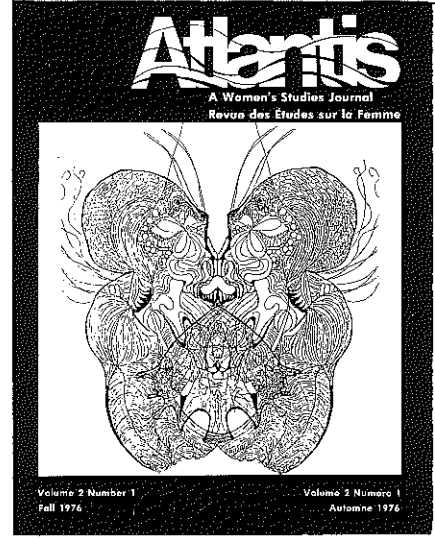
*La Gazette des femmes*. This is an action-oriented, glossy magazine with lots of pictures, easy to read, intended for feminist activists. It is very helpful, however, for those who want to stay informed about current feminist politics in Québec. It is published by the Council on the Status of Women of Québec. It seems more like the publications of various women's umbrella groups like NAC's *Feminist Action* than the bureaucratic memos sent out by Ontario's Status of Women's office, for example. A recent issue included a "dossier" on pay equity, an analysis of the political consequences of the judgement on the non-constitutionality of abortion, an outline of the federal government's project for tax reform and its implications for women, a presentation of facts about breast cancer and an interview with feminist activist Francine McKenzie about new reproductive technology. The same month (Vol. 10, No. 1, May-June 1988), the regular biographical column featured a testimony on incest, and that on world affairs presented an article on Salvadorian women. As well, there were the usual letters, notice board of feminist events, book and film reviews. Bimonthly. Free. Just write to: La Direction des communications du Conseil du statut de la femme, 8 rue Cook, No. 300, Québec, G1R 57J.

*La parole mèteque*. This "magazine of feminist renewal" as it is subtitled, is the liveliest feminist publication in Québec. Under the energetic direction of Ghila Benesty Sroka, it aims to enlarge the scope of feminist debate in terms of both issues and audience. This periodical specifically engages the problematics of difference within feminism, those crucial differences of ethnicity and race. An entire issue (4, Winter 1987) was devoted to the women of Haiti and Haitian women in Montréal, while another (6, Sum-

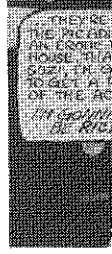


While their "querrelle de chapelle" became a court battle for control of assets, as with the French periodical *Questions féministes*, *Les têtes de pioches* in Québec floundered over a theoretical split. The writers and journalists (including Nicole Brossard, France Théoret, Michèle Jean) who founded this first feminist tabloid on radical grounds, attempted to expand by each inviting a friend of similar persuasion to join. However, the increased number made more complex the negotiation of differences of point of view. The new group wanted to take the periodical in a Marxist direction. The founders took charge of the group again and published a few more issues. By then, they knew they had had a determining influence on the direction taken by feminism in Québec, so the impetus for continuing the review diminished proportionately to the degree of its success.

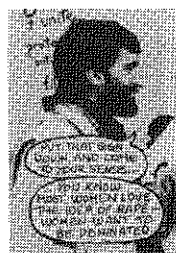
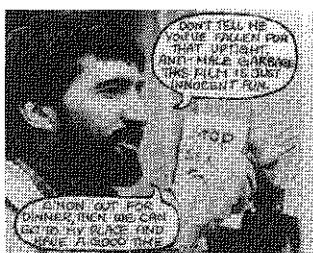
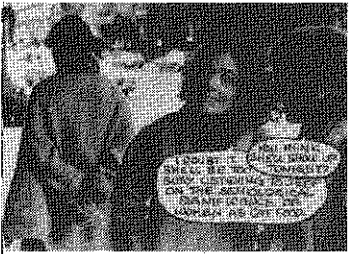
Although some feminist periodicals in Canada and Québec are disappearing, others continue to be launched. Currently, according to the Directory of Canadian Feminist Periodicals published for the Third International Feminist Bookfair in Montréal, there are more than 50 feminist periodicals appearing regularly in this country, of which some 47 are profiled in the directory. These shifts reflect the inevitable burnout, but also the development of feminist theory as it addresses new questions, especially the complex ones of the difference(s) within feminism, those of class and race which destabilize the universalizing claims of liberal or separatist feminism with their focus on the unitary subject, Woman. A current active area of new publications is to be found among ethnic and cultural minorities who are seeking to establish a more visible presence within the cultural institution. In Toronto, *Our Lives* from the black community, *Diva* from the South East Asian community, and *Tiger Lily*, produced by women of colour, have begun publication



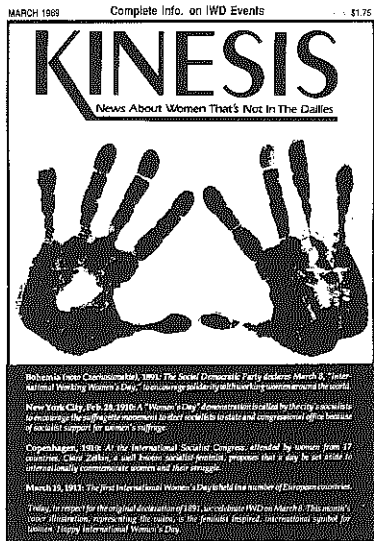
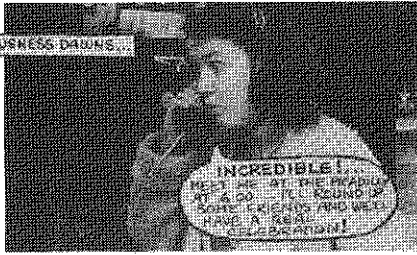
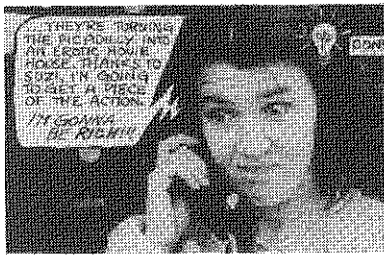
in the last year, while *la Parole Mèteque* has emerged in the same period in Montréal to give voice to a variety of cultural communities who use French as their vehicular language. There is also an increasing institutionalization of feminist periodicals into a complete but parallel system of diffusion as the feminist community sets up more instruments to make access to this alternate press easier. Under the heading "The Feminist Connection," *Broadside* published a list of Canadian feminist presses, periodicals and bookstores in its 1988 summer issues. CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women) has established an Index for feminist periodicals which is entering its fifth year of operation at the University of Alberta. Toronto is the base for the Canadian Women's Indexing Group which is producing a retrospective index to Canadian feminist periodicals and a bilingual feminist thesaurus with the aid of an SSHRCC grant for research tools. The relative availability of these information sources



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*Impulse* and *Fuse*. The latter has a number of feminists on the editorial collective. It regularly features articles on feminists active in popular music, video, films, the plastic arts and writing. Especially noteworthy is the regular chronicle of Marlene Nourbese-Philip who has been working out a feminist analysis of black women's writing. In Québec too, the most theoretically oriented feminist writing appears in *La (nouvelle) barre du jour* which has at least one feminist issue a year. Editors have included noted feminist writers Nicole Brossard, founding editor, Louise Cotnoir and Louise Dupré, and currently, Line McMurray. Extended book reviews from a theoretically informed perspective are to be found in *Spirale*, a journal of postmodern culture, which was founded by feminists Gail Scott and France Théoret. Later the editorial collective was presided by Suzanne Lamy and currently by Sherry Simon.

Barbara Godard is a teacher, translator and editor of *Gynocritic/Gynocritique and Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Quebec Women Writers*.

NOTES

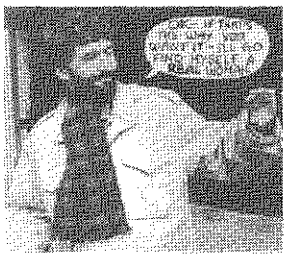
1. Doris Anderson, *Rough Layout* (Toronto: Seal, 1982), p. 149.
2. Bronwyn Drainie, "Meet the Postfeminist Woman," *Chataleine*, September 1986, pp. 59 and 95.
3. *Horizons* 4, no. 5 (July/August 1986).
4. Martine d'Amours, "De quoi *La vie en rose* est-elle morte?" *La Gazette des femmes X*, no. 3 (septembre-octobre 1988), pp. 20-22. D'Amours was a member of the editorial collective of the magazine during its final year.
5. J.S. Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 21:340. Cited in N.N. Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 41.

makes unnecessary an exhaustive survey of these periodicals in the present context. The range of Canadian feminist periodicals is great: from *Maternal Health News* published in Vancouver; *Women and Environments* and *Women's Education des femmes* coming out of Toronto; to *Informelles*, newsbulletin of the association Pluri-elles in St. Boniface, Manitoba and *Optimist*, newsbulletin appearing since 1973 to bring up to date information on feminist issues to the women of the Yukon. Formats vary from tabloid to academic journal. Two of the very influential early Quebec periodicals of the 1970s, *Québécoises déboutte!* and *Les têtes de pioche*, eventually became books in re-editions published by Les Editions Remue Ménage (1982).

Aside from the literary field, which is the most developed in the feminist alternate press, the best feminist analysis of culture and the visual arts is to be found in general cultural magazines, especially in the Toronto-based *Parallogramme*,

mer 1988) had an article on the Chinese women in the Montréal Chinese community. The tabloid format with many pictures, numerous interviews, testimonies by writers and jargon-free language, all reach out to a non-specialist readership. Its focus on culture, mainly on literary questions, prevents it from stepping into the shoes of *La vie en rose*. Organized around a special theme, such as diaries (no. 6, summer 1988) or the Third International Feminist Bookfair (no. 7, Fall 1988), the magazine includes contributions by such internationally well-known writers as Nicole Brossard, Dacia Maraini, Marguerite Duras and Marilyn French, and five little-known "new Canadian" women painters (all in No. 7). Nor is *La parole mèteque* afraid of controversy. Its coverage of the International Book Fair included a statement under its "Tribune Libre" column from Donna Kate Rushin on behalf of the black women attending the conference on ways to eliminate the eurocentrism and racism in the structures of the book fair. Another from Madeleine Gagnon, entitled "Rereading *Retailles*," protests against the exclusive dominance of the feminist scene and feminist literary structures in Québec by the radical lesbian faction which advocates separatism in what Gagnon calls a "battle between the sexes." Quarterly. Subscriptions \$12.00 from: 5005 Chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine, No. 12, Montréal, H3W 1M5.

*Recherches Féministes*. The newest feminist periodical is published under the direction of Huguette Dagenais by GREMF, the women's research group at Laval University. It aims to be an interdisciplinary scholarly journal serving the international francophone community, an "intellectually lively and socially useful" periodical. Issues will be organized around a theme, in the first instance, education, with articles by historian Nadia Fahmy-Eid and sociologist Isabelle Lasvergnes, and by specialists in education from Québec as well as from Spain. Book reviews are oriented to this theme. The issue also contains a bibliography of Canadian and Québec publications on women and education since 1975. As well, there is a research report on a rural development project and a document, a text by celebrated 19th century Québec journalist, Françoise. The focus promises to be more empirical than theoretical. Twice yearly. Subscription \$18.00 individual, \$16.00 student, from: GREMF, Pavillon Charles De Konick, No. 2463, Université Laval, Cité Universitaire, Québec, G1K 7P4.



Visuals originally published in FIREWEED #11, Summer 1981.

border/lines fall 1989



# SPEAKING WITH

The text given here is part of an ongoing attempt on my part to understand testimony given by Haida woman Diane Brown before His Honour, Justice Harry MacKay (here called Kilsli), in B.C. Supreme Court, November 6th, 1985, in the matter of the application by Frank Beban Logging and Western Forest Products Ltd. for an injunction to prohibit Haida picketing of logging roads on Lyell Island, South Moresby, in Haada Gwaii. The injunction was granted two days later, and 72 Haida, including Diane Brown, her 80 year-old father Watson Price and other Haida Elders, were subsequently arrested, tried and convicted for continuing their blockade.

The civil disobedience action was part of the Haida struggle to protect their traditional homelands and have aboriginal rights and entitlement recognized before logging completely denudes the Islands, South Moresby, as those who followed the story will know, has since been declared a national park, although the aboriginal entitlement issue has not been addressed.

Justice MacKay, in a remarkable departure from conventional courtroom practice, allowed the Haida to give testimony in traditional oral fashion, without lawyer intercession, and it is this element which drew me to the text. Working from the printed transcript (for which I thank the Council of Haida Nations) I attempt to "hear" Diane Brown's words in a way that might, hopefully, give them meaning in the white, Eurocanadian context of this magazine.

The reader might situate her or himself, in approaching this text, as a kind of eavesdropper on an ongoing interethnic, intercultural conversation. Part of the problem of Eurocanadian-aboriginal communication and discourse is the question of place: how, and therefore where, does the discourse happen? On the printed page, the oral, which is essential to the Haida way of speaking, is rendered mute. On the other hand, if the text that oral testimony produces does not get "out," beyond the specific location where the words happen, its political potency is reduced.

So, in resituating my text, I present it as a kind of "dialogue," and maybe, hopefully, a "duet" of voices. The more I work with this text, the more it becomes clear to me that it will ultimately only work in an oral, performance, perhaps theatrical context. And ultimately that's what I will write it for.



# DIANE BROWN

## A Text-in-Progress

*Norbert Ruchsaa*

In the meantime, the reader here will perhaps collaborate with me and overhear as much meaning as we can now make. In my original presentation of this work, in the context of a university communications programme, I said I wanted to approach Diane's testimony "shipwrecked and naked," aware, in other words, of the kind of research and exegetical techniques Europeans have imposed on local texts, but casting these off in favour of a more direct kind of speaking. The university, amazingly enough, listened to me, and so I'm encouraged now to go out a little further into the world with my (and Diane's) project.

The section of *Speaking With Diane Brown* presented here is a section of the longer work-in-progress: it focuses on the specific theme of translation/transformation as the dual or twin process by which transcultural meaning might be made, even in something as austere and restrictive as a Canadian courtroom (and/or magazine text). My point of departure was my own identity as an immigrant Canadian: I approach Diane Brown's text as an immigrant facing an Aboriginal inhabitant. Diane's voice is given in a separate typeface as a mark of respect for this asymmetry. The piece begins with an initial question from Justice MacKay:

*Mrs. Brown, I understand you want to speak in the Haida way as well.*

Yes, I do. Kilsli, Kilsligana, Kiljadgana, Taaxwilaas. Your Honour, chiefs, ladies held in high esteem, friends. I thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I was aware that I could get a lawyer, but I feel you lose if you go through another person.

My first language is Haida. My second language is English. Therefore I can express myself better in English. I feel through another person, a lawyer, they also speak another language, and I would have lost what I hope to help Kilsli understand and feel.

The Haida have asked His Honour, Mr. Justice Harry MacKay, at the start of the hearing whether they may call him "Kilsli," the Haida appellation for a respected, honoured, important person. The strategy here is quite simple: the project is to transform "The Queen Charlotte Islands" (a place) into "Haada Gwaii" (another place) via the medium of a third place (the courtroom), then it is strategic to transform "His Honour," the "respected person" in the discourse of that third place, into a respected personage (title) of the place one is trying to achieve or construct. The "Courtroom" thus becomes not (or not only) a place where Canadian law and justice (read: power; authority) are rendered and reinforced, but also a place where Haida transformation (of persons into their masks, their "naming") can occur. By "naming" Kilsli, Diane Brown makes room in something as alien as a Canadian courtroom for a Haida way of speaking.

A person-place relation is offered, in which person ("His Honour/Kilsli") is allowed to serve as a metaphor, or, more properly, act metonymically for place — i.e., to be privileged in a way that (I suspect) is counter to conventional Haida discursive practice where place, *Haada Gwaii*,

**In denying the Haida a way of legitimating their past in their own culture and language, Canada compels them to imagine one.**

would normally be the reigning metaphor and persons — "the people," Haada Laas — emanate from there.

Note then how the other (Haida) respected persons present are brought into the discourse and aligned with Kilsli; made "like" him (and he like them) by contiguity. Kilsli is then, in a reverse or reciprocating gesture, reintroduced as "Your Honour" — to secure his own, independent agency in the discourse, I presume, and at the same time bound this agency within the now established convention of "Kilsli." "Chiefs" then comes in to buttress this: "Chiefs" is white man's language for respected Indians in the same way that "Your Honour" is white man's language for Kilsli. Thus, syntactically, Diane "respects" the classification "white man's language" while at the same time requesting that it respect the classificatory convention established by her initial salutatory string of Haida namings.

"Ladies held in high esteem" appears at first glance like an enigma. It breaks both court convention and, by its placement in the "English" part of the salutation, suggests it is not normal Haida usage either — at least not in this form/translation. On the other hand, Haida traditions are matrilineally received, and I think it is the attempt to put this idea on the agenda — and specifically on the English agenda —

that is behind this gesture. Ladies held in high esteem directly confronts the male hegemony associated with Canadian court procedure.

Diane then thanks the assembled persons named for the opportunity to speak. The point to note here is that, in opposition to court etiquette, where the judge alone confers the right to speak, it is here requested of and felt to be given by the entire assembled community. A listenership and a co-authorship is proposed, and a trans-cultural, tran-sethnic/linguistic community is hypothesized in which Diane's discourse can "take place."

She knew she could get a lawyer, but feels "you lose if you go through another person." In view of the metaphors Diane will employ later in her speaking, it's worth taking this construction quite literally. You — not "I," or "one," but the generic second person — lose by going through another person. The image given is a physical one of being born — the only time in life you literally "go through" another person — and Diane simply states here, I think, that she does not wish to be born through the words of a male. If the lawyer's words are the normal route (body; "code") by which one travels from one's place (*Haada Gwaii*) to this place of speaking (the court), and if speaking is a bit like being born, then "lawyer" (man) is the wrong vehicle. "You" — all the assembled — lose something, i.e., your collective and personal body. It is impossible to be born (move from one plane of speaking/being to another) in this manner.

My first language is Haida. My second language is English.

This phrase addresses me as an immigrant Canadian. I too have a first language and a second that I learned here. Except I usually phrase it another way: "My first language was my European one, but now it's English because I can speak it better." Linguistically, thus, I have arrived at a different "place" with my second language than has Diane. This is only to be expected, in view of the fact I am an immigrant and she is not. For me the "here" of language is "English" (better second), and I reveal myself therefore as a displaced European, rather than an indigenous person for whom the "here" is still Haida (first language).

Therefore I can express myself better in English.

So a turnaround of my normal construction. What I hear in it is the gap, the silence that occurred in Haida culture when children were shipped (right up to the present generation) to residential schools and forbidden to speak their language. This strategy of the church and the Canadian state of annihilating the culture by cutting it off at its roots, at its vocal cords, so to speak, is a form of cultural genocide not often discussed or understood in the Canadian body politic. Diane expresses its pain in the syntax of her sentences. In the gap between "first" and the

"better second" languages speaks the silence of someone whose language has been once removed from their body — and for whom memory thus becomes always partly an act of imagination, of reinventing.

The idea of the second or "other" language is then curled around to include the other person, the lawyer, who is normally the keeper or speaker of second languages (and second guesses about language) in this place. What's notable here is the movement of agency in the sentence — from "I" through "another person" to "a lawyer" to "they," and then back to "I" and "Kilsli" who are the true "dialogic" partners (to use Bakhtin's term). What I think the sentence means is that even though English is a second language for her, Diane, into which she must translate from Haida, this is okay because lawyers translate too, from the street to the courtroom.

Thus the idea of regional/spacial separateness of languages, both "first" and "second," is maintained, while the paradigm of translation — between places and between languages — is acknowledged and upheld. Diane Brown constructs a link between herself and "lawyer" by this method in order to gain the authority to speak for herself in the courtroom. This two languages theme becomes a key one in my analysis.

Note then the important connection between understanding and feeling — which for Europeans, of course, are separate moments: one hypothesizes separate "selves" in order to appropriate them. For her project to succeed, Diane Brown must reconnect these in the construction of "Kilsli": in order to make him understand, she must also make him feel. It is in this sense that it is vital she not "lose" herself.

Since the beginning of time — I have been told this through our oral stories — since the beginning of time the Haidas have been on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The Charlottes were named thus in July 1786, by Captain George Dixon, after his ship the *Queen Charlotte*, which traded sea otter furs in the area for the King George's Sound Company.

That was our place, given to us.

It's unclear here by whom the "place" is given. Its placement directly after the English nominalization makes it ambiguous. The Haida creation story says that *Haada Laas*, the people, were born from a clam shell discovered by Raven on Sandspit Beach.

For a good discussion of the "time immemorial," "beginning of time" theme, see Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams*. He discusses there the conflicting evidence, scientific vs. mnemonic, and the resulting stories, those told by scientists vs. those told by oral historians, and how objectionable European theorizing on this subject is to many coast native people. He indicates clearly that the Bering Sea migration the-



ory, proposed by white archeologists and prehistorians, is seen by many aboriginal coast people as just another in a string of discursive efforts by which white Eurocanadians try to "assimilate" Indians into the former's immigrant culture and thereby deny them the very idea of aboriginal rights or title. More importantly and cruelly, it takes away the native peoples' right to speak about their own past — to tell their own creation story — and in this aspect participates in the cutting of vocal cords mentioned earlier. Another way of putting this is to say that, in denying the Haida a way of legitimating their past in their own culture and language, Canada compels them to imagine one.

We were put on the islands as caretakers of this land.

I think this construction demonstrates the almost seamless join (to use a Christian metaphor here) the Haida have achieved between ancient local and imported Christian traditions. The idea of "caretakers" is a key value here. It offers a bridge by which to travel or translate between the two languages, cultures, localities under discussion. It welcomes the European reader/listener.

Here is the first time in Diane's text that an action is proposed which directly connects self and place in time. Note then how "history," European time, enters in the immediate next sentence:

Approximately 200 years ago foreigners came to that land.

"This land" has changed to "that land" in one sentence, concomitant with the arrival of the "foreigners." A first meeting. A first transformation of time directly into speech, one might say.

The Haida are very hospitable people. The people came.

Clock time begins to interact with narrative/myth time. Note the tense change: already we don't know who is coming and going here. The Haida "are" in the perpetual present, but "the people" came in historical time. A translation/transformation, occurs — not only between people and languages but between orders of time. The metaphor is that of the Haida people coming to the beach, then as now, to greet the foreigners who are also coming (who came and are still coming); a joining-in-the-place-of-the-act-of-coming (impossible to say in English). This is a welcoming ceremony in which one people is transformed (syntactically here) into the body of another — in an attempt to join and become "the" people. "Hospitable" is the key value here.

They were welcomed. We shared.

This close musical movement of pronouns brings "we" and "they" together in vocal alignment without forfeiting independent agency. The strategy is rhythmic

(as opposed to syntactical). The balance of passive and active voice has the effect of moving the pronouns, the "selves," even closer together. "Welcoming" and "sharing" are the key joining ideas.

They told us that perhaps there is a better way to live, a different religion, education in schools. The Haida tried this way. The potlatches were outlawed. In many schools my father attended in Kokalitza, the Haida language was not allowed to be spoken. He was punished if he used his language. To this day, Watson Price, my father, understands every word of the Haida language, but he doesn't speak it.

is a body split in two.

Watson Price speaks only English (second language) but understands (hears) every word of Haida (first language). He says, and his daughter says, "Watson Price," but he hears, and I imagine she hears, his (unspoken) Haida name. (She does not mention it, speak it, out of respect for that silence, I think, substituting the generic "my father.") This rupture between speaking and listening self (between word and its absence; between a name and its unravelling) corresponds, on the level of physiology, I think, to the rupture on the geographical plane between "Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C., Canada," and *Haada Gwaii*. One hears one place and speaks another: one speaks one name and



So the two-language theme again. Haida and English. Watson Price, my father: note the naming sequence. One hears a silence where the other name should be, the Haida Watson Price. Note how closely the naming-language question is linked with the outlawing of the potlatch. Potlatches were the places where you received/were given names: with their outlawing, naming is silenced. Language is outlawed at its base. The vocal cords which connect self with place are torn.

This silence is, on the one hand, that between a father and a daughter, a gap between bodies connected through kinship, and, on the other, a silence within the man, Watson Price, himself.

I want to listen closely to this silence. When I do, it opens and I discover that it is in fact two men I am listening to. Or it

hears another. This is another way of conceptualizing the place/self dichotomy.

So the people came.

Ambiguity here about who "the people" are at this point. Or rather: we are transported back to the welcoming ceremony described earlier, by which the boundary between the two types of "people" was negotiated and made fluid. Bodies blending into each other in the place of meeting and coming, etc. It is interesting to note in this connection how the original Haida structuring of society into two "sides" or moieties which "meet" during the potlatch is echoed in Diane's rendering of this first contact story. Potlatch meetings were the locations/places where separate "kinds" of persons (one is

Parade through Vancouver after the arrival of the "Save South Moresby National Caravan," March, 1986. Photo by Martin Roland

almost tempted to think of them as species) met, talked, danced, gave gifts and therewith negotiated social, spiritual and economic boundaries and continuities.

In reiterating this structure here, Diane Brown attempts to place the Contact Story into the larger aboriginal frame of "time immemorial," I think. She accommodates the "newcomers" within the tradition. She welcomes them, we might say, into her speaking.

We tried their way. Their language.  
Their education. Their way of worship.

Historical time is on the horizon now and the effort is to accommodate it (welcome it into) a native (i.e., local) way of speaking. One could formulate it this way: with the arrival of the Europeans in her narrative, Diane Brown needs a way of structuring their narrative time — i.e., "history" — into the aboriginal narrative time — i.e., "myth." She doesn't want to continue telling a story about "time immemorial" unless she can incorporate clock time into it.

Watson Price, because he accepted and welcomed the language of the foreigners into his world, his being (his ears and his voice), became unable to tell himself the story of how he came to live in *Haada Gwaii*. Thus he is also unable to tell the story of *how he still lives there/here*. He is cut away from his place and his time, and functions, in the portrait Diane provides of him, as a kind of mute inhabiting an alien world. It is this mute "otherness" that Diane wishes to undo with her current speaking.

I might state it this way: if Diane wishes to keep the "myth of origins" (how people and places were first connected) alive, and thereby keep alive the very concept of myth as a theory about time, she must discover or unearth (I'm tempted to say) a way to "speak" these ideas in English. She must find a way, in the "second" language, by which these "first" language concepts can come alive. If she adopts the strategy of her father and simply discards the first language, these ideas will die — and the person becomes severed from his or her place. If, conversely, she refuses to speak the "second language" on the grounds that it cannot or will not contain — or, worse yet, will destroy — these first language ideas, she will not be understood in this courtroom where she has chosen to speak. She will become a mute.

Her task, therefore, becomes the construction of a "place" in the second language where the first language ideas can occur and be "heard" and a "self" that can "speak" those ideas in that place. Since this self must speak in the "second language," it must constitute or "speak itself" in that language — even as it recognizes or "hears" the first place ideas in her speaking. She must bring Watson Price's two selves back together, is the metaphorical way of saying this.

What appeared at first glance, therefore, to be a problem of translation — language A into language B — reveals itself

more and more to be a problem of transformation. What Diane Brown must "bring over" from one linguistic system to another is not words but ideas. She must carry meanings. In the case of *Haada Gwaii*, "history" (the story of Watson Price) has shown that these meanings cannot be severed from the persons and places in which they occur and that they represent without a rupture or loss (of self and place). They are inviolably connected in part of their being with the persons and landscapes they articulate. It is thus not a matter of translating "language" A into "language" B, but a matter of transforming persons and places *whole*, so to speak.

The next part of her testimony enacts, I think, this physical movement. It works by way of the transformation of a body into a place, and then the reciprocal transformation of a place into a body. The resulting "discursive location" becomes a site where meaning is said and heard, and heard to be said and heard. It's a place of witnessed speech, we might say. Again, it echoes the potlatch as a place of witnessing.

In giving this testimony, in turning a place into a body (and also vice versa), Diane Brown pushes to the very edges of the discursive regimen she is here operat-

**To bring up something as lofty as the word "spiritual" in a Canadian courtroom questions the bounds of its discourse; to connect this concept with the notion of a "perfect environment" leaps over them.**

ing under. She transforms the "courtroom," as site of speaking, into another kind of place.

I want to touch on a very important area of my life as a food gatherer. It is my job, my purpose, to insure that I gather certain foods for my husband and my children, and I want to share one part.

She touches an area of her person (self) which is food gathering, and wants, like food, to share this.

It's called *gkow*. That's herring roe on kelp.

*Gkow* does not mean herring roe on kelp: it is herring roe on kelp (and not somewhere else).

In the spring, the herring come and they spawn on kelp. For many years now I have been harvesting that and putting it away for the winter.

Story begins like a fairy tale, in time immemorial — each spring, forever, the herring come, and I come...etc.

But so far I haven't heard what — why is food-gathering spiritual?

This is very important. The rupture (again) in syntax must be listened to with great care. Begin like a fairy tale: my life is a fairy tale, but so far I haven't heard...what?

She hasn't heard the fairy tale about her life, is I think what she's trying to tell here. Or, more profoundly: my life is not a fairy tale because it doesn't, or hasn't yet, told itself — the world — the story about what it means. The fairy tale idiom as a narrative mode stops short here. It can't work.

The meaning is not: life is like a fairy tale; the meaning is: my voice is taken away. In the rupture in syntax we hear again (as a kind of echo) the "story" of Watson Price; the physical discontinuity between a person and his/her life, experienced now as a speech hiatus or jump in the speech act of the story-teller, the hero's daughter. We hear the silence that has placed itself at the centre of their connection.

How is food gathering spiritual? What is the story of that? The profoundly simple point here is that "English," the second language which Watson Price and the other Haidas of his generation welcomed into themselves and tried to share, has not been able to tell that story. It has not found a meaningful way to connect cultural and natural "series" in a way that would show "spirituality." Thus, in speaking it, the Haida have been cut off from themselves and from their land.

In the testimony that follows, Diane Brown will try to heal the rupture by re-telling that story. She will use English, her (better) second language, to reconnect the cultural and natural first language series in a way that re-establishes contact between people and places, humans and their things.

It's a spiritual thing that happens. It doesn't just happen every year. You can't take that for granted. We can't take that for granted because everything in the environment has to be perfect.

Note how this language accosts the boundaries of what we normally think of as testimony or legal evidence. To bring up something as lofty as the word "spiritual" in a Canadian courtroom questions the bounds of its discourse; to connect this concept with the notion of a "perfect environment" leaps over them.

The climate has to be perfect. The water temperature. The kelp have to be ready, and the herring have to want to spawn.

We are asked to believe, in this story, that there is a perfect place in the world where herring have desires — i.e., they are willful creatures, a bit like humans are — and where kelp can exist in alternative states — one of readiness and one of unreadiness.



But I want to share what goes on in my spiritual self in my body come February.

"In-my-spiritual-self-in-my-body" is one place, one time, one-body-and-voice come February. I'm reminded of the earlier place of meeting and coming, the welcoming and sharing ceremony constructed when Diane retold the First Contact Story. Here, I discover, I am also hearing a Contact Story, albeit one that tells of a person meeting her place, a land sharing its body. Note how the ideas (persons/places) are separated rhythmically, vocally, while being in every other way — syntactically, semantically, logically — joined.

And I feel it is an important point. That's what makes me as a Haida different from you, Kilsli. My body feels that it's time to spawn.

What makes her different as a Haida is that her body spawns — "feels" the place and the story and the time of spawning. This piece of testimony is the transformative moment where Diane Brown transforms herself — and thereby the courtroom — into a Haida place or way of speaking.

Here are the steps by which she moved to this point:

- she touched an area of herself which is food gathering, i.e., which equals food gathering;
- she shared this part (her self as *food gathering*);
- she called it, named it something — *gkow*;
- first in Haida (first language);
- then in English (second language);
- transformed it thereby into "Herring-Roe-on-Kelp."

In this naming, this "placing," the location, "Canadian Courtroom," is transformed, (rhetorically) into part of *Haada Gwaii* — which is also, as I have said, a part of Diane Brown's person (body). The "courtroom" becomes, at least in part of its being, "Herring-Roe-on-Kelp-Place" — at the same moment, in the same gesture, as it is a Haida woman speaking. There is no separation, in other words, between body and place in language.

Note how she observes the "correct" sequencing of first and second languages I described earlier — first language becoming better second one, rather than the immigrant sequencing where second languages replace (and thereby partly dislocate) original ones. In the new sequencing, we "hear" both languages, (first-in-second) as we speak, and we "speak" both languages (second-in-first) as we hear. In this way the rupture of sense and self experienced by Watson Price and his generation is assuaged.

For in the immigrant sequencing we can already hear the silence, the rupture that disconnects words from their places, people from their meanings, when original first languages are lost or pushed aside.

This "rupture" corresponds, incidentally, to the period in Haida/Canadian history during which the federal government pursued a dual policy of segregating native cultures from the mainstream by locating them on reserves, on the one hand, and trying to assimilate them into the mainstream via European ("school") education, on the other.

When first languages are abandoned or confused in this way, original meanings (spirits) begin to wander and lose their hold on real places. The language "forks," we might say, away from its landscape, and we are unable to perceive local meaning.

*Gkow*, which is one thing, one place, one activity-and-time in Haida (in *Haada Gwaii*), can only be spoken in English (in



this courtroom) as a sentence. It can only "be" a relation between a subject and a predicate, in other words. *Gkow* becomes not a place or a name at all, but simply a semantic relation, a verbal construct.

To get around this problem and "translate" the subject back into the object (and vice-versa) in correct order, Diane takes the bull by the horns (or the *gkow* by the seaweed, so to speak) and makes this semantic relation a place. *Gkow* is, becomes, "Herring-Roe-on-Kelp" — a named place. Haida and English. This is the new verbal ground Diane offers as a basis of speech in this courtroom. Naming-as-transforma-

tion, rather than semantic translation, becomes the rhetorical practice.

In giving this new name, this "English" place, Diane heals a rupture between things and their names, people and their culture, time frames and their "stories," etc., that opened during the original Haida-European encounter, and has been structurally replicated in subsequent Haida-European(Canadian) relations.

It gets ready in February. I get a longing to be in the sea. I constantly watch the ocean surrounding the islands where the herring spawn. My body is kind of an edge of anticipation. Finally the day comes when it spawns the water gets all milky around it.

Here the transformation is consolidated. The day spawns, the place spawns, the body spawns, the water spawns grammatically and logically in this sentence — all in one continuous movement and transformation of semantic energy. The rules of English grammar and sentence structure (so dear to courtroom etiquette) are suspended, and a way of speaking emerges that is "pure Haida." The speaking of "Finally the day comes when it spawns the water gets all milky around it" leaves us, as European "native" speakers of English, breathless and concerned about sense of place. It is as if an earthquake had suddenly come and transported us, by the sheer force of Diane's language, to a different location, a different "hearing" or perception — of our own language.

In this new hearing, people and places, subjects and objects, names and their places, are connected by a different logic than the one I have been taught to become used to. Instead of subject-verb-object, I witness a pure display of transformative verbal energy that has no apparent need of or regard for proprietary rules of English grammar. It is as if, indeed, I had been transported in my "hearing" to another location, where everything participates in this act, this place or event of spawning — "Herring-Roe-on-Kelp-Place":

Finally the day comes when it spawns the water gets all milky around it.

Haida going into court in Vancouver for sentencing, December 6, 1985.  
Photo by Martin Roland

In this "place" I experience a pure tension, a pure force of oscillation between apparent contradictions. The energy released by this oscillation of meanings excites me. Its release, in the centre of Justice Harry MacKay's courtroom, gives room to breathe and imagine a way of speaking — about land and people, about Haidas and Europeans — that has not been spoken or heard there before.

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S-4

# LUMIÈRE'S REVENGE

RON BURNETT

*Shoah*, by any other fully justified hopes for represent equated the event very exte worth, is archive a outakes v of histori It is rare ously and into an a one, com between image. It launched the idea t pendent ing the s "pictured medium of this ar precisely image, as ate its rol institution document about the cinema.

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Lanzm contradic holocaust camps, kn second-ha the proble as if the h hole in it substituti his histori mind. As more than final prod ences betw se, that is tion of a p undertaki tion of tra materials



*Shoah*, by Claude Lanzmann, more than any other film since World War II, has fully justified Auguste Lumière's early hopes for the cinema. *Shoah*'s power as a representation of the holocaust has been equated by commentators and viewers to the events of history itself. In fact, all of its very extensive footage, up to 100 hours worth, is going to be housed in a special archive at Yale University. The film's outtakes will thus become another source of historical information on the holocaust. It is rare for a film to be taken this seriously and the act of converting the film into an archival document is a fascinating one, conflating as it does the differences between history, representation and the image. It was Auguste Lumière who launched, though by no means sustained, the idea that images were mimetically dependent upon their referent, thus promoting the supposition that history could be "pictured" if not reproduced through the medium of film. It is one of the purposes of this article to explore *Shoah*'s impact precisely as historical reconstruction, as image, as picture, and to more clearly situate its role in relation to the cinema as an institution. The film's role as a historical document also raises other questions about the history of the documentary cinema.

Lanzmann initially approached his research on the holocaust and the Nazi era in what he described as a traditional way. "For over a year I read every history book that I could find on the subject. I went through all of the written archives to which I could gain access."<sup>1</sup> This preliminary comment reveals the strong fascination which he had with Nazism. It is this fascination which provoked the following comment. "As the research developed I was asked by the people financing me to explain what I was doing, to explain the direction which I was taking. But to me those questions were absurd. I didn't have a clear conceptual framework for what I was doing. I had a few personal obsessions and I knew that I had set myself a rather difficult task, but the whole question of concept was a difficult one for me. I would characterize my knowledge at that stage as theoretical, almost wholly derived from my reading of books, a clearer way of saying that would be that my knowledge was essentially second-hand."<sup>2</sup>

Lanzmann was faced with a series of contradictory problems. In relation to the holocaust, in particular the extermination camps, knowledge as such can only be second-hand. Yet his way of characterizing the problem points to a possible solution, as if the history of that period has a large hole in it which he will fill by a process of substitution. In effect he has undertaken his historical research with the film in mind. As I hope will become clear, this has more than just a passing relevance for the final product. There are important differences between the activity of research per se, that is, the investigation and exploration of a particular period of history, and undertaking that research with the intention of transforming essentially discursive materials into images.

The notion of the second-hand implies a separation between Lanzmann's fascination with the period and his desire to generate new truths from his research. Irrespective of whether it is first-hand or second-hand, whether it is oral history or legend, text or image, the shape and form he gives to his research cannot avoid the mingling of fiction and fact. The arbiter here is not truth but the context within which assertions are made about truth or, put another way, the context within which the second-hand is adjudged or interpreted to be truthful. Of equal concern is how his fascination will shape not only the history he chooses to investigate, but the very act of historical interpretation itself.

Lanzmann goes on to explain the way in which he extricated himself from the vise of second-hand knowledge. First he tried to find out as much as he could from the survivors of the concentration camps. He didn't want just ordinary information or even ordinary witnesses, he wanted people who had been close, very close to the killing and death.

**Thus before he actually made the film Lanzmann encountered a fundamental problem. He wanted to experience history, experience the holocaust and then reconstruct both his experience and the event.**

"I was like someone who takes dancing lessons, but never really learns how to dance: I found that the gap between what I had learned via books and what the people told me to be so large that all of my earlier work seemed to be irrelevant."<sup>4</sup>

"I knew then that the only way I could proceed was by going to the actual sites — the concentration camps — and seeing them for myself. I realized that knowledge was without value if it wasn't combined with experience. To know and understand I had to see. In order to see I had to know."<sup>5</sup>

Thus before he actually made the film Lanzmann encountered a fundamental problem. He wanted to experience history, experience the holocaust and then reconstruct both his experience and the event. He wanted to be part of a process which would join historical enquiry with reproduction, which would link the past with

the present, which would transform the past into a 'living' event for the viewer. The film continually uses the recollections of its interviewees as a pivot for this desire, as if their discourse, its intensity, its power, will overshadow the fact that he cannot "show" what they are talking about.

How does that link up with his assertion that knowledge of the holocaust is inevitably second-hand? In some senses he is trying to produce an empirical history, one which will reflect reality and where reality in turn will be reflected through the image. His film will not only explore death by extermination but will illustrate its very processes. But note that his illustrations will be unique, will show that which has not been seen before, an iconography which will join data, reconstruction and the imaginary. The data, the reconstruction, and the image, will all be joined to make the experience of the past as real as possible.

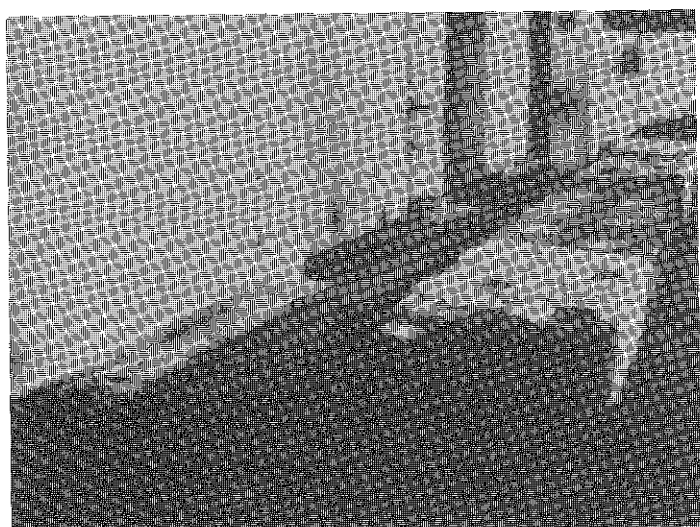
His search for primary sources puts to the side the very difficult problem that no event is outside of the sign systems which are used to communicate what has in 'fact' happened. Thus the event itself is suffused with layers of meaning which have become textual and which cannot be foregrounded unless they are rewritten, retold, or reconstructed. With that, a measure of indeterminacy is introduced, something which, as we shall see, Lanzmann is desperate to avoid.

In the film, Lanzmann combines his images of concentration camp locations with scale models of gas chambers. For him, this combination reflects an internal pressure or urgency to understand an incomprehensible event and to reproduce in great detail that which the imaginary and images cannot fully reveal. He did this because he could find no archival images or photographs to show him what had happened. "There were two distinct periods. From 1933-39 we found photos and films of book burnings, news footage of Jews being chased in the streets and persecuted, *Kristallnacht* in 1938, etc. Suddenly the war came. The people and countries controlled by the Germans were cut off from the world. From that period we have a few rather inconsequential propaganda films shot by the Nazis, including a grotesque one from the Warsaw ghetto showing Jews singing in fake cabarets, Jewish

Still from the Lumière brothers' first programme, 1895, where the first representation of a moving train frightened audiences.



border/lines fall 1989



Camp latrines, empty in 1955. Still from *Nuit et Jour*, Alain Resnais's 1955 attempt to convey the reality of the German death camps.

women parading the streets wearing expensive clothes etc., all designed to show the Jews as hedonists. As far as the process of extermination goes, nothing — and there was a rather simple reason for this — the Nazis formally prohibited any filming of the extermination in order to keep it a secret."<sup>6</sup>

Lanzmann goes on to describe the monumental effort of the Nazis, Himmler and others, to avoid leaving any traces of the atrocities they were committing. It is Lanzmann's effort to confront this absence which interests me, because what shocked him about the response of audiences to his film was the way in which his efforts at reconstruction were taken at face value. The assumption was that archival footage was being used and one viewer said, "That was the first time I had heard the cry of a child in the gas chamber."<sup>7</sup>

Aside from the reconstructions, he set about interviewing people who lived in the town of Treblinka. He even found the conductor of one of the trains which had been used to bring Jews to the concentration camps. "After I had talked to him, I found the locomotive which he had used. I told him, 'Get on the locomotive and we'll film an arrival at Treblinka.' I didn't say anything else. We arrived at the station and he made this incredible gesture staring back towards an imaginary chain of boxcars. He made as if he was going to cut his own throat. To me that was an image of truth which made the archival photos which we had seen completely irrelevant. After that I made all of the peasants repeat the same motion and it became what it had always been, a sadistic gesture directed towards their victims."<sup>8</sup>

For Lanzmann, *Shoah* is both a fictional film and a fiction of the real. Those people he interviewed became actors, not only telling their stories, but reconstructing their own memories, in a sense redefining their imaginary of history at both a personal and social level. "This film was not about memories as such, I knew that right away. Memories scare me. They're just too weak. The film abolishes the past and present. I relived the past as if it were in the present."<sup>9</sup>

Let me deal in the first instance here with the question of past and present in

terms of images, because what is important is the way in which Lanzmann conceptualizes the relationship of history to the image as a strategy of explanation. His search for that which has been lost is not in and of itself unusual, examples abound from historical and ethnographic films, but his emphasis on confronting his own imaginary is, and what it points out is the rather difficult problem of 'living' the past through the present tense of images. This problem is compounded even further when that past is supposed to be brought to life by images which are not only meant to reveal the past but to exemplify it. Exemplification and verification — clearly those few archival images which Lanzmann found and which he decided were of no value say something not only about history but also about the history of images. How could, how can the holocaust ever be pictured?

In one sense the holocaust exists as a frozen sign of human brutality — in another sense it lives through its survivors and the children of those survivors and their felt need to keep the memories alive as a warning for the future. But there is a

**There is a distinct difference between trying to convert the image of a historical event into an authoritative one, and confronting the rather delicate question of the boundary between fascination and the grotesque.**

distinct difference between trying to convert the image of a historical event into an authoritative one, and confronting the rather delicate question of the boundary between fascination and the grotesque. Lanzmann's assertion that the film is both fiction and fact flounders because it is precisely the setting out of the difference between fact and fiction which needs to be argued. The various elements of that argument will inevitably be at the centre of the cinematic strategy which he will choose. If history, to be relevant, to be understood, must be brought "to life," then a special kind of illusion has to be created. To work the illusion must carefully recontextualize and draw upon the very historical discourses which Lanzmann feels are absent. Ironically, the representations which Lanzmann wants to find cannot be easily "pictured." The blame for that lies not with the event nor with the discourses which have followed it but with a strategy which assumes that the past can ever be relived.

In a superb article entitled, "What has History to do with the Semiotic?" Brooke

Williams says, "to argue that the past does not exist until the historian makes the shots by calling them, that is, to argue that the historian creates the past simply by his or her construction of it, sinks history into a kind of linguistic quicksand which loses all ground upon which to base a semiotically objective inquiry. On the other hand to fail to recognize the power of the word, or power of naming, in the shaping of a thought about the object — in establishing the object's signification — is to fail to recognize the presuppositions built into the naming process itself, and thus to fail to recognize any difference between what really happened and what we call history."<sup>10</sup> I would characterize the crisis which Lanzmann faced as a crisis of the image, a crisis of finding an image and crucially naming, representing, conferring meaning through images. His desire to somehow make 'memory' concrete is a contradictory one because memories, even those spoken by participants in historical events, are a site of meaning without the specificity which he so desperately seeks.

No event has so fully occupied modern literature, modern historiography and modern research as the holocaust and the Third Reich. Few men have had as much written about them as Hitler. Few events can claim as many films, as many documentaries, as many cinematic re-interpretations, as many grotesque attempts to aestheticize the horror of mass extermination, as the holocaust. Lanzmann clearly does not want to duplicate that history.

What discursive hole is Lanzmann trying to fill? It might be useful to contrast a recent film by Robert Kramer, *Unser Nazi* (*Our Nazi*), which tries to explore many of the same problems except that Kramer set about videotaping a film being made by Thomas Harlan entitled *Wundkanal: Execution for Four Voices*, also about the Nazi period. I cannot summarize *Unser Nazi* here, suffice to say that it is as much about history as it is about producing a videotape to explore the effects of history on one's own psyche and imaginary. It is about what happens when the image is inadequate, when it inadequately portrays human conflict, when historical images fail, when sight and the activity of seeing provide no base upon which to analyse what one has felt or understood in viewing a film based on a historical event. As the set in which *Unser Nazi* was filmed turns into a place of inquisition, Thomas Harlan (filmmaker, actor, victim) traces his own past, his Nazi father, through a former Nazi and what comes out, as Harlan says, is the Nazi in all of us. This theme has been dealt with in great detail by other West German filmmakers like Syberberg, Fassbinder, Sanders-Brahms, Von Trotta and Schlöndorff. For our purposes, Kramer's film explores many of the contradictions which *Shoah* leaves out. Throughout *Unser Nazi* Kramer worries about discourse, precisely about the fictions of those whose recounting of memory relies on a careful selection of facts, a careful selection of truths. After all, were it not for that selectivity most historical discourse would take



on precisely the kind of absolute qualities which would preclude any rewriting.

Lanzmann's fascination is as much with his own past as it is with Nazism. He is honest about that. Less obvious though is the way in which *Shoah* is an exorcism of a pain which Lanzmann feels guilty about not feeling. For irrespective of the power of the images, they remain just that, images. Their hold is found precisely in their aesthetic impact, a point well-made by Susan Sontag in her article about Syberberg's *Hitler, A Film From Germany*. Images offer horror in much the same way as they offer pleasure. In a repetitive fashion, that horror and pleasure can be denied because viewing never simply replicates what has been represented.

This gap is at the heart of a dilemma for *Shoah*, which wants to make an impact upon history and thus to change the way history has been seen. It simultaneously wants to invite the spectator into the gas chamber in order to be more than a witness, in order to become the victim, to feel that which we cannot feel, the very moment when life and death are indistinguishable and crucially when language means nothing and is emptied of all possibility of meaning. This problem, that images cannot simply transcend their own limitations, is responded to by Lanzmann at the level of editing. The film is nine hours long. He shot well over 200. This is a ratio of 20 to one. A ratio about which he was not happy, but which of necessity, he had to face if he was to transform his film from a mere mass of images into a presentable theatrical show. This is exactly the problem. Irrespective of his intentions and honesty, the exigencies of the medium are not simply a hurdle to overcome, they are at the centre of the question of how processes of representation work. The exigencies of the medium form and reform the way history can be seen and understood and thus Lanzmann must bear some responsibility for producing a historical spectacle, a responsibility which he would prefer to avoid given his desire to produce "truth."

Furthermore, given that so much of what we have of the holocaust is framed by the relationship between language, analysis and image, the balancing act between images and what is understood to be the empirical reproduction of an event will always be open to debate. Which set of hurdles is Lanzmann really trying to overcome? He says that only traces remain of the extermination, but he himself found many witnesses to it. He says that his film is about the traces of traces, yet he ended up reducing what he had filmed to the broad outlines of an argument conditioned by the performative demands of the cinema. I am not suggesting here that he should not have done that. Rather, the more fundamental question is whether the cinema can ever do more than just perform the histories it so willingly appropriates.

At one and the same time Lanzmann wants to find facts and reshape them. Yet that reshaping is as much a re-imagining as it is a retrieval. Ultimately his faith in

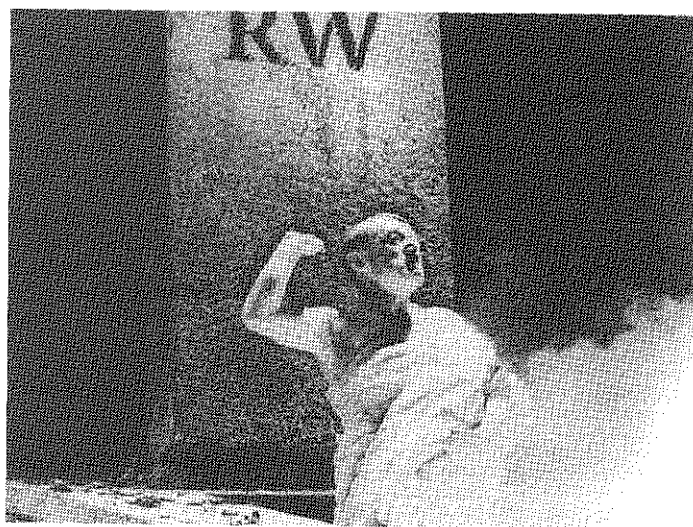
the image is what betrays him since what he is recreating cannot on its own reveal the imaginary at work, cannot sustain the rather intense contradiction between truth and representation. Thus he never re-lived the past as much as he made the past significant for the present. In so doing he simply filled the hole of history with the cinematic equivalent of a phantasm, the imaginary became the real, for him, and in a strangely paradoxical way he repeated one of the crucial characteristics of the adherence that so many Germans had for fascism.

It is precisely the phantasm of power, the power to control events, to transform history into a performance which accounts for the enormous popularity of a film like *Heimat*, by Edgar Reitz, (which like *Shoah* is meant to bring history to life) for it recovers that set of sequential movements in time without which the history of Nazism seems inexplicable. At the same time, it is that recovery which reshapes the fascination, conferring power onto both the filmmaker and the viewer so that both can grasp hold of a set of events otherwise governed by rules which seem to be

**Images offer horror in much the same way as they offer pleasure. In a repetitive fashion, that horror and pleasure can be denied because viewing never simply replicates what has been represented.**

disconnected from the presumed logic of historical rationality. Foucault has put it quite clearly, "Nazism never gave a pound of butter to the people, it never gave anything but power. Nevertheless, one has to ask oneself why, if the regime was nothing else but this bloody dictatorship, there were Germans up to May 8, 1945, who fought to the last drop of blood, unless there had been some kind of attachment to the people in power."<sup>11</sup>

This raises a further question. Does a film like *Shoah* threaten the historical moment of which it is a part? Put another way, is the film merely one of many, many films, particularly those of Germany in the seventies which ostensibly concern themselves with history, the history of the thirties and forties, in order to recover not only the past (which will to some degree always remain outside of their grasp), but the binds produced by the way the present inevitably recasts and reconstructs the signifying properties of history? *Unser Nazi* is confronted by the same problem. One of the characters in Kramer's film, Thomas Harlan, himself a documentary

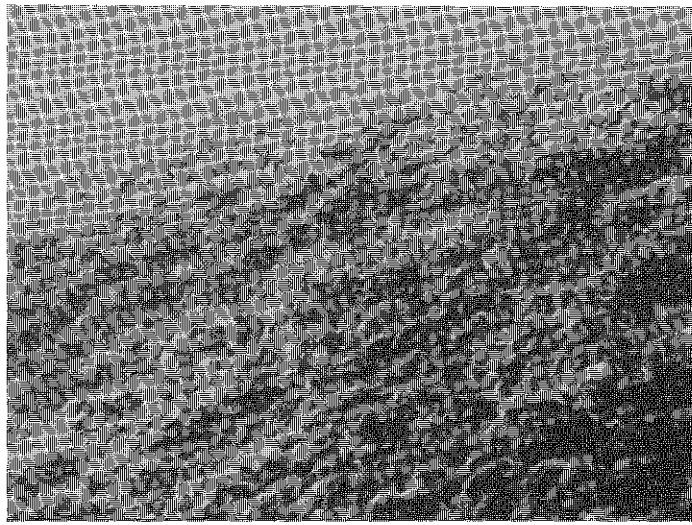


Still from Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler, A Film from Germany*, 1977.

filmmaker, arranged for a former Nazi to be interviewed during the shooting of his own film. Filbert, it turns out, was a brutal mass murderer who felt little in the way of guilt or repentance. This infuriated Harlan who saw in Filbert not only a representation of his father, but also the problem of guilt not being felt. Harlan is plagued throughout *Unser Nazi* by the pain of not being able to get Filbert to feel guilt. Finally, he physically assaults Filbert and even then can feel no satisfaction. The bind here is that the present has made possible an image of the past without the past itself rearing its head and producing a real enemy. Thus Filbert cannot be killed by Harlan and yet that is clearly what Harlan wants to do.

Images in films lead towards a past they can conveniently picture and it is the picture which becomes the threat. Yet changing the picture won't necessarily change the past. What is more the past as picture may paradoxically map the ground upon which signifying systems can replace that which they were intending to reveal. This led Foucault to say: "...how could Nazism, which was represented by lamentable, shabby, puritan young men, by a species of Victorian spinsters, have become everywhere today — in France, in Germany, in the United States — in all the pornographic literature of the whole world, the absolute reference of eroticism? All the shoddiest aspects of the erotic imagination are now put under the sign of Nazism...."<sup>12</sup> However, in a context where replacement and substitution are the necessary conditions upon which the Nazi era can be conceptualized, no amount of theatre, no aesthetically perfect representation can ever face the substance of that historical moment. Why is it then that the image seems to carry the burden of strategically accounting for the horrors of that period?

Thomas Elsaesser tries to answer this question in the following way: "Syberberg made *Our Hitler*, against and in anticipation of Joachim Fest's *Hitler — A Career* as well as NBC's *Holocaust*. By structuring his own film so much in terms of a critique of showing and seeing, he indicates that Hitler had already, in his appropriation and use of the media, anticipated his own



A mountain of women's hair. Still from Alain Resnais's *Nuit et Brouillard*.

revival and survival as spectacle. The physical destruction of history and of Germany is redeemed by 'Hitler's heirs' through the historically new category of the show — the democratic leveller, according to Syberberg — as we know it from television and advertising, subsuming both history and personal experience. In the age of the mass-media, the past itself becomes a commodity, and historical experience cannot be transmitted in any form other than as an object for consumption, as a visual system of identification, projection, mirroring and doubling, which is to say, by short-circuiting the very possibilities of understanding, knowledge and the social processes of passing them on."<sup>13</sup>

I do not fully agree with Elsaesser's characterization of the mass media in part because he describes a level of instrumentality which mirrors the desire for control which the media have, but which they can never exercise unless that is, they "colonize the imaginary" — a phrase which I have borrowed from *Kings of the Road* by Wim Wenders because it so aptly describes the once again easy enemy which the media can come to stand for. However, it is quite clear that commodification alters the meaning of history if only by suggesting that the past can be shown through visual systems. The problem is that media like film provide a mode of explanation replete with a quite specific impact as if for example, the empty hallways of a faded Aushwitz in *Night and Fog* (by Alain Resnais) can be explained through the voice-over, as if image and word, image and speech can conjoin to reveal a pain both real and metaphorical, both reconstructed and imagined. Is it then an accident that most efforts to deal with Nazism through the cinema, like *Lili Marleen* and *The Tin Drum*, turn towards the metaphorical as a way of rediscovering the imaginary of the event? If our language is so woefully inadequate how can our images escape that inadequacy? In part they try to escape by elevating evil to an extreme level and thus by exclusion try to prove the point that even our imaginaries have not gotten away from the instrumental effects of the images which surround us. But this notion of instrumentality — the desire to effectively produce an audience which mirrors the messages sculpted into language or

film — is not all that different from the way the Nazis themselves saw their own propaganda machine.

In a quite extraordinary book by the psychoanalyst Ernest Kris, entitled *German Radio Propaganda* we are given the following explanation: "Since the Nazis believe that the immediate sensory experience that participation provides exerts a more powerful influence on man's attitudes than arguments do, they use every verbal propaganda technique that fosters the illusion of immediacy and concreteness. Hence their preference for the spoken rather than the written word, for eye-witness reports rather than summary accounts, for a personalized presentation of the news rather than sober, impersonalized discussion, for illustration rather than explanation."<sup>14</sup>

The German listening audience was to be molded into one by the listening experience, by nine news bulletins a day, by the regularity and seeming normality of that everyday experience. If you didn't own a radio then provisions were made to listen in public squares and in factories,

**The significance of the effort to picture the holocaust is the manner in which it has come to stand for a story which must be repeated by every generation in order to believe it, in order that is to attach the truth values of the present to it.**

etc.. What is important for our purposes here is the notion of the audience and the rather extraordinary victory claimed for propaganda by the Nazis. Thus it was a case of the German people merging with a collective self defined in national terms by the images and sounds of Nazi ideology. As Kris points out later, the bombing of Germany reminded the people of a possible gap between the message and the truth and as this gap grew, as hardship increased, the propaganda became more intense and more idealized. He chooses an example: "Over there is a woman worker; her eyes are still red and full of tears; her voice trembled, but on she went with her work... A boy of sixteen was wounded; his arm is bandaged; his head is bleeding under his steel hat. Duesseldorf stood up to it. Every one of its citizens is a hero."<sup>15</sup> But this is precisely the clearest indication of the failure of the message. In any case, the message and the way it is comprehended can never simply be identified with the messenger, though it might be the desire of the propagandists to confer that power

on themselves. The question is far more complex than that. From our point of view what is important is the perspective from which truth as such can be ascertained.

Now it is clear that, for Lanzmann, truth will surface through the imagery, through the power of the message to disturb the viewer, to alter the viewer's own self-image and definition of history. But this assumption depends on whether the viewer is willing to accept the claim that the image can speak in truthful terms. The problem is, that to believe a cry has come from a gas chamber in a film transforms what "really happened" to the imaginary of what really happened and paradoxically, that is a condition, a fundamental condition of historical imagery, of historical cinema. The collapse of the distinction is exactly a victory for the propagandist which is why in *Unser Nazi* the construction of a narrative around Nazism is shown to be a struggle with the paralysis generated by the distance which has to be taken from the historical in order to produce it. This distance is on the one hand frightening because it suggests that evil cannot be immediately pictured and thus understood, and on the other hand it suggests that distance must be the fundamental ground upon which the message has to be constructed. Thus the message has to co-exist with its impossibility (and this does not mean that nothing can be said) and with the difficulty that the past can never be relived in the present.

In one sense, this is precisely the source of our fascination with historical imagery, linking what remains of the past with the present. The filmmaker as historian realizes the past through his or her phantasms, a relation between observation, exploration, explanation and the imaginary. The same can be said for the historian as filmmaker. Claims of truth, reality, authenticity, set those phantasms apart from their progenitors and presuppose a kind of collective fantasy which we all share. The significance of the effort to picture the holocaust is the manner in which it has come to stand for a story which must be repeated by every generation in order to believe it, in order that is to attach the truth values of the present to it. Yet this only further reconstructs the gallery of significations which mediate the distance we have to take from it. The result is more and more levels of aestheticization till we finally reach Heimat, that is, if the metaphor can be stretched, until we finally find ourselves in the comfort of our homes watching a televised reconstruction of the fundamentals of kitsch.

Here is a contradictory middle ground where art and history conjoin, and where the poetics of historical writing, historical filmmaking, reveal a radical discontinuity between events and the way that they can be illustrated. That discontinuity, however, is one of the reasons why images can appear to be historical since what they name, what they give meaning to, are the phantasms which separate them from the past. At the same time, as the mediations grow it becomes more and more difficult



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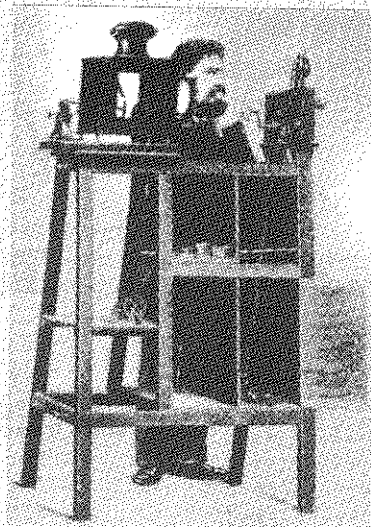
to distinguish between the various levels which might differentiate the role of the image from the event.

Lumière then, properly speaking, has had his revenge, for he was truly one of the first filmmakers to try and record historical events with precision. History is judged by its communicability and by the effectiveness of those signifying systems most closely linked to the actualization, the virtual reproduction of the past as past. I am not suggesting however, that this particular contradiction can be avoided, merely that it be recognized precisely as one of the sites where history is produced. What we understand to be second-hand both as knowledge and as image — *Shoah* — marks out the terrain of our fascination with the imaginary as a tool for making history real. This is the case even when historical discourse must be rewritten and even when images can do no more than hint at the memories upon which they are based. The paradox is an exquisite one because for every film which attempts to assert historical truth another can use the same techniques to turn the truth upside down. *Shoah* is caught by all of the phantasms which it is trying to unmask and would have perhaps been more significant as a film if it had confronted the way those phantasms govern historical discourse rather than trying to reveal how they must be eliminated.

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#### NOTES

1. Interview with Claude Lanzmann, *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 374, July-August, 1985, p.18. (All translations mine.)
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.
8. *Ibid.*, p.20.
9. *Ibid.*, p.21.
10. Brooke Williams, "What Has History To Do with Semiotics?," *Semiotica* 54, 3/4 (1985) pp. 291-292.
11. Interview with Michel Foucault, *Cahiers du cinéma*, nos. 251-252, July-August 1974, p. 10. Quoted in *Reflections of Nazism* by Saul Friedlander, (London: Harper and Row, 1984), p.74.
12. *Ibid.*, p.74.
13. Thomas Elsaesser, "Syberberg, Cinema and Representation," *New German Critique*, nos. 24/25, Fall-Winter 81-82, p.144.
14. Ernest Kris and Hans Speier, *German Radio Propaganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p.12.
15. *Ibid.*, p.192.



One of the Lumière brothers with their invention, the first motion picture projector and developer.

# Subverting the Symbolic Order: The Ethics of Literary Discourse



**Robert Majzels**

Traditional male-dominated literary discourse either denies having any moral framework for its aesthetic judgements or claims some universal ethical ground. Feminism and marxism have exposed the self-serving hypocrisy of such assumptions. Because it takes place in a material world of gendered human beings, historically divided into classes and races, literary discourse is necessarily the site of a struggle for power — the power to control/create meaning. The writer's practice takes place on the ideological terrain, a terrain dominated by phallogocentric, bourgeois and ethnocentric discourse. From this critical perspective, no literary discourse can avoid taking some moral stance; the most common practice, because it is the way of least resistance, is to reproduce, in some form or other, the dominant ideology. The question arises: is it possible to engage in literary or any discourse without reproducing the dominant ideology? Can a text adopt a different ethics, resisting phallogocentric assumptions without using an entirely new language? And if such a language must be created, how will it make itself understood? Is there such a thing as a subversive text?

Even as I am writing (as you read), Adelina is working in the cane field on Hacienda Paz. She is stacking the sugar cane on the back of a *carabao*, a Philippines ox. Adelina has been up since four o'clock in the morning. First she helped her mother make breakfast; they have exhausted their rice rations, so they boiled some banana flower. Her father always eats first, because he needs his strength in the fields. Then come her younger brothers and sisters: they are too young to go without food. If there is something left, Adelina and her mother can eat; if not, they will wait until supper. During the harvesting, the women work in the field to increase their family's production. But they are not paid for their labour; it is calculated as her father's share.<sup>1</sup>

Feminism has produced a literature based on-feminist ethics, that is, a genuinely inclusive human ethics. Ethics as we know it is really male ethics, limited to a male perspective of justice which excludes women's experience. Feminist ethics rectifies this distortion, and this allows Debra Shogan to conclude that "ethics" is, in fact, a sub-category of feminist ethics, rather than the contrary.<sup>2</sup>

**MALE STRATEGIES.** Somebody should compile an exhaustive list of male strategies for resisting feminist struggle: a study in the "military history" of the patriarchy's shifting lines of defense.



1. Based on notes taken by the author during a visit to the Philippines in 1984.

2. See Debra Shogan, "Categories of Feminist Ethics," *Canadian Journal of Feminist Ethics* 1 (Fall 1986), pp. 4-16.

Images by Nancy Spero. Photos by David Reynolds. Courtesy of S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto.

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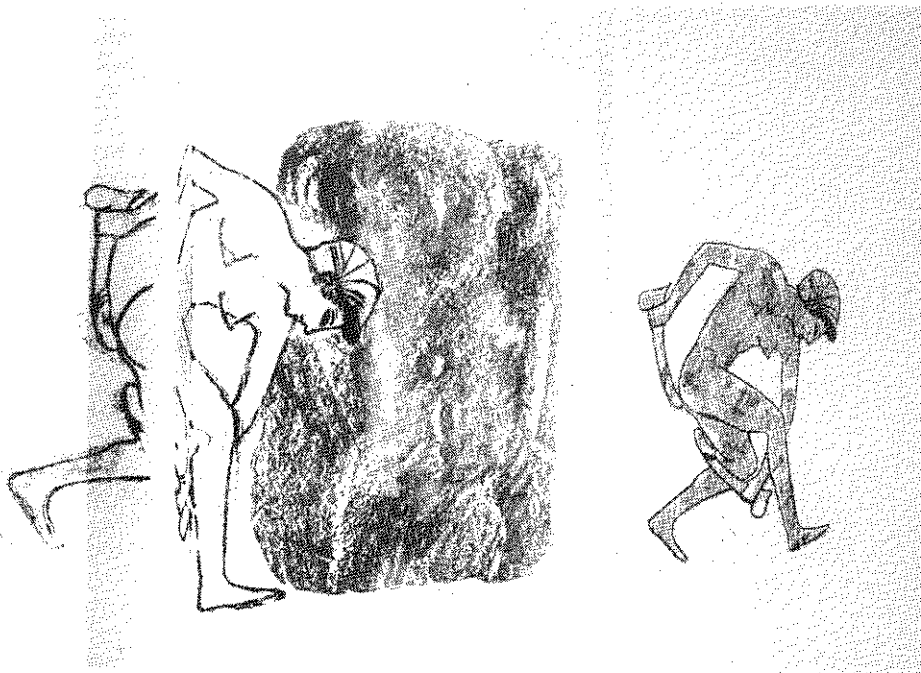
Beverly Harrison has identified five basic principles of feminist ethics: taking women's experience as the starting point; taking women's well-being as a fundamental concern; recognizing the moral agency of women; celebrating embodiment, as opposed to the Christian tradition of shunning sexuality; treating mutuality and caring as fundamental norms. There is a sense in which literary discourse based on such ethics is necessarily subversive: it demands change. This view of ethics contrasts sharply with the mainstream view of ethics as abstract, moral judgments. "Rather, starting with a notion of human personhood grounded in the material conditions of existence, and a notion of ethics as caring and responsibility in relationship might lead to a different type of quest for ethical foundations, locating it in the concrete circumstances of human life."<sup>3</sup> The struggle for justice begins with the concrete experience of those who have historically been denied power.

The first time I got big Pa took me out of school.... He never look up from cleaning his gun. Pretty soon a bunch of white mens come walking across the yard. They have guns too.

Pa git up and follow 'em. The rest of the week I vomit and dress wild game.<sup>4</sup>

Everything except the wings around my face is red: the colour of blood, which defines us. The skirt is ankle-length, full, gathered to a flat yoke that extends over the breasts, the sleeves are full. The white wings too are prescribed issue; they are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen.<sup>5</sup>

There is no more work on the Hacienda. The landlord says the price of sugar is so low it is not worth growing the cane. The cutters have asked him if he will let them grow vegetables and rice, but he says this is sugar cane land. Adelina's father cannot find work. He has gone into Bacolod City to try his luck. He has been gone for several weeks now. They have heard nothing. Adelina will have to go. She will have to try and get to Manila. Or Bataan. In Bataan, there is a free trade zone, they call it the Export Processing Zone. The American textile and electronic factories in the Zone hire women. They say the women are patient, and good with their hands. And they don't make trouble. Adelina will go to Bataan. If she finds work there she will send money home.



Because patriarchy denies women's moral and sexual agency – in male discourse, 'woman' means man's object, his Other – any literature which exposes this denial might be assumed to be subversive.

My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born.

(*Handmaid's*, 62)

Pa call me. Celie, he say. Like it wasn't nothing. Mr. \_\_\_ want another look at you. I go stand in the door. The sun shine in my eyes. He's still up on his horse. He look me up and down.

(*Color*, 11)

Feminist ethics demands the recognition of women's sexual agency. A text which affirms female desire subverts phallogocentric ideology, speaking the unspeakable, shattering the taboo.



3. Martha Saunders-Oppenheim, "Reason and Foundations of Ethics," p. 8.

4. Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), p. 11. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text.

5. Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1985), p. 8. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text.

It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire.<sup>6</sup>

Without ever a pat of the hair, a rush to change clothes or a quick application of paint, with no gesture whatsoever, she rippled with sex...<sup>7</sup>

It mine I say. Where the button? Right up near the top, she say. The part that stick out a little. I look at her and touch it with my finger.  
(*Color*, 82)

Feminist ethics also posit mutuality and caring as fundamental norms.

Shug say, Us each other's people now, and kiss me.  
(*Color*, 189)

We was girls together, she said, as though explaining something.  
(*Sula*, 194)

Does this mean we might establish an ethical grid by which to judge all literary discourse? Cheri Register's "prescriptive criticism": "To earn feminist approval, literature must perform one or more of the following functions..."<sup>8</sup> In spite of its univocal and essentialist character, this call for feminist realist fiction was grounded in women's experience. Julia Kristeva has situated the imperative, authoritative discourse of radical feminism in the historic evolution of feminism as a second stage. This does not imply that it is outdated; the imperative, positive voice remains a critical facet of the struggle. "If patriarchy oppresses women as women, defining us all as 'feminine' regardless of individual differences, the feminist struggle must try to undo the patriarchal strategy that makes 'femininity' intrinsic to biological femaleness, and at the same time insist on defending women precisely as women."<sup>9</sup> Affirmation, reappropriation of the "feminine" raises women's consciousness, unsettles patriarchal assumptions. That, surely, is subversive in itself. It certainly provokes the wrath-disguised-as-scorn of the literary establishment. "If it is any good, feminist criticism, all feminist writing, and from my view all criticism, is guaranteed to offend the mighty."<sup>10</sup>



6. Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Toronto: Penguin, 1984), p.139. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text.

7. Toni Morrison, *Sula* (New York: Plume, 1973), p.42. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text.

8. Cheri Register, "American Feminist Literary Criticism," quoted in Elizabeth Meese, *Crossing the Double-Cross* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1986), p. 140.

9. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (New York: Methuen & Co., 1985), p. 82.

10. Meese, p. 17.



11. Colette Guillaumin, "The Question of Difference," *Feminist Issues* (Spring 1982), p. 39.

12. Michel Wallace, "What's Wrong with this Picture?" *Ms. Magazine*, December 1985.

13. Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 42.

**SOFTENING THEM UP.** The outright rejection of any feminist criticism is, of course, not a realistic alternative; not in the long run: some adjustments, some accommodations, are inevitable. However, this in no way implies that an initial outright rejection cannot serve as a first line of defense. Such a strategy slows down the encroachment of women into areas traditionally reserved to men; it gives men time to readjust and fabricate a more flexible, more subtle, second line of defense. It also discourages the faint-hearted, those women not willing to face the tough battles ahead. And it induces those who stick it out to adopt less radical methods, thereby softening the ensuing blows.

But the univocal affirmation of "femininity" is not as subversive as it initially appears. It can be diverted into a call for acceptance, a strategy of integration. The claim to difference, if it is not also a rejection of the very concept of a centre, is reduced to a demand for recognition. It stops short of questioning the fundamental systemic sources of oppression. It can be co-opted into reformism. Much effort is engaged into reassuring that the margin is not a threat: we only want a piece of the pie.

She laugh. Let's us put a few advertisements in the paper, she say. And let's us raise your prices a hefty notch. And let's us just go ahead and give you this diningroom for your factory and git you some more women in here to cut and sew, while you sit back and design. You making your living, Celie, she say. Girl, you on your way.  
(*Color*, 220-1)

If it is true that "what the dominant group fears above all is the concrete autonomy of the dominated, and even just its possible eventuality,"<sup>11</sup> how threatening is a utopia of black feminist capitalism? By autonomy don't we mean a complete break with the system? (Will Celie's business expand — "git you some more women in here to cut and sew?" Will she set up subsidiaries in Taiwan, South Korea? Why not use her missionary sister's contacts in Africa and set up a textile plant there?) "For the American public, surrounded by so many alarming fluctuations in the reign of the patriarchy, *The Color Purple* must have been reassuring to read. Given the chance, it implies, women won't lead so much as nurture."<sup>12</sup>

Prescriptive writing also perpetuates the myth of a single source of meaning. It reproduces the patriarchal idea of writing as "transparent communication of morally useful meaning,"<sup>13</sup> and the author as transcendental signifier. By insisting on essentialist gender definitions, such discourse can do no more than tinker with the symbolic order. It remains entrapped in the logic of binary oppositions.

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(Moi, 108).

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**ROLL OVER.** Include one workshop on "The Women's Question," include one section in the manifesto; let them chair the workshop or write the section — that way we keep them busy, happy, and we don't have to worry about it.

Most women are moody and whimsical. This is some passing whim of your wife, due to some cause or causes which you and I needn't try to fathom. But it will pass happily over, especially if you let her alone.

(*Awakening*, 119)

**Just insert the footnote:** "Except where clearly intended otherwise, the use of the masculine in this document is meant to include the feminine."

**In fact, instead of the traditional relegation of women to the margin, from which they have increasingly been encroaching on the text, we might attempt a new strategy:**

**LET THEM HAVE THE FOOTNOTE.<sup>14</sup>**



14. Forcing women into the footnote is consistent with phallogocentric logic; it forces them to take a position within the system. When feminist writers like Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, or Rachel Blau DuPlessis reject forms of the uncentred text, they are not doing so for purely aesthetic reasons. They are, in a sense, breaking through the barriers which separate aesthetics and ethics.

"For Cixous, feminine texts are texts that... strive in the direction of difference, struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality" (Moi, 108).

The deconstruction of gender roles, the denial of essentialist definitions, is, increasingly, a basic element of feminist ethics. A consistent ethical position would necessarily seek to subvert essentialist discourse, denying absolute authority to any one voice, denying the claim to the "natural" superiority of any single race, sexual orientation or fixed gender definitions. In adopting this position, feminist theorists have integrated aspects of recent semiotic criticism. Deconstruction denies the possibility of any transparent, uncentred signification. Discourse is always already de-centred. Any text's interpretation is determined by a complex of conflicting factors, including the social context, the author's personal experience and intentions, the reader's experience, and the ideology already encoded in the language.

According to this view, a writer who acknowledges this absence of absolute meaning, who recognizes the textuality of discourse, can choose to participate in the deconstruction of the patriarchal myth of the centre. But, to do so, she must first abandon the desire to occupy a uncentred position: "The search for a unified individual self, or gender identity or indeed 'textual identity' in the literary work must be seen as drastically reductive" (Moi, 10). A literary discourse, therefore, which presents a model of mutual caring, women as moral agents, celebrates embodiment and the well-being of women, and bases itself on women's concrete experience may correspond to a positive ethical position, but if it simply substitutes one absolute for another, it fails to subvert the symbolic order in a profound way. In not adopting a subversive refusal of authority, a text weakens its attack on phallogocentrism and remains entrapped in the logic of binary opposition. Finally, the text is flawed on an ethical level because it is not consistently revolutionary. Any literary discourse which fails or partially fails to subvert the existing order also fails or partially fails in the ethical realm.

This strategy seems to offer important advantages. Clearly, a phallogocentric position cannot be dislodged by a discourse which is equally univocal. Any attempt to "rally behind a uncentered feminist discourse against which we pit the more powerful voices of the critical establishment struggling to repress it" (Meese, 140) is bound to fail.

Of course, Elizabeth Meese's reasoning is not based solely on her evaluation of the unequal *rapport de force*; it is also an ethical concern. Univocal discourse is itself reductive and authoritarian, excluding, marginalizing different experiences among the non- or partially non-hegemonic groups. When white, petit-bourgeois or bourgeois, heterosexual women, for example, claim to speak for all women, working class and/or lesbian and/or women of colour are treated as Other.

Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be.

(*Sula*, 52)

That's the problem, she say. Have you ever seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of 'em wasn't showing the other one how to drive or clean it?

I got out the car, opened the back door and clammed in. She sat down in front. Off us traveled down the road, Miz Millie hair blowing all out the window.

(*Color*, 109)

She didn't step aside to let me in, she just stood there in the doorway, blocking the entrance. She wanted me to feel that I could not come into the house unless she said so.

(*Handmaid's*, 13)

It is in their search for strategies to subvert the patriarchal order that a number of feminist writers have taken up the not necessarily feminist preoccupation with experiments in form. A number of traditional concepts have been rejected: the "universal," the "masterpiece," the "canon." Feminists and postmodernists travel together some way along the road of technical explorations. They resist linear narrative, violate the established rules of grammar and punctuation, reject the traditional insistence on character, plot and theme. Prose and poetic forms are fused, theory and fiction entwined, literary genres are shuffled together. Meanings are multiple, all closure is denied; intertextuality supplants the myth of originality. The visual dimensions of the text are exploited. Repetition, word play, musical patterns all serve to make the language itself the subject of the text. "Employing the epistolary form of classical texts, the author challenges phallogocentrism with black language, style, and consciousness, Walker wrests language from white domination" (Meese, 126).

These postmodern techniques are attractive to feminist writing in so far as they stress heterogeneity, provisionality, and subvert uncentred discourse. "If it's really the forms, the language, which dominate us, then disrupting them as radically as possible can give us hope and possibilities" (Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "For the Etruscans," in *The New Feminist Criticism*, 287). This has sometimes led to accusations of incomprehensibility and inaccessibility.

All clear statements are trapped in the same economy of values, in which clarity (oculocentrism) and univocity (the One) reign. Precision must be avoided, if the economy of the One is to be unsettled.... [The object is to] defer the moment of assimilation back into a familiar mode.

(Jane Gallop, quoted in Meese, 144)

We're going to create something they can't steal because they can't play it.

(Thelonius Monk to Mary Lou Williams, in Rob Backus, *Fire Music*, 37)

\*\* The demand to reduce discourse to the comprehensible can be a trap. If ideology is encoded in language, then any message which is immediately understandable is already familiar. Common sense is a mask for the dominant ideology. The demand for more clarity can often be nothing more than a resistance to change.

Accompanied by a plague of robins, Sula came back to Medallion.... So they laid broom-

sticks across their doors and sprinkled salt on porch steps.

(Sula, 89-113)

The revolutionary writer is still using language to subvert the symbolic order of language; she is still a prisoner of language. "Language, the first and last way out of the literary myth, finally restores what it had hoped to avoid, that there is no writing which can be lastingly revolutionary" (Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 63). Total rejection of the symbolic order would appear to be impossible, short of madness. The revolutionary is already part of the order which she or he seeks to subvert, even though she or he may be in the margin. This contradictory inside/outside position is at the root of the duality of revolutionary strategy: on the one hand, the demand for recognition and reform; on the other, rejection of the system and refusal to integrate.

No text can escape contextuality, historicity: no text is subversive in an absolute sense. It remains a site of struggle between the contending forces of interpretation. The struggle never ceases; there is no transcendental Subversive, no word which, if pronounced, would bring the entire patriarchal edifice crumbling down.

The multi-national textile and electronic companies are hiring only young rural women who are not married and who can be proven to be virgins; the companies do not want to pay maternity benefits. Adelina will go through the virginity test. And of course, how can you prove a woman is no longer a virgin unless you abuse her. The policy is "lay down or lay off." The union does not want to deal with this reality. In the collective bargaining process, they are concentrating on issues like minimum wages and some basic job security. They say the women's specific problems are not the kind of issues which will mobilize all the workers. They say these problems will be taken up later.

Ideology is not a monolithic structure. The realization that there is no absolutely subversive text does not imply there is no possibility of creating meaning or subverting the symbolic order. "Though it is true to say that the dominant power group at any given time will dominate the intertextual production of meaning, this is not to suggest that the opposition has been reduced to total silence. The power struggle intersects in the sign" (Moi, 158). Literature is not condemned to reflect the socio-economic relations which dominate society. Ideas and discourse may be the products of a material world but they have a dialectical relationship with that world — a counter-action takes place.

There is therefore in every present mode of writing a double postulation: there is the impetus of a break and the impetus of a coming to power, there is the very shape of every revolutionary situation, the fundamental ambiguity of which is that Revolution must of necessity borrow from what it wants to destroy, the very image of what it wants to possess.  
(Barthes, 92)

The other, more optimistic side of this is that the old society contains within itself the germ of not only its own destruction, but also that of the

new world which will supplant it. If the new were forever trapped in the language of the old, there could be no change; we would be back to an essentialist determinism (something towards which Structuralism tipped dangerously back).

Adelina has to queue up every day at five o'clock in the morning to find out if she is on the list to work today. If she is not on the list, she will come back tomorrow. She has not been paid for three months because the plant manager has cash problems; the Central Bank has set controls on dollar supplies on account of the foreign debt. Adelina is not sure what this means, but she knows she must keep working if she wants to stay on the list. She will have to find a source of money until she starts to get paid at the plant.

**SHARING POWER.** "Their qualifications being judged equal, the committee will favour women candidates over men." I'm all for women's rights, but feminism goes too far. You'll never get anywhere by antagonizing people. What they do in the privacy of their own home is their business, but do they have to flaunt it in public? Your strategy is divisive of the family — the Union — the working-class — the Party. We should not hesitate to recognize that there are elements of feminist criticism which we can and should incorporate into literary criticism.

However,  
the question is:  
how much space  
can we afford to  
give up  
to  
this  
Other  
discourse?

By attempting to take over the entire text, aren't you claiming to represent, not just women, or yourself, but everyone? If so, you had better have a very thorough and all-inclusive theory to back up your claims.

**NURTURE ME.** All right, we're listening. Just tell us what you want us to do. It is, after all, your responsibility to re-educate us.

We can't do it alone.  
In the long run,  
sexism hurts men as much as women.  
You said so yourself;  
you said  
men had as much to gain from feminism as women do,  
in the long run.

(Come to think of it,  
we might even argue that men have been even more victimized by this sexism than women.)

You said we weren't listening.  
Well, now we're listening.  
So tell us what to do. Help us. Nurture us.  
What do you mean you don't have the time?  
You said women were half the sky; well, that means we're still the other half. Isn't that what  
You said?

If there is no absolutely subversive text, those forces relegated to the margin must locate a position from which to attack the centre. But the straight ahead charge up out of the footnote cannot succeed for long. Aren't we still attempting to "rally behind a uncentred feminist discourse against which we pit the more powerful voices of the critical establishment struggling to repress it?" Now I am imagining a kind of guerilla warfare of language.



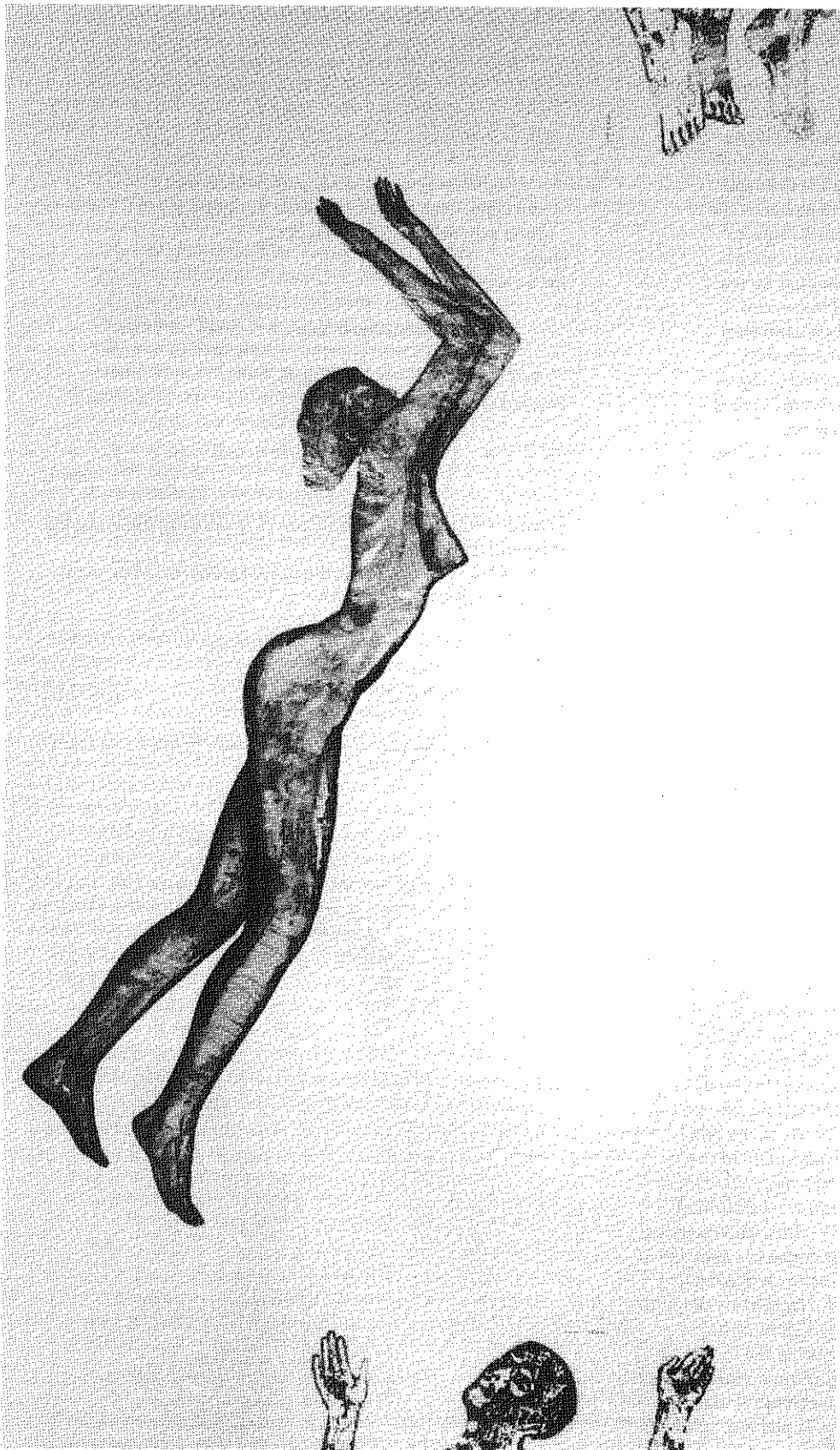
attacking in forays out of the margin<sup>15</sup>

mobility

, mob/i/lity

maintain. constant

mobility ,



15. When they storm the footnotes, we are already long gone.

avoid:  
frontal  
assaults

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man."

(Genesis 2: 23)

strike quickly in the gaps      vanish from sight

"the female is as it were a deformed male; and the menstrual discharge is semen though in an impure condition: i.e., it lacks one constituent, and one only, the principle of the soul."

(Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 737a, 26-30)

surround

the margins

the

from

centre

Moira was out there somewhere. She was at large, or dead. What would she do? The thought of what she would do expanded till it filled the room. At any moment there might be a shattering explosion, the glass of the windows would fall inwards, the doors would swing open.... Moira had power now, she'd been set loose, she'd set herself loose. She was now a loose woman.

(*Handmaid's*, 125)

This strategy avoids the contradictions of coming to power. It refuses to liberate even a small red zone, thereby hoping to escape the dangers of new authority, new hierarchy. Writing is a series of breaks, ruptures and gaps in the symbolic order.

The guerrilla refuses to come down from the mountains. The new Absolute is disruption; no alternative community, no unity is possible. Where does this lead in ethical terms? Where does it lead in strategic terms?

The manager of the plant might have taken her in as his mistress, but he chose someone else. She can go to Olongapo and sell herself to the American sailors stationed at Subic Base. If she gets a job in a bar, as a hospitality girl, she can make up to US \$5 a customer. She will have to negotiate with the bar owner about her share. He will provide her with a cot with the other women behind the bar. First she will need papers from the City Council Health Center. That means she must pay for the STD tests, twice a month. The US Navy takes her picture. If she gets sick, they will post her picture on the base, to warn off the sailors. If she gets AIDS from a sailor, they won't pay for her treatments; they pay for the tests, not for the treatments. Most of the women don't think they will get sick: they take antibiotics before sex to ward off infections and pregnancy. After sex, they wash out their vaginas with Colgate, or Sprite, or carbonic acid. This destroys the vaginal linings so that they can no longer lubricate naturally. Some women get cancer of the uterus, but the US Navy does not worry about that — cancer is not contagious. If she makes some money, she could send it back home to her mother in Negros, for the young ones. But she will have to lie about what she is doing, she will have to find a way to keep it from them.

"The stress on negativity and disruption rather than on questions of organization and solidarity leads Kristeva to an anarchist and subjectivist political position" (Moi, 170). Kristeva pursues anti-authoritarianism to the exclusion of mutuality and caring.

The strength of an ideological order lies in its flexibility, its ability to reintegrate discordant voices. In the struggle against authority, is there not another danger? Plunging into the fast flow of the shifting signifier, thrashing loose from all possible co-option, resisting integration, breaking away from all groupings, all structures, to float free, we suddenly discover ourselves back in the calm waters of petit-bourgeois individualism. There is a market for this kind of writing, sooner or later. Kristeva no longer wishes to be pinned down as a feminist: "I am not interested in groups. I am interested in individuals" (in Moi, 169). So we are back to Hobbes and Mill: liberalism. The patriarchal, capitalist system can handle such individualists; at worst they can be declared geniuses.

We need an ethics of subversive discourse. "Exploration not in the service of reconciling self to world, but creating a new world for a new self" (DuPlessis, 288). What the dominant power fears most is not simply the autonomy of the individual, but, more than that, the autonomy of the dominated regrouped in a collective movement. A revolutionary aesthetics would need to assert a feminist ethics while refusing uncentered discourse; it would reject authoritarian hierarchies while promoting collective action. "The artwork produced with this poetics distinguishes itself by the fact that it claims a social function and puts moral change and emotional vulnerability at the center of the experience of the reader...mutuality, porousness, intimacy, recontacting a both/and, using both sides of the brain, nonhierarchic, anti- or multi-climactic, wholistic, lacking distance...perhaps didactic" (DuPlessis, 280).

**IS THIS TEXT JUST ANOTHER MALE STRATEGY?**

Appropriating feminism: White jazz.

The Tootsie tactic: allow me, ladies, to speak in your name. After all, we men can do it so much better. The Walter Raleigh ruse: let me spread my cape over this muddy hole of theory, so you can sail across un/touched.

But I hope this is not merely one more male strategy.

I hope this is a self-critical text.

This is what I, a man, have learned so far.

I hope this is a text in support of feminist struggle. Not presuming more; but not just moral support: a fighting support.

I hope this is a listening text.

How

do I listen without appropriation?

hear many voices: poly/vocalism inter/textuality: gaps.

Str a i n to hear the voices fade in and

out of

my range

extending my range widening the page undoing undermining centre/margin...

How? A collage, a composition, arrangement of voices, sometimes in harmony sometimes

**CONTRA / DICTION**

out of step

if feminist ethics are indeed human ethics, my task as a man: to study, support, struggle, to keep my

"EARS HUGE"<sup>16</sup>



16. Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei and Gail Scott, editorial collective of *Tessera*. *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 57 (1987).



If litera perhaps it This text is not been c integrate t substitute

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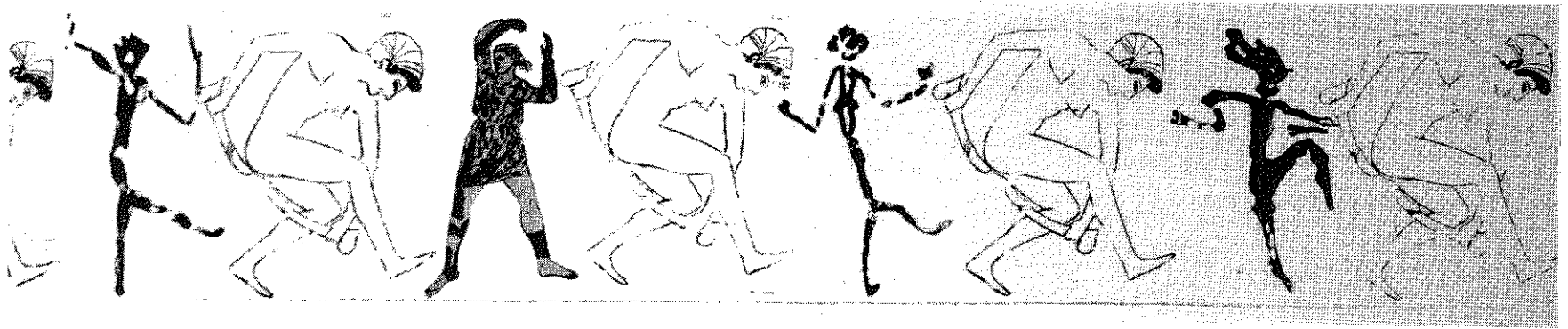
le t s t s

Feminis and practic and aesthe art and life agers; whe uncles; aft all the whi have raped to their gra when Lind makes it w the cats an to mount t "It is be possible."<sup>17</sup> "And n

Robert Majze Philippines. F Filipino poet

17. Roland B *Essays*, trans Northwester





If literary discourse is going to require us to act collectively, perhaps it must begin by abandoning the concept of "author." This text is only a specific locus in a process. The words have not been composed, so much as collected. This text will disintegrate thirty seconds after.... This text cannot/must not substitute for action.

When she joined the New People's Army, Adelina joined a collectivity. Even in the mountains she is living as part of a larger community. Everything is not perfect. "Some of us women who joined the NPA thought that once we were carrying M-16s we would be emancipated. Sure, you're less likely to get raped if you're walking around with a machine-gun, but, even so, our struggle isn't over."

If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it.... You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else."

(*Handmaid's*, 37)

Feminism is making breakthroughs in revolutionary theory and practice which require redefinitions of terms like ethics and aesthetics, and a re-examination of the borders between art and life. "After all the old women have lain with the teenagers; when all the young girls have slept with their drunken uncles; after all the black men fuck all the white ones; when all the white women kiss all the black ones; when the guards have raped all the jailbirds and after all the whores make love to their grannies; after all the faggots got their mother's trim; when Lindbergh sleeps with Bessie Smith and Norma Shearer makes it with Stepin Fetchit; after all the dogs have fucked all the cats and every weathervane on every barn flies off the roof to mount the hogs..." (*Sula*, 145-6).

"It is because the world is not finished that literature is possible."<sup>17</sup>

"And not enough..."<sup>18</sup>

Robert Majzels is presently doing research on women and development in the Philippines. He has also edited *The Guerilla Is Like A Poet*, an anthology of Filipino poetry.



17. Roland Barthes, "Kafka's Answer," *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1972), p. 137.

18. Kathleen Martindale, marginal commentary.



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## Camera Politica

Joe Kispal-Kovacs

**Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film**  
by Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner  
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988, 328 pp.

The publication of *Camera Politica* marks a welcome addition to the growing number of Marxist texts on film in particular and popular culture in general. Ambitious in scope, the book aims to highlight the "relationship between Hollywood film and American society from 1967 to the mid-eighties." In this it invites immediate comparison to Robin Wood's *Hollywood: From Vietnam to Reagan* (1986). Both studies have as their starting point the recognition that there has been a significant shift from the Left to the Right in the social imaginary of American society and in its cultural representations.

This shift, according to the authors of both texts, has been marked by the increasing use of the Hollywood cinema as a tool for the dissemination of the agenda of the political Right — the restoration of the nuclear family, the rehabilitation of militaristic values and a Social Darwinist economic strategy. Other similarities include a radical political stance — one that incorporates Marxist economic and political analysis, radical psychoanalysis and socialist feminism — that is common to much contemporary film theory.

Robin Wood's analysis is largely informed by the work of Norman O. Brown (especially in the idea that the human race is at a crossroads — it must liberate itself or face extinction) and Varda Burstyn (the centrality of feminism to the socialist project). In the case of Ryan and Kellner it is the psychoanalytic theory of object relations (which "emphasizes the role of representation in determining the direction and development of psychological life") and the socialist feminism of people like Sheila Rowbotham that has influenced their work. Both *Camera Politica* and *Holly-*

*wood: From Vietnam to Reagan* also make the argument that the mainstream cinema should be the major site for the intervention of radical film theorists and not necessarily the work of the modernist avant-garde as had often been the case in the past. Ryan and Kellner claim that the avant-garde faces two dilemmas that undercut its possible influence. First, there is its structural exclusion from mass accessibility, and, secondly, there is the ability of the capitalist social system to gradually incorporate its aesthetic into the fold and to depoliticize those fragments that resist incorporation. In Wood's book this is not even an issue as he disregards it altogether. The final significant similarity between the two works is a recognition that while Hollywood provides an important institution for the production and reproduction of ideology — this process is by no means a monolithic and homogeneous one.

Hollywood films can and have, at various times, incorporated structural contradictions that highlight the artificiality and arbitrariness of the dominant ideology, and have even worked against it. Despite these apparent similarities, the strategies and content of these two works are quite different. Robin Wood's book makes no attempt to offer an exhaustive historical survey of the period. Instead, he offers some general comments on the change in political climate and focuses on a number of specific films and filmmakers that best typify the changes that took place over the past two decades. This work is largely a collection of essays tied together by a common theme — the crisis of representation in the mainstream cinema that accompanies the complex and uneven ideological counter-revolution in American society. The tone is largely pessimistic although Wood does find a number of instances, in specific films and artists, where the shift to the right has been resisted. Since this book has been reviewed elsewhere in this magazine (*Border/Lines* number 14), I will not dwell on it.

*Camera Politica*, in contrast, is more historical in orientation. Ryan and Kellner spend a fair amount of time elaborating the political and social context in which these changes in the Hollywood film took place. They begin by offering a periodization that incorporates some of the major developments that have taken place in American society over the past three decades:

1) the 1960s, when the growth of new social movements (feminism, the anti-Vietnam War movement, gay and lesbian liberation and the fight against racism) pressured the then liberal political administration to begin to make changes in society;

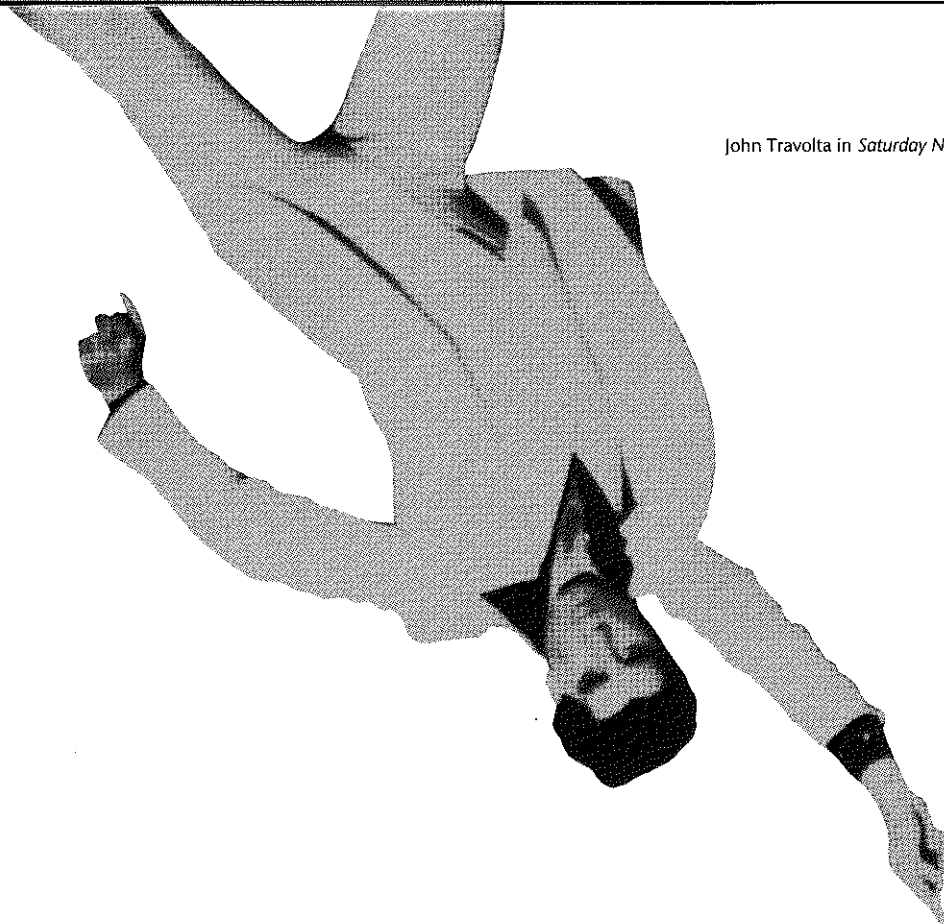
2) the crisis of legitimacy in American society in the 1970s that followed Watergate and the defeat of the imperialist adventure in Vietnam. This was accompanied by a great deal of liberal questioning about the priorities that had dominated American society for decades. However, the authors argue that while liberalism did offer a partial critique of the problems that faced society it was incapable of offering an alternative, redemptive vision of a society that could replace the one in crisis.

This "failure of liberalism" was partly responsible for

3) the conservative backlash that dominated the scene in the 1980s.

All of these developments were dealt with either directly or indirectly in the popular films of the period. However, Hollywood films did not magically reflect all of these issues in a straightforward or immediate way. Ryan and Kellner conceive "the relationship between film and social history as a process of discursive transcoding."

They argue that, "Films transcend the discourses (the forms, figures, and representations) of social life into cinematic narratives. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves be-

John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*

come part of representation of reality."

Following the production, the large body of this period ways. Varieties of Hollywood movement, the crisis of and to the examine the political development some of the represented and how they were them narrative s under the Ryan and K of some of this period *Saturday Night of Endearment Deer Hunter* outlook bu

tured the p attention is of these films interesting Kellner are *Hunter*, W despite its offers one of American evaluation Wood's. For books agree trilogy star indictmentmitted to c Ridley Scot

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come part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality."

Following a general theoretical introduction, the authors proceed to look at a large body of popular American films from this period. This is done in a number of ways. Various chapters include discussions of Hollywood's reactions to the social movements of the sixties and seventies, to the crisis of legitimacy mentioned earlier, and to the rise of the New Right. Others examine the specific effects that these political developments have had in changing some of the ways that popular cinema represented oppressed groups in society and how the conventions of the cinema were themselves partially transformed (in narrative structures, generic formulas, etc.) under the influence of external pressures. Ryan and Kellner also offer close readings of some of the more important films of this period. These films (*Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *The Godfather*, *Terms of Endearment*, *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter*) are largely conservative in outlook but for various reasons have captured the public's imagination. Much attention is devoted to the ways in which these films deconstruct themselves. It is interesting to note that, while Ryan and Kellner are fairly critical of Cimino's *Deer Hunter*, Wood and others have argued that despite its conservative veneer the film offers one of the more radical indictments of American society in this period. Other evaluations, however, coincide with Wood's. For example, the authors of both books agree that George Romero's *Dead* trilogy stands as one of the most radical indictments of American society ever committed to celluloid. Equally celebrated is Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*.

This historical survey of the contemporary Hollywood cinema is carried out through recourse to two tropes from literary criticism — metaphor and metonymy. These "master tropes" are used repeatedly as a yardstick to evaluate both the ideological character of a particular film and its emancipatory potential. A metaphoric, representational strategy is seen to be essentially conservative in nature, in that it seeks to replace an actual object with an ideal or higher meaning. In doing so it denies the materiality of that object. An example is provided by the authors to illustrate their point. The metaphor of the eagle representing "freedom" is doubly problematic: it denies the materiality of the eagle and its environment, and, secondly, it mystifies and idealizes a historically contingent concept like freedom. Metonymy, on the other hand, "is the trope of connection between objects which are in contiguous relation to each other or which relate by part to whole.

"Eagle is by metonymy not a sign for an ideal like 'freedom' but rather significant of, because literally connected to, some part of material reality like the threat hunters and land developers (whose material activities are sanctioned by an ideological ideal like freedom) pose to the wilderness and the environment."

Applied to films, these tropes demon-

strate the variety of narrative strategies possible within the mainstream. Conservative films like *Saturday Night Fever* are largely metaphoric in construction. In this film the dominant metaphor is the bridge that spans the divide between working class Brooklyn and affluent Manhattan: "Figuratively, it represents the transcendence of working class life, the act of crossing over to the world of upward mobility. The film wants the audience to think of the bridge in that sense exclusively." However, the metaphor is, at times, strained: "the bridge, in its literality... is a means of conducting working people to the drudgery of another day on the job. This literality must be sublimated, excluded and replaced by an idealized substitute." Hence the privileging of the metaphoric representation of the bridge as a means of escape from class oppression.

A consciously metonymic strategy can be found in a film like *Nashville* by Robert Altman: "The narrative of *Nashville* is discontinuous; the characters are multiple (24 in all), with no privileged hero or even privileged object of sympathetic identification.... No character is granted special metaphoric status as a hero who transcends social context. Altman's world is one without conservative monuments or ideological myths."

These are just some examples of the complex strands of argumentation woven together throughout the book. Still, the book is not without its flaws. Some of these arise from Ryan's peculiar appropriation of the philosophy of Deconstruction, an appropriation that is not entirely unproblematic, as anyone familiar with his *Marxism and Deconstruction* (1982) will find.

The difficulty with Ryan's earlier attempt to wed deconstruction to Marxism is that the end result is an unstable and contradictory philosophy. While it is true that Marxism has always had a "deconstructive component" and that deconstructive analyses of cultural texts are perfectly legitimate endeavours for Marxist theorists of culture, the attempt to transform an essentially diagnostic tool into a prognostic theory of political organisation belittles the tremendous task facing socialists who want to effect real social change.

Although Ryan does attempt to respond to charges that his proposed political practice will lead to "paralysis," these responses ring rather hollow. In order to discredit the older "humanist-essentialist" traditions within Marxism (Marcuse, Sartre, Lukács, for example), he has to caricature them.

In some ways his attempt to generate a new political practice is similar to Laclau and Mouffe's attempt (see *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1982) to wed an essentially Stalinist social critique (Althusser's anti-humanist structuralism) to a pluralist emancipatory project.

In the case of Laclau and Mouffe the result is a kind of liberalism with a socialist window-dressing. This problem is also evident in Ryan and Kellner's new book.

The authors are quite correct in arguing that the Left must abandon its traditional

disdain for popular culture (a tradition best exemplified in the work of the Frankfurt School) if it hopes to be successful in putting across socialist ideas to a large audience.

However, there is a big gap between calling for the Left to counter the dominant cultural representations in society with progressive ones and the need to address the problem of accessibility to the institutions of popular culture production.

By ignoring the latter part of this problem, the authors downplay the complexity of the issues involved. The book thus ends with a kind of "New True Socialist"\* plea for the Left to bring the "object of desire" (socialism) to the screen as a blueprint for the masses.

Despite these criticisms the book is still well worth reading. As a sophisticated and at the same time clearly written diagnostic appraisal of this particular period in American cinematic history, *Camera Politica* has few precedents.

The historical component of the study also fills a gap in Robin Wood's otherwise impressive book on the same subject. *Camera Politica* would make an excellent addition to any undergraduate university course on the Hollywood cinema.

The only problem is, that at a \$66.50 retail cost, *Camera Politica* has priced itself out of the market at which it was aimed.

\* Here I am referring to Ellen Wood's characterization in *The Retreat From Class* (1986) of the new political theories (Poulantzas, Laclau and Mouffe, etc.) that trace their genealogy back to Althusser.

Joe Kispal-Kovacs is a graduate student in Social and Political Thought at York University.

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## Cultural Ventriloquists

Ioan Davies

Charlie Farquharson, c. 1988



Don Harron, c. 1988



### Best Seat in the House: Memoirs of a Lucky Man

by Robert Fulford  
Toronto: Collins, 1988, 260 pp.

### The Private Voice

by Peter Gzowski  
Toronto: McClelland and Stewart (A Douglas Gibson Book), 1988, 328 pp.

### Don Harron: A Parent Contradiction

by Martha Harron  
Toronto: Collins, 1988, 325 pp.

The task of reporting on our culture for the State Networks is a specialized and centralized one. In English Canada, for the CBC (radio and TV) and TVOntario, Canadian culture is represented by perhaps no more than 50 full-time reporters and anchor people, whose work is also to be found in the Toronto broadside dailies and commercial periodicals such as *Macleans* and *Saturday Night*. Although they are augmented from time to time by newcomers — Alberto Manguel, Richard Gwyn or Margaret Visser come to mind — the network is firmly Toronto-based, as often as not educated in English literature at the University of Toronto, and characterized by an intellectual liberalism, tolerance and eclecticism which sets itself off against the more narrowly ideological definitions of *The Idler* on the right and *Canadian Dimension* on the left. Sometimes the

media elite seem to be the nub of a set of cultural networks that extend through the Writers' Union, the various Harbourfront reading and performing series, publishers across Canada, and a host of traveling musicians and actors, curators and folklorists. In a sense that is as it should be, because without the CBC none of us would know what is going on across the country. But what goes on inside the cultural programmes? The simultaneous publication of three books (two autobiographies and one biography) by or about major cultural emcees allows us to explore the assumptions behind cultural reportage.

The books are characteristically different. Fulford's book is the least personal or self-critical, written in the *I-Was-There* style of political autobiography, where the people whom Fulford has met are the real subject. Fulford's excellence at his job is taken for granted, as becomes an autodidact. Gzowski's book is almost painfully self-reflexive; in the same way that doing *Morningside* is the occasion for reminiscing about his career, his personal life, his relationship to the programme and to the CBC, and his Canadianness. Harron's biography is written by his daughter, though based in part on an unpublished manuscript by Harron (to have been called "Harronside": Harron was Gzowski's predecessor). It is therefore personal in a different way, reflecting the daughter's pride in her father's career — largely that of an actor and scriptwriter — but also her pain at his failed marriages, her father's

moods, her being transported frequently across North America and Europe. It says little about *Morningside* except that she listened to it — and thus for the first time to her father — while she was at home rearing children.

The "magazine" programmes that Fulford, Gzowski, Harron and their colleagues have worked for have audiences larger than print magazines (see inset). The readership for magazines that deal in any way with Canadian culture is clearly widely dispersed, and I am ignoring specialist genre journals. Radio and TV offer the only consistent thread joining these fragments. The aim of this review is to examine the premises implicit in Canadian cultural reportage.

Martha Harron refers to her father as "Renaissance Man," and, in a sense, anyone who is a host of a TV or radio show concerned with culture, politics, society and the arts has to be competent, as well as sensitive to a broad spectrum of ideas and practices. But of course we have a fair selection of Renaissance People, most of whom would not care to be hosts of a talk show, or, if they cared to be, would not be allowed the chance. Hence the gang of 50.

One of the prerequisites in Canadian media for being a cultural mediator or moderator is that the incumbent should neither be a major intellectual figure nor be known for their creative work. The exceptions are Erica Ritter, who lasted for three years on *Day Shift* (though she is now back with the radio theatre series *Air Craft*), and Don Harron, who lasted five years on *Morningside*. This contrasts with Britain or France where stage directors,

*Morningside* has an average of 250,000 listeners and a reach of one million;<sup>1</sup> *Realities* had an average viewership of 36,000; the *Journal's* Friday (cultural) audience is 1.4 million, with a reach of 1.6 million (though the Monday to Thursday editions have a reach of 5 million); *Gabereau* averages 110,000 listeners and reaches 616,000; and *Ideas* has an average audience of 52,200 and reaches 239,600. *Democracy*, CBC Television's attempt to do *Ideas* in film documentary, has an average viewership of 1.3 million. Ralph Benmergui's *Prime Time* has a dedicated average of 50,700 listeners and a reach of 264,000; while *Brave New*

*Waves*, at midnight on Monday to Thursday, has an average of 7,100 listeners and a reach of 31,000.

This might be compared with *Macleans's* weekly circulation of 620,000 copies and *Saturday Night's* (monthly) 115,000. But *This Magazine* is at a circulation of 7,000 copies (bi-monthly), *C Magazine* (quarterly) at 4,000, *Impulse* (quarterly) at 5,000, *Fuse* (quarterly) at 4,000, and *Border/Lines* (quarterly) at 1,600. Before its resurrection at the hands of James Lorimer, the *Canadian Forum* (10 times a year) had a circulation of 4,000; but the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* (twice yearly) has

a circulation of 3,000. The readership figures for print might be multiplied by three or four.

Within Toronto, the two weekly listings papers, *Now* and *Metropolis*, average circulations of between 75,000 and 90,000 copies on "free" sales; while *Toronto Life* sits around 98,000 copies monthly.

1. The concepts of "average" and "reach" are based on the "average" number of people who watch an entire programme, and the "reach" of those who tune in for at least 15 minutes per programme. The circulation figures for magazines are based, as far as I could establish, on subscriptions and newsstand sales.

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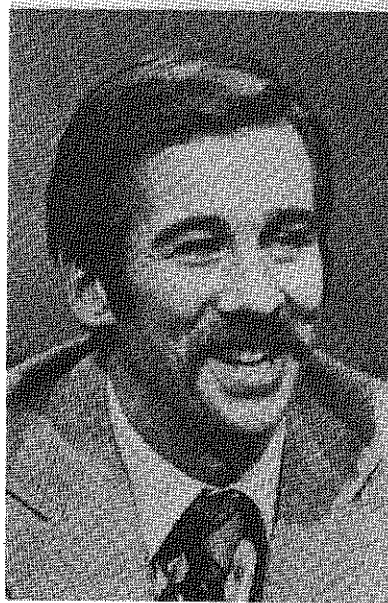
novelists and academics are actively sought to host or direct similar programmes — Jonathan Miller, Melvyn Bragg, and Canada's own Michael Ignatieff, whose confrontative *Three Minute Culture* is now running on BBC 2. This has significant advantages and disadvantages. In the British case it leads to a certain jumpiness of intent, where, particularly throughout the 1980s, the variety of TV and radio programmes shifted with bewildering rapidity. The arts programmes in particular have oscillated between magazine formats, documentaries, and live talk or performance shows, such as the current *Late Show* on BBC 2. On the other hand, magazines like *The Listener* and regular columns in the quality dailies and weeklies ensure a treatment of the production and content of the media as something that is seen not merely as *entertainment* but as an essential component of the cultural and intellectual life of the country. Witness, for example, Raymond Williams's regular columns for *The Listener* in the 1970s (now reprinted as *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings*, edited by Alan O'Connor for *Between the Lines*, Toronto).

By leaving it to the journalists to handle cultural issues, Canada ensures a continuity of format and production. But it is a continuity which relies on the gang of 50 and which, incidentally, generates a curious by-product in the cultural business: the instant book by the emcees on "my problems in coming to terms with myself, intellectual life and Canadian Identity." These three books are classics of this genre, and their coincidental appearance allows us to look at their authors as

cultural gatekeepers as well as representatives of a particular intellectual ambience.

The idea of the public intellectual in Canada is generally reserved in the media for a few economists who are called in from time to time to spout on about "policy" questions whenever journalists want to do a good turn for their former professors; the heralding of writers who win the Governor General's Awards, and who are therefore considered to be politically significant; or the celebration of authors such as Grant, McLuhan and Macpherson who are discovered to be important just before their demise. A few foreigners are occasionally quoted or reprinted because they are newsworthy, sometimes because of what they say, but more frequently because they are weird or different or because they confirm the programme's editorial position.

To some extent, the cultural programmes stand apart from all this in that they try to provide a forum within which ideas can be developed. But, by Canada! it is a hard struggle. The commentators work for networks which try to establish a concept of neutrality and impartiality, as opposed to the regular media which is blatantly prejudiced even when it protests its objectivity. The idea of cultural programming is not taken as anything more than a series of checks and balances, a forum within which we can all splash around in the great amorphousness of our culture. Peter Gzowski is, of course, the great chameleon. He may be NDP or Liberal or Red Tory, but he is, above all, Canadian and decent. Gzowski is good with the human interest stuff, with the political and media



Peter Gzowski, c. 1971

gossip, but when someone like Simon Reisman comes into the studio to denounce everything Gzowski holds near and dear, he is left in the lurch. His interview with Noam Chomsky a few years back was an unmitigated disaster, and his encounter with Betty Friedan was hilariously awful, because he lacks a confrontative politics. Gzowski's autobiography is largely an encounter with journalistic self-image, and it is interesting how ratings, the observations of friends, getting honorary doctorates from universities, or going on book-promotion tours play an important part in what he has to say. And, ah! the anguish of broken families, the drunken remorse of wasted opportunities.

It is a pity, of course, that we do not have "Harronside." Don Harron is more than a journalist: Charlie Farquharson of *Hee Haw* fame, the promoter of *Anne of Green Gables* at the Charlottetown Festival, and arguably the nastiest Jimmy Porter of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger*. Don Harron was not just the emcee of *Morningside*, as his daughter's book makes clear. He was, after Andrew Allen and the great drama years of the 1940s and 1950s, the first creative mind to take hold of CBC radio — aided and abetted by Krista Maeots, his producer, whose tragic suicide at Niagara Falls in 1978, ushered in a kind of burning twilight in the *Morningside* business. After Krista, a Marxist-feminist, it became clear that CBC did not know what to do with its morning radio show, and thus *Morningside* rapidly resorted to being the comfortable middle-of-the-road show to which Gzowski's book is a monument.

As emcee of *Morningside*, Don Harron was abrasive, inventive and sometimes rude — he had a tendency to interrupt his guests before they had made their point — as the programme's title, *Don Harron's Morningside*, should have led us to expect. He used *Morningside* not only as an occasion to represent different points of view but as an opportunity to confront other ideas and to present his own. He regularly read his own material. He deliberately crossed the boundary between objectivity and opinion. In listening to him, one felt that he was asking his guests what they wanted to do with their ideas before they were consigned to the archives. Don Harron made *Morningside* a creative stage upon which personalities acted out their ideas as a sort of free-form theatre, but

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Robert Fulford, c. 1971

with a Brechtian emcee as the alienated chorus of common sense. It was superb theatre, but was it radio? For all his faults, Harron is a man wrestling with the strengths and limitations of the media. He is a man who has taken incredible risks: theatre, scriptwriting, television, radio, film and advertising. The others, as journalists, were locked into a profession, and if they switched media, did so because their journalism demanded it. Harron switched because it was fun.

The scene shifts with Fulford, and if we spend a little longer with him it is because he is brighter than the others, more self-assured. His book starts with the *de rigueur* statement that his father was an alcoholic journalist, and therefore we are led to surmise that his achievement is based on him surmounting that obstacle. (Alcohol, rather than the sharp thrust of ideas or a relationship to community action, is a favourite topic with these authors. Gzowski apologizes for himself because of the influence of alcohol. Martha Harron, on the other hand, in describing her father's apparently despicable behaviour towards his family, is also careful to note that he is a life-long teetotaler — and nonsmoker to boot. Are we therefore to conclude that Harron is a nastier man because he does not have alcohol as an excuse? Of course, the whole issue as a moral stance on creativity is a piece of fashionable faddism, which Mordecai Richler has spoofed marvellously in an analogy with the Ben Johnson case in *Saturday Night*, January 1989. Fulford is, of course, a self-made man, who learned his ideas the hard way. That is an interesting story in its own right, and parts of this come through in these memoirs. Only a small part, however, because that voyage of exploration is to be found in the journalism and the TV programmes which have been Fulford's life. This autobiography is an exercise in writing over and against these other texts. It is an attempt at providing an authoritative account of why these should be ignored in favour of the person of Robert Fulford. It is part of the Canadian Problem, the problem of instant, authoritative fame.

Not only does Fulford write regular columns for newspapers — most recently the *Toronto Star* and the *Financial Times* — but he was for nearly 20 years the editor of *Saturday Night*. He has also been central to one TV programme, *Realities* on TV Ontario, and one on radio, *This is Robert Ful-*

*ford*. He has read and met a lot of people. In *Best Seat in the House*, he drops more names in some paragraphs than Conrad Black ever dreamt of, but the real issue is how he makes the imaginative connections between them. He tries to make the connections personal and Canadian — Glenn Gould, Michael Snow, Beland Honderich, Nathan Cohen, Marshall McLuhan, Ken Lefolii, Peter Gzowski, Margaret Atwood, Conrad Black — though sometimes people like W.H. Auden and Edmund Wilson get in.

Take, for example, the case of his school-mate Glenn Gould, the genius of pure sound and mathematical tonality. Fulford knows that his own love of jazz as a social medium must be contrasted with Gould's hermetic but polyphonic universe. Two of twelve chapters are spent on the subject. But nowhere is it suggested that this is part of a much wider debate on music from Max Weber and Theodor Adorno to Eric Hobsbawm and Imamu Amiri Baraka. We are presented with it as if it were Fulford's personal dilemma, something unique to him. Autobiography frequently suppresses thought, even when, as here, the autobiographer has surely read or even interviewed all the participants in a debate. Much more interesting in an autobiography would be an exploration of how an individual comes to terms with ideas which influenced him or her, rather than representing self as the sole mediator of all ideas. Fulford comes out of all this as if he were not just tone-deaf, which he says he is, but concept-blind.

Fulford's journalism and the *Realities* interviews are eminently sensible, bland and uncontroversial, academic chit-chat made palatable for the masses. Yet when major radical thinkers such as Raymond Williams, Noam Chomsky, and Edward Said sneak into the columns or the studios, it is not their ideas that are discussed but the curiosities of their lives and the peculiarities of their marginal situation. Prime exposure, of course, goes to the likes of Allan Bloom who are allowed to develop their ideas.

But Fulford's career is in public education and he is the nation's schoolmaster. It is through him that many people hear of important thinkers for the first time. His contribution is therefore incalculable. His style is fluid, the writing machine crackles on, and he is easily able to address virtually any topic of public importance. Given that most people who read him or watch *Realities* do not read any of the source material, it is his version of these ideas that prevails. And his concept of how to convey ideas is to personalize them, to turn discourse into a gossip column, as in his chapters on Atwood and McLuhan. By a marvellous theatrical device, the thinkers become the puppets to Fulford's ventriloquism. They say what he wants them to say. The three books are important in that they give a sense of what cultural reporting is and of who rises to the top of the pile in the public-owned networks. They demonstrate what the middle-ground of Canadian culture is, and what are the obstacles to creating anything more vibrant. The major obstacle is an ideological one, the deep sleep of middle-Canadian rationality, where three carefully-chosen specialists representing the PCs, the Liberals and the NDP comfortably debate reasonable politics; where Margaret Visser prattles on about our eating habits; and where the Great Cultural Ventriloquist makes everyone seem ideologically normal.

What is startling in all this is that different models do exist on how to do it, as well as there being different community-based organizations on which to draw, not to speak of alternative magazines. The public networks operate as if these did not exist. The emergence of a Harron or a Ritter on the airwaves suggests that breakthroughs are possible, though any major transformation would require much more concerted action than is evident at present. Meanwhile, the sleep of reasonability.

*Ioan Davies is a member of the Border/Lines collective.*

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# The Radical Pedagogue and the Conservative Restoration

Satu Repo

**Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education**  
by Michael Apple  
New York: Routledge, 1988, 259 pp.

These are not easy times for those who make a living by thinking critically about schools and society. In *Teachers and Texts* Michael Apple, using Raymond Williams's words, describes his own frame of mind in Reagan's America as "a cluttered room in which someone is trying to think, while there is a fan-dance going on in one corner and a military band is blasting away in the other." In these circumstances, he maintains, just thinking seriously can be a form of resistance in itself.

*Teachers and Texts* is a collection of essays on teachers and the circumstances in which they work, on textbook publishing, and on Blue Ribbon reports on American educational policy. It is far too thin and schematic to fulfil its promise to be a "political economy of class and gender relations in education." What it does offer is a rather complex model for thinking about the subject and some commentary on current topics which show how the discourse of "critical pedagogy" can be applied.

Developing a Marxist "critical pedagogy" has been a collective process; many have contributed to it since the pioneering work by Bowles and Gintis in the 1960s: among others, Bourdieu, Connell, Giroux, Willis and, to a very substantial extent, Michael Apple. This is his fourth book on the subject, and his own thinking has gradually become less economist and reductive, more able to deal with the complexities of economic and cultural factors, with forces of resistance as well as forces of domination. In a sense this present work, for me at least, sums up where the discipline itself is at the present time. It shows both what has been achieved and some of the weaknesses of contemporary Marxist thought about education.

The paradigm in critical pedagogy

draws on both "structural" and "cultural" Marxism. Apple and others rely to a great extent on the synthesis of these created by such British Marxists as Stuart Hall and the work done in recent decades at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England.

Critical pedagogues insist that education has to be seen *relationally*. It is not an isolated domain but is created out of the economic, political and cultural conflicts that have emerged historically in a given country. Our schools are a product of capitalism, which has to be understood to be not only an economic system but, as a form of life, "a structured totality." A capitalist society is built out of "constantly changing and contradictory sets of interconnections among the economic, political and cultural spheres."

Education is part of the "cultural sphere" but it is also deeply influenced by the overall power relations in society: by class, gender and race relations. It tends to reproduce these relations through curriculum and pedagogic styles, which themselves are influenced by economic and political considerations. However, this is not a simple, mechanical process. Schools are sites where the status quo is both reproduced and struggled against. As teachers, students and parents, "classed, gendered and raced" subjects also play a role in trying to shape the educational process, trying to get it to reflect their needs and priorities. Teachers struggle for more autonomy from the state in matters of curriculum and pedagogy; students show both active and passive resistance, creating "discipline" problems and "dropout problems;" culturally diverse communities demand more to say about what is being taught and how the specific needs of their children should be met. Thus schools, like the rest of society, are fraught with strife, as members of subordinate groups resist, both actively and passively, the dominant order and its agenda.

Critical pedagogy stresses, then, that schools have their own specific politics. While these may be tied to and restricted by class relations and the economy, they also have their "relative autonomy." It is therefore both possible and worthwhile to examine specific issues that are of concern to schools today. This is what Apple does in *Teachers and Texts*, which focusses on the effect that Reagan's economic and social policies have had on American schools. He argues that eight years of conservative rule have created proletarianized teachers, a cautious curriculum, and a dispirited school system with a narrow trade-school mentality.

Teachers have become proletarianized, because their work has been restructured similarly to industrial and clerical work in earlier periods. Increasingly, the control over curriculum and teaching methods has been taken out of the hands of teachers and imposed from above, by school administrators and state officials. As education budgets are cut, the teachers' work also becomes more *intensified*, which adds to the erosion of their status as "professionals." They have larger classes and less time for either self-improvement or for developing programmes which stress creativity and imagination. Both *proletarianization* and *intensification* have had important effects on the curriculum as well. The textbook publishers have rushed in to provide material that satisfies both the administrators' desire for tighter control and the teachers' need to simplify their programs, because of intolerable workloads. Textbooks have evolved into "curriculum systems" in which "goals, strategies, tests, textbooks, worksheets, appropriate student response" are all integrated. As a consequence, "little is left to the teacher's discretion as the state becomes even more intrusive into the kind of knowledge that must be taught, the end products and goals of that teaching, and the way in which it is carried on."

Apple stresses that *gender* is also a factor in the growing regimentation of schools. The long tradition of sexual division of labour in schools — female teachers, male administrators — means that *patriarchy* as well as *class* offer mechanisms of social control. Many school boards have been able to maintain more effective bureaucratic control over curriculum and teaching practices by structuring jobs to take advantage of sex role stereotypes of women's supposed responsiveness to rules of male authority and men's presumed ability to manage women. Even when teachers resist the top-down hierarchy and regimentation, it often becomes "gendered resistance," which may have "contradictory" results. Apple found in interviewing female elementary school teachers that they often expressed their reservations about highly structured and test-based reading programs by insisting that it was more important for them to make children "feel good" than to teach them skills, thus falling back on the traditional notion that it is women's role to provide emotional security: "while these teachers rightly fight on a cultural level against

what they perceive to be the ill-effects of their loss of control...they do so at the expense of reinstating categories that partly reproduce other divisions which have historically grown out of patriarchic relations."

The *political economy of publishing* further contributes towards a cautious, status quo-oriented curriculum. In the United States the production costs of school texts are such that, for every \$500,000 invested in publishing a text, 100,000 copies have to be sold just to break even. As textbooks need government approval before they can be purchased by individual schools, the publishers have to be tuned into the increasingly conservative sensibilities of state bureaucrats to survive.

In discussing the long-term trends in education, Apple stresses that they are influenced by what is happening in other spheres, particularly in the economy. The forces of capital are restructuring the American economy. An international division of labour is being created, with industrial jobs moving to low-wage areas on the globe and the home economy turning into a "service" economy. Broadly speaking this means skilled jobs for the minority who are producing information and information processing devices and unskilled jobs for the majority who have a choice between vastly simplified clerical work or selling goods and services.

This restructuring has also generated a debate among the American ruling elites about the role of the schools. The 1980s have produced two major education reports by blue ribbon task forces, the liberal *The Paideia Proposal* and the conservative *A Nation at Risk*, and a great deal of hand-wringing in the media about the "problems" of the American school system. Both reports are part of the renewed emphasis on "getting back to the basics" and the stress on "excellence" and "discipline" in the classroom. *The Paideia Proposal*, which represents the views of the academic and intellectual establishment, has actually made one startling and potentially progressive recommendation: the elimination of all tracking or streaming from American schools. However, Apple judges, probably correctly, that in the ongoing debate on education the liberal humanists have lost power to the business elite and the extreme right: "*The Paideia Proposal* will make a small ripple in a big pond where the waves are now being made by capital and the state." *A Nation at Risk*, which represents a broader constituency of business and government, is more concerned with bringing the educational system more closely in line with the needs of the corporate sector.

Apple makes some somber predictions about the future of American public schools. He believes that inequalities will increase. At the same time, schools will be scapegoated: teachers and curriculum will be blamed for social and economic problems over which they have no control. Schools will become dangerously narrow in their scope, shunning liberal arts and education for citizenship and concentrating on disembodied technical skills and

workplace dispositions. And teachers will gradually become as tightly controlled as workers in stores, factories and offices.

*Teachers and Texts* succeeds in situating the current malaise of the American school system in the context of larger shifts in the economy and body politic. It is somewhat less successful in showing how the schools might also have their "relative autonomy": what is mostly being discussed are the "effects" of these larger forces. Like many radical pedagogues, Apple is also more effective in developing a "language of critique" than a "language of possibility." While he devotes a few obligatory pages in the last chapter to an "alternative" proposal for organizing schools, his heart is not in it. If anything, he tends to worry about left utopianism in relation to possible "resistance" in schools, be it by teachers, parents or students. He warns us that "possibilities must be grounded in an unromantic appraisal of the circumstances in which we find ourselves" and quotes with approval a stern admonition by Stuart Hall: "The task of critical theory is to produce as accurate a knowledge of complex social processes as the complexity of their functioning requires. It is not its task to console the left by producing simple but satisfying myths, distinguished only by their super-left wing credentials."

Nobody should encourage foolhardy optimism about turning the schools around in Republican Amerika (or Conservative Canada, for that matter). Still, a radical critique without a utopian vision at its centre remains politically inert. This is the main problem I have with the bulk of

"critical pedagogy." It is ironic that it has borrowed much of its theoretical equipment — terms such as "hegemony" and "resistance" — from a thinker-activist who, under much bleaker circumstances, was able to keep the task of social transformation at the centre of his thought: Antonio Gramsci. Every page of his *Prison Notebooks* is animated by one concern: how do we build a counter-hegemonic culture which is popular and broadly-based? Critical pedagogy, while often referring to Gramsci, seems to have retreated from this concern, or perhaps given it up as hopelessly romantic. And yet "transformative" educational practices can be found both inside and outside the school system both in the United States and Canada: in "alternative" schools, in the classrooms of individual "inner-city" teachers, in the curriculum initiatives by progressive publishers. Radical pedagogues like Apple, who are explicitly committed to "understanding the world in order to change it," need to write more out of these counter-hegemonic practices, reminding their readers forcefully that more liberating forms of education and social practice are not only possible but practised in the here-and-now. Otherwise, this often brilliant and incisive critique will continue to resonate only in the Halls of Academe.

*A different version of this review was published in Vol. 1, No 2 (Jan 1989) of Our Schools/Our Selves.*

*Satu Repo is a member of the Border/Lines editorial collective.*

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# On Shakespeare

Mark Fortier

The iconic image of William Shakespeare



**Shakespeare Reproduced:  
The Text in History and Ideology**  
Eds. Jean E. Howard and  
Marion F. O'Connor  
New York: Methuen, 1987, 292 pp.

**The Shakespeare Myth**  
Ed. Graham Holderness  
Manchester: Manchester University Press,  
1988, 215 pp.

"Shakespeare in Canada"  
*Canadian Theatre Review* 54 (Spring  
1988), 96 pp.

In his survey of recent "Political criticism of Shakespeare" in *Shakespeare Reproduced*, Walter Cohen argues that ideological criticism is more advanced in Shakespeare studies than in any other area of traditional literary research, and that Shakespeare studies form "the cutting edge of academic criticism in the United States." However, if the effect of this cutting edge is not to be blunted, Shakespeare studies must concern themselves not only with a historical and political study of Shakespeare's texts in their time, but with "Shakespeare" in a more current sense. As Terry Eagleton writes in the "Afterword" to *The Shakespeare Myth*, "Shakespeare is today less an author than an apparatus." Shakespeare is not only a set of literary texts from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but "an entire politico-cultural formation" in the world around us. The Shakespeare apparatus, the Shakespeare industry, "interlocks with almost every major structure of late capitalism." In other words, "Shakespeare" is the name of something which continues to have a political effect in our own day. It is this "Shakespeare" which must be studied if

the full urgency of Shakespeare studies is to be made manifest.

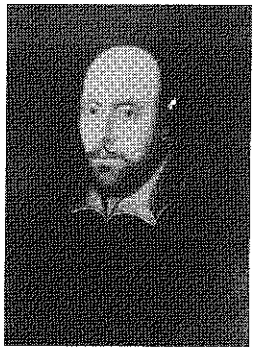
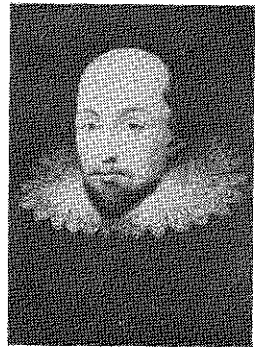
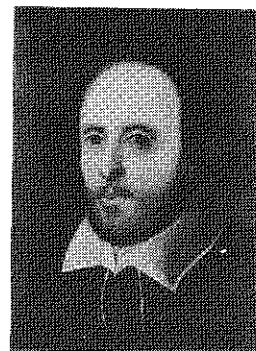
Of the volumes under review, *Shakespeare Reproduced* is the most literary. It takes up the contextual rereading of Shakespeare's plays already underway in such compilations as *Political Shakespeare* (Eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Ithaca: Cornell, 1985), *Alternative Shakespeares* (Ed. John Drakakis, London: Methuen, 1985), and *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (Eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, New York: Methuen, 1985). Here the plays are reputedly set inside their historical context, and yet what seems to happen is rather that the historical context is set inside the plays — hence a symptomatic pattern in the titles of a number of the essays collected here: "class-gender tension in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," "femininity and the monstrous in *Othello*," "gender and rank in *Much Ado About Nothing*," "subversion and recuperation in *The Merchant of Venice*." Perhaps more interesting to a wider audience is the discussion of Shakespeare and higher education in Britain, and especially the United States, which is taken up in the introduction by Howard and O'Connor, and then in the contributions of Walter Cohen, Don E. Wayne, and Margaret Ferguson.

Cohen, one of the most trenchant of current Shakespeare scholars, indicates the work still to be done. While "radical" Shakespeare may be becoming hegemonic at elite conferences, in scholarly journals and in large research universities, this is not the case in the classroom generally, especially at the smaller colleges and universities where those from the working or lower middle classes are likely to be in attendance. Nor has the radical critique of Shakespeare informed a critique of aca-

demic and pedagogic procedures, let alone a critique of practices outside the academy. Don E. Wayne argues that the new historicism, the most ubiquitous form of radical critique of Shakespeare in the United States, while it comes out of the activism of the 1960s and that activism's critique of state and institutional power, is blind to its complicity — in its world view, if not its practice — with the corporate power structures of late capitalism in the 1980s. Margaret Ferguson questions the potential of Shakespeare studies as an effective oppositional strategy, and shows that the forces for containing the subversive power of radical Shakespeare studies are truly formidable. Such a bracing awareness, she argues, must inform any alternative pedagogical practice. Howard and O'Connor conclude by calling for studies of "Shakespeare" in advertising, popular magazines, and political rhetoric, for instance: "Ignoring these uses of Shakespeare as trivial or beyond our expertise means acquiescing in the separation of the academy from general culture."

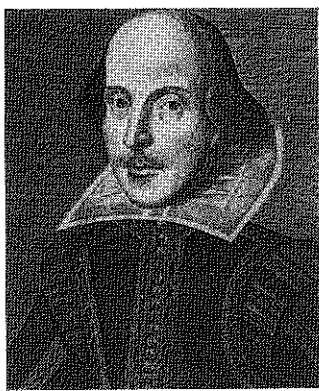
*The Shakespeare Myth* is explicitly less concerned with Shakespeare's dramatic texts than with such "trivial" appropriations of Shakespeare. The contributors were urged to "look behind and beyond" the plays "and to recognize 'Shakespeare' wherever and whenever that authorial construction is manifested." In fact, the closest thing to a textual reading in this volume is a reading not of Shakespeare's works but of the adaptations of Stoppard, Marowitz, Wesker and Bond. Although scholars of literature may find this approach disconcerting, it opens the discussion into areas which traditional approaches have always elided.

"The call of the contemporary is inescapable," writes Graham Holderness in his



border/lines fall 1989





introduction, and "Shakespeare is, here, now, always, what is currently being made of him." In Britain "Shakespeare" continues to be an effective and pressing ideological state apparatus, disseminated through such industries as tourism, broadcasting, publishing and education. John Drakakis studies the conflicts between the International Globe Trust, which wants to reconstruct the Globe theatre on its original site, and the Southwark Borough Council, which wants to use the land for public housing. In his article on Shakespeare and education, David Hornbrook continues the groundbreaking work of Alan Sinfield in *Political Shakespeare*. Hornbrook notes a strange new twist: while Shakespeare plays a progressively smaller role in the education of the working class, the elite in British "public" schools continue to be well versed in their bardolatry. Hornbrook argues that the exclusion from Shakespeare studies goes hand in hand with an exclusion from access to the managerial class, and that Shakespeare studies — in a radicalized version — should be reintroduced into working class education. *The Shakespeare Myth* also looks at other contestatory practices in which "Shakespeare" as champion of the status quo is taken to task: feminist criticism, popular theatre and adaptation, gay liberation.

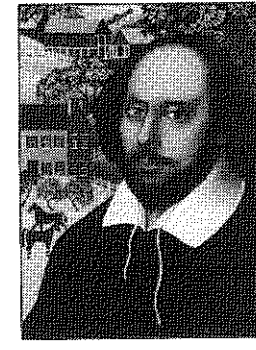
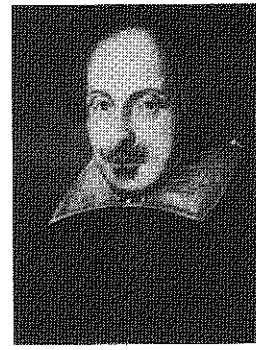
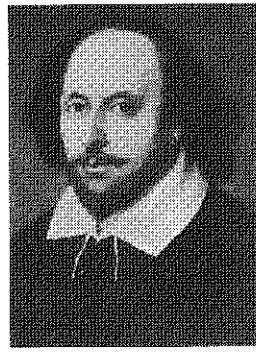
*Shakespeare Reproduced* is decidedly American in its focus, and *The Shakespeare Myth* is even more decidedly British. This leaves the Canadian reader with little or no specific understanding as to how the Shakespeare apparatus, the Shakespeare industry, the Shakespeare myth, works in Canada in the late 1980s. Northrop Frye's *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1986), for instance, is a strictly literary analysis of Shakespeare's texts as works expressing universal truth: rather than elucidating the Shakespeare apparatus in Canada, Frye's book must be read as one of its symptoms. The special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* on "Shakespeare in Canada" begins to lay the ground for such an understanding. *Canadian Theatre Review* has recently been moving toward a more theoretically and politically informed critical practice, but it is hampered in this movement by its privileged status as a high-profile, mainstream journal. The "Shakespeare in Canada" issue is only sporadically informed by any self-aware political or theoretical viewpoint. Paul Leonard, for instance, in a review of Shakespeare in Toronto's parks, notes that there is an unquestioned assumption behind these productions that it is good for people to see Shakespeare, that Shakespeare is thought quite naively to carry an absolute value independent of cultural context. Ann Wilson and Steven Bush argue that all productions of Shakespeare, and not just radical adaptations, are political reappropriations. Much of the rest of the volume avoids such affronts to humanist assumptions; however, the articles gathered together are quite useful as the raw material for the production of a fuller understanding of "Shakespeare" in Canada.

There are articles, for instance, on specifically Canadian adaptations of *Pericles* and *Hamlet*. There are articles on regional Shakespeare in Vancouver, Saskatoon and St. John's. Not surprisingly, perhaps, what looms largest in the volume is the Stratford Festival, the linchpin of the Shakespeare industry in Canada. Richard Paul Knowles writes about the impact of the Festival theatre stage on Stratford productions — thereby showing how, in theatre, architecture, rather than dramatic meaning, is sometimes the determinant element. A more political reading of the Festival space could benefit from the details and analysis provided by Knowles. Cecil O'Neal interviews John Hirsch, former Stratford artistic director, and we find Hirsch mouthing the same apolitical and ahistorical platitudes as his British counterparts in *The Shakespeare Myth*. However, while Terry Hands, Michael Croft, and Jonathan Miller are savagely taken to task by Terry Eagleton in the British volume, Hirsch's assumptions remain unchallenged here. Stratford is also the subject of a theatre review of the 1987 season by Ralph Berry, as well as two book reviews by Neil Carson and Anne Russell. What seems lacking in this wealth of information is a materialist analysis which would begin to

see Stratford as an "entire politico-cultural formation."

How, then, does the Shakespeare apparatus function in Canada? Are Shakespeare studies in Canadian universities on the "cutting edge," or are they the castle keep of academic feudalism? If Shakespeare in Britain seems part of living — if oppressive — history and tradition, and in the United States an aesthetic object somewhat apart from lived experience, what role does Shakespeare play for us? The work has not yet been done to allow us to answer these questions, but the works under review at least allow us to pose the questions. Ann Wilson, in her introduction to "Shakespeare in Canada," gives an account of the seemingly unmediated response of Stratford elementary school children to "William's play," *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Wilson concludes, "It is hard not to envy the intimacy of [this] response to Shakespeare's plays." This may be true; but, unfortunately, we can also discern in these children the uncritical humanist responses of tomorrow. Those responses should not be envied, but analysed and countermanded.

Mark Fortier teaches in the Cultural Studies Programme at Trent University.



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# Our Kind of Books

## The B/L List

**Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism**, edited by Susan Sheridan. London: Verso, 1988. \$21.50 paper. Mainly Australian essays on a variety of topics from dance to Freud and Woolf, from migrant women's writing to Hollywood films. Above all, includes Meaghan Morris's marvellous article "Things To Do with Shopping Centres."

**Hotel Destiné** by Patricia Seaman. Charlottetown: Gynergy Press, 1989. \$9.95 paper. Patricia Seaman playfully rewrites the self and the family using eroticized language as her point of departure. Published alongside titles by Nancy Chater, Ann Decter and Angela Hryniuk, *Hotel Destiné* launches Gynergy, an exciting feminist imprint of Ragweed Press, the Maritime publishing house wholly owned and operated by women.

**Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty** by Gilles Deleuze and **Venus in Furs** by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. New York: Zone Books, 1989. \$29.95 cloth. Sacher-Masoch's classic work is here reprinted alongside a translation of Deleuze's essay "Le froid et le cruel," originally published in 1967. Examining the writings of de Sade and Sacher-Masoch, Deleuze concludes that sadism and masochism cannot be considered as two parts of a single whole but rather as conditions dependent on completely different world views. True to Zone's high standards, *Masochism* is a beautifully produced book.

**Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland** by Iwona Irwin-Zarecka. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1989. \$44.00 cloth. A study of how the evidence of the holocaust has been treated in Poland over the last decade. Based on interviews, analysis of the press and government policy, and discussion of the reception of "The Jewish Memory Project," *Neutralizing Memory* also includes interpretation of the reception of Lanzmann's *Shoah* in Poland.

**Panic Encyclopedia: The Definitive Guide to the Postmodern Scene** by Arthur Kroker, Marilouise Kroker and David Cook. CultureTexts Series. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1989. \$9.95 paper. A thoroughly entertaining romp through the trash heaps of postmodern

American culture. The definitive coffee-table book for the Baudrillard set.

**The Politics of Literary Reputation: The Making and Claiming of 'St. George' Orwell** by John Rodden. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. \$39.50 cloth. John Rodden's book is an innovative synthesis of sociology, history and cultural criticism. Drawing from a wide range of material, Rodden examines the public reputation of George Orwell and how that reputation has been used and claimed by a whole gamut of political and literary interests that range from George Woodcock to Raymond Williams to New York neo-conservatives. A good feat of scholarship.

**Reader, I Murdered Him**, edited by Jen Green, with an Introduction by Alison Hennegan. London: Women's Press, 1989. \$10.95 paper. A collection of 16 mysteries by established and new writers. Poison in boss's tea, a flowerpot on the head of a two-timing husband, a camera in an old lady's purse: these and more were successful and unsuccessful crimes. This anthology should be read by all men who are concerned by female strategies.

**Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age** by Modris Eksteins. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989. \$26.95 cloth. Eksteins works a well-tilled field of modern scholarship: the social and cultural roots of the First World War and its aftermath. Interest in this familiar material is, however, revived by the author's contention that Europe actively sought this conflict as a rite of passage from the moribund world of nineteenth-century rationalism into the aestheticized, aleatory sphere of full modernism. The novelistic character of Eksteins' prose makes for enjoyable reading.

**Sans Souci and Other Stories** by Dionne Brand. Stratford, Ontario: Williams-Wallace, 1988. \$10.95 paper. Already one of our most important politically engaged poets, Dionne Brand has produced a first collection of prose that is at once lyrical and unsettling. The finest of these stories explore the subtle, occasionally blunt, manifestations of racism, patriarchy and imperialism both in Canada and the Caribbean.

**Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society** by Stanley Aronowitz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. \$19.50 paper. This is more a review of the literature of the critique of science than an original analysis, but what a review! Aronowitz, a labour sociologist and frequent contributor to *Social Text*, casts a wide historical net in his discussion of Marxist and Frankfurt School approaches to science.

**Spaces Like Stairs: Essays** by Gail Scott. Toronto: Women's Press, 1989. \$10.95 paper. Billed as a collection of "essays," *Spaces Like Stairs* is more of an open-ended writer's workbook that traverses the territory between feminism and postmodernism, between fiction and theory, between francophone and anglophone culture.

**Universal Abandon: The Politics of Postmodernism**, edited by Andrew Ross. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. \$20.95 paper. Mouffe, Aronowitz, Laclau, Grossberg, Rose and others discuss the implications for political practice of the debates that have circled around the notion of postmodern culture. Clearly written and representing varied left critiques, the articles are essential reading on the subject.

Compiled by Ioan Davies, Joe Galbo, Robyn Gillam, Daniel Jones, Peter Laurie and Melony Ward.

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borderlines fall 1989

A listing of academic, political and cultural events compiled by Mark Hesselink and Melony Ward. Information to be published in future quarterly issues of *Border/Lines* should be sent to us care of: Scanner, 183 Bathurst Street, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2R7.

Scanner provides free publicity to those political and/or cultural events which, for financial or ideological reasons, do not have access to major media outlets.

### Conferences and Festivals

**The 10th Biennial Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference presents "The State of the Art, The State of Practice"**, October 18-21, 1989, Palliser Hotel, Calgary, Alberta. Topics will address the following: the state of art in individual disciplines, women and ethnicity, ethnic literature, oral history, ethnicity and politics, Native studies, immigration and refugee policy. For further information contact CESA Conference 1989, Dean's Office, Faculty of Social Science, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4. Tel. (403) 220-6151.

**54th International P.E.N. World Congress**, September 23-27, 1989, Toronto, Ontario; September 27- October 1, 1989, Montréal, Québec. Contact Sarah Thring, Communications Co-ordinator, The Canadian Centre (english-speaking), The Writers' Centre, 24 Ryerson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2P3 (416) 860-1448. The 54th World Congress of International P.E.N. will gather in Toronto and Montreal for a week of meetings, readings and literary sessions based on the Congress theme *The Writer: Freedom and Power*. Twenty-one literary panels will take place during the Congress, including: National Identity in the Contemporary World, Power and Gender, Private Conscience and State Security, Where is Latin America?, The Writer, Censorship and Self-Censorship.

**"Unguarded Borders": A series of presentations by artists living in Canada and the United States** Presented by Visual Arts Ontario  
October 17 1989: Mary Pratt  
October 24 1989: Barbara Kruger  
November 7 1989: Paterson Ewen  
December 5 1989: Lawrence Weiner  
takes place at the Ontario College of

Art, Toronto, 7:30 P.M. Preregistration advised. For further information contact David McClyment at Visual Arts Ontario. Tel. (416) 591-8883.

**In Visible Colours.** International Women of Colour and Third World Women Film/Video Festival and Symposium, November 15 - 19 1989, Vancouver. Contact Fariba Ferdowski, Public Relations, In Visible Colours, 849 Beatty Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 2M6. Tel. (604) 685-1137 Fax (604) 666-1569.

In Visible Colours is a celebration of women's vision found in the diverse and rich cinema by women of colour and Third World Women. Festival themes will reflect universal concerns of peace, work, family ties, relationships, self-determination, and freedom. Workshops and forums will bring together Canadian and international film/video makers to address critical concerns of production, distribution, training, financing, and aesthetics. The panels include: "Independent Black Cinema," "Old and New World Asia," "Native Filmmaking — Reclaiming Our Images," "New Latin Cinema." A unique anti-racism school program will also offer Vancouver secondary students special screenings and hands-on workshops with film and video makers.

**Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival.** The Inside Out Collective, a group of lesbians and gays interested in film and video, is planning a Toronto lesbian and gay film and video festival from November 3rd to November 13, 1990. Anyone interested in more information should contact Brent Cehan at 105 Isabella, Apt. 214, Toronto, Ontario, M5X 1N9, (416) 920-4570; or Gillian Morton at (416) 924-3902. A call for submissions is forthcoming.

**AIDS Awareness Week.** 2nd Annual Ontario Aids Awareness Week; 6th Annual Metro Toronto AIDS Awareness Week, October 16 - 22 1989. Contact Johanne (Jo) Campbell or Anne Marie at The AIDS Committee of Toronto, (416) 926-0063. "Forum on Testing and Treatment", date and location T.B.A. "Candle-light Vigil" at Cawthra Park in the evening of October 19. "AIDS Memorial", Toronto City Hall Rotunda, Monday October 16 - Friday October 20.

**Energy For Tomorrow**, the 14th World Energy, Conference Congress, September 17 - 22, 1989, in Montreal. Contact Guy Coulombe, 2 Place Felix-Martin, 14th Floor, Montréal, Québec, H2Z 1Z3.

**The Guelph International Film Festival**, with a focus on the environment, October 26 - 29, 1989, Guelph, Ontario. Contact: Robert Tudhope,

Centre for International Programs, Development Education Program, University of Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1.

**Popular Culture Association National Meeting**, Toronto, Ontario, March 7-10 1990. For information contact: Ray B. Browne Secretary-Treasurer, PCA, Popular Culture Dept., Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, 43403. The Popular Culture Association is an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary organization interested in new approaches to the culture which most people for good or ill enjoy: literature and art, materials, patterns and expressions, mass media genres and all other phenomena of everyday life.

**Globe '90.** A trade fair and conference on the environment and global opportunities for business, March 19 - 23, 1990, Vancouver. Contact: Globe '90, Suite 250, 1130 Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6E 4A4.

**33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies.** August 19 - 25, 1990, University of Toronto. The theme is "Contacts between Cultures." Contact: Prof. Julia Ching, Secretariat, 33 ICANAS, Victoria College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1K7.

**National Symposium on Aboriginal Women of Canada: Past, Present and Future**, October 19 -21, 1989, University of Lethbridge, Alberta. Contact: Prof. Christine Miller, Native American Studies, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, (403) 329-2635.

**The 15th Annual Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts**, October 6 - 8 1989, Glendon College, York University, Toronto. Contact: Prof. Joseph G. Green, Programme in Arts and Media Administration, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, M3J 1P5, (416) 736-5082. Conferences range from discussion of particular genres to social policy and theoretical issues related to the arts and popular culture, including performing arts, architecture, museums, urban ecology and literature.

### Call for Entries

**5 Feminist Minutes.** Deadline for Submissions: September 30, 1989. Contact: your local film co-op, your local NFB office, The National Film Board of Canada, Studio D P-43, P.O. Box 6100, Station A, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3H5. 15th Anniversary of Studio D, The "Women's Studio" of the NFB. Up to 15 films: "Snapshots" of the world from a feminist perspective, imaginative, personal "Words on Women". Each film must be five

minutes in length: Fiction, Documentary, Animation or Experimental. Open to women who are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

### Actions

**Don't Lose the Right To Choose: Your Body is the Battleground**  
Cross country Pro-Choice demonstration October 14 1989  
Exact Time & Place T.B.A. For further information contact:  
Ontario Coalition of Abortion Clinics (416) 969-8463  
Vancouver (604) 266-9636  
Montréal (514) 522-7776

### Boycott!

**PROMISING AIDS DRUG STILL NOT RELEASED.** DDI is a promising new anti-viral drug. In U.S. drug trials, DDI has been shown to be safe and far less toxic than AZT. It is especially needed for the growing number of people living with AIDS who are AZT intolerant.

The Canadian government has given its approval for the immediate release of DDI through the Emergency Drug Release Programme. But Bristol-Myers, an American multinational drug corporation, continues to say no.

People living with AIDS have a catastrophic right to free access to any treatment that they and their doctors feel will be useful in combating or slowing down their illness.

On July 13th fifty people demonstrated outside the Bay Street office of Bristol-Myers. Seven AIDS ACTION NOW! members were arrested trying to speak to Bristol-Myers officials about demands for the immediate release of DDI. Bristol-Myers' stalling is costing lives.

The same day Bristol-Myers USA announced that DDI may be released on compassionate grounds by September if their drug trial proposal is approved by Canadian authorities. But past experience proves that such a trial is not possible until 1990. Release under the Emergency Drug Release Programme must not be dependent on approval of drug trials.

We cannot and will not wait. People's lives are on the line. There is no reason why Bristol-Myers cannot initiate emergency release of this drug today. We urge you to protest Bristol-Myers' stalling.

Phone Bristol-Myers with your concerns as often as you can: (416) 362-4281 FAX 362-9249. Boycott their products (some of them being): Bufferin; Windex; Javex; Miss Clairol; Fleecy. Time is running out. AIDS ACTION NOW!, Box 325, 253 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1R5; or call the AAN! phoneline at 591-8489.



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KNEW IT  
WAS RIDICULOUS  
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