This issue of *Radar* Lines emerged somewhere between the Queer Sites Conference held in Toronto in May 1995 and our own alienated meetings over cold as brass. From the start we experienced a tension between the rapid emergence of queer theory and research, usually Canadian-based, and our own persistent memories of political meetings and street demonstrations. There are only a handful of people doing queer studies in Canada, fewer still with the security of a university professorship. Queer Canadian writers have few places to publish and develop their ideas. At the same time, many queer activists have struggled to meet the challenges posed by severe economic hardship and the continuing AIDS crisis.

In this issue of *Radar* Lines we publish articles that take very different positions on issues of representation, militarized style, race and sensuality. We attempt to capture the spirit of cultural interventions made by lesbian and gay of colour who have challenged the dominance of white queer thought and organizational models. Indeed, the term 'queer' itself has become a site of contestation given its inferred white origins. Helen Lerner’s interview with Mel Ziegler, photo/visual artist and diseñador, and her account of her experiences with AIDS, set the scene for a collection of essays and interviews with Po Bronowski on South Asian lesbian identities, all pointing to the effacement of such cultural practices. Other essays, such as those by Trevor Targett, Rachel Grice and Nichola Packwood, bring into focus the current preoccupations with the politics of image production and consumption, both alternative and mainstream. We include poetry to convey our respect for this form of cultural expression as integral to the interrogation of identities and communities.

Many of our contributors bridge the gap between academic scholarship and grassroots organizing. Indeed, we believe the work represented here similarly to the productions of such explosive positions. In editors, we have solicited shows, more immediate ways to recognize the need for concise, useful and accessible writing than queer keynote. Readers will find a defining or thematic framework in this issue. We have arranged an overarching framework, in fact, we six editors have reservations about the political and conceptual closure that inevitably comes from such a practice.

Consequently, this issue is a veritable melting pot, we hope it provides you with a delightful issue of queer culture.

The three of us would like to thank managing editor Lee Johnson for providing us with consistent and much appreciated guidance in the process of putting this all together.

Alison Bevan, Anna O’Conner, Reckl Rey

On behalf of the *Radar* Lines collective, Alison and I would like to thank Reckl for joining us to edit this special issue. A keen teacher and political activist, her wise academic and political knowledge, wise address book, humanity and generosity of spirit are reflected in every page of this issue.
Alison Hean, Alan O'Connor, Becki Ross

Editorial

Articles:

4. What Colour Is Your Underwear?: Class, Whiteness and Homonormative Advertising

Noreen Stevens

10. Billbarding Homo-Erotica

R.M. Vaughs

20. If Silence = Death, How Can You Live Without Me?

karen/miranda augustine

22. bizarre women, exotic bodies and outrageous sex; or if ontic sparkle was a black box she wouldn't be off that

Rachel Giese

28. Lesbian Chic: I Feel Pretty and Witty and Gay

Courtney McFarlane

34. Consentship, Passion and Identity

Vinita Srivastava

37. You Stretch Me

Nicholas Packwood

44. Looking Hot: Gay Performances of Masculinity

Interviews:

Helen Lee

14. Interview with Midi Okedara

Alain O'Connor

32. One Catherine, Alter Another: An Interview with Sarah Schulman in New York

In Memoriam:

Robyn Gillies, Joe Golbi

48. Daniel Jones

Reviews:

Becki Ross

43. On Shogun Adelman's Teen Donna

Cynthia Wright

49. On Sixteen, Sexperts, Queens Beyond the Lesbian Nation

Francisco Baxter-Carrasco

51. On Proud, Cule Porter, Michelangelo...

Gretchen Zimmerman

52. On The Persistent Desire: A Femmes/Butch Reader

Poetry:

Stuart Blackley

25. For Doug Wilson: Something in My Eye, Sleeping With The Enemy

Lola Phase

30. Cold To The Famoso Mystique

Brandon Brooks

36. One Angelic Kiss, Local Honey

Ian Iqbal Rashid

46. Mungo Boy (or Identity Poem), The Heat Yesterday

Book Notes

Shogun Adelman

43. Average Good Looks

Bob Ross

45. Rip Rap

Ellen Flinders

48. Joey Pong

Jennifer Gillmor

50. Julie Pintner

Cindy Parker

51. Becki Ross

R.M. Vaughs

52. Cover: "It's long's tongue revealed it" from a photograph by Hub Rim

Design:

John Jaworski & Co. with assistance from Roger Bidwell

Lawyer/Attorney:

Robert Searby

Outreach & Skills

Printing:

Spring Press

Editorial Address:

The Graffiti Building
105 Bathurst Street, Suite 601
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1M7

Telephone: 416.965.2600
Fax: 416.965.2617

Subscriptions

Border Lines

Berklee College

York University

490 Queen Street

North York, Ontario

C3D 5R1

Subscription Rates:

12 issues per year, $35 in Canada, $40 outside Canada

In Canada: Border Lines

Smalley Street, Suite 101

Tel: 416-965-2600

In the U.S.: Borderlines

1111 East 3rd Street

Los Angeles, CA 90033

Tel: 302-659-0738

The contents of this issue are available in a public domain format from the Ontario College of Art: www.oca.on.ca

This document contains information about the current issue of Border Lines, its contributors and editors. This information is intended for the general public and is not meant to be used for any commercial or promotional purposes. Any reproduction of this content without permission is prohibited. Border Lines Magazine Society Inc. is a non-profit organization engaged in promoting literacy, visual and media educational accessibility in Canada, for your and your community's benefit.

Federal Copyright Notice: © 1995 by Border Lines Magazine Society Inc. Copyright reserved to contributors upon publication.

Printed and Published in Canada, 1995, by Border Lines Magazine Society Inc.
what colour is your underwear:

Class, Whiteness & HOMOEROTIC Advertising

by Steven Maynard

We are at the 1983 Toronto Festival of Festivals, at the Q & A session following the screening of Greg Araki's new film Totally Fucked Up. As he takes the questions from the audience, Araki casually but deliberately lifts his black T-shirt several times to flash the waistband of his underwear. It was a can of holy muttering shit. For the audience of teenaged boys in Araki's film, whether lounging on a bed or sitting in a corner, the costume of choice is underwear. In the filmmaking world, Araki is not alone in his obsession. I would not be the first to call attention to the scenes in Tom Kalin's Swoon that looked distinctly like Bruce Weber's commercials for Calvin Klein. More than a signifier in queer cultural aesthetics, underwear is everywhere.

With the emergence of specialty underwear stores, window displays of underwear have become a visible marker on the streetscapes of many urban gay ghettos. The textual circulation of underwear — on everything from cards advertising the latest underwear warehouse party, to their ubiquitous presence in the leather/gay press — is virtually impossible to avoid. And it is more than a textual formation. In the bars, clubs are underwear parties and wet jockey shorts contests. As anyone who has cruised a phone-sex line or bathhouse will know, underwear plays an organizing role in the sexual scripts and practices of many gay men.
Underwear also figures prominently within homosocial advertising, I am going to assume that I do not have to convince most people that the focus of my interest here are practices that are commonly perceived as "homosocial" (Figure 1). Even in mainstream men's fashion magazines it is now commonplace to acknowledge that homosocial imagery abounds in fashion. The New York Times has commented on the homosocial content of Calvin Klein's ads.

To say this is not to suggest that the ads are "gay." Photographs, of course, do not have inherent sexual identities but take on sexual meanings only in the context of their use. Advertisements are part of a complex relationship between image and spectator. It might be more profitable to look at men's underwear ads as an aspect of gay culture. What I have recently called the "homosocial potential," or the way in which the ads construct a semiotic homosocial plane regardless of the sexual identity of the male viewing the ad. At any time, one can see the textual and visual cues that create an idealized object of desire for the straight man in the medium's equilibrium with desire for the consumer's desire for the object. This is a thin line between identification with and desire for the bodies of the models in the ads.

While I am fascinated by the process of identification, it is important to note that advertising is not the only way in which we are exposed to images of gay men, fashion magazines, for example. Despite the attention to such magazines that have a significant impact on our self-identification with gay culture, we need to broaden our horizons. Underwear of various descriptions appeared in gay porn magazines long before they did in gay. What Calvin Klein ads tend to do is to dovetail these connotations with conventions of gay pornography so that gay men can read subtextual meanings in the way that straight consumers do not. For example, the underwear consumer will not notice the "success of this marketing strategy can be measured in part by the way in which even traditional underwear companies, such as Bra/Mal/Rand and Forsmaid's, have homosocialized their recent ad campaigns.

Most analyses of men's fashion ads tend to focus on the ads on the phenomenon of commodification and masquerades in commodity positioning that results in changing definitions of masculinity as we move within gay pop culture. I think they do — how many of us have seen posters advertising Marky Mark in his Calvin Klein ads in the 1990s? — the Solvay bodies in these ads reified the masculinity of gay men over the past two decades. But an analysis focused exclusively on commodification or gender over looks that the ads are also about class and race.

To look at these images and the broader industries of which they are part focuses our attention on the process of class formation within lesbian and gay communities. It is clear, for example, that while advertisers talk about the gay market, they are not actually talking about lesbians and gays in general, but about a particular class, race, and gender. A more nuanced examination of the advertising community requires a more detailed exploration of class and race. For example, women of color and lesbians are often excluded from the dominant narratives of gay culture. In the next section, I will focus on the role of race in gay culture and the way in which it affects our understanding of gender and sexuality.

The point about class is a simple one, but it is important to note that so much recent queer work within cultural studies addresses issues of class. This is particularly ironic because so many of the cultural studies texts that are objects of study by queer theorists are the products of late capitalism. This conflation is usually handled by authors by acknowledging at the outset of their articles that they are dealing with the features of western, capitalist economies and cultures, but then go on to write about their chosen subjects as if class did not exist or matter.

The case of underwear ads makes this kind of analytical manoeuvre problematic for so many. But the decisions made by the companies are not the only reason that women's and men's underwear ads are not the same. Men's underwear ads are not the same because of the way in which sexuality is performed and represented in these ads. For example, women's underwear ads are often more explicitly sexual, while men's underwear ads are more focused on functionality and performance. This is not to say that women's underwear ads are not sexual, but rather that they are more likely to be accompanied by text that emphasizes the functionality of the product. Men's underwear ads, on the other hand, often focus more on the aesthetics of the product, with little emphasis on its performance characteristics. This difference is likely to be the result of the different ways in which women and men perceive and use underwear.
known for the creation of homoerotic imagery. Weber's commercial photography has also been described by critic Anne Russell as the "invention of a world of queer/Wrap." On the obvious level, we can note that the models are all white and that, even though Klein Ayres his paints covers different colors, the products' choice for advertisement — it is a shirt, boxer shorts, britches, or athletic underwear — is always white. Weber's characteristically black and white photography functions to emphasize, sometimes to almost illuminate, the whiteness of the fabric.

Both these images of whiteness are in other ways as well. Note the often non-clinical alliances of the image (Figure 2). This plays upon a long tradition of association between classical Greek society and homoeroticism. It is the same tradition that was taken up by many German photographers in the early twentieth century who were involved with the physical culture movement that emphasized the cult of the body. One of these photographs, Herbert List, is someone whose white body achieves the same mass influence. We also know that the Weimar Republic gave way to Hitler and the rise of the Nazi Party. It is well documented that the Nazis incorporated the classical impetus within their art and culture, and that the cult of the body became associated with the physical perfection of the white body and the strength and spirituality of the Aryan race. All this is not to say that Bruce Weber is a fascist. It is to suggest that in Weber's photography and in Calvin Klein ads I think a number of historical-clientural continuities in ways which produce a not so subtle slippage between homoeroticism and whiteness, homoeroticism comes to be defined as white.

Homoeroticism is not simply associated with whiteness in these images. It is wrapped up in notions of white social dominance. This occurs partly through historical alliances, but also through the internal composition of the photograph. There is a focus in these images on the youthful, muscular, powerful body. It is not, however, a direct emphasis on the body as we only see the body through the product. If we take the underwear to be a number of whiteness, then we are seeing through whiteness to power. All of these ads are implicated in racism through acts of exclusion, by the fact that men of colour do not appear. Thus, they also do not imply a definition of power as white.

Having gone over this ground, I want to turn briefly to the politics of underwear ads. As already mentioned, the ads bring into view a process described by cultural theorists in which elements of distinctive subcultures are commodified. To take one example, consider how "Grey Liberation: Once the Colour of Coarseness" — the title of a fashion layout in Details magazine — homoerotic gay politics to sell grey clothes in a mainstream magazine. Much of what Dancey Clark says about style and commodity can also be said about politics: "Because style is cultural construction, it is easily appropriated, reconstructed and divested of its original political or subcultural adjudication. Style as resistance becomes commodifiable, as chic when it locates the political notion and enters the fashion world." As one more example. Aids shoes has recently taken to advertising its products alongside a red ribbon, although it's actually unclear whether the "Aids for Life" campaign involves AIDS fundraising or not.

While the ads teases us with homoerotic looks and meanings, few really go so far as actually representing gay culture or gay sexuality. There is no important visual representation of the over-increasing visibility of queer culture and capitalism's need for queer money, this is not to say about gay and lesbian magazines and the ways that they commodify and appropriate相同的性腺的在我们的社会中。In addition to sexual liberation, we must also be alive to the many varied pleasure homoerotic advertising may hold for the queer spectator.

In terms of the gay market, even though it is directed at a specific and narrow segment of the gay community, we all live with the way in which it identifies us as consumers and promotes a popular understanding of being lesbian or gay as a lifestyle. There is a reason that during Queer Nation, one of the buttons we wore was a button that read "I'm not who I was 'then we're queer, and we're not going shopping."

Alongside the increasing numbers of mainstream companies openly willing to court the queer consumer, specifically lesbian and gay marketing firms like食べ物 Grey and H&M continue to proliferate. They all decline being lesbian and gay in terms of what we buy. Such a view of our sexualities may define us as consumers, but not necessarily as people with political rights.

The realm of advertising and consumption also becomes a contradictory arena for our political energies. Traditionally, this has most often taken the form of the boycott. We have used our power as consumers to force companies to particular directions. Some argue that our much-valued consumer loyalty pays off in the end. Was it not, after all, gay men's preference for Stonewall flyers for love that led to the Hey butler. Corporations to pass non-discrimination policies, extend benefits to lesbigay employees, and to support a gay boycott of the Bay Streets?

Sometimes the ads themselves become the focus of political action. A Kensington ad that departs the letters "FIFTY" posted on a red ribbon is only the most recent of several ads by Kenneth that has angered AIDS activists. There were also the famous "Toyata" which pictured two white gay men, their dalmatian dog, a picnic basket and of course a Toyota with the caption "The Family Car." The ad featured lesbian/straight, but even after much pressure, Toyota refused to pull the ad. It was not that Toyota had suddenly taken up the cause of protecting lesbians and gays from right-wing attacks, but as one commentator noted: "fundamentalists tend to have low disposable incomes, which makes them less important than gays anyway."

The Globe and Mail summed up the connection between consumption and politics this way: "wearing gold credit cards at retail centric companies...may obliterate for lesbians (and gays) what years of wandering pluckled in the street failed to accomplish."

All of this raise important political questions. I think we need to ask ourselves if we are satisfied with the displacement of politics from the streets to the marketplace. How does a politics rooted in consumption speak to the many lesbians and gays who are excluded from the world of queer money? What are our needs to the politics of the marketplace that such institutions as the police or the legal system?

One of Bruce Weber's recent queer ad campaigns, entitled "My Closest Family," a series of photos of models, together, family and gay and lesbian "families," captures the romance and charm of the aesthetic revolution (Figure 4). It should be noted that Bruce Weber has run this kind of other campaigns in the lesbian/gay press, particularly in the stylish pages of Out magazine. Against the dominance of the heterosexual formal form, the ads are a powerful affirmative of the right to choose a variety of family arrangements. Against the unanimity of aesthetic to "queerspiele" of queersacral, the slippage within the ads between the families and sexualities suggests that erotic preferences are also chosen. But on the question of how to change the world to look like the one represented in the photographs, the ads remain silent. Choosing one's family and living one's erotic life freely will not be achieved by buying a Bruce Weber T-shirt or wearing grey clothes.

As far as my case, I want real changes. I want underwear, style and popular culture in a way that recognizes these relations and revels in their plenitude and sometimes subver- sive silence. And I also want my politics in the street. All of this is what I mean when I talk "what colour is your underwear?"

Steven Maynard is a gay social historian. He is completing a PhD thesis on urban space, policing, and the making of homosexual archives in the mid-twentieth Canada.
“Noreen Stevens, you are a menace to society. You should be shot dead.”

(Answering machine message on my home phone, October 12, 1993.)

---NOREEN STEVENS---

When Sheila Spence and I tell the story of our visual arts collective, Average Good Looks, we tell it chronologically. I once thought this was for convenience, a way to make a complicated story more clear. Increasingly I understand that chronology - the linear march of time, one event methodically following another - is inherent to the nature of Average Good Looks.
Looking back I can speak conceptually about Average Good Looks as an actory and a body of work, as public art, activist art, advocacy other than. But it begins an idea, and an impulse, one project, then one event followed another. We had no idea.

On Lesbian and Gay Pride Day 1993 a man was beaten and drowned in Winnipeg. There were witnesses on apartment balconies across the river who did nothing. Sheila wanted to respond to the incident and in conversation with Cal Asmundson and me, and with the support of Plug in Gallery who funded the project and billboard space, the Homophobia is Killing Us billboard was developed. The only time I recall experiencing any foreboding of what was to come the three of us were sitting around Cal’s living room. The finished design for the billboard lay on the table between us. Translated by the image, we were trying to write just the people’s responses to the billboard. Would they notice? Would they be upset? There had been very few art actions of this type ever made and certainly none had ever taken place in Winnipeg. We didn’t know what to expect but I had a strong feeling that we just might be upsetting the proverbial apple cart.

And as the controversy began, I faced a markup of the billboard to Mediacom for a quote on printing and installation. They refused a quote as well as a comment on the tragedy of homophobia. I sent the finished artwork to Mediacom and, for the first time, they did a good look at the photograph. They refused to print the piece, taking note of the Taste and Public Goodness Clause of the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards which says “advertising must not portray sexually...in a manner which is offensive to generally prevailing standards.”

We tried every approach we could think of but the Mediacom people were clearly not going to change their minds. A press release was issued and immediately the photo Mediacom didn’t want the public to see was on the front page of the Winnipeg Sun the next day. The rejected billboard received a good deal of attention, locally and nationally, Mediacom was not being portrayed favorably. Our biggest concern was trying to get the billboard up; no small feat in the midst of all this controversy. Our billboard has quietly become a hot potato. We did find someone. Prance Beaum, an artist, who could do it. We tried to accommodate something of this size and he knew a guy who would put it up.

At this point the story goes off in a couple of directions. We decided to file a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission against Mediacom for discrimination based on sexual orientation. At the same time, the billboard finally went up. Spurred by the attention it had already received, the installation was well covered by the press and the photograph we had set to record responses to the billboard was raking off the hoist. Four days after the installation the billboard was pulled, and the answering machine message was altered via remote control. We would later find out it was the work of the Soo Kiu Kook Kain. Changes were dropped on a technologically.

Meanwhile the Manitoba Human Rights Commission officer to mediate a settlement between Average Good Looks and Mediacom. After a meeting several meetings Mediacom agreed to install two more billboard projects for us, one on the Plug in billboard and a larger campaign on Mediacom structures across Winnipeg. It was an enormous victory.

In June of 1993 we were invited to Passion Pink!, an exhibition on the subject of homophobia at Gallery 101, in Ottawa. We mounted a great copy of the billboard and the vandalized version which we had salvaged and edited the answering machine tapes for continuing play in the gallery. I think it was beginning to ask of us that we were beyond one idea, one project. Average Good Looks was taking shape. We were onto something. We had stumbled onto something.

Homophobia varies because les- bians and gays are invisible and we choose invisibility because we fear homophobia. Or we choose to be vis- ible. And in the late 19th, late 20th cen- tury works the mainstream media is the fast track to visibility.

Now we had a mandate: “Average Good Looks creates positive images of lesbians and gays for display in the public domain.” And we were faced with the challenge of how our art could be a tool for social and political activism, how our ability to access visual images could be vital to a political movement that lacked visibility.

At Passion Pink we played our answering machine tapes for the first time and got a sense of their power and potential. Silence, like invisibility, is the enemy of the lesbian and gay rights movement. People don’t understand homosexuality because they don’t talk about it. It’s taboo. It’s systemat- ically disregarded. Without our phone-lines, Average Good Looks creates a framework which gives the diverse public permission to talk about homosexuality.

We had explored playing the messages in a gallery setting during Passion Pink, and the Winnipeg Sun had broadcast some of the calls for a story, but that wasn’t until our second billboard campaign, Lesbian. It’s not a dirty word in December 1992 that we deliberately pursued the “dialogue” variant, for example, we used the story of the billboard and the messages as a hook or call-in radio program.

We understand, too, that the power of our human images to provoke the obscenities, the death threats, the hate mail that is com- posed on the answering machine is significant. Our choice to be visibly engaging has, ironically, invited the most robust and irrational responses. Our third and most recent campaign, gays and lesbians, our family, our family, developed during a residency at the Banff Center for the Arts, perhaps best exemplified our strategies. The effort, the final pieces of our set with Mediacom, was installed in birght places in Ottawa, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg in August 1995, with local pioneers in each city.

Sheila and I have talked often of various ways to use the answering machine tapes, hours and hours of raw material and endless possibilities. Currently Margo Chisholm, Artistic Director of the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba is collaborating with video artist Hope Paskin and musician Marilyn Laran on an experiments proposition twelve piece which builds upon the answering machine below. Called Magpie, it will debut November 27, 1999, as part of festivals Ground, Vernon, VII, Winnipeg.

The Average Good Looks story is now up to date. I know things now I never thought I’d know three years ago. I know about the Queer Alliance of the Ku Klux Klan. I know how to talk to the media and not get into trouble. I know it takes two days to bind print a dozen copies of their first billboard.

And I know that Average Good Looks is making a difference because, for all the wits and quirky that call the answering machines, there are many others who say thank you.

Karen Stevens is a Winnipeg-based visual artist, and a member, with Stella Spencer, of Average Good Looks.
MIDI ONODERA

Interview

with Helen Lee

Toronto-born and based, Midi Onodera makes films of uncommon ambition. As a project, her films involve explorations of race, gender and desire, motivated by experiments with the medium. Under the rubric of women and cinema, her work occupies a special, shared space (as Onodera later points out) "Tono" and formally inventive films such as Ten Cent A Dance (Paradise) (1980) and The Displaced View (1989) — films in which Onodera herself appears — have mined this intersection where female authorship meets the unexpected contours and itineries of lesbian experience, representation and cultural history. Add influences such as early feminist film, new narrative and a queer punk aesthetic, and Onodera seems damn near unclassifiable. And she likes it that way.

Seductions of The Moon. Onodera's first feature film, is currently undergoing completion with anticipated release in 1994. The story involves Alex Koyama (played by Natsumo Ohno), a woman who embarks on making a film about tattooing where she meets the intense, enigmatic Chris Black (Keram Malicki Sanchez). In the downtown Toronto art scene, Alex becomes increasingly drawn into a world of body alteration, transsexuality and personal transformation. The film stars Diana Brooke as Penny Louter, Alex's close friend and confidante, and Melanie Nicholas-Baker as Alex's assistant, Montse. In addition to making Seductions of The Moon, Onodera is also producing a Super-8 feature film, Girls in the Band, directed by Candy Faulker.

MO: Maybe I can start at the beginning. The reason that I got into film in the first place was the fact that film brings together all of the elements that I wanted to explore in photography, writing, and visual art. I guess what I was interested in was making art. There are all these terms that are thrown around in the industry like director, filmmaker and author, but I still like to think that I am an artist at the core. That's not to say that directors can't be artists, it's just that I feel that my approach to filmmaking is coming from an artistic background and practice rather than a commercial sensibility or motive.

HL: How would you describe the relationship between your earlier films and this new film?
MO: In the very early days, I was really trying to figure out how film worked. So many of the early films are concentrated on one area, like the use of music and the elements of composition, very formal elements like that. Then I would toy with a story on top of the visual component. I guess that's how I came to produce Ten Cent A Dance, which had a formal, technical backbone and a narrative which augmented the theme of the film. That's how I see film working. I like to find a technical device which enhances the content or the theme of the piece.

HL: What was the technical side in Seductions of The Moon?
MO: The technical side was the structure of a conventional drama. I realized that the things I wanted to say within that construction were very outside of a conventional narrative. So by engaging in a form that was already considered mainstream and accepted, I could bring in other elements that were completely foreign to that structure. So I hope that by using that kind of framework I'm more accessible in terms of an audience that would actually see the film, and hopefully they will get something out of it because of the content.

HL: Apart from the formal challenge of making a drama, what was the original idea for this film?
MO: Right after The Displaced View (in 1989), I wanted to do something that was in a way similar to the themes explored in Ten Cent A Dance (Paradise), something that dealt with sexuality and gender identity. So I started examining the links between sexuality and gender, specifically transsexuality. I did a lot of research, just because I didn't know very much about transsexuality and I really wanted to do a thorough job on it. Very early on I found out that female to male, and male to female philosophies, history and context were completely different from each other. So when you talk about transsexuality, you have to ask, which gender to which gender are you talking about?

There's been quite a lot done on male to female, on one would expect in this culture. For instance, mainstream films like Footloose and Mrs. Doubtfire comically explore the cross-dressing theme. But there has been very little done on female to male. It's a similar phenomenon in the medical world. Medical treatment for women is less advanced than it is for men, and a clear example of this is sexual re-assignment surgery. Men have very little trouble transforming into women but women still have a difficult time going the other way. So I spent a lot of time on research, writing, and re-writing and trying to figure out what the story was, and who the characters were.

HL: So the core of the film was around transsexuality?
MO: Yeah, the ideas and the issues in the film have not changed since the beginning. If anything, I think they've grown and become more ingrained in the characters rather than a theoretical essay applied to something. So it becomes more of a character trait or a character insight than "this is my theory and I want to prove it." I think that part of the magic in a conventional drama is the power the characters hold for the audience. If an audience finds the characters interesting then the story will most likely be interesting.

HL: Transsexuality and tattooing are two different degrees, taboo subjects. And they also have, as I'm sure you've found, very developed communities. Can...
YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE REPRESENTATIONAL PROCESS OF RECRUITING "SOUTHERN" WORLDS INTO A THEATRICAL FEATURE, AN UNUSUALLY MORE MAINSTREAM CONTEXT. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF WOMEN IN QUEER SOUTHERN CINEMA TO BECOME POP CULTURAL ICONS ON ENTERTAINMENT NIGHT?

Q: I'm not sure I understand your question. The concept of recruiting "southern" worlds into a theatrical feature might seem unusual, but when you say "more mainstream context," are you referring to the representation of women in queer Southern cinema as pop cultural icons on television or in entertainment media? I'm interested in discussing how this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema.

Q: I'm interested in the question of how women are represented in Southern cinema. The representation of women in queer Southern cinema as pop cultural icons is a fascinating topic. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?

Q: I'm interested in the ways in which women are represented in queer Southern cinema. How do you think this represents a departure from traditional depictions of women in Southern cinema?
HL: How much have filmmakers like Sue Friedrich or Chantal Akerman, lesbian filmmakers who are truly iconoclastic in my mind, been precedents for you?
MO: Chantal Akerman was a major influence on me in the beginning. I found her work, especially her earlier work, extremely exciting. There was a raw energy and an aggressive exploration which flowed through her films that I could relate to. It wasn't that I wanted to produce work that was similar to hers, it was more about having the confidence to break down the barriers that existed for women during the formalism movement. By the way, Sue spilled backwards is "un" and we all influence each other.

HL: How is this context different for a Canadian filmmaker, not just all the other subcategories: independent, woman, Asian, lesbian, Japanese Canadian...do I miss any others? Who supports you — where do you find your support? Women filmmakers, especially, are not getting many opportunities in making feature films in Canada.
MO: I'm sure you missed a few categories, like meat-eating and pet-owning, but I don't know if it's specifically different for Canadian women making features as opposed to American women. Private film investment is still not as high as I believed it is in the States. There is very little foundation support for filmmaking in this country and just the population difference between Canada and the US makes a big difference in how we make our work. Here, there is very big division between art films and television films whereas in the States and in Europe I think that these definitions are less rigid.

As far as support, financially I have been very fortunate to receive funding from the arts council and smaller community organizations like the Toronto Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal. Personally, for this film, the most significant support has come from my partner, my producers, Philip Ign and Helene Zucchi. My parents, friends and peers. This is extremely important to me because without the ongoing emotional support of those around me, it would probably be impossible to take risks in my work.

Helen Lee is a Toronto-based filmmaker, writer and critic.

of aspects that I want to develop through my films and not all of these directly relate to a specific sexuality. Again, my own sexuality is just a small point of who I am. I don't want to be limited to produce a certain type of film, I want the freedom to explore themes and issues that I find interesting, not case that are "in" politically. The same goes for the form which I choose to engage in — for instance. The Displaced View was exploiting the boundaries of documentary film and Sadness Of The Moon deals with a conventional narrative structure. I don't know what my next film will look like.
Silence —
Death,
how can you
live without
me?

R. M. Vaughan

As a gay artist, I've grown used to being described as "lesbian"—too dead, too angry, too graphic, too far. I've had countless arguments with straight artists who claim my work is only valid as a kind of cultural "artistic" statement. My personal position as an out faggot not only informs my world, they argue, it also supports the subtext and reading of the work—subtext, style, and total being the exclusive property of "artistic" straight artists. No matter what sort of work I do, no matter what subject matters entice me, I am, according to my straight colleagues, a "gay activist" first and an artist second. Ignoring my daily reality of dealing with bigoted publishers, censoring art dealers, and timid grand juries, straight artists love to tell me how lucky I am—after all, I've got a ticket on the minority gravy train. I've got a chip. If it's so simple (and pref- fectable), why don't they just pretend to be fags and dykes? Constantly having my work read first as gay product makes me defensive, and probably a bit paranoid. It also, unfortunately, causes me to indulge in some naive illusions about the commonality and community, of Queer artists. After some years of being told that I'm "lesbian," I've just discovered that in some Queer art circles I'm not "enough."

Out and about OUT: whose self-representation is it, any- way?

Several months ago I submitted some work to a Toronto magazine in response to their upcoming All Queer issue. After a cursory glance at my slides, the art editor informed me that my work simply wasn't "gay enough" to be published. I jokingly suggested: spray paint the word FAG over each of my paintings.

"Hmm," he replied, in earnest, "That would be cool."

Thus, in the same spirit of redneckish art thinking (about, this tapestry artist would like to offer to other underestimated artists: strength included) a simple:

1. Get naked.
2. Get some groups—sports expeditions, domestic straits, band pajamas, a pair of heels, another naked leg. A cheap way to the best view in the Joyce Hotel.
3. Take a picture of yourself looking:
   a) aggressive
   b) sexy and knowing, like you've been around
   c) weary and bemused, weight of
d) hazy light (tan black suit while shirt only)
e) bored with it all
4. Apply the foregoing norms to the image of your naked lover, covering your ass (for private shows/galleries) or your Mirror (for public shows): Fag, Faggot, Queer, Queer, Queer, Queer, Fairy, Tries, Steve, Master, Player (public galleries), Victim (private galleries).
5. Pose with or more naked legs in a provocative, non-sexualized manner that cleary hides the most common and/or genital nudity in some or all of you. Reduce these non-idealized basics to angles and lighting and optical clinicals (region, black and white about set). Project an image of these latest slippings from these frightening newspapers and eras of the names of dead faggots from the middle-mid nineties (private galleries), or fag- gots killed by AIDS (also private galleries).
6. Share your head.
7. Modify the means from number 6 with racial change—everyone will know that you can't mean it "cause you're home and you understand oppression.
8. Type up some stories about getting the shit beat out of you in high school, all those in a glass vial, and position them next to the images of your newly maimed, asked Queer self.
9. Find a gentlemanly gay art dealer and brighten him into exhibiting your work—he will invite other gay gentiles to his gallery and brighten them into buying your work.
10. Invent—remember what happened to all those graffiti artists with names like Zane 3000 and Rico X70? Or Mark Hambell?
11. Finish your MFA. You can always fall back on teaching.
The new school of lesbian pro-sex activism has been pushed into the mainstream of queer political thought. Important in it is for women’s issues to be placed at the center, and particularly so since lesbians generally have little emotional or financial dependence on men, throughout the bulk of sex roles, porn, and the Modern Primitivism trend. At heart is an unacknowledged presence of culture-validation dependent on racialized sexist drives of white quasars.

As a queer-identified Black woman, I have felt unsatisfied by the sexual liberation rhetoric that firmly anchored within lesbian and gay spaces. S/M, dyke representation, censorship, pornography, sexual fantasies: this connotes women’s sexual practice within the mainstream of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities has consistently disregarded the very complex issue of race—and where it all sits—within these discussions.

I’m not big on sexuality theories because the very things that swell my clit, when thrown into the whirlwind of lesbian political correctness, just don’t figure. And depending on how strong I’m feeling, shame is often the outcome if what’s turning me on is deemed degrading to my sex by the progressive elite. Put quite simply, I don’t claim definitive politics on a lot of these issues, but I do understand what makes me wet.

I am a consumer of pornography. Hot porn, that is. I have been so since the age of 11. Cherie, Penthouse... you name it, I boarded it. What I realized then was that Black female porn stars (like their Asian, Latino, Arab, and Jewish sisters) were left to the pangs of literal nangs, alluding to themes of cannibalism, bestiality, and slavery. What I understand now is that race is the distinguishing feature in determining the type of objectification a woman will encounter. And believe me, the sexualities of the queer scene need a wake-up call: this problem is alive and well and deeply embedded within our communities. This is mind, a historical briefing on Black sexual consumption will bring me back to my case in point.

the 411

Links made between the eroticization of Black sexuality, myths surrounding “whiteness” and colonial culture are lacking in the bulk of queer sex-lib theories. In examining the supposed normality of “whiteness” and the colonial construction of Black sexuality—and more importantly, how to reconceptualize that image—a different impression of the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, sexuality, power, and control could emerge.

The use of Black women’s bodies as fetish and “entertainment” for Europeans has its roots within the colonization of Africa. In France during the 18th and 19th centuries, the sexuality of African slaves was studied by scientists, naturalists, and writers. The results deemed the African woman as primitive and therefore more sexually intensive. Interestingly enough, these “studies” which perceived the African/him/ them from the European/us”—not just physically, but morally—distorted African sexual agency, and pathologized women’s sexuality on the whole. The cult of (white) womanhood, was confined to notions of purity, chastity, passivity, and prudence. Black womanhood was polarized against white womanhood in the structure of the metaphoric system of female sexuality—the Black woman became closely identified with illitity sex.

Sarah Bartmann’s Girlie Show

The genitalia of selected African slave women—referred to as “Hottentots”—was examined in order to prove them a primitive species who most likely copulated with apes. According to Spencer Gilmour, one of many African women placed on display, Sarah Bartmann, referred to as the “Hottentot Venus,” is but one example of Black female objectification during early 19th century Europe. Her display formed one of the original icons for Black female sexualitiy; Bartmann was often exhibited at fashionable parties in Paris, generally wearing little clothing, to provide entertainment. To her audience, she represented derisive sexuality. Reduced to her sexual parts, Ms. Bartmann was shorned for about 5 years until her death at age 25 in 1815. To add insult to injury, her genitalia were dissected and—in this very day—put on display at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris.

Present day notions of “fixed” and “open” sexuality rely specifically on this historically-specific interpretation of Black womanhood.

Fuck Lea Delaria & Her Big Black Dildo Jokes

question: what is more intimidating: a man, or a big man, or a black man?

question: rough sex—who are you most likely to get it from? an Asian, an African?

question: what makes Latinos so “hot-blooded”?

The onslaught of dyke sex paraphernalia, in an attempt to overthrow the strictures of
(white) womanhood, reinserts itself by commodifying "otherness" within certain sexual/sexual practices:

- body piercing, tattoos and scarification are part of the Modern Primitives (in offensive and loaded terms) movement, forms of body adornment inherent within Indigenous and Eastern cultures;
- in "Leatherwomen, a book of women's sex writings, a (straight-identified) white woman is gang raped by 1 Black and 2 Latina women (never mind that Blacks, Latins and First Nations form the majority of those incarcerated) who are portrayed as being sexually "deviant" and violent;
- and, in "Love Notes," a book of letters, photograph, white dykes fuck each other with big, black dildos.

Talks regarding the representation of women in porn and erotic writing have for too long privileged white gender and sexuality. Unchallenged racism is reflected in both and queer space: Black men are reduced to the size and effectiveness of their penises, while Black, Asian, Latina, Arab and Jewish women are viewed as anomalies, exotic treats and fetishism.

Receptivity notions of a person-of-colour's body suggest intense sexual pleasure unknown to the vanilla experience.

cross-over vanillas

Receptivity may claim censorship over my blunt observations of race and representation. And receptivity from the pink third space may attempt to regulate how we, as queer-of-colours, should knock boots proper (read: no B/W).

Yet most needed in a level of acknowledged and social understanding regarding the cultural specificities of sexual expression. Non-sexual examples include how dancemuzik, rap and Black speech are misinterpreted in the mainstream by non-Black audiences. And how, in porn and other sex-mut, the racialization of Black and Brown people is taken to the nth power and most extreme level. Perhaps what I'm trying to express most is that a lot of the debates presume that we are all white and that the confines of white body culture apply to us all. And this just isn't so.

Stressed here is not a simple trashing of lesbian-fuck culture, but the limitations and myopia of a sex-club scene that is stuck in the rut of racial ambivalence. What one has the right to fantasize about or sexually imitate is not the issue here. The question how estranged is that sexual fantasy/practice in the myth of progressive representation and the transcendency of white patriarchal expression is key.

---

for Doug Wilson

a wall fell down, a field of muddy bootprints like scattered bricks, in early spring
then again, climbed by winter, hard and white as a public toilet
shocked by the headlong rush of green never before seen, every year, the spire that never comes, every year
exhausting itself to the bones of a million wheat, the soft, curvaceous ass over the black earth
then shocked, in gauzy flannel stacked by a few archaeists filing for winter
and again, summer and again, for us, spring

Something in My Eye

My eye shifted like the harem from safety to sudden unwholesome, or the prone pushing further to an unexpected depth without warning, the platform spiny, the mother unrecognizable in evening wear
So my head tracks a curvature inverse and speed its reading deeply across the dank wood of this book, left through to right against the grain, particles floating to reach the eyes in a haze of scented savannah hearing physical memories in letter form, hard infections, the stabbed notes inscribed in65gapping moments.
And my eyes too casting off not a vision precisely but a fragrant, an outpouring of every rational substance once transcribed by time with the elation of roses, iris, helicon, cornas... now in hanging garlands, in slappy handfuls tossed into the disintegrating air, the chimerical masses of pulp and perceptive flesh.

---

Sleeping With the Enemy

The first lesson does not appear for some time. Its quiet mood ripples below the thin veil cracking a moment undreamt of revenge hovering, static giving way to defining flesh and the horse of the body speaking for the rest of us. We moan the taste of bodies unmade and memed. We lie with the enemy and share the remembered flavour of animal limbs that arched our backs with tidal shocks, receiving every pulse. Our open mouths shun the pleasure our pores speak of delicious corners and endless human corridors leading to no place.
We miss the skin's vague contour. We lie with the enemy on resilient sheets, limp with suspense needy with the dreams of each recent emission. The body is an everything burnt breath through every fiber the fluid exchange of sentences, parsed or essential down to a tender contract. This paper of flesh furnishes this counseling a dermat. We are left with this. But the lambent body articulates itself ennatiating nothing leaving sight as skull, as sanctuary.
No one permits its editorial unedited reflection. You are left with me and the touch of a rhythmic figure.

Stuart Blackley
Lesbian Chic: I feel pretty & witty & gay

Once upon a time,

In the 1970s, gay men ruled. In the urban centers of San Francisco, New York and LA, they gave the best parties, designed the best clothes and choreographed the best shows. Modern day Noel Coward, they could always be counted on for the wittiest remarks and the daintest gossip.

Then came the 1980s and with the shadow that AIDS cast on them, gay men were no longer so attractive. Heterosexuality came back in with a vengeance. Women like Nancy Reagan and Joan Collins became the drag queens of choice. Straight people took over the clubs and started finding their own connections to cocaine. The decade was still about excess, but it was financial in nature, not sexual.

The high living of the 1980s gave way to the recessionary 1990s and the world needed a new sexual orientation to give meaning to the decade. The media seized upon lesbians. They were the perfect image for the scaled-down, renting 1990s. Their sex was safe and their relationships were long lasting. According to the media, lesbians had shed the negative image that had plagued them in the 1970s—as man-hating separatists. In the intervening years, lesbians had apparently discovered sex, Nair and Armani. And the media was ready to discover them.

The beginnings of the Lesbian Chic phenomenon can be traced back to when Sandra Bernhard got together with Morgan Fairchild on Broadway. Glued to our sets,
we barely made it out of our living- room to buy the National Enquirer with a movie star on the front page. A woman, familiar with the news, said, "There's too much kissing and cuddling lesbians call home."

Then Lea DeLaria screamed, "I'm a bender on Arena Hall and we peep the hearts of America. New York magazine, already famous for breaking both the New Yippie and the New Coach potato trends, swooped again. This time with a cover story on the New Lesbian, "Lesbian Chic," shrieked the headline above the cover photo of K.d. lang, "the bold, brave new world of gay women."

Other media were quick to pick up on this trend. Newsweek magazine asked the burning question "lesbianism—what does it mean?" on its cover star, Cindy Crawford. US magazine ran another lesbian story and everyone is waiting for Gus Van Sant's film, Even Cowgirls Get the Blues, with its lesbian sub-plot, to be released.

On one hand, this sudden attention is welcome. Gay men have had to put up with public outings after wash- room raids and skid row hairdresser stereotypes in film and television, lesbians have suffered an apposite fate—a gay men's propaganda campaign. For the first time in history not only do lesbians have a high profile, it's also been getting posi- tive coverage. Sexy, sappy and media- friendly, lesbians are a baby who can give good soundbites. In fact, she's almost too good to be true. If reports are correct, the lesbian of the 1990s is highly educated (no doubt at Smith, Wellesley or the Parsons' School of Design), liberal minded (a friend of Bill's who has a wicked crush on Hillary) and earns $54,000 a year (as a model, editor, artist, etc.). I'm almost without exception, she's white. Linda Villarosa, the one black face in the sea of white chicseness, is an editor at Elle magazine. And then there's the elusive and highly successful and very non- controversial. One wonders how she's managed to find time to do her own writing with all the media attention focussed on her. You can almost hear editors yelling, "I want a story on dykefastic Those new fashionable ones! And be sure to get an interview with the black woman!"

The Village Voice's Deb Schwartz calls this a "snobish, media-ready lesbian chic, "Homosexualization Line." Devoid of any political or historical context, it's all style but very little substance. The New York Times article, while it attempted to address some pertinent political issues, focussed mainly on fash- ion and social mores. A trip to a trendy lesbian bar reveals attractive Lippies (lesbian urban professionals) sipping wine upstairs and their holy unions. An interraciual couple (Jewish and African-American) smooth over their differences by purchasing identical engagement rings at an upscale depart- ment store. And Madison's and Sandra Bernhard's dirty dancing at a lesbian club gets far too much credit for bring- ing the lesbian movement to maturity. It was as though the Stonewall Riots, the feminist and civil rights movements and the creation of a rich feminist/lesbian subculture of writing, film and music never existed. Instead, a new generation of lesbi- ans was presented, born of an Immaculate Conception, radically dif- ferent from the activism and dissent. No political or social issues more pressing than deciding on a shade of lipstick. The Newsweek piece is equally as guilty of the twin sins of omission and sanitization. The cover features two well-accessorized babes (a denim shirt with pearls) cuddling. The reader is later to find out that the pair are lovers and even know each other's mothers. No one is looking for a "therapist for homosexuals." How perfect. How 1990s. For the lesbi- an-impared, Newsweek provides a let- tew. We are being taught to perceive beauty. But what of the Madonna aesthetic? Dolls up, wear makeup and skirts and have long nails. The whole article has the tone of an anthropological paper or a cheap pulp novel—explores the strange radiant world of women who love women.

Interestingly, no one in the main- stream covering the Lesbian Chic trend mentions, "bitchy." Homosexualization is judging from the response in the lesbian and gay press, most lesbians are sus- picious of the hype. Most are afraid it will suffer the same fate as the new couch potato and the new yuppies—we soon find ourselves in another magazine on a list of the year's worst trends. Out in both senses of the word.

Perhaps it's just another "media-fication" that much of the reporters aren't lesbian. But it's another matter entirely when they try so hard to make it clear to readers that THEY'RE NOT DVKES. In the US story, the author points it out in the first sentence. She writes, "I'm estranged alone, the only straight woman in motorcycle leathers among a thronging, grinning, drinking, smoking, dancing, kissing group of long-haired, red-tipped, perfect-bodied, little-boned lesbians in Gay Bar in Los Angeles." Obviously the author has not kept up with the news, or else she wouldn't have made such a fashion statement from her own closet. This writer seems to have a few false goddesses and the old lesbians as she picked out her undercover gear for the night. In dyke bars only the straight girl reporters wear less pasts and no makeup. Unfortunately, what may be missing beneath this objective facade is a nasty case of homophobia. While lesbians may be cool to talk about, look like or even love each other, they are still seen as being in a minority with all the problems that come with it. But lesbians aren't the only ones recognizing our current cachet. News of us has been selling magazines, but we're also being recognized as consumers. In the past few years, market research has shown that gays and lesbians have large incomes and expensive, well-educated tastes. Companies like Absolut vodka, Banana Republic and Toyota have targeted ads towards the lesbian and gay market (see Steven Maynard's article in this issue). Banana Republic even used a real lesbian in their "Choose Family" campaign—Ingrid Castares, the ex of both Madonna and Sandra. It's certainly fascinating. And these ads may do more to increase our visibility than any number of marches on Washington. But again, it's our alleged financial clout, not any belief in our basic rights, which has inspired these ads.

To a certain extent, lesbians them- selves may be responsible for the sudden hype. There is some much in the media revelation that the new generation of lesbi- ans is different from the past. In the film, Thank God I'm a Lesbian, author Sarah Schulman explains that lesbians who came out in the late 1980s have an entirely different relationship and differs expectations of popular culture than the past. When Stonewall lesbians felt alienated from popular culture and 1970s feminist lesbians protested against it, younger lesbians are demanding a place in it. Muslim Schulman. We love Madonna, CDs, we read hip lesbian and gay maga- zines like OUT, 10 Percent and Dancenews and watch films by lesbian and gay filmmakers. This is not even seen as a rebellioon against the perceived prudish- ness of an older group. Shaving legs, wear- ing lipstick, reading porn and calling each other (never woman, woman in women) has become the new way for lesbi- ans to be radical. A straight friend of mine told me she first heard of the Lesbian Chic trend on the news and was shocked, because the Maury濮ovich show had a hip lesbian couple who charmed the audience with their non-threatening atti- tude and good looks. Both of their fathers were in the house and they stood up and told Povich how proud they were of their daughters. However, Povich had also invited an old-school feminist lesbi- an who was practically thrown off stage for her politics and, one can presume, tacky fashion sense. My friend said it was a win-win situa- tion for the lipstick lesbians and the audience. The audience could put them- selves on the back for their liberalism— sure they could accept homosexuals now when they were young and lately and the lipstick lesbians could gain soci- etal acceptance from distancing them- selves as much as possible from the less desirable elements of the lesbian commu- nity. My friend said it was a perfect example of a controversial issue made palatable with the benefit of good pack- aging.

The lover of course, was the older feminist lesbian. Set up as a straw woman and an out-dated cliché, she was rejected even by members of her own community. This divide and conquer routine is often used on minority groups. And now we're seeing the good lesbian fighting against the bad lesbian, with the media pushing the theme, "These are the 1990s, accessorizing is it. Organizing is out." While for the time being she's win- ning hands down, in the end we all lose. Rachel Klein. We love Madonna, CDs, we read hip lesbian and gay maga- zines like OUT, 10 Percent and Dancenews and watch films by lesbian and gay filmmakers. This is not even seen as a rebellioon against the perceived prudish- ness of an older group. Shaving legs, wear- ing lipstick, reading porn and calling each other (never woman, woman in women) has become the new way for lesbi- ans to be radical. The historian of feminist lesbians who has led the fight against an under- ground community is apolitical. While she is making the covers of main- stream magazines her own magazines are being stopped at the border. Lesbian author Jane Rule once explained why she wrote for The Body Politic, a now defunct gay liberation magazine. While Rule had gained main- stream respectability she said she would continue to defend the controversial magazine because as long as one homo- sexual magazine is on the news, all are said. She refused to hide behind her reputation and allow others to be pushed to the fringes.

There is nothing wrong with being chic. There is nothing wrong with lesbi- ans finally being able to move into the mainstream. And perhaps it is inevitable that in its first attempts to explore the lesbian experience, the media hasn't done a thorough job. Maybe that is a task best left to lesbians themselves.

There is a cost, however, in the whitewashed notion the media is having with us. We're not always going to make good copy. And while the media may ignore our struggles, our policies and our community, we had better not. We'll be left, like bikes at the altar, scathing our heads and wondering what hap- pened, when we're no longer front page news.

Rachel Klein is a first-pace writer and she works at the University of Toronto's Varsity newspaper.
Ode to the Femme Mystique
by Lois Fine

Would that I could add those hours to my life—
Spent pondering the femme mystique in all of its manifestations.
For surely I would live to be a ripe old batch.

Hear me now, that this mystique casts its charms on many levels:
From the sublime to the spirit
From the most physical engagement to the deepest matter of the heart.

For it is with a bewitching finger that my femme has called
And once so am I not but hold fast to heed her
For though my mind may say nay.
Yet my body brings me forth.

To stand outside her door fell oh so sweet and heavy
And when asked the simplest question to lose sense of even my name.
As when holding me with her potent eyes
Or smiling at me in the midst of satisfaction.

Can I be expected to know my own thoughts although what would they be
But that there could be no place I would more like to find myself.

And such is the fate of the batch protracted.
Left to wander openly at how a woman that seemed of steel
Can melt under her soft and menacing touch.
(For once those matchbooks among us proved and preserved our zeal and their scent, still lingers until they are knowing femmes teach them in places where we no longer hold to stone.)

For the femme mystique has brought batchmates to perform
Unheard acts of order.
Oftone feats of physical accomplishment which the bathrooms walls
Have begged to divulge
Untold tales of brave and daring courage
In manner of speaking and ways of dress.

So take heed ye batchmates out there.
That ye may know her when she calls.
Your femme has this mystique in her favour.
Years but to surrender.
ONE CATASTROPHE
An interview with Sarah

Sarah Schulman writes novels about the Lower East Side and lesbian subculture in New York City. Like a good punk band (Fugazi, the Middle) Poison Squad every book she releases is quite different. How you think about her depends on which novel you just finished reading. Cities change and they don't change. There are always homeless people in her New York, contemporary political events such as American wars, low-wage women's jobs, and there's always sex. Over the last ten years she has written five novels, including Girls, Violence and Things, People in Trouble and most recently, Empire. In After Empire, the main character drops by CDO's, a punk palace, and comments that the petrified hardcore kids need to get hip to something new. But then she still reads punk poet Pati Smith about her friends.

If you want to talk to Sarah Schulman about New York or Toronto, and about her new non-fiction book on lesbian and gay life, you phone her New York number between eleven and noon. It's the only way she gets any writing done. On the telephone, she's friendly and practical. Sure, she'd do a taped interview. "Let's do it right now, you just keep firing questions at me."

In the summer of 1993, Alan Duncan asked the questions.

AID: Is there any single theme in your book on lesbian and gay politics during the 1980s?

SS: Well, it was just one catastrophe after another, wasn't it? I don't think anyone ever could have imagined what was coming next. So the book is an analysis of strategies and tactics we used in the 80s, and which ones worked and which ones didn't. And I think that it is pretty obvious that single-issue organizing does not work. That trying to use the language of the right wing, words like pro-family and things like that, does not work, and that trying to make changes behind the scenes, working inside political parties does not work. The thing that has worked the best has been when we have been very authentic about who we are and as radical as we really are and used direct action. That seems to have been the most effective actually, when you analyze the period from 1980 to 1992, the Reagan-Bush years here in the United States.

ASS: What do you mean by single-issue politics?

SS: In the early 80s in the United States there was a very strong anti-abortion movement. That was a very wide coalition of everything from the Catholic Left to the completely insecure religious Right. And they united on one issue, which was to make abortion illegal. So we tried to hold huge coalitions on single-issue politics. We spent the whole 80s initiating the tactics of the right, but that doesn't work if your vision is freedom. You can't make these tactical decisions to eliminate half of your worldview in hopes of having... coalitions. So, for example, the women's movement tried to have a single-issue campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment in which they excluded all mention of abortion rights and lesbian issues, and failed miserably because you end up not really standing for anything.

AID: Can you point to a coalition that is an example of what we should be trying to do?

SS: I think ACT UP is a very good example. It was always a coalition. It had and still has every kind of person. There's people who want revolution tomorrow and there's people who just want to work inside the Democratic Party. There's the whole spectrum. And yet, the way it has operated when it has been most successful is that people are allowed to be who they are at. There is no forced consensus. So if you want to participate in a particular type of action you can, and if you oppose that action you don't have to be a part of it. But that doesn't mean that you have to leave the group. There is a certain ideological flexibility which allows a lot of very different people to work together.

AID: How has the relationship between men and women worked in ACT UP and similar groups?

SS: ACT UP has always been primarily men. Though I would have to say that of all the different AIDS organizations, whether it is issues of the pharmaceutical industry, the government, social services, or community-based groups, ACT UP is really one of the organizations that has been in the forefront of advocating for people who are not necessarily represented in the group, or who are represented in a minority way. We had prison projects, we had non-discrimination, we had school condom distribution, we had an incredible amount of activism on behalf of women with AIDS, pediatrics, too, every issue of access has been addressed by ACT UP. So I feel that it has been a very good relationship. There was friction-fighting in ACT UP, as in any other organization, but I don't think it ever was around gender. Race was about positive or negative HIV status. It was always ideologically divided.

AID: Is ACT UP always going to be lesbian or is it going to be...?

SS: ACT UP has always been primarily men. Though I would have to say that of all the different AIDS organizations, whether it is issues of the pharmaceutical industry, the government, social services, or community-based groups, ACT UP is really one of the organizations that has been in the forefront of advocating for people who are not necessarily represented in the group, or who are represented in a minority way. We had prison projects, we had non-discrimination, we had school condom distribution, we had an incredible amount of activism on behalf of women with AIDS, pediatrics, too, every issue of access has been addressed by ACT UP. So I feel that it has been a very good relationship. There was friction-fighting in ACT UP, as in any other organization, but I don't think it ever was around gender. Race was about positive or negative HIV status. It was always ideologically divided.

AID: Is there a new generation of activists who define themselves as queer rather than as gay or lesbian? Does this represent a shift in politics?

SS: I don't want to be too simplistic but "queer" represents people who have been able to have a place both in the gay world and in the world of popular culture. Pre-AIDS gay life took place underground. The more we have achieved, the more we are able to have a place in the world as well as within our world. That is what queer represents. It is happening and it is an inevitable change. It is not for everybody but that is an actual evolution of the movement.

AID: All of those questions are queer, are we gay, do we need lesbian separatism, do we need gay and lesbian separatism, bisexual separatism, there is not one answer to this. The point is to create an environment where there is the largest number of people can participate in political rebellion. And that means providing the greatest range of options for people to participate. So if there are lesbians who want to be in lesbian-only organizations there is a need for them to be there. If there are lesbians and gay men who want to work together those organizations need to be there. And then, of course, if they want their own organizations... What I'm saying is that we need to have the widest range possible. But to have a closed, dogmatic definition of what it means to be politically active.

AID: Can you say something about Lesbian Avenger? A new organization you're involved with...

SS: Okay. I'm also still active with ACT UP. By the way, Lesbian Avenger was started a year ago by some women, lesbians, all of whom had a huge amount of political experience. At this point I think we have been in fifteen chapters in the US and in Europe. The New York chapter has over two hundred people in it. And we just had our greatest moment. We organized the dyke march, the protest before the march on Washington, in which 39,000 lesbians marched to the White House, and we believe this is the largest lesbian event in the history of the world. From six people to 28,000 in one year is pretty good. It is on a Queer Nation or ACT UP level, a lesbian direct-action movement. It is not separation. It is a post ACT UP lesbian movement. Lots of people in the group are in other organizations, in mixed groups, in non-gay groups, whatever. There is not an ideology of separation. But lesbians have been in the forefront of every movement for social change on the face of the earth but not as lesbians and not on our own behalf. And that is what this is about. So we're only do direct action. It is not a theory group, it is not a therapy group. It is a direct action group and our actions have been very clearly focused on the right wing. We don't go after other movement groups or other liberal organizations. New York City's religious right has battled the multicultural curriculum in the high school system. And we have been involved in caring those moves. We were very much involved with the Irish lesbian and gay organization when they took in the Catholic Church and tried to march in the St. Patrick's Day parade. We zapped the mayor of Denver after Colorado passed Proposition 20. And we were in Tampa Florida where a lesbian with AIDS had her trailer burned and the city of Tampa refused to classify it as a hate crime. So 51 Lesbian Avengers from Atlanta, New Jersey and New York went to Tampa and did all those actions, had a media team and demonstrations and got the mayor to come out and speak on her behalf. So that's what we're doing. We're realistic and we're willing to go on location. It's really very exciting.

Sarah Schulman's book My American History, will be published by Routledge in June 1994 for the 20th anniversary of Stonewall. This interview with Alan O'Connor was first broadcast on CUNY 91.7 FM.
by Courtney McFarlane

I want to say something about censorship as it relates to other issues of identity and difference. The debates about censorship rage on. When I hear the word, I hear associations to self-censorship, social censorship, community censorship. I hear the myriad ways that we are people of colour internalize the oppressive attitudes of our society, our community and stifle the work we produce, we create. I don't hear about the state-sponsored censorship that most people talk about. Most anti-censorship activists rarely address the issues of censorship that I experience directly.

Censorship is actually not an issue I feel very passionately about. The language used in discussing it is basically outside my experience. In order to participate in a panel discussion on this issue I had to do some basic research. I was somewhat ashamed to admit my ignorance of the Butler decision. I was aware in a peripheral kind of way of the harassment of lesbians and gay bookstore, custom tshirts of queer images and other incidents around the city. However I had not personalized the issue. What I knew did not lead to any action or even outrage. I have recently finished four years at the Ontario College of Art, as insulating an educational institution as any other. Perhaps that explains some of my obliviousness to the issues.

As someone with a double consciousness, a gay man and a Black man, I recognize that the issue is often framed and defined by people who are relatively privileged by this society. Censorship is often only viewed as the suppression of cultural productions related to sex and sexuality by the state, institutions of the state, and conservative elements of society. This limited definition is something I feel very outside of. Yes, there should be freedom to create, exhibit, distribute, work of any nature and I should support that, but I am not passionate in that support or defense. I certainly have difficulties with that narrow definition of censorship. It often does not recognize the other subtle ways in which censorship is practiced: the forms of social censorship that exist within the queer artistic communities.

We should all fight to defend freedom of expression, but recognize that we aren't equally free to express, create, exhibit, publish, perform, be picked, praised, criticized, recognized and be paid, much less censored. Within a white, supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal, heterosexual society I might have forgotten something about freedom to be distributed unusably. Even though we are lesbians and gay activists we have struggles that intersect, they are not identical. The effect of censorship differs with one's presence in society, one's place in the hierarchy. My struggle is about creating a community to support my expression, my cultural productions, to access resources from organizations or communities that don't necessarily see my silence or invisibility as a priority. Institutions continue to value and privilege the way others represent me rather than the way I choose to represent myself. That defines art and culture in a manner that continues to marginalize my expressions and critiques my work by standards by which I will always be found lacking. I am coming from a space where there isn't the luxury of time to create when energy is diverted into the fight for access to resources and in developing these communities to support and nurture my work.

That is basically where I am coming from in terms of this issue. So I would like to ask how much of this work that we are so passionately defending is by people of colour? How much of this work speaks to issues that are outside of our experiences? That takes positions with which we disagree? Any movement to combat censorship must recognize social censorship, market-place censorship, by extension, personal censorship. Not only censorship that directly affects us and those like ourselves, but the censorship that we participate in. As gay and lesbian activists, as artists, we are censored by the state and society but do we censor our sexual identity, those of us who are privileged whether it be by race, gender or class, to acknowledge that privilege. So any struggle against censorship for me has to adequately address not only the state-sponsored censorship, the social censorship, but also the censorship I feel I live and breathe everyday. Unless censorship includes that struggle, I will continue to be dissatisfied about the anti-censorship movement.

While writing the original version of this article I went to a dub poetry festival in Toronto. Many of the people who support the black artsitic productions such as this festival are lesbians and gays. So as we watched the performances that went on well beyond closing time, one of the performers, a well-known dub poet in the city, slipped into the world "loosin" and within that space we heard it. The word... yeah we caught it, sort of like dog hearing right, we heard it and thought it was so quick no one else would hear. Talking to a lesbian filmmaker on the way home, she described how this woman up front was saying "Oh yeah and sexpert, me like all that except for the lesbian part." When I'm coming from within the Black community, lesbians and gays don't exist. The issue of homosexuality is never addressed and often we as Black lesbians and gay artists within those spaces are presumed to remain invisible and silent. In this culturally conscious queer milieu that is predominantly white, we continue to be marginalized and silenced. Both of these realities are forms of censorship that I experience, that are real for me. Finally, I recognize that all forms of censorship limit us and that our struggles and that these linkages have to be made.

Courtney McFarlane is a black, gay male, Jamaican born, Canadian raised and African identified. He is a multi-disciplinary artist and poet and a member of AVA, an activist organization for Black gay men.
Local honey

must be gathered slowly, at first, the tongue’s tip, the fingertips,
no everything in this sweet, preposterous business we set our bodies to.
The gatherer must learn and live for honey like the familiar scent of dew seeped
from her fullest centre, and learn to rely so, make it rise
with a touch implied and promises swiftly unfulfilled
until they are fulfilled,
in the gatherer’s own wild amusement of slopping time,
at the hooting voluptuous honey because too heavy for them.
But it must be slowly, at first
the tip of each finger being all-
the intense intent before the fact,
the near touch, the almost word, the insinuation, honey eye
that turn the gatherer into the gathered deeply.

One angelic kiss

Beenda Brooks

Though nearly you ignore me, ever bringing gifts that amount to more than a small tip
of antique hearts and I would never be retaliatory enough to love you though I am
still ridiculous enough to love you there are angels tilted with I don’t care and so what anyway
we are all going to die maybe sooner and
being more adventurously than we think
and the sun’s got to set sometime and there’s
a world-class lousy tyrant ordering a new set
of scriptures even as we speak or
preferably,
even as we make a pragmatic date to
get together for one last long angelic kiss
which may be one of the few pure gestures left
to appear to platelet from the kind of pastures
made by the wallower to the fully loved.
when she raises a thin silo porcelain bowl to
line you, you see every storm happening
on the moon through it to the other’s lips
and the thirty-sixorge of rain individually
collected just after dusk onto her tongue saying
nothing but that kind of angelic kiss speaks
for itself.

Photograph by Esjak Fagbola

by Vinita Srivastava

There is a story that is told about the shehla
(washer’s dog). The shehla leaves his community
with his dog every morning to go to the river
to wash clothes all day. Playing with the
river dogs, the washer’s dog becomes almost
but never quite at home by the river. Every
night, the washer’s dog runs, looking forward
to going home. Only to realize he is not home
there anymore either. His ways have changed.
He is part river now.

Prathiba Parmar cautions us against the use of
the term “exile.” She warns that the use of the
word must be specific, for even though we may
be “treated as exiles” or feel exiled in some
sort of “psychic or cultural way,” we are “not
exiles, but settlers.”
Remembering the half-awareness of my breasts and the stretch of my black legs in the night, and the indistinct softness of your lips and the cloud-like texture of your voice, I feel as if you were kissing me lightly on the cheek.

I pull you closer, I kiss you tenderly.

Listen up, Toronto, Vancouver, Berlin, Aarhus, I will write about you lower.

Smiling, I say, "I hope you're not too burdened on your faraway home."

You laugh, "Yes, but I'm sure you'll kiss my lips next time."

It's late, it's Monday evening, I'm back to our old routine.

"Sun, June 17, 1977... My day was a terrible day..."

"April 3, 1991: Mara's an idiot. She was making fun of our names."

"Sunday, July 18, 1982... Meets a girl — one year older than me — black hair, brown eyes, tall and skinny. Brown Bralettes, Pretty, Tomboy (?). Wearing jeans and white top, nice. My first time meeting her."

"July 21, 1985... I've spent many restless nights over the flight 182 plane crash, where 229 people were killed when the plane supposedly crashed over the Atlantic Ocean... A girl... really liked, Meets Gupta, was on the plane. I remember sharing our problems together."

"March 16, 1987: It won't work anymore. Because I don't know what to write down. I don't know what is bothering me... I feel... empty... no... I feel helpless..."

"Never cry in public."

And if someone were to have told me that I would get on this airplane and cry, I would have laughed because it is too unbelievable.

I take my seat amongst all the mates and noises and suddenly become overwhelmed at the thought of what I really am doing. This is leaving, returning.

Leaving you.

I busy myself with my luggage, my coat. The mates next to me smile and tells me it will be a long flight, so didn't I want to put my coat with hers — above us, in the carryon? She, the mate, smiles. Asks me if I am missing my friends and family. Tells me she understands how hard it is to leave loved ones behind.

I am wishing.

I am wishing.

I am wishing.

I was still looking at your red shirt.

The man strolling across from me has some hands. It has been a while since I looked at a person's hands up close. They seem so long and chunky. They make me think of a woman I knew and takes her hands off. I see her curiously, looking at my hands. I am glad I wore my tan Kurtis, because, at least in some instances, they give back their trays of hair and I am glad to be free of them.

"I thought she looked like the performer that I sprayed on the duty free store."

"I know there are others, but I only see your hands."

"I am wishing.

"I am wishing.

"I am wishing.”

The man strolling across from me has some hands. It has been a while since I looked at a person's hands up close. They seem so long and chunky. They make me think of a woman I knew and takes her hands off. I see her curiously, looking at my hands. I am glad I wore my tan Kurtis, because, at least in some instances, they give back their trays of hair and I am glad to be free of them.

"I thought she looked like the performer that I sprayed on the duty free store."

"I know there are others, but I only see your hands."

"I am wishing.

"I am wishing.

"I am wishing.”

BorderLines
Last night the bed sinks in, swallows us. First there is just a small depression in the centre of the bed, and then slowly, it is larger. The bed caves in, creating a room for us.

Now the bed throws us out again. Spitting us, laying us on top.

Facing racism makes it difficult to talk publicly about the rifts we have, instead we place impossible, incredible expectations upon ourselves and each other to fulfill our needs socially and politically as lovers, family, friends, and community organizers.

This ends up ripping us apart.

As we dig down into what makes us joyful, we find some sorrow. And when we find sorrow it is because we remember the joy in our lives.

We need to talk openly and comfortably about our religious, class, caste, racial, sexual, and gender differences.

The discussion of bisexuality which took place within the 1993 Desh Pardeh working collective made me buy my head in the sand. The argument about opening the term "queer," about allowing bisexual feminists either to form their own caucus or to join the existing lesbian caucus disrupted our identities, our places and our relationships to one another. I just wanted to fit in. Here. Somewhere. I wanted "our community" to be cohesive. I didn’t want to disturb it.

Climbing the rungs of pride and the pride that I feel for the work that my peers have done before me and for the work that I contributed to the Desh Pardeh. I can point to many wonderful discussions that happened and coalitions that were formed. I want everyone to know about the amazing surge of energy and confidence I gain from attending and working on Desh Pardeh as well as working with other "South Asian" community organizations. These groups and events provide us Asians with badly needed support and give us a forum to address the issues that are not always addressed in both the Asian and gay and lesbian communities. One of the issues that has begun to be addressed is the oppression of racism in the gay and lesbian mainstream. In the United States, our history has been excluded from lesbian history, our literature from gay and lesbian literature, and our images from our community’s media.

(Sharmeen Islam, "Towards a Global Network of Asian Lesbians," 1993)

I feel odd about Sharmeen Islam’s comment above. Can we be talking any gay and lesbian movement (even white) "mainstream"? Like her, I see the invisibility of and resistance toward South Asian, East Asian, Latin, and African dhokes and bisexual-feminists in predominantly white "queer" groups. The objectification and erasure of our color, bodies, and culture, and trivialization and reduction of our culture to food, music, and clothing is all important, but not the sole definition of who we are as South Asians - there are many other feeling lives that need to be organized autonomously. However, deciding to call a white lesbian and gay movement "mainstream" does not address the homophobia that we all feel as lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

As South Asian lesbian, gay and bisexual groups form in New York, in New Delhi, in London, in Toronto, the isolation felt by Pratibha Porman twenty years ago has begun to be tackled. "There were very few South Asian lesbians and gays around," she says, but "we knew we were around and we would travel hundreds of miles to meet. Now, in Britain, we have Shakti." The New York South Asian Gay Association explains the reason they formed:

To address issues of concern to us which include the complex racial politics of gay and straight American life, the threat posed by AIDS to South Asians the world over, and the pressures and pleasures unique to our own situation: family expectations, migration and integration, and negotiating between the different roles that we play in working, living and loving.

"(Dupattas on Fifth Avenue," Trikone, 1991)
The risk of ostracism from one's family is something that many South Asian lesbians/gays/bisexuals face; in a society that does not validate our culture, our families often become the only source of cultural assimilation and resistance. The need for social mobility "of people of colour" emphasizes marriages; the importance of marriage in South Asian cultures creates a point of conflict for many lesbians, gays and bisexuals who fear "fitting down" their families, as well as the rejection of a community that offers them a refuge from a racist society. This community can also be an economic cushion, as well as a source of political power for an individual otherwise marginalized. Urveshi Vaid, former head of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force sends a message to South Asian lesbians and gays who fear family reaction:

One thing we have going for us Indians is that there is a very strong commitment to the family. I feel very committed to my parents and my sisters. It doesn't matter if I am gay, I know I am going to be part of their lives. Of course there are moments of awkwardness and pain, but I know they will go through that. (Urveshi Vaid, Tribune, 1989)

While Urveshi Vaid's experience with family may speak to some of us, for many South Asian queer, lesbians in particular, arranged marriages pose a unique and volatile problem. As an unnamed contributor to Shakti Report states: "Great suspicions are aroused when a family member does not get married, or refuses to get married. Such an act is seen as willful disobedience, an adoration of western values, a rejection of Asian customs." For many South Asians, maintaining their sexuality means losing connections to their family, and making future prospects for younger siblings concerning the family and the family's reputation. South Asian lesbians often face very tough choices.

I ran away from home the night before my wedding. I was nineteen. My parents had chosen this man from India, who I hardly knew at all. I just couldn't get along with him. I was a lesbian, I ran off to live with my girlfriend. She was Asian and had also separated from her family. It was good to be with her, sharing the same background so we spoke.

My family found out where I was staying a couple of months later. I don't know how. Someone must have told them they saw me and then they must have watched me and followed me around. Anyway, they turn up at the place where we were staying at 2:00am. Four cars loads of them. Smashed the door down, screaming and yelling at me, slapping me around and my girlfriend, shouting all sorts of bad names at us. They began dragging me out of the flat towards the car. Luckily a neighbour called the police when she heard the noise. They were around there pretty quickly. They were really good.

Anyway in the end I had to get an injunction on them to stay away from me. My girlfriend and I had

Shonagh Aquarium is a Toronto-based visual artist who has exhibited in galleries across Canada for over ten years. In her other work, "Larger Than Life" and "Skin Deep,"Merchant explores themes of the body, femininity, lesbian sexuality and fantasy. Her most recent project, "Tele Donna," was on view at A Space Gallery in Toronto, January 6-February 15.

An installation of eleven anonymous black light boxes (8"x10") arranged in the V formation of a family portrait. Tele Donna features bold drawings of feminine figures tied together from diverse historical periods. Among them are a nine-century Italian prostitute, a 19th Dynasty royal woman in a 19th-century bathing suit who shouting and boxing gloves, and a 20th-century "lesbian woman" from Medieval mythology. The darknessed grayskin space and the very purple hue emanating from each box suggest secrecy and erotic intrigue more commonly associated with scenes from a house of horrors or commercial adult shows rather than VHS. The video shows VHS covers in the 1970s. Montage on the side of every storefront, like box is a television network showing it in the 1980s. It's a very unclear and very explicit, twenty-minute phone box massage. Quite unexpected, it found me sitting there, bits bewildered behind the box, weather in hand. Sitting in the dark, it was scarily disconcerted by Adarison's crafty construction of a "representation of" a soft-core activity. At the same time, I experienced the thrill of being tx with a voyeur and a plumed and partipated in a compelling range of female-centred fantasy scenarios.

"Tele Donna" was accompanied by a show of drawings and photographs. Photographs trigger my sweet memory of Miss Missy and Isabelle Hartman in Dame Kyhe's homoerotic classic, "Enter Nuns" (1985).

"This show's the best thing to be there." At the vertex of the angled arrangement, stood another, the two women performing a balloon dance. Wratn 2" 2000 stools of tablets, knotted and unknotted with chemical bleaches. They trigger my sweet memory of Miss Missy and Isabelle Hartman in Dame Kyhe's homoerotic classic, "Enter Nuns" (1985).

"Tele Donna" was accompanied by a show of drawings and photographs. Photographs trigger my sweet memory of Miss Missy and Isabelle Hartman in Dame Kyhe's homoerotic classic, "Enter Nuns" (1985).

Vinita Srivastava is a writer/dreamer living in Toronto.

Works Cited

Shakti Report, 1992

Becki Ross
by Nicholas Parowood

A wholesale appropriation of skinhead iconography has taken shape in queer punk. These images are linked through a self-consciously performative aspect of gay masculinity. This masculinity is retor- lve, ironic and camp. It relies on codes which identify gay men with one another in a society where most articulations of affection between men are forbidden. For gay men to be masculine despite exclusion from the category by virtue of a "feminizing" desire involves a form of masquerade. Gay men, just like everyone else, are playing a game of gender. We are simply more likely to be aware of it. This performance is about looking hot. Oscar Wilde, in his obsession with art and appearance, expresses this sensibility clearly: "It is better to be beautiful than to be good... But... it is better to be good than to be ugly." Gay men have been accused of being "apoliti- cal." On the contrary, there is a politics of looking hot.

At the 1992 symposium of Carleton University's Centre for Research in Art and Society Susan Douglas presented her analysis of "The Best Young Men..." by Attia Richard Lukacs. This work depicts a group of naked skinhead lounging in Beirut's clubs. The space is a performance of nakedness. The space is a performance of masculinity. In their appropriation of muscular naked skinheads, imagine their surprise that this image, a work of the gay Lukacs, would be of compelling interest, could even be found relevant, to some gay men.

How can skinheads - a youth culture often linked with violent racism and, specifically to this case, virulent homophobia – be of sexual interest to gay men? How could they be amusing? The work of the surprise of my straight colleagues: how could gay men relate to an image of mas- culinity which is not a stereotypical "femi- nized" representation of gay men?

We need to examine the limitations placed upon the performance of the self when a gay man cannot be muscular and virile without participating in the oppression of others and, by extension, the oppression of himself. The skinheads of Lukacs' painting are perceived as threatening, racist, violent and unequivocally masculine. But gay? Gay man, by virtue of a desire which does not fit, is denied participation in masculinity. As a result we can be incredibly unsuccessful and creative in the performance of ourselves. Yet members of the gay male community continue to valorize our exclusion from more 'conventional' codes of masculinity. After all, who would want to look like this mascu- linity oppressor? Who could desire a skinhead?

The visual cues that signal the skinheads' participation in a specific youth culture also emphasizes their masculinity. Heads are shaved, faces gaunt. Bulky biceps are emphasized with militaristic tattoos. Their rakishness underscores the "attractive" factor. These fine young men are emotionally unavailable - unapproachable and aggressive. But queer punk men are considered perplexing because they have shaved heads, combat boots and an aggressive aesthetic powerful symbols of masculinity. They are perplexing because of their seemingly inconsis- tent desire for life. This play on expectations can be troubling to many gay men. It may be perceived as a betrayal of the "semiotics" constructs which have differentiated straight and gay masculinity. A gay man with a shaved head? How can we reconcile this symbol of aggressive masculinity with "being gay"? Symbolic inclusion and exclu- sion is not limited to a determining straight society. Many gay men also engage in the politicking of a correct masculin- ity.

Two gay friends came to mind: one an androgynous queer fairy, the other a truck driver. Most people have no trouble identifying the first as gay. Slim and suave in flowing clothes and make-up with a campy bite in his speech, he is a fire hazard. The second stands in contrast, the odyssey of the hunched man with ragged jean and plaid flannel work shirts. He has been thrown out of gay bars for not looking gay enough.

These two have never met. They would not be able to stand each other. Why? The work of the queer fairy is the only recourse for a man who does not wish to participate in codes which reproduce hierarchical relations of domination and sub- mission. Also, he is not straight but gay and wants to signal that he hates men. For the other he is a ragged masculinity to which he is attracted. His}

Nicholas Parowood is the editor of AIDS and Culture.

Works Cited

MANGO BOY
(or Identity Poem)

Ian Iqbal Rashid

1.
In London, the seat of empire
Underwear showing through now.
I eat mangoes, sliced
See the cyanine
Sprinkled, machine-gunned through raw
Honey-coloured
Flesh.
Then I ride my lover high
And marvel at my fortune
This projection screen of back
So white and vacant, so long, capable
Of holding so many of my moments.

Samowered. I seek
This waxy shine of hom
Squeezed through with pimples, teeth-marks
That remember a mango-splittered smile.
Smiling bits of yellow applause.

2.
I need a new name,
I'll take back my second
Or maybe just speed it up past my first
I'm not the same ever something else
That will make people angry
Shahani or Giles, or Mango Boy
I'll grow over-eats mango sticky-day
Offered like an unremovable stain
Mango legacy, mango regret
Live up to this reputation
Feel for free
Make propositions, lie
Like my use in the water, so simple...
And tidy
Or squeeze the mango boy and watch
It all come out - then
Then think of a name - then
Then tell me

3.
Maple syrup on mango
Mango, you are
A Canadian child
I'm told
And so
I drink it all in yoghurt
Pour cardamom
And pistachio
Yes, some mint
Whip it in
definit.
One clove
Cinnamon

The heat yesterday gets a hold of my head,
Becomes an absent presence; the memory of a
Crown. Heat aggravates everything, bullies you
Into a little less alive. The inverse of an
Echo, the man you are about to become. Heat
Peels back the wild, musty smell of boy, which
Is always there, waiting like curtains.

Heat erodes the gravely bits that complicate
Your voice, that confuses the air—a constant
Static sound. Sound that has scored the last
Angry days with you, our horrible misstepped
dance out of sync; every expression a glare,
Every touch a threat. And my two hands always
Struggling, working a pocket-sized game.
Nothing I could do was right: the tiny silver
Balls never in their nooks all at once in
The heat yesterday.

In the heat yesterday I leave you impoverished,
Embarrassed feeling foolish, mispent. (As time
Goes into one of its own long taffy-like
Stretches.) I am amazed that I can leave, as if
This was an early emergence from an afternoon
Film. To turn the corner chased by so much
Runny yellow noise. So much that had been
Allowed to go on and on now for so long now
Without me.

The heat yesterday slices through today like
Cellophane. Today is an unused shellacked
Smell. And I am back again still. Still touch
The complicated bones of knee that poke out
From under a sheet. "The heat yesterday... You
Can not hear me. A love song seeps out from the
Headphones that cup your innermost face..."
Adios, Amazon Nation
BY Cynthia Wright

In the twenty years since Jill Johnston first described her radical sex-

ratist politics, Lesbian Nation, lesbian culture and politics have undergone a

remarkable redefinition. Many young dykes have sought exit visas from the

Amazon Nation, deeming what they see as the sexual silenced, parochial

politics and dull culture of seventies-style lesbian feminism.

Sisters, Sexperts, Queers brings together sixteen of these young (and a

few middle-aged) dissenting voices to consider four themes: sexuality and

lesbian identity, dykes in and popular culture, lesbians, home and “the

family”, and political organizing. Many of the contributors are hip,

urban things out of the universities, film schools and queer magazines, of

New York and California, and their essays reflect that reality. Despite

this limitation (and it is an important one), there is much that is valuable

in this collection.

In contrast to the much tamer Lesbians in Canada, with its virtual

silence on lesbian sexuality, Sisters, Sexperts, Queers marks as its greatest

momentum, were shot at the sudden cessation of such productive

energy.

Jones always found dealing with the
core world a difficult and painful

campaign. For most of his life he

pushed against the limits of what was

unacceptable, and his final act ultimately

wept beyond art, language or inter-
p

pretation. When the truck finally
came down the road, there was no

one there.

Robin was married to Daniel Jones for eight years. For worked with

Daniel Jones and knew him for over

ten years.

The thematic role associated with the modern writer reveals the construc-
tion of living in a society that values spottiness and personality, but only if it is marginalized from the once

illuminic spheres of society. There

is little doubt that economic prob-

due to the deteriorating position of

financing for the arts in Canada

added to Jones's doleful, and his ill-

ness exacerbated his difficulties as a

cultural producer in the post-NATF

world.

There were many sides to Jones

but one of his most important roles

was as a catalyst. He was adept at

bringing people together and mak-

ing things happen in all press

scene and other fringe artistic

communities in Toronto. He was author of a collection of poetry, The House

Never Write Poetry (Coach House Press, 1965), and Obsessions, a work of

experimental fiction (Mercury Press, 1992). His last work, The People One

Kisses, is scheduled to come out later this year from

Mercury Press. He published extensively in the Toronto small press

and, with Robin Gillan, had his own imprint, Streetcar Editions. He was

involved with Pavement and What's Magazine, and over the last year he

was editor of Paragraph. After two

years of being Book Review Editor

of those with whom he was

involved, particularly in recent years,

he left behind his greatest

momentum, were shot at the sudden

cessation of such productive

energy.

Jones always found dealing with

the core world a difficult and painful

campaign. For most of his life he

pushed against the limits of what was

unacceptable, and his final act ultimately

wept beyond art, language or inter-
p

pretation. When the truck finally
came down the road, there was no

one there.

Robin was married to Daniel Jones for eight years. For worked with

Daniel Jones and knew him for over

ten years.

The thematic role associated with the modern writer reveals the construc-
tion of living in a society that values spottiness and personality, but only if it is marginalized from the once
Newswirl and Vanity Fair) and yet nowhere: Part Two of Sis, Sper- t, Quer's final novel, this is a popular and stream of consciousness novel.ixa of 2007 Days: Looking BQoak at Vanessa Williams and the Sex Wars. It is a black novel that is about a woman named Vanessa Williams, the first African-American woman to become Miss America, who is forced to step down after Penthouse magazine published photos of Williams engaged in lesbian sex with a white woman. Goldies both examines her attraction to these photographs in the context of her own experiences with sexual imagery, and also interrogates 'the premises on which we assumed then and continue to assume now that quintessence' figures the normative center of political and theoretical discussions about sexuality — including lesbian and sexual identity. Part Three of Sis, Sper- t, Quer's final novel, this is a contemporary and popular novel. This is a book about a woman named Vanessa Williams who is forced to step down after Penthouse magazine published photos of Williams engaged in lesbian sex with a white woman. Goldies both examines her attraction to these photographs in the context of her own experiences with sexual imagery, and also interrogates 'the premises on which we assumed then and continue to assume now that quintessence' figures the normative center of political and theoretical discussions about sexuality — including lesbian and sexual identity.

A lot of Sis, Sper- t, Quer's examples of "political correctness gone wrong" are drawn from a essay published by a woman named Vanessa Williams who is forced to step down after Penthouse magazine published photos of Williams engaged in lesbian sex with a white woman. Goldies both examines her attraction to these photographs in the context of her own experiences with sexual imagery, and also interrogates 'the premises on which we assumed then and continue to assume now that quintessence' figures the normative center of political and theoretical discussions about sexuality — including lesbian and sexual identity.

In that essay, the author argues that political correctness gone wrong is a phenomenon that is now widespread and that it is having a negative impact on the ability of lesbians to speak out about their experiences and to resist oppression. The author also argues that the phenomenon of political correctness gone wrong is a form of intellectual and political decadence that is damaging to the cause of lesbian and gay liberation.

The author concludes by arguing that it is important for lesbians and gay men to resist the pressures of political correctness and to speak out about their experiences and to resist oppression. The author also argues that it is important for lesbians and gay men to be able to speak out about their experiences and to resist oppression in a way that is consistent with their own values and beliefs.
One could say that testimonies are politically aware biographies. They are not scientific research notes on the lives of "Gay Noiva's Testimonios". It's precisely that genre which insists on singularity. Subjects of "life" might claim that they truly represent their type or class, but, eventually, they have to face the simple limitation of singularity: the fact that a peer can say "I don't look or act like that at all".

The difference between biographies and testimonios is more one of intent than form. Biographies (with their ghost writers) are not the result of individual work and their intent is largely self-serving. Bios may be exemplary (like the lives of Catholic saints), but they are not necessarily "representative" in the political or critical sense of the word. Testimonios (used interchangeably but not unproblematically with testi- mony, oral history, life history and autobiography) are a result of some form of self-quest conducted with- in various contexts (e.g., feminist research, critical ethnography, anthrop- ology) generally between individ- uals who are situated in symmetrical positions of power. The intent of testimonios is didactic (like the Odyssey in which Perseus and the Blinds were political as well as educational in their role); its objective is to serve as a model for others (advocate, denounce, demand). Testimonios crack open the tragic posture of the binary between private/public. They submit their appar- ent determinism. Personal narratives (e.g., Adams/Alicia/Manuela/Lola/...), "rigoberris" (Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (Borgo-Reddy, ed. 1984) maintain a delicate balance between 

explaining personal circumstances and feelings and having them stand for some universal experiences of oppression and liberation. Sommer explains that "Rigoberta's singular is a achievement of her identity as an expe- rience of the collective. The singular represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguish- able part of the whole" (1988: 108).

Paul Montes states that the "effect of a testimony" in the tradition of the AIDS community I have observed is that many gay men find AIDS stories too banal or novelistic to deeply evoke the epidemic among gay men. It is likely that it is written in unproblematic forms to facilitate the expression opportunity to explain in detail how, why, and when the virus enacts a line of life in the AIDS community - no one is ex- included. It is written to be read by someone who is not to be understood. However, a new perspective on the "registration" of the Gay Noivas/Noivos is given to the uni- verse of AIDS and gay life. The stories about the "virals" seem to function in more as a confession than anything else. The addition between testimonies and evidence is essential and they have been written in this form. The stories about the "virals" are now a confession. They ...
Females as well were expressing their own unique way of being in the world. Joan Nadel writes on being a 50's teenager, "We had our styles - our outfits, our perfumes, our performances - and we could lose ourselves under the pressure of our dancing partners." Partners Indeed, just as disruptive, but not as well recognized, was a phenomenon known as the 'Desire'. Desire was the voices of butches and fems of colour. An article from Inland magazine in 1994 describes lesbians as 'past-time' men, who for various reasons reject feminine roles and, while retaining female trappings, compete with men for jobs — and other women. Countering this historically interesting, yet judgmental article, excerpt from "The Beach" by Audre Lorde. Lorde writes of the way 'gay girls' dressed and 'semi-dressed', declaring that "Clothes were often the most important or only way of broadcasting one's chosen sexual role." Other contributing women of colour include Cees Villamor, Kooky Tsu, and Jewelle L. Gomez. Tsu writes "Sure, I wrote love poems, but I never wrote about sex. I won, after all, a nice Chinese girl and we didn’t talk about things like that." Now she does.

Butch/femme women are once again at the lesbian forefront, claiming as Arlene Stein does that "roles are exchanged in a manner that involves younger dykes, who never fully partied with their butch and femmepatrons, experiencing femmefemethylene is being reclaimed by younger dykes with a new sense of erotic play - a departure from the 50’s style rebellion and survival.

The new butches and femmes are adopting signifiers more out of play than necessity. Butch/femmes are playing involves more fluid definition of what it means to be a femmefemme, butch. This change would likely never have been caught dead in the other roles with a butch, or going out of the house without the proper shade of pink lipstick. 50's butch would not willingly wear a dress (in any comfortable manner), unless perhaps she had to go to court to defend the charge of impersonating a man. Today's butch/femme lesbians are more comfortable with transgressing dress codes, switching roles, playing the 'other' part, the top, or playing both roles at once. Likewise with today's new role adaptation one might find two butches playing off or two femmes trying to 'cosmef' the other.

Upon reading The Femmefemme Reader, one could also say that there is a reconstruction of the 50's butch/femme by the new butch/femme which takes place through what Arlene Stein calls "refusing ghettoization, acknowledging internal group differences, and affirming the value of individual choice when it comes to style and political and sexual expression." Sounds like a lesbian utopia. The downside of this, however, says Stein, is the potential to 'depoliticize' lesbian identity, thus blurring the boundaries of the 'what it is' the individuality of being lesbian.

For 50's butch-femme women, blurring the boundaries was a way of life. Life, Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis chronicled this blurring: "They had no time to mess with: The construction of the butch role in the lesbian community of the 1940s and 50's. They argued that there were similarities between butches, femmepairings and heterosexual unions, mainly in terms of gender polarity, there were also many unique aspects to butch/femme. One aspect of this uniqueness included the way in which women were perceived and treated. "In the 1950's, lesbian culture, and lesbians' resulting consciousness and sense of pride had developed sufficiently to enable all of its members to leave their traditional women's upbringing and embrace new sexual attitudes and practices." Kennedy and Davis also discuss the absence of camp among 50's butch-femme women. One has to note about gay butch men, butch/femme would not take on such a camp tradition. In answer to the question of why lesbian camp never took hold, the authors write: "The structures of oppression were such that lesbians are exposed to male supremacy. In lesbian's actual struggle in the bars or on the streets, authority was almost always male. Fighting for one's life as a woman did not square neatly with sending up masculinity for laughs. Each conflict, therefore, deserves a separate overview and short-story in The Persistent Desire recalls the strength, courage, pride and determination of each individual female and butch. All the contributions describe the struggle to define a lesbian way of life, and to invent new forms of culture. By rejecting society's strict definition of femininity and womenhood in the 1950s and 1960s butches and femmes defined exactly what it meant to be a lesbian, and redefined what it meant to be a woman. Today, butch/femme individuals are also redefining how femininity and masculine roles are appropriated and played, by affirming that women can be one or the other, or neither or both, or any variation thereof, along with the affirmation that both roles are equal.

An aspect of lesbian culture that the femmefemme butch reader touches upon and intends to challenge is the notion of a dyke wearing a "clique", a dyke, is still a dyke, and not a woman—be man. In "Sex, Lies, and Penetration: A Butch Finally Fesses Up." Jean Brown discusses the "dildo dilemma" in terms of her own past experiences. She speaks of the taboo that many lesbians in the 90's place on penetration between two women, stating, as the myth declares, that there is an obvious heterosexual copying-catting. The underlying premise is that "penetration equals oppression." As Brown tells us, these are all lies. Lesbians have been using dildos for longer than most can imagine, more so than we dare to admit, and will not stop under accusation of threat.

According to more than one author, women who wore dildos kept the secret to themselves and the dildos well hidden under the bed, or in the closet. But closets are for clothes, not dildos. Suddenly, bravely, dyke-strapping lesbians were coming out of the closet, quite literally, in hand—or is that on hip—they were proud. They were also wondering why some of their sisters turned both eyes and ears away, leaving the honest dildos wearing dykes to fend for themselves. (As if they hadn't done this already). Dildo wearing dykes were no longer confined or embarrassed, they were free, proud and relieved; they were also unwillingly placed in the position to answer a lot of idiots questions, like is it a dildo a penis substitute? With respect to 'explaining' the difference between a dildo and a real penis (assuming that this is difficult to discern, Brown says: "Our answer was to explain that dildos were absolutely lesbian. They were our heritage and history, a link with those who had bravely gone before. Dildos did not represent the penis.

"Can't we take ours off and put it in the drawer? It was a removable object purely for pleasure and did not entail its wearer's any feminine ability to keep its recipient barefoot, in the kitchen and oppressed." Perhaps the sound of a dildo being strapped on is what Radclyffe Hall really meant to write about when she wrote, in "The Well of Loneliness," "that night that they were not divided." Brown says it more directly: "Because we are dykes, we want a dyke on the other end of that cock.

Barbara Smith also problematizes the 'penis-substitute' myth when she writes: "I can fuck my lover with my cock...I can take it off and fuck myself with it, or she can fuck me with it. Tell me how many men can castrate themselves, hugger themselves with their own cocks, fettle their own cocks attached to someone else's body, take their cocks off, put them in a drawer and forget about them - this all this and not to die?"

There are many voices in The Persistent Desire: many stories, stories that are both good and bad, and many lives lived, either as a femmefemme or as a butch. The one thing that all of these stories have in common is desire: a desire for other women, a desire to be desired by other women and an even stronger desire for butch/femme to continue as a valid, healthy and exciting way of life. These stories and the women behind them are living proof that, in Joan Nestle's words, 'Butch/femme relationships (are) complex erotic and social statements, not ghastly hetero-sexual replicas.' They are filled with a deeply lesbian language of stance, dress, gesture, love, courage, and autonomy.

Grethchen Woman is a writer and bookseller specialist in Waterloo, Ontario.

---

**AREA Journal**

**A NEW JOURNAL OF ART AND THEORY**

**ANCESTORS**

**RACIAL FILM CRITICISM & THEORY**

**3 ISSUES**

*Available for Individual* $18 for Individuals

*Available for Institutions* $35 for institutions

1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION

**SEND FOR FREE SAMPLE ISSUE**

35 BURLINGTON AVE. BURLINGTON, ON L7R 3S9

**INTERPRETATION AND THE PRESENT CULTURAL REVOLUTION**

**THEORIZING THE CULTURAL FIELD**

**Send for free sample issue**

**AREA Journal**

**PO Box 18**

**North Carlton**

**35 Burlington Ave., Burlington, ON,**

**Phone: 416-673-0822**

**AREA Journal is distributed on behalf of the Curriculum Inquiry Project.**

---

**NAME**

**ADDRESS**

**CITY**

**CODE**

**Send for Free Sample Issue**

This collection of 42 articles is intended as a guide for university courses in lesbian and gay studies. It's a monster book (the same weight as a city telephone book) and good value for the money. The list of further readings is very helpful. The selection of articles seems to be excellent, from Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex" to Kobena Mercer's second thoughts about Robert Mapplethorpe's portraits of black men. Many of the more recent articles are quite difficult. There is a noticeable lack of history of the lesbian and gay movement(s), but a serious attempt to include racial and ethnic diversity. Several days after poring my copy of the book home, I was still browsing though it discovering other articles and books I want to read. It's hard to expect a university course book to do much more than this.

Sarah Schulman, Empathy (Plume, 1993).

But not in paperback, Sarah Schulman's latest novel includes the characters Anna O., Dora and a post-Psychiatry psychiatrist. It's set in New York's Lower East Side in the early 1990s: economic depression, crack economy, AIDs emergency and the Gulf War, and also includes a side trip to Indonesia. Much of the novel is about people trying to figure out what they want. The Doc specializes in affordable (ten bucks a session) good sense but is also searching. The speeches at the anti-war demonstration bored the protagonists as well as the riot cops. And what about those yellow ribbons?


The narrator works on coding questionnaires about the American Dream. He knows that he is really a lizard. He has a quick tongue and a tendency to eat dogs, street boys and dissenting guests. He hangs around San Francisco's queer underground clubs and gets into a recovery program. The Wizard Club is like a queer 'zine in a book. It includes a three-page cartoon (Hopeless Love), a neat map of counter-cultural stuff (make your own map), extracts from the Green Book of Count Lemon, results of a questionnaire sent to 60 'zine editors and other assorted human trash, and much much more. It's a sort of collectively-written fantasy and reminiscence on that collective fantasies are as real as anything else.


Michael Warner (ed.), Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory (University of Minnesota, 1995).

Another well-edited collection from the Social Text journal of literary and cultural studies. The major argument in the volume is that identity politics in the United States is a losing strategy because it plays into the hands of conservatives who now define themselves as a minority whose culture and values are everywhere attacked and misunderstood. The theoretical take involves reading cultural practices as texts. Queer culture is not what you are—it's what you do. It is unclear how relevant some of this is to Canada with its very different political, judicial system, health system and state-funded "multiculturalism." "Queer Nation" and postmodern politics are not the same in Illinois and Ontario.

Martha C. Nussbaum, John Greyson and Pratibha Parmar (eds.), Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video (Between the Lines and Routledge, 1995).

A wide-ranging book as one would expect from editors based in Toronto, London and New York. The project originated in Canada (where there is no queer cultural magazine) and some of the articles are a bit dated. The one on Greg Araki's Boy Meets World is an essay behind. Throughout, Canada is not mentioned very often. Someone might tell Maria Wagner not to believe everything he sees at the movies—his remarks about Toronto are hilarious. Nonetheless Queer Looks is packed with interesting articles, three photo-essays, a cut-and-paste lesbian visibility pamphlet and enough hot pics that most people will like something.

Alan O'Connor