

pears from it because she is afraid he's falling in love with her Violet alter-ego and not her 'true' self, and reenters his life as Elizabeth. They only sleep together because Elizabeth reminds Mark of Violet. This is romance?

Ignorant of the purpose of the genre's language, Mort Ranson makes the mistake of taking it too literally. In one scene the cliché of a couple dancing to their own song, oblivious to the world around them, is presented word for word, to the viewer as Elizabeth/ Violet and Mark dancing to a slow song while the other people on the dance floor move spastically to an inaudible disco tune.

Unlike *Champagne for Two*, which gives us access to the heroine's inner thoughts, *Sincerely, Violet* effectively locks us out. Elizabeth is too busy writing a book and would rather not share her thoughts if it means falling behind schedule. However, even if *Sincerely, Violet* had given us the opportunity to know the heroine's thoughts and feelings, it is doubtful that any identification with Elizabeth would have been possible. Elizabeth is depicted as the retiring and shy history professor in some scenes and a sensual, femme-fatale in others. The two aspects of Elizabeth/ Violet are never reconciled into a whole and complete individual. It is as though the film takes as truth the Madonna/whore myth that a woman can't be both intelligent and seductive. She must either be an Elizabeth or a Violet. This depiction of a dichotomized woman will be insulting to many of the female viewers who see themselves neither as pasteurized maidens nor as irresistible vamps.

If *Shades of Love* doesn't undermine the intelligence of its predominantly female viewer, as it does in *Sincerely, Violet*, it will be an incredibly successful series. Few can resist a warm invitation to fall in love, at regular intervals, in the privacy of one's home. And without having to worry if this time is for 'real'. As *Champagne for Two* proves, when the romance novel is interpreted correctly, it will be.

Ana Arroyo •

exec. p. Ken Atchity p. Stewart Harding d. Lewis Furey (*Champagne for Two*), Mort Ransen (*Sincerely, Violet*) d.o.p. René Verzier prod. design. Michael Joy prod. sup. Marilyn Majerczuk prod. man. Pierre Labege art d. Lynn Trout cost. design. Lyse Bédard sd. Henri Bilondeau post prod. sup. Peter Alves 1st a.d. *Champagne for Two* — François Leclerc. *Sincerely, Violet* — Frank Ross 2nd a.d. Tom Groszman 3rd a.d. Vicki Frodsham unit man. Ken Korrall loc. man. Carole Mondello, Marie Potvin prod. co-ord. Deborah Day asst. to Steart Harding Linda Nadler Asst. to Ken Atchity Tracy Lotwin asst. to Michael Joy Françoise St. Aubin asst. to John Meighan Skip Hobbs prod. acct. Peter Sowden. Tina Kontos typist/ reception Jean Sexton asst. cam. Denis Gingras 2nd. asst. cam. Jean-Jacques Gervais cont *Champagne for Two* Sandrine Fayos. *Sincerely, Violet* — Suzanne Chiasson set dec. *Champagne for Two* Guy Lalonde asst. by. Richard Tassé *Sincerely, Violet* André Chamberland asst. by Mario Hervieux prop. mast. Marc Corriveau props. Marc de Léry, Anne Grandbois asst. cost. des. Ellen Garvie set ward. Francesca Chamberland asst. set ward. Marie-Thérèse Brouillard asst. unit man. Karl Archambault pix vehicle co-ord Roman Martyn make-up Colleen Quinton hair *Champagne for Two* Serge Morache *Sincerely, Violet* Ben Robin swing gang Glendon Light, Denis Lemire, Eric Brunet, Stéphane Connolly, Ross Schore gaffer Jean-Marc Hébert best boy René Guillard 1st elec. Sylvain Bernier 2nd. elec. Bernard Arseneau geni op. Michel Canuel key grip François Dupéré grip Robert Baylis boom Pierre Blain art. dept. driver Mary Lunn Beachman office driver Jimmy Kontos, Eddy Fisher driver Tim Parkinson craft serv. Jean Lalonde honeywagon Gerardo Monzi casting agent Nadia Rona, Elite post prod. Peter Alves pub. relations, Shona French, David Novek Associates l.p. *Champagne for Two*. Nicholas Campbell, Kirsten Bishop, Carol-Ann Francis, Terry Haig, Eve Napier, Russell Yuen. *Sincerely, Violet* Simon MacCarkindale, Patricia Phillips, Barbara Ann Jones.

Chris Gallagher's Undivided Attention

Undivided Attention is a feature-length experimental film by Chris Gallagher which could be seen as part of a trend in Canadian experimental film which has surfaced in the last few years. This trend can be defined as a move away from the purely structuralist inspections of time and space to include elements of character, narrative, emotion and text.

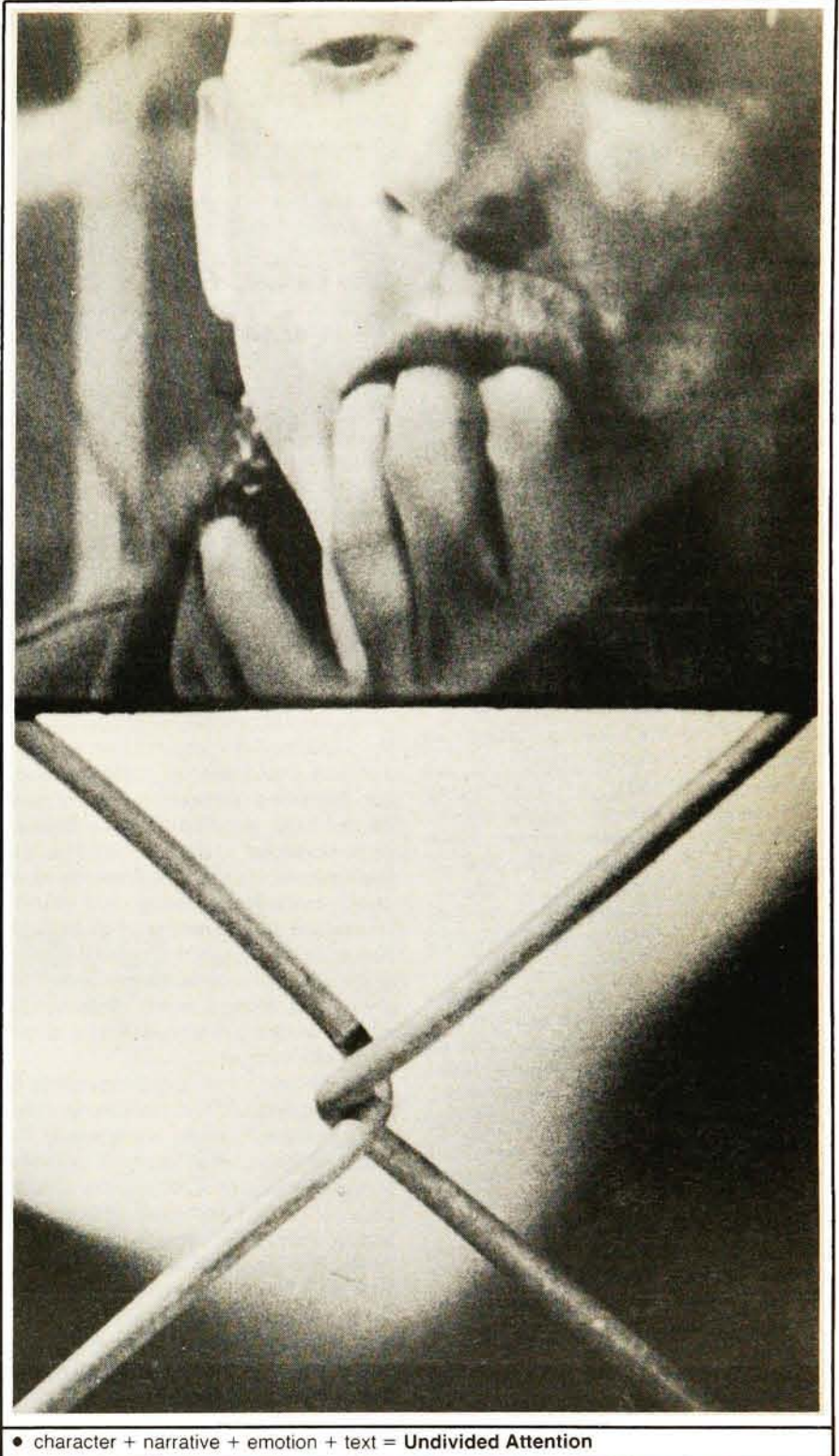
Other films by Gallagher have been fashioned primarily in the structuralist mode, for example, *Atmosphere* (1975) or *Seeing in the Rain* (1981). *Undivided Attention* is essentially a non-linear, narrative construct (with a voice-over text and an original musical score) which uses structuralist devices. Like Godard or Straub, Gallagher relies heavily on a collage technique which uses the film elements like puzzle pieces, that only come together as an emotional and narrative whole in the viewer's mind.

Gallagher's metaphor for narrativity, and construct of the film as journey, is a recurring shot of a man and woman in a small sports car travelling through various rural and urban landscapes. We always see the couple from the back of the car where the camera has been placed and travel with them, in what seems to be a cross-country journey, through a series of jumpcuts which destroy the illusion of a continuous time and space.

This emblematic couple is always crossing bridges just as Gallagher's film attempts to bridge the gap between the dichotomies that define his filmmaking and his self. This film seems to be dealing with the split in the postmodern world, between the natural and the civilized, the emotions and the intellect, woman and man, art and theory, sign and meaning, and what we see and what we know. These splits are imaged through a collage which becomes a three-way relationship between perceptual disorientation, an ambiguous conceptual relation to the world, and the problematics of male-female relationships.

The recurrence of perceptual, cinematic games is the most noticeable feature of the film. Besides from the numerous uses of rhythmically edited jumpcuts, we also get many shots which serve to disorient the viewer's relationship to the visual world of the film. One often-used device is that of isolating a part of the frame, usually some sort of symbol (such as a painting, a postcard, or a wheel) and holding it steady while the rest of the frame — a conventional, realistic shot — spins out of control. At the beginning of the film Gallagher does this with a strip which goes horizontally across the center of the frame, showing a picture of a toy boat, while in the background is a shot of a real boat. The real is set spinning but the sign remains in control.

Another type of shot which Gallagher uses to question and distort our sense of space and control of the view, is one



• character + narrative + emotion + text = Undivided Attention

where the camera is seemingly directly attached to some object in the frame. In the most spatially disorienting shot of this type, he mounts a camera on a shovel with the shovel blade in the center of the frame. This at first seems to give us a point of reference but as soon as the manipulator of the shovel (maybe the cameraman/filmmaker) starts to shovel, the background space becomes real and yet a virtually unreadable, swirling sea of matter. The central view orients to the shovel but disorients us in space. The background and foreground seem separate realities but become one as the shovel picks up snow. The soundtrack also disorients as the live synchronized sound is intentionally put out of sync, thereby creating a further feeling of a world out of kilter. Gallagher's perceptual games and intentional blurring and undermining of an easy viewing or reading of his work is implicitly a call to pay attention (*Undivided Attention?*) to his mode of construction of a work of art, his style of representation, and his version of a cinematic self.

The previously described shots could be seen as pure structuralist constructs,

questioning the relationships between viewer, film and reality. However, Gallagher, in this film, often uses these structuralist devices to put forth an emotional reality. As in a Brakhage film, we share the filmmaker's subjective point-of-view. The narrative line of this film, as disjunctive as it is, does seem to follow the progress of a sexual relationship. The emblematic couple in the recurring car scenes is replaced by other actors in different scenes, but these scenes when strung together do make a poetic and narrative whole. The feelings of disorientation, which the perceptual trickery conveys to the viewer, are not only feelings of disorientation towards the perceptual world, but only towards the conceptual and emotional world.

A scene central to the definition of the male/female relationships in the film is that of a man typing up a shot by shot description of *The Blue Angel* by Von Sternberg, while a part of the film plays on a television set in the background. The scene on the TV is that of Marlene Dietrich in the cabaret singing *Falling in Love Again* while the German professor,

who is soon to become her lover, watches from the audience. The song defines her as a femme fatale, a destructive force who draws men like "moths to a flame". At the same time, in her role as cabaret singer, Dietrich obviously portrays the woman as spectacle, as unattainable other. **The Blue Angel** is about a relationship between a sexual woman and a rigid, over-intellectual professor who is locked in by acceptance of the codes of his society. This could also be seen as a description of the relationship portrayed in the film. The filmmaker/author seems to be struggling with a dichotomy in himself, a conflict between the emotional self and the intellectual self. This scene also contains perceptual-conceptual game-playing: the camera appears to be directly attached to the typewriter and moves across the screen in small jarring motions dictated by the typing, while on each return the shot gets tighter and tighter on the face of the man who is typing. The typing (supposedly of the screenplay of **The Blue Angel** which we hear on the voice-over track) dictates Gallagher's unusual shot by shot breakdown in a literal mechanical sense, just as the voice-over describes the breakdown of the German film playing on the video monitor. The two films are linked in Gallagher's innovative manner, and the audience is cued to look closer for the subtextual connections to his emotional themes.

In another scene, the neon sign of a running horse is juxtaposed with a voice-over narration which recounts the story of Muybridge, the photographer who was a seminal force in the investigation of motion by the use of several still camera images. Muybridge can be seen as trying to pin down a natural phenomenon through intellectual means, but in the end we learn that he was put on trial for the murder of his wife's lover and even though he was acquitted the suspicion remains that he was incapable of controlling his own nature.

In this respect the filmmaker's handling of the scene where the couple make love is one of the most interesting for its many reverberations of meaning. The scene starts with an overhead shot of Niagara Falls, as the camera pulls back it reveals a woman reading a book held over the falls. The voice-over is a doubled voice, male and female, reciting these words; "I look into his eyes and he looks back. Who are you and what do you mean?" There are more shots of the falls and as the camera goes into a close-up of the rushing water, we hear the sound of a woman's voice during the sexual act. The speed of the rushing water is manipulated (slower & faster) until it becomes an abstract, electronic light play - an apparent linking of the natural and conceptual. Next we see a woman walking over a bridge and then an out-of-focus image of two bodies making love, so abstract as to become almost unrecognizable. The previous doubled-voice-over text is played backwards and eventually a small spotlight appears caressing the bodies and revealing certain parts more clearly and sharply than in the overall image. The spotlight is a very suggestive device, implying the eye of the camera, the peephole gaze of the viewer and the objectification of the bodies. But the shots of the

woman walking over the bridge, which are intercut into this scene, do suggest that the dichotomy between male and female, intellectual and natural, can be bridged. In the out-of-focus shots of the two bodies making love, the viewer is not able to clearly define what is happening, but the emotion inherent in two bodies melting into each other is clearly conveyed. Repeatedly Gallagher uses what can only be called an abstract expressionist style of filmmaking, as in the previously described shots, which seem to refer to an alliance between art, nature and the emotions. As in Lacanian psychology, the unity of the self is linked to a pre-language, pre-signification stage of awareness. To emphasize this the sex scenes are followed by shots of a paintbrush merrily dancing over a blank page, to the tattoo beat on a paintcan drum, flowing in red and blue.

It seems to us that in this film, society as a whole is seen as a system of signs which bars the male/filmmaker from the bliss of union with the other, be it woman or nature. Indeed, the beginning of the film is a series of revolving signs for modern day commodities; gas, fried chicken, cigarettes, etc... The ending of the film then becomes a clearer statement of the impossibility of a relationship between men and women. Gallagher presents the intellectually active man, destroying, eating and burying himself in books, imprisoned behind a fence, cut off from the natural woman, presented as the unattainable 'other' in a shot of a female nude, seen upside-down, in the groundglass of a photographer's camera.

There are some problems with the film. **Undivided Attention** is essentially a postmodernist work where Gallagher tries to imbue notions of subjectivity, emotion, and narrativity in a film that on its first and most striking level works mostly as a series of perceptual plays. The question is, how effective is this mix? Are there enough clues to the emotional and psychological meanings? For an unadvised audience, the film could become an enjoyable visual experience but perhaps no more. Several viewings might be needed to decipher the complexity of the work. The overwhelming length of the film can also become a deterrent to its enjoyment and if some of the repetition could be cut out it would make for a tighter and more powerful statement. However, overall **Undivided Attention** is a highly ambitious, complex and successful work.

Don Terry ●
Mary Alemany-Galway ●

UNDIVIDED ATTENTION p./w./d./o.p. Chris Gallagher add. photog. Georg Ladanyi sd. rec. Chris Gallagher add. sd. rec. Scott Jacques, Tom Turnbull ed. Chris Gallagher add. sd. cut. Angelos Hatzitolios m. Chris Gallagher add. m. Tom Kondzielewski **Persian drum** Orang Nowkhah pipe band Victoria park Pipe Band, Regina "Ich Bin Von Kopf Bis Fuss Auf Liebe Eigesteelt", and "Lili Marleen" sung by Marlena Dietrich voice over Dawn Kasdorf, R.J.W. Swales, John Turek, Michelle Turek **Thanks to the following for their assistance** Harald Berwald, Peg Campbell, Michael Decourcy, Spyro Egarhos, Wren Jackson, Barrie Jones, Se Kohane, Marc Lafoy, Peter Lipskis, Nancy More, Susan Roth, Wayne Selby, Somkiat Vitthuranich, Randy Zimmer, Elizabeth Zmetana, The University of Regina - Department of Film and Video lab. Alpha Cine financial assistance Canada Council Film Production Section l.p. Barrie Jones, Merika Talve, Chris Gallagher, Wren Jackson, Georg Ladanyi, Wren Jackson, Alan Brandoli, Tomasz Pbbp-Malinowski, Al Egum, The 15th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA, Roy Cross, Dana Taffelmeyer, Spyro Egarhos, Carlyn Swartz, Georg Ladanyi, Lisa Daum, Don Hall.

Kay Armatage's **Artist on Fire**

The first thing you see in Kay Armatage's **Artist on Fire** is a joke. Joyce Wieland - avant-garde filmmaker, Canada's officially-sanctioned radical woman artist, our Joyce - sits in a stuffed chair putting the finishing touches on a portrait of a young man in ancient Greek costume. The model stands posed with two other ersatz Olympians before a background of rich draperies, soft lighting and still-life. The whole thing sends up the genteel male tradition of salon painting - its stasis, its borrowed mythology, and, most importantly, its exclusion of women artists - in one sharp jab. This documentary about Wieland makes its first point quickly and deftly: the boy's clubhouse is a farce; it just plain looks silly. But our Joyce is in a tricky position because she's just been invited in.

Artist on Fire arrives as Joyce Wieland finds herself being celebrated on several fronts as "Canada's foremost woman artist." After decades of working on the fringes of recognition, working in a variety of media, working with and against traditional notions of women's work and women's art, Wieland has come in from the margins (or the centre has expanded to meet her). Her work is currently the subject of a major Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective, and both the popular and the art press have been writing about her lately with unprecedented interest and urgency. **Artist on Fire** arrives at the same time as all of this, but it stands to one side of it.

Armatage's film was conceived in 1983, stemming from an initial interest in Wieland's 'formalist/feminist' films of the '60s and '70s, and an amazement at the lack of informed critical writing about them. Both a film scholar and a filmmaker, Armatage makes documentaries that usually approach 'women's' issues - abortion in **Speak Body**, objectification and economy in **Striptease** - from a grounding in theory. **Artist on Fire**, as she saw it, would attempt to place Wieland's films within the larger

context of her work - canvases, drawings, sculptures, quilts, etc.; it would demonstrate the richness of (and in) Wieland's work as a whole, and rescue her films from the confining structuralist designation. Traditionally, films such as **Reason Over Passion**, **Handtinting**, and **A and B in Ontario** have been looked at (when they were looked at at all) as experiments with the medium, formal play. **Artist on Fire** views them in the context of Wieland's personal concerns: feminism, the environment, the Canadian political and geographical body, eroticism, to name some.

The film works by intercutting interviews with Wieland - she addresses the camera directly - with examples of her work, scenes of her at work, and staged scenes which 'quote' her work. We see Wieland swimming in a lake, reprising a scene from her feature film **The Far Shore**. We see Wieland aiming a hand-held camera at the camera, quoting **A and B in Ontario**. Armatage's technique is to blend her text with Wieland's texts, insinuating commentary into art. She's able to do this partly by not identifying shots from Wieland's films when they appear. They simply form a part of the text, given no more weight than Armatage's own images. In fact, the film's editing style insists on erasing the lines between what is secondary and what is primary material, on knitting a seamless join between Wieland's life (or performed life) and her art: associative cuts may take the viewer from an object in Wieland's home to a similar object in a film of hers, to a canvas, to a new sequence. This is not a distanced, 'objective' documentary; Armatage has called it an ode.

Or perhaps a chorus. Armatage's use of voice in **Artist on Fire** is characteristic of her work. She blends the commentaries of Denis Reid, Joyce Zemans, Judy Steed and Michael Snow, which include both personal and critical statements, into a polyvalent voice, speaking around Wieland and her work, overlapping and intersecting one another, working by addition to fill in the picture. Armatage has used this strategy before, most effectively in **Speak Body**, where the common personal experience of the women and the emotional resonance of the subject combined to give the voices an irresistible rhetorical force.

The effect isn't as strong here, but the voices do convince, and that causes some problems. Interweaving voices would seem to solve the problem of the 'authority' of the traditional documenta-

● Joyce Wieland gets ready for the job

