

Commentaire des beaux arts

Bruce: Hey Geoffman, what is it about the nature of art that causes so much judgement? Whenever someone comes up with something there are ten people ready and willing to criticize, satirize or just ignore its existence. Don't people realize that art is sufficient and perfect in itself? To me art is like a snowflake, it comes down from the heavens and it is never the same twice, and therefore perfect in itself.

Geoff: To begin with, there is a traditional dichotomy of interpretation which gives art a political realm. One side gains objectivity of art by being unattached to it; as a result, they see art as something which is imitating nature. The other side gains objectivity by participation in the artistic experience; as a result, they hold art as the (re)creation of nature. Two contemporary terms for this split (academicians included) are the culture of suspicion and the culture of assent, respectively. In the university, there is debate over whether or not this split is detrimental or whether it helps kindle enthusiasm for students enrolled in the humanities. What I think is needed is more reconciliation. A cultivation of both arguments is necessary, or else one is simply left a half wit. Uh? What was the question?

Bruce: Yeah, I guess I understand that. I agree that a marriage of the dichotomies is necessary, for without that there is no understanding of the subject. We need faith and doubt to work together, and objectivity and subjectivity to unify. Without this marriage (check bpnichol while you're at it) there is no solid communication, and the distance between people cannot be breached (try some Martin Buber here too). And if art fails to communicate, then it is our fault here on the receiving end that it doesn't - for everything has an intent, a purpose, an aspect of creation of some kind and force. To clarify my earlier point: Art exists solely with the creator, and the relationship is holistic between them. Our external experience as viewer does not provide validity to the creation. We can revel in the power and breadth of the communication, but the relationship, the marriage of chaos and mind, is only pure between the creator and created. Make sense?

Geoff: Like a frog needs a trampoline... like a (needs a) ... like a buick needs a bumper...

Bruce: The power of idiom has won again. Arrrgghhh! Well hope you folks out there appreciate our lack of asceticism and our reverence for the purity and aesthetics of art.

Geoff: Play safe over the holidays now... and remember if you're not wasted, the day is.

Bruce Gilchrist & Geoffrey Ineson

Knights with white ribbons

I am writing in response to Peter Angione's article "Physician heal thyself", published in the November 26 edition of the Gazette. While Angione pointed out the White Ribbon Campaign's (WRC) noble intents to "stimulate reflection discussion, and analysis" around the issue of violence against women. I feel compelled to express the concerns held by many women, and student activists, who are working to eradicate violence against women on campus.

The WRC is an extremely subtle example of men's appropriation of female leadership. Steve Patten, the WRC spokesperson quoted in Angione's article, made a presentation to delegates at the October general meeting of the Students Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS). At this time, I brought forward many of the concerns I have, and that have been expressed to me by both women and men, about the WRC.

Since its inception last December, the WRC has grown into a high-profile, centralized movement for men, run by men. One of the most lucid analogies I have heard is that the WRC is an example of male chivalry, of the "white knight" riding in to give the "girls" a paternalistic pat on the head and let them know that the men have come to save the day. Underlying this statement is the fact that for several years, women have provided the leadership and the organizational framework for everyone, both women and

men, to work towards the eradication of violence against women. Furthermore, the purple ribbon campaign (notice the lack of capitalization because the purple ribbon campaign is not a legally, centrally incorporated body but a grassroots movement) has always been inclusive of both women and men.

I don't mean to imply that men should not be assuming responsibility for men's violence against women, and I also believe that under different circumstances the WRC could be a wonderful and progressive initiative. The

ones that have endorsed the WRC ever consider endorsing a campaign run by women?

The answer to these questions is a resounding NO. In my conversation with him, Patten himself acknowledged his own concerns about the participants in the WRC using the "old boys network" and positions of authority to achieve their goals.

Students' displeasure with these processes used by the WRC was expressed during the Closing Plenary of the SUNS meeting on October 18, 1992, when the membership overwhelmingly supported a motion not to endorse the White Ribbon Campaign on SUNS campuses. This means that the student associations at Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Mount Saint Vincent, King's, Acadia, St. Francis Xavier, UCCB, and DAGS will neither support nor promote the White Ribbon Campaign. These student associations are, however, endorsing the purple campaign for both women and men.

Along with many other women and student activists, I look forward to the day when the WRC will use means that are in keeping with its goals. Until that day, however, I will continue to support women's grassroots leadership and initiative over the White Ribbon Campaign's slick appropriation of female resistance to male violence.

Candida Rifkind, Chair
SUNS Women's Issues Comm.

WRC is an example of male chivalry

WRC's intent is not the problem, here, it's the process by which they have launched their campaign that I have serious problems with how many women's organizations working on violence against women can afford to do national mailouts? How many women's organizations can afford to send representative across the country to espouse their cause? How many women's groups can afford expensive (according to Steve Patten) downtown Toronto office space? Would corporations like



LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Word watchers

This is an open letter to Ivy Kusinga:

I want you to know that I admire your courage and am embarrassed by the truthfulness of your words. You accuse students of not taking action when a professor "excludes whole cultures and peoples from their discourse." I am ashamed to admit that I allowed such behaviour to go on in one of my classes during my first year at Dalhousie.

The class was English 1000 and the topics were Shakespeare and Conrad. Before we began to study *King Lear* we spent three full classes discussing the 'Christian vision of the world' which influenced Shakespeare. When it became clear that we were only going to discuss that singular, narrow view of the world I raised the point that Shakespeare openly questioned Christian ideas and I suggested that it would be helpful to discuss other cultural perspectives and traditions which may have influenced him and those who have viewed or read his plays. Much to my surprise, I was told with hostility, "If you don't like the way I run my class, you can leave." Everyone in the class was shocked, but nothing further was said.

Later in the term we began to study Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and my frustration really accelerated. We approached the book from a completely male, Eurocentric perspective even though it is clear that Conrad's style encourages the reader to be sensitive to and critical of the white men's actions towards the African people. My questions in class which dealt with the exploitation, domination and

colonialization in the story were not given the attention that questions about the metaphors of Jesus Christ were. My prof. seemed to have an ally in a student who chose to concentrate on finding familiar cultural ideas and icons in the novel rather than searching for meaning, emotions and outlooks which were unfamiliar and perhaps painful to explore.

Moreover, I kept objecting to the use of the term 'savages' when it was not being used in the direct context of the story, yet most classmates ignored my request and the prof. made no attempt to help. BUT, aside from complaining a lot in class and having some fiery arguments along the way, it never even occurred to me to follow up my concerns because nothing blatantly 'racist' was said; only implied. It probably would have done some good to explain my frustrations to the prof. because he seemed like a fair man who did not intentionally lead the sort of class I have described and probably would want to know if the curriculum was in any way racist or sexist.

Now, three years later, I can not imagine myself allowing such a narrow, exclusive approach to learning to continue. As a woman, and a feminist, I am committed to denying my 'white-privilege' and this includes having the courage to fight against racism in any situation or context.

Ivy, you have asked your black sisters to stand up and be counted. You will be counted and your voices will be heard. Any feminist theory or practice must include all women of every culture, race and background. If it fails to do this, then it is just as guilty as the 'common enemy' which we are supposedly all fighting.

Suzy Kovinsky

Concrete continuum

To the editor:

It was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which taught us that in nature everything is interconnected. Humans must wake up to the reality that we have a reciprocal relationship with nature. Hazardous wastes are not going to "go away" via the cement industry. There is no incinerator sink into which we can conveniently dispose of our industrial garbage. This garbage is the product of a capitalist industrial society, based on mindless economic growth and consumerism, with its accompanying non-renewable energy and use of finite "resources". We have to put an end to tranquillizing ourselves with consumer goods and in the process cannibalizing the planet. Some supporters of the Lafarge proposal speak of a community service being performed by the burning of toxic wastes for fuel, yet unless the basic orientation of our society is addressed, what we have is a transparent cover for business as usual and selfish disregard for future life on our planet. No job or "economic spin off" can compensate for this.

Most people know that toxic chemical pollution on a global scale is increasing. The incineration of hazardous wastes is contributing to this. It is time for the public to become involved, to stop the Lafarge proposal.

David Orton

Letters

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the Gazette

vol 125 no 12 December 3, 1992

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The Dalhousie Gazette is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, the Gazette has a circulation of 10,000. As a founding member of Canadian University Press, the Gazette adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o the Gazette. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday before publication. The Gazette offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. The views expressed in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff.