

## ANALYSIS

## Fred 'n' Wilma on the mythopoeic wheel



I'M HOME?: Coincidence or typo? Read on.

By PROFESSOR PHYLLIS STEIN

I have no intention of retracing the steps taken by I.A. Elliott in his brilliant but overpriced *Myth and Metaphor: Fred and Barney—Adam and Noah* (Princeton, 1978), but rather shall concentrate on the inherent difficulties of so ephemeral an approach as Elliott's, and then look at possible alternatives to the puzzle *The Flintstones* present.

More than one critic has noted that Elliott borrowed heavily from the pioneering Hanna-Barbera scholar, the French pataphysicist Ubu Beau-Shitr, whose 1972 study *Le Flintstones: S-Z* went largely unrecognized on this continent until its translation in 1976 by University of Toronto Professor Emeritus Roland Roland-Hand, whose own *Meet George Jetson* (1971), *His Boy Elroy* (1972), and *Daughter Judy* (1972) so influenced Elliott's long-time partner and ex-wife Oedipa Maas-Elliott.

*The Flintstones: S-Z* opted for a quasi-Frazierian view of *The Flintstones*, going so far as to suggest that what Hanna-Barbera had in mind was an attempt to demythologize our subconscious notions of prehistoric society, in particular; and overall patterns of technological advance and human adaptation to same, in general. The approach, needless to say, was an unpopular one, particularly among North American critics more familiar with interpretations such as this one from Gary Gerani's *Fantastic Television*:

Adapting modern technology in a prehistoric setting was a gimmick that eventually wore thin, but the characters never did. (174)

The idea that the universe was man-centred and man-directed was itself the very core of Hanna-Barbera criticism at the time. With Roland's translation came the beginning of a new appreciation, one which shattered the very foundations of early Barberism, and led an otherwise recalcitrant Enos Cabell to write, prior to his trade to the Mariners, "We doubt not but that *The Flintstones* wanted one final season to destroy our long established mits." And while, on the surface, Beau-Shitr, and later Elliott, seem to have got hold of the crux of the matter of *The Flintstones*, we must ask ourselves, along with Roy Batty, "Tyrell Corporation?" Hanna-Barbera, in short, must have had something else in mind.

If we think of Eliot's "Time out of time"

and "Time past and time future" phraseology, we get an idea of how important such concepts become to any consideration of *The Flintstones*. Think in particular of the theme song:

Flintstones, meet the Flintstones, they're a modern stone age family,  
From the town of Bedrock, it's a place right out of history.

An obvious, if somewhat overworked allusion to Eliot's conception of a time away from time, where action and suffering only will be understood, where peace will be had, where all will be still, where the boys are. The constant and consistent images of Fred and Barney running through domestic scenes of hell or driving through crowded purgatorial streets with one or sometimes two background patterns repeating endlessly, points to such an interpretation.

If *The Flintstones* are on Eliot's wheel, moving cyclically to the middle, we must accept that theirs is not an attempt at demythologizing, but remythologizing: that is, the confirmation of past types, past stories, past patterns. Is, for example, the Grand Puba of the Royal Order of Water Buffalos a denial or affirmation of religion? Is Barney Fred's Shadow? If so, is the Great Gazoo his Oversoul? The often agitated set-tos between Fred and Wilma have an overwhelming resemblance to Freud's Id-Ego conflict, with Barney/Betty often serving as the arbitrator, Superego.

We would of course be remiss in ignoring a completely different and equally valid approach to this animated enigma. In the spirit of Jungian and eastern philosophies, critics like Enoch Bendley have completely rejected the dualistic approach of traditionalists in favor of a more profound paradoxical one. Though less utilitarian than others, Bendley's approach is eloquent and convincing. As he says in his conclusion to his masterwork *Yabba Dabba Tao* (1981):

Fred and Barney are, then, the quintessential paradox; Fred the dark sensual source of human passion, Barney the epitome of human reason and ethics. In Taosit language they are Yin and Yang: together, the symbol of spiritual unity; apart, the shattered halves of a now chaotic whole. Who could ask for a better symbol of the twentieth century Western dilemma. Their dreams are our dreams; their failures, our dilemmas; their successes, our hopes.

## ArtStuff

Compiled by BEVERLY MILLIGAN

## ON CAMPUS

## Continuing

□ An exhibition of screenprints by artist Gerd Winner is at the Art Gallery of York University, N145 Ross, until Nov. 9. HOURS M-F 10-4. 667-3427. Reviewed this week.

□ Samuel Beckett Theatre presents *At Home* by Michael Weller and *Present Tense* by Joseph McNamara tonight and tomorrow night. Stong College at 8 p.m. \$2.

□ *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, a comedy, continues at Theatre Glendon until Saturday. 8:30 p.m., matinee Oct. 25 & 26 1:15 p.m. \$3. 487-6250.

## OFF CAMPUS

## Continuing

□ Sharon Pollock's *Doc* plays until Nov. 4. Toronto Free Theatre. 26 Berkeley St. \$6-\$12. 368-2858.

□ David French's *Salt-Water Moon* plays until Nov. 4. Tarragon Theatre. 30 Bridgman Ave. \$6-\$12. 531-1827.

□ *Deadclothes* by Kevin Teichroeb plays at the UC Playhouse, 79a St. George St. through Oct. 27 and Oct. 30-Nov. 3, 8 p.m. \$3. 978-6307. Reviewed this issue.

□ *Back to Back*, a collection of life-size body cast figures, on display through April 1, 1985. 115 King St. E. Hours: 8 a.m.-dusk. Free.

## Oct. 25

□ *Guitar Workshop*, the second of a four part seminar series at the Toronto Musicians Assoc. Auditorium. 4 p.m. Free. 421-1020.

## Oct. 26

□ Jim Crocini performs *Fantasy* — Rock one night only at the Joseph Workman Auditorium, 1001 Queen St. W., 8 p.m. 787-5372.

□ *Content Under Pressure* opens in The Art Gallery at Harbourfront and runs until Dec. 2. Free. Hours: Tues-F 12-6, S & S 12-9. 869-8410.

## Oct. 27

□ Kontakte Reading Series presents jwcurry, Mark Laba, Lillian Necakov and Stuart Ross reading and performing their prose and poetry. Ross will be launching his new book, *Skip and Biff Cling to the Radio*, and there will be a large display/sale of these artists' pub-

lications. ARC Gallery, 658 Queen St. W., 8 p.m. \$3.

□ The Neilson Children's Reading Series will be launched at the Studio Theatre at 1:30 p.m. Free.

□ Ferron will sing at the Bathurst St. Theatre, 736 Bathurst St., 8 p.m. \$9.50 at BASS or Toronto Women's Bookstore.

## Oct. 29

□ *Blood Relations* by Sharon Pollock, directed by Denis Johnston, premieres at 8 p.m. in the Glen Morris Studio Theatre until Nov. 4. \$3, Students \$2. 978-8668.

## Oct. 30

□ *Battlefield Band*, a Scottish group at the forefront of Celtic music will play at the Music Hall Theatre, 9 p.m. \$8.50 at BASS or \$9.50 door.

□ The ROM presents *The Last of the Red Hot Dadas*, an evening of surrealist film with live accompaniment by the Bill Smith Jazz Ensemble. South-side doors, 9 p.m. \$5, \$4 if in costume.

## Oct. 28

□ Jack Smith will present four nights of Film and Performance at the Funnel Theatre. \$3.50. 364-7003.

□ *Democracy on Trial: the Morgentaler Affair*, produced by the National Film Board, will be shown at the St. Lawrence Centre Town Hall, 27 Front St. E., 8 p.m. Free. 869-4094.

□ *Responding to Photography*, an exhibition of selected works from private Toronto collections. Art Gallery of Ontario. Through to Dec. 2. 977-0414.

## PREVIEW

The New Media 1984, an international festival of New Media/Video will run at Ontario Place November 2, 3, and 4. At the festival you will find video at its best. Video art, special effects, computer graphics, and animation will be presented in the form of exhibitions, workshops, seminars and symposiums.

A number of video professionals specializing in many diverse areas will participate: screen writer and director David Cronenberg of *Scanners*, *Video-drome* and *The Dead Zone* fame; Mitchell Kriegman, a featured writer and performer on *Saturday Night Live*; Tosujasu Kunii, a faculty member at the University of Tokyo and authority on computer graphics; and Judson Rosebush, the founder and president of Digital Effects, New York.

The New Media 1984 should prove to be a high-tech introduction to video that will interest both the artist and the computer programmer. Student rates are: 3 days \$40, event \$8, General \$4 at BASS. For more information call 446-6996.

—Beverly Milligan

## Would-be Voltaire lacks satirical edge

By BERTO DA SILVA

"May the Bluebird Of Happiness nest in your pubic hair," begins Erick Nicol's new novel *Canadide*, and unfortunately this level of humor is rarely transcended.

*Canadide* is described as a 'patriotic satire' but it is more a situation comedy in the form of a novel.

*Canadide* is the anecdotal tale of a naive young reporter who is appointed to a well-paying civil service public relations job after walking into the wrong room at the Royal York and witnessing the Minister of Sports and Recreation performing equestrian sex acts with a woman other than his wife.

As a civil servant our hero then endures minor roles in such misadventures as Brigitte Bardot's visit to Canada's annual seal hunt, the Gerda Munsinger Affair, Margaret Trudeau's dalliance with The Rolling Stones and a Mountie barn-burning. He also claims to have slept with everybody but Margaret Trudeau—one of the few surprises in the book.

The writing is true to the 'sit-com' sensibility of *Canadide*. Any given paragraph contains 10 one-liners, 10 percent of which are slightly amusing. It's too bad that

for the remaining 90 percent of the book much of what is funny about Canada does not lend itself to one-liners.

The novel also suffers from the gratuitous use of sex and stereotypes as subjects of humor. When *Canadide* rarely rises above being a situation comedy it usually ascends no higher than the level of a light Music Hall farce.

Unlike farce, satire works best when kept dry, like gunpowder. Rarely does *Canadide* approach a Voltairean satirical sensibility. Occasional relief may be provided by lines such as: "In Ontario the men don't seem to be prejudiced against appearing sexually inferior. They will assume any position as long as they are convinced that it is a promotion."; and "The Department of National Treasures, I found, was a brand new agency of the Secretary of State, and reflecting the wakened consciousness of the federal government that Canada might have something worth keeping." However, there are not enough of these dry moments to sop up the rest of the drippy jokes.

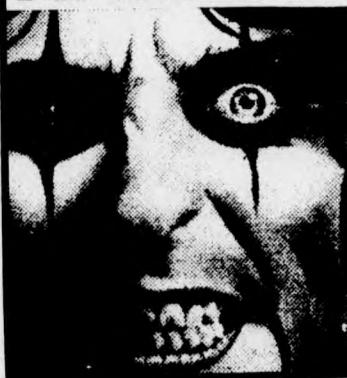
*Canadide* works only if you look at it as a treatment for a CBC 'sit-com' casted with 'pretty people' like the Mulroneys; but if it's homegrown satire you want, you would do better to stick to Alan Fotheringham.

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