the relationship between power and economics is exposed. Nolan also battles against the pre-fabricated roles of an industry wherein women are expected to sing and "jiggle" as opposed to picking up an instrument and playing. The novelty tag of "all-girl band" is a testament to what Nolan is talking about.

Exhibition and performance spaces often come with onerous clauses regarding artistic or political compromise, two principles neither Nolan nor Channing are willing to relinquish. Tokenism and the "old boy's network" often threaten to hamper their resolve. Nolan relates her experience with gigs in which organizers strongly hint that she should tone down her out politics, reminding her "it's a family day thing." Nolan openly challenges the conservative monopoly on family values, "I'm a lesbian, I have a family. [But] I'm the one in the family who isn't supposed to exist.

This kind of blatant negation attempts to obscure an essential aspect of their work and identities. Channing speaks of how those who assess her work overlook her lesbianism and feminism, which she feels are essential in understanding where the art is coming from. "The organizers of the gallery saw my work only through heterosexual eyes; the lesbianism in my work is very much a part of what it is."

*Toronto artist Grace Channer in Long Time Comin'*

It seems astounding that anyone could overlook the feminist aspects of their work. Nolan's lyrics, Channing's wood sculptures, her vulva painting, and the painted statements on her canvasses are powerful declarations of their political sensitivities and personal allegiances. The driving sensuality of their work originates from the wellspring of their love for women. Their Blackness, their lesbianism and feminism are advantages factored into the creation and presentation of their work. Within this perspective, the passivity of conventional cultural consumption seems curiously meaningless and particularly lethal.

Both women are working against a status quo which valorizes art and translates success into sales. In response to the commodification of not just art but social values, Channing scripts into the border of her canvas "there will never be enough money when you follow what's right." Nolan and Channing's art exists as a vigorous dialogue with the communities which are the essence of their identities. The sing-along of Nolan bluesy folk bears witness to the intrinsic need to link with a community who know the tune and can pick up a line. "I can have a full black culture and be a lesbian," says Nolan, "which is very rewarding." On Nolan's stage, every day is Gay Pride Day. This sentiment towards community is also encapsulated within the immediacy of Channing's work. As she recites in her poem, "it would be incomprehensible/to only have only yourself to measure blackness against/in a world that claims it doesn't exist." Nolan and Channing's audiences are not passive observers but are full participants in their creations. Malaise and alienation do not figure into Nolan and Channing's vocabulary. A running subtext of the film is the necessity to build a space in which to work and thrive. Throughout the course of the film Nolan and Channing are involved in the construction of Camp SIS, a political education centre located in the country. This camp "of one's own" is to be a sanctuary for women and children from the stresses of urbanism, corporatism and patriarchy. In all their projects, Nolan and Channing have displayed a desire for a different path. *Long Time Comin'* bears witness to their courage and is a resounding anthem of survival.

## KANEHSATAKE: 270 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Written and Directed by Alanis Obomsawin. Produced by Studio B, National Film Board of Canada, 1993.

### *by Merlin Homer*

Kanehsatake.

Oka.

"When we were in Oka..." a friend of mine begins a sentence. She and her children had been part of the Peace Camp, the supporters of the resistance. I see her face, her body posture subtly change. Her unspoken words reach me: "When I was untainted in who I am, when I was unquestionably proud, unquestionably confident...when I did something I knew was good."

A few weeks ago in a circle of women, Oka was mentioned. Spontaneously, one after another, the women said what it meant to them. An awakening of consciousness, of purpose, a coming to grips with who they are, a radicalization, as if in a sudden shock of recognition each one suddenly knew that it was time for the tide to turn, and that she would be part of its turning.

Alanis Obomsawin was there, and her sense of having been part of something unquestionably good is communicated electrically by her film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance.* With exquisite clarity and detail, Obomsawin documents the complex history of the fraud and expropriation that compressed a people onto smaller and smaller pieces of land, less and less favourably placed, until the tiny Mohawk village of Kanehsatake, still in 1990 being pro-

gressively encroached upon by non-native settlement—land that is clearly in their use being treated as not-theirs—finally says, "No." When Ellen Gabriel, at a hopeful moment in the events, stands up and says, with a shattering sense of conviction, "today I am proud to be a Mohawk," that inexpressibly deep pride is there, too.

Obomsawin captures it all and you feel you have been there. The pattern, since contact, of white society being able to take whatever it wants, is explicit. At a public meeting at which he is cheered, the Mayor of Oka makes it clear that this pattern is being challenged by the resistance to the conversion of sacred lands to a golf course. "Should we negotiate for 75 per cent of Quebec's territory?" he calls out rhetorically.

The helplessness of Tom Siddon and John Ciaccia—two highly placed white negotiators who seem to mean well—is apparent as their bosses, Mulroney and Bourassa, speak blandly of the threat to democracy. From many different people, the same anguished cry echoes repeatedly through the film: "This is Canada, this is Canada."

Not Nazi Germany, not Russia, they mean. What is happening to us, what is happening before our eyes, is not supposed to happen here. The encroachment of the previous 270 years is re-enacted in microcosm in tiny Kanehsatake, culminating in the compression (by over 3000 federal soldiers and a surreal quantity of razor wire) of 30 warriors, one spiritual leader, one traditional chief, 19 women and seven children, into a treatment centre bizarrely shrouded from view by a huge white curtain.

Increasingly, the army, which seems motivated by nothing beyond an inexorable drive to subdue, treats journalists like enemies. Their film is intercepted, their phone contact cut off. Geoffrey York of the *Globe and Mail* appears on screen. "We're allowing the army to tell us what we can put on the weekend news," he says.

Obomsawin never leaves. She is still there when the Mohawks simply "exit" from the treatment centre. On their side of the white curtain have grown a deepening sadness, gentleness, calm and self-acceptance which contrast visibly with the "I have a military job to do here—I'm gonna do it," attitude of the soldiers. "The spirit was there," says one man. "We never surrendered. It was an exit."

I cannot begin to convey the intensity, detail, and immediacy of *Kanehsatake* in this short space. It is a powerful woman's film, made by a powerful woman, Alanis Obomsawin. Near the beginning of the film, another powerful woman, Ellen Gabriel states, "Our women have to go to the front. Because it is our obligation to protect the land. Our Mother." At the very end, a woman from the treatment centre who is dragged into detention cries out, "We don't ask for anything that's not ours. You came and you took. You took!" Throughout, women's voices are heard: in this film, their voices are as loud as the voices of men. Indeed, the strong presence of the Mohawk women contrasts greatly with the all-male power structure of the whites.

The final scenes of *Kanehsatake* could be considered tragic. The "exiters" from the treatment centre are chaotically grabbed, beaten, taken into custody. But a comment made by one of the warriors before the exit rings even truer today than it did in 1990: "It's brought all Indian nations together this fight. So in a way, our battle is won."

## BACKLASH

Susan Faludi. Paris: Édition des Femmes, 1993.

### *par Chantal Poux*

Susan Faludi, prix Pulitzer 91, reporter pour *Wall Street Journal*, nous livre là un document explosif sur la revanche contre les femmes aux États-Unis, sous les gouvernements Reagan et Bush. Douze ans de chasse aux sorcières, de représailles en tout genre, de rancoeur et de haine, en fait une véritable guerre ouverte contre toutes les femmes dans une Amérique fin vingtième siècle.

Qui sont les auteurs de cette revanche, comment et pourquoi agissent-ils? Responsables politiques et religieux, policiers, médecins, journalistes, producteurs cinématographiques, publicitaires, couturiers, dirigeants d'entreprises, psychothérapeutes, aucun champ social n'est épargné et aucune arme négligée: lois rétrogrades, fabrication de rapports officiels, invention pure et simple de nouveaux maux et de nouvelles maladies spécifiquement féminines, coupures budgétaires, inégalité salariale, croisades anti-avortement, exclusion et culpabilisation de celles qui dérogent du droit chemin, etc. Mais pourquoi tant d'acharnement? Les justifications sont là aussi plus qu'éloquentes: «Les femmes ne peuvent pas tout avoir», «L'égalité fait le malheur des femmes», ainsi s'expriment les leaders de cette nouvelle droite réactionnaire.

*Backlash* est l'histoire de cette lutte terrifiante contre les droits des femmes, leur marche vers l'égalité, la reconnaissance de leur identité. C'est un livre dur parce que sans appel. Faludi n'invente rien, elle nous livre au contraire une recherche de quatre années, étayée par des rapports complaisants ou censurés, des interviews personnelles, des témoignages parfois anonymes, de nombreux jugements et statistiques souvent «neutralisé-e-s». Faludi nous livre la réalité brute et implacable.

Alors, au coeur de cette noirceur demeure-t-il un espoir? L'auteure reste affirmative: «Les femmes continuent de lutter». Elles continuent de s'instruire, de faire leur place dans le monde du travail, d'élever des enfants, de vouloir en tout et pour tout participer pleinement en tant que citoyennes libres, conscientes de leurs droits et de leurs devoirs, à la vie politique de leur cité et au destin de leur nation.

Pourquoi lire *Backlash?* D'où que nous venions, où que nous vivions et où que nous allions, cette perspective