

REVERB

give an inch, lose a mile

Censorship often seems to be a wonderful thing. The religious, conservative and narrow-minded can support it and feel that they are defending society from the ever-increasing encroachment of the modern world. The liberal and the artistic can attack it and feel the sanctimonious purity of defending artistic freedom.

The letters in the Toronto papers during the controversy over *The Tin Drum* tended to follow one of these two lines. Yet with very few exceptions, none came to grips with the issue of censorship itself. There were numerous letters in the vein of "How can you censor an artistic work like *The Tin Drum* while violent films like *Friday the 13th*, or sexy films like *Hot Sex in Bangkok* are playing here in Toronto?" What these correspondents failed to realize is that the moment you agree to the censorship of one film (or book, or magazine, or painting) you allow the censorship of all works of art or commerce. There is no realization that the act of censorship is a manifestation of moral and societal cowardice, revealing a society which is terrified of ideas or of acts which may offend some segment or, even worse, change the way someone thinks.

Personally, I have seen hardcore pornographic films, super-violent horror films, and even films which advocate the overthrow of a legally constituted government. Yet I have never felt the urge to rape children, hack people to death with chainsaws, or take up arms against Pierre Trudeau. (On occasion I *have* wanted to take up arms against the Conservative government of Ontario, but this has seldom been more than a passing fancy.)

For those who protest the censorship of films, there are three facts worth remembering. First, the Canadian Bill of Rights is not worth the paper it is written on: it has never stood up in court as a legal defense. Second, the Supreme Court of Canada has upheld the right of the provinces to censor films. (The *Last Tango in Paris* and the Nova Scotia Board case for example.) Third, unless you are willing to organize campaigns in a sustained manner, your cause is hopeless, for the simple reason that those who want censorship

are always writing letters on anything that bothers them. All the boards need do is point to the constant stream of letters demanding more censorship.

The difference between those who wish censorship and those who oppose it is that the former are in favor of thought control and are willing to work to bring it about; whether they wish to censor films, legalize abortion or close the bars at one a.m. . . To end censorship, you have to be *heard* — for the fearful will always be with us and will always fight to keep out anything which upsets their sense of order.

John Harkness

fair share?

As I have always understood it, the purpose of the National Film Board of Canada has been to promote Canadian culture through national films. Our tax dollars go to the NFB to enable it to fulfill these identity needs, and give Canadian talents the opportunity to flourish on home ground, instead of falling by the wayside or being swallowed up by our friendly giant to the south.

In the area of Animation, the need for such an organization is even more acute; the difficulties of trying to get financing for animated films, especially if they are experimental in nature, are well-known. The NFB seems to be a haven for the fine-art aspect of animation, with such specialized forms as pinscreen, paint-on-glass, direct-to-film and many others. Their long list of awards is impressive, and they do offer some people the opportunity to grow and flourish.

In the past five years or so there have been some big changes in the Animation scene in Canada. We have seen a great rise in the number of animators seeking employment — due chiefly to the influx of graduates from the Animation Department of Sheridan College. Animation studios outside Canada are now looking with interest, and new respect, at this young generation of Canadian animators. This is partly due to the excellence of NFB films, but also to the talent and quality of work displayed by Canadian

animators who have gone to work in the large film studios outside the country. In fact, the powerful animators' union in California, seeing the numbers of foreign animators finding employment in the film studios there, and fearful of the loss of employment for American animators, have staged strikes — which now makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for foreign animators to work in California any longer. And although there has been a steady, if at times erratic growth in this Canadian business in recent years, it is still very difficult for newcomers to make a start — particularly those wishing to be filmmakers as well as animators.

The NFB could be helping these people more than it is: its facilities and money could serve as an excellent launching pad for talented and innovative newcomers. Unfortunately, it appears that the Board would rather stick with a group of already accomplished filmmakers. The same names appear over and over again at the end of NFB shorts, and this small group of Canadian animators is the only one benefiting from the public funds available.

Instead of this closed-door attitude, the NFB animation studios could establish a revolving system whereby newcomers would have the same opportunity to produce films as do those already at the Board. The system could operate on a term basis, i.e. no one person would be allowed to stay longer than two years, or some other fair arrangement which would encourage a turn-over of people. Also, could the Board not look into the feasibility of providing non-commercial camera facilities, which are so desperately needed by independents? The animators currently working at the NFB are precisely the ones who are the most equipped to go out into the private sector. They have the experience and the credibility necessary to enable them to raise revenue for films, and help develop the Canadian industry.

The NFB would do well to re-examine its present attitude towards outsiders and work more within the Canadian film community. Otherwise it runs the risk of becoming just another government bureaucracy that has lost sight of its original purpose.

Melody George

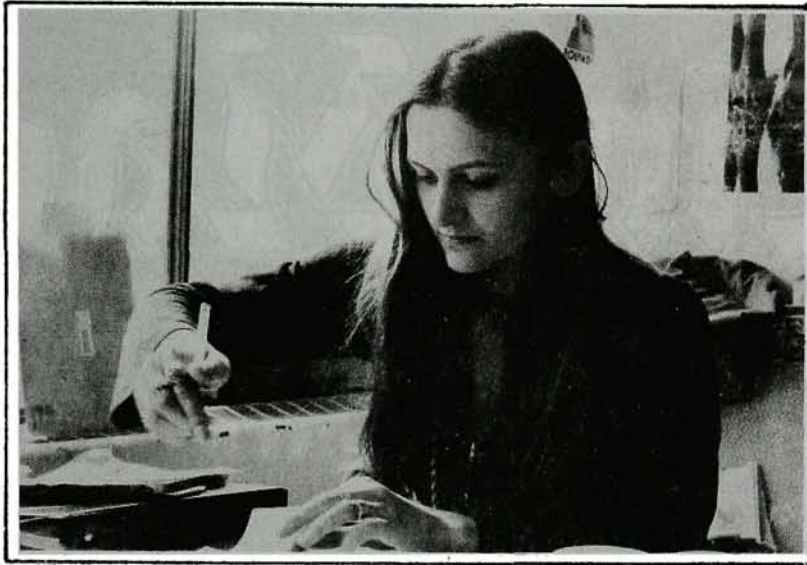


photo: George Csaba Koller

Agi Ibranyi-Kiss (Iman) working on *Cinema Canada* in early 1972

Remembering Iman

"A. Ibranyi-Kiss has dropped out of seven women's liberation groups. She is the daughter of two political idealists, sister to a violinist and a Sufi dancer, and lives amongst cats, plants, books and filmmakers."

This was the autobiographical by-line at the bottom of a *Cinema Canada* article on "Women in Canadian Film," December, 1972. It was the first major piece that Agi Ibranyi-Kiss had written for the fledgling magazine, then in its fifth issue.

Agi and husband George Csaba Koller had moved to Canada only two years before this article appeared. It was before the film business had become a business in this country; before one could call the industry an Industry. We were filmmakers, out to produce small, personal films, before the Industry saw the range of specialized techniques and craftspeople its expansion demanded. Gerard Pelletier was the Secretary of State, and it was big news that Bill Fruet was to direct his own script, "Wedding In White."

Cinema Canada had been the organ of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers, and Phillip McPhedran and Koller had been approached to produce a glossier format for the Society's newsletter. One issue and \$2,000 later, the Society decided they couldn't carry the debt of publication. McPhedran soon resigned to work in film production, and Agi and Csaba assumed the responsibility, and the debt, of the magazine. Agi collected unemployment while handling the layout, typing, and acting as publisher. With

Phil's departure she assumed the role of co-editor, contributor, and Managing Editor. In their second year of publication, Kiss and Koller could each finally draw a salary of \$35 per week.

Even though finances were pinchingly tight, there was always a glass of wine for visitors — and there were always visitors to the *Cinema Canada* office. "It was important to be social then," says Koller. "We had no reporters, so people came to us, and that's how we gathered our information." They gathered information, but the visiting filmmakers gathered a support and enthusiasm from Agi that was beyond measure. She made sure that the smallest project received press, that people were introduced; networks set up to nurture the film process.

And Agi nurtured Susan, the rubber tree in the office who became the *Cinema Canada* mascot. "Every time we succeed in putting out another issue," Agi told *Toronto Star* columnist Clyde Gilmour, "Susan celebrates by putting out one more leaf." We suspected that Agi's faith and energy had influenced Susan's growth. That same energy finally led to her handwritten note printed in the August/September issue of 1974, announcing to readers that *Cinema Canada* was not only out of debt, but had incorporated under a non-profit charter. The pursuit of grants, and a three-fold circulation jump allowed Kiss, Koller and then Advertising Manager Harris Kirshenbaum to now draw whopping salaries of \$75 per week.

But Agi's story would not simply be the story of *Cinema Canada*. Late in 1974, she and Koller passed the magazine on to

Connie and Jean-Pierre Tadros. The magazine opened a Montreal office, and Agi moved to New York to dedicate herself to the Sufi religion. She chose the name Iman.

Iman's transition was not a retreat from the world and its realities. It was a step deeper into activism. Her energies organized Bowery soup kitchens to feed the city's poor, and her novels, stories, poetry and meditations have attracted New York publishers. Iman's sister, Sadeki, who introduced her to Sufism, will supervise the publication of her works.

The details of Iman's passing, the morning of Sunday May 18, are, to those who know them, remarkably peaceful, spiritual, and even beautiful. Iman was now a Priestess, empowered to celebrate the ceremony of Universal Worship — a service bringing together all the major religions of the world on one plane. She died in a car accident, travelling towards the country to perform this service.

The Celebration of her Passing was held the following Wednesday in Kensington, Maryland. Pir Vilayat Khan, leader of the Sufi Order of the West, presided, and over 150 people came from all over North America to take part in the celebration. Iman's ashes will be scattered over the tomb of the founder of the Sufi movement near New Delhi, India.

"I've had a message from her," says George Csaba Koller. It is:

*Pride Must End
Peace Must Enter
And Purpose Must Exist.*

Suzanna Plowright

CineMag

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