

# **FIREWEED**

A Feminist Quarterly

OH ART!!!  
HOW COULD YOU  
LIE TO ME?

POPULAR  
CULTURE

HARLEQUINS

SOAP OPERAS

PHOTOROMAN

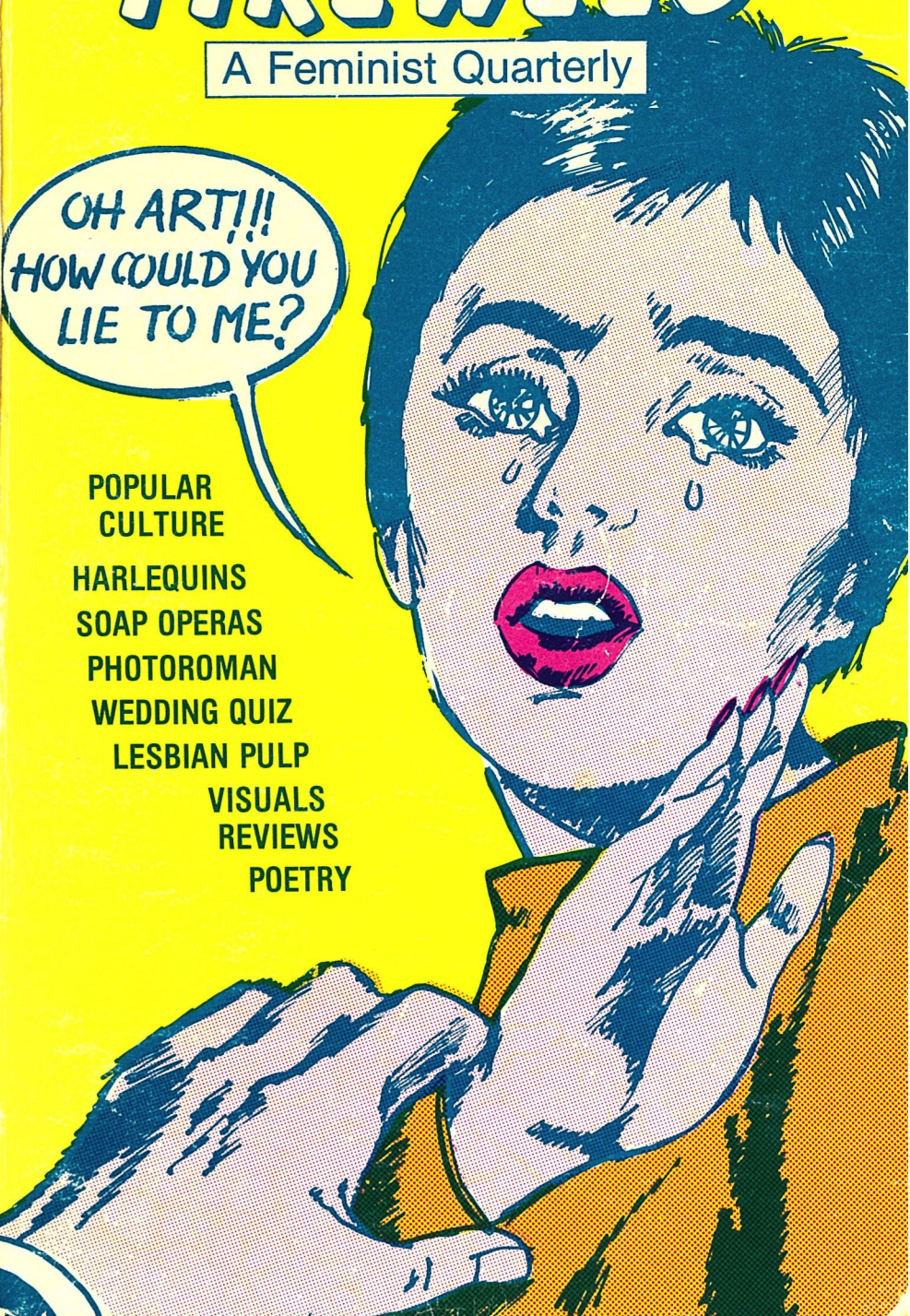
WEDDING QUIZ

LESBIAN PULP

VISUALS

REVIEWS

POETRY



# **FIREWEED**

Popular Culture

Issue 11

A Feminist Quarterly

**FIREWEED  
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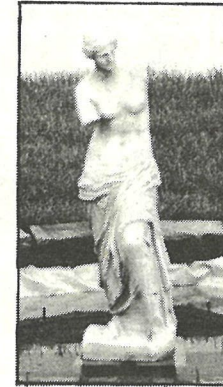
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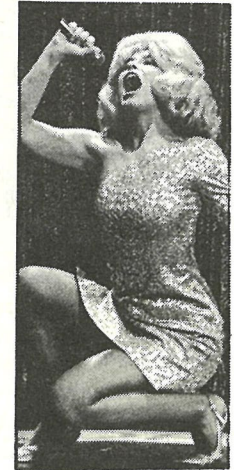
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# EDITORIAL

Nothing is so hard to look at as the devil within. Popular culture is perhaps the strongest indicator of the real status of women. In it we find ourselves victimized, trivialized, manipulated, brutalized and oppressed. Yet, though it's something we (feminists) don't like, it is something we (women) buy. It's ours, whether we like it or not.

If our response is outrage or ridicule or denial, we implicitly support an elitist ideal of high culture. If we become champions and enthusiasts we can, by a kind of willful slumming, become blind to both its power and its destructiveness. Or else we can take the risk of looking, however painfully, at *why* we buy it; how it is we repeat within ourselves the patterns of our oppression and how we can change.

Culture is the indispensable prop to the economic structure oppressing us. What we see in mass culture isn't merely a reflection of the power system, it is what helps create and maintain the power system. When you want to change, when you want the world to change, you start by looking at what outrages you, and you don't need to look far. But what it always comes down to, in the end, is that people do it to people. We do it to ourselves. Something in us lets us create these institutions or else something in us keeps us from fighting back. How do we understand our own masochism? No one *forces* a woman's hand to the Harlequin stand and then to her pocketbook.

If we say it's *men*, men did it, we deny both our own power and responsibility. If we say, it's *Capitalism*, Capitalism did it, we deny the power and responsibility of our class. There is no *deus ex machina* that fabricates injustice. In the past our job as feminists had been to outline the injustice of the patriarchy. Now we have to learn to outline our own complicity, the structures of our agreement, and to trace out the contours of our freedom.

Rhea Tregebov

**EDITORIAL**

1  
LATELY I'VE NOTICED SOMETHING STRANGE

2  
I USED TO READ GOOD BOOKS... SEE FOREIGN 'ART' FILMS...

3  
... THEN I STARTED TO CHANGE...

4  
I'D COME HOME FROM THE COLLECTIVE MEETINGS AND JUST WANT TO CURL UP WITH A ROMANCE NOVEL

5  
EVERY DAY I WATCHED MORE AND MORE HOURS OF DAYTIME TELEVISION.

6  
MY FACE BEGAN TO GROW SIMPLIFIED... DISTORTED.

7  
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME??!! HAS POPULAR CULTURE DONE THIS?!

8  
THAT NIGHT, I LAY AWAKE THINKING... IT'S NOT AS IF I WAS PURE TO BEGIN WITH... JANE EYRE, A PROTOTYPE OF THE ROMANTIC GOTHIC, CORRUPTED ME AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN - SET ME UP FOR THE DOMINATING MAN WHO COULD BE TAMED BY LOVE...

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...THE DARK PRINCE OF A MILLION HARLEQUINS, I HAD NO INNOCENCE TO LOSE AFTER THAT



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ARE MILLIONS OF WOMEN WHO LIKE POPULAR CULTURE DUPES, PAWNS OF A PATRIARCHAL PLOT?

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I DON'T BUY IT!! I HAVE TOO MUCH RESPECT FOR THE AVERAGE WOMAN...



15  
I CAN'T JUST SAY "YOU THINK YOU WANT IT BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN BRAIN-WASHED. I KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY NEED."



17  
MAYBE WE CAN TURN IT AROUND... I CAN'T IGNORE IT - I LOVE IT... I HATE IT... I LOVE IT... I WANT TO KNOW MORE



16  
IS FEAR OF POPULAR CULTURE A FORM OF CLASS HATRED?!!



JOSS MACLENNAN



Photographs by David Cooper

## CLICHETTES

Louise Garfield, Janice Hladki, and Johanna Householder have been performing together as THE CLICHETTES since Sept. 1978. Never "just a lip sync act" we chose our material from the early 60's — a period particularly rich in female recording artists. We selected songs for their ironic woman's point-of-view (You Don't Own Me by Leslie Gore became our signature) which we heightened with choreography, costumes and artifacts of the era. We wove our material into a couple of sets and performed around Toronto as a fictionalized version of a girl group, for about a year.

Not wishing to be mistaken for nostalgia-mongers, we realized we needed a more explicit context for our histrionic goings on. We embarked on a collaboration with Marni Jackson, a writer who often reports on pop culture. The result was Half-Human, Half-Heartache, a feature length lip sync musical play, an allegory of the origins of the CLICHETTES and their coming of age as girls of the sixties.

# HALF HUMAN HALF HEARTACHE



## CLICHETTES

### Act One

*(The stage is dark. We hear Yma Sumac singing Xtaby.<sup>1</sup> Neon "M", the voice-over signature, lights up)*

**Voiceover:** "Good evening former boys and girls, this is Monica, your Voiceover. Our story begins on a small but significant planet located in the galaxy of Dyapolus-8. At the heart of Dyapolus-8 is the planet MORE, where life is very different. On MORE, emotions have been outlawed, although a lively black market trade still exists, and recreational sex lingers on only as a folk dance of historical interest. Music on MORE has become the language of clocks — clocks make music, and people make time.

*(Clichettes enter wearing black plastic bags and large rubber ears. They apply stethoscopes to a large pile of recording tape.)*

**Voiceover:** Meet Hoj, Naj and Oul — three of MORE's foremost sonic engineers. On MORE, sound is a potent source of energy — and even life itself; since both sexes are capable of solitary reproduction. Conception is triggered only by sus-

<sup>1</sup> Xtaby (Lure of the Unknown Love) by Yma Sumach, (L. Baxter and J. Rose.) Capital Records (ASCAP.)

tained acts of resonance. But the sonar resources of MORE are limited ... and finding a fertile frequency can be a problem.

To keep the wave banks stocked our three scientists are hard at work sorting out the gibberish of the galaxy into piles of sound garbage and the precious, high-potency wave lengths. Their job is to remove all the impurities that cling to the Velcro-like surfaces of the sound waves — trash such as emotion. Each day, Hoj, Naj and Oul gather whole bins of tuneless emotion, which is then carted off to the Sentimentorium, where it is destroyed. But one night, they missed the pick-up, and started fooling around with the scrap feelings. Twirling their tuners, they stumbled onto a shipwrecked frequency — 12:12 on their dials — the slat of space where pure sound and raw emotion merge.

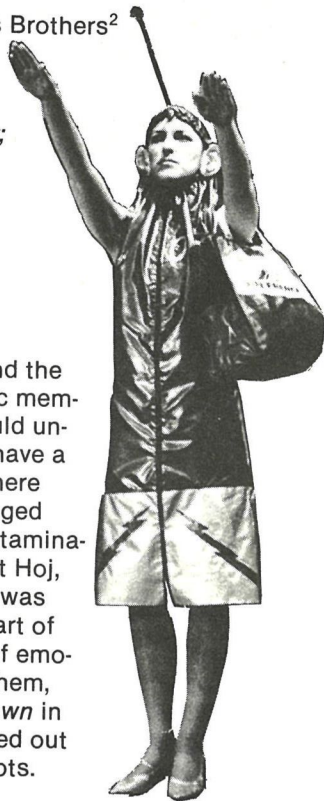
**Audio:** *Ebbtide* by the Righteous Brothers<sup>2</sup>  
First the tide  
Rushes in ...

(*Oul and Naj begin to slow-dance together; they are mesmerized.*)  
(*audio continues*)

**Voiceover:**

Night after night, they tuned into 12:12, and the sound they heard aroused ancient, genetic memories in the youthful engineers. If they could unlock the secret of this music, they would have a new sonar resource for their planet. But there were staggering risks involved — a prolonged visit to earth could lead to total mood contamination, and even death by sentimentality. But Hoj, Naj and Oul were hooked on the sound; it was clear they would have to voyage to the heart of the beat. Banking on a six-month supply of emotional immunity suppositories to protect them, they aimed for the archives of *Tamla Motown* in downtown Detroit. Hoj, Naj and Oul stepped out into space. It was navy blue, with Swiss dots. (*Blackout*)

<sup>2</sup> *Ebb Tide* by The Righteous Brothers, (Sigman and Maxwell.) MGM Golden Circle 45, 1974.

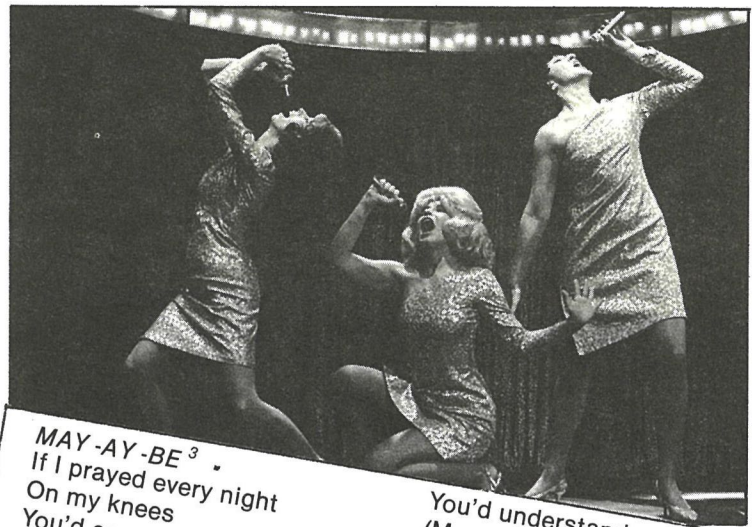


**Voiceover:** Discovering that clichés were the favoured form of expression on earth, Oul, Naj and Hoj decided to call themselves ... The Clichettes.

**Hoj:** Right now I am scanning letters from *Troubled Teen*, *Crippled by Shyness*, and *Scared for Life*. I register strong emotion on the outlaw frequency.

**Oul:** *Crippled by Shyness* ... I like that name ... we should all adopt earth names.

**Hoj:** I want to be called ...*Taken for Granted*.  
(*The Clichettes walk into the audience singing ...*)



MAY -AY -BE<sup>3</sup> -  
If I prayed every night  
On my knees  
You'd come home to me.  
(Home ...home...)  
And maybe, maybe  
If I cried every day  
You'd come back to stay ...  
Maybe  
(Maybe ...maybe ...maybe ...)  
Ow! Ow!  
May-ay-ay ay-ay-ay-be!  
If I could ... hold your hand  
(Maybe!)  
You'd understand.  
(Maybe ...maybe ...maybe)  
Maybe! May -be! May -be!  
If I could kiss your sweet lips  
You'd be at my command.  
(Maybe!)  
(Maybe ...maybe ...maybe)  
Oww! Ow!  
Maybe!  
(Maybe ...maybe ...maybe)  
Owwwww!  
Maybe!  
May -be! May -be!  
May -hey-hey-heyyy-be!

<sup>3</sup> *Maybe* by The Three Degrees, (Richard Barrett.) From the album *Maybe*, Roulette Records, 1970.

## The Clichettes hit the circuit

**Voiceover:** Confident with their wealth of acquired knowledge the Clichettes set off on a whirlwind tour of the earth, putting on and taking off cultures as easily as changing the charms on their bracelets. By the time they hit Milan, a wave of Clichette fashion had preceded them ... the buo-fant sports jacket was on the cover of *Uomo* magazine, and charm bras were everywhere. They swept through Nashville, despite an accident when Naj collapsed under the weight of her wig and had won over the cautious country audience, with a tune called *Silver Threads and Copper Sevens*. Throughout it all, the Clichettes kept their heads — but their emotional immunity was under stress. Let's look in on them in Berlin.

**Male Voiceover:** *(with thick German accent)*  
While all other groups are laughin' and jokin'  
Clichetten on stage ... cookin' and smokin'.

*(Clichettes enter wearing short black wigs and large white boats)*



## Backstage in Berlin



*(Hoj enters in a daze)*

**Hoj:** *(smiling)* Hiiiiii ...

**Naj:** Hurry up Hoj ...we've got to get ready. We're going to Budapest tomorrow.

**Hoj:** I don't think I'm going to go.

**Naj:** Why not?

**Hoj:** I've become betrothed.

**Oul:** What's that?

**Hoj:** I'm going to marry Gustav, and cherish him always ... We'll live in the Black Forest, and I'll make black-eyed peas and wear black slacks.

**Naj:** You cannot take him with you to MORE. Your parent will not accept him.

**Hoj:** I don't wanna hear no more about MORE! It's a tawdry little planet.

**Naj:** But why Hoj — why?

**Hoj:** *(sings)* To know, know, know him  
Is to love, love, love him.

**Naj:** We have so much work to do ...

**Hoj:** Just to see him smile  
Makes my life worthwhile

**Naj:** But you're different from him — you're from up there and he's from downtown.

**Hoj:** Someday he will see  
That he was meant for me ...  
Oh ho ...yes ...

*(To Know Him Is To Love Him<sup>4</sup> fades as Hoj exits.)*

<sup>4</sup> *To Know Him is to Love Him* by The Teddy Bears, (Phil Spector.) Vogue Music (BMI.) Janus Records, copyright 1978.



**Naj:** This is unbelievable. Hoj's hormones have been hijacked. Without her we can't complete our mission. What are we going to do, Oul, what are we going to do?

*(Oul turns around. She is made up like a doll.)*

**Oul:**

*(spoken)*

When people ask of me  
What would I like to be  
Now that I'm not a kid  
Any more ...

*(sung)*

I know just what to say  
I answer right away

There's just one thing I'm waiting for ...  
I wanna be Bobby's girl,  
I wanna be Bobby's girl,  
That's the most important thing to me.  
And if I was Bobby's girl  
If I was Bobby's girl  
What a faithful, thankful girl I'd be  
What a faithful, thankful girl I'd be.

**Oul:** I wanna be Bobby's girl<sup>5</sup> ... *(Oul exits)*

**Naj:** They've turned into GIRLS! *(Suddenly Naj is overcome with a wave of strange feelings. Looking down she realizes she has gotten her period. Gleeefully, she dances off.)*  
I wonder if a virgin can wear Tampax??  
*(Pinspot on Naj as she exits)*

## Always a Bridesmaid

**Jo:** I know it's hard for you Jan, but the wedding rehearsal is tonight, at seven. Can we count on you?

**Jan:** Of course. Life goes on.

**Lou:** Oh honey, don't worry. We'll get you back in circulation again. You think I got all this sex appeal overnight? You have to work on it.

**Jo:** Wait til you see the best man! He's really cute, and available too! Since you're maid of honour you'll have to dance with him and everything ...  
*(moves in to Jan)*  
I know there's a lot of homework involved in marriage, Jan, but it really pays off, believe me.  
Oops, I'm late for my blood test — see you later!  
*(Jo exits)*

<sup>5</sup> *Bobby's Girl* by Marcie Blaine, (Hoffman and Klein.) AME of New York (BMI.) Seville label.

**Jan:** I've had it with love, Lou. I'm going into advertising instead. It's creative, and it pays well. I really want to be somebody.

**Lou:** But being in love is being somebody. Look at Jo — she's going to be Mrs. Somebody. Her eyes sparkle, and she has that kind of glow ...

**Jan:** It won't last — I know. Love is just a trick, Lou — in the end it's not real. "If you're born a woman, you're born to be hurt. You're born to be stepped on, lied to, cheated on and treated like dirt ..."

**Lou:** But what else is there?

**Jan:** Personal power.

**Lou:** But I'm already working on dating, shopping, grooming, volunteer work, hobbies, sports and sex. Do I have time for power?

**Jan:** Lou, the earth is like an onion. It's got lots of layers, and they all make you cry. And you know what's at the heart of it?

**Lou:** Nutrition?

**Jan:** Power. We thought being popular was power — what a joke. From now on, I'm concentrating on my own career.

**Lou:** I thought you were tired of show business.

**Jan:** We were just naive. I've got an interview today with the Morris agency. They say I have a good face for TV — all I have to do is pick the right product, establish an image, and cross right over into films. Then I could use fame to do something really worthwhile. Oh Lou, branch out before it's too late! Wake up and get a job!  
*(Jan exits)*

**Lou:** Why not? Maybe I can get a job where I can meet some new guys ...

**Audio:** *Hurt* by Timi Yuro<sup>6</sup>

**Lou:**

lllllllll'm so  
Hurt  
To think that you ...  
Lied to me.  
I'm hurt  
Way down deep inside of me  
You said  
Our love was true

And we'd never never  
Ever part  
Now you want  
Someone new  
And it breaks my heart  
Wo  
Oh  
I'm so hurt

## Lou Gets a New Look

*(Jan and Jo enter in white coats)*

**Jan:** Lou, you can't meet the President of General Foods looking like that.

**Lou:** What's wrong with the way I look?

**Jo:** You're not pulled together.

**Jan:** And your mascara is beaded.

**Lou:** It is not beaded, it's contoured.

**Jo:** And your hair needs more width. For someone with a long, square face, you should go WIDE!

**Jan:** We've just been to Beauty Makeover class. Let us help you, Lou.

**Lou:** I don't need any help. Boys like me the way I am.

**Audio:** *Theme*

**Jo:** I like your attitude, Lou, but your colouring is a little sallow. Relax, breathe deeply, this won't hurt a bit.

**Jan:** Rita, if you would like to point out to our first-year class what the fashion highlights of our operation are, I'll get down to work. I've discussed the patient with my colleague Dr. Dufarge, and

<sup>6</sup> *Hurt* by Timi Yuro, (J. Crane and A. Jacobs.) Bourne Co. Inc. (ASCAP.) Copyright United Artists, 1961.



we have agreed on a bilateral blush, a lash implant and a massive manicure.

**Jo:** Oh, Bravo doctor ... and will you be using the Richter incision?

**Jan:** I am using it now. Minor blood vessels have been clamped off. The mandible is clearly visible.

**Jo:** *(to audience)* Our patient is all set to surrender with a carefree cut by Mr. Versace of the *Boom Boom Room*.

**Jo:** For a subdued surgical look, Lou is wearing a new shade on her nails called *Khmer Rouge*.

**Jan:** I'm going in now with a blemish stick and a collagen night cream.

**Jo:** The saucy all open down the back gowns are now being worn above the knee in the neurological wards ...

**Jan:** My God! That turquoise on her eyelids — I'm sorry, this is my first face job. Rita, tweezers, please.

Jo: Tweezers. Of course, spinal hair is a nuisance with this season's body conscious swimwear but a combination of plucking, electrolysis and boiling lava will take care of this exuberance of nature.

Jan: I've pierced the ears and landscaped the hairline. I'm closing up now ... four minutes skin to skin, not bad.

Jo: Congratulations, doctor, the mocha shadow worked very well.

*(Nothing works out for our "girls." Work is anti-creative and men are "nothing but a heartache.")*

## Finale

Jan: Listen, we're all alone.

Lou: Space orphans.

Jo: Former MORONS, ex-girls.

Lou: We don't belong, we're nothing, we're nowhere.

Jo: Well we may be nowhere but at least we're together. I feel like it's been ages since I've seen the two of you.

Jan: You're right. We may have worn spike heels but we can still walk.

Lou: We can escape this PINK VORTEX!

Jo: Who needs earth or Monica? All we need is a new planet.

Jan: Another place with a new beat.

Lou: A place in the universe where we can make our own waves and finally ...

All: SING!

Audio: *Telestar*<sup>7</sup> (Three smoke bombs, blackout)

<sup>7</sup> *Telestar* by The Tornadoes, (J. Meek.) Piedmont Music (ASCAP.) Copyright London.

A HARLEQUIN ROMANCE



## Consuming Passion



JANET  
PATTERSON

*The devaluation of women's culture is nothing new. An activity becomes contemptible because it is associated with women and then women are viewed with contempt because they are associated with that activity. Housework or "women's work" is an excellent example of this dialectic. Equally clear is the devaluation of popular culture of all kinds: folk tales, fairy stories, myths, superstitions — in fact, the art forms nearest and dearest to a great many people who are not of the dominant culture. Harlequins are both; they are popular and they are women's fiction. As feminists, we need to be serious about this very serious literary phenomenon.*

She gazed for a long time up at the great white stars blazing in a purple pall above the snow-clad summits of the mountain crest that showed silver in the starshine. Life was wonderful. Almost at the same moment that she had come to the full realization of her love for Adrian, she had learned that it was reciprocated ... She felt strong and uplifted ...

The Golden Girl

*Emotion is always an act of fully engaged interpretation, of making sense of the world. (...) Through their emotions people express the moral and human meaning of the institutions in which they live.*

Authority, Richard Sennet

For women in our society, the emotion of love must be inextricably bound with the emotion of powerlessness. Since the 1970s the predominant expression of this bond in popular literature has been the Harlequin Romance. As a mass media phenomenon, Harlequins have become a topic of controversy and of avid speculation among publishers, feminists, stock market analysts and critics of popular culture alike. The ideological package — seductive fantasies perpetuating the myths of love and marriage and emblemizing the subjugation of female to male — is horrifying. The sheer virulence of reader addiction and formula writing is intriguing. And the quantity of black ink that the Harlequin publishing industry has generated is compelling.

There is clearly a relationship between the conservative message of the Harlequins, their importance to women as a cultural activity, and their extraordinary success as an industry, but the specific dynamic between these elements is not only complex but deeply troubling to the feminist community. What is it that makes so many women dedicated to such a sado-masochistic cultural and literary experience? The implications in terms of how we must understand women's culture are enormous. As a way out, as a way of disregarding the cultural and ideological significance of Harlequins to their readers, it has proven tempting to view the Romances exclusively as commodities or products. Within this perspective, popular culture in general is considered a process of commodity production and, by implication, the reader is seen as a consumer. This view (ironically enough) may be shared by Marxists and literary critics, by feminists and advertisers.

It is a seductive approach. It suggests that the Romances are *one* undifferentiated product; in fact, one commodity. The Romance is

seen as having a single formula or form, variable in detail only. "Although there are 2,461 versions, the authors, editors, and readers know that there is really only one book." ("A Harlequin Serenade," Mary Novik, *Books in Canada*, Nov. 78.)

The Harlequin marketing strategy certainly perpetuates this image of a single product. The cornerstone of the strategy is the standardization of the product, or, as it is known in the business world, quality control. Harlequin Enterprises has introduced to publishing the concept of streamlining, rationalizing, and standardizing all aspects of book publishing — content, production, distribution, and advertising — in an effort to win brand loyalty from its customers. A glance at the production and marketing practices illustrates how far this concept of book-as-commodity has gone. Specifications for content, style, and form are sent to every potential Harlequin writer: the manuscript must be 55-65,000 words (188 published pages), must have a happy ending, and must have a third person narrative technique. The production is no less homogeneous.

New Romances, twelve a month, are banged out with military precision: eight Harlequin Romances and four Harlequin Presents (the racier although not sexually explicit versions). For the dedicated reader, a subscription service will send the entire collection to your home. Of course, this is scarcely necessary, so efficient is the Harlequin distribution. Grocery stores, drug stores, department stores in every small town and metropolis in North America carry Harlequins. In Canada and the USA, Harlequin Enterprises sold *109 million* copies in 1979. Romances are also translated into twenty-four different languages for export. Retailers are especially eager to carry Harlequins: one store owner estimated that the average time from his receiving a shipment to a clearance of the stock was forty-eight hours. Harlequins do a booming business at the second-hand book stores as well. Television ads emphasize the uniform pleasures of reading Harlequins, and free copies have been offered as bonuses in boxes of Bio-Ad, Tide, and Kotex.

The predominant literary analysis has viewed the Romances as ideological commodities or products. It depends upon generalization, and generalization can be a powerful approach. For example, the observation that there is a Harlequin convention of the heroine who "falls in love, always, with a man who is about twelve years older ..." ("Dreams for Sale," Marjorie Lewty, *Next Year Country*, 1.) is read as a narrative key in which the woman is always a child in her relationship to the man. However, the assumption that Harlequins represent a unified sign system, a collective and cohesive presentation of a certain ideology, can easily lead to perceiving such a system, rather than checking to see if there is one. There is a built-in prejudice for noting similarity. For example, the generalization that the heroine is always a virgin was not true in five of the ten Harle-

quins that I first read.

The more serious problem with this approach, which I have stated previously, is that it does not take into consideration the reader's culture. The significance that we can perceive within the unified sign system is that of the relationships between signs (the heroine's age vs. the hero's); it is not the significance of the sign to the reader nor to the reading experience as a cultural activity. For a genre which is gender specific, for Harlequins are *women's fiction*, this theoretical separation from the specific reader obscures what is to us of most interest — the reason why women want to read Harlequins.

In both the marketing strategy and the literary analysis, women are quietly equated with consumers. There are, I think, several variations in this equation, but they all involve, to some extent, oppressive stereotypes. The market analysts especially assume the reader as consumer is passive in the extreme; someone who cannot, by her very nature, control the impulse for romance. Often this impulse is portrayed in terms of appetite. "The market for romances, however, will never die out. Women have greedily devoured novels since *Moll Flanders* appeared in 1722." ("Harlequin Serenade," Mary Novik.) Women's culture (like women, apparently) is unchanging and ahistorical. This sexist concept of consumerism goes beyond the recognized phenomenon of brand loyalty, for it hypothesizes addiction. Reading, as a feminine activity, is irrational, repetitive, and exploitable.

Characterizing the Romance as escapist fiction, as the "passport to a dream" touted in the ads, is another easy way to dismiss the genre. Feminist critics have tended to see the dream not as fanciful promise so much as reflected experience. In *The Female Eunuch*, Germaine Greer sees women celebrating the "chains of their bondage" in their support of the Harlequin hero. Susan Brownmiller sees the Harlequin fantasy as an imposition of patriarchal definitions of sexuality onto female consciousness. "Given the pervasive male ideology of rape (the mass psychology of the conqueror) a mirror-image female victim psychology (the mass psychology of the conquered) could not help but arise. Near its extreme, this female psychosexuality indulges in the fantasy of rape." (*Against Our Will*)

Within this perspective as well, however, the message of the text is perceived as separate from the reader. The attempt to account for why women are attracted to a phenomenon which is obviously sexist results more often than not in contempt for the readership rather than understanding of the significance of this literary culture.

Because the approach to women's literary culture as a commodity production does not answer, but only characterizes the question of the significance of the Romance for women, it is being challenged. "It is precisely because novels written for women are less

aesthetically compelling than serious fiction that the contextual and sociological questions arise: What is the fascination of these books for their audience? What are those readers typically looking for when they read? What do they find? And how do they use it?" (Lillian Robinson, *On Reading Trash*) Women are not consumers but active readers; novels are not commodities but cultural experiences. With this understood, we need a "more complex idea of the relation between the consumers and sellers of mass culture: in this newer view, popularity is by definition considered as a species of vitality. In other words, consumers are not seen merely as passive repositories, empty vessels into which debilitating ideologies are poured. This recognition of the force of popular forms (...) is an important development in our critical thinking." ("Mass Market Romance: Porno for Women is Different," Ann Barr Snitow, *Radical History Review*, Spring/Summer 79.) By reading, women are *engaged* in the general process of ideological production, the producing of meaning and ideas in their lives.

The devaluation of women's culture is nothing new. An activity becomes contemptible because it is associated with women and then women are viewed with contempt because they are associated with that activity. (Housework or "women's work" is an excellent example of this dialectic.) Equally clear is the devaluation of popular culture of all kinds: folk tales, fairy stories, myths, superstitions — in fact, the art forms nearest and dearest to a great many people who are not of the dominant culture. Harlequins are both; they are popular and they are women's fiction. As feminists, we need to be serious about this very serious literary phenomenon.

If Harlequins are to be understood as an important reading experience we need a new approach to their analysis. In particular, we need to account for the importance of the repetitive reading experience — why, when the stories are similar, women wish to read infinite variations. I would like to treat Harlequin Romances as a genre; that is, a collection of similar but not identical stories, rather than as one uniform commodity. The similarities are indeed striking, for the form is highly stylized. These similarities will be viewed as *conventions* or aspects of the general form which are likely to be but are not necessarily in any particular story. By looking at the most common conventions, we can find a repertoire of possibilities, a pool, if you like, from which any particular romance will have a unique combination of characteristics. The differences between stories, then, are not structural, but they are significant to the reader in several ways. First, the conventions (which are obvious to the reader after five Harlequin stories) establish the rightful *expectations* of the reader of the romance; the differences create a new reading experience each time. Second, and equally important, the variations allow a wide range of experience to fall within the same

narrative and interpretive form.

Most Harlequin narratives have an important dividing line in the narrative: the moment at which the heroine becomes conscious of her love for the hero. The plot can thus be divided into three parts or consciousness structures — the Pre-Conscious Romance, the Realization of Love, and the Conscious Romance.

The Pre-Conscious Romance is usually full of electricity unidentified. The hero and the heroine have met, often under circumstances which put the heroine at a decisive disadvantage (she is caught trespassing on his property or even forced into marriage with the hero stranger). While the early period of the relationship may not be easy, it is anything but indifferent.

### Conflict

Adrian had a deep pleasant voice and he was reasoning with her calmly, and Tony had told her not to come, so she was in the wrong. But his restraint only irritated her the more. She would have been better pleased if he had abused her, thus giving her cause for resentment. Moreover, there was something disturbing about this man's personality that affected her against her will. She was not normally susceptible to masculine allure, but she was subtly aware of this man's magnetism, and his attractiveness increased rather than decreased her resentment against him.

The Golden Girl

### Attraction

His skin was naturally dark, and, into the bargain, he was excitingly suntanned and the tan somehow accentuated those dark, sea-green eyes. The colour of his eyes came almost as a jolt, for one would have expected them to be brown — or even blue. He was the kind of man most women would give anything for as a love and there was an indefinable magnetism about him. Shivering slightly, Jade was acutely aware of him. He would, she thought, assert himself in every role he played, including that of a lover.

Island of Cyclones

The Realization by the heroine of her love for the hero is often painful, accompanied as it is by the hopeless feeling that her love will never be reciprocated. Some difference in class background,

education, or experience, or some complication of plot has already appeared in the story to keep the lovers apart. The Realization of Love often comes as a surprise to the heroine, as if her feelings had developed against her conscious will.

### Realization of Love

She drew a sharp intake of breath at the intolerable ache of it, shocked to her core to recognize it for what it was ... *jealousy*. She was impotently jealous of Flore Michelet because either without knowing it or, less honestly, heedless of the straws which should have warned her, she had fallen in love with Saint-Guy: With Saint-Guy who employed her; who indulged irony at her expense; who dismissed her claim to independence as 'very young'; who, though coolly kind, was entirely indifferent to her, and who would marry elegant, desirable Flore.

Kingfisher Tide.

Occasionally, the Realization of Love is mutual and uncomplicated and, until a new twist in the plot changes circumstances, the hero and the heroine enjoy a brief romantic love. More often, the Realization brings the need for active *duplicity* on the part of the heroine, as she finds it unacceptable to give expression to her feelings. Much of the Conscious Romance then, is about the heroine's social self-control.

He moved nearer. She could feel the warmth of his arm through his sleeve. She didn't speak because her heart was full. She wanted nothing more than to turn to him, but she dared not because another girl had sickened him with her mercenary motives. And he could suspect hers.

Through All the Years.

The plot always has a Complication which prevents the hero and the heroine from getting together. It can arise either before or after the Realization of Love. The Complication may be one of character — the hero's attitude towards women, his marriage, or the "impossible" age, class, health, or personality differences. The Complication may be one of plot, usually arising from the scheming of either the heroine's rival (the sexually experienced woman) or the hero's rival. A Complication usually involves a serious misunderstanding on the part of the heroine or hero as to each other's intentions or feelings. The Complication keeps the heroine and the hero apart for

much of the romance, for it allows at least one character to *interpret* all events in the story wrongly.

### The Complication

Yet Flore claimed she was afraid, and out of fear or impatience had woven this dark web of intrigue into which she had bribed Blaise. For Blaise must have agreed. He had carried out the pattern to the letter. Now Rose saw the significance of his halting her in the path of Claude Odet's car, so that Flore could report back with truth to Saint-Guy that Blaise was taking her about without Sylvie. Later both Flore and he had probably embroidered on that and other incidents. And Blaise had not been caught in the act of that passionate kiss. He had timed it accurately for Saint-Guy's benefit! She remembered too that he had admitted going late to her room that night. Had he even engineered that as well, ensuring that Saint-Guy should hear of it and draw the obvious conclusion?

Kingfisher Tide.

The Complication is resolved through some change in circumstance which exposes the wrong interpretation and reveals everyone's true feelings. Arranging the Revelation, after having perpetuated the Complication for so many pages, requires a considerable twisting of the plot and may involve such devices as heroes eavesdropping, tape recorders left on, lost letters appearing, and key witnesses arriving at crucial moments. The Revelation is a release of the tension of the plot (which often involves progressive misery for the heroine) into a flood of happiness.

### The Revelation

'Quite frankly I've been eavesdropping' he told her, 'and I found your remarks most illuminating, my dear Madeau. I couldn't bring myself to interrupt until all was revealed.' He shot Rosamund a lightning glance compounded of mischief and something she could not define. 'So, Madeau, all that sympathy you ladled out to me during my convalescence was designed to separate me from Ros. I might have known it!'

'I had to try to save you from your folly,' Madeleine declared. 'She ...' she jerked her head towards Rosamund, 'is not worthy of you or Belmont. A little jumped-up adventuress who ...'

'That will do, Madeau,' he interrupted her. 'I know better than you do what Ros is.' He glanced towards her again and said softly 'She has a heart of gold.'

The Golden Girl.

One of the specifications of the Harlequin guidelines is an exotic setting. It must be contemporary, and it may be "anywhere in the world as long as it is authentic." The rationale is that "our readers" enjoy visiting new and unknown places and learning about local food, dress, and customs. This nod to realism nonetheless maintains that authenticity be "subordinate to the romance." The heroine typically enters this unfamiliar setting young, without experience, and alone. She is implicitly separated from the social network which could support her values, ideas, and emotional responses and which could help her interpret this exotic world. At the same time as she loses her "support system," the heroine also gains some freedom from community control of her sexuality. Both of these aspects — her vulnerability and her freedom — are a part of her experience as an "outsider."

The setting is exotic only for the heroine; for the hero, it is home. The hero is integrated into or is a natural part of the "foreign" culture and usually holds a position of high status. As a character, then, he has a clear geographical and historical place, a social place in which his personal identity is assured and with which he is closely identified. *The exotic setting is the male world.* Clearly, the setting is exotic socially and sexually as much as it is geographically, although the heroine must "travel" (leave her world) to meet the man who will introduce her to this new place. (A man who is always taller, older, and of a higher professional status than the heroine.) Within the terms of the narrative, there is an identification of sexual, social (especially class) and geographical "place" as the man's world into which the woman comes, alone and an outsider.

The "otherness" which characterizes the relationship between the heroine and the hero stands in sharp contrast to the solidarity which the Harlequin narrative technique creates among the three female consciousnesses involved: the heroine, the narrator, and the reader. The heroine/narrator/reader relationship is complex, and key, I believe, to the Harlequin reading experience. All three share the desire for a happy ending; they are, however, separated by their varying degrees of knowledge. The heroine, alone and confused, tries to understand the significance of the events around her but she's confused or frustrated for much of the plot. The narrator is the "mouth" for the heroine's frustrations, but she (and the narrator is quite clearly a she) also understands more about the context and about the hero's intentions. The narrator always presents the heroine very sympathetically, dramatizing her feelings or expanding on them. The voice of the narrator is frequently intertwined with the voice of the heroine:

Rosamund was furious, and her anger was directed nearly as much against the unreasonable Mr. Belmont as at Tony's refusal to see her. She was sure that he could have engineered a meeting somehow, but he feared being sent away in disgrace more than he wanted to see her. But surely Mr. Belmont could not be quite so tyrannical as to do that?

The Golden Girl.

It is as if the character were self-conscious enough to describe her emotional states in the third person: as if this commentary were *shared, validated* and put in a narrative context by a sympathetic friend, acting as mediator. There is no division of narrative voice, unlike most third person narrative styles, and a very different aesthetic is suggested by this joint participation in the common language of emotion. Because the Harlequin narrative "grammar" or structure is so highly stylized, the reader develops a set of general expectations about the plot which put her in the position of knowing *more* about the significance of certain events than either the heroine or the narrator. This is much in contrast to other forms of third person narration.

In the following passage the narrative voice slips into the character's emotions:

She gazed for a long time at the great white stars blazing in a purple pall above the snow-clad summits of the mountain crest that showed silver in the starshine. Life was wonderful. Almost at the same moment that she had come to the full realization of her love for Adrian, she had learned that it was reciprocated ... She felt strong and uplifted ...

The Golden Girl.

These emotions both can and cannot be fully shared by the reader. Because the passage takes place on page 149, thirty-nine pages before the end of the novel, and because the Complication has not yet occurred, the reader knows what the heroine and the narrator do not: that this happiness is temporary and some terrible blow is just around the corner.

Because the heroine is alien both to her setting and to the hero, the only common language in the novel is between the narrator and the heroine. Harlequins are written in quasi-symbolic clichés. We hear of the hero's "mocking glint," his "ruthless way"; people "fall

by the wayside," "stray into orbits," and "perch" on sofa arms. The language is not so much stale as drawn from a stylized feminine romantic vocabulary and used, like the narrative form, repetitively. In each book a unique symbolic code is created to express perspective and relationship. This symbolic formation begins, usually, with metaphors of personality such as the sparrow (her), and the tiger (him), the butterfly and the bird of paradise. (Bird imagery is very popular for the heroine.) It is used to detail explicitly or implicitly the relationship and its development. The code need not be a part of the characters' consciousness at all. Rather it is a part of a shared interpretation between the narrator and the reader who both know better than the heroine the workings of the Harlequin world.

Having looked carefully at the implications of the formal conventions of the Harlequin Romance as a genre we are, in some sense, closer to answering Lillian Robinson's question, "What are readers looking for when they read? What do they find?" However, in order to understand the significance of the entire reading process, of the reading of Harlequins as a cultural and ideological activity, it is necessary to go beyond the grammar of the text into an examination of the predominant cultural experience of women under patriarchy. And to do this, we need to examine the experience of falling in love in a patriarchal society.

In *The Dialectic of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone has identified love as an emotional structure through which women, as a subordinate class, make demands on the powerful class, men. That is, love is never experienced separate from the power relations in our society, and we, as women, cannot imagine a "true love" which is outside those power relationships. Firestone identifies three specific demands that women make through the emotional expression of love. First, they demand emotional security, a commitment or bonding between partners. (This, in Firestone's opinion, is justified.) Second, however, women demand the emotional and social identity which they should be able to find through work and recognition, but which they are denied; thus they are forced to seek their definition through a man. Third, women demand the economic class security that is attached to their ability to "hook" a man.

The weakness in Firestone's analysis is that it does not address the emotional experience of falling in love, only the materialist expression of that experience. In his book, *Authority*, Richard Sennet provides a useful perspective on emotions and the subjectivity of social forms. This approach seeks:

... to understand anger, jealousy, and compassions as interpretations people make of events or other people. (...) emotion is always an act of fully engaged interpretation, of making sense of the world, and therefore we are always legally and morally responsible for what we feel. This view is also social.



*Through their emotions people express the moral and human meaning of the institutions in which they live.*

Emotions are a full way of knowing the world (not in the rationalist tradition) and are the full and active engagement of the existential and social self. Social bonding, he continues, is the natural expression of such interpretive emotion. He uses "bond" in two ways: it is a connection — a recognition of others in one's life; it is also a restraint — one is held in "bondage." Bonds are the cultural attempt to stabilize and formalize emotional commitment.

On the one hand, we can understand how women seek both emotional identity and economic security in the love relationship and we can see the love relationship as necessarily being a power relationship. And on the other, we can see that for women the emotion of love, the expression of which is the bond of *intimacy*, must be inextricably bound in our society with the emotion of powerlessness, the expression of which is the bond of *authority* (recognizing the power of others). The presence of dual emotions of love and of powerlessness in relationships with men must leave women experiencing confusion, instability, the lack of a common language of intimacy with the powerful, and the fear of exploitation within the experience of intimacy.

There is a desire I think by women to stabilize such conflicts in any relationship through stabilizing or conventionalizing the power aspect of the relationship in a way which allows for the successful culmination of intimacy for them. (The feminist alternative is, of course, to challenge and change the individual exercise of power by men.) Therefore, the bond that many women desire with men, a bond which expresses the conflicting emotions while stabilizing them, is the bond of intimate authority; that is, the bond of paternalism. The bond of paternalism within a patriarchal society expresses the commitment that a woman and a man make to each other, institutionalizes in their commitment the relationships of intimacy and power, and ensures the woman's emotional identity and economic security.

Paternalism is, I believe, the primary intimate social bond between men and women. This is both ironic and dialectical because, as a social bond, paternalism is the "solution" for women to the situation of exploitability and powerlessness; it is also one basis for the social system of patriarchy which determines that powerlessness. In our patriarchal society, men base their power on control of private property, the law, and physical intimidation; they also maintain through the primary bond of paternalism an individual control of women, defining their very identity and their security through the mechanism of paternalistic emotional closeness, or love. As Sennet says, "paternalism is male domination without a contract." Conven-

tional love, is the ideological expression and mechanism for the bond of paternalism, and is at the core of women's social experience, at the root of their attempt to find a place, an identity, as well as love in the male world. Language plays a particular role in this bond. Like most power relationships, male domination is supported by a system of symbols and beliefs which legitimate authority. In the case of paternalism however, language itself, its semantics, and its usage define women as subordinate, as the exception, as "other." Through simple conventional every-day use of language, men can exercise a form of reality-control, defining the world and women from the male perspective. Language thus becomes a formidable weapon of paternalism, which in turn, legitimates and perpetuates the male right to linguistic dominance.

Harlequins address this fundamental tension in women's lives; the Romances create and solve the problem of social bonding in a patriarchal world, but do so in a female language created by the joint efforts of the narrator and the heroine. Because the narrative technique is female (a shared language between female consciousness), Harlequins can be seen as active attempts by readers to interpret their world through their own language. By having "falling in love" as the subject matter of Harlequins, this attempt at active interpretation is directed at the fundamental contradiction in women's lives: the conflict between intimacy and power in any female/male relationship. Thus we can understand the logic of the repetitive reading act. The female dilemma is structural and repetitive; it is experienced every day in every woman's life. However, no matter how much the bond of paternalism binds the conflict between power and intimacy, it is ever-present and ever-changing. Thus the stylized form of the Harlequin reflects the constant emotional structure of women's experience; the variations reflect the basic instability of the paternalistic bond and the need for constant ideological reinforcement for women through the ritualistic reliving of the bond as "solution" to the conflict. Reading Harlequins is not an intellectual activity of interpretation which is worked through once; it is a fully-engaged emotional interpretation shared with other women (the narrator and the heroine) expressing the social and emotional contradictions of women's experience under patriarchy.

Clearly the Harlequin Romances are intensely conservative. If the narrative structure encodes women's cultural dilemma through the device of the Complication, it also "solves" this dilemma through the device of the Revelation. The Revelation ensures the Happy Ending and is the episode which validates the belief that for 186 pages there has been a schism between appearance and reality. The Revelation assures us that, of all that the heroine has seen and heard, only the hero's declaration of love is real, and, as a reality, it is much

more pleasant, more human, and much safer and sexier than the apparently hostile world. The message is that nothing is as it seems: the apparently oppressive and exploitative face of male authority *disguises* the true love which may be consummated in the bond of paternalism.

Other aspects of the narrative also encode women's experience. The dawning Realization of Love, for example, is most often accompanied by the heroine's consciousness of her vulnerability. This is a peculiarly female experience with love: the sense that emotional openness brings vulnerability and that feelings of attraction must be immediately accompanied by covering-up, protecting, hiding, vulnerability. From this need to protect oneself from the potential exploitation of the powerful comes the heroine's instinct for deceit and dissembling, and it is actually this fear of self-exposure that is the basis for the schism between appearance and reality. The heroine feels that her true feelings and her actions can have no correlation; the narrative structure assumes that this is generalizable. In this female world, no reality (feeling) and appearance (a "front") can be correlated. The hero's mysteriousness is a mirror of the heroine's need for self-protection. This world-view is validated by attributing the schism to some objective necessity (which can then be "solved") rather than to the basic experience of powerlessness.

This leads us to another aspect of the female experience of love; as an emotion it is an act of fully engaged interpretation of a man and the man's world by a woman. Because the Complication (or the structure of powerlessness) is imposed, a statement of feeling is not only dangerous; it is very difficult. The basis of communication, Harlequins say, is knowing the audience and, in particular, knowing the intentions of the hero. The significance of the hero's intentions and emotions cannot be underestimated within the narrative structure. If he is not in love, he is in a position to ignore the heroine, exploit her, mock her, and command her (as an employer, seigneur, or husband.) If he is in love, he will create a new place for her within his class, home and language. Through the hero's emotions, the Harlequin world can change from one of misogyny and denigration of women to one of richness, human warmth and sexual fulfillment. Thus Harlequins not only do not challenge the bond of authority between men and women; they present it as transformable through the experience of love.

This ideology of love and its transforming power is not particular to Harlequin Romances; it has been a part of Western culture since the Renaissance bards began re-working Ovidian myths. What is particular to the Harlequin Romances is the presentation of women's experience within this patriarchal concept of love, the narrative technique of solidarity and symbolic language which allow this experience to be fully female and the presentation of the bond

of paternalism as the Happy Ending to the cultural contradiction between power and intimacy. Falling in love for women in a patriarchal society can clearly be a painful experience; it is also *necessary* to validate women's participation in the bond of paternalism. The reading experience of Harlequins provides women with a highly ritualized validation, a sympathetic expression and a temporary solving of the conflicts in their lives. And if they have to read the solution twelve times a month, we should understand it as a sign of the intense conflict they are experiencing as women, not as an appetite, grossly indulged in.

#### End Note

*There is one important aspect of women's experience that I cannot address in this paper, although I think it is an essential component of the Harlequin narrative — that is, women's experience under patriarchy. Simply, at one level, falling in love can be seen as a metaphorical substitute for sexual desire. Much of the heroine's trepidation is fear of sexual exploitation by the hero, while wanting sexual fulfillment herself. The exotic setting is indispensable for the sexual liberation that such a metaphor suggests — that women can be excused from the social control of their sexuality for a time (the equivalent of the introductory convention "Once upon a time" — all the rules of reality are relaxed.) It also suggests that Harlequins, in addition to stabilizing the authority relationship, eroticize it and are, in fact, a form of feminine pornography.*

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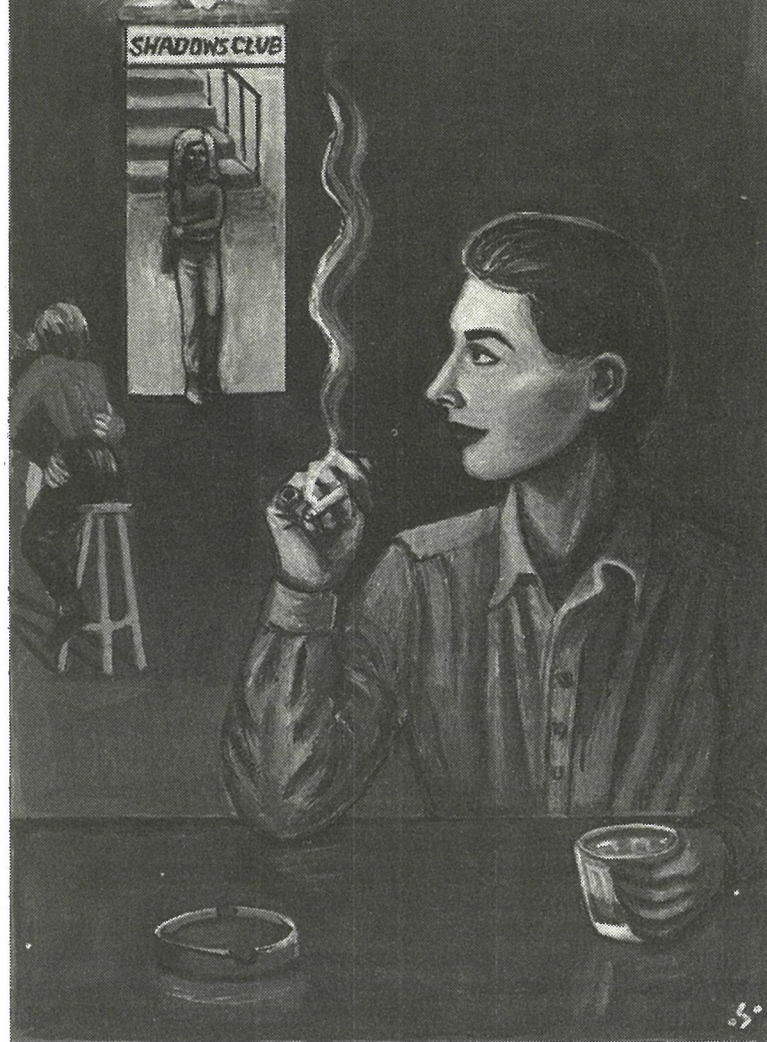
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# SAPPHO

in soft cover



Susan Sturman

## SAPPHO IN SOFT COVER: Notes on Lesbian Pulp

### Susanna Bennis

She took a drag on her cigarette and let it flow out of her nostrils. "L for Love," she said, looking into space. "L for Laura." She turned and smiled at her, a little sadly. "L for Lust and L for the L of it. L for Lesbian. L for Let's — let's," she said and blew smoke softly into Laura's ear. Laura was startled to feel the strength of the feelings inside her.

(p. 86)

That's Beebo Brinker speaking, or more accurately, seducing, in a lesbian pulp novel published in 1959. The scene is a sleazy Greenwich Village bar called *The Colophon*.

Ah, Beebo (nee Betty Jean): handsome, nearly six feet tall with short curly black hair and piercing blue eyes — cynical, worldly-wise, hard-drinking — but a sucker for Love and especially for Laura Landon, a strangely beautiful, slim, naive girl with long fair hair.

The idiom is contagious, a sort of Harlequin cum Forties Tough but Tender, with an odd dislocation of gender. The lesbian pulp novel, that is, the *true* lesbian pulp novel, is a very specific kind of book.

During the 1950's and early 1960's, thousands of titles and millions of copies of mildly salacious paperbound novels were produced and marketed under imprints such as Midwood Tower,

Beacon, Nightstand, Fawcett Gold Medal, Midnight, Pillar and Monarch, among others. While we assume they were intended to stimulate, for sex *is* their subject, they were not especially graphic. Quickly written for little money and cheaply printed, they were churned out for the titillation of "respectable" people.

Most of this avalanche of bad taste dealt with illicit heterosexual sex, but a surprising number of the books were about lesbians or included lesbian characters. This is not so surprising; hard core pornography, even material labelled "erotica," has always favoured the subject of sapphism, albeit with virtually no relation to its reality. Lesbianism, unlike male homosexuality, is seen as "kinky" without being threatening. Since women without men have historically had little place or influence in the world, lesbianism could be regarded by men as stimulating but unimportant.

Most of the writers of 50's/60's pulp were men, many of whom used female pseudonyms. Their books reflect men's ideas about women who love women. The presentation of lesbians in these male-identified novels is, in retrospect, laughable. But in their time, the grossly-distorted image that they limned was widely accepted as truth. The book is *We Love in Shadow* by Sylvia Sharon:

Emily rubbed her eyes with her knuckles, then put on her glasses. They made her look school-teacherish allright, Sandra thought, but they still didn't cover up her looks — especially that scrumptious shape. If only Emily would wear youthful clothes ... And that dowdy hairdo! A cute pageboy would do wonders for that heart-shaped face of hers.

Emily rose, stretching like a cat. The constriction of her dress against her ripe round young breasts accentuated their enticing surge, and Sandra appraisingly eyed her *the way a man would*. (*Italics mine.*)

(p. 48, 49)

When Emily and Sandra finally bed down, between Sandra's steamy encounters with the novel's male characters, the reader discovers that Emily has "saucily ample tightly set buttocks," while Sandra is abrasively equipped with a "flinty-tipped bosom." Yet, despite any discomfort engendered by flintiness, or apprehension at "how near to the brink of the dreaded unknown abyss of appeasement-yearning" they must come, Emily and Sandra, "two magnificent, young, quivering bodies," know at last "supreme abandon."

The first edition of a bibliography of *The Lesbian in Literature*, published in 1967, contains at least a thousand titles which were subsequently eliminated from a second edition on the grounds that they were trash. Virtually all of the entries dismissed were pulp novels of the vintage previously described. The editors of the se-

cond edition of *The Lesbian in Literature* must have derived considerable pleasure in chucking these books over the bibliographic rail. They did, however, retain references to many pulp novels of the same apparent type in what had now become a politically-conscious listing. This was because some were different.

Here, of course, we come to the true lesbian pulp novel. A handful of these books appear to have been written, if not *by* lesbians, then at least by writers who had some *actual knowledge of the subject* they undertook to describe. Considering the provenance of the mass-marketed, male-oriented trash, their existence is remarkable. At the very least, they are a neat bit of covert nose-thumbing. At best, they are a sturdy, popular record of the lives and times of some mid-century lesbians, however diluted by the exigencies of their medium.

The medium, however, cannot be ignored or dismissed; it was responsible for the dated and often unsavory tone of the books. They are not examples of either fine writing or good politics about lesbians. The writers of even the best lesbian pulp were necessarily trying to make a living first and to describe or inform only secondarily, if at all. An unofficial analogue to the Hays Code of Hollywood applied. It was possible to write about lesbians; it was encouraged for the sake of sexiness and marketability, as well as for its prurient appeal to men (and women). But, by the last chapter, the "real world" in all its glory was expected to prevail.

Unregenerate, unapologetic lesbian characters, often depicted as older "career" women, had to die or end up lonely and bereft. Merely misguided women, usually young, attractive and feminine, were required to see the error of their ways and turn (or return) to the love of men. Great emphasis was placed on what was "natural." This meant the acceptance and endorsement of women's traditional place in the world — the original KKK — Kinder, Küche, Kirche. Fulfillment is a word that was used with surprising frequency in the 50's and 60's, but for women it invariably meant living through a man. Pulp novels were required to reflect this sensibility, thus letting the reader off the moral hook.

Despite extremely difficult societal conditions, some writers were still able to give us a reasonably accurate picture of the lesbian sub-culture of the '50s and '60s. Three of the best-known and most representative writers of true lesbian pulp are Paula Christian, Valerie Taylor and Ann Bannon.

Paula Christian wrote six lesbian pulp novels between 1959 and 1965, all of which have recently been reprinted by Timely Books of New Milford, Connecticut. The first novel, *Edge of Twilight*, tells the story of Val MacGregor, stewardess for a fledgling airline. Despite an apparently heterosexual background she becomes enmeshed against her will with co-worker Toni Molina — a volatile younger

woman. On a brief stopover in Central America, the two women are assigned the same hotel room. They both get mildly swacked on the complimentary rum punch served in coconut shells. After some equivocating,

She suddenly was aware of Toni's lips on her cheek, felt them part, then slowly find their way to her mouth. It seemed to natural, so very natural. It was the gentle kiss she had always expected to receive from a man and had never received.

She was afraid to move, afraid to stay where she was. She wanted to wake up, but she knew she was awake; if it were a dream she could excuse herself, but this was no dream. What was happening to her?

(p. 35)

Nothing much just then, as it happens. Later, after much soul-searching, pain and guilt on Val's part, she and Toni become lovers, and contrary to lesbian pulp formula, the lovers remain together at the book's end.

However, Christian goes further than the formula's requirements to assure us that lesbianism is unsavory. Toni is depicted as unworthy; she is weak, demanding, sly and undependable. A woman is captivated by lesbian sex even though the object of her affections is a bad choice — this theme runs through almost all of Christian's books.

Apart from being stewardesses, Christian's women characters are housewives, office workers, photographers, writers — all quite believable. More importantly, the principle value of reading her books lies in her convincing disquisitions on lesbian and gay life in the 1950's. In the Timely Books reprint of *Amanda*, the last of her novels, there is an interesting introduction by the author in which she discusses and emphasizes the "enforced secrecy" of the era. She explains: "My purpose was to reveal that there's nothing to be afraid of by exploring; that one didn't get acne or turn green after a lesbian experience."

The second writer, Valerie Taylor, cannot be introduced without a personal digression. In the pharmacy where I bought (instead of borrowed or surreptitiously nicked,) my first lesbian pulp novel, the clerk did not blink over my purchases. I went home with several things I did not want or need — but I had my prize. It was Taylor's *Stranger on Lesbos*, a title which was unmistakably about women who love women.

It concerns Frances, a suburban Chicago housewife from an impoverished background, who gives up an unusual chance to go to college for marriage. When the only child of the marriage reaches his late teens, Frances goes back to university on a part-time basis

(with her husband's approval.) She befriends Bake, a single "career woman," and on a holiday weekend, Bake and she go out to the autumn countryside for a long walk, picking armfuls of bright leaves and bittersweet. Later,

She walked back to the couch and sat down, stretching out her legs in the mud-splashed navy slacks. "I do get into the goddamndest situations."

"Bake, please."

"I love you," Bake said quietly. "I think I've loved you for quite a while. Come on, I'll take you home now."

Frances' eyes widened. They looked at each other steadily. In the silence she could hear the ticking of the clock on Bake's bedside stand, in the next room. She came and stood awkwardly beside Bake, wanting to touch her and afraid to. "I don't want to go home. I think I love you too."

"You don't know what you're talking about."

"I know how I feel. You could show me."

"I've always sworn I wouldn't do this," Bake said in a low harsh voice. She bent her head. "Apparently there are some things you can't help. They must happen."

"Will you let me stay?"

"Yes, of course. I don't seem to have any choice."

"You won't hate me if I'm scared or clumsy?"

"Oh, good God."

They came into each others arms like puppets moved by a single string.

(p. 29)

This is a classic example of lesbian chemistry — romantic slush of the sort which strikes a recognizable chord in many lesbians who had to conduct their love lives during the pre-movement years.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by a formulaic ending. The lovers separate due to Bake's alcohol-related problems and non-monogamous tendencies. Frances returns to her husband just in time for their teen-aged son's wedding, (after having been rolled and done by a dyke ball-player the night before.) Despite the necessity to shore up hetero-sex, Taylor manages with obvious intent to make this ending both ambiguous and unresolved.

Of the three writers under discussion, it is Taylor who has not been reprinted. In 1977, however, she produced a new novel, *Love Image*, published by Naiad Press. Although it is not her best book, it is clear she was writing without the constraints imposed by the pulp market. In the back is a brief biography written in the third person, but obviously by the author herself, in which she describes her creative life. Full of the struggle against economic and personal

hardships, it is strikingly similar to the life Tillie Olsen describes in *Silences*. Taylor, now well into her sixties, has gone on to complete another book, *Prism*, published in the fall of 1981.

Ann Bannon's novels, from which the introductory quotation of these notes is derived, are the most intriguing of all. Four of them were chosen for reprint in the Arno Press collection on homosexuality, published in 1975 by the *New York Times*. Bannon wrote a series of six novels with three main protagonists. Laura Landon spends several of the books in hopeless love with Beth Ayers, who eventually falls for Beebo Brinker, who has spent most of her time with a bad case for Laura Landon. These soap-operatic complications take place over twenty-five years and involve a host of other characters.

Of the three main characters, it is Beebo who commands the reader's attention. Beebo is a butch dyke — a real cross-dressing stomper. She works as an elevator operator so that she can wear pants on the job. Her employers believe she is a young male homosexual. Beebo drinks too much and is notorious around the Village for her numerous "conquests":

"I know most of the girls in here," she said. "I've probably slept with half of them. I've lived with half of the half I've slept with. I've loved half of the half I've lived with. What does it all come to?"

(p. 85)

Interestingly, the only major male character in the series is a non-effeminate gay man — rare in pulp fiction. Jack Mann describes Beebo as "a hellion, but I like her. She's a cynic like me."

Despite Beebo's role-playing and less-than-constructive lifestyle, Bannon makes her emerge as a character with dimension, rather than a stereotype. Her butch panache is offset by her intense response — her emotional vulnerability to Laura. Beebo is intelligently self-aware and has the ability to laugh at herself.

"Are pants really that important?" Laura said. She said it sarcastically because she was afraid of her tears.

Beebo laughed a little, "I don't know. How important is that important?"

"Why don't you get a decent job?"

"Oh," said Beebo as she understood. She finished a second drink. "I've got one, baby. I'm a lift jockey. Very elevating work."

(p. 174)

The devotees of Beebo Brinker could well imagine her — dyke extraordinaire, sixtyish, very much alive and still striding through the Village making her rounds.

There are many other equally interesting, although less prolific writers of lesbian pulp. The notorious Ann Aldrich, who wrote under various pseudonyms, including Vin Packer, is worth mentioning if only because she produced some of the worst anti-lesbian books of the time. She then turned around to give us, in 1971, the quite decent *Take a Lesbian to Lunch* and, in 1972, the amazing *Shockproof Sydney Skate*.

For more, the best place to look is in Barbara Grier's essay, "The lesbian paperback," which appeared in *The Lesbians Home Journal: Stories from The Ladder*. Grier, a.k.a. Gene Damon, was an editor of both editions of *The Lesbian in Literature*, and for years wrote a book column for *The Ladder*, a magazine published by an early lesbian organization called Daughters of Bilitis. She has almost single-handedly been responsible for the survival of true lesbian pulp.

Here the question arises: should pulp survive at all? It is difficult not to be defensive about a penchant for pulp. There is considerable justice in the charges against it. Even the best contains a high incidence of role-playing, despair, suicide (in one famous instance, canicide,) sentimentality, jealousy, heavy drinking, misogyny and heterosexual reinforcement. Some of this was the result of writing to a formula; but some was not. Considering the atmosphere of repression under which these books were written, it is not surprising that they distort and exaggerate the lesbian lifestyle. But, they also contain a measure of truth. No one under the age of thirty-five can begin to feel what life for a lesbian in the 50's was *really* like. It is this reality which makes good pulp valuable.

Today's lesbians are, by and large, far more aware and politically conscious than was the case when these novels were written. The admission that *The Well of Loneliness*, despite its bizarre theorizing (Mark of Cain, indeed,) has something to tell us across the gulf of years, could be considered by some feminists to be a position of extreme reaction. Although it is still exceedingly difficult to be a lesbian in today's society, it is nothing, *nothing* like it was.

It is no longer necessary to haunt gamey, second-hand bookstores in search of non-clinical information about lesbians. There is a comparative wealth of material available today. In the last decade, not only small feminist presses but establishment publishing houses have produced books about lesbians which contain, in varying combinations, good politics, fine writing and no apologies. These writers are relatively free to write in a context of feminist consciousness; the writers of pulp were not. Pulp novels are pieces of lesbian record, of herstory, that cleverly escaped the machine which silenced us then, and continues to try to silence us now. As is true with any culture, our past is part of the making of our future.

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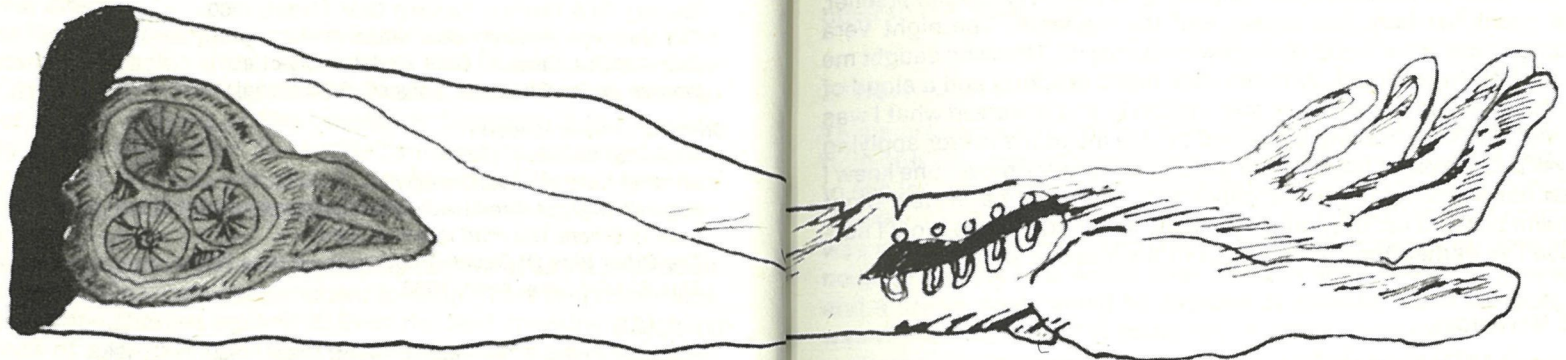
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## EXCERPTS FROM A NOVEL IN

## PROGRESS BY A.S.A. HARRISON



Suzanne Gautreau

### Chapter Four

*23 November*

As well as a black dress, Madeleine has a red one. Her act in the red dress is different. In the red dress, Madeleine struts around grinning conceitedly, smoothing and stroking the satiny red, sticking out her butt, grinding her pelvis and gazing with fascination at her own body parts moving. She can be really provocative, but there's something horribly insincere about everything she does in the red dress.

In black, Madeleine is cool and unapproachable, and she tricks you into thinking she's helpless, which she isn't. In red, she's hot and full of promises, and she makes you believe she can give you something you didn't even know you wanted till she offered it, and then she withholds it.

No matter how often I watch her in the red and in the black, I'm drawn in by her deception. But I can't believe that Madeleine is an insincere person in life. This is just what she does for her act.

I have exchanged my shopping alibi for a more serviceable one. Where can a young lady go, alone, several nights a week, without exciting her husband's suspicion? The only problem is I'm obliged to arrive home with damp hair and wet things in my bag. The caution is probably not necessary because Eddy has no eye for detail where

it doesn't concern photographs, but surely if I were to make no effort at authenticity, if I were to press my luck, Ed would say to me one day at dinner, "I know you don't go swimming."

So on my way out of the theatre each night, I go into the ladies' room and create the necessary evidence. This would be a simple matter, except that there are often other women in there glancing curiously or staring outright as I douse my suit and cap with water and bleach and wrap them in a towel and then bend over to splash my head. I end up feeling smaller than ever.

It seems I'm always doing something to embarrass myself. Just last week I took my laundry to work with me in a green garbage bag. Since the laundromat is on my way home from work, I thought I'd save myself going home after work to get my laundry and then going all the way back to the laundromat. I didn't realize how I would look to the people at the bank, coming in with my laundry and stowing it on top of the coat rack. It was Lillian who told me.

"Look, Lucy, you shouldn't bring your laundry to work. People here think it's weird. I'm just telling you so you'll know what people are saying."



I'm no good at normalcy. The worst of it is my clothing. Buttons come undone when I'm not looking. Have you ever come home and realized you've been walking around all day with your blouse open? It happens to me, and it's extra humiliating because my underwear is always grey. And my clothes are all too big for me. People think I have no taste, but the truth is, there are no clothes that fit me.

The staff at the Metropole is getting to me. Vera the ticketseller, the snack-bar lady, the ushers and the manager. One night Vera wouldn't sell me a ticket till I showed her my ID. Then she caught me in my bathing-suit act. With her high heels clacking and a cloud of perfume accompanying her, she walked in and observed what I was doing. She said nothing but stood beside me at the mirror applying layer upon layer of lipstick and watching my every move. She knew I saw her watching me in the mirror and she didn't care. Next night when I showed up, they all stared icily. Vera had passed it on. I suppose I've earned their suspicion, but it's starting to get to me.

#### *25 November*

It was snowing out tonight, but the air was mild. I put my gloves in my pockets, left my coat unbuttoned and set off down the street, watching the numbers, which were often hard to find, painted on awnings or store windows or nailed onto doors set back from the sidewalk and bathed in shadow.

I passed a building where chickens are slaughtered and sold at wholesale prices. Patches of feathers were stuck to the sidewalk in front of the big doors that admit the chicken trucks. The smell of slaughter never leaves that stretch of sidewalk. In summertime, I have wakened in the early dawn to the death-cries of chickens, distant and mournful, coming from some gory inner chamber of this establishment and getting in through my open bedroom window.

When you express aversion to these aspects of the flesh-eating habit, someone usually tells you a story about catching a chicken in the yard and chopping off its head and then eating it for Sunday dinner. This is a form of bragging some people do, as if they're better than you because they know what it's like to have to kill their dinner with their bare hands. The implication is that you don't know anything because you didn't live through the depression and the war and you've never had to suffer.

Madeleine has two windows over a bakery. I crossed the street to get a look at them. They were draped in red. The lights within showed around the edges of the cloth, illuminating its deep colour. In one place, the drapery was pulled aside, revealing this: a corner joining two walls and a ceiling, and the top left segment of an open doorway, beyond which was a darkened hallway. There was no sign of life in the room. Streetcars came and went, and I began to shiver. I cross-

ed back over and, finding her door unlocked, stepped into a narrow vestibule at the bottom of some stairs. Light was coming from above. I climbed the stairs to the top where I found a landing and two closed doors. One of the doors was hers, but I had no way of knowing which. Coming down again, I studied the mailboxes hanging on the wall. One belonged to M. Fripp and M. Forsythe and the other to P.F. Olikovsky.

#### *26 November*

This morning when I left for work, instead of getting the streetcar right outside, I walked down to Madeleine's. It took me only a minute to slip inside and rifle her mailbox, freshly packed with the morning delivery. I knew it would be easy and it was. Madeleine, of course, was not up at that hour, and I had a line ready in case I ran into any neighbours. But who would think that I, a small female in glasses and a brown coat, would be capable of stealing mail? Anyway, it wasn't stealing since I'm going to put it back tomorrow.

My plunder concealed in my purse, I waited out the day at work, only once taking a peek at my hidden booty. It was a bank statement. A bank statement! My lucky day!

I steamed it open over the kettle while Ed was in the toilet — a bit risky, but I was too impatient to wait for a better moment — and sneaked it to the little desk in the bedroom that is my personal corner of our apartment.

The secrets a bank statement can reveal. I now know at what building she does her banking. This gives me a triangular sketch of her life: her apartment, her place of employment, her bank. A beginning. Here's what else I found out: her bank balance is twenty-six dollars and ninety-three cents; her cheques are baby blue, and on them she writes with blue ballpoint or black or red felt pen; her signature is roundish and legible; she bought two hundred and eighty-nine dollars worth of goods at Walker's a week ago last Wednesday; her rent is two hundred and forty-five dollars a month.

I received these crumbs gratefully and meditated upon them at length before storing them away in memory. Then I resealed the envelope with glue and rubbed out the carbon fingerprints. I confess to feeling a pang of regret putting the thing back into my purse. How nice it would be to have something of hers to keep.

#### *5 December*

Well, I've got it. It's what I wanted and I have it. He wasn't at all surprised when I asked him for it — just named his price. He could have got a lot more, but I wasn't going to argue. He made me feel very humiliated.

In the early evening, before he starts work, he sits at the lunch counter in the drugstore next door to the theatre. I go in sometimes to buy gum and cigarettes, and if I'm early enough, I see him there eating his dinner. They all go in there — the people from the theatre. The strippers go in wearing their costumes with coats pulled over. They get coffee to go and cigarettes and magazines and chocolate bars and cokes. I've stared at them the times I've seen them in there. Shari Lee came in once, and Pearl, the black stripper, came in. They look remarkable up close like that, lit by the glaring fluorescents. Pearl had silver glitter glued to her eyelids, and her lips and cheeks were painted cherry red. Her hands were laden with rings and her wrists with bracelets, all jangling and clanking. Shari Lee's earrings dangled elaborately, inches from my face, and the way she smelled, and the heat coming from her flesh. Everybody in the drugstore stared at them standing at the cash on three-inch heels, glittering and jangling and clinking and exuding, snapping gum, pulling fistfuls of bills out of leather wallets and plucking change out of little velvet purses with their long fingernails that clack together.

I went in about six o'clock, and he was sitting by himself eating liver and onions. He's just a wispy guy, colourless, of no account, so I didn't care at all what he thought of me, and that made it easier. I walked over and sat down beside him at the lunch counter. It didn't seem an odd thing to sit right beside him since the place was pretty full. I admit I was nervous about broaching my subject, but I had thought this thing through and knew what I was going to say.

"Excuse me."

His face turned to me, a blank.

"You're Larry, aren't you?" I began. "I've seen you in the Met." My head jerked in the direction of the theatre next door. He just kept staring at me with no expression whatever. I continued: "There's something I want, and I thought you might, ah, be willing to get it for me. Of course I'll be glad to pay you if that's what's ah, what's ah, done." (I stammered terribly.)

"I never done business with a girl before," he remarked coldly, turning back to his meal.

My face flamed, but I pressed on. I told him what I wanted. First he just kept eating, but finally he gave me a price. Relieved, I handed him the money, which he promptly stuffed into his pocket. I hesitated then — him having my money and me having nothing at all, but there was nothing to be done. I got up and left. I went home.

Next evening I found him in the same seat eating a Spanish omelet. I sat down and ordered coffee. He seemed bent on ignoring me, and after waiting with faultless patience for some time, I tipped my face at him and said:

"So?"

Not right away, but after enough time to remind me that he was

the man with something I wanted, and I was the girl with nothing but a fancy craving, he reached inside his windbreaker and produced a brown paper bag, all rumped and squashed down, and put in on the counter between us. My heart thumped and a big rope knotted in my chest as I extended my fingers to grasp hold of it. I had a dread that he had got the wrong thing, worst of all, something belonging to one of the others. I transferred the bag to my lap and looked inside. My heart's desire lay in a heap at the bottom.

I would have liked to thank him, but he wouldn't look at me, just kept eating and staring at the air in front of him. Made me feel like some kind of worm.

But I have it, which is what matters now. It lies as I write (this bit of sewn cloth that has belonged to her, that she has touched, worn and kept by her) in a drawer of my little desk, still concealed in its rumped bag. I imagine the bag to have come from the theatre, carrying therefore in its molecules something of her world, and thus acting as a shield to its precious contents. I would sooner die than toss my treasure bare among the horrible objects in my drawer — pencils, paperclips, dirty rubbers, ballpoint pens.

I have already once removed the glove from its container, permitted myself to cradle it in my hands, sniff its perfume, admire its scuffed little fingertips (it's the right-hand one I asked for), drink in its rich red hue. This glove of hers has soothed me in private moments, made me feel close to her, helped me to bide my time.

## 22 December

Madeleine has been getting a lot of calls since the party. Everybody was impressed by the way she went straight for her mark (and got it), and by her looks. Goodbye to the days when I shared her with a few perverts. Everybody wants her now.

"Beautiful," they say in wonderment. "And clever! Have you heard she plays violin? And did you see how she went straight for her mark (and got it)?" Heads tilt in contemplation of the rare constellation of attributes that is hers, and her phone rings and rings. (I hear Bill Selby went over to see if he could seduce her and she threw him out.)

My Eddy is one of her callers. (I put the idea in his head.) They went out drinking together, Ed and Madeleine ("Why don't you take her out for a drink?") Ed won't make the mistake of trying to get her into the sack. Madeleine saying she doesn't care for men makes most men want her more. "She just hasn't tried the right man," they say, full of themselves, wanting her so bad. Some of them even try the friendship ruse — put her off her guard. It has been known to work, though afterward, when she tells them it was no good, they cry on her shoulder. But Ed isn't going to try anything like that. Ed is not

naive about sexual matters. Ed will always take a woman on her own terms.

There are certain truths about this drinking duo: it's brawny, pretty, and it favours women. Eddy wordlessly perceives this and adapts. He aids and abets his date in capturing the rapture of a secretary called Helen MacDonald, becoming the first male to share a successful sexual experience with Madeleine.

Madeleine drank like a son of a bitch all evening, Ed tells me, and was nervier than ever. Eddy has never seen anything like it. He says Madeleine is the kind of drunk who would put a lampshade on her head if there was one available. She drank whiskey till she started running out of money and then switched to draft. Sitting at a table near Ed's and M's were five secretaries from Wilson and Wilson Advertising. One of them, Helen MacDonald, kept walking by to play the jukebox. So Madeleine gets a pen from the bartender and scratches a message on a piece of napkin, and next time Helen MacDonald walks by, Madeleine grabs her wrist and presses the napkin into her hand. Helen MacDonald is surprised but not alarmed. When she gets back to her seat, she unfolds the scrap of paper and reads the message. She doesn't show it to the other secretaries, though they never stop begging to see it.

Helen MacDonald now keeps staring at Madeleine and Eddy from across the room, and they keep staring at her. Finally, she comes over. She's trying hard to walk straight, and the effort makes her look comical. She's come to the bar straight from work with the other secretaries and they've been drinking for hours. By speaking slowly she manages almost perfect diction. She has a charming Scottish accent.

"I'm Helen MacDonald," she says, offering her hand to each in turn. She places her palm on their table and leans into it and keeps having to toss her hair back from her face. She has wavy dark hair and glasses and a mole beside her mouth and is wearing a beige skirt-and-sweater set and high heels. Her clothes are kind of rumpiled; her stocking has a run.

"I wouldn't have come over but you look like nice people. You oughtn't to go flattering a girl that way." She looks from one to the other, not sure which of them wrote the note. "Mind you, you're not the first to say so, but I've no doubt the resemblance is just superficial. I've the same build, of course — a wee bit stocky and really stacked, excuse the vulgarity. I'm not bragging you know, I really prefer an altogether different kind of look. Take that skinny blonde, what's her name, it's just slipped my mind. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't knock what I do have. I mean what you do have is what you do have, isn't it?"

She beams them a radiant smile, her opening speech concluded. Madeleine and Eddy exchange a glance, and Eddy stands to offer

Helen a chair.

Now these two lechers disguised as attractive young people go to work on her. Her vanity is large and accessible. Flattery is found to be extremely effective. H.M. lays a crisp twenty on the table, and Madeleine quietly switches back to whiskey. That ambulant bump in Helen MacDonald's sweater is Madeleine's hand progressing across the damp netherarm terrain to put a squeeze on one of those colossal hills. Time passes. The secretaries leave following a failed attempt to seduce their cohort from the clutches of depravity. "They were lovely people," Helen would insist to her workmates next morning when she arrived at the office with a rash on her neck. "They took me straight home when the bar closed." This statement would be sufficiently suggestive for the hour. At lunchtime she would elaborate just enough that by four o'clock there would be not a single doubt from Reception to Market Research that she was no provincial miss.

Shall we have you at your very best, Miss Macdonald? Step into the bedroom now and come out as you really are.

Emerging from that room, she stops and stands, front full to Eddy's camera. Her cigarette, held daintily aloft, is a stub, about to singe the fingers that straddle it. She also bears a small glass containing what I know to be whiskey. She smiles, looking like a good-natured celebrity indiscreetly sans habiliment at a cocktail party. Clack goes Eddy's camera.

She strolls across the living room and bends in two to butt her smoke in the ashtray on the floor. Her tail shoots into the air and segments of straining muscle and tendon protrude all down the backs of her legs. Her feet stand primly together, but her posture is not prim. That disreputable organ, the lascivious mons, is tastelessly framed by a diamond-shaped aperture where the thighs fail to close. Clack clack goes Eddy's camera.

All of the pictures show Miss MacDonald magnificently bared in her living room. She is the only one of the trio to have bared herself. On arriving home, she is said to have decided that there was no longer a need for pretense, modesty, humility, etc., her lone desire being for adulation of her unexpurgated self, whose loveliness her companions have not failed to perceive. (H.M. has been likened before tonight to a youthful version of the American star who bears the name of the British queen.)

Just a little nakedness, nothing more sinful than that. Nothing more than a few drinks and a few photos. Only a merry waltz to the edge of decency, three childlike shudders of horror and a quick retreat. No, depravity has not feasted here. These are funloving souls. So says Ed.

So says Ed. But I wonder. She paid for their liquor and transportation with her crisp twenties and also offered her considerable

boobs, her amplitudinous bottom and her pudendum meritorious into their employ where they were sentenced to hard labour as playthings by those two amorous incompatibles in need of some things to which both could relate, that they might commune with one another. In return, Helen received titillation and a reputation (aforementioned). As both were things she prized, she was satisfied, they say, but I wonder.

## EDITORIAL

### Letter to a Female Impersonator

Some of you believe the perversion  
has to do with us

We watch you  
in gross disproportion  
as a salve a purge  
You are an abuser/you mock the further abused  
the sad cycle goes on, wheels enmeshed  
from hetero to homo  
sometimes no difference but the bodies

We wear many visible masks  
when we haven't begun on the invisible ones  
You bind yourself behind facades  
of iron face set granite  
or mannequin masquerader

Others see a mirror overtop the stage  
the show is called self-delusion  
S & M in bold display

Somewhere between the half torn glance  
we'll see your real self emerge  
reflected in a shard of glass  
strewn on some forgotten floor

*Pamela Godfree*

## PHOTOGRAPHS COHEN HITZEROTH

LYNN COHEN'S silver prints, (black and white photographs), are made with a large-format camera. Contact prints are made from 8" x 10" negatives. Her subjects are unpeopled public areas.

CONNIE HITZEROTH paints in oil on photographic colour prints to make images of domestic plants and animals that seem to float in space. The finished works are large and brilliantly coloured.

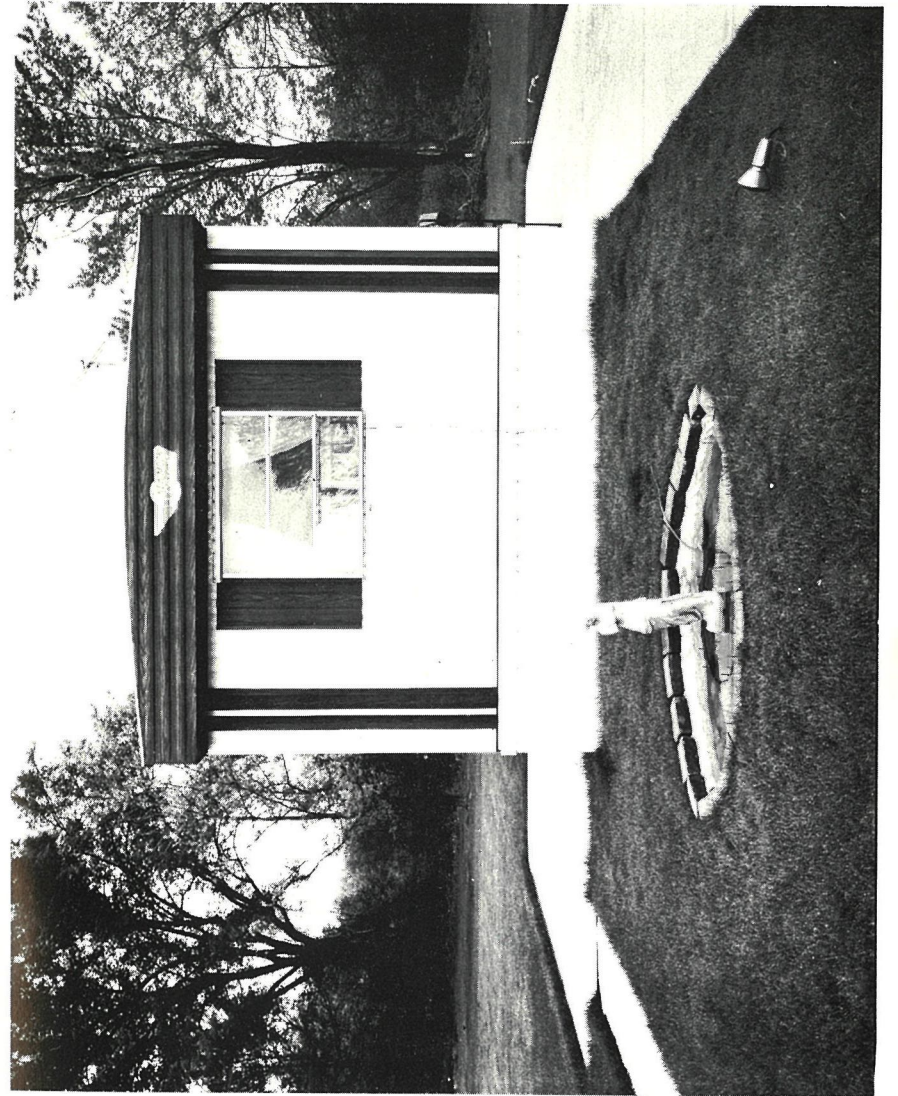


*Shriners, Charleston, W. Virginia.*

Lynne Cohen

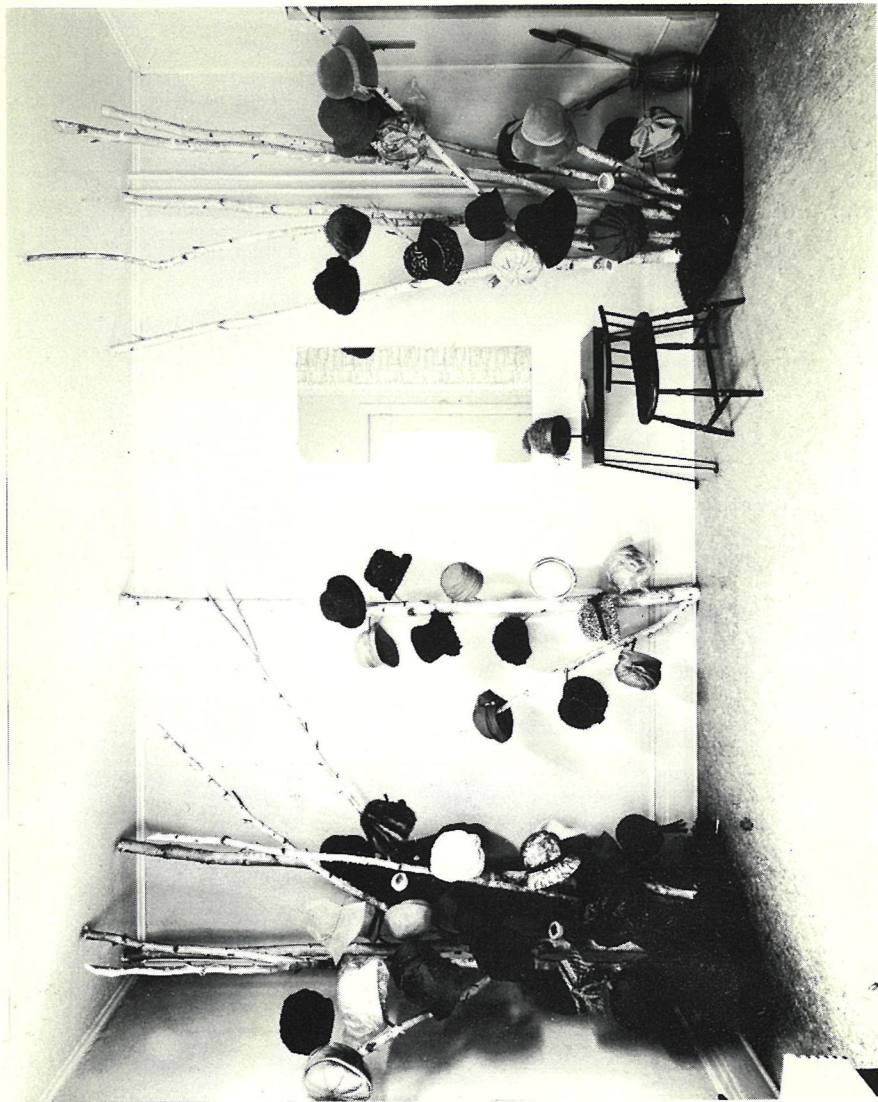


*Living Room in a Model Home, Birchtree Condominium, Ottawa.*  
Lynne Cohen



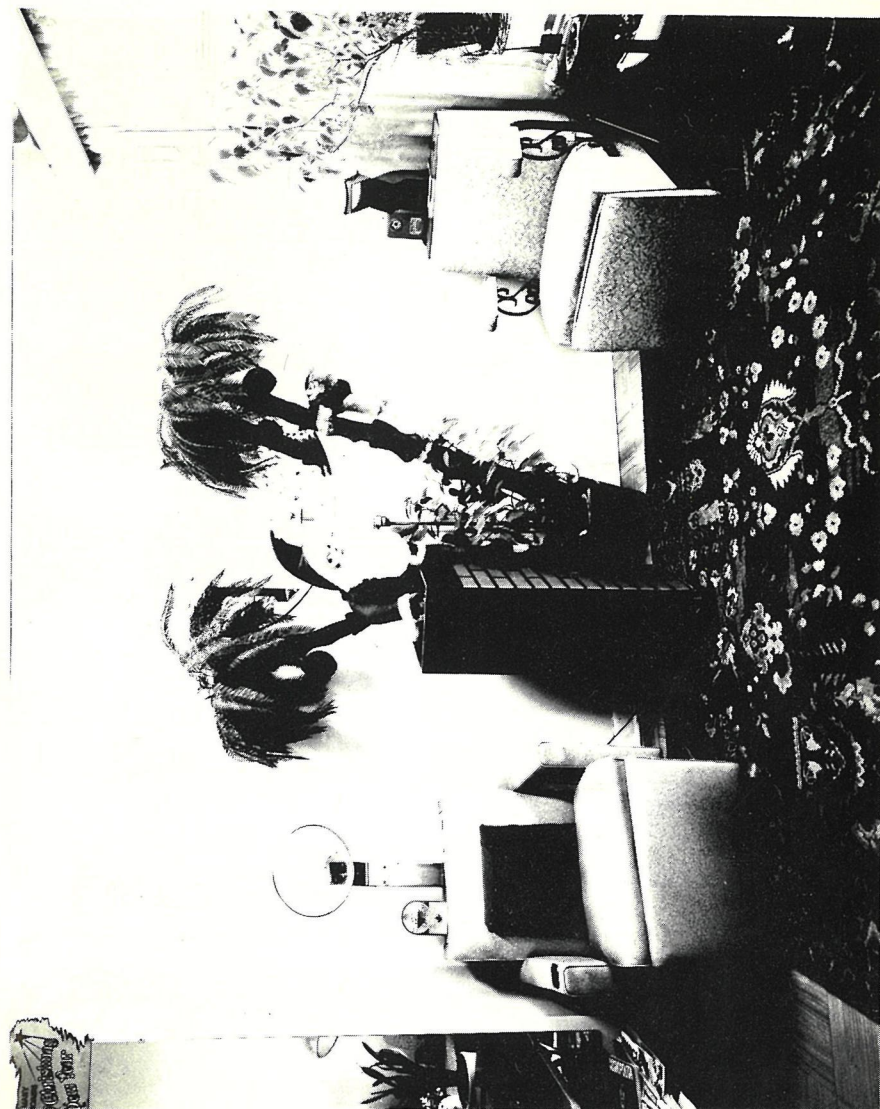
*Mobile Home Park, Ypsilanti, Michigan.*

Lynne Cohen



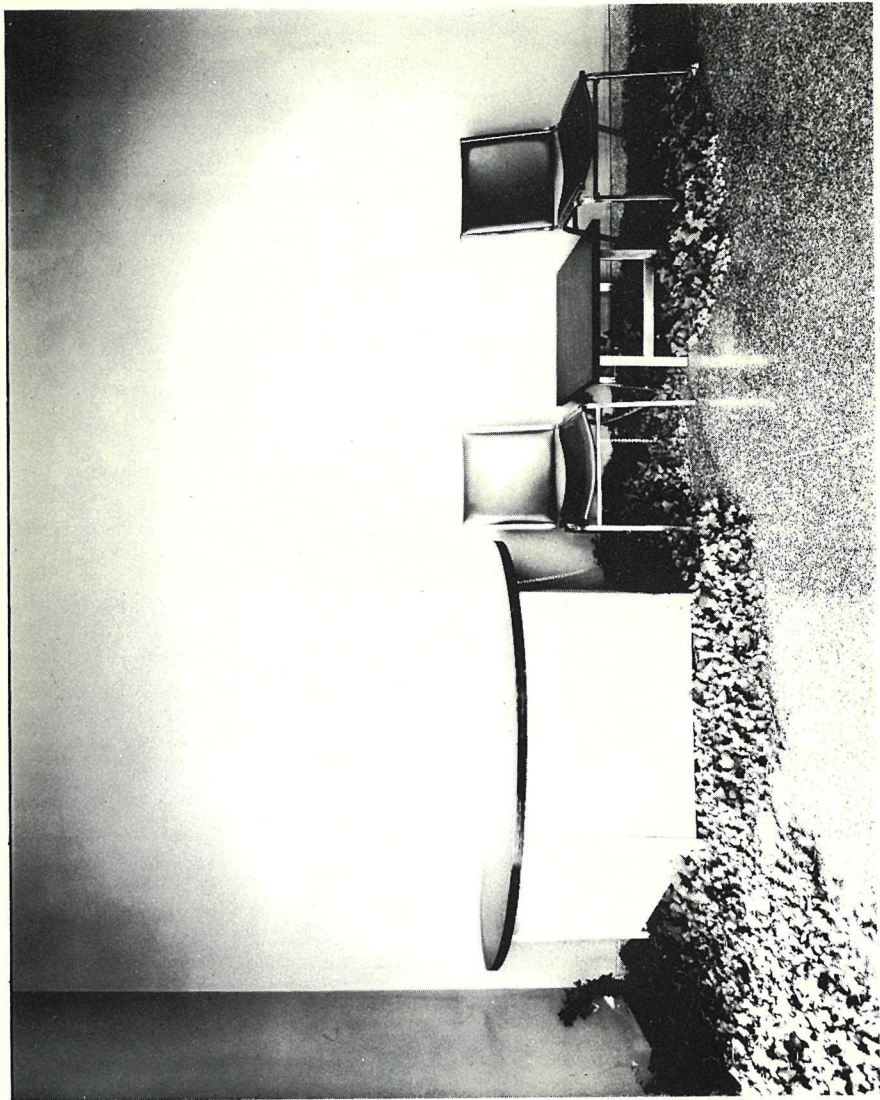
*Hat Trees in a Hatstore, Hull, P.Q.*

Lynne Cohen



*Beauty Salon at Christmas, Ottawa.*

Lynne Cohen

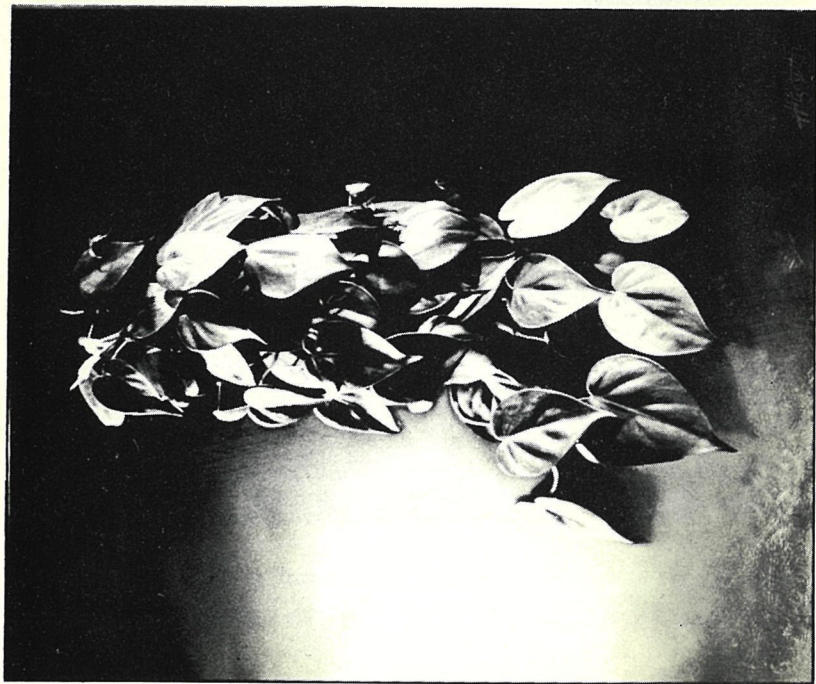
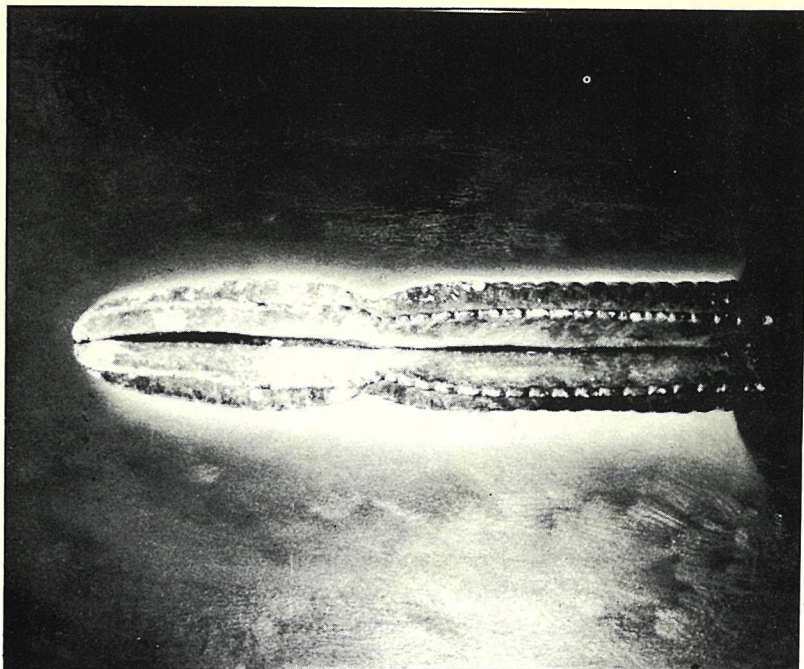


*Lobby in a Textile Factory, Toronto.*

Lynne Cohen



Connie Hitzeroth



## Divorce Poems

Anna Jean Mallinson

I

I thought I had performed  
 all the rites, exorcisms, I threw  
 my wedding ring into the sea, I burnt  
 my bridal rose, shredded the poem  
 you enclosed, I can't go through  
 all the books you gave me and erase  
 your signature from the flyleaf, I said  
 your name backwards, walking  
 three times round our double bed.  
 Then why do you, familiar, revenant,  
 keep recurring, broken record, needle  
 in the grooves of my coiled  
 brain. Shall I smash  
 all the mirrors that reflected  
 your face, slash all the dresses  
 I wore for you, rename our children,  
 dye my hair black? When will it  
 be finished? When, in dreams, will you  
 stop coming back?

II

Fifteen apparitions have I  
 seen and the strangest was  
 my husband pushing  
 another woman's grocery  
 cart. My husband is  
 a transplanted flower, he  
 dug himself up, it took  
 all winter, so many  
 roots in the way, He  
 wilted a while, people said  
 It won't take, but he's  
 putting forth new leaves. Besides  
 I've filled in the hole he  
 left with whatever I had  
 around, I flung everything  
 in, it was deep but not  
 bottomless. Still there's



a mound there, like a grave  
or a scabbed wound on the  
earth but next spring I'll  
cover it with  
periwinkles.

III

As the distance from Rome increased  
the emperor's image on coins changed, until  
at the obscure edges of empire,  
in remote provinces, where the imperium  
ended, the face had dissolved into  
arabesques, no longer a symmetry  
of eyes, nose, mouth, but a mnemonic  
doodle, a rumour of power, the lines  
of command so thin they had almost  
snapped: like an incantation  
passed from child to child  
in a whispered game, the words  
at the end a distorted echo  
of the words at the beginning.

So now I can scarcely conjure up  
your face, slant eyes, thin mouth,  
high forehead, hairline; you dis-  
solve, float away, like an image  
drawn on the dark with a sparkler.  
I didn't consult the oracles, I  
thought the emperor's seal, your face  
on mine, would wear forever. But  
now Rome is a rumour, the city  
has already fallen, barbarians  
press your face into earth,  
obliterate it. And I draw it  
over and over, my memory fading,  
turning you into curliques,  
ornamental motifs, and my face,  
no longer wearing the masks  
you imprinted, turns into  
someone, a stranger, my  
unfamiliar self.

# SOAPS

*The following conversation took place at Harriet Rosenberg's house. Harriet teaches Women's Studies; Freda Forman runs a Women's Resource centre, and Joss Maclennan is an editor of Fireweed. Not the typical soap opera viewers, you might think but, as Freda says, "we're neither more nor less typical than any other watchers."*

*Soaps are becoming popularized through mainstream media coverage of the "Meet Luke and Laura" variety. People are introduced to "Bright Day-Time Stars" on T.V. talk shows and in People magazine. At a supermarket opening where a popular soap actor made a guest appearance, women screamed "rape me Luke." We read astonishing statistics on how many millions of people watched a wedding on a particular soap opera.*

*Despite the excessive media attention, very little critical analysis is presented. How many people know that there are quotas for "ethnic characters" on the soaps? Are soaps a passivifier for the house-bound woman? How does "only a housewife" feel watching programs that depict women as having professional well-paid jobs and a family? There exists an undertone of "how can people watch that crap?" in talk show hosts' (or those a slight step up in cultural prestige) commentaries on soap operas.*

*The discussion that follows is between three self-confessed soap opera addicts who compared their experiences of watching soaps.*

*Joss:* I started watching soaps because I was working at home, freelancing as an illustrator. Ninety per cent of it is mechanically sitting at my desk for hours, playing around with little bits of paper. I live with somebody who works nine to five; he would come home and I would talk, talk, talk; he wouldn't want to because he had been talking all day — a classic case of housewife's syndrome. So I started watching the soaps. I found that I could go downstairs, turn down the sound to answer the phone, miss a day — none of that mattered. I realized why my mother watched soaps; she could vacuum, or go out of the room and still pick it up. If you watch every ten minutes you can get all the information you need.

*Freda:* I started watching when my first child was born. I was nursing and had to find some activity which I could do while sitting and rocking. I was forever nursing, so I began watching soaps. I didn't watch them unhappily. There were certain daytime programs, like the game shows, that I would not watch under any circumstances. Soap operas were not something I did reluctantly or begrudgingly.

*Joss:* Or even ironically?

*Freda:* Yes and no. Ironic was for the public. My own pure feelings were that I looked forward to them. I was quite pleased sitting there nursing a child and watching soap operas. I had a friend in a similar situation — we began to analyze them. Right after a show we would call each other up. We had a theory that they were written from Aristotelian concepts of tragedies — that gave us an extra kick.

My son just turned nineteen, so I can date it. There were interruptions over the years, but you can pick it up — there's still a connection.

*Joss:* There would be the same characters.

*Freda:* For a while I was flighty and went from one to another — but once I established my relationship with *As The World Turns*, nothing else took its place. The central characters, Helen and Chris, the matriarch and patriarch of the family, were young marrieds then.

*Harriet:* I'm thirty-five and I started listening to soap operas on the radio when I was a kid — they came on right after the children's shows at noon. There was just one you could catch before going back to school. I think it was *The Guiding Light*.

*J:* Did they turn into TV shows?

*H:* *The Guiding Light* did. There was a time when they were on both radio and TV. When I got a bit older I was going to Hebrew school after regular school. There was enough time to watch *The Edge of Night* before going. It was a way of coming down from all the tension — I think that's why I have an enormous affection for *The Edge of Night* — I started watching it from the beginning. Then I started watching other soaps. When I was writing my thesis my capacity for watching expanded a lot. It was like eating chocolates — if nothing was going right I'd watch them all day.

*J:* Didn't you feel guilty?

*H:* Sometimes. I used to think it was very neurotic — I didn't admit it to people. Now I have a loyalty to one soap and a keen interest in two others, a platonic relationship.

*J:* I watch almost every day from eleven to five.

*F:* I've seen others, but mainly it's been *As the World Turns*. I feel like a dilettante compared to the two of you.

*H:* Part of the reason you watch is to psyche it out. I try to figure out what is going to happen next — let's say they have one or two murders a year — the evidence always points at one person who couldn't possibly have done it. It's like 'will the case be cracked?' My friend and I used to sit there and try to guess.

*J:* Let's talk about the addiction of it.

*F:* When I wasn't working full time the soaps were an escape. When they were over, I could feel my energy leaking away, my feet getting leaden ... the end had come. I had to rouse myself with all my discipline.

*H:* Maybe it's the time slot. Three to four is a very low point, that hollow period when you've got to get geared into thinking about dinner.

*J:* I'm different in the sense that I work while watching them, they help me work. In fact I don't work on Saturdays because there are no soaps on. I think I have an addictive personality.

*F:* It has a lot of qualities that addictions have for people. Tuesday afternoons I have off. When I get home I know the pleasure, my steps quicken. I can never sit and do nothing. I sew or something, but that's guilt, not boredom.

H: I think I'm addicted to the regularity. Part of it is knowing that when you turn on the tube at three o'clock all the same people will be there — hanging onto a cliff, in a high-speed police chase and having dinner together — it's a real comfort to see that sameness. It gives you a lot and it's so undemanding, unlike the real world.

F: Do you have a chance to discuss the soaps with anyone?

J: I occasionally get a chance to talk with my mother in Vancouver about *The Edge of Night*.

F: But it's not a daily part of your watching. For me it has been. I think if I had to watch it alone I'd never be able to. It's a social experience, there's always someone around with whom I can discuss the characters.

H: So it's a bond.

F: It's fun. It is a bond. I come from a small family — extended families, that kind of world, was closed to me. You can talk about Lisa as if she is somebody in your life. That's supposed to be one of the horrors about soap operas, how awful it is that these people become real and how lonely we are.

H: Why that should be stigmatized is ridiculous. When you read a novel you have that same identity with the characters.

F: Their lives are absorbing in that narrow way in which lives can be absorbing.

H: It's a way of getting deep into a gossipy situation without having any negative side effects. You can really get off on who's sleeping with who and why so and so doesn't know, but if it's happening in your own department it's always a disaster. It's guilt-free gossip and it's a real bonus.

F: I have to say I love watching soaps. The time that I watch is so perfect. I'm more relaxed; it's not passive. There's something about life unfolding in a certain way — there's gratification.

H: It's like reading a Jane Austen novel and you want every nuance.

J: What I love about novels is that they are the working out of a moral idea with real people and that's what the soaps are all about. You have these moral dilemmas — like what you used to say as a kid, "if this friend and that one were drowning, which one would I

save?" Or, if you have to sleep with a drug dealer to save your mother's life, would you do it? That was a real situation on *All My Children*. People are fascinated by the moral choices.

H: I'm reading statistics that say a large part of the audience are men who work a nine-to-five day and leave their workplaces to watch these things. So, it's not just filling a woman's need — it's filling a social need for that kind of depth.



Their lives are absorbing in that narrow way that lives can be absorbing.

F: What I like about *As the World Turns* is precisely the blend of very rich homelife — the central characters around whom the world revolves. You have the home base — the woman's world — the various daughters-in-law who change over the years, but there's a connection to the outside world — the world of hospitals and the world of law. Women's values are externalized; they go beyond the family into the hospital which is run along family lines. So is the legal firm. Even the mining industry now — one of the reasons Chris doesn't want to sell the mines is because of the workers. The world that we really know doesn't exist there.

*J:* One of the things I'd like to mention is that the men always talk about emotions. They talk just like women.

*H:* One of the main hooks about soap operas is that it's the only place where men pay attention to women and to relationships. They're willing to drop their work at a moment's notice for any of these other values. That's completely untrue in the rest of the world.



...it's the only place where men pay attention to women and to relationships...

*F:* When you consider the vast social change that has taken place in North America, there is no recognition in the soaps of a world that has changed.

*H:* There was one where they bowed to a recognition of what's going on in the world. They had a rape case which was very similar to the Rideout case.

*J:* Marital rape?

*H:* Yes. A wife brought charges against her husband. It was handled with a lot of care and concern. And then the writers chickened out, they couldn't end it. So, they had a *real* soap opera — I mean that in the negative sense — ending, a mish-mash that ends in a mistrial on a technicality. They really bombed out on that one.

*F:* The thing I think was interesting in that was the pressure of the father. He pressured her tremendously to sue for rape. His daughter had been violated and clearly it was a trial between the father and the husband over property, rather than a woman independently suing for rape.

*J:* Did you see the rape on *General Hospital*? This young man, a lower-class street kid (from Elm Street) falls in love with a woman and he rapes her. After, she starts to fall in love with him. Now they are lovers on the show. I think part of the reason that happened was that the viewers found this guy to be a more attractive character than her husband (who is about as exciting as Kraft cheese,) and they wanted the romance to develop. Soap operas are the only mass media thing that is very responsive to viewer prejudices and likings; people write and call in and the writers do plot changes to accommodate reader preferences.

Usually there is some reason why a character behaves badly and it's talked about. You come from Elm Street poverty, or you were rich but you had everything but love.

*H:* There seems to be four main focuses: male-female relations, marriage, kinship and relationship to children. The birth of a child can precipitate enormous crises. The identity of the child is absolutely crucial.

*J:* Possession of children. Men seemed to be obsessed with parenting of children; in reality the statistics of abandonment don't back that up.



"Luke" from General Hospital

H: There's always the incessant consuming need to have children. It's a constant theme that women who don't have children are miserable or can't have children.

J: Or they are with a man that is sterile.

H: The raising of a child is absolutely never dealt with. Caregivers appear in the background. Children almost never cry. If the bad girl has a baby and tries to raise it on her own, she can't stand the sound of the child's crying. The good girl can take over the same child and it will never cry.

F: In Oakdale you still have extended families, so there's always some older person who cares about that child. You never see the situation of having no one to turn to except paid babysitters. There's paid help, or magically people appear who will do that. In *As The World Turns*, abortion hasn't been dealt with. Whereas something which is more current, like surrogate motherhood, is being dealt with head on.

J: Bad women think about having abortions. Like Sybil who just got shot on *All My Children*.

H: She's made up to look like everyone's image of a trashy female.



It's a constant theme that women who don't have children are miserable.

J: Can we talk about what constitutes virtue and evil in the soaps? Human love and caring are the most important things. The worst things are the sins of malice, gossiping, backbiting — gossiping is all right if it's truthful, but not malicious gossiping — lying is considered bad.

F: The "good/bad" thing I don't find. They have redeeming features. Even someone like Joyce, a rather dark character who does some really awful things including shooting her lover instead of her husband, remains part of the family. That is a wish-fulfillment that is incredible in *As The World Turns*. No one is ever cast out of Oakdale. It has a class thing as well. There are two characters that are despised (though not excommunicated): John, who came from the lower class and crawled his way into the medical establishment; the other guy (from the upper class, an aristocrat from Europe,) is a real villain.

H: Upper class is always trashy. There's an equation between upper class and criminality; no one seems to be in the upper class without being a crook.

F: He's the embodiment of evil. He murders, deceives, plots — he's malicious.

H: There's a female equivalent to that which is the dithering grande dame who is only concerned with appearances. The thing that's interesting about the women is that the appealing or dynamic women always have this manipulative quality to them. In the real world you can't construct a reality on your own and feel that powerful; whereas Joyce and Iris on *Another World*, they shape events. They withhold the right amount of evidence, they plant just the right amount of seeds of doubt, they leave little envelopes and letters, they lie about this and that.

F: It's mostly the guys (who are lower or working class) that are being integrated into Oakdale society through the women. They come in rather bad shape, poor background; it's quite clear they didn't have the breaks. The women reform them. There's one who specializes in that, Carol, she's done two or three of them now. She has faith; her abiding faith in love does reform them. She's now on her third one. So there's the notion of a woman's love.

J: I think the good values of the soap, the thing that isn't Fritos corn chips about it, is that they put human values above everything, above money, above ambition, above science, above politics. It says love and being loved is the most important thing.

F: They're women's values ... private morality. It's a revolutionary concept in many ways. There's a way in which private values, nurturing values become a desirable norm for the more public world.

H: I think there's an enormous mythology in the way in which the family is conceived of. What the soap does is reinforce that there is no public world. The family is a haven from the heartless world around them. You never see inflation, racism, class bias, intruding. People don't sit up at night and fight because they can't make the mortgage payments.

J: Absolutely not. The only thing is that women's values again go into public life, the politician who lies...

H: I wouldn't call that women's values. I'd call that the stereotype of what women's values are supposed to be.

F: It may be a stereotype but at the same time I think there is a lot of truth to it. Women, by and large, provide for the society we live in. I mean women's social behaviour, interpersonal responsibility — women's responses to being in the world. The model for that in soap operas is more centrally women and it becomes the model for more public behaviour as well. And I think that's a very fascinating concept.

H: But why is that compelling?

F: It's a wish come true. They live in a world where their acts matter to someone. Most of us live in a world where nobody really cares. People do care — you land in the hospital, within minutes people know. One is never alone. There's a world that suspends itself and comes to your aid. They visit in the morning. They have coffee.

H: That's the best convention. It's like the telephone has never been invented. They drop in — the women are all wearing peignoirs in the morning — they're well-coiffed. They're pouring coffee from silver coffee services; somehow fresh rolls appear from nowhere.

J: An orderly world on the surface. There's never mess, clutter, shopping.

H: One other part of it — the glamour fantasy. Here we're feminists and socialists (a couple of us with working-class backgrounds) and I'm totally hooked into what it would be like to be a world famous model.

F: That's small-time glamour.

H: All the sets look like they're from furniture stores. Everything's beautiful. There are no financial problems. In one of the soaps, there's the possibility of leaping into the jet set. Of course, it's always a miserable experience. There is this guilt-free class mobility. Somehow in *The Edge of Night* of late they're all constantly moving into penthouses and having nannies, which has lifted them out of the more domestic drama.



Joss MacLennan

J: I do feel that the advertising is one thing that makes sure the fantasy can't be clean. The sponsors have an enormous voice. Now we've got the Moral Majority that's pressuring TV programmers to clean up sex and violence. And the standard of living that everybody maintains is being used as a carrot to the viewers. The *700 Club* — they're trying to broaden their programming — one of the things they've got is a soap opera. They were showing a forerunner of it. Apparently they've gone out and hired the best people from the soap operas. They've bragged about having *bought* the top professionals in the field. It's very slick.

H: Awww. That'll never go over.

F: What do you think of the possibility of a feminist soap opera? I mean could a soap opera ever be written with social realism as a basis, with some socially progressive factors in it, or does it have to be essentially reactionary?

H: It would be very hard. Unless we see state power as random. They would become preachy and obnoxious. Given the powers that govern the production of soap it would be rare.

J: Would a feminist soap have the same shortcomings?

F: No, it would have style and verve and intelligence and charm.

H: And it would have humour. It would be hard because our lives often feel like feminist soap operas. I can't figure out why I'm addicted to soaps because I really like things that are humorous; soaps are so humorless. Every once in a while you get a little flash of a pun or joke, someone with a little sparkle.

J: The fun is what you are making of them.

H: Yeah, you're sitting there doing a running dialogue.

F: I treat them with a bit of irony, but I'm not ashamed to talk about soap operas. People who ignore them are making a mistake, since this is the art form that was written for women. Women have been watching them for forty, fifty years.

H: To dismiss them is, I think, very foolish.

J: I used to bug my mother, "what are you watching that garbage for? It's rotting your mind." Now we sit and talk about them.

F: I think if soap operas constitute your major artistic experience of the world they may do something to your mind. I don't know, the other art stuff that's around, the movies, they don't hesitate to show somebody being decapitated in slow motion. At least the violence in soaps is off-screen. It's very friendly, a little protective towards the audience.

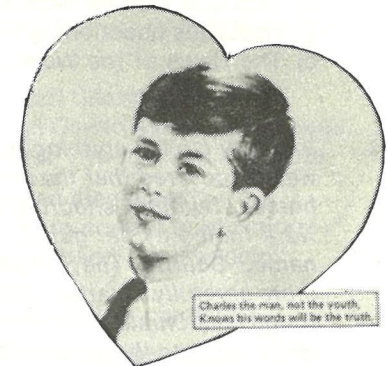
J: I've been made to feel the object of curiosity for watching the soaps. Don't you think that has something to do with the fact that they're written for women? They're about other women's lives...

H: "Oh, Harriet, she watches soaps!"

F: If there were an equivalent male form...

H: There is. Pro football.

# The Charles and Diana Quiz



Test your immunity to months of media saturation with the Charles and Diana-Renewed-Faith-in-Humanity Quiz of the Century: relive that historic moment when Action Man was united with Purity Itself, as one tenth of the entire world gathered together in solemn celebration of romance, tradition, and the missionary position.

**Warning: there is sometimes more than one right answer to a question! Proceed at your own risk!**

1. To which of the following women is Lady Diana related? And how?
  - a) Mary, Queen of Scots
  - b) Barbara Cartland
  - c) Florence Nightingale
  - d) Queen Elizabeth II
2. What are her primary qualifications for the post of Princess of Wales?
  - a) virginity
  - b) royal blood
  - c) passion for blood sports
  - d) typing skills

3. *In Britain, the nation has a place in the bedrooms of the state. Behind the "white mystery of her veil" lies the level gaze of cornflower blue eyes, those of a young innocent, that ideal woman with "a history but no past." How do we know?*
- Prince Charles never got beyond first base
  - The Queen's physicians pronounced her *Virgo Intacta*
  - Scotland Yard subjected every man of her acquaintance to rigorous questioning
  - The News of the World offered her only \$5.00 for her life story.

4. *Virginity isn't everything: there's trouble in paradise since it was discovered that the new Princess of Wales is not fond of horses, hunting, shooting or fishing. The Queen's advisors were fooled by her girlish affection for a pet Shetland pony named Souffle. They should have checked her credentials more carefully. Charles, who longs to share his pleasure in the rough and tumble of the chase with his new wife, may perhaps want to quote this piece of advice to help Diana avoid marital stress:*

"It's up to the wife to make adjustments. Look at me and horse-back riding. Once I was scared to death of horses. I learned to ride only because that was what \_\_\_\_\_ (man's name) was interested in."

Who said these inspiring words?

- Princess Anne
- Marilyn Monroe
- Nancy Reagan
- Elizabeth Taylor



5. *Who is the odd woman out in this aristocratic line-up? And why?*

- Lady Jane Wellesley
- Lady Sarah Spencer
- Princess Marie-Astrid of Luxembourg
- Lady Isobel Barnett

6. *These men were in the news this year. Identify the cause of their notoriety:*

- Lord "Chips" Maclean, Lord Chamberlain
- Sir Peter Hayman, ex-High Commissioner to Canada
- Michael Bogdanov, director, *The Romans in Britain*
  - charged with "procuring an illegal act"
  - implicated in "conspiracy to corrupt public morals"
  - alleged to have master-minded "The Wedding"

7. *What do the following people have in common?*

Barbara Cartland — Queen of Romantic Love  
 Ian Paisley — militant Ulster preacher  
 King Juan Carlos — restored monarch of Spain



8. *In a lightning survey of Britain it was discovered that:*
- 2 out of 3 people believe the cost of the wedding was money well spent
  - 3 out of 4 people feel that the advantages of the monarchy outweigh its cost
  - 1 out of 10 people is unemployed
  - 4 out of 50 million people say "What Wedding?"



9. "Wedding Livens Things up a Bit" was the popular view. Britain being a democracy, some citizens took it upon themselves to disagree, preferring the flames of burning cars and stores to the sparkle in Diana's eyes. Rioting in the depressed areas of Britain continued up to The Day, calling for some fairly astute analysis on the part of politicians, concluding that the riots were caused by:

- The Wedding itself
- naked greed
- loss of parental control
- bad housing and unemployment
- insensitive policing
- mysterious hooded agitators



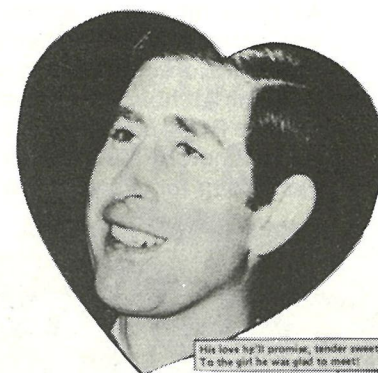
10. The most telling comments came from three well-known women. Who said which?

Barbara Cartland, Margaret Thatcher, Shirley Williams

- "The stated dose has not yet been exceeded"
- "We must get away from class"
- "Nice is not enough"
- "The people want love. They want to believe in love"
- "Femininity is asking yourself all the time what human purpose is being served"

11. Now, several months after the great event, with Royal Engagements across the country trailing a wake of defused bombs, The Princess of Wales is said to be:

- unhappy
- pregnant
- bored
- shooting to kill



## Answers:

Scoring: Give yourself 3 points for every correct answer unless directed otherwise.

- All except Florence Nightingale. a) Foremother. b) Step-grandmother. d) Seventh cousin.
- a) 3. b) 2. Four of her ancestors were mistresses to Stuart Kings.
- b).
- c). In "Seven Rules for a Happy Marriage," *The Star*, September 1981.
- d) Lady Isobel Barnett, a well-known radio personality, was prosecuted for shop lifting goods worth 87p (\$1.95). She committed suicide after the trial. The others have all been romantically linked with Prince Charles.
- a) iii. b) ii. c) i. Sir Peter Hayman was discovered to be a member of the Paedophile Information Exchange, an organization devoted to circulating information to those interested in sex with children. In order to protect his position, his real identity was never mentioned in the trial early this year. One wonders why the same protection was not afforded Lady Isobel Barnett. Michael Bogdanov fell foul of a British version of the Moral Majority, when he directed an explicit scene of homosexual rape in the play *The Romans in Britain*, at the National Theatre. According to Sir Peter Hall, Artistic Director, it was intended as "a precise and inevitable metaphor about the brutality of colonialism." Until the early fifties, it had been part of the Lord Chamberlain's job to censor plays. Now he devotes himself to Royal theatrics.

7. All three refused to attend The Wedding: Barbara Cartland was miffed at getting a bad seat; Ian Paisley was disgusted at the inclusion in a Church of England service of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster; Juan Carlos was furious that the Royal couple were to include Gibraltar on their honeymoon itinerary (it's a British-occupied part of Spain.) *Score an extra point for every reason that you got right.*
8. a), b) and c) are all correct.

# Police face death probe

By FRANK CORLESS


**AN INQUIRY** has been ordered into the death of a man hit by a police van in the Toxteth area of Liverpool.

Disabled David Moore, 22, died in hospital yesterday five hours after he was knocked down as mob violence flared again in the riot-torn district.

9. a). Only curmudgeons see The Wedding itself as a trigger. It seems to have been more successful at deflecting anger than igniting it. All the others were put forward as plausible theories. Naked greed is Mrs. Thatcher's favourite, while Home Secretary William Whitelaw came up with the marvellous diversion of blaming rioters' parents. Insensitive policing refers no doubt to the "hot pursuit" operation in which a disabled youth was killed in Toxteth, victim of a hit-and-run police van charging a crowd of rioters on the eve of The Wedding. Well, it is hard for the English Bobby to keep his proverbial cool when faced with hooded *agents provocateurs*, (with Irish accents) who are running around England dispensing tips on guerilla warfare to unemployed youth.

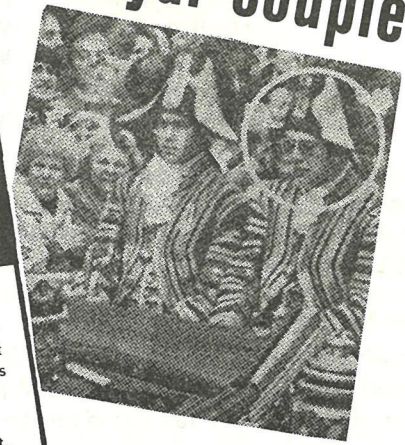
# 'Shotgun' for royal couple

**MUG OF THE YEAR**



Don't bother with official souvenirs get yourself a PROPER CHARLIE. White china loving cup, holds 2 pints and does not fall over. Direct from the artists at £10 + £1.50 p&p.

**LUCK & FLAW**  
Victoria Hall, Victoria Street,  
Cambridge CB1 1JP  
Weekly deliveries



10. a) Margaret Thatcher. b) Shirley Williams (one of the Gang of Four founders of the new breakaway Social Democratic Party.) c) Margaret Thatcher again, referring to Shirley Williams, demonstrating that no matter what your gender, you have to be macho to become P.M. d) Barbara Cartland. e) Shirley again, discussing Thatcher's governess approach to government.
11. She has been rumoured to be all of these things, including overcoming her commoner's squeamishness so far as to have shot a deer. Her chief burden seems to be that she cannot get used to not being allowed to make her own bed.

**Score Analysis:**

- 0 - 50 points:** Congratulations! You have remained relatively unpolluted.
- 50 - 100 points:** Do you ever dream of being kissed by a handsome prince and awakening to a new and better world?
- Over 100 points:** You've either cheated or were in London for the Wedding.

# EDITORIALS

Pop. U. Lar.  
Cult. Ture.

Read: *Theirs*  
What's...  
Where's...  
When's...  
Ours.

And would we know it if we saw it?

**Popular:** For/By/Of The Populace.

That's us. At last count the female class rang in at about...51%,  
53%

## The Numbers Game

"Ever'body in this here town voted — real democratic like — an' we all decided that them black folk, them women folk, an' them thar poor folk, were fair game for the pickin'.

## Crusty but Benign?

**Culture:** As in bacterial growth. Like yeast infections and all other such under-investigated, untreated and generally dismissed *female* disorders.

Overheard at a recent gathering of feminist scholars: "Culture is what you hire a babysitter for."

or

Hire a royal commission (mostly male) to investigate.

or

Appoint juries (mostly male) to assess and fund the winners (mostly male) with **popular** tax dollars.

or

What artistic directors (mostly male) select.

or

What art teachers (mostly male), under the guidance of department chairmen (mostly male) teach art students (mostly female) is legitimate, died-in-the-sack, legitimate and certifiable ART.

## En Français

**Culture:** 1. n. (a) (physical, intellectual development) culture f.

**Physical culture:** culture physique; a woman of no culture; une femme sans aucune aucune culture or completement inculte.

*Robert and Collins*

**Culture?** Ici, c'est bilingue.

Vraiment? Quelle surprise!...selon qui?

**Culture:** What *is*. Is familiar. Like air. Natural.

The air 'round here's polluted.

Point to the clean, pure, whole air.

Would we know it to *see* it? To *feel* it?

## Postscript

Fresh from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women's National Conference on Women and Culture, I know

a) That the best *feminist* article this year (according to *that* venerable organization) was written by a man. (God, we're lucky)

b) That you can lead a herd to water, but if it's polluted why bother.

c) That content and form are neither separate nor separable and as long as we continue to accept, excuse, use, and validate patriarchal, hierarchal forms to house our thoughts whatever hard-won feminist content we may generate will surely have its meaning wrung out of it before it has a chance to reach receptive eyes/ears.

d) That culture is not only product but process ... **who** makes the decisions according to **what** economic necessities within **what** authority structure within whose definitions of Reality. Value. Truth and Aesthetics.

*Rina Fraticelli*



Popular culture. 'Popular' according to Webster's dictionary 'pertains to the common people, is easy to understand, is adapted to the means of the generality of people and is, hence, cheap.' Culture, according to the same source, is "the act of developing by education." Popular culture then, becomes the lowest common denominator, is a form of teaching that reaches everyone in some form or other.

Much of popular culture addresses itself to the issue of love. Many of our readers might stop here and mumble, 'oh no, not that old saw, no more about love.' But that's just the point, isn't it? The old saw, that inundation of material about love has never portrayed it as it really is. Harlequins twist it into possession of women by men, into helpless, unsure heroines lost in exotic settings. Soap operas labour over manipulative females, unrealistic and suffocating family ties, over-concern for others at the expense of the self, all-

consuming relationships to the exclusion of other life-fulfilling activities.

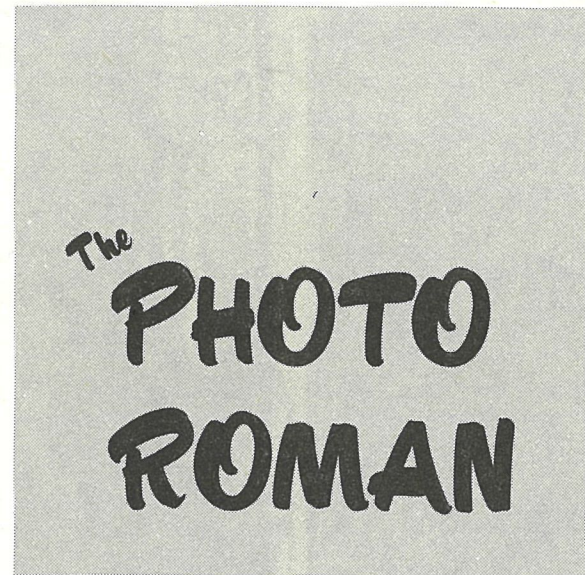
Love is portrayed as the panacea for women's ills, the blotter which soaks up the tears shed from the lack of self-fulfillment, the real out-in-the-world obstacles to development, the lack of self-confidence, the inability to make effective decisions or to even know what the questions are. Witness the lyrics of some popular songs. "You will be mine. You will be mine all mine" or "I am your knight in shining armour and I have come to your emotional rescue" or you might hear lyrics to the effect that 'you think you're flying high but I'll clip your wings, bring you down, you'll walk with me, lady.' Alas, this litany to the creation and maintenance of female dependency and/or manipulation is everywhere. Just listen to the radio, just open a Harlequin or watch a soap opera.

What has not been said in popular culture is that love is a choice. Love need not be something women fall into helplessly. It can be a heart/mind decision, a choice. It is not a total giving-up or giving-over to someone but a positive feeling coming from a position of strength and self-love. We cannot love someone who controls or has power over us. Love has no room for power struggles. A slave cannot love a master. And so, though much of popular culture addresses itself to the issue of love, it does not express what love is — a letting go of the other, an interest in her growth and happiness. It *risks letting go* so that she can learn for herself.

Popular culture fails to tell us we cannot live our lives through others. True, we can listen to others' tales and adventures; we can read their books and eat their gastronomic delights; we can even marry their power (money, status, good looks) but we cannot make their power our own. And, as long as we think we can, we will continue to give others our power to self-determination. It's here we need to feel sympathy for ourselves. We have not, in popular culture, been shown *how* or *why* we need to take our own power.

While popular culture may 'cop' the question and maintain the *status quo*, the answer for us lies in loving ourselves first and foremost. Our power lies not in selflessness, all-givingness or martyrdom but in self-love, self-respect and self-fulfillment in whatever we might be — mother, homemaker, career woman, woman-of-leisure. Self-love begins with accepting and coming to know ourselves, our thoughts, our ideas, our bodies and then moves on to develop what we choose. This doesn't mean that we must now put on our boots and stomp all over other women, men or children. It means that, only as much as we love ourselves in the deepest and most primary sense, can we truly love others. And so, it doesn't matter as much what we choose to do or be but that we begin by engaging in the very act of deciding and acting upon choices that come from within ourselves.

Eddie Hoffman



The photo-roman, a kind of cross between a daytime soap and Mary Worth in still photos, is an immensely popular form in Europe and North America, although it never caught the fancy of the English-speaking audience. Most of them are produced in Italy and translated into Spanish and French. They have a wide and loyal following and their various leading actors are as recognizable and popular as any film star. Although the stories are invariably both sexist and corny, the form has some obvious attractions for the feminist who wants to make a movie but can't afford it. Therefore we offer here the first feminist photo-roman, in hope of encouraging the development of a whole new direction in the genre.

Ann Pearson

Yvonne M. Klein

# BRIGHT VICTORY

or THIS IS NOT A LOVE STORY, EITHER.

a photo roman by

ANN PEARSON  
and YVONNE KLEIN

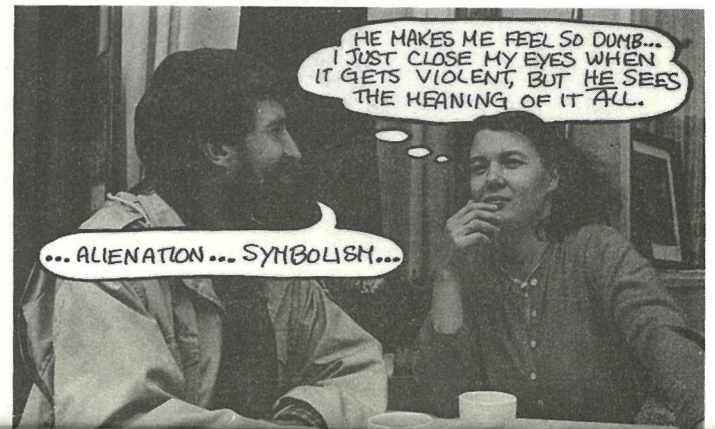


AFTER THE SATURDAY MATINEE....



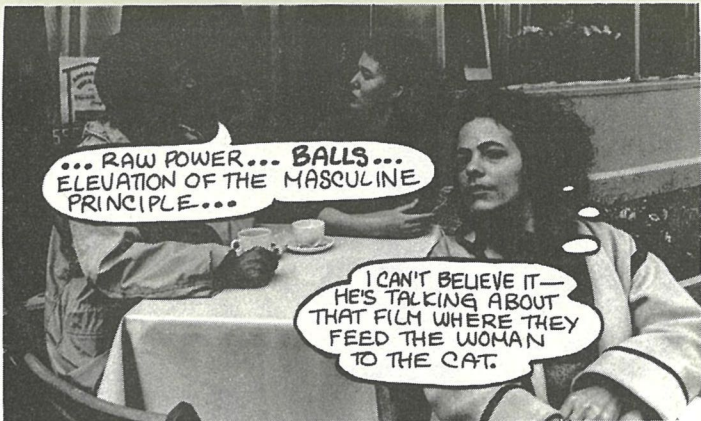
THAT FILM EXPRESSES SO PROFOUNDLY  
MAN'S DEEP ALIENATION, YET IS DEEPLY TOUCHING  
IN THE SIMPLE DEPENDANCY BETWEEN  
"A BOY AND HIS CAT."

JEFF'S SO  
INTELLIGENT.  
NO WONDER HE IS  
THE TOP CRITIC  
AT THE DAILY  
POST.



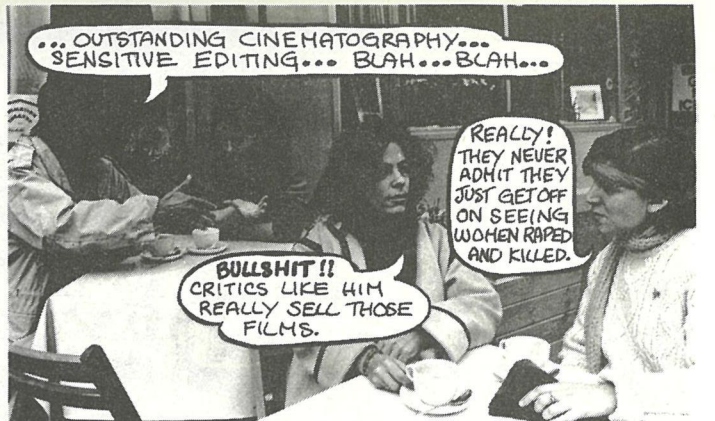
HE MAKES ME FEEL SO DUMB...  
I JUST CLOSE MY EYES WHEN  
IT GETS VIOLENT, BUT HE SEES  
THE MEANING OF IT ALL.

... ALIENATION ... SYMBOLISM ...



... RAW POWER ... BALLS ...  
ELEVATION OF THE MASCULINE  
PRINCIPLE ...

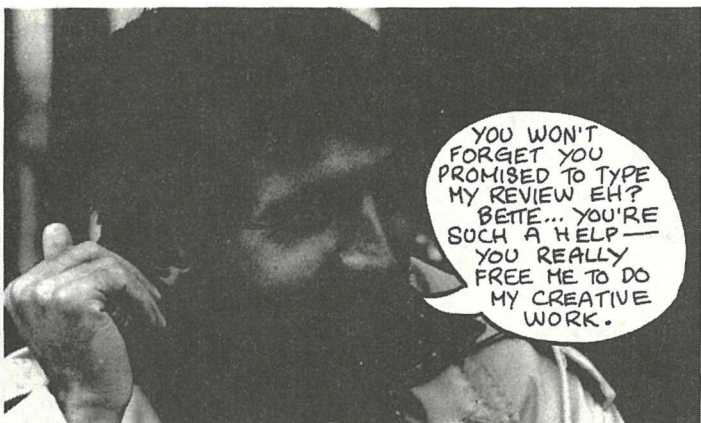
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT—  
HE'S TALKING ABOUT  
THAT FILM WHERE THEY  
FEED THE WOMAN  
TO THE CAT.



... OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY ...  
SENSITIVE EDITING ... BLAH ... BLAH ...

REALLY!  
THEY NEVER  
ADMIT THEY  
JUST GET OFF  
ON SEEING  
WOMEN RAPED  
AND KILLED.

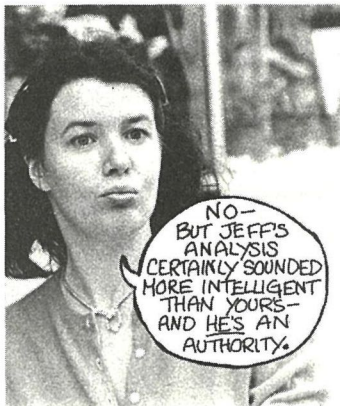
BULLSHIT!!  
CRITICS LIKE HIM  
REALLY SELL THOSE  
FILMS.

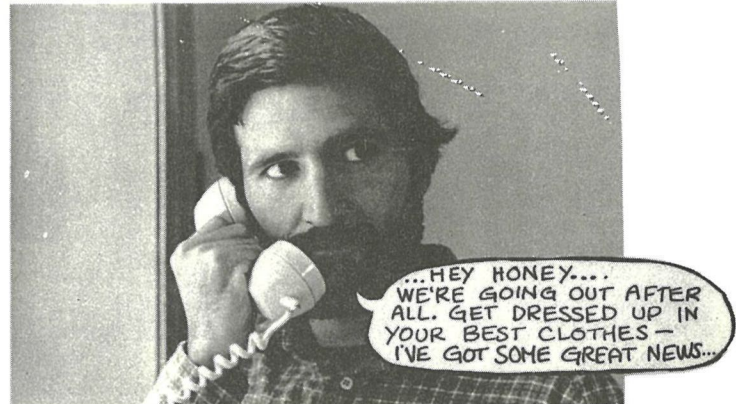
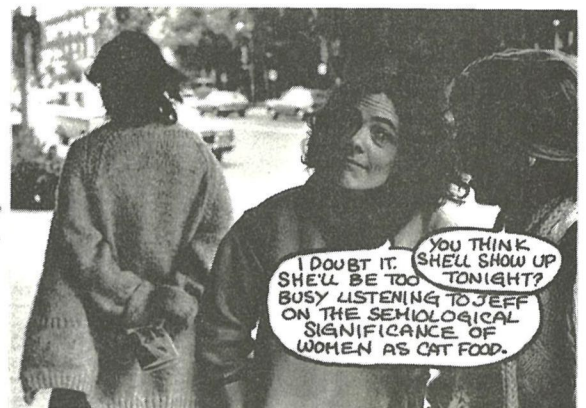
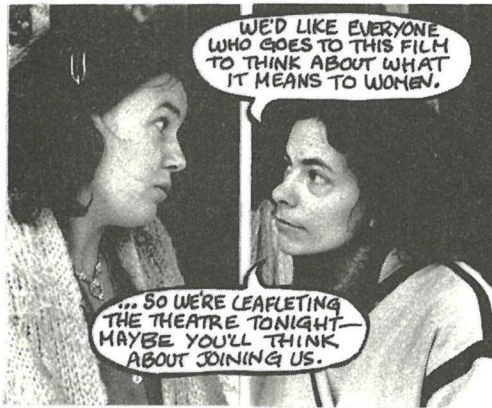
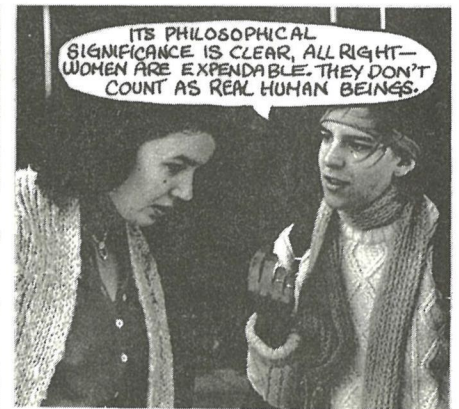
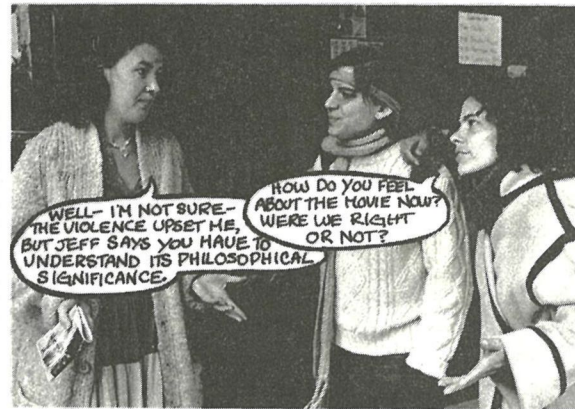


YOU WON'T  
FORGET YOU  
PROMISED TO TYPE  
MY REVIEW EH?  
BETTE... YOU'RE  
SUCH A HELP—  
YOU REALLY  
FREE ME TO DO  
MY CREATIVE  
WORK.



HE'S GORGEOUS!  
I'M SO LUCKY  
HE NEEDS  
MY HELP.







6:00...PICADILLY...



LOOK WHO'S COMING!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!



GREAT TO SEE YOU - WHAT CHANGED YOUR MIND?

WELL... I WASN'T GOING TO COME... BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED...



JEFF'S BUYING INTO THIS PLACE AND TURNING IT INTO A PORNO PALACE. I'M REALLY UPSET!



LOOK! HERE HE COMES NOW, THE LOUSE!

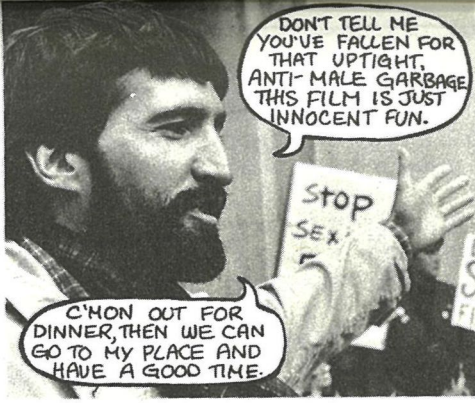
HE'S GOT A NERVE SHOWING UP HERE.

GOOD GRIEF - I HOPE I CAN GO THROUGH WITH IT.



HI HONEY, WHERE ARE YOUR FRIENDS?.... I HOPE THIS ISN'T THE CELEBRATION!

THEY'RE MY FRIENDS ALL RIGHT, AND THIS IS HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOUR MOVIE!



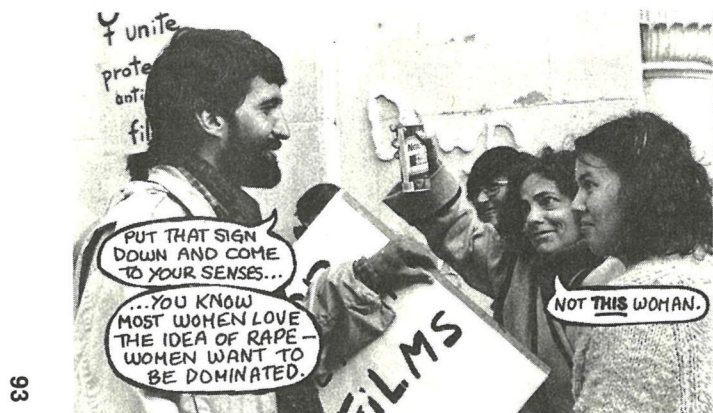
DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FALLEN FOR THAT UPTIGHT, ANTI-MALE GARBAGE THIS FILM IS JUST INNOCENT FUN.

C'HON OUT FOR DINNER, THEN WE CAN GO TO MY PLACE AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.



STOP SEXIST FILMS

IF THIS FILM IS YOUR IDEA OF FUN WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ME OR ANY WOMAN?



PUT THAT SIGN DOWN AND COME TO YOUR SENSES...

...YOU KNOW MOST WOMEN LOVE THE IDEA OF RAPE - WOMEN WANT TO BE DOMINATED.

NOT THIS WOMAN.

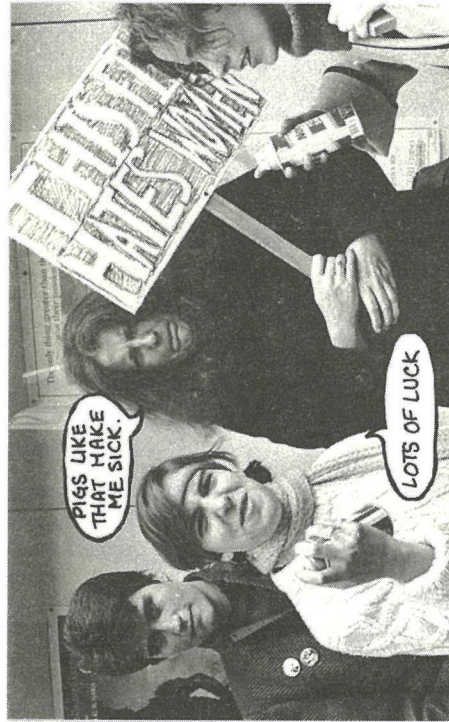


GET OUT OF HERE YOU SEXIST PIG, OR I'LL SHAVE OFF YOUR BEARD... FOR STARTERS.





OK- IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT- I'LL GO FIND MYSELF A REAL WOMAN.



PIGS LIKE THAT MAKE ME SICK.

LOTS OF LUCK



I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

I MAY HAVE LOST JEFF, BUT I'VE GAINED STRENGTH, INDEPENDENCE AND SOLIDARITY WITH MY SISTERS.

YOU WERE MARVELOUS.

Photography... ANN PEARSON  
 Text..... YVONNE KLEIN  
 Graphics..... JANE & JOAN CHURCHILL  
 Script Consultants... RINA FRATICELLI  
 JOANNE GORMLEY  
 PHYLLIS ARONOFF  
 Bette..... JOANNA NASH  
 Jeff..... FRANÇOIS BEAUDRY  
 Jane..... JOANNE GORMLEY  
 Wanda..... RUTH GRANOVSKY

WITH MANY THANKS TO SUPPORTING CAST AND PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS!

# POPULAR WISDOM

Linda Gustaphson

## Dictionary of Quotations 1978.

When the candles are out all women are fair. [Plutarch: *Conjugal Precepts*]  
 Most women have no characters at all. [Alexander Pope: *Moral Essays II*]  
 Like all young men, you greatly exaggerate the difference between one young woman and another. [G. B. Shaw: *Major Barbara III*]  
 For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:  
 But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. [Proverbs  
 My only books  
 Were woman's looks,  
 And folly's all they've taught me.

[Thomas Moore: *The Time I've Lost in Wooing*]  
 Woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands. [Ambrose Bierce: *Epigrams*]  
 Dangerous, terrible women, with whom one's relations were liable to take a serious turn. [Henry James: *Daisy Miller*]

"As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten." St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*, I know the nature of women; they won't when you would; when you won't they long for it all the more. [Terence: *Eunuchus IV.vii.*]  
 Pattenham (1589): "a shrew in the kitchen, a saint in the church, an angel at the board, and an ape in the bed."  
 Women have a great advantage, that they may take up with little things, without disgracing themselves; a man cannot, except with fiddling. [Samuel Johnson: in Boswell's *Life*, April 7, 1778]

13 You sometimes have to answer a woman according to her womanishness, just as you have to answer a fool according to his folly. [G. B. Shaw: *An Unsocial Socialist XVIII*]

In your amours you should prefer old women to young ones. They are so grateful. [Benjamin Franklin: letter to a young man, June 25, 1745]  
 She blended in a like degree  
 The vixen and the devotee.

[J. G. Whittier: *Snow-Bound*]  
 Chanticleer is quoting from a dialogue ascribed to the Emperor Hadrian and Secundus, a philosopher. Hadrian asks "Quid est Mulier?" [What is woman?]  
 "Man's damnation, an insatiable beast, a ceaseless fight, a continual solicitation, the shipwreck of man's virtue, the manacles of the human race (i.e., "the old ball and chain")."  
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,  
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes and saps  
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse  
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.

[Tennyson: *Guinevere*]  
 Wicked women bother one. Good women bore one. That is the only difference between them. [Oscar Wilde: *Lady Windermere's Fan III*]  
 Through all the drama—whether damn'd or not—  
 Love gilds the scene, and women guide the plot.  
 [Richard Brinsley Sheridan: Epilogue to *The Rivals*]

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to His revealed will and approved ordinances; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice. [John Knox: *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*]

Not huffy or stuffy, nor tiny or tall,  
But fluffy, just fluffy, with no brains  
at all.

[A. P. Herbert: *I Like Them Fluffy*]

Womankind more joy discovers  
Making fools, than keeping lovers.

[John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: *On the Coquetry of Women*]

Women are to be talked to as below  
men, and above children. [Lord Chesterfield: *Letters to His Son*, Sept. 20, 1748]

It is said of the horses in the vision,  
that "their power was in their mouths  
and in their tails." What is said of  
horses in the vision, in reality may  
be said of women. [Jonathan Swift:  
*Thoughts on Various Subjects*]

Be to her virtues very kind;

Be to her faults a little blind;

Let all her ways be unconfin'd;

And clap your padlock—on her mind.

[Matthew Prior: *An English Padlock*]

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### Toronto Star August 1981 Edward Shorter's column "What is a real woman?"

Almost all the female Star readers who responded liked the idea of being a real woman. They liked sex roles. They don't want men and women to be alike.

The one theme that came out and hit me on the head was that the real woman was above all, a "lady." If you haven't been next to the women's studies blast furnace for the last 10 years, you probably don't realize to what extent the word lady has become a swear word in university circles. "Shorter wants women to be ladies," sneer the women's movement types around here.

A 17-year-old girl living on

Men hate learned women.

[Tennyson: *The Princess* II]

A woman, a spaniel, and a walnut  
tree,

The more they're beaten the better  
they be.

[Thomas Fuller (1654-1734): *Gnomologia* (1732)]

As the faculty of writing has been chiefly a masculine endowment, the reproach of making the world miserable has been always thrown upon the women. [Samuel Johnson: *The Rambler* No. 18]

Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote. The relative positions to be assumed by man and woman in the working out of our civilization were assigned long ago by a higher intelligence than ours. [Grover Cleveland: in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1905]

the Canadian Forces Base in Lahr, West Germany, says, "I have a friendly piece of advice for all the males out there," she says. "Regardless of what a large majority of us will say, do pamper us."

Tina Shehyn in Lahr says, "My mother is a real woman. Yet there are more women who are into the 'burn your bra' scene. Fools, all of them. Why would a woman want to burn her bra? I wouldn't, I need all the support I can get.

"A real woman has warmth, grace and understanding. She loves and needs to be loved. I would love to be a real woman."

Remember, you heard it first from Tina Shehyn.

### *Pornography. Men Possessing Women* by Andrea Dworkin.

New York: Perigree. Pg. 300.

### *Pornography and Silence* by Susan Griffin.

New York: Harper. Pg. 277.

#### by Thelma McCormack

Once upon a time people believed that pornography was a consequence of sexual repression, that as our Victorian attitudes disappeared, pornography would also. Others thought that the problem was not so much one of attitudes, but ignorance, and when information about human sexuality was available to all, but especially to the young, there would be no need for growing kids to find out the facts of life from "girlie" magazines. No one believes either of those theories today. Enlightened sex education and bourgeois liberalism seem to have created a generation of pornography consumers, young adults whose mental health is sound as a bell and who have come to regard pornography as much a part of their leisure lifestyles as cross-country skiing and wine with meals. A new pseudoscience of sexology, which measures sexual competence by the frequency and duration of male orgasms, has created the myth that pornography is therapeutic. For women too? Well, they say, anything that benefits men will benefit women, since they have the same (his) sexual imagination.

Feminists have challenged this new ethos. Both books discussed here treat pornography as an extreme form of misogyny, a symbolic statement of how women are viewed in a culture made by men for men. Both Dworkin and Griffin analyze pornography literally; no apologies for *Lady Chatterly's Lover* as really a disguised comment on industrial society; no philosophical discourse, cum Simone de Beauvoir, of the Marquis de Sade as the déclassé existentialist. Where literary critics have found metaphors and symbols in the perverse content of pornography, Dworkin and Griffin find that "cunt" means cunt and "rape" means rape. This is true whether the authors have distinguished reputations or are anonymous hack writers. *The Story of 'O'* is subjected to exactly the same kind of analysis and interpretation as *Whip Chick*.

Both writers adopt the current feminist line that pornography is analogous to racism. I can't believe they have examined racist tracts very carefully; if they had they would have discovered a fundamental difference between them. But what Dworkin means is that the liberal conscience which would not tolerate racism on the newsstands is complacent about pornography. (Actually, to judge from the case of a neo-Nazi group marching through Skokie, Illinois, a

predominantly Jewish suburb of Chicago, the liberal mind of the American Civil Liberties Union is equally complacent about racism.) Griffin borrows George Steiner's argument that pornography is a precursor of Nazism.

*And now perhaps we can understand why German propagandists flooded Poland with pornography before the German army invaded that nation. For in the ideology of pornography they had to recognize the same hatred and abandonment of self. Men or women immersed in the pornographic ideology would more easily surrender themselves to authority. (p. 194.)*

The commonly made assertion that pornography contributes to rape — Robin Morgan's statement that "pornography is the theory; rape is the practice" — is de-emphasized in both books, although not totally discarded. Instead, the authors have adopted a more comprehensive and cultural perspective. We live, they say, in a sick society, a woman-hating society. Pornography is the tip of the iceberg; it actively contributes to the perpetuation of the male misogynist mind. "Male sexual power is the substance of culture," Dworkin writes. "The conquering of woman acted out in fucking, her possession, her use as a thing is the scenario endlessly repeated, with or without direct reference to fucking throughout the culture." (p. 23.) Griffin regards pornography as the male creation of culture in opposition to nature. Only nature is free of pornography. But she says, the pornographic delusion projects itself onto nature so that philosophers believe that it is inside nature, and, therefore inevitable.

There the similarity ends. Dworkin is the more political of the two writers, which is both her strength and her weakness. She has a much harder awareness of the self-deception in New Left circles about sex and liberation. But her analysis of pornography remains superficial, and, in the last analysis, *Pornography. Men Possessing Women* is — and maybe was intended to be — the literary version of the travelling slide-show that feminists have been showing to women's groups. Just as in these slide-shows we get a quick succession of images which create an immediate sense of anger and disgust, so here, too, we get a quick retelling of plots which produce the same response.

The feminist slide-shows are supposed to demystify and educate women about hardcore pornography. (There are strong denials by the sponsors of any prurient appeal which makes a lot of the women watching them for the first time feel guilt as well as anger and disgust.) But these slide-shows are like the travelling slide-shows of the pro-lifers, with their pictures of mutilated fetuses. No matter how you feel about abortion, it is almost impossible not to feel

shock and aversion when suddenly confronted with these gruesome photographs. Thus, the pro-lifers achieve their goal, which is not to convert feminists, but to neutralize them. Similarly, the pornography slide-shows do not contribute to a better understanding of pornography, or greater insight into our own sexuality. They may be effective in weaning women away from old middle-class loyalties to a civil libertarian philosophy, but there it ends. And, what we are left with is a protestor, a picketer, not a more enlightened woman.

Susan Griffith's study is not a slide-show, although the plots of myths and books she describes are vividly depicted. She tends to be very digressive. For example, in the midst of an intriguing analysis of Marilyn Munroe, she goes off on a side discussion of how we are all motherless in a society which denies women any identity. There is a lot of amateur psychoanalysis, which some may find interesting and worthwhile. (It is the *amateur* I object to, not the psychoanalyzing.)

Griffin believes that true eros exists only in the state of nature; pornography is non-eros, the contrived false eros of male power which blanks out our memories of the true authentic eros. "One can look at the whole history of civilization," she writes, "as a struggle between the force of eros in our lives and the mind's attempt to forget eros ... Our memory of eros, of the feeling of wholeness, and our idea of love is clouded over by and surrounded with pornographic images." (p. 235).

She makes a good case that pornography is not true eros as women have intuitively known. But the other side of her argument — that true eros is found in nature, outside of culture, is not made. Nor can it be, considering that all definitions of sexuality and its symbolic representations are cultural. There is no "noble savage" no matter how attractive these philosophies and legends are. It is not the return to nature that feminists advocate, but the reconstruction of culture; not in the image of nature, but in a vision of social justice in which culture is a precondition.

What is missing from both of these books — Dworkin's because she gets caught up in the slide-show mentality; Griffin's because she is the captive of some mystique about nature — is a programme for the development of knowledge about female sexuality and the appropriate grammar and vocabulary for it. This is the only point in studying pornography as these authors do; that is, studying it literally. Even then there is the question of whether this approach is adequate, whether we don't also have to examine pornography on a deeper level — as a version of the profane.

Meanwhile, either of these books would make a good introduction to the study of pornography; Dworkin's includes a splendid bibliography. Not much in either of them, however, for scholars or advanced feminists.

## undoubtedly freudian

Jeanne Harrison

all the girls have gone crazy  
and all the crazy girls have gone  
only the mothers are left

regularly the fathers  
go off to the factory  
regularly they return

(this is clockwork

by night the factory stack  
stabs into the sky lit up by large  
lights at the base that shine all the way up to the top

some fathers at the factory  
break in new boots  
some new habits  
some forget

all the girls have gone crazy  
and all the crazy girls have gone and  
only the mothers are left who read in the paper in the shadow  
of the stack

### ON DEATH OF GIRLS AT SMOKESTACKS

...girls are causing great concern especially  
during migration. Migrating girls mistake the  
illuminated smokestacks for the moon and fly  
right into them. Every day we find dead girls  
at the base of the stacks ...

but only the mothers  
bleed

**NO MATTER  
WHAT YOU  
THINK,  
YOU THINK  
WHAT I  
THINK  
YOU THINK**



**Kerri Kwinter**

During the forties, when political and social conditions encouraged women to help run the American economy, films were made and cultural precedents were set about a new, brave and confident professional woman. Hollywood called them "battle of the sexes" pictures or "women's films." Hepburn and Tracy were often cast in the leading roles and George Cukor directed. These films are often regarded as the first and last "good deal" that women got from the movie industry. The female characters and the actresses themselves are often looked back upon as the type of the strong and independent woman. In fact, these films offer the oldest example of all; that of the banished woman.

It's hard to accuse these films of the worst kind of sexism. The women are bright, witty, quick and capable. They triumph. Traits like intuition, emotional motivation and uncompromising desire are given validity, credibility and primary status. And yet, after a viewing, one senses that things haven't changed, they have only deviated temporarily.

Classic examples of the genre are *Adam's Rib*, *Philadelphia Story* and *His Girl Friday*. Each has a determined, intelligent and success-

ful heroine in a lead role who, for most of the film, fights a winning battle (professional, legal or moral), against men. The narrative resolution of each film, in which the women quickly and quietly concede defeat, amounts to a full restoration of the old social-sexual order. The question then, is: Why after a long and deliberate winning battle, does the audience so easily accept a resolution of defeat?

The ending of the story is rarely a surprise. Spectators are somehow forewarned about the ending that they will accept or expect. Contemporary criticism has directed attention to what isn't said in the "telling of a story" — the omitted — as the "truth" that is being imparted. There is, perhaps, an implicit, or implied, narrative that exists between the explicit, or presented, portions of the story. The function of the explicit narrative is to evoke the implicit narrative and thereby to guide the viewers' reading of the story toward something that is never really said. In many cases, these narrative gaps are directed toward, and then filled with, the vague but omnipotent tenets of the story of original sin. The viewer, without ever being told to equate the lead female character with the Eve of Genesis, is repeatedly led to do so by the various texts and sub-texts of the film. Once the association is made, the doubts, suspicions and judgements that are inherent to the myth are also evoked by the story. Finally, the Bible's ambivalent definition of women is implanted in the story. The films' characters are then defined in this way, have the same traits, are potentially as dangerous.

In *Adam's Rib* (which seems to be the prototype of the genre) the allusion to the story of original sin begins with a heavy hand. The movie calls itself *Adam's Rib*. It names its leading male Adam and his wife, Amanda (*A-Man-da*) — substituting the rib metaphor with a letters-of-his-name metaphor. Less overtly, there are layers of subtle determination that are supported and propelled by the story or content. These layers exist below the spoken text but they reinforce it, and they allow the almost illogical resolution of defeat to be accepted.

*Adam's Rib* is about the Law. Adam and Amanda Bonner (Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn) are both rich and successful lawyers. Adam has been appointed prosecution lawyer for a case in which Doris Attinger (Judy Holliday) has been accused of shooting her husband. Adam has dismissed Amanda's assertion that women are judged more harshly than men for committing the same crime. In indignation, Amanda takes the job of defence lawyer. In the rest of the film, the male-female battle develops within, and as a result of, a larger legal battle in court.

The "original" law of Genesis is evoked by Adam's constant and irrational exclamations that «the law is the law,» as if a tautological relationship with itself gives it a divine or *a priori* status that needn't be questioned and must be upheld. The film also elucidates the con-

cept of the power of the Law as it is used or defined by psychoanalysis. This law is contained within language and is therefore inescapable. As language gives an infant possibilities (i.e. meanings, thoughts and desires that can be known, named, communicated and "had") it also hands a child a «pre-existing world of rules»<sup>1</sup> — the Law (of the Father.) The child is «thereby bound into an eternal and collective entity — the community — whose values and prohibitions he (sic) absorbs from its speech.»<sup>2</sup> The film argues that no matter how frivolously we challenge it we cannot escape or trick the Law, because we will be turning it onto itself. No matter which side wins, it will be within the domain of the Law.

Once we have accepted the Law, that is, once we have learned to speak or learned to speak in legal terms, we are susceptible to its rules and force. We bring our inherent fear and reverence for the Law to the film with us. A reverent context is established for the film by depicting the formal, traditional and ritualized austerity of the courtroom. By liking, sympathizing or "identifying" with the protagonist/antagonist lawyers, we are made to further accept the Law. We blindly accept Adam's uncontested loyalty to the Law because a hero's loyalty is noble and dignified and when we are sitting there, vulnerable in the dark, we sometimes let these things pass. Audiences generally submit to the powerful charismatic fascination of a good, unblemished, incorruptible man. It is Amanda's relationship to the law, however, that creates the dilemma.

In a way that Amanda (a woman) has learned and mastered the language and mechanics of the (male) legal world, she has mirrored the child's inauguration from non-speech to speech. By becoming a lawyer she has been susceptible to, accepted and even sworn loyalty to, the "unfair" prejudiced structure that she is trying to challenge. She has to be colonized to fight colonists. Not only is her place within that world questionable, but any triumphs within it end up to be in its favour.

Her client, Doris Attinger, is depicted as a rather stupid, impetuous somnambulist whose greatest problem is being overweight. She has no political or logical sense whatsoever. She doesn't judge herself and judges her husband more harshly for infidelity than for «battin' her around.» She does not really feel the consequences of her deed. The only thing that this prison business means to her is that she can't take her kids to Coney Island like she «promised 'em.» Her crime reads as a pure act, an irreducible genuine outcry. Amanda's wrongdoing differs from Doris' in that it seems a conniving and devious reaction. Doris' is the voice of the uninitiated while Amanda's is that of the initiated but dissenting.

In the prison, where Amanda meets and interviews Doris for the first time, an almost religious gesture is made that symbolizes Doris' entry into this world of language and laws and logic and

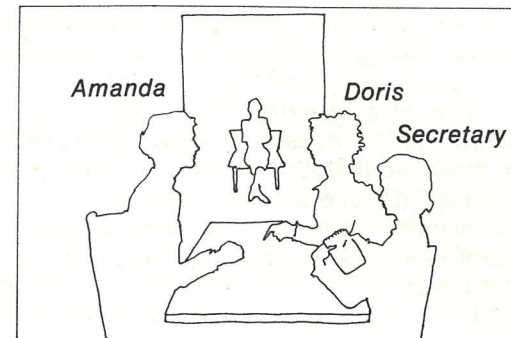
tricks. Amanda is sitting across the table from Doris. Amanda's secretary is sitting beside Doris, also facing Amanda, taking down all of Doris' statements. We, the viewers, are positioned at the end of the table that divides them, closer to Amanda's side. At the other end of the table is an open doorway. Just outside of it, sitting stiffly in the «vanishing point,» is a woman in a uniform.

Amanda is attentive and sympathetic. She is anxious to help Doris see herself as «oppressed» and to see her crime as the consequence of that oppression. She feeds Doris "self-esteem" by helping her define herself as a housewife, mother of three, a worker, member of society and a worthy participant, instead of «nothin', I don't do nothin'.» By giving Doris a definition, voice and reason and by imbuing her act with credible motivation and changing her "nothing" life into a circumstance, adverse condition or stageset she is also forcing Doris into the realm of the Law.

Until now Doris has managed to live within the Law's boundaries, but has had no knowledge or concern for its power. The shooting, her first genuine action against the Law that governed her, bore no regard for the rational or civilized world. When asked to describe the shooting she said, «It was like in a dream.» She has no words for it save the ones she got from the gun manual she has read. When the shooting was over Doris broke down and acted maniacally. Her animal-like noises at the time of the murder read somewhere between elation and horror. She said that when it was all over, instead of any moral sensation, she felt hungry. Her contact with Amanda has made her subject to the Law. Now she must fight it.

Both Amanda and Doris are accused of using the tools of peace as weapons against it. In Amanda's case the tools are the law and logic and in Doris', guns and the law. Both show that they are not only using these tools in defense of themselves and the lawful place that the world has inscribed for them, and is denying them, but that they are also using them in the exact same way that they are sanctioned when used by men. The difference between their tactics is the same as the difference that exists between the use of terrorism and political lobbying. In this case the lobbyists appropriate the terrorists, and by giving the acts *legal* meaning, take the real meaning out of them.

When Doris finally constructs a verbal articulation of her crime, she speaks in the words and uses the gestures of an infant, as if to emphasize the novelty of the activity. As she speaks, Amanda slowly leans over and touches her arm, as if to fix the moment and extract it for later use. She signals to her secretary to get it all down. Amanda has re-constructed and fixed (on paper) the transgression in words that will also be its defense. As in the religious ceremony of the «laying on of hands» the weakened soul is given the spirit, in this case of the Law.



The entire shot is constructed to reinforce this gesture. The motionless woman sitting in the vanishing point is a prison guard or matron. She, like Amanda, has accepted the Law and becomes an enforcer of it. Although she divides Amanda and Doris, all of the lines of vision are drawn to her and what she symbolizes. From her central position she stares, almost points, back at us. At one point, as if to mirror the effects of giving Doris speech and «laying on of hands,» a second matron crosses the doorway from left to right. She appears from behind Amanda's head and disappears behind Doris'. The gesture functions as a subtle, almost poetic transfer.

In this scene Doris is absolved of her guilt in the woman's court. Sort of. The woman choreographed around her have "cured" her. By confessing in the proper terms, she is emptied of her guilt and filled with defence. Because the techniques are practised by women, they allude more to witchcraft than they do to the ecclesiastic tradition. But it is the justified use of the tools of civilization (in this case language and religious ritual) to incorporate the weak or dissociated into its ranks.

Although we do not see it, at some point in this meeting Amanda gives Doris a hat to wear in court. Hats, it seems, are also meant to represent an aspect of this sacrosanct male world that women abuse and use to their own ignoble ends. The hat narrative reveals itself after a few viewings. Its importance as a supporting text culminates in Adam's shocking and absurd outburst in the court.

In the beginning of the film Adam gives Amanda a hat as a peace offering. He has offended her by not taking her seriously. He has ridiculed her for taking an active interest in the injustice of the Attinger case. He calls her cute and puts her down as "causey." By giving her the hat and apologizing for his insulting treatment, he is reinstating her into his respected world of serious people. On one hand that hat says, «I accept you into the hat-bearing circle.» On the other hand it's dripping with flowers (Eden) and plumage (temptation).

Unfortunately the apology comes too late. After the insulting

phone call (in which she also learns that he has been appointed prosecuting attorney,) Amanda goes out to get the job of defense lawyer so that they can fight this one out in the public courts. The first heavy-handed indication that this hat means more than a peace offering is Adam's over-reaction to seeing it on Doris' head. To wear a hat is to comply with the rules of hat-wearing and finally to have aspirations in the world that it has meaning within. Misusing this symbol is a mockery of that order and meaning.

During the summation Adam recounts the numerous contraventions and mockeries of the legal process, including the wearing of hats, that the defence lawyer and her client have perpetrated. He rips the hat off Doris' head and says, «This is mine, thank you very much.» He then submits the bill of sale for it, which he has been carrying around in his pocket, as a piece of evidence. This is a last-ditch attempt to reveal Amanda's wrong-doing or to "demote" her. The camera treats this hat-snatching both as a "rape of the innocent" and as a final revelation, or uncovering of her guilt.

Hats make a final appearance in the resolution-restoration scene. At this point Adam and Amanda have begun to reconstruct their battle-torn relationship. Adam has announced that he, by the way, has been promoted to the District Attorney as Amanda kids — only kids — about getting the competing position. While they are chatting they both put on their hats: hers the garden of Eden number and his of the sensible grey felt variety.

Guns are also used to underline the theme that «the law is, and must continue to be, the domain of man.» In the hands of a woman the power and force of a gun will be used to transgress society's rules. A man, however, will use it to restore those rules, maintain them. Doris used a gun to wound her husband. Amanda argues that under the circumstances it was a justified use. Only we, the audience, see both the crime being committed and the moment of judgement in court. Doris' acquittal produces a confusion or tension in us. We know that she is guilty of a shooting and must be judged or punished for the deed. Although this would have been achieved by a ruling of justifiable harassment or something, the film is very careful not to be moderate. We are left with a feeling of complicity in the crime and complicity in the outwitting of the Law. Instead of being absolved with Doris in the court, we are left guilty and with a gnawing desire for resolution. We therefore welcome and accept Adam's final clever triumph over Amanda because it absolves us.

The triumph scene begins as Adam finds Amanda and a harmlessly infatuated neighbour in an innocent embrace. By now Adam has left Amanda. We don't know where he is staying, what he has been doing, thinking or feeling. Having suffered so much humiliation, including watching his wife as she is flirted with by this half-man musician, we accept this reconstruction of the earlier crime: a

rejected, neglected spouse has come to reap revenge on the forces that threaten him and his happiness. He pulls a gun on Amanda and Kit. In her panic and terror Amanda blurts out that under no circumstances does he have the right to shoot someone. Amanda has come clean at gunpoint. Adam says, «That is just what I wanted to hear sister. *No matter what you think you think, you think what I think.*» He then casually sticks the barrel of the gun in his mouth, as if threatening to commit suicide. He has made his last point. Since he has no wife, or nothing to live for, he can die. As they react to dissuade him, he calmly watches them and bites into the barrel and begins to chew on it. «UM good licorice.» The implication is that Adam is further absolved because he hasn't even had to use a real gun, only the suggestion of it, with no possible threat of its potential violence.

All these illustrations of the ways that women (like Eve) will misuse the tools of peace and civilization for their vain and selfish ends are punctuated by Adam's religious and irrational adherence to the institution of the Law. In his character the suffering of personal humiliation and legal wrong-doing are equated. Because Adam is the unflinching and unerring exponent of the Law — the law of the courts, the law of home — any wrong-doing against him personally is also a blow to what he represents. Amanda's humiliating treatment of him in court then, is our final judgement against her. In the humiliation our sympathies switch to Adam and we begin to view Amanda as he does, as a dangerous but desirable threat. Eve.

Amanda shines in court. She makes good, strong, logical points to illustrate her case. Adam seems to be sailing on the coat-tails of boring old decorum and makes a few gains in the audiences' eyes. To demonstrate that women are equal to men, Amanda invites several examples of female over-achievement to the stand. Her third witness is a strong woman/acrobat. After the witness hurls herself through the air a few times, Amanda asks her to demonstrate her strength by lifting the prosecuting attorney into the air. As Adam rises so does the laughter and outrage in the courtroom.

This entire scene, especially the shot of Adam, footbound and waiving in the air, is shot and designed to humiliate Adam personally, irreconcilably and to outrage the law and decorum generally, beyond reparation. Allowed the emotional and spatial distance of the only extreme long-shot in the film, our sympathies suddenly switch to Adam and his belittled and brutalized pride. Amanda has gone too far. In this single action she has hurled an unfair blow at her lover, legal husband, legal institution that she is part of, and to the notion of human dignity and justice. She has used the very tools that these institutions use to maintain themselves. Because we sympathize with a "victim" we, like Adam, cannot condone the act. She admits her guilt by trying to give Adam a gift later that night at

home. By admitting her guilt she reinforces our judgement against her.

There is a strong similarity in the way that the women characters are depicted. Women are made to look and seem out of place, uncomfortable and unmanageable when they take up and use male paraphernalia.

Adam seems totally at home with a gun although we have no reason to believe that his urban background has trained him to use one. His force, forthwith behaviour and ease with the weapon support the notion that a man and a gun go together like a banana and a peel. Doris, on the other hand, has to read a manual to pull the trigger, acts like the gun is making too much noise when it goes off and is startled to find it in her hand when the shooting is over. Besides, she actually *shoots* it, actually breaks the law with it. Adam doesn't.

Amanda with a lawyer's license is compared to Adam with a lawyer's licence. In court, he just presents his case. His occasional outbursts are anomalous but acceptable. Amanda, on the other hand, defies the unwritten rules, "and goes too far." She introduces elements that the courts don't easily admit: sentimental drama and physicality. De-sexualized, suited men, sitting around, talking logic and truth, are not likely to respond well to the introduction of such base evidence as physical strength to prove a point — especially when the evidence is a huge ugly woman. Physical strength in the courtroom, Amanda in the male-legal world and Doris with a gun are made to seem out of place, unusual, uncomfortable, awkward. The audience is set up to feel "relieved" when these incongruous elements are banished from their unlikely setting.

The secondary texts in the film create a reluctance to accept a triumphant ending. We agree with the sentiment of the women's fight. Our desire for their triumph, though, is superceded by our desire not to be left complicit in their misdeeds. The accumulating tension that we feel about Doris' acquittal and Amanda's unpunished brutality requires some sort of diffusion or compensation, so we can be let off the hook. Adam's triumph over Amanda, which pronounces Doris guilty of the shooting and Amanda guilty of wrongfully defending the crime, is a welcomed resolution, a restoration of order. It cleans up the chaos that the film has created.

The women win the court case with the *explicit* evidence of, and arguments for, equality. They ultimately lose, not only the court case, but the case for equality in general on the *implicit* suggestions of their basic tendency toward treachery, mockery, irreverence and duplicity.

1. R. Wollheim, «The Cabinet of Dr. Lacan», *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXV, No. 2H22, Jan., 1979.

2. *Ibid.*

# OURSTORY

## THE SCOOP ON WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIREWEED

Rhea Tregobov reports

Doesn't **Gillian Robinson** have enough to do already, whiz kid that she is? This gal's not only been *Assistant Editor* at **Fuse** for ages, she's a *top-notch* writer and an all-around feminist with a mean critical mind... Now, everyone knows the Collective had been making seductive offers for months, but who *ever* thought, with her publishing know-how and books that she'd accept? ...No one was more surprised than the old **FIREWEED** gang, who were seen welcoming her shortly afterwards...

Everyone's heard about the *heartbreak* the Collective went through when **Canada Council** refused our grant...we know you fans out there *love* us, because **Canada Council** must have been listening when you wrote to protest the lack of funding ... The *good* news? The **Council** reconsidered, **FIREWEED** submitted a second application — and we got it!... How can we *ever* thank the readers and contributors who wrote on our behalf? ... Somebody *else* up there must love us too, 'cause we're sure She's on our side ... The first time

ever, the Collective has been given a grant to cover *six months* full-time salary!!! Who are our Angels? The gals up at **Secretary of State**...we knew Ottawa had a heart, and we love 'em ... We'd like to set you *right* from the start on that nasty rumour that **FIREWEED** has been evicted from our offices for "unladylike" behaviour!!! The *true* story is...they've decided to move the building *out from under us!*...So it looks like at the end of December we'll be bidding a fond farewell to **280 Bloor West** and who knows what the future holds? (if anyone has a *spare* garage, they can call us at **922-3455**...)yes, fans, **FIREWEED** has a phone ... We know you've all been thinking that there's been a lot of water under the bridge since the last issue of **FIREWEED** ... and that's why we have so many lovely folks to thank for their help with this issue and with so much more ... **Bitsy Bateman** and **Pamela Godfree** for running the Palais Royale fund-raising dance ... **Sheilagh Crandall** for helping with the dance, our accounts and so much more ... **Edie Hoffman** and **Rina Fraticelli** for taking charge of the lawn sale ... **Rina**



for planning and soliciting material for this issue ... **Suzanne Gautreau** for organizing production ... **Daria Stermac**, **Maureen Littlejohn** and **Linda Gustaphson** for helping out with production ... **Women's Press** for lending us their production space ... special thanks to **Gillian Robinson** and **Carolyn Smart** for their heroism in managing the **FIREWEED** Festival ... all

## Contributors' notes

**Susanna Benns** is a writer living in Toronto. **Lynn Cohen** is a photographer who teaches part-time at Ottawa University. **Freda Forman** is the co-ordinator of the Women's Resource Centre at O.I.S.E.. She loves to watch soaps. **Louise Garfield** works in a delicatessen. **Suzanne Gautreau** is an artist working in Toronto as a typesetter. **A.S.A. Harrison** is a writer whose work has also appeared in *Impulse* magazine. **Connie Hitzereth** is a photographer working in mixed media. **Janice Hladki** manages a diner. **Johanna Householder** drives for a bakery. **Yvonne Klein** teaches and writes in Montreal and is a founding member of Newspace at Powerhouse and the Centre for Feminist Culture. **Kerri Kwinter** writes and lives in Toronto. **Kate Lushington**, a theatre director, resides in Toronto in voluntary exile from England. **Anna Jean Mallinson**, a West

the other people who helped us out during the Festival...and to the following generous people who gave from the *pocket* as well as the *heart*; Donna M. Stephenson, Patricia Alton, Marilyn Trew, Lorna Moor-Schueler, L. Padorr, S. Kreisch, Mary Meigs, Jan McMillin, Kandace Kerr, S. Wiitasalo, M.J. Lister, Betty Allen, Joyce Matthews and Helga-Liz Haberfeller.

Vancouver writer, is now working on a series of poems tentatively called *Songs for the Thin Girl*. **Thelma McCormack** teaches in the Department of Sociology at York University and is a member of the *National Action Committee for the Status of Women*. **Joss Macleannan** is a member of the Fireweed Collective. **Janet Patterson** writes and is president of Local 3 of the *Canadian Union of Educational Workers*. **Anne Pearson**, a writer and photographer, works freelance in the film and video industry. She is a member of *Powerhouse* and is a founding member of *Femmes-Media* and the *Centre for Feminist Culture*. **Harriet Rosenberg** teaches Women's Studies at the University of Toronto and started listening to radio soap operas at the age of twelve. **Susan Sturman**, musician/artist, was last seen at the *Cameo Club* practising "a guarded look across the room" and looking appropriately tragic.

## Announcements

Letter to the Editor:

*Recently, the Rape Crisis Centres held their annual regional representatives conference in Winnipeg. These women experienced first hand the Winnipeg Women's Building's crisis. We are facing winter with no heat; we cannot survive without donations to get the heat turned on!*

*The Building has never received much in the way of funding from the government other than short-time summer employment grants. Our only other source of income has been rentals for office space. At present, the building houses Wen-Do, People on Welfare, a free clothing depot, Women in Trades, a women's theatre group, graphic company and the W.W.C.E.C.*

*The Building was purchased in November, 1979. As far as we know, we are the only women-owned and operated building in Canada. We believe the building is necessary and herstorical.*

*So, as you have guessed, we are in desperate need of money. Our heating bill is \$6,000.00. We've held all kinds of fund-raising events, but we can't seem to gather sufficient funds. We're asking for donations of what you can afford (we now have a tax deduction number.) Any assistance will be greatly appreciated.*

*In sisterhood and struggle,*

*Yvette Parr (for Women's Building)*

*Send to: The Women's Building,  
730 Alexander Ave.,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3E 1H9*

## LESBIAN COUNSELORS NETWORK

If you counsel lesbians and are a radical lesbian feminist or separatist, you are invited to join a network of radical lesbian counselors. We will be sharing theory, techniques, case consultation, workshop ideas, and personal survival ideas as they relate to counseling lesbians. For more information contact: Ruth Baetz, Box 242, Rt. 2, Burton, Wa. 98013

*Amazones d'Hier, Lesbiennes d'Aujourd'hui*

*Video for Lesbians Only.* Made by French Canadian Lesbians about themselves. English version is a voice-over of the original French. Available in 3/4 inch or 1/2 inch tape. For further information or rental requests: Vidéo Amazone, c/o Ariane Brunet Boite 429, Succ. Station Victoria Montréal H3Z 2V8 Québec, Canada.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

The Women's Writer's Center of Cazenovia, New York, has received two grants from New York State. The New York State Council on the Arts awarded a grant through its Visiting Artists Program to provide a residency for writer Olga Broumas from October 1981 through May 1982. Ms. Broumas is author of two volumes of poetry: *Beginning With O* (winner of the Yale Series of

Younger Poets competition) and *Soie Sauvage*. As Artist-in-Residence, Ms. Broumas will meet with students and members of the community through courses and readings. Applications are now being accepted for the Spring, 1982 semester which begins January 24, 1982. For information and application write: The Women's Writer's Center, Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, New York 13035, or phone: 315-655-3788.

## TRINITY SQUARE VIDEO

Trinity Square Video is an access centre serving a membership of artists and non-profit community groups. Audio and video production facilities include a studio, viewing area and portable equipment. Other services available are off-air recording, dubbing, technical assistance as well as a regular series of workshops and access to our library. For further information call Meg Thornton at 593-1332 Weekdays between Noon & 6 P.M.

**Trinity Square Video**

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# ***FIREWEED***

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