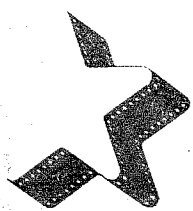




Festival of Festivals: Patricia Charbonneau (L.) and Helen Shaver in Donna Dietch's *Desert Hearts*. (SEE STORY PAGE 8)



FEATURE

FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS:

This year's film festival in Toronto featured many fine offerings from women filmmakers, thanks to programmer Kay Armitage. From *Desert Hearts* to *Broken Mirrors* to *Seduction: Cruel Woman*. Reviewed by Donna Gollan and Susan G. Cole. Page 8.

HOME SAFE HOME?

Violence against women and children, particularly in the home, is endemic and *not* the result of rare behaviour, say Margie Wolfe and Connie Guberman in the introduction to *No Safe Place*, a new Women's Press anthology. Page 5.

OUTSIDE BROADSIDE:

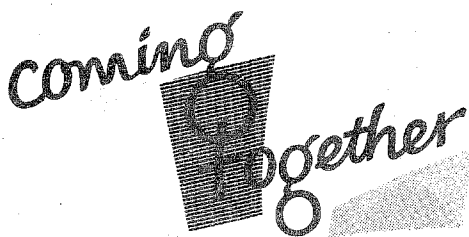
Don't miss this month's calendar of Toronto women's events, for November 1985. Page 15.

INSIDE BROADSIDE

NEWS

COMING TOGETHER:

Women came together in Toronto to discuss sexuality, but talk became difficult as it became clear there are so few words to describe our experience. Ingrid MacDonald reports. Page 3.



MOVEMENT MATTERS:

Read about a documentary on the Eaton's strikers, about a conference on the politics of prostitution and pornography, about a new computer network for women, about a Crimes Against Women tribunal, about family allowance cuts, and about feminist cats. Pages 6 and 7.

RALLY FOR CHOICE:

The Ontario Court of Appeal's ordering a retrial for Dr. Morgentaler is consistent with our justice system's refusal to grant full reproductive freedom to women, said Nikki Colodny at a pro-choice rally several days after the decision. Page 4.

ARTS

MOONTREE MADNESS:

A Hamilton, Ont. community theatre produces *Moontree* by Martha Boesing, about three former wives of one man who live in an asylum. Gay Bell interviews members of the troupe. Page 11.

ART AND POLITICS:

Susan Crean reviews two books on 'activist art,' Lucy Lippard's *Get the Message*, and Judy Loeb's collection *Feminist Collage*. In the art establishment, political art is not considered *real* art. Page 12.

MODERN 'GROUP':

Libby Scheier reviews *Superior Women*, Alice Adams' retake on the Mary McCarthy classic *The Group*. Though not a feminist novel, the book has a feminist subtext, says Scheier. Page 13.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE:

Gabriella Goliger reviews Penney Kome's *Women of Influence*, a look at women in Canadian politics, and the behind-the-scenes work to enhance women's political power. Page 13.

SHE DEVILS:

The Clichettes lip-synch their way to Niagara Falls in 1998, in the guise of alien scientists, in "She Devils of Niagara" playing at Toronto's Factory Theatre. Reviewed by Susan G. Cole. Page 14.



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The *Broadside* Collective does not necessarily share the views contained in any article, even if the byline belongs to a collective member. Views of the Collective are expressed only in editorials, and essays signed by the Collective.

Manuscripts of articles should be typed on white paper, double-spaced (send us original, keep a copy) and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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LETTERS

Notso Entertaining

Broadside:

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on an incident that occurred at the Notso Amazon Softball League annual banquet at the end of September. Following the evening's entertainment, one league member, representing the umpires, performed a theatrical striptease.

The collective would like to apologize to those women who were offended. While two individual collective members were aware that this striptease was going to occur, they chose not to inform or consult in any way the other fifteen members of the collective and we were as unprepared as most women in the audience.

As a collective we do not pass judgement on any form of entertainment. However, we respect each woman's right to choose what forms of entertainment she will see, and we sincerely regret that women attending the banquet were not given that choice.

We do not feel, as do some, that women who objected to the entertainment had the opportunity to get up and leave. Unfortunately, many of us have been socialized into sitting quietly rather than raising our voices in objection.

We were responsible for organizing the banquet and do offer our apology to those women and their guests who were offended. We hope that this in no way detracted from the enjoyment of the softball season as a whole.

The Collective
Notso Amazon Softball League

Breaking Silence

Broadside:

I am writing you from the NGO Forum in Nairobi. There is much wonderful talk going on here— talk of women and development, women in prison, agricultural women, breastfeeding women, trade union women. And a new word has broken loose. Women of various countries found a common concern throughout the world to break the silence about incest after the showing of the new documentary film, *Breaking Silence*. This film, produced and directed by Theresa Tollini of California, is the story told by incest

survivors and by men who have committed incest, of their experiences. Although such a topic has a potential to be thoroughly depressing, this film is not. It leaves us with some hope for the future, as people begin to speak out about their experiences and as services are developed both to prevent incest through education and to aid incest victims.

The women in this film tell us of the years of struggle that it took to reach the point where they could face and discuss what happened in their past. They speak of the deep anger that needs to be resolved and of the self-imposed guilt that, often only through therapy, can they be freed of. The film also shows how mothers, because of their own oppressive marriages and their economic dependency, develop a blind eye and do not admit to themselves what might be happening when their husband is molesting their children. These mothers who will become the source of their children's anger for not stopping the violence, are victims themselves. The man who commits the incest often was himself once a victim— a sexually or physically abused child. The chain continues until it is put to an end when someone speaks out and calls for help.

This film helps us understand the hidden world of incest and realize that something can be done to stop it. As a person who has been molested by my father as a child, I found the film extremely valuable. It has given me strength to speak out about my own experience and a new realization of how that experience still affects me now. The film has shown me that I can help other victims of incest and I have begun by writing this letter to *Broadside* in the hope that some women's groups could bring *Breaking Silence* to Toronto, and to let other incest survivors know that you are not alone.

Sandra
Nairobi, Kenya

Women as Subset

Broadside:

Many women in the creative arts, perhaps most, honestly believe that if they are good enough in their discipline, their talent certainly will be recognized. They may accept the statistics which show that, except in dance, women as a group have always been less successful in a

discipline than men, but somehow they think that in *their* case things will be different.

I used to think this too. Now, having immersed myself for several years in statistics and in case studies about the success of creative women, I no longer think so. I think in general men see artists who happen to be women first as women, and then as artists, even though these artists don't want to be so classified. I believe that unfortunately there is nothing we can do about this; it's just the way things are. It does not necessarily have anything to do with discrimination— it simply means that men seem to see all women as a subset, the way they might see children. A painting is seen as a woman's painting, and a music composition as a woman's composition, not necessarily better or worse than such works by men, but in a different category, to be judged separately.

The impression of men seeing women as a subset is certainly correct, if we are to judge by George Woodcock's new book *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* (1985, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver). It is an overview and history for the past fifty years or so of the arts and culture in Canada. I read it hoping to gain insight into new research on women and the arts carried out largely for the Applebaum-Hébert Review Committee on the arts in Canada in the past seven years. This would be the first book of its type in a position to discuss the art of all Canadians, not just Canadian men.

Alas, Woodcock may have had the data to include women as well as men in his overview, but he chose not to do so. He refers to the artist in general as "he," and ignores all the new information on women. There seem roughly to be about the same number of male and female creative artists in Canada, judging from university enrollments and professional group memberships, yet the book index which lists artists mentioned in the text shows that Woodcock considers ten times as many men as women. While there are citations for artists such as Pierre Berton, Morley Callaghan, Alex Colville, Robertson Davies, Irving Layton, Farley Mowat and Murray Schafer, there are not for Violet Archer, Margaret Atwood, Karen Kain, Alice Munro, Barbara Pentland or Joyce Wieland, arguably among the best artists now working in Canada.

Anne Innis Dagg
Waterloo, Ontario

EDITORIAL

A Mayor for a Change

Feminists tend to feel a little uneasy around election time; we are acutely aware that the machinations of the state often work to co-opt radicals and we have wound up feeling, at best, ambivalent toward government. We insist on (and are grateful for) state funding for our projects and yet we know at the same time that we cannot count on government to make all the political changes we need. In the face of these contradictions, *Broadside* has consistently argued against abandoning the political arena, insisting that women in government might make a difference and urging readers to cast a vote.

This view seems all the more sensible when it comes to civic elections. In the municipal arena, we can address the issues that touch closely on our daily lives: child care, the implementation of health and education policies and the quality of life in our own neighbourhoods. And it seems to us patently obvious that feminists ought to vote when they have the chance to elect Anne Johnston for mayor of Toronto.

It's not simply that she is a woman. We know that gender alone does not necessarily make a progressive mayor. Still, Johnston's personal life experience suggests that she can be mayor and lead the city with her reservoir of compassion and commitment to the issues that matter. She is a single mother of five and has never had difficulty understanding why child care is important. With growing children of her own, she knows the importance of sex education, and was Chairman of the Board of Health when Family Planning/Family Services initiated its controversial policy of distributing contraceptives free to high school students. Her voting record shows consistent

support for increased funding to shelters for assaulted women and for fair housing practices. Her refusal to support extravagant public funding for Toronto's domed stadium has, not surprisingly, been distorted by her opponents, who insist she "opposes" the dome when we know she opposes only the expensive funding package. The other camps portray her as someone (just like a woman) who can't have good clean fun, when in truth, she has wisely questioned the city's priorities and sensed that the city's moneys are desperately needed elsewhere.

She is not a queen bee politico, so anxious to penetrate the preserves of male power, that she has forgotten her own grass roots. Many of us remember her support for women's services, in particular a delightful appearance at a benefit for the Women's Counselling, Education and Referral Centre in 1980. Her ringing support for feminist initiatives to shut down the movie *Snuff* when it came to Toronto convinced many women that there was somebody listening at City Hall. She has never been one to avoid taking difficult stands.

And she can hardly be called a token out to make it on the backs of the women's movement. Johnston has been an alderman for 13 years. She is now Chairman of the Board of Health, of the Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee and of the City Services Committee. Yes, that's right. Johnston does know everything she has to know, from the minutiae of equality policies to the logistics of trash collection.

By returning Johnston at the polls, we are not exactly ousting a paragon of feminism. Mayor Art Eggleton seems to have slept through his

terms of office, and to have arisen only to go to the ball game and to blow with the wind. He appears to be progressive when it is expedient to do so, he tugs on Liberal Party coat-tails when he has to and raises his voice only occasionally, such as when he wants to support the completion of the Spadina Expressway. With such elusive politics, Eggleton indeed defies description. He deserves to be retired from the mayoralty so that he can sleep at home and not at the expense of the voting public.

Anne Johnston, on the other hand, is dynamic, progressive and clear about where she stands. She deserves our support.

Our Mistake

The following paragraph was omitted from Varda Burstyn's article "Considering Context and Content" in the October issue (which discussed her reasons for granting Forum magazine an interview):

"When the million or so people who read *Forum* pick it up, the articles they read are presented with this kind of legitimization. Of those who subscribe or buy the magazine on a regular basis, a full 47.3% are women. It might be useful to know that of the men who read *Forum* regularly, 48 percent are between the ages of 25 and 34— a time when men are getting married and having children, in other words, at a time when responsibility vis a vis women is important. And 39.4 percent of the women who read the publication are between the ages of 18-24, when crucial life decisions, based on self-image and a sense of what options await, are being taken."

Women's Sexuality Conference

So Few Words: So Many Metaphors

by Ingrid MacDonald

I get a call from a friend. She's in the middle of writing an erotic story about a woman. "What's another word for wet?" she has phoned to ask. Dripping, I offer. "I used it already," she says. Okay, how about sopping. "Got that one too." Uh, I falter. "Is that all?" I scan my vocabulary, certain that there must be a million words to say it, but I just can't think of them right now. Can I call you back I ask. I go to the Sexuality Conference, I hear Connie Clement speak. I call her back triumphant with a new word: Englistening. "That's a great one," she says, "Got any more?" More? How many does she want? What are you writing, a story or a dictionary, I ask. "A story, but it needs a lot of words." I see. Can I call you back, I ask.

All the years of women talking sex across the kitchen table with one another, those exhilarating hours of disclosure, confidences and revelation, may well have politicized and eroticized many a woman. But keeping sex talk for the kitchen table alone leaves sex in the private sphere. Moving women's sex talk into the lecture hall "is a very powerful thing," commented Connie Clement, one of the keynote speakers at Coming Together, a women's sexuality conference in Toronto. "The more we can talk openly and publicly about our sexuality, the more we start to define it for ourselves. . . . In speaking, we advance who may desire whom." On that note, women brought their sexual talk to OISE for a weekend of workshops, performances and key notes.

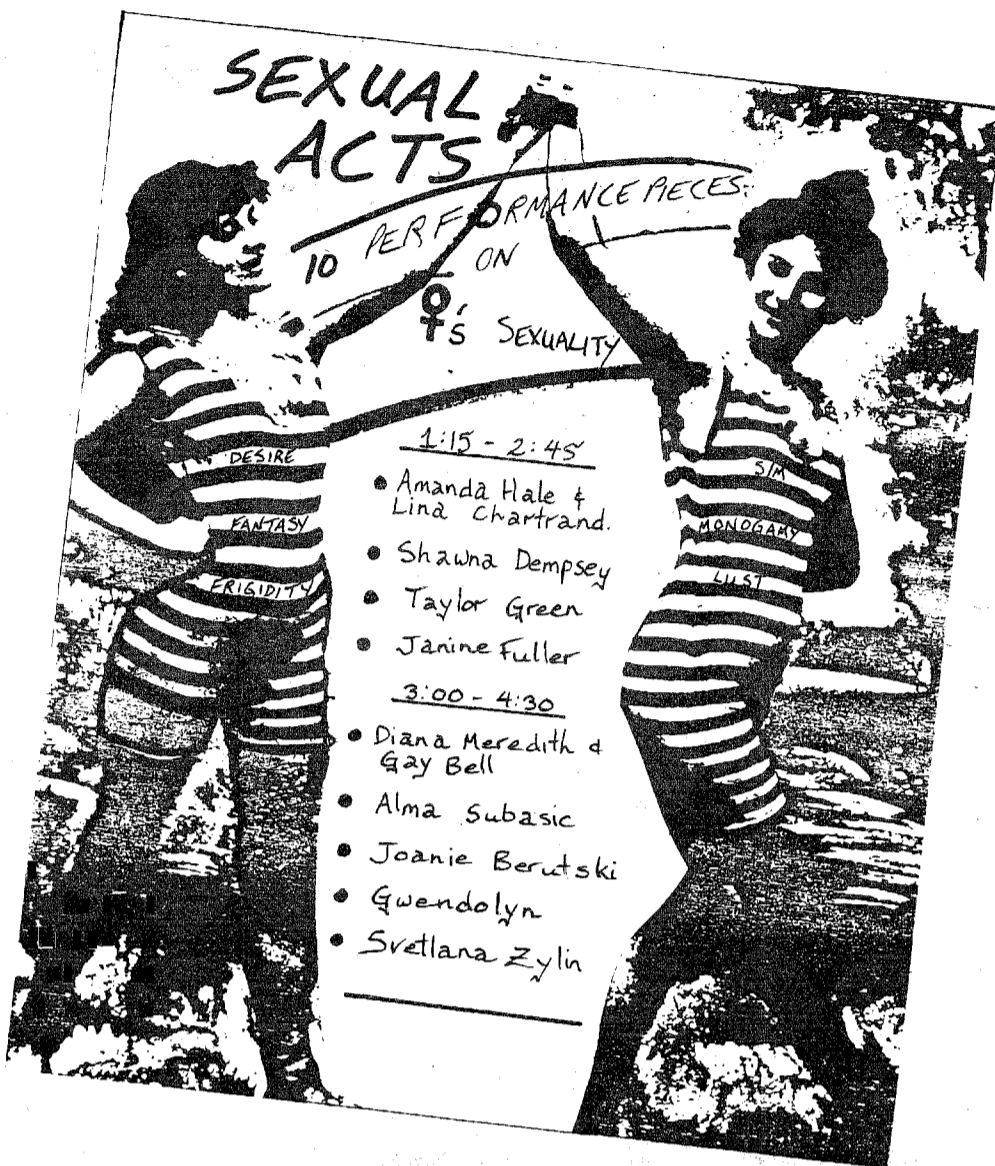
It was not just an event for lesbian women either: conference organizers Maggie Redmonds and Natalie Zlodre wanted to stage an event that would bring all women together sexually, heterosexual, bi-sexual, celibate and lesbian alike, in the hopes that some common ground could be walked on.

Radical feminist Susan Cole had the pleasure of kicking off the conference, delivering her sex talk from a pulpit. Cole spoke of female sexuality as a kind of work in progress. Our eroticism is still under the influence of its original patriarchal context, and yet it is anxious to hasten and enter the post-patriarchal era. To Cole's mind, our present sexuality is being affected by the sexual values of the (I assume she means male heterosexual) pornography industry which makes "racism sexy, makes inequality sexy"; by the widespread appropriation of "domination and submission as a model" for sexual relations; by the statistically high reality of rape and sexual assault against women; and by the "seemingly religious conviction" that all sexual acts have power invested in them.

While apologizing for the unintentionally post-feminist sound of her address title ("Is There Sex After Feminism?"), Cole in fact addressed whether our sex would still be recognizable after patriarchal values have been banished from the bedroom. The task at hand is "how can we make this feel good and be good," this sexuality which affirms equality after having so long accustomed ourselves to the asymmetry of sexual standards which maintain, or even "eloquently express," the status quo.

"People say to me, Susan, what does that mean: eroticizing equality?" Allowing a pause before she answers her own question, Cole declares, "I don't know." A logical enough response, one supposes, when neither equality nor a completed eroticism are at hand. Cole feels it is in the domain of the artists, journalists and performers now. She concluded her thoughts with the imperative that language must accommodate our sexual changes. Cole would begin by exchanging the word power for the word energy when speaking of sexual matters. And she would hang on to both the word and the concept of love as a critical ingredient of the new sexuality.

JoAnn Loulan, the one imported speaker



for the conference, is a spunky California therapist who must have been a stand up comedian in a previous life. If people thought Susan Cole was funny on Friday night (and she was), then Loulan was hysterically funny. In fact, it could be said that she was a little too funny: it became hard to keep track of any theoretical configurations while Loulan was whipping the audience into a froth of laughter. "Oh I see them all the time in my office: the sexual Yes Person and the sexual No Person get it together, yup, the Trans Am and the Virgin Mary get together" (audience: ha, ha, ha), "Either it's Yes to sex, or you should be arrested by the Lesbo Police" (ha, ha, ha), "Pardon me, Ma'am, have you had sex lately? No? Come with me please." (ha, ha, ha.) And so on.

According to Loulan, the big stumbling block in the way of female sexual pleasure is The Little Girl With The Broken Heart; this is her metaphor for the kind of primordial hurt that lurks inside women, a hurt which surfaces like the Loch Ness monster when we make love or take a lover. "Let's get that Little Girl out here. Has her heart been broken 75 times? That's okay, get her out here." It's that Little Girl who chooses our sexual partners for us, apparently, and it's that Little Girl who wakes up six weeks into a relationship and tries to screw up the screwing and sabotage the love. "She's screaming 'I hurt'." Loulan advocates us all doing our own day care, nursing ourselves before expecting our lovers to rescue us from that hurt once and for all.

Although Loulan's approach to sexuality has its merits as a helpful role-playing game for understanding the way we might, as women, relate to our lovers, it is a poor substitute for an actual consideration of our complicated and complex sexual identities or practices. Or, as Mariana Valverde said, not of Loulan in particular but in commenting on the many ways that we speak of sexuality, "People are approaching sexuality from a therapeutic point of view, approaching it tactically, or mechanically, as though they were trying to fix it. There is a real need to think of our sexuality as a theory."

Connie Clement, a long time sexual educator, describes herself as the daughter of a school nurse, someone who grew up "testing the Modess, Tampax, Kotex menstruation pamphlets before they went into the schoolroom. I had a very good understanding of the plumbing." Yet her experience growing up, and as an educator, taught her painfully that sex has to do with intimacy much more than anatomy. In particular, she found teenagers were unable to envision sexuality in

any way other than genital, and that they equated "sexual contact with non-intimacy." "Some teenagers are having good sex lives," said Clement, "but some, many, are not. We have a responsibility to raise our children so that they can begin to learn about sexuality."

Part of the parental inability to talk about sex with their children, especially the girls, stems from the larger linguistic problem of there being so few words available to define female sexuality and female anatomy, that thing which this author calls cunt. Clement quoted a study in which women talking among themselves had either no word at all for it, called it "down there," or, more formally, "the vagina." Clement, in her work at Toronto Family Planning, had tried to advocate the use of positive imagery to accustom women to their cunts: "Think of it as a warm, moist couch, or a soft, desirable fold, and no longer as the vast cavity into which tampons get lost." (While I understand the therapeutic use (positive thinking) of the feminine words soft, moist and warm, I do not think Clement would object if I were to recommend to the adventurous reader a 'burning, clenching couch,' or a 'throbbing, devouring fold'.)

Clement followed with a much needed consideration of the way we limit and appropriate our sexualities through the use of labels. She recommends that we incorporate a continuum model into our thinking when we speak of our sexuality. If sexual acts were to be seen on this sort of continuum, the touch, the kiss, the hold and the fuck could all have their worth redistributed so that they would bear equal relation to each other. The labels that we affix, often for the sake of politics, to our actually amorphous sexual identities could be challenged as serving only to limit us, and to name ourselves inaccurately in some cases. "Identity is not a hard kernel in our hand. It's more like peeling the layers off an onion. There is identity in each layer."

Amanda Hale and Lina Chartrand confronted, in a performance piece, the dilemma of carrying our cultural/patriarchal baggage with us into the bedroom. Hale, in tight jeans and a studded leather armband, poses as a photographer, while Chartrand in a wide brimmed hat and a summer dress poses, coyly, as her model. When Chartrand wants to have her turn behind the camera, Hale relinquishes it only grudgingly. She shuffles moodily to her spot as photographic object. The question of pain comes up, and Chartrand charges Hale in a gossip-like curiosity, "He-e-ey, are you into S/M." Hale uses a microphone to amplify the popping sounds

made by beating her hands on her own chest and head. The two play tug of war with a chain; Hale ravel and unravels herself in its length.

All the while, a video has been appearing, on and off, on a television screen behind them. The tape has on it the talking heads of Hale and Chartrand, each alone, each recalling strange memories or difficult events from childhood and adolescence. Each related event seems to have been a peculiar memory with a premonitory quality, as though foreshadowing the content of their own adult sexuality. Hale describes her fondness for a particularly fierce female relative in a way that is most disquieting. Chartrand offers a remarkable account of learning to read as a child while sitting on her father's lap. She watches his big finger find each word on the page until the finger gets stuck at a word she can not recognize. The stuck word drains the joy from the experience and becomes a crisis for the child, the unknown word haunts her. The eerie quality of all the memories gives one the sense of one's own oddness, of one's displacement from the realm of objects and people.

Later, answering a question from the audience, "How do we turn the television off in our heads?" Hale explained that one doesn't ever, really. "We can get away from it for maybe a couple of hours." Chartrand completed the thought, "It's important to take what is there and own it as ours."

The Hale/Chartrand piece works as a very complex, if at moments frightening, arrangement of sexual metaphors which describe the difficult emotional patterns that we make and break in bed.

Mariana Valverde (whose book *Sex, Power and Pleasure* is being published this year) would describe all attempts to describe sex and sexuality as metaphoric. "Talking about sex is hard because there is no inherent meaning in the sexual acts themselves. Although we might think a certain act has meaning or that a certain act is, for example, considered degrading, that meaning is coming from the constellation of social events around the act. And we can be aware of what an act usually means in our society and then go against the grain of that. When people talk of sexuality, they are talking about a particular metaphor to describe sexuality. What interests me more and more are the conceptual models that people use to talk of sexuality."

The sense of female sexuality that I could garner from the keynotes as a whole, was that our sexuality is still more 'out there' than 'down there.' One went away with an impression of the oratorical skills of the three keynote women—eloquence, jokes, storytelling and wit ran freely and yet I hungered for a taste of something frank or vulgar to be discussed. While allowing that a balance must be struck between turning an audience on and freaking them out, there seemed to be only a cautious entry made into our volatile sexuality. A safe place to talk about sex was created by talking about the kind of sex that has already been declared safe: pornography, bisexuality, coalitions between lesbian, heterosexual and bi-sexual women, pain, raising kids, celibacy. This is not to say that talking sex is suddenly easy in these categories, but that there was the conspicuous absence of a kind of sexuality that may be too close to the street for the tastes of some. There seemed to be a silence around butch/femme, class, safe sex practices, race, leather, S/M and voyeurism. If one were to use the Sexual Acts workshop as an indication, many of these topics are not in the minds of the performing artists in the city. Certainly an eavesdropper at many a kitchen table in this city would find women trying to grapple with the impact of these topics, these difficult realities, on our identities as sexual women, and as feminist women. ●

CHOICE



Decision Overruled: Justice Overturned

by Nikki Colodny

(The following is the main body of a speech by Nikki Colodny given at a Toronto rally several days after the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered a retrial of Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Speakers at the rally represented the broad base of support that exists for legalizing the Morgentaler Clinic, repealing the abortion law, and establishing access to safe, supportive abortions at free-standing clinics. Besides Nikki Colodny of OCAC and Doctors for Choice, speakers included Lynn Kaye, NAC; Caroline Lindberg, CARAL; Cliff Pilkey, OFL president; and Jack Layton, NDP alderman.)

So, do you believe we're here again? Another set of men in expensive, fancy robes have made another decision denying women's right to control our bodies. They've gone further than that. They've said, in essence, that we don't count. How else could someone say that there is no medical emergency concerning access and delivery of abortion services.

"Oh yes," they say, "We see that each week of delay causes a 20% increase in the risks to a woman's health." "Immaterial," they say. The only way that's immaterial, is if what happens to us as women doesn't count. Well we're here to be counted! We're not going to stand by and watch as they try to take our rights away!

I suppose we should not really be surprised: judges have been quite consistent in denying women's reproductive and sexual freedom. A week or so ago in the trial of some of those who harass women at the Morgentaler Clinic, the judge made inflammatory statements that abortion was murder and that he sympathized with the anti-choice fanatics. Another judge recently downplayed the seriousness of rape—because the woman was a dancer in a bar. Other judges send women to jail when they are afraid to testify against violent men.

Those judges and this appeal decision show contempt for women. According to them, the right to be married and have children is rooted

in the Canadian Tradition—but the right to abortion is not. Well, whose tradition? *Not ours.* In our tradition, in the reality of women's lives, no matter how dangerous for us, there have always been abortions, just as there has been contraception, lesbian relationships and birthing options. It is about time that the laws reflect the reality of our lives and our rights.

It is the four juries that have acknowledged the reality of women's rights by continuing to acquit doctors performing safe and supportive abortions in free-standing clinics. It is the representatives of the people, the juries, who have consistently acknowledged where justice lies in this matter.

And it is the courts, the judges, that consistently uphold the so-called majesty of the law, even though that law enacts a monumental injustice to women.

There are further disturbing implications to this decision. It is an attack on the right to trial by a jury of one's peers—a very fundamental right. And it is saying that juries don't have the right to "find for justice." It therefore represents a backward step for all those seeking to use the courts to change unjust laws.

Why does the state and its Courts respond so harshly to the pro-choice movement? What is their strategy? On the one hand, it is defensive—they have to show that people just can not challenge and disrupt the law, that we can't win through direct challenge to the law.

If the pro-choice movement overturns the abortion law, it will set a powerful precedent for other demands of the women's movement and other social movements as well. The government knows very well that this would be a dangerous precedent.

We have to be very wary of small concessions or reforms we are offered. Those are the government's defensive strategies. In the current period the Liberal government may promise—perhaps even partially deliver—better access in hospitals. If they do, we should claim any such improvement. It is because of

the pro-choice movement that *any* improvement is being made. But we should be clear that this is not a victory, because it is not enough!

Any solution that is based solely on hospital abortions is unacceptable. It won't solve the problems of inequitable access. It is often an unresponsive and unsympathetic environment. Therapeutic Abortion Committees are unacceptable because they maintain control over women's reproduction. Even the Canadian Medical Association supports abandoning the Committee system because it is unworkable.

In contrast, clinics can be fast, responsive, and safer. They could become part of woman-controlled health care, clinics offering midwifery, contraception, counselling and a wide range of services including abortion. Clinics could become important institutions in supporting women's control of their reproduction and supporting greater autonomy for women. Which, of course, is a major reason why the government is so opposed to clinics.

More generally, the state's role is to preserve the status quo. Well, the status quo of sexism and heterosexism is not in our interests. The status quo tries to take away our right to control our bodies and our sexuality, won't provide universal daycare, pays us 60% of what men earn for the work we do when we're employed and nothing for all the other work we do.

Using the courts against us is an offensive strategy. It uses up our money, our energy, and our resources. Getting tied up in the legal system can easily demobilize a movement.

So, are we demobilized? You bet we're not. We're fighting mad and we're going to organize, and keep on organizing, until we win the repeal of the abortion law and easy access to safe, medically insured abortions in free-standing clinics.

We have been fighting back and winning. The Morgentaler Clinic has now been open for ten months. Keeping the Clinic open is a

powerful and continuing victory. It is a result of the courage and work of hundreds of escorts, a result of the thousands who are part of the reproductive rights movement. Keeping the Clinic open is a reflection of our strength and our determination!

But now we are at a new stage of the struggle. We must fight back through the courts by raising money to pay for legal fees. And we must fight back by making our movement stronger, wider, bigger and more visible than ever. We must create a balance of forces that the provincial and federal governments and the Supreme Court of Canada cannot ignore. We have a lot to gain and a lot to lose. Many of us saw the anti-choice demonstration in Toronto last month. Yes, there were lots of them. But it's the same number they had two years ago. Their base is small and static. They draw on the same 4% of the population each year. Whereas we keep growing and growing and growing, because we draw on the majority.

The organizing to build the pro-choice movement wider has already begun. We never see abortion rights in isolation from other struggles for reproductive rights. And so we must continue to build links with other reproductive rights movements; like the fight to legalize midwifery.

To defeat the federal law we need more than separate, provincial pro-choice movements. We must solidify our links with reproductive rights activists across English Canada and Québec. Along those lines tribunals are being planned across the country to put the unjust abortion law on trial and to mobilize support for repealing the law.

If each of us does all we can, and we encourage everyone we know to do the same, we will win our struggle to repeal this unjust abortion law.

OCAC is organizing the tribunals and planning a Toronto Tribunal on "Crimes Against Women: Abortion Law on Trial." For information, call (416) 532-8193.

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Home Sweet Home: No Safe Place

(The following article is an excerpt from the introduction to *No Safe Place*, the new *Women's Press* anthology on violence against women and children. Writers whose articles appear in the anthology include Susan G. Cole, Lisa Freedman, Marilyn McLean, Alanna Mitchell, Kamini Maraj Grahame and Mariana Valverde.)

by Margie Wolfe and Connie Guberman

Women and children live in the shadow of terror. Whether it is in the workplace, on the street, or inside the home, the threat of violence stays with us wherever we happen to be. The police advise us to avoid this violence with passivity, and many women do keep indoors after dark, never hitchhike, and dress conservatively in public. Other women have also taken to "streetproofing" our children. Our supposed haven, the home, unfortunately offers us little protection, since most assaults on women and children are by known assailants. If a husband, friend, or relative does not get to us there, a stranger might.

Today, we can document what feminists have suspected for many years - that violence against women and children reflects typical, not rare, behaviour that is consistent with general attitudes. It is far too encompassing to be treated merely as an aberration, the problem of criminals or "sick" individuals. All the evidence we have today points to that fact. Over the last fifteen years, the women's liberation movement has encouraged many thousands of victims to come forward. The number of women and children together with the details of their experiences have generated a body of research that continues to grow daily.

The question which of course comes to mind is why we, the members of society, have permitted such a situation to flourish? Simply put, we have, because such behaviour is consistent with our social value system. When people use force as a method of control, they are usually reflecting the role models of our culture or of their own milieu. Society will remain an unsafe place for women and children as long as there is a hierarchical order which places men on top, women below them, and children on the bottom.

Society has compounded its crime against women by blaming us for male violence. Instead of pointing the finger where it belongs, hundreds of generations have accused women of bringing abuse upon themselves. Women were blamed for arousing their husbands' fury as well as the carnage of strangers. We were never told that this violence was used to get, and keep, us in line. Children have also met with similar experiences. Not so long ago five-year-old girls would be blamed for seducing adult males. Some parents still defend battery of a child as a disciplinary procedure. Rationalizing the use of violence in this way not only absolves the perpetrator for his actions, but also lays the pain and trauma of guilt on the shoulders of the victim.

There are many and varied ways in which violence acts in this way. Rape, child sexual assault, wife and child battery are now readily accepted as forms of violence. Sexual harassment, which involves either verbal or physical abuse, if not necessarily sexual coercion, also conforms with our traditional view of violence. While pornography is not qualitatively the same as rape or physical battery, it is still a form of assault. By embodying the threat of actual violence and legitimizing it, pornography can act as a vehicle of control. Violent/sexist imagery in media and advertising is another form of this non-direct, perhaps more subtle, but not necessarily less-insidious violence. Images such as these, whether in a rock video, in a magazine, or on a billboard reinforce women's terror and men's dominance. As a lingering reminder of the unequal social relations which prevail and the violent reality that always seems to lurk, violent/sexist images can themselves become assaultive, as inhibiting and debilitating in their own way as the threat of actual abuse.

Violence exhibits itself in other forms in our society. Elderly, homeless women living in poverty and those perpetually undernourished children invisible in our midst are no less

victims of violence than are wives who are slapped around by their spouses or children who are sexually attacked. The abuse is different, but not less violent. We commit acts of violence against these women and children when we ignore their misery despite possessing the resources to alleviate it. This reinforces their powerless state. Similar accusations can be directed at industries that, for the sake of profits, provide women with hazardous health products, penal institutions that brutalize instead of rehabilitate, and governments that refuse to upgrade inadequate child-care systems. Accusations can also be levelled at the social institution of heterosexuality which forbids lesbianism for its threat to male dominance and forbids male homosexuality for its threat to the traditional family structure. Together, these examples reflect a much expanded concept of the nature of violence against women and children, one that has not had much play to date. But for anyone envisioning the possibility of a world which is non-exploitive, free of sexism, racism, and inequality it only makes sense to further explore and refine our concept of the ways in which violence does exhibit itself today.

Most of what we already know about the victimization of women and children can be attributed directly to the growth and the efforts of the women's liberation movement. Women's fear, and the violence which generates it, remained hidden, an invisible reality until feminists exposed it. Thousands of years of abuse and pain had been denied simply because we failed to acknowledge it openly. Instead, acts of violence committed against women and children were viewed as non-issues or social taboos not fit for public perusal. Over the last fifteen years, feminists brought these acts into the open, turned them into issues of social significance, and have attempted to destroy the false myths that surround them. This forced the violence firmly into the public arena, so that centuries of experience seemed to burst upon us as if it all

began yesterday. Now, rape has finally become a crime of violence instead of the butt of jokes in locker- and court-rooms alike. The pat on the ass by the employer and a stranger's invitation to "screw" - formerly acceptable components of women's everyday experience - are today clearly identified as sexual harassment. Feminists have catapulted wife battery and child sexual abuse from the invisibility of the private household onto prime-time network television.

As feminists exposed the issue, we also explored the role of violence in the development of cultures, in the relations between men, women, and the members of the family, and in the functioning of industrialized society. We also attempted to situate violence against women (analyses of child sexual assault and battery was begun later) in relation to other issues - economic, social, and political - and discovered, not surprisingly, that all were interconnected. There appeared a schema which linked woman's low economic position with her vulnerability to violence both in the family and the workplace and that, in turn, was connected with her powerlessness in relation to the state and men in general. Essentially, we discovered a social order, created and sustained by hundreds of generations that had institutionalized women's vulnerability and men's dominance in its social structures, laws, and attitudes.

Feminists quickly set out to make some changes. Short-term solutions to violence became a priority. Each moment women and children were being bruised and battered and, not only was no one doing anything about it, no one seemed to acknowledge that anything was wrong. Using our own unpaid labour and whatever resources we could scavenge, feminists began to organize a network of support to service victims of assault. Women-run, women-controlled rape crisis centres, and shelters and transition houses for battered women were initially created out of little more than women's ingenuity, anger, and determi-

nation. At the same time, feminists also formed self-help groups, counselling services, and self-defence classes geared specifically toward the needs of women. Whatever their inadequacies, we had now, for the first time, services which focused solely on dealing supportively with women's experience of violence.

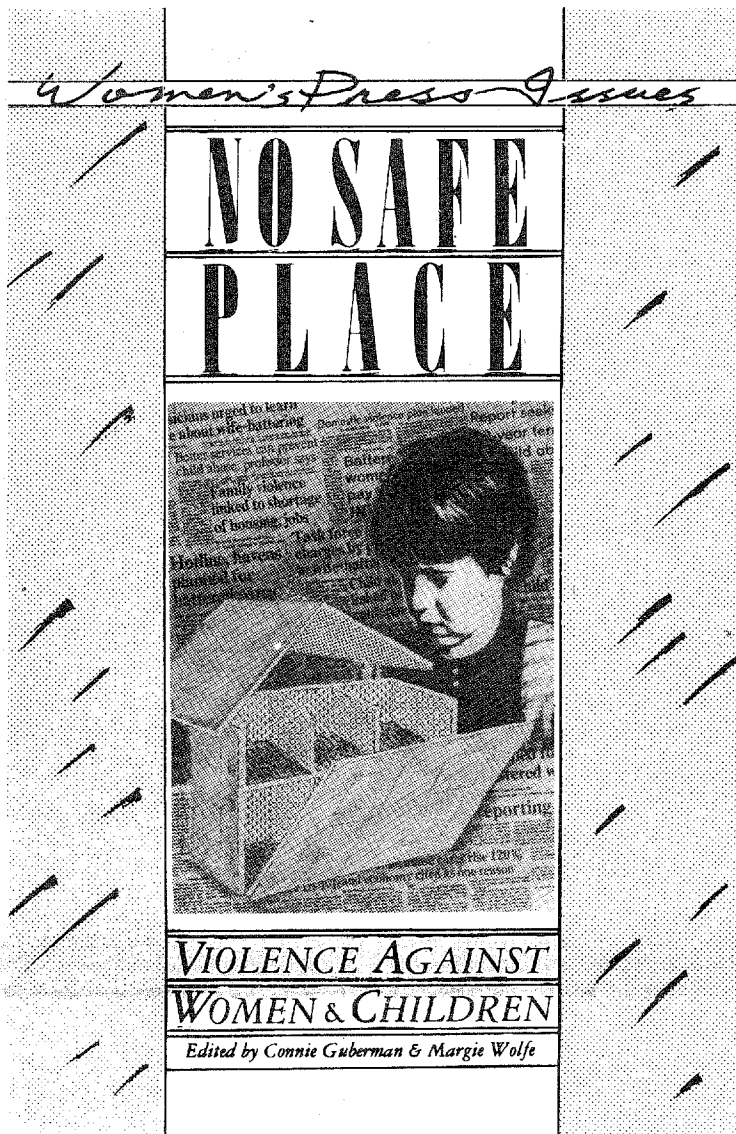
While we struggled to build and maintain these services, feminists also began to educate the public on violence-related issues. Media coverage was sought out, articles and books were written, demonstrations were organized, and forums were planned. Violence against women was finally to become high profile. The short-term goal of the consciousness raising was to garner mass support, enough so that government, the judiciary, and the police would be forced into reforming their policies and procedures on public and private violence as they related to women.

On one level, the strategy worked very successfully. Women's liberation had garnered a world-wide movement; public consciousness was certainly raised. With much reluctance, the state became involved in the business of dealing with violence against women. Over the years, police have formed special rape squads, some laws and procedures were introduced, and all kinds of public inquiries, task forces, and commissions were set in motion. Along with providing financial backing for the feminist-run organizations, the state spawned its own bureaucracy, spanning various levels of government with a budget and personnel all their own. Today, in fact many of the violence-related services rely heavily, if not wholly, on public assistance for survival.

While this situation has caused some concern among feminists, it has for the most part aided the public image of government and policing bodies. With a few dollars, some paper shuffling, new kinds of speeches, and excellent promotion work, they appear humanitarian, open to change, and generally concerned and responsive to the plight of women and children in trouble. What no one, except the feminist community, has seemed to notice is that the state has done nothing which really challenges the social order that produces the violence in the first place. To date, the state has been basically supporting a program of band-aid solutions, but nothing more. Until society focuses on the real causes, we cannot hope to eliminate the problem.

Many feminists have always recognized the need for change that goes beyond mere reforms. The public education mentioned earlier, the continual building of a more powerful women's movement, has been ultimately aimed at bringing about a qualitatively different kind of society. Feminists organizing around violence-related issues have subscribed to this long-term goal from the early days of the movement. We recognized that the reforms were mere stopgaps, however necessary. But the danger today is that the state - whose interest lies in sustaining the status quo, not in radically altering it - has been trying to co-opt our issue. If feminists do lose control, we will be left with a set of reforms that do little more than service perpetrators and victims at best. The values of the society will remain intact with violence against women and children treated merely as an aberration of a humane and healthy social order. Feminists need to guard against too much dependence on the good will of the state. Becoming too enmeshed in their rules and short-term reforms may cost us our long-term goals.

The issues discussed in *No Safe Place* are all linked. Often, when we separate them, discussing pornography in one forum, sexual harassment in another, and rape in yet another, they seem somehow unconnected. Approaching the issues in a piecemeal way tends to minimize the extent and the insidious nature of violence because, really, one form of abuse flourishes because the others do, nurturing and feeding off each other in a manic kind of way. Placing the issues of rape, wife battery, sexual harassment, pornography, child sexual assault and child battery side by side in a single source should highlight their common roots and links and, hopefully, help to point us on a viable course towards alleviating the problem. ●



MOVEMENT MATTERS

Farm Women's Strategies

CHARLOTTETOWN- This month, farm women from across Canada will be meeting in Charlottetown for the Second National Farm Women's Conference, November 21-24. The theme of the conference is "Farm Women Networking for Action."

The intent of this conference is to bring approximately 350 women from across Canada to participate in the discussion of many important farm issues affecting farm women and to develop strategies for influencing decisions. Some issues to be discussed are consumer trends, the special needs of farm women, the current economic crisis in agriculture, stress, family violence, and the need for child care in rural areas.

The organizing committee feels it is important to have a structure in place in order to act on these and other issues on an ongoing basis.

One highlight of the conference will be an address by Laura Heuser. This professional speaker will draw from her own experience with development of the Women for the Support of Agriculture in Michigan and, most recently, with the formation of the coalition of many existing groups and individuals called American-AgriWomen. Laura will provide positive and witty insights based on her experience with national American agricultural organizations.

To obtain more information about the conference, write: Second National Farm Women's Conference, P.O. Box 984, Charlottetown C1A 7M4.

Eaton's Women Organize

TORONTO- By now you've heard about the strike at Eaton's. You've read about it in the paper, seen short clips on the news, or noticed the "Boycott Eaton's" buttons or signs. Well the strike is over and the videotape documentary is ready for its premiere on November 29 at the Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St. Toronto, at 8 pm. The tape was produced by Emma Productions, a feminist media production collective. For six months Emma went out on location collecting footage of rallies, picket lines, meetings and personal accounts of the strikers.

Following the Christmas Boycott of Eaton's there was a groundswell of support from women's groups which made us all realize that the Eaton's strike was a women's strike. By the end of this historic strike, the strikers had gained a new awareness of their position as women in the retail sector and now knew that there was strength and support in the women's community.

"No Small Change: The Story of the Eaton's Strike" celebrates women organizing in the labour force. If you would like more information about the tape please call Emma Productions (416) 537-6207.

Amazon Data Line

TORONTO- Friday, October 18, 1985 saw the inauguration of the Amazon Data Line Ltd, a computer telecommunications network for women. This network aims to link women across the country and around the globe. Women will be able to call up information on subjects ranging from health and travel to the latest legal cases of interest to women. They will also be able to set up personal two-way conversations, tap into conference calls and send out or receive general news about activities by women's groups.

In addition you will be able to send or receive messages/documents at any time of day or night, discuss strategy locally, nationally or internationally, share research/ideas in a small private group or open forum, work out agenda details before the meeting, mobilize for quick action and much more.

All that is needed to link up with this service is a micro-computer with a modem - or access to one. The cost of this service for organizations is a monthly \$20 flat rate plus \$12 an hour. For individuals the charges are \$12 per month and \$12 per hour. For information about computers and about the Amazon Line, call or write to Linda Ryan Nye or Pat Hacker, 73 Riverdale Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4K 1C2, (416) 461-5620.

Papers Wanted

WINNIPEG- A session entitled "Towards a Sociology of Lesbianism" is being organized for the June 1986 meeting of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association in Winnipeg. Papers are wanted to discuss questions such as: Why, within sociology has lesbianism been either ignored or trivialized? Is it sufficient to discuss lesbians in connection with male homosexuals or should we be viewing lesbians as a unique population, distinct from both men and heterosexual women? What are the sociological implications of how lesbians are treated in the literature? Where is research needed? What are the ramifications of continuing to view lesbians as an insignificant population?

This session will provide a wonderful opportunity to have lesbian studies taken seriously by academics in general. Submissions from non-academics are welcome - you do not need to be a member of the CSAA to present a paper. Submissions should be sent to; Sharon Stone, 122 Galt Ave., Toronto, Ont., M4M 2Z3.

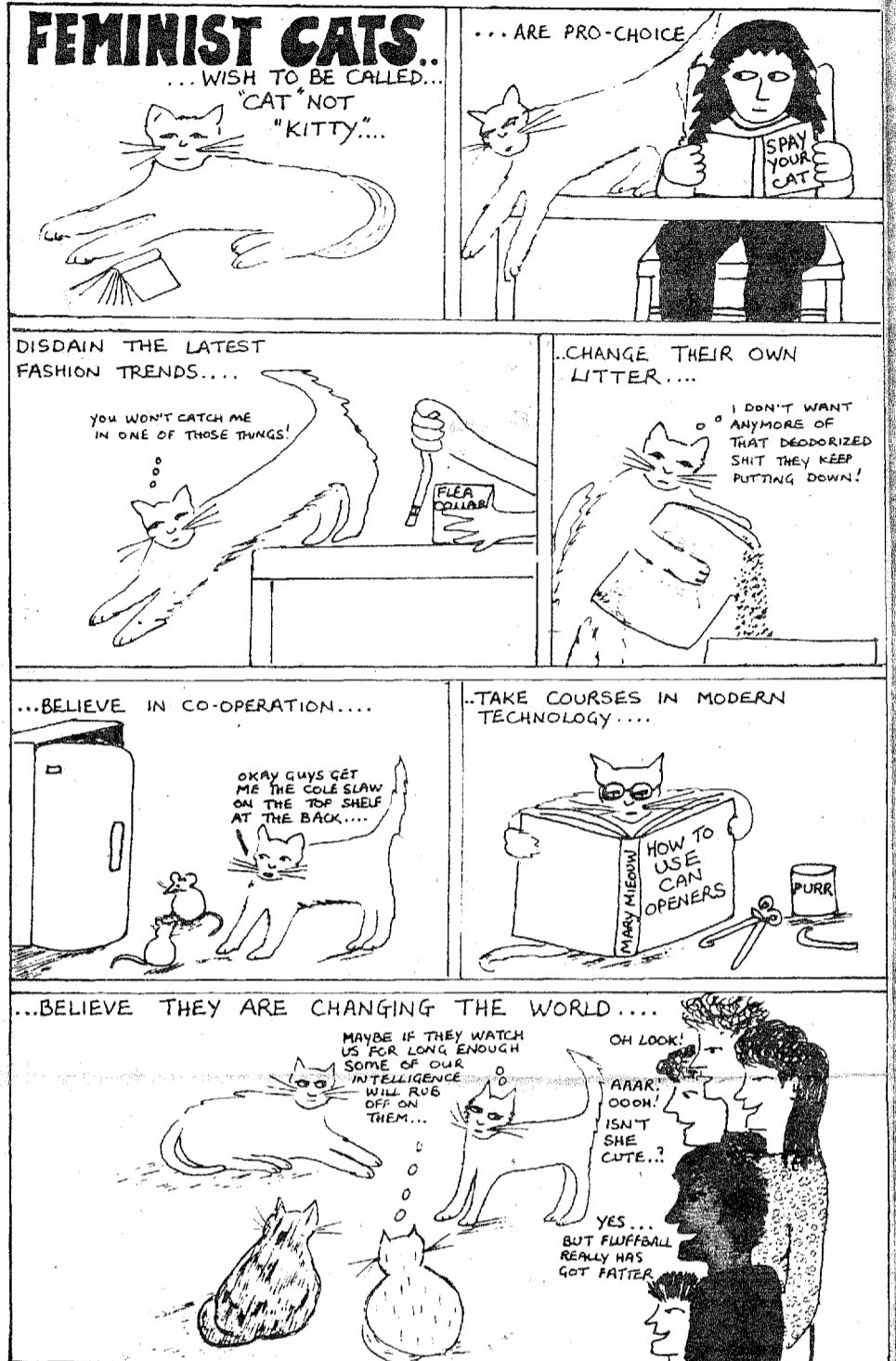
Challenging Our Images

TORONTO- The idea for a conference on "Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution" (to be held in Toronto November 22-24), came from the women who organized International Women's Day activities in Toronto this year. Two of the issues which the March 8 Coalition felt had been inadequately addressed were pornography and prostitution. This was made particularly clear when the Coalition was challenged by women from the sex trade who felt as women, their concerns regarding the work they engage in had been misrepresented not only by the Coalition but by the women's movement in general. It was felt that an open feminist forum on the issues of pornography and prostitution would provide a valuable opportunity for concerned people from various communities including the women's, legal, academic, church, gay and lesbian, and sex trade communities to come together to share their concerns and ideas.

The wide variety and volume of submissions to the Federal Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution clearly shows that there is an interest from these communities, in developing a better understanding of these two issues. Furthermore, anticipating that legislation will be tabled this fall on pornography and prostitution, by the Federal Government, this conference will provide a timely opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Some of the questions the conference will be addressing through films, speakers, workshops, videos and live performances will be: What are the factors and institutions which have created an environment where pornography and prostitution exist in their current forms? Why are these issues so explosive and contentious to talk about? Can and should we work at bridging the gap between feminists and women in the sex trade? Does discussing pornography and prostitution together, as was done by the Fraser committee, cloud these issues or are they intricately linked? What short term and long term political and educational strategies should we be working on? What are the current laws around pornography and prostitution? What is being proposed by the Fraser Report? It is also essential to address pornography and prostitution not as a monolith but as encompassing many issues pertaining to sexism, sexual preference, class and race.

While the idea for the conference came from International Women's Day, OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group) with the support of the March 8 Coalition took the initiative to organize the conference. As a graduate student group at U of T whose purpose is to facilitate public interest research, OPIRG's position is that there are many debates around pornography and prostitution and hopes this conference will provide an important political and educational opportunity.



Crimes Against Women

TORONTO- "Crimes Against Women: The Abortion Law on Trial" is a Canada-wide campaign being organized to expose the injustice of the existing abortion legislation (Section 251 of the Criminal Code). The campaign centers around testimonies of women who are standing up and speaking out about their abortion experiences and problems of access to procedures. The testimonies will be presented (by the women themselves or anonymously) in the form of tribunals in major cities across the country. The tables are turned, instead of women pleading their life choices before a Therapeutic Abortion Committee women will put the law 'on trial.' The verdict... Section 251, guilty of discrimination against women - the law must be repealed and free-standing clinics providing medically insured abortions must be legalized.

Since the inception of the law in 1969 women have had to appear before committees comprised most often of male physicians who know little or nothing about the woman on whom they are passing judgement. This works effectively to de-personalize this important personal decision and to put the control of a woman's reproductive rights into the hands of strangers.

Only 20% of all Canadian hospitals perform abortions. And the situation is not getting better. Abortion procedures are given such low priority that many hospitals have reduced or even eliminated altogether this most vital service. Women from rural communities or those in low-income situations find themselves particularly vulnerable to such cutbacks. The process of obtaining 'per-

mission' from a Therapeutic Abortion Committee can be lengthy, increasing both risk and emotional trauma. In all, owing to the existing law, women's access to early, safe, medically insured abortions in Canada is severely limited.

Our voices are strong - our experiences powerful! Organizers of tribunals in the "Crimes Against Women" campaign are seeking women who will provide written and/or verbal 'testimony' of their abortion experiences. Three kinds of testimony are necessary to demonstrate the inadequacy of the current law: 1. women who attempted to obtain an abortion before 1969, 2. those who have had to deal with Therapeutic Abortion Committees and hospital abortions and 3. for contrast, experiences of women who have had abortions in free-standing clinics.

The tribunals are slated to start on both coasts in January of 1986. Sweeping the country, they will culminate in a final tribunal and public action in Ottawa in late spring. On the doorsteps of the federal government, Canadian women will stand up and testify. This will add further evidence to the fact that the majority of Canadians believe in and support a woman's right to choose and her right to safe and medically insured abortion.

Join the growing number of women who will be speaking of their experiences. Contact your local Pro-choice group to see if a tribunal is being organized in your region. Testimonies can be sent directly to the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) at: P.O. Box 753, Station P, Toronto, Ont. M5S 2Z1. If you are interested in supporting this nation-wide campaign from the organizing end, in Ontario, call (416) 532-8193. Help put the abortion law on trial, help stop these Crimes Against Women!



Take Back the Night in Vancouver, September 1985.

Anti-Rape Action

VANCOUVER - "What do we want - Stop rape - When do we want it - Now!" demanded 600 angry women who charged, danced and marched through the streets of downtown Vancouver as part of the sixth annual Take Back The Night protest on September 20. Of all the anti-rape protests organized over the past ten years, this was by far the most spirited and successful.

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter organized the gathering of a wide cross-section of women. Individuals and representatives of women's groups in the Lower Mainland came prepared with colourful banners and placards. The excited crowd prepared for the march by listening to drummers, speakers, painting faces and convers-

ing. Meanwhile, across Canada, over ten rape crisis centres having membership in the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres organized protests on this same evening. Many others had marched only the weekend before.

The key speaker, Drena McCormack, spoke angrily about the threat of sexual assault to all women who choose to exercise their right to walk on the streets of this city alone. The crowd of women was incensed. It took very little encouragement on the part of the organizers for women to loudly demand an end to violence against women in all the forms it takes.

"Incest, rape, battered women - we have had enough" was enough to make the people

Anna Project

This is for you, Anna, a successful Toronto play, is going to England. The Anna Project has been invited to perform their play in London, Nottingham, and Oxford. Sponsored by Nightwood Theatre, the group has the exciting opportunity to introduce new audiences to a feminist show of significance to women in any country.

This is for you, Anna was developed to explore women's responses to violence and coercion. The title of the play is taken from the words of Marianne Bachmeier, who walked into a crowded German courtroom in 1981 and shot the man who killed her daughter. This chilling story is combined in the play with a Roman legend of a woman who kills herself after being raped, and with stories of battered women. The result is a highly imagistic and emotional evocation of female reaction to violence.

Since its first performance at the 1983 Women's Perspective festival, *This is for you, Anna* has received enthusiastic responses from audiences at Theatre Passe Muraille, and Great Canadian Theatre Company in Ottawa. Special tours have also taken the show to the kitchens of battered women's shelters,

a women's prison and women's community centres. Most recently, the company was sponsored by the Law Union to tour Ontario's law schools, providing a forum for discussion of family law reform.

The excitement of *This is for you, Anna* eventually came to the attention of various leading theatres of the English fringe. In response to their invitations, *Anna* is scheduled to play at the Midland Group in Nottingham, Pegasus Youth Theatre, Oxford and at The Oval in London. *This is for you, Anna* will be returning to Toronto for a special one week engagement at the Theatre Centre in January, 1986.

Unfortunately, the budget for the tour does not provide for wages or living expenses, so the company has come up with an offer for anyone who wants to help out. For a gift of anywhere between \$10 and \$99, The Anna Project will send the donor a postcard during the tour, \$100 and up will get a letter from abroad; and anyone giving \$500 or more will get a telegram from the company on opening night. Details are available from Barb Taylor or Linda Brown at Nightwood Theatre, (416) 961-7202.

lining the streets on this busy Friday night stand aside to let us pass while we daringly took two and sometimes three lanes of the major thoroughfares. We had chosen to protest in the downtown core because we knew there would be hundreds of people on the streets. We established a presence that had to be contended with. Some of the people along the route waited outside local theatres to view movies about women being exploited, sexually attacked and sometimes murdered.

The march was animated by six outstanding 8 ft. high women figures which could be seen above us while carried by women in the march. A local artist, Ann Beesack worked with the collective to create the figures. Street stencilling was planned and carried out by an ad hoc group of lesbians during the march amidst the large and protective crowd. Because the march was so spirited, it was remarked by one participant as being reminiscent of the original Reclaim the Night march organized by the "Fly by Night" collective in 1978.

While the police again this year tried to interfere with the march, their efforts were thwarted by the safety women who confidently led the march through the downtown core and stopped traffic when necessary. The Rape Relief and Women's Shelter collective has over the years taken the position that it would be a contradiction to ask for permission to "Take Back the Night" - least of all from any male authorities. The police have never been informed of our plans for the protest. So far there have been no arrests.

Local papers have been filled with the reports of two recent murders of women in Vancouver and sexual assaults too numerous to report here. The commercial media came out in large numbers and were the initiators of some fairly good news coverage.

Attacks on women are continuing and as feminists we intend on carrying on the fight to end violence against women and to win. Take Back the Night is just one way to say *no more*. And to say this with hundreds of women marching at your side is to say we're on our way...

Maureen Mills,
Vancouver Rape Relief
& Women's Shelter

Family Allowance Cuts

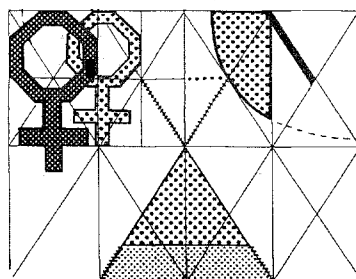
This fall the Government introduced a bill to de-index the family allowance. (De-indexing is the removal of a safeguard against inflation. Family allowance and other benefits will not be totally de-indexed, but will lose 3% of their purchasing power each year. So families will continue to get a cheque, but the cheque will be worth less each year.)

And over the next four years, Canadian families will experience two other cuts. In addition to the de-indexation of the family allowance which begins January 1, 1986, a second cut begins in 1987, when the child tax exemption will be reduced. This is a program that benefits disproportionately middle to higher income families. A taxpayer who could claim \$710 per child now, by 1989 will be able to claim only \$398. Yet the money is not being re-directed to support for low-income families, which the government had earlier promised. A third cut concerns the child tax credit, which begins two years later. The impact of this cut is hidden, because the Government intends to increase the child tax credit before beginning to de-index it. The increase is a very temporary increase and is just to sweeten the blow. It tries to hide the fact that benefits to Canadian families are being drastically reduced.

Family allowance is a question for women because women do most of the child raising. It is usually the woman who receives the family allowance cheque. Although many mothers now work outside the home, there are a significant number of mothers for whom the family allowance is the only independent source of income. The cutbacks in social programs are cutbacks for women because women are the prime beneficiaries; half of lone parent families headed by women live below the poverty line.

Governments can be pressured into changing their minds. Canadians demonstrated this last June, when they embarrassed the Government into restoring full indexation to the old age pensions. Canadian children are not as able as seniors to speak up for their interests, and it is our responsibility to speak up for them. Write the Prime Minister or Minister of Finance at the House of Commons, Ottawa (no postage required). Let the government know that you want the family allowance to remain indexed to the inflation rate; that you don't want this important social program eroded.

Créer la perspective



MONTRÉAL - On October 5, Lesbians in Montréal organized Lesbian Inter-Action Day. Their pamphlet, "To Create A Perspective," is translated and excerpted as follows:

"Purpose: To know our difference and our points in common in order to act together, to become a force, particularly in the face of ris-

ing conservatism.

"Our point is not primarily that society accept us and integrate us as lesbians, but rather we want to transform this society, change ourselves, change life... that is to say, we believe *Lesbianism is political*."

Workshops were about the public and private image of lesbians, visibility, going to the bars, incest, radical lesbianism, self-image, health issues, the right wing, coming out or not coming out, and the community of anglophone lesbians in Montréal. It was complemented with contact improv, theatre, polarity, and cabinet-making workshops during the 2-hour lunch period and an evening dance and show called: "Show & Sweet: stories of our hours of tenderness and distress."

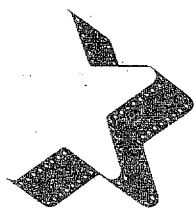
Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
Four months of training and skills
sharing with women's groups in other cultures

For information, write to:
Isis-WICCE C.P. 2471, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE
The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
and the March 8th Coalition for International Women's Day
are holding a

New Year's Eve Party
at the Party Centre, 167 Church Street, Toronto.
Tuesday, December 31, 1985 9:00 pm.

Make your plans now... Ticket information: (416) 964-7477



10th Annual
Festival of Festivals

Developing Cinematic Direction

by Donna Gollan

What made the Festival of Festivals so exciting this year? Meeting Margarethe von Trotta and having the chance to see all of her terrific films again, even the 1972 *A Free Woman*, an early feminist manifesto which she co-wrote. It is so incredibly depressing that for the first time in my history of feminist movie-going I really feel like saying: we've come a long way!

No less exciting was the chance to see Chantal Akerman's entire oeuvre. Although Akerman herself could not attend, we saw everything from her oddly soothing silent experiments to full-blown non-narrative features and bizarre comedies. My favourite remains the matter-of-fact short *J'ai faim, j'ai froid*, which had me laughing aloud at the tensions of adolescence. Now why have I never found them funny before?

Some excellent Canadian fare included Sandy Wilson's first feature *My American Cousin* and Midi Onodera's short about the alienation of modern sexuality, *Ten Cents a Dance (Parallax)*. Sophie Bissonnette's *Quel numero, What number?* is a lively documentary on high technology and the resulting changing nature of women's work. In addition, there was a surprisingly good docu-portrait from Brigitte Berman, *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got*. Berman has really been getting the short end of the stick from reviewers who are largely ignoring the film she has made and chastising her for all the things she has left out. Shaw comes across as a clever troublemaker, not a saint, and the whole film is worth watching just to meet his most recent wife, the fascinating Evelyn Keyes.

And what's a film festival without a few puzzling films? The kind you mean to catch on a Friday night during the year when you set out with the best of intentions but, instead, end up going to something through which you can happily munch popcorn.

Seduction: The Cruel Woman (FRG) by Elfi Mikesch and Monika Treut was definitely not the last word on sadomasochism but instead a sort of illustrated essay on how tiring and dull playing roles, even kinky roles, can get to be. Marion Hansel's *Dust* (Bel/Fr) was an allegorical tale about class and race relations in South Africa that seemed to waver between a fine portrait of the effects of isolation and, in overplaying the allegory, reinforcement of every myth we've ever had shoved down our throats about sexually repressed spinsters. Equally disturbing was Joyce Chopra's *Smooth Talk* (USA). Based on a short story by Joyce Carol Oates, it is a confusing jumble of fantasy and reality that seems to imply that a young girl lusts after some kind of threat or force when it comes to the first awakening of her sexual self. Yvonne Rainer's *The Man Who Envied Women* (USA) was overly textual, but refreshingly witty in places and Valie Export's *The Practice of Love* (FRG) had some superlative mixed media effects despite a somewhat confusing plot line.

There was also an enjoyable retrospective series called "From the Vault." Coline Serreau's *Pourquoi pas?* (Fr. 1978) is the first ménage à trois movie I've ever seen written and directed by a woman! Normally, I detest the genre as it always seems to pander to the concept of men as utterly possessive and selfish. This one, however, deals with the healing power of love, the wounds themselves being socially inflicted. Valerie Sarmiento's *Notre mariage* (Fr. 1984) too, is part of a long-overworked genre, that of the older man and girl-young-enough-to-be-his-daughter. Here again the writer-director wastes little time on the long-documented feelings of the man, but instead offers us insights into the confused feelings of Lola, a young woman caught between a desire and a taboo.

Yes, I confess, I did go to see some films that were handmade. John Irvin's *Turtle Diary* (GB) was slow, touching, and superbly acted. Ted Kotcheff's *Joshua Then and Now* (Can) had its moments of brilliance, generally those between Alan Arkin and children, and was no more misogynist than are

Mordecai Richler's books usually, take that as you wish. Hector Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Br/USA) is a complex tale about two men who share a prison cell, one a homosexual in for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, the other a political prisoner who refuses to talk. Much more interesting than it sounds, the woman serves merely as an object of fantasy - it is the men who spin the spidery web. Jean-Luc Godard's *Je vous salue Marie* (Fr) is as misguided as his films generally are, since he persists in making films from a woman's point of view and he doesn't seem to have the first clue how we feel about sexuality or motherhood.

Richard Marquand's *Jagged Edge* (USA) is quite the worst film I have ever seen. The timing is off, the plot sparse, and the suspense depends wholly on the terror you feel when you see a woman strapped to the bedpost and cut open in graphic detail. Glenn Close plays a female lawyer who is ruled entirely by her gonads and manages to set back women's claims to intelligence by at least a hundred years. She spends most of her screen time weeping and the make up artist actually has the gall to make her look terrific as long as she is in love and haggard as soon as she begins to doubt the motives of the man she loves. Every other character in the film can see straight through the thug, even her little boy, but of course they are all men. Avoid this film.

My Beautiful Launderette (GB), on the other hand, is one of this year's gems. Directed by Stephen Frears for British television, the story touches on issues of race, class, male homosexuality, lust, love and materialism. It may be lauded as ambitious film. It is quite *stunning* television.

And what were the woman-made gems of this year's festival? The first is the powerful and empowering *Broken Mirrors* (Neth), Marleen Gorris' newest release. Alternately frightening and infuriating, Gorris never forgets who her audience is and is careful not to push us into the helpless terror which *Jagged Edge* thrusts upon us in its first few minutes. Although I was nearly prevented from going by Kay Armatage's graphic description, just as you may be discouraged by mine, I can truthfully say it was the highlight of my attendance at the Tenth Annual Festival of Festivals.

The second gem was Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts* (USA). Based on a novel by Jane Rule, it is entertaining, amusing, and erotic. As Deitch herself put it: "It is about a love relationship between two women that doesn't end in suicide." It is, quite simply, a Friday night popcorn-and-coke movie to catch when you've really set out to see *Broken Mirrors*, but you can't quite face it tonight.

Broken Mirrors

written and directed by Marleen Gorris

Welcome to Club Happy House, a warehouse in which the women support their lives with bitter humour or, quite simply, fail to do so: "Linda kissed the umpteenth frog and hung herself."

A new worker arrives to replace Linda. She is the mother of a small child, rendered desperate for money by the drug habits of the child's father. Her new friend describes the work in chilling detail and finishes with a word of encouragement: "Can't you get an ordinary job? This isn't work, it's madness."

Christmas Eve, the night of Christian family feasts, is just another busy night at the club, now overrun by students. Even the "madame" must participate to meet the demands of all the Christmas shoppers. Afterwards an exhausted woman complains: "I feel like a public lavatory."

Is this the stuff of nightmares? No, these women do not walk blindly to their fate but face their reality head on. Their idea of a good man is one who has "ordinary" sex, nothing

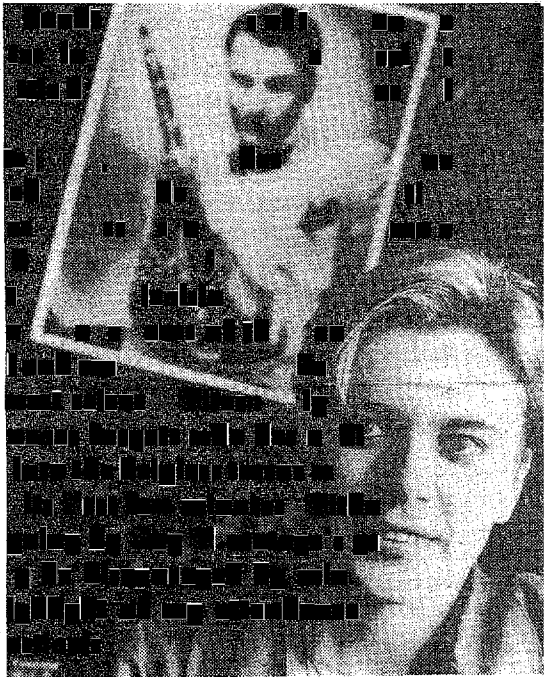
kinky, nothing that takes too much time. There is no such customer in this movie, and the women fight on.

The real nightmare is intercut with the matter-of-fact which occurs at Club Happy House. Bled of most of its colour is a scene in which a suburban single mum is stalked and captured by a silent man, then chained to a bed. We are given a glimpse of her captor. We see only the back of his head, his tidy haircut, his expensive leather gloves. Helpless, frightened and gradually fading away, the captive in chains terrifies us. She has not walked since her fate. She has had awareness thrust upon her.

The two stories intertwined reveal a frightening world for its women viewers. As we begin to make vague connections which the characters are not in a position to make, struck by the full horror of the destructive force behind the power. As long as the women at Club Happy House control that force, they are safe. The captured suburban mum must learn to take that control, perhaps for a moment, even if it kills her. There is a terrible, bloody wedding scene, not where we are most dreading it, chained bedside of the powerless; Gorris spares us the particular horror. Instead a john loses control at the club, temporary target is rushed to hospital, her belly split.

Now the women are forced to recognize a few truths. A sentence might as easily apply to us, the watching women are all made to stare at ourselves in the mirrors of Club Happy House. The mirrors are broken. We are all forced to see a psychopath in the face. And he is defeated.

It is not an easy victory. It is not even a complete one. This is not an easy film to view, nor is it entertaining. Why to see it then? Because it is a chance to stare the worst face, and come home whole. - D.G.



Director Brigitte Berman.

Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got
written and directed by Brigitte Berman

Talking with Brigitte Berman is a slightly breathtaking experience. She is vibrant, charming and full of future plans and her company is enough to discourage you from asking the standard questions like: what happens to you when you work full time at the CBC and make your own films on the side? I did manage to ask what it was like having to work twice as hard to prove your capabilities true - but she doesn't really mind, she would be working hard anyway. When this woman says she has been working hundreds of hours a week for the past four years, you believe it.

A large part of working this hard is a reflection of Berman's determination to learn the skills she needs, step by step, for a future as a feature producer and director. She puts it: "If you are going to jump in the ocean and swim, you do not just practice in wading pools."

Her skills are very much in evidence in *Artie Shaw: All You've Got*. The film is thoughtfully constructed and interesting visually as it is aurally. Reconstructing Artie Shaw, Berman pieces together his memories, big-band footage, movies, and recordings of some of his greatest hits. Scattered old photos into moving pictures and moving picture stills. Some of the scenes shot on location at his previously owned farms are filmed with a poetic feeling. Berman nicely balances the dry wit of his reminiscences and the music playing softly in the background.

As for Artie Shaw himself, he is a man who, at 74, is very much alive thank you. Shaw is irreverent, intelligent, aware, and politically fascinating. He has lived with his heart open, his habits and opinions closed. He has the edge, and indeed, tipped over that edge once or twice. We would like us to understand that he has never been in the House Un-American Activities Committee, that his whole state of celebrity, these are insane, not the brilliant scattered Artie Shaw. And how can you argue with that?

Brigitte Berman explained to me that to be a filmmaker you have to have the most enormous ego in the world, and that's at all. This description might have been meant for Artie. Perhaps what makes this film so enjoyable is the meeting of two like minds, kindred spirits.



Club Happy House from *Broken Mirrors*.



Sophie Bissonnette (L.) at the editing table.

My American Cousin written and directed by Sandy Wilson

The scene opens on a midnight blue lake and zooms in on a few yellow, homey lights in the windows of a remote house. We continue through the window and straight onto the pages of young Sandra's diary to read: *Nothing Ever Happens*. It is our first laugh and it launches us back into life as we knew it, at twelve. And yet, it is not quite true that nothing ever happens. In this film, Sandy Wilson is able to make a story out of a series of little nothings, and keep us entertained all the while.

There are amusing scenes between Mom-the-wicked-witch and daughter, Dad-the-bumbling-authoritarian and daughter, and between a gaggle of giggling girls. The arrival on the scene of the fabled American cousin, Butch, and his sporty red convertible, provides little more than a foil for our straightforward little Canadian heroine. Set in the great Canadian West of the 1950s, the jokes are often on us, on Americans, and especially on Ontarians.

How much of this film is autobiographical is never revealed but we suspect Director's Revenge is at work on the girl who stole Butch but refuses to go "all the way" with him. He whines, "Doesn't anyone want to have fun anymore?" The scene is ruthlessly intercut with Sandra, once merely left behind, but now having the time of her life at a dance.

Butch has other great lines like: "Being a teenager is the best time of your life. Look at me." Sandra, about as gullible as a mother listening to late-night excuses, quips back, "Yeah, look at you. You're out of gas, walking along a dirt road with an ugly twelve-year-old."

Sandra's story is a familiar one of a young girl squelched by a strict upbringing but battling valiantly with all the dangers of puberty. It's a tough life but someone has to escape it. In the end, however, her upbringing overcomes her longing for freedom. Even though she is left behind, has lost her favourite belongings and watches her fascinating cousin disappear in a cloud of dust, she still remembers to shut the gate behind him. Opening it again for us is our treat. - D.G.

continued next page

Numero? What Number?

written and directed by Sophie Bissonnette

Numero is a fast paced documentary with innovative subtext that might be an ode to the tedium of technology. The characters we meet are, for the most part, women. If their work lives were dull before, the advent of high technology has it, in apart their feelings of self-worth and, not surprisingly, thickened their point of view.

It's the women who must work those sticky, electronic cashier check-outs at a supermarket are the first group we meet. They sit together at home and write a song, "Where have all the men gone?" with the rhythm of an early slave work song. The machinery is used to spy on them, counting their mistakes and staging their work performance. Fed up with the frustration they must face when the computers "go down," the head cashier complains what it feels like to be in charge, but without power.

Next we meet some office workers who were put in charge of computerizing their offices - only to find themselves out of a job, replaced by a system they helped develop. One woman complains wryly that her boss realized that the more the three secretaries understood about the new system, the less he did. His solution? He fired her and reorganized it so that he could reassert control and the two who remained no longer understood what was going on.

We meet a woman who types straight from a dictaphone to a word processor, in the green, sterile environment of a hospital. She is the mother of young children and works nights. She feels she has already worked a full day before she arrives at the hospital. There is obvious isolation, few excuses for a break from the mind-numbing, eye-blurring work. As she speaks directly to us, she becomes more and more frustrated. We watch her awakening to her own nightmare. She, in turn, experiences us listening. She is strengthened in her resolve to change jobs. But how likely is she to find a different job given her experience, her training?

We are introduced to a machine which is capable of stuffing employment cheques into envelopes at a rate of 10,000 per hour.

We meet the telephone operators whose lives have become a living hell trying to live up to an impossible standard of speedy efficiency while continually reducing AWT (average working time). In theory, computerization was not supposed to destroy jobs. In fact, the women who were offered job transfers from small towns to large cities were secondary wage earners with families, and few were free to move. How many companies count on just this kind of situation when they make promises against lay-offs? We wonder how Bell would have saved face had these women accepted their transfers.

In the face of ignorance ("You just talk on the phone all day. What's so hard about that?") these women retain their sense of humour. They act out skits for each other, laughing heartily at a familiar kind of customer who tries to sneak her way through without accepting any charges. It is quite painful for us to watch their frustration. When their skits inspire a theatre troupe, we all get a laugh. It is as if we need that little bit of distance from the workers and their difficulties in order to understand the crank customers and impatient bosses - now replaced by spying machinery - humorous.

A film on the tedium of computerized work would be incomplete without a trip to the post office. We have been watching postal code sorters type their fingers off for some time when the day shift comes abruptly to an end. If a picture worth a thousand words, then the image that follows the blowing of the shift-end whistle is worth a thousand comments. It is all over in a few seconds. The workers rise from their seats and the camera captures them, frozen, in a *dead run* to the door.

A postal code sorter cannot quite explain to us how mind-numbing her job has become. The computerization has accelerated her work, while robbing it of its last remnants of challenge. She explains: "When I first started this job I thought, what's wrong with my little girl?" When she was out on strike for an extended period, her family, despite the loss of income, admits: "I'm glad you were on strike, you stopped yelling." No one is running with this woman's slippers when she steps to the door after a hard day's work. No one is cooking her a nice dinner. Here is an issue that has heretofore been quite invisible as part of the effects of automation in the work place. Women whose jobs were dull "women's work" before must face the worst developments than they had ever imagined. They are expected to resist unbelievable stress, tolerate boredom, and continue to nurture the human race in their spare time. We are headed for overload.

Sophie Bissonnette has made some terrific choices in the lives which she has brought to us. We must all face the complicity of buying our groceries, dialing the telephone, posting a letter as part of our everyday lives. She handles her subjects with a sensitivity which is patent, allowing their wit, their compassion, their complaints and their loss to come through directly to us. These are women who are trying to illustrate their boredom and succeed in showing us their brains. Bissonnette succeeds in illustrating the tedium of their work, in a work which is never boring. - D.G.



Giggling Girls from Sandy Wilson's *My American Cousin*.

Turning Cinematic Tricks

by Susan G. Cole

Yvonne Rainer's extraordinary film, *The Man Who Envied Women*, asks one of those ultimate questions: Can a feminist/artist/academic/heterosexual/anti-imperialist ever be effective politically? This is a very cerebral film, but then, Rainer is as much a filmmaker as a theorist and is as interested in the meaning of pictures as she is in the machinations of the mind. Scattered throughout the film are monologues delivered by the male protagonist of the film who talks to the audience as if he were talking to his shrink, while scenes from American film noir are projected onto a screen behind him. Everything he says is related to the cultural information he has absorbed about women. He then literally turns women into what culture tells him women are.

This struggle of women to rise above the way culture defines us applies equally to the portrayal of sex itself. Given what the camera is and does, given what "looking" means in a culture where the male gaze is a violation, given what Hollywood has done to and for sex, can sex, even when presented by women, be erotic and exist outside of a context of exploitation and manipulation? It looks like it can't, and thanks to Kay Armatage's careful programming at Toronto's Festival of Festivals in September, we were able to discover why.

The hottest pleasure came via the most manipulative cinematic techniques, the bleakest turn-offs from the most realistic presentation. Everything anybody ever wanted to know about how Hollywood has made sex romantic and heartwarming can be learned from watching Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts* and from contrasting it to Chantal Ackerman's *Je Tu Il Elle*. And the German film *Seduction: Cruel Woman* displays another fine art of seduction, this time by the camera, of its audience, proving once more that film is always suspect when it comes to sexual representation.

Desert Hearts is based on Jane Rule's first novel, *Desert of the Heart*. It is the story of an east-coast literature professor who arrives in Reno to get a quickie divorce. Chilled by this life change, she still warms to Kay, a "known" lesbian and a casino employee. They fall in love. This is lesbian love Hollywood style. Minus the angst of Rule's novel and without the book's central conceit of the two women's near twin appearance, the story is the stuff of a love comic. This time, though, girl meets girl, girl gets girl, girl loses girl, and girl recovers girl. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, in the face of Rambo and the like, watching the romance unfold is a refreshing and wholly pleasurable experience.

For me, that is. But what about a mainstream audience that

has likely never embraced, I mean, really looked at and accepted, lesbian love as a fact of erotic life? How does director Deitch deal with that? The answer is simple, the formula fool-proof: She applies every technique in existence to make the sex look good, beautiful and fulfilling. This involves coddling the audience, manipulating the audience by manipulating the camera, using the full range of cinematic powers available to her, following the rules.

Rule one: Make sure your Lesbians are beautiful, conventionally speaking. This makes the relationship credible to your heterosexual audience, and will absolutely thrill the lavender contingent.

Rule two: Make your audience wait. Work the viewers into a lather, testing their patience, so that they want these women to get it on long before you intend to show them doing it. Tease the audience. Show the young heroine clad in only a denim shirt and cowboy boots, emphasizing leg. Keep up the tension. This is an important part of the formula for romantic fiction, the older woman holding out until she's finally won over. In this case, the presence of heterosexual ambivalence of our female academic, mirroring that of the audience, makes the holding out all the more believable.

Rule three: Once they're in bed (finally!), light the scene carefully, softly, creating shadows to convey vulnerability and block out body parts that would make the scene too jarringly explicit.

Rule four: Don't force feed your audience. You don't want to scare them. Make sure the lovers go slowly, more slowly than anyone could actually go without climbing the walls. Accentuate the languor by cutting through almost ten different camera angles in the space of twenty seconds. Steer clear of distracting sexual noises. The idea is to make the sex palatable.

I did not figure all this out by watching *Desert Hearts*. I was too swept up in it to notice how Deitch had done it. I learned this by watching 15 of the most instructive seconds of filmed sex I have ever seen, in Chantal Ackerman's *Je Tu Il Elle*, a film that has absolutely no desire to be nice to its audience. Ackerman's attention to detail is part of her desire to show life as it is, in its real time and place. Since her themes are alienation and loneliness, this can make for some heavy going. This might make Ackerman most interesting to film students, but for the rest of us, her interest in showing life as it really is ultimately uncovers the limitations of the camera as well. What the camera will not do becomes plain in the lesbian sex sequence of *Je Tu Il Elle*. Here, Ackerman breaks all the rules

continued next page

Cole, from previous page

of Hollywood's effective formula.

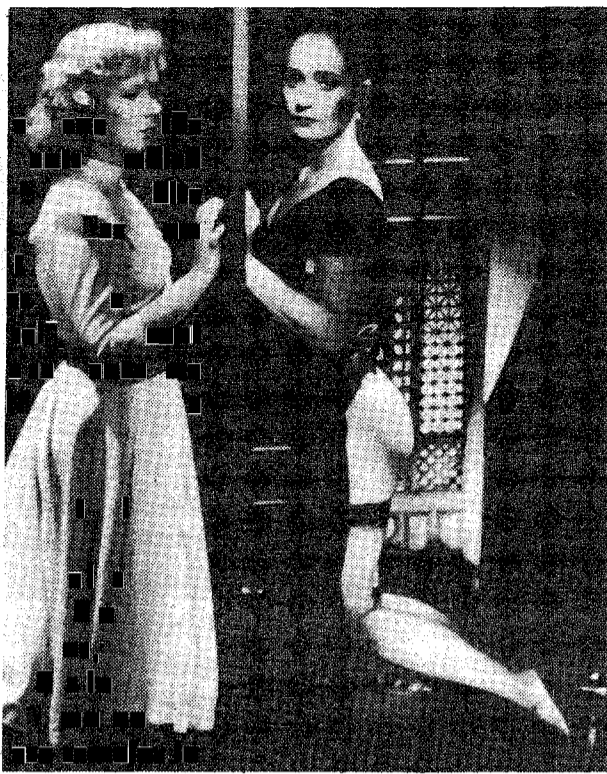
Rule one and the acceptable lesbian: This sequence is the Elle segment that follows the Je, Tu and Il segments in which Ackerman reveals a character hopelessly hooked on white sugar and totally unable to communicate— one wonders how she ever could have found a lover in the first place. Some critics have explained that the four characters in the film, though all of them are played by Ackerman herself, are meant to be different women, in which case in the Elle sequence, we know so little about her that we cannot possibly empathize with her. Either way, rule one is definitely broken.

Rule two and the creation of breathless tension: Broken within two minutes, the length of time it takes to get Elle and elle into bed.

Rule three and the soft lighting effect. *Je Tu Il Elle* is shot in black and white with no interest in beautifying anything. The sex scene is divided into three five minute sections, one in which the lovers engage in noisy tribadism, another in which they kiss at length, and third where one goes down on the other. For each of these three sections the camera remains in one place and the light is flat and unchanging. There are absolutely no tricks here, and what emerges is material that is decidedly un-beautiful. It is the antithesis of Deitchian romance.

These are one shot deals. There is no elaborate cutting to play with real time, no gentle lighting, no lovable characters. Ackerman's point is very clear. If you were to be standing by this bed watching these women making love, *this is what it would look like*. It would not look like a Hollywood movie. It would go on for longer than you could stand, regardless of how much you yearn for the erotic, and regardless, even, if voyeurism is your sexual persuasion. It might even make you uncomfortable. This is a cinematic revelation for which we should be truly grateful to Ackerman, who made this film in the early seventies, long before anyone was talking about pornography, and long before sexual representation became the preoccupation of feminist artists.

Seduction: Cruel Woman is Monika Treut's and Elfi Mikesch's ode to Sacher-Masoch (whence comes the word masochism) whose fiction fantasy *Venus in Furs* they have adapted for the screen. The film shows a day in the life of Wanda the dominatrix, who plays out the S/M fantasies of her clients in her own private gallery for their pleasure and often for the pleasure of a viewing audience. Wanda has two lovers over whom she seems to have total control: Gregor, her slave, and Caren the shoe clerk with (surprise) a shoe fetish. But Wanda wants Justine, just in from America, to be her new



Top and bottom from *Seduction: Cruel Woman*.

bottom. Justine however, prefers the top.

The sexual politics of the film are not exactly coherent. The filmmakers wanted to make a movie about the presence of power in all relationships, but instead they consign power dynamics to an S/M fringe in a gallery frequented by the sexually marginalized, and thus Treut and Mikesch undermine their own point. The film winds up as a pagan to sexual libertarianism ("Perversions are only misunderstandings," says Wanda) and a putdown of the "vanilla" brigade ("Sex for me in that sense had become boring.") and yet *Seduction: Cruel Woman* is curiously devoid of pleasure. The lovers never make a sound when they come. They don't even smile. Perhaps it's the Germanic influence, but it strikes me as an odd way of acting as an S/M apologist, making it seem as if the practice is no fun at all.



Desert Hearts: director Donna Dietch (L.) and Helen Shaver.

But beautiful it is. *Seduction: Cruel Woman* is stunning, so consumed with fetish that each one becomes completely comprehensible. The film is stylized, stylish— fashion-ridden actually. If anything, *Seduction: Cruel Woman* makes you want to go right out and shop. But that seductive element of the film goes beyond the clothes to the sexual practices themselves. Using avant garde visual forms and relying on the premise that watching film is in and of itself an act of voyeurism ("You have eyes, you have voyeurism," remarked Mikesch), Treut and Mikesch illustrate how film can be used to turn what some consider to be hideous sexual practices into works of art. It doesn't matter if you are appalled or baffled by S/M. It works.

And so, Donna Deitch can make lesbian love exquisite for heterosexuals not inclined to think it so. Chantal Ackerman can show women making love and it will look just awful. Treut and Mikesch can make slavery, humiliation, even bloodletting look gorgeous. Such is the power of film. It makes you wonder what forces could be unleashed if more women had the resources to get their hands on a camera. ●

Gollan, from previous page

Ten Cents a Dance (Parallax)
written and directed by Midi Onodera

A difficult and perplexing film poem, Midi Onodera's *Ten Cents a Dance (Parallax)* raises questions about the erotic and the personal, measuring the actual distance of the alienation between two people in three sexual encounters. This is largely accomplished through film form— this thirty minute short is shot in parallax, that is, with two cameras shooting side by side, each of them centering on a different person within its frame. The effect is one of separation, a black bar of non-existent space preventing the ultimate connection between two women sitting drinking saki in a Japanese restaurant, discussing the possibility of having an affair; two men in adjoining washroom stalls, there for some quick, anonymous sex; and a man and a woman at either end of a phone line, the woman paid for every word she speaks, the man naked and responding.

What is disturbing about this film is that the most erotic scene is actually the least personal— that of the two men in the washroom stalls. They are the only ones to cross the barrier, enter each other's space, and provide each other with the sexual stimulation and satisfaction that they came for. They do not know each other's names, nor are they likely to learn them. There is something of the voyeurism of pornography at work here, even though, or perhaps *because*, we cannot see much from our bird's-eye vantage point.

The least erotic scene is the decidedly boring phone sex in which we can see how uninterested the woman is, even as she describes her excitement to her paying partner. The separation of this scene is also the most complete— they cannot enter each other's space because they are on opposite ends of a phone line, speaking lies meant to titillate and failing utterly to bridge the gap either personally or sexually.

By far the most interesting scene, both visually and in terms of measuring that distance, is the first. The two women sit opposite one another, testing their spaces with words. The lesbian woman makes the forays, takes the chances, risks rejection. The other woman follows her lead, reflecting back her own interest, encouraging the personal connection which expresses a future erotic, if not a present one. There is a poetry to their movements, too, which occur in synch, flicking their ashes so that their hands nearly touch, sipping their saki one after the other and, at one moment, raising their cigarettes to their mouths in such spontaneous accord it might as well have been a kiss.

It would be facile to draw conclusions from these scenes about the personal being non-erotic or pre-erotic and the pornographic being non-personal. Eroticism can stand many a close look under the microscope of human interaction. Onodera's film is at once a great success, and a small beginning. — D.G.

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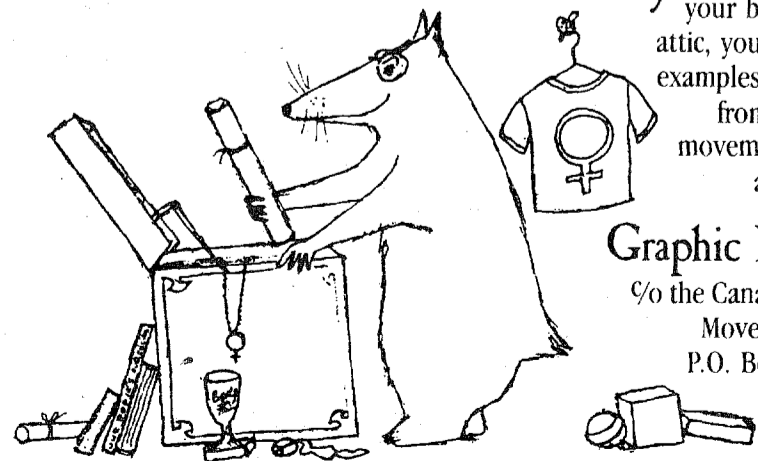
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ARTS

Our Half of the Sky



Moontree: Beth Wallace (L.), Judian Shardlow and Kathy Brown.

by Gay Bell

"A group of us women with the same sort of political consciousness wanted to contribute to the women's movement. We'd already gone to meetings and contributed in ways like that, but we wanted to have some fun. We kind of liked theatre so we said, 'Okay, we're going to be a feminist theatre troupe, right? Wow, neat! That's going to be a gas!' But each production has been such a struggle and at times so depressing because there's not enough knowledge, not enough skill, not enough time. And yet, when we did it we were so high and so pleased with ourselves because we knew how we'd struggled to pull that out of the air."

"I've done amateur theatre all my life. You learn things because you have to. Because if you don't do it there's nobody else to do it."

Kathy Brown is a member of Half the Sky, a feminist community theatre group in Hamilton, Ontario that produced *The Moontree* by Martha Boesing in September. Impressed by the very existence of a feminist community theatre, I was curious to know who they were and how they managed.

"Pretty well everybody works full time, mostly day jobs. Duffy (Foreman) has studied theatre arts at Niagara College and she has had some gigs singing. At present she's running the lunch counter at a health food store. I'm on mother's allowance with two kids. Beth (Wallace) is a single mother. She does simulated patient work at McMaster Medical Centre for student doctors to diagnose. Mary Beth (Pongrac) is a full-time student and runner and she has a part-time job. Judian (Shardlow), who has classical training as a singer and who has done musical theatre, works for Olivetti teaching people to run new-fangled machines. Anna (Allerato), who did a bit of theatre in high school, is a co-ordinator and counsellor for Hamilton's Employee Assistance Program."

After doing a number of plays and collective creations on abortion, women in prison, and breast cancer, they managed to get a grant from the Secretary of State to invite women from Toronto to give workshops: "For the women's culture, movement and community, the 'big time' is Toronto," says Kathy.

They wanted to develop a play on women's sexuality. Cynthia Grant from Nightwood Theatre did a workshop with them, as did Baputa Rubess, with whom they used playthings such as high heels, hats, poses that contradict the vocal message, telling stories using sounds and movement and no words. They did theatre exercises with Innis Buchli and workshops on colour and masks with Robin Endres. "She had us all massage each other, which is a great exercise to throw into anything you do in a group. We all bent down touching our toes. There were seven of us so you'd have six pairs of hands on you. Someone would be on your legs, someone on your back, someone on your arms, and you'd just stay like that for about five minutes, getting

massaged all over. Then she'd put her hand on your spine and raise you up slowly. You could just see everybody when they would come up. They were energized. And it made us all relax with each other because we got to touch each other."

But, "when you're working five days a week and you've got four weekends in a row booked with workshops, you've got no time to take what you've learned and play with it and then apply it." So, as part of the grant involved doing a production, they decided to do a more polished version of *The Moontree*, which they had done for International Women's Day in Hamilton.

As Kathy talked about contacting At the Foot of the Mountain, the feminist theatre group that developed *Moontree* along with Martha Boesing, she talked about their search for feminist plays. "Maybe we're not knowledgeable enough of the feminist theatre scene, but we do have trouble finding good scripts, stuff that's suitable for us, something that an all-woman cast can do. However, there's so much support whenever I've had to write to a woman playwright. She's so excited we're doing her piece. There's no hierarchy. We're all the same: they're doing it there and we're doing it here and we're all sisters. We're really all helping ourselves. It's a new field and it's certainly blossoming and taking off. The feminist theatre scene is a medium that's natural for us. It's a better way to tell things and do things than preaching or public speaking. If you can get somebody in their emotions and in their heart, it's a better lesson than any intellect can convey."

So, as they developed *Moontree*, they invited Innis Buchli on directing jaunts from Toronto. The play takes place in an asylum where the three former wives of a man named Schooner are incarcerated together. They act out their present lives on the left side of the stage and pass individually through a "door" which bisects the stage to Schooner's study where they act out episodes from their past lives with him. Kathy says Innis was very helpful to them in figuring out how to use the "door": "She taught us about focus, how you explain things by giving them focus and by giving each other focus, how you make statements with your energy, just by focus. For example, she got us to do all the knock, knock, knocking in the play at the door, so the door will be seen as a central theme, which I take to be male privilege and all that. The monsters of the patriarchy are behind the door. If you open it, you'll have an understanding of all that. It's about not knowing how to get some of that for ourselves."

My feeling as a critic was that there were certain weaknesses in the Hamilton production. Some of the actors had figured out their parts more thoroughly than others and had the means of expressing their analyses more effectively. But given time, I think they will find ways to project the complex interactions between the characters.

This production is funny. There were some very conventional and sexist young people sitting behind me in the McMaster University theatre where the performance was held and yet they seemed to be involved in watching the play. The play was very clear about its feminist politics but the humour of the production was so well done that it was funny no matter whether you're straight, gay, feminist, or even sort of conservative. They're such mundane situations between partners highlighted in such a believable way that you almost have to identify and laugh.

It seemed to me that the play is a successful combination of collective creation and the individual writing of Martha Boesing. Often a single writer can't get such a wide range of infuriating and funny anecdotes. I can imagine a group of women sitting together and one says, "I can remember when my husband did such and such and I was ready to kill him," which provokes someone else's memory. The play is like being on a roll of memories.

Kathy particularly likes doing feminist theatre because, she says, "the characters give me licence to do and say things that I'd be too timid to do and say in my real life. It's neat to see women up on stage, doing stuff, saying stuff, 'bad' stuff."

The character of Schooner, the husband of three past wives, Fish-Bones, Leviathan and

The Eel and of his present wife, Crustacea, who comes to show us her current struggles, is an egomaniac writer. He is played by Anna Allevalo. I found it unusual to see a male character written in considerable depth played by a woman. For one thing, I think the audience readily accepted the convention, and although it added to the humour - gave us more insights and made it easier to laugh - I don't think the analysis was less credible because it wasn't the 'real thing' acting it. At any rate, it's a real contribution in the examination of gender which is going on in contemporary art.

Another thing I liked about the production is that there's a point to the play which was illustrated by the conclusion when all the female characters talk directly to the audience:

"Sit with me under the moon tree and share your stories with each other. Share them all - each and every one. For only by sharing all of your stories will you become empty. And only when you are empty can you be filled."

"Bring your laces and your pots, your quilts and rugs and bandages, bring your tears and your songs and your stories, bring your hopes and your disappointments, your anger and your love, and build the moon tree. Build it out of your own lunacy."

As Kathy says: "It's a healing play. It's just doing what women have been doing in consciousness raising groups and even before, sitting around the kitchen table, letting their hair down - what's left of it, the part we haven't pulled out yet!"

Gay Bell is a Toronto playwright.

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Gilt-Edged Aesthetic

Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change, by Lucy R. Lippard, Dutton, New York, 1984.

Feminist Collage: Educating Women in the Visual Arts, Judy Loeb, editor. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1979

Reviewed by Susan Crean

I happened to be in New York in 1970 when the American Association of Museums was holding meetings in an appropriately grandiose Manhattan hotel and with all the solemnity befitting a gathering of THE Art World Establishment. Governor Nelson Rockefeller, whose family is unrivaled in the role of self-appointed Medici to American Art (and who personally bankrolled the founding of the Museum of Modern Art) was himself slated to speak on the last day, underlining the fact that in the USA there are some places (ie, museum boardrooms) where art and politics most definitely do mix. This, incidentally, was taking place only a few weeks after Kent State, when anti-war sentiment was at its peak in the US and the activism of the 60s counter-culture was still alive and kicking shins. One might have expected some of that turmoil to spill over into the arts, inspiring artists to re-examine their own political position in the imperial scheme of things.

However, the officials of the AAM weren't expecting a group of local artists, members of the recently founded Art Workers Coalition, to gate-crash their discussion. As a foreign observer, I was somewhat amazed by the reaction. Although there was one fairly unruly plenary when the AWC representatives tried to get the museum pros to take a stand on the war, the AAM didn't stonewall, but rather hurriedly arranged a special artists' panel. For a moment it looked as if the AWC had carried the day. What I didn't realize immediately was that instead of calling the NYPD, they had instead called in the secret police to control the demonstration from within.

The morning Rockefeller came to speak, I sat on the sidelines and watched as a crew of plainclothesmen fanned through the mezzanine, expertly herding the artists to one side. I saw one six-footer trip an elderly woman in (yes) running shoes from behind so he could snatch her placard away. They were rough, determined and very fast, and I had a swift introduction to the politics of power, American style.

I kept in touch with the AWC for several years after, interested in their activities because of the work I was doing with Canadian Artists Representation (CAR) which by 1972 was also taking on the museums and art galleries. Eventually the newsletters stopped coming and though I assumed the organization had gone under, I always wondered what had happened. The answer I found in Lucy Lippard's book. *Get the Message?* is a collection of articles and lectures written over the past fifteen years, documenting her evolution as an art critic from her early years as a follower of 'formalism,' to the left politics of the AWC period and from there to feminism.

The AWC came along at a strategic moment for Lippard, and no doubt many American artists. "I already sensed the art world was an unhealthy place for art and artists, but I had no progressive theory with which to analyze my discontent," she tells us. Through the Coalition she made contact with people who did and, overcoming her former antagonism to groups, became deeply involved with what she calls "activist art," participating in all sorts of protests and guerilla actions designed to elucidate the confluence of interests among the various branches of the power structure, from patrons to the Pentagon. (One of the most famous was the unannounced appearance of the AWC at a board meeting of the Metropolitan Museum during which a box of cockroaches was dumped in the middle of the table.) This was the beginning of an intellectual odyssey which resulted in some of the finest political writing in the field.

In *Get the Message?* there are two stellar

examples of Lippard at her best. "The Pink Glass Sawn: Upward and Downward Mobility in the Art World" (1977) which examines the class system of the art world and schizophrenia of artists who 'make it' by establishing a reputation and selling to the upper classes while artistically identifying with an avant-garde which is anti-establishment, anti-commercial and ideologically downwardly mobile. "Looking at and 'appreciating' art... has always been understood as an instrument of upward social mobility in which owning art is the ultimate step, and making art is at the bottom of the scale." Into this discussion Lippard weaves a feminist analysis with some trenchant insights. For example: "To understand the woman artist's position... it is necessary to know that in America artists are rarely respected unless they are stars, or rich, or mad, or dead. Being an artist is not being 'somebody'... A man who becomes an artist is asked when he is going to 'go to work' and he is not-so-covertly considered a child, a sissy (a woman)... someone who has a hobby rather than a vocation, someone who can't make money and therefore cannot hold his head up in the real world of men - at least until his work sells... Male artists, bending over backwards to rid themselves of this stigma tend to be particularly susceptible to insecurity and *machismo*. Women daring to insist on their place in the primary rank - as art makers rather than art housekeepers (curators, critics, dealers and 'patrons') - inherit a heavy burden of male fears in addition to the economic and psychological discrimination still rampant in a patriarchal money-oriented society." Hmhmhm.

"Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980" (1981) is a hard-hitting socio-aesthetic review of the (then) current artscene which wanders gleefully into taboo territory such as the relationship between elitism and the notion of Quality. The snobism of the purveyors of 'high' art, Lippard argues, scorn a "less than classy audience" and dismiss any art which is popular and therefore a "crowd-pleaser." Here Lippard picks up on a theme she returns to again and again: the bone-headed apolitical bias of American artists who, inured by the mythologies of rugged American individualism and the purity of Art, reject any notion that art has something to do with politics or even the society it is produced in. Political art is 'bad' art; politically active artists are tainted (not *real* artists) for as the saying goes "if you want to send a message, call Western Union." And therein lay the seed which destroyed the AWC; for instead of leading to the establishment of an artists' union, it remained an agit-prop theatre troupe which eventually collapsed under political divergences and the strains of emerging feminism. All the same, in some ways the AWC seems to have been a precursor to the 70s style activist art in America which turned around the proposition that artists should be political about their art and exhorted artists to become artistic about their politics. Lippard's book is a mine of information about this ar-

tistic underground and the role of feminism as a cutting edge of a deliberately declassé avant-garde.

There are times, reading Lippard, when you can appreciate that there are real disadvantages in being an artist in the highly artificial environment of International Art circles. The difficulties of cutting through thick layers of gilt-edged elitism, hubris and mega-million vested interests which surround the richest and most powerful ruling class the world has ever seen, whose members spare no effort to keep its ideology intact and invisible, are overwhelming. The odds ranged against American artists actually getting together and organizing effectively to change that are astronomical.

Not so in Canada. Partly because the view from the periphery tends to be sharper and the contradictions of capitalism in a colony starker, partly because culture in this country has always been a more or less collective and public affair, the possibilities for progressive action here are actually greater. Certainly our equivalent of AWC (CAR/FAC) hasn't faded away. Artists' rights have been articulated and have become a part of the political culture in Canada. So, for example, we have a system of paying fees to artists whose work is exhibited in public galleries which American artists can only dream about.

On the other hand, the very hugeness of the American art scene obviously means that more people (including feminist theorists) can live off it. Lippard's book is evidence of that, as is *Feminist Collage*. This latter book serves well as a companion piece to Lippard's and deals with many of the same issues. An anthology of essays by teachers and art historians, the view this time is from inside the halls of academe where the politics are predictably blunted. (It includes an introduction by Joan Mondale, no less.) With a couple of exceptions, the radicalism is reserved for feminist reinterpretations of art history, made safe by distance. But there are, nonetheless, some interesting insights. The most stimulating theoretical contributions are Linda Nochlin's "Towards a Juster Vision: How Feminism Can Change Our Way of Looking at Art History" (basically a revisitation of the ideas she expounded first in her seminal 1972 piece "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?") and Mary D. Garrard's "Of Men, Women and Art: Some Historical Reflections" (which looks at the parallels between the status of art and the status of women, art having often been stigmatized as a womanly pursuit.) By far the best piece, or at least the most riveting, is artist June Wayne's "The Male Artist as a Stereotypical Female" in which she depicts the dilemma of women artists who are by definition battling a different collection of prejudices than men. How's this for an analysis in a nutshell:

"When women and minority artists clamour to share the recognition and rewards available till now to a few white males, they merely add themselves to an overcrowded talent pool... There are something more than three hundred aesthetically valid artists without dealers for every artist of comparable quality with one. I doubt that more than one artist in fifty who have galleries live from sales their dealer generates... Many women note that half of nothing is nothing and that to share what the male artists have been getting is to move from our harem to theirs."

As Wayne and others who explore the theme point out, the problem for women artists in gaining acceptance as real professionals is having to dispell the prejudice which sees them as housewife-hobbyists, mere dabblers. While the men are out there swaggering around trying to prove they can be artists and real men too, the women have to prove they are not typically female. So says Wayne, "A few of us have achieved some recognition, but we clearly carry demonic markings to hide our female stigmata. We live in lofts and storefronts and other wildly unconventional spaces just like male artists do. We dress in unisex or as fantastic eccentrics: Nevelson and O'Keeffe do not shop at Peck and Peck. As successful (women) artists, we *must* prefer lovers to husbands and be on guard every moment against conventionalized female gestures. If one is lesbian, so much the better; this demonizes the image and gains one the wife that every artist needs to do the scut work of a career."

In sum, these two books are high-protein food for thought; useful theoretically if not politically to Canadian readers.

Susan Crean is a feminist author, cultural critic, and contributing editor of This Magazine.

THE A SPACE EXHIBITION COMMITTEE IS CALLING FOR PROPOSALS FOR A MULTI DISCIPLINARY PROJECT

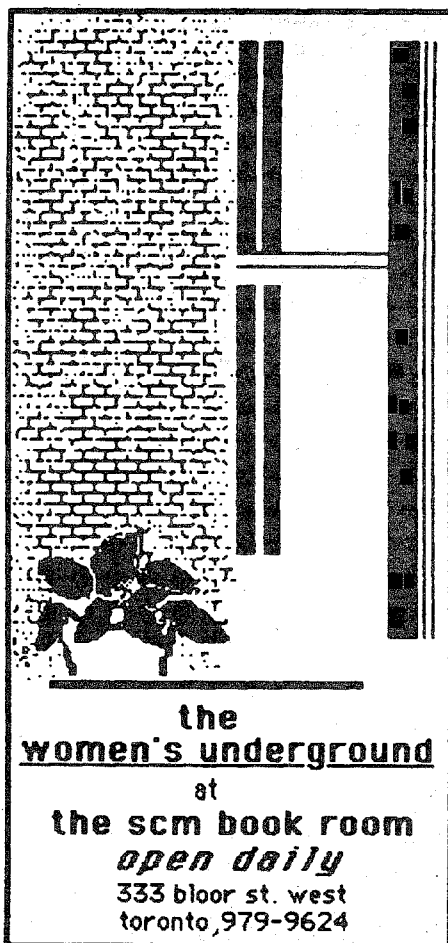
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- ▶ HOW IT OPERATES IN POPULAR CULTURE.
- ▶ WHAT DISTINGUISHES A "NATION" FROM A "STATE"?
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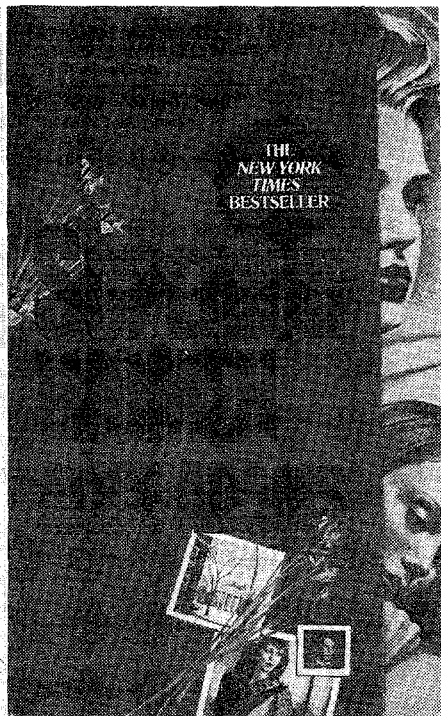
The project will encompass a wide scope of art activity along with the publication of several essays. We are encouraging the submission of essay outlines from writers and are looking for proposals from artists active in various media. The submissions and proposals may consider the statements listed above or others not mentioned. What ever the case, we encourage people to respond from the point of view of their own experience.

Proposals will be accepted until January 1st, 1986, and should be addressed to: NATIONALISM, EXHIBITION COMMITTEE, A SPACE, 204 SPADINA AVE., TORONTO, ONTARIO M5T 2C2



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Superior Melodrama



Superior Women, by Alice Adams. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

Reviewed by Libby Scheier

Alice Adams' *Superior Women* is a book with a message, with several messages, but they are mainly critical. We see what is bad with the world, but are not given any easy answers about what to do. We are pointed in a few directions and also given the feeling that we live in a period of transition, which means both the frightening disintegration of what we know and an atmosphere of hopeful possibility.

Adams is not a political novelist in the manner of Marge Piercy. There are no long analytical speeches, no blueprints for change. *Superior Women* could pass for a well written psychological novel about the interesting lives of five women. However, the accumulation of events and perceptions leaves us at the end with the sense of a writer with a very political,

feminist purpose in mind.

Adams writes with a light, quick brush. Her characterizations are calligraphic—a few words highlight one characteristic, like a certain frown, and a sharp picture is painted. It's a deceptively simple writing, that builds with cumulative force. I became gradually mesmerized by this book, to the extent that I took it with me to the corner store, reading as I walked. This may be partly because I identified strongly with the central character, but it is also because Adams is a very good storyteller. I wanted to see what was going to happen, and I also began to care about the characters as though they were real.

The novel is a variation on Mary McCarthy's *The Group*, a model which has been much copied. *Superior Women* looks at the lives of five women as they begin their freshman year at Radcliffe in the 1940s, and then follows them into late middle age. Adams is very self-conscious about the story model and that it has been used frequently in recent decades: her characters sometimes allude to books about girls in boarding school, and what it would be like if they wrote a book about themselves.

The essential group is four women: Lavinia, the beautiful, blond, slim, rich, self-possessed, debutante WASP, envy of the other girls and the person who values appearances above all else; Cathy, the quiet, intelligent, devout Catholic; Peg, the big, bearty girl from an ultra-conservative, wealthy family, who likes to mother everyone; and Megan, the bright girl from a working-class family who comes to Radcliffe on scholarship, and feels uncomfortable with her privileged friends. The fifth person, Janet, is an intellectual Jew, down-to-earth and possessing integrity, but somewhat peripheral to the group (one reason for this being Lavinia's anti-Semitism). Janet is important in the first part of the novel, but is little heard from in the second part. This is too bad, because her story is interesting and, having become personally involved in the book, I wanted to know more about what happened to her.

While Adams adeptly switches point of view to present the world as seen by each main

character, Megan is clearly the central figure in the book. She is the least formed at the novel's outset, but fares better than Lavinia and Cathy later in terms of finding an acceptable way of living. While Megan is decidedly heterosexual throughout (moving through periods of promiscuity, celibacy, and what would be termed in the 70s a "primary relationship"), she retains a natural independence from the men she becomes involved with. She finds work in the New York publishing industry, first as an editor, later a literary agent. This does not fulfill her, and she remains uneasy and unsatisfied with her work throughout the book.

The male characters are mostly awful and the women who get caught up in nuclear families are either miserable or become less miserable by leaving. There are a few males who are okay: Henry, Megan's steady lover; Biff, a gay co-worker of Megan's in the publishing field; and Jackson, a black musician and ex-lover of Megan's.

Peg is also quite unformed as the novel begins. She enters a very traditional, family-approved marriage with a grossly insensitive businessman and has a nervous breakdown. Her psychiatrist is mainly concerned with lessening her feelings of aggression toward her husband and getting her to go to "pretty-ware" parties where they talk about being a perfect wife and mother. She finds herself by finding her lesbianism, leaving her marriage, and becoming a civil rights activist in the Southern US.

At the end of the novel, we find Peg and her lover, Vera, and Megan and her mother, Florence, sharing an old farmhouse in the American South, which they run as a temporary shelter for homeless people—"mostly women but sometimes men." Other men are present too—as regular weekend friends/lovers or as temporary visitors—but they are not integral to this loose collective. At this juncture, Adams avoids the temptation to present this as a happy ending, an alternative social formation that brings happiness to all. While these people's lives are not wrecked or wretched like the lives of the other characters, they are not calm and fulfilled either. Peg is

insecure about her lover's loyalty. Megan finds the work difficult and has not come to peaceful terms with her relationship with Henry and other men. But what you do have here is gays and straights, whites and blacks, even women and men, getting on reasonably well together—and people engaged in work they are not ashamed of.

A weakness in the book's story line and character development is the short shrift given the bearing and raising of children in the lives of the main characters. All of them, with the important exception of Megan, have children, but the offspring are mainly alluded to in a cursory manner, as accidents that befall individuals. The children generally turn into opposites of their parents. No one seems to have had a child on purpose or derived any satisfaction from it (though this may reflect a 1950s reality). Megan has little to say on this score except briefly to wonder, toward the end of the book, whether she regrets being childless and to decide that, no, she doesn't (but without saying why). This gap in the book apparently derives from the author's reluctance to write about what she doesn't know. In a book that wants to portray fully all the important sides of five women's lives, however, it is a real lack. My sensitivity here no doubt comes from my own bias as a mother who greatly values parenting.

When I finished *Superior Women*, the silly cliché about Chinese food came to my mind—you eat this big, delicious meal and an hour later you're hungry again. I became a prisoner of this book, hypnotically chewing my way through its many courses, but felt frustrated when I was done. Maybe I wanted some solutions to all the pain presented. Maybe I wanted the never-quite-formed Megan to get her identity together once and for all, so I could take away a prescription for myself. I was mad at Alice Adams for touching so many nerves and leaving me raw, and sad. But that I suppose is also what is good about this book—its honesty and its hope, its refusal to be simple-minded.

Libby Scheier is the author of *The Larger Life*, Black Moss Press, 1983.

Women of Influence: Political Notables

Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics, by Penney Kome. Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1985. 240 pages.

Reviewed by Gabriella Goliger

Penney Kome's new book, *Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics*, is a tribute to Canadian women's political achievement of recent years and a paean to the women who have attempted to enter traditionally male domains of power. Kome's jumping off point is the 1984 election campaign during which, she asserts, the women's vote was courted as never before. Women's issues became the "motherhood issues of the campaign" as each of the parties attempted to cater to feminist demands. From this milestone, Kome looks back over the past 100 years to trace Canadian women's growing influence and political clout, focusing particularly on events in the past 20 years—The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, International Women's Year, the fight to include entrenchment of sexual equality in the Canadian constitution and the 1984 campaign with its nationally televised debate on women's issues.

The book is obviously very timely and, written in a breezy, journalistic style, could serve as a readable complement to more academic studies. Unfortunately, Kome's apparent need to praise, to cheer and to chalk up victories weakens her analysis.

A prime example is her explanation of why a gender gap—the concept that women en bloc vote differently from men—failed to materialize in the 1984 elections. Canadian women, like Canadian men, overwhelmingly voted Tory, the party that has historically represented traditional rather than feminist values. Kome's reasoning is that both the Conservatives and the Liberals had very

similar policies and that the campaign hinged on image rather than issues. The Liberals made some big mistakes with theirs—John Turner patronizingly patted Iona Campagnolo's bottom, MP Alistair MacBain was found guilty of sexual harassment. Although the NDP was the party with the strongest platform on women's issues, Kome argues that "there was no chance that the NDP would form the government," implying that that's why women failed to support it. The Tories, therefore, got women's vote by default.

Kome's assumption through all this is that Canada's women really did vote with their feminist instincts, that women's issues were definitely high on their priority lists. She does not consider the possibility that other issues were ultimately more important to the majority of women, that their feminist consciousness did not run very deep, that they were prepared to settle for lip-service. Uncomfortable thoughts, indeed, but ones that must at least be discussed in the light of such an unprecedented Conservative victory.

Kome goes on to tell us everything that we gained through the 1984 elections—double the number of women MPs in the House of Commons, greater attention paid to women's concerns—but she never contemplates what we may have lost by giving the Progressive Conservative Party such an overwhelming mandate.

Another example of how Kome is too liberal with her feminist brownie points is her treatment of the so-called "Yvette" phenomenon, the movement among Québec women to defeat the 1981 referendum on sovereignty-association. During the campaign, PQ Minister Lise Payette handed the "Non" forces ammunition. She offended Québec housewives by comparing Claude Ryan's wife to "Yvette," a housewife character in grade-school textbooks. As a result, thousands of Québec women rallied to the "Non" side and, in one gala event, packed the Montréal

Forum to affirm their solidarity for "motherhood and motherland."

"Yet," writes Kome, "it was not an anti-feminist event, according to academics who studied it afterwards." The point is, was it a feminist one? Kome makes it sound as if it was. There are many examples in history of how women have thrown their support behind causes, nationalist or otherwise (e.g. conscription during World War I). The fact that they do so does not, in itself, make the cause feminist.

Although *Women of Influence* is weak when it comes to issues, it does introduce us to many interesting and notable women. Some are well-known, such as Emily Murphy and Dr. Emily Stowe, others such as Madelaine Parent, deserve greater recognition. Solidly researched, the book is peppered with colourful anecdotes gleaned from a variety of sources including first-hand interviews. And it documents many important modern events in the history of Canada's women's movement.

But at times Kome clutters her text with too many names so that it reads like a Who's Who or a guest list. At times, also, she wanders down irrelevant sidetracks that distract the reader. Her tendency to jump around from topic to topic and to use long quotations rather than summaries to make her points adds to the disjointed quality of the narrative. Finally, her writing occasionally slides into tasteless clichés ("Youthful, animated and soft-spoken, Hosek's appearance counters all the stereotypes of feminists as shrill, mannish women.")

For those who are fascinated by politics or hungry for information about Canada's women's movement, *Women of Influence* is worth buying. But anyone seeking solid analysis or a good read is likely to be disappointed.

Gabriella Goliger is a writer living in Ottawa.

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The Clichettes: Out of This World



She Devils: Janice Hladki (L.), Johanna Householder and Louise Garfield.

by Susan G. Cole

In the early 60s, an array of what became known as "girl groups" released pop records about bad love and mad love. Tragic romance, along with the "dulang dulang" - "de-doo-run-run" back-up vocals, became the thematic and musical signatures for these groups and they repeated the formula with such regularity that the sensibility itself, even within the space of just five years, became something of a cliché. Lip-synching - mouthing the words to recordings - became popular when Dick Clark's American Bandstand featured these pop singers who lip-synched to their own records, pretending to perform live, and not in the least convincingly. Thus lip-synching became a laughable cliché of early 60s music promotion.

Johanna Householder, Louise Garfield and Janice Hladki, all of them devoted to the icons of culture, especially the girls in those groups, knew this. They donned improbable wigs, so that they would look like their role models (remember the 60s beehive look?) and began to lip synch, tearing apart the conventions of sex stereotypes and sexual oppression/repression of the 50s and 60s. They called themselves the Clichettes.

In performance, the Clichettes have always been out of this world, literally and figuratively. Literally speaking, audiences not familiar with the Clichettes brand of comic mayhem could not be sure whether it was a send-up or a put-down, and even the judges in the US may have missed the joke when, faced with the Clichettes' technical brilliance, they bestowed them first prize at the national lip-synching contest in Houston last year. Figuratively speaking, the Clichettes' theatre has always taken them into the realm of science fiction and inter-planetary travel where the implications of sexist ritual can be developed without constraint, dissected and of course, parodied.

She Devils of Niagara is the latest of their theatrical offerings, at the Factory Theatre in Toronto, and admirers who have had to settle for just snippets of Clichette hilarity at benefits can now take in a full two hours of frenzied satire. The time: 1998; the place: Earth, at Niagara Falls (Canadian side of course). Jan, Lou and Jo, three intergalactic travellers, alight to discover that the "great sperm male" is an endangered species. The gender police are implementing a ten-year plan to preserve male culture, and martial law commands that everyone behave like men. This means that women have to lower their voices, learn to play football and make it appear as if they have a jock-strap-full between their legs. It also means that when the trio lands a gig at Club Over the Falls, their act must denigrate femaleness and celebrate machismo in all its forms. This is the set-up for most of the lip-synch routines.

Jan, Lou and Jo have their own personal preoccupations in a script, co-written with Marni Jackson, that careens with one-liners.

Jan misses sex. She won't settle for the fast-food version available at the SCBO (complete with a cigarette afterwards) and so she tries the ultimate subversion: cooking up the right chemical solution for gender differentiation. Lou wants love and finds it with a turtle. Jo is more practical and looks for more work so that she can pay off fines incurred by violating the laws of mono-gender. She does a stint at the wax museum where only one half of history is on display; female heroines have been relegated to the basement. There is a happy ending to all this, all the more wonderful because the Clichettes wind up with a superb change of musical gears.

As is usually the case with comedy that has to try *everything*, the play lacks the kind of structural tension that might make it work for more conventional theatre goers. The gender police appear too many times, so that the suspense they might have generated never seems to materialize. The pleasure in the performance derives more from one-liners than from plot. And the Clichettes are more innovative as performers - lip-synchers and dancers - than as actors. In the end, the Factory Theatre stage seems to overwhelm the performance, and the problem is exacerbated by a nebulous set and flat lighting that never really captures all the potential of a Clichette performance. The spectacular costumes often make up for the technical problems, but *She Devils'* episodic nature makes it more a revue than capital-T Theatre, which might explain Toronto critics' antipathy to the work.

But these are a matter of form (who cares about critics anyway? Certainly the Clichettes don't) and misses the essence of the Clichettes' vision. They have always been on the brink of a pop epiphany in which mainstream music wails out the pleasure and pain of sex and romance. In past performances, their ideosyncratic tastes held them back from the ultimate revelation. *Half Human, Half Heartache*, their first full-length theatre piece (about the other side of the gender dilemma: how to come back to earth and behave like girls without going crazy) often missed because of the Clichettes' purist zeal. They selected obscure material, little known songs by well-known girl groups, appearing to avoid on purpose material that would bring a flash of recognition to an audience. This time, they let go of some of their obscurantism and give us a long-awaited rendition of the Shangri Las' "You Can Never Go Home Anymore," while still finding amazing tidbits, especially a spoken piece on the (male) virtues of quail hunting, that sustain their reputations as archivists.

But lip-synching is really the hook here, and it is vintage Clichettes. Every nuance counts, the tug of a crotch, the stroking of a chin, all performed with that award-winning perfect unison. So if the name Clichette evokes something feminine and diminutive, don't be fooled. There is nothing diminutive about *She Devils of Niagara*. And feminine? Not on planet Earth, not in 1998, and not when the Clichettes "Walk like a man." ●

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INCEST SURVIVOR GROUP: Small group, creative approach, sliding scale, new members welcome. For more information, call Michele (416) 977-7609, Wendy (416) 977-7609 or (416) 598-4105.

THE WOMEN'S INFORMATION LINE welcomes new volunteers to operate feminist phone referral service. Call Ottie: (416) 920-9797.

YOU ARE COMMITTED to a crazy life, but you want to change your diet. Nutrition/cooking workshop - Grains and Casseroles, November 10, 11-4 pm; Soups and Stews, December 1, 11-4 pm; \$40 per workshop. Queen Street West. Diana Meredith (416) 979-2319; Charna Gord (416) 593-6591.

WOMEN'S JOURNAL WRITING GROUP forming: Mondays 10 am to 12 noon, or 7 to 9 pm. \$50 per month. Also journal writing workshop, Saturday, November 23, 9-4 pm. \$50. For information, call Melinda (416) 759-7389.

GAY/LESBIAN RIGHTS RESEARCHER WANTED. Innovative, independent gay/lesbian rights researcher with office and interviewing skills required to research a brief to the Ontario Legislature. Full-time, Dec/85 - Feb/86. Toronto access required. Reply no later than November 15, 1985 to: Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario (CGRO), Box 822, Station A, Toronto M5W 1G3.

DYKE DIARIES. Anthology of lesbian personal writings - diaries, journals, letters, thoughts - requests submissions of up to 20 pages. Pieces used may be published anonymously if the writer wishes; confidentiality will be strictly observed. Please include year of writing and age of writer at the time. Deadline: March 1, 1986. Send material to Frances Rooney, PO Box 868, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2Z2.

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OUTSIDE BROADSIDE

TORONTO WOMEN'S EVENTS CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 1985

Compiled by Catherine Maunsell

● **Friday, November 1:** The Clichettes, in "She-Devils of Niagara." Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St. Tickets and info: 864-9971. To Sunday, November 17.

● **Friday, November 1:** Kristi Magraw performs with Elizabeth Paddon and Dunstan Morey. Free Times Café, 320 College St. 9 pm. \$5. Also Saturday, November 2.

● **Friday, November 1:** "Signs of Life" by Joan Schenkar, part of the International Playreading Series Transformations coming to Nightwood Theatre. Theatre Centre, 296 Brunswick Ave. \$3. Info: 927-8998.

● **Saturday, November 2:** "Masterpieces" by Sarah Daniels, her response to a snuff movie is part of the international Playreading Series Transformations, coming to Nightwood Theatre. Theatre Centre, 296 Brunswick Ave. \$3. Info: 927-8998. To Sunday, November 3.

● **Saturday, November 2:** Project Health Care Workers/Visible Minority Health Care Team presents "Workshop '85 - Facing the Challenge," which will explore worklife discrimination factors including professional and economic equity issues facing visible minorities and those new in the immigrant workforce in the Canadian health care community. MacDonald Block, 900 Bay St. \$25 organization, \$10 individual. Registration, 8-9 am. Info: Clarence Cachagee, 964-7285/7283. To Sunday, November 3.

● **Saturday, November 2:** Toronto Nuclear Awareness is holding a used book sale. Trinity-St Paul's Centre, 427 Bloor St. West. Pick-up and info: 537-0438.

● **Sunday, November 3:** Tools for Peace Benefit Concert with Volcants: 3 Nicaraguan "new song" musicians. Trinity-St Paul's, 427 Bloor St. West. 7 pm. Tickets at DEC, Toronto Women's Bookstore, SCM. Info: 533-1849.

● **Sunday, November 3:** Captive - Images of Women, a film series highlighting societally imposed psychological and physical forms of captivity. The Rivoli, 334 Queen St. W. Info: 598-1447.

● **Sunday, November 3:** Toronto Premiere of "Dark Lullabies," a film which focuses on the generation of children born to Holocaust survivors, as seen through the eyes of a woman who is the child of Jewish survivors. Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor St. West. 2:30 pm. Free. Info: 532-6677.

Week of November 4

● **Monday, November 4:** The Women's Group, an open lesbian discussion group, meets at 519 Church St. Community Centre. 8 pm. Info: 923-2778. Also Monday, November 11, 18 and 25.

● **Monday, November 4:** The Centre for Women's Studies in Education presents "Popular Feminism," a lecture and discussion series in which women's studies faculty members talk on how feminism has shaped their work. Jeri Dawn Wine speaks on "Towards a Feminist Standpoint for Psychology." OISE, 252 Bloor St. West, Room 2-212. 8 pm. Free. Info: 923-6641, ext. 2520/2204.

● **Monday, November 4:** Women's Journal Writing Group. 10 am - 12 noon or 7 pm - 9 pm. Also Mondays, November 11, 18 and 25. For information, call Melinda, 759-7389.

● **Monday, November 4:** Bratty and the Babysitters at the Holiday, 651 Queen St. West (at Bathurst). Also November 5 and 6.

● **Tuesday, November 5:** Join the Participatory Research Group for the premiere of their new slide/tape show, "Who's in Control: Women and Microtechnology," and the launching of their booklet "Short Circuit: Women on the Global Assembly Line." Development Education Centre (basement), 229 College St. 7-9 pm. Info: 961-8638.

● **Tuesday, November 5:** The Women's Information Line has new hours starting today: 7-9 pm, every Tuesday and Thursday. Messages may be left at any time, (416) 926-8700.

● **Tuesday, November 5:** Lesbian Phone Line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30 - 10:30 pm. 533-6120. Also Tuesdays, November 12, 19 and 26.

● **Wednesday, November 6:** Exhibition of recent works by Anne Plaxton Smith. Opening, 7:30-10:00 pm. Sparkes Gallery, 693A Queen St. West. Info: 368-6756. To Saturday, November 30.

● **Wednesday, November 6:** Larry Grossman will speak on "Public Education: Curriculum for Public Participation," sponsored by the Learnx Foundation. St. Lawrence Centre, 27 Front St. East. 7:30 pm. Free.

● **Wednesday, November 6:** Older Women, a group exhibition of women artists 50 years and older. Gallery 940, 940 Queen St. East. Info: 466-2030. To Saturday, November 23.

● **Thursday, November 7:** Canadian Action for Nicaragua general meeting with a special educational presentation by South Africa's ANC. 7:30 pm. Info and location: 534-1766.

● **Thursday, November 7:** Women's Studies Bag Lunch Talks: 1985 Reports from Nairobi, with Jackie Claxton, Women's Program, Secretary of State. New College Library, 20 Willcocks St. 12-1 pm. Free.

● **Thursday, November 7:** Lesbian Phone Line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30 - 10:30 pm. 533-6120. Also Thursdays, November 14, 21 and 28.

● **Friday, November 8:** The Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre (WCREC) will be celebrating its 10th anniversary with two days of workshops, an evening birthday buffet and a dance. Workshops will focus on identity, empowerment, creativity and relationships. Keynote speaker: Hogue Wyckoff. OISE, 252 Bloor St. West. \$165 individual, \$215 organization, \$45 student (limited spaces). Info: Gwen Roe, 534-7501. To Saturday, November 9.



Sweet Honey in the Rock at Con Hall, November 16.

● **Saturday, November 9:** Otherwise Benefit, an evening of entertainment on behalf of the feminist newspaper at U of T, OtherWise. Performers: Sandy Alexander, Afua Pam Cooper, Janine Fuller, and Ingrid MacDonald. Henry's (upstairs), 150 Harbord Street. \$6. employed/donation, \$4 others. Info: 925-2793, afternoons.

● **Saturday, November 9:** WCREC's 10th anniversary bash - everyone welcome. The Toronto Press Club, 5 Wellesley St. West. 7 pm - 1 am. Buffet 7:30 pm. MC Pat Henderson, and DJ Deb Parent. \$20. Cash bar. Info: 534-7501.

● **Sunday, November 10:** The Alternative Clothing Show/Sale will donate partial proceeds to OXFAM-Canada's relief work in Africa. The Concert Hall, 999 Yonge St. \$3.50. 11 am - 6 pm. Info: 532-3558.

● **Sunday, November 10:** Concert for the Margaret Frazer Scholarship Fund: MC June Callwood will host an evening of chamber music and duets by a variety of professionals. Holy Trinity United Church (behind the Eaton Centre). \$10 in advance at Recorder Centre, 999 Dovercourt (1 block south of Dupont). 8 pm. Info: 534-7932.

Week of November 11

● **Thursday, November 14:** Women's Studies Bag Lunch: 1985 Reports from Nairobi, with Nikita Crook-Stevens and Phyllis Sereda of U of T Women's Studies. New College Library, 20 Willcocks St. 12 - 1 pm. Free.

● **Thursday, November 14:** Development Education Centre benefit for Tools for Peace, featuring the Wildflower Dance Brigade. The Music Hall, 147 Danforth Ave. 7:30 pm. \$6 advance, \$7.50 at the door. Info: 597-0328.

● **Friday, November 15:** Women's Independent Thoughtz (WITZ): A seminar/discussion group for the exchange of ideas and creative endeavours in art, literature, philosophy and political thought. Topic: Lesbian identity. Info: Lois, 223-1478 or Amber, 481-9894.

● **Friday, November 15:** The annual pre-holiday book sale, to raise funds for the Elizabeth Fry Society. 215 Wellesley St. East. 10 am to 8 pm. Also Saturday, November 16, 9 am to 4 pm. Info: 924-3809.

● **Sunday, November 17:** Ravenwing, a course in women's spirituality including Tarot, crystals, chanting, meditation and more. Info: Janice Canning 626-5465 or 656-8760.

Week of November 18

● **Monday, November 18:** Stephen Lewis will speak on Public Education for World Citizenship, sponsored by the Learnx Foundation. Convocation Hall, U of T. 7:30 pm. Free.

● **Thursday, November 21:** Women's Studies Bag Lunch Talks: 1985 Reports from Nairobi, with Shelagh Wilkinson, Director of Women's Studies, York University. New College Library, 20 Willcocks. 12-1 pm. Free.

● **Friday, November 22:** Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution, a conference sponsored by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG), will feature speakers, workshops, films and creative performance. OISE. 252 Bloor St. West. \$35 (\$20 students/unemployed). Childcare, wheelchair accessible, interpreted for the hearing impaired. Info: Paula Rochaman or Diana Roberts, 978-3032. To Sunday, November 24.

● **Friday, November 22:** Jean Lamon, violin soloist in Tafelmusik's first performance of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" at Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, 427 Bloor St. West. 8:00 pm. Call (416) 964-6337 for tickets: \$9, \$12, \$16 and \$20. Also Saturday, 23 November.

● **Saturday, November 23:** Women's Journal Writing Group, all-day workshop. Info: Melinda, 759-7389.

Week of November 25

● **Wednesday, November 27:** Mary Paisley's black and white drawings depict the irony, absurdity and pain of being pregnant and unmarried, relinquishing the child only to search for him 20 years later. Gallery 940, 940 Queen St. East. Info: 466-2030. To Saturday, December 14.

● **Wednesday, November 27:** NFB screens D.E.S.: An Uncertain Legacy. NFB Theatre, 1 Lombard St. 12:15 pm. Free. Info: 369-4093.

● **Thursday, November 28:** An evening of creative solidarity for women who grew up poor or working class only. Please come and share your stories, art, music and poetry that expresses your class experience. Wheelchair accessible. 7 pm. at 519 Church Street. Free. For more information, call Lilith (416) 531-8537 or Michelle (416) 594-2930 (after 5 pm.)

● **Friday, November 29:** Chris Rawlings and Cathy Miller, feminist singer/songwriter from Ottawa perform at the Free Times Café, 320 College St. 9 pm. \$5. Also Saturday, November 30.

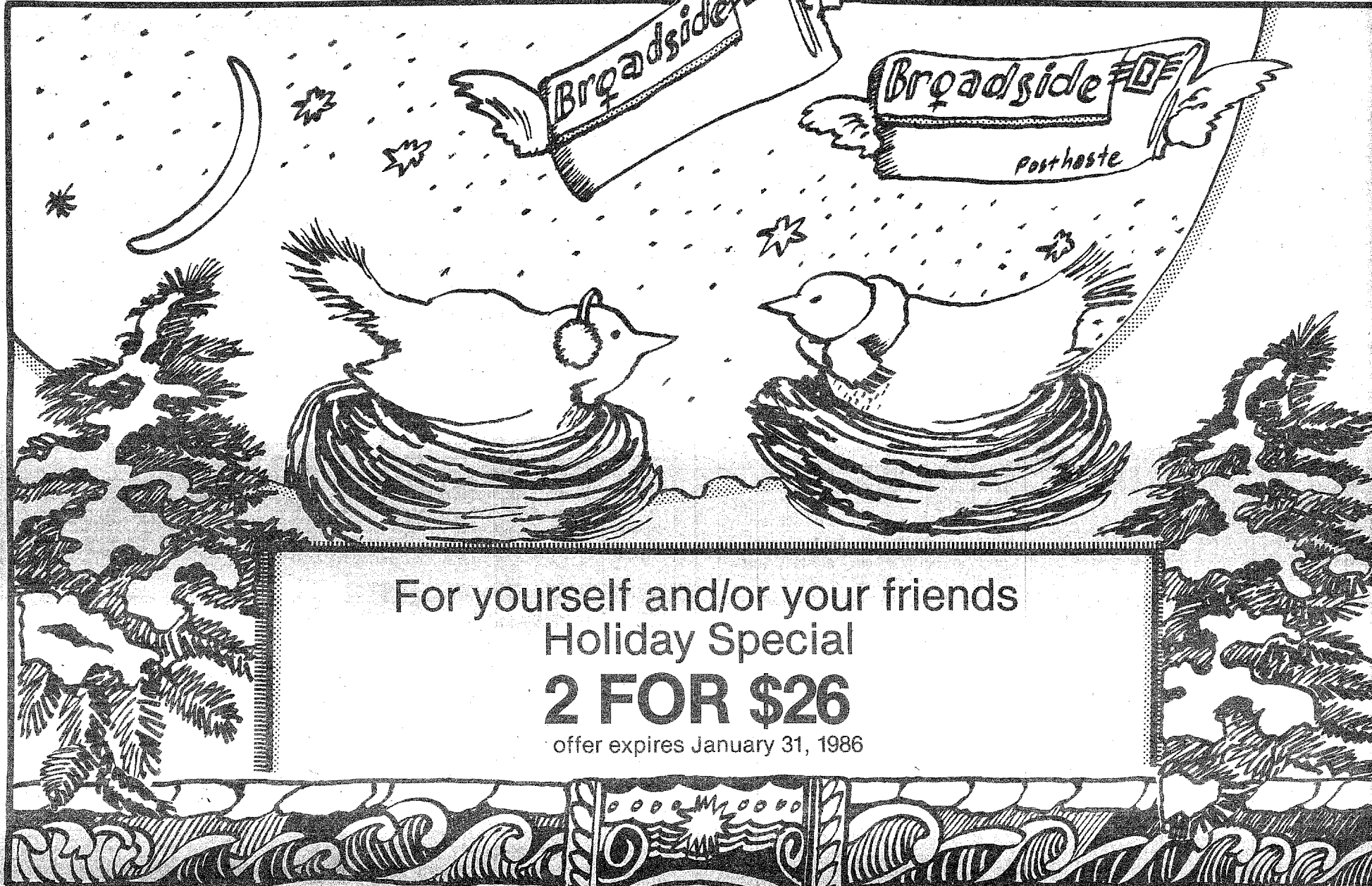
● **Friday, November 29:** "No Small Change: The Story of the Eaton's Strike," a 50 minute colour documentary videotape by Emma Productions has its premiere screening at Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St. 8 pm. \$5/\$3. Cash bar. Advance tickets at Toronto Women's Bookstore and DEC. Info: 537-6207, 533-2738.

● **Friday, November 29:** "Voices Spoken, Voices Heard," an International Event on Violence Against Women. Keynote Speaker: Charlotte Bunch. Cultural Performance by the Ruah Dance Theatre. Harbord Collegiate, 286 Harbord St. 7 pm. Tickets: \$6/\$4, available at DEC, Toronto Women's Bookstore and SCM Bookroom. Info: 961-8100.

● **Saturday, November 30:** "Voices Spoken, Voices Heard," an International Event on Violence Against Women. Workshops: Violence in the Home, Sexual Assault, State Violence, Organizing. Film Program and Cultural Expressions. Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. Jorgenson Hall, 380 Victoria St. 9:30 am - 5 pm. \$10/\$5 (lunch included). To register, call: 961-8100. All women welcome.

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