

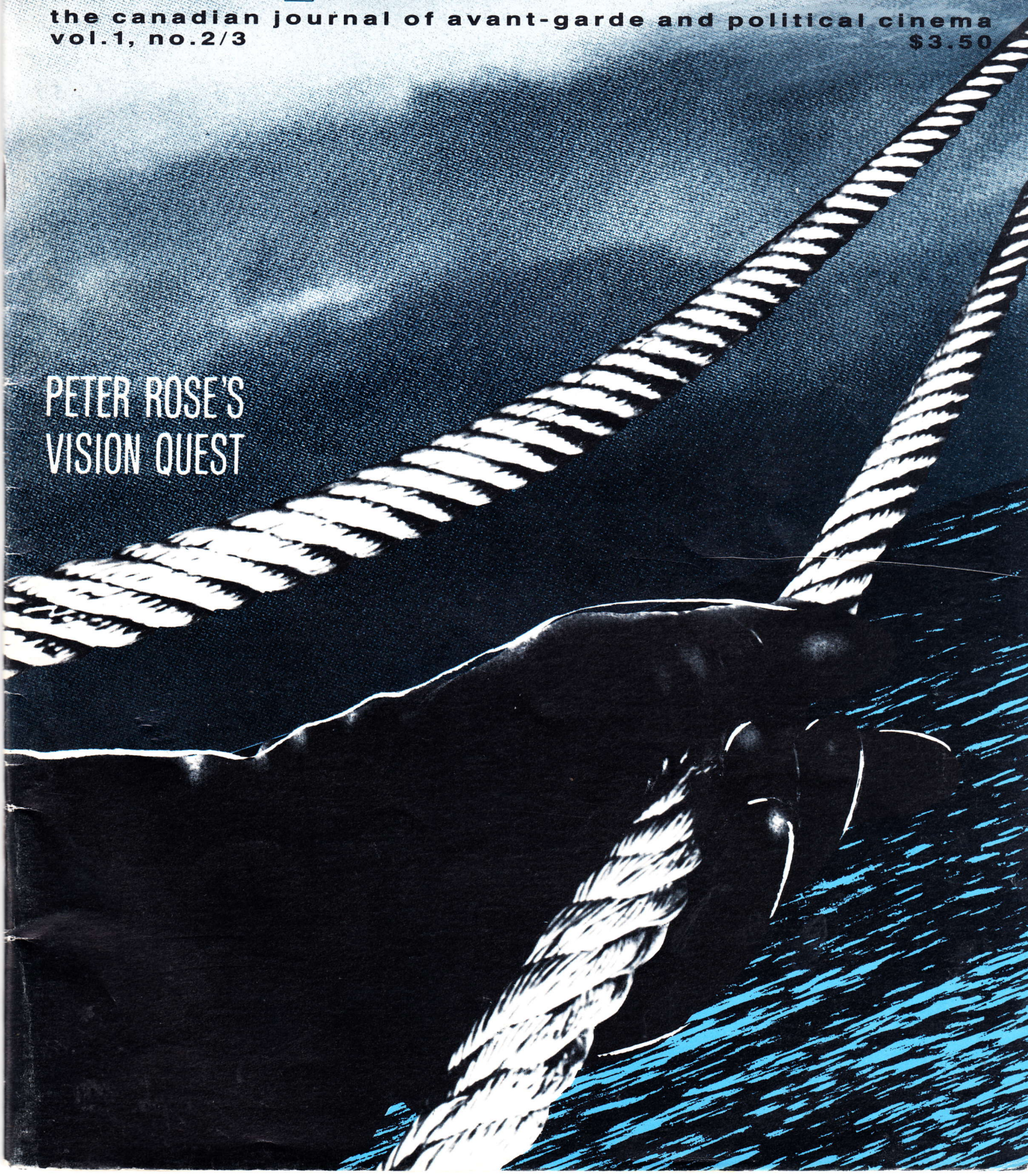
# OPPOSIS

the canadian journal of avant-garde and political cinema

vol.1, no.2/3

\$3.50

PETER ROSE'S  
VISION QUEST





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This second issue of *Opsis* comes after a lapse of time that would have seen the demise of most editorial boards. Indeed, the May/June 1985 *Report on Business* circulated with Canada's "national" newspaper (*The Globe and Mail*) not only misplaced us geographically but also wrote our obituary. The delay between issues one and two, however, was as much the result of financial crisis as it was affected by covert and overt hostility emanating from film academicians whose positions, whether within "new narrative" or avant-garde, were seemingly threatened by comments made in the first issue.

In the interim, Tony Reif has resigned from the publication and we anticipate that new editorial contributions will be forthcoming from other members of the politicized arts community.

Issues and concepts remain our primary concern. Theoretical and curatorial positions are never abstractions. Rather, and our contemporary culture offers many examples of this, behind every 'position' and within every institution there are identifiable elements and individuals whose work reveals personal histories and a networking of energies. Such is the case in today's Canadian avant-garde curating, a practice largely dominated by Torontonian academics and a single self-promoting philosophy (conceived by R. Bruce Elder) that arises on the basis of suppression of diversity and fact in favor of self aggrandizement and its 'illuminated texts'. The spectacle of avant-garde practice subjected to reactionary speculation and the whims of a few individuals is certainly foreign to other (eg. U.S.) avant-gardes where active criticism works in favor of plurality. The recent examples of *Cinema Canada* promoting tendentious and specious debates on a "cinema we need" (the very cinema that was suppressed for the last five years by curatorial 'Elderism') or promoting the works and tastes (read value system) of a single film-maker as privileged 'authority' presents a series of particularly insidious examples as to how media and culture can be successfully manipulated lately and how this manipulation functions within a silent opposition.

The sad state of Canadian avant-garde film studies is reflected not only in the scarcity of published articles but also in the range of articles. This scarcity and narrowness is to be subjected to a 'test' of time, and whether the field is broadened largely depends on the courage and dedication of new contributors.

One area which is not a sad testimonial to Canadian cultural frigidity is the continuation of battles between political film and video artists and the Ontario Censor Board, now redefined and with increased powers as the "Ontario Film Review Board". Last year's "weeks of protest"—featuring open screenings of film and video in a variety of province-wide locations—testify to the courage and commitment of Ontario's politicized arts community.

These actions also represent a move out of the morass and divisiveness which characterized earlier "special exemption" negotiations between artists and Censor Board. If any lesson can be learned from these protests it likely proceeds from praxis and not simple defiance (transgression) or theoretical posturings.

In *Opsis* we will continue to strive for the development of a theory of contemporary avant-garde cinema and support a praxis that poses questions that address art and politics alike. The revamping of existing theoretical matters is of obvious interest to us; we do not maintain a fixed or authoritative vantage point, nor do we support prescriptive theorizing. Issues concerning "New Narrative" and "psychoanalytic" feminism were brought forward in issue # 1 (*Menage a Trois...*) and continue to be developed in this issue. We feel that "psychoanalysis", as a dominant mode of film theoretical discourse in the 70's, is precisely one of the problems afflicting film theory. The reactive heritage that structuralism and psychoanalysis (currently masquerading as "post structuralism" and "post-Lacanian" discourse) have bestowed upon us must be exposed and neutralized. Unfortunately, our support of a critical position against 'Oedipus', 'castration', the 'lack' and the critical theocracy of 'subjectivity' has been misconstrued by some as 'anti-feminist'. Nothing could be further from the truth. We support socialist feminism, for there can be no advance in practice without productive dialogue across the lines of gender specificity and the many forms of cultural-social oppression. It is indeed unfortunate that feminism has been conflated with a reactive (pseudo) psychoanalysis of the cinema—unfortunate, because the latter mystifies and alienates the former and will not, in the long term, advance feminism or the psychological sciences (to which it pretends) in any way. We would anticipate that within several years the church of psychoanalytic subjectivity will undergo a kind of collective amnesia (or claim to have been misunderstood all along!), and maybe then everyone will turn their attention to issues not 'originating in infancy' or bound to dyadic binarisms and the narcissism of the cinema-as-mirror.

Why avant-garde and not simply experimental? Because revolutions of form and content (that is, semiotic revolutions of social proportions) are necessarily linked and remain for us a preferable focus over those which are exclusively obsessed either with art as formal innovation/experimentation or archaic form serving revolutionary content. The further promulgation of a division of form from content serves only to reaffirm metaphysical binarisms arising in art (or the philosophies of art) and is tied to a reactionary form of politics which we intend to resist.

We hope that the resumption of our publication will encourage you to read and submit comments, articles and photo essays to our future issues. We are optimistic.