

York student paints the decay of the West coast family

By KEN KEOBKE

At the beginning of Lawrence Jeffery's new play *Precipice* at Factory Lab Theatre, the patriarch Edward stands on a cluster of rocks overlooking the ocean. In a personal ceremony, he slowly washes himself, touching and admiring his own strength. His strength comes from the enormous wealth he has created as a lumber baron and now, in his old age, he is free to enjoy his family. But all his life Edward has loved his work more than his two children and he is unable to deal with them without a wad of money, freely offered or withheld, sheltering him from emotion.

One child, Alicia and her bumbling husband Timothy, have lost their money and need a "loan" to continue their lives as professional tourists. The other son, Jack, refuses his father's offer of the family business or even enough money to buy his own taxi.

Complications in the plot are created with the illness of Edward's wife Rebecca and with the arrival of the nurse Karen, who comes home to care for her. In what sounds more like a soap opera than it seems, while watching the play, it turns out that Karen and Jack used to be each other's true loves, although they seem unable to understand why they broke up.

The play has other structural problems as well. Timothy commits suicide at the end of act one with a shot to the head and then has to stumble dramatically on-stage to show us the blood. He is resurrected in Act Two, although he is now blind. In this and other matters, there is a complete lack of suspense, such as when Rebecca is asked by Karen if she knew Edward's first

wife. She replies, "She was my sister." This is a major point in the play and could have been either drawn out or presented in a context that would illustrate its importance.

Similarly, when Jack breaks down and calls Rebecca "mother" at the play's conclusion, no previous fuss has been made to signal us that it is a significant action for him to do so. What is to happen in the relationship between Karen and Jack is also left unclarified. All of these plot complications leave one somewhat confused and dissatisfied.

The set, by designer William Chesney, is a series of marble platforms modelled after a house that Frank Lloyd Wright set over a stream. Behind some expensive furniture hangs a Christopher Pratt (or preferably Westcoast artist, Gordon Smith) painting and a large disk of cedar slats which form several living areas in Edward and Rebecca's home.

Although the design is Chesney's, part of the concern for its appropriateness and beauty may have come from Lawrence who came to playwriting via art, having studied at York University and the prestigious Sorbonne in Paris. His first play *Clay* was also produced at Factory Lab, largely thanks to the efforts of Artistic Director Bob White, who energetically supports new works by Canadians. Since then, Jeffery has gone on to a great deal of successful writing for radio and television.

Precipice has an all-star cast and despite the sense of futility for the characters at the play's end and the slightly muddled plot, it contains many moments of exceptional humour. Like most of Factory Lab's productions, it is innovative and worth seeing.

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Films and feminism at York

By WYNDHAM WISE

The Women's Film Festival concludes this week with *Quel Numero*, an NFB documentary that takes a humorous look at technological changes in women in the workplace, and *You Have Struck A Rock*, a film that focuses on the historical development of women in South Africa.

The Film Festival was shorter this year (in total there were only five films screened over 10 days). This was due to the cuts in administrative funding of all the directors of the Council of the York Student Federation (CYSF), according to Catherine Lake, Director of Women's Affairs for the CYSF.

"I wanted to continue the Film Festival because it had a good showing last year, although my budget is considerably less than the previous director had," commented Lake.

"York is notorious for not participating in after-school events. The Film Festival makes available films that are by and about women, from a

female perspective, which the mainstream film industry does not generally allow for," Lake said. The other films in the Festival included Margarethe Von Trotta's *Sheer Madness*, from West Germany, and Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames*.

Lake, a fourth-year undergraduate in creative writing and women's studies, wants to make feminist perspectives accessible to the York community. "I think it's important to have at least two weeks of 'female vision,'" she said.

Lake is now planning a Women's Sexuality Week from February 9 to 12, with eight speakers appearing over a period of four days. Discussions will include topics lesbian sexuality, and 'Sexual Risk,' a new board game designed specifically for university students by Professor Susan Brown from the University of Guelph.

Earlier this year Lake organized the Security Forum and became deeply involved with the issue of

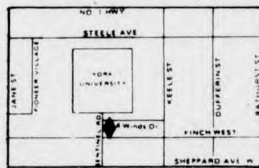
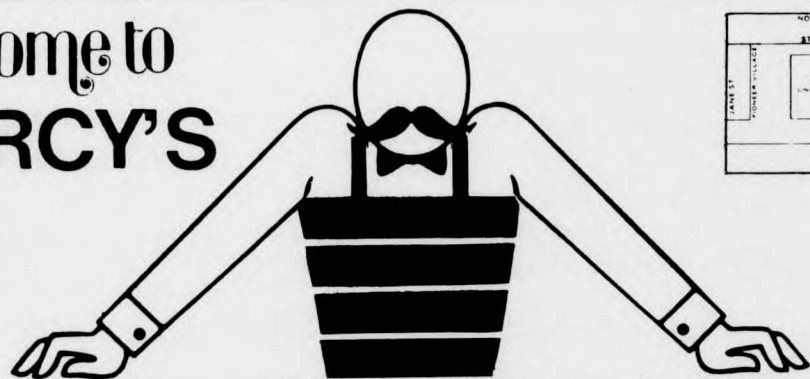
security for women on campus. "I was trying to focus on making some concrete changes with security on campus. They're understaffed, under-trained, and the Administration tends to think that we don't need that security."

This experience has caused Lake to become disenchanted with York's Administration. "Working with the Administration has led to limiting the goals I hoped to achieve this year. I hope that whoever takes the job (of Director of Women's Affairs) next year is women's issue oriented. It is important to maintain a continuum. York is open to women's issues, but practically, there is too much Administration lip service to women's issues and not enough funding, or (perhaps) it's just that the issues are not taken seriously enough," Lake noted.

Lake hopes to soon get away from administrative activities and concentrate on her career as a writer, dealing specifically with radical feminism from a lesbian point of view.

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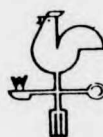


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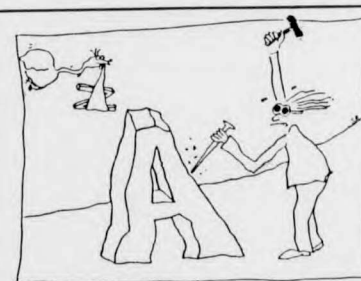
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