

arts & entertainment

Requiem for a dead flamingo

by Leslie J Furlong

Last week an era came to an end, if in name only. After a decade of fits and starts, the Flamingo finally closed its doors for good, six months after acquiring new ownership.

Its humble origins can be traced back to 1983 on Grafton Street in the space that now houses Alfredo, Weinstein and Ho's, where an all-ages audience sat at a handful of warped picnic tables to listen to bands like Staja Tanz and Registered Vote. It was a short stay, just a few months all told, and it wasn't until the Hallowe'en of 1986 that The Club Flamingo reopened its doors in the old Cove theatre, now the location for Rumours. It was a madhouse that night, with hundreds of costumed revellers flooding in to be visually assaulted by bloody horror films like *Evil Dead* on the big screen with a soundtrack provided by the Misery Goats, October Game, and the then-local-wonders, the Jellyfishbabies.

At that point, it seemed like the Club was going to be a major success, but as time moved on that proved to be

anything but the truth. Location, the minimal response to the films that they screened and the lack of a liquor license all proved to be factors in the Flamingo's second closure. It was fun while it lasted, though, and provided the young people of Halifax with a collection of memories: the captivating image of Margo Timmins singing dreamily into her mike, the guitarist for the Doughboys wearing a dress and falling off the stage, and Moe Berg from the Pursuit of Happiness abruptly halting the band's set by yacking on the drumkit.

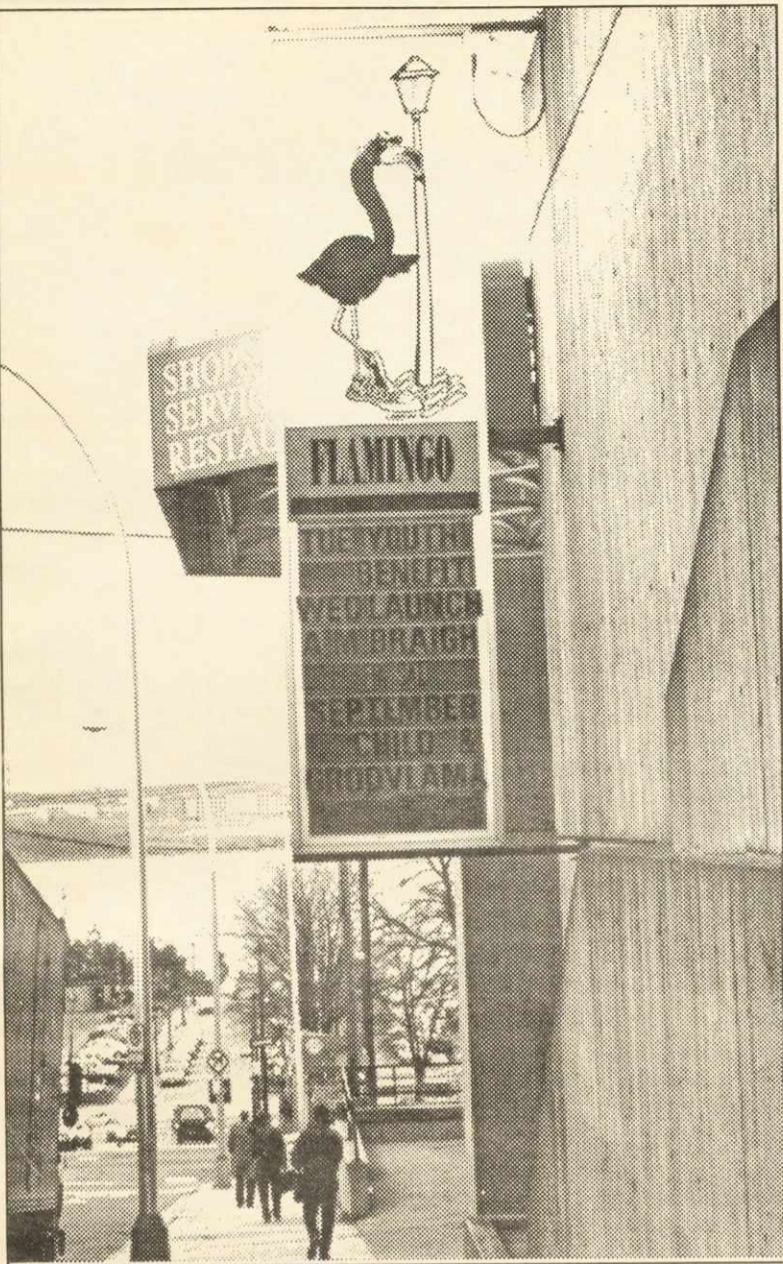
When the Flamingo reopened for a third time, things had changed considerably. A liquor license was in place, prompting the name change from 'Club' to 'Pub', and unfortunately at the same time barring minors, which the original Flamingoes had been set up to serve. In return those who were able to get in were given a beautifully designed performance space and sound system with the performers to match. During its run, the Flamingo brought in a diverse collection of musicians, from the blues of Clarence 'Gatmouth'

Brown and John Hammond to the jazz of the Shuffle Demons and Rare Air right on through to Billy Bragg, Sarah McLachlan and Shadowy Men from a Shadowy Planet.

Maybe it was their diversity that proved to be their greatest weakness. Maybe it was the departure of Greg Clark from the fold. Maybe with the Double Deuce and the Cafe Olé the Flamingo simply became irrelevant. There are at least a hundred different maybes as to why the Flamingo finally shut its doors for good last week. It seemed that the new ownership was moving in a positive direction in the last few months, with what was reputed to be a quite popular bi-weekly rave-styled event every other Sunday, but no business can make it on one good night a week. Regardless, the damage that was done to the bar's reputation, by whatever means, was too great to recover from, so finally the name Flamingo can be filed away with the few other good memories a generation has had of being young in Halifax.

PHOTO: LISA WAMBOLDT

Flamingo-a-go-go: The sign at the bar's Salter Street entrance lists events that will never happen at this venue.



Wild Orchids in Bloom

by Geoffrey Ineson

When I first read *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from American Universities*, I'd spent some time deciding whether or not there would be a Canadian audience. I still don't really know. What I do know is that literary study, in Canada and elsewhere, is constantly exploding with vogue scholastic movements (i.e. New Historicism and Lacanian Psychoanalysis). 'Get your programs at the gate, folks!'

BOOKS

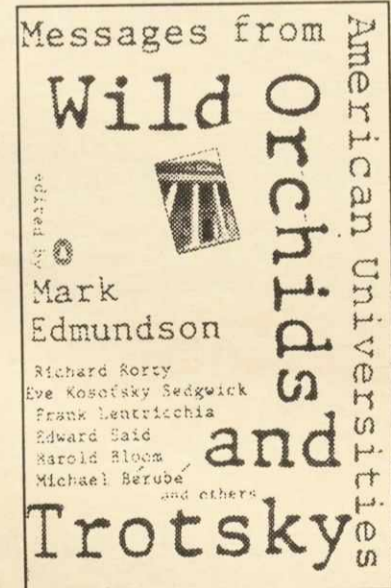
Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from American Universities
Edited by Mark Edmundson
Penguin

There are intense debates and constant splits in English Departments about the relevance of literary theory. In the minds of some academics, "the stakes are very high". On what and on whose authority is it to be taken that the quality of syllabus offered, at any given university, will yield the best and brightest scholars of tomorrow? Good question, eh?

It's an incredibly elite book. *Wild Orchids and Trotsky* is a compilation of America's leading literary thinkers. The title comes from the opening essay by Richard Rorty. Literary study, for Rorty, is a particular capacity of "holding reality and justice in a single vision." Edited by Mark Edmundson, this book contains essays by; Frank Lentricchia, Nancy K. Miller, Edward Said, Judith

Frank, Michael Berube, Susan Fraiman, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Richard Poirier, and friends.

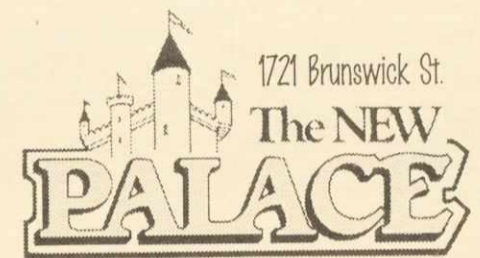
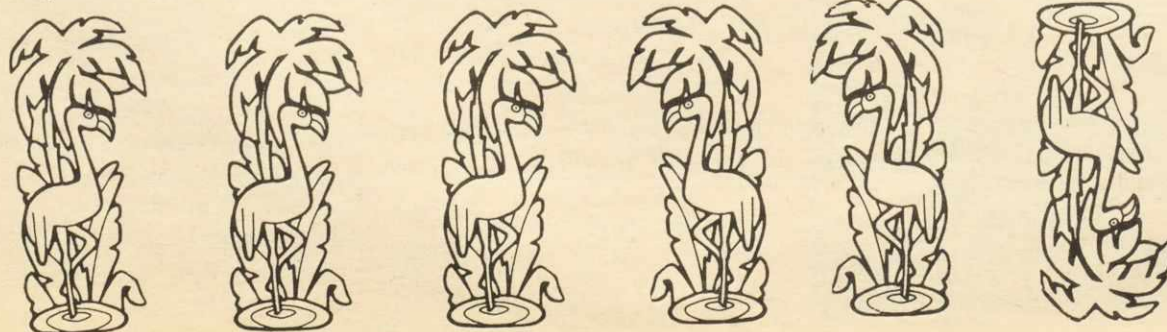
All of the essays are autobiographical. Usually, theorists in general are either beyond their students' concern or far too erudite for the average undergraduate. *Wild Orchids and Trotsky* is unique in this regard because the writers are not overtly deconstructing them-



universities, I'll have to admit, has entered a phase where I am totally out of sympathy with 95 per cent of what goes on. It's Stalinism without Stalin." Bloom is considered to be America's best known critic. His most famous work, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), had earned him such prestigious teaching positions as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard, and Sterling Professor of the Humanities at Yale. But what is he out of sympathy with, and what does it matter?

In the quoted passage Bloom is airing his gripes on that which has been passing for literary theory, as opposed to what it actually is. "Gender and power mongering" is an interesting reference point for serious scholasticism. This quote was used by Bloom in reference to a 'School of Resentment', namely, the pseudo-Marxists and latest-model feminists who have vulgarized university English classes. I agree with Bloom on this point, that sociological conclusions are not textual conclusions, and they have little to do with approaching literature as an imaginative whole. Here, Bloom is brilliant and really showing why he is a very controversial critic.

Now this may seem like a group of essays by astoundingly intelligent people holding mirrors up to their brains... well, it is... but the wit of the examples is worth exploring. Even if one has no patience for literary theory, the autobiographical style contains, at best, a sympathetic approach to a better understanding of academic authority.



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