

sex, lies and trash

by Alix Williams

Trash is brutally frank. Playwrights Kelly Clipperton and Deanna Wilkins even expect some audience members to walk out.

Controversial and risqué, *Trash* is a play that bluntly examines society's attitudes towards sex and sexuality in the '80s and '90s. While its heavy subject matter may be disturbing to some, *Trash* is filled with the personal experiences and feelings of its authors and cast members.

Seven years in the making, two months in rehearsal, the production makes its theatrical debut March 15 in Burton Theatre.

"I hope that people have an open mind when they come to see it," Clipperton said. "And for them to be as understanding as they possibly can."

Sex is no longer the behind-closed-doors subject it once was. Today's youth are asked to deal with a much broader sexual spectrum. *Trash* is an attempt to explain and communicate the wide range of confusion and feelings which surround these troubling topics. An experimental production, *Trash* features an ensemble cast, something which Clipperton sees as a dramatic euphemism for society at large, and how its morality and mores affect everyone.

His actors are no "Barbie and Ken stereotypes" but represent "a healthy variety" of the population. Much of *Trash* has been created through the two-month rehearsal process. While Clipperton and co-directors Christine Mattiuzzi and Tamara Hudgins mapped out

each scene in the play, its structure and content are developed by using the experiences and emotions of the cast.

Avoiding stereotypes became

of paramount importance — even to the point where the onstage development may be hard for the audience to swallow. Once the play was cast, workshops were

held allowing cast members to provide their own input.

Keeping with the tone of the production, many of the ensemble pieces have been staged to mod-

ern music — tunes such as the Eurythmics' "Brand New Day" and Berlin's "Trash" illustrate the conflicts young people must deal with, ranging from sexual abuse to homosexuality to parent-child relationships.

When asked if *Trash* presents parents or adult figures as the 'bad guys,' Mattiuzzi said, "It may seem that way, but that isn't our intention. This is a production based on personal feelings though, so blame is going to be laid somewhere at certain points."

Clipperton stresses that *Trash* deals more with the thoughts and feelings of a generation than with the search to establish right and wrong.

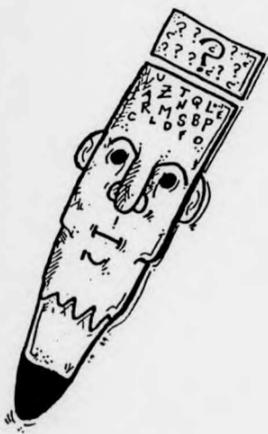
"These are our personal experiences. We aren't going to change them in order to remain neutral; let the audience decide where the blame lies," Clipperton said.

Although the cast of 14 found the topics difficult to deal with at first, Clipperton and Mattiuzzi said that things are going very well. The ensemble, which consists of all theatre students, has "gelled" and although no one expects perfection, the cast is confident the performances will be a worthwhile experience for both the audience and themselves.

The Anxious Company, putting on *Trash*, is comprised of student performance and production members, and has been financially assisted by Vanier College and YUTSA. *Trash* plays March 15-17 in Burton Theatre at 8 pm. Tickets are available at the door or (March 6-16) in the Fine Arts Lobby. Recommended for mature audiences only. Subject matter may be offensive to some.

joel trojanowski

the writer's block



Ira Nayman is a York student with vast experience as a writer. Ira has written numerous newspaper columns as well as dabbling with CBC television and radio.

by Ira Nayman

THINGS THEY DON'T TEACH YOU AT JOURNALISM SCHOOL, #2:

Some people don't do windows. I don't do news.

This is not to knock news writing. It takes talent to write anything well. It's just that my interest has always been in storytelling and the creative use of language and news writing doesn't allow for either of these qualities.

(Most news writing is based on the concept of the "inverted pyramid," in which facts are assembled in decreasing order of importance. The style is based on two considerations: that people will read an article until the information in it stops interesting them; and, if a story needs to be shortened due to space limitations, the last few paragraphs can be removed because they contain the least important information. I find this kind of writing formulaic; it also frequently disrupts the logic of the story it is trying to tell.)

I haven't written news in years, and even then, I wrote it only because the newspaper was desperate. It was the second year of *Imprint*, at the University of Waterloo. Almost all of the people who founded the newspaper and felt they had done their job,

disappeared. *The Chevron*, the paper *Imprint* replaced as the official student newspaper, was still being distributed on campus; most students probably didn't want to get involved in the war until a clear winner had been declared.

If a lizard had crawled through the door, the editor would have sat it behind a typewriter. And, I haven't looked like a lizard since I got out of diapers.

My finest moment (or worst, depending upon your point of view) came during a visit to UW by Bette Stephenson, then-Minister of Education. I had covered a number of her talks at institutions around the province, so I had a good idea of what to expect. Or, I thought I did; UW had a way of confounding one's expectations.

The campus Communists picketed outside the auditorium where Stephenson was to speak. No surprise there. Because they all worked for the *Chevron*, one of them (Brigid, I believe) was designated "reporter": it was her job to report on the speech, mainly by getting the reactions of

the others. If you're familiar with Marxist-Leninists, there's no surprise there, either.

The Engineering Society marching band played nearby. Engineers and Communists traditionally do not get along; at UW this conflict often erupted in snowball fights and vulgarity. This particular afternoon, the band had its desired effect: the protesters were all but drowned out.

A couple of minutes into her chat, Battleship Bette, as the Minister was affectionately referred to, was hit with a pie. If I had been a real journalist, I would have found out what flavour it was. Regardless, it was hard to miss the three or four people distributing pamphlets declaring the provincial government null and void, with a tombstone and the caption: "REST IN PIE."

The pie-petrator, Sam Wagar, was arrested on assault charges. He was released two or three hours later when the Minister, in an unusual burst of common sense, refused to press charges.

It was a circus, and I wrote it as such. I described the protesters

and the circumstances of the Minister's visit, then her introduction, and only then, the actual pie incident (much like I have here). It was a great short story, but it was lousy journalism. (The story was accompanied by a photo of the Minister, post-pie, which suggests that it was, in fact, custard.)

The story was picked up by the *Varsity*, at the University of Toronto, where it landed on the front page. They immediately took out all the local references on the not unreasonable assumption that Toronto readers wouldn't be interested in the loonies in Waterloo. While this is probably true, it did remove a lot of the colour from the article.

The Varsity then put the story into inverted pyramid style. Their version was pretty good journalism, but it was a lousy short story. It was probably when I got over appearing in *The Varsity* that I decided to stick to columns, reviews and features.

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You have to know your limitations.