

MONTREAL (CUP) — Wednesday night we had just returned for an organized trip to Stratford where we had seen Henry V—Tim, Sherry and we were discussing sex.

We had noticed during four days that there wasn't any sex on campus. We had spent the previous night with Betty playing Peeping Tom to confirm or (hopefully) disprove this assumption.

We had been asking questions all day, and late at night took a field survey.

Nothing.

It was an incredible situation: total freedom, private rooms with double cupboards, liquor, and absolutely no supervision.

#### UNMENTIONABLE

Yet there was no sex worth mentioning.

Tim, Sherry and we—a group that remained a unit for the rest of the seminar, though some people attached peripherally—decided to approach the problem more scientifically.

We determined to announce to the delegates, as others had done for other topics, that we would like to hold a discussion on who, and how many, people were 'getting it.' We thought the reaction to the announcement would be valuable per se.

We must emphasize at this point that this was a serious issue and

was highly relevant to the interpretation which we had formulated of the seminar situation, and which we shall elaborate later.

To make the announcement to the assembly concerning this discussion, we wanted someone to whom no aura of eccentricity was attached and who had gained a reputation of being a responsible, intelligent group leader.

#### THE CHOICE

We chose Matt Jonas. We went up to his room at 2:30 a.m. to talk it over. The ensuing three hours are profoundly etched in our minds.

We woke Matt up and he invited us into the room. We explained our proposition to him and asked whether he would make the announcement.

Then it began.

He insisted that we discuss this outside his door later. Within his room, we were to establish a 'collective consciousness' and analyze fully in phenomenological terms the sexual problem inherent in the Human Condition.

He maintained with increasing irrationality that unless we five solved the problem, there would be no significance in bringing it to the assembly.

Further, he insisted on the inevitability of our discussion with him. His method was to deeply



AT WATERLOO  
... a confused world

pry into our sexual past, assuming that we could generalize onto the Human Condition.

We were unwilling to play this game at that time.

#### DESCRIPTION

He consequently launched into a description of his own sexual experiences—one incidentally involving Honeybee—which was too detailed, and perhaps too perverted, to relate here.

He emerged from these episodes a tremendously destructive personality.

His meglomania, his inability to relate to others, as to us that night, his insistence on phenomenological terminology and conceptualization to the ninth degree, and not least of all his persistent fluctuation from rationality to near hysteria and back again, terrified us and made us doubt his sanity.

#### CANNOT EXPRESS

There are many details and aspects of this three-hour nightmare which we have not given and cannot express.

Suffice it to say that we were very frightened for him and for everyone with whom he would come in contact. When we left, he was angry and bewildered, and we four were actually shaking.

It was dawn.

All analysis of what happened at the seminar must begin with the set-up. A total freedom situation existed.

150 people had been taken out of their home environment and were deposited in Waterloo, almost as on a desert island. Not only did the seminar itself have no defined structure, and not only was

there no official supervision, but all the rules of residence were suspended for the seminar.

Liquor was permitted and consumed in abundance, and absolutely no curfews were in effect.

#### NO LAWS

The sexes were nominally segregated by residence, but doors of all the houses were open at all times, and the individual private rooms could be locked.

There was no machinery to prevent anything the delegates might have wanted to do.

A corollary of the lack of structured meetings was the lack of official relaxation of sleeping periods. With no real time divisions, outside of meal hours, all time ran into one until the concept of time ceased to have any meaning.

#### LITTLE SLEEP

We two, as many others, averaged three hours of sleep in each 24-hour time period during the week of the seminar—we talked for more than 20.

"Yesterday afternoon" became a relative term. After two or three days we felt we had been there for two or three weeks.

We remembered events but had great difficulty with sequences.

## Waterloo

## Seminar

# An existential nightmare

If we got them all straight for this article, it required no mean effort.

#### FREEDOM RESPONSIBLE

We hypothesize that the complete freedom of action that delegates had was fundamentally responsible for the corresponding sexual inhibition at the seminar.

Many told us they would have acted differently at home.

experiment with an anti-establishment value system.

Once they had set up their own rules—in effect establishment rules—they could not break them.

This led to acute anxiety.

An interesting sidelight was that many claimed the seminar planners had so structured the situation that delegates might experience anxiety in order to discuss it better. Many

on the crucial first steps of existentialism (or had rationalized their way through them) which led to a certain commitment to a way of life. They had not come to existentialism inevitably; they had chosen it and were simulating the pre-conditions.

Rationalization of this kind can be so intense under normal conditions one can get away with it for years.

#### IT'S A GAME

Sensitive, introspective people will at some point, however, realize the fundamental contradiction in treating existentialism as a philosophy—they will realize they are playing a very complex and elaborate game with themselves.

This awareness leads to tremendous inner conflicts.

The seminar set-up precipitated just such an introspective honesty with oneself. Many of the existentialists we had met arrived at this point of conflict.

There were two main alternatives open to them.

One entailed rejection of existentialism, at least as long as it rationalized imitation, a chosen (no matter how seriously) game, a theory. The other involved continuing to act in bad faith or self-deception, by strengthening defenses and remaining locked in a construct of phenomenological complexity.

#### THE RESULT

The existentialists all cracked at the point of conflict.

Those who resolved the problem by the latter method regained composure very swiftly. The others had the long task ahead of them of filling the vacuum left by abandoning a theory to which they had adhered for years.

They faced this task rationally, although with great anxiety.

We might hypothesize that, had the seminar lasted longer, delegates would have undergone a three-stage process: the stripping away of external identity; the abandonment of defense mechanisms; and the breakthrough to an understanding and acceptance of the human condition.

We don't know, we can't say.

It is difficult to discuss the meaning or value of the seminar—so many people were affected in so many ways.

## Background

No definitive article will ever be printed on the IXth CUS Seminar at the University of Waterloo last summer.

With no structure and no frame of reference weird things happened. There were 150 delegates to the seminar and none of them have been able to tell what happened to them—and this includes the writers of this article, John Fekete and Elly Alboim, both from McGill.

Identity and Anxiety were the subjects of the week-long talk-in, but Disintegration and Re-arrangement were the processes.

In the article they concentrate on sex and existentialists, perhaps the two most interesting features of the gathering.

They talk about other people as they saw them. But no one can trust anything written about the week. Observations are biased by each person's individual seminar, and these seem closer to the truth than most.

Unravelling the tangle of thoughts and feelings, crisis and resolution, what made Waterloo is an impossible task, but the article throws some light in dark corners and presents a viewpoint into the kaleidoscope.

In a restrictive environment, such as their home environment, they could buck establishment rules—that constituted a challenge and a game—and success led to prestige.

At Waterloo, they floundered in freedom like fish out of water—they had to make their own rules or suffocate. They could not accept the free environment and were forced to build restrictive structures of their own.

#### TRUST HURTS

They didn't want to abuse the trust the authorities had placed in them and hence were unwilling to

thus projected their own Frankenstein onto the administration.

#### EXISTENTIALISTS GO

Among the first to crack were the existentialists.

The freedom and unstructured situation forced a process of introspection that shook the foundation of their thinking. They had chosen existentialism as a philosophy, from the writings of Sartre and Camus, because it was consistent with their view of the world.

They had been alienated from their society and found sympathy in existentialist tenets.

However, they had missed out

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