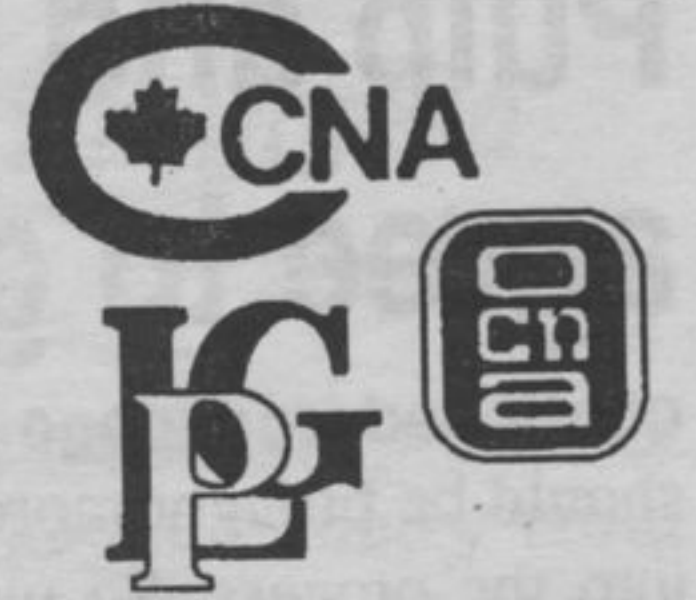


Editorial

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We have seen more violent acts than most of us can recall

When I was about 13 or 14, I remember reading in the newspaper that Swedish teenagers my age couldn't go see the movie *Star Wars* because it was considered too violent and therefore was restricted for people 18 years of age and older. They could, however, get into a screening of the *Happy Hooker Goes to Hollywood* without any trouble.

Although this struck me as peculiar at the time, it simply highlighted the differences between the two cultures: we have liberal attitudes about the definition of what is violent, and they have very liberal attitudes about sex.

So the announcement this past week that the CRTC is encouraging Canadian television stations to reduce the amount of violent programming it shows reminded me that, at least on television, Canadians have a high tolerance for violence.

Does this make Canadians more violent? Does going to see *Terminator 2* and *Lethal Weapon 3* and *Alien 3* and then coming home to watch an episode of some American crime drama make us more likely to be violent ourselves? I don't think so.

When you think about it, long before cable and the tidal wave of American-based programming, we had the NHL, the only professional team sport that permits—some would say encourages—fighting. And for graphic violence, what TV show can compete with news broadcasts?

But the real danger of exposing ourselves to so much violence is not what it may bring out in us, but what it may condition us to seeing. Having grown up watching a lot of television, not to mention a lot of quite violent movies at the theatre and on videotape, the Persian Gulf War seemed more like a miniseries to me than a major conflict in which thousands died. The carnage in the former Yugoslavian Republics, while I know it's tragic, doesn't seem real either. And I suspect I'm not the only one who's developed emotional callouses to scenes of violence.

Like an experienced policeman at the scene of a grisly car accident, or a firefighter fighting his one thousandth blaze, we have become inured to scenes of violence. We have been exposed to graphic scenes of television violence more times than we can count. It doesn't seem real, it doesn't feel real, it doesn't affect us directly, and, most importantly, it happens far far away.

What the long-term impact of this desensitizing will be is difficult to predict, but it can't be healthy.

But what I really want to know is what kind of impact *The Happy Hooker Goes to Hollywood* has on a 13-year-old boy?



A plausible horoscope at last

Astrology: the study that assumes and attempts to interpret the influence of heavenly bodies on human affairs.

Webster's Dictionary

Richard: What's your sign?

Victoria: I'm sorry, it's unlisted.

Mel Brooks, High Anxiety

Poor old Astrology. It's kind of the Rodney Dangerfield of the Pseudo-sciences—it can't get no respect. The Church pooh poohs it. Engineers sneer and academics roll their eyes and scientists laugh up their coat sleeves at it.

And don't ever make the mistake (as I once did) of asking an astronomer whether he believed in astrology. I had no idea that a learned man of science would even know the kind of words that came out of his mouth.

Astronomers consider themselves to be the only legitimate students of stars. They think astrology is to astronomy as Randy Macho Man Savage is to Greco Roman Wrestling.

Astronomers believe that astrology gives their science a bad name and they would like all astrologers of the world to stop writing their drivelly but lucrative magazine and newspaper columns, fold up their Signs of the Zodiac charts and become parking lot attendants.

Me? Well, I'm not as vehement about it as the AF of L CIO Astronomers Union, but I have to confess I think astrology's a bit of a scam. I find it a real strain on creditability to believe that the oscillations of the third moon of Betelgeuse is going to have a measurable effect on my love life next Wednesday afternoon.

Besides, the whole idea of astrology is betrayed by fatal flaw.

Jerks. Every day I run into all kinds of jerks. Sometimes it's individual jerks. It can be jerks in flocks of three, five—even a dozen or more.

An yet they have no sign. The astrological zodiac does not provide a sign for jerks.

Oh sure, the Zodiac will say Taurans are "stubborn" and Librans are "dreamers." I am not talking about stubbornness and dreaminess. I am talking about the pig-ignorant, moronic, mean-spirited psychopaths and bozos that dot this planet like fruit flies on a day old danish and make each day an obstacle of broken-field running for the rest of us. What's their sign?

This is not new rant for me, which may explain the sheet of paper I found under my office door this morning. A new interpretation of the zodiac. No date, no address, author unknown.

It's a cheap and vicious piece of writing and I like it very much. Here's a sample:

LEO- July 23 - Aug 22:
"You consider yourself a born leader. Others think you are pushy. Most Leo people are bullies. You are vain and dislike honest criticism. Your arrogance is disgusting. Leo people are born thieves."

You a Capricorn? Then this Scud's for you: "You

don't do much of anything and are lazy. There has never been a Capricorn of any importance. Capricorns should avoid standing too long, as they tend to take root and become trees."

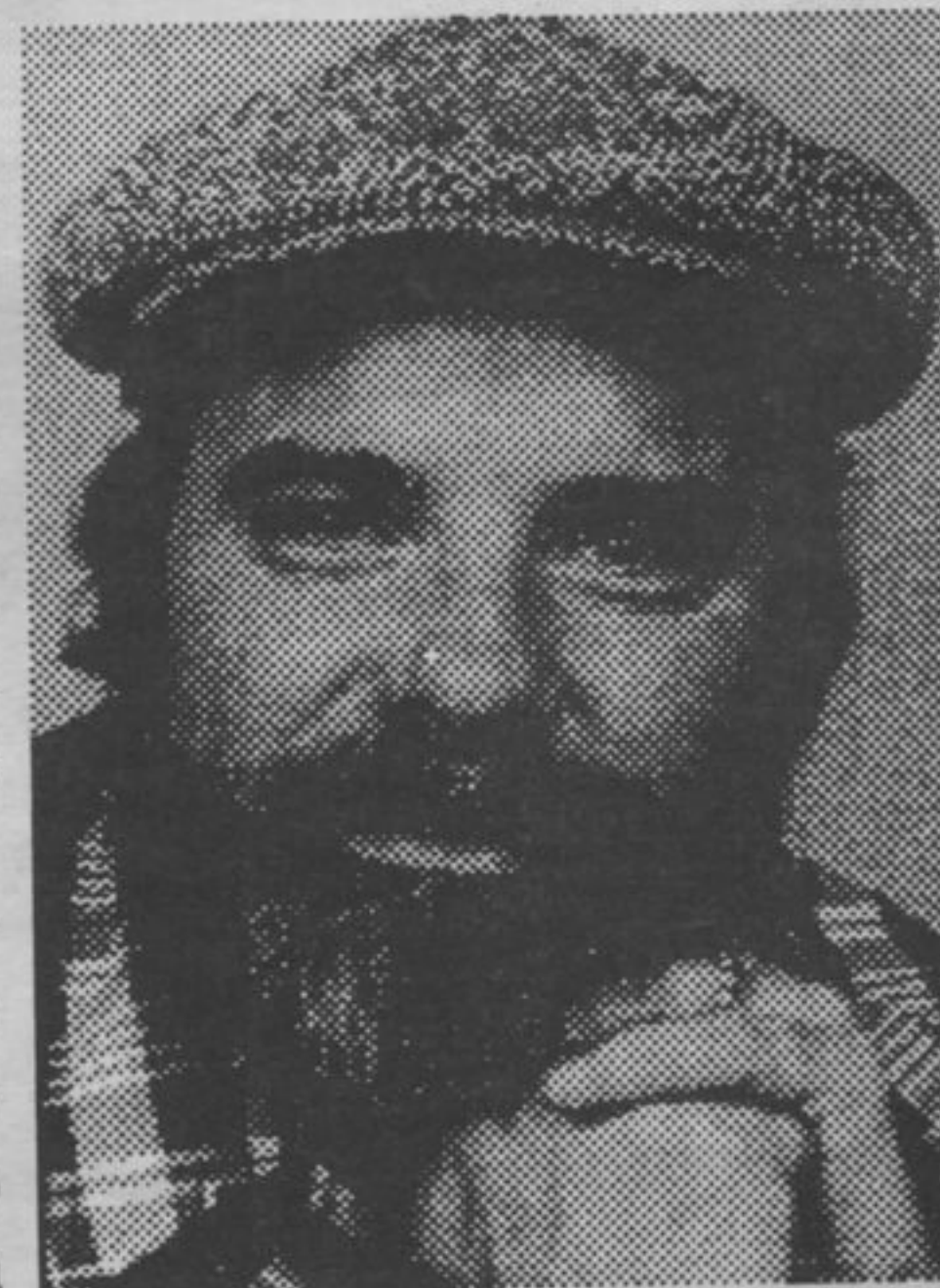
Grossly unfair perhaps, but a refreshing change from all that kissy-face goodness stuff you usually see in astrology columns.

My sign? Well, I'm a Virgo, if you must know, but wh . . .

Oh. You want to see what Mister Anonymous Astrologer had to say about my sign? Well, it can't do any harm I suppose.

Virgo - Aug 23 - Sept 23: "You are the logical type and hate disorder. This nit-picking is sickening to you friends. You are cold and unemotional and sometimes fall asleep while making love."

I certainly don't find much humour in that one. On the other hand, my wife still hasn't stopped laughing.



Arthur Black

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