

York-based periodicals flourish

Critical, literary and academic journals fill void

By LAURA LUSH

Despite an economic climate that has never been favourable to literary and critical periodicals, York-based publications continue to flourish thanks to the efforts of a hearty few who believe their magazines are filling a void in the publishing marketplace.

As Atkinson College English professor and author Barry Callaghan put it, "Journals are independent and by and large come out of the devotion of the people who start them." Callaghan, who has been teaching at York since 1966, founded his literary journal *Exile* in 1972 on this very principle.

While the University encourages the growth of journals, it does not have a specific funding policy for literary publications. Vicki Hodgkinson of the Office of the President said that York "does not have the money that is needed to sustain a journal for a continuing time." Journals should "plan to be self-sustained" by securing funds from other sources such as the Canada Council (CC) and the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) Hodgkinson said.

There is, however, a President's Ad Hoc Fund that will provide initial seed money for new journals. "It is a last resort committee," said Noli Swatman of Research Administration. "If you can't get money from other committees, we will help, although the money is more of a means of support rather than a large investment." While York can offer very little in the means of funding, it can and has offered other support like office space and secretarial services to handle the publication's mailing.

The relative ease or difficulty of beginning a publication is often determined by one's in-house support system. Callaghan's *Exile*, for example, seemed to grow out of the natural enthusiasm and support of Atkinson College.

"Atkinson is a remarkable and quite a unique college in regard to the business of journals," Callaghan said. "The creation of *Exile* Callaghan said, came out of a five minute conversation with the late Dean Harry Crowe which culminated with Callaghan proposing to Crowe, "How would you like to have one of the two best literary quarterlies in the world?" Crowe then agreed to provide funding for *Exile* for the first year until outside support from the CC and OAC could be secured. "I don't think that (the support) could have happened in the University proper," Callaghan said.

Although *Exile* now subsists solely on council funding and monies from its close to 900 subscriptions, Callaghan still considers it a York-based publication because two of the three editors have been affiliated with York at one time

or another. Associate editor Ray Ellenwood, a former Atkinson student, has been with *Exile* "from almost the beginning," Callaghan said. Atkinson College continues to provide secretarial support to handle the quarterly's mailing.

The early to mid-70s proved to be a "wonderful moment in York's (publishing) history," Callaghan said. "For about six years there was an extraordinary amount of energy and accomplishment that came out of York devoted to contemporary writing. It's surprising that such publications came out of such an architectural wasteland like York," Callaghan added.

One such magazine that arose out of this milieu was the *Canadian Theatre Review* (CTR) in 1974. Founded by Don Rubin of York's theatre department, the magazine set a precedent in Canada by being the first professional theatre journal devoted to theatre criticism. "York was a very strong influence for Canadian theatre studies," Rubin said. The national magazine featured such articles as cultural politics, theatre for the young, homosexuals in the theatre, and Quebec theatre. "It was a York publication by the Faculty of Fine Arts," Rubin said. "We used lots of York faculty for editing and writing."

The CTR received seed funding from the Faculty of Fine Arts and further monies from subscriptions and advertising. The CC and the OAC provided funding after the magazine's first year of inception, Rubin said. Rubin estimated that the CTR's circulation rose from 800 in 1974 to as high as 4,000 in 1979.

Rubin left his editorship in 1982 when he went on sabbatical. Although the publication rights were sold to the University of Toronto press at that time, the editorship is still held by a York professor, Bob Wallace of Glendon College.

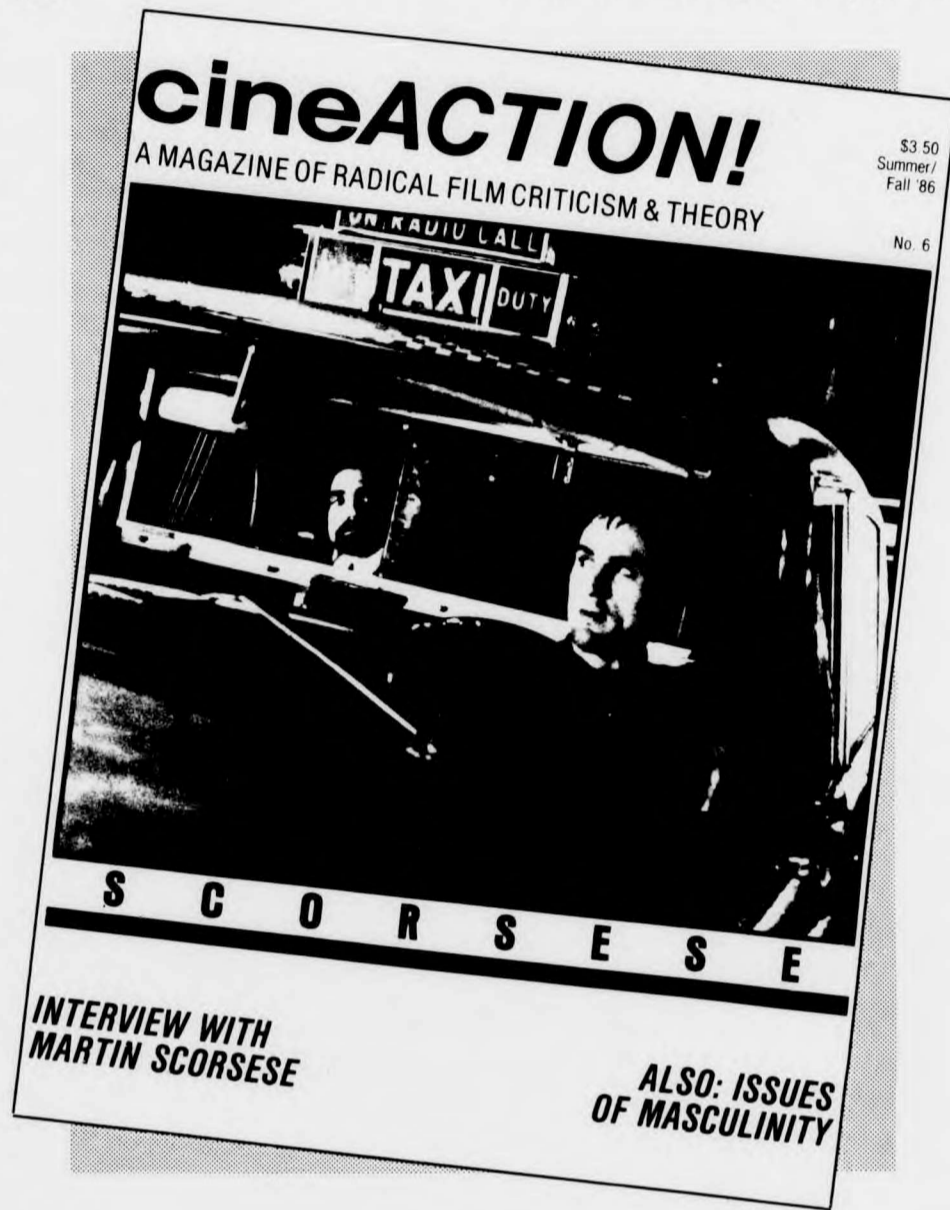
One of the more recent publishing initiatives to arise out of York is *cineAction*. Calling itself "A magazine of radical film criticism and theory," all but one of the present 10 member collective are involved with the Atkinson College Film program. Robin Wood, co-ordinator of the Atkinson College film studies program and a teacher in the York film department, said the first issue of *cineAction* came out in May, 1985. The first issue was largely funded by private donor John Anderson, Wood said. The quarterly also received a small subsidy of \$200 from Atkinson College and other donations from "generous film supporters and film makers," Wood added. *cineAction* has since received funding from the CC's Exploration Fund and the OAC.

Wood said that he approached the Dean of Fine Arts for funding and support but received no response. "There was no interest from the York film department," Wood said.

"*cineAction* is the only one (magazine) of its kind in Canada," Wood claims. "It is the only serious film criticism magazine that exists today."

still struggling." Davies added that publication costs run at about \$5,000 for every *Borderline* issue.

Probably one of the most interesting endeavours initiated by a York faculty member is chairman of the English department, Frank Davey's electronic literature magazine *Swift Current*. Initiated solely by Daveys, the elec-



Wood said that *cineAction* has published articles from both undergraduate and grad students in the film department as well as freelance writers. Having both a national and international scope, the magazine has reached a circulation mark of 1,600 with 300 subscribers from Canada and around the world, Wood said. "That's very good," he said. "It's much more than most specialist magazines (obtain)."

Another publication to sustain the crucial funding hurdle is the critical interdisciplinary magazine *Borderlines*. Celebrating its second anniversary this month, the *Borderline* initiative was "stimulated by York people," says York sociology professor Ioan Davies. Davies is also one of the only York-affiliated editors on the dozen membered editorial board. A mixture of York grad students, past and present from the departments of film, social science and mass communications, plus writers from other universities and freelancers have all contributed to *Borderlines* at one time or another, Davies said.

Published at Bethune College, Davies said the funding for *Borderlines* came primarily from the Faculty of Arts, Dean of Graduate Studies, the President's Ad Hoc Fund and individual donors. The magazine also took out a bank loan and has since received both CC and OAC grants.

Davies said that *Borderlines* has a "York imagination," growing out of the "work done here at York." He said that *Borderlines* is unique in that it attempts to explore "all the aspects of Canadian culture" while "providing a bridge between academics' perceptions of what culture is and the real experience of people who are making culture." Davies said that "most universities are only concerned with academics; they don't want to reach out to the artist, copywriter and other people working in the field."

The last issue of *Borderlines* came out in July and had a circulation of 1,200 with 700 subscribers. "We want to have at least 1,500 subscribers," Davies said "to break even. We're

tronic magazine provides a data base for about 100 writers who access each other's ongoing work. Currently there are 20 to 30 subscribers to *Swift Current*, Davey said. While York does not provide any funding to *Swift Current*, it does provide technical assistance and space to house the data base, Davey said.

York-based publications are not limited to just faculty and students. Nick Powers, owner of Gesture Press and employee of York's book store has aligned with former York student Chris Warren to publish *Tandem Ten*, an upcoming poetry anthology featuring 10 poets of the York community.

Recognizing the number of serious writers at York, Power said that the anthology aims to provide a format for aspiring writers. "There are a lot of good writers at York, both past and present," Power said, "who are trying to get published. We thought it was a good idea to put together an anthology."

Power said that the range of writers included in the anthology consists of past and present York students and one staff member. Power and Warren will distribute a dummy copy of *Tandem Ten* to the various bodies of the York community in hopes of securing the approximately \$500 needed for funding. "If we get support from the University first," Powers said, "it will help when we look for outside funds."

Power and Warren also plan to hold both a York and outside reading and benefit evening in an aim to "seek a bridge to a wider audience."

Tandem Ten will be published under Powers' Gesture Press with an estimated initial print-run of 250 copies. Power is determined to publish the anthology regardless of whether he gets funding support, but says the amount of funds will ultimately determine the production quality of the anthology. The 45-page publication's estimated price will be around \$3.00.

Maintaining a simple mandate, Power said the anthology hopes to capture the "time and space continuum" of the various writers that have come to and left York.

