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## Editorial

Trespassing. Transgression.

In issue 2, NMP explores Trespassing. As a theme with so many connotations... what is trespassing? What does it mean to transgress? What are the limitations, the risks, the consequences, and the outcomes of crossing lines, of blurring boundaries?

How do we define trespassing? To be gradually intrusive; to enter without right or permission, to move back from the encroaching tide, to invade, to hunt, and to pass. La transgression est le fait de ne pas respecter une obligation, une loi; de ne pas se conformer à une attitude courante, naturelle; d'envahir, d'aller contre ce qui semble naturel.

I know what most of you are thinking. So before I get into the details of this most amazing second NMP issue, I offer a few words on format.

Where is that promised "print" version?

Well, some of you may have already noticed: It's here. It's ready for you to print on demand from Lulu, or as a FREE download here. You can print it yourself that way – maybe for cheaper. Print on demand is expensive, especially during a global economic crisis, and with terrible conversion rates, it's really quite inaccessible to most. We know this. But the truth is that it'd be even more expensive to print it in Canada, even given all these costs. If anyone knows of cheap but good Canadian print on demand services, email us immediately. Otherwise, print it yourself! Or, save the trees and read it on your monitor. Or better yet, subscribe to the online

NMP for a mere 30\$/year and support NMP. De cette façon, vous aurez un accès illimité aux contenus vidéo et audio, et nous allons être en mesure de payer pour le site.

Now, NMP 2. How happy am I with this? So very happy.

Once again, we have incredible interviews and articles by NMP editors. NMP editor Dayna McLeod interviews prominent photographer Lise Beaudry, who has given us the stunning cover image for this issue. We're very happy to showcase Beaudry's work in #2. In addition, McLeod matches lesbian icon Shawna Dempsey with video wonder Divya Mehra.

Notre plus récent ajout à l'équipe de rédaction de NMP, Gabriel Chagnon, nous apporte un texte important, une réflexion sur le contexte entourant la sortie du film Polytechnique. Bienvenue à bord, Chagnon.

Fabien Rose nous propose un texte de réflexion portant sur l'(auto)identification, le « gender passing », qui s'alimente à une production universitaire. Discutant le lien entre la perception et la réception dans la politique du genre, Rose s'intéresse à la possibilité d'envisager que « nos interactions sociales en terme de passing [puisent] être d'une quelconque utilité politique. »

Laura Agustín's essential discussion about the misperception of migrating people as either "pathetic victims" or "predatory scroungers" sheds a bright light on the interlocking notions of agency and victimization. Originally published in 2003, Agustín's words still ring true in our present day political context and we feel it important to republish it in NMP's second issue.

Current political issues are addressed in Meg Leitold's article, where she discusses "Operation Cast Lead," the bloody air and sea invasion of the Gaza Strip by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in December 2008. Passage Oublié negotiates between formalist new media art and political demands by investigating airports as sites of illegal detention and transport of suspected terrorists.

Video activist Martha Steigman give us a visual context to the Barriere Lake blockade maintained by the community until Canada and Quebec honour their agreements and respect leadership customs.

Lucky for us, we have John Caffery review Toronto's 100\$. I saw 100\$ play not too long ago in Toronto and was blown away by this new Janis Joplin and her band. It was really one of the best live shows I've seen in ages. The kind of show that's so down to earth but goes and gets you right in there... go see them live and buy their album now. Seriously.

The lovely Sasha converses with the equally lovely Gentleman Reg about belonging, signing falsetto, and the politics of (not) giving it all away.

From music to noise, Mel Mundell speaks with Her Jazz Noise Collective in Vancouver, about space and gender, and noise with toys.

Du bruit au son, j'ai interviewé Nancy Tobin sur sa double vie en tant qu'artiste sonore et conceptrice de son pour le théâtre. Elle contemple la place de l'artiste à l'ère du numérique et elle s'interroge : « Si je ne suis pas en ligne, puis-je exister ? »

Amy Kazymierchyk's review of WACK! suggests that the show's "events paid homage to the history of feminist art and artists, and celebrated the culture of collaboration and collectivity that arose out of the feminist revolution in the 1960's and 1970's." She admits that these works made her reflect on the undeniable influence of the feminist movement on today's radical politics. Is feminism dead? Is the revolution over?

Two beautiful illustrations gild the pages of NMP: Lim's incredible comic, part of her ongoing Butch Portraits series, and GB Jones' I am the Rain made especially for NMP. Thank you.

Notre prochaine édition porte sur l'Ego. Attendez-vous à un numéro très spécial...

Another very special thank you to my lesbro Jeff Traynor for his technical support with the website - we now have an archive and a functional subscription option.

More big love to M-C MacPhee and Dayna McLeod who continue to lose more sleep over NMP. Thank you also to our translator and new NMP editor, Gabriel Chagnon, to copy-editors Lindsay Shane and TS, and again, to you, the readers, to whom we are committed to bringing forward a really special and smart magazine bi-monthly.

*Mél Hogan*

**POLYTECHNIQUE***Gabriel Chagnon*

Le texte qui suit est une réflexion sur le contexte entourant la sortie du film *Polytechnique*, et porte principalement sur le contexte et les médias francophones du Québec.

C'est accompagné (et surtout précédé) d'un flot impressionnant de débats, interrogations,

inquiétudes et prises de position diverses qu'est sorti tout récemment sur nos écrans le film *Polytechnique*, de Denis Villeneuve. Certains trouvent malavisé de rouvrir de telles blessures et doutent de la pertinence de faire un film qui fait revivre l'une des plus douloureuses tragédies vécues au Québec, d'autres

déplorent que ses artisans aient opté pour la fiction au lieu du documentaire, et d'autres encore, trouvant qu'il était grand temps qu'une œuvre de fiction soit produite sur cet épisode, ont accueilli le film avec intérêt et curiosité.

Rarement, dans les annales du cinéma québécois, un film aura-t-il fait couler autant d'encre et suscité autant de discussions que Polytechnique. Mais ce n'est pas tant l'œuvre elle-même qui aura alimenté les débats que son existence même, et les polarisations suscitées rappellent étrangement celles auxquelles les événements, survenus il y a bientôt 20 ans, avaient donné lieu. Le tueur était-il simplement un fou qui a commis un geste isolé dont il serait vain de chercher le sens, ou ce geste horrible était-il une expression extrême de la misogynie ambiante ?

Et pour bien des femmes au lendemain de cette tragédie, il s'agissait bel et bien d'un crime dirigé contre les femmes et les acquis du féminisme. Elles ont été outrées lorsqu'une majorité de commentateurs et de médias, en particulier ceux du milieu francophone, se sont évertués, dans un premier temps, à n'y voir qu'un acte de pure folie totalement dénué de sens. Exception qui confirme la règle, dans une entrevue qu'il donnait à Michel Desautels le 8 décembre 1989, le regretté Pierre Bourgault affirmait que la tuerie de Polytechnique constituait le « premier crime sexiste avoué ». Toujours selon Bourgault, ce geste était une « expression extrême du backlash face au mouvement de libération des femmes ». Bourgault aura été l'un des seuls à exprimer cette opinion sans se faire accuser de politiser l'événement à outrance. Denis Villeneuve, le réalisateur du film, a lui-même émis récemment un point de vue similaire : « Fou, ce tueur ? Oui, mais té-

moignant d'un malaise réel. En chaque homme sommeille un gars révolté de laisser sa place aux femmes. » (Le Devoir, 31 janvier 2009).

De plus, la lettre écrite par le tueur, qui définit lui-même son geste comme un acte politique, ne devrait-elle pas suffire à le considérer comme tel ? Publiée près d'un an après l'événement, la lettre rédigée par Marc Lépine laisse très peu de place à l'imagination : « ... si je me suicide aujourd'hui 89/12/06, ce n'est pas pour des raisons économiques... mais bien pour des raisons politiques. Car j'ai décidé d'envoyer Ad Patres les féministes qui m'ont toujours gâché la vie. Depuis 7 ans que la vie ne m'apporte plus de joie et étant totalement blasé, j'ai décidé de mettre des bâtons dans les roues à ces viragos. » On peut aussi y lire ce qui suit :

« Même si l'épithète Tireur Fou va m'être attribuée dans les médias, je me considère comme un érudit rationnel que seule la venue de la Faucheuse a amené à poser des gestes extrémistes. Car pourquoi persévérer à exister si ce n'est que faire plaisir au gouvernement. Étant plutôt passésistes (exception la science) de nature, les féministes ont toujours eu le don de me faire rager. Elles veulent conserver les avantages des femmes (ex. assurances moins chères, congés de maternité prolongés précédés d'un retrait préventif, etc.) tout en s'accaparant de ceux des hommes. »

Certes, pour qu'un individu commette un tel acte, l'hypothèse de la folie ne fait aucun doute, mais pourquoi faudrait-il que l'existence d'un trouble évident de santé mentale exclue automatiquement une lecture politique du geste, et empêche de voir un lien entre celui-ci et les tensions sociales de l'époque ? En fixant son délire paranoïaque sur les féministes, qu'il

rendait responsables de tous ses malheurs, Lépine s'alimentait d'un ressentiment bien réel à l'égard des féministes, fût-il à l'état larvé, éprouvé par bien des hommes qui se voyaient bousculés dans leurs repères.

Si, aujourd'hui, le féminisme n'a pas encore tout à fait bonne presse et se voit fréquemment vilipendé (souvent davantage, malheureusement, pour les intentions qu'on lui prête que pour ce qu'il est vraiment dans toute sa complexité et sa diversité), la situation était bien pire à la fin des années 1980. En effet, si l'on accepte aujourd'hui de reconnaître le rôle historique essentiel et positif du mouvement féministe, à l'époque, les féministes inspiraient la méfiance, et les avancées sociales rapides et radicales réalisées grâce à l'action du mouvement des femmes n'avaient pas manqué d'attiser les frustrations, surtout, on s'en doute, du côté des hommes. Un malaise existait bel et bien dans la société québécoise, nourri par un ressentiment non avoué face aux changements sociaux rapides qui avaient transformé la société et remis en question les rapports de pouvoir dans bien des domaines.

Dans un article intitulé « Je me souviens », publié dans le numéro hors série de la revue *La vie en rose* (octobre 2005), la journaliste Francine Pelletier émet des propos intéressants à cet égard, après avoir relaté un épisode survenu le surlendemain des événements, où elle a entendu un homme lancer, dans un corridor de Radio-Canada : « Il aurait dû toutes les tuer » :

« Cette phrase assassine marqua pour moi le début des hostilités entre les hommes et les femmes. Car, partout au Québec, la guerre des sexes, la vraie, creusait ses tranchées. On n'en a jamais vraiment parlé par la suite, mais c'est

un sous-texte crucial du 6 décembre. Beaucoup d'hommes trouvaient que les femmes exagéraient, qu'elles imaginaient des Marc Lépine partout ; ils voyaient dans la politisation de l'événement une accusation sans nuances à leur égard. À l'inverse, beaucoup de femmes trouvaient que les hommes minimisaient la gravité de l'événement et, le réduisant au « geste d'un fou », faisaient d'elles des folles et des hystériques à leur tour. Hommes et femmes étaient devenus Juifs et Arabes devant le mur des Lamentations. »

Mentionnons également que si le 6 décembre est devenu par la suite, partout au Canada, la Journée nationale de commémoration et d'action contre la violence faite aux femmes, il importe de rappeler quelle était vraiment la cible de Lépine :

« À la thèse de la folie s'est substituée avec le temps la thèse de la violence faite aux femmes, c'est vrai. Mais ce n'est pas frapper exactement sur le même clou. En abattant 14 futures ingénieures, ce n'est pas à elles personnellement que Lépine en voulait, mais bien au mouvement des femmes. La distinction m'apparaît importante. Il s'attaquait à des conquérantes, pas à des victimes. Il frappait au vu et au su de tous, il ne se défoulait pas en catimini. Loin de rééditer un vieux rapport de force, il s'en prenait à ce qu'il y avait de plus nouveau dans la société : l'avancement des femmes. Bref, c'est au progrès que Lépine s'attaquait, c'est au futur comme nous l'imaginions. » (Francine Pelletier, *ibid.*)

En revanche, d'aucuns affirment encore aujourd'hui qu'un « certain féminisme doctrinaire » a récupéré le sens des événements de polytechnique, et que les tenants de la thèse

de la « folie » ont pratiquement fait l'objet d'une censure pendant toutes ces années, laissant toute la place à ceux de la thèse du « geste politique ». C'est notamment l'avis de Catherine Fol, diplômée en génie physique de l'École polytechnique de Montréal et auteure du documentaire *Au-delà du 6 décembre*, qui a été la cible de féroces critiques de la part de nombreuses militantes féministes lors de sa sortie, en 1991. Selon elle, au lendemain des événements de Polytechnique, les gens auraient eu besoin de faire leur deuil ensemble, mais certaines militantes féministes ayant leurs entrées dans les médias ont pris la parole et martelé le même message qu'elles véhiculaient déjà avant le drame : « Nous, les femmes, nous sommes victimes de vous, les hommes » ; pour les féministes, la tuerie de Polytechnique constituait donc une illustration et une démonstration de ce qu'elles s'évertuaient à affirmer depuis des années. Toujours selon Fol, ce qu'on disait à Poly, c'est que « des femmes » ont été victimes d'« un homme », et il n'y a pas de lien entre les deux. Les féministes ont selon elle fait du militantisme après le drame, toujours selon la même perspective « nous les femmes, nous sommes victimes de vous, les hommes », alors qu'on n'avait pas besoin de militantisme, on avait besoin d'être solidaires, ensemble, dans la douleur du drame de Polytechnique. Fol croit que le féminisme demeure aujourd'hui un facteur de division entre les hommes et les femmes (émission *Bazzo*, tv, Télé-Québec, 12 février 2009). Or, si l'on ne peut nier que plusieurs déclarations formulées par des féministes au cours de la période de l'après-6 décembre manquaient de nuances, et que, sous le coup de l'émotion, il se soit dit toutes sortes de choses regrettables (par exemple, cet acharnement sur Nathalie Provost, l'étudiante qui a dit à Marc Lépine, avant que

celui-ci se mette à tirer : « Nous ne sommes pas des féministes »), cette façon de voir le féministe comme un facteur de division entre les hommes et les femmes permet d'évacuer tout débat de fond sur les répercussions complexes des changements rapides et profonds introduits par la deuxième vague du féminisme.

Pourquoi cette extrême réticence à conférer à ce geste une valeur politique ? Pourquoi, vingt ans plus tard, les thèses de la folie et du geste politique s'affrontent-elles de façon aussi dichotomique, comme s'il fallait absolument que ce soit l'une ou l'autre ? Voici une autre citation fort éclairante de Francine Pelletier :

« Il faut dire qu'entre le drame de Poly et la publication de la lettre, il y avait eu la crise d'Oka, assortie de la même tendance à la déresponsabilisation. Encore une fois, ce n'était pas la faute des Québécois, mais celle des méchants Indiens et/ou du méchant fédéral. En temps de crise, le Québec est toujours archi-convaincu de sa propre vertu, un peu comme Israël. Comme si le fait d'avoir été des victimes de l'histoire nous empêchait d'en faire à notre tour. Comme si on était encore trop petit pour manier le gros bout du bâton. » (Numéro hors série de *La vie en rose*, octobre 2005).

Le statut minoritaire et précaire de la culture québécoise serait-il un élément expliquant cette volonté acharnée de faire à tout prix du Québec un lieu idyllique et exemplaire où le sexisme, la misogynie et le racisme n'existent plus, et où tous les combats et les remises en question ont été menés et ne sont dorénavant plus nécessaires ?

*Polytechnique*, le film, raconte en 76 minutes les événements du 6 décembre 1989 à travers

les yeux d'une étudiante et d'un étudiant, deux personnages fictifs représentant un amalgame des protagonistes réels. Le film, qui s'inspire des témoignages des survivants et des familles des victimes, est remarquable sur le plan cinématographique, d'une grande maîtrise technique. On suit le parcours de Jean-François et de Valérie, qui se trouvaient tous deux dans la classe où Marc Lépine a séparé les hommes des femmes pour ensuite tirer sur celles-ci. Le film nous entraîne au cœur de la tourmente, parmi les étudiants qui voient leur vie basculer en ce jour fatidique. Sans justifier ni expliquer, il ne fait que montrer. À la fois sobre et direct, tourné en noir et blanc afin d'installer une distance entre l'action et les spectateurs, il évite tout sensationnalisme de même que tout psychologisme (il ne s'agit pas d'un film à thèse). Même si l'œuvre est tournée avec brio et comporte des plans magnifiques, on ne pourra pas accuser Villeneuve d'avoir signé une œuvre esthétisante, contrairement à Gus Van Sant, dont le film *Elephant* a souvent fait l'objet de ce reproche. Les images, superbes, ne portent jamais ombrage au propos. L'excellente direction photo de Pierre Gill, le scénario bien ciselé de Jacques Davidts, la musique subtile de Benoît Charest et la formidable direction d'acteurs de Villeneuve contribuent à faire de *Polytechnique* une œuvre achevée qui constitue, selon moi, le meilleur film du réalisateur de Maelström et d'*Un 32 août sur terre*.

Selon les artisans du film, *Polytechnique* relevait avant tout du devoir de mémoire, et visait non pas à apporter des réponses, mais à susciter une réflexion, provoquer un débat. Je crois en effet que l'art doit entre autres servir à ne pas oublier, nous aider à sonder nos parts d'ombre pour leur trouver un sens, pour reprendre l'expression utilisée par Villeneuve, ainsi que

nous mettre face à nous-mêmes et nous permettre de réfléchir aux événements troublants et difficiles qui marquent notre société. À ce titre, au Québec, il semble que nous ayons un singulier rapport avec la mémoire traumatique en ce qui a trait à son expression au cinéma, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit des rapports complexes, parfois conflictuels, entre différents groupes sociaux. Par exemple, la crise d'Oka n'aura été abordée au cinéma que par la documentariste Alanis Obomsawin (*Kanehsatake – 270 ans de résistance*). En outre, comme le mentionnait récemment la critique de cinéma Odile Tremblay, qui soutient que le cinéma doit aussi faire œuvre de catharsis et de mémorial, « des crises très graves, tels les événements d'octobre 1970 et la Loi des mesures de guerre, auraient pu engendrer une foule de films. Michel Brault s'y est attelé dans *Les ordres*,... Vingt ans plus tard, Pierre Falardeau aborda le sujet à travers *Octobre*... » (*Le Devoir*, 31 janvier 2009). Cette prudence dont font montre les cinéastes est-elle due à la crainte de subir l'opprobre s'ils osent s'attaquer à des sujets dont les gens ne veulent plus parler, parce que trop délicats et douloureux ?

Les artisans du film tenaient aussi à exonérer les étudiants de Poly qui se trouvaient sur les lieux pendant ces 19 minutes cauchemardesques, et qui se sont fait reprocher par la suite de ne pas avoir porté secours à leurs consœurs. « Très vite, on est tombés d'accord sur le fait qu'on voulait que le film dédouane les étudiants et les libère du poids de la culpabilité. Parce que dans toute cette affaire, les seuls qui ont réussi à garder le silence, à rester dignes et à résister à l'enflure médiatique, c'est les étudiants. Et pourtant, ils ont été laissés pour compte par la société des aînés qui avaient d'autres comptes à régler. » (Jacques Davidts, cité par Nathalie Petrowski)

dans La Presse, samedi 7 février 2009). Car le film a bel et bien un angle, et c'est le regard de Jean-François, personnage incarnant l'homme témoin impuissant du drame, qui constitue le principal moteur du récit. C'est à travers son regard qu'on découvre l'ampleur du carnage, et à travers lui, on nous dit toute la culpabilité ressentie par les étudiants de Poly qui n'ont rien pu faire pour arrêter le tueur. On ne saurait être en désaccord avec cet angle. Bien des choses se sont dites dans la tourmente qui a suivi la tuerie, et moult reproches ont été adressés aux étudiants de ne pas avoir tenté quoi que ce soit pour venir en aide aux femmes. Ces reproches, injustes et imbéciles, n'ont certainement rien fait pour aider les gars présents le jour du drame à se remettre de ce traumatisme. Le film effectue une remise des pendules à l'heure qui est loin d'être superflue.

Toutefois, le fait qu'on choisisse précisément cet angle, plutôt que celui, plus délicat peut-être, du « tremblement de terre que cet événement a provoqué chez les femmes » (Catherine Perrin, à l'émission C'est bien meilleur le matin, 6 février 2009), est révélateur. On évite de jouer dans des eaux qui demeurent toujours troubles aujourd'hui. Personne ne nie que l'événement ait été extrêmement traumatisant pour les hommes présents. Là-dessus, il y a consensus. Mentionnons le cas de Sarto Blais, dont le nom est ajouté à la liste des quatorze femmes défilant à l'écran à la fin du film, qui s'est suicidé l'été suivant, suivi par ses parents un an plus tard. Pour ma part, je crois que malgré la grande qualité du film, on a peut-être été ici un peu trop prudent. On peut comprendre que les artisans aient fait preuve d'une extrême précaution, étant les premiers à briser le silence au bout de presque vingt ans, dans un contexte où les survivants et les familles de-

meurent extrêmement fragiles. D'autres films restent à faire, et espérons que les artistes continueront d'avoir l'audace, comme l'a fait Ville-neuve, d'explorer cet épisode unique et sombre de l'histoire du Québec.

*Gabriel Chagnon travaille en rédaction et en traduction depuis plus de 20 ans. Observateur assidu de la scène culturelle et politique d'ici et d'ailleurs et cinéphile averti, il a collaboré au fil des ans avec de nombreux groupes populaires et politiques et organismes culturels, dont Divers/Cité et image+nation.*

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DIVYA**

*Divya Mehra | Shawna Dempsey*

Divya Mehra is funny. So it is not surprising that she is the only artist I know who begins her artist statement with a joke:

An Englishman, a Cuban, a Japanese man and a Pakistani were all on a train. The Cuban threw a fine Havana cigar out the window. When he was asked why, he replied: "They are ten a penny in my country." The Japanese man threw an expensive Nikon camera out of the carriage, adding: "These are ten a penny in my country." The Englishman then picked up the Pakistani



and threw him out of the train window. When the other travellers asked him to account for his actions, he said: "They are ten a penny in my country."

Now the joke is totally not funny. But it is a fitting introduction to Divya's work, a body of photographic and video pieces that blend seeming naivety with cringe-worthy socio-political indictment. Her most recent vid, "The Importance of Being Earnest" is likewise a roller coaster ride of goofiness giving way to stomach-churning discomfort.

Divya often performs in her work. I first became familiar with it through the photo-series she created during the last year of her BFA at the University of Manitoba. Divya inserted herself into family portraits of the perfect white, middle class family. There she is at dinner, in the park, and on the tennis court: a short, awkwardly posed and beautifully round girl amidst towering, emotionless, pink people. The contrast is hilarious and its content clear: despite our "multi-culti" lip service, assimilation is still the name of the game, the key to "success". And, as depicted by Divya, what a bland, heartless state to aspire to. Tennis anyone?

Her videos, likewise, reveal hypocrisy with humour. In her hands (and editing suite), pop culture icons are reframed to highlight the often-painful absurdity embedded in portrayals of racial otherness. She takes humiliating images that have been packaged as entertainment and playfully turns them upside down. By inserting herself into a redux-remake of Peter Seller's infamous film "The Party", she delivers a brilliantly succinct analysis of the film's inherent racism. In "Like You", Divya lip-synchs the Monkey King song from the "Jungle Book"

while performing a soft-shoe shuffle, undermining this potential object position by the sheer force of her personality. It seems highly unlikely that this unselfconscious, self-possessed woman really wants to "be like you-oo-oo" or me. She's got her own thing going on. In "Pants", she redubs and resubtitles a Bollywood film of the '70s, taunting the viewer with ethnic stereotypes while nonetheless exposing the difficult position of women in EVERY culture. The audio (in Punjabi) is a dialogue between two dufus guys describing the unruly nature of women in India; the subtitles (in English) describe the unruly nature of women in Canada.

Her latest piece, "The Important of Being Earnest", is a response to the bombing in Mumbai. Like an earlier vid, "Wet Girl", the soundtrack is stolen from a blockbuster kids' flick of the '90s. In this case, "The Importance of Being Earnest" features Divya lip-synching once again, this time to "A Whole New World", the duet from Aladdin. The saccharine Disney animation from which the soundtrack is pulled is Orientalism at its finest and completely unselfconscious. Ah, those wacky brown-skinned folks, in a magically far away time and place (with the not so subtle subtext: where they belong). Divya mouths the female role with gusto, wind blowing through her hair, posed against picture-postcard images of the contested territory of Kashmir. "A whole new world! A dazzling place I never knew...". And then, just when I was getting comfy, it turns ugly. The chroma keyed background shifts into images of bloody suffering as Divya keeps belting out a song that, in its original context, has the emotional weight of a piece of bubblegum stuck to the bottom of your shoe. "Unbelievable sights, indescribable feelings...", yup, she's got that right. Displacement, poverty, terrorism, warfare. And if for a moment I thought I could



Don't despair Narendra, there are no pants in India.

get away with mere pity, there is the map of India, before and after partition. Who has created this “whole new world” that plagues the Indian subcontinent with instability and violence? Oh, we did that. My darn, towering, emotionless pink ancestors cooked that one up. Colonization, anyone?

Divya’s arch dialogue and kitschy visuals are rooted in truths. These truths quickly turn my laughter queasy. I have participated; I am implicated. And yet, I have also been included.

There is a big-heatedness to this work. The eye candy and scathing critique overlay an emotional largess. By placing her vulnerable self in the images, she both implies and creates an empathy that runs two ways. These tapes have soul.

Fortunately for us, there’s lots of them. Divya is prolific and works fast. If you check out her website ([www.divyamehra.com](http://www.divyamehra.com)), you’re sure to catch the latest bee in her bonnet. You’ve been

forewarned: she stings, but with good reason. And there’s a whole lot of pleasure, not to mention thoughtfulness, in that bite.

*Divya Mehra is a multimedia artist who recently earned a MFA from Columbia University in New York. She obtained her BFA with Honors from the University of Manitoba’s School of Art. In her practice she explores issues of cultural displacement and hybridization, deploying a humorous perspective in the execution of the works. Her work has been included in numerous exhibitions and screenings across North America.*

## PASSAGE OUBLIÉ

*Maroussia Lévesque and Jason Lewis*

Most of the time, I feel like an impostor. I am always sneaking in places where I don't belong. My work is about finding cracks-interstices-windows of opportunities to convey subversive material. This is a very precarious position, for I am always vulnerable to legitimating the system, all the while thinking I am subverting it.

Passage Oublié makes use of one such interstice: the opportunity to display an art piece at Pearson airport to 6 million passengers for a duration of 11 months. Being granted access to post-security areas was an important aspect of the piece. Negotiating entrance to restricted zones allowed a form of sanctioned trespassing. I will say more later on this process.

### Context

First, a word about the project. The challenge we undertook at Obx Labs was to create a fun, visually appealing installation to engage passengers at Pearson airport about the illegal detention and transport of suspect terrorists. Passage Oublié is an interactive touchscreen where one can leave comments on a map featuring documented rendition flight paths. Extraordinary rendition is an American initiative to transport presumed terrorists to secret detention sites where they are interrogated outside any legal or formal framework. This global

mistreatment network takes people off the radar, off the record, off the map. While we know about Guantanamo Bay, more secretive detention sites are scattered throughout the world, taking advantage of increasing mobility to constantly relocate their operations. Secret detention sites, known as « black sites » also differ from Guantanamo in that detention is outsourced to local authorities. Local control over the prisoners is only nominal, allowing the United States to drive the process and obfuscate any responsibility for the alleged mistreatment taking place in these facilities. We can hope that President Obama will issue clear orders to halt this practice as he did for Guantanamo Bay. But when the project was conceived in 2006-7, there was absolutely no political will to deviate from the post-9/11 ticking bomb rhetoric justifying such departures from basic human rights guarantees.

It is important to clarify that while Pearson airport, the site of our installation, was not specifically involved in the illegal transport of terror suspects, a shocking number of civilian airports worldwide were. Rendition operation camouflage their activities in civilian air traffic using jets leased from fictitious companies. We've detailed the dynamics of extraordinary renditions here: <http://wi.hexagram.ca>

### Interactivity

*Passage Oublié is an interactive touchscreen where users annotate a map featuring the flight paths and civilian airports involved in extraordinary rendition. The display automatically cycles between 15 documented flight paths. Instead of using lines to show the flight paths, we use messages sent by the public and animate these entries along the flight paths.*



# Passage Publiée

WHAT ELSE DO WE LOSE WHEN WE MAKE PEOPLE DISAPPEAR?

PLEASE TOUCH THE ICONS TO START

FREE WIRELESS ACCESS

YOUR MESSAGE WILL TA  
ACCORDING TO FI  
DROP-OFF A



## Rendition report

Abu Omar was kidnapped in Italy and rendered to Cairo. He lost hearing as a consequence of his detention. Italy, a Geneva Convention signatory, launched an investigation on the events. This 1974 agreement prohibits a country to send a detainee to another nation where he risks torture.

## Submitted Message

Dear enemy combatants, are you being treated fairly? We'd like to know if they are not that simple madness, it has far-reaching consequences on your life. Come. Bad example. the boys back home



### Rendition staging airport

Aircraft, pilots and agents meet at these rendition staging airports to plan and begin rendition operations.



### Detainee drop-off airport

'Ghost detainees' of the rendition program are taken to secret detention sites near these drop-off airports.

SEND A TEXT MESSAGE

416.300.7669

WWW.PASSAGEOUBLIE.ORG

FROM PEARSON'S WIRELESS HOTSPOTS

KE OFF FROM A RENDITION STAGING AIRPORT

LIGHT SCHEDULES AND LAND AT A DETAINEE

AIRPORT.

TAS



KEL



1 of 5

ant: do you feel you are treated  
gs to be black and white but  
ple. Winner takes all Stop this  
eaching and adverse  
our children and generations to  
Don't blow anything up. bring  
. I've been racially profiled.

In order to contribute to the project, the public could send a text message to a Toronto cell phone number, or via a web form on [passageoublie.net](http://passageoublie.net). We invited contributions to focus on such questions as: Are rendition flights an acceptable means of dealing with the threat of terrorism? Does the end justify mistreatment when it comes to the 'war on terror'? Are the liberal democracies involved in this activity compromising the constitutionally protected principle that one is innocent until proven guilty?

We solicited and received contributions locally at Pearson airport and downtown Toronto, and from web users worldwide.

Another way of engaging with the project consists of using the touchscreen. This simple interaction allows passengers on the go to browse other's contributions and to trigger informative pop-ups. Upon being touched, each airport icon will display content about how this specific location is involved. Touching all icons rapidly will cause the whole network to be visible for a few moments. The visualization, like our ephemeral knowledge of shifting black site locations, vanishes rapidly.

### Unsighted political trespasser in neutral space

Passage Oublié negotiates between formalist new media art and political demands. If one is to look at the piece quickly, it may just be mistaken as eye candy. Akin to rendition flights camouflaging themselves in the civilian air transportation network, this political piece camouflages itself as a seemingly innocuous slick art piece. Despite a growing number of politically engaged new media art pieces, the mainstream association of new technologies with the benign celebration of consumerism, or with their direct lineage from the military complex persists. This worked to our advantage, since it attracted people who would otherwise be put off by a more overt form of political action, such as protest and



petitions. Passage Oublié is an undercover political agent trespassing in the seemingly neutral airport space.

### **Neutral or invisibly charged space?**

*Airports self-define as politically-neutral spaces,* yet the process of custom clearance consists of increasingly invasive security measures. We allow ever larger trespasses on our physical integrity and dignity, as anyone who has been

patted down will agree. Airports also invoke the rhetoric of emergency measures curtailing individual rights: a trespass on constitutionally entrenched rights against discrimination, and on the presumption of innocence so dear to Western juridical systems. These trespasses are political in that they shift power from the private sphere to the benefit of the administrative-utilitarian machinery. As the theater of these trespasses, the airport is a politically charged space.



continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination.” This logic denies any agency to micro, or capillary movements. Is it possible to have a win-win situation, where Obx Labs gained access to a wide audience and the airport got a solid art project? Perhaps there is a tragic tendency to see power dynamics as a zero-sum game.

### **For a core – Periphery conception of power**

The airport authorities granted us access to boarding areas beyond the security and custom checkpoints in order to do field research during the prototyping phase of the project. We accessed this area via a hidden door followed by a maze of corridors. An interesting allegory lies here: art provides a unique avenue to the core of power, via a hidden door followed by a winding road.

I'd like to take this opportunity to open up a wider conception of how art relates to power. I use the words core and periphery not in their context of the dependency theory – although an intuitive parallel may develop as – you read these lines – but to denote a core of official power and a periphery of lower intensity, less recognized forms of agency. To put it bluntly, liberal professionals, entrepreneurs and politicians are at the core of decision-making. They hold the enabling degrees, access to the public purse and to private financing. From a realist perspective – now I borrow this concept from political science – actors at the core have the hard power to influence the world.

Artists, among others, are agents at the periphery of the power distribution. While they

seldom have a strong bargaining chip to affect the world, their lack of allegiance to an electorate, shareholder board or professional society enables a wider scope of freedom. Agents at the core have the power to make and implement changes, but their hands are tied. Artists at the periphery have considerable latitude, but little agency to frontally alter things. There is an inverse proportionality between the power to make change and the freedom to make change.

While curators, grant requirements and the art market do play a role in shaping art, the intensity of these restrictions are in no way comparable to that of public or private accountability for agents within the core of power. One way that artists have increased their power of actual change without compromising on their inherent autonomy is by being impostors in the core. This soft power mechanism has taken a variety of forms, from the ephemeral graffiti of the GRL [http://graffitiresearchlab.com/?page\\_id=95#video](http://graffitiresearchlab.com/?page_id=95#video), to the performances of the Yes Men <http://theyesmen.org>, and the subtle Notepad <http://www.swamp.nu/projects/notepad.html> intervention of Swamp <http://www.swamp.nu>, infiltrating Congress with the names of Iraqi civilian casualties. These projects, and perhaps Passage Oublié, are promising instantiations of trespassing as a mode of political intervention.

*Maroussia Lévesque holds a BA in Computation arts from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, where she was the conceptual lead at Obx Laboratory for Experimental Media, Hexagram. She is more interested in politics than computers, and tries to reconcile both through her studies in law and new media. Her experience in hip hop and community work (both in Brazil and Canada) is motivated by the potential of subcultures as social emancipators as well as a potentially revolutionary stance against the current order. In her free time, Maroussia enjoys blinking the lights of large buildings <http://blink.digital-spa.com> and make relaxing computer yoga <http://yoga.digital-spa.com/> programs with her partner. She is also learning a fifth language (Arabic), to establish an ssh tunnel between the cultures flowing in her blood. Maroussia is currently learning and unlearning legal constructs at McGill Law school.*



*Jason Lewis is a poet, digital media artist and software designer. His research/creation practice revolves around experiments in visual language, text and typography, with a core interest in how the deep structure of digital media can be used to create innovative forms of expression. His creative*

*work has been featured at the Ars Electronica Center, Elektra Festival, ISEA, SIGGRAPH, Urban Screens and Mobilefest, among other venues, and his writing about new media has been presented at conferences, festivals and gallery exhibitions internationally. He founded Obx Laboratory for Experimental Media, where he directs research/creation projects in digital texts, systems for creative use of mobile technology, alternative interfaces for live*

*performance and the use of desktop virtual reality to assist Aboriginal communities in preserving, interpreting and communicating cultural histories. Obx Labs is deeply committed to developing innovative forms of expression by working on conceptual, creative and technical levels simultaneously. He is currently an Associate Professor of Computation Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. [www.obxlabs.net](http://www.obxlabs.net).*

*Credits for all pictures go to Obx labs.*

## **ISRAELI APARTHEID 101: FROM CHECKPOINTS TO CAST LEAD**

*Meg Leitold*

On December 27, 2008, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) began a bloody air and sea invasion of the Gaza Strip, later expanded to involve an overwhelming ground incursion of the besieged territory.(1) The devastating 22-day military operation, cynically titled “Operation Cast Lead,” would leave more than 1330 Palestinians dead (457, or one-third, of them children), and 5,450 wounded, according to Palestinian medics.(2) The global response to the massacres committed by Israel in Gaza ranged from anger and horror on the part of people of conscience the world over, to inexcusable silence and strongly-enacted support for Israel on the part of numerous state parties, including Canada.

While the depths of Canadian complicity in Israeli war crimes are unconscionable, especially disturbing was the Canadian public’s surprise and ignorance in the face of such horrific violence. The massacres in Gaza were seen as an isolated event—a legitimate, if excessive, state response to the actions of a “terrorist organization,” rather than as an extreme extension of a policy of violence and militarized segregation that has been in place for over 60 years. In order to adequately understand the situation in Gaza, we must first understand the colonial character of the Israeli state since its founding, and its accompanying history of Zionist settlement, dispossession, and racism. We must also look to the more recent past, and question the dominant media narrative that transpired in the face of the Gaza invasion, in order to more

clearly comprehend the gravity of the current circumstances in Palestine.

### **Historical Amnesia**

In January 2006, Palestinian elections took place under international surveillance within a territory under Israeli military occupation that lacked recognized borders, a normal state structure, and any real political autonomy. The result of the elections was a victory for the political party Hamas over the incumbent authority, Fatah.(3) A national unity government was agreed upon by Fatah and Hamas on June 27 of that year, but Israel, the US, the European Union and Canada boycotted the move, and suspended all aid to Gaza. In June of 2006, Israel launched a bloody offensive on Gaza, involving aerial bombardments, assassinations targeting Hamas leaders, the kidnappings of at least 64 officials (many of whom still remain in prison), and a devastating ground invasion.(4) Renewed fighting between Hamas and Fatah aggravated the situation; eventually Hamas took power in Gaza, and Fatah in the West Bank. In June 2007, Israel instituted a total blockade of Gaza.(5)

Negotiated in June 2008 with Egyptian support, a 6-month truce was signed between Israel and Hamas. The accord comprised three points: a ceasefire between the two parties, the extension of the ceasefire to the West Bank at the end of several months, and the lifting of the Israeli siege on Gaza.(6) An agreement on the part of Egypt to open the Rafah passage of the Gaza - Egypt border was also negotiated. During these 6 months, the violence diminished and Hamas stopped firing rockets, but Israeli military incursions killed 25 Palestinians.(7) Contrary to what the truce had outlined, Israel maintained its blockade of Gaza, inadequately

opening only a few border passages for short periods of time.(8) The economic strangulation of the siege continued to take its toll, as Gaza remained cut off from sufficient food, fuel and medicine. In the 18-month period from June 2007 to the start of the Israeli invasion in December 2008, 262 Gazans died from lack of access to proper medical care.(9) On December 20th, the day after the truce expired, the first casualty was again a Palestinian, killed by an Israeli air raid.(10) Contrary to what has often and incorrectly been repeated in mainstream media sources, it was Israel and not Hamas who violated the truce.(11) What was Hamas to do, as an elected political party charged with the defence of Gaza's civilian population, in the face of Israel's blatant ceasefire violations?

The Israeli state claimed to act in "legitimate self-defence" on December 27, in response to rockets fired by Hamas and its refusal to prolong the truce. In reality, according to a December 31 article in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the bloody Operation Cast Lead was planned well before the beginning of truce negotiations in June 2008, and the six months' ceasefire were allotted in order for the Israeli state to work out the remaining details regarding the incursion.(12) The only thing missing was a pretext. With this necessary component lacking, the Israeli government took the time to warn its Egyptian counterpart and wait for the official end to the truce to launch its attack on Gaza. Indeed, the words of Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai in February 2008, foretelling a Palestinian "shoah" (Hebrew for "holocaust") in Gaza, seem disturbingly prophetic in hindsight.(13)

Any attempt to categorize Israel's recent military actions as "surgical" or "restrained" lost

all legitimacy with the preliminary tally of damage to civilian infrastructure, and with even a slight understanding of Gaza's demography. The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated regions on earth, with 1.5 million people on approximately 360 square kilometres, and 44.7 per cent of the Gaza population was under the age of 14 in 2008, according to the CIA(14) (meaning that approximately half of the Gazan population was under the age of 12—clearly not old enough to elect their own government—in 2006 when Hamas came to electoral power). Gaza's oft-quoted status as an "open air prison" since the beginning of the 2007 siege became all the more brutally evident during Israel's invasion. One and a half million people, nearly half of them pre-pubescent, were locked in on all sides with nowhere to run when the bombs began to rain down. Israel's attack on Gaza, from this purview, cannot be called "self-defence" or a "response to terrorist provocation." Rather, terms such as "collective punishment" (in violation of Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention)(15) and "butchery" spring more quickly to mind.

The full depths of Israel's war crimes will undoubtedly remain unknown for some time, but snatches of the terror and agony in which Gazans lived and died over the 22-day assault are slowly coming to light. A myriad of experts' allegations(16) and photographic evidence(17) of Israel's use of DIME (Dense Inert Metal Explosives) weaponry and white phosphorus (an incendiary weapon that causes horrific burns to human skin, and illegal under international law for use against people) on crowded refugee camps in Gaza surfaced, as the invasion continued to devastate. Bombing targets by Israel's helicopters and fighter planes over the duration of the incursion included the Islamic

University of Gaza, the Ministry of the Interior in Gaza City, a United Nations (UN) convoy, hospitals, media stations, ambulances, mosques, homes, a UN warehouse containing food and medical supplies,(18) and three UN schools(19) (leaving 43 dead who had sought refuge in the schools, whose GPS coordinates were known by Israeli military officials months prior to the invasion)(20) — belying the fallacious rhetoric of Israel's attacks as "calculated" and marking exclusively military targets. The revelations that Israel prevented Palestinian ambulances from

attending to the dead and wounded (in some cases for up to four days), in blatant breach of the Geneva Conventions, and the Red Cross's delayed discovery of four emaciated children lying next to their mothers' corpses in Zaytoun, were equally ghastly.(21) The horrific story of Rawhiyya al Najar, carrying her baby in one hand and a white flag in the other, shot in the head in broad daylight by an Israeli soldier in the town of Khuza'a, is among the many accounts of Israeli military terror that have only begun to emerge.(22) The IDF's incursions into



Gaza constitute grave violations of international law, including, among other illegal acts, the use of collective punishment, the targeting of civilians, and the use of disproportionate force.

The toll of material destruction, difficult to quantify, will doubtless deprive the Gazan population of essential infrastructure and decent living conditions for a long time to come. Recent estimates claim that more than 50,000 Gazans are homeless as a result of the Israeli invasion. More than 4,000 homes were completely destroyed in the invasion, and 17,000 more were badly damaged;(23) 30 mosques, five media institutions, two health care facilities, 60 police stations, and 29 educational institutions were destroyed. 121 industrial facilities lie in ruins, with 200 more partially damaged.(24) But all of the numbers in the world do precious little to quantify the devastation in Gaza. Indeed, survivors of the massacres repeat over and over that words cannot express the desolation and ruin in the wake of Israel's attacks. And regarding the rubble from the limited perspective of an isolated incursion does nothing to alleviate the suffering and oppression of the people of Gaza, the majority of whom are refugees who fled their homes and lands in 1948 during Al-Nakba ("the catastrophe"), the founding of the state of Israel.(25)

### **Hideous Twins: Apartheid and Militarism**

Apartheid, from the Afrikaans literally meaning "separateness," is a term used to describe the policies of racially-based segregation, discrimination and domination as enacted by the state of South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The term acquired new legal meaning and became transferrable to other national contexts with

the creation of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which was adopted in 1973.(26) In recent years, a growing body of scholarship, grassroots research and independent media investigation has elucidated the status of Israel as an apartheid state according to this international standard.

Current Canadian involvement in Israeli apartheid is visible in the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, signed in 1997 and expanded in 2003,(27) as well as in a number of provincial bilateral agreements with Israel, including the 2008 Quebec-Israel Accord,(28) and through other instances of corporate investment and cooperation. Canada's position at the United Nations Human Rights Council in January 2009 as the only one of 47 nations to oppose a non-binding resolution condemning Israel for human rights violations in Gaza(29) spoke volumes in its silence.(30)

Contemporary Canadian complicity in Israeli apartheid is overwhelming, but it also has a longstanding historical precedent. Former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin's statement in November 2005 that "Israel's values are Canada's values"(31) was a disturbing but unsurprising admission. After all, Israeli and South African apartheid policies were inspired by and modelled after the Canadian Indian Act of 1876,(32) which established reserves for native people on undesirable, economically unviable pockets of land, isolated from one another. The Act codified in law the separate legal status of "Indians" and Canadian citizens, and restricted the movement of Native peoples who wished to leave the reserve, requiring them to have a permit from an "Indian Agent." As an incipient architect of colonial apartheid, the Canadian

state has not wavered from this commitment since its founding.

The Indian Act permit system was directly transferred to South African apartheid in 1950, where it became the Population Registration Act requiring all South Africans to be racially classified into one of three groups: black, white, or coloured.(33) All blacks were required to carry “pass books” containing fingerprints, photos and information on their access to non-black areas.

Comparatively, Palestinian citizens of Israel are required to carry ID cards that identify them as non-Jewish, as well as contain other personal information. Movement and access to certain areas are denied and restricted through the use of such cards. Currently in the West Bank, Palestinians are forced to use differently-coloured license plates that identify their place of origin and are not permitted on many West Bank roads which have been declared “Israeli only.”(34)

South African apartheid was as notorious for its system of pass laws as for the stunning fact that 87% of the land was reserved for whites. In comparison, Israel has reserved 93% of the land in Israel proper (to say nothing of the occupied territories) for Jewish development through state ownership, the Jewish National Fund and the Israeli Lands Authority.(35) The Bantustans that defined South African apartheid have different names in the Israeli context, but in the West Bank the dizzying matrix of more than 600 checkpoints,(36) combined with the construction of a 730 km Wall annexing nearly 50% of the land inside the Green Line (deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice[37]), make the geography of Israeli apartheid undeniable.

With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, three-quarters of the Palestinian population, or over 750,000 people, were expelled.(38) These Palestinians and their descendants are forbidden from returning to their homes and lands, making them the second-largest refugee population in the world, at nearly 5 million globally.(39) By contrast, according to Israel’s 1950 Law of Return, any person of Jewish background from anywhere in the world is able to automatically gain Israeli citizenship.

For the 1.4 million Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship within Israel’s state borders, life is characterized by second-class citizenship. Forty-three Palestinian villages within Israel proper are “unrecognized,” meaning they receive no municipal services and do not appear on maps.(40) Israeli-Palestinians are discriminated against in the labour market by job prerequisites citing “military service” as a requirement (Palestinian citizens of Israel do not serve in the army, while most Jewish citizens are conscripted to military service by law). In South Africa, the apartheid government deliberately starved the black population of education, health care and social services while funding services for the white minority (for instance, in 1978 the average education expenditure for black pupils was US\$45, while it was US\$696 for white pupils).

Comparatively, the Israeli housing ministry’s budget in 2002 spent about \$30 per person in Palestinian communities inside Israel compared with up to \$3250 per person in Jewish ones.(41)

It is these conditions, combined with a body of 20 Israeli laws that discriminately privilege its Jewish citizens over its non-Jewish ones (the

majority of whom are Israeli-Palestinians),(42) that have led to an analysis of Israel as an apartheid state. International figures such as South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu,(43) former Prime Minister and architect of South African apartheid Hendrik Verwoerd,(44) Congress of South African Trade Unions President Willie Madisha,(45) former US President Jimmy Carter,(46) United Nations General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,(47) as well as numerous Israeli politicians and military officials, have all come to the same conclusion.

Supporters of the Israeli regime respond to this evaluation of Israel with a number of red-herring arguments. They claim that Israel is the "Middle East's only democracy;" that the country is a haven for queer people who are persecuted by neighbouring regimes, and that Israel's commitment to environmental issues is laudable. Finally, in a desperate attempt to silence criticism, regime apologists argue that, while South Africa's apartheid policies were clearly motivated by racism, Israel's policies, while similar in result, are driven by a need for "security." In response, one wonders how dispossession and second-class citizenship accord safety and freedom to queer Palestinians, and I think it safe to presume that any environmentalist assessment of Israel's military arsenal, potentially including depleted uranium and the aforementioned DIME and white phosphorus,(48) would be deeply critical at best (particularly given its virtually unquestioned status as a nuclear power).(49) Perhaps most importantly, as this paper has attempted to elucidate, the Jewish character of the state of Israel and any semblance of real "democracy" are clearly mutually exclusive and indeed antithetical. And as for the "racism or security" question (leaving

aside the racist and colonial underpinnings of Zionist ideology), I refer to the rather uncompliated idiom: if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it is a duck. If Israel's policies are, in practice and result, comparably or indeed more egregiously unjust, violent and morally repugnant than those of apartheid South Africa, what difference do its intended effects make to our ethical assessment of, and response to, such policies?

It becomes clear, when examined in this light, that Israel's invasion of Gaza was neither a justified "response" nor a tragic, exaggerated misstep; it was a profound display of exactly the kind of devastating militarism that is required to maintain the artificial segregation of two peoples from one another, for the purpose of dominating one. Having understood this connection, we, as members of international civil society, come to a crucial juncture: what do we do?

### **Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: A Burgeoning Movement**

On July 9, 2005, a united Palestinian Call for a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel was issued, signed by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations.(50) Importantly, these organizations represent Palestinian refugees in the diaspora, those living under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and those subjugated Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship in 1948 Palestine or the state of Israel.

They called upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel, similar to those applied

to South Africa in the apartheid era. The goal of such activity is, above all, to end international support for Israeli apartheid and occupation, on which the Israeli regime relies heavily. Actions can range from economic non-cooperation and consumer boycott to the realms of culture, sport, and the academy, in conjunction with moves towards divestment and governmental sanctions. Quoting from the 2005 call for boycott,

These non-violent punitive measures should be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.(51)

by various sectors of international civil society are inspiring evidence of the rising momentum against apartheid and for a just peace in historic Palestine. The BDS movement and global opposition to Israeli apartheid will continue to grow until Israel conforms to international law and basic notions of survival, justice, and dignity for the Palestinian people.

## Endnotes

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*Warszawski are greatly appreciated.*

*Photo Credit: Darren Eli*

## NOTE SUR L' (AUTO) IDENTIFICATION ET LE GENDER PASSING

Fabien Rose

- *I have been woman and I have been man, and I know more things than you single sex people can even imagine*

- *Dude, I thought you were a real guy?*

- *We walk among you.*

[...]

- *That poor thing couldn't pass on a dark night at 200 yards. [...]*

- *You better check your T-dar, honey. She's a G.G.*

- *A what?*

- *A genuine girl*

*Transamerica, Duncan Tucker, États-Unis, Alliance Atlantis, 2006.*

La présente intervention pourra paraître à certains être le rappel d'évidences : celle de l'incidence qu'a, sur nos vies, l'identification normative lorsqu'il est question de genre, et celle de la nécessité de trouver des moyens d'en amortir ou même d'en détourner certains effets. Elle s'inscrit dans un contexte particulier influencé par la production académique anglo-états-unienne sur le concept de gender, contexte qui explique la forme de cette note, ainsi que la plupart de ses références explicites et implicites. La réflexion qui la sous-tend est cependant aussi personnelle, et elle se veut un appel idéaliste (et qui s'assume comme tel) en faveur de la nécessité de développer de nou-

velles façons de « voir ». Ces nouvelles façons de « voir » permettraient que l'on puisse, dans un avenir que j'espère le plus rapproché possible, venir à bout non pas du genre (personnellement, je tiens assez au mien), mais de la contrainte voulant que les termes « homme » et femme » ne réfèrent chacun qu'à des assemblages uniques d'éléments dont l'unité est prise pour acquis, et qu'hors de ces catégories, il n'y ait point de salut. Fruit d'un amalgame de réflexions théoriques, d'intuitions, d'opinions et d'expériences, le présent texte est assurément d'un drôle de genre.

### (Auto)identification

Ma réflexion sur le genre s'alimente à une production académique faite de gender, de queer, de sexuality et de trans studies. Tous ces champs d'études sont marqués, pour le moment du moins et que ça plaise ou non, par un désir de complexifier ce que j'appellerai pour la suite des choses les catégories « hommes » et « femmes » sous leur forme non problématisée. Actuellement, dans l'académie, ce travail de complexification est le plus souvent symbolisé par l'invitation lancée par Judith Butler à « défaire le genre ». « Défaire le genre », c'est non seulement dissocier le genre – ce que l'on entend lorsque l'on parle de « masculinité » et de « féminité » – et ce qui est généralement reçu comme son référent – le sexe dit « biologique » – et montrer comment ils s'interconstituent, mais aussi et surtout mettre à jour le fait qu'ils sont, tout comme les deux uniques catégories qu'ils sous-tendent, des effets normatifs . Ce travail critique semble avoir favorisé l'expression et l'intelligibilité de genres et d'(auto)identités de genre multiples, en contexte universitaire et militant du moins. Certaines de ces (auto)identités ne se pensent

pas nécessairement en termes politiques, bien qu'elles contribuent, jusqu'à un certain point, à faire bouger les choses en demandant à ce que les catégories « hommes » et « femmes » soient en quelque sorte réaménagées. Ces réaménagements visent non pas à anéantir lesdites catégories, mais plutôt à permettre que certains individus qui en ont été exclus à la naissance mais qui s'y (auto)identifient puissent s'y tailler une place. D'autres (auto)identités de genre se veulent alternatives, pour ne pas dire carrément subversives. Stratégiques, elles se posent comme des modalités de lutte contre la binarité en matière de genre.

Ces nouveaux genres, nouvelles (auto)identités de genre et nouvelles façons d'être « homme » et/ou « femme » ont permis d'exposer toute une gamme de possibilités (auto)identitaires qui participent jusqu'à un certain point à la remise en question des pratiques d'assignation et d'identification normative en matière de genre. Je fais partie de ceux qui croient cette diversité et l'essentiel de ses effets nécessaires. Toutefois, je pense aussi que le travail critique pouvant être fait par l'(auto)identification seule est limité. Au-delà de ce qui survient au strict plan subjectif lorsque l'on parle d'(auto)identification, s'(auto)identifier, c'est aussi identifier. S'(auto)identifier à d'autres que l'on considère mêmes, identiques, c'est aussi, dans un même geste, assigner à ceux-ci notre (auto)identification. Par conséquent, l'(auto)identification va de pair avec la définition de frontières (auto)identitaires et, par extension, avec la mise en branle de processus d'inclusion et d'exclusion qui se font parfois de gré mais aussi de force. Qui fait partie de quel groupe, et à partir de quand? Quelles sont les conditions d'admissibilité au sein d'une catégorie donnée? Si un individu qui remplit ces condi-

tions d'admissibilité ne veut pas faire partie de cette catégorie à laquelle il ne s'(auto)identifie pas, ou encore que ceux qui en font partie ne veulent pas qu'il en fasse partie même s'il s'y (auto)identifie, qu'est-ce qui arrive? On l'y inclut malgré lui ou, au contraire, on lui en refuse l'accès? L'(auto)identification est clairement loin d'être dépourvue d'enjeux et, aussi diversifiées soient les (auto)identités, elles ont elles aussi des effets normatifs. Mais pour moi, une des plus importantes limites relatives à l'(auto)identification en matière de genre tient au fait que l'essentiel des (auto)identités de genre sont inintelligibles dans la plupart des interactions sociales banales et quotidiennes. Cette limite permet difficilement de faire l'économie d'une réflexion sur les pratiques d'identification et sur les normes qui les régissent de facto dans la plupart de nos interactions sociales et qui sont indissociables tant de la stabilité des catégories « homme » et « femme » sous leur forme non problématisée, que des enjeux et limites relatifs à l'(auto)identification.

Tout dépend bien entendu du milieu dans lequel chacun évolue, mais dans la plupart de nos interactions sociales quotidiennes banales, celles que l'on a au marché du coin, dans les boutiques, sur la rue, et même dans la plupart de celles que l'on peut avoir avec des collègues ou même avec certains proches, l'identification normative prend le plus souvent le pas sur l'(auto)identification. L'identification normative est et continue d'être efficace. Et cette identification est, la majeure partie du temps, l'effet de facteurs n'ayant qu'un rapport incident avec l'(auto)identification. Lorsque l'on croise des passants, l'(auto)identification n'est pas nécessairement la première chose rendue sensible, ou du moins, tout dépend du degré de sensibilité de ceux dont on fait la rencontre. Dans

beaucoup de contextes, l'identification précède l'(auto)identification. En témoigne notamment la nécessité du coming out toujours renouvelé devant laquelle se retrouve tout individu qui veut que l'on connaisse son (auto)identification hors normes mais dont le genre, en apparence du moins, correspond aux attentes sociales et binaires en matière de genre. L'impératif au coming out vient du fait qu'une assignation a déjà eu une certaine efficacité. En témoignent aussi les difficultés que rencontrent les individus dont l'apparence ne correspond pas, pour les autres, à leur (auto)identité, de voir reconnaître leur (auto)identité par ces autres. Nombre de sites et forum trans sur Internet abondent en passing tips qui sont autant de tentatives d'influencer la réception de genre que les autres réserveront à l'individu qui décidera de les mettre en application. Ces exemples montrent que l'identification au quotidien garde et conserve toute son efficacité et que, dans beaucoup d'interactions sociales, elle peut prendre le pas sur l'(auto)identification.

## Gender Passing

Partagé entre, d'une part, la conviction de l'utilité et de la nécessité d'(auto)identités complexes et multiples pour ceux qui souhaitent s'y identifier et, d'autre part, le constat de l'ineffectivité de toute catégorie de genre plus complexe que « homme » et « femme » dans la plupart de mes interactions sociales, j'en suis finalement venu à envisager comme potentiellement valable le concept de passing. Évidemment, j'ajoute non seulement un concept en anglais de plus à une liste déjà longue lorsque vient le moment de parler de genre ou plutôt de gender, mais aussi un concept dont il faut presque toujours expliquer le sens qui ne semble pas aller de soi. Dans son ac-

ception la plus commune, passing désigne le fait, pour une personne, de « passer pour ». Il est généralement sous-entendu que quelqu'un qui passe passe pour ce qu'on considère qu'il n'est pas. Lorsqu'il est question de genre, il est généralement synonyme d'« hommes » qui passent pour des « femmes » et de « femmes » qui passent pour des « hommes ». Lorsque l'on fait ainsi sens du gender passing, c'est que l'on considère que de ces deux termes, c'est le premier – le « sexe » – plutôt que le second – le « genre » – qui est vrai. Si l'on parle en ces termes du passing, c'est que l'on considère qu'un « homme » qui passe pour une « femme » est un homme et qu'une « femme » qui passe pour un « homme » est une femme. Dans la foulée, on n'utilise généralement pas le mot passing pour parler d'« hommes » « hommes » ou de « femmes » « femmes » même s'il est pourtant admis, en gender studies du moins, que le genre est un faire, et pas uniquement pour ceux qui désalignent sexe et genre. Comme le verbe « passer » se conjugue toujours à une forme active, qu'il suppose toujours un individu qui fait l'action de passer, et qu'il ne sert qu'à désigner ceux qui passent pour être d'un genre autre que celui qui leur a été assigné à la naissance, seuls ces individus sont perçus comme devant faire un effort pour passer, pour avoir l'air. De là s'ensuivent rapidement des accusations de faux et de tromperie.

L'acception commune de ce concept est évidemment problématique, j'en conviens. Sans compter que le concept de passing a une histoire qui lui donne plus ou moins de crédit politique. On l'a surtout utilisé dans une perspective historique et on en a fait une pratique stratégique à laquelle des individus n'ont pu et ne peuvent encore aujourd'hui recourir que par nécessité de se conformer. Assimilé

à une forme d'oppression et de violence symbolique (« passing is oppressive »), le concept de passing semble par conséquent de peu d'utilité politique aujourd'hui, inconciliable qu'il est avec l'injonction à « être out et fier » (« being out and proud ») lorsqu'il est question d'(auto)identités.

Mais je crois que le problème avec le concept de passing réside peut-être précisément dans ce qu'on en a dit et ce qu'on en a fait, puisque le mot passing peut aussi référer à toutes ces situations où l'on est perçu par les autres. L'on passe alors pour un « homme », pour une « femme », pour quelqu'un de genre indéterminé (on se fait alors généralement poser beaucoup de questions), ou l'on peut aussi passer pour quelqu'un qui veut ou essaie de passer (à noter que pour le dernier exemple, l'on parle généralement, à tort à mon avis, d'individus qui ne passent pas. C'est que l'acception commune du concept détermine qui passe et qui ne passe pas en référence à des idéaux normatifs). Le passing survient quel que soit chez un individu l'assemblage sexe/genre/(auto)identification, mais il diffère dans ses conséquences selon que l'on passe ou non pour être du genre considéré comme devant naturellement être l'effet du sexe qui nous a été assigné à la naissance. Le mot passing peut donc aussi référer à ce moment effectif, ponctuel mais aussi et surtout dynamique où il y a passing. Et ce moment, s'il implique un individu qui passe, implique aussi forcément quelqu'un qui le fait passer. Pour passer, un individu doit certes faire quelque chose, disons ici présenter un certain genre, ce qui peut se faire avec plus ou moins d'intentionnalité. Toutefois, si l'individu en question passe, c'est qu'il se voit accorder une signification par d'autres. Pour passer, un individu doit passer auprès de quelqu'un

ou pour le dire autrement, quelqu'un doit le faire passer pour qu'il passe. Ces moments où, simultanément, l'on passe et l'on nous fait passer peuvent venir court-circuiter le travail critique que l'on aimerait voir être fait par les (auto)identités. Dans ce type de situation banale, l'assignation de genre se fait la plupart du temps de manière pas trop compliquée et sans trop de considérations visant à déterminer comment notre interlocuteur s'(auto)identifie. Évidemment, il peut exister un lien entre passing et (auto)identification. Mais si la relation entre passing et (auto)identification n'est pas exclue, l'(auto)identification n'est en rien une condition du passing. L'on peut postuler qu'un individu puisse s'(auto)identifier d'une façon donnée sans chercher à passer pour tel. Faire l'exercice de présenter un genre auquel on ne s'(auto)identifie pas est aussi une possibilité et, à l'inverse, l'on peut très bien faire tous les efforts du monde pour passer dans un sens ou dans un autre, en vain. En matière de genre, vouloir passer n'équivaut pas à pouvoir passer, et l'inverse est aussi vrai. Et pour un certain nombre d'individus, c'est précisément là où prend corps la tension entre l'(auto)identification et l'identification (par les autres), la seconde ayant des effets quotidiens bien concrets dont il faut, me semble-t-il, tenir compte.

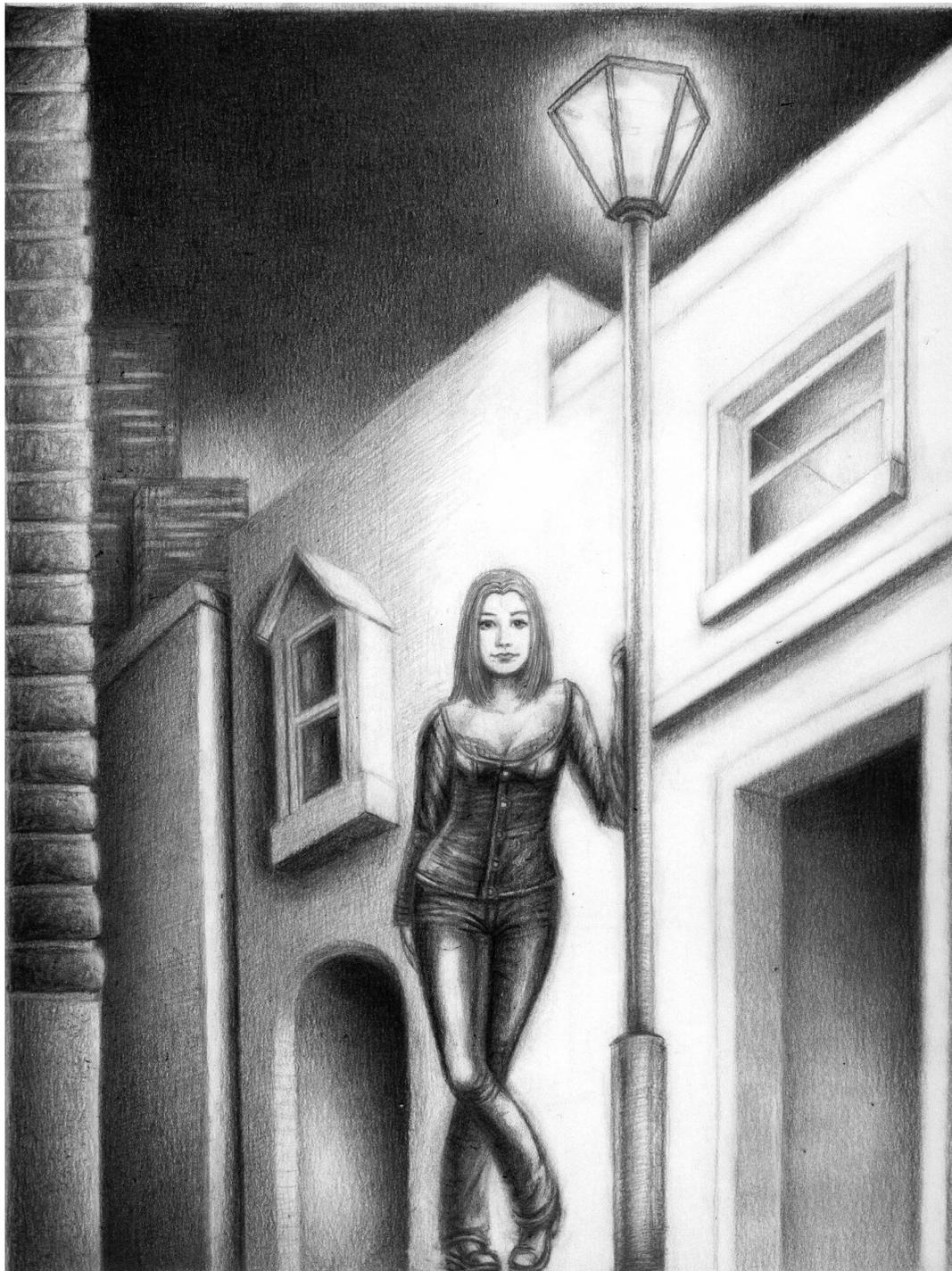
J'insiste beaucoup ici sur les effets qui sont ceux de la réception que nous réservent les autres, mais loin de moi l'idée de dire que seule importe la manière dont ces autres nous perçoivent. Mon point vise plutôt à rappeler une évidence trop souvent oubliée lorsque l'on parle d'(auto)identités, soit le fait que dans la plupart de nos interactions quotidiennes, l'on ne sait pas, l'on dispose de peu ou d'aucun moyens de savoir, et l'on ne cherche généralement pas à savoir comment les individus que l'on rencon-

tre s'(auto)identifient. La plupart du temps, l'on assigne et l'on se fait assigner un genre, un point c'est tout, bien qu'il puisse exister des différences dans les manières de le faire (personnellement, j'évite autant que possible les marques de genre et les titres de civilité lorsque je m'adresse à quelqu'un même si la chose, en français, s'avère le plus souvent relever du tour de force. Un travail d'assignation n'en opère toutefois pas moins dans ma tête). Ce rapport dynamique de passing au quotidien constitue à mon avis un noeud duquel toute réflexion sur l'(auto)identification, mais aussi toute action visant l'empowerment par l'(auto)identification de genre, devrait tenir compte. Dans un article récent, Tallia Mae Betcher insiste d'ailleurs sur le fait que la prise pour acquis dans notre société d'une relation de communication entre le genre de présentation et le corps sexué contribue à rendre inintelligibles certaines (auto)identifications et que, par conséquent, l'affirmation (auto)identitaire peut difficilement faire l'économie d'une réflexion plus large sur les pratiques de signification et d'identification.

Est-ce que le fait de penser nos interactions sociales en terme de passing peut être d'une quelconque utilité politique dans ce contexte? Je crois que la possibilité mérite d'être envisagée. Penser nos interactions sociales en terme de passing, c'est faire de l'exercice consistant à complexifier les possibilités d'(auto)identification se situant derrière chaque genre ou apparence que l'on identifie un réflexe. C'est continuer à fonctionner en société au quotidien, à faire face aux exigences de genre qui sont celles du monde dans lequel on vit, mais aussi, simultanément, favoriser la lente érosion de ce sur quoi reposent ces exigences. C'est aussi, évidemment, accepter de faire du doute

quelque chose de productif en admettant qu'il puisse exister d'autres possibles, pour les autres mais aussi pour soi. Le fait de penser nos interactions sociales en terme de passing mérite à mon avis d'être exploré comme potentielle condition d'effectivité des (auto)identités.

*Fabien Rose est actuellement candidat au doctorat conjoint en communication à l'Université Concordia (Montréal, Québec). Ses recherches sont financées par le Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC). Détenteur de diplômes de 1er et de 2e cycles en histoire, il est coauteur de manuels d'histoire et d'éducation à la citoyenneté pour les élèves du 3e et 4e secondaire (collection Fresques, Éditions de la Chenelière, 2007 et 2008).*



## **I AM THE RAIN**

*GB Jones*

*GB Jones is an artist residing in Toronto, ON. When she isn't drawing, she is making music <http://www.myspace.com/mariaenascenti> or movies. Her work has shown in galleries around the world and has most recently appeared in print in the sequential art anthologies "Juicy Mother" and "The Book of Boy Trouble Vol 2". Her new movie is called "The Lollipop Generation".*

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lollipop\\_Generation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lollipop_Generation)*

Website:

*<http://www.youtube.com/GBJonesTown>*

**ROAD TRIPPING:  
ADVENTURES WITH LISE BEAUDRY**  
*Lise Beaudry | Dayna McLeod*

Lise Beaudry is one of my favorite photographers. She manages to capture stillness, melancholy, nostalgia, longing, and a sense of both the unknown and the familiar with her camera that is simply astounding. Her practice borders on the obsessive and relies on a thoughtful gestation period as she captures hundreds and hundreds of images for each project, saves them, thinks about them, and works with them sometimes years later. I sat down with Lise in her studio in Toronto to talk about her work, her process, and her many adventures as a photographer.

**Tell me about the travel images.**

They're from a series called, "Road Tripping". I don't know how old they are- it was at least 5 years ago that I went on a road trip with Aileen, my partner, and we had a lot of projects going on in the car as we were driving across the country. The main one was to photograph drive-in theatres, a series that I've shown. What I had done before leaving is all of this research online and found all of these drive-in theatres in Canada and the US, and some of them were still alive, still working, and some of them were dead. So I mapped them all out, and as we were driving, we were sussing out how much



of a detour we would do to go and photograph them, and because there was always a bit of a chance, "is it still there, or not?", we'd have to find it in or around the town. After a while, I could almost feel where they would be. They're usually outside of the town somewhere, so if it's a small town especially in the prairies- the prairies were pretty easy because you arrive in the town and drive around town- you can see the screen popping out of the landscape.

### **That must have been very exciting, using your sixth sense...**

It was very exciting. A lot of my work is like that- I go search out things and I find them and I start feeling like I can almost predict where I can find them, and there's that feeling inside that is sort of exhilarating when you find it. But you know, sometimes you don't find it, and when we couldn't find the drive-in, we'd find the town centre and try to find the info-centre and go ask

these, usually older ladies, and see if the drive-in was still around. One thing I regret is not recording those stories because those interactions were really great. Sometimes it's almost more about the process of finding than the actual discovery. It's so much part of what I do, that research before, and often there's some

sort of travel or search component that brings me to finding what I'm going to be photographing.

**How do you take a picture? How do you approach your work?**



For each project, I give myself a set of rules or have a set of considerations. When I was doing the drive-in photographs, I was very interested in the juxtaposition of the flat screen within the landscape, and often in my photographs, there are no people. It's more about the place and the objects that are used by people that

often bring people together. I call the series, "Scenes in the Sky", and I like the blank screen and seeing it at a time that you don't necessarily see it. You don't necessarily notice them. The way that I photograph them is almost like they're bigger than they actually are, they're kind of like gigantic screens. I think of the blank





screen and the possibility of what can exist on it. I enlarge them quite big so you can see the actual texture of the screen. Often when I go on these “benders” of taking photographs of specific things, I go more than once. This series was part of going on this road trip- so a lot of it was developing as I was photographing. When I come back and get it all processed (because I don’t shoot digitally, I shoot on film), I’ll often go back and photograph again, see

what’s working for me. Usually when I first approach something, I always have some consideration in mind, but I try not to figure it all out.

### **To trust your intuition?**

Yes. It’s always this balance of making sure that I have something that works, that there’s a reason why I’m photographing it in a particular way but leaving place for surprises, errors or

other things to happen and to just really be intuitive with the landscape, with the camera and kind of move around. I arrive and I walk around for a while before I figure out where I'm going to position the camera. I just look for a while and decide. I take tons of photos.

### **You've talked to me previously about being obsessive with your work. Do you consider yourself a collector?**

Yes, definitely. I love to collect photographs, look at them, reuse them, reassemble them in different series. I create this collection of images around specific things. The drive-in theatre project is just one. There were several projects on the road trip to the point where driving was more relaxing than being in the passenger seat because whoever was in the passenger seat had to record all of these things. The drive-in was different because we would actually stop. It was more of a formal project.

### **What were some of the other road trip projects?**

I had this whole series that I'm calling, "Road Tripping" and basically, they're a lot of signage. In Canada, I was mostly interested in photographing signs of small towns and weird kinds of signage that you see on the side of the highway. And so if you were not driving, you would be shooting these, and those I was shooting with a Lomo camera, a really low-tech camera where you just estimate the distance between the camera and the subject to figure out where the focus is going to fall. So when you're driving, you really have to guesstimate the distance and then take the photograph. So tons of them are really blurry, but then there's some that look really great and captures that sense of be-

ing in movement while you're photographing. The other was a video project that Aileen and I did together. We stopped at a lot of Canadian "main attractions". We stopped in Wawa with the big goose, and we took turns filming each other, reading from the guidebook about the actual site. And it was really funny. We had some that were specific to a location, some were by a lake and talking about the Canadian landscape. We had a lot of fun. We never did anything with it. I do a lot of projects, and sometimes nothing comes of them, but they exist and maybe later something will happen with them. We were also doing, "Car Art", we were making things out of dental floss and objects that we would find. They were more like "inside the car" decorations.

### **Can you talk about the ice fishing project?**

Another project is that I've been photographing ice fishing huts. In a lot of my projects, I have an interest in things that are connected to the north. I'm from a really small town and these kinds of small town activities and things that are connected to growing up in a small community interest me, especially a francophone community.

These activities, places or objects that people tend to do as a group, they're very social and tend to bring people together, but I just photograph them as these stand-in portrait/objects, so I don't really photograph the community or the people involved with it but I tend to photograph the objects.

The ice huts are almost sculptural, they're pretty interesting how people construct them.

## What is an ice hut?

People build ice huts to go ice fishing. So if you go ice fishing, you can have a place to hang out in. And there's a fire inside. You have a wood stove inside so that you can actually warm up in there and you can cook. So in my family, when we get together at Christmas time and we all go ice fishing, we do a bit of a family reunion on the lake and my aunt has tourtière and we have wine and we hang out. We're mostly outside but you go inside to eat or to warm up a little bit. And people usually make them out of recycled material, whatever wood they have so they're really unique. I think it would be really hard to find two ice huts the same unless you go to an ice hut rental place where they have 20 of the same huts, which is a bit crazy. So last year I had a show in Sudbury and I discovered this ice hut community, Azienda and what was really great about it is that a lot of the ice huts were made out of camping trailers. I'm going back this winter to photograph.

## You seem to have a real old-school practice. Can you talk about why you use film?

I like the process but I also really love film. I love the grain. Grain is sort of like a puzzle that fits together and digital images are dots that don't really fit together, they sit one next to each other. So especially when you enlarge images, you really see grain and it's beautiful. I really like the physicality of the actual film. I also like the permanency of negatives. I always feel with digital files that they can just disappear. With negatives, they could disappear, but there would have to be a really big catastrophe. I like to collect, I like to have things, and I like to have my negatives, the object. I also like the idea

of taking photographs and the process of taking photographs without seeing the immediate results. Because you really have to think about things and you don't have a second chance, necessarily. The process is really different and I'm really into that photographic process where you take time- the actual photographing is really exciting. With digital, you see it right away and often, when I get my film processed, I often don't like them. Sometimes I'll go get a roll of film and I say, "Wow. They're all... crap." And if it was digital, what if I just erased them all? I mean, I wouldn't, but there's that possibility. With film, they're always going to be there. And especially with the way that I work, going back, they exist and I can go and get them. I print digitally- I scan them and have them as digital files as well, but I do like both the process and the physicality of the object of the film.

## What are you working on right now?

When I started pulling out the "Road Tripping" images, there were all of these gun photographs. I started making correlations between being a photographer and being a hunter. One particular image that did that for me is, "Aim for the Best". You've got the gun and you've got the frame where you look through the gun and shoot. There are some parallels with photography- just the language of hunting and shooting. I always set these adventures for myself and go on these excursions to find things, I go on this process where I have this high level of alertness and focus; I'm going to gather something. I'm familiar with that process because I used to go hunting when I was a kid and I think that there's something, some sort of excitement when you see and when you find what you're looking for and then you actually capture it. I think that there's something kind of interest-



ing about that process, and I'm interested in that idea of hunting and the guidelines of hunting, the tools of hunting- keeping your tools in good shape, caring, selecting your tools according to what you're going to go and capture.

**So are you excited about the "Road Tripping" project again? Excited about going through that process of culling your collection and revisiting these images and working with them in relation**

**to this idea of the hunter? Is this your main drive?**

It's part of it. I'm definitely attracted to the images themselves. I've been thinking about possibly working with text, finding text that speaks both of photography and hunting, maybe really small underneath the image, having a row of text that's ambiguous that talks about hunting but if you really think about it, it's relative to the image.

## Text from a manual?

Possibly from a manual. I did a bit of research online in trying to find some hunting guidelines.

## Like how to skin a deer?

Possibly. But more about shooting- the idea of going out and trying to find something and capturing it, being skilled, learning your trade, and making sure that when you shoot that you get it right. That process. The whole hunting theme is to acknowledge it in my process, and to acknowledge it as something positive. I think that for me, hunting is not a bad thing at all, because it is something that my family did and it wasn't wasteful. We ate moose all year. And I have fond memories of that process.

I think that a lot of my work is trying to recapture these moments of adventure that I had so much of growing up. One thing that I did with my dad, is he would take me hunting or fishing or something and he would tell me, "I have a hunch that there's a lake somewhere, but you know, I'm not sure. But before we go, we should really stop at the corner store and buy a chocolate bar just in case we get lost so we have energy." So we'd buy a Wonder Bar, and we were not allowed to eat the Wonder Bar until we got back to the truck and we knew that we were safe.

Then he would park the truck and we would walk up these trails. Of course he knew there was a lake there, but we'd get to the lake and he'd say, "What kind of fish do you think there is?" There were often these kinds of adventures that he would make up and I love that idea of going on a road trip or just discovering new things. I think it's very much part of my pro-

cess to set up these things where I might discover something. I think to create that sensation of true adventure, especially when you're a kid, well, we don't have that a whole lot, this heightened sense of excitement for these really simple things.

*Lise Beaudry is a Franco-Ontarian artist originally from Earlton, a rural farming community near the Ontario/Quebec border. Now residing in Toronto, she is the Director of Gallery 44 – Centre for contemporary photography. Her photographic and video work has been shown across Canada, in the U.S, Romania and Arles, France during Les Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie. As an image-making artist, Lise operates as a romantic researcher and serial photographer.*

*Dayna McLeod is a writer, video and performance artist. She has traveled extensively with her performance work, and her videos have played from London Ontario to London England- across Europe, North America, South America, Asia and a few times on TV. She co-hosts Dykes on Mykes in Montreal, and conceived and coordinates <http://52pickupvideos.com>; a video site whose participants make one video a week for an entire year.*

## **FRANCHIR LE MUR DU SON : UNE ENTREVUE AVEC NANCY TOBIN**

*Nancy Tobin | Mél Hogan*

**Enfant, tu étais attirée par les radios et autres appareils sonores domestiques. Peux-tu me parler de ça ? Est-ce que tu as toujours senti un lien privilégié avec les ondes sonores ?**

Non, je n'ai jamais vraiment senti une connexion particulière ou privilégiée, du moins pas consciemment. Mais depuis quelque temps, je comprends de plus en plus que parfois, la connaissance va bien au-delà de la conscience. On saisit beaucoup par l'entremise du corps aussi, et c'est dans ce registre que, pour moi, les vraies sonorités se passent, que la véritable musique se crée...

**Tu travailles à la fois pour la scène, comme conceptrice pour le théâtre et la danse contemporaine, et dans le milieu de l'art sonore : tu as produit des disques et tu fais aussi des performances. Est-ce difficile de combiner ces activités ? Comment ton travail diffère-t-il entre ces deux pratiques artistiques ?**

En théâtre, on fait appel à moi quand on n'a pas besoin de musique. On me dit : « J'ai pensé à toi parce que ce spectacle ne nécessite que des sons, des bruits. Mais il ne s'agit pas d'illustrer avec les sons, je veux que tu composes des am-

biances, des ambiances qui vont évoquer des émotions, qui vont stimuler des états. »

Dans le milieu de l'art sonore, je suis la « conceptrice sonore de théâtre ». Je suis une artiste un peu étrange qui, de temps à autre vient faire une « apparition » dans un concert de musique expérimentale.

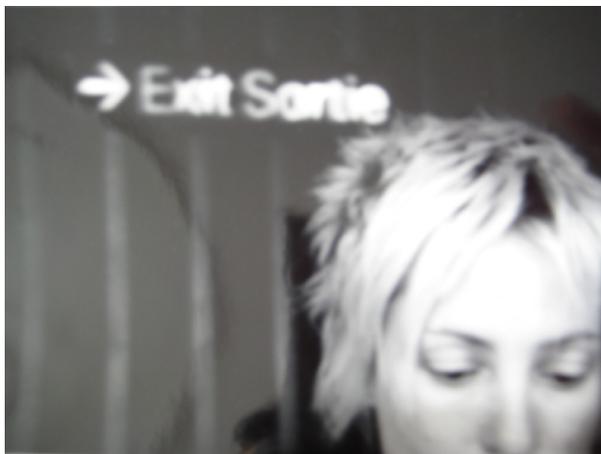
Cette situation où il semble que je sois toujours considérée comme la bête étrange, celle qui dépasse, qui vient d'ailleurs, me convient. Elle me donne en fait, je pense, une liberté... J'adore dépasser les frontières, toujours dans un état de mouvance, nomade.

Ma pratique issue de la scène m'oblige à maîtriser la technologie de la diffusion du son et ma pratique en art sonore stimule une recherche constante axée sur la découverte de nouvelles manières de composer, de générer des sons.

Cet état nomade, cet état d'identité floue, où il n'est pas clair d'où je viens, je pense qu'en fait, je m'y retrouve comme naturellement. Sur le plan de la langue, une situation analogue persiste depuis toujours. Ma mère francophone, Québécoise du Bas du Fleuve, mon père juif anglophone de la rue St-Dominique à Montréal... J'ai appris les deux langues en même temps ; même enfant, je mélangeais les deux. Aujourd'hui encore, pour les anglos, je suis franco, et pour les francos, je suis un peu anglo. Je dépasse toujours un peu, peu importe dans quelle culture je me retrouve.

**Tu as déjà mentionné que tu souhaitais ouvrir l'art du son à un public plus large. Quels sont les projets que tu as entrepris qui contribuent à démystifier l'art sonore ?**

En 1960, John Cage a été invité à une émission de télé populaire pour interpréter « Water Walk ». De toute évidence, les spectateurs n'ont pas pris très au sérieux sa prestation. (Les réactions de John Cage sont d'ailleurs très inspirantes.)



sont réunies différentes possibilités pour générer et traiter des sons : quelques pédales de guitare et des générateurs de fréquences, par exemple. En répétition, j'apprends à connaître les possibilités de ce terrain de jeu (quels sont les sons ? les rythmes ? les multiples combinaisons ? les textures ?). Je ne répète pas trop... il ne s'agit pas de développer une aisance, une maîtrise ou une virtuosité, mais plutôt de découvrir le potentiel expressif des instruments. En performance, seule ou avec d'autres, je n'ai aucune idée de ce qui va se produire. Juste avant, je sais que le plus important, c'est d'être disponible au moment, et entièrement libre pour mieux entendre et agir.

Je pense qu'aujourd'hui, nous pourrions revivre exactement la même situation si John Cage était invité à « Tout le monde en parle » par exemple, émission de notre chaîne publique nationale. L'art sonore et la musique expérimentale sont encore obscurs pour le grand public. C'est encore élitiste, réservé à des connaisseurs. Mais peu importent les raisons qui expliquent cet état de fait. Je pense qu'il y a possibilité d'ouvrir, et ce, sans modifier les contenus. Je rêve d'organiser des concerts ou des manifestations en dehors des circuits habituels pour atteindre un public différent. Investir un bar local, dans un lieu excentré, à St-Henri par exemple. Y organiser des concerts...

L'extrême plaisir, c'est de vivre le danger, complice avec le public.

**Ton site Web est très minimaliste. Crois-tu qu'il est important d'avoir une présence sur Internet pour faire connaître ton travail ? Que penses-tu des sites tels que Last.FM et des applications comme iTunes, qui pourraient faire en sorte que ton travail soit largement distribué et puisse te rapporter des sous ?**

Récemment, j'ai beaucoup réfléchi à Internet, aux façons dont je dois l'utiliser. Au cours des dix dernières années, Internet a certainement modifié les possibilités de promotion et de diffusion pour les artistes. Les œuvres sont plus accessibles grâce à des sites comme Myspace,

50 **En tant qu'artiste du son, tu préfères te concentrer sur des formes de création qui ne nécessitent pas d'ordinateur. Quels sont les techniques et l'équipement que tu utilises ?**

Pour l'instant, avec l'ordinateur, je suis toujours déçue lorsque je l'utilise en performance. Je n'ai pas encore trouvé une façon de l'utiliser qui soit souple, flexible et surprenante. C'est d'ailleurs ça qui me stimule en performance, d'être happée par l'imprévisibilité de l'instant. J'adore créer un contexte, un terrain de jeu où

Last.FM et Facebook, par exemple. Lors d'une discussion que j'animais récemment au Groupe Intervention Vidéo (GIV) dans le cadre du 10e anniversaire de RestArea[1], je posais la question suivante : « Si je ne suis pas sur le Web, est-ce que j'existe ? » Ce questionnement est survenu à la suite d'une recherche que j'ai dû effectuer dans le cadre de ma préparation pour un cours que je donne actuellement à l'UQAM. Je cherchais sur le Web des présentations audiovisuelles sur des artistes du son. En effectuant cette recherche, je me suis aperçue que les artistes ne sont pas tous bien représentés. En outre, plusieurs artistes très intéressants ne sont pas présents du tout sur le Web. Dans le cadre de la préparation de ce cours, donc, je me suis retrouvée devant la difficile situation de ne pas présenter certains artistes, faute de documentation audiovisuelle. Cette situation a soulevé un tas de questionnements : en tant qu'artiste, doit-on obligatoirement se forger une présence sur le Web pour avoir accès à la reconnaissance ?

**En faisant une recherche te concernant (Google), je me suis aperçue que le site nancytobin.com ne t'appartient pas, et en plus, qu'il semble y avoir plusieurs « nancytobin » artistes, présentes sur le Web. Comment réagis-tu à cette situation ?**

C'est plutôt drôle, non ? C'est comme si, en fait, ma condition de personne sans identité claire se poursuivait même sur Internet, à outrance. Non seulement l'identité de ma culture et de ma pratique artistique est-elle difficile à cerner, mais sur Internet, on peut même se demander de quelle « nancytobin » il est question ! J'aime bien cet état d'indétermination... De toute façon, aussi bien s'y faire, car il est impossible de

contrôler notre image sur Internet.

Si tu avais la liberté de ne pas devoir travailler, si tu avais tout le temps et l'argent dont tu as besoin, que ferais-tu ?

RIEN.

Rien, simplement, et là je ferais tout, tout ce qui importe vraiment.

“The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature, in her manner of operation.” John Cage

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[1] Oeuvre Internet créée pour l'événement Laboratoire Périphérique au GIV, commissaire: Nicole Gingras.

## Endnotes

*John Cage Water Walk*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSulycqZH-U>

*\*\*Read the English version of the article on [thtreat.net](http://thtreat.net)*

*(°) nancy tobin | artiste du son | sound artist*

<http://www.mmebutterfly.com/>

*Photo par Bruno Marcil*

*Nancy Tobin est une artiste sonore et conceptrice pour les arts de la scène. Ces vingt dernières années, ses conceptions pour metteurs en scène et chorégraphes ont été présentées au Festival TransAmérique, Festival d'Avignon, Edinburgh International Festival et le Berliner Festwochen. Spécialisée dans l'amplification de la voix pour le théâtre, Nancy Tobin intègre des systèmes de haut-parleurs inusités afin de transformer, de moduler et de façonner les sons. Elle termine présentement DelayToys-Berceuses, une composition portant sur la mémoire, le ludisme, le silence et la contemplation.*

*Nancy Tobin is a sound artist and designer. During the last twenty years, her designs for dance and theatre productions have been part of the Festival de théâtre Transamériques, the World Stage Festival, the Festival d'Avignon, the Edinburgh International Festival and the Berliner Festwochen. Over the years, she has developed a specialization in vocal amplification for theatre and incorporates unusual audio speakers to transform the aural qualities of her compositions. Nancy Tobin is currently finishing DelayToys-Berceuses, a thematic composition, centred on memory, play, silence and contemplation.*

## **100 BUTCHES, NUMBER 37**

*Elisha Lim*

*Elisha came out so late. When she was 26 she dumped her fiancé and moved to Berlin, which started a sharp learning curve including lesbian squat houses, queer trailer parks, transgender pride parades and an Ethical Slut reading group. She has since played in Drag King circuits from Berlin to Jerusalem, illustrated for queer zines in London and Vienna and runs a tribute night in Toronto called Lesbian Blues from the Thirties. She draws a comic strip called 100 Butches about Butch-gazing, which has been featured in lesbian magazines in Australia, England, Austria and the U.S. You can check out more of her beautiful comics here: <http://www.qpoccomics.blogspot.com/>*

I ask Nay about being gay back home in Palestine.

"Being gay is easier now with the internet, it's an important way to meet others and to talk with other people. But being gay is underground," she says. "But you know, having sex before marriage is as disgraceful as being gay... Anyway how are you?"

She has always been good at deflecting personal conversations. But I've been wondering about her life lately. I ask her how it feels to see Gaza in the headlines right now. How is her family?

"They're doing well," she says. Then she pauses. "My brother works in an office and he has to watch his words. My family can't express themselves." Her family lives three hours away from Gaza in a Palestinian town in the North of Israel. "They want normal lives. They want to stay in their jobs and keep their homes. They feel helpless. Their future is unpredictable."

"What I don't understand," she continues, "is Canada." She sits up. "The Canadian media make it seem like a two-sided thing between two warring states. There is only one state. Palestine's elected leaders have been arrested and jailed. The CBC talks about Israel 'defending itself' when this isn't about defense, but about gaining power. I can't understand Canada. Do you know what happened on January 12th, when the UN Human Rights Council resolved to condemn Israel for human rights violations? Out of 47 countries, only one voted against it. Your country."

This news leaves me speechless. I forget my questions about gay life at home. I know that her underground queer community is exuberant. I have met her friends who are drag kings, activists, hip hop performers and public speakers, and who tour the world with anti-homophobia campaigns. But what's more important to her is broader anti-oppression work, and communities in solidarity. I don't know what to say.



## JUST ASK THE GENTLEMAN

*Gentleman Reg | Sasha*

Simply put, Gentleman Reg is a natural performer. Onstage he is affable and relaxed, teasing and bantering effortlessly, making his dulcet falsetto, choice weapon of the numinous queer intruder, that much more pleasurable and easy to yield to. In studio his work doesn't lose this knowing, romantic charm. His new album *Jet Black* is melodically sanguine but lyrically sly with traces of Marc Bolan and T-Rex, Junior Boys and David Bowie circa *Modern Love*. Reg himself calls the album a shower rather than a grower and says, "It was all about what would make the most impact upon first listen. It was always what was best for the song. If we had to rip a song apart and piece it back together in the studio then we did." Although he claims that, "Nothing was treated as precious", the results most certainly are.

Sasha talked to Reg in Toronto about his first album in five years, Liz Phair, betrayal, student politics and this issue's theme, trespassing.

**Trespassing is NMP's current topic. Do you ever feel like a trespasser in this world?**

I often feel out of place in many different social situations. I'm very introverted, so there are



many times that I get into situations and then realize too late that I shouldn't be there. The whole time I was at university I was constantly out of my element, whether in class or in board meetings or at International Socialist meetings. It was never me at those classes or meetings, it was who I thought should be there.

**Where would you have rather been, or been better suited to be, if not at board meetings (what kind of board by the way?) and IS meetings?**

Well that's the thing. I guess it was a time in my life of self-discovery. Like I didn't know I was gay until I was into my twenties, so in that sense maybe it's exactly where I was supposed to be. But in retrospect, it seems foolish and like another life. Board meetings were just campus groups, CFRU the radio station, the school paper, different hiring committees—all by consensus of course!

**Have you ever trespassed for real, and what were the results?**

I've jumped into outdoor swimming pools in the middle of the night in summer and never been caught and had the best time. I snuck backstage once to try and meet Amy Winehouse and realized immediately that lining up to meet someone is totally lame.

As a child my life revolved around trespassing. On construction sites, or abandoned houses or others property, that was where the adventure was to be found. A lot of my youthful activism involved trespassing. Taking over the president of the university's office for a week. I don't know what we ever gained from doing that. Fun memories I guess.

**What were the circumstances of the office take-over? What university? And where did you grow up?**

It was some sort of tuition freeze protest. It was at Guelph, that's where I did high school and university. Otherwise, I lived in several different cities in Ontario and also in Germany as a child. Military upbringing.

**Every interview is essentially an exercise in invasion. What do you hold private and what are you public about?**

I don't talk a lot about my family, not specifics. I try not to get into stories about past band members or business relationships gone wrong. Or gossip about famous friends. Some stuff is just not cool to disclose, and it's just not my personality to do it. Not in the press anyways. Privately is different. I likely won't ever talk about the first time I had sex. It's tricky though, because I can appreciate people for giving it all away. Sometimes I feel like a liar, or a less interesting version of myself when I keep the juicy bits to myself.

**Or it gives you more mystique. Why does it feel wrong to discuss your family?**

Only because I've hurt people in the past by talking about personal things in the press, so I try not to anymore, even though it's difficult, since obviously it's all a part of my story.

**Do you actually enjoy going out or are you happier at home?**

I do enjoy going out. It just has to be the right place/situation. I've just found in the last year

I've enjoyed my solitude more than drinking with strangers. And I'm also coming to terms with living single as a way of being all right. It doesn't have to be only a way to be until you find a partner.

**Who has been the most significant trespasser in your life? Who came in uninvited and really shook your shit up?**

A boy who lives far, far away and will remain nameless! I wouldn't say he was uninvited, but definitely unexpected. We took a fantasy much too far.

The imagination is so powerful—it made the reality an impossibility.

**Which outsiders have influenced your style?**

LadyFag from NYC. She literally used to style me for things like video shoots. She's not only a friend but a style icon for sure. When I was younger I was obsessed with female bands from Japan—Shonen Knife, they were at the top of my list.

Also Kahimi Karie, Takako Minekawa, Buffalo Daughter, Pizzicato Five and Cibo Matto, even though they were based out of NYC. I'm sure the influence got into me somewhere/somewhat.

**What mainstream trends have influenced your style?**

Well I'm a child of the '80s so it's impossible not to say Boy George, Cindi Lauper and Madonna. All those freaks who somehow broke through to the mainstream, and were somehow just accepted. It was all surface of course, but visually it made an impact.

**Did you choose falsetto as a range or did it choose you? Why do you use it? It is such a deliberate and unusual range and one that goes right for the heart. Funny, because false is the root word, immediately implying fake, phony. What is the purpose of this vocal range to you? How does it make you feel when you hear it, say from Antony Hegarty or Jimmy Somerville?**

Falsetto is definitely something that chose me. The problem with it is once you realize you can go there, it's hard not to do it all the time. With this new album, I changed a lot of the vocal parts to lower melodies, to get out of my falsetto. It's almost like if it's overused it lessens the value. I also don't have the power or breath support that I would like when I'm in falsetto, so it's not always appropriate.

As well it can become a gimmick or an easy way to grab an ear, so it needs to be used selectively. I actually wish the range in my actual voice was larger so that I could sing higher without resorting to falsetto. Some one like Rufus can sing incredibly high before he goes falsetto, that's something admirable to me. Antony and Jimmy are otherworldly. I wouldn't compare my falsetto to theirs for a second.

**I want to elaborate on this. Falsetto again, is a "false" range yet it accesses such profound and intimate emotions. I'm interested in your thoughts on this—how "falseness" and "artifice" can sometimes touch us so deeply.**

I don't know if I would agree that it always touches us. Falsetto can often be incredibly

cheesy if used on the wrong singer. A lot of R'n'B does that, and a lot of female singers use it as a sign of emotion, but it's not. Someone like Sarah McLachlan uses it at the ends of a lot of her phrasing, and it creates this wispy effect, but to me it sounds like a cheap effect. I saw her and Cindi Lauper sing a duet last summer, and it was just so obvious that Cindi was a true individual, a force of a singer and has a completely unique way of using the voice, but when Sarah would sing it just sounded amateurish and lazy. Using Antony as an example, it's true, he hits deep, but to me it's the way he uses his voice that does it, not the voice alone.

### **What do you enjoy about being a musician?**

It's one of the things in my life that I actually feel like I do well.

I feel like I've worked on it and it's progressed in a logical manner.

I have such intense memories involving my favorite singers. I hope to give some of those to other people.

There's traveling involved, so I've seen a lot of the world through my music. And I've collaborated with tons of other artists, filmmakers and video-makers. I love seeing my music set to visuals.

### **Did you grow up with music or any other art form? How did it come into your life?**

My parents are both singers. Music was always there in a von Trapp style way. Music lessons were always encouraged and supported, as

well as theatre. I started writing songs around 8 or 9. Oddly I can still remember some of them, even though they only exist in my head.

### **Who are some of your favourite artists and why?**

For painting Yoshitomo Nara. He paints amazing and mysterious kids. It's hard to say why painting speaks to me the way it does. A lot of my favorite songwriters are people I know: Kevin Drew, Elizabeth Powell, Emily Haines, Bry Webb. There's something amazing about knowing a person on a basic daily level, and then getting to see something they make come to fruition. I'm constantly surprised and challenged by the music that's right around me.

### **What is your favourite thing to do when you have time off?**

What's time off? I'm not good at taking holidays. When I do I'm visiting with friends. They're all over the world at this point, so catching up is rare, and when it happens it's amazing and intense.

Otherwise right now I'm in go, go, go mode. Creation, looking ahead, making things, hoping that in twenty years I'll love what I did with my time.

### **Talk about your experience writing and recording this last album.**

Since it was done completely independently it just took much longer than I would have liked for it to see the light. It didn't physically take long to write or record, but to find the right label and get released took a long time. I know now that it was all worth the wait and every-

thing happens in its right time, but sitting on art is never comfortable or fulfilling. I'm dying for some feedback and reactions, good or bad. The song selection we chose for the album had the live show in mind, so there are less ballads and mid-tempo stuff than in the past.

**Let's talk little bit about the song on Jet Black called "Oh My God." As a recovering Dutch Calvinist myself, it's hard not to see traces of that oppressive and unforgiving religion in it.**

Unfortunately religion was never a force in my life. It was around me, but only in a weekly Sunday church going experience, or saying grace before dinner. I let it go as soon as I was allowed. For years I had a desire to write a song called 'Oh My God'. The title came first. The lyrics fell below it and are a mixture of so many things I don't think it would do the song justice to fully explain them away. Within each line there are several things going on. I do get asked about that one a lot though.

**There is a song on Jet Black called "When Heroes Change Professions." What about when professions change heroes? How has being a musician professionally (something that can be exhilarating and disheartening in equal measures) changed any heroic aspirations you may have had, if at all?**

Truth be told this song was originally inspired by Liz Phair, and the overwhelming negative response she received towards her being, when she decided to try out life as a pop star. She was really vilified for it. But what struck me most about the negative press was how personal it

was. It was like her doing something else artistically was so offensive to people that rather than just put down the work, they completely put her through the wringer for betraying them, and ultimately all her past achievements, which in the end, shows how much of an effect the original songs had on people. But the song is saying, just don't wait around. If you looked up to something or someone and that thing leaves or changes, it's up to you to deal with that yourself. They have no responsibility to you.

*Sasha is a sex columnist whose work has appeared in Canadian weeklies for over 14 years. She is also the co-artistic director of the Scandalles, a multi-disciplinary performance group from Toronto. She has seen Gentleman Reg perform many times and once had the pleasure of putting on his Boyfriend Song when she was DJing a party and watching him turn pink as a baby as the crowd went wild.*

*Photo Credit: Matt Barnes*

## **FORGET VICTIMISATION: GRANTING AGENCY TO MIGRANTS**

*Laura Agustín*

*I published this five years ago but it feels as relevant as ever. In those years, the assumption among certain groups that migrating people are pathetic victims has solidified into a simple 'fact'. Another group sees all migrants as predatory scroungers, an equally exaggerated position.*

*Once at a seminar where I'd spoken, an academic got quite upset while trying to get me to admit that the poor of this world are victims objectively, by definition because of 'global structural inequalities'. I replied that I understood how she, coming from her subject position of white, middle-class woman identifying as socialist, produced poor people this way. 'What I'm saying is that, if you move over to the poor person's place and ask them how they see their situation, they may well not produce such an image of themselves. I thought the woman was going to go through the roof with outrage at my inability to see the facts!*

*Of course I believe that the world is a place of terrible differences between the poor and the rich, where men almost always have more power and money. It's not fair. But given the unfairness, I prefer to listen to how people describe their own realities rather than create static, generalised categories like Exploited Victims. I also don't agree that poor people only leave their countries because they are forced to, with no possibility for their desires and abilities to think and weigh risks. The same goes for people who get into prostitution or*

*sex work - I prefer to give the heaviest weight to what they say they are doing!*

*Here's the longer version!*

## **Forget Victimisation: Granting Agency to Migrants**

*[1] Development, 46.3, 30-36 (2003)  
Laura Agustín*

There is a growing tendency to victimise poor people, weak people, uneducated people and migrant people. The trend, which began as a way of drawing attention to specific forms of violence committed against women, has now become a way of describing everyone on the lower rungs of power. Routinely, supporters position them as victims in order to claim rights for them, but this move also turns them into victims, and victims need help, need saving—which gives a primary role to supporters. Much rhetoric about migration has fallen into this pattern: migrants, it turns out, are not only vulnerable to exploitation, a patent truth, but they are 'victims'.

The other choice, according to sensationalist media treatments, is criminal. Since news on migrants is reported only when disasters befall them, or when they are caught in something 'illegal', they can only be positioned in one of these two ways: as past victims of poverty or conflict in their home states and present victims of criminal bands, or as criminals who take advantage of such victims. The victims need to be saved, and the criminals to be punished. This reductionism encourages the idea that there is something inherently dangerous about being a migrant. Since migrants are usually seen as people from the third world, the posi-

tioning of so many of them as victims—of economic restructuring if not of criminal agents—harks back unsettlingly to the old category of the 'native'. And since migrants nowadays are so often women, these natives are constituted as backward, developmentally less than first-world women. This is most overt, of course, in 'trafficking' discourses (for example, in Barry, 1979) but can now be heard in general talk about 'illegal' migrants.

Ratna Kapur shows how this victimising tendency began in the early 1990s with the project to reveal the widespread, routine nature of violence against women:

In the context of law and human rights, it is invariably the abject victim subject who seeks rights, primarily because she is the one who has had the worst happen to her. The victim subject has allowed women to speak out about abuses that have remained hidden or invisible in human rights discourse (Kapur, 2001: 5).

This strategy has led to many benefits for women. The problem is that the person designated a victim tends to take on an identity as victim that reduces her to being seen as a passive receptacle and 'encourages some feminists in the international arena to propose strategies which are reminiscent of imperial interventions in the lives of the native subject' (Kapur, 2001: 6).

The category 'migrant', awkward and ambiguous to begin with, becomes more so when it is victimised. In this article, I want to look at what we think we mean when we call someone a migrant, and then suggest that there are both class and postcolonial analyses to be made of this constructed identity and the passivity assigned to it. To do this, I will call on my own

research with migrating people in various parts of the world. What I recount is widely known, but not often included in formal studies of migrations.

### **Conventional travellers**

On the surface, there seem to be patently different kinds of travellers: tourists, people whose work involves travel, refugees and migrants. Tourists are generally defined as people with time and money to spend on leisure activities who take a trip somewhere to do it: they are 'travelling for pleasure'. Tourism is defined by an absence (work), and tourists are believed to have left their jobs behind to indulge consciously in not working. In the literature, the tourist is someone from the North (the tourism of Southerners is invisible). Some people oppose a status of 'traveller' to that of tourist, saying their trips are unplanned, open-ended, longer and more appreciative of the 'real culture' of a place. 'Interacting with the culture' is the goal for many of these, and this interaction most likely comes about through getting a job. 'Working' does not exclude pleasure, then, for first-world subjects.

ists also go (theatres, cabarets, sex or gambling clubs, restaurants, bars, boat trips, sports events). The trips taken to attend conferences, do field work or provide consultations by academics, 'development' and technical consultants, missionaries and social-sector personnel also feature tourism. Sports professionals, singers, musicians, actors, salespeople, sailors, soldiers, airline and train personnel, commercial fishermen, farm-workers, long-distance truck drivers and a variety of others travel as part of their professions. Modern explorers search for oil, minerals, endangered species of animals and plants and 'lost' archaeological artefacts. Many of these people spend a long time away from home, and their work life is punctuated by leisure and tourist activities. Some of these people have homes or 'home bases' in more than one place.

Students who take years abroad or travel to do field work are combining tourism and work. The main goal of a voyage for religious pilgrims is not work, but they may work and engage in tourist activities on the way to and from the pilgrimage. And then there are nomads whose traditional way of gaining a livelihood includes mobility.

The dichotomy working traveller/work-free traveller is misleading, and many forms of travel have aspects of both. So what makes a 'migrant' different?

### **This other kind of traveller**

Some people distinguish between all the above types and 'migrants', on the grounds that the latter 'settle'. According to this distinction, migrants move from their home to make another one in someone else's country. They are not po-

People who travel in the course of carrying out their jobs are at first glance also clearly identifiable. Whether sent on trips by companies or undertaking them on their own, business travellers are obliged to be on the road. Their trips may be long or short, involve familiarity with the culture visited and the local language or not and require sociability or not, but they have in common that this is not supposed to be 'leisure time'. But is this true? Many businesspeople also engage in tourism during their trips, using their 'expense accounts' to entertain clients, much of this money going to sites where tour-

sitioned as travellers or tourists, since they are looking not only to spend money but earn it. The word migrant is nearly always used about the working class, not about middle-class professionals and not about people from the first-world, even if they also have left home and moved to another country. Instead, the word rings of a subaltern status.

Theories of migration have tended to concentrate on what causes people to move to new countries, focusing on structural conditions such as recomposition of capital or globalisation of markets, national policies and the rational decisions of 'household units'. Discourses of 'push-pull factors' at the point of origin and the point of reception centre on causes such as wage differentials between countries, loss of land or crop failure, recruitment by employers abroad, family reunification projects, favourable immigration policy, flight from violence, persecution and armed conflict and the 'feminisation of poverty'.

None of these conditions excludes the others, and migrations are obviously best thought of as having multiple causes, since no single condition guarantees that migration will take place.

That such factors exist is unarguable, but they envision human beings as being acted upon, leaving little room for more subtle issues of desire, aspiration, frustration, anxiety or a myriad of other states of the soul. 'Push-pull' factoring, which sounds like something that happens to less-than-'civilised' people, is not usually mentioned when Euramericans are the migrants; these are more likely to be described as modern selves searching actively for better situations in which to realise their identities.

We know that choice is always at work, even with the poorest migrants, simply because everyone does not migrate from places having 'push' factors.

If it were true . . . that the flow of immigrants and refugees was simply a matter of individuals in search of better opportunities in a richer country, then the growing population and poverty in much of the world would have created truly massive numbers of poor invading highly developed countries, a great indiscriminate flow of human beings from misery to wealth. This has not been the case. Migrations are highly selective processes; only certain people leave, and they travel on highly structured routes to their destinations, rather than gravitate blindly toward any rich country they can enter (Sassen, 1999: 2).

Since the media, many governments and numerous supporters of migrants tend to talk as though the proverbial 'avalanches' of migrants were actually occurring, it seems important to underscore this point.[1] Even in the most trying situations, there are people who prefer to remain at home, while other people prefer to leave. Both are acted upon by world forces, yes, but they do not lose their ability to think through their options. Individual personalities play their part, differences such as degree of self-confidence, willingness to take risks and adaptability in the face of change. Being in a structurally less powerful position than people in the first world does not mean that one is not making decisions, and those decisions are influenced by a vast multiplicity of circumstances, including individual desire. Being poor does not make people poor in spirit.

In the same way, it does not follow that people who have decided to leave home, travel abroad and look for work, even in the most arduous conditions, never have leisure time, engage in tourist activities or look for pleasure. Combining business with pleasure is a concept available to the poor as well as the rich, to those with a false passport as well as those with a real one, and to those working in stigmatised occupations such as sex work as well as those doing what societies call 'dignified work'. Saying migrants are people exclusively dedicated to work makes as little sense as saying business travellers are—it means rendering them one-dimensional, less than human.

A good deal of the fault for this reductionism goes to the media overload on the issue of how people migrate.

### **The manner of arriving**

Until recently, the way people migrated was not a central issue in migration studies. They were assumed to have got the money together somehow, taken a bus, train, boat or plane and landed somewhere. Until they tried to make money, asked for help or presented some kind of social problem, they were more or less invisible. But now that the focus is on people getting past border controls to work in the sex industry, questions of how people get out of their own countries are on the agendas of numerous national and international governments.

Without a job offer, work permit and associated documents, entrance to the first world and many other countries is legally out of the question. Entering with a tourist visa is therefore a conventional solution, the idea being to overstay the time allotted and 'disappear' from

authorities' control. But obtaining a tourist visa can also be next to impossible for citizens of many countries with destinations in the first world, or may require long waiting because of quotas. Or the potential tourist-migrant may indeed be able to get a visa but not have the money to buy tickets and survive while looking for work. For these and other reasons, would-be travellers commonly seek help from intermediary agents in the travel process. These intermediaries sell services and documents that many travellers cannot afford to buy, so loans are a common feature of these trips. Those who help (in this context selling the service is helping) are often family members, old friends, tourist acquaintances, independent entrepreneurs or any combination of these, and they may play a minimal part or offer a whole travel 'package' which links them closely to the migrant at every step of the way.

Services offered for money may include the provision of passports, visas, changes of identity, work permits and other documents; advice on how to look and act in interviews with immigration officials (at the border, in airports, on trains and buses, in the street); the loan of money to show upon entrance with a tourist visa; pick-up service at the airport or car transportation to another city or country or to pre-arranged lodgings; and contact information for potential employers or other intermediaries at the destination. These services are not difficult to find in countries where out-travel has become normalised over time, and in certain countries, formal-sector travel agents offer such informal services.

Once in the destination country, travellers continue to need help and advice if they are going to get safe jobs with decent pay and without

egregious labour abuses. They need contacts who can provide transport schedules or transport, addresses of safe places to stay, translation services, information on labour and cultural norms, medical references and other, conventional travel advice. In short, the creation of an economic niche for outside agents is a normal development in the informal economy facilitating migrations. That part of this economy turns to criminal exploitation does not mean the entire network does, nor that the clientele are all its 'victims'.

I remember one day in a café in the centre of a Caribbean town. While Europeans were enjoying typical tropical holidays on nearby beaches, everyone in the café was talking about how to get out of the country. A young waiter discreetly chatted me up, soon asking if I could help him travel to Europe, in exchange for any kind of services I liked. Many vacationers who have been in poor countries have had this experience, and some will still remember the sympathy they felt, and the desire to help. Some will, in fact, have helped with money, ideas or contacts, thus becoming part of the informal networks that assist migrations, but few of these think of themselves as 'traffickers' or 'smugglers', no matter what job a migrant is destined to do.

The processes described involve potential migrants in a series of risky judgements and decisions. Each step of the way, they must weigh the story they are being told against what they have heard from returned migrants, friends abroad and news reports. Whether migrants buy a 'full package' from a single entrepreneur or make a succession of smaller decisions, only one link in the chain needs to be bad in order for things to go wrong. Obviously, this kind of

clandestine market, outside all regulation, is not 'fair' in comparison with what people expect to enjoy in the first world. But the people who act within it are real, whole people who do not merit being generalised as 'victims'. Néstor Rodríguez describes such migrations:

It is important to understand that autonomous migration means more than unauthorized ('illegal') border crossings: it means a community strategy implemented, developed, and sustained with the support of institutions, including formal ones, at the migrants' points of origin and . . . points of destination. Precisely because core institutions (legal, religious, local governmental, etc) support this migratory strategy, undocumented migrants do not perceive its moral significance as deviant. Migrants may see their autonomous migration as extralegal, but not necessarily as criminal (Rodríguez, 1996: 23).

This point demonstrates that the 'other' of the victim—the 'criminal'—is also a misleading notion for describing great numbers of people both travelling and facilitating travel in these immense worldwide networks.

### **Thinking about migrancy another way**

Granting agency to migrating individuals does not mean denying the vast structural changes that push and pull them. On the other hand, granting them autonomy does not mean making them over-responsible for situations largely not of their own making. Global, national and local conditions intervene in individuals' decisions, along with doses of good and bad luck. Many situations come up during a migration in which migrants have to choose between doing things the 'right', or legal, way, or doing them so that they might turn out the way they want. This brings to mind the conversation I had with

a Colombian woman through the bars of the detention centre where she was being held in Bangkok after spending a year in prison. Her anguish did not derive so much from her having been in prison as from her own feelings of guilt because she had semi-knowingly broken the law, allowing a fake visa to be prepared for her in order to get into Japan. Her family had helped her with this, and her resultant conflicts over love and blame were tormenting her. While this woman had been a victim, she had also made choices and felt responsible, and I would not want to take this ethical capacity away from her.

Since Manuel Castells proposed the idea of a 'space of flows' for human movements in a 'network society' (Castells, 1996), migration scholars have used this metaphor in various ways. Doreen Massey emphasizes the 'power geometry' of flows:

Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it (Massey 1994: 149).

The migration-project consists of a vast complex of forces, from the national and global to the most local, personal and serendipitous (whom one happens to meet in a café). How people move, how necessary knowledge moves toward them, how they move their money and how its value moves them, as well as how they encourage other migrants to make similar moves: all form part of these flows. We are surrounded by images and sounds that foment the desire to 'see the world', and although we don't

have solid proof that this vision affects the desire to travel, we all know that it does.

In the classic distinction, migrants 'settle'. So very many don't, though: because they never (mentally or physically) relinquish a house, village, city or culture they are accustomed to, because they set themselves up to do business between the old and new country or because they find it unavoidable or impossible not to leave and go back.

The latter possibility by no means signifies failure of the migration project, which may end up taking the shape of repeated use of tourist visas or simply repeated attempts to cross the border illegally and manage not to get caught while working. Most of these people come to feel they have more than one 'home', and that they live in both of them.

### **Living in more than one place**

Take the titles of two texts written about the Dominican diaspora: *Between Two Islands* (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) and *One Country in Two* (Guarnizo, 1992). In this case, a large number of Dominicans are said to live in both Santo Domingo and New York City, or live between them, on the 'bridge' they have built during the past 20 years.

Family arrangements in which one or both parents live in the U.S. with none or some of their children, while their other children live on the island, are frequent. Although having more than one household in two different countries might be a source of emotional stress and economic hardship, it also arms family members with special skills to deal with uncertainty and adversity. They become more sophisticated

than nonmigrant people in dealing with a rapidly globalising world. (Guarnizo, 1992:77)

These arrangements may derive from enormous injustices committed against a people in the past but be expressed as great strengths. Take the case of the West Indian island of Nevis:

The global quality of West Indian culture is seen to be related to the circumstances of slavery and colonialism which sought to suppress and make invisible the Afro-Caribbean community within the island society. For this reason the Afro-Caribbean people employed colonial institutions, to which they gained access, as frameworks within which to formalize and display a culture which they saw as their own.

After emancipation these frameworks increasingly derived from migration destinations in the West Indies, North America and Britain, where waged employment was available. In the course of these historical processes a global culture emerged which was characterized by its ability to cultivate and promote a locally developed system of values and practices through the appropriation of external cultural forms (Fog Olwig, 1993)

Karen Fog Olwig's study is called *Global Culture, Island Identity*, again demonstrating the 'bothness' of many peoples' sense of home. These concepts, so common to studies of diaspora and hybridity, are so far not recognised widely in studies of migrations in general, which makes me ask whether we think diaspora is something more profound or complex than mere migration, and why. Diasporas began, after all, with ordinary migrants, 'pushed' or 'pulled' by 'factors'.

Cosmopolitanism should give us another way to position migrants, but Ulf Hannerz, in another classificatory exercise, said:

Most ordinary labour migrants are not cosmopolitans either. For them going away may be, ideally, home plus higher income; often the involvement with another culture is not a fringe benefit but a necessary cost, to be kept as low as possible (Hannerz, 1990: 243).

How in the world does Hannerz know this? It's patently not true of many, many migrants, and anyway—at what point does a person stop being a migrant and become something else? Hannerz fixes migrant identity in an early stage, that of ant leaving, self-protection and wariness toward the new. We can be thankful that most migrants, especially younger ones, do not remain in this stage for long, and they may just as well go on to be cosmopolitans as anything else.

Alejandro Portes et al have proposed a new social field to be called Transnationalism, composed of

a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders. Activities within the transnational field comprise a whole gamut of economic, political and social initiatives—ranging from informal import-export business, to the rise of a class of binational professionals, to the campaigns of home country politicians among their expatriates (Portes et al, 1999: 217-8).

Defining a field means the authors have to delimit the phenomena involved, to avoid the

term's 'spurious extension to every aspect of reality, a common experience when a particular concept becomes popular' (219). From the quoted text, it would appear that transnationals are middle class, but I see no need for this. Delimitation is not my project, however.

## Beyond labelling

I opened this piece with a complaint: that (unconscious) victimisation is the growing modus operandi of people speaking on behalf of migrants. Obviously, those who work in victims' services meet only victims, and as long as they speak on behalf of those particular people there is no problem. But the tendency is wider, and it is not solved by trying to distinguish precisely between a 'smuggled' person and a 'trafficked' one. Possible abuses committed by facilitators of migration know no boundaries; they may happen to men as well as women and to those working in sweatshops as well as in private houses.

I suggest that we re-confirm the idea of agency for migrants, with the emphasis on the process they are going through. Although some migrants may experience a (sad) feeling of being permanently uprooted, many others do not, and the whole theory of social 'integration' of migrants depends on their desires and abilities to adapt, assimilate and lose not their own identities but their identification with migrancy. At best, 'migrant' refers to a stage of life.

I also suggest that researchers and supporters consider the 'transnational' as a way to understand many migrants' customs, including those that have caused polemic ('sacrifice' of animals, wearing headscarves and so on). Perhaps I don't use the term in a carefully delimiting

fashion, but it seems to me that many individual migrants evolve transnational ways of living that show creative adaptation and strength: looking for ways out of bad situations, trying to maintain something of the past while opening to the future.

## Notes

[1] According to the director of the external relations department and senior regional adviser for Europe at the International Organization for Migration: 'The 150 million migrants estimated to be in the world today make up only 2.5 percent of the world's population' (Schatzer, 2001).

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Other articles by Laura Agustin:

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[www.sidint.org/development](http://www.sidint.org/development)

See the flyer for the next *Sexuality and Development* journal here: [http://www.palgrave-journals.com/development/development\\_52-1.pdf](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/development/development_52-1.pdf)

Laura Agustin has written on sex, travel and work across a variety of nongovernmental, academic and mainstream publications. She is the author of *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* [link below], London: Zed Books, 2007. She recently edited a special issue of the journal *Sexualities* focused on 'The Cultural Study of Commercial Sex', which explored how the meaning of buying and selling sex changes according to the social, cultural and historical processes in which transactions are situated. Her website/blog, *Border Thinking on Migration and Trafficking: Culture, Economy and Sex*, specialises in alternative visions to the usual confrontation prostitution debates.

**CATCHING UP TO THE PAST CATCHING UP  
TO THE PRESENT:**

**A RESPONSE TO WACK! ART AND THE  
FEMINIST REVOLUTION 1967-1980**

*Amy Kazymierchyk*

On Saturday January 10th 2009, one day before the WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution 1965-1980[1] exhibition closed at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), I made one last ceremonial visit. It was my fourth walk around the show and I wasn't expecting to see anything new or feel anything profound. I simply went to say goodbye to Lorraine O'Grady's Mlle. Bourgeoise Noire (1980) manikin; to commit to memory all the artists in Mary Beth Edelson's Some Living American Women Artists (1972), and to jot down the names of all the women whose anger was immortalized in Louise Fischmann's Angry Paintings (1973).

And then I found myself watching Dara Birnbaum's Technology, Transformation: Wonder Woman (1978-79), and thinking about Toronto video artist Aleesa Cohene's practice, which employs a similar process of re-structuring the semiotics of found film in pieces such as Something Better (2008). Watching Disband's Get Rebel (1979) performance video of their anarchic embrace of amateur feminist punk rock performance art led me to consider its influence on the music and performance art of Riot Grrrl bands Le Tigre (1998-2007) and Tracy and the Plastics (1999-2006). And then I found my-

self struck by a revelation: The essential motivations, values, processes, symbols, materials, and goals of the feminist revolution and its impact on art have been passed along on wave after wave, through teaching, writing, video, sculpture, music, painting, and performance, and are still being investigated and contested today.

Feminism is not dead. The revolution is not over.

At first this idea struck me as naïve; but after reflecting back on almost forty years of internal power struggles, rifts over race, class and sexuality politics, as well as backlash after backlash in the feminist movement, I concluded that it is as hard to encourage young women artists to consider the impact that feminism has on their politics and art (and to identify as feminists), as it is to get first and second wave feminist artists to acknowledge that contemporary young women have inspired their own revolutionary feminist art movements.

I could not have identified this prior to the four months of symposiums, lectures, artist talks, video screenings and parties surrounding WACK! organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, and satellite venues such as VIVO Media Arts Centre, UBC Gender Performances Research and Reflection Group, and the Western Front[2]. An immense effort was made by Vancouver's visual art, media art, and critical and cultural studies communities to contextualize WACK! within international, Canadian and Vancouver based feminist art practices, from 1967 to present day. The satellite events articulated the impact artists and work exhibited in WACK! has had on formal and conceptual currents by connecting contemporary practices to the artistic

and political trajectories that laid their groundwork.

VIVO Media Arts Centre's Persistent Resistance: Early Feminist Video in Vancouver[3], featured the work of Vancouver media arts collectives Reel Feelings, Women in Focus, and Amelia Productions, as well as the work of 1970's and 1980's video artists Marion Barling, Peg Campbell, Kate Craig, Crista Dahl, Deborah Fong, Saralee James, Nomi Kaplan, Paula Levine, Shawn Preus, Ruby Truly, and Cornelia Wyn-gaarden. The Western Front's F-Word[4] exhibition presented video based practices that explore liveness and video, and the performance of gender in feminist media-art by Rebecca Belmore, Patty Chang, Allyson Clay in collaboration with Lisa Robertson and Nathalie Stephens, Kate Craig, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, Klara Lidén, Deirdre Logue, Jillian McDonald, Lisa Steele and Salla Tykkä. For her "Inside the Exhibition talk on Public Feelings" at the VAG, Ann Cvetkovitch facilitated a tour of WACK! that privileged visitor's emotional responses to the work (through journaling) over academic anecdotes. Her keynote address at UBC's Creating Resistance: Arts Practice/Political Praxis Symposium presented the Michigan Women's Music Festival as a cross-generational site for ongoing explorations in performance and gender—both on stage and off.

My own desire to see the feminist movements of my own generation (I was born the year that WACK! concludes) included in a dialogue on feminist art and revolution inspired me to curate two satellite events: Dear Joanie, I Made a Movie: A survey of the Joanie4Jackie Chain-letter Tapes from 1995-2007 at the Pacific Cinémathèque, and Riot Grrrl Music Video Dance Party at VIVO Media Arts Centre.

Both these events, and the supplementary projects that flourished in the fervor of collective organizing are imbued with politics and aesthetics that are present in many of the works and practices presented in WACK! With the intent of inspiring a dialogue about what the feminist revolution stands for—what legacy the first and second wave gifted my generation—what we as the third wave have forged as our own revolution—and what we might inspire in the fourth, I have drawn parallels between these two events and specific WACK! works.

Dear Joanie, I Made a Movie: a survey of the Joanie4Jackie chain-letter tapes from 1995-2007 was presented by DIM, the monthly evening of contemporary short form moving images and cinematic collaborations that I program through the Pacific Cinémathèque. Curated by Miranda July and Shauna McGarry, this program was a survey of the Joanie4Jackie project (formerly Big Miss Moviola), an independent distribution system and feminist art project, conceived by July, that invited women filmmakers and video artists to submit their independent works, which were compiled onto a “chain-letter” tape of ten pieces in the order of their arrival. Each artist on a chain-letter tape received a copy of that tape and a corresponding booklet of letters written by the featured artists. In 12 years Joanie4Jackie compiled 19 chain-letter tapes and three curated co-star tapes. The survey featured videos by Tammy Rae Carland, Dulcie Clarkson, C. Ryder Cooley and Zoey Kroll, Sarah Hanssen, Miranda July, Sativa Peterson, Vanessa Renwick, and Naomi Uman.

As a project whose mission was to mutually support women artist’s practices and careers by collecting and disseminating their work through non-commercial, anti-patriarchal net-

works, Joanie4Jackie was an essential part of the feminist art movement of the 1990’s. Miranda July exposed work being made by young girls, teenagers, art students and mothers, and celebrated films and videos that ranged from edgy anarchic animations about tampon bombs, to coming of age masturbation and alien mutation dramas, re-mixed Super 8 porn, and poetic ruminations on the culture of rape and violence against women in small town USA. Joanie4Jackie rallied girls and women to pick up cameras, document their lives and picture their dreams, and share each other’s work with their families and communities. It created a culture of underground feminist filmmaking out of a disparate network of artists who may of never otherwise found each other (or called themselves artists). Joanie4Jackie also established an archive of films and videos that may have never have been screened or recognized as a significant contribution to independent underground cinema.

As a social practice that requires outreach to, response from, and participation of many members of a society—in this case women media artists—Joanie4Jackie reflects an art practice that is shared by a number of WACK! artist’s. Sheila Levant de Brettville developed projects that brought women together to discuss social issues around gender and femininity. Her series of three videos titled Menstruation (1972) featured adolescent boys and girls, young adults and post-menopausal women talking about cultural attitudes towards menstruation. Pink (1973) invited her friends and colleagues at the Women’s Building in Los Angeles to express their relationship to the colour pink on embroidered quilt squares. These squares were transformed into a lithographed patchwork poster of collected voices. Much like July’s intent to cre-

ate a forum for women's stories and voices to be seen and heard on film, de Brettville justifies Pink as, "employing graphic strategies that will enable us to listen to people who have not been heard from before." [6] Monica Mayer's *El Tendero* (1978) is an example of her commitment to championing the work of Mexican women artists and instigating public dialogue about women's issues. For an exhibition of young artists reflecting on the theme of the city at Mexico City's Museo de Arte Moderno, Mayer displayed a clothesline hung with small sheets of pink paper, on which 800 women of diverse ages, classes and professions had previously completed the statement 'As a woman, what I detest most about Mexico City is'. Women who visited the gallery felt compelled to add their own statements. *El Tendero* became a site for community dialogue about issues such as harassment, fear of physical and sexual violence, and safety on the streets. [7] *The Where We At Black Women Artists* (1971-1997) collective addressed and critiqued racial discrimination in the arts community, and the visibility of black women artists among black men artists. Their work together began with an exhibition at the Acts of Art Gallery in New York in 1971. This exhibition was the first group show of professional black women artists in known history. [8] Following this exhibition, the collective—which grew to thirty members—and included artists Faith Ringgold, Dindga McCannon, and Kay Brown, offered workshops, seminars and panel discussions, created youth apprenticeships, and worked with women in prison.

In celebration of *Joanie4Jackie* and my own contribution of teenage videotapes to two different video chain-letters, I solicited work for a chain-letter DVD of feminist media art from Vancouver BC. The DVD, titled *Two Sisters*, features work

by Dana Claxton, Leigh Fisher, Leah Finkel, Lisa G, Emma Waltraud Howes, Donna Lee, Terra Jean Long, Miriam Needoba, Helen Reed, Maya Suess, Julie Saragosa, Lyndsay Sung, Donna Szoke, and myself. The namesake of this collection was inspired by the twin peaks that grace Vancouver's Coastal Mountain skyline above Capilano Canyon. Known to colonizers as the Lions, these peaks are known to the Coast Salish as the Two Sisters or the Chief's Daughters. The peaks hold the spirit of the two daughters of a Capilano Chief who inspired peace between warring coastal tribes by requesting the invitation of a rival Upper Coastal tribe to their coming of age potlatch. The sister's gesture is an act of feminist direct action, and its intention is held in the terrain that we, in Vancouver, are creatively, spiritually and physically nourished by.

It is too overwhelming to discuss the relationship between all the videos featured in the *Two Sisters* chain-letter and the *Joanie4Jackie* survey, to those exhibited in *WACK!*. I do however want to explore the parallels between one video in each project to illustrate the feminist continuum in feminist video art. Vancouver filmmaker, educator, and activist Julie Saragosa's film *Cindy Doll* (2008), is a gritty black and white hand-processed Super 8 film that explores the impact of patriarchal power, sexual abuse, and the male gaze on women's sexuality. The film features Julie naked in the bath with her *Cindy Doll*. Her gaze, body, and narration are directed towards the viewer. As she opens her body to be fucked by the *Cindy Doll*, the story of receiving the doll as a gift from her grandfather and abuser, in a gesture to assuage his guilt (and her pain), is hesitantly revealed in the first person. Its explicitness is convoluted by details of the car they sat in and her confused affection

for the man. Her relationship to the doll and its gifter are further complicated by her sexual desire for the doll. The roots of this form of first person confessional are evidenced in Hawardena Pindell's, *Free, White and 21* (1980). In her video, Pindell plays both herself, and her adversary—a naïve racist white woman, in a power play that is echoed in Saragosa's film. As herself, Pindell recounts racist experiences she has had throughout her life. In true confessional form she is seated facing the camera, speaking to and looking directly at the viewer. Her stories are montaged with the critical response of a white woman (Pindell in white face) casting doubt on the authenticity of Pindell's testimony. The tension between these two perspectives is bound by images of Pindell suffocating her voice and image with white toilet paper. Miranda July's video *Atlanta* (1996) possesses a similar confessional frame and power play structure as *Free, White and 21*. *Atlanta* also features July playing both a 12 year-old swimming athlete preparing for the 1996 Atlanta Georgia Olympics, and her mother—who is also her biggest fan. Each character is framed as if being interviewed by the press about the young swimmer's Olympic dreams. As the interviews progress, both the swimmer's buoyant love of the sport and her mother, and her mother's selfless support for her daughter's talent fractures to reveal an insecure daughter longing for unconditional love, and a mother whose sense of personal failure motivates her selfish desire for her daughter's success.

This Summer's *Gonna Be a Girl Riot: Riot Grrrl Music Video Dance Party* at VIVO Media Arts Centre was a collaborative event organized by the VAG! WACK! collective which included Mel Mundell, Aili Meutzner, Kika Thorne and myself. The title is taken from a letter written by

Jean Smith of Mecca Normal to Allison Wolfe of Bratmobile in the summer of 1991 following the Mount Pleasant race riots in Washington D.C., and the christian coalition's right to life attack on legal abortion (which led to *Rock for Choice*). It was from this line that the movement 'Riot Grrrl' was coined. Our party was organized to celebrate the impact of Riot Grrrl as a feminist movement, and the influence it has on the contemporary DIY craft, music, film, art, and critical theory communities that we are a part of. In honour of the Riot Girls who reiterated the importance of women championing women's DIY music and art production and distribution, we programmed an evening of live musical performance, homemade mixed tapes, and feminist record label music videos. Kristjanne Vosper from the Bash Brothers, *Oh I See*, and the Her Jazz Noise Collective performed three chord, three minute homages to Riot Grrrl standards. DJ Tapes, DJ Ruggedly Handsome, and DJ Doll Parts spun vinyl and mixed cassette tapes of Crass, Huggy Bear, The Raincoats, Metalux, T.I.P.S., Nü Sensae, Bikini Kill, Hole, Le Tigre, Bratmobile, and Sleater-Kinney. And the DJ's were cut with music video selections from K Records, Matador, Kill Rock Stars, and Rock Camp for Girls (with selections of Anne of Green Gables thrown in for good measure). Large-scale posters of the Riot Grrrl Manifesto were silkscreened in the back corner of the studio beside the craft table where people could make their own 'Angry Me' postcards. Next to the entrance a merch table glittered with Rock Camp for Girls pins and pamphlets, local crafts and textiles, and VAG! WACK! t-shirts.

One phenomenon that I was most conscious of in my fourth visit to WACK! was the prevalence of manifesto's within the feminist revolution's vernacular. The manifesto is our rallying cry,

our familial bond, and our reassuring embrace. It is uncanny that after four decades, a similar politic and utopic vision can be found in each generations call to arms.

Our chief task at present is to develop female class-consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions...

– Redstockings Manifesto, 1969

[We strive] to create women’s culture within a dominant environment, to speak of the future... not as a passive act, but a denial of the patriarchy and a re-creation of our own image, energy, self, situation, time, space, and our own interpretation of those events...We are taking our energy and giving it back to ourselves.

– Mary Beth Edelson, Happy Birthday America, 1976

BECAUSE doing/reading/seeing/hearing cool things that validate and challenge us can help us gain strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodieism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives.

– Riot Grrrl Manifesto, 1991

We are a feel tank, but this does not mean that we do not think. We are governed by outrage that the desires and demands for a less bad life and a better good life continue to go unrecognized. We desire and demand to think beyond what’s deemed possible.

– Feel Tank Manifesto, 2006

Inspired by the desire to commemorate the correlation between the WACK! exhibition with my queer feminist friends tendency to refer

to the VAG phonetically and anatomically as the “vadge”, the VAG! WACK! collective silk-screened a limited addition run of t-shirts that feature one of Tee Corinne’s cunts from her Cunt Coloring Book (1975) on the front, and the text, VAG! WACK! in the same font as the VAG logo on the back.

I shall save referencing the goldmine of vaginal imagery in WACK! for discussion on The After Party installation. What is unique about the VAG! WACK! t-shirts and their relationship to the history of feminist art is the means and site of production. First, with no money, previous experience, or ownership of tools, we were forced to reach out to our community of DIY crafters. I had a conversation on the street corner with Aja Bond, a previous member of the Seamrippers Craft Collective, about how to expose screens and set inks. She offered to lend us her squeegee and heat press if she could find them in her basement. Kika Thorne had recently taken a workshop at Blim Studios and volunteered to coordinate building the frames and exposing the screens. Georgie Russell of Hand & Shadow offered her studio for printing. Numerous friends donated their free boxes of t-shirts, bought cheap shirts at thrift stores, and brought their own clothes. We used ironing boards, hair dryers, garbage bags, and dishcloths to fill in the gaps of our makeshift studio. A rotating crew of printers spent evenings drinking tea and wine in my kitchen, and (with as few drips and finger prints as possible) lovingly printing over 50 vaginas.

The domestic space, as a site of engagement with the self, the family and partnership, patriarchal captivity, and feminine labour and ritual, is a central theme in feminist art. WACK! artists document, celebrate, critique and dis-



mantle their relationship to their personal domestic spheres, as well as the socio-political realities of women and domesticity. Domestic life is subject, material, concept, and studio.

Mary Kelly sources domesticity and motherhood as the subject and material for her *Post Partum Document* (1973-1979). *Post Partum* chronicles key developments in her son's growth from birth to five years, including feeding, weaning, and learning to speak and write. Constructed in six sections of 135 pieces, these documents include feeding charts, transcriptions of conversations, Kelly's own psychological response to her child's development, and its reflection on herself as his mother. In its form, Kelly layers and collages smearings of her son's feces, his drawings and early handwriting scribbles, and resin casts of his pre-formed letters and handprints. Jacqueline Fahey's painting *Sisters Communing* (1974) captures two women trying to

seize a spare moment to catch up, gossip and share a cup of tea amongst the clutter of a living room that doubles as a laundry hamper and child's playroom. This artwork documents the reality that for many women, including Fahey, their home is their workspace, studio, sanctuary and social scene. In her 1975 video *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, Martha Rosler takes a critical stab at the social construction of women as innate nurturers, mothers, and homemakers. In a narrative that resembles a cooking show, shopping network campaign, and *Sesame Street* vignette, Rosler hijacks a kitchen and re-inscribes the definition and usage of kitchen utensils from A-Z with anger, dissatisfaction and revolt.

The politics of home-based practices were transformed by the Riot Grrrl movement. What was once a site of captivity, negotiation and sacrifice in motherhood and partnership, became a ground zero for radical freedom and

self-expression in D.I.Y (Do It Yourself) culture. Women who were invested in created a mutually supportive feminist art culture reclaimed the domestic sphere and established record labels in their basements, produced fanzines and posters in their bedrooms, cleared sheds for band rehearsal space, and held concerts and film screenings in their living rooms. Homes became autonomous zones for women who wanted to create art and music outside of a market economy that privileged the exhibition and promotion of conservative, educated, straight, white men.

While organizing This Summer's Gonna be a Girl Riot, I was approached by queer feminist artists Paige Gratland, Onya Hogan-Finlay and Hannah Jickling about hosting their collective response to WACK!. Working under the collective name The After Party, they defined themselves as, "a mobile and flexible collection of artist multiples, group activities and collective performances responding to the loaded visuality surrounding feminist consciousness and the body in contemporary art practices." [9] They proposed to host an "All (gender) Inclusive Weekend Package" titled Un-Packing the Pants of Vaginal Imagery in Feminist Art. Their goal was to inspire young feminist artists and activists to consider the impact the works in WACK! have on them, and contribute to the feminist dialogue by reworking the form, aesthetic, concept or material of a WACK! piece to reflect their own experience and practice. In The After Party's words,

The 'All (gender) Inclusive Weekend Package' will have the feel of something between a debauch feminist clubhouse, santa's workshop, and a DIY, dumpstered cardboard utopia. Together we will create two installations with artist multiples

and hand crafted cardboard objects at VIVO for one-night only (December 12, 2008)! This work will respond both to WACK! and to Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party (1974-1979) which featured place settings honoring women icons and aimed to "end the ongoing cycle of omission in which women were written out of the historical record." Objects will be suspended like mobiles from VIVO's ceiling or will join an assemblage of limited edition multiples on a table in a staged 'after-party' scene. Cut-up some cardboard, cut out the patriarchy and let's make this happen together!" [10]

The collaboration between the VAG! WACK! and the After Party collectives resulted in a series of four events that included: Group Art Walk: Wade in WACK!'s Vadge at VAG, Feminist Rough Craft Cardboard Sculpting 101, HPV Brunch: Hand-Mirror Pubic Visualization, Mudflap-Jacks, Eggs' n Bacon Strips, and WACK! WRECK! Beach Burning-Woman Bondfire.

These events paid homage to the history of feminist art and artists, and celebrated the culture of collaboration and collectivity that arose out of the feminist revolution in the 1960's and 1970's. It may have even been while I was elbow deep in poster paint, channeling Louise Fishman for my own series of psychological distress paintings, that I first considered the thesis for this essay.

The art works that were created during Craft Cardboard Sculpting 101 included responses to Susan Hiller's 10 Months (1977-79), Lynda Benglis' Odalisque (Hey, Hey Frankenthaler) (1969), Rebecca Horn's Feathers Dance on the Shoulders from Berlin (1974-75), Louise Fishman's Angry Paintings (1973), and Magdalena Abakanowicz's Abakan Red (1969) [11]. These



pieces were hung above a cardboard replica of The Dinner Party's triangular table.

The After Party, as a collective, installation and social engagement project, paid its respects to The Dinner Party as a seminal piece in the feminist art canon. It also paid homage to the feminist practice of paying homage. Through the setting of 39 uniquely crafted plates, Judy Chicago invited specters of Virginia Woolf, Susan B. Anthony, Saint Bridget, and Sappho to be honored at the ultimate feminist dinner

party. In *Some Living American Women Artists* (1972) Mary Beth Edelson rewrote invitations to *The Last Supper* to Louise Nevelson, Georgia O'Keefe, Faith Ringgold and Kay Brown. In the process of creating her *Angry Paintings*, Louise Fishman validated the pent up rage and frustration of Marilyn Monroe, Djuna Barnes, and Yvonne Rainer. Sylvia Sleigh transgressed the tradition of documenting all male art societies and guilds in oils, by painting a vibrant portrait of the all woman Artist in Residence (A.I.R) collective in *A.I.R Groups Portrait* (1977).

The After Party collective also celebrated the rich tradition of core-central imagery in feminist art. Core-central imagery was Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro's brainchild that posited that women artists used vaginal iconography as metaphor for the essence of womanhood.[12] The After Party installation immortalized core-central imagery in an assemblage of vagina artist multiples that ranged from queef cushions to lesbian feminist colour-coded hankies, maxi-pad coffee cup holders to silicone fists, and pizza pussies[13]. The presence of the vagina in feminist art is vast. Two pieces in WACK! worth noting are Hannah Wilke's Ponder-r-rosa Series 4 (White Plains, Yellow Rocks) (1975) and Shigeo Kubota's Vagina Painting (1965). Wilke's abstraction of the labia in latex reads like paper doilies, flowering labia, and mass produced textile patterns. Its title politically charges its delicate aesthetic by referencing the corporate client that funded the first part of the series (the Ponderosa Steak House), Marcel Duchamp's alter-ego Rose Sélavy, and the 'pondering' of flowers that the sculptures inspire.[14] Kubota's feminist action painting was performed by attaching a paintbrush to the crotch of her underwear. The Vagina Painting is a process of vaginal visualization inspired by self-examinations and masturbation, and a revolt against patriarchal control of the female body by artists such as Yves Klein's in Anthropometry (1960).

When I visited WACK! for the last time, I wasn't just struck by the parallels between the work being made across three generations of feminist artists. On a deeper level I was moved by the sensation that we are not living separate movements divided by generations and their unique political climates, but are part of one undulating and evolving revolution. If this is the

case, we have some work to do to catch the present up to the past and the past up to the present. A cross-generational dialogue about feminism and its impact on girls and women's lives and their art over the past forty years is long overdue. In hopes that this dialogue can happen face to face, and in earnest, I offer this essay.

## Endnotes

[1] Curated by Cornelia Butler and originally presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA, March 4-16 2007. Exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Vancouver BC, October 4 2008- January 11 2009.

[2] A full list of WACK! satellite event presenters includes: Artspeak, Burnaby Art Gallery, Centre A, Cineworks Independent Filmmakers Society, Contemporary Art Gallery, Gallery Gachet, Or Gallery, Pacific Cinémathèque, Presentation House Gallery, Rape Relief, Richmond Art Gallery, UBC Gender Performances Research and Reflection Group, VIVO Media Arts Centre, and The Western Front.

[3] Presented by Video Out Distribution, VIVO Media Arts Centre, SVES and UBC. Curated by Jennifer Fisher, Elizabeth Mackenzie, and Marina Roy. November 7 + 8 2008.

[4] The F Word. October 18- November 22, 2008. Western Front. Curated by Alissa Firth-Eagland and Candice Hopkins.

[5] *Creating Resistance: Arts Practice/ Political Praxis: A One-Day Symposium*. Friday, October 24, 2008. First Nations Longhouse, UBC. Coordinated by the UBC Gender Performance Research and Reflection Group in conjunction with the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). Funded by The AMS Innovative Project Fund and Access and Diversity.

[6] Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 221.

[7] Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 264.

[8] Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 314.

[9] After Party Press Release. Paige Gratland, Onya Hogan-Finlay and Hannah Jickling. 2008.

[10] After Party Press Release. Paige Gratland, Onya Hogan-Finlay and Hannah Jickling. 2008.

[11] After Susan Hiller's *10 Months* (1977-79) by Brady Marks, After Lynda Benglis' *Odalisque* (Hey, Hey Frankenthaler) (1969) by Paige Gratland, After Rebecca Horn's *Feathers Dance on the Shoulders from Berlin* (1974-75) by Constance Hockaday, After Louise Fishman's *Angry Paintings* (1973) by Amy Lynn Kazymierchyk, and After Magdalena Abakanowicz's *Abakan Red* (1969) by Helen Reed.

[12] Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 223.

[13] *Vagina multiples* were created by Tara Azopardi, Aja Rose Bond, Janice Demkew, Paige Gratland, Onya Hogan-Finlay, JD, Hannah Jickling,

Cailin Livingstone, Allyson Mitchell, Will Munroe, Jeanine Oleson, Zeesy Powers, Rachel Shannon, Jen Smith, Catherine Stinson, *The Third Leg*, Lex Vaughn, Karen Wielonda.

[14] Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 317.

Amy Lynn Kazymierchyk is a filmmaker, writer, and independent curator. She loves film culture, throwing parties, and building community and dialogue around art and its sister disciplines. She currently programs DIM, a monthly evening of contemporary short form moving images and cinematic collaborations at the Pacific Cinémathèque, and is a co-programmer of the Signal + Noise Media Art Festival at VIVO Media Arts Centre. Amy Lynn is interested in blending documentary, narrative and experimental cinematic forms. She is about to embark on her first large-scale experimental narrative film, which will explore Vancouver's gothic history, the impact of landscape and weather on identity and belonging, and alienation in Vancouver's pre-olympic Down Town East Side, where she lives.

Photo Credit: Sarah Race Photography

## TRESPASSER

Martha Steigman



It happened by accident. The best projects always do. I was just going to let some activists use my classroom for a meeting. Then I found out why—they were making banners for a highway blockade. I had heard about the Algonquins of Barriere Lake. I knew the Trilateral Agreement they had landed was a precedent setter and I knew that was why Canada and Quebec were playing as dirty as they could to undermine it. So I couldn't think of a reason not to go when they asked me.

I've never been anywhere like it. Algonquin is still spoken as a first language; Traditional government is still intact, and people still live off the land. You simply don't find that this far south in Indian country. If it were implemented, the Trilateral Agreement would give the Barriere Lake Algonquins decision-making power over 10 000 square kilometers of their traditional territory without surrendering their rights to the land. Surrendering rights to the land is one of the usual conditions the Canadian Government has forced on First Nations when they come to the negotiating table under the notorious Comprehensive Land Claims process. In the old days they called it extinguishment. They changed the wording in 1986, but not the effect. At least back then they were more honest about it. A friend sent me a link to this year's World Press Photo contest winner.

I doubt many of us in Canada think of ourselves as settlers. I wake up every morning on Mohawk Territory. The Great Peace of Montreal was negotiated where I live in 1701. But if the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabee Peoples gave us "permission" to be here, I know damn-well the people I pay taxes to, the ones who speak in my name on a daily basis didn't hold up their end of the deal. But fuck them - do I live by the Treaties?

See video here:

<http://nomorepotlucks.org/article/trespassing-transgression/trespasser>

*Martha Stiegman grew up in Halifax, on Mi'kmaq territory. These days she's doing what she can to keep it real in Montreal. For more information on the Barriere Lake Algonquins and their struggle, check out:*

<http://barrierelakesolidarity.blogspot.com>

## **ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR REVIEW**

*John Caffery*

\$100 is a country band from Toronto whose sound gets back to the raw and real origins of the country music genre. I went to see these guys perform live more than any other artist this year and was never disappointed. The pairing of Ian Russell and Simone Fornow as a duo,



or with their full band, is captivating. The genre of country music has not seen such a pairing since Johnny Cash and June Carter.

While Simone is a powerful front-woman who has written thought-provoking lyrics and delivers them with an intensity that is unapologetic, Ian Russell is the lead guitarist and singer. Their telling of hard times is enough to stop you in your tracks. During one of the shows Ian looked like he was hooked up to a medical drip. Although it was staged, the humor and honesty about life and death, and the struggles people endure, are right at the heart of this project.

Their song "Hell's a Place" is the story of two lesbians running for their lives in British Columbia. \$100 uses their music to create awareness of the troubles that are often neglected.

*It don't matter if our love is true  
Them bigots have it out for girls like me and you  
Their morals rain from that G-d up above  
And according to him Hell's the place for our love  
Thumbs out of Quesnel through Veder Crossing  
Memories harden like the earth beneath this  
stranger's tires  
They spare us guns of war, then beat us in our  
homes  
Convinced our interlocked legs are fuel for fire.*

The tune "Careless Love" deals in a frank and tender way with the common occurrence of being in bed with someone who doesn't really care. This song is fragile, and strong, and catchy enough to sing along with.

\$100 songs manage a quality that is both timeless and yet completely relevant for today. The songs seem older, because the band embraces the roots of country sound and yet lyrically they

address current social issues. In fact, the arrangements are so strong that the songs from Forest of Tears will endure for many, many, years.

The album was released by Blue Fog records, a small Toronto label that is the project of Rick White (Eric's Trip, Elevator) and Brian Taylor (Rotate This-Record Store). Rick White also recorded the album with \$100 over the course of thirteen hours. While some bands take fourteen years to put out crap (think the "Chinese Democracy" of "Guns N Roses"), a band like \$100 show it is possible to spend a day recording and produce a brilliant album.

*John Caffery is a founding member of KIDS ON TV, which was formed in the spring of 2003 in Toronto, Canada. Their music explores the worlds of punk, no-rave, electro, booty house, acid, soul, and experimental rock. Their work references many elements of queer history and the artists who inspire them. KIDS ON TV transform environments with projections of their film and video work. In 2007, they released their debut album "Mixing Business With Pleasure" on Chicks on Speed Records and Blocks Recording Club. They recently collaborated with Yo Majesty and have worked with Boy George and Man Parrish. They toured Europe in '06 & '07. KOTV have played with Gang of Four, Crystal Castles, and Ladytron. Kids on TV organize events in Toronto in bath houses, ware houses, and school houses, the group recently performed with an orchestra of children who had learned a KOTV song in school.*

## **HER JAZZ NOISE COLLECTIVE: “WE ARE THE MAJORITY.”**

*Mel Mundell*

Who mixes blanket forts and band practice, hand holding and harsh noise, circuit bent toys and dissonant solos, feedback and the female voice? Her Jazz Noise Collective.

Her Jazz is a group of self-identified (trans-inclusive) women who are sound artists, noise musicians and those eager to learn in Vancouver and, more specifically, the Coast Salish Territory. Not in fact a band, Her Jazz is “a radical, posi-core community interested in dialogue about equality, privilege, gender, power and personal experience,” according to their mission statement.

Founding member Aja Rose Bond (of Diadem, In Flux and DJ Tapes) said Her Jazz Noise Collective’s original inception was inspired by “a lack of women making noise in Vancouver.” Named in reference to Huggy Bear’s British Riot Grrrl anthem, ‘Her Jazz’ holds the same motivations as early ‘90s American riot girls who formed bands in response to the male-centric DC punk scene. “As far as we knew there were no other ladies making noise in the city,” stated Bond who, alongside In Flux band mate Erin Ward (of Shearing Pinx, In Flux and Les Beyond), had been making noise together for roughly four years. “There were ladies at our shows, there were ladies buying merch, so why were there never ladies on the stage?” Bond said. In Flux members joined forces with Ora Cogan, Larissa Loyva (of Kellarissa, the Choir Practice and P:ano) and Arlie Doyle (of Burrow Owl and the Internet) to form Her Jazz. But the spring after the collective began they were faced with the

tragic death of a young audience member, musician and collective-friend. Although Her Jazz was already in action, they couldn't help feeling they had come too late. "What difference would a group of really supportive women peers do?" Bond recalled wondering at the time. Early Her Jazzers could see with events happening like the Her Noise Festival in the UK in 2006 that "things were happening in the international

community, [there was] something in the way in Vancouver. Initially [...] women [...] who didn't identify as musicians [joined Her Jazz] because they were essentially promised that this was a safe space", explains Bond.

"There are less women in 'noise' than other genres, especially harsh noise," said Amberleigh Forsyth (of Red Clover and Dawt). "Noise





is pretty much a dude fest.” Bond, who has a habit of tallying the gender ratio at noise shows, agrees. “It is one to ten female to male performers on stage consistently,” she said. When asked about her motivations for joining Her Jazz, member Rachael Wadham (of Attn: Diamond Shoppers and Brooch Post) explains, “There is a connection that women have with one another that really creates a solid ground to stand on. That’s not to say that there isn’t a

connection between men and women, it’s just different.” For Jennifer Clarke, choreographer, dancer and yoga instructor, she finds in Her Jazz Noise Collective, “A welcoming, positive energy that makes me feel like I can make art.” “Besides Laurie Anderson, there really weren’t any women to look up to,” Ella Collier said when asked about role models in the noise movement when she was growing up. The group agrees. Yoko Ono, as well as contemporary Finnish

based Islaja, Bay area artists Grouper and Eva Incaore, and now defunct UK all female noise collective Leopard Leg, have all been sources of inspiration. Interestingly enough, almost all the members cite each other as major influences. Because a background in sound art is not required to join Her Jazz, the collective provides mentorship with skill sharing as a key component, evident in the number of local kick-ass experimental projects in Vancouver containing Her Jazz members. As a trained musician in the western tradition, Sidria Pony finds comfort, “playing music that isn’t perfect,” in Her Jazz. Bond, also coming from a theoretical music background, defines noise as “a complete rejection of western music theory” and has gone through a process, similar to what many experimental musicians describe, of unlearning mainstream musical practice. PrOphesy Sun (Dance Troupe Practice) approaches sound art with physicality, and describes creating noise as, “an extension of my body and my practice.”

Although Her Jazz has received negative backlash for not admitting men into their primary membership, the collective encourages men’s involvement in other ways and chose to “focus on the people that do support us” according to Bond. Collective member and Fake Jazz Wednesdays co-producer Anju Singh (of Ahna) has received a lot of interest from men attending workshops, for example, in the use of contact microphones, and welcomes their involvement. When asked about trans-inclusivity, Bond explains that “anyone who has identified as a woman at one point in their lives” is welcome to full membership. Pony explains that the collective has an “ongoing dialogue about space and gender. [In Her Jazz], we are always talking about what we are doing.”

I asked members what instruments they play and they gave me a look that was part incredulity, part playful. In short they play anything that generates sound and, more specifically, field recordings, vocals, homemade instruments, found objects, loops, cassettes, effects, ukulele, contact mics, open-tuned guitar, circuit bent toys, violin bow on random amplified objects, trumpet, clarinet, rhythm synthesizer, software and electronics.

Held at VIVO in conjunction with the VAG’s WACK! show on December 12, 2008, “This Summer’s Going to be a Girl Riot” showcased Her Jazz Noise Collective collaborating, DJing and making some fucking noise. Collective members Forsyth, Bond, Collier, Singh and Sun sat on the floor in a circle facing one another. Each equipped with a microphone, they generated sound by manipulating their voices through effects pedals, loops, amplifiers and mixers. Distorted, at times magnified, and almost always partially looped, the statement “We are the majority, so where are we?” is repeated. Her Jazz performances are present with intensity, communication and curiosity, not volume wars. It’s like the soundtrack of an abstract painting that one would stand in front of for hours, absorbed.

Since spring 2007, the collective has tripled their membership and organized a busy schedule performing fifteen shows since their inception. They started a record label and have produced three international/Canadian split cassette and CD noise releases. Her Jazz has also curated shows featuring female-noise experimenters Jenny Hoyston (of Paradise Island and Erase Errata) and Portland-based visual artist and musician Tara Jane O’Neil. In addition they began a weekly jam session/skill share, as well as

conducting regular monthly meetings. Perhaps their highest achievement to date is the successful curatorial hosting of six interdisciplinary all-female art events entitled "Women's Studies," which have been held at VIVO since last March. According to Her Jazz's blog, "This series has featured over 20 all female acts, many of which were debut performances." Shows vary and often incorporate improvisation, movement, video, installation and even wine glass orchestration.

Her Jazz Noise Collective has also become part of VIVO's official events programming for 2009 and they will be co-curating with sister collective Dance Troupe. The group describes seeing that many women perform in experimental forms exhilarating and surprising because: "You don't realize you've never seen it until you do," states Bond. Installation and performance artist PrOphecy Sun, who holds membership in both collectives is pleased to "encourage an exploration to open up in different mediums". An exciting interdisciplinary season lies ahead. The first event took place Saturday, February 7, 2009 with performances and work by Ora Cogan, Square Root of Evil, a piece curated by Dance Troupe, DJ Vera and Her Jazz Noise Collective performing with a super 8 film by local artist Amber Dawn with film features by Lief Hall and Asa Mori.

Proposals for future Women's Studies are encouraged from inside as well as outside British Columbia. Contact Her Jazz at: [herjazznoise@gmail.com](mailto:herjazznoise@gmail.com).

For further radical information visit: <http://herjazznoise.wordpress.com>.

*Mel Mundell can typically be found somewhere on the Amtrak line between Portland and Vancouver, begging for a job to support an MFA researching Queercore culture at Portland State, visiting their Oregonian girlfriend and smuggling vegan donuts and cheap effects pedals over the border. Mel plays in a Anne of Green Gables concept band called, 'Oh I See' and compared to their more 'Anne' worthy bandmate, has been relegated to 'Diana' status, with the secret hope of one day becoming Gilbert Blythe. Mel is the newest member of Her Jazz Noise Collective.*

*Photo Credit: Mel Mundel*

*Photo Credit: Aja Rose*

## LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Ainsley Brittain

*From: ainsley.brittain*

*Subject: feedback on the birth*

*Date: January 7, 2009 12:18:56 PM EST (CA)*

*To: nmp@nomorepotlucks.org*

Greetings NMP!

I would like to congratulate you on the release of your first issue! I thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the piece by Leah. I am familiar with the experience of negotiating the role of the white friend and/or white lover to queer women of colour in my life and all the conversations, mistakes, and struggles that inevitably go along with that.

The purpose of my email, however, is to express a concern of mine. As someone who has worked on queer and feminist publications before, I know how shitty a time this is to receive criticism. You have all no doubt been working on this publication full-time for weeks. But I believe that feedback is a favour, and a responsibility, especially if you have faith in that and those to which you are providing feedback. So here goes ...

I think the cover was a huge mistake. When I first saw it I half-joked to myself that the featured woman 'better be trans'. Regardless of your intentions, the way that I read that cover, and I know that I am not alone in this, is as a recentring of the privileged body. A cover im-

age is never just a picture. And putting photos of people on the cover of publications like this is so dangerous, because they become representative. They inevitably are read as embodiments of the politics, purpose, content etc. of the publication. They inevitably resonate with some people and alienate others.

That being said, I would further argue that not all alienation is equal. There is a difference between a queer publication alienating its homo-normative readers and alienating its trans readers. The latter is worse than the former. The same goes for NMP alienating its white readers versus alienating its readers of colour. Alienating someone who always gets alienated is worse than alienating someone who rarely gets alienated. And if one wants to try to avoid alienating people all together, one perhaps should not put a recognizable photo of a person on the cover of one's publication. Unless the photo is of one of the featured contributors or something. Put cartoon people! or cartoon robots! or words! or barbed wire with flowers growing out of it. Appearing willing to risk turning away marginalized readers in order to be artistic or provocative translates in many peoples' minds to carelessness and white-centrism. Questions about whether the cover image was deliberated over by a diverse committee are raised, whether or not there were any dissenting or critical voices, and if so, whether they were listened to.

Those are my thoughts. I look forward to hearing your response.

Thank you again for a (mostly) brilliant publication!

Ainsley Brittain