BORDER/LINES

DOUBLE ISSUE No. 38/39
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M. NOURBSESE PHILIP on
Bernardo, Homolka,
the Mona Lisa and
the press

CAMERON BAILEY on
Race and the Net
Culture-Slash-Nation

SPECIAL SECTION ON TV:
Moses Znaimer:
Counter-revolutionary:
Reality Programming:
Gals, fish and TV and more
Editorial
No. 38/39

Winter is a time of the year when an insistent and heavy lassitude weighs upon the fabric of things. Darkness closes in early and remains a long time, causing us to seek solace in remembrances of warmth and light, or to devise convoluted plans of escape towards them. This year, such fanciful thinking is harder to come by. Our ideological landscape has become the stomping ground of the new right, neo-cons whose lines of complaint and resentment pull at their mouths and who exercise the closed logic of religious zealots. We first saw their arrival in the pulsating light of the 19 inch screen, a bizarre hallucination whose increasing frequency was consensually held to be real. Now that the reality has indeed become virtual, we await further injury with an air of malignant expectancy. At this time, at this time of the year, it is tempting to claim that the world is emptied of generosity and of caring, is full of outrage and acts of cruelty.

Nonetheless, we still have the madness of possibility at our disposal. Let us embark upon reckless acts of expression, sublime and daring feats of communication. Let us allow irony and play to perform their work of mocking normative convention. Let us reveal that these new emperors—despite their immense privileges—are indeed without intelligence or foresight, and that their monetarist rhetoric is but a cheap designer knock-off whose shoddy fabric won’t stand up to close inspection. It’s time we tart ourselves up, put on our best party frocks and get down to the serious business of exposure.

Beth Seaton

Special thanks to co-editor Stan Fogel and also to Michael Hoechsmann, Julie Jenkinson and Alicia Peres.
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Inside front cover: from Album Di Famiglia Dolly TV.

Back cover: from Album Di Famiglia Dolly TV.
Dear Border/Lines

I am puzzled by your use of a pastiche in Julia Creet’s contribution to Issue 37, “Pagklabat: Mary Walsh vs. the Heimstube.” Why, twice, does she ponder what “the Native Canadian” or “the Native communities” would make of Joe Crow? Who is she talking about? I agree with a politico that recognizes situated interpreters and situated interpretations, but not in some odd posture that locates the only plausible interpretation within some authentic representative. Who could that possibly be? I thought cultural criticism was less essentializing ourselves into rigid little boxes and more about learning the power (and betrayal) in representation.

As an urban working class female, raised White speaking English in upper Canada, working in the academy, I think Joe Crow is funny. What is funniest is the parody of non-Native expectations of Native people. Joe Crow. In my reading, conventional stream of consciousness, and exposes their limitations: the excruciating point of the parody comes in a heavily stereotyped figure reporting the news in all its political reality. Each Joe Crow episode is a 95 second scripted issue of The Nation (an English journal of current affairs published by the Grand Council of the Cree of Quebec) being interpreted by an editor of The Globe and Mail who doesn’t get by stereotypes in his reading. This is what This Hour is so good at, bringing truths about racism, classism, sexism and traditions of over-intellectualizing everything into a frame where we can laugh at them. Every consumer of the media needs to be a careful interpreter: we can’t make it somebody else’s responsibility. But the point is more why am I not an adequate interpreter? The point is whether or not my role as interpreter displaces someone else, Joe Crow, to my delight, displaces the Globe and Mail, which is a good thing given imbalances in economic and ideological resources between real Native leadership in Canada and conservative national newspapers. Now, why isn’t Garth Drabinsky investing in Thomson Highway plays? There’s an issue. I would also like to re-subscribe, so please forward enclosed to subscription department please.

Sincerely,

Wendy Russell
London, Ontario

Border/Lines

Although I realize that it is in good taste to bite the hand that has fed me—thanks for the nicks—I still believe that it is important for me to finally address a concern that has been gnawing at me ever since I received your recent issue of Border/Lines.

I appreciate my publication that provides a forum for those people whose voices are seldom heard in the mainstream media. However, I am disturbed that you didn’t even consult me, let alone inform me, that my poem would be nothing more than a cute little subtext for the photograph which juxtaposed it. Or is the photograph of that pale cadaverous S&M poster boy/girl supposed to be my mirror identity? Or were you just trying to put some Paki bitch to her place? Patronize me for not being a genius, that is, a person (usually male) who has been endowed with the supreme intellectual capability to authentically define what is the operative interrelationship between textual and visual data—I never had aspirations towards being the next Camille Paglia anyway—but what was the fucking point, hello?

I have spent most of my adult life adroitly asserting my inherent right to not be tied, bound, or dogged by any individual, institution, or damn as an art critic. As you recall, I had also submitted a poem entitled “I Ain’t Your Fucking Harem Girl.” I had assumed that it gave you a graphic idea of where I was coming from. I am not an aficionado of that vio-

Errata

In Border/Lines no. 37 the reproductions of Tiz Bacher’s Sex With Strangers were printed without their respective captions. The following captions should have appeared beneath the images:

Page 30 (left): Unfortunately, many females in Sarmela’s situation have failed to report such incidents to the police.

Page 30 (right): The rapists inflicted considerable pain during the sex acts.

From the Editors

M. NourbeSe Philip, a regular contributor to Border/Lines, recently won a Toronto Arts Award. The Border/Lines collective congratulates her. We think of her as one of Canada’s finest writers: an incisive commentator on arts/race/culture and a superb poet and fiction writer.

That her award provoked racist, obscenely vituperative remarks on CRFB (Toronto) by Michael Coren—out on a limb-soft, as ever—reinforces our commitment at Border/Lines to continue to make available commentary that is progressive, powerful—and too often absent in other media.

What is Your Alternative?
HOW WHITE IS YOUR WHITE?

On the lack of colour in the Bernardo/Homolka affair.
The names Bernardo and Homolka are far more “foreign” sounding and “different” than Clinton Gayle, Lawrence Brown, or O’Neil Grant. Black men, who in 1994, galvanized media attention and public discourse around issues of race and crime.

They were their race that室外ized Canadian birth and citizenship. Issues of origin, minority status, citizenship and citizenship dominated in the case of Black Canadians. But since the 1970s when you consider the media these issues have not, or did not, with the issues of race and ethnicity as they relate to this trial.

Bernardo and Homolka. The names are either “ethnic” in the way in which the word has come to be defined in Canada: all those who are white but not AngloSaxons or French. The white ethnic. In multicultural Canada there is a sense in which ethnicity has become the presence of the white ethnic, while Ethnic, Asians and First Nations remain the sole occur-
erance of the five races. But the question is how one can call it to the surface. Only the skin is lifted. The search for the white ethnic, however, has led to the rediscovery of the blackface-motion picture type from his father’s side and Anglo-Canadians from his mother’s. The name Homolka sounds Eastern European. Nothing, however, has been revealed about this woman’s exact background. And whatever the various ethnic communities to which this couple belongs, none has been called on to explain how it is going to control this type of heinous crime by its members. Neither is the white community (to this much there’s a limit!) or the various ethnic communities called on to explain how they have produced such monsters. Where are the calls for the control of white crime, particularly sexual crime? The silence resounds all the more loudly because it hasn’t been addressed or broken.

What is the colour of white? White has no colour. Physical and economic: the colour of fear and hate, and, at times, loathing. From the perspective of many Black people that is. Similarly, the colour of black, from the perspective of many white people, is also the colour of fear, loathing and hatred—physically, socially, physically. What makes the experiencing of these two social colours different, however, is that it is white people who control the production of images of Black peoples. The latter lack similar control over the portrayal of whites and for the most part own themselves. Further, integral to being socialized as a Black person is the acquiescence of a sense of how you are seen through the eyes of white people—what W.E. du Bois described as “second sight” or “double consciousness” that only allows you to see yourself “through the rebellion of the other.” Black people bear constant witness to the fear and loathing in which they are held. From the smallest act of existence—simply drawing away from them in fear or distrust—to the much larger picture of the primarily neg-

ative representation of Blacks in the media. Blacks see their blackness represented back to them in unchallengeable, unchallengeable, unchallengeable ways.

It is uncanny, however, for white people to experience or even see themselves as white—they just are—not alone witness their whiteness as a representation of negativity. Everything around them compels them to see themselves otherwise. The most memorable scenes in Spike Lee’s movie Malcolm X is of the epiphany moment when the young Malcolm, sitting in the prison library, understands how the meanings of the words black and white bear witness to the lived experience of Black people.

The colour of blackness is highly visible to Blacks and all those upon whom it impacts negatively while simultaneously invisible. Invisible because, in a society steeped in racism and ethnocentric ideology, white and whiteness becomes equalled with normality, with its effects primarily negative for white people as well remain remarkably visible to all those who use to look. Integral to the insulating, and exploitive of the peoples and lands of Africa, Asia and the Americas was the ideology and practice of whiteness, that in 1992 the United States, Canada and other colored nations were held onto or “celebrating” the 50th anniversary of Colombo’s “discovery” of the New World. That this “discovery” meant genocide for Native peoples seemed not to matter to the celebrators.

The essence of whiteness is its incommensurable and unassimilable access to power, accompanied by an inability to counteract being threatened in any way. The backlash against affirmative action policies both in Canada and in the United States continues overwhelming witnesses to this. “By giving special attention to other races,” Andrew Hacker writes in The Nation, “[affirmative action] shouldn’t be white. Thus for the first time, Caucasians were made to feel they no longer came first—they had a taste of what it might be like to be black... they haven’t enjoyed the experience...” In pretending whiteness doesn’t exist, that normal equals white, the power of whiteness grows exponentially. It mobilizes. It also

*Lawrence Brown and O’Neil Grant were arrested and charged in the slaying and shooting that took place at the Last Descent resort on April 5, 1984. Clinton Gayle has been charged in the murder of a white policeman on June 16, 1984.*
In all the copy written about him, the only time Paul Bernardo is identified as white is when his desire to be a “white rap artist” is reported.

For the record, it should be noted that despite the (for many), unsavoury lyric s of gangsta rap, no rap musician has kidnapped young girls, raped them, killed them and cut them up.
Hers is a case of whiteness melded to gender. The result? A teflon princess to whom nothing sticks. Not even a murder rap. The media have described her as mysterious - the archetypal mysterious woman - even compared her to the Mona Lisa!

Being forced to do what she did - the way the L.A. police in the Rodney King case were being forced by factors we did not and could not see to believe in the way they did. Honokua's excuse was that she was being abused; the L.A. police's that Blacks are aggressive and physically violent. In neither case were these external factors visible on video, but their suggested reading of these videos call into question the edgery that we're facing, indeed, believing.

Like the L.A. police defendants and his wife, Paul Bernardi also urged the jury to disregard what they saw on the tapes and conclude that although he appeared to be in control much of what was happening on the tape, he did not actually kill Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy.

Consider for a moment the videotape released around the time of the Just Desserts robbery to assist the police in their search for the perpetrators. Blind, inaccurate and indistinct, but startlingly clear in its representation of young Black men. All young Black men. The public, as judge and jury, were encouraged to believe they could see what was in fact not visible - a clear representation of the faces of those young men; they were then asked on the collective identity of young Black men in Toronto. Of all whom became guilty by virtue of being Black. In the high visibility of Blackness the absence of detail becomes irrelevant; in the low visibility of whiteness, the plethora of detail is material.

Experts have opined at length on the early women indulging in crimes such as Honokua's and Bernardi's. The only explanation we have had for Karla Homolka's behavior is that she was battered. And though there have been experts who have said that her abuse - whatever its extent - is not sufficient to explain her behavior, the image of Karla Honolka remains one of an abused woman - a victim.

At the time of writing, there has been no challenge from the women's movement or the case of the Battered-Wife Syndrome in her case. Only when recently recognized in law, this difficulty has been used to explain why women kill their abusers. Not to excuse the rape, torture and murder of young women. To have this difficulty used to explain away Homolka's participation in these crimes makes a mockery of the work done over the years to have this difficulty recognized in law. Why the silence?

Despite her involvement in these crimes, however, at some fundamental level the image of Karla Homolka remains strangely untouched, and whiteness once again becomes a shield and is shielded. Here is a case of whiteness melded to gender. The result? A teflon princess to whom nothing sticks. Not even a murder rap. The media have described her as mysterious - the archetypal mysterious woman - even compared her to the Mona Lisa!

While there is no little self-esteem in this description, it also serves to protect her image as a white woman. She may be a sadist, she may have killed young girls to their deaths, she may even be a murderer, but she is right. No dumb blond this, but in the top 10% of the population in intelligence. If this doesn't undo (and it won't the nonsense about high IQ scores guaranteeing anything, I don't know what). She has been shown to be fairly tough and resilient under cross-examination. Now contrast the image of the Mena Mona Lisa with a penchant for cadmium with that of Audrey Smith, the Jamaican woman who complained about being strip-searched by the police in public. Based on recent "analysis" and "research" by the likes of Phillippe Bouthon and Hermans and Murray of Bell Curve fame, we know that IQ to be sub-normal. Rose Di Manno of the Toronto Star confirms this: Audrey Smith is telling the truth because her "simplement...just sits there like a lump on a log." And so for mystery - the only one is why this Black woman from Jamaica was sitting on a bench in the Parkdale area late at night. That mystery has now been resolved by the investigating panel's report with its strong suggestion that Audrey Smith was a drug pusher. No drugs were found on Audrey Smith and the issue before the panel was whether she was stripped in public. Not whether or not she was selling drugs. Karla Honolka, this "pathal" blondie with the "pouting" blond lip, is a woman who "felt at ease with men...men always seemed to find her most believable." Audrey Smith cares the other hand is "boring" and "lumpen" (6 Mannin again).

That Audrey Smith has been treated shabbily is beyond denial: She has come to Canada on many occasions to seek justice; only to be returned to Jamaica without having her case heard. She has been summarily stopped at the airport in Jamaica on her way to Canada and told that the Immigration Department would refuse to allow her to enter Canada because she was manipulating as someone else. Her reputation has been slandered. Audrey Smith has not raped, tortured or killed young girls. Audrey Smith is Black. And while whiteness reigns, her skin becomes a marker of guilt. Even when she has committed no crime. Conversely, even when the most heinous crimes have been committed, whiteness becomes a shield, offering protection and safety.

Despite the Paul Bernardi's, the Gifford Olson's, and the Karla Homolka's, the most enduring image of the criminal, which has greatest currency today in Canadian society, is that of the Black male. The Bernardi's remain blank white rap artists, the Honolka's intelligent Mona Lisa with pouting lips who feel at ease with men. Contrary to recent reports that there are too many Chinese in Markham, too many Jews practising law, medicine and accounting and, of course, too many immigrants, what Canadian society is suffering from - ever since the first white settler arrived here - is an excess, an excessence if you will, of whiteness. Until and unless we "attack whiteness as a destructive ideology" and "focus political energy on exposing, denouncing and demystifying the particular ideology of whiteness," asRodrigue write, Victusa, Auzana and First Nations people's -the Other as postmodernism has so aptly named us - will continue to carry the disproportionate load of dominion in this Society. In the meantime, as my manifesto says, "after what damn white people doing to Black people during slavery time...nothing surprising me about what damn white devils doing today."
Sports

Gary Genosko

Whether cultural studies in its American incarnation will pick up the trail remains as yet undetermined, although indications are strong that it will, despite the recent remarks of those such as Elliot Gorn who claims that “the glowing field of cultural studies seems oblivious to the work done on athletics. This is ironic, because cultural studies... is exactly where the study of sports is most needed.” Michael Ondaatje’s Reading Football, for example, is a study of football’s cultural narratives (the gladiator, “scientific” football, heroic masculinity, etc.) in the popular journalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were treasuries to be discovered in the Voice sports columns (the greasy Jackoilette and Mike Gellrie’s baseball report, Runforest), and one or two articles in each issue. For example, I was staggered by the implications for research of the recent casual cultural history of the Voice by Gehr Kuntzman of the “highfive” celebratory gesture in baseball, which turns out to have been invented as a rhizome crossing baseball and college basketball, involving the mutation of handshakes, high fives (“giving skin”), high fives proper, high tens, the full moon, and the forum bump (recalling with nascent enthusiasm the Sixers)

Where do we go from here? Specifically, a comparative analysis of the history and meaning of the celebratory gesture across sports remains to be written. In the context of a broader study of gestural sporting behaviour of athletes and fans alike, the "wino" would be examined, so too would be the moving of all sorts of gymnastic objects such as "Hummer Hanks" in baseball. In hockey there is the long-standing tradition in Detroit of throwing octopi onto the ice; there is also the recent "comeback chop" used by Atlanta Braves fans and widely protested by native and other groups. In hockey, equipment imposes a set of what may be called syntactic constraints upon innovation. Within these confines, one may recall retired Maple Leaf and Canucks Dave "Tiger" Williams’ celebration: "I slap the ice, arms pumping, as he positioned his stick between his legs in order to ride it like a hobby horse. Then there is the usual face punching, air punching, stick swinging, twirling, embarrassing, patting, petting, and rubbing, etc.

More generally, the progressive reader of sports has to become a writer (even though, as Nick Hornby reminds us, the word progressive has, for some, the unfortunate connotation of the music of King Crimson and Emerson, Lake and Palmer). Short of this, the pickings are slim and, in Canada, at least, almost non-existent. The exceptions being few and far between: one thinks of Daniel Gauthier’s queer hockey and sports reporting in Xtra West and elsewhere, as well as Doug Smith’s recent article in This Magazine on the political and fiscal follies of the drive to save the

Obituary

On August 29 of this year, Jeff Z. Klein and Andrew Hsiao, who were Village Voice sports editors for 1993-95 and 1992-3 respectively, penned an epitaph as the paper ended its sports coverage. Since 1983 the Voice had cultivated, as they put it, “an irreverent, progressive point of view” on sports. Race, gender, labour—did I mention queer—issues were all part of this unique reportage that blazed a trail for cultural studies of sport in North America.

The truth is this: for alarmingly large chunks of an average day, I am a moron.

Nick Hornby, Fever Pitch: A Fan’s Life
al. Despite being extra-temporal, it is not altogether separate for this death takes place in the ring. It is for good reason that Oates uses the concept of permeability to describe the knock out. This turns the referee into a kind of priest with exclusive control over a restricted domain. It is by means of the referee's power to mediate between the temporal and extra-temporal, between the living and symbolically dead, that a boxer can return from the dead. The referee mediates the communication between the living and dead. These symbolically dead boxers have a crucial role to play in the match because, in boxing, it is normal to be, in this way, dead. This is what is extraordinary about boxing: death is not split away and dressed up for viewing, but remains in circulation amid the living who are simultaneously repulsed and fascinated by everything that happens in the parentheses. Boxing's ritual either to express death or to hide it away in an exquisitely subtle space explains why it is revived by so many, without an investigation of other reasons, such as its interminable scams and scandals, alleged mob connections, and violent spillers of every kind.

The history of boxing is littered with real thanatopornies as well, as the ring itself, and the slow death of the retired boxer. Every time a "bump of the mouth" is produced from the ranks to face a superior opponent, every time a match is allowed to go on for a few seconds too long before being stopped, every time a boxer suffers a career-ending injury, death becomes a factor. Boxing does not refuse the boxer his death; it does not have the power to suspend death. The boxer's death is always at stake, and this is especially true in mismatches, in which a boxer is not properly protected by his handlers, and in the strategy adopted by a fighter, such as the innovative but physically costly superphone introduced by Mohammad Ali against George Foreman in Zaire in 1974. The rules do not prevent a violent death from being at stake.

Books and Articles Mentioned:
Doug Smith, "Score!" This Magazine (August 1995).

Guidelines for Contributors

Who Are We? Border/Lines is an interdisciplinary magazine committed to exploring all aspects of culture — including popular culture, fine art, visual arts, gender, literature, multiculturalism, mass communications and political culture. Although its geographic focus is Canada, this is taken as meaning anything that is relevant to understanding Canadian culture.

Who Are You? Border/Lines aims to fill the gap between academic journals and cultural magazines. Our audience is diverse and eclectic, so too are our contributors. Drawn from a broad base of writers, artists, culture producers and critics, potential contributors should bear this diversity in mind and try to address cultural issues with spunk, humour and the occasional sideways glance. Please avoid pedantry, footnotes as well as excessive allusions and isms.

We Welcome New Writers. Send your feature article, commentary, review, poetry, fiction, etc. to our editorial address below. All correspondence should be accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. If your manuscript is on disk, please send it, too. (Mac format is preferred.)

We Want Your Visuals. We encourage you to send illustrative work with your manuscript. We also encourage visual artists to submit work. Please carefully consider the reproductive qualities of your submissions, as well as the page proportions of the magazine. Include any captions, photo credits and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. Final design decisions rest with the collective.

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tel. 416-921-6648
Virtual
Skin.

Articulating RACE in
CYBERSPACE.

Does race matter? Can it sustain itself in the shifting space of virtual communities?

By Cameron Bailey

Is “race” corporeal? Is that all there is to one of the most complex and contested discourses of the modern era—skin, eyes, lips and hair? Clearly not. Most theories of race reject a biological basis altogether, in favor of a tangle of social, political and psychic forces that work their strange and funny ways on each one of us every day. That’s how it goes in the real world.

But what about cyberspace? Do the same laws apply?

Recent writing on electronic communication systems insist that despite its disembodied nature, cyberspace remains what Michael Benedikt calls a familiar social construct “with the balled of materiality cast away.” That means race may function in much the same way that I do in the world, where we are more directly accountable to our bodies. It may mean that, but it’s hard to tell, because very few of the thinkers currently probing cyberspace have a word about race.

Faced with the delirious prospect of leaving our bodies behind for the cool screens of digital communication, the leading theorists of cyberspace have addressed the philosophical implications of a new technology by retreating to old ground. In a landscape of contemporary cultural criticism in which the discourses of race, gender, class and sexuality have often led us to the next loop in understanding—where, in both, they have been so thoroughly used as to be turned sometimes into mandates—these interpretive tools have come curiously late to the debate around cyberspace. It may be that the prevailing discussion of digitally-assisted subjectivity has focused not on the culture of cyberspace as it exists today, but on the potential of cyberspace, on utopian or dystopian visions for tomorrow. Since we never reveal ourselves so much as when we dream, it’s worth noting that most speculations on the future of cyberspace return questions of race in particular to the margins.

But does race matter? Can it sustain itself in the shifting space of virtual communities? It would seem clear that the safety of binary oppositions—self/other, black/white, male/female, straight/gay, writer/reader—would evaporate in the forcibly uncertain world of electronic discourse. A message comes and goes without a face, communication takes place without bodies to ground it, to provide the deeper layers of meaning between the surface upon which we all depend. This is especially important given the extent to which social interaction depends on embedded communication, on stable, known genders, sexualities, races and classes being somewhere present in the communicative act. Without this there would be no power flowing through communication, and without the flow of power, what would we have to say to one another?

Cyberspace communication challenges all that. In the online world, identity is often chosen, played with, subverted, or foregrounded as a construct. There appears to be in this a demonstration of the freedom provided by disembodied communication, the ludic—or “play”—element that is central to cyberspace activity in general, as well as the influence of 25 years of postmodernity. What makes cyberspace so interesting as a public sphere is how none of the usual landmarks can be trusted. Also, the old economy of readers and writers, speakers and listeners is turned sideways, with the simultaneity and multidirectionality of online communication, authority is won and lost with such frequency that it becomes nearly irrelevant.

But online interaction is anything but a utopia of democratic communication. Feminist critics have pointed out how cyberspace is gendered to reproduce boring philolatric limits on expression. Many have noted that the idea of unfettered democracy touted by so many champions of the internet contains its own ideological dead-weight. Like the democracy of the ancient Greeks, today’s digital democracy is reserved for an elite with the means to enjoy it. So it is with race. Existing racist discourses find their way into cyberspace, not simply as content, but also as part of the shaping structure of the place. As with any other arena where identities are produced and exchanged, this aspect of cyberspace rests on the question of representation.

It is necessary to examine how various communities are constructed online as well as the access that different communities have to communication technology. In the United States, for instance, there is a growing movement among African Americans to resist being excluded by those corporations getting ready to wire the suburbs for the forthcoming ideology—a.k.a. information superhighway. While this is primarily a consumer issue that only grazes deeper questions of engagement with the apparatus, there comes

As an initial flag, I place the word “race” in quotation marks to acknowledge the work that Henry Louis Gates, Thelon Harris and others have done to unpack how race is a constructed discourse, not a biological or even a social fact. However, I do not believe that quotation marks resolve the question—what do we do with all of language’s other slippery concepts? From this point on, I will leave “race” to fend for itself.

“My focus will be on the domain of online communication—bulletin boards, systems, commercial online services and the Internet, i.e., the aspect of cyberspace that exists as a public sphere.”

Photo collage by Andy Komorowski includes image from Mike Voes’ video installation, “Surveillance, (Illusion, the Other).”
...with this mobilization a push for greater technological literacy among blacks and other disenfranchised people.

In personal terms, we need to explore what it means to construct identity without the aid of racial and cultural markers like physical appearance, accent, and so on. Here I will be dealing exclusively with those forms of electronic communication that depend on text—instead of any figural representation of the physical body—i.e., internet newsgroups, online forums, e-mail, and text-based environments such as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). On the surface it would seem that these are literary domains similar to an exchange of correspondence or the letters page of a newspaper. She presents herself in language as does in all forms of writing, which requires all the acts of identity construction, selective editing and lying committed by anybody who has ever written anything. But online communication adds something more—speed and uncertainty. MUDs operate in close-to-real time, providing an instantaneously that remains disembodied like writing, but is nonetheless immediate like the telephone. And the literary contract between writer and reader becomes blurred. In the world of Internet newsgroups, mailing lists and electronic bulletin board systems (IBBS), writers post messages simultaneously to individuals and to groups sharing a similar interest. The question of address becomes more complex. Also, the way in which these messages are retrieved and read gives the reader a power akin to the high-sounding authority over source music—it's a consumer's market. All of this uproots the online writer's sense of his or her centred self. If identity is created solely through text and the text is as fluid as this, things fall apart in interesting ways.

My entry points for exploring the special glow of virtual skin are, first, the perspective of an online browser who has been involved in local IBBS, such as the Matrix and Magic in Toronto, the CompuServe commercial networks as we as the less-regulated Internet, and second, a continuing interest in the formation of new communities. Like all postmodern selfs, I've learned to move with shifts in imagined communities. To ride the knowledge that, as Althusser Roseanne Stone notes in her article, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?", Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures, technology and culture constitute each other; I may not swim, but I've learned to surf.

My first experience of virtual community came in Rock Dundo, Barbados, 1989. when I first jacked in to a smooth, plastic, VHS-coloured View Master®. I and my mother were in Barbados for three weeks, and we took no leave. I was transported. Every time I returned to that machine, I left the postcolonial sunshines behind for the marvels of Canada. Immersed in the depth, resolution and brightness of those images I became a part of a community, sharing an experience with everyone who had passed to get a good look at new City Hall, who had marveled at the Falls. More importantly, by entering these images, I could share the desires for the spectacle of Canada with my mother, who had recently immigrated there.

Now, producing these words on a newer piece of plastic hardware—a matte-black IBM ThinkPad—I can extend into corners of cyberspace, re-making myself with will and accident, reading and misreading others. It's exhilarating at first, but it's not new. As Stuart Hall and others have pointed out, migration is a central part of the postcolonial experience, and it necessarily involves shifting identity. It's the nature of Asian and new-worlders to pass through different allegiances, belief systems and accents—for me it was Wembley, Rock Dundo and now suburban-Toronto—as a common part of life. At the same time, one develops a hyper-awareness of the relationship between physicality and identity. Like women, like lesbians and gay, people of colour living in Western metropoles live a crucial part of their existence as body/people, as subjects named and identified through their flesh. One need only hear "Monkey" or "Water-buffalo" screamed at you on the street every once in a while to be reminded of that.

The cybersubject as currently figured is male, white, straight, able-bodied and ruling class. So what? Any identity that occupies the shadow-half of these categories is female, black, queer. I remain locked to his or her body. Libraries of feminist thought tell us that the woman's identity has historically been defined and maintained through the body. The same holds true for Africans in the West, Aboriginal people, and so on. Biology is destiny. Physiology is law. Subjecthood lies over the horizon. This becomes especially interesting in a domain which privileges giving up the body so easily. That process is neither universally simple nor universally desirable.

It's important to distinguish here between the cybersubject as a figure produced by current thought about cyberspace, and the actual people who enter cyberspace every day. In the same way that film theory distinguishes between the cinematic spectator as a function of the cinematic text and "real-world" viewers of movies, we must note that the cybersubject defined above is produced by still-limited notions of the experience of cyberspace, and has a relationship to, but is in no way co-extensive with, the millions who communicate online or enter virtual reality. Cyberspace is built for that unified subject, but inhabited by a happy chaotic range of subactivities.

Freeing up movement, communication and sensation from the limitations of the flesh might be the promise of digital experience, but the body will not be abandoned so easily. We have said that the quality of imagination is what allows all manner of disembodied experience, from being "immersed" in narrative to the spatial metaphors of cyberspace.
Shareware

"A human being is a person through (other) people." Bielsa priests.

So what is the nature of the online community? First, the economics of online communication require that participants have access to a computer, a modem and a telephone line. Cancel tens of millions of North Americans, until recently. Internet access required membership in an elite school—a university, government department or major corporation. Millions were gone, but not evenly across the board. In the United States, African Americans and Hispanics are overrepresented among those without Net access, as are Aboriginal peo-
ple in Canada. Owning the means of participation is a class issue, and another example of how class is racialized in North America. In writing about poverty and information, Karen G. Schneider argues that "the information-rich, however well-
meaning, have largely determined and prioritized the issues of the information revolution according to their own visions and realities." What happens when the class of the information-rich is also racialized, when it continues to be predominantly white? Beyond economics, there is a somewhat harder to quantify culture of cyber-space. The Net nation displays shared knowledge and language to unite across differences. Net jargon extends beyond technical language to accommodate both benign (BTW, "by the way") and snappy (RTFM, "Read the fucking manual.") It includes neologisms, text-graphical hybrids called emoticons, and a thoroughly anti-okiebule "nerdly". Like any other commu-
nity, it uses language to erect barriers to membership. It's worth noting that Benedict Anderson suggests print culture is crucial to the formation of nations. The Internet is nothing if not a relic of publishing, often about itself. Popular guides such as Brendan Keefe's Zen and the Art of the Internet, as well as the countless lists of "Frequently Asked Questions", serve to provide a body of common knowledge and therefore enforce order on the Net. There is in these codes of language, and in the very concept of "iniquity", some of the culture of suburban America. One gets the sense that those structures are in place not simply to order cyberspace, but to keep chaos (the urban sphere) out. It's no stretch to suggest that the turn to cyberspace, the white middle-class men who first populated it sought refuge from the hostile forces in physical, urban space—crime, poor people, de-
spared neighborhoods, and the black and brown. So the suburban ideal of postwar North America returns in virtual form—communication at a safe distance, community without

out contact. Is it any wonder that when movies visualize the Net's matrix of connectivity, it often resemble the cool, aerial patterns of a suburb at night?

One, often overlooked, dimension of Net culture is the ludic aggression of its users. The Net, users have seen how cyber-

space is gendered as masculine, but the community of hackers, late night Net surfers, BBS sysops and virus writers has often included large numbers of teenagers. Particularly since the era when popular culture first came to be identified with teen cul-
ture, adolescence, especially male adolescence, has been

accented profound importance and created a profound distor-
tion in Western society—just look at all the mechanisms in place to control it. In acts both constructive and transgressive, adolescent boys have used cyberspace to express the fury, despair, anger, restlessness and pain of coming to adulthood. In doing so, they have shaped the character of online community to reflect hostility to authority, secrecy and open aesthetic structures. The sense of connivance played engendered by this group extends the range and focus of the imaginative act that entry into cyberspace requires.

Allergies to Blackboard International in Toronto, Imphokie in Brooklyn, New York, Pari-Africa Online in Pasadena, California and Girlfied in Arlington, Virginia. Many of these BBSs are linked through a U.S. network called Aironet. Aironet has recently been joined by Macinet in linking people of African descent in cyberspace.

The sale and exchange of digitized porn images caters increasingly to racist fetishes, with white and Asian women carrying the highest currency. The nar-
ratives of interracial desire remain popular on porn BBSs, even on African American porn BBSs such as Ebony Shack, images of black male-white female sce-
narios sometimes outnumber all other configurations.

As an Aboriginal people and people of colour organize online, so do for right organizations. According to Reuter's and U.S. News and World Report, neo-Nazi hate literature has been discovered by browsers on bulletin board systems in Germany, Sweden, France and the Netherlands. Usenet culture in particular encourages subcul-
tures, with its devotion to trading arcane knowledge and to the same celebration of spontaneous opinion that one finds all over North American talk radio, this medium is a latter means for generating local communities within communities.

Digitalia

I occupied space, I moved toward the other... and the evanescent other, visible, yet not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Rusza.

—Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Mask

The discourse of race is by history and by design. rooted in the body. Cyber-subjectivity promises the fantasy of disembodied communication, but it remains firmly connected to bodies through the imagin-

ative act required to project into cyberspace. What cyber-subjectivity is actually coming to be: disembodied com-
munication. So how should I re-embodie myself amidst the Net's possibilities for self-presentation? Where should I look for my digitalia, that odd conflux

"According to Art McGeer, "Aironet is an eochall backbone supported by African and African American BBS sysops across North America. The goal is to distribute notice of conferences with African and African American themes throughout North America. It was originally conceived by Ken Onewe."

of intimacy (intimatial), foreignness (marginalia) and wires? Should I announce myself racially, give myself a secure racial identity? As an experiment, I conducted a poll in CompServe's African American forum, asking how participants situated themselves online.

More often than not, I do not identify myself when I interact with people except in forums such as this one. Should I, really? I have had more separatist experiences with people being overly racist in cyberspace than I have in PFI (Face to Face). In the Real World, it is helping to experience what people tell me when they think I am white. — Deborah Carter

In the other CompServe forums and Internet conferences which I frequent, I encounter a lot more racism (and sexual, and homophobic, and anti-Semitic, and otherwise haterousness) than I do "real life." I find this an amusing aspect of online communications, it is very exciting to hateful folks. — Peter John How's a thought. Do you think hateful people are attracted to cyber space, or are "normal" people encouraged to show their hateful tilted sides? — Michelle Pessoa

I have heard people making derogatory comments about Western Americans, Asians, Jews, Mexicans, and Russians, etc., and although I am not a member of those groups, I feel that it is essential that I establish tolerance, part of my struggle of fighting the stereotype. Have people told you to get real, and I am not as important to you as in telling people about the war and not just a sport. — Deborah Carter

What was most interesting about the response was how quickly the thread moved away from the question of how one identifies oneself to a more manageable debate about racism. From what I've been able to glean in this and other online conversations (my survey was limited in sample), many African Americans are unwilling to probe too deeply into what part racial identity plays in their conception of themselves, what part of them stays black when they present no "evidence" of blackness. Race is either "taken for granted" or deliberately left unspoken. In a Glazica conference on African American access to information technology, a quiet consensus emerged on the value of racial anonymity online. One man, who asked me in response to the question of what is your name, said that he wanted to keep his identity as secret as possible. He is a student and does not wish to be identified with the color of his bread. — Robert Carter

Another participant commented:

When you types in, you are using a name and have your side color. accounts don't matter as much. High tech is a wonderful way to fight another.

Given that cyberspace is a racialized domain, this sort of virtual transvestism is not without meaning to the larger society. In an earlier era it was used to be called passing. There is another option, taking a cue from the adolescent boys who determine so much of our cyberculture. I could play. I could try to extend my engagement with cyberspace beyond the voided economies of North American teenagers to include trickster traditions, signifying, and elements of spirituality that are outside Western rationalism. That way subjectivity need not be a fixed racial convention nor a calculated transvestism. It could be more fluid, more strategic. William Gibson was the first to write about various cosmological approaches to cyberspace, contrasting his protagonist Case with the Rastafarian-derived "Zionites" in Neuromancer, and making extensive use of voices in Count Zero and Mona Lisa Overdrive. While this offers enormous possibilities, there is a danger, at least in fiction, of surrendering to the same sort of essentialism that defines people of colour in anti-colonial, body-orientated terms. Michael Heim, for instance, in lamintating cyberspace's estrat from the physical body, offers Gibson's Zionites as a symbol of salvation.

Glenn London's image of a human group who exclusively bumps into distance from the computer matrix. These on the Zionists, the religiously infermial folk who prefer music to composers and infinite libraries to calculate... As we will see for the missing future in cyberspace, we must not lose touch with the Zionists, the body people who remain rooted in the experience of the earth. (Futile starts.)

In the novel, the Zionists are rooted in both technology and spirituality. But taken by Heim as a symbol, they get reduced to "body people." I prefer to go all the way back to that View Master™ holding it up to the bright Barbados sun so I could see Canada better. Maybe this is an answer: the ecstacy of projected community and irresolvable difference, both claimed at the very same moment.

This article is excerpted from a longer version published in Immersed in Technology: Art Culture and Virtual Environments (published by the Walter Phillips Gallery and MIT Press). The research and writing of the article were assisted by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council's Arts Writing Program.

Further Reading
Metz, Calilena, and Isaac Julien. "De Margin and De Centre." Screen 29 (Summer 1988).
Everything you never wanted to know about television

"It's time. It's time to start the body count for one of the great battles of the second half of the twentieth century, the battle between the image and the printed word." With this introductory statement, Moses Znaimer begins his polemic, hyperbolically titled "The TVT Revolution." According to Znaimer, the image has won and those pandals of print—the written word, journalists and academicians alike—are creative anachronisms at best and "constant corporals" at worst. From the evidence of the programme itself, and the image it presents of commercial television's world domination, it is hard to disagree; the show is an intricate and well-crafted exercise in ineptitude.

This excludes the making of Znaimer's own image, perhaps to such an extent that it eclipses all other issues.

Znaimer's three-hour open on the new world of television opens on our vaguely reminiscent hero, a walking camera offering uncomfortably intimate closeups of him in an undress suit. The film's noirish affect and his general demeanor, complete with the standard urban-chic uniform, suggest that Znaimer is still in character from his bit part as a hood in Louis Malle's Atlantic City. After various changes of persons and costume, ranging from a baseball player to General Patton, Znaimer appears in a trenchcoat against a brick wall backdrop to hold his "tadpoles" ten commandments of television to the camera—written on scrolled parchment, no less. I doubt many actually take this character of dealer—prophet as a sign of street credibility; the wardrobe is obviously that of a media hack later, a successful entrepreneur and participant in Canada's...
Paglia provides a stream of consciousness monologue, without any pretense to consistency, let alone intelligibility..."

The programme is symptomatic of the state of the media, the way television is talked about by those who profit from it. While Znanie plays himself as an eccentric rebel of the media biz, he is far from the van-guard, not once does he present a portrait of himself as the media player that he is. Instead, Znanie wants us to take him seriously as a disinterested philosopher of television's future. "The TV Revolution" becomes a symposium of sorts, with Znanie stringing together provocations about our "new" digital and social media and those who work with it.

What Znanie's ten commandments amount to is not a radical vision of the democratic paradise of television; instead, they reveal a fragment of what is an authoritative language promulgated by policy elites and cultural entrepreneurs alike. In certain circles, most of these claims are received wisdom. If there is a dominant theme running through the list, it is an attack on public culture that reduces the concept of public ownership and service to a simple case of elitism. This is implied in the aesthetic suggestions of maxims 1 and 2, in the technological essentialism of maxims 3, 7 and 8, and in the accusations of governments' ideological control in maxims 9 and 10. But it is maxim 8 that most completely captures the link between the aesthetics of the medium, the "true nature" of the technology, and the politics of culture: "In the past, television's chief operating skill was political. In the future, it will have to be mastery of the craft itself." Its implication, Znanie would have us believe, that the hands of cultural entrepreneurs, those who have "mastered the craft," the political dimension of culture and policy disappears. In this view, public culture is always politically and ideologically twisted, and the forces of the market are unbound and pure.

While studiously avoiding commentary from those contemporary cul-
tual and communications theorists who seek to develop and challenge ways of understanding media. "The TVTV Revolution" concentrates on the opinions of producers, politicians, and executives of media corporations. Interviews include such diverse media "experts" as Henry Jenkins, Sherry Chow, Carolio Poggi, and Ronald G. Kassow, among others. "TVTV" is currently a partner with University in the newly subsidized Access TV. David Pettypiece talks about how environmentalists became media targets and the government's role in television. Michael Oscarson, a leading international sales of Wainey Bux, relates how small markets need cheap U.S. programming because of their insufficient indigenous talent pool. Other clips include McPherson, talkshow host, Daddy Jones, and his producer David E. Berman, Sylvia Brevin, U.S. producers Sonya Guiness and Larry Jacobson, and British producer Richard Powell.

In his collection of interviews, Znamier finds his theme: "The TVTV Revolution" concentrates on the opinions of producers, politicians, and executives of media corporations. Interviews include such diverse media "experts" as Henry Jenkins, Sherry Chow, Carolio Poggi, and Ronald G. Kassow, among others. "TVTV" is currently a partner with University in the newly subsidized Access TV. David Pettypiece talks about how environmentalists became media targets and the government's role in television. Michael Oscarson, a leading international sales of Wainey Bux, relates how small markets need cheap U.S. programming because of their insufficient indigenous talent pool. Other clips include McPherson, talkshow host, Daddy Jones, and his producer David E. Berman, Sylvia Brevin, U.S. producers Sonya Guiness and Larry Jacobson, and British producer Richard Powell.

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Closed captioning transcends the aural portion of a program, whether a television broadcast or a video rental, into a line of print text that can be decoded with a captioning decoder box, which resembles a cable converter. Captions appear as white characters and symbols against a black or grey background at the bottom of the television screen. Ideally, closed captioning makes television accessible to all viewers by providing a near transcription of a television broadcast or a commercial film.

The problem inherent in closed captioning is to make it a political issue for many users. I was aware of my casual TV watching that captors sometimes detract from the visual (by covering the best bits of probe bodies), that they sometimes increase in pace to unadulterated speed, and that often captions missed significant on-screen sound effects such as song lyrics. However, I had not recognized this as an issue of cultural censorship until until five years ago when I sat down with a hard-of-hearing friend to watch the captioned TV premiere of the movie RoboCop. At that time captioned TV movies were a rare enough phenomenon to warrant excitement.

The following scene from RoboCop occurs in the street with a group of villains guarding a businessman who has hijacked their companion. Emmett, recently released from jail, for some unexplained reason the captors direct the following scene somewhat enthusiastically:

"Hey Emmett! Are you the Crown Bond Man?"

"No, but they let me keep the skirt. Nobody popped my cherry."

"Why?"

"Emm, have you seen doing, man?"

"At this point the men begin to wrestle over the possession of an innocence pail."

"Pail!"

"Give it up, Emmett."

"Let a man handle it."

"No, let's handle, get your own."

"I'll get you, Emmett!"

Until I pointed out the blank textual space and what the captions had missed, my hard-of-hearing friend did not register the absence. The scene was either too short or the faces too obscured by the night scene for lip reading. At the time, I wondered if a commercial captor had caused the scene to be eliminated, eliminating perfectly and provocative dialogue throughout the movie, or if the censure was some consequence of the broadcaster’s disapproval. In any case, my friend was unimpressed that she had the right to use the swearing. As a cable subscriber she wanted to make the choice to tune in or tune out a program that might offend her. He choices were already so limited that she resented any further censorship or limitations imposed by the television broadcasters.

Close captioning is not free, nor is it a service guaranteed through Canadian affirmative action or equity rights legislation. Deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers pay to view captions by subscribing to a local cable service (or by erecting an exceptionally good antenna) and they must own or rent a closed caption decoder to decrypt the signal. The price of commercial decoders has plunged recently in Ontario largely as a consequence of the importation of American television with captioning capacity. With the passage of the American Disability Act (1993), American manufacturers are now required to accommodate the needs of potential consumers by incorporating the technology into new televisions. Be requiring that any manufactured or imported television sold in the U.S. containing over three inches be equipped internally with decoder circuits, the U.S. law makes the conventional decoder box obsolete. If Canadians cannot afford these new televisions, a "free" decoder can be obtained, on loan for a deposit, directly from Ontario cable companies.

When closed captions flicker out in a cliffhanger episode or turn into incomprehensible garbage across the bottom of the screen, as they do all too frequently, it is hard to believe that anyone in the broadcaster's studio is checking the quality of the service. Given that closed captioned television was not even available in Canada until the early 1990s, it is perhaps not surprising that it still remains poorly monitored. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) ensures access to captioning by affixing a cable band (see Figure 2) for the exclusive display of closed captions. Recently, in response to lobbying by consumer groups, the CRTC has begun to require that broadcasters increase the overall percentage of captioned programmes. Previously, the CRTC did not monitor closely the use of captioning technology by Canadian companies or the consumer quality of captioning in the television industry. A broadcaster could claim that the six o'clock newscast would be "closed captioned for the hearing impaired" when only the news headlines (such as KILLER STORM or POLITICAL LPB) was 9% or 9% of the overall programmes were actually captioned. An active lobby by the Canadian Association of Capturing Consumers and other organizations for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, armed with comprehensive studies of broadcaster services and quality, has been urging the CRTC for years to strengthen industry standards. Acknowledging the problems in the television industry and the research of health groups, the CRTC under Commissioner Gall Scott announced this summer that broadcasters will have to meet a target of 90% captioning of their programming by 1998.

Forget TV guides and newspaper listings. TV channel surfing is probably still the most accurate method for caption consumers to find closed captioned television programming. Of the estimated 81% of the overall daytime broadcast schedule captioned in Western Canada, only 51% of the actual captioned program...
ning schedule is accurately indicated in these guides. In the
remaining programmes, the gambit, partial, or disappearing cap-
tions are very familiar to deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. I sus-
pect that the regular disruption of captioning in rerun programmes,
especially Star Trek, may be the result of the subtle speaking up of
the taped programme to accommodate additional commercial times.
Elsewhere, gaps in captioned dialogue, especially the final dramatic
dialogues and offscreen comments, may be a consequence of last-
minute editing after captioning has been locked. In any case, hear-
ing TV viewers are not expected to tolerate a blank screen during the
final scenes of "Northern Exposure" or an unrepairable sound that was
inseparable for a broadcast of "Hockey Night in Canada."
Even renting a video is a gamble. If your tastes turn to alterna-
tive films or anything produced outside of the major American stu-
dios, you may be out of luck. It goes without saying that what dia-
logue exists in a pornographic film won't be closed captioned.
Even if "Eyes Wide Shut" has what you want and it carries the closed
captioning logo, there is still a good chance that you have blown
your three bucks on an unoptioned video.
Closed captioning functions much like a translation, from one
source language to another. It is often intended to circu-
culate the contents of a given work and to make it available
to wider audiences. It is much more than a simple mechanical
process; it involves value judgments, accommodation to publishing
standards and print technologies, and a certain amount of creativ-
eity. In the case of commercial captioning, captions are restricted
by practical considerations such as the capacity of their audience
and the capacity for print absorption by the average reader. This is
especially true for children's programming where the captioner
must determine whether captions should be redundant or con-
densed to conform to a child's understanding of linguistic com-
pleteness. Average adult literacy allows for a comfortable reading
speed of 200-250 words per minute, but must account for a drop
to 120-140 words per minute when a television screen is animat-
ed with background visuals. Unlike reading a book or newspaper,
reading a captioned TV programme does not allow reviewing a
complicated sentence or looking up an unfamiliar word. For these
reasons, commercial captioners are sometimes compelled to
smooth the syntax in order to retain clarity. Children's program-
mapping, for example, is often completely rewritten to accommodate
the reading levels of young viewers and to make explicit the infer-
ces of vocal tone that are suggested to a hearing viewer. In the
process, subtitles of tone, humour, and cultural differences within
spoken English are often sacrificed for what is deemed to be the
more important overall message. The captioned text of a children's
programme also promotes a cultural conformity and blandness
reminiscent of Reader's Digest Condensed Books.
The limitations and cultural knowledge of commercial cap-
tioners create another serious problem. During live broadcasts
taped programming, these highly trained individuals are not
always able with the spellings of proper nouns for individuals
are expected to caption accurately based on previous vocabula-
rories. More seriously, most captioners are not adequately pre-
pared by broadcasters or producers to discern subtle linguis-
tic variations within spoken English. "In real time" captioning, a high-
quality captioning produced simultaneously on-air, captioners are
at a serious disadvantage. Although the best captioners are highly
qualified and flexible practitioners, the act of transcription is a
process which produces as well as captures meaning.
Frequently, captions are redacted with unintentional "Heyda-
ian slips" (as a caption for TVO's "Imprint" once read.
For example, when the singer Dolly Parton appeared on the Arsenio Hall
show, the last late-night talk show to offer captions, she was very animat-
ed and in her description of "signifying" with the late comedian Redd
Finn. It was apparent by the context of her story that, by "signify-
ing," she referred to the opposite of what its origins in the African
American community. To signify, according to Roger D. Abrahams,
is to play the trickster and to "talk with great innuendo, toキャ,
caipe, to needle, and to lie." Reese described a spontaneous ses-
ion of outrageous insults flying back and forth between Fonz and
himself and, to underline the excitement of the verbal sparring,
Reese remembered no comedian Richard Pryor encouraged them to
shooting. "Signify, signify!" Any subtext in this exchange was lost
as the captioner repeatedly misrecorde her phrases as
"safely, safely!" Despite the narrative context, the captioner
mediated the story by supplying those words that were "heard" or
which made the most sense in their understandable limited experi-
ence. Rather than criticize the captioner, I would rather point to
the limitations in the practice itself. Captioning, like the lim-
ited editing, is an ideological practice which has the potential
to smooth out cultural difference and distinctions. This dimension
is largely uncharted. In the past, the work of advocacy groups
and the CRTC has focused on the larger problems of consumer access
and on the quality of closed captioning in general. Very little has
been done to foreground the ways captioning, as a form of cultural
mediation, influences and intervenes in the acts of television vis-
ion for deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. Safely, indeed.

Note
All statistics are quoted from the only comprehensive
Canadian study on the quality of closed captioning:
The Canadian Captioning Development Agency,
Canadian Captioning Profile: "The Monitor Project."
Toronto, CCAA, January 1993.

"No!" yelled girlfriened. "Don't stop there. My thumb on the clicker, clicker again. The
Woman's Television Network disappeared into the continuum of mindless unwatched
and unwatchable channels. The response was visceral. The thumb click on its inevitable impatience.
But when I fingered a remote to "TVO" and "What, we're not on TVO?" Would we
see ourselves? Is the channel out for us? Named after us? Does it not call out to us to come?
"Come Woman. Can we come. Does it not hail us in our cozy living room from its cozy living room set? "No!" yelled girlfriened. "I don't care if you have a caption about it, watch it when I'm not here."
It was a lucky thing then that I also have free time this summer, day to idle away, or I would never have been able to write this article. I would have never been allowed to watch enough WTN to write something based on more than second-hand half-stories. But I would see.less, complaints half-articulated but entirely predictable.
That's where it started, this obsession to WTN. It started with the immediate impression that its food was a library of troubles presented live and in person. Unlike the daytime talk shows, which openly thrive on the exploitation of sorrow, misery on WTN lacks entertainment...
value. It has none of the scopophilic pleasures of the talk show carnivals, or the carnage on the nightly news, or the engrossing real-time drama of CNN. WIN takes a novel approach to recovery: it is for information only, consciousness-raising, community-building. But this is exploitation of another kind. Television is a voyeuristic medium, looking in someone’s imagined living room or someone’s all-too-real crisis. If it shows the disenchanted, they are shown as spectacles, as Other to the viewer. But in the hands of WIN, the Other is producing shows about itself. And me. It haunts me. We are producing shows about you.” What would be human interest stories on any other channel are women’s interest stories on WIN. Women are supposed to be interested in other women as a matter of political principle. How would I admit, after years of schooling in the feminist arts, that I am not always interested? That I don’t want to be represented in this way? Not if I want to keep my job preaching to the converted. But in the privacy of my own home the encouraged reflexes of my thumb battle with my political ideals. They produce a sensation I can only describe as the disembodiment of ambivalence. Intellectually, it is like an Althusserian nightmare.

Louis Althusser (a French philosopher who strangled his wife and whose presence therefore represents a certain ambivalence in this essay) wrote about the process by which ideology haunts or interprets individuals as subjects. It can be imagined along the lines of the existential commonplace: “They, you there.” You turn around, knowing that you are being spoken to. In his example, a policeman shouts and you turn because, being a subject of a policed subject, you are not guilty. Althusser described a circle of recognition—“interpellation,” in his terms. For my purpose, you could say that Althusser described how people are interpreted into categories by recognizing themselves to be a member of the group. Thus women recognize themselves to be Women, gays and lesbians, Gay and Lesbian, Brown and black, Black and People of Colour: status of subjectivity, but somehow legislated nonetheless. Cultural, social, and political opaque produce different categories of people, but they are all ideological, left and right. Television is one of those apparatus par excellence, and “Woman” one of those categories.

A la Althusser then, a woman watching the program knows it is addressed to her. She is hailed by an almost obsessive repetition of the word “Woman.” She knows that she is a member of a target audience, a commercial category built on an unbreakable circle of semantic recognition. If you watch WIN you will be seen more closely as a woman, your opinions, as a woman, being represented to you and the rest of the television-viewing audience. WIN is offering broader social recognition—within a narrow set of acceptable parameters. Remember, the bottom line is selling airtime. What is so discomforting about WIN is that it not inadvertently highlights the ideological nature of both the women’s movement and television together.

Television is a advertising-driven medium that, in a bottoms-up kind of way, must be able to identify its audiences and sell them things. Thus, when the initial advertising research for WIN produced a demographic that said that the people who would watch were older, sixty percent of whom were female and forty percent male, programming was canvassed accordingly. “Feminist” was declared a dirty word because focus groups indicated it would be perceived as man-hating and would turn away viewers. Yet the stories were to be done by women. Women were to show women as capable of being decision-makers. The market researchers were wrong about their audiences. It was younger and hipper and, by definition, feminist. Women who were already quite capable of making decisions had made theirs.

My unsanctioned market survey (I asked my friends of who watch what, if anything on WIN, produced these results: “Mary Tyler Moore” and “Kate and Allie” have a faithful following of gay men; “French and Saunders,” a British comedy series which is about as far from politically correct as women can get, is a favoured favourite. “Erin,” a WIN style, upbeat girls-on-the-street show, aimed at adolescent and young adult women, seems to draw a crowd; and “The Natural Angler,” a fishing show which last year starred former Olympic high-jumper Debbie Van Keikshoelt, has high klatch appeal. Oh if I saw one of those true porn, “I can’t believe I am seeing this!” moments, Van Keikshoelt became seminudeamic with a fish on her line. “OK,” she said, breathlessly, “Let’s use this guy in.” Each fish hooked produced close-ups of red fingernails and her high-pitched repetition of key phrases. All the fish were guys. Unfortunately, even this show turned into a human-interest story when Van Keikshoelt, satisfied with her day’s catch, takes us on a little tour of a nearby historically accurate recreation of an Indian settlement. “I like to make a day of it by taking little side trips,” says the angler turned theme-park tour guide; typically this show sublimates his audience. (See Jack Baker’s article “Women and Fish...” on page 49 and for another take on “The Natural Angler,” a show with remotely controversial material is flagged as an “adult viewing.”) So “Shameless Shrive” was shown at midnight, making it very shameless indeed, and “The Creation,” a series on women artists, warrants “discretion advised.” A whiff of controversy might at least produce a bodily needed public profile.

So why did we not watch WIN more? (Past tense here because I have hopes that the current season may prove better.) Look, for example, at the flagship show, “Point of View: Women.”
“Typically WTN infantilizes its audience.

“P.O.V. Woman” was (it has been replaced this season by a new show, “Take Three”) a current affairs program which, according to the promotion material, “looks at the world around us from a woman’s point of view.” It was to represent the mandate of the channel: “Specifically designed to portray the women’s perspective on current social issues and achievements, WTN endeavors to ensure that all women are represented, regardless of age, ethnic or socio-economic background. Television is for women, by women, and about women and their worlds.” Anyone who has been around awhile will recognize the unconstructed (sic) design of this sentence, a hallmark of the must-see repetition of “woman” and that of her singular “woman’s perspective.”

“P.O.V. Woman’s” had three hosts, Helen Hutchison, Sylva Sweaney and Jeanette Lokan. They were, as promised, visually diverse: older White, Black, and Asian, respectively. One had the sense that they were very interested in women’s opinions. But we, the viewing audience, seldom heard their opinions since they occupied the strange pole of objective interviewer, representative of their category, and stood in for women as a whole, all at the same time. P.O.V. wanted the talents of the hosts. Audios crossed precisely at the holes – it’s difficult to suss all the way when left faceless in front of a television camera on a still chair with no draped-they did their best to make their guests say something interesting only to cut them off as soon as possible.

The interviews seemed to be that any woman (and some men) would have something interesting to say if stuck in front of a television camera. Helen Hutchison’s discourses on depression with Mike Wallace had some depth and meaning, but it’s hard to go wrong in conversation with such a seasoned broadcaster as Wallace. Jeanette Lokan had a good story to tell about her depression, but her obvious intelligence was concealed behind scripted questions, which tried to anticipate both interviewee responses and audience objections for too much to be interesting. The interviewees couldn’t pretend that they were objective with a title like “Point of View,” but how could subjectivity be this constrained and boring? Expected but not met, “P.O.V.” was often painful to watch.

The interviews faced slightly better when they were in the field. One memorable video spot showed Sylva Sweaney interviewing Susan Powell, a popular fitness personality. Sweaney, sweet and Black, towers over the bleached and kinetic Powell. Powell barbs on about food and the body in front of the small screen and it’s a bit of a check to her graceful height but says nothing about her experience of what must be an extraordinarily painful (woman’s) body. Shortly after I saw this interview, The Globe and Mail ran a front-page story on Sweaney and her accomplishments in subnetting. She’s a team-savvy vision of the Canadian national women’s basketball team, now a television producer herself who won accolades for her documentary on her uncle, Oscar Peterson. But you’d never know it from seeing her on WTN.

Once again, I saw a discussion with three young “Trickles” with good attitude (one at least described) “Trickles” was the self-definative term they used. One was obviously a drudge and about the only Irishman I’ve seen on the Network who actually showed signs of being one. The absence of signs of lesbianism quite clearly demarcated the limits of what WTN has decided is a profitable representation of women. And my desire to see signs of lesbianism proves how inscrutable the circle of inclusion is. I want to be included, knowing that my inclusion would be determined by a board which would decide, on balance, that trying to sell something with the risk of losing other viewers to whom they might sell something.

This is the paradox of WTN. Powerful women behind the scenes are neutralized or invisible in front of the camera. Sweaney isn’t the only WTN associate to have been profiled as a female success story in The Globe and Mail and (don’t assume that this is a measure of what constitutes “celebration of her achievements.”) Barbara Bate and Brianne on several times in the business pages of both The Globe and The Star. Formerly Vice-President of Programming and one of the driving forces behind WTN, she left suddenly after the first season. She now heads Upfront Entertainment, which will this season produce independently in Toronto what were formerly WTN’s in-house productions. (It’s a deal that she’s reluctant to discuss, since the move from in-house to independent production satisfies promises made to the CRTC, but seems to me to be a lot of a shell game, particularly in light of her departure from local office in Winnipeg.)

First and foremost, WTN in business is a business. It’s vastly percent owned by Fancy Moffett of Moffatt Communications, the owner of the Winnipeg CTV affiliate. Ron Rhodes (whose theory of feminism comes from Carol Gilligan) and a partner own fifteen percent. Linda Rankin, the recently fired president, owns another ten percent. Barbara Bate and The Bate group own eighteen percent; there are others—minority-shareholders. The original application for a licence made to the CRTC was for a station called “Lifeline Television.” There’s a “lifetime,” a similarly named and targeted channel in the United States which claims nightly telethones and reruns of old sitcoms. It did sponsor the women’s crew of “Mighty Men” in the America’s Cup and it broadcast a few PMAs on Breast Cancer to please its viewers, but it is primarily market-driven.

Regarding WTN the die was cast early, when the marketing department, rather than exclude for exclusivity for programming, as independent producers had in the case of “The National Atopic,” sponsored a Skiing Federation, or the also popular “Out and About,” financed by General Motors—decided that it would try to raise additional revenue through heavily discounted advertising sales sold by the CTV advertising department, under the Mendel’s son, Greg. For a show on older women and sexuality the suggested products were adult diapers and denture glue. Sponsorship then became increasingly difficult to organize since it was more expensive than the regular advertising time. If it wasn’t for an agreement to get WTN included in the second tier of cable subscriptions after Rogers’ negative optioned scheme backfired, the channel would never have survived.

Since I was concerned that I present a balanced story on the channel, I called WTN’s offices for information. No one from head office in Winnipeg even called me back and several other women associated with the channel were reluctant to say anything. In spite of much instability—Daryll Moulton, director of independent production, Kate Thomas, director of programming, and the Present, Linda Rankin, were all gone within the first year—there is a loyalty to the original vision of the channel and a desire to see it succeed. Barbara Bate isn’t afraid of the crucible, however; she thrives on it. Over these three hours breakfast I am almost worn over by her. Her history of how WTN made it to air is a mix of tragi-comedy and apocalypse. Apparently, no one expected that the CRTC would greatly grant the “Lifeline Channel” a licence. The CRTC licensing approval came in June of 1994. Program production started in October. WTN threw on the switch at midnight, December 30th, 1994. In three months, starting from when the office was opened, with limited equipment and money, WTN put on a brand new television channel with twenty-five new series in production. It would have been impossible without the fervent belief of all involved in it. Ninety-five percent of its staff were female and they worked night and day. (Many of these women gave up other jobs to work at WTN and many independent producers agreed to work for relatively low wages.) One imagines that many of the women dedicated to the promise of WTN were like Bate—smart, funny, tough, a bit of a madcap reformer.

Smart—funny, tough. That’s what Bate hopes the new season will be. She wins when I mention “P.O.V.” even though the show was originally her idea. She promises that “Take Three” will be better. She admits the first season was monotonous, too serious. This season will be more interactive, will appeal to a broader audience. New ideas are percolating—such as “Glass Act,” an etiquette show. Only one problem she says: we can’t figure out who would host it. It’s quite obvious, I say, who. A drag queen. Light bulbs go off of Bate’s. Only one problem she says, who would we find one? We live in different worlds, it seems. [He’s since heard that they’ve asked Peter Schneider, a niece, but quite proper, gay man to do the job, no more hate just the glory of being on WTN.] There’s one more thing I want to know. One wonders, with Sweaney and Kiebel’s involvement in the Network, why there aren’t some serious women’s sports broadcasts. We can do, after all, have a world championship (women’s) hockey teams in both the lesbian and straightating divisions. This season, Bate tells me, WTN will air a half-hour half-hour British women’s sports digest in addition to the half-hour half-hour show called “On Your Feet” (which I still haven’t stumbled upon after months of imposing viewing). TNV has apparently got the rights to most women’s sports even though it broadcasts a very small percentage. I think about suggesting that WTN’s do highlights from the women’s soccer, and the basketball, the rugby … nothing. The sports programming is left out of WTN included in the second tier of cable subscriptions after Rogers’ negative optioned scheme backfired, the channel would never have survived.
AFFECTED by ARTIFICE:
The Populist Resentments of REALITY TV

by Beth Seaton

Why "America's Most Wanted" and other shows like it make you lock your door at night.

There are moments in time when certain events appear inexplicable, whose severity and meanness seem just too sharp to grasp. "How did this happen?" we ask, and the answer we give, if we answer at all, tends to avoid difficult or uncomfortable explanations in favour of the easy response that such things are simply beyond our control.
The city of Toronto, this response has become
something of the chosen explanation for the
election of Mike Harris and the eartshaking
of his Conservative government’s cut within
the social and cultural sectors. For those of us who
live in this city whose choking air and ugliness are only
made tolerable by its strong cultural environment,
who consider ourselves enlightened and urbane,
and who only last spring were laughing at the medi-
cratic of this man in the face of a corrupt choir
boys, the consensus is that Harris was nominated to
forces outside of our domain. Simply put, it was
those people out there—out in the excessive waste-
land of urban monster homes, or litter out in
the more pastoral, but equally mysterious novel terri-
tories—who brought Harris and his Key government
to power. These are people who, even if they be pro-
sumer. There are few others, but few number
or understanding of the life
and experience of this city.
While these may seem too
reductive, the success of Harris’s “com-
mon sense revolution” extends
to a simple way of the
country and the city. Nor may
be found within an economic
equation (the deficit), which
is itself only a heuristic. To
be dressed up as a truth. Rather,
the conditions of this “revo-
lution” may be found within
more nebulous and affective
terrain of culture that places
where a hegemonic “common
sense” secures its nomination.
Harris’s election is indica-
tive of a fundamental shift
in the cultural machinery of repre-
sentation—where what is important (particularly for
the look of building consensus) is not knowledge,
but feeling, not critical distance, but an emotional
clouseness. Harris was able to push his politics into
the sphere of communions by speaking to people on a
very subjective level. He attacks upon the deficit
was not voiced in the daily language of economic
rationalite, but rather outreach. His attacks upon the
poor—labelled as “welfare cheats” and “immi-
grants”—tapped into a mean and irrational paranoia
of “the other.” Nothing was explained, onlly felt.
What is disturbing about the success of this
culture is that so easily it appears to
parallel a shift in auditory culture: particularly in
terms of how television now defines and shapes
social problems. Television, as all students of
the medium know, acts as an important—if not the pre-
eminent—public sphere. The social meanings which
are circulated and constructed within this apparatus
matter very much to our lives. As a commercial
medium geared towards the entertainments of
consumption, television’s persuasive and wide-
spread influence has long been dependent upon its ability
to sell us things—comfort foods, soap operas,
common sense porn—and the acts we are asked to do.
As a mass medium which is also a household
object, television is doubly articulated between pri-
ate lives and public worlds. It offers a felt connec-
tion between what is here and there and what is there
between what is actual and what can be imagined.
Much has changed in terms of the quality of television’s mediations over the past ten years.
Certainly, it remains an important part of
the process by which the content to the existing structure
of power in society is produced; however, the
process by which this production takes place has
changed. Television, which is equally an aural as
well as visual medium, no longer represents
in a clear and measured tone, but increasingly in the staminating
staccato of a talk-
radio host, a curial host or a political	politician. Its persuasive intentions tap into and bring
forth not the new knowledge of insight, but the
other abstractions of emotion; abstractions which make
the complexities of society in sentimental and
spectacular terms.
Television (and this old never) has gone
total. It is now movement into private
matters, and, as is necessary in any scripted
gossp, it does so with a sophisticated interrogating of the
truth and the lie. The stealth wait of an entertainment news has become entertainment: anchors engage in
“happy talk,” events are illustrated in computer generated
re-enactments, and the “soft” interviews of
decadence are taken from
in the family
though the “happy” parrots of domesticity
(with the harder fall awarded a cash prize), the
televised and capsized ceremonies of the
decadence as a constant threat whose existence demands
social and moral rectitude. Hence, the supercilious con-
demnations of the tabloid, or the cop/strip/card shows and their weekly variations on the theme of Nancy
Reagan’s staged cook-house bust, in which police, with
camera cones, send a “live” show of their pow-
ers’ “comparisons” and their moral convolutions.
Finally, reality programmes express their social or
moral dilemma in highly emotional terms, for this is
chiefly for their self-sustaining function. Importantly, it is
feeling, rather than seeing, which is the basis for
believing in these shows. Stress is laid upon individual
and immediate manifestations, particularly in terms of
how humans or morals are expected to exist.
In this respect, it is no longer a distance or neutral gaze
which acts to establish authority, but rather an appeal to
subjunctive authority, which is a way of
the proximity of the depicted event to the experience of
the audience. In other words, the audience affair on
(inside the, the furrow sewing on, and the
groom who goes up to his wedding at America’s
Funnest Home Videos are all events which can attem-
taken seriously to the viewer. This appeal to subjection
involvement is further established through certain participa-
tory strategies that, in the sacred topic of “consumer
choice,” encourage audiences to interact with the pro-
grame. Thus, viewers of Mad TV are offered 1,000
numbers in order to place phone-in votes at the end of
the show ("Burt or Love? Who do you believe?—Callers
must be 18 years or older.") America’s Most Wanted
seeks its viewers to exist in the capture of suspected fug-
ites profiled on the show by calling the toll-free hotline 1-800-CRIME-TV. And studio audience members
of America’s Funnest Home Videos vote for the “funniest
video shows during the programme.
There was a time when the tabloid shows were
laughingly dismissed as the slacker and risque freaks of
the programme schedule. Just as some of us, in a not
too-distant past, found Mike Harris and his supporters to
represent only the more aggressive and “bathroom-
excremental” of an operatic Conservative Party; so too
were these shows held to address only a small constitu-
tes of the tabloid’s audience; the depths of a few
common denominator. Consumers of these
programmes were imagined as the television version of
those bi-polarized women who supposedly frequent
the supermarket’s cheque-out lines—checking out the tabloid’s
report’s stories of lust, adultery and the occasional
this sighting, while seeing to buy the week’s supplies
of cheeseburger, wendy bread and dessert cake. In effect, both
the tabloid shows and their audiences were directed
in an exhaustive framework of gastronomical, esthetic
and moral distinctions significant to the mass
food of a “feminine” mass culture which holds no produc-
tive or aesthetic value, but the last taste of the “femi-

a viewing visible reference to, or dramatized of, “real” events,
people or problems. This description of the “real” involves
a fixed and unmediated relation to actuality, sometimes strains the bounds of
credibility. Rather than simply relying upon actual
documentary or “live” footage, reality programming often
draws upon a mix of acts, sets footage, interviews
and recreations in a highly simulated portrait of the
“real.” Materialization of actuality—mesh-
with the liberal use of flashy graphics, creative editing
and evocative music—is largely geared towards self-pro-
jection, rather than informational, ends. In essence,
the effectiveness of the “real” in these shows is drawn
from popular memory and forms, specifically the popular
forms of commodity culture. Second, these programmes
are the stuff of moral disorder and desire—crime, cor-
ruption, sexual infidelity; violation—particularly as
they take place within a private sphere. While the
random proximity of murder is tempered in its family
videos through the “happy” parrots of domesticity
(with the harder fall awarded a cash prize), the
televised and capsized ceremonies of the
decadence as a constant threat whose existence demands
social and moral rectitude. Hence, the supercilious con-
}
content for the journalistic conventions of naturalism raised questions about our everincreasing relation to reality.

Undoubtedly, the deepening of realistic programming may be attributed to the economic demands of a competitive television market. The crisis and confusion represented by the mutations of reality programming also led to a notion of an overall devaluation and decline of accessible societal "truths." In no number of articles debating the existence of "real life," the "truth" of investigative or alternative actions, or the ground lost by white men, the explicit or implicit complaint is that social categories (of race, of gender, of sexuality, of class) will no longer stay in their places. Anyone may be in these days, anyone an aggressor. In this respect, confusions of realistic programming's "realism" violate its empathy upon moral disorder, its appeal to the subjective, and its permissions of the "real" may be read as symptomatic of a culture in which the lines drawn between reality and representation, between the private and the public, and among categories of social identities, has become modelled. More particularly, in a hypercommercialization of the "real," reality programming may be seen to comment upon itself, foregrounding its own constructedness and cultural status as television, and "true" television at that. Here, the false naturalness of reality TV can be found to recede the codes and processes of an ideological realism, rather than to diagnose such codes as common sense. Despite such self-conscious expressions, salacity TV acts in the service of repair, rather than to the true and inaccurate wearers of a contagious ideology. Its violators of the "real" cannot be extended into a celebratory logic which reads reality TV as, in the words of media scholar Susan Sontag, a "primary site of psyche in the ideological fabric of bourgeois culture." Such readings in fact belie a peculiar, and largely epiphenomenal habit of some analysts of culture whose myopia won't allow them to see the hegemony for its "resistance." The obligations of reality programming are guided more towards the re-determination of accumulable social truths. As ones is to provide a simulated relief from the assault upon unsanctioned cultural and moral values. Ironically, this restoration is conducted through the exhibition and policing of a public, "feminine" domain.

This point does not only release the norm of a society that necessarily encompasses a "feminine" place. Rather, it puts to those places which have historically served as repositories for, or domains of, social difference. Such a place could be the home, it could be in the public shock at night known as a "quaker space." It could be the street (and increasingly, for poor people, it is). It is that place which, for whatever historical contingency, remains excluded from the universalist rights of a public sphere. In Canada, as in the United States, the state expresses its norms and regulations in neutral and general terms, wherein political rights are said to be available to all, irrespective of social differences. While not entirely banished, but certainly transcended within the disclosure of public rights and responsibilities, difference is argued to be important only within an experiential or personal venue. It is thus the domain of the private which harbours difference, as all that which remains other than a universalist or normative standard.

Not surprisingly, Harris's cats are aimed at those public institutions responsible for allocating the difficulties of difference, particularly as this difference is articulated in a private sphere: women, children, legal aid, health care, work equity, public transportation. In a like manner, it is the domain of the private which is the televised site of ideological conflict and difference and thus the stage of social policing. While realistic programming's hypercommercial orientation at the expense of the private plays up the demise of over-romanticized social and "family" values, such scrutiny, conversely, is also the means by which an embattled dominant order now simulates repair upon the homes and bodies of those outside of its normative presence. This social and moral redux is evidenced in tabloid TV's hypercommercialization par excellence in that this domination of (and thus dominance) of often murderous social/space conflicts, wherein the challenge which difference may pose is erased by any material or ideological conditions. We see such reductive points most prominently in the video/entertainment show, whose simulated actuality is anchored to a faith in the spontaneity and uncontrolled "truths" of the camera. Rather than exploring reality for the "true" of any surface, such programmes are geared towards the production of social consent, wherein the spectacle of violence conditions the audience to the visual domination of the camera. Thus, the faces of perpetrators—overwhelmingly black, chicanos or woman, overwhelmingly poor—are rarely obscured in these programmes, but shown, observed, as the gnawing physiological evidence of criminality. The cards give a running narrative to the anonymous and usually amusing camera, talking of the pain and trauma of crimes on film and their frustrations in dealing with it. The camera interviews or police, dogs and camera cross literally crash into the privacy of people's lives, bursting into their homes in the middle of the night, turning over tables, turning up drapes, turning over their children to state authorities, all in the best interest of a universal social community, "the people.

Producers of the cop and madam shows, perhaps in an effort to distance their product from the "naivety" stigma of tabloid TV, like to describe their programmes as "pro-social," as offering a form of public service. Supposedly, these shows are designed to foster a solid consensual ground of social and moral content. In their appeal to viewer identification, the helpful "crime tips" offered, and the participatory strategies of 1-800 numbers used to report a suspicious stranger, neighbor or friend, they presumably offer a rhetoric of citizenship and engagement, whereby collective watching translates into the collective practice of caring. This moral and social consensus is directed less towards collective ends than to an individualist and conservative populism. It is addressed not towards the "public" citizen, but the citizen-consumer, whose primary motivations involve the pursuit of self-protection and self-protection from the cruel (and largely economically unequal) outside of the world. The social dimensions which these shows express encourage a crude redefining. Crime is rampant out there—committed by all those crazies and cowards and denizens—and it's inescapable. There is no space for escape, except at back, watch, and hope it doesn't come your way. The findings mobilized on these shows are not those of care (except about one's self), but those of fear and insecurity; feelings which are simultaneously raised and then allied with the "ebb and flow of emotional closeness and self-conscious anxiety. By making a spectacle of "the real," reality TV acts to accentuate the "naivety" of this condition, while isolating the viewer from its touch, keeping it at a proper and categorical distance. As a genre which promises an immediate or direct engagement with "the real," it nonetheless offers a sensual flight from the social crimes of the real world. It professes a love of truth and compassion in all its dramatized forms, but never in its complex substances.

During a period in which "gilded" communities are rapidly becoming the standard for urban housing, the attempt to keep difference at bay—the covertly managed dwellings of the "normal"—has become not only a doleful dream's, but also the obsession of a new privileged class. So far as it supports such an obsession, reality programming may be the pleasurable perversity of a new feudalism: a decisive society where the madness still remain safe behind their gates, while in the decaying city, the images of the distant poor (Mike Harris's "special interest groups") are captured and broadcast back to them, measuring them in their limited understanding, their meanness, and their populist conceits.

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**Women & Fish: WTN’s**

**“The Natural Angler”**

*Finally in the Net after a Long Battle!*

Here is an image of fishing at its most essential: landscape, man, fish. This postcard depicts the male angler alone in the wilderness, apart from civilization. Or rather, he is alone with the fish with whom he is engaged in an intimate relationship: the caption, “Finally in the Net after a Long Battle!” connotes a sense of bonding, as if the two were on equal footing, partners for a moment in the eternal struggles of nature. Here is the essence of truth, where a man encounters nature directly, an experience apparently unmediated by the complexities of social life in modern times.

**“Fresh Fish Fry”**

Another postcard, “Fresh Fish Fry,” shows us a slightly more developed social world, a father and his son about to bond over a pan of fresh fish. This pair have set up camp in a vast, empty landscape. And yet it is a generous landscape, a natural strip of abundance. Here, so it seems, one can live “off the fat of the land” and pull fish from the water with a minimum of effort. Survival is represented as an uncomplicated affair: without wage labour or exchange, sustenance is taken directly and immediately from nature.
**A Perfect Camp-Site**

F\ally, there is the all male group of "A Perfect Camp-Site" (next page). Their (and our) attention is focused on the dis-play of the antics: the "trout shuck" is perhaps the most con-venient image of fishing. Our gaze is also directed to the boy as the men...and we-partake of his pleasure. He is of central impor-tance on the postcard speaks of the didactic function of fishing. A boy learns about nature and his proper relation to it. At the same time he learns what it means to be a masculine subject--he learns to be a man among men.

Three postcards, harvested recently from a nickel in New Brunswick, appear to be generic photos with indistinguishable location simply stamped on the back. Their function is twofold: they operate as tourism advertisements, but in X location one can obtain such experience; and they express, define, and validate the experience of the angler who collects or sends this card. The man who sees in the images are not necessarily the main subject; rather, these cards are just as much about the landscape that surrounds them. These images of landscape express a nostalgia for a preindustrial past of natural abundance and simplicity of life, a world supposedly removed from (modern) society. But in these cards certain nostalgics, they lack history. They lack history because they lack specificity, they represent a generic postcard. Obviously, all three cards present a social world--namely, the culture of the out-doorsman, camper, fisher--but nothing is represented here as an escape from modern, urban or suburban social practices and obliga-tions. We are drawn into a world of fishing that is represented as natural and authentic. In a strange--but not uncommon--inversion, what the camera records or signifies is the absence of culture, history, and thus the camera's own absence.

Of course, to be represented as "natural" is a contradiction in terms; these cards are themselves codes. The postcard's hyperreal colours bulk its constructedness. The fishers depicted are far "off the beaten track," but it takes a good deal of cul-ture--of dress, objects, genre, and a little added colour--to signify the natural. We are drawn into these images that fishing requires a great deal of cultural baggage. The fisher's world is one of a rare array of equipment, dress codes, hierarchies of practices, elaborate moral and ethical rules, as well as other complex government regulations. Behind the seemingly trivial behi nch of these postcards lies a social world composed of several layers of meaning, that resonate within complex, contradictory--interconnected--natural nature and culture; individual and community; the exploitation and conservation of nonhuman life; an ethic of respect for both the land and one's fellow scrutinizes; and particularly the cultural rules of gender.

**Fishing from the Nature/Culture Divide:**

"The Natural Angler" and the Interfacial construction of nature

The aforementioned issues are the basic components of sportfishing in general, and they form the symbolic substance of the full spectrum of fishing shows on television. From the popular to the obscure, the local to the national, to the inter-view in a whistling that "Fishing the Whist," "Frank Parker's Outdoor Magazine," "Yashis with Orlando Wilten," "Fishing with Roland Martin," "Rod and Reel--St smartphone," "The Walleye Guy Chronicles," "Great America Outdoors," "Fishin' Canada." "Credent Fishing," and "Base Masters," the production of knowledge on fishing shows goes far beyond technical know-how; it reproduces fishing culture. But "The Natural Angler," the Woman's Television Network's recent fem-knowledge into the main domain of the fishing genre, exposes the tensions and contradictions of fishing culture.

"The Natural Angler," which used to be hosted by Debbie Van Kiekel, emerges from a fairly well-established tradition. Fishing shows have become a notable feature of low-budget cable networks--ESPN, ESP, TWC, WTVO--and long established their place in the weekend quiche of banality. As a hybrid of these other low-budget weekend staples, nature documentaries and margin sports contests, fishing shows take us to the fringes, to the peaceful hinterland of the television medium. But from their

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**The Natural Angler**

Absolutely breath-taking. As soon as you see me traipsing my fishing rod and my fly-waders for bugging hooks, I want to make the most of my experiences. These three, "The Natural Angler" included, are about much more than the fish and their capture; they also establish relations between the fisher's world and that of the fisher, people and "natural environment/culture" and nature. It is, in fact, this nature/culture dichotomy that serves as the foundation for the production of knowledge on fishing shows; the other issues they raise, such as ethics and gender, are layered on top of this.

Nearly every shot of the fishing show expresses a negotiation between nature and culture. The overwhelming majority of fishing shows are shot from the confined space of the fishing boat from which he braves and pilots the fish. Typically, it is the boat from which we look out over or across the surface of the water. So the divi-sion between nature and culture is expressed as that between inside and outside and we are asked to have a seat on the inside. On the inside is a close, confined and somewhat contained world, a microscopic world of camaraderie, a world of jokes, slights or connotations, and construction and exchange of knowledge and fishing monthly. The social world of the boat is most often con-tained on-screen and the watermen--or nature--is just offscreen, on the edges of the narrative. The meanings of the social place and natural space are distinct but codetermines: they resonate on one another, and each provides a context for the other. The fishing show thus represents and fixes, despite the mobility of the boat, a social place that floats upon the surface of a natural space.

When the full course of "The Natural Angler" is viewed against the backdrop of its genre, what is most extraordinary is that Van Kiekel has become a fisher from a boat. One reason for this is certainly budgetary. Like the rest of WTVF's face, the show is low-budget and downtown-earths. But a boat and the closed world it rep-rese was would be out of sync with the overall tone of the show. Although "The Natural Angler" draws upon the conventions of the genre and falls well within its parameters, it tries to offer a unique, "feminine" perspective on fishing. It carries a different emphasis, for example, it does not emphasize technique so much as the ethics of fishing or safety; it places fishing as a cultural activity in a larger social context. Van Kiekel addresses the viewer directly throughout an interview or direct address in a series in eastwest, executive shows where the exchange of lore and expertise between fishing-screen genres is the norm. She tends to conclude to ge-ttery in favor of emphasis. Also, from fishing to visit a local cultural point of interest such as the Crawford Lake Indian Village Site, fishing reservations, clubs, or bed and breakfasts:

When you go fishing, I like to make the most of my fishing trip and I like to create the area that I'm staying in, hidden places that make that particular fishing area special.

If you may stop to lecture on the function of boat locks, fish forms, native fishing practices, the choice of proper clothing, fishing with children, and so on. The didactic function of this pro-gram is often tied to a particular effort to benefit from the view-er an appreciation of nature--the title of the show. As she

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Border/Lines
Fishing Who Invented it? by a Woman, the Domestication of Nature

“Fishing Who Invented it? by a Woman, the Domestication of Nature”

Young guest: Could you tell me who invented fishing?

Van Kiekelt: I’m sure it was a woman, Jake.

“The Natural Angler” can locate itself on the frontier between the natural and the cultural because it is about the domestication, the conquest, of nature. When all of nature becomes domesticated, there is little need for any distinctions between nature and culture. At the same time, the show represents the domestication and feminization of a masculine, gender neutral game. With just a touch of femininity, Van Kiekelt asks her guest and long-time fisher Donna Salmon about the feminization of the sport:

Van Kiekelt: How do you find a lot of women fishing?

D. Salmon: I’m finding it’s impressive.

Van Kiekelt: Do you and your girlfriends go out for a beer and say, “Let’s go fishing this weekend?”

D. Salmon: Well, that’s stretching it a little. I wish there were a lot more women out there to join me with this. And I find that slowly but surely women are picking it up a bit more often.

Thus, “The Natural Angler”’s attempt to confound the distinctions between nature and culture is linked to an agitation of gender roles. It is significant that “The Natural Angler” is scheduled just before “Carnaryl” or “Mary Bellamy.” But if the fisher into the male domain of fishing is a feminization of the game, it is not, if ever, feminized. As her female child guest sports over a minnow bucket, Van Kiekelt teases her what it means to be a woman among men:

Van Kiekelt: Now Whitman, I’m going to tell you a secret. Your brother wouldn’t touch one of those minnows! Now what kind of guy is he? Shall we show him what a real woman is? Do you want to put your hand in there?

But to be a woman angler means to bring traditional female values to the sport. If “The Natural Angler” puts fishing as a cultural, rather than natural, activity for women anglers, it is a culture of domesticity. It is linked to the culinary arts:

Van Kiekelt: I love to barbecue whitefish. It is so tender, it is so nice. . . . A little bit of garlic, a bit of butter. Minnows, I can taste it already.

Or, in a discussion with Dianna Salmon, fishing becomes craft, rather than sport:

Van Kiekelt: What do you think about fly-fishing. You just got into it recently?

D. Salmon: Well, I really enjoy fly-fishing and it seems to be that there is less technology involved; it’s more you and the fish. You’ve got only the line between you and the fish and there is a bit more skill involved than . . .

Van Kiekelt: I think there is a real art to it.

D. Salmon: Oh, yeah. And when you get into the other aspects; the education, the fly-thing, which is a beautiful, beautiful craft . . . . It’s great! It’s great for women to do. There’s such neat flies out there. There’s a whole new realm when it comes to fly-fishing.

Van Kiekelt: You know a lot of people say fly-fishing for a woman . . . almost go hand in hand [sic]. There’s a real touch, there’s a real art and it’s a very sensitive style of fishing.

The “female instinct” for fly-fishing comes from women’s sensitive nature, and that a women should take her nurturing abilities with her when she goes fishing:

Van Kiekelt: If I had what I call my emergency measures, or my care packages. You know, kids get restless, and sometimes they get hungry and you want to make sure that they’re happy the whole time you are out there. So always have a couple granola bars, a couple lollipops, something easy, easy that I can put in my pocket.

Of course, like the rest of television, this programme is produced to deliver appropriately socialized consumers to advertisers. “The Natural Angler” is sponsored by Ford, Hi-Tec; Sporting Goods, The Kettle Creek Clothing Co., and two tackle manufacturers, Berkley and Fenwick. The show’s inclusiveness is also packaged and sold to a wide range of advertisers: those selling fishing equipment, of course (although big-ticket items like boats and fish finders are notably absent), but also producers of what are considered feminine items which are often pitched with particularly regressive representations of female consumers: Suntan lotion, hair, and body care products; domestic soap products; and an army of food products (all noticeably absent from men fishing shows).

The nature/culture, outside/inside, male/female dichotomies that are negotiated on-screen in “The Natural Angler” actually parallel similar dichotomies that have emerged historically in the larger field of television and its place in everyday life. Since its development in the 1950s television has offered a clear relation between the index and the outcome. Television is a means to master the outdoors and nature and carry it into the domestic interior. Along with the development of suburbia, TV was designed for spatial domesticization, fishing shows. “The Natural Angler” in particular, are clearly the fulfillment of such a function in their ability to bring the fish into the living room while allowing an experience of wilderness, in a link from any dangerous ambiguities and excesses of meaning, meaning which might threaten the carefully constructed world of postwar North America. The construction of nature on television goes hand in hand with its construction in our homes and yards, in suburban design and development, along our highways, in parks and preserves, and so on. “The Natural Angler” participates in the historical processes of containment, domestication, and rationalization of social and natural life.
Altkleiser goes fishing

Fishing is the art of hooking, of bringing the fish to the social world of the angler. The lure is addressed not just to any fish but a specific species or a specific fish in a specific place: "Hey you there! Hey you, Basel!" As Van Kirkhele suggests, hooking can work in both directions:

Van Kirkhele: They [the salmon] are just beckoning for me to come and catch them.

The surface of the water is not present on the screen of the fishing show. It is a membrane that separates two worlds: the waterworld and the airworld. These different worlds are defined not just by the concrete, material elements of which they are composed, they are also differentiated subjective worlds: the fish-world and the human-world. The fishing line separates between people and fish and their worlds.

Van Kirkhele: What appeals to you about fishing... what attracts you to the sport?

D. Salmon: I think the isolation and the freedom and that you get that you're not just catching a fish... As well as the enjoyment, especially with catch and release, to be able to catch a wild animal, to appreciate playing with them, and allowing them to go back to nature and live again is really thrilling to me and I really enjoy that part of it.

The organic moment—the "money shot" of the scene—occurs when the membrane is violently ruptured and the fish, by its own effort or by that of the fisherman, violently enters the air-world. On "The Natural Angler," like other shows, a jumping fish will slick cloth of joy from the angler, and the higher and more violent the jump, the more respect is extended to the fish. This rupture can signify violent death for the fish, but it is also a face-to-face meeting of fish and fisher, nature and culture after a sometimes protracted foymy of communication between the two through the fishing line.

Van Kirkhele: There's nothing like that feeling of casting and that hook set; like knowing that you have caught the fish and released them. And then putting up the fight and bringing them in. There's a real bond between the fish and the angler.

It is significant, too, that the TV angler often speaks to, as well as about, the fish.

Van Kirkhele: I am definitely going to eat him for supper tonight. [To the fish] I'm sorry, don't hate me.

This boundary between the fish world and the human world is crossed discursively; that is the primary function of the fishing show. In a couple of episodes of "The Natural Angler," we are shown underwater shots of the fish. These shots are found in abundance in the print advertisements for lures and jigs and often show the fish fighting or about to take the lure. We are placed within the fish's subjective world; we are asked to see the practice of fishing from, quite literally, the fish's point of view. The central problem of lure choice and manipulation is to discover or predict what will be recognized by a particular species of fish, in a particular environment at a particular time, as an effective meal. (Van Kirkhele demonstrates a precise and detailed knowledge of lure function in relation to fish behavior and environmental conditions.) A great deal of effort is expended attempting to come to terms with the other-world of the fish, so what distinguishes the skill of the fisher is not only skill in casting or handling a hooked fish, but also her familiarity with fish perception and interspecies interpretive and communicative abilities.

At first glance, the cultural practice of fishing seems to be primarily a leisure activity, an sport that offers a set of pleasures in the pursuit of game and the domination of nature. Without the justification of subsistence, fishing might seem a pure sport, nothing but a game played out at the expense of the fish. But "The Natural Angler" foregrounds what is only a subset in most fishing shows: a reciprocity between the human and nonhuman, fisher and fish. That reciprocity is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in this practice of catching and releasing fishing. Catch and release is emulated on nearly every fishing show, but "The Natural Angler" is particularly obsessed with this practice. Releasing the fish back into the water has become nearly as important symbolically as the catch; on "The Natural Angler" there is almost as much instruction on proper release methods as on those of capture.

Van Kirkhele: Oh, yeah, this guy is tough. Come on, come on. O.K. Come to Mama [ength]. Come to Mama. All right, O.K. I'm going to pull him in now. Here we go. [he picks up the struggling trout] Oh Oh! O.K. Hang on; hang on; hang on! O.K. I'm going to guide him just in front of his fins, hold him there, hold the fish under the water. I'm giving him oxygen, O.K., he's a beast. He's gorgeous. Of course I used a barbed hook because we really want to release him. Hang on; hang on; hang on! O.K., let me go for my homemade harness because I am having trouble getting this hook out of his mouth. Hang on, buddy. There we go; there we go; got it out. Always remember when you release him, put him back in the water, let him get a little oxygen, let him recover, take it easy until you feel—oh, he's a strong one! As fish swim away and release... Oh, that's great... away he goes back to his natural habitat.

While it makes little sense in terms of fishing as a means to harvest resources, this elaborate ritual makes perfect sense within a cultural practice that attempts to generate a symbolic exchange with the environment. This fishing show suggests a relation to fish based not only on representation, but also on communication and symbiotic exchange. The liberal and figurative understanding of the fish-subject has important consequences for fishing as a cultural practice. As I have suggested, fishing is much more than a leisure activity; it is primarily an ideological practice laden with ethical and ultimately ecological significance.

Although a cursory glance at the fishing show would suggest an ethic of exploitation and domination, "The Natural Angler" reveals something quite different: interspecies communication and discursive reciprocation. The show's disruption of the symbolic boundary between nature and culture points the way toward different relationships to nature:

"The Natural Angler" may offer an ecological ethic based upon a somewhat radical redefinition of human and nonhuman relations. Because it does so in the context of the feminization of sportfishing, it opens the question that lies at the centre of ecocriticism decades: are we, because of their biological roles as mothers and social roles as caregivers, somehow closer to nature and more "in tune" with ecosystems, or does the domestication and feminization of nature simply function to naturalize subordinate social roles, leasing women outside politics and outside history? WHIC's contribution to fishing culture becomes us no less to resolve this question and only rudiments the water further. This is because the show hinges in a web of tension and compartmentalization within a culture and the economics of commercial television. The show's apparent ecological concerns are tempered by television's role as an advertising medium and a means of socialization. If feminized fishing sets up symbolic exchanges between women and fish it also sets up exchanges between commodities. If the show distances the gendered division of consumption of television, it also reinforces traditional gender roles in order to sell "feminine" products. So although "The Natural Angler" exists in one of the most obscure and remote corners of the mainstream, it nonetheless stages some of the broader and more significant issues, contradictions and practices of contemporary western culture.
Dear Gwiyasad:

In an attempt to help you to understand Canada/Quebec relations I went back to the journal I kept around the time of the 1995 referendum to see what my thoughts were:

October, 1995. "My Canada includes Africa. I've decided to put these words of greeting on my answering machine. It's an attempt at my part to counteract the overwhelming Eurocentric context in which the debate over Quebec has taken place.

Do I have any legitimacy to say anything about Quebec? After all I am a newcomer to this land—this space called Canada. A space which, despite being a land of immigrants, has not traditionally welcomed all immigrants equally. Not all immigrants are equal.

My Canada includes Africa. And India. And China. And Japan and... The so-called ethnicities. The very ones who, according to Panizoo, lost them the election. And money. He never said whose money. Ethnic money, perhaps? Non-ethnic money as in Anglo money?

My Canada includes Africa. An odd configuration of the greater being contained in the lesser/smaller. But for now it works metaphorically."

Gwiyasad, I hope my letter fits in some of the gaps.

Dear Gwiyasad:

I am so happy that you have been thrown out and brought back to life! It seems odd to talk about Quebec's independence since so much is now taken for granted. As you must now know, Quebec has been independent for some 15 years. It hardly seems memorable any longer. Everyone in the RDC (rest of Canada) now accepts it and no longer sees it as such a terrible thing after all. We still go to Quebec to get a taste of Europe—Paris, France. Montreal continues to be a very cosmopolitan and multicultural although Toronto still has it beat. But it's got cheese. Montreal does—you've got to give it that. What is it like trying to catch up with 30 years of history? Difficult and stressful I imagine.

Dear Gwiyasad:

I was saddened to learn of your setback but happy that the doctors were able to fit you with a bionic arm. I'm sure other people have told you that it really isn't so different from how it was before. And Quebec and Canada have recently sent a joint team to take part in the winter Olympics in Norway.

At the time of the 1995 referendum I was a student at the University of Toronto and had done a paper on the role of the media during the referendum. An excerpt from my paper follows:

"Boring, silent and invisible... an empty hand with wonders" in how cast writes describes Canada. This is the myth on which Canada was founded and exploited. For instance, if the land were, indeed, empty then issues related to First Nations people become less valid. This description is, in fact, very much the description of the settler and the silence identified in the above quotation has expressed itself in many pernicious ways, not least of which has been the way in which the media have dealt with First Nations issues.

The CBC failed to frame the issues of the 1995 referendum accurately, but to do otherwise would have meant talking about how the land had been settled, what had happened to the First Nations peoples in the process and how the Canadian/Quebec issue is premised on the silence and the silencing of these peoples.

There was very little mention of First Nations issues in post-referendum analyses on the mainstream media. For example, the Morning Show allow the morning after the referendum. To mention First Nations issues were twice. After some two hours of discussion and panel, Barbara McEachran, former Conservative MP, alluded to the outcome of the referendum held by the Cree and the Iroquois. The overwhelming vote to stay within Canada, she opined, had helped the Federalist side.

A First Nations man made his appearance on a panel of "minorities" assemblage to discuss Panizoo's comments about the "ethnic vote." This was the second time a First Nations perspective was given and the only time a First Nations voice was heard on this show at least. His placement on the "ethnic" panel clearly exhibits how the CBC contextualised the issues relating to First Nations peoples.

It was no different on television and there were times when I..."
Queens body and the maple leaf. Last time I had seen all this emotion among white folk was when I went to the Gay Pride Parade, but I didn’t know that they all were gay like that. And I was real proud of them. Now, don’t get me wrong, sis Gayn. We still had them beast—they were a million Black people at the Million Man March. People say I want to change that can call me. They weren’t half as many of them as we, but it was rich, man, rich with singing and waxing and saying how much they loved Canada. And there had been some incident with the car and they wasn’t even worried. And they were there to big up Canada. Snow and ice and all.

I remember when Canada had its share of unity rallies, with all the cultural blegies and icons standing up for Canada. But you know what, Gayniss, my sister, I crawled for Canada and the Quebecs take their hockey very seriously. There was slothing in the streets—in the snow actually. Gunnells gurus got started and those wars and skirmishes lasted for a good two years. Eventually, people got led up with it and finally the entire matter was taken to the Supreme Court of Canada which decided that the country had to abide by the hockey score. And that, my dear Gayniss, was how Quebec finally got its independence.

Except it was all a dream. The result of all the stress by the constant remittances. It might as well be sold by a game I remember thinking at the time, but I felt it of no importance to make any sense any longer.

Yo Gwnniss:

Man that’s some cool name. Gwnniss! Sounds like a queen or something. I meant somewhere that it meant winter. Makes me almost just thinking of it. Having a sneeze like winter, is that for me? Anyway, you’ve been taking in at the college. Besides the misfits and the meta-mythical happenings in this country they call Canada. It was the unity rallies that grabbed me—especially the one in Montreal held the Ink Belt before the referendum. A couple of weeks before that—October 16th to be exact—the brothers—one million men of them—had marched on Washington. The Nation of Islam’s men, brother Louis Farhanam, had called it as a day of atonement for the Black man. I wasn’t down with all that atonement shit, because I didn’t think we had anything to store from it. But the brothers and sisters felt like I did, that they weren’t really part of the debate. Whatever the meaning, we—what the black man’s mission, brother Louis Farhanam, said it as a day to take responsibility for not showing up. But you have to see what black men are for or face to face. Before the brother came, man, brother Louis Farhanam, as the most multicultural in the world—but I didn’t see no multiculturalization in this debate. Only when you get to be a buck and you go to the brother and you get out of the way and you get to be a buck to get into the brother. And we are in our accidental position—being blamed. SIX GwnnX that’s like years away! Lest but I find it in some other man’s term. That Haris the man made us suck some real salt. One way or another Black people always suck salt, we were always bad—French hand at that—some salt. Some salt. Okay. Sis, I call the white times—some as what white folks liking to call the dark ages.

But hey, Gwnniss, my sister, at the time I felt that whatever happened Quebec had given the ROM an ought sight—I mean thousands of people coming out and spreading their hugging for Canada for the whole world to see. Yes, Gwnniss sister, this looking of love was face-on man, face-on. Whether or not you supporting nationalism and politics is just a good thing, whether you questioning why people fighting Quebec to stay in Canada, it was a serious witnessing of some thing.

Speaking of why people wanted Quebec to stay in Canada—this I actually heard this woman on the radio saying that she wanted to keep Quebec in Canada because it was nice to have a bit of Europe in a beautiful day when she had been living all this time, I wondered. Africa? Asia? The Middle East? Last time I checked I could see in Europe stamped all over every overhand. I wanted to ask this woman if she planning to be moving out to stay in Canada. Shit man it was like having a picture in your living room—nice knowing that’s there. But as I was thinking of this, sis Gayniss—it’s a hard emotion—don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. Many years ago I was a sign at the Montreal airport saying that Rapid! We sure looked at the street of the toad. “Die that,” my lady at the time said. “The heart of Toronto! Toronto doesn’t have a heart!” We cut up about that one. It was supposed to be a real heartless place. Toronto. This was what a Quebecs sister once said to me—that Quebec was the heart of Canada. Many people were really down with this belief. Even the Deputy Prime Minister, Sheila Copps, shed some eye-water in the House of Commons saying that without Quebec Canada would be “only an empty shell... the heart of Canada is Quebec.” Maybe, Six Gwnn, that was all though it was true. This woman has gots to go another one, have a transplant, or you die. Since Montreal has left, so the brother and the sister and my man have to be a big, wide multicultural and multiracial heart.

And Canada not die—not she just grew another heart. I’m cut off here GwnnX and you look after yourself now that you’re back in the real, or it is usual world. Speaking about love and all the sis, GwnnX, I don’t mean to say but what about you—I mean your man, man. I know that you and my man has been gone for some 20 years? It must be lonely. Anytime you want to talk to me just pick up your pen and get that on a mailbox. My address: GwnnX

Dear Gwnniss:

It is not often one has a chance to be a part of living history and I want to add my voice to the others.

What I learned most was that the fed-
eral government would make all these concessions to keep Quebec in Canada and at the end Quebec would still be. And we would be left with a Canada that would be substantially weak- ened in every way. Unless there was a miracle of some sort it was only a matter of time before the sovereigntists won.

There was a fundamental flaw at the heart our country and that was what people enjoyed the rights of full citizenship. We realized that we could be condemned forever, I tae, to agonize about whether or not we had a country and what that country was.

"But the French have been here for 300 years!" This from a progressive friend in response to my concern about First Nations issues. The implication being that by virtue of their being here for such a long time, this somehow justified rationalized? explained? why they should become a nation.

And it challenged her with two examples: the presence of Africans in the United States for some four hundred years which as of 1815—and to a large degree still today—bears to continue to exist by the color of their skin, who after getting the rights of full citizenship, still have none of their own. If length of time and exploration were prerequisites for nationhood then American Indians should have been at the top of the list.

The second example was of Israel. The Zionist claim to the establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine was based on the fact of an unbroken connection of the Jews with the land of which they are meant to return to. While this is true that the Jews had not lived in Palestine for cen- turies, my point was that to justify nationhood the little claim to land is not necessarily extinguished by the passage of time. Neither does the possession of time in the case of the First Nations necessarily give one greater rights to a homeland and nationhood. In fact I said that the Quebecois had been here for 300 years and simply that they had been here for 300 years. It did not necessarily cancel out the claims of aboriginal people who, under the Treaty of Washington, have always been on this land that they call Turtle Island.

I am sure if my friend got my point, but I hope that you do and that my letter helps you to understand a bit more about what happened to Canada and Quebec.

Dear Gwynnald:

I feel I go back to my journals and letters to see what I thought all happened such a long time ago and it seems like so much has happened since then. Except for this letter to a friend—October 1985: "I have had moments of lasting "enough already." Two France with Quebec..."

More than a little the truth has occurred regarding the description of Quebec's position in Canada. Recently that is. Then it seemed that maybe Quebec's position was valid, until the government of Alberta was a destabilizing force in politics in Alberta. And perhaps in that moment we could bring enough pressure on the Prime minister's regime and the sacred earth policies. I have hesitated that because people aren't ready to take advantage of any moment, and I suspect it will dogmatize into chauvinism and ethnocentrism.

I do question this commitment to the natio-nalistic that is sup- posedly Canada when our economic life is really controlled by the bond broken like Moodys in New York. Further, with the rush on part of the federal government to evacuate (evict?) areas like health care, social services, unemployment insurance, I ask myself what government can be a little light that this time when there is a move by the right to reduce govern- ment, to paint government as a monster (arguments made by mi- litia movement), and some insist that the govern- ment reducing its role? At the same time we-and the Quebecois-es expected to believe that there is some value to maintaining this fiction called the nationalism.

A couple of weeks ago I finished understanding why I am opposed to Quebec separating. I guess the issue is in language. For Quebec to separate and set up on its own nation to be back to a time of settlement of this country by the Europeans. It is to cut the discourse of colonialism, isn't it, complete with warming European presence? Such a joke. Today, in 1985, in the language we ought to be speaking, the discourse, if you will, we should engage in is that of resolution of First Nations issues includ- ing the return to First Nations people of their land which had illegally been taken. Sure this is what should be galvanizing us and not the dreams of the descendants of a small band of European settlers whose women aren't enough children. We are in a time of change, right? For Quebec to sepa- rate is to give visibility to that discourse which is fundamentally flawed by its inher- ent immorality. For all that it is a truth—what is nothing—my answer is no.

Although I believe that it probably will not make a difference if I try to persist and keep Quebec happy within Canada. Already departments such as the cultural wing of the Federal Affairs are almost completely devoted to Que- becois issues.

I seemed to me, Gwynnald, that these debates between Quebec and the SRC was essentially a colonial discourse—non-European power which had decided it was 2000 years too late and for the point of view of at least one of the two, there was unfinished business to settle.

Despite the fact that Eliz. Harper and other First Nations leaders had stated that there could be no settlement of unconditional issues in Canada without resolution of Aboriginal rights, they con- tinued to be ignored for the most part. They were right to resist being ignored, and had they been heard in the wake of the election campaign, their voices were right to resist the forced extinguishment of their rights. And while the pre-amble to the Canadian constitution continued to deny them Basic ingredients to keep challenging any constitution accorded with Quebec.

Canada has been a denial of Aboriginal rights. It should not go into the archives to take those rights that were lost in 1995 when this debate was at its height. As the African proverb says, when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers and if I believe was the position of the First Nations people visa-vis this archaic, anarchistic Anglo-French dispute.

In conclusion, to the fruit of my mind, Gwynnald, in Quebec saw the writing on the wall and moved very quickly to amalgamate with Nunavut—the eastern section of the Northwest Territories. In 2000 they took the next step by voting for separation. I did subsequently position to support the vote side but that will have to wait for another letter. Gwynnald. I trust that my letter has helped you.

Dear Gwynnald: 

I felt I need a second letter to you, but I felt that my first one omitted a few important issues. Time and time again the folks told the Quebecois that this made poor financial sense to separate, but then they little made some financial back then and in some ways it was a relief to see a people not letting their actions be determined by the bottom line as the rest of Canada was. I mean how can we pay a pension against a homeland. I am sure some people thought that way. You just cant put a dollar sign on free for homeland can you?

The language the folks used was very Slippery and seductive. At the "how about if we just built this country"? Was the you. The Chinese. The Japanese. The African? The First Nations people? Who, indeed, held this country and whose money? What of the First Nations people whose lives and cultures were seriously compromised and in too many instances directly wiped out.

"We built this country," the language sounded disturbingly like that of the old-settle- ter leaders such as Iain Smith of the former Rhodesia. I don't mean to suggest that (I was an Ian Smith, the leader of the UN in move- ment in Rhodesia, to be former colonial and I was in Africa they didn't manage to wipe out Africans to the same extent they had done with natives people in Canada and South Africa.

The only difference between Canada and countries like Russia and Russia and South Africa is that in Africa they didn't manage to wipe out Africans to the same extent they had done with natives people in Canada and South Africa. We built this country," As if they arrived and found a land unoccupied by anyone.

Someone else at the rally was J. Johnson, perhaps? I don't remember—talked about how people around the world wanted to come here to "this wonderful country". He failed to mention that not everyone was equally welcome in Canada in 1895, and that this had always been the case. The Jews could tell you that. So could the First Nations peoples. Just before the 1915 referendum, this government that was extolling how people's desire to come to Canada, had instituted a sort of discrimination by class and race: the coloured races. It had also instituted a head tax, not to mention the steep application fees which were always being charged. Fluency in English and French was also made a requirement. Recently the Canadian- government was requiring DNA testing in cases involving Africans to prove that family relationships existed. And when they got these- same immigrants and same are made to feel that they were to blame for crimes, high welfare rates and for taking jobs

Dear Gwynnald: 

The government has changed its position and they have seen Canadian. But Gwynnald, you have been for so long don't know the half of it. You would have thought that the plight of the Quebecois would have made them sensitive to issues regarding aboriginal rights. WONG! The Cree and the Inuit had made it very clear that they were not willing to the Federal government. They had held their own referendum just before the Quebec referendum and they whole-heartedly voted no. Their whole vote was to make it clear to the Quebecois that they controlled their own destiny and that no longer were they to be seen as "people without power". They also claimed most of North of the province which Quebec saw as a resource rich with vast hydroelectric potential.

The Quebecois did not look favourably on these aboriginal claims. Today's newly independent nations are one and one against their own separatists or potential separatists. "...since Jacob had written in her book The Question of Separatism.

"Ireland after having achieved independence from Britain in 1918 promptly refused the right of self-determination for the Mand...Pakistan having won its own separation, went on to fight the separation of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. And so on. That is why all nations behave...But this is not the case of the Quebecois in the light of reason. The consensus is emotional and unreason-
Oh, and add it to the list Quebec. Emotional and irrational. What is the point of separating only to have someone separate from you? What is this about being a European American population? If you can’t take your “native people” with you! How can we be just like you and equal to you if we don’t have our own ‘native people’ anymore? And just because? If no one has told you yet, the aboriginal peoples did separate. Despite the much smaller size of this territory that came to be known as Canada. Remember the “pale faces” still wanted out.

Dear Gwendal:

I was taught to reason on the myth of my flip-flop from one to yes. Wall it had to do with the First Nations. Given that they themselves supported the no side, I suppose I should have support of their position, but it seemed to me that with a yes vote, the First Nations people could probably merit some leeway to work some concessions from both the Quebecers and the French. I don’t believe I made my mind up the fact that the Fathers were any more interested in realising First Nations issues than the Quebecers, but I hoped that a yes vote would further the French. Would Quebecers or Canadians have actually used armed force against the Cree and Ojibwa? At this time I didn’t know, but a yes vote, I reasoned, would foreground the issue of aboriginal rights and self-governance to some of the fundamental issues. Maybe I was being unrealistic, particularly given the First Nations opposition to rebellion. But I also felt that a yes vote would put to rest the incessant badgering that effaced Canada over the last 25 years. When I reading how you can’t have children because of what happening to you? I just wanted to write to tell you about this.

I come from Grenada and when the 1985 referendum happen in Canada for the first time. I was living in Grenada, and when Grenada was the subject of a vote. I was living in Grenada. When I changed my citizenship to Canadian, but I didn’t like it. I think it was because of the fact that the white minority was really having nothing to do with me. When? Well, like it was really nothing to do myself. You know, and sometimes water would flow right into the next house, which was the topic of the day. How can we be just like you and equal to you if we don’t have our own ‘native people’ anymore? And just because? If no one has told you yet, the aboriginal peoples did separate. Despite the much smaller size of this territory that came to be known as Canada. Remember the “pale faces” still wanted out.

Dear Gwendal:

You want, Yes! Self-determination! You might have been flawed but you’re still a hard woman asking such damn hard questions. But let me throw a hard question at you. What is Quebec for? Is Quebec for the English? Are we still determined to be insulted by settler nations which shouldn’t be there and which time ran out of time to do the good they have to present us with today? I mean, really, today?

This is not to say I’m not down with the Quebec’s historic self-oppression and exploitation at the hands of the British. Although not a Quebecer myself, so, "fist from only make god laugh." All those robber bars and thieves—the history books calling them menace acolytes. Actually, to be honest, they are being treated as uneven people. All people, black, white, yellow, pink and brown. And we’re not talking with those clear consciousness shit and all. Remember the Quebecs. The Quebecs, the Quebecs. The Quebecs. And let’s not forget the fact that they are being treated as uneven people. Whatever the case may be, we’re not here to talk about them. For the time they are being treated as uneven people. Whatever the case may be, we’re not here to talk about them. So you have no more business here with the class question.

Dear Gwendal:

I sell em nervous writing to you. I read about what is happening to you, how you been frozen in the snow for so long. I’m just an ordinary woman from the Caribbean who living here for the last 63 years. How can I explain that emotion can overwhelm you at the slightest moment, perhaps, the cause of a hill, the way some gentle giants go on, or the quiet of a frozen lake and snow-covered landscape, at that same time leading to violence. On behalf of what? On behalf of which? The belief that somewhere you’ve part of the very soil-their soil.

That’s the way I feel about the tiny piece of coal that I call home. Thinking of this, I know there will be days when I feel low, that simple will not do. No matter where or how far you travel. There’s a fit to speak to the person and the land. When the Quebecers speak of ‘core’ they are talking about the feeling that they mean. And more so that if love has been nurtured in the shad of an oligarchic relationship with a larger and more powerful entity. The danger is that this love of “pale faces” can explode into violence: to die for one’s native land! Nothing more then that. To kill for one’s native land!

You’re Gwendal:

Lies, lies and more lies! Political lie! I don’t know if you know that, but the Quebecois did it for them. They have more than enough. They always have. They always will. The 1995 referendum was a classic example of lies, lies and more lies. On both sides. But one of the biggest lies was the one that Quebec politicians lied on their people. Man those politicians had these sovereignists believe that if they voted for sovereignty, it would ensure that they lived in a socialist paradise in North America. Vote no if you believe that you’ll be allowed to keep your unemployment, your decent, and your medicare system without ever fees!

We pay for everything now, Gwendal, but back then users face was still dirty words. For the life of me I couldn’t understand why those Quebecers people believed that they would be allowed to be in one country and in America with a fully developed social net. Did they really believe that all these states running the international financial organizations and the bond brokers in New York would somehow come across all over Latin and under the vision of these newly independent Quebecers still detect with the third experience? Yes, sure they did, they didn’t. Suchad are born every minute and countless as they seemed to forget that the very same lightning forces that went to work in the ROG would set to work on them. If nothing else, to let Quebec remain as an example of an experiment that just would not be allowed. It’s like Cuba and the USA. Working examples are more dangerous than talk and rhetoric.

I’m not sure what was reason for the Quebecer to No, but politicians need to be down with the people and be honest with them. As I said honestly and politicians don’t really go together.

Dear Gwendal:

Greetings on your return to society. I am sure that it’s very differ- ent when you left. I hoped that the Yes side would win in the 1985 referendum in Canada. And I didn’t believe it would be the end of Canada, as you have seen for yourself. That Europe’s not over yet. Not by a long shot... We’ve been talking about including Saskatchewan in the nation, and I hope last night was a wake up call for all of us.” That was part of a letter that was sent to me after the 1995 referendum. The extraction of Canada... Why would Quebecers be interested? I think it wouldn’t extend from sea-to-sea but many many countries have survived aspirations and confirmed: India, Pakistan, and Russia (both Federation and Russian Federation). The people of Quebec and many others in the world would worry. Even if the real danger of violence as we saw in the Yugoslavian expan- sion, but I wasn’t sure why the latter would think Canada would be more capable of it. The people of Quebec, I think, would worry. If the winter, it would be all the natural resources that help to make this a great country.

What is the care of a percentage of a nation’s people want to succeed, how can you talk of a nation, extinct or otherwise, as it was unmediated by this reality. The sovereignists may have lost the battle but they won the war. They succeeded in bringing the issue of Quebec to the conscious- ness of the nation in such a way that it could not go away. They had not the red of Canada, voted their love for Canada which was as passionate as the Quebecois. Many Canadians had harboured a hidden love for this land and desired a wholeness which they can achieve for others. It was more than the sum of its parts, with Quebec’s attitude at that time, the whole was infinitely less than the sum of its parts. There was already a hole in the whole that was Canada. Don’t be closedness of the vote spoke to that. It really was only a matter of time before that fracturing became reality. What Canadians couldn’t see was how they could be left to Quebec. I know they would be. They needed to believe in themselves.

You’re Gwendal:

The nation is dead. Long live the nation! The Quebec nation! The Black Nation! What are we nation? Could you have a nation without a homeland, without shared boundaries with a shared language? Could we abandon the nation of Africa? Should we abandon the nation? Those were some of the questions that I was thinking about it with our forebears in 1995. How would I find it if there was a possibility for “a homeland” for Africans in some part of the American? Man we have certainly put in some hard time and we have earned it. But, and there is a but these achievements, they are said. To add.

Maybe Canada is a space-aer space where many nations can rift together within a common set of boundaries. There is a sort of desire that is a part of “nation” when you think of it as being located in a specific space and time. But what about shifting nations? Nations and nationalities in constant flux, but in a positive way. So today you might be part of the Quebec nation, but tomorrow part of the Black Nationalist. Is that goofy or what? But we have to keep the damn politicians out of it, because you know they’re going to fuck up your day. I told you this.

Anyway, Gwendal, all peace to you and I want to big you up for surviving the snow. Be talking to you and I’m out here.

P.S. Gwendal, one idea was I was pushing back then in ’95 was making one of the First Nations languages an official language. Like you, someone else could do it too. I don’t think it has the same force. Anyway don’t be. Although thinking of Cleavon trying to speak one of those languages was enough to crack me up for a whole week. But it’s still not too late. Before Quebec goes back to having French anyway. So why not Cox or Gwinnow. I’ve heard that.
A year ago, I pitched off for a three-day trip to Sarajevo with a war correspondent. At first, I had not wanted to go. I was frightened to go. I admit it. And, as I told Hanna, I did not necessarily see the point in going, or at least the purpose in my going to Sarajevo, except it was associate director at the Centre for Contemporary War Studies. "Hanna," I said, "a war-torn city doesn't need another tourist. It doesn't." Or another journalist. to live out the cliché of being able to claim they've stayed in the Sarajevo Hotel Inn." "We shut stay at the Holiday Inn," she said decisively. She had a head of red hair and a manner that tended, at moments, towards brusqueness.

"Where shall we stay then?"
"With some friends of mine," she said. She refused our cigarettes in the bar. She sat at a table with the staff of the Caffe Sna Sout on Upper Street in Islington, and looked up again, sharp-eyed and scrutinising. "But someone like you should go, Cya."

I was still frightened, sitting back in the seat next to Hanna on the flight to Zagreb, where we would apply for our U.N. accreditation before boarding on one of the relief flights to Sarajevo. But when we arrived in Zagreb, we found that the Sarajevo airport had once more been closed after a mortar attack, and there was nothing to do but hang about or return to London.

We found a small hotel room, nearly square but serviceable, jammed with a pair of drum beds. At night, we undressed and slept side by side like strapping, the hair was on fire. During the day Hanna was happy enough: she had a story, there were the most recent arrivals out of Sarajevo to interview, and plenty of U.N. officials. And I. I walked the streets of Zagreb, a city that, if not currently in the front line of the war, was nevertheless steeped in it. Soldiers filled the streets. As flights began to change, crowds surged across intersections as if they did in any city. In cafes, I watched people eat croissants and drink chocolate in a frenzy of delectation, licking their fingers and spoons, not quite as they did in other cities. In people's eyes, time seemed to pass differently.

At night, I lay in the dark in my sagging bed, staring up at the ceiling and thought, "What am I doing here? How did I come to be here?" And raged a little against Ivan and Neil, the two young men whom I'd last seen in a Toronto revue. "What have you made me into?" Hanna's breath was steady in her sleep.

On the third day, the Sarajevo airport was still closed and there seemed little immediate sign of change. It could, of course, we weeks or months before it opened again. I told Hanna I was thinking of leaving, that I ought to get back to work.

"We could try to get to Berlin," she said, sticking out in one of the strong French cigarettes she liked to smoke. She brushed out deeply, "Or into the country."

"Really, Hanna," I said. "You go back then," she said. "I mean, I mean, I mean."

The staff was still there, the street was empty, the street was quiet. I imagined Hanna's little moments of impatience, imagined disasters, air plane crashes. For practical reasons I imagined possible disasters. Because it was part of my business to do so, because this seemed better than no interest. The pall of war still hung like a film, like invisible bacteria, over everything. Barring my luggage over my shoulder, I made my way to the airport bus and ordered a shot of vodka, which I drank standing up. The man on the bus stood next to me, clad in an overcoat, turned and looked up, asked me in English where I came from. London, I told him.

"But you aren't English, are you? American?"

"Canadian."

He told me his name was Daniel Jacobsen, and he was originally from Boston, although he hadn't lived there in years. He assumed I was another journalist until I told him otherwise. He'd flown out of Sarajevo four days before, which I could feel on him, a strange superabundance of energy pouring from his skin, a strained, flabby at his gait latched on the walls across the room or the glass in front of him. He stared at his fingertips through a glass, then tossed his head up, brushing slightly, tawny hair, missed, cheeks shiny with a day's growth of beard, and said, "I know this is crazy, but I'm going to Venice for a few days. I know this is crazy, but I'm going to Venice for a few days. I know this is crazy, but I'm going to Venice for a few days. I know this is crazy, but I'm going to Venice for a few days."

I thought about it for a moment before I said yes, as if it were possible, by doing this, to act both out of deep selfishness and selflessness, as if the extremity of the world abandoned demand it as a form of relief or release. A celebration of escape. I had to buy a new plane ticket and Daniel Jacobsen insisted on helping me pay for it. We flew to Venice but did not touch. He told me he had a flat in Prague, where he was based when he wasn't on the move through Europe. Had I been to Prague? I hadn't. The shoulders upon being were the fitter of ordinary plane travel. On the ferry into the city, he shung his arm around my shoulders and asked me if I were married and I said no, though I had been, and asked if he was, and he shook his head. The shots of arrival was then I received through my hair. Much miles away across the water we lay a city under siege. Now I was approaching a city in which I hadn't in the least expected to find myself. Flights wheeled to a high arc across the wide and oceanic sky. Water slithered along the edges of the boat we travelled in.

Once I had been to Venice, with Matthew Cale, shortly after we'd married, we bought charter tickets from London. Now I walked beside Daniel Jacobsen through a sea of metal cafes tables spread across the Piazza San Marco, past the swells of camera-laden tourists, and down a narrow street on the far side. It was as if we had bestowed a marvellous contingent trust upon each other. We crossed a small bridge over a deep green canal still it seemed somehow interior, and then, on the far side, the street we followed grew narrower and narrower, the walls greenish and mossy, although Daniel insisted he knew exactly where we were going— to the pension where he always stayed when in Venice.

And around the corner where he said the Pension Alberti would be, it was. A woman slipped through a dark entrance into the vestibule to greet us but shook her head when Daniel said in Italian that he'd made a reservation.
could understand this much. He flashed a little in annoyance—although it didn’t really seem possible to him that he could be flashed. It was like coming out of a beached city in the sea of a floating dock and ride in a suburban car. He discussed issues of intervention, rules of engagement. What was necessary, we both agreed, in the case of any intervention, was the rules of engagement to be clearly delineated. ‘Don’t one of the questions—’ I said, stirring my coffee, ‘—isn’t the question partly whether the intervenor is interested in peace or justice? I mean, is the point of the intervention to stabilize a situation, or to bring about a war? Or is it stabilizing the situation to war? And the hostilities, and the fact that one may be a hostile aggressor, the other an interminably stabilizing state trying to defend itself? For instance, is that a useful impartiality or a corrupt one? Is it fair? Does your right as a citizen to be protected from attack and feel safe precede over any civic notions of self-determination? But what if one international recognition state is born out of the struggles of another state that is still, at least partly, recognized internationally? I’m not sure I know the answers—I’m asking.’

“You were licked from the tail back into the tiny fishowlow, where Daniel Jacobson slowly turned naked on the bed, arms folded behind his head, compartmentally and lazily exposed. The sheets twisted underneath him. The bedside lamp glowed. All this seemed startling and strange again, the world thick with sharp, incomprehensible yearnings. I reached down beside him, twisted back my hair, pulled my knees to my chest. ‘What would you be willing to risk for love?’ I asked, and fixed my eyes on him.

‘He smiled. “For love.” His thin hair, flying in all directions, looked faintly matted, lips thickened and pursed. He looked, now, merely exposed, almost frightened, as if he had to batten down in self-protection at the question, as if the rules of engagement had suddenly changed.

‘“Yes,” I said. “Don’t worry. It’s merely hypothetic.”

‘“Are you thinking about diseases?” Although we had been careful—had taken no one else—so far as he knew. “No,” I said aloud, “I do not worry.”

‘You mean you would be willing to throw myself in a raging river to save the woman I loved?”’

‘“More that sort of thing, yes.”

‘Why?’ I said, and, reaching out one arm, switched off the light.

‘“Would I settle in some city I could stand, say, some disgusting, polluted, midwestern town, full of people who don’t bathe and shower there in another bathroom down the hall?”

‘Even here, ordinary things seemed miraculous. In the room down the hall, there were sheets of toilet paper, the toilet flushed, astonishing hot water streamed out of the taps. Out of the tap, I flushed hot water over my face and panicked for a moment—just for a moment—as to what the naked body of this tall, sleek, shapely man would look like.

‘When I returned, he had shaved and taken off his shirt and glasses: turned shiny-checked and hollow-eyed. He had pulled down the standard white sashes. When I switched off the red globe of the bedside lamp, it could have been any hour of the day or night. I reached out my hands and touched his skin. I smelt the scent of him, the breath he held in his chest, the breath of his Adam’s apple, his lips, the tongue, which reached my fingers. I took his fingers, my arm, raising his hand, tucking his weight across his own.

For dinner, we went to a small unsavory restaurant not far away, with fluorescent strip-lighting across the ceiling, and a guarded dining area. We sat at a table in the window, and ate linguine al aero di spiga, linguine with black squid, which gave you mouthfuls of black squid, as much as you liked.

I drank wine like regimented sailors, breath in the small of sex that rose from my own body. In the morning, I would stand up in the yard of a floating dock and ride in a suburban car.

We discussed issues of intervention, rules of engagement. What was necessary, we both agreed, in the case of any intervention, was the rules of engagement to be clearly delineated. ‘On one of the questions—’ I said, stirring my coffee, ‘—isn’t the question partly whether the intervenor is interested in peace or justice? I mean, is the point of the intervention to stabilize a situation, or to bring about a war? Or is it stabilizing the situation to war? And the hostilities, and the fact that one may be a hostile aggressor, the other an interminably stabilizing state trying to defend itself? For instance, is that a useful impartiality or a corrupt one? Is it fair? Does your right as a citizen to be protected from attack and feel safe precede over any civic notions of self-determination? But what if one international recognition state is born out of the struggles of another state that is still, at least partly, recognized internationally? I’m not sure I know the answers—I’m asking.’

“You were licked from the tail back into the tiny fishowlow, where Daniel Jacobson slowly turned naked on the bed, arms folded behind his head, compartmentally and lazily exposed. The sheets twisted underneath him. The bedside lamp glowed. All this seemed startling and strange again, the world thick with sharp, incomprehensible yearnings. I reached down beside him, twisted back my hair, pulled my knees to my chest. ‘What would you be willing to risk for love?’ I asked, and fixed my eyes on him.

‘He smiled. “For love.” His thin hair, flying in all directions, looked faintly matted, lips thickened and pursed. He looked, now, merely exposed, almost frightened, as if he had to batten down in self-protection at the question, as if the rules of engagement had suddenly changed.

‘“Yes,” I said. “Don’t worry. It’s merely hypothetic.”

‘“Are you thinking about diseases?” Although we had been careful—had taken no one else—so far as he knew. “No,” I said aloud, “I do not worry.”

‘You mean you would be willing to throw myself in a raging river to save the woman I loved?”’

‘“More that sort of thing, yes.”

‘Why?’ I said, and, reaching out one arm, switched off the light.

‘“Would I settle in some city I could stand, say, some disgusting, polluted, midwestern town, full of people who don’t bathe and shower there in another bathroom down the hall?”

‘Even here, ordinary things seemed miraculous. In the room down the hall, there were sheets of toilet paper, the toilet flushed, astonishing hot water streamed out of the taps. Out of the tap, I flushed hot water over my face and panicked for a moment—just for a moment—as to what the naked body of this tall, sleek, shapely man would look like.

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I pose reasonable questions at all? Don’t I ask only what I myself want to be asked? The question touches on something I’d like to talk about right after. The genre of the question is inherently egotistic—it serves first and foremost to give myself expression. It certainly doesn’t strain to elicit the best from the other person, because the need to be entertained or informed isn’t so powerful as the need to be entertained or informed isn’t so powerful as the need to entertain and to form.

Sometimes I pay such paralyzing attention to the form of the question that I wholly forget to concentrate on the answer. Sometimes, in fact, a person feels so surprised by his own style of inquisitiveness that he stops to ponder and admire it if he has any luck, his interlocutor will join him in this exercise. Sometimes he will raise objections against his own questions—and see it directed menacingly against himself.”

“At least they dare to consult their mirror image when they can be observed at it. If this really has to be done, then on some isolated detail with cursory display. They discriminate their relationship to the image through grip and focusing, initiating adjustments, adding, smoothing. The gaze appears to be wholly taken up by the outer question; it chooses itself into a single point. “I’m not looking for myself, I’m just improving something.” This passes for honest work so far as other people are concerned. Only with a show of this attitude can dialogue with the camera be made public, bearable for everybody else.

I can no longer stroll, but it still isn’t late enough to necessitate breaking into a run, you jee! Right then you suddenly sense an impendiment in space, in the zones that appear otherwise unoccupied, between the visible obstacles. The air itself feels unmanageable. It contains and hides an infinite protection that for the first time, as if dumbfound, offers opposition to your frustrated and disoriented eye. What usually yields itself by imperceptible degrees must now abruptly deliver its information. It can’t behave as your companion; therefore, it gathers itself together into a counterforce.

If you can’t vacate the space in which another person is making a telephone call, a common concession to the circumstances is a politely oblique gaze. If there’s no other means of occupying yourself. You fixate on details in the room that no one has ever before so attentively observed—so judiciously observed, so devotedly, so amazingly, so courteously. Every form of involvement is possible. As you make such a survey, your sudden interest doesn’t feel remotely courteous. At first, you hadn’t any desire to be so perceiving, didn’t it? But eventually you felt yourself simply drawn into the room, away and out of the noise. If you can’t discover any more new sights, an anemic sort of detraction comes into play—you just stare in front of yourself.
There is something strangely admirable about Moses Znaimer’s ability to appreciate the strengths of his imagined audience. While keen for his confident assertions regarding the nature of TV, which is perhaps less ideological than many of those involved in actual television broadcasting, Znaimer’s challenge to television’s passivity and illusionary nature is a commendable one. By bringing forward the idea of television as an active and creative medium, Znaimer is not only challenging the traditional roles of television viewers, but also encouraging a more participatory and engaged audience. This is a refreshing approach that challenges the passivity often associated with the medium of television.
By Michael Hochsman

**What Was Generation X?**

When Douglas Coupland published his first novel, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture,* in 1991, he set off a revolution in the world of literature and popular culture. The book became a bestseller, sparking a nationwide conversation about the experiences and aspirations of a generation that had grown up in the wake of the Baby Boomers.

**When Generation X was published, it quickly became a bestseller, sparking a nationwide conversation about the experiences and aspirations of a generation that had grown up in the wake of the Baby Boomers.**

**Generations Xers and slackers... I'd like to be a slacker, but my family would kick my ass.**

For the slacker generation, there's gotta be baby boomers and their sameness, Generation Xers and slackers. I'd like to be a slacker, but my family would kick my ass. A poor Mexican searching for economic conditions like ours? Get a job, "mijo." Of course, the term "generation" is imposed at the best of times. Issues of difference, whether in classes, race, gender or sexuality, are systematically erased by this generalizing term which puts everybody in the same boat. To ignore questions of difference, the problems of disadvantaged white males can monopolize the cultural mainstream. On the other hand, if Sludgers and Generation X are taken seriously as texts about disadvantaged white boys, if issues of difference are foregrounded, they can be taken as starting points for some productive analyses. Perhaps it is simply the case that the load, preordained value of "generation X" is a ethos shared by young white males, those very people who were socialized to expect social privilege and power to come easily. What is the nature of this generation's historical horizon? The Christian Slater character in the movie, Pump (up the Volume! [1990]), captures well the purported national angst of North American youth succumbed to Gen X's "There's nothing to do anymore. Everything's been done. But the good themes have been used up and turned into teen epics. So I don't find it charming. I find it the middle of a totally exhausted decade where there's nothing to look forward to and so one doesn't look up to do..."

But the Christian Slater character is not a bone fide slacker, preferring to change his conditions by orchestrating his fellow high school students to rebel against the oppressiveness of their school. Sludgers is a film about a group of white youth, living in the late 1980s of Reagan's America, in a condition of anomie and despair. The landscape of the film lacks the wistfulness from my youth to another... Some old same old... Just Hollywood around. Still unemployed. I'm in this band... We're the Ultimate Losers now. And, ah, the singer's still a jerk.

Along the way, the slacker is treated to a rift of sandal's insights which do little to explain the situation, but rather moral pessimism and disdain.

One of the most significant contributions to the generational literature is the way in which it reflects the gender and economic mainstream of white youth—and one which reveals the gender bias of gen X's "late Bloomers: Coming of Age in Today's America" at the Right Place at the Wrong Time by David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams. Perhaps the cultural status of the last jacket that this book offers "comprehensive, non-contradictory analysis" and the picture of two clean-cut young whites in suits should offer a warning, but nothing would quite prepare a reader for this: "Didn't we imagine that we had money, and houses, and families of our own, as we approached the end of our twenties? Didn't we imagine we'd be easy in our lives—that we would be an affair of lunches and suburban homes and coming in through the front doors of our houses? Despite the themes of lament for privilege lost, this book is loaded with research data on the new hard times for youth; nonetheless these two go-getters, (as I see it) are responding to the relative costs of a new Mustang and university tuition, seem hardly affected.

Two other energetic white boys, Rob Nelson and Jon Courant, teamed up to write Revolution X: A Survival Guide for Our Generation. Nelson and Courant, founders of the u2u, "monatomic" "I need... Or Leave" network, defy the gen X stereotypes of fatalistic slackdom to promote political engagement on the part of U.S. youth. They take aim at important social issues of the day such as the environment, crime, and the debt; they attribute the latter to U.S. military spending, tax breaks to the rich and "middle class welfare." They expose a contradictory politics congruent with a middle-class lifestyle that buys into the material benefits of mainstream culture without completely selling itself out.

No feet, horses, gun, police dogs, or riots. Let's face it: Most of us aren't looking for unnecessary confrontation. A generation that reads Details and Spin, watches "Melrose Place," "Seinfeld," and "The Simpsons," and signs on to the StairMaster after work is probably not going to be taking to
Resolution X offers an extensive resource list for political action including addresses and phone numbers of advocacy groups, political parties and mainstream alternative media. Unfortunately, though it is bigger and more street wise than Late Bloomers, it is cut from the same cloth. While Linsky and Abrams might vote Republican, Nelson's and Cowan's "post-partisan" revolution is content to get youth out to the ballot box, presumably to vote Democrat.

The problem with Slackers and Generation X, to name the two most influential renderings of the North American post-faddist generation, is that they substitute anthropological and literary insight for historical rigor. While gerbils are in a unique position to reconsider the down sides of "free-market" capitalism, their spinoff to distinguish them as a model of apathetic social drop outs. The fallout of this new market has been a string of lamentable movies; the aggressive, fast-paced ads campaigns produced by a industry-backed by Coupland's claim that "we are not a target market"; the appropriation by the music, fashion and television industries of grunge rock and fashion as a kind of urban moment of the whole phenomenon; and the emergence of Seattle as a new cultural mecca, a San Francisco of the 10's. As the 50's saw wear, however, "gener-

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several. Despite its lack of the 80's ethos of individualism and greed, it was Late Bloomer that attracted some critical attention, thanks to a pre-publication excerpt in Harper's (July 1984). Linsky and Abrams presented some media analysts which showed that, by 1980, major newspapers and magazines had portrayed youth as confident, ambitious, determined, fiercely self-reliant and older "than they used to be." Suddenly, in 1980, this all changed. Time published a cover story entitled "Preparing With Caution" which characterized youth as paranoid thinkers, who were "very sensitive at best and lazy at worst," and for whom "second best seems just fine." Fortunes, which had

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lashed young people in the late 80's, promptly adopted this same tone. To explain the editorial shift, Linsky and Abrams pointed out that 1 million jobs were lost to youth between May 1980 and May 1981. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, they asked whether the new editorial stance on youth was an act of "unconscious kindness"; after all, if we had never cared about careers and material success, it would be less disturbing for an-we-for the country-when we didn't achieve them.

While Linsky and Abrams perceptively demonstrate the impact of a changing economy on youth in general and the discourse on youth in particular, their book shows they are principally concerned about how that changing economy would squander their own material aspirations. Nevertheless, to begin to answer the question of what was "generation X," the impact of a changing economy on youth must be foregrounded. But given the mutability of the term "youth," and given the gender and ethnicity of most of the group's populace, the question that follows is which "youth" are we talking about? As Leslie Sponsel notes in The Village Voice, "there's no Northwest X in Generation X—except when an ad is deliberately 'multicultural'—the X of the media mind means almost entirely white youth." (August 24, 1993)

To test this hypothesis, take a careful look at the current McDonald's "I am Canadian" campaign, which borrows all the elements of U.S. print ads. "Generation X," as a cultural phenomenon, corresponded to a great extent to a period of mourning of young white male who had been socialized to expect into access to privilege and power, even if only the middle-class American Dream; today even that seems almost unsustainable. While the economic conditions that gave rise to "Generation X" are shared by all youth, those in the north being blamed by the phenomenon are predominantly white and male. The tests that they created or in which they were represented reflect that fact.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education offers a ten-week seminar at the University of Toronto in a seminar at the University of Toronto in a seminar of the Arts in Education offers a ten-week seminar in the arts in education and the workplace, including the workplace. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT) has announced a seminar in the arts in education and the workplace, including the workplace. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT) has announced a seminar in the arts in education and the workplace, including the workplace.
"I got tired of putting on my face where other people shirk," she said. "it was giving me too much self-esteem."

Although the title hints at religion (the passion) and leisure (Alice), the pleasure of the best is produced by less grander, more intimate strategies. Alice's long, difficult stay in the hospital (where most of the action takes place) doesn't translate into longevity for the reader. ASF.


This introductory text on media and culture in the context of globalization is innovative in its integration of Latin American theoretical perspectives into the usual media studies canon of European and American works. Despite some rather obvious padding chapters, an extensive chapter on the mutation(s) of culture in an era of economic globalization is worth the price of admission. Lule introduces some vocabulary for dealing with culture going global: determinationalization, transculturation and retooling. While this is not the best introduction to Latin American cultural theory, Lule weaves the ideas of Jesus Marin Barrera, Nestor Garcia Canclini and others seamlessly into his arguments, without putting himself on the book for some subplot of "discovery." ASL.


Given the growing hysteria over violent youth crime in Canada, Achard's detailed study of media coverage of a "peppy murder" in New York's Central Park is a very worthwhile read. Achard contextualizes his analysis of this case in a broader discussion of representations of youth in film, on television and in academic work to provide a framework for understanding the place of youth, and youth culture, in popular discourse. This book is well-written, theoretically astute and politically significant. ASL.


The words of this novel—like those of the title—quikly do and don't go together. As a de rigeur as a reference to a Grapp Aka volume and as a conventional as a desire for "clarity," the components of Rat Bohemia also do and don't mesh. Deliberately, queer and straight don't mix, or at least they resist awkwardly here. Schulman jams the machinery that produces a collision of fiction by giving three characters—two lesbians and a gay male (who dies of AIDS)—from different spheres: gay—comic—pathetic monologues. The novel closes, curiously but aptly, with a "cleaned" lesbian's narrative that marks the limits—in a hetero-oriented culture—of gay speak, of queer culture.

Schulman's New York—a city often constructed in literature—also reads sharply, uniquely. It's a queer space that unites, say, Paul Kutscher or Jay McInerney's "big city." ASF.


"Materialist Shakespeare: A History is not a history. Though conceived as such and organized chronologically from '77 to '94, it is really a culling "from the immense corpus of materialist Shakespeare criticism essays that are not only of exemplary quality but also typical of specific kinds and, collectively, suggestive of the broad range of materialist practices in Shakespeare studies."

The range includes feminist materialists, British cultural materialists, and American new historicists, all reading Shakespeare in the light of contemporary Marxist theories. Materialist Shakespeare has lots of intriguing, important, and difficult ideas, but only Kamps' introduction and Fredric Jameson's afterward are new. So why publish articles already available in prominent journals?—to produce a textbook for graduate seminars. This is the expressed aim of the book, which seems designed to meet, as it were, traditional academic requirements for breadth and depth; hence, the editor's assumption that students and teachers will get materials for an intensive look at one play (three essays on Othello), for generic and historical coverage, and for study of "the most frequently taught plays" (which, this book implies, we should teach more often). In this sense the volume is thoroughly conventional. So too in the marketing hype, passed off as history, about the "metanarrative" of materialist criticism and its "successory... . in Great Britain and the United States." In effect, readers are offered power, the power of being "where it's at" in the academic of the old empirics and the new.

Although the packaging of the thirteen essays that make up this volume is intimidating, what's in the package is worth-while. The essays work against the grain of Shakespearean criticism by challenging customary assumptions and readings, the most persuasive being Alan Sinfield's on Machiavelli: Walter Cohen's on The Merchant of Venice; Michael Rinaldi's on the "comedy and aesthetic explorations" of Othello: Broniat concludes that "Othello is a race of rational and sexual perversion." Lynda E. Boone reads the "sacred history of women's silencing" in The Making of the Stirens. For others, such as John Drakakis and Graham Holderness, not only anti-moral, but also modern and postmodern, social history plays in and through the plays on the page, stage, and screen. Together the contributors to Materialist Shakespeare transact the ideological cloud of Shakespeare and, as such, its abiding usefulness. ASL.

Reviews by Stanley Fogel, Michael Hochschmann and Ted McGee.
by Michael Hoechsmann

Interview

with Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña

Speaking From/To Border/Lines

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña combine their work in cultural theory with performance, video, and radio. They were interviewed by Border Cross in November 1994, when they performed “Mexicanos Intelectuales,” a performance piece set in a mall, which posed questions of racial and cultural identity in the corporate future shaped by the new globalizing economy. Both have published anthologies of critical writings recently: Coco Fusco, English & Broken Heart: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas (New York: The New Press, 1995) and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Warrior for Reappropriation (U. of Calif. Press, 1996). Fusco returned to Toronto in November, 1995, to participate in the Contretemps de Sur Film and Video Festival with Provenance: A Chicano Soap Opera, a video by Fusco that features the Chicano Secret Service.

Q. Guillermo, the Mexico-U.S. border has been the site for much of your work. You were a founding member of the Border Arts Workshop (1985) and among many “border” works, is the film version of your performance “Border Brute” (1990). While the concept of “border” has recently slipped into Anglo-European scholarship with relative ease, it does not appear to draw extensively in all of your work. On the other hand, important theoretical work from Latin America, such as Néstor García Canclini’s Culturas mixtas (1989), does establish important links to your work. Could you comment on the development of the nation of “border”?

Guillermo: The border paradigm was originally introduced in the mid-60s by artists who were working in the highly charged political context of the U.S.-Mexico border at a time of tremendous nationalism in both countries. For the FBI in Mexico, the border was seen as a site of contention against which to define “Mexicanity.” For the Reagan administration, it was seen as a threat to the national security of the U.S. Neither country was interested in border dialogues, border aesthetics, border culture; or in talking about a border consciousness, while artists were.
The End of the Line

Griostoke

One of the complications that border culture provided to the debates on identity in the '70s is to talk about being defined by cultural traditions. In particular, the Mexican and Mexican-Americans who have been actively engaged in the creation of this model began to talk about the need to develop a border consciousness that could encompass both sides of the border. The border itself is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and borders are never just geographical lines. They are also cultural, social, and political constructs that shape and are shaped by the people who live on either side.

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Toronto, ON, May 2011

Randy Reagon and the American Serenaders

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who really experience difficulty in crossing: the politics of which border is which and which one is permeable or not and why is far more apparent.

Guillermin: The border as a metaphor was and continues to be very useful. It is a very malleable metaphor which allows for multiple readings. Some more politicized than the others. Depending on one’s position. For a theorist, the border can be a very useful laboratory of thought, while for a Mexican migrant worker the border means fences, police dogs, border patrol, helicopters, raids and fear. That is why we have to be very careful in terms of glazing the reality.

In the border model of collaboration that many artist collectives have developed since the mid-80s, I think that often the Cucaranes and Mexicanos offer the ideas and the Americanos control the terms. In a sense, we are witnessing an intellectual version of a maquiladora and a cultural version of free trade. Under the label of border art, the Mexicanos provide the raw talent and the intellectual and artistic labour, and the North Americans are the curators, the impresarios, and the publishers, the people who control the terms of the debate, who frame the artistic product, and who organize the conferences.

We have to work against that model: what we want is a truly symmetrical exchange between the North and the South, between the North Americans and the Mexicanos. For that symmetrical model to emerge, there has to be a time when the U.S. stops talking and begins to listen.

Q: Coco, you co-produced a video documentary about Cuban artists called Havane Postmodern (1999) that aired on public television. Recently, the concept of postmodernism has been receiving a lot of attention in Latin American intellectual circles, but one strand current within those discussions is to suggest, as do writers such as Celeste Olayaqui and Nelly Richard, that given the “mestizaje” of Latin American culture, postmodernism is anything but new. Could you tell us about the video and its reception in Cuba and the U.S., as well as commenting on the viability of the concept of postmodernism in Latin America?

Coco: I went to the Havana Biennial with the two co-producers in 1996 with the intention of making a documentary about that event. At that time there was quite a heated debate going on in Cuba as to whether the term postmodernism would apply to that context. While it is true that socialists realism was never imposed on Cuban art, in the 70s there was an official disdain for internationalist trends, for a kind of aesthetic eclecticism which had been part of the history of Cuban visual art. There was pressure to pay more attention to artists who dealt with figurative paintings, especially representations of working class people.

At the time the same people who are now internationally acclaimed artists—José Bedia, Flavio Gómez, Consuelo Castaño, Arturo Puerta—were in a much more precarious position. By associating themselves with a movement that was critical of cultural nationalism, they were assuming a position that was somewhat controversial. Their take on Cuban culture involved a more realistic, more open-minded view of “underdevelopment.” We were condemned by some bureaucrats who claimed that our representation of the island was too ugly. Thus, the tape was censored in Cuba and it became a kind of underground cult video for a while. We showed it in the States, but the right-wing Cubans didn’t want to know that there is any art in Cuba. For the Americans left there was a problem because they were still into this idea that Cuban art was all posters and schematically pro-revolution. So we made the video at a moment when there wasn’t much acceptance of the concept of an independent, autonomous artistic activity coming from an underdeveloped socialist revolution.

What took place in the debate over postmodernism in Cuba was the opening up of the visual arts to the aesthetic experimentation that we associate with art in other parts of the world, particularly the U.S. and Europe from the 60s and 70s.

At the time we made the tape most European and American curators thought the Cubans were just slaves to fashion, that they had read too many issues of Artforum. I showed the tape in London to the visual arts curators at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art) and they told me that Cubans couldn’t have postmodernism because they had never had modernism. That was the state of things at the time; now it’s perfectly fine and it’s cool and everyone recognizes that the co-existence of different historical and social formations in the same society at the same time is similar to what Jameson labelled postmodernism.

In regards to the broader issue of postmodernism in Latin America, I think that it is ultimately positive that intellectuals outside of the U.S. and Europe decided to have a debate about postmodernism and that news of that debate actually got back to the “centre” and some people take it seriously. There really was a time when it was not considered acceptable for people in Third World countries to talk about postmodernity. It’s not only that there was a total lack of familiarity with urban cultures and the uneven introduction of mod-
enism and modernist practices in those countries, but it was also because there was this really strong sense among a certain generation of critics, including many Latin American leftist. That modernism was something for the hyperdeveloped world and had nothing to do with Latin America. So the attempt to interpret the relevance of that concept to a Latin American reality specifically, but also is a lot of developing countries, was a really smart move.

Guillermo: I think that a postmodern reader of Mexico is better than a magical realism reading; which is what existed in the introduction of this debate. Magical realism only helped to perpetuate the myth of Mexico as a partially industrialized country, not quite modernized and more connected to shamanism and a kind of rural magical thinking than to the political, social, and economic problems of a postmodern society. In terms of art, it was the same. Americans had a lot of trouble accepting the idea that Mexicans could do conceptual art, video art, or performance art, because that meant accepting the notion that Mexicans were citizens of the same time and place and not creatures somehow encrusted in an historical era existing outside of the present. To understand Mexico as a postmodern nation is to politicize the perception of Mexico, and I am all for it.

In regards to performance politics, I just want to mention the example of the Zapotistas and the figure of Marcos. This is probably the last chapter of a very novel history of performance activists in Latin America. You have the quintessential postmodern guerrilla leader, someone who is fully aware of the symbolic power of utilizing a mask and of using props, and of the importance of press conferences and of staging theatrical actions for the eye of the camera.

Q. Guillermo, you suggest that Joseph Beuys was correct to prophesize that art will become political and politics will become art. You state that in the 1960s "politicists and activists borrowed performance techniques, while performance artists began to mix experimental art with direct political action." Could you comment on this statement in light of current developments in the U.S.? What are the current prospects of GringosTrash?

Guillermo: You are speaking to us in a very different moment. We have just experienced a shift of power to the Republicans, as well as the approval of Proposition 187 and the rejection of Pete Wilson in California. GringosTrash as a national project, the American version of "glamstas," is being completely dismantled. What we are witnessing is an incredible retreat from the dominant Anglo-American sectors of society. They are very well organized and they are doing everything possible to dismantle social services, education, medical access, and cultural programmes that serve people of colour, newly arrived immigrants, women, the homeless, the elderly. They are doing it so thoroughly and effectively that I think we are going to be very badly shaped by the end of the century.

Three or four years ago, many people were talking about California as this very interesting laboratory, a sort of possible future where we could develop models of coexistence. Now I think that California is becoming increasingly an apartheid state, with a kind of a cowboy version of the French politician, LePen, called Pete Wilson. Two weeks before we went on the road, a supremacist group in California started issuing stickers and leaflets telling Anglo-Californians that it was time to start killing Mexican people. Over the past two years, opportunist conservative politicians and sectors of the mainstream media have been creating the psychological and cultural conditions for the justification of aggressive behavior towards the "illegal" immigrant community. They have been labelled as the source of all of the social ills of contemporary America. It is very dangerous. We need border dialogue right now more than ever.

Q. Where do you go from here?

Cocom: Attempts to counter the hegemonic gringoman are going to become more strident because the U.S. government has given the green light to all attempts to stop any kind of institutionalized multiculturalism. If all of the institutional attempts to account for difference and historical inequities are going to disappear, then it is all going to be cultural and there is a lot going to be counter-cultural. This is terrible, but I don't think it is the end. I believe that American culture is the product of the clash of cultures. Even though there is a myth of a homogeneous America, it has never really existed. Aspects of other cultures will enter into the society and into the culture and we'll feel the effects of it in the long term.

Guillermo: In terms of our performance work, I think that it is time to become very activist, to speak out, to do work that is very tough and confrontational with alof of valor. It is time for artists to assume a role of leadership, and to do very risky work, because we have to fight back.
When Does Post-Postmodernism Begin?

by Dennis Sexsmith

The following is a list of One-Hundred Starting Points of the Era of the Generation that Comes of Age after the Baby Boom Generation (with a postscript on the end of the post-postmodern generation in A.D. 2000).

“We are, certainly since Nietzsche and Spengler, ‘terminalists.’”
—George Steiner

100. California’s Proposition 13 cuts property taxes by up to 57% (1978). Middle-class tax revolt signals the end of the New Deal and the dawn of Reaganomics.


85. Postmodernism was a middlebrow phenomenon. Its champion practitioners were Warhol, Mailer, and Tom Wolfe. Its "theorists": were Susan Sontag, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Pauline Kael. —Louis Menand reviewing Pauline Kael in 1995.

84. Deng Xiaoping speech, "Liberalize your thinking, seek truth from facts" (Dec. 13, 1978). China is launched on the road to capitalism.

83. "One-child-per-family policy invoked by China due to severe food shortages (1979). A return to pre-Communist patterns of minimal and reproductive restraint.

82. Britain (1979). "Weaver of Discontent" culminates in a four-party race that elects Margaret Thatcher in May.

81. The "no-holds-barred" celebrity biography begins.


78. Sony invents the Walkman (1979). The listener is present yet absent.


74. The revival of sculpture first heralded at British pavilion, Venice Biennale (1980). The return of mass, representation, and some sense of minimal and conceptual art.

73. Carlo Ginzburg's The Cheesecake and the Worms (translated into English, 1980). The new history turns 180° to examine particular stories, rather than speculate about the big picture.

72. Unprecedented numbers force subsequent blockbuster exhibitions to ration attendance after Pablo Picasso Retrospective, MOMA (summer 1980). Art becomes a mass spectacle.


70. MTV begins (1980). Pop music as TV ads.

69. Luis Alvarez's hypothesis is published in Science, that the great Cretacice extinction was caused by an impacting asteroid (June 1980). He fractured the reigning tradition of Lyellian gradualism during the 1980s.

68. Post modernism as anumber one U.S. industry (1980). The information age supplants the industrial age.

67. Polish authorities permit a tenth-anniversary memorial in Gdansk to the shipyard strikers killed (Dec. 1979). The tide turns in Solidarity's favour; state communism begins to falter.

66. "Having created the Swinging Stalas, Lennon became a hold-all for the throbbing credulities of the next decade, a decade whose demise coincided with his own." — Martin Amis, writing the obituary of John Lennon, 40, killed on Dec. 8, 1980.


64. The IBM PC appears (1981). Big business adopts what had till then appeared to be a toy.


60. The Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, identifies AIDS (spring 1981).

48. The Dow jumped forty points and a five-year bull market begins (Aug. 13, 1982). The contemporary art market overheated among other things.

49. USA Today appears, without a geographical base. News-from-nowhere as an information paper.

50. The thirty-year trend of expanded opportunity, inaugurated by the GI Bill after World War II, began to reverse itself (1982). The percentage of American private college and university students from less affluent families began to fall.

51. Sidney Scott's film Blade Runner fascinates with its androids (1982). Are we "hollow men"? How do we treat humanoids?


53. Picasso's Guernica is rumored to be on show in New York. The resurrection of Europe.


28. First hypertext novel. Rob Swigert's Portal designed to be read on the Apple Macintosh. Allows the reader to take different paths through the story (1986). The reader as author.

29. Rafael Mono, Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Merida, Spain (1986). The return of beauty in architecture.

30. The last contemporary art exhibition before the National Gallery of Canada's move to a new building. Image-Object-Text in the largest scale. Changes names to Songs of Experience when the exhibition opens (1986). The same work, redesigned.

31. West Edmonton Mall expands, intensifying adulthood in Disneyfied fashion (1986). Shopping as play.


34. "The peak of American Cold War rearmament" was reached in 1985. The last year the U.S. defense budget grew in absolute figures.


36. Debts agreement allows dollar to fall, yen to rise (1985). Global markets erasing national monetary policies.

37. Michel Foucault dies, complications from AIDS (1984). "You used to have to read Marx. Now you have to read Foucault."—Peter Reit, speaking in 1992.


41. Thriving city becomes our "equal area" world map (1984). The third world begins to look much more significant.

42. Number of planes crossing the Pacific surpasses the number crossing the Atlantic (May 1984).

43. Thirty-year trend of expanded opportunity, inaugurated by the GI Bill after World War II, began to reverse itself (1982). The percentage of American private college and university students from less affluent families began to fall.
17. "The '80s Are Over, Dread Goes Out of Style," Newsweek (Jun. 4, 1988). Citing "signs of increased altruism," the decade is declared dead over two years early.
11. Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie for The Satanic Verses (Feb. 14, 1989), if he'd known what would happen. Rushdie later says he'd have written a more critical book.
5. Student occupation of Tiananmen Square, Beijing, violently suppressed by People's Liberation Army (June 4, 1989). China is changing, but slowly and reluctantly.
4. State Communism in most of Eastern Europe begins to disintegrate, symbolized by the opening of the Berlin Wall (Nov. 9, 1989).
P.S. When will the Post-Postmodern era end? Presumably when the generation after the so-called "increment" X" comes of age, those born between 1980 and 2005 will turn twenty from 2000 onward.

"When Does Postmodernism Begin?": the prologue to this article—appeared in Border Lines, 31.
CULTURE-SLASH-NATION

CULTURE-SLASH-NATION

Introduction
Cheryl Sourkes, Lorraine Johnson

Culture-Slash-Nation Speaks
(scripted from "Towards a Definition of the Cultural Producer: a video by
Cheryl Siman and Fred McSherry)
Lisa Henderson, Gerald Alred
Charles Acland, Jody Berland

Writing On The Wall
Barbara Godard

Politics After Nationalism. Culture after Culture
Jody Berland

Controlled Environments
Andrew J. Paterson

Visuals
John Marriot
Robin Collyer
Andrew J. Paterson
Laurel Woodcock
Dianne Fird
Gilbert Breyer
Kathryn Walter

Cover
(front) Laurel Woodcock, "bleuria," 1993
(back) Kathryn Walter, "Whitewash," 1995

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CULTURE SLASH NATION

INTRODUCTION

This insert represents the written components of an exhibition Culture Slash Nation, on view at Gallery TPW in Toronto from October 21 to November 25, 1995.

SLASH

to cut with a sweeping motion
to cut slits to expose the material beneath
to lash with a whip
to criticize severely
to reduce in a drastic manner

Culture Slash Nation is a response to the national and provincial policies that are reducing the frame of choice and limiting discourse about how we constitute ourselves as a nation. Specifically, we ask the question, if you squeeze the culture of the nation, if you slash cultural policies and institutions that have collectively defined that nation and "administrated" culture with all the problems that suggests, what's left for the nation to know itself by?

Today, the frame feels not only shrunkken, but mutilated. It seems that the language of commerce has co-opted any discussion of how we define ourselves as a nation. So, not surprising, the artists in Culture Slash Nation have turned to texts for expression of their frustration from Robyn Collie's practice of public text from the landscape of vision to Kathryn Walter's performative narrative of "white washing" public space, to Andrew J. Paterson's video interrogations of language and subtexts of arts funding, to Cheryl Simon's and Fred McSherry's video explorations of how artists and cultural theorists speak about culture and nationhood, to Katherine Knight's and Garry Conway's reinsertion of the artist's voice into the cultural policy debate through oral texts found in the CBC radio archives, to Jody Berland's and Barbara Godard's critical investigations of how culture is constituted, institutionalized and suffocated through public policies.

Is the slashed frame falling damages public space, the space of collective invention? And how do we, as artists, critics and/or activists fight for culture as a public resource? In the current slashing/cutting/lashing/criticizing/reducing, just what material is exposed beneath...and beneath what?

Co-curators,
Cheryl Souches and Lorraine Johnson

CULTURE SLASH NATION

What follows are responses to eight variations on the question, given the establishment of multi-national economic trading blocks such as the European Economic Community and the North American Free Trade Agreement, is the concept of a nation state or a national culture still functional? Is the idea of nation outdated?

Lisa Henderson

There is something very luxurious about dismissing the idea of nation when you are, indeed, a powerful one. It reminds me of the language of postmodern discourse where a grand idea has been made about the deconstruction of the subject and the loss of subjectivity. On the one hand I accept that postmodern logic has been very much by some of the theorizing about the decanted subject has come from people who, historically, are quite accustomed to being the centre of subjectivity. While this is a distant availing the problems (it points to are equally those of this discourse around the nation. Only with the privilege of global supremacy does one just dismiss with the idea of the nation state on the basis of any kind of policy making... But within that discourse of the nation I would guard against nationalism coming to mean anything more or essential in ways that reduce the sovereignty of groups within the nation who exist sometimes in resistance to the nation... That is always the tension within the concept of "nations."
dent as class warfare between have and have-nots waged with new tactics and ferocity? The vulnerable are being scapegoated for problems inherent in the economic system as the wrath of the middle-class in an age of downward mobility is worked on the marginalized, the poor. Indeed, it is precisely their poverty which makes artists targets of a rhetoric of marketplace success/exchange as a criterion of value. Art, knowledge, health—nothing can be allowed to interfere with the bottom line. Advancing arguments of economic necessity in myths of massive government indebtedness is an attempt thus to legitimate cutbacks in metaphors of "good housekeeping." This ignores the historical causes in government policy changes which have produced new patterns of public debt. The advantaged are also intervening in discursive practices with a new inflection of the term "interest group" to delegitimate collective struggles for equality and still public debate in what is a radical restructuring of economic and social policies underway in Canada.

Political struggle is organized through signs with the mass media being one of the institutional sites for this contestation. "Public interest" as one semantic configuration currently undergoing such resignification. A recent column in the Financial Post by Michael Walker, head of the right-wing Fraser Institute, titled "Disarming special interests is key to re-engineering Ontario economy," exposed the neo-conservative strategy. Neither business groups nor bonding agencies, both of which have vested interests in government policy, are considered "special interests" by Walker. No concern is expressed over the $4.8 billion in government support of the Canadian chamber of Commerce last year in addition to the tax-exempt status of its membership dues, while grants of $250,000 to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women generated protest. The Canada Council has been a favourite target of attacks by conservative groups such as the National Citizens Coalition that culture is just an expensive "special interest" the overburdened taxpayer should be spared. The label's effect in diminishing the force of claims to "public interest," a "civil society" or a collective project of society must be understood as a strategy in a discursive struggle around "interest" to position one group as speaking subject and negate others to silence, so naturalizing a shift in relations within the social contract.

It is not my purpose to analyze cutback data but to isolate some of the episodes in a narrative that is fostering my unease. Both its repetitiveness and its generalization are disconcerting. For incident after incident involves the same two actors: state financiers and artists in fixed positions of subject and object. These tales signify a break, a
shift in financial commitment that will transform the cultural industries in Canada. Of what magnitude? With what shifts in policy? What is being lost?

Never addressing explicitly in the newspapers are questions concerning the internationship of the threatened alliance, the signifies ‘nation,’ ‘culture,’ and the arts. What would add to the crisis of this alliance? What ‘culture’ is at stake here? Which ‘nation?’ Among the many contradictions operative in the discourses of ‘cultural and national identity’ is the arts, those prominent since the mid-nineteenth century engage the artist’s heterogeneous role as ‘unacknowledged legator’ is taken over into a superior reality as civilian or dissident, this is the where the reification of ‘interest’ around claims to the ‘public good’ finds fertile terrain. Rather than reverting the current situation within a rhetoric of crisis, as the news media would invite, I want to insist on the ongoing nature of this ‘crisis’ for which there are many possible sources of origin.

Within a series of self-propagating contradictions regarding arts policy in Canada there is nonetheless in the present conjuncture a certain shift in relations among the terms, epitomized in Susan Waller’s Janus-like New Year’s summation of the arts in 1994: ‘Ask not what your government can do for you, but what your government is doing to you’ (The Toronto Star). What the shift in prepositions signals is a change in the role of the state in upholding and promoting a public concept of the common good, manifested in the establishment of arts councils, other agencies of what Day Laborers call “procuratorial liberalism” with its privileging of individual rights, which has been reshaping the Canadian state since passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. There is an additional shift signalled in the ambiguity of Walker’s title, “Professional arts nags had work cut out for them.” “Arts nags” described the artist’s complaints about the lack of support for the arts. Indeed, it is their role to mediate the relations of artists and state, in this case the Ontario Arts Network, whose disappearance in the December initiative of the Creative and Cultural Industries Task Force in 1995 is associated with the recent modifications to the Advocates of Professionalism. The arts network is a task force from its members to formulate policies and initiatives for the renewal of the Council’s mandate to “energize” or “seize” artistic activity. This proactive stance was articulated in the recent recommendations of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Appalbaum-Hebert) whose report generated many counter position pieces from the Canadian Conference of the Arts, though little legislative action.

The arts’ criticism of Carrier nonetheless highlights a difference from earlier moments when the Canada Council carried out “Sounding” with the arts communities in order to get feedback on its ability to perform more effectively its advocacy role and, with the arts, and the economy, and with the government. Indeed, in the mid-1980s, the Canada Council’s arts policy was more coherent than today. Arts’ members formed the 1812 Committee to fight government cutbacks. Documenting the economic importance of the arts, this committee made the arts an election issue in 1979. Subsequently, the first conference of federal and provincial ministers of culture attempted to make their relations and policies more coherent. The Canada Council’s mandate to “energize” or “seize” artistic activity. This proactive stance was articulated in the recent recommendations of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Appalbaum-Hebert) whose report generated many counter position pieces from the Canadian Conference of the Arts, though little legislative action.

The complex orientation of the Canada Council might be read in terms of shifting institutional lines of accountability from Secretary of State to Minister of Communications, from Canadian Heritage, How far back in the past does one need to go to find similar relationships in Canada’s institutions? What a case for the Arts Council, its relatively low pay. The myth that artists are a privileged elite has itself become a form of oppression, suggests Heather Robertson, a means of segregation which, like reservations for the First Nations, works to keep them “powerless and poor” and, consequently, less creative. Robertson’s own response to this impoverishment and lack of respect has been to challenge the Arts Council’s bureaucracy, drawing attention to the pyramid of benefits from grants, salaries, tax credits, and so on, to the artist. The administrator is the only one with the permanent job. This situation might be overcome. Robertson suggests, by more direct government intervention to subsidize the artist without the intermediary of the arts-length councils. However, the history of the Canada Council suggests that a populist move to democratised does not automatically nationalize. Greater funding with the introduction of government appropriations in 1956 produced clutter scrutiny and parliamento interference to constrain grants on moral and political grounds. Moreover, the current system of subsidy might be seen as productive in a different way, that of constituting a cultural community, the collective producud a cultural discourse and the informed and involved audience to sustain the intensification of arts activity since the 1950s. It is the availability of this audience to support Canadian artists which has enabled them not only to pursue careers in Canada but to produce state-of-the-art work responsive to the local and the national. With changes in the economic basis of art came changes in its production. No longer dependent on the market place the metropolis, artists could create more freely for the Canadian public. It is this explosion of creative work by choreographers, composers, poets, painters, film-makers, photographers, etc. in the last thirty years that has transformed the arts scene, made it a place of creative innovation rather than colonial repetition.

This came about in a society with a social and economic contract forging an alliance between nationalism and the welfare state following the Depression and World War II. In other words, with many contradictions, nonetheless make a space for the arts within a humanistic discourse of balance and harmony and a nationalistic discourse of self-knowledge. Now, forty years after the establishment of the Canada Council, another change is underway—a shock to European humanism which has been abolished in a state of continuous change and Free Trade and their promises of individual rights over any collective goals a society might set. There is no place for art as a public good to be protected by the state within the individualistic, neutral, egalitarian discourse of procedural liberalism which misrepresents its production of inequality through the apparent symmetry of exchange value.

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The term "Canadian cultural industry" was coined by the Canadian government in 1957 to encompass the arts and culture sector. The Canadian government supported the arts through various programs and initiatives, including the Canada Council for the Arts, which was established in 1957. The Canada Council provided funding for the arts and culture sector, including the performing arts, visual arts, literature, and media arts. The Canada Council also supported the development of Canadian artists and the production of Canadian cultural works.

The Blanshard Report on Federal Cultural Policy was a comprehensive report on the cultural policy of Canada. The report was commissioned by the federal government in 1971 and was completed in 1973. The report was widely recognized as a significant contribution to the development of Canadian cultural policy.

The Blanshard Report recommended the establishment of a cultural policy that would support the arts and culture sector in Canada. The report emphasized the importance of cultural diversity and the need to support the development of Canadian artists and cultural workers. The report also recommended the establishment of a cultural funding agency, the Canada Council for the Arts, to support the arts and culture sector.

The Blanshard Report was widely criticized by some artists and cultural workers, who felt that the report was too conservative and did not support the development of new and innovative cultural works. However, the report was widely recognized as a significant contribution to the development of Canadian cultural policy and provided a foundation for future cultural policy development in Canada.

The Blanshard Report was followed by the Canada Council for the Arts, which was established in 1973. The Canada Council provided funding for the arts and culture sector, including the performing arts, visual arts, literature, and media arts. The Canada Council also supported the development of Canadian artists and the production of Canadian cultural works.
POLITICS after
NATIONALISM,
CULTURE after
CULTURE.

by Jody Berland

One of the works exhibited in the Power Plant Gallery's recent "Beauty & Evil" show is a sleeping bag hung on the wall with the words "Treason over Compassion" stitched onto its surface. As the subtitle, "After Wieland," reminds us, John Marriott's work owes its genesis to a well-known earlier work by Joyce Wieland, whose 1978 quilt, bespattered with the words "Treason over Passion," stylishly quipped Prime Minister Trudeau's summation of Liberal policies of the era. Wieland's earlier irony seems both poignant and quaint now, for the right-wing shows no evidence of reason or passion in its present transformation of Canadian society.

The newer work offers us a chilling reflection on our cultural history and our mean-and-meanser present in an exhibition whose curatorial coolness otherwise tends to a kind of sophomoric nihilism. Marriott's work refers to a time when Canadian artists, activists and intellectuals could associate justice and law to social values with national character, and project manifestations of naivety outward beyond the national borders. Does that work any more? A lot of people are sleeping on our streets and there will be more menace before the decade ends. The work evokes compassion in a tone that is cool, ironic, and reflexively historical. There's nothing comforting about this comment, any more than if it were all that came between me and the night somewhere on a downtown street. Yet the new motto hit me at a visceral level—it evokes the antipathy and moral outrage we feel when we look at current attacks on public social and cultural policies that have always defined Canada as different. But—to what extent can we call on a special loyalty to Canada, i.e. nationalism, as an antidote to this treason? Where are we to do so, what would we sound like?

English-Canadian national identity and its sporadic eruptions into patriotism have never looked like the nationalism I see described in newspapers or social or cultural theory. It doesn't matter whether such theory pursues a critical analysis of the nationalisms of an earlier era, or more contemporary issues informed by post-colonial theory. It also seems to make no difference whether the "national" in question is posed as an imperial or an anti-imperial entity. Either way, Canada never fits the pattern. This makes it frustrating trying to draw on such theory, for it sheds only partial light on the changing constellations of state/culture/nationhood which now confront us. The contrast does reveal one certainty, which is that the idiosyncrasies of Canada's national formation have been variously beneficial and disastrous for the evolution of cultural autonomies within its territorial borders. Perhaps a second certainty now follows, rather unhappily, from the first: that we have to learn new strategies and discourses if we wish to advance or even to maintain the public assets—cultural and otherwise—which were built in the last half a century.

John Marriott

Canada's nationality is so peculiar and anomalous that one sometimes wonders how or why it does or should survive as a nation. It is hard to see any economic, cultural or topographic nationality to this identity, no matter how graphically illustrated are the history textbooks or how convincingly mundane are the debates that circle around the nation's capital. What do we have in common, after all? Not even language. We have no shared ancestors or genetic pool, no originary revolution myths, no common rituals for commemorating each other's births and deaths. The "natural" etymology of economic flow is north-south, not east-west. Without a viable narrative or common symbolic culture other than sometimes, maybe, perhaps hopefully, land and landscape to legitimize the existence of this nation, why bother?

Nevertheless people intervening in public policy and cultural politics debate continue to speak as Canadians, i.e., to reconstruct a nationalistic discourse, which means not only taking a nationalistic position on, say, cuts to film development funding, but also addressing the benefits and difficulties and necessities of speaking producing Canadian culture. This discourse never reaches closure on a definition of what that is. In identifying oneself in terms of "Canada," one distinguishes oneself from the differently inherited possessions of British, European, or American voices, but each of these constructions evokes collectively and culturally in a different way. Even if we wanted to we cannot situates ourselves as the same-only-different in relation to Americans, for instance, by evoking a national identity. The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes and mobilizes too dubious and marginal a set of historical discourses to call it "identity" in any usual sense.

The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes rather a veritable catacomb of national inventions, the CBC, the Musée Commission, biculturalism, multiculturalism, CRTC regulations, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the Canada Council, the i-Art Bank, community radio, public hearings, briefs and briefs, government everywhere, probably subsidizing not only the speaker, but also the very paper the words are printed on. The sentence with the Canadian subject thereby nomimates the speaker as participant in and subject of a complex apparatus of agencies and institutions which for over half a century has sought to administer culture as part of the larger enterprise of defining the nation's borders. This attempt to constitute borders through the regulation of culture (and culture through the regulation of borders) is the endeavour American movie mogul Jack Valenti recently (Toronto Star, March 17, 1995) termed "an inflection sweeping the world." It's not clear who is the victim and who is the
physician here. But we — Canadians that is — know Valenti’s rhetoric better than anyone, since in this a good moment for a touch of irony? He so effectively lobbies Washington to denounce, penalize and criminalize Canada’s association of culture with politics and nature. All that is understood.

What cannot be spoken in the sentence with the Canadian subject is a claim to a coherent national identity with deep historical-cultural roots preceding such governmental endeavours. Unlike American, Irish, Polish or Quebecois citizens, no one recalls a strongly felt imperative to forge a collective destiny within the imminent form of a nation-state. This nation is a synthetic construction initiated by colonizers and designed by royal commissioners, lobbyists and civil servants. It is a pure colonial entity, produced by colonial powers and colonial practices. Canada exists because a state manufactured a nation, rather than the reverse. The process has met with limited success, presumably, in that few Canadians believe the nation-state can or should express any particular narrative of cultural identity. Indeed we tend to attack government agents when they attempt to do so.

If Canada is a pure colonial product, then, it is, by the same token, intransigently “pure.” We are not the Irish against the British, blacks against white rule, Palestinians against Israelis, or Quebecois against Canada. Unlike many emergent colonies we are embarrassed by anything but the most subtle and ironic of patriotic gestures. We are only what we were “given,” what we made, and what we took: land, trees, banks, railways and satellites, agencies and institutions, narratives and codes of citizenship cooked up from what was brought from various parts of the world. We neither sprang from nor produced a common culture, race, religion or language. As Kristeva puts it in *Nations without Nationalism* we share a legal and political pact rather than a “spirit of the people.”

This geneva is difficult enough, where nationalism is concerned, but the growing diffusness of global power has also tended to prohibit the development of classic (anti-)colonial nationalism. If by this we mean a reconstructive mobilization of pre-colonial ethnicity, language, culture AGAINST external rule. Who or what nationalist discourses defend us from is comparatively diffuse.

There is no singular “us” here, but there is no singular “them” against whom we might gradually invent ourselves, either. We do not oppose ourselves to an external entity so much as to a system whose values and benefits “we” partly share. Perhaps that is why “we” always seem to capitulate. In the end, Canada’s collusion with the imperial enemy doesn’t take (so much) the form of self-hated racism or sectarianism, but appears rather as a kind of technological progressivism espoused on behalf of the national interest. Its rhetoric promises that pro-business economic policies, pro-consumer cultural policies and cutting-edge technological change will protect us from an otherwise ruthless imperial history and draw us into a new pragmatic utopia of international culture. What is born from this statist collusion is not the nationalism of “a people,” but rather of a technologically constituted cultural marketplace.

Now nationalism is an increasingly problematic mode of politics in any case, for reasons which are richly explored in many critical texts emerging from Anglo-American and postcolonial theory. In any case Canada’s nationalism is as idiosyncratic as its nationhood discourses and dilemmas.

Historian Ramsay Clark has suggested that culture is one of the few domains in which the Canadian government has been able to summon the political will to impose public policies even where these counter economic/colonial interests. The astute reader will note not only that this agenda is disappearing from the public domain, but also that two different definitions of culture have been mobilized herein: the kind that one produces and writes about if given adequate time/funding, and the kind that one simply lives, for instance by eating donuts or touting guns or activating one’s beliefs about government through voting. But no one has convinced me contemporary left and right skeptics notwithstanding that they do not influence one another in the larger world. A “culture” which believes (metaphorically at least) in democratic access to all public rights and resources, including airwaves, and thus comes to privilege of only fragmentally an “autonomous” non-market cultural economy as a public good will produce different symbolic discourses from a “culture” which conceives democracy as adversarial competition, mandatory self-production and cultural pluralism, assigns culture, including the airwaves, to the “free flow” of an “open” market, and otherwise reserves the term “democracy” for when invading through one means or another a foreign country.

Culture became one of the principle domains in which nation-building emerged as a legitimate framework for social practice, not because there WAS “culture,” as this term was understood in the nationalist paradigm, but because so many social actors believed there NEEDED to be culture to fill in the vacant spaces of the national social. Thus legislators and civil servants, artists and cultural communities, the trade union and women’s movements, and the nationalist left built a political coalition around the imbibition of culture and nationhood, there-by forcing government to legislate into being a body of cultural institutions and assets to define and serve the Canadian public. The state policy of support for the arts was thus predicated on a rhetoric of national sovereignty and difference, while the state’s claims to the governance of sovereign space were predicated on and legit-
mated by its protection of culture, defined more and more metonymically in terms of select cultural spaces, from the free market. It's important to remember this genealogy when we consider how far government legitimation is being transferred, however subliminally, in the anti-culture business of celebrity, of the indigenous Canadian process. The public process surely begins with irony, of course. Of the purposeful development of a "national culture," i.e. of state-national symbols capable of evoking loyalty from subject citizens, is not unique to Canada. Indeed this process defined and legitimated the State of the State. It was the same throughout Europe and the BBC public radio telecommunication of the 19th century. But certain features of this process, in combination, were unique to this country: the unprecedentedly indissoluble joining of culture, democracy, national sovereignty, and resistance to a "free" market economy, first advocated in Parliament by Sir John A. Macdonald at the 1873 Special Committee on Indian Affairs. The nature of this discourse to culture as an object of national debate, as a complex of cultural practices, and the potential of this discourse to foster a discourse of public participation in national debate as a community, as a complex of cultural practices, and the potential of this discourse to foster a discourse of public participation in national debate as a community, the emergence of those social practices emphasizing mass media of identity (ultimately precipitating a practically definitive reversal in the approach to democratic sovereignty, which has switched its focus from producers to consumers, a complex culture of anti-political politics, and the notable absence of a discourse predicating national identity on uniformly in language, race, history, or culture in either the equalitarian or modern sense of that term. What defines the prehistory of Canadian collective memory, then, is the transparency of governmentally driven processes of collective invention. Since 1929, massive public policies involving virtually all publics have preceded the establishment of public agencies dedicated to support for the arts, justified by the need for national culture and national defense. The genesis of Canada's arts and cultural policy was thus dominated by the attempt to create a bourgeois culture which could stand in for, and replace the role of a displaced, assimilated, and disparaged history. Certainly, constrictions of this strategy became evident during Mulroney's reign, when "cultural industries" were exempted from an agreement that otherwise promised to eliminate anything in the economic or social realm that defined Canada as different, and when Mulroney himself advocated support for culture as a means to entail the support of Canada's interests in artists and artists for free trade. But paradoxically this same project of cultural rationalization depended on a cultural community willing to fight for and to catalyze the spaces of that bourgeois culture for its own purposes. The artists' and writers' articulations of vision, location, value and difference helped to produce a symbolic space they could point to and call Canadian. Artists helped to give expression, affect, and material form (as commodities, though rarely profits) to the nation's claim to difference and autonomy. But there is another paradox in this scenario. The ongoing rationalization of culture and cultural policy which ensued helped to elevate and marginalize these discourses, building on the foundations laid: Hinders and Guantanamo Bay."

The academic and artistic left, following Foucault and other theorists, has developed a sophisticated critique of the state as the "universal master" of any discourse, of the state as healer of the ills of all social relations and institutions of social management in terms of a hegemonic dissemination of power. At issue here is the accuracy of this theoretical stance—its emphasis on particularity and plurality has made a crucial intervention in cultural theory and politics. Indeed, if we accept the Franks' claim that "any" and "cultural politics" is an emerging field of study and the empires of the social, the tenuresque "infrastructure of collective invention is collapsing. The academic and artistic left, following Foucault and other theorists, has developed a sophisticated critique of the state as the "universal master" of any discourse, of the state as healer of the ills of all social relations and institutions of social management in terms of a hegemonic dissemination of power. At issue here is the accuracy of this theoretical stance—its emphasis on particularity and plurality has made a crucial intervention in cultural theory and politics. Indeed, if we accept the Franks' claim that "any" and "cultural politics" is an emerging field of study and the empires of the social, the tenuresque "infrastructure of collective invention is collapsing.

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controlled environments

Andrew J. Paterson

[A] "I still feel that memory provokes motivation."
[B] "And guilt provokes remorse. Which is probably how you came to be a cultural bureaucrat."
[C] "You're out to lunch. I mean, you're not paved in anybody else's game."
[D] "Duh, I can tell what you've been reading in your off-hours."
[E] "Well, at least I don't wear my eyes out proofreading cutbacks!"
[F] "That will do, A."

"Etiquette"

[A] "Do you recall that application which seriously divided today's jury?"
[B] "Yes, I recall you muttering under your breath about some sort of stalemate situation when I ran into you during your break. Now, what are the artist's initials again?"
[C] "C.P."
[D] "Right, C.P."
[E] "One of the jurors was persistently insisting that art cannot be propaganda and that therefore propaganda cannot be art."
[F] "I'm not sure to what degree propaganda is meant to be art."
[G] "You sound like the particular juror who gave me such a headache."

"Propaganda"

[A] "Where do you get your information, A?"
[B] "I don't even need to obtain such information about you. If you disgrace yourself at public parties then you blow your chances of being invited to private ones."
[C] "Oh, listen to the unspoken lecture on the subject of etiquette."
[D] "There are many people, in fact a majority of people who, if they wish to be entertained, prefer to hire professional entertainers for the occasion in question. As opposed to constipated cultural bureaucrats who can't hold their liquor and as a result metamorphose into 60s-rate standup comedians!"

"Etiquette"

CULTURE-SLASH-NATION