

# Hartley offers family road movie with a twist

by Rob Sheridan

At first blush, the concept of Hal Hartley's latest film *Simple Men* may sound naggingly familiar. Two brothers with conflicting personalities unite to partake in an extended journey by car, and in the process come to understand and appreciate each other a little better. This is, however, where the similarities between it and other more commercial fare such as *Rain Man* or *Coupe de Ville* end.

Because by infusing the same counter-cultural motifs which punctuated such earlier work as *The Unbelievable Truth* and *Trust*, Hartley has once again created a modern-day parable about living large, and largely left, in an era of more "traditional" family values.

The key here is the source of the inevitable "quest." Bill (Robert Burke) and Dennis (William Sage) do not seek money or even some outpost of supposed peace and well-being, but rather, their estranged father — who has been on the run from the law for several years. Daddy, it

**film** *Simple Men*  
written and directed by Hal Hartley  
Alliance/Cineplex  
opens in Toronto Nov. 13

seems, turned from major league shortstop to major league anarchist some time in the late sixties: He's been wanted for a bombing at the Pentagon ever since.

It is in the rather atypical and decidedly rebellious roots that both the characters and the film remain firmly planted. And it is here where the major differences between this and other "family road movies" occur.

The trend of such kindred-spirited films in Hollywood tends to be one of pulling the more dissident elements of the clan back into a comfortable centre. Generally, the "bad" members of the group are either denied recognition entirely, or are somehow assimilated in a way that both the rest of the family and society in general can then deal with in a rational manner. In *Simple Men*, the very patriarch himself remains decidedly

left-of-centre, and the acceptable norm by which his offspring are judged suddenly exists in a radically different sphere.

The results then become obvious. Son Bill can be a white collar criminal, on the run himself from the law, and yet still garner a certain amount of respect from his more conservative college student brother. Likewise, it becomes perfectly acceptable for Dennis, said student, to beg, borrow or steal if necessary just to catch a glimpse of the outlaw father he never knew. What's missing is some moral voice of righteous indignance: The audience is allowed to revel in the action at hand almost on an existentialist level, without having to worry if everybody will come together in the end for a symbolic group hug.

The film simply becomes refreshingly fun and liberating to watch. Hartley injects his unique brand of subtle humour into almost every scene, peppering the script with numerous Godard-inspired philosophical rants by the characters, which are



Bill (Robert Burke) and Kate (Karen Sillas) are "family bonding" in *Simple Men*.

by turns both hilarious and also rather enlightening.

*Simple Men* is the family road movie for people who hate family road movies. Or even just families.

## Ecofeminism: Nature and women's spirituality

Theologian Anne Primavesi explores Creation and women's role in it.

by Donna McClure

Describing herself as a 'freelance theologian,' Anne Primavesi explained how women are essential for the survival of the ecological movement. They have a unique association with nature which must be integrated for a more complete understanding of the environmental problems and how to heal the wounds.

Examining the links between woman and the environment was the topic for a discussion recently when Primavesi visited York.

Irish by birth and Catholic, Primavesi is familiar with the churches' political power and the entrenched male authority which still excludes women. The established church does not support her feminist approach to spirituality that is closely linked to nature: ecofeminism.

Primavesi draws on the observations made by James Lovelock, Barbara Clintock and others whose principles are based on adaptation to the environment and focus on the differences within nature. Every organism within its species has its own fingerprint and knowledge is unique to each individual.

Women can bring completeness to the understanding of nature which traditionally has been based on the masculine perception. The feminine views need to be incorporated into this body of information if a complete understanding is to evolve. Our role as stewards of the land must be accepted if the universe is to flourish.

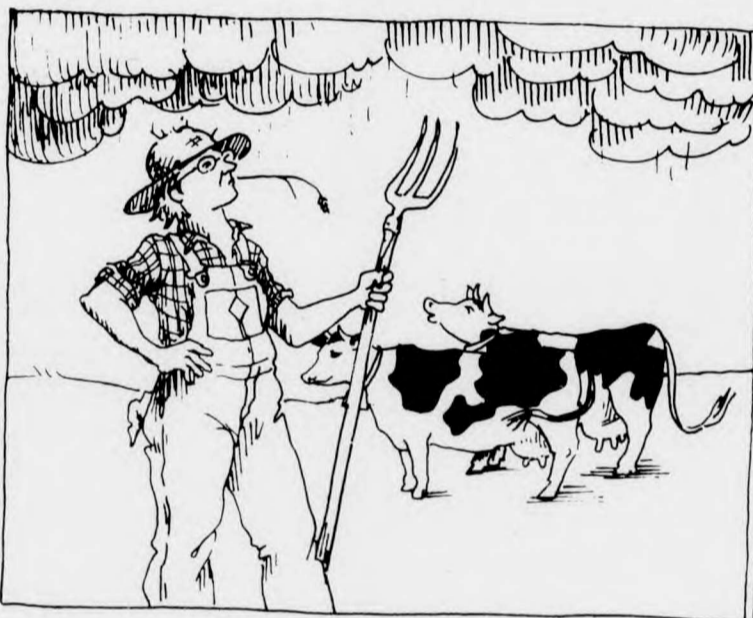
Through knowledge we are engaged with the world and our experience shapes this knowledge. Each person's knowledge comes from the uniqueness of the individual's experiences. Respecting this uniqueness affirms others and enables us to empathize with our fellow human beings.

According to Primavesi, sin is the refusal to give knowledge 'a home.' There are no limits to knowledge; it is the real power that we can trust.

Primavesi questions the notions of 'Sin' that still exist and contribute

to the limitation of the established churches. This definition of sin has been a divisive factor in religion and is responsible for the decline in the church's role in society. The church must become accountable, do what is right rather than what is safe if it is to be an integral force in the community. It must reassess its concepts of sin.

Feminine wisdom must be re-integrated into the essence of a spirituality that comes from our environment rather than imposed on it. Through mutual knowledge-building we will galvanize change. Creation becomes the spontaneous experience of being alive.



\* graphic taken from Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For*

## British theatre company brings Dr. Seuss-like lyricism to York

by Diane Peters

Picture this: a cold Thursday night in Burton Auditorium, Fine Arts II, York University. In the dark theatre a crowd watches and listens to a performance of *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas. Eyes, ears, minds and Welsh accent de-coders are riveted to the stage. From time to time, body parts wander away from the stage, they think about other things, they feel very cold. Two hours pass. The entire crowd has caught a cold, but somehow, everyone feels happy.

This one-night performance, produced by Theatre at York and co-presented by Atkinson College, brought The Travelling Players of the Dylan Thomas Society of Great Britain to Canada for the first time.

The play itself is quite brilliant. But not flawless. Thomas died before he revised it. There are two narrators and nine actors, who tell the story of a Welsh fishing community in a twenty-four hour period. All the actors sat, were dressed in black (the narrators in white),

**theatre** *Under Milk Wood*  
written by Dylan Thomas  
directed by John Rhys Thomas  
Burton Auditorium, Fine Arts II  
October 29

and had multiple identities of the various eccentric townspeople of Milk Wood, sixty-three in all. It is an innovative idea on the part of the playwright; but is a festering ground for boredom when being staged. What it needs in order to work is a good dose of numerous and interesting Welsh voices, and damn fine acting.

Ken Thomas (half the cast seems related to each other), who plays seven characters, stood out both in vocal and acting ability. He used comical put-on voices, exaggerated facial expressions and well-controlled physical gestures. The play can take this kind of over-acting; it almost needs it to make up for the lack of props, costumes and continual movement. He was responsible for half of the powerful moments that made the play worth watching.

None of the other actors were as consistently enrapturing. But there

were numerous moments of real theatre magic when the Dr. Seuss-like lyrical language, sporadic brilliant one-liners and eccentric characters that are the strong points of the play mixed with solid, quick acting, punctuated by the Welsh tongue.

The play suffered when things slowed down. Word has it the whole thing should take only ninety minutes; speeding it up would have helped a lot. When the narrator begins the show with a ten minutes monologue, you ask yourself, "Is he going to go on forever? Is this really a Greek tragedy? Am I going to catch a really bad cold?" Which I did, so there.

Including intermission, the play took over two hours. It tired you out, but you didn't feel ripped off. Numerous priceless moments redeemed the slower ones. Since this play cannot really be done in any other accent but Welsh, seeing it by this company, on their first trip to Canada, was worth the cash. If it comes your way again, go see it and dress warmly.

### More Hits 'n' Bits

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Imagine this in colour. Heisel's style explores the dynamics of geometry.

experiments with geometric shapes — circles, lines, dots — giving them rich vibrant colours; he finds fascinating the clean look of futuristic architecture. "People think there's a secret behind art and that once you find it you become *The Artist*. But it's about exploring yourself, emotions, ideas and images."

— Lilac Caña

### Film

*Okanada*, a film presented by the York Women's Center on Oct. 26 and 28, is arguably the best chronicle of last year's final days of the Oka stand-off. Produced by Montrealer Albert Nereberg with a \$2,000 hand-held camera, it laughs in the face of \$500,000 documentaries, and will probably outlive most of them. Okanada presents with simplicity and impartiality the conflict between Mohawks and the Quebec police. A valuable source for anyone interested in Native issues, Canadian or Quebec history, and the state of democracy today, Okanada is available for rent, and will undoubtedly be screened at some rep theatres.

— Nina Kolunovsky

### Advertising

Mike Timlin underhanded the ball to Joe Carter at first base, giving the **Toronto Blue Jays** their first ever World Series. Fans were able to savour the victory for about 30 seconds; then, thanks to the fine folks at the Coca Cola Corporation, we were treated to the first of an inundation (infestation?) of advertisements based on the Blue Jay win. There used to be some lag time between an emotional national event and its commercial exploitation; technology has reduced this to next to nothing. The ad was unbelievably crass; Blue Jays fans should show their displeasure by switching beverages.

Then there are the **Encore** coffee advertisements on television and on the TTC. The caffeine in coffee is a stimulant; even people who know nothing about drugs know they can get a boost by drinking coffee first thing in the morning. To advertise any coffee, then, as "mellow" is ridiculously misleading, if not outright dishonest. If this is what the advertising industry considers ac-

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