

OtherWise

A Feminist Newspaper at U of T



Barefoot and Pregnant?

Karen Tucker

The issue of motherhood is perhaps one of the most contentious issues that feminists must face today. During the early years of the women's movement the issue seemed more cut and dried: there was a conscious effort to get beyond motherhood -- women's liberation was seen as being dependent on the abolition of child-rearing, if not childbearing altogether. While anti-feminists were still clinging to the idea of a 'natural' connection between childbearing and childrearing, feminists were pointing to studies which proved that 'motherhood' was merely a social convention, there being no 'natural' or biological reason why women should be the primary caretakers of children. In recent years, however, there has been an attempt on the part of some feminists to "reclaim" motherhood. This has not meant merely adopting

the old anti-feminist stance. Rather, these women want to reclaim motherhood by redefining what it means to be a mother. This has tended to entail an attempt on the part of feminists to raise the previously personal realm of childcare to the realm of the political, while at the same time recognizing the biological bond that exists between mother and child. These women see it as necessary to rescue motherhood by showing that it can be a positive experience for both mother and child. The question I would like to ask, however, is; Is this reclaiming of motherhood the best possible solution for women, children and society as a whole? Although much has been written on this issue, I will limit my discussion to the works of three feminists who have written on the subject. I have chosen to deal

with Sara Ruddick, Shulamith Firestone and Nancy Chodorow because these three women hold very different views concerning motherhood and how it relates (if at all) to women's oppression.

I will begin with Sara Ruddick for it is she, who, more than either of the other two women wants to reclaim motherhood. In her article entitled "Maternal Thinking" Ruddick sees motherhood primarily as a nurturing function. She claims that motherhood has been devalued by society and wants motherhood transformed so that it will be seen as a positive experience. Ruddick does not believe that maternal practice and maternal thought are rooted in biology. She believes that all thought arises out of social practice and states that males are also capable of "maternal" thought. She does, however, have reservations about allowing men to partake equally in the raising of children. Men, she believes, can have a negative effect because they oppress women in the outside world; although eventually Ruddick would like all people, both male and female, to become "mothers".

Despite Ruddick's claim that men are capable of maternal thinking, she implies throughout her article that women make better "mothers" than men do. To give her credit, she does recognize that women are socialized to be more "maternal", but she is wary about extending this to the point of stating that males could be socialized to be just as "maternal". At times Ruddick seems to contradict her original statement that "all thought arises out of social practice". Take, for example, the following passage: Maternal thought does, I believe, exist for all women in a radically different way than for men. It is because we are daughters, nurtured and trained by women, that we early

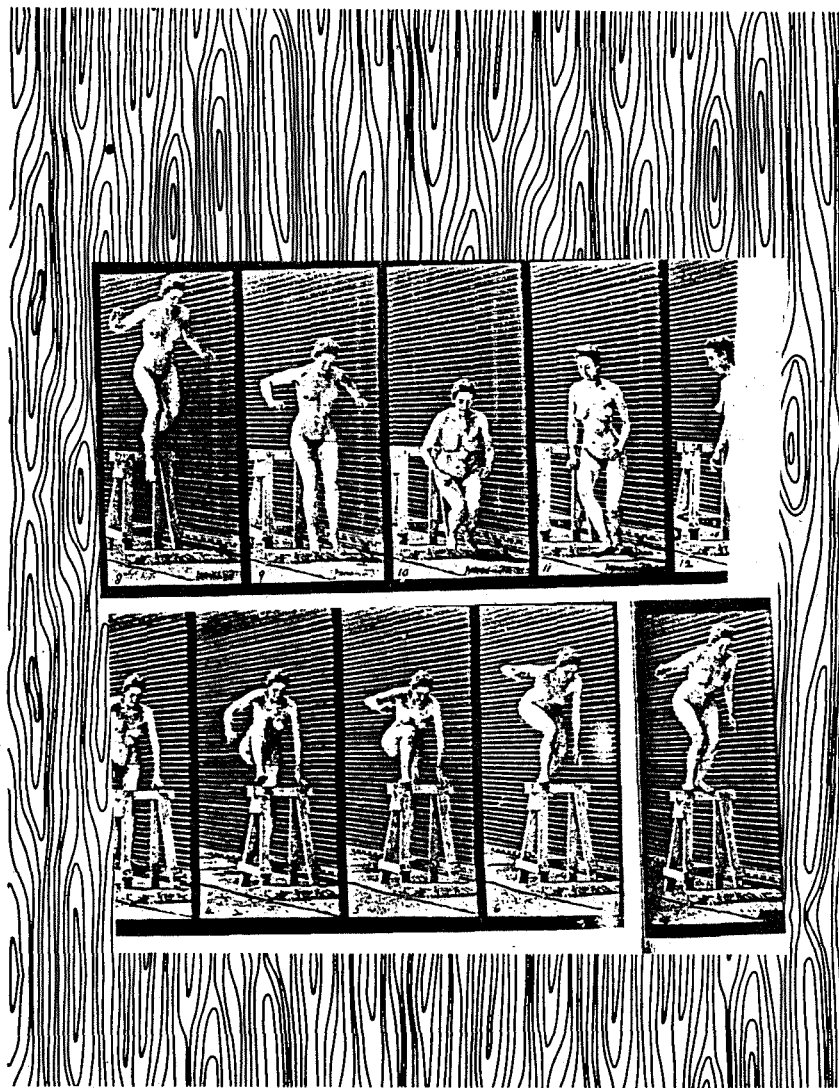
cont'd on page 12

MORE OTHERWISE

Medusa's Revenge,
Page 3

Which Sex For You?,
Page 2

Media Exploitation,
Page 5



We are the Otherwise Collective:

Karen Bernard
Vivan Chan
Elizabeth Czach
Chris Glady
Amelia Golden
Karen Tucker
Sarah Yu



Contributors: Claire Christie,
Kim Sawchuk.

Special thanks to our sisters at the Women's Centre for their willingness to take us in when there was nowhere else to go. Also, many thanks to those members of the W.S.S.U. who spoke out in support of providing us with a permanent home. In addition, thanks to Aubrey Golden for the loan of his computers and work space.

Anyone interested in getting involved with Otherwise will be more than welcome to join us at our weekly meetings, Friday evenings at 5:30 in room 55B, New College.

Sex Selection - Is Choice the Issue?

Sarah Yu

For supporters of the Pro-Choice movement, whether abortions are right or wrong is not the issue, it is the freedom of individual women to maintain control of their own bodies. In other words, we are fighting for the right to know our alternatives, and most importantly, the right to choose them. Similarly, feminist philosophy does not condemn women who have chosen to be homemakers and mothers; it is the patriarchal system which prevents women from knowing or realizing other options which we censure. So why, then, has so much concern been generated by last month's opening of Allan Abramovitch's Sex Selection Clinic? Isn't the issue the right to choose the gender of the child, whether it be male or female?

This is undoubtedly the reasoning used by Abramovitch and the originator of the sex-selection technology, Ericsson. However, if one delves beneath the surface, it soon becomes apparent that such an argument is an over-simplified justification of a complicated issue.

Previous criticisms have stemmed mainly from a fear that the widespread use of Ericsson's method will result in a larger percentage of males being born, thus perverting the gender ratio of the greater population. Ericsson originally conceived the process to isolate the Y sperm (which results in boys). Isolating the X sperm was little more than an after-thought. Concern for the

overwhelming preference for male babies is not unfounded; even in our modern, western society, men are undeniably favoured by the economic and social systems. More and more frequently, couples are limiting themselves to having one child and would like the benefit of choosing its gender; in such a situation, it is probable that the choice will be male.

Although the predominance of males being selected at the clinic is disquieting, other concerns with equally disturbing implications should be considered. Not surprisingly, the clinic has only been approached by couples, generally married. Since historically, marriage has always assumed the wife's compliance to the man, (to trust and obey), wouldn't a sex selection clinic facilitate the perception of women as reproductive machines at the disposal of men? Although the choice is ultimately the woman's, who can determine the amount of psychological manipulation she has undergone in her decision? Even if the decision has been reached mutually, it is the woman who will carry the child and any emotional burdens caused by such a decision.

Furthermore, Abramovitch's requirement that a consent form be signed by the parents declaring that they will accept a child of either gender is a pathetically inadequate measure of protection. If under normal circumstances a boy is wanted and a girl is born, there will probably be disappointment. If

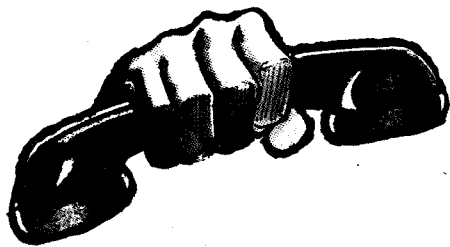
Submissions to Otherwise can be mailed to P.O. Box 857, Postal Station P, or slipped under the door of room 55B, New College. Please mark all envelopes "To the attention of Otherwise" and include your name and telephone number on any articles submitted.

The views expressed in articles printed in Otherwise are not necessarily views held by members of the collective.

after \$1600 and approximately three artificial inseminations of manipulated sperm a boy is wanted and a girl is born, there will probably be anger. Consider that Ericsson's success rate only ranges from 75-86%.

Finally, the main question feminists ask is why should there even be a need for sex selection? Ideally we will live in a society where sex (and race and any other physical characteristics) will be irrelevant to a person's ability to interact with others and exist in her or his own right. Yet how can we possibly claim we are striving for such a condition with clinics which ultimately encourage the distinction between sexes? Whether the desired gender is male or female is irrelevant. The very manifestation of a preference strengthens stereotyping of the sexes and discourages us from viewing each other as individuals whose traits transcend gender. The answer is not to prohibit clinics such as Abramovitch's. The answer is to reach a level of insight where the existence of such clinics is a complete absurdity and an insult to the concept of humanity.

Medusa's Revenge



Kim Sawchuk

Medusa's Revenge

This is a part of a work in progress, Tele-Tale Signs on technology, sexuality, and the telephone. This piece is a response to the challenge of the obscene caller.

To decapitate -- to castrate. The terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something. The hair upon the Medusa's head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from the castration complex. It is a remarkable fact that however frightening they may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is a confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration.

Sigmund Freud

The Medusa's Head

THE OBSCENE CALL*

*This is a transcript from one of many similar calls left on a friend's answering machine over a span of approximately three months. The dotted lines indicate the points at which the machine stopped, and he was forced to redial.

I just want you to know that all of the time I'm talking to you I'm jerking it here.

Ah. I don't know exactly how much experience you've had, but anyone with my staying power is quite able to satisfy a lady. A lady, of course, is able to have multiple orgasms.

I would also say that my cock is, I need it certainly several times a day and I just haven't been fortunate enough to find a lady that wants it as often as that. I have several ladies who get it several times a week, but not several times a day. Anyhow, as I was saying, I really like my ladies to get on top. That way they can help themselves to as much as they want. That way there is no danger of me hurting them by driving it in too far. And also I like to eat a little pussy too. I like it when they sit up on my chest. I don't even mind if they practice withdrawal, I don't like using a safe. So, I like to slip it in, if they want to pull out I give them a little tongue job.

Ah, as you are aware, guys who aren't circumcised quite often have a cleanliness problem about their cock because that foreskin is overneath and they get a buildup of lint and sweat and that gets underneath it. But mine's so easy to clean. And it's got a really large head on it, and ah, the ladies like to feel it. They say it feels so soft and silky, yet firm and hard.

Anyhow, ah, I really appreciate ladies who like to get on top. They can kinda help themselves to as much of this thing as they can fit into their pussy.

I guess you're probably thinking, "who is this nut?" And then if you want to ride on my tongue, I'd also like that too.

But I'm not really a nut, I'm just I want you to know that right now an extremely horny guy, I don't get I've been jerkin' off here all the enough to satisfy me not because time we've been talking. Or I've I'm not goodlooking or anything been talking. I'm at the foot of else, it's just that I probably my bed, and I can see my balls are

cont'd on page 9



TORONTO
WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE

THE COLLECTIVE
WISHES YOU THE
BEST FOR THE
HOLIDAY SEASON!

WHEN RAIN CLOUDS GATHER.....\$11.95
Bessie Head

LETTERS TO MS. 1972-1987.....\$24.50
edited by Mary Thom (less 10%:\$22.05)

TO LIVE AND TO WRITE.....\$14.95
selections by Japanese women writers
edited by Yukiko Tanaka, translated by Yukiko
Tanaka, Elizabeth Hanson, and Hiroko Morita Malatsta

*POSTERS*MUSIC*ALMANACS*JOURNALS*CALENDARS*

73 HARBORD STREET TORONTO, 922-8744 • WHEELCHAIR ACCESS
MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY 10:30 TO 6:00 • FRIDAY 10:30 TO 8:00

SPECIAL DECEMBER HOURS: THURSDAY, FRIDAY 10:30-8:00



Fabulous Babes

PREMIER ISSUE

PAGES
BOOKS & MAGAZINES
256 QUEEN ST. W. TORONTO 598-1447

OtherListings

(If you have anything you'd like to include in our listings please call or send it to Otherwise)

Good Eats:

Mariko.

Japanese cuisine, inexpensive and delicious. Brunswick and Bloor. 968-0883

Jennie's Restaurant.

Fine dining, exceptional cuisine. 360 Queen St. E. 861-1461

Original Vietnam Restaurant. Ossington and Bloor.

Church St. Cafe Ltd.

485 Church St. 925-1155

Clubs:

Chez Moi.

Bar, dance floor, dining room. 30 Hayden. 921-5566

The Rose Cafe.

Dining, dancing, and amusements for men and women. 547 Parliament. 928-1495

Bookstores:

Toronto Women's Bookstore. 73 Harbord. 922-8744

Zarembas.

Harbord and Spadina. 925-2793

Theatre:

Emily Carr at Alumnae Theatre. Nov. 17-Dec. 13. Tues.-Sat. 8pm, Sun. 2:30 pm. 70 Berkeley St. 364-4170

Bachelorman Theatre Passe Muraille. 16 Ryerson. 363-2416

Galleries:

Ready-made red by

Arlene Stamp running until Nov. 28. 80 Spadina. 364-8716

Display: installation by Renee Van Halm, running until Apr. 1. 115 King St. E. 485-9658

Sculpture by Louise Noguchi, Carmen Lamanna Gallery running until Dec. 10. 788 King St. W. 363-8787

What's this city coming to? Toronto now has a woman's club that not only offers music, food, and a politically correct ambience, it's also a lot of FUN. Under one roof you can eat anything from lobster salad with strawberries in a light mint vinaigrette to a burger with cheese and mushrooms, finish off your repast with a drink at the extensive bar, then join a host of other groovy women on the dance floor. Dinner service continues throughout the night, but one would be well advised to eat early; the music starts at 9 p.m. and after that point, it's difficult to sit still let alone eat. (the Rose Cafe: 547 Parliament, 928-1495. Open for Lunch.)

Tune in to CBC's third season of Sextet, featuring distinctive new plays by Canadian women writers. The series runs from November 29 to January 3, at 7:05 p.m. on CBC Stereo.

Nov. 29: "Tornado" by Judith Thompson

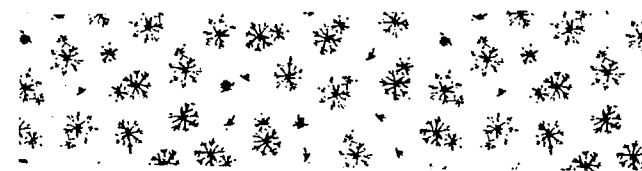
Dec. 6: "Change of Heart" by Audrey Thomas.

Dec. 13: "Mongoloids" by Colleen Murphy.

Dec. 20: "The Ultimate Truth" by Ann Cameron.

Dec. 27: "Yellow Ribbons" by Carol Bolt.

Jan. 3: "My Grandmother's Quilt" by Paulette Jiles.



Subway

Amelia Golden

The Spadina and St. George subway stations are among the more dangerous to women, said Pat Marshall, the Executive Director of the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC). Marshall was speaking at a Centre Stage Forum on Transportation and Women. Problems in these two stations are crossing her desk more and more often, she continued. Unfortunately these are two of the main stations frequented by university students.

Dr. Juri Pill, General Manager of Planning at the TTC, claimed that the threat to women's safety is "more perceived than real". He stated that the TTC is getting a bad reputation because of media coverage of events in the more dangerous U.S. Transit systems. Many people in the forum disagreed. Marshall pointed out that women are "limiting their activities because they are afraid". A University of Toronto student in the audience agreed, "I know women who don't take evening classes because they do not want to take the TTC at night. They are effecting their education, their future, because our transit system is unsafe." The question is not, said Marshall, if the TTC is safer than other systems but how dangerous it actually is.

Xenia Zepic, co-founder of the Liveable Winter City Association, presented a slide show which included slides of streetcars in Sweden which have their exit step the same height as the curb. This brought forth another rally of complaints against the TTC. Two women spoke of the difficulty in exiting and entering the street cars when they have their young children with them.

The handicapped women in the audience presented their cases of the lack of accessibility to the TTC. Sandra Carpenter, Executive Programme Co-ordinator at the Centre for Independent Living was a scheduled speaker on behalf of the handicapped but she was unable to attend. Carpenter is confined to a wheelchair and, ironically, at a forum on transportation, the St. Lawrence Centre Stage is not wheelchair accessible.

TORONTO'S NEWEST WOMEN'S BAR...

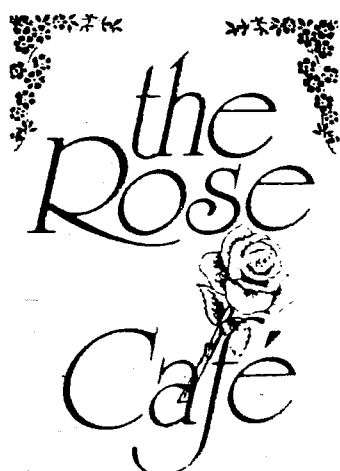
WEDNESDAYS ARE WING NIGHT! (15¢ wings)

DEC. 2: tree decorating party

DEC. 8: sagittarius party

DEC. 13: rose "hip" band
brunch followed by live entertainment

DEC. 17: old-fashioned christmas party



547 Parliament st.
928-1495

join us! We're open from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 a.m.
monday to saturday, 11:30 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. sunday

547 Parliament St. 928-1495

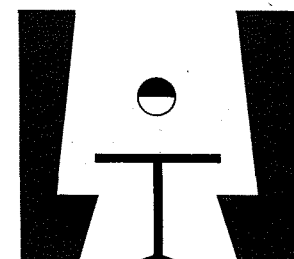
208

332

QUEEN STREET WEST



QUEEN MOTHER CAFE



RIVOLI CAFE & CLUB



Media Sensation

Amelia Golden

This commentary is an odd and ironic one to be found in a newspaper. It is about how far to trust the press. I felt a need to write this article after I was totally misrepresented and exploited by the media. A twisted and sensationalized version of what I wanted to say was flashed into hundreds of thousands of living rooms on the eve of October 28. Maybe some of you saw it on CFTO National News. My face, my name and "Assault Victim" was flashed onto your screen. You watched an earnest looking woman tell her personal tale of her assault. The story of a rush-hour subway car and

a hand creeping up her skirt might have filled you with anger or revulsion or maybe you just took it as another assault against another woman.

The assault to me on the TTC that day in June was a lot less personally traumatic than the assault perpetrated against me by CFTO in the way that they presented my interview. I feel that I was exploited by the media because I am a woman and because they could use that short news clip to sensationalize a story. What you saw on your television screens that evening was one half minute out of a seven minute interview. The interview took place in the lobby of a forum on Women and Transportation. During that forum I had brought up the problems facing university women; mentioning the women who don't take evening classes because of their unwillingness to travel at night, the dangerous subway stops that are frequented by university students, and the seemingly uncaring attitude of the TTC to the rising numbers of complaints from women about their system. I sat back down in my seat after my remarks and Tim Sheehy from CFTO approached me with a request to repeat my statement for the cameras. I must admit that the ham in me, the unfulfilled actress, was thrilled at the prospect of being on T.V. I chatted with Tim

and the camera-person and basically repeated the statement that I had made inside. My mistake was in talking too frankly to other people about sexuality. When I was asked if I was ever personally afraid on the TTC, I told Tim about the incident on the subway this summer. I thought that it might hit home what I had been saying in the rest of my interview.

What you saw on your television was "Dangers in the TTC experienced by this woman" and my half minute story clipped and edited. CFTO exploited me as a woman, as someone with an open-minded, fearless attitude towards sex, and as a trusting human being. My message to you is this:

The media is a money making business. They want to sell papers, keep listeners, and get high ratings. They will do what they need to do to achieve their goals. In this age of mass media, you are all potential victims as I was. You are a more attractive victim if you are a woman, good-looking, and/or trusting. If you don't want to be misquoted, you must choose carefully with whom you speak. If you want to avoid being exploited, you have a tough job ahead of you as a woman in this society. If you can find a way to be a woman and not be exploited, please let the rest of us know...it would be greatly appreciated.

Theatre, cont'd from page 9

submit to the rules of her nation and religion. But like many other women who have made a significant contribution to society or broken new ground, she was dismissed as being unnatural and insane. On one hand, the insane asylum could be seen as a microcosm of society, an imposed environment where men often control and silence women.

OW: Which is of greater importance to you -- the avant-garde, or feminism?

TA: Well, we aren't a completely feminist group; we include men in our productions...

OW: Using feminism to encompass a broader and truer definition, of equality and humanism rather than separatism, I would certainly consider Theatre Asylum a feminist group -- especially because of your concern with women's issues in both the political and theatrical world. Going back to my original question, is one more important than the other?

TA: I would say "no." Our main concern is with breaking down barriers and escaping the restrictive and flat nature of convention. People are waking up to the fact that the role of females in society is turning, and that the male way of doing things is not the only way. Similarly, the old ways of theatre are not the only ways. We certainly would not perform work which portrayed women negatively, no matter how interesting or new it was. Sexism flourishes even in the contemporary art world -- there are strong elements of it in Dadaism and Surrealism. But by the same token, a bland, boring production which portrayed women positively would be of no interest to us. Either way, it's quality we're striving for. We don't consciously aim to be feminist group but our energy draws other women to us. You could say that we're feminists more by example than by rhetoric. You can't escape the fact that you're a woman, and thus must address the issues, whether you're on or off stage. It's a reality not to ignore or over-simplify, but one to elaborate and explore.

Theatre Asylum welcomes submissions of exciting scripts. For more information, call Jennifer Capraru, 979-3942.

GAIA'S



CAFE

A NEW WOMYN'S SPACE

NATURAL FOODS

womyn's entertainment & art

24, Baldwin St. Toronto



This ceramic relief depicts the way children were traditionally swaddled in the misguided belief that it was healthy for them.

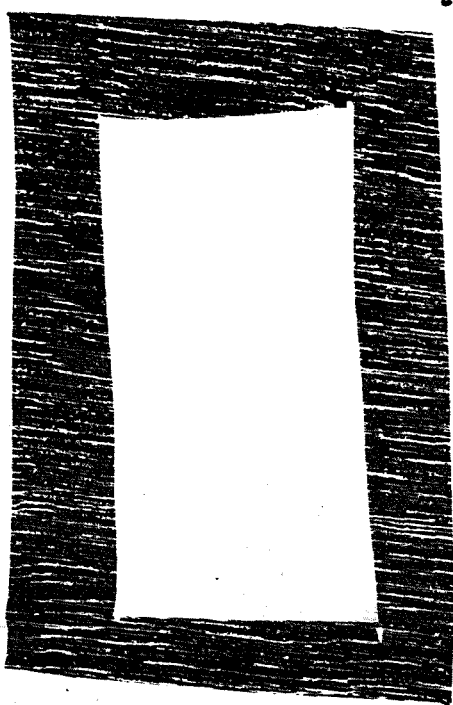




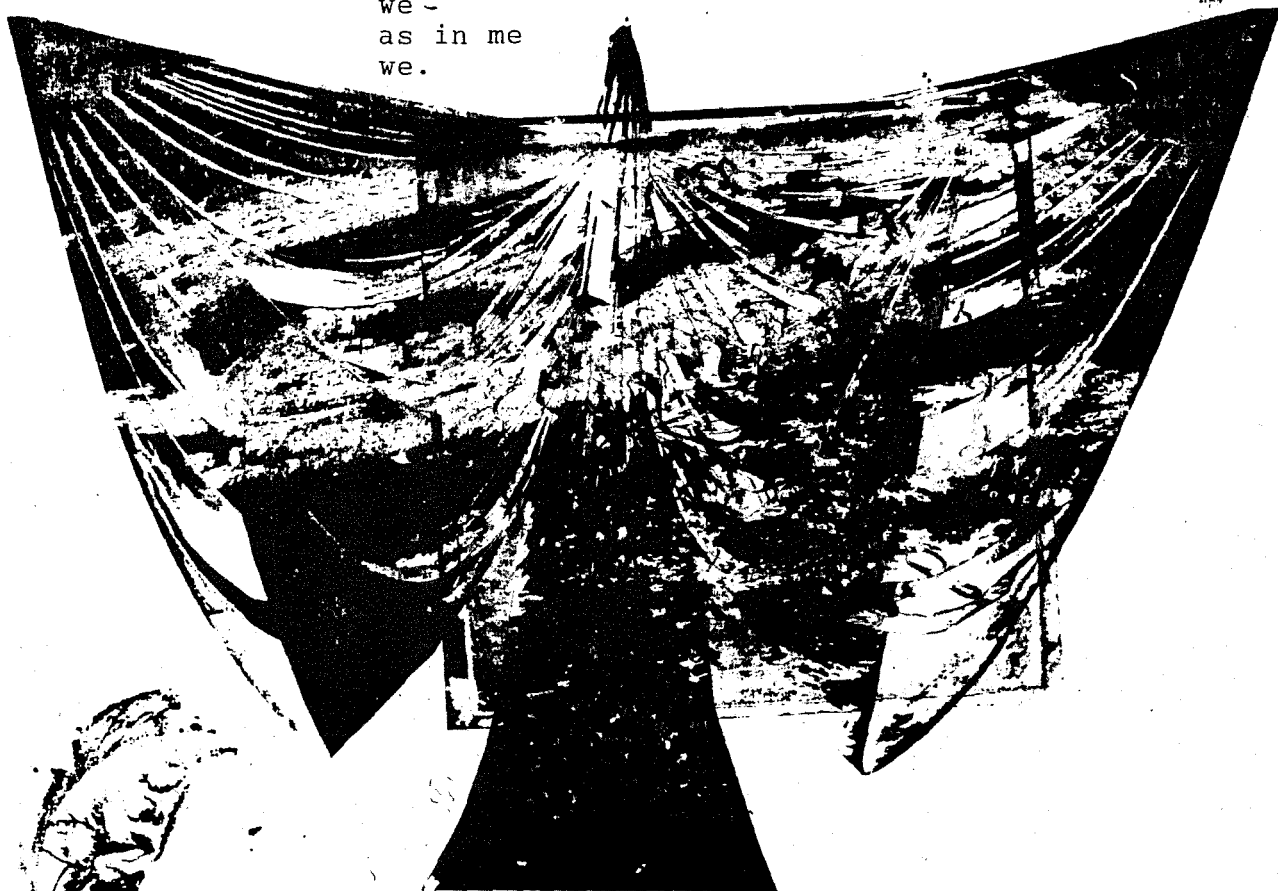
Sarah Yu

I invited you here for selfish reasons.
(Realize this and expect nothing)
Not to burn down this ice scape of stony trees
Nor to crush these concrete slabs that grow
And erode
Slowly around me.
No.
I ask only that you trace the fading black lines
Of my shadow.
Redefine the body of my prison.

Touch
But do not pierce these walls of flesh.
They are here for a reason.



sitting on the edge of teeth
chattering
away on my own spewing of esoteria
insides raging away at injustice
of \$8000 grants
we chinese or korean or i guess it doesn't matter we
we as in not you
we
who are not so
unprivileged.
you don't know anything
and i don't know but
i know you
don't and i don't
and i scream fuck you you
asshole you're
just a bigot anyway you
just
can't
know
and i arrive
to my home of papers
scattered all over floors and
corners
empty of anything
to hide behind because i
know i can't
do this for much
more
before
i realize that we all
don't know
we
as in me
we.



A Final Farewell to "Vagina Feminine" Art

Tuesday am. Sixth floor Sid Smith. I'd call it a Feminist collage class if it weren't for the 'hush hush' I received from 'above' concerning the discussion of politics, sex and religion! Art is, after all, art.

What about the constant production of (dare I say!) feminist or women-oriented images sprouting up on the sixth floor? In the history of the Fine Art Department, has there ever been such an aggressive band of women creating such imagery? Has the 'terrific noise' of powertools these women use ever been louder? Powertools -- women finally dropping crochet for chainsaw. Goodbye Little Bo Peep --hello to a sexual symbolism based on cunt. The Difference?

Today, women artists are lucky. In this Post Modern environment, women have the flexibility to create images of themselves in the political system of art language. Femininity, aggression, representations of sexuality and identity are utilized as sign language and made to refer to gender as construct, art as politic.



Bill 7 Scholarship

For those of you who are wondering about the current status of the Bill 7 Scholarship, I can report that the Board members of the Bill 7 Award Trust are still working diligently to raise money for the fund.

In case any of our readers are unfamiliar with the scholarship, here is a brief history. The idea for the scholarship was first conceived in April of 1987 with the intent of commemorating Bill 7 and aiding gay and lesbian students who are in financial need. Because gay and lesbian students often suffer forms of discrimination and subsequent economic hardships that heterosexual students do not suffer, the founding members of the Bill 7 Scholarship felt it was necessary to establish a fund to which gay and lesbian students could turn in times of economic hardship.

The award will be open to anyone who is enrolled in a post-secondary institution in Ontario and the awarding of the scholarship will be based solely on financial need. Need will be determined by the Board which is comprised of 6 members representing various gay

(Hello, Maria French) Maria French intrigues me: she has worked as a commercial designer, obtained a degree in English and travelled through Asia. It was in the Fine Art Studios of Sid Smith where I discovered French along with her impressive sculpture of Sylvia Plath. This piece stands approximately three feet off the ground and is constructed of wire, screen, ribbon and some of Plath's own text. It is a massive structure of twisting, knotting and smoothing folds of screen. French has attempted to represent all aspects of Plath's life--her commitment to her art, the constant juggling of her identity as artist and mother, and the guilt which eventually led to her suicide. French expresses her idea of Plath in terms of contrasts. The organic form of the flower as feminine is contrasted against the materials of metal, and screen; the reference of industrialized products. This juxtaposition of hard and soft imagery appears throughout the sculpture and represents the chaos and ambivalence Plath felt towards her own identity.

Wire is spun into Flower, raw and abrasive.

The transition from the base of the flower to the column is gradual, smooth and easy. The long and slender folds which make up the stem are interrupted by the abrupt and seemingly premature bloom of the flowerhead; its petals transparent, smooth struggle to fill their surrounding space. Through the petals, the top of the hollow stem appears to widen slightly before it falls down under the baggage of clinging vines. At the base the folds become entwined in broken lines of poetry and prose of Plath. A red ribbon, which runs through the screen, gradually fades as it becomes absorbed in the tangles of the base.

and lesbian groups in the community (Lesbians of Colour, Toronto Councillor Centre for Lesbians and Gays, Lesbians and Gay Community Appeal, Women's Centre at U of T, Black Women's Collective, and ZAMI).

The award is privately funded and interest earned on capital each year will be given away in one or more scholarships. The Board's goal is to raise \$30,000.00; at present they have \$9,300.00 and hope to have the remainder by the end of the summer of 1988. If all goes well, the scholarship will be ready by 1989. This January there will be a fund-raising drive, and a tremendous need for volunteers is anticipated. If you or your group are interested in donating time, money*, or labour to the scholarship fund please call:

Regan McClure
977-5907 or
Jude Angione
926-1595

*The Bill 7 Award Trust is currently applying for charitable status and if granted, this will mean all monetary donations will be tax deductible.

Through the treatment and choice of materials, French presents an image that is simultaneously sensual, elegant feminine yet rough



photo by Maria French

angular, masculine. This juxtaposition is a continuous treatment of the entire piece which leads me to believe that it was the process of resolving the identity conflict between mother and artist rather than the destiny of Plath's life which French expresses.

The audience? Maria told me quite simply that she made it for herself. If you're absolutely dying to see other work by Maria, I'm afraid you'll have to come up to the sixth floor of Sid Smith. Dare you?

Chris Gladly

寡佬世界

BACHELOR-MAN
by
Winston Kam
(英語兩幕劇)

Men's lives without women...
...women's lives without rights

OPENING NOVEMBER 12

Theatre Passe Muraille
363-2416 16 Ryerson Avenue

"a most bitter thing it is to be born a woman..."



Terry Barclay, Leonard Chow, Brenda Kamino, and Robert Lee in a scene from BACHELORMAN.

Sarah Yu

Bachelor Man portrays the pain of being a woman in a traditional society, of being Chinese in a white man's world, of being homosexual in a climate of heterosexism, of being a soldier, an old man, a young boy: it is about the pain of the general human condition. The play is set in a tea-house/bar in Toronto's Chinatown during Dominion Day, 1929. Six years have passed since the Chinese Exclusion Act went into effect, preventing further Chinese immigration. This arbitrary act resulted in the estrangement of Chinese Canadian men from real or potential wives, "rice cookers" in Chinese lingo. The first act is an often humorous, often poignant depiction of men who lack the tolerance to accept their situation and the courage to change it. In the second act, the tension escalates with the entrance of Queenie, Chinatown's resident prostitute/baglady. Although she has been raised with the maxim "there is no place for women who do not know their place", her stance is one of perpetual defiance. With her tragic life story, she shakes the young men out of their complacency and inspires them to go out into the world and make changes. Although the didactic element of the second act is heavy, it is justified by the importance of the message being conveyed. Oppression exists in every society, on all levels of society, in history, and in the present. The only place free from it is the future, and it is our responsibility to ensure that as the future becomes the present, it offers equality and hope to everyone, regardless of race or sex. (Bachelor Man, running at Theatre Passe Muraille, written by Winston Kam. Information, tickets: 363-2416.)

Provocative Theatre

Sarah Yu

Theatre Asylum is a company which aims to create thought provoking, daring and accessible theatre while promoting equal opportunity for women in all aspects of theatrical activity. The name reflects the understanding of theatre as a place of refuge, trust, and process, and also a place of spectacular danger and the unconventional. Although a young company, (up to this point they only have one production behind them), the intensity of their energy and ambition distinguishes them as an important new group. OtherWise had the opportunity to interview Jennifer Capraru and Otilie Mason, the core members of Theatre Asylum, to discuss both the company and the general conditions of theatre in Toronto.

OW: In defining yourselves and your intentions, you centre around being an avant-garde group with woman-centred concerns. Could you elaborate on this?

TA: Well, yes. In terms of our artistic vision, we are primarily interested in workshopping new plays or developing older plays with a completely new treatment. We want to do work that is challenging and thoughtprovoking, for both ourselves and the audience.

At the same time, we are also consciously attempting to invert the usual ratio of men to women in theatrical productions, and to include women in all areas of the arena. As an actress, going to the boards can be very frustrating, since most auditions ask for white

men. We're tired of dealing with this.

OW: Why would you say that this is the case?

TA: It's simply a reflection of our society. It starts with a male writer who creates male parts for a male director. Roles for women are often limited to stereotypes such as ingenues or neurotic victims.

OW: How are women portrayed in your productions?

TA: We have a strong desire to create complex, dimensional, and interesting roles for women. In our last production, which consisted of three plays, ("Mr. Happiness," by David Mamet; "Despair," by Lezley Havard; and "Chamber Music," by Arthur Kopit), an underlying theme was the perceived madness of women who have defied society. For example, there's Joan of Arc, who refused to

cont'd on page 5



Jennifer Capraru and Otilie Mason of THEATRE ASYLUM.

Emily C.

Sarah Yu

Michele George's compelling performance in Emily Carr recommends this play as one not to be missed. Written and directed by Alan Richardson and presented by the Trinity Theatre Company, it is a powerful and sensitive portrayal of the renowned Canadian artist. Carr was a woman of conflicting emotions, at times bitter, at times triumphant, lonely but fiercely independent, who transcended the limitations of a society where "being a woman is not being yourself". But Emily Carr does not only depict the struggles of a female artist; it encompasses a broader spectrum of the pain of reconciling oneself with the surrounding world.

(Running at the Alumnae Theatre until December 13. Information, tickets: 364-4170.)

OtherWriting

Claire Christie

A jealous face staring back through the looking-glass. The face is the object of jealousy, the mind itself the Envious One, exercising its only power over the the visage: manipulation. The mechanism of thought and its articulation -- how is it that you are so perfect in all your bareness? so capable of persuading, demanding, discarding with a simple movement from that complicated mass of bone, tissue, and flesh. with all my valiant attempts at articulation being constantly criticized, mocked. not fair to me. and with coloured cakes you paint and they say it "enhances". my efforts toward animation called "affectations". envy, yes. moreover, anger, as every expression you produce is at the hands of my will. there is no credit. beautiful face. not beautiful thought that created the face. the exaggerated inflection in my voice has limited impact, but the simple raising of an eyebrow imports significance. the raging, rampant jealousy I feel for you. to lay dormant and command such attention. myself pulsing wildly to convey one simple emotion. funny. like two bodies: separate entities. one communicating through the other. interdependent. yet at times completely celibate. I can disengage you from the company of my thoughts -- stop.

The sober face; eyes cloaked in delicate folds of skin, concealed by lash and tissue, each seemingly floating in its salty niche. The nostrils execute their tiresome duty (breath(e) in, exhale... inhale, breath(e) out). The gentle hollows of cheeks made pink by the sweltering heat. And the full mouth, crimson, pouting flesh, opened slightly to reveal the straight white tombstones of enamel. A face without expression, that by simple virtue of its structural perfection, evokes a message of beauty and depth. The silent whisper of life.

A sleeping face awakened by a conscious thought. the eyes strain to focus on the world blurred by a visual slumber. The idea vociferates -- even the eyes in your countenance belong to me.. they are mine. (in) sight. you are site. you can only look where I choose to see. I can cut you off, not only

from myself, but from the world. a simple, mental gesture. your perfect, splendid mouth. my servant. your every feature vulnerable to my whim. my intent. your intensity. I laugh through my jealousy. make you laugh, fret, sigh, frown. mere puppetry. and yet control does not appease my spite. for you still possess the ability for silent command. a quiet admiration. as I see, unduly bestowed. what are you but a slate for my chalk? I toil to achieve. you relax to receive. such credit to you. the occasional words of praise to my proficiency. bliss can only describe. accolades to you. countless. not even met with the proverbial bat of an eyelash. your smug nature infuriates me -- this time the face severs the connection as muscular fatigue sets in.

The face relaxes, and as the eyes slowly, uncontrollably, close, the mind is forced to its inner chambers. A dark solitude. The thoughts banished to dreams. While the mind rests in its suspended consciousness, the face rejuvenates, calmly awaiting the return of its angry opponent. It is not long before the mind awakens. A fitful sleep has aggravated its already infuriated state. The face reacts, as its eyes are forced to open wider and wider until it looks quite mad. The mind is once again eager to express its distaste.

The face succumbs to the verbal onslaught -- and still you are exquisite. my furor seems to strengthen your beauty. a glowing countenance in the face of my burning rage. I despise you. simple words cannot express the hatred I feel. there. the pains I take in making an emotion discernible. one you could communicate with one twist of your features. the frustration escalates in me. a worthy foe. my advantage, the power to reason. yet you are. you have the power to be. you exist to please. I must do that and more. I am party to your enhancement. and to what purpose? to be burdened with misery over your attributes. anxiety at your resplendent beauty. the effortless manner of your very essence. I detest you. destroy you -- the thought of defacing the object of envy. It is a solution: riddance of complication, competition.

The looking-glass shattered easily, and large shards of glass fell to the floor. Several pieces were propelled across the room to where the floor meets the wall, and shattered again. The face was raised to the light. The look of fear, produced by muscular tension, not by will, dissipated rapidly. The mind, drained of all contempt, released from its steely bonds of spite, thought quietly, timidly -- upon reflection... -- and with a mutually sincere effort, the most beguiling smile spread across that splendid face.



She Was Like Me

I wouldn't sing their fascist song
And I wouldn't fight their war
And I've loved all other colours
But the general doesn't care

So I hide in my silence
Or perhaps I ran away
It doesn't really matter
Either way I've had to pay

So I think of Jennifer
Because she was like me
Mouth screaming silent scream
Like some Satyagrahi

She said, "Vivian what shall I do
They wait for me in the shadows"
And I said, "Don't ask me
I don't know any shadows"

But now they've got me pinned too
I smoke my last cigarette
Staring soundless through the line
To catch a glimpse of old Kamet

I remember that white night
She was just another one
I never knew her last name
But we did have some fun

Well they slammed down on the
faggots
And they slammed down on the
streets
They slammed down harder on her
And they knew she'd admit defeat

Now she can't talk anymore
Inside she keeps the silent shout
But I don't really understand
How these ruelles have come about

So tell me where's the moral
Where's the good, where's the bad?
What are we supposed to do?
God it seems all so mad

So now I close my eyes
And now I close my mouth
And now I close my thighs
And now I close the doors

I guess I'm learning to be a part
of society.

Time and again I tell myself
I'm not going to play anymore
But those white lights keep
following me
So I say to myself just once more

I remember that white night
She was just another one
I never knew her last name
But we did have some fun



Medusa, cont'd from page 3

starting to tighten up and this weapon of mine is rock hard. It's just starting to spurt some cream out the end of it now. Here I go baby, I'm just blowin'.

Wow.

Hit myself right in the chin.

Wow.

That's the kind of performance I can give to the ladies too. They like that kind of strokin'. I can give it to you or you can hang on longer and we can have multiple orgasms.

Too bad for them if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren't men, or that the mother doesn't have one. But isn't this fear convenient for them? Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they only have to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.

Helene Cixous
"The Laugh of the Medusa"

THE RESPONSE

I want my chance.
My chance to respond to you.

Your speech is a challenge; a challenge to write and break up a phallogocentric narrative. Medusa's laughter; Medusa's revenge.

I respond to you as the I that is we because as women, we have all been the subjects of and subjected to obscene phone calls: your sexuality, my sexuality is created and recreated, not simply reflected in this event. And exceptions probe rules: one thoughtful pervert has told me more about the construction of our sexual identities than could the observation of a thousand solid citizens.

Yet you are unique among obscene callers because your terror of women is doubly displaced. Not only do you fear a confrontation with my body, abjection at the sight of my sexual difference, but you refuse to speak to me. You

hang up whenever I answer the phone. You talk to my machine.

It is not a body you crave, but my voice, my "hi, how are you, I'm not home, leave your name and I will return your call as soon as possible"; the voice on my answering machine. My machine voice cannot respond, and therefore cannot cut you off, castrate. But it also allows you to give me any attributes your imagination fancies: for desire is as much a part of a mutual imaginary landscape as it is real or embodied lust.

I am any woman, every woman. A call girl deprived of her economic or personal remuneration.

One of your ladies.

Do you have a harem of machine ladies? Women you have never seen, but who are the objects of your strange aural fetish. Mechanical brides you keep captive by pirating their technology for your own ends, for the pleasure of your technopricks?

You probably think you are harmless, and because I am not forced to talk to you, that you are doing me a favour; but you are only depriving me of the power to disconnect you. You have reduced me to silence, cut out my tongue; censored the body and censored speech.

And you take up all of the space on my tape.

However, I cannot remain completely disdainful as your persistence is a cruel reminder that I am trapped in this same social assemblage of desire and collective assemblage of enunciation: a repression of the body and its potential plenitudes. We are both at the mercy of this narrow phallogocentric economy of pleasure which is oriented around, organized around the penis.

"By affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallogocentric ideology has claimed more than one victim. As a woman, I've been clouded over by the great shadow of the sceptre and been told: idolize it, you cannot brandish. But at the same time, man has been handed that grotesque and scarcely enviable destiny (just imagine) of being reduced to a

single idol with clay balls."

(p. 254, "M")

We both suffer from an economy that values performance; but we suffer differently. You, from a fear of castration, of non-performance, from a closure of the other possibilities of sexual gratification in your body; I from the notion that I lack one, that I lack the lack, that desire is born of this absence, and language from desire, that this makes it impossible for me to enter into language or culture, that I am different, therefore inferior to the boys. Yes, we both suffer; but unequally, unevenly. After all, as you admit, "I've done all the talking." However I have a secret: I have learned that pleasure does not begin and end with the end of a penis, with one final burst of cream from a weapon; and I think you know this secret.

How do you do it, I wonder.

Your rap sounds so carefully scripted that I am convinced that you must be reading from a text: Yet, you can't be holding the paper, the phone, and your cock all at the same time. Unless you have yourself connected to another machine. A machine that lets you do all this at once. I imagine your body itself becoming a machine, a desiring machine, plugged into the telephone wires, your flesh changing into plastic, your veins becoming wires, your muscles, cybernetic circuits, as your voice utters your teleorgasmic tale.

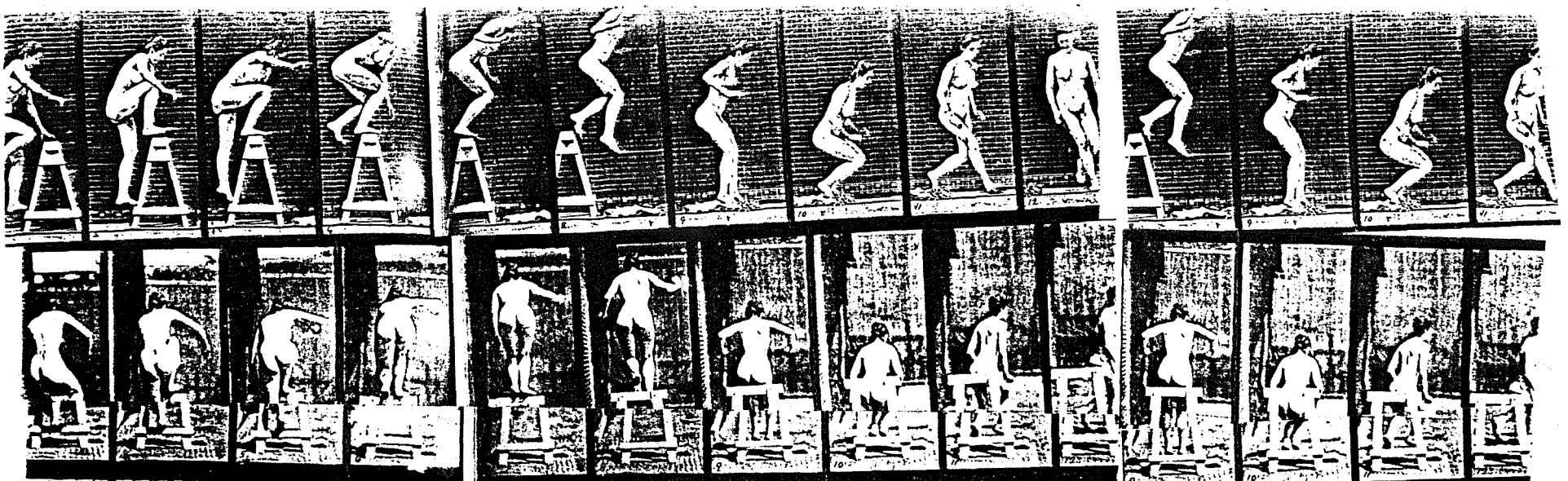
But now I have my revenge.

This conversation which you thought was private, which you wanted to remain private, which was not even for my ears, but for your pleasure only, is now public, and returns to haunt you in the revenge of the printed word.

References:

Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," New French Feminisms. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New York: Schocken Books, 1981

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. trans. Dana Poland. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1986.



Motherhood, cont'd from page 1

receive maternal love with special attention to its implications for our bodies, our passions, and our ambitions. We are alert to the values and costs of maternal practices whether we are determined to engage in them or avoid them." If all thought does arise out of social practice, and is not biologically linked, couldn't the attentions of maternal love have the same effect on both sons and daughters? Ruddick does not seem to think so. Despite her earlier claim that maternal thought has no link with biology, Ruddick implies in this passage that the female body does indeed make females more susceptible to maternal thought. I would argue that Ruddick's choice of terminology--"motherhood", "maternal love", "maternal thought"--limits the way she thinks of childcare and makes it easy for her to associate child-rearing with females. It is perhaps because of this that Ruddick can make statements such as "a mother typically considers herself, and is considered by others, to be responsible for the maintenance of the life of her child", and never question the validity of such an assumption.

Despite the flaws in her argument, Ruddick does raise an interesting question. Although many feminists want to see men engaged equally in childcare, Ruddick asks if this is really beneficial to children when men oppress women both in the private and public spheres. She worries that a male presence in the nursery might help to propagate male dominance and this is a valid point, but it also contradicts another point she makes, that is, that "equal childcaring would require men to relinquish power and their own favorable position". While women should be wary about importing male dominance into child-rearing practices, I believe it is much more likely that shared childcaring will help to chip away at the sexual division of labour that exists both inside and outside the home. Ruddick's claim that the presence of an affectionate, egalitarian man will be useless against the power of the "Symbolic" father is also suspect. For while it is true that it is not enough to merely fight women's oppression in the home, having a positive male presence in the home as an alternative to this oppressive figure must surely be beneficial to both parents and children alike.

In sharp contrast to Ruddick's position, Shulamith Firestone wants to do away with the concept of motherhood altogether. In her book The Dialectic of Sex, Firestone states that the way to end motherhood, and with it women's oppression, is through technology. Through the invention of such things as artificial wombs, women will be freed from the task of childbirth; child-rearing will be done by society as a whole, and the nuclear family will be abolished. In this way Firestone believes we will get at the root of the division of labour that exists both inside and outside the home. By

severing the biological ties of women to reproduction, the whole of society will be liberated and everyone will be free to choose whatever path in life she or he desires. While many aspects of Firestone's solution are tempting, it is still highly problematic.

To begin with, Firestone states that artificial reproduction is liberating unless it is improperly used. As she says, "to envision it in the hands of the present powers is to envision a nightmare". But the question that must be asked is --

What is to guarantee that artificial reproduction won't be abused? Firestone notes that women have always been excluded from science, and at the time she wrote this book, women were still conspicuously absent from the higher echelons of the scientific world. Firestone argues that unless women scientists are in research positions, it is doubtful that artificial reproduction will be developed. But she also claims that women will not be able to gain access to these important positions until after artificial reproductive technology is put into use. This presents quite a problem and yet in spite of this, Firestone states that she will assume "flexibility and good intentions in those working out the change". One wonders, however, just how wise it is to do this given the present state of the scientific community.

But regardless of this, Firestone goes on to state that the first demand for any alternative system must be: "The freeing of women from the tyranny of reproduction by every means possible, and the diffusion of the child-rearing role to the society as a whole, men as well as women." The question that arises is--What about women who do not consider childbirth to be "tyranny", and who want to give birth to their own children? Surely, women should have the freedom to give birth as well as the freedom not to give birth. Yet Firestone claims that "pregnancy is barbaric". She goes on to say that pregnancy "is at best necessary and tolerable. It is not fun". These are highly subjective statements to be making and yet Firestone never acknowledges them as such. In fact, she goes on to mock those women who actually enjoy pregnancy.

With regard to Firestone's plan to diffuse the childrearing role to the society as a whole, I agree wholeheartedly, but couldn't this be accomplished without putting an end to biological reproduction? Just because women must bear children, it does not mean that they must also rear those children. Firestone, however, does not seem to realize this and conflates childbearing with child-rearing. The one does not necessarily or logically follow the other.

Nancy Chodorow is the only one of the women I am dealing with who explicitly states the difference between childbearing and child-rearing. In her book The Reproduction of Mothering, Chodorow

claims that just because women give birth to children, it should not be assumed that they should naturally raise those children. Because it has usually been assumed that there is a connection between these two activities, this has resulted in a sexual division of labour. Chodorow believes this sexual division of labour is responsible for sexual inequality. The way to end this inequality she claims, is to adopt a system of parenting which would hold both men and women responsible for childcare. This, she believes, will result in a much healthier situation for parents and children alike.

Unlike Firestone, Chodorow does not believe it is necessary to do away with natural reproduction. Women might give birth, but there is no reason to assume that they alone should care for children. And, unlike Ruddick, Chodorow does not believe that mothers are any better suited for raising children than are fathers. She writes:

"Beyond the possible hormonal components of a woman's early mothering of her newborn (and even these do not operate independently), there is nothing in parturient women's physiology which makes them particularly suited to later child care, nor is there anything biological or hormonal to differentiate a male "substitute" mother from a female one." For this reason, Chodorow has no hesitation about incorporating males into the realm of childcare. Like Ruddick, Chodorow believes that parenting qualities are created in women through specific social and psychological processes. But Chodorow believes that these qualities could easily be created in men if men and women participated in parenting equally. In fact, she goes on to state that unless men and women do share equally in the raising of children, we will never get rid of the sexual division of labour that exists both inside and outside the home.

Obviously there is no easy answer to the question of whether or not the women's movement should reclaim motherhood. But it is necessary that we as women and feminists think about the complexity of the issue at hand. For whether the women's movement decides to embrace motherhood or reject the concept altogether is still uncertain. What is certain, however, is that whatever we decide will have far-reaching effects on women, children and society as a whole.

SOURCES:

1. Sarah Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking" Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory ed. J. Trebilcock (New Jersey: Rowan & Allanheld, 1984).

2. Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1979).

3. Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering (California: The University of California Press, 1978).

