

# ASE IT'S TIME

## AT LAST THE STUDENTS SPEAK!

A few weeks ago a poem appeared on this page entitled "The Puerto Rican Goddess Thinks She's Alone as She Rubs Her Thighs Beneath my Window". The poem was written by Ramon Fernandez, an Americanized Peruvian poet who has been living and working in New York for many years, and was reprinted from *Jagannath* magazine.

Unfortunately, however, I am not sure whether I can defend our publishing the poem in this newspaper simply because both poem and poet have been recognized. There still seems to have been a considerable outcry from many students over our publication of the poem, as exemplified by a letter of complaint from "Two Girls Who Care", which we have published in this issue of *The Cadre*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the two girls who took the trouble to put their criticism in writing and submit it to *The Cadre* for publication. Furthermore the letter itself is well written and makes its point in a logical and convincing manner. I personally feel much of your criticism is justified.

As Arts Editor of *The Cadre* it is I however, and not the Editor-in-Chief, who ultimately is to be held responsible for publication of this controversial poem. As the one responsible for selecting the material which goes into *HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME*, it is my esthetic which is under attack, and therefore I feel some explanations are necessary from my point of view.

First of all I am indeed sorry if the poem did, in fact, offend certain students by showing a lack of respect for the sexual act. I assure you this was not my intention. Perhaps it can be best explained by answering the girls' letter of complaint.

They begin their criticism by stating "Even in this progressive age on this enlightened campus there are some aspects of life which are held sacred". I would have to say in answer to this, that if you feel this is an enlightened campus your conception of the 'progressive age' is about fifteen years behind the times. Don't speak of freedom and enlightenment in the arts until you are familiar with musicals like "Oh! Calcutta", "Hair", "Cock-Strong"; films like Andy Warhol's "Lonesome Cowboys"; poetry like that of Elizabeth Sargent, who writes in her poem "Sailor at Midnight":

... "What are you, anyway," he whispered.

"Are you a virgin?"

"No, I'm a poet," I said. "F-k me again."

The four-letter word implied is in the original, as are others like it in her book *The Love Poems of Elizabeth Sargent* (Toronto, 1966). By comparison, "The Puerto Rican Goddess" is mild, as it is when compared to Leonard Cohen's most recent novel, *Beautiful Losers*, in which he writes:

.. In the armpit! ... S-w the pimples off her!

... then you condemn "The Puerto Rican Goddess" and in the same breath call this an enlightened campus! But if you want to go farther back than Leonard Cohen — to the 'progressive age' of no less than **thirteen** years ago — look at the poetry of Allen Ginsberg, one of the most significant poets of the 20th Century, and his book *Howl and Other Poems* (San Francisco, 1956). Ginsberg would agree that "there are some aspects of life which are held sacred", but expresses it this way (and I have no qualms about publishing this since we studied it at this self-same University last year in *Modern Poetry*):

The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!

By comparison, "The Puerto Rican Goddess" is an innocent babe. No, you see you are not as aware as you think of 'the progressive age' and certainly your criticism of "The Puerto Rican Goddess" must be restricted in the context of its publication on a very UNenlightened campus.

If the purpose of poetry then is to enlighten, I would say this poem has succeeded. It has shown

you that, for some people, there are some aspects of life which are definitely NOT 'held sacred'. Furthermore it has proved your theory of man's 'superiority' over the beasts of the field not necessarily true. Perhaps you degrade the animals because they have sex without even being married. Funny thing is, humans do it too.

Your criticism of "The Puerto Rican Goddess" as being 'animalistic' is therefore quite well-founded. But the connotations of inferiority which you seem to associate with the word are not. Okay, man's intelligence is superior. But if you want to talk sex it is precisely man's intelligence which allowed him to dream up society's oldest are — prostitution. Have you ever seen a cow winking her eye and flexing a tight-sweated bosom? No, that is something particularly 'humanistic'. So is knowingly engaging in pre-marital sex; so is knowingly violating a marriage contract.

In its instinctive approach to raw sex "The Puerto Rican Goddess" is primarily 'animalistic', but to deny the poem on these grounds is to deny reality. So you say "Okay, we're aware of reality already! We don't have to read about it!" But to be so naive as to impose such an anthropomorphic label as 'sacred' to biological sexual behaviour common to all living things with a nervous system, simply prove you are not aware of reality. To disprove such notions is precisely what "The Puerto Rican Goddess" sets out to do. We do not live in an idealistic world of sacredness, and we certainly do not live in a world where 'responsibility and respect go hand-in-hand with freedom'. And if we closed our eyes and ears to 'vice' nothing would ever be done about it. I find it hard to believe that girls who seemingly want to see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil, are really 'Girls Who Care'.

Alas, all you really seem to care about is man's image unto himself (or should that be spelt Himself), as evidenced by the statement "Let us not continue to degrade ourselves". Well I say why not degrade ourselves when we deserve it? What about Hitler's Germany? What about the Black Hole of Calcutta? What about prostitution? What about rape? What about Ramon Fernandez? And that is precisely the whole point of "The Puerto Rican Goddess" — the point you completely miss by 'making up your mind' after the first verse, or as some people did, not even bothering to read the rest of the poem. Ramon Fernandez is not saying "Look, Mom, no hands!" without a reason. I believe he is using this style to consciously expose and degrade himself for his 'animalistic' treatment of the Puerto Rican woman. You only have to look at the abrupt change of mood in the second verse to realize he has finally recognized the woman as a person and not a thing. She is warm — bubbling — alive, yet, paradoxical like a woman, she is shivering. She is lying next to him: cold, dead, lacking sentiment — "an icicle".

The poem does not profess a moral; it does not contain a 'message'. It simply describes a personal image of the poet — and that image is the transition of the Puerto Rican woman from a goddess of sex — an unreal sexual object — to a real and sensitive person.

The major body of campus criticism concerning the poem seems to be centered around the form; it is considered by many to be in poor taste because of the poet's choice of words and his arrangement of them within the poem. But how else can the poet affect his transition from raw sex to tenderness without, in fact, using the words of raw sex and arranging them in the metre and frenzied rhythm of raw sex? If the poet wants to expose himself as guilty of lack of sexual respect, and then to show his realization of it through tenderness, it only makes sense that he should write in the appropriate styles.

As far as I am concerned I would not have published the poem if it had simply been a "Look, Mom, no hands" 'flaunt of freedom', intended solely to shock its audience. Again I apologize if the poem did offend some people, but I will continue to defend the poem on esthetic grounds with the belief that the poet was honestly attempting to express a real feeling he had experienced by using words and structure intrinsic to the subject matter. What resulted, I feel, was a sincere poetic statement.

If any of our readers found themselves embarrassed by "The Puerto Rican Goddess" it was because the poem honestly expressed feelings you may

have had yourselves. But for those who only read the first half of the poem, then threw it away, don't cry pornography to me. With pornographic material, pornography is the end in itself. "The Puerto Rican Goddess" does not use profane language; it is not pornographic; what language it does use is only a means to an end. If you did not read the whole poem, or if you were so narrow-minded you "had your mind made up" half way through it, then you have cheated yourself and I have no sympathy for you whatsoever.

## U. P. E. I. Film Workshop Underway

By Brian Pollard

(Ed Note: We reprint here information passed out at the Workshop's first meeting last week for the benefit of those who could not be present.)

The U.P.E.I. film workshop is an informal project designed to acquaint students with some of the basic techniques of film art and production, and hopefully to provide the students with an informative and enjoyable winter pastime. A number of very worthwhile projects are being offered to the participants: one 15 minute 8mm. film with sound for each student, one 16mm. film to be completed by the whole group, and experiments in film animation. The scope of the projects and amount of entertainment gained depends entirely upon the participants themselves.

The workshop is being conducted by three students who took the English 260 course in film art and appreciation at Prince of Wales College last year. Susan Sherwood, Rick Hancox, and Brian Pollard will use their limited knowledge to criticize, explain, and assist the students in their problems and projects. Although most decisions will be made by the students, handling of a budget and okaying of individual scripts will be handled by the three students conducting the workshop. To use a popular term: they should be looked upon as resource people.

Most of the learning of techniques will take place in the workshop sessions, but a few elementary terms should be learned before attempting a shooting script, or even discussing film technique:

—One push of a button on a camera constitutes a shot.

—A section of film which is more or less complete in itself, and made up of a number of closely related shots is called a sequence.

—A film is composed of a number of closely related sequences.

—The placing of different shots into sequences, and the relating of sequences to one another is called editing. The editing process is just as important as the actual shooting of the film. Editing technique can give numerous special effects. The placing of very short lengths of film together can give the illusion of speed in the film, even though the actual action of the shots is slow, and vice versa. Two shots can be related through the use of similar shapes, the contrast of shapes, and through the similarity of motion and the contrast of motion, not to mention the special effects of superimposition, fades, and dissolves.

—The film has its own technical angles, but it also has its own artistic language. Metaphors, symbols and irony etc. can be presented on film in a manner which is unique to film, these are referred to as filmic symbols and filmic metaphors. Action in real life which would make an excellent topic for a film is said to have filmic qualities.

The important thing to remember in making a film is that like still photography, film is a visual medium but unlike still photography film relies on motion. The less film is like still photography, the better the film.

Please keep these ideas in mind and watch for them in the television programs and movies you watch, and if you have the time look over some of the books on film in the University Library.