

ALL IN ONE FILMS -Transcripts

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SO THIS PROGRAM THAT WE WORK ON IN CANADA HAS BEEN ON THE AIR FOR 25 YEARS. SO WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF WHAT'S HAPPENED, AND THE PLACE TO START I GUESS IS THE SIXTIES. IS EVRY GENERATION AS UNSURE OF ITS YOUTH AS WE SEEM TO BE?

Unsure of youth? I'm very sure of my youth. I don't know about everyone else.

I MEANT THE SIXTIES AS A GENERATION. THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF DEBATE ABOUT WHAT IT WAS REALLY ABOUT.

I think the problem of the sixties was we were very arrogant about our own youthfulness and as we made a cult like the first or rather second generation of Romantics like Byron, Shelley and Keats, we made a cult of our own youth. And I think out of this era came the disasters of the sixties, the excesses of it -our disrespect for tradition, for our history, for parents, wisdom and so on and so forth. I mean my attitude was that of the Doors' line - we want the world, we want it now. I made a lot of mistakes and I really ah injured my own causes. And I've been battered around in life and I've learned a lot. In fact what I think the nineties are about is essentially a return of sixties idealism but tempered by seventies and eighties pragmatic political realism - idealism tempered by realism I think is the legacy of the nineties.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REALISM OF THE SIXTIES? I MEAN HOW DID WE FORGET THAT?

I don't think we were realistic. I think that there's a very interesting film which I just recently saw - Berkeley in the Sixties - and you really see what happened. You see the beginning, the passionate commitment to political causes and then the swirl, psychedelia which I very much support, out of which I came in some sense. I didn't take drugs but everyone around me did and I'm very influenced by the kind of drugged way of seeing the world. Psychedelia was a disaster to politics. It was a turn inward; it was a visionary search for expanded consciousness but that that unfortunately came a kind of neglect of political realities. And that's where the sixties failed. You can see it in this movie. You can see how at first people are absolutely - their faces are alert, they have limited aims which they achieve through civil disobedience or whatever. And within a few years you began to get a kind of barbarism in the streets, riots, affluent middle class youth being totally disrespectful of working class values and middle class values as well. And then there was the counter-reaction of conservatism because of these excesses. We're now still picking up the pieces from that counter-reaction which was necessary to reassert law and order because of this barbaric riot that we let loose, the Dionysian riot, you know, that our own idealism let loose

upon society. The conservative reaction was necessary but unfortunately, you know, a lot of sixties people are either brain dead from the drugs. Perhaps some of the most creative people I know are ah never ended up contributing anything over the long run because drugs help you at first to break you through your conventional way of seeing things but in the long run they harm your ability to create external material forms that can communicate your vision to the outside world. So I feel very lucky that in some way I wasn't drawn to drugs. I'm not sure why. I think I'm addicted to my own hormones, but at any rate my adrenalins or whatever they are. I'm sort of like - I'm the speed freak sixties, you know. I never had to take anything, that's just me. And so I feel like coming right out of the Bob Dylan Electric Pier, that kind of speed freak jive, kind of that rap and so on. And I feel very lucky because I think it was because I did not take drugs, I have been able to work with such intensity and such practical application. And no one else around me has been able to do that. There's been a tremendous loss of the sixties vision because of the, you know, we see it in Jim Morrison. Jim Morrison, just a fantastically brilliant - so learned, really one of the centres of sixties sensibility and took all the drugs and alcohol and eventually the drug or the alcohol turns on you as it did with him and he ceased being able to create.

WHEN WE THINK OF THE SIXTIES, I MEAN NAMES LIKE JANIS JOPLIN AND MORRISON AND HENDRIX, WE TALK ABOUT THEM ALOT. BUT ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE US, PEOPLE THAT WERE JUST SORT OF MOVING ALONG AND FEELING THAT PERHAPS POLITICAL REALITY WAS THAT THE POLITICS WEREN'T WORKING, THAT IN FACT AS A GROUP WE MAYBE COULD WORK TOGETER AND MAKE THE WORLD A BETER PLACE. I MEAN IT SOUNDS ALMOST CORNY TO SAY THAT NOW. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THOSE PEOPLE AND THAT IDEALISM, JUST THE AVERAGE -

I think it failed. I think it failed. I think the whole thing just got out of control. And I think part of it was the contempt for the older generation. The older generation sensed that, you know this, we have nothing to do with you. We have something new to offer and we're not going to listen to you at all and part of that came from the fact that our parents, like one didn't realize at the time but as years went on I saw it very clearly - our parents were resting after decade after decade of the Depression, the rise of fascism, Naziism, World War Two, the bomb, discovery of the concentration camps, the Cold War and so on. And our parents wanted a better life for the children than they had had. They had had nothing since they were young but worry about anxiety, about darkness. So they were determined to create an environment that would protect their children from what they had suffered. As a consequence, they did not tell us about the real - the realities of the world. And I think that's what I felt, growing up in the fifties. I thought, what, this is so boring. This is so boring, this is so sanitized, I can't stand this. I felt like I was in prison in the sex roles of the fifties, in the politics of the fifties. I just felt I can't - I mean I'm still claustrophobic from it. We have this TV series down here, Happy Days, which is giving a very biased picture of what the fifties were like, this idea that somehow a black-jacketed guy like Fonzy could be received at the house of the red-haired boy. That's absurd. The hoods could never be

received. There was absolutely a repressive era where the hoods represented the criminality and sexuality and everything that was outlaw and so on and so forth. So I feel The Twilight Zone very accurate reflects the fifties instability, that is a sense of normality which is then disturbed by eruptions of what has been repressed, okay, what has been repressed in the cellar, what has been put up in the attic. I feel that my work in Sexual Persona, I feel that what I'm doing is going down into the cellar and up into the attic and bringing into - into the eyes of everyone what our parents did not want to think about - everything whether it's pornography or aggression or Naziism, the inner aggression of the human soul and so on, inner evil of the human soul, right. So I think that the, our parents were actually excessive. Their tranquility was a false tranquility. The Rousseau, the sunny Rousseauist, you know, optimism of the fifties, the normality of the fifties, right. That was an excessive reaction to something that had been excessive and our reaction was excessive to the fifties. And out of that came another excess, the conservative backlash. And I think we're waking up from everything now, sort of the end of the century, it's the end of the millenium, we're reassessing and I feel there is something happening. I have been saying my ideas for 20 years, no one listens. I couldn't get published, I couldn't get hired and suddenly people are listening and understanding what I'm saying. And it suggests to me there is kind of a cyclical pattern at work. And we've gone through a full cycle and we're coming back. And people have written to me, people from the sixties, who have said that, you know, for 20 years I felt what has happened, I felt I had lost myself and so on and I was reading the excerpts from your article that was in - like in the San Francisco Examiner. There was a huge cover story with excerpts from an expose that I wrote and people have written to me that they began weeping, that they actually began - people said I wept here and I wept again and I wept again. Because I'm like reasserting the claims of the sixties, that is that we were seeking cosmic vision. I mean it seems so unfashionable now. My students can't possibly understand what we mean by cosmic thinking or they can't understand what is meant by the void in the Zen Buddhist sense or anything like that. It's amazing how they're lost this.

BUT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND ACTING GLOBALLY. I MEAN THEY UNDERSTAND IN TERMS OF THE ENVIRONMENT THEY KNOW -

Yes it's coming back. Yes I feel it coming back. They're concerned for the environment and globally it's starting to resurge. And I began noticing about five years ago that my students would, would just quiz me about the sixties that this generation of students is very very interested in the sixties. I began noticing people to class with Grateful Dead t-shirts and so on and so forth. And I felt something is happening. I don't think it's a sentimentalization of the sixties at all because I think the sixties had a vision, a real vision but it was lost in the excesses. What I say in my book essentially you see is Norman O. Brown and Marcuse and so on talking about Dionysius, these are older men okay, who came out of a different kind of a milieu. We are the ones who put the myth of Dionysius into action and we saw - we hit the wall okay because once you release the Dionysian forces, Euripides Bacchi tells

you what happens, okay. There is destruction, disorder. No one can control Dionysius and he is not simply pleasure; he is pleasure-pain. Altamont, okay, the Rolling Stones' concert at Altamont shows what happens. The end result of that, the people just turning on each other and beating each other and a murder in front of the stage and so on. That's the Dionysian reality.

WHAT'S THE EQUIVALENT OF THAT HORRIBLE MURDER IN THAT CONCERT FOR SOCIETY? I MEAN IS THERE A SOCIETAL EQUIVALENT TO THAT GUY BEING KILLED WITH THE POOL CUES OR WHATEVER IT WAS?

I think the way the crowd turned on itself I think that's what happened, okay. We had this enormous unleashing of idealism in the sixties but without any clear sense of how we can harness this, without any clear sense of what politics means. There was a kind of naivete. People talked about America with a capital K, you know, as if it's a repressive regime. And it's very - and this idea, like you can see it in movies like *Wild In The Streets* where people have this idea, wow, our youth cult, just like get into the Senate and just like completely do it by like bliss them out like this. And there was a general lack of political reality, I mean a real lack of a study of how politics works. I mean politics is a dirty game; it's an art of compromise. The more you study ancient history which I have - I originally wanted to be an archeologist - the more you see the way culture developed out of nothing, all right. The way we began simply totally dependent on nature and slowly step by step we developed small units and then larger units and the economic benefits that come from that and so on and so forth. Now today apparently nobody studies these things. Feminists carry on with these absurd ideas of once there was this wonderful blissful time and then the patriarchy rose and overthrew it, almost naive kinds of ideas of politics are the heritage of the sixties. So what I'm calling for is real political realism, the enlightened understanding of the sixties combined with real political realism about what can be accomplished. We can't just complain, look there's some poor people, well it's the president's fault. I mean that is not the way we do things, all right. I mean that's not the way you understand how politics works. You have to understand what is it - we have to understand the mechanisms, a perfectly - society which completely satisfies everyone's material needs may in fact be a totalitarian regime because it would require a centralized authority, a kind of bloating of centralized authority. And see that is the one problem with contemporary liberalism. It just - it becomes, it has emotional reactions to what it regards as material injustices to the poor and so on but it does not understand that in order to satisfy everything, all right, that you have to do the one thing that liberalism fears and that is expanding the centralized bureaucracy. We can see everyone in the world and Russia and so on, the way that it kills the spirit ultimately all right and that perhaps, perhaps, I feel that Buddhism and Hinduism offer a different way of looking at human suffering, a much more philosophical point of view. We should try to alleviate suffering where we can, all right, but it's childish to continually maintain that the government is responsible, mommy and daddy are

responsible for satisfying everyone materially, that ultimately the spiritual is more important than the material.

ARE WE GOING TO KNOW THAT? ARE WE EVER GOING TO KNOW THAT? ARE WE EVER GOING TO TAKE THAT TO HEART AND DEAL WITH IT AS A SOCIETY DO YOU THINK?

Oh I think so, I mean I think so. That's what I feel is happening. I think people are becoming more realistic. On the other hand, academe - people who I went to graduate school with and people who are now in power in academe who are in their forties like I am or fifties and sixties, I remember being very troubled by the kinds of - they imagine themselves to be liberals, okay, and humanitarians but I've always been troubled by what I regard as the simplistic naivete of the remarks about politics. Even those who - like the new historicists and the pseudo Marxists and so on they're very removed from reality. Maybe it's because my mother came over from Italy and I - and my grandfather was a factory worker and proud of it. We have absolutely no shame about physical labour in the Italian tradition going all the way back to Renaissance artists and beyond. We have a sense of the nobility of physical labour and so on and so forth. I seem to have a kind of rapport with working class people and since I've been teaching in art schools as well, we get people, we get very talented black dancers right out of the ghetto and so I have tremendous rapport with them. and I think this is one of the problems that contemporary liberalism and the sixties movement was essentially a movement of the middle class, all right, and ultimately it was - it was pampered, okay. It was buffered from reality by our parents. And so what I feel is that let's say Hinduism in it's, you know Hinduism in India must deal with the reality of human suffering, of a poverty we can't even imagine here, of people just living on the street in Calcutta and so on and so forth. And for some reason that - and you can see Hinduism gives a kind of serenity because of the grand perspective that you have on human experience and on nature as the cycle of birth and death and so on. So I feel that my work is actually the result of that fertilization that happened in the sixties between Western forms of thinking and these Eastern forms. The beatniks of the fifties are - who just came before me were very interested in Zen so those ideas were everywhere when I - as I came to consciousness and then Hinduism was - the passage to India was a thing that we did in the sixties. and it wasn't - and I don't feel that we should - we should make a passage to India, then we should come back, okay. The people who went out, whether through drugs and whatever and didn't come back or have failed their own culture. So I think that - I'm neither a practising Catholic nor a practising Buddhist or Hindu. I feel that the intermixing of these two points of view has been tremendously creative for me.

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING THAT? I MEAN I THINK YOU'VE SAID BEFORE THAT COMPARATIVE RELIGION SHOULD BE TAUGHT FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE. DO YOU SEE THAT -

I don't know if children are learning it. You know the terrible thing is that my students have been produced by sixties parents who said, well we're not going to lay that guilt trip on our children, what we had, our struggles against sex and so on. So my students have often been raised without any religion whatever. They have nothing. And the end result of it is a disaster. I'm now beginning to realize as I look at the career of Madonna, you know and in myself that actually having a very repressive religious background can form your personality, can make you very combative and actually gives you a more intense, a richer, even sexual imagination. Like Madonna and I have a pornographic imagination that's coming from repressions of the Catholic church. And I look at my students, my students are like - they're so nice, you know. But they're wandering, they're craving, they're looking for something but the culture is giving them nothing. The Ivy League, what's being given them is this horrible nihilistic deconstruction business - there are no meanings, there's nothing in the universe and so on are just absolutely sick sorts of things. So I feel that we must start thinking about what education should be providing to the students. And one of the things I think it should be giving them is an Eastern perspective. And I just this past semester created an experimental course with a Chinese artist here called East and West. We are trying to explore ways of doing this, of presenting the great religious traditions of the world to Western students in ways that are not preaching or teaching but rather simply enlarging our understanding and giving the students something, allowing them to choose something to give them, you know, give them guidance, give them a path to follow because students have nothing. It's a disaster; it's an absolute disaster today.

BUT WHAT'S MADONNA GIVING THEM? I MEAN IF IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS AREN'T GIVING THEM ANYTHING WORTHWHILE IS MADONNA GIVING THEM -

Yes I think Madonna is a great example of someone who's totally self-reliant okay, who is very disciplined, enormously disciplined, who doesn't blame other people, who's just feisty and combative and who's very sexual as well. That is her eroticism, her lack of problem with her own sexuality as a woman, this has been enormously important for feminism. She shows it's possible to be a feminist and to be fully sexual, even slutty, all right, as a woman. I feel what she's doing is helping us to recover the myths of the whore of Babylon and of Mary Magdalene. Madonna is literally rejoining the split archetypes of Mary the Holy Virgin the mother and Mary Magdalene the fallen woman, these two split halves of woman that Western culture has been very schizophrenic about. And I think also that Madonna has brought back beauty and glamour into a feminism that ah that is very suspicious of them and regards them as conspiracies by white heterosexual men to keep women down - ridiculous, you know because we have - Japan is a culture completely oriented around the idea of beauty. I demonstrate in my book that ancient Egypt invented beauty, invented femininity as a great art form for 3,000 years there in Egypt and so on. So I think that's one of the things Madonna gives. Madonna also her energy she gives. She has energy, she has passion, commitment, self-discipline, all right and a feeling for beauty and glamour and a feeling of reverence and also I like the way, I identify very strongly with her in the way

that she identifies with both gay men and drag queens. And for me the drag queen has a much more accurate sense of sex roles, historical sense of sex roles than does contemporary feminism.

AGAIN WITH THE OVERVIEW OF THE LAST 25 YEARS, WHERE DOES FEMINISM FIT IN? DO YOU SEE IT AT ITS BEGINNINGS AT LEAST AS A USEFUL MOVEMENT?

Feminism was an outgrowth of the sixties revolution. And I feel that feminism too often today ah looks at changes in the culture and thinks that they're due to it when in fact they're due to my generation of individualism. We are the ones who demanded the right of self-expression. So before feminism even burst on the scene in the late sixties - I arrived in college in '64. We were the generation that threw off our shoes, went barefoot and got rid of the bras, let our hair down and we were the first respectable women except for a brief period in the twenties when you had flappers as being kind of wild and so on, we were the first respectable girls in history to swear like sailors, to go out, to get drunk, to pick up guys, to do all that experimentation. And our personalities, I think because of the repression that we came out of, are so much stronger. We're bigger personalities because of our combative stance than the current girls who are very kind of like this, are very kind of stuff and these are the ones who are getting date raped, all right. They're the ones who are wandering to fraternity parties and drinking, you know, like ten scotches, going up to rooms and they're giving all these signals they have no sense of. They're completely cut off from a sense of their own sexuality. I don't know what happened to the sexual revolution because feminism ah oddly enough turned away from the sexual revolution. It's extraordinarily puritannical, extraordinarily prudish. There was a period of erotic intensity in the sixties. There were magazines like Eros, people were writing porn novels and so on, it was everywhere. There was a freedom of thought, a freedom of sexual imagination. I think it had to do with sensuality. That's how I'm looking at it now that when you look at films of the festivals, of the rock festivals when you see the interviews with the kids of my generation, when you look at movies from that era you feel that the men are doing something. The men are going kind of fluid. The men are letting themselves go. There's a sensuality to their body language that's something happening. And it's like, and everything is like there's an appeal to the senses. So people go to say a movie like The Trip, you go like into someone's house and it will be - all the walls will be painted psychedelic colours, there will be like a purple scarf thrown over a lamp, there will be incense burning. See, this appeals to the senses. There cannot be sexual liberation without sensual liberation. I think that has been lost. Feminism is extraordinarily phobic about The Senses, you see. I think that that's what drugs gave people in the sixties, right. That is it gave men the ability to get groovy, you know, get down and so on. It's very interesting, what happened to that body language, it disappeared. It returned to being a kind of gay body language by the seventies when in fact we can see so clearly heterosexual men were doing something that was then lost, you know.

BUT WHAT HAS TECHNOLOGY -

And this people's park thing, oh let's take this plot of land which the university has designed - it was a real provocation, okay. We'll just make it all - every one knew, okay that there was going to be - it was playing games, and then even people right on film some of the leaders of Berkeley are saying on film now, they're saying, I warned them, we had huge arguments. We said we cannot have a situation like happened last night where we went wild and people were like crashing the fences and gates of working class families and cars were being tipped over and people were You see that's what happened, they alienated the -

SO THERE WAS EXCESS BUT I'D RATHER HAVE EXCESS WITH PASSION THAN NO PASSION.

But the point is it self-destructed and you had a conservative backlash. Something much worse that happened because law and order must go on. We must have law and order. We cannot have a situation where everyone does his own thing. We cannot have rioting in the streets, okay. If you haven't seen this film you must because you can actually see the - you saw the way the government began to respond with force, okay, to a situation that had gotten out of control. Now first everything was going well, all right. When there would be a response that was excessive as long as it was - the communications is of the essence. The sixties youth could not govern alone. One needed to convince, okay, the older generation, to convince the electorate - this is democracy - one needed to convince and to persuade that ideals of civil liberties and so on okay could - were in keeping with the American tradition. And we failed to do this by the way - I think it's partly the playfulness - it turned into yippies. It turned into like, oh dadaist, we'll just do this, hey, you know like that. And to the absolute destruction - myself did this in my own way not in the sixties but I continued in the seventies, okay, and I had my own crack-ups all right because my anger was hey, I walk into like a faculty meeting at Bennington College, like we were trying to get a new president or something, I was as rude - I mean people think I'm rude now. I say my God, you think I'm rude, oh my God I was just - my attitude was - and I would just - there were all these older people around here - my attitude was who are these people and what have they ever done you know what I mean? These people are just sitting on their ass. My contempt, okay, my arrogance - now I understand, okay, decades later that academics for example are usually - usually have a sense of failure by mid-life, okay, right okay. But not only do they feel that they -

DOESN'T EVERYBODY?

Well but you see I didn't understand this, that the last thing you want to see when you're 45 years old and have given 20 years of your life to an institution, nothing you want to see is some whippersnapper wet behind the years coming out of graduate school like real hot shot and tell them what to do like that. I mean this is like wait, no wait. And then I began

to understand that they were - I was not married. They were swamped with obligations. They had a spouse, they had children, okay, they had financial worries. I began to see the degree to which my sixties energy, my yippie energy and so on, my prankishness was draining the energy of people who had actual important life concerns. All right, so what's the point? The point is we're trying to reform. We're trying to get - we're trying to achieve our political aims. One has to be realistic about achieving political aims. Where I have learned, okay, I've learned how slowly institutions change. And in fact if an institution were to change rapidly, that's fascism, okay because the minute you do this, the minute you - you see I began to realize through my own personal experience and disasters, all right, that when things are free flow and there are no procedures because everything is going to be free flow, that's when you have the situation ripe for a total abrogation of civil liberties. I know it myself, okay, right. violation of due process. It happened to me, it happened to me at Bennington, it's happened to other people at Bennington since because there they say we all want the best here and so on. They don't have like these formal procedures. Again and again Bennington has a situation where mob hysteria railroads people. There's no procedure, there's no process, there's no law, there's no slowness. I began to realize that slowness, okay, which I hated as a young ... that the slow, boring movement of the law in the courts okay is what prevents mob hysteria from lynching you okay, because I felt it myself, all right.

BUT THE SECOND YOU STOP THAT YOUNG WHIPPERSNAPPER COMING THROUGH THE DOOR IS THE SECOND THAT YOU START LIVING OFF YOURSELF. YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT A CHALLENGE. (OVERLAP)

No, I'm very obnoxious still and I still, like I was carrying on at the meeting but the thing is that now I'm more realistic. I understand that institutions change slowly. So my thing is not we want the world, we want it now. My thing is all right, one year from now, if I come on, you know, steadily, two years from now it will change, see. And I also learned how to pick my fights. My thing was like everything. I had endless energy. Oh people think I'm energetic now. Oh oh I'm a shadow, a shadow. I had so much energy, I could stay up all night. And my thing was this issue, that issue, that issue. Now I learn how to pick my fights and also how to present in a way that does not alienate the very people I need for a to get my aim achieved. And that's maturity okay and that's what I think is missing, Act Up, okay, Act Up and our gay men have influenced me enormously but I don't like the way Act Up is totally out of control. You have Act Up doing fabulous things, you know, the wonderful things it's done, but then they have been doing stupid things like alienate like going into St. Patrick's Cathedral and throwing the host on the ground was an absolute disaster and it's causing a backlash against gay men everywhere. Here they did the same thing. They didn't throw the host on the floor but they invaded the cathedral and threw condoms at the bishop's chest, I think it was at the altar, it bounced I thought, what are they doing? I mean this is absolutely -

THEY'RE TRIED TO GET ATTENTION, THEY'RE TRYING TO GET NOTICED IN A SOCIETY THAT IS MOVING -

(overlap) But it's infantile.

WELL SURE BUT -

There are other ways to get heard. What I'm saying is that part of the sixties was about regression, about positive regression. I think the sliding in the mud at Woodstock was this kind of sensory self-pleasuring that I'm talking about. At the same time we have to be careful in being a child-like, not to be childish if there are things about society you want to change, see. I think there was a slightly perditionous effect coming from it. It was very positive, the influence from Hinduism and Buddhism but ultimately also part of it was, hey you know, politics don't really exist. There was like a mixed message coming. On the other hand, we want the politics to change immediately. Change now - because we're like these pampered, middle class people. On the other hand, you don't really exist. And so it was all a muddle. It was sort of like we'll just go to the Pentagon and levitate it. Let's levitate it, like that, I mean all right, when are we going to camera again?

WE'RE GOING NOW.

We've been rolling? Oh you didn't warn me.

IT SOUNDS SO SILLY. WE ALMOST CAME FULL CIRCLE WHEN YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT ROLLING IN THE MUD.

Oh all right, rolling in the mud.

I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE LOSS OF SENSES, AND THE SENSUALITY

Shall I repeat that about the mud?

NO I THINK WE GOT IT.

But it was in the middle of a tirade.

WE PICKED IT UP LONG BEFORE THE TIRADE.

Oh okay, all right.

BUT WHAT I WANTED TO - WELL I'LL COME BACK TO THAT. I JUST WANT TO ASK YOU - JUST SO WE STAY IN SOME ORDER IF I CAN.

Let's finish the feminist -

ABOUT FEMINISM YEAH. LET'S SAY THERE FOR A SECOND.

I consider myself a feminist. I was like the earliest feminist that anyone has ever known because I was born in 1947 and within a few years I was in open revolt against my sex role. I could not bear what was demanded of me as a woman in society. I didn't identify at all. I probably have like a massive gender dysfunction from it. I didn't identify at all with being a woman and I rebelled against it by- from earliest years choosing transvestite Hallowe'en costumes which was just unheard of for an Italian-American girl at that time in the fifties. So I was like 5, 6, 7, I was 8. I was a toreador, a Roman soldier, a Napoleon -.... and so on and I was trying to telegraph to the world my inner sense of my own resolution, just my desire for achievement and so on. So I was in open revolt for years before there was a context. And because I began thinking about sex so much earlier than other people, I really got out of synch I think with the contemporary feminist movement. By the time I read Simone deBeauvoir I was 16, in 1963. It was before Betty Friedan's book was just coming out at that time. So already I was full fledged confrontational feminist. I identified strongly with Amelia Earhart. Amelia was a great craze of mine. For 3 years I researched her deeply in high school. And what I identify with still is that pre-War feminism of those individualists, those absolutely self-reliant individualists like Katherine Hepburn, Amelia Earhart and there's a whole generation of them. I mean they were feminists long before contemporary feminism. Feminism has had 200 years of history going all the way back to Mary Wilson Manifesto, all right. And merely because I am critical of contemporary feminism does not mean that I am not a feminist a hundred percent. Jane Harrison THE greatest woman scholar who has ever lived, from the pre-war era in Great Britain, she was a feminist. And I feel she took upon herself the highest male standards. She didn't go around grouching and complaining about men and about how have men have kept women down, she knew it was her task to achieve and to ask of herself the highest level of self-discipline. Now what has happened is that contemporary feminism bursting out in the late sixties, I tried to join it and it was almost impossible for me to do so because it at first began as - as kind of rebellion by individualists but it almost immediately became a kind of group think, knee jerk ideology. My first arguments were about the Rolling Stones. They could not accept - the feminists of New Haven could not accept that one could admire the Rolling Stones despite their sexist lyrics. The idea of like responding to something artistically while rejecting it politically, this kind of ambivalent response, was impossible to them. I had a huge screaming argument about the Rolling Stones where in fact there was a whole group of these female musicians surrounding me, spitting in my face practically, we're all screaming at each other. And I said the Rolling Stone song, Under My Thumb, is art. They said art, art! - Nothing that demeans women can be art. Now you see there is where feminism went off. Now there are two large areas where contemporary feminism is deficient. One is aesthetics, all right, they have no aesthetic. For them, beauty is simply an allusion and a delusion fostered by men who want to keep women down. This lack of aesthetic has caused, in my view, for example, the rise of a new criterion. People think that the New Criterion here in America is simply a political tool, in point of fact Chilton Cramer was an art critica, right. What New Criterion is responding to is the complete lack of an aesthetics in leftist liberal thinking in America. The other point where feminism is deficient

is psychology. Right from the start, Kate Millett banned Freud as a sexist, and that's where we got, to me, this absolutely intolerable present system of feminism where all human problems are blamed and externalized on an outside, unjust social system. Now again, from my study of Hinduism, Buddhism, even Catholicism, I feel that the answer is within. Yes there are unjust social structures which we must change, right, but many human problems are coming from personal things, personal interrelationships, relations between mother and son or between spouses, between lovers, things coming perhaps from nature, all kinds of inequities that nature has put there between the sexes. So what has happened to feminism, all right, it has lost the inability to - of self-critique. I'm a Freudian insofar as I believe in looking within the self, self-analytic style. We must seek maturity and seek personal responsibility so those two areas have become -

BUT HAS IT ACHIEVED ANYTHING? IT WAS A POSITIVE FORCE WITHIN THE LAST 25 YEARS.

Absolutely yes. It demanded that women be taken seriously, okay and I think that part of that is the legacy of the sixties, one of the enduring legacies of the sixties. So we began to get many more women, you know, career woman, in law school and in medicine and so on, right? And then that succeeded. In the seventies we have those women ah now in ah you know in all these career tracks. But happiness has not been the result. I would say that part of the problem now in - at least in America is that you have women trying to do everything or have it all, trying to have children and husband and the household and do the career, and women are terribly torn. Now the feminist answer today is that we again must adjust the social system and allow for flex time and all these other things when in fact it may be that nature puts a heavy burden on woman. She is the child bearer. Now I have made the choice that Katherine Hepburn made. Katherine Hepburn has spoken out and said she felt - she feels that this idea that women can do it all is an absolute delusion. You are stealing from one or the other. You're stealing from your children and your husband or your career. You cannot do both fully. I am unmarried, I have no children. Okay, I'm extremely driven and I have devoted everything to my work. I would not dream of like, even in relationships after a while I realize it's unfair to even be in relationships because I take too much away from it anyway. So I think that feminism has gotten off track because of its very success. Now I think that in the seventies also we were in a kind of gender bending period. There was a period in the seventies I said I'll never wear a dress again. I was wearing my Frye boots, I was in my real like militant feminist mode and I was real like kick-ass. I'm still very kick-ass - but anyway what happened was because of feminist success it was possible in the eighties for women to recover their sexuality in their career personae right? And part of that coming from TV, from the influence of Joan Collins on Dynasty, as a career woman, a business woman who's also very sexual and very glamorous. But I think even more for American audiences, Donna Mills creating the part of Abby Ewing on Knots Landing my favourite night time show. I think that she did a tremendous job again very - because unlike - Joan Collins is almost like a drag queen, very very theatrical. But

Donna Mills has the American style, kind of breathy, understated, very feminine. She was trained as a dancer and she was magnificently dressed, beautiful and graceful, at the same time shrewd killer instinct as a business woman on that story. Now that's what's happened is that I think that because of feminism but also you know because of men's acceptance of women in world of authority in the eighties and now in the nineties, women have been able to recover a sense of their own sexuality. And now I think it's time in the nineties for us to be thinking about sexual difference again, accepting sexual differences.

WHY ARE WE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THAT NATURE MAY IN FACT HAVE PLACED A GREATER BURDEN ON WOMEN THAN ON MEN?

Well this is the problem with contemporary feminism and much - most of academic discourse that it's stuck on social constructionism, that everything that we are is formed by environmental pressures. This is part of the heritage of Rousseau. I think that perhaps in the old days, the argument from nature was abused, keep women in their place. I think that's really the answer to it. And we have - we subscribe to the myth of free will, that is we believe that we're able to do whatever we want. Therefore if we believe that everything came from nature it seems to be a kind of deterministic you know constraint upon our full self-development. But I believe - I'm a firm believer in astrology. I believe that we're bringing something into life and it's not simply a matter of the also very important environmental pressures after our birth. And I also as a psychologist, after all my observations I believe that there is something inherited in personality and that there are distinct personality types that we're bringing into - that a mother of a large family can feel instantly, okay, the personalities of the babies. And mothers talk about how they felt the shyness of the infant, the shrinking of an infant or the feistiness in the way that other infants are like very bold and so on. I know that my personality was not made. My personality was born. A lot of my - I'm an Aries woman like Joan Crawford, Betty Davis and so on. We have a lot of problems with people because of this. We're just so obnoxious. From my earliest years I just - I felt the first impact of socialization. See this is the thing - feminists like to like whine and complain. Oh we could have been a contender. Oh if only this hadn't happened to me or my daddy or my lover, all this crap. I was such a like an intense personality from my earliest infancy I think. I felt the first efforts of socialization when people tried to contain me and I resisted it or rather if I went through the motions of it my heart was burning with indignation. I can remember very clear right. I have resisted primary socialization every time in my life. I'm 44 years old, I'm still - people are still having to speak to me, now that was very rude, you shouldn't behave like that. And people, even today people are always lecturing me about my excessive behaviour in the way I completely ignore social forms and decorum and so on so it's been a struggle for me. For me, okay see this is why I see society as civilizing. I don't see society as oppressive because in my case, okay my barbaric energy needs to be contained, needs to be contained. Otherwise I'd be killing people and stealing and God know what else. I'm just like this ego maniac, I'm an Aries, pure ego maniac. And these other people, you know, feel

that somehow all the influences from society are oppressive. They don't see the guidance. You see Italians also have - I think that's another thing, have a very firm way of educating children. They were very good with animals, with dogs and horses. We say no, simple no, it's like that, all right. Or people, like if a child is making a scene in public we go, sh, like this, very simple things like that. And I notice that liberals, okay, have this idea that children are beautiful saintly creatures coming to us. We must be very careful not to bruise them so we'd never dream of saying no to them. So meanwhile you have these horrible scenes in grocery stores in American where the kids are screaming their heads off in a grocery line infringing on the civil liberties of everyone in the store because, heaven forbid we should like - we should like immutilate the poor child by saying no. And I think that - the end result of that is like 20 years later you deal with terrible problems. The child is stuck in a tantrum mold, all right, see. So again I feel society is a civilizing - society keeps men from raping. It's nto society which tells men to rape or gives them signals to rape. Feminism has gotten itself completely in a tangle I think because of its naivete about politics and psychology.

THIS REMOVAL FROM THE NATURAL WORLD -

Yes.

WHAT ROLE HAS TECHNOLOGY PLAYED IN THAT BECAUSE SURELY THE LAST 25 YEARS ONE OF THE MAJOR STORIES IS THE ADVANCES, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN OUR LIVES. WHAT IS -

Well we'd have to go back years. You know really Romanticism is itself beginning in the late 18th century a response to the Industrial Revolution. So that the more we get these assertions of the beauty of nature in poetry and in painting throughout the 19th century the more we are seeing the huge growth of industrial centres and the pollution of the environment. Blake may be the first to have expressed this in his poems about the way the English greenwood was disappearing under this cloud of soot and so on in the 1790s. So I think it is very ironic, yes. I think that we - that's one of the problems of living in America. Now American and especially in the northeast has a fairly temperate climate. So you can - we have snow in the winter and so on but we can avoid thinking about nature too deeply. In India you cannot avoid thinking about nature. Nature is overwhelming. Nature overnight can - there could be a monsoon which can kill 50,000 people overnight. So there's no way to avoid it. And I think that is really to a me a hubris and sacrilege of the first kind, that we have people being trained in the ivy league today who course after course after course who never, either teachers never mention nature, never think about nature in any respect. This is absolutely obscene. Now it seems to me the force of the sixties, the great vision of the sixties was the way it had this double vision. It was the romantic vision, it was to me a recurrence of Romanticism. It was able to see the enormity of nature and to honour it. At the same time to be able to see social structures and to use its energies to oppose them and to reform them. I think that's a wonderful dual perspective. Now today it's a disaster and let's say in Act Up and often in feminism you have these kinds of civil rights

movements and so on being mimed, okay, but what's been lost is the sense of nature as a whole and a sense of the sacred has been lost, okay. Now you cannot just focus in - demand more money for AIDS. This is a very shrunken perspective when we have Gandhi and Martin Luther King, their demands okay for civil liberties were against a background of a sense of, again of God, of the sacred, and in Gandhi's case because he went back toward his Hindu roots a sense of nature, of the majesty of nature as the sort of backdrop behind human events. So there's been a terrible kind of - it seems to me - mutilation of the larger perspective of the sixties. To me, current political activism is completely lacking in any kind of philosophical understanding because of its loss of sense of nature or when nature gets at all into academic discourse today, it's in like certain wings of feminism, it will be nature is wonderful and kind and benevolent and woman as a goddess mirroring that wonderfulness. Whereas India sees the reality. The goddess Coli who is simultaneously positive and negative, you know, who is light and dark and both gives birth and kills. That is the goddess, that's woman, that's nature, the great duality of vision that Hinduism gives you, that's also been totally lost. Whenever nature creeps in, it's again the same scenario. Oh horrible, oppressive social systems are polluting the environment. Right now blame, blame, blame. We must stop this blaming and whining kind of motif. We must take personal responsibility for ourselves and understand that it's up to us to develop ourselves spiritually that - yeah.

THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN -

Start 03:20:25 Interview - Camille Paglia 3 T

SO WE WERE TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE LOSING THAT SACRED SENSE OR A SPIRITUAL SENSE. IS THAT THE VICTORY OF PAGANISM OR CAN THERE BE A SENSE OF SPIRITUALITY WITHIN PAGANISM?

This is what I'm saying. I'm saying that in Sexual Persona, I'm saying that in Western culture there's been this - ... this tension between the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions and that it is not true that Judeo-Christianity ever defeated paganism. In fact it went underground and has erupted at various moments - at the Renaissance, Renaissance art and Romanticism and now again in modern popular culture. And that paganism is not - it does indeed have a spirituality. In paganism you have a unity between sexuality and spirituality which is a great ideal. Christianity was not able to do this because it regards nature as a fallen realm and our bodies as belonging to that fallen realm. So the soul is our - the thing that was created in God's divine image. So the closer you can come to God the less sexual you are. This produced the monasticism of course and celibacy of the Middle Ages. So yes indeed that's what I'm trying to show in my work. I'm trying to show the actual spiritual vision that's inherent in this highly eroticized points of view that paganism had, right. And it's so difficult for people to understand this. Like I regard all striptease or belly dancing today as part of that long line, coming down from when dance was sacred in the cult around the Great Mother. And this is really true that belly dancing is

the last remnant of this long tradition going back. These movements of the hips, the overtly sensual and provocative pelvic motions of the belly dance to evoke the fatigued libido of the various sultans and caliphs and All that goes back to the temple prostitutes around the Great Mother in the ancient Near East and so on. It's difficult for people trained in Judeo-Christianity to look at overt sexuality and regard it as in any way having to do with God, right? But it does. In Hinduism there are temples in India which have copulating and nude couples, sometimes threes and fours on the temple. So I'm entirely pro-pornography. When I look at pornography, for example, I see the energies of nature. I see - ultimately for Hinduism those are creative and fertile energies. People who look at pornography and see simply oppression, see male dominance and female submission which by the way is completely false about pornography. That's simply not true. Often it's exactly the reverse. I mean what a wierd way to look at things, to see all -

THE EXTENSION OF THAT IS THAT SOCIETY HAS TO CONTROL THAT THEN. WE HAVE TO BAN IT, WE HAVE TO NOT ALLOW PEOPLE TO SEE THIS.

Yes, feminism is very much in a - there are some wings of feminism which are pro-pornography but they are not the dominant ones. They're not the ones which control the public discourse.

STAY ON TECHNOLOGY FOR A SECOND.

Technology - now technology for me, is very - see this is one of the ironies of my generation. Our generation was looking to nature and being very disrespectful about society and about capitalism. At the same time it was the most electronic and electrified, okay, generation in history. I was the first person that I knew to have a stereo, to go to college with a stereo in 1964. No one had stereos. Now everyone has every kind of musical equipment right? I had the earphones and I was completely plugged in. This is my attitude toward ah toward the world. On the one hand I see all of nature and I honour it, the moon, the stars, the planets, all of that as an astrologer. I just see it so clearly. But then I cannot go anywhere, I just feel so happy at home when I have the TV on and I have the earphones on and I have the telephone and I have the radio and I'm just like the wires are crossed on the floor. I'm always tripping over the wires and I just feel like I'm in this kind of space capsule. I'm just totally connected to the universe and I think that's part of the universality of our vision the fact that we're connected into the universe through all thise electronic machinery.

IT'S AN ELECTRONIC UNIVERSE. I MEAN YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO THE NATURAL UNIVERSE.

Not really, no no, because I think that on cable TV you can flick one channel and you'll see, you know, animals in Africa, you'll see on nature. But that's the way of God himself, of checking in on what's happening on every possible station in the entire universe. I think this is definitely the wave of the future. I think our ability to - I feel that technology offers a

kind of, you know the Western version of expanded consciousness. Because my ability to simply concentrate with all this going on, with a sensory flood of stimuli, that's what's different about my brain, okay, from the brains of the scholars who came before me. Because I have a - one part of my brain is totally rigorous and analytic in the traditional way. The other part is this electrified brain and people have found no machine to measure yet. It's completely lurid, it's like neon, like this, right. My ability to think in the face of incredible noise for example. People say how can you think with that noise but I can only think when there's noise, all right. I have to flood my senses in order to really think. For example I feel that the brain has many tracks and I have - every one of my generation, for 35 years I've been listening to rock music. All of rock music has gone through this ... again and again and again, it's all in there, right. And so I feel that I have a track in my brain which when I wake up in the morning is playing. It's constantly playing music. Then I have another one that's a visual track, so I love to write when I have the earphones on, I'm listening to music. It could be classical music, could be movie music. I love like been Hur and all those great scores. It could be rock or disco I love, when I'm writing and so on, all kinds of things. Then I have the soap operas, without the sounds, okay, right. So and I'm like - I have the sound going very loud, I have the images coming to my brain. I can't concentrate. If I am trying to write without the sound and without the images my mind wanders. I have to supply the music and I have to supply the images, okay. So what I'm saying is that our brains are completely different. It's something new and I think we're moving outward toward that moment when we leave the earth and go into outer space. Star Trek was a great phenomenon of my generation, okay. I think that our ability to - let's say we have to take 40 years for a person to get from earth to some planet. People will be born and will live and will die in space capsules, okay, and it was my generation which is the first okay through this technological machinery okay to be able to have this sense of being a citizen of the universe. We are citizens of the universe. We have a truly international perspective through TV and through technology.

BUT IF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS TRUE THEN WHEN JOE MONTANA DROPS BACK AND SCANS THE FIELD FOR A RECEIVER, HIS BRAIN IS MORE CAPABLE OF DOING THAT THAN SAY Y.A. TITTLE OR A QUARTERBACK BACK IN THE FIFTIES BECAUSE THE CULTURE HAS TAUGHT HIM TO BE ABLE TO SCAN LIKE THAT?

I think that's true. I think it's absolutely true. As a football fan, I feel that's absolutely true. First of all, football is very complex. The play books have gotten fatter and fatter and fatter over the years.

BUT JUST ALL OUR BRAINS ARE MORE CAPABLE NOW OF SKIMMING.

Because of sensory, sensing - in other words before this - I feel often when I talk to people who are older than me, a generation older than me, academics and so on their brains are very slow, okay, very slow. The speed of my mind is part of my - is part of the stimulation I have received from all these sensory things in rock and roll and from TV.

When MTV came along like here it was 1984 - 1983-84 I felt it was exactly the way my brain had been operating for the prior 20 years - flash flash flash with images like that. That's exactly the way my mind works. And I feel that - that television and rock music allow us to bypass these formal structures that we've gotten in what the French would dismiss as the phallogentric or logocentric tradition which I honour. I honour the Apollonian logic school and analytic tradition. It's brought us science, it's brought us archaeology, it's brought us all the things - technology itself okay. I think that feminism is like you know, dismissal of it in the snide way that this tradition is treated in academe is abhorrent, absolutely ridiculous, right? But that part of the brain is not the only part of the brain. We must have - we must develop that one to the maximum and then we must allow for everything else. And I think the area of vision of the Dionysian part, the part that - the religious part and so on, the erotic part, all these other things are operating. And I think my ability just to be totally open is like - it's very interesting like they use metaphors like this in Buddhism and so on. The idea that the mind should be like a steel pod receiving messages from the universe. That's exactly how I feel when I'm looking at TV. I go completely blank, absolutely blank, right. And that's why it's so refreshing me. And I just like to sit there, like just go completely - and after I've had like dinner and I've had like a wine - glass of wine and I'm just sitting there with Entertainment Tonight and suddenly there's this completely glitzy sensational - I just love that. I have such pleasure at it, okay right? And I can feel that it's palpitating part of my brain that's not the other part of the brain. I can just feel it, you know, there's Liz Taylor coming out of the hospital again, there's another, you know, it's always like that area of like sleazy eroticism and so on. I just feel it. So actually my work is an attempt to explore all parts of the brain. My work is the real sixties, that is to fully explore all the levels of consciousness, okay, and then it's possible to integrate them. We must pay homage to both, to all parts of the brain not just one or the other. The problem of the sixties was that it went too far to psychedelia and then was ignoring the logical analytic realistic part. That's the thing. What I'm calling from my work is both the Apollonian and the Dionysian principles must both be respected, both honoured. If you don't honour them both then you're going to get this oscillating movement which we're seen in the last 30, 40 years of history, okay, oscillating movement from excess to conservatism to rebellion and back again.

SORRY, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT TV BUT YOU WANTED TO STOP AND GET A -

(BACKGROUND TALK)

WHAT I - WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THIS AND I'M NOT SURE I'M HAPPY ABOUT IT. I THINK YOU'RE SAYING THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT'S ON TELEVISION. DOES IT?

Yes well in a way I feel that, you know the attitude toward television in academe is absolutely wrong, in American academe that is that somehow television is this

brainwashing tool developed by the capitalist oppressors, you know to - and it's a way to form ah and to manipulate the brains of these passive pawns, the proletariat. This is ridiculous because TV is a totally commercial medium, at least in America and it totally follows popular taste, in fact servilely follows popular taste. So if you want to see the popular mind you must look at TV. The TV is literally an emanation in some sense of the popular mind. I feel that everything on TV is of interest to me. I love advertisements. I just wrote an essay talking about ads as an art form. They in fact have - you know I look at them. I love the speed of them.

BUT IT REALLY IS THE MEDIUM ISN'T IT? I MEAN YOU'RE SAYING THAT IT'S -

The medium itself yes.

THAT TELEVISION ITSELF IS IMPORTANT.

I love the sleaziest parts of TV. Some academics like to say oh yes I like PBS or I like these documentaries. That's not my attitude. Or they want to talk ponderously about the problems with the news programs. Well that's not what I regard TV as, you know, I regard TV as this river. It's like a river of images, especially now with cable you can get like 37 different channels, and I just sit there, I go zap zap zap. It's like an art form where you have this wierd collage you see of completely discontinuous images. You'll go from the face of a religious figure, you know holding the Bible to suddenly the next thing a girl like dancing with her boobs hanging out of her bra like that, and I think this is fabulous. This is the culture, the way we have all these strange things which cannot formally come together, these two figures, you know, the evangelist preacher and the stripper, let's say, right. Those two people can never meet but television brings them together. They are both aspects of reality and therefore the mind of the person watching TV okay is this universal mind. So I feel totally open. I try to have an attitude of total openness to everything I see and I have such an enjoyment, such sensuous pleasure of enjoyment okay, in watching television. And you know the colours, okay, the movements, everything about it, everything which strikes very book oriented people as tinselly or squalid. Those very things are exactly why I love TV.

WHAT'S GOING TO DO IN THE NINETIES DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU LOOK AHEAD TO TELEVISION AND TECHNOLOGY I SUPPOSE, BUT MOST SPECIFICALLY TV. I MEAN I JUST GOT A SATELLITE DISH AND I CAN GET OVER 300 CHANNELS NOW.

Oh my God.

AND IT SCARED THE WITS OUT OF ME AT FIRST. I HAVEN'T GOT TIME IN A DAY TO WATCH ALL OF THIS.

Yeah. I think it's going to take over. I think our students have, in America, have been totally formed by TV in ways that the academe has not caught up with yet. Their brains have

completely been formed by TV. And Neil Postman and I had a public debate on this question that was in Harper's magazine. And I respect him very much and he and I both agree that education cannot just follow servilely the way that television culture is moving. Rather it must be the guardian of our heritage, of the logocentric tradition, it must. And we must do something to try to bring something else to the kids' minds. I think he's correct that rational political discourse is impossible simply through TV. Now I'm not one of those who says, oh TV has a terrible effect upon them and so on. On the contrary I think the camera really tells the truth about a politician, the camera over time. NOW a TV ad can obviously lie and be manipulative and so on. But over time in our very arduous primary session for example that goes on and on and on, the camera watching the candidate dealing with these hordes of paparazzi around him and dealing with the weather and dealing with problems, dealing with crowds, that camera really shows the mettle, shows the character of the politician. But still, Postman is correct, right, that we cannot really think deeply about large public issues simply using the television part of the brain. We must have this other rational part of the brain developed.

BUT WHEN YOU SAY OVER TIME I MEAN IN THE PRIMARY SEASON THOSE CLIPS ARE SELECTED VERY CAREFULLY AND THE POLITICIANS AND THEIR HANDLERS KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO DELIVER A 30 SECOND CLIP. WHAT ABOUT LIKE NIXON AND KENNEDY. THAT WASN'T OVER TIME RIGHT ...

I'm not talking about - the advertisements can manipulate but the news stories and especially post-Watergate the American news media is always looking to show the candidate in the worst possible light. So you can be sure if there's been an entire day of campaigning going from several cities, right, the media will show the moment when things fell apart and when the candidate is being very testy, okay, right. That's what they'll show. So our media is very attracted to the negative. The thing is that over time the ability of the candidate to endure, to improvise, to be - by nerve reflex by simply his own instincts to react to crises and so on this is a very good preparation let's say for the presidency where you cannot possibly predict policy issues, what's going to happen to you; anything can happen if you're president. Any crazy thing flaring up around the world.

BUT TO MAKE A DECISION ON JOHN KENNEDY BECAUSE HIS BEARD - BECAUSE HE APPEARED BETTER, MORE RELAXED -

I don't think it was that.

YOU DON'T THINK THAT DEBATE WAS -

No I don't. I think that it really was - Kennedy was a representative of the new youth culture and Nixon was the old guard. I think what was showing was in some sense the truth. That is that Kennedy was - he had a kind of vitality, and he had a wit and humour. And the wit and the humour, okay, the way his spontaneity, his ability to improvise, all right, that was what was showing. It's true -

BY HIS ABILITY TO USE TELEVISION.

His ability to use television but TV I feel was showing the truth, that Nixon in fact is very prefab okay, that Nixon is a very intelligent actually I think analyst of the political scene but he represented the old politics in fact, yeah and that it was showing something about character, all right, and so on. Then of course in the long run, then we learned much later about Kennedy's womanizing and so on which has put feminism in a dilemma and so on. But I think his glamour, his charisma, his personal charisma was no an delusive charisma, it was something real. He energized the nation. He made the nation feel good about itself and that is a positive thing for a political figure.

WHERE IS TELEVISION TAKING US? WHERE CAN IT TAKE US DO YOU THINK?

I - it's amazing, it's hard, you yourself mentioned the satellite dish bringing you 300 stations. I mean it's obvious we're just goign to get this explosion of stations stations stations. I think it's bringing us a more international perspective. It's obvious that the more channels we can get, let's say from the Far East, you know, from around the world, just the way Western culture has permeated other cultures through technology, I think now is going to be happening in reverse. I mean we're going to start getting them back again. I mean I can think only of positive I love the experience of sitting home now and in fact I used to go to movies much more. I rarely go to movies now because I just feel so much at home with the TV. I feel the TV is this window on the world. It is - we can see like the increase let's say in sophistication of people even in American over the last 20, 25 years, that people in the smallest Appalachian holler okay have access - they can see everything. They can see India, they can see Moscow, they can see Beijing and so on from their, from wherever they are. And I feel that there's - one can see even in the response, the on the street interviews with Americans, like say on the street interview from the early sixties and every ten years look at them, you can see the way the American you know populace is getting more and more sophisticated about the world. Now the one thing that's bad about American media, they never allow you on the news to hear a foreign language. This is something I hope I can like speak out against and get stopped. If there's anyone, a foreign leader, even speaking, you will immediately get a voice over translating it. In other words we never have a sense of any foreign languages. That's part of the problem - that's one problem that I see in our media here.

DOES POSTMAN'S CONCERN ABOUT WE CAN AMUSE OURSELVES TO DEATH, DOES THAT HOLD ANY WATER FOR YOU AT ALL, THAT IF WE KEEP WATCHING TV AND STOP PERHAPS THE BOOKS, SAY IF YOU HAVE A CHOICE, WON'T DIONYSIUS WIN OUT EVERY TIME?

Well yes but I think he thinks it's amusement or entertainment. That's part of I think a new perspective I'm bringing through my work. I'm showing that there's nothing that is mere entertainment. There's nothing that is mere amusement. People like to think that a TV

show, in the old days even a movie - I mean there are many old guard critics to this day, literally critics who are like in their seventies now who still have never accepted even a movie as a work of art. It's my generation that made films an art form. When I was in college in the sixties there was nowhere in the country you could go to study film except in southern California, there were film programs that Now it's everywhere. There's no college in this country without a cinema course right now, okay, and we're the ones who did that. And so I'm extending even further. Some people would still call - would call movies an art form now but they wouldn't call let's say Madonna an artist or they wouldn't call - they certainly wouldn't call disco an art form or MTV video or advertisement.

NOW DO YOU KEEP TELEVISION UNDER CONTROL.

I have totally expanded the idea of what constitutes art, okay, my idea of artifice as a human construction. What were you saying?

HOW DO YOU KEEP TV UNDER CONTROL?

Keep it under control? Well I don't think it should be controlled. I think that that is the great virtue of American media that we are not under any kind of state control, that on the contrary in Europe, you know, you have something quite different where the state makes formulas. Well you know only 40% of French television will be American in origin and so on. We don't have that here to our great benefit. We have this pluralism. WE have this mad kind of chaotic rabble, you know, this cacophony of voices. I don't think there should be any control. On the other hand I do think that it's appropriate to ask questions about things coming into someone's home. In other words, the Madonna video, Justify My Love which I loved - I found it very pornographic and exactly the way I like - it's part of that aesthetic sensibility of the great foreign films, European films of the late fifties and early sixties. I thought MTV did the correct thing in banning it because MTV has now become a mainstream music channel watched around the clock by children. And I felt that the Madonna video was inappropriate for young children, not because it would pollute them or corrupt them, on the contrary. I felt that it was too sophisticated for them and that when you inundate young children with very sophisticated sexual images it robs them of their sexual imagination. They have nothing left to look forward to. If you've seen that when you're six, what is left for them. You see this is what I see, not that children are being turned into perverts by all this erotic imagery but rather that they don't have the intense imagination that I do. Madonna and I have these unbelievable Freudal and colourful imagination. We're completely self-sustained by our seething imaginations, all right, and that's because of the limits placed upon us in our youth. And I see today that how pallid and bland the children are. They have nothing. Their personalities are empty. They're not hungry. There's no fire in them. There's nothing that they want. They have no - they have no goals but at the same time they have no vision. I mean it's not the lack of goal orientation of Buddhism. They have neither vision nor goals and they're just looking for meanings. And so I think that it is appropriate for us as adults and so on to say something that's watched around the clock by

children are the things that perhaps should be left to be defined as naughty, kept in mother and daddy's closet. I think that's a good idea.

LET ME JUST -

What again?

Start 04:07:33 Interview - Camille Paglia 4 T

WE'RE AT PASSION AND REASON AND DIONYSIUS VERSUS APOLLO OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS. BECAUSE WE HAD A PRIME MINISTER, I THINK MAYBE THE LONGEST SERVING PRIME MINISTER IN CANADA, TRUDEAU, WHO HAD A QUILT IN HIS HOUSE WITH REASON OVER PASSION. AND HE A JESUIT TRAINED MIND. IS THAT BALANCE EVER GOING TO BE STRUCK DO YOU THINK?

Well my ideas about the Apollonian-Dionysian are coming from the study of Nietzsche and and before him Plutarch. Plutarch actually is the origin of these ideas. I think that these are - that here we have part of the spiritual wisdom of paganism okay, that there should be - we can never totally harmonize Apollo and Dionysius but we have to try. That's the effort that we have to, you know, that we have to be aware of these two forces fighting against each other, all right, and if we're not aware of them and we don't try - and we don't try to balance - it's like yin yang, if we don't try to balance them in our own life - in our private life, in our political life - then they take over. They take over as almost like autonomous, you know, international kinds of rhythms all right which we are the victim of them. We either must integrate them ourselves or we become the victim of them. So yes in these terms I would see the fifties as extraordinarily Apollonian and the stress on social order and so on and on reason and then the sixties are the total Dionysian backlash to that and then the conservative reaction of the '70s and '80s as Apollonian again, including the rise of the yuppies and the great concern with material wealth and external things - Rolex watches, BMWs and so on and so forth. And now it seems to me quite clear in the '90s I like just to think of the Blakeian pattern of innocence, experience, redeemed innocence. That's what I see is happening here okay, that the sixties were naive in their innocence and idealism and then we fell into disillusion and disarray and there have been many deaths, many losses. People have literally died you know from the consequences of our excesses and now in the '90s we're ready I think for some hopefully a kind of integration of these things, to give both Apollo and Dionysius their due.

WHAT WILL THAT MEAN? WHAT KIND OF A SOCIETY WILL WE BE LIVING IN IF THAT BALANCE IS STRUCK?

WELL I think we have to - I mean I feel very much in sympathy with the classical liberalism and with the early Reform movements, that is the abuses of ah of workers in the factories and so on, that we must search for social justice. That's essential, okay. At the same time we also must look within, all right? There must be both things. We must look at the external

world and try to remedy the injustices that we see. At the same time we must look within and be self-critical about ourselves and ah and we have to honour both nature and culture, you know, both these principles. So for me Apollo represents culture, you see, and Dionysius' nature. And there's really been a loss, again we have in the stress upon social constructionism you have a very dessicated Apollonianism right now. It seems to me absolutely terrible for academics and scholars who are writing and for the students who have to listen to them. And when the students themselves are being attracted back to the sense of the environment in the global community and so on. I think that that ah you know that my book has really caught academe napping because my talking about nature has absolutely thrown - they have no way of feeling with this. They think that - they accuse me of being a biological determinist and so on when I'm simply - I my whole book is about artifice. My whole book is in essence about what culture has created through art, okay. At the same time I feel that we must look at nature and see what's behind everything. I feel that what I've done in my work really, it's like people have been in a box in this room, this little Apollonian room, right. All I've done is throw open the door all right and I've made them see the night and the stars and nature. And they haven't seen it for such a long time they feel frightened. They feel a sense of fear at their own significance when they see the spectrum of nature that I'm exposing to them. But it's not I that has created that. I have simply opened the door that allows them to see something that they have repressed. There's a terrible tunnel vision operating here.

THE TROUBLE SEEMS TO ME THAT THE COMFORTABLE ESTABLISHED PEOPLE VIEW HISTORY AS SOMETHING TO BE OVERCOME ALMOST AND YOU SEE IT AS SOMETHING TO SWIM IN, TO ENJOY, TO APPRECIATE, TO LEARN, TO BRING TO WHATEVER IS GOING ON -

From my earliest years, I was such an alienated being, okay, I think from my rebellion against my sex role in the early fifties. Right from the start I felt when I went to the - I was a tiny child I went to the museum, Metropolitan Museum and I saw the great artifacts from Egypt and so on. I always felt that the study of history, it gave me a kind of perspective of my own culture and allowed me to see my own identity in a larger frame of reference. And I think the study of history has been for me - my early passion was to be an archeologist, an Egyptologist, the study of history has been for me a liberation from the conventions of my own kind. I totally respect the lessons of history. I think all this talk today about repressive regimes, like America is like oppression, this is ridiculous. Because I, having studied the past and early Egypt and so on, I mean this is how you must study imperialism, nationalism, factionalism. Study the ancient Near East. Study the way Rome developed from a tyranny to a republic to an empire and then collapsed and so on. When you study that thing then you begin to have respect, much more respect for law and order. You begin to see that for example Romans have a very bad press and the Hollywood films - Hollywood films are very biased toward the Judeo-Christian perspective. I must complain about that. The Romans are always being shown as petty tyrants when in point of fact they

produced the Pax Romana, they solved the petty factionalism, you know, in the piracy, the banditry, the rapine that was going on all across the Mediterranean and they allowed Christianity to be born and to spread, okay, right. That is the point. And then of course every just thing eventually becomes an unjust thing. Every you know republic eventually becomes an empire that falls. And we see that pattern in Napoleon beginning as a youthful figure of idealism just after the French Revolution and then suddenly turning into an emperor. Within 15 years, right, France had thrown out a king and gotten an emperor. We see this pattern again and again in history and that kind of perspective on history allows us to be more fair about current political dilemmas. The sense of history is totally missing from current political analysis and academe - in the American media certainly.

WHEN YOU OVERLOOK THAT HUGE SWEEP OF HISTORY WHERE ARE WE NOW?
WHERE IS NORTH AMERICA NOW?

See that's why I see history in huge rhythms, enormously long rhythms and that's why, I mean I think most people are just trapped in the present. If you don't understand the whole past you can't see where we're going because you don't see where we've been, right? So I just see these huge rhythms operating and I see that, you know, popular culture has been this enormous transformation that happened. I feel the 1920s with the birth of sound pictures, that was the moment when I think high art lost exclusive status and popular culture took over. and I think we're still in this - I believe that we are still in the Romantic rhythm. My mentor, Harold Bloom also believes that we're still in the Romantic era, that is the movement initiated by Rousseau's ideas in 1760. So that's what I see, one long huge pattern. Rock and roll is simply another eruption of that Romanticism. I see us still in that and I think the next - if I have to predict - I think the next rhythm will be inaugurated by someone from outer space. I mean if we discover another civilization, you know, another planet, if it turns out there's evidence for that then that's the beginning of a new phase, I think when the people of the world presumably will see that we look more like each other than we do like that creature there which looks like a blob of jello. I think that may happen at a certain point and I think that may terminate the phase we're in.

OKAY.