

Volume 20 Number 1 \$5.50 A magazine about issues of art and culture

# FUSE

MAGAZINE

## CAN I HAVE MSG?

Food and Asian

American Media Art

by Yau Ching

Also... a look at Paul Wong  
& *Sex in the New World* by G.B. Ingram

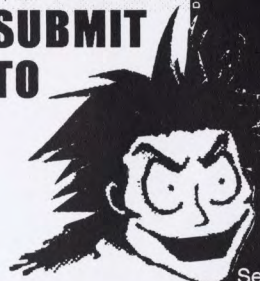
Plus reviews of Wendy Oberlander, b.h. Yael, Yasufumi Takahashi,  
Laiwan & Michael Belmore





DIANE DIMASSA. ©D. JONES. ELIZA GRIFFITHS ON EXHIBIT JAN 10 TO FEB 22 1997

**SUBMIT TO**



**THE CALL:**



IMAGES FROM: HOTHEAD, L. TERRORIST & FRIENDS BY

**SAW** is accepting fax and mail submissions throughout February 15th to March 15th for: **Artists Against Hate** a national fax & mail art show occurring March 1 - 27, 1997. If you have seen it, or felt it, or heard of it, then send us your work about it! Anything within the theme that arrives by fax or that can fit in the mail will be hung/displayed. Help eliminate hate in all its forms. Works will only be returned if indicated by inclusion of a self-addressed, stamped envelope/packaging. Look to your local Artist-Run Centre for information regarding SAW's celebration and reflection on March 21st, the **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Do you have 3 minutes of tape and/or 10-15 slides and many words about wanting to **STRUT YOUR STUFF** in **SAW's SECOND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE, FILM/VIDEO & ACTION ART EXTRAVAGANZA?** (Residency and performances involving installation are welcome). Just let us know and send us your support material & proposal by July 21st.

Send us your 10-15 slides and 500 word philosophy on concepts of "original" versus "reproduction" in the making of multiples, indicate your intent for possible inclusion in an exhibit on **ART MULTIPLES -REPRODUCTION & fine print** scheduled for Spring, 1998. **DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS: October 6,**

Are you into SAM, bondage, body modification/mutilation or "modern primitive" acts spectacle, imaging or are you critical of it in some exhibitable form? Then send us your slides, C.V. and statement. **SKIN, STEEL & INK** exhibit is in the planning. Send your proposal by July 21st.

SAW Gallery is also seeking work on *Nasty Grrl* themes, *techno* and *non-techno dependencies*, *cultural inquiry/activism*, *site specific work* for consideration by the Selections Committee. **DEADLINE: October 1st,**

**SEND ALL PROPOSALS C/O VISUAL ARTS COORDINATOR:**

**SAW Gallery**

67 Nicholas St. Ottawa, Ont. Canada. K1N 7B9

Tel: (613) 236-6181 FAX: (613) 564-4428

*snappy title*  
a fundraising extravaganza and art sale  
January 15 - January 25

*Big Dick Time*  
videos by Paul McCarthy & Mike Kelly, Richard Pettibon, Tony Oursler & Joe Gibbons, Michael Smith & Doug Skinner, Jonathan Wells & Geoffrey Topham  
curated by Steve Reinke,  
February 5 - March 1

*Barbara Hammer: The Sensual Gaze*  
films curated by Milada Kovacova  
March 6 - March 29  
opening Friday March 7, 8:00 pm

**NEW DEADLINE FOR EXHIBITION PROPOSALS IN FILM, VIDEO AND PERFORMANCE: FEBRUARY 15/97**  
**DEADLINE FOR EXHIBITION PROPOSALS IN VISUAL ART AND INSTALLATION: APRIL 1/97**

PLEASE CONTACT **YYZ** FOR APPLICATION FORM.



**YYZ Artists' Outlet**  
1087 Queen St. West  
Toronto, Canada. M6J 1H3

tel. 416-531-7869 | fax 416-531-6839

YYZ acknowledges the support of The Canada Council; the Ontario Arts Council; the Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation; the City of Toronto, through the Toronto Arts Council; and the Municipality of Metro Toronto, Cultural Affairs Division.

January 16 to February 14

**Tracey Moffatt**  
*Scarred for Life*

**Iké Udé**  
*Celluloid Frames*

*Subject to Representation*  
curated by **Kevin Gibbs**

February 27 to March 28

**Jim Grant**  
*Dr. Livingstone I Presume?*

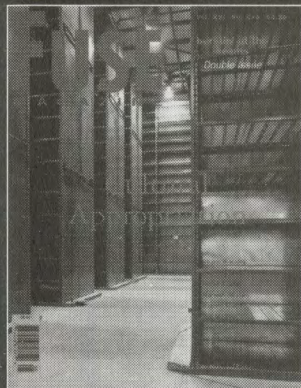
April 10 to May 9

**Mary Suiyee Wong**  
*She Takes His Bed*

**101**

Galerie 101 Gallery  
319 Lisgar Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2P 0E1  
tel: 613.230.2799 / fax: 613.230.3253 / oneoone@web.net

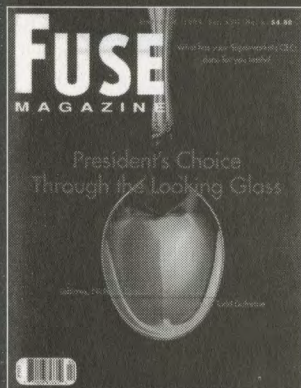
**ARE YOU MISSING A FUSE?**



16.5



17.2



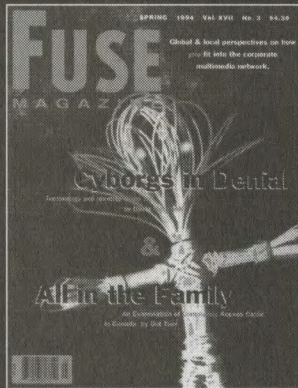
17.4



18.1



17.1



17.3



17.5



18.2

main gallery

**Roland Jean** January 9 - February 15  
**Lucy Hogg, Tulsa Kinney, Ron Terada**  
February 20 - March 29

project room

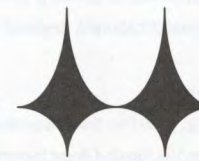
**Ghostwriter 3** curated by Gerald McMaster  
Don Hall, Robert Houle January 9 - February 15  
**Ghostwriter 4** curated by Andy Fabo  
Charline Boudreau & Anne Golden, Brent Cehan, John McLachlin  
February 20 - March 29

window

**Laura Teneycke** January 9 - February 15  
**Alan Flint** February 20 - March 29

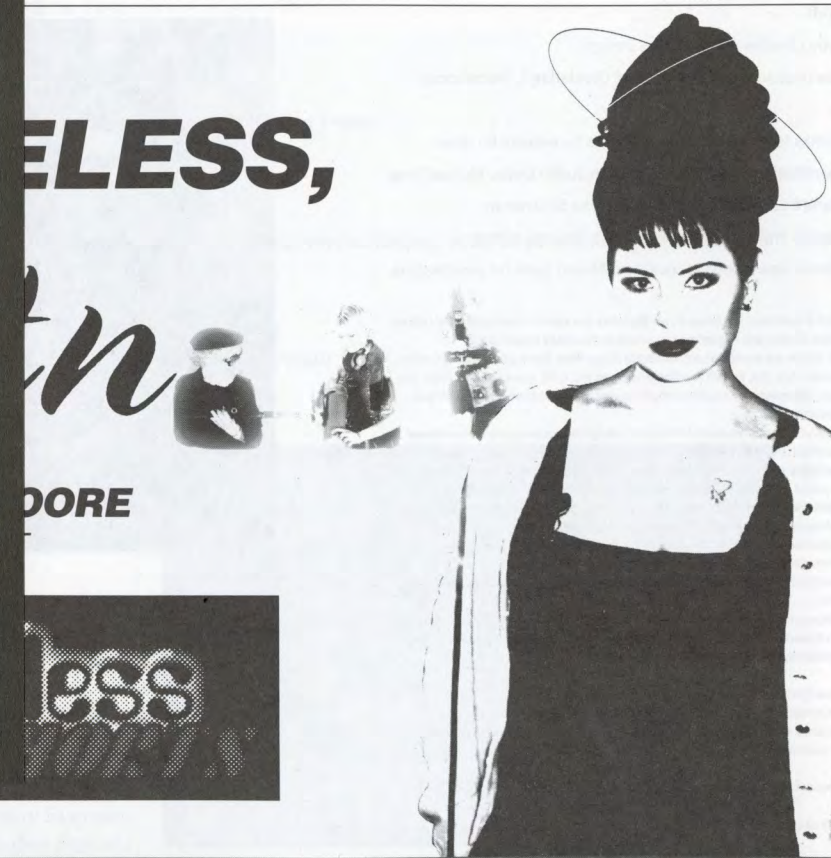
439 King St.W.  
Toronto, ON.  
Canada M5V1K4  
tel 416-977-1412  
fax 416-977-8622  
mercero@interlog.com  
www.interlog.com/~mercero

Mercer Union



**ELESS,**

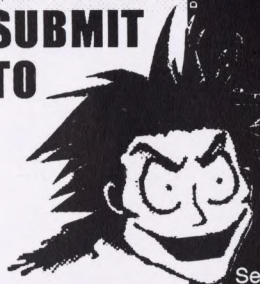
**DORE**



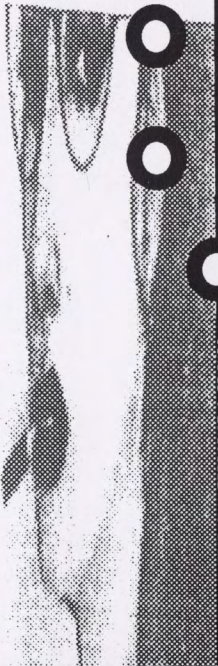
11:30PM EST SATURDAY & 3:30AM EST SUNDAY



**SUBMIT TO**



**THE CALL:**



**SAW** is accepting fax and mail submissions throughout February 15th to March 15th for **Artists Against Hate** a national fax & mail art show occurring March 1 - 27, 1997. If you have seen it, or felt it, or heard of it, then send us your work about it! Anything within the theme that arrives by fax or that can fit in the mail will be hung/displayed. Help eliminate hate in all its forms. Works will only be returned if indicated by inclusion of a self-addressed, stamped envelope/package. Look to your local Artist-Run Centre for information regarding SAW's celebration and reflection on March 21st, the **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Do you have 3 minutes of tape and/or 10-15 slides and many words about wanting to **STRUT YOUR STUFF** in SAW's **SECOND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE, FILM/VIDEO & ACTION ART EXTRAVAGANZA?** (Residency and performances involving installation are welcome). Just let us know and send us your support material & proposal by July 21st.

Send us your 10-15 slides and 500 word philosophy on concepts of "original" versus "reproduction" in the making of multiples, indicate your intent for possible inclusion in an exhibit on **ART MULTIPLES -REPRODUCTION & fine print** scheduled for Spring, 1998. **DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS: October 6,**

**SKIN, STEEL & INK** exhibit is in the planning. Send your proposal by July 21st.

SAW Gallery is also seeking work on *Nasty Grrl* themes, *techno* and *non-techno dependencies*, *cultural inquiry/activism*, *site specific work* for consideration by the Selections Committee. **DEADLINE: October 1st,**

**SEND ALL PROPOSALS C/O VISUAL ARTS COORDINATOR:**

**SAW Gallery**

67 Nicholas St. Ottawa, Ont. Canada. K1N 7B9

Tel: (613) 236-6181 FAX: (613) 564-4428

## FUSE ME WITH BACK ISSUES:

snappy title a fundraiser January 15

Big Dick Ti videos by F Richard Pe Michael Sn & Geoffrey curated by February 5

Barbara Har films curate March 6 - M opening Fr

NEW DEADL IN FILM, VIC FEBRUARY DEADLINE F IN VISUAL / APRIL 1/97

PLEASE CO

YYZ Artis 1087 Queer Toronto, C

tel. 416-531

19.5 Fall '96

19.3 Spring '96

19.2 Winter '96

19.1 Fall '95

18.5 Special Issue

18.4 Summer '95

18.3 Spring '95

18.2 Winter '95

18.1 Fall '94

17.5 Special Issue

17.4 Summer '94

17.3 Spring '94

17.2 Winter '94

17.1 Fall '93

16.5 Special Issue

16.4 Summer '93

16.3 Spring '93

16.2 Winter '93

16.1 Fall '92

Add \$6.00 per copy, includes GST and shipping/handling. Include this tear out in the attached self-mailing envelope.

**TOTAL FOR BACK ISSUES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**101**

Galerie 101 Gallery  
319 Lisgar Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K2P 0E1  
tel: 613.230.2799 / fax: 613.230.3253 / oneoone@web.net

### RECENT DONATIONS

to Oakville Galleries' Permanent Collection  
January 25 to March 2, Gairloch Gallery

### FERTILE GROUND

February 1 to March 30, Centennial Gallery

### THE VIEW FROM HERE:

Selections from the Permanent Collection  
March 8 to April 20, Gairloch Gallery

### DOMESTIC BLISS

Media Arts at Oakville Galleries  
The Gloria Tapes by Lisa Steele  
March 9 to April 20, Gairloch Gallery Video Salon

CENTENNIAL GALLERY  
120 Navy Street

GAIRLOCH GALLERY  
1306 Lakeshore Road East

**oakville galleries**

OFFICES  
1306 Lakeshore Road East  
Oakville, Ontario  
Canada. L6J 1L6  
Tel (905) 844-4402  
Fax (905) 844-7968

main gallery

Roland Jean January 9 - February 15

Lucy Hogg, Tulsa Kinney, Ron Terada

February 20 - March 29

project room

Ghostwriter 3 curated by Gerald McMaster

Don Hall, Robert Houle January 9 - February 15

Ghostwriter 4 curated by Andy Fabo

Charline Boudreau & Anne Golden, Brent Cehan, John McLachlin

February 20 - March 29

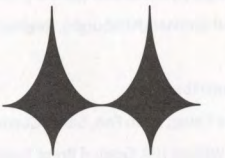
window

Laura Teneycke January 9 - February 15

Alan Flint February 20 - March 29

439 King St.W.  
Toronto, ON.  
Canada M5V1K4  
tel 416-977-1412  
fax 416-977-8622  
merc@interlog.com  
www.interlog.com/~merc

Mercer Union



If she's  
**SHAMELESS,**  
she's on

*wtr*

**JAKE MOORE**  
HOST

**Shameless**

11:30PM EST SATURDAY & 3:30AM EST SUNDAY *wtr*

# FUSE

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 1 WINTER 1997

## Board of Directors

Millie Chen, Su Ditta, Judith Doyle, Richard Fung,  
Marilyn Jung, David McIntosh, Francine Périnet,  
Renuka Sooknanan, Kathryn Walter

## Contributing Editors

Clint Burnham (Vancouver), Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Calgary),  
Allan deSouza (Los Angeles), Thea Demetrakopoulos (Toronto),  
Cliff Eyland (Winnipeg), Andrea Fatona (Peterborough),  
Sylvie Fortin (Ottawa), Anne Golden (Montreal), Jorge Luis Marzo  
and Tere Badia (De Calor Magazine, Barcelona), Ashok Mathur  
(Calgary), Ian Rashid (London), Clive Robertson (Montreal),  
Nell Tenhaaf (Pittsburgh), Reginald Woolery (New York)

## Contributors

Yau Ching, Kuan Foo, Samir Gandesha, Sandra Haar,  
R. William Hill, Gordon Brent Ingram, Karlyn Koh, Patti Kim,  
Kyo Maclear, Nancy Pollak

## Staff

Petra Chevrier (Production & Design)  
Lisa Deanne Smith (Advertising, Circulation & Promotions)

Thanks to Richard Fung and Renuka Sooknanan for issue  
coordination. Thanks to Millie Chen, Judith Doyle, Richard Fung,  
Marilyn Jung, David McIntosh, Renuka Sooknanan,  
Rinaldo Walcott and Kathryn Walter for copy editing.  
Thanks also to John Maxwell and Shawn Syms for proofreading.

FUSE is published five times a year (includes one special issue) by Artons Cultural  
Affairs Society and Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist's organization.  
Our offices are located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 454, Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada M5V 3A8, E-mail: fuse@interlog.com, tel: (416) 340-8026, fax: (416) 340-  
0494. All newsstand inquiries should be sent to this address. Publication mail  
registration No. 4455.

Copyright © 1997 Artons Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International  
Copyright Union. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Artons  
Publishing purchases First North American Serial Rights and copyright reverts to  
the writer after publication. Artons Publishing assumes no responsibility for  
unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-  
addressed envelope will not be returned. A copy of our Writers' Guidelines is  
available on request. Publication of an advertisement in FUSE does not include  
endorsement of the advertiser by the magazine. Opinions expressed outside of  
specifically marked editorials are not necessarily held by members of the editorial  
board.

FUSE acknowledges financial assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario  
Arts Council and the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour that are  
provided by everyone listed on our masthead.

Subscription rates: \$20 per year; Institutions \$32 per year  
(in Canada only). Outside Canada \$24 U.S. per year; Institutions \$38 U.S.  
Decisions regarding who qualifies as an individual subscriber remain the right of  
the publisher.

Printed in Canada on recycled, acid-free paper by PointOne Graphics Inc.

ISSN 0838-603X

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and is a member of the Canadian  
Magazine Publisher's Association.

## 5 Editorial

## Columns

7 TOPOGRAPHIES: ASPECTS OF RECENT B.C. ART  
Reflections of Diversity and Institutional Reality  
by Kuan Foo

11 FOOD AS METAPHOR  
Is Diversity the "Spice" of Life?  
by Samir Gandesha

## Artist's Project

16 PATTI KIM



*The Red Paper*, Dana Claxton; from the exhibition  
"topographies: aspects of recent BC art"  
at the Vancouver Art Gallery,  
September 29, 1996 to January 5, 1997

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION  
ARTEXTÉ  
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

# contents

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 1 WINTER 1997

## Features

17 SEX MIGRANTS  
Paul Wong's Video Geographies of Erotic and Cultural Displacement in Pacific Canada  
by Gordon Brent Ingram

27 CAN I HAVE MSG, AN EGG ROLL TO SUCK ON AND ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA ON THE SIDE?  
by Yau Ching

## Reviews

35 GIFTS AND CRUELITIES OF DISPLACEMENT  
Nothing to be written here  
Video by Wendy Oberlander  
Review by Nancy Pollak

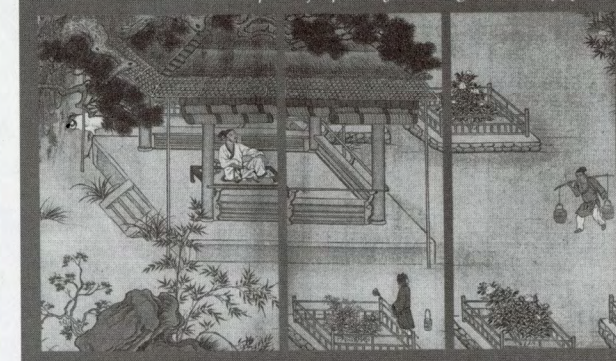
37 FRESH BLOOD  
A Consideration of Belonging  
Video by b. h. Yael  
Review by Sandra Haar

39 REFORMATION  
Michael Belmore exhibition at Garnet Press  
Review by R. William Hill

41 TRANSMISSION RUSES  
small, medium and not large: books and collages, 1982 to present by Laiwan  
Review by Karlyn Koh

44 CURTAIN DRAWN ON RISING SUN  
Red Reflection I by Yasufumi Takahashi  
Review by Kyo Maclear

*Who knows at what depth of spirit you long to be enjoyed?*



*Who knows at what depth of spirit you long to be enjoyed?*,  
postcard by Laiwan, image from *The Garden of Solitary Enjoyment*,  
16th century painting by Ch'iu Ying, China. (See page 41.)

## Publication Release

### Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future

Edited by Peter White  
Walter Phillips Gallery Editions

To order, please call  
Office of the Registrar,  
The Banff Centre for the Arts  
403-762-6180

February 13 – March 30, 1997

### Staking LAND Claims

Guest curated by Patricia Deadman

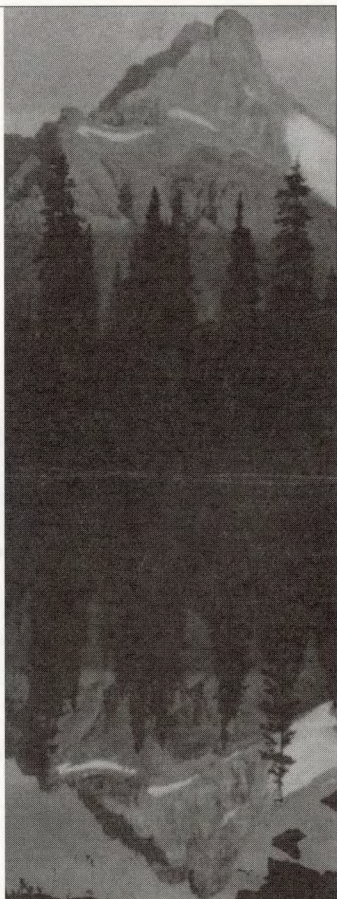
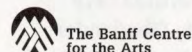
Mary Anne Barkhouse  
Michael Belmore  
Kelly Greene  
Anne Walk

Presented in collaboration with the Aboriginal Arts  
Program at the Banff Centre for the Arts

### Walter Phillips Gallery

Box 1020-14 Banff Alberta Canada T0L 0C0  
tel 403-762-6281 fax 403-762-6659  
<http://www-nmr.banffcentre.ab.ca/WPG/>

Financial support provided by the Canada Council  
and Alberta Foundation for the Arts



INDIAN SUPERHEROES KICK U.S. ARMY BUTT

## Aboriginal VOICES

Volume 4, Number 1 The Magazine of Evolving Native American Arts & Culture

The PowWow  
Journey  
by Michael Greyeyes

Indian  
Mindmeld  
Tomson Highway  
Interviews  
Sherman Alexie

Out of  
the  
Darkness

Tina Keeper survives  
tragedy and triumph



PLUS The best in books, music,  
theatre, film and video

## Aboriginal VOICES

Aboriginal VOICES is the only  
Canadian Native magazine on the  
market today. Subscribe now and  
save 15% on gift subscriptions for  
your friends and family.

1 Year Subscription  
Regular - \$20.00  
Institutional - \$25.00

2 Year Subscription  
Regular - \$35.00  
Institutional - \$45.00

Send Visa, money order, or cheque to: Aboriginal VOICES, 116 Spadina Ave.,  
Suite 201, Toronto, ON., M5V-2K6 (Subscribers outside Canada,  
please send US dollars.) phone (416)703-4577, fax (416)703-4581 e-mail  
abvoices@inforamp.net, <http://www.vli.ca/clients/abc/cmail/abvoices>

Call toll free from anywhere in North America.

# 1-800-324-6067

## editorial

of Holocaust survivors. Specifically, the tape charts the chilling experiences of Oberlander's father, one of hundreds of Jewish refugees transported from Britain and interned in Canada together with their Nazi persecutors. Memory and war is also a focus for Kyo Maclear's review of Yasufumi Takahashi's *Red Reflections I*. Presented as a quilt, the show is a metaphoric weaving together of reflections on death, violence and sacrifice. What is repressed when war is aestheticized? What is beautiful about war?

Sandra Haar's review of b.h. Yael's video essay *Fresh Blood: A Consideration of Belonging* narrates the artist's journey as a Christian-raised, Arab Jew back to the land of her birth, Israel. The tape probes the assumptions of Jewish, Arab and Israeli identities and courageously imagines the possibility of community across divisive boundaries. Similarly interfering with monolithic cultural assumptions, R. William Hill's review of Michael Belmore's exhibition *Reformation* takes up the artist's interrogation of the idea that aboriginal people are specially gifted with self-knowledge. Belmore's work serves to unsettle the romantic relationship—or equivalency—between Native and nature.

Finally, Karlyn Koh's review of Laiwan's *small, medium and not large: books and collages, 1982 to present*, focuses on truth production. In this exhibition, the artist investigates the work of cultural ideas in the construction of "truth." In their totality, the pieces in the installation excavate the omissions and silences in a retransmission of ideas.

### Twentieth Anniversary Retrospective Issue!!!

FUSE Magazine is celebrating its 20th anniversary! First introduced as *Centerfold*, FUSE has been dedicated to publishing provocative, incisive commentary on art and culture locally and internationally. FUSE has served as a forum for some of the most influential writers on some of the most pressing topics. Indeed, the magazine has often managed to put progressive issues on the table. FUSE is surviving in the face of massive funding cuts and a general climate of "Harris/ment." Our survival is both a sign and a strategy of resistance to increasingly conservative shifts.

The 20th Anniversary Retrospective Issue looks back over the last twenty years, demonstrating FUSE's commitment to the critical examination of cultural production. This issue (Vol. 20, no. 2) will be an important edition for anyone interested in the politics of art and culture. However, it will not be available at your local magazine rack or bookstore! To receive your copy of this special issue you must be a FUSE subscriber! Sign up or renew now!



THIS ISSUE of FUSE connects the politics of identity, food and representation. The three feature articles map notions of "race," community and subjectivity within a context of disrupted cultural mythologies. Both Samir Gandesha and Yau Ching examine the complex relationships between cuisine, home and assimilation, questioning essentialized "ethnic" categories and their relationship to structures of power. While Yau Ching explores these issues through an examination of independent film and video, Samir Gandesha uses memory of food experiences as a departure point for critical reflection. The third feature, Gordon Brent Ingram's "Sex Migrants: Paul Wong's Video Geographies of Erotic and Cultural Displacement in Pacific Canada," offers an analysis of community, queerscapes and education in the age of AIDS. Ingram uses Wong's video *Blending Milk and Water* to discuss both the genre of AIDS educational video and the possibilities for life and survival on Canada's West Coast.

Extending an examination of the West Coast art scene, Kwan Foo's column, "topographies: aspects of recent B.C. art," problematizes recent curatorial directions at the Vancouver Art Gallery. What do diversity and inclusion look like when they are part of an overall strategy to increase public attention and support?

The reviews in this issue build on and complicate the politics of identity and nation. Nancy Pollak's consideration of Wendy Oberlander's videotape *Nothing to be written here*, narrates the process of forgetting and remembering in the families

## The St. Norbert Arts & Cultural Centre's

# Full Retreat

### ON-GOING Residency Programme

#### Call for Submissions

An invitation to Writers, Visual Artists, Performance Artists, Media Artists, Audio Artists, Musicians, Composers, Designers, Critics, Curators and Arts Administrators to apply to come into residence and work independently on their own work in a retreat setting for periods of time ranging from one to six weeks. Residencies can occur throughout the year, pending availability. Cultural organizations may also apply for residencies for visiting artists.

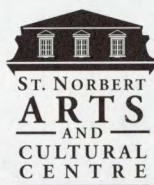
The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre also maintains an on-going programme of residencies featuring invited guests active in all disciplines.

The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre is situated on the five-acre grounds of a former Trappist Monastery near Winnipeg.

For application information, call the St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre at (204) 269-0564.

### Fees .....

- You may elect to stay for periods ranging from 1 to 6 weeks.
- Your fees cover your residency only.
- Each resident will have their own guest room and lockable studio.
- There is a shared mezzanine lounge as well as a shared kitchen/dining room.
- Residents are expected to cooperate on food arrangements. Food is not included in fees.
- Residents are responsible for their own supplies.



100 rue des Ruines du Monastère  
Box 175, St. Norbert, Manitoba, Canada R3V 1L7  
Telephone: (204) 269-0564 Fax: (204) 261-1927  
E-mail: programs@snacc.mb.ca  
Web: http://www.snacc.mb.ca/snacc

#### Fee Schedule

1 week	\$150
2 weeks	\$250
3 weeks	\$350
4 weeks	\$450
5 weeks	\$550
6 weeks	\$650

There is a 10% members discount available.

## THE POMELO PROJECT PRESENTS CITY AT THE END OF TIME HONG KONG IN 1997

FEBRUARY 14 TO MARCH 15, 1997  
VANCOUVER, BC

Artists & Writers from Hong Kong, Canada and the U.S.

Art Exhibition Feb 14	Public Talk Feb 15	Poetry Reading Feb 16
Choi Yan-Chi Kum Chi-Keung Lee Ka-Sing Jamelie Hassan Mary Sui-Yee Wong	@ SFU Harbour Centre Rey Chow Ackbar Abbas facilitated by Rosa Ho	@ Vancouver Art Gallery Leung Ping Kwan jamila ismail hosted by Jim Wong-Chu

Exhibitions at Access, Artspeak and Foto•Base Galleries: Feb 14–March 15  
Helen Pitt Gallery: Feb 11–March 1

Reception Feb 14, 8pm

Launch of artists' book,  
special issue of *West Coast Line*,  
and World Wide Web site

A Pomelo Project Production  
Organized by Scott McFarlane & Henry Tsang  
For more info, phone  
**(604) 254-6042**  
or e-mail: doro@hotmail.com

The Pomelo Project gratefully acknowledges the support of The Canada Council, The Department of Canadian Heritage, City of Vancouver, the Government of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, BC Multiculturalism and Immigration, VanCity Community Partnership Program, the Vancouver Foundation, the Koerner Foundation, The Institute for the Humanities, SFU

bubbly

party at

**FUSE's**

20<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
Bash

dancin' shoes  
A OK

info  
(416)  
340-8026

sympton  
hall 160  
claremont ave.

saturday  
march 15,  
1997 at  
9pm

dj's

20th  
retro  
issue

# topographies: aspects of recent B.C. art

REFLECTIONS OF DIVERSITY AND INSTITUTIONAL REALITY

by Kuan Foo

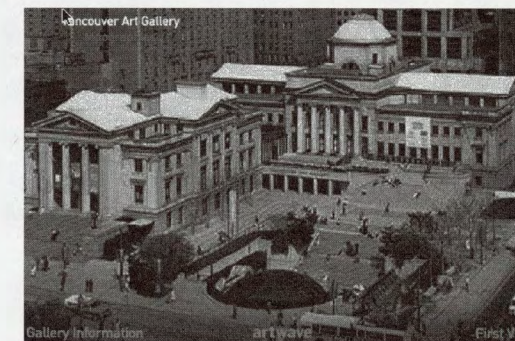
### topographies

Vancouver Art Gallery  
September 29, 1996–January 5, 1997

Dempsey Bob, Rena Point Bolton, Janis Bowley, Dana Claxton, Daniel Congdon, Judith Currelly, Fred Davis, Freda Diesing, Christos Dikeakos, Clare Gomez Edington, Rodney Graham, Arni Haraldsson, Walter Harris, Chuck Heit (Ya'ya), Lucy Hogg, Byron Johnston, Ki-ke-in (Ron Hamilton), Donald Lawrence, J.J. Lee, Mary Longman, Landon Mackenzie, Myfanwy MacLeod, Kevin Madill, Teresa Marshall, Melinda Mollineaux, Shani Mootoo with Kathy High, Ken Mowatt, Wendy Oberlander, Chester Patrick, Susan A. Point, Judy Radul, Rick James Rivet, Isabel Rorick, Debra Sparrow, Robyn Sparrow, Yoko Takashima, Mina Totino, Cathi Charles Wherry, Jin-Me Yoon, Robert Youds, Sharyn A. Yuen

Curated by Grant Arnold, Monika Kin Gagnon and Doreen Jensen.

The Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) has traditionally occupied a curious space in the public imagination. Clad in the shell of the former Supreme Courthouse and girded by four of the busiest streets in the downtown core, it remains the most visible vessel of "serious art" within a city that has much to distract it from art. It sits flanked on all sides by banks and shopping malls, majestic and slightly anachronistic, an effect heightened by the neo-classical façade of the building itself. Until recently, it always seemed that while most Vancouverites were aware of the VAG, very few actually cared about what was happening there. The general public appeared to perceive the VAG as a haven for second-rate artistic esoterica, while those with an



interest in alternative and non-mainstream art saw it as dated and irrelevant. Both stayed away in droves.

But no more. The past year has seen the VAG fling its doors wide open to embrace the public. First came the "Andy Warhol" show with its audience participation galleries, then "The Group of Seven" exhibition with its portentous subtitle "Art for a Nation"—both big shows, both shattering previous attendance records. While it is possible to criticize the conservative nature of these shows it is hard to deny their success in recapturing the public's interest in art, even if it is art of a very mainstream nature.

So it is fresh off the success of these two "mega-shows" that the VAG is presenting "topographies: aspects of recent B.C. art." It is very tempting to view "topographies" as merely the latest installment of the VAG's program to "legitimize" art to the masses and thereby legitimize its own position in the Vancouver art scene. Certainly the pre-exhibition advertising blitz, aided in part by the sponsorship tie-in with the Rogers Communications empire, has been extensive. "The Vancouver Art Gallery is being transformed this fall by 'topographies'" intones the advance brochure (which begs the question of what VAG was *before* the alleged transformation took place). "The exhibition reflects British Columbia's position as a major cultural intersection of Western, Asian and West Coast Native



The Fountain Heads, Myfanwy McLeod, included in the exhibition "topographies: aspects of recent BC art."

traditions and histories." Clearly, the VAG wants to be seen to be making a fresh start, and topping off the agenda is the desire to expand the notions of what is traditionally considered VAG art—to reflect "diversity." Of course, one would have to be naïve to think that this move is not politically expedient.

But, for the moment, let's give the VAG the benefit of the doubt. Examining the genesis of "topographies," it is encouraging to find that two of its three curators have not been previously associated with the VAG, and that they come equipped with alternative viewpoints and fresh new agendas (new to the VAG, that is). Furthermore, most of the forty-one artists that are represented in the show are far from mainstream, and a good portion of them come from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the Western Art canon—the brochure even makes a point of mentioning that "many [are] exhibiting at the Vancouver Art Gallery for the first time." This methodology does seem to indicate a genuine desire

by the VAG to, if not actually embrace diversity, embrace those who do.

However, good intentions aside, the important question to ask is whether a show like this is ultimately good for the artists that it encompasses. Does being embraced by the VAG "legitimize" them in the public eye and is this necessarily good? Is it possible for a large, mainstream cultural institution to pull off this kind of a show without the art being tainted by the nature of the institution itself? Is the show ultimately about the art or the agenda?

The curators—Grant Arnold, Monika Kin Gagnon and Doreen Jensen—to their great credit, have recognized these conundrums and perhaps as a pre-emptive strike, have penned an introduction to the show's catalogue that verges on apology. "From the beginning," they write, "this project was not intended to be a comprehensive survey of current art in British Columbia, either in terms of representing each geographical area or each mode of artistic production in the province. Rather, through the perspectives of the three curators, the exhibition presents a variety of art in which both shared concerns and divergent aesthetic strategies can be discerned." In other words, "this is not a survey, this is not intended to represent anything other than what we the curators happen to like and think ought to be included." This amounts to the most startlingly honest admission of curatorial bias I have yet to see and in all fairness it would pass without comment in a show of lesser scale. It is unfortunate then that the "mega-show" nature of the institution that they are working in works against the intentions of curators themselves and, in fact, grants them an authority that they have no desire to wield.

By virtue of its size, stature and track record, the VAG is going to imbue anything it exhibits with the aura of being a complete package. If the label says diversity then—by golly—this must be "diversity," curatorial attempts to persuade otherwise notwithstanding. Perception, as the saying goes, is nine-tenths of reality; and while the applicability of this time-honored cliché to the practice of art is debatable, its truth in the politics of the art world is undeniable.

Perception can be especially problematic for a show like "topographies," which depends so much on its need to be inclusive. No one show can ever represent the entire "diversity" of any community—and the curators of "topographies" have taken pains to stress that this is not what they are attempting to do. Doreen Jensen, for instance, makes no bones about working to promote First Nations and women artists and this is clearly evidenced in her curatorial selections. But once again, curatorial caution runs contrary to the greater agenda of the institution itself. The institution demands a grand scheme for a grand event, and that

## The Vancouver Art Gallery



grand scheme is "diversity." The promotional materials continually stress the importance of the event in terms of how it reflects diversity and how it "reflects British Columbia's position as a major cultural intersection of Western, Asian and West Coast Native traditions and histories." The only trouble with reflections is that sometimes they can be mistaken for the real thing, especially when backed by an institution eager to be seen as breaking new ground.

So is this really dangerous? Some would argue that the exhibition of non-mainstream artists in a mainstream institution is a good thing in itself and they would be right; it is always a good thing for those artists to get exposure. However because of the nature of the institution, the perception is created that the only reason those artists got exposure is because they fit under the imposed mandate of "diversity" that arises from *this particular show*. The very real danger at the end of the day is that the public goes home having been treated to "diversity" and that the various committee members of the VAG pat each other on the back on a job well done at addressing "diversity" and *that is the end of it*. Conversely, if "topographies" is the first step in a process and not an end in itself—if, for example, it is the first of a series of shows to be guest curated by people with "alternative" areas of interest, and if the submission process is opened up to attract as broad a range of work as possible, and if, ultimately, it opens up a dialogue between the mainstream and "alternative" institutions—then "topographies" could just possibly be the important show that the VAG wants it to be.

Kuan Foo is a Vancouver writer, musician and Ultimate player. He hosts a weekly human rights show on Vancouver Co-op Radio.

Available in bookstores across Canada & the U.S.

# FIREWEED

Heather Cameron on the cross-Canada Women's March Against Poverty plus notes from "Rolling Feminist Library" organizer Amitha Whittaker

Patna Kapur: Queen on the Screen & Bandits in the Courts how censorship rewrote THE BANDIT QUEEN in India

Brenda Cossetan reviews WHO'RE CARAVEL by Shannon Bell

Ling Chiu's film / reflection on the MONTREAL MASSACRE

plus new work from ijoee crow, Shai Dhali, Neesha Desai, Crystall Carmen & others

1 year: personal \$20; institutional \$30; foreign: personal \$28; institutional \$42; please add seven percent GST. Send to: Fireweed, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, ON M5T 2W2 (416) 504-1339

the magazine of  
artist-run culture

# MIX

Formerly known as Parallélogramme. MIX continues a 20-year-history of provocative artist-run cultural coverage. DON'T MISS A SINGLE ISSUE! SUBSCRIBE TO MIX: 1 year \$20 for individuals (\$35 for institutions) 2 years \$35 for individuals (\$50 for institutions) Write, call, or fax us with your name address and phone # Ask us to bill you (or enclose your cheque) Mix, 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 446 Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5V 3A8 Tel: (416) 506-1012 Fax: (416) 340-8458

Image: These Shoes Weren't Made for Walking, a film by Paul Lee, 1995.

The **Department of Media Study** at SUNY/Buffalo has two tenure/tenure track openings for September, 1997. One is in film/media with an emphasis on video, one is in digital arts. MFA or equivalent preferred but creative excellence essential. Women and minorities encouraged to apply. EO/AA employer.

For details visit our website:  
[http://wings.buffalo.edu/academic/department/AandL/media\\_study/](http://wings.buffalo.edu/academic/department/AandL/media_study/)

or contact Roy Roussel  
 tel (716) 645-6902  
 fax (716) 645-6979  
 Department of Media Study  
 231 Center for the Arts  
 Box 606020  
 Buffalo, New York 14260-6020  
 U.S.A.



**UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO**  
 STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

**David Burkes, B. Com, C.A.**  
 Chartered Accountant

30 Wertheim Court, Unit 14, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1B9  
 Telephone: (905) 882-0497 • Fax: (905) 882-0499



**AKAU FRAMING & ART**

742 Queen St. W  
 Toronto, Ont.  
 M6J 1E9  
 Telephone: 504 - 5999  
 Fernanda Faria

Hours: Tues. - Sat. 10 - 6 pm

# 1996 Canadian Magazine Catalogue

**100's OF MAGAZINES TO CHOOSE FROM!**

The full-colour Canadian Magazine Catalogue 1996 is here! Nowhere will you find so many intriguing magazines on virtually every topic under the sun. Use it all year long to find the perfect gift. Or treat yourself, at home and at work, to the latest information on everything from horse sports to political analysis. Its handy annotations and address directory also make it a great reference tool for anyone who wants to know more about Canadian magazines.

To get your new catalogue, fill in this coupon and mail it today with **\$5** (including GST, shipping and handling). We are also happy to accept **VISA or Mastercard orders by fax or phone.**

New This Year:  
 10% off  
 on Two or More  
 Subscriptions!

**Yes!** Send me the new **CMPA Catalogue 1996.**  
 I enclose my credit card information or cheque for **\$5**  
 (GST, postage and handling are covered in this amount).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov \_\_\_\_\_

Postal \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque enclosed  Credit Card

Visa \_\_\_\_\_ exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Mastercard \_\_\_\_\_ exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



**CANADIAN MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION**  
 130 Spadina Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2L4  
 Tel (416) 504-0274 Fax (416) 504-0437

# Food as Metaphor

IS DIVERSITY THE "SPICE" OF LIFE?

by Samir Gandesha

for Zubair Ghuman

**Lemme tell ya 'bout your blood, bamboo kid  
 It ain't Coca-Cola, it's rice  
 Go straight to Hell, boy  
 — The Clash, "Straight to Hell"**

Let me begin with a little story. I grew up in a homogenous suburb about ten minutes north of the city of Vancouver where there were hardly any Catholics or Jews, let alone other Hindu kids like myself. The neighbourhood was almost exclusively, as they say, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, or WASP. It was difficult growing up in what was in many — though not all — ways a culturally intolerant place. Like everywhere else, I suppose, the rule of the schoolyard was that you were accepted if you actually succeeded in fitting in. If you weren't quite as lucky, then you had to put up with all manner of quotidian humiliations and, of course, the ever-present threat of getting a real hiding. So it goes without saying that I didn't exactly embrace my own difference with open arms.

My need to disguise such difference led me to adopt what were essentially western tastes and attitudes, particularly where food was concerned. I certainly wouldn't be caught dead with "curry" spilling out of my lunch box. No way. It was peanut butter sandwiches on Wonder bread for me. You see, cultural differences aside, there were other more pragmatic considerations: in the schoolyard Indian food possessed absolutely no exchange value; there was no trading a Tupperware container filled with, say, a chick pea and potato sag (curry) for a ham sandwich. Thus from a very early age, I shunned my parents' diet,

eating only burgers and fries, pizzas and steaks, pork chops and mashed potatoes. The very sight of traces of turmeric in whatever was placed before me was the immediate cause of profound discomfort. It was almost as if unconsciously I was thinking, like a certain Ludwig Feuerbach, that "Man is what he eats." By eating Indian food I would remain hopelessly and irretrievably Indian, by eating what everybody else was eating, however, I was sure to become "Canadian," which is to say white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant.

Despite becoming politicized at a relatively early age, I wasn't fully rid of this cultural myopia (dare I say "bad faith") until my third year of university, which took me, ironically, to Europe, to London to be precise. It was as if I had to go to the centre in order to understand the meaning and pleasures of the margin. At the L.S.E., I met a Pakistani guy who knew his Sartre and his South Asian cuisine. His *piece de résistance* was Masoor dal (red lentils) Punjabi style. This involved boiling the dal, adding a variety of spices and, while it was being curried, frying half an onion in a good dose of cooking oil. The fried,



black pepper



almost burnt onions and the oil would then be added to the dal, giving it a viscous, porridge-like consistency. While cooking he would, with a certain sly glint in his eye, wax poetic: "A curry must be nurtured," he would say. Once the dal was ready, all one needed was some dhali, a little cucumber and onion salad, some pita or chapati and, voila!, a tasty and hearty meal would appear before us. Well, from that point on, I was sold on the idea of cooking Indian food much to the quiet chagrin of many members of my extended family for whom cooking was, with some important exceptions, the exclusive preserve of women. From that point on, my friend would have me enthusiastically rolling out chapatis with an empty wine bottle, while he cooked the curries and rice. All of this would be done in the common kitchen in the hall of residence. Once the meal had been prepared, we would share it and numerous pints of bitter with friends.

I say all of this to acknowledge the importance of cuisine to cultural meaning and identity. It was and most certainly continues to be intrinsic to my own sense of being part of the South Asian diaspora. Indeed, it is still the source of pride that despite my having gone wrong in the eyes of some members of my extended family by not becoming a professional, and therefore a respectable member of the community, they have been known to exclaim from time to time: "That boy knows how to eat!" What I want to raise in the following remarks are some reservations about the ubiquity of food as a metaphor. The question I wish to pose is: to what extent, despite apparently representing difference, does the metaphor of food actually foster assimilation?

There is no denying the fact that the association of various South Asian communities in the West with spicy food has become something of a cliché in the media and a stereotype in society at large. The former involves reducing the differences between the many

South Asian cultures to a particular cuisine which is then perceived as the simple, exotic, antithesis of Western cooking. The stereotype is expressed, in most extreme form, as racial epithets. In this register, Indians and Pakistanis are "curry-heads" in the same way that Chinese are "rice-balls." Recently, however, there's been an exciting outpouring of cultural productions from within various South Asian communities that has sought to reclaim the metaphorical flavour of food for culture and identity. One need only think of the English-South Asian play *Moti Roti*, the film *Bhagi on the Beach* and the "Khush" poetry of Ian Iqbal Rashid, with its sensual evocation of culinary tropes of mangoes and

maple syrup. By far the most prevalent metaphor, however, is that of "masala." Here, of course, one thinks of Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, Srinivas Krishna's *Masala* and the bhangra music show on Ryerson Polytechnical University's radio station, CKLN, called "Masala Mix."

On the one hand, it is not difficult to see the immediate appeal of the masala trope. For the metaphor is very much like the bhangra and hip-hop that it describes in its power to suggest sampling, experimentation and hybridity. As any DJ will tell you, you never play the same number twice; the scratching, the sampling and the mix itself are always

modulated in a slightly different way with each repetition; so too with masala. For masala is also a mix of a variety of spices; it is a combination of turmeric, coriander, chili powder, cardamom, cumin, mustard seed, cloves, fenugreek, etc. One never comes up with the same exact combination or articulation twice. How you get it right is not a matter of precision as in the case of many other forms of cuisine in which everything measured out to the last Profrockian teaspoon. Indian cuisine, in contrast, is based on the repetition of what is different. As any Indian cook worth his salt, so to speak, will tell you: "It's all in the mix, yaar."

On the other hand, I suspect that it is this metaphor of difference itself that is ultimately complicitous in the reduction of difference to identity or sameness. One must, I think, be extremely wary of the simple celebration of "difference," which can just as easily be made into an advertising slogan by a capitalism gone fashionably "postmodern." For capitalism is a social relation



ginger

that actually reduces quality, the specificity of a particular object the index of which is its ability to satisfy an equally particular need, to an abstract quantity of money. In a Fordist world, a world based on the mass production and consumption of commodities, individuals become mirrors of the commodities they consume, which is to say thoroughly standardized or in the words of Huxley "Bokanovskyized." The post-Fordist world, in contrast, is based on the consumption and production of differences. Hence, in a recent ad campaign, Arby's tells us in a particularly saccharine slogan that "Difference is good." Is it any coincidence that Arby's is selling what is, after drugs, the most perfect commodity: fast food?

Returning to the metaphor of masala, it seems that there's a double-bind at work here. For at the very moment of its representation (as food), difference is prepared and served up as something to be consumed, ingested, incorporated, which is to say, taken into the body (politic). That this is the case shouldn't come as a surprise. For it was, after all, the desire for spices that fed the Western imperial machine. The "spice trade" with its deep roots in antiquity, was the primary impetus of a very modern form of colonialism. The spice trade is virtually coextensive with

trade itself; its traces are therefore sedimented in the pre-history of capitalism. That which is most archaic is thus simultaneously most modern.

Spices found their way from India into what is today misleadingly referred to as the "Middle East" about two centuries before the death of Christ. The profits from the spice trade were already enormous in Alexandria around 80 BC, at which time Ptolemy bequeathed the city to the Romans. From that point on, Rome became the world centre for trade with India, which it would remain for the next three centuries. From the tenth to the fifteenth century, the Italian city state Venice, with its mastery of the seas, was able to gain a stranglehold on the trade with the Palestine. Other European powers, seeking to break Venice's monopoly, embarked on the so-called "Voyages of Discovery." Here, the Portuguese led the way. Indeed Salman Rushdie's most recent novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh*—a novel which he says "grew out of a

peppercorn"—centres on a Goan family which makes its fortune in the spice trade. As the narrator of the novel, the Moor, suggests in an evocative yet ironic commentary on the roots of colonialism in the spice trade:

[...]if had not been for peppercorns, then what is ending now in East and West might never have begun. Pepper it was that brought Vasco da Gama's tall ships across the ocean, from Lisbon's Tower of Belem to the Malabar Coast: first to Callicut and later, for its lagoony harbour, Cochin. English and French sailed in the wake of the first-arrived Portugee, so that in the period called Discovery-of-India—but how could we be discovered when we were not covered before?—"we were not so much sub-continent as subcondiment," as

my distinguished mother had it. "From the beginning, what the world wanted from bloody Mother India was day-light clear," she'd say. "They came for the hot-stuff, just like any man calling on a tart."

The competing interests not only of Portugal, England and Spain but also Holland and France gave rise to the titanic political and military rivalries through the "Age of Reason," culminating in the "Age of Empire." The relation between the two great ages of Europe was not simply fortuitous, a point to which I shall return below. It led, ultimately, to the consolidation, after the decline of the Iberian powers, of the British Empire on which "the sun never set." Is it any surprise that one of the defining moments of the Indian struggle for Swaraj or self-governance was Mahatma Gandhi's famous twenty-day march to the sea which sought to break the British monopoly on salt? In a



clove

letter to the British Viceroy, Gandhi explained the significance of the exploitative salt tax thus:

[...]the British system seems designed to crush the life out of [the Indian peasant]. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing that he must eat more than the rich man...<sup>1</sup>

This brief digression is simply to suggest that there is a history of experience that is contained in the very metaphor of masala itself—an inextricable relation between “subcontinent” and “subcondiment.” That is, the relation of the West to the other that it produces out of itself cannot be understood without bringing into view the metaphor and meaning of spice. To place the metaphor within such a historical perspective is also at the same time to displace its purely metaphorical nature. It is to show how social and political relations are etched into the surface of that metaphor just as the metaphor itself is written into those very relations. The metaphor of masala, in other words, is not innocent. In no way do I aim to critique the specific films, plays, etc. in which it crystallizes, rather I am simply suggesting that it cannot be used without a degree of reflection on its myriad, often unconscious, meanings. Just as actual spices themselves must be cooked in order to break open their fragrance and savour, so, too, must their literary double agent be decoded, deciphered. For there is a specificity to the metaphor of masala in which is stored an entire phantasmagoria of the Orient. In this register, the Orient is other—what is exotic, sensual, sensuous, feminine, pagan, despotic, infidel and because of this potentially dangerous or “unsavoury.” In a word, what the West cannot “swallow.” This stored up experience is unleashed every time, for instance, Joanne Kates, food critic for the *Globe and Mail*, describes a Toronto Indian restaurant as the “ideal ethnic experience.” It is significant that she doesn’t just say the “ideal ethnic restaurant.” No, the operative word here is “experience.” Kates suggests that it is possible to have an experience of the “ethnic” other without being changed or transformed, which is to say challenged, by this cross-cultural encounter. In other words, the structure of the inclusion of otherness is, at the same time, that

of its exclusion. Doesn’t the stroll down the block to the Indian restaurant manifest a repetition compulsion of the archaic quest for spices? Is it not in an extremely abbreviated form, an uncanny repetition of Columbus’ desire for an elusive and allusive India? And is it not a voyage that fails, like that of Columbus, to reach its destination?

This problem of repetition is made especially clear in the British context. Indian food is so popular in Britain, especially England, that like pubs one finds Indian “take-aways” on virtually every corner. So popular is Indian cuisine in the UK that recently there were some musings in the British media that Indian food might be considered the “national” cuisine. Indian food is particularly popular amongst the English working class which, in the late nineteenth century, effectively sublimated its revolutionary aspirations in an increasingly national and therefore imperialist direction. Just because the white working class consumes Indian food doesn’t make it any less racist (just as the displacement of ketchup by salsa as the number one condiment of choice amongst Americans doesn’t necessarily improve the fortunes of the Latino and Chicano communities in the U.S.) Quite the contrary. As Martin Amis suggests in *London Fields*, members of the white working class in Britain are not just drawn to Indian take-aways because vidaloo goes well with lager but rather because they can walk into an Indian restaurant and, unlike most anywhere else in an extremely hierarchical and deferential society, actually feel superior to those serving them. Like Kates, they can experience—literally “taste”—colonial relations of power; the past weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living, as Marx put it in a different context.

Lying at the very heart of colonialism, then, is a politics of incorporation. Incorporation here is understood both as subsumption or co-optation and the appropriation of surplus that lies at the very heart of the political economy of imperialism. Let me briefly elaborate. First, one of the central cultural and philosophical practices of imperialism is the constitution of the other as barbaric and irrational respectively. What legitimizes to a considerable extent the imperial project is therefore the “civilization” of the barbaric and the “rationalization” of the irrational. In both instances, what is at issue is a type of incorporation by which I mean a reduction of what is different to the same; the reduction of the Other to the status of the “other” as what is simply the antithesis of Western identity. Thus, in modernization theory and dogmatic Marxism alike, “Third World” societies are, in essence, just like Western ones. In fact they are always already Western societies. Their “occidental” nature is simply nascent, which is to say at a stage of infancy. Development therefore consists in maturation, in

simply growing up. Likewise, the philosophical process by which the irrational other is reduced to the sovereign categories of reason is through a process of incorporation. The Otherness—the distinctive nature—of the other is simply swallowed up by a reason with a ravenous appetite for the Absolute. Second, at the risk of simplifying their many complexities, imperial social relations are based upon the often violent and devastating extraction of surplus from very their colonies. These colonies are turned into cash-crop economies often resulting in their chronic inability to produce sufficient food for subsistence of the vast majority of their populations.

Imperialism is therefore fundamentally a parasitical relation. If it is now fashionable to talk about “magical realism,” then the magical reality of imperialism conjures a strikingly macabre image of a vampire sucking and taking into its deathly body—quite literally incorporating—the life-blood of the societies which are subject to its history. As Marx put it, “Capital is dead labour which vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.” Such a vampiric relation negates the possibility that these nations might enter onto the stage of history and, with that possibility, autonomy and self-determination. The ghostly, emaciated bodies of Bangladeshi, Ethiopian and Somalian children are, in this sense, the products of imperial incorporation in its purest form. The single starving child with its bloated belly represents synecdochally the impossibility of “modernization,” it is an image of the increasingly apocalyptic future to which the West has consigned its other: “Go straight to Hell, boy.” This image of absolute abjection represents the very impossibility of Western “modernization,” for it is its telos. And one could hardly expect a severely malnourished child to grow into adulthood. But then development in any meaningful sense of that term was never really part of the imperial project, especially its most recent incarnation in the form of the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank.

The pluralism that Western societies supposedly represent does not “fare” well when difference is simply reduced to an event to be experienced, which is to say consumed, gobbled up and washed down. The “multi-cultural politics of recognition,” for which Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has recently called, becomes a politics of misrecognition when the other must continue to play the good servant by holding up the mirror in which the master gazes from time to time to confirm his own identity. Despite the celebration of the “post-colonial condition,” a very real colonialism continues to repeat itself. This colonial unconscious will not simply disappear into thin air however much we would like it to. It is the water we drink, the food we eat.



turmeric



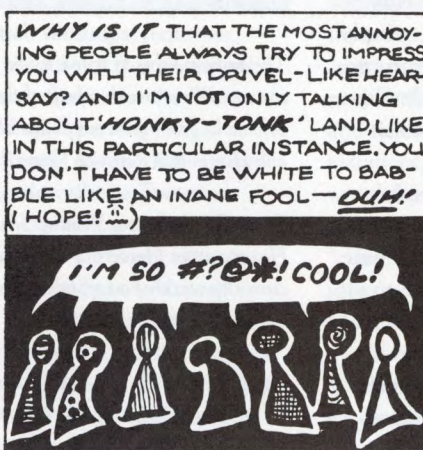
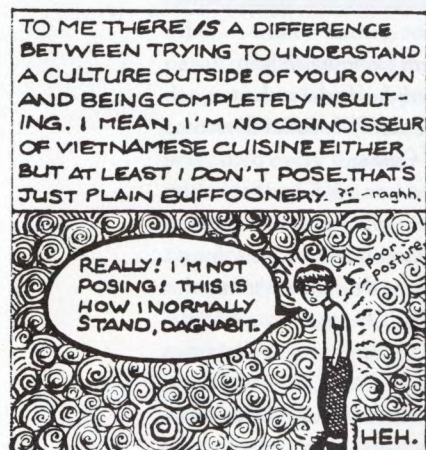
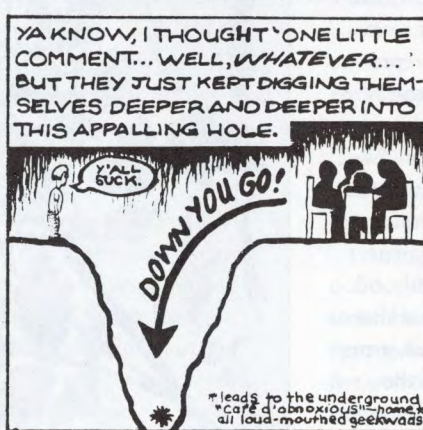
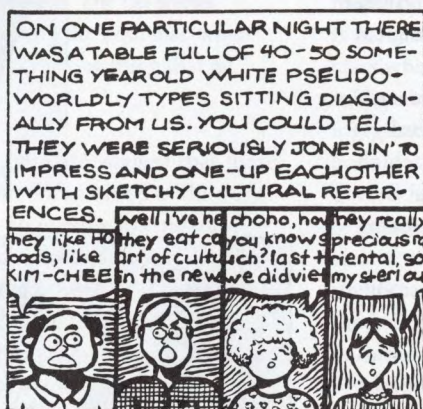
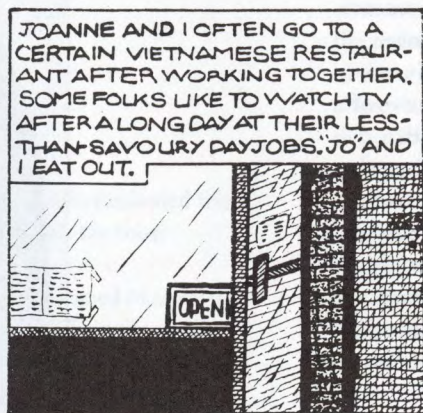
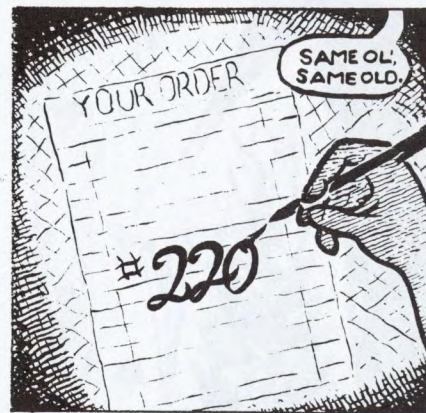
mustard

The author wishes to thank Alicia Peres for her insightful comments on a previous draft of this article. He also wishes to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Samir Gandesha is a Visiting Scholar in the Department of History at the University of California at Berkeley. He is currently working on a project examining the relationship between architecture and politics.

Note

1. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 265.



# Sex Migrants

Paul Wong's Video Geographies of Erotic and Cultural Displacement in Pacific Canada



by Gordon Brent Ingram



Paul Wong's latest video, *Blending Milk & Water: Sex In The New World*<sup>1</sup> is an important and indicative work from today's flux that once was, not so long ago, called the (Canadian) West Coast "scene." This tape works within yet subverts the genre of AIDS educational video, mapping a compelling "new world" of displacement, loss and fractured optimism. Over the last fifteen years, the AIDS educational video has become a crucial means for describing queer culture and for asserting a range of experiences of marginality. The AIDS pandemic and activist responses to it have progressively destabilized the hegemonies, the hierarchies and boundaries of the erotic, love, and death. *Blending Milk & Water: Sex In The New World* is more than a good introduction to the new worlds on the West Coast; one could say that it is the stuff of new Canadian mythology.

### Paul Wong's World

Paul Wong was born in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, and now lives in Vancouver. He has produced videotapes, performances, photography, and installations. Many of Wong's works have been exhibited and televised internationally, notably *Prime Cuts* (1981), *Confused Sexual Views* (1984), *So Are You* (1994), and *Body Fluid* (1996). He participated in the founding of several artist-run centres in Canada, notably Video In Studios and On Edge Productions. In 1992, he received the Bell Canada Award for Video Art for his many contributions to the field. In 1995, The National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa presented a solo exhibition of his work. His current work-in-progress is entitled *Cultural Baggage*.

Wong has thrived through the kind of entrepreneurial smarts and drive that lay to waste any remaining illusions of a "laid back" West Coast lifestyle. His edge comes from growing up in Prince Rupert, on the north coast; a town built on the heady, toxic optimism of easy money and speculation that was the engine of Pacific Canada for over a century. Today, it has some of the highest rates of hard drug use and domestic violence in Canada. Wong got out, and he made a name for himself as the badly needed bad boy in Vancouver during the 1980s, when the art community was, yet again, grappling for an identity. In this current moment of expansion and contraction in West Coast contemporary culture, Wong is a survivor if not one of its most perennial tricksters.

### More than Just an AIDS Educational Video

*Blending Milk & Water* begins as an AIDS education video, but ends as an important new map of the emerging geographies of spatial, cultural and social migration and displacement on the west coast of Canada. Communality is difficult to find, and yet life is almost terminally optimistic

in the land that some Chinese dialects refer to as "Golden Mountain." *Blending Milk & Water* delves into the means by which people survive, travel, attempt to transform their lives, make homes and carry on. This work compiles excerpts from a Pacific Rim future that is increasingly bound to be one part *Blade Runner*, one part "information superhighway" and one part unstable political economy. The much touted affluence of the West Coast is tenuous, especially with the continued destruction of its forests and the decline of its industrial base. These conditions, masked by convenient infusions of foreign investment, provides a testing ground for new forms of



survival, culture and sometimes even community. In this way, *Blending Milk & Water* is a series of episodes from a latter-day Canadian saga in which the ending is far from being settled.

Education, especially that dealing with information on sex, has different functions for different social groups. Knowledge can nurture better environments for safe and consensual sexual practices. But, today the "target groups" are shifting, and in this not-so-very-brave new world nearly everyone experiences some kind of loss and terror around sexually transmitted diseases. As these feelings of displacement are internalized, they force various migrations between physical spaces and social affinities.

A decade and a half into the pandemic, the impacts of AIDS have intersected with other fundamental social and political economic changes, such as demographic migrations and formations of local cultures on the British Columbia coast. This might be generalized as the shift from "colonialism" to what, today, is barely understood in such vague terms as "postcolonial narratives." Wong's montage of interviews<sup>2</sup> focuses on the West Coast and on Chinese communities in North America. But, to slot *Blending Milk & Water: Sex In The New World* into a mostly gay Chinese and/or AIDS category would be to ghettoize it and bypass its broader implications. The underlying narrative of

## Blending Milk and Water Sex In The New World

by Paul Wong

*Blending Milk & Water: Sex in The New World* is a cross-cultural documentary about the diverse views of sex from twenty-two people. The recollections, fears, and opinions of young people, professionals, health workers, educators, artists, community activists and people living with AIDS are mixed.

In January 1994, Henry Koo of ASIA (Asian Society for the Intervention of AIDS) in Vancouver called a meeting to discuss producing new educational materials for the Asian community, particularly in Vancouver. We recognized that sex was not being adequately discussed in Chinese communities in North America. After numerous meetings, we decided to make a videotape. Because these communities are diverse and fragmented by many social, economic and political differences, the tape was designed to include a wide range of experiences. This project was difficult because Chinese Canadians and Americans are often sharply divided historically, geographically and sexually. And communications are often complicated by language differences.

We felt that a video would be the most accessible form to stimulate discussion on sexual health and "education" for the prevention of AIDS. Although the oral languages of Cantonese and Mandarin are very different, they have the same written form. Everything in the video is titled in Chinese and all of the Chinese segments are subtitled in English. Some subtitles are literal translations while others are more playful approximations. There are also key differences in nuances between Taiwan, Hong Kong and Beijing forms. This project has involved an extraordinary community process made possible by the commitment of dozens of volunteers. Each participant was interviewed for thirty minutes, and the shooting was completed in 1995. The following are excerpts from the interviews that touch on origin, identity, sexuality and place.

**Chao Xin:** My name is Lin Chao Xin. I came from Nanjing.

**Cathy:** My name is Cathy Cecilia Maria Gallagher. It is a mixture of Christian Catholic that was infiltrated into Indonesia where I was born.

**Peter:** I'm an investment immigrant from Hong Kong. I came here to open a restaurant.

**Ed:** My name is Ed Lee. I'm a Chinese-born Canadian.

**Bao Ai:** It's hard for traditional Chinese heritage to take root in Japan. The Japanese don't easily accept other cultures, but it's different here.

**Dana:** I think my mother wanted to be White because of the external pressures of living in a White supremacist society. She was ashamed of being Indian. For the longest time, it's so funny, she told people that she was Japanese and French. Because in terms of who was the ugliest on the list of minorities, the Japanese and French weren't as bad as the Chinese and the Indians.

**Lillian:** During the war, the family moved to Chungking, which was the war capital. After the war, we went back to Beijing and left there again just before the Communists took over.

**Jennifer:** I don't want to reveal my real name. I'll use Jennifer. For the first six months when I came here, I cried for many nights because of the unspeakable loneliness.

**Chao Xin:** I taught chemical engineering at University in Nanjing. I'm now working as a handyman.

**Robin:** I work in Chinese broadcasting as a vice-president in marketing.

**Sushi Bar:** I personally define myself as a screaming drag queen.

**Winston:** Heroin takes away your sex drive so when I was using a lot of heroin I really didn't have sex.

**Lin Bo Ai:** He should be heavier than me and not bald. I like him slim but not wimpy. I prefer him slim now because later on he'll get fat anyway.

**Henry:** My current partner is the only relationship that I've ever had. He was the first for me, my first date, my first relationship, my first sexual encounter. I believe, it was after the third date—we became physical.

**Lin Bo Ai:** But Chinese men will do the grocery shopping. They help with housework and they protect their women.

**Dana:** It's not so much why not a Chinese man, it's that I just want to have children with an Indian man.

**Ed:** I remember a line from a movie—"it was like an ice-cream world." I was charmed. Everything came very easily. I was educated. I had a very good job. I had a wife from a very prominent family. We lived very well. We didn't want anything. It was idyllic.

**Robin:** When two people who get together, get to know one another and grow together as a couple, relationships often fall apart when they move to a new place or have new developments in their lives. These are genuine emotional crises.

*Blending Milk & Water* reaches beyond a sort of discrete, queer "Chinatown" where there are now more than a few culturally displaced non-Chinese and heterosexuals.

Most Canadians, whether they have been born in Hong Kong or Halifax, experience the loss of older forms of community and a rootlessness that forces many to move to larger metropolitan areas such as Vancouver and Toronto. And, most of us are leading lives as sexual beings in a context in which AIDS has displaced our erotic and emotional worlds in ways that make us "migrants." The perilousness of sex places many of us in new classes of social migrants, moving within and between communities, in a manner that makes the distances between Vancouver and, for example, Hong Kong not seem so far.

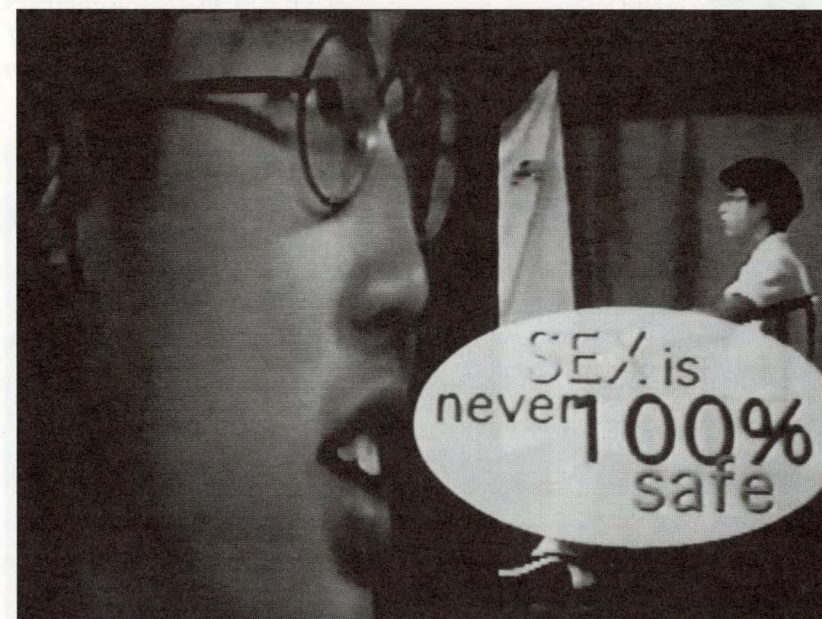
*Blending Milk & Water* is not just about being Chinese or loving someone who is. This video is not just about worrying about HIV and having safer sex, or finding comfort and communality despite ongoing loss. In this period of increasing social instability of migrations and displacements, the very personal terrors and losses of living through an epidemic collide with arid theory that has only begun to tell the "difference," in tangible terms, between "colonialisms," "neo" and "post."

The West Coast is a Canadian region hit especially hard by AIDS, from



gay ghettos to Indian reserves. The transformation, or at least the initial displacements of the roles and experiences of sexuality and erotic relationships, have taken place in a period of major demographic shifts in culture, class, and broader economic conditions. It should be mentioned that only one half of the people who have migrated to Pacific Canada in the last decade are from overseas while the other half come from the rest of Canada. Only a

portion of overseas immigrants are from east and south Asia. Therefore the spectre of the "influx of rich Chinese" as perceived, for example, by the anglophiles of "Little Rhodesia" in the Vancouver suburb of Tsawwassen, is more myth and paranoia than reality.



Race is a code word for loss of security, and cultural security for many is still tied to British Columbia as the lingering vestige of a far-flung colonial outpost. The shift in the cultural location of British Columbia from European imperial margin to picturesque Canadian window on the Pacific Rim has involved many yet-to-be-resolved political questions classified under the heading "greater equality"; persistent inequities in the control of "public" lands must be confronted.

Since entering Canadian Confederation in 1871, British Columbia has barely decolonized with respect to aboriginal land ownership and sovereignty. And it was only in 1949, not so long ago, that Chinese Canadians were finally given the vote. The vision of some sort of "postcolonial" reality is still a long way off. Chinese immigrants, among other immigrants, always made up a significant portion of the non-Native population.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese "settler" was building British Columbia decades before its entry into Confederation. Today, hybrid east Asian and south Chinese communities that were formed in the colonial period, increasingly mediate between the last gasps of anglocentricity and the growing challenges to it. Not coincidentally, strategies for AIDS prevention on the West Coast have been increasingly cross-cultural and often focus on culturally based questions of intimacy, communication and security rather than earlier dichotomies of "gay" and "straight."

**Ed:** At times when the urge came it was difficult to quash. It would reveal itself like an ugly monster. I would do silly things like go have sex in the park.

**Cathy:** I enjoyed being almost like a voyeur and being paid for it. But it cost me my marriage.

**Robin:** God does not intend for homosexuality to happen.

**Ed:** My mother was very Christian. So, I was like their gift from God. I got married for them. I was living their lives. I did what they wanted.

**Jennifer:** They didn't know I was a lesbian. I did want to tell them. I'm not a coward, I just couldn't because of the social pressures.

**Winston:** It was a rebellion because if society didn't accept me as a gay man, well, I would just live in the fringes of society with all the other assortment of outcasts.

**Cathy:** I have a son who is fifteen and I remember living on Sunset Beach. He would walk out to see the beautiful sunsets. One night he said, "there's a man, he asked me to go to his house" ... I realized that it was a pick-up place for gay people, which I'm totally open about except my son was so young. You know, I didn't know what to do.

**Peter:** If I noticed gay tendencies at the childhood stage, I'd try to reform them.

**Ed:** I finally told my wife after five years of marriage that I was gay. And the marriage continued on for another eight years. We were married for thirteen years.

**Arika:** I'm very close to my aunt. The funny thing is that I haven't come out to her yet. I plan on doing that soon cuz she's taking me to San Francisco.

**Jennifer:** I left the country that I was in. I left a very well-paying \$100,000 a year job. I left all that because I was dying spiritually as a lesbian and physically as a human being.

**Gilbert:** Homosexuality exists. There's nothing bad about it. It's not like they rob or commit crimes.

**Robin:** If my son tells me he's gay, I would assess the situation to see if it's a delusion.

**Jennifer:** My sister wrote, "I cried when I found out, not because you are a lesbian but because I couldn't support you not knowing all these years. I cannot imagine all your pain and your sorrow. I love you and am happy that you have told me."

**Arika:** Just being proud of who I am and being myself. I have friends and family who support me.

## Video as Geography:

### Mapping West Coast Queerscapes

In AIDS videos, two very different sets of educational goals and pedagogies are increasingly blurred. The first agenda is to distribute basic information on the mechanics of safe sex as clearly as possible, and the second is the longer-term and still vague project of creating "space" for effectively asserting erotic desire, and supporting more careful and consensual decision-making around sexual acts. As more and more people are gaining access to the basic information, this latter goal becomes increasingly important for "the long haul," and for the development of eroticized culture, as the ravages of AIDS continue to shock and force us, no matter how numbly, to react. Confronting AIDS, whether for educational purposes or for the making of art, requires a fuller exploration of specific locations, both cultural and geographic. New examinations of race and gender must be precisely situated in contexts of political and cultural economy for there to be any relevance and credibility.

Today, many AIDS videos are as much about determining the nature of "context" with respect to the places in which particular people are, and how they choose where to go, as they are about the epidemiology of the virus itself. In this sense, a video such as *Blending Milk & Water* looks at the paths of place and placelessness as much as the disease itself. The tension emerges from the often contradictory and obfuscated relationships between various groups of Chinese Canadians and the not-so-cohesive society called British Columbia, as much as from the general history and trajectories of HIV. But what kinds of maps can a video compiled from interviews create and where can they take us? Here, it is worth looking more closely at the history of marginalized sex and sexualities on the Pacific Coast.

Vancouver, Victoria and Prince Rupert are relatively new colonial towns built on Native cultural centres, some of which may have existed for at least 5,000 years. Vancouver was established as a city in 1886 with the completion of the Trans-Canada Railway. Two decades before this, Victoria became a Hudson's Bay Company town, and two decades later Prince Rupert was established as the Pacific terminus to the northern rail line. Soon after its founding, Vancouver also became the northern terminus of the Great Northern Railway. These towns existed, for most of the first part of the century as way stations in a colonial landscape between Europe, Asia and later the United States. Like nineteenth century San Francisco, with its similar patterns of labour and immigration, Pacific Canadian towns became major sites for both "sexual, racial and gender

crossings"<sup>4</sup> and the institutionalization of racist policies. This contradiction remains central, even today, in any exploration of Chinese Canadian culture, sexuality and risk. For example, as the Trans-Canada Railway was being completed by Chinese workers, in 1885, an anti-Chinese head tax was enacted and maintained for thirty-eight years, followed by policies of active exclusion until 1949. In the months following the incorporation of Vancouver, sodomy was criminalized in Britain, largely in response to the expansion of spaces of relative sexual "anarchy" that extended from central



London<sup>5</sup> to the saloons on the frontiers of British Columbia. The chill of this new repression was soon felt in the margins of the Empire, particularly in emergent centres of Sodom(y) such as Vancouver, and it came to be embodied in its landscapes and architectures. In the first half of the twentieth century, these West Coast towns were hard port and railway terminals where prostitution and other "vice," including male and female homosexuality, was partially tolerated when it was not outright flourishing.

Similar to more segregated cities in the British Empire, Vancouver, in the brief period since its inception, has supported at least four very different homosexual or arguably queer subcultures: white male, primarily white lesbian, Chinese, and aboriginal—the latter two less publicly evident. Other marginalized social groups were situated around these divisions. In the frontier towns, there was remarkable spatial segregation especially between sexual minorities. Within every homosexual underground there were discordant and invisible networks that threatened to explode and become visible if broader political and economic factors permitted. In contrast to the formation of primarily white gay enclaves, the nineteenth-century homosexual Chinese

**Winston:** Society is very intolerant about differences. And as a kid you don't want to be different. You just want to be like everybody else and be accepted.

**Crawfords:** I have spoken to my three-year-old daughter—that a potential partner for her could be a male or female. She seems to think that she'd like a male for the most part because she wants to wear the dress and he's suppose to wear the suit at the ceremony. But now, she's entertaining ideas that they can both wear fancy dresses at the ceremony.

**Sushi Bar:** I went straight from a straight life. One week I was at a gay bar, the week after that I was in a dress.

**Wayne:** I know that my parents are very unusual for Chinese. First of all, they've been accepting of me being gay, and secondly, they've been accepting of all my boyfriends.

**Peter:** It was a little uneasy for me meeting Wayne's dad and finding him five years older than me and his stepmother eight years younger than me.

**Cathy:** That's the most practical thing, masturbate, learn to masturbate.

**Dana:** I prefer to be on top with big muscular men.

**Winston:** I like it fast, easy and anonymous. That's how I like to do my drugs, too.

**Sushi Bar:** This person wanted to take me home and I said, "Yes." But, the minute we got there, all he wanted was to go into my closet and try on dresses.

**Dana:** In terms of wanting to physically and sexually dominate, it has been with White men. It has something to do with taking my aggression out on White men and I have done this through sexual ways.

**Ming:** I met my partner through a personal ad. It said, "Sleek, 1948 Import, no liens, low-maintenance seeks single male for mutual TLC."

**Arika:** What does a lesbian do after her first date? She packs the U-haul and moves in with her partner.

**Sushi Bar:** The best part of relationships for me is having the security of knowing that when I go home, the make-up and dress comes off and the show personality goes back into the closet, that there's somebody there who will accept me for what I am and listen to what I have to say.

**Crawfords:** She refers to them as "one of those little bags that you put your penis into." And that if we find one on the sidewalk, do not pick it up.

subculture was established when 10,000 to 15,000 male workers were crowded into Vancouver after the Trans-Canada railroad was completed. The queer margins of this Chinatown undoubtedly had cultural links to the large homosexual enclaves in cities of China.

Vancouver has a less overt history of state-sanctioned segregation than many other cities in North America, but the fractured invisibility of large networks of racial and sexual minorities, indeed of much of the "queerscape" is remarkable. It is probably no coincidence that as the divisions described above began to break down over the last decade, a somewhat less Eurocentric, more sex-positive queer politics has emerged. But integration of these queer networks has only just begun, and will remain appropriate only for particular forms of communality, exchange, and erotic contact where modicums of equal power relationships, along lines of gender, race, language and ethnicity can be safeguarded.

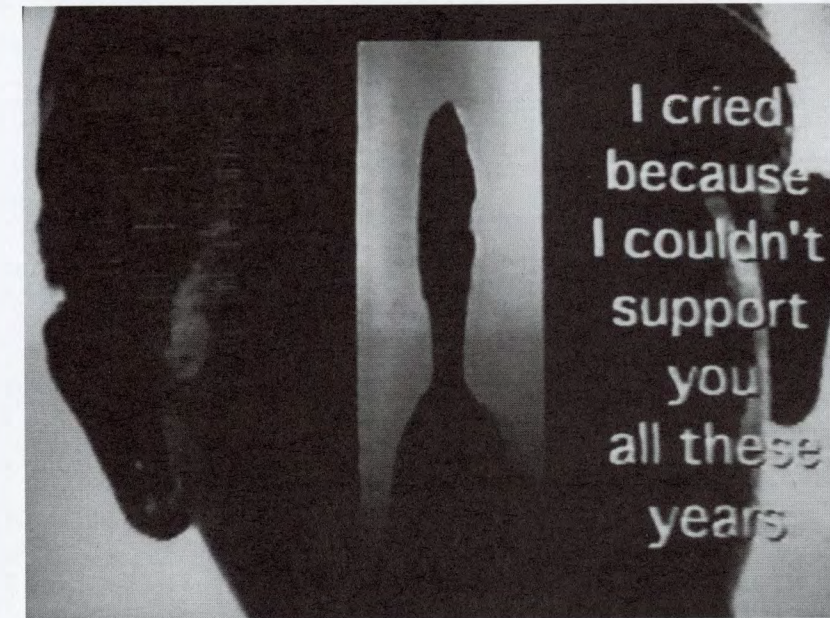
In the same period as the queering and partial decolonization of West Coast sexual minorities, Vancouver has emerged as a centre for film and television production, exporting queasy and often pretentiously postmodern mythologies. The city is a major world centre for the production of the para-normal and fetishized paranoia, with Fox's productions of *X-Files*, *The Outer Limits*, and *Poltergeist* as some of the more celebrated corporate examples. This growing un-Britishness of British Columbia is increasingly at odds with the construction of sexual identities, including lesbian and gay, that remain rooted in anglophile world views.

The colonial landscape was built with systematic homophobic repression through the isolation of sexual minorities while, at the same time, open spaces provided places to hide and tolerate minority sexualities. In other words, West Coast towns had the crucial combination of ingredients for making queer public space: lots of forest and outdoor space in which to hide, and crammed towns, saloons, pubs, balls and raves in which to make contact. And, perhaps more than most large North American cities, rampant prostitution, and reactions to it, were major factors in the formation of Vancouver's neighbourhoods. Even today in port towns, beaches are surrogates for more politicized formations of "public space."<sup>6</sup> They have become the fulcra for social discourses and contesting boundaries, from cruising to political demonstrations that typically go on in the centres of urban fabrics.

Also, the city police of these Pacific towns have been relatively tolerant of the public presence of sexual minorities, especially of the white gay community, than other forces in major Canadian cities. Vancouver has, historically, had less incidences of violent and organized harassment by police than Toronto and Montreal.

In recent years, the West Coast has been a destination for international

capital, in large part, because of the unsustainability of the forestry, mining and fishing sectors.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese "influx" is less about a fundamental change in the percentage of east Asians in the overall population as it is about the shift in economy to more expansive sectors of services<sup>8</sup>—communications and culture. This flow contributes to the transformation of Vancouver into what some, including Paul Delany, have argued is a quintessentially postmodern city.<sup>9</sup> Delany's argument is that cities such as Vancouver, which have been peripheral to the colonial and modernist centres of power, can better nurture hybridity and diversity. Less optimistic Vancouverites are convinced that



power brokers are hell-bent on concocting "fictional histories" of the city, re-iterating colonial fantasies as part of new marketing ploys.<sup>10</sup>

Despite continued attempts to elude the colonial past and (neo)colonial present, public space on the West Coast remains cramped and uncomfortable for "minorities" such as Chinese Canadians. There are many different ways of mapping these disparities, and *Blending Milk & Water* looks at how the culture of displacement and the establishment of first, second, and third (and more) generation Chinese Canadian experience intersects with the impacts of AIDS. Video provides a particularly strategic, alternative space to discuss these issues. The interwoven interviews in *Blending Milk & Water* locate only a few points, but the lines connect and begin to point to some trends and possibilities—not just for the "minority" but for the region as a whole.

### The Uses of Video Maps (and AIDS Videos)

*Blending Milk & Water* represents a range of under-discussed experiences and information, in three languages—effectively challenging the supremacy of

Amber has suggested that we carry a pair of chopsticks to pick them up and put them into the garbage.

**Dr. Simon Ko:** Mistresses worry that their men will sleep around.

**Ming:** I know that how you practise safer-sex is important, wearing condoms and things like that. However, one of the main things is to reduce the number of partners.

**Dr. Simon Ko:** Wives worry about their husbands sleeping around when they go abroad, especially the "astronauts." They ask me to check for sexually transmitted diseases. Usually they are just paranoid.

**Chao Xin:** AIDS is already a problem in Hong Kong, China and Canada, but I don't personally know much about it.

**Dana:** I remember the first time that I heard about AIDS. I think it was 1983, twelve years ago. It was somebody who I have known for twenty odd years. He told me, he didn't tell me, he was crying and I knew.

**Ed:** I found out I was HIV-positive in 1992.

**Dana:** I use to babysit him when he was a little boy. About a year ago, he was getting very sick, and asked if he could come and live with me. He thought he was going to die, and he didn't want to die in a hospital. I said that would be fine for him to move in and die in my home.

**Ed:** I was on my own during that Christmas and it was really a trying time. Here I was just walking around with having just learnt that I was HIV-positive. It was Christmas and being away from family and having no one here. It just mounts and mounts.

**Winston:** I was in a double bind being an IV drug user and a gay man, where the chances of me possibly getting AIDS was a lot higher.

**Cathy:** I can remember the time it came off, the Berlin Wall came down so I said the rubber wall will also come down.

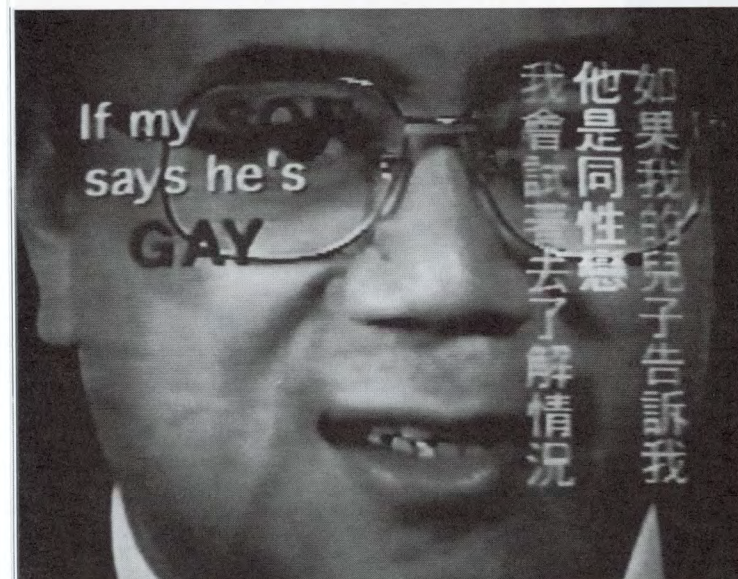
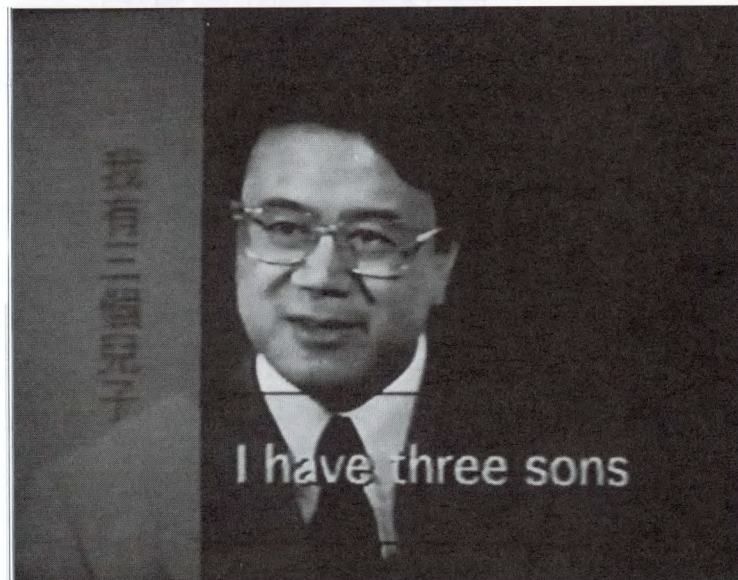
**Dana:** You never know if somebody is telling you the truth about their sexual history. You can only hope that they are.

**Winston:** I've slept with men who were really drunk or high and they've wanted me to fuck them without a condom.

**Dana:** There's no safe zone any more, it's like everybody's at risk, everybody's at danger.

**Arika:** I don't think there'll ever be a time, unfortunately, that you can stop protecting yourself.

**Ed:** Our sexual activity is very safe because I would feel terrible if he were infected. He's tested negative throughout our three-year relationship.



## Notes

1. *Blending Milk & Water: Sex in The New World* (28 minutes, stereo), 1996; Languages: Cantonese, English and Mandarin; Executive producer and director: Paul Wong; Original soundtrack by Frederick and Jeet; Producers: Ming Chaing, Davina Chan, Nancy Li, Henry Koo, A Project of ASIA, Vancouver. Distribution: Video Out International Distribution, Vancouver; fax: (604) 876-1185; email: video@portal.bc.ca.

2. This article is based on the first screening of *Blending Milk & Water: Sex In The New World* at the XI World AIDS Conference in July 1996 in Vancouver. Wong has also expressed plans to present the work as a site-based installation with numerous monitors presenting longer versions of the interviews of various individuals.

3. See the 1891 and 1901 Canadian census for the Burrard Inlet, New Westminster and Vancouver (Island) divisions (National Archives of Canada, Ottawa), and Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status and Social Boundaries 1863-1913* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), pp. 19-21.

4. Richard Fung, *Dirty Laundry*, video, Toronto: Fungus Productions/Banff, Alberta: Banff Centre for the Arts, 1995.

5. Paul Hallam, *The Book of Sodom* (New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 15-96.

6. Lance Berelowitz, *From Factor 15 to feu d'artifice: The Nature of Public Space in Vancouver* (Toronto, alric, 1994-95), pp. 32-37.

7. Gordon Brent Ingram, "Landscapes of (un)lawful Chaos: Conflicts Around Temperate Rainforest and Biological Diversity in Pacific Canada," *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law*, 4(3), 1995, pp. 242-249.

8. Based on the 1891 census, the total population of Chinese/Chinese Canadians in the city of Vancouver has probably declined while the total percentage of non-European backgrounds has increased.

9. Paul Delany, "Vancouver as Postmodern City," *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City*, Paul Delany (Ed.), (Vancouver: Pulp Arsenal Press, 1994), pp. 1-24. See his discussion of "peripheral cities" on p. 4.

10. Trevor Boddy, "Plastic Lion's Gate: A Short History of the Post Modern in Vancouver Architecture," *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City*, 1994, pp. 25-49 especially pp. 38-49.

English. An emphasis on Cantonese acknowledges the culture that historically provided the primary source of cheap labour in the West. Mappable cultural space is created through the texture of fragments of experience; in this new cohesion, the video employs optimism, humour, and sly camp that extends the discourse into real time and useful discussions of political econ-



omy. As a West Coast AIDS video, *Blending Milk & Water*, even with its emphasis on Chinese Canadians and mixed couples, is far more inclusive and inspiring than many AIDS videos that speak more about the past than the future.

*Blending Milk & Water* does not equate the compounding of marginalizations with the advent of AIDS as experienced by Chinese Canadians, but Wong does not try to separate or negate their synergies and overlapping locations. People on the West Coast who feel acute displacements in the Age of AIDS, like loss of health and networks of friends, cannot necessarily "share" or equate their "pain" with the displacement of Chinese Canadians. But, the video is not specifically about Chinese Canadians, rather it is about sex in the New World. We all may be a bit displaced as sex migrants—but in different places, on different blocks in those crude frontier towns. The gaps in the maps of various experiences can tell us more about where we really are and the cultures and geographies of the West Coast than the increasingly re-marketed colonial mythologies of a past that never was.

**Brent Ingram is from a West Coast family of diverse backgrounds involved in the modern founding of Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince Rupert. He has worked extensively on Canadian government projects in China and Indonesia. This article was supported by Canada Council Explorations grant, Queersville.**

# CAN I HAVE MSG, AN EGG ROLL TO SUCK ON AND ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA ON THE SIDE?

by Yau Ching



Still from *The Trained Chinese Tongue*, by Laurie Wen, 1994, 16mm, 20 min.  
Distributor: Women Make Movies, New York.



Is the excess of cooking and eating a stereotype of Asian North Americans, or is it an "essential" part of our identity? How has the experience of preparing and consuming food informed and constructed our sense of being? How is our relationship to our food culture affected by diaspora and how are those shifting relationships articulated in media representations? The following essay is an attempt to interrogate some of these questions through a study of several independent films and videos recently made by Asian North Americans.

Every time I watch *The Trained Chinese Tongue* (Laurie Wen, U.S., 1994, 20 min.), I feel an intense hunger rising within me, even if I've eaten right before. Whatever I've had, Chinese or not, suddenly falls short compared to the close-ups of food that streamline the optical experience, and the sensual, communal atmosphere this visual pleasure gives rise to. My responses have something to do with the surreality of the film's premise: the filmmaker asks female strangers in Chinatown grocery stores if she can follow them home. As a young Chinese woman speaking a displaced language, her appearance of authenticity evokes sympathy and empathy from the strangers she approaches. They bond with the filmmaker by inviting her to dinner. It is as if making friends with those who come from where one came from somehow satisfies the yearning for the "lost home."

The film is constructed not so much on the imagined solidarity of the disenfranchised, however, as on exposing its fragility. In fact, *The Trained Chinese Tongue* opens with a potential subject refusing to collaborate; a woman hurrying away, staring back at the pursuing camera as if it were a huge rat in the grocery store. Wen's strategy then shifts: "I am a film student from Harvard. Can I film you?" This untranslated line reveals the

**Diasporic Chinese, including the relatively recent immigrant wannabes like myself, have gradually come to a sad realization that whatever "authentic" dishes we try to order, they still have a "chop suey" quality to them.**

power relations between the woman in front of the camera and the one behind it. It sets up a paradigm in which this student from an Ivy League school becomes a symbol of the American Dream that the potential subject may want to access. The student also happens to be an apparently harmless Chinese girl whose needs at this particular moment can only be fulfilled by the woman on camera.

In this sequence with Jenny and her eleven-year-old daughter Tina, Wen's voice-over narration compares her own immigrant experience with theirs. A mutual dependency soon develops between Wen the filmmaker and Jenny the subject. But the filmmaker's own subject position is one of both insider and outsider. Jenny doesn't speak English. Jenny

assumes Wen's mother doesn't speak English. Wen, however, clarifies in voice-over that her mother was an English teacher. Jenny tells Wen that she wants Tina, like Wen, to go to an Ivy League school. The women's desire to (over)identify with each other in spite of class differences, access to representation and whatnot, speaks the emotional connections arising from the diasporic experience. This scene, however, ends not with the imaginary bonding but with a performance of will: Tina singing "A Brave New World" for Wen. While this reminds us again of the unequal power relations between the filmmaker and her subject, it also carves out a space within the film in which the subjects enjoy a greater degree of self-representation. Although the film privileges the filmmaker's English narration over the Cantonese and Mandarin spoken by its subjects,<sup>1</sup> Tina's song of courage and determination wins her an unforgettable presence.

What is the filmmaker's need? The filmmaker needs to film. But in order to film, this need is intentionally confused with the need to eat. Auntie Lai, another woman Wen meets in the grocery store, brings Wen home like "a stray cat that needs to be fed." This analogy is deepened when we notice that most of the food in the film is seafood, heavy on fish and prawns. What does the audience want? We want to watch. But in the process of watching, we are confused by our desire to eat. We devour with our gaze as if that somehow kills the hunger. This slippery confusion of desires characterizes, in my experience, the process of any identification.

We might expect that Wen the filmmaker would identify with Lei Shing, the young woman artist. But owing to a language barrier—Cantonese vs. Mandarin—the camera is more intrigued by Lei Shing's boyfriend Ocean, the "emergency translator" between the two women. The filmmaker is of course playing the role of the translator too, constantly paraphrasing the Chinese dialogue and its cultural meanings for the American English audience. Wen's

gender-bending comparison of Ocean's use of language with that of Daisy from *The Great Gatsby* establishes both a difference and an identification that fringes on an almost homoerotic desire from a subject position whose sense of self is always already othered, colonized, assimilated. This way, she maps both herself and her object of desire onto the master's image, turns it around, claims it as an essential part of her subjectivity, and—oops!—she also reminds us of the "blasphemy" of the act.

*The Trained Chinese Tongue* reflects on this perhaps never-ending quest of desire: the yearning of the self to merge fully with the other, but in its failure to do so, confronting the other within the self. Since Wen did not come to the United States until she was twelve, the Chinese American Mr. Bau assumes she possesses a special eating technique called "The Trained Chinese Tongue," while lacking the language skills to pronounce "Fort

Lauderdale" correctly. Mr. Bau's prejudices based on class, language and eating habits ("We Americans vs. You Chinese") remind the filmmaker and the audience once again of the shaky and potentially dangerous imaginary bond among immigrants. It also highlights how assimilation and identification actively construct power relations by which a whole spectrum of Asians in America, including Jenny, Wen or Mr. Bau, find themselves inevitably bounded and defined. "Whereas racism privileges whiteness and targets a somewhat shifting body of 'others,' anyone, no matter their status or color, can engage its discourses. There is a way that power is fluid and shifting at the same time that it is concentrated at the top."<sup>2</sup>

In Hong Kong I remember there being good food and bad food. Good Cantonese food or bad Cantonese food. Good Szechuanese or bad Szechuanese. Coming to the States, however, I gradually learned that Chinese food is Asian food and Asian food is ethnic food, spicy food, fast food, cheap food. Suddenly, all Chinese cuisines become one and "Asianized." So rather than losing "home," I lost my ability to compare different kinds of Chinese food, different restaurants, different menus, as they've all become "unified,"

through diaspora.<sup>3</sup> However much we fantasize the constant, the diasporic experience has affected the process of preparing, perceiving and consuming food in a way that no food can stay the same once it moves



Still from *The Trained Chinese Tongue*, by Laurie Wen, 1994, 16mm, 20 min. Distributor: Women Make Movies, New York.

across cultures. So diasporic Chinese, including the relatively recent immigrant wannabes like myself, have gradually come to a sad realization that whatever "authentic" dishes we try to order, they still have a "chop suey" quality to them.

By desiring and eating cheap Chinese takeout in America, I am constantly reminded of my diaspora status. I too become always othered, always the same. I become what I eat. I once resented American Chinese food. But the irony is that even if I didn't eat Chinese food, I would still be perceived as having qualities that resemble it—my skin the same color as a fortune cookie's.<sup>4</sup> I don't have Chinese food; I become Chinese food. And I lost access to Chinese food when I became it.

*Fast Life on a Lazy Susan* (Tien, Canada, 1993, 15 min.) explores how Chinese American food as a discursive formation is also full of contradictions and instabilities. In this short experimental video, a group of young Canadian women of Asian descent discusses how "white people's perception of Chinese food" is different from the "genuine" Chinese food their own mothers cook. But they also jest that they actually love these "fake" inventions—Chop Suey, Egg Roll, et al.—because, although these takeout foods were developed by the Chinese in North America to cater to "what they thought white people wanted to eat," it's become the only Chinese food widely available:

"I know that on the one hand it's white people's representation of us in a kind of food form, but on the other hand it's been made by Chinese people. We get the last laughs. When we take it into our own hands, it means something different."

It is in such a context that the women sharing a durian, a woman gutting a fish, washing a squid and, last but not least, consuming a bowl of fortune cookies, become political acts. Tien confronts the reality of Chinese food as a lost territory, daring to reclaim it through contradictions and ironies. The low-tech, shakycam aesthetic gives this tape a home video look which, among other things, frustrates the exoticization of these otherwise easily exoticized acts of preparing and consuming food.

The piece cuts between a utopian vision of a community of Asian American/Canadian women from different language backgrounds sharing food, jokes and

thoughts, and the image of a lone, young, Chinese woman pushing a cart of steamed buns down cold Vancouver streets. There are no people, only cars, and she appears lost, not quite knowing where, why or for whom she's going. Finally, she offers the buns to the camera and the audience. In the former, the



Stills from *Eat Drink Man Woman*, Ang Lee, 1994, 35mm, 130 min. Courtesy the Film Reference Library, Toronto.

women's legs erotically caress each other. They consume Chinese foods in a typically unfeminine, and therefore unoriental, manner: six pairs of chopsticks tear a bun apart, a woman devours a bowl of noodles, spilling them occasionally and wiping her mouth with her hand, looking straight at the camera as it closes in on her. The fact that Tien chooses a community of young women but represents them in codes that defy traditional Chinese gendering is significant. While

the domestic kitchen is historically a space to confine and contain women, and cooking (for her husband and children) is defined as a woman's "natural

**Food thus serves as an index of the imaginary "heritage" passed on, the racial symbolism, the alimentary sign of Chineseness.**

responsibility," the kitchen is usually a freer space where women and girls can hang out and share secrets beyond men's control. Traditionally, a good Chinese wife is marked by how well she cooks within the kitchen, and how decently she behaves outside it. The relative freedom of the kitchen is dependent upon the meticulous gendering outside. Whereas *The Trained Chinese Tongue* expresses empathy toward the intimate ways

women bond through the food ritual and gives the women's laughter and silences outside the kitchen an unusual amount of space, *Fast Life on a Lazy Susan* shows women's bonding and self-representation as a given in any space. In Tien's video, the women's refusal to observe "table manners" powerfully extends women's freedom way beyond the kitchen, and, in fact, beyond the "home." It is through re-defining women's freedom that the video seeks to re-define home.

The woman who wipes the grease off her face, mouth stuffed with noodles, is the same woman pushing the cart. With this juxtaposition, Tien interrogates the North American stereotype of cheap Chinese food, which perpetuates the subjugation of many Chinese in America as a class systematically alienated from their labor of producing food. By differentiating the foods that Chinese people eat and the ones they sell to survive, this video also points to the Chinese laborer's alienation from her product. As a producer of cheap food, she does not exist as a subject since she owes her existence to the customer's appropriation. By directly addressing the audience, offering us—not selling—the same kinds of steamed buns that the subjects themselves eat, the video builds up an understated tension by contrasting the intention of hospitality and possibility of community with the harshness of North American realities.

What Barthes said about wine vis à vis the French people can very well be used to speak about food vis à vis the Chinese: food "is a part of society because it provides a basis not only for a morality but also for an environment; it is an ornament in the slightest ceremonials"<sup>5</sup> of Chinese daily life. "It exalts all climates, of whatever kind: in cold weather, it is associated with all the myths of becoming warm, and at the height of summer, with all the images of shade, with all things cool and sparkling. There is no situation involving some physical constraint (temperature, hunger, boredom, compulsion, disorientation) which does not give rise to dreams of" food. If Fanon is right that to be exiled from language is to be dispossessed of one's subjectivity, then what we witness in both Wen's and Tien's works is how exiles repossess their (displaced) subjectivity through food; how they build their sense of self through food amidst, despite and because of the physical, emotional and intellectual constraints they have experienced in a hostile environment. But just as Mr. Bau manages to use the discourse of food to flaunt his "Americanness," the repetitively and obsessively performed rites of preparing, cooking and consuming food plays an essential part in upholding Chinese identity as a "race." Food thus serves as an index of the imaginary "heritage" passed on, the racial symbolism, the alimentary sign of Chineseness.

I was both seduced and offended when I first looked at the long (perhaps a full five minutes?), fast-paced sequence of chopping, steaming and stuffing that opens *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Ang Lee, Taiwan/U.S., 1994, 130 min.). It



sure felt good. It was stunning to look at. Deep down I knew that neither my mom nor my friends' moms nor my friends' friends' moms cook that way. But at that moment I felt very Chinese. So I began to think maybe somewhere, sometime my grandmother's

grandmother, if she happened to be the Emperor's mistress, maybe she cooked like that. Of course, Emperors' mistresses never cooked. At the same time, watching the film in a theater in New York's SoHo, to feel quintessentially Chinese is also to feel essentially othered, superior but castrated, especially since this identity is, again, based on these very strange ways of

cooking and eating. I could smell the wide eyes, the falling jaws around me. The film is so mapped out, wonderfully calculated—the protagonist is a famous chef—that this fetishistic representation of food is justified within its characterization. Those close-ups of the kungfu of chopping and stir-frying constitute a postmodern version of the West's Chinoiserie. I felt like I was stripteasing, selling something that I didn't have. I felt incredibly fixed. Because I felt fixed, I felt false. I felt as if I were an imitation, pretending that I too could live up to the glamorized image of these foods. Then I realized the only way I could feel more comfortable looking at these images was to imagine I wasn't Chinese. That way, I could take full pleasure in enjoying the intricacies of the acts, those strange, very very strange ways of cooking and eating. As if this was completely foreign, and I was not.

The title says it all: the film is about how "Eat Drink" and "Man Woman" are interrelated. The central pathos lies in the resistance/impossibility of the daughters to take care of their father, while continuing to

uphold the image of the traditional Chinese family—i.e. living, sitting, eating together.

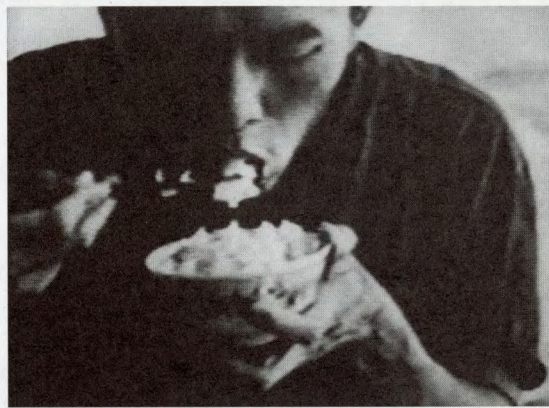
As a major chef, the father's character serves as a spectacular epitome of that tradition ("There's no one in the whole of Taiwan that cooks like you any more"), versus the rapid

modernization of the metropolitan Taipei embodied in the daughters' drifting away.

The film is punctuated by wide shots of the busy thoroughfares of Taipei. It keeps reminding us that this is not a film about one family, but about a society. The three sisters are all marked by distinctly "Western" influences—Christianity, international business, Kentucky Fried Chicken—that reinforce the "authenticity" of the father. That he cooks better than any Chinese on earth, makes him in fact more Chinese than anybody else. Thus the only option left open to the daughters is not authenticity but submission to it. Their goodness is not measured by their ability to cook, but rather to stay home, sit around the dinner table and eat. Actually, the more a daughter is like the father, the more she is considered a problem. For example, the second daughter cooks best; she even

enjoys doing elaborate dishes like her father. But the fact that she criticizes her father's cooking—oh yes, she also talks back—makes her a nuisance. In other words, she competes.

The Father is the sole upholder of the family—the breadwinner, and also the commander-in-chief in the household. He keeps the family together by performing the duty of cooking both outside and within the home. The absence of the mother facilitates a gendered dichotomy with, on the one hand, the father-cum-giver-cum-timekeeper-cum-custodian of (Chinese) tradition and,



on the other, the daughters-cum-takers-cum-sleepers-cum-ungrateful asserters of (modernized) individuality.

The character of the Father is marked by mobility. He is constantly on the run, cabbing, jogging, speeding from room to room, from house to house, from his kitchen to the restaurant, to the sauna, to the hospital, to the park, and even to deliver lunch to little Shan Shan's school every day. The film begins at a point, however, when this power of mobility seems to be in question: he has more or less retired, has lost his taste buds and his health is in question. Who is going to take care of him? He now has to meet the challenges posed by his daughters' increasing mobility. But while moving out of the home suggests the possibility of a more independent space for the women, both the eldest and the youngest daughters' flights are into other men's arms. They move from the gender-defined space of their father's household into the equally gender-defined space of their husbands'.

The women in the film are all marked by the signifiers of conventional Chinese femininity: crying, singing (even hymns), hysteria, admiration of a husband's strength and, of course, pregnancy. The film's potential moment of transgression comes when the second daughter attempts to trespass the boundaries of the kitchen by proving to her lover (with whom she has no plans to marry) that

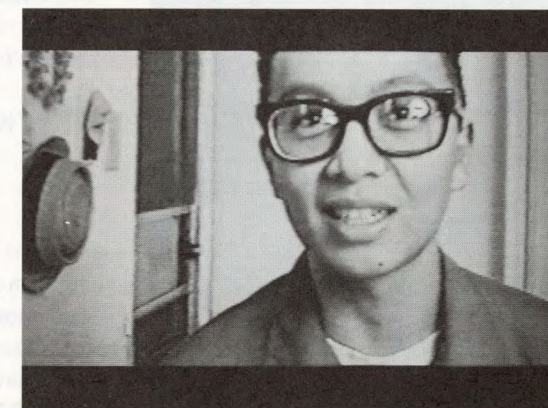
she can also cook—almost as well as her father. However, the potential of subversion is never fully realized, not so much because of the "almost," but more for the fact that no matter how well she cooks, she will never have the option of moving into the restaurant as a chef. Further, her ability to cook only serves as a cure for the Father's taste buds. Uncle Wen on his hospital bed defends the Father by saying that he kicked second daughter out of the kitchen so that she could move on to "bigger things." What the film refuses to deal with, though, is the fact that Chinese professional chefs (as opposed to domestic cooks) are seldom female. Inserting a woman into that role would upset the patriarchal system defended, and ultimately embraced, by the film.

If there is anybody in *Eat Drink Man Woman* who manages to transgress real boundaries, it is, again, the father. He is given the most melodramatic

moment of the film when he proposes marriage to Jin Rong, instead of the expected Mrs. Liang. It is perhaps not surprising that Jin Rong has little voice in the film; most of the time she lowers her head, as if her divorce has completely traumatized her sense of self. Ironically, the part is played by Sylvia Chang, one of the smartest and strongest Taiwanese actresses and the director of numerous films, including the recent *Xiao Yu*, co-produced by Ang Lee. Her impregnation at the end of the film signifies the father's regained youth from marrying a young woman. The nuclear family is restored, the weaker gender conquered and retained in the house, happily.

The final scene says it all: the father asks for more of the daughter's soup, (while criticizing it, of course) and the daughter stands up to get it for him. The two reunite by calling each other "Daughter" and "Father." Freeze. This frame has stayed with me for a long time. The daughter standing, passing the soup to the father in both hands, showing the utmost respect. They re-identify with each other's familial roles. The return of the prodigal daughter. She performs the ultimate traditional Chinese feminine vocation: stay unmarried, take care of your father.

*Seven Steps to Sticky Heaven* (Nguyen Tan Hoang, U.S., 1995, 24 min.) is an imaginative attempt to signify eating as a practice of both oppression and liberation, of self-violation and self-fulfillment. It also encapsulates the desire of young Asians to queer up the hetero-patriarchal ideologies embedded in their food culture. The videotape examines the term sticky rice, which refers



Opposite and above: stills from *Seven Steps to Sticky Heaven*, Nguyen Tan Hoang, 1995, video, colour, 24 min.

to Asian gay boys who desire Asian gay boys. By performing himself on the tape, devouring sticky rice and rubbing it on his own body, Nguyen parodies a world in which we Asians become the food we (are expected to) eat; the image of a racialized food reinforces the stereotypes of the Asian body, smooth and soothing. On the other hand, to sexualize the Asian male body is also to defy the Eurocentricism of the dominant sexual paradigms, to reclaim the (lost) penis as a presence, to counter the myth of the undersexed Oriental male, the Chan who is always missing, lost in the gaps between the racial dichotomy of black and white. If the video sexualizes the maker's own body, it also seduces the viewer to identify with the maker's desire for undesirable bodies, to identify with and desire an Asian male body which doesn't desire white men.

Ironically, in the video's interviews the terms used to describe the desirable Asian male body are also those of the dominant stereotypes: the smoothness of the skin, the hairlessness, tight little ass, little brown nipples, and of course, "the dick is kind of cute." This is how the tongue-in-cheek structural motif of the sticky rice backfires on itself; how we all suddenly become and remain sticky rice; how we all eat it, hate it, love it and... eat it—so historically fixed in a position that we actually proclaim it as desire, as home. While it is easy to see this as "internalized oppression," its foregrounding strategically provokes a re-examination of available space to Asian American gay subjects coming into being. While it has appropriated the white gaze as part of its own desire, the overt narcissism of the video lures the viewer into a position where, in order to desire the (yellow) body, one also has to identify with it, thus problematizing the whiteness of the gaze.

The fact that our subjectivity as Asian North Americans, or Asians living in the generalized Western world, is inevitably constructed of internalized/assimilated Orientalist knowledge, epitomizes the contradictions confronted by a lot of Asian diaspora artists working today. If making a video or film, especially with an autobiographical voice, is about articulating, and

therefore inventing, one's selfhood, how do we negotiate a sense of self that is always already othered? Or, to be more specific, how do I formulate a strategy that critiques the imbalance of power around the making and reading of

Asian North American work in a white-identified society which, at the same time, allows me to come to terms with my othered state of being? How do I represent the fact that at times I find being in the margins, like masturbating with Sticky Rice, pleasurable, even desirable, when marginality has

become an integral part of my being? This dilemma is in many ways similar to my food dilemma: how do I continue wanting to eat Chinese food (in America) without hating it or, for that matter, myself? Is this the beginning, the reason, or the limit of doing auto-ethnographic work?

Since food, Asian food, Chinese food in particular, has acted as a major source of western anthropological knowledge, our sense of self as Asians and Asian North Americans living in an imperialist global economy, is inevitably informed and violated by assimilated anthropological knowledge historically focused on us as the objects of ethnography. Within and alongside this established ethnographic food discourse, a new generation of Asian North American media artists such as Wen, Tien and Nguyen have sought various strategies of cultural resistance to challenge their status as native informants, and re-articulate the complexities and subtleties of their cultures. In their very different ways they also foreground, question and contest the marginality of their representations. While directors such as Ang Lee receive backing from the Taiwanese government to promote

their nationalistic sentiments overseas, and simultaneously take Hollywood by surprise, we, as independent makers, realize there's a lot of work to be done, new battles to be fought. As an "authentic" Chinese, "when our time

comes," I'll treat you to a good Chinese American restaurant I know.



Still from *Seven Steps to Sticky Heaven*, Nguyen Tan Hoang, 1995, video, colour, 24 min.

*I would like to thank Allan deSouza, Yong Soon Min, Monica Chau and Vanalyne Green for reading the drafts, the film and videomakers for their work, and Richard Fung for the fine editing.*

*The writing of this essay is partially funded by the Lyn Blumenthal Memorial Fund for Independent Video.*

**Yau Ching is a writer, film and videomaker, currently teaching in the department of Film and Video Studies of the University of Michigan. Her collection of essays and fiction, "Building a New Stove" (Youth Literary Press) was recently published in Hong Kong.**

#### Notes

1. In a private conversation with Wen she told me she has seriously considered subtling the film in English instead of using English voice-over, but could not afford doing it.
2. Richard Fung, "Seeing Yellow/Asian Identities in Film and Video," *The State of Asian America/Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, Karin Aguilar-San Juan ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1994), p. 164.
3. The irony is: the harder the Communist Chinese government seeks "unification" with the other Chinese societies, namely Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, the more Chinese people from these societies are forced to "unite" in the West by becoming voluntary exiles.
4. A more detailed study of the colour of the fortune cookie is found in "Eating the O: Gender and Sexuality in Recent Asian-American Art," a paper by Fatimah Tobing Rony delivered at the College Arts Association Annual Conference, 1994.
5. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paris, 1957 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

## GIFTS AND CRUELITIES OF DISPLACEMENT

### Nothing to be written here

A VIDEO WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY WENDY OBERLANDER

EDITED BY JENNIFER ABBOTT

CAMERA BY KEVIN MATTHEWS, BO MYERS AND WENDY OBERLANDER

HAHN & DAUGHTERS PRODUCTIONS, 1996, 47 MIN.

REVIEW BY NANCY POLLAK

Toward the end of *Nothing to be written here*, Wendy Oberlander's video meditation on large and small Jewish histories, we encounter a close-up of grass. The long, motionless blades are woven together by weather and time, collapsed with their own weight and heaped into grey waves. A Hebrew word is surprinted on the field. The word fades, gives way to another tranquil image—but of what? Fabric? Water? Something lifting and falling—surely a wave, perhaps linen, perhaps a froth of ocean disguised as cloth. What really are we seeing?

More words appear, in English: "Can one really change one's language as if it were a shirt?" Yes, then: cloth. Language as clothing, Oberlander seems to be saying, intimate as skin, a medium that sheathes and projects a person's being. Cloth spun from grass, grass sprung from fields, fields as geography, as place. Now we hear the videomaker's voice: "If I sound like a stranger, who will listen?" In this fragment of the forty-seven-minute video, Oberlander is pondering her unsettled relationship to the German language: the mother tongue of her Jewish parents; the childhood language of "tenderness" that still rouses her in some primal way; the language of the people who tried to murder her family.

*Nothing to be written here* has many such complex moments. Yet there is nothing obscure about the work—remarkably, given the territory Oberlander covers: from a portion of little-known Jewish-Canadian history, to her relationships with her father

and herself, to silences both official and particularly Jewish, to the perils and imperatives of tracking memory and wisdom. As *Nothing to be written here* unwinds, we find ourselves inside a composition that is full of feeling (though restrained in its emotions), often beautiful, and suffused with a quiet, ethical tone. The video has an atmosphere of inquiry that seems political, emotional and spiritual all at once. In a word, *Nothing to be written here* is substantial.

The work is principally about her father's wartime experience. Today, Peter Oberlander is a Vancouver-based urban planner. In 1938 he was a fifteen-year-old boy who, along with his middle-class Jewish family, fled from Vienna to England to escape further persecution. With the outbreak of war in 1940, Peter and about 29,000 other Jewish refugees of Austrian and German nationality were rounded up as enemy aliens and potential spies. The British war office, like Canadian officials later on, didn't seem in any hurry to distinguish between Nazis and victims of Nazis. To put some distance between Britain and the putative spies, the teenaged Oberlander and thousands of other male refugees were deported to Canada and Australia.

They didn't cross the ocean alone. The vessels were crammed with angry German POWs, including Luftwaffe flyers who

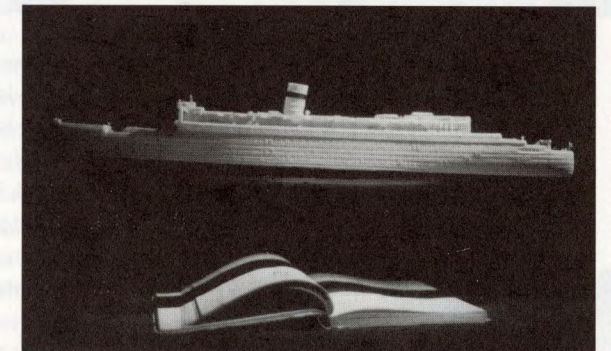


Photo credit: W. Oberlander © 1996

sang loud songs about how, in Peter's words, "they're going to kill the Jews." The other Jewish refugees, ranging in age from sixteen to sixty years, included men who had already escaped camps such as Dachau and Buchenwald. Once in Canada, the refugees were loaded onto trains and sent to rough, rural prison camps in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Peter chopped down trees in a maritime forest and endured the oppressive conditions of the camp.

In the meantime, Jewish organizations and the internees' surviving relatives quietly campaigned for their release—quietly, because Ottawa's hostility toward foreign Jews-in-distress was well known. Camp life was anything but pleasant and the future was terrifying; after all, the war's outcome was uncertain. The campaigns eventually succeeded and between 1941 and 1943 the internees were released. Peter decided to stay in Canada and he enrolled at McGill. Evidently he was a first-rate student: Jews needed higher marks than Gentiles to be accepted at the Montreal university.



Internment Camp B, Ripples, New Brunswick, c. 1941.  
Photo credit: Acadia Forest Experiment Station

"That every word is counted and charged."  
"And a telephone?"  
"That what we say here is heard there."

*Nothing to be written here* is also about Wendy Oberlander's exploration of her

*Nothing to be written here* excavates this buried and appalling chapter of Commonwealth history, links it to Canada's anti-Jewish immigration policies of the day, and to what Wendy Oberlander calls the "transtemporal" oppression of Jews. She uses some conventional documentary methods to tell this history—newsreel footage, family movies, documents and newspaper clippings, clandestine camp drawings and photos (Canadian officials didn't bother to create an official photographic record of the camps), interviews with Peter—but Oberlander doesn't stay fixed on explicit time. There is a deeper view here, conveyed in images of seamless ocean, stranded suitcase, burning page, and in poetic phrases about the gifts and cruelties of displacement. The ocean may be what literally carried Peter away, but on screen it reads as a pooling of the unconscious, the wash of other sorts of knowledge.

We are traveling into "the infinite text," as Wendy Oberlander says, of Jewish exile and escape. And she does not let us go unequipped. Lifelines are offered, often in the shape of the traditional Hasidic survival tool: everyday existence. As the train transports Peter and other internees to their prison camp in Canada, we hear a man's voice:

"What can one learn from a train?" asks one of the Hasids.

"That because of one second, one can miss anything."

"From a telegraph?"

father's internment and hence about the ethics of "visiting the place of his pain." At first she is astounded at the silence within her family, yet she also senses the story is old. The daughter's journey is painful and painstaking, as "memory and forgetfulness chase the facts in a circle" while she attempts to undo the erasure.

Oberlander brings compassion and delicacy to the search. Her father's privacy is protected, his courage implicit. Peter Oberlander, she makes clear, "never denied [his] internment, but in 1941 the silence was forced on him." There was fertile ground for such silences: the shame of being targeted as unwanted and dangerous—as Jewish; and the impossibility of comparing Peter's experience with the exile of other Jews. As the daughter observes, how was her father to "reconcile his internment with the losses in Europe?" Oberlander's honouring of her father is one of the pleasures of this work—and a rare pleasure, too.

She inserts herself into the video in various guises: as narrator reciting the chased-down facts; as daughter confronting her hunger for what the father jettisoned; as researcher treading though unaided "private suffering" in a public archive; and as Jew bearing personal and transpersonal witness to hatred. We "see" Oberlander mainly in her voice, but also in home movies. She comes to us as a young Jewish man (her father in Vienna?), then as a blurred figure peering into the silences. Yet there is never too

much of her. Oberlander is absorbed in her inheritance—in "the residue [that] is inherited"—not in her self.

*Nothing to be written here* does have some unsatisfying elements. The video's typographical look (the surprinted text, segment titles) is not well designed and sometimes reads like mediocre advertising. If artists are going to use type, they should approach it as a painter does paint: with due respect for its power and subtlety. And Oberlander's use of home-movie shots of herself as a youngster is part of an autobiographical tradition I view with suspicion. What do such images ever really convey except that home movies have an intrinsically evocative quality? We see the washed-out 1960s graininess, the jump and jerk of images, the faces grinning at the cameraperson—it's intense and, yes, something pulls us in. Yet I feel it isn't these particular images that do the capturing, rather some seductiveness built into the medium.

On the other hand, Oberlander spares us that most manipulative of elements: the musical soundtrack. *Nothing to be written here* has voice and images only, the occasional lapping of waves, but no music to inflate—and violate—the silences. How wonderful, I thought. A videomaker who trusts her medium and her audience.

Altogether, *Nothing to be written here* has a thoughtful, almost gentle tone. We do feel involved with infinity here, perhaps the infinite edge of exile and of the exile's response. Where once nothing could be written—by the edicts of authorities, and the authority of pain—the video writes a great deal. Oberlander inscribes this traumatic realm with patience and a careful desire. She wants hard knowledge and disclosure, and she wants more: to know a way in, and then a way throughout.

Nancy Pollak is a writer and editor living in Vancouver.

## FRESH BLOOD

### A Consideration of Belonging

VIDEO BY B.H. Yael, 1996, COLOUR, 55 MIN.

DISTRIBUTED BY V TAPE

REVIEW BY SANDRA HAAR

A woman packs a suitcase, then prepares to board a plane. These two simple acts are fraught with meaning: what has she packed and where is she going?

*Fresh Blood* is part personal narrative and part documentary—a travelogue with a specific agenda. Yael, the video artist, is also the central character in her own story. She is returning to Israel, the country of her birth, to reconnect with the culture, the sights, smells, sounds and the family she left behind at the age of seven. Yet her "return," a term laden with religious and Zionist overtones, is not a re-entry into the fold, nor an uncritical reclamation of identity. For Yael, it marks more clearly the space between here and there, and highlights both her connection and disconnection with what she discovers on her journey.

First, we learn of the basic pieces of her identity: "I was born in Israel. My mother remarried when I was seven. I grew up north of Montreal in the Laurentians in Canada. My mother is from Iraq and my father from Poland." Her search leads her to her grandmother's house, to an Iraqi-Jewish party, through the markets in Jerusalem, to the salty terrain of Sodom, and finally to an Israeli feminist conference. She speaks with an Israeli lesbian in a busy café; to activists in the areas of Palestinian nationalism, peace politics, Arab culture, Ashkenazi-Sephardi relations in Israel. Always, her search for the meaning of her identity is presented through various theoretical constructions. Discovery, memory, language, sex-

uality, race, history, Palestinian concerns, identity, multiculturalism, community—all are prefaced with quotations from such well-known writers and academics as Paul Célán, Judith Butler, Sander Gilman, Stuart Hall, Avital Ronell, bell hooks, Edward Said. These, along with the unfolding of Yael's story, provide the key markers in an investigation that becomes layered over and over again with multiple concerns and re-considerations.

Yael's excursion into this terrain is part of the entry of a specifically Jewish presence, with its histories and realities, into the general area of cultural studies and critically informed artwork. Her examination of her Jewish identity takes its place within an overall consciousness of ethnic/racial identities, and the art and scholarship that has been part of it.

Yael ponders her own location in the discourse of "race." This is done at the backdrop of Gilman's observation that, for scientists of the nineteenth century, the Jew was considered "black." Yael reflects that in North America, the Jew is considered "white." She locates herself "between white and coloured, between power and persecution." This dichotomy is further complicated by the racial politics between Israeli Jews of (recent) European origin—Ashkenazim—and those from the Middle East—Sephardim or Mizrahim—and Ethiopia. Her interview with Ella Shohat, an Iraqi-Jewish Israeli scholar, and discussions with recent immigrants from Ethiopia reveal

the cultural domination in Israel by European Jews.

Israel is also the site of Biblical mythologies. Yael wants to go to Sodom; she valorizes Lot's wife, who looked back in



fondness, Yael imagines, for the people she was leaving behind. "I want to go to Sodom, as if my standing there would negate its mythic power," she says. But her desire is thwarted. She encounters a Bedouin family among the salt rock deposits by the Dead Sea who tell her that "there is no Sodom." The camera pans the vast landscape surrounding them. "This is it." Thus, Yael returns to a place laden with its own complexities.

Yael's agenda causes her to see a view of Israel very rarely depicted, and through the activists she interviews, a politics seldom represented. Aida Soliman Touma, a Palestinian woman, and Dalia Sachs, a Jewish woman, reflect on the question of

consciousness and politics for oppressed people as they come to power—each speaking about her own people. Shohat discusses the implications of the Black Panther Movement in Israel and asserts the legitimacy of an Arab Jewish identity: “No one doubts the Christian Arab identity or the Muslim Arab identity.”

Yael resists “placing” herself. She pulls away from the heterosexual assumption offered by men in the street, from the Zionist wish for her to re-join the State. She argues two sides of the Palestinian question—with her mother, for Palestinian sovereignty; with friends, the need for a Jewish homeland—each position reflecting a true, and yet often contradictory, desire.

In resisting the temptation of easy answers, Yael charts a political landscape that leads to surprising connections: between the concerns of Palestinian and Israeli Jewish activists; between African Americans and Mizrahi Israelis; between Yael’s mother and a Bedouin woman who share a given name. By also charting the disconnections, *Fresh Blood* skirts the edge, but ultimately avoids the cloying and glib tone that can accompany messages of “unity.”

Yael’s return does not only reveal political lessons, but a sensual world from which she has been removed. In the food, language, music and dance come another connection, and another contradiction. All of these evoke memories for Yael, even though she is ignorant of their specificities. The theme of memory is further explored in the re-telling of several events that became confused in Yael’s mind: the massacre of Jews in Baghdad in 1941; her grandfather injured in a nationalist demonstration in the same city. She also makes allusion to the traumas of her father’s history and the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination. Here *Fresh Blood* becomes



Stills from *Fresh Blood: A Consideration of Belonging*, b.h. Yael, 1996, video, 55 min. Above: Karen Tisch as model mother.

part of the cultural theory examining the role of memory in constructing individual and collective history.

*Fresh Blood* asks fundamental questions about our assumptions of identity. While Yael feels connected to Arabic, Yiddish and Hebrew, languages she has not spoken or heard spoken in decades, she questions what connection exists between herself and her father, whom she has not seen also in decades.

Nevertheless, in conclusion, Yael does reveal hopes of cohesion and connection. She watches her grandmother lighting memorial candles. She reflects on the older woman’s immersion in the day-to-day tasks with “no desire to be elsewhere,” and the effect of her grandmother’s absence on her life. Yael wonders what would have happened if she had remained and grew up in Israel. She imagines that she would have been at the feminist conference she attends, one where “Palestinian and Israeli women; Jewish, Christian and Muslim women; Arab, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi women” are attending; where, despite the conflicts, they celebrate and dance together. While very hopeful, it avoids the naïveté and bad faith of many such expressions by having built an under-

standing for the situation in which these women are working.

The tail end of *Fresh Blood* brings us back to Toronto, with cast and crew learning to belly-dance. The difficulty most are having in learning this ancient art is reflective of another difficulty: the enormous dedication necessary in the endeavor to create community, particularly across national, ethnic and racial boundaries.

About to embark on her voyage, Yael had packed a *kafiyah* (Palestinian scarf), a black lace dress, a Swiss Army knife and a bottle of ketchup. Each of these things and other symbols introduced throughout *Fresh Blood* became keys to the unfolding story. Isaac Bashevis Singer once said: “If you want to tell a universal story, tell a very personal one.” Yael not only tells a personal story, but one that is understood through and contributes to larger discourses on memory, identity, nationalism and race, among others, thereby drawing her small story into a place of enormous implications.

*Sandra Haar was born in Montreal and grew up in Toronto north of the 401. Her mother is from Egypt and her father from Poland. Sandra’s essay, “Seeds of Doubt: Constructing a Sephardi Identity,” has recently been published in Bridges and Canadian Woman Studies.*

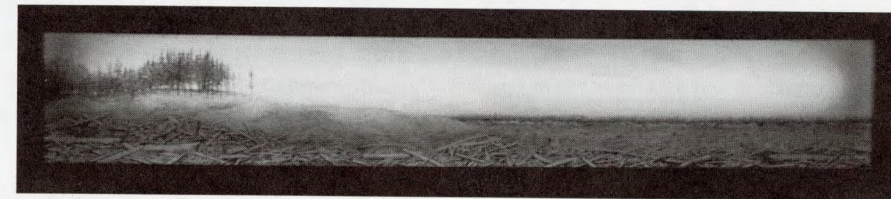
# REFORMATION

**Michael Belmore**

GARNET PRESS, TORONTO, MAY 18–JUNE 15, 1996

REVIEW BY R. WILLIAM HILL

Native people have made a great deal of progress in taking control of our representation in art. In magazines and curatorial essays Native artists are often said to be replacing white stereotypes about themselves with “the truth.” In this understandable state of euphoria it is important to acknowledge that there can be issues and problems in our own pro-



duction as well, that we Native Canadians are not specially gifted with unproblematic self knowledge. Michael Belmore’s recent exhibition “Reformation” asks some interesting questions about what we know about ourselves and how we know it.

Almost since contact, Europeans have theorized a special form of knowledge available to Native people, based on our relationship (or equivalency) to nature. Belmore challenges us to look not only at the European construction of these notions but how contemporary Native people have come to make use of them as well. As he put it: “...to be authentic to yourself or your people you have to be one with nature: I think that’s a crock.”

*Acculturated* is a triptych of graphite drawings displayed in light boxes. The first is a landscape of pine trees silhouetted

against the sky. Moving from left to right, from image to image, the foreground is gradually illuminated until in the final drawing we can see that the landscape is in fact a large clear-cut. The piece indicates one of the ways in which the contemporary Native relationship to nature is influenced by participation in global capitalism. At the same time it becomes a

metaphor for other processes of acculturation which also need to be “illuminated” in all their complexity.

The work *Rapids* consists of six rectangles of solid but transparent Lucite elaborately mounted by steel apparatuses to wooden bases. The top of each piece of Lucite is frosted and contains a word: Immune, Align, Dispose, Noble, Heathen, and Imitate. The underside of the Lucite is imprinted with a negative relief casting of an undulating wampum belt, giving the wavy effect of flowing rapids. The wampum belt is a mnemonic device used in story-telling, the beads being signifiers to be read by the storyteller. Belmore sees the relationship between signifier and signified to be, like rapids, fluid and shifting, dependent on the social/historical context of the reader.

Some of these contexts are suggested by

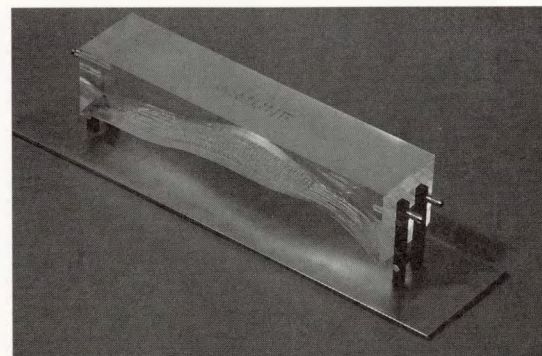
the English words mentioned above. Belmore chose the word “Dispose” in part for its relation to the word disposable—that which we can do without. In discussing this issue he suggested that we tend to focus on preserving commodifiable objects, while paying less attention to the culture of everyday life. The artist links “Dispose” with “Imitate,” which he observes is the relationship we have to our cultural past when we seek to preserve it “authentically.” This fetishization of the past creates a kind of authority where cultural activities are privileged simply because they were (or are perceived to have been) historical practice. Belmore reminds us that Native culture isn’t a pre-existing given. He told me, “We drive and we determine where our culture goes, and we have to realize that we create it.”

Other works stake out Belmore’s own shifting position in relation to his cultural heritage, creating a space for contemporary identity. *Claimed*, *Sanctify*, *Vestige*, and *Intrinsic* are four tiny back-lit photographs—anti-Jeff Walls if you like. They chart the distance from the artist’s grandparents’ home in northwestern Ontario to his own life in urban Toronto. The two images representing northwestern Ontario are physically separated from their companion pieces representing Toronto; in fact they are displayed on separate floors of the two story gallery. Belmore’s contemporary environment of Toronto is depicted by a colour photograph, trees in High Park in black and white. The house that he grew up in is

*Acculturated*, Michael Belmore, 1996, lightbox, graphite on lexan drawing, detail. Courtesy the Department of Northern Affairs and the artist.

represented by a grainy black and white photo, while his grandparents' house is merely a dot on a photographed section of a topographical map. Because of complex cultural associations we tend to ascribe greater immediacy to colour photographs than to black and white photographs or photographs of maps. Belmore uses these conventions to acknowledge and describe his relationship to his past while maintaining the primacy of his present urban reality.

*Flock* also addresses this process of moving between and claiming new spaces.



Left:  
*Immune*, Micheal Belmore, 1996,  
detail, one of a series of six sculptures. Courtesy of Herb Bunt and the artist.

Below:  
*Acculturated*, Michael Belmore, 1996,  
lightbox, graphite on lexan drawing,  
detail. Courtesy the Department of  
Northern Affairs and the artist.

The flock in question is a group of graphite drawings of individual ravens, a bird famous for its adaptive ability. The artist uses it as a metaphor and a role model as he constructs his own urban identity and generates new meanings for the word Native.

All quotes are from a June 1996 interview with the artist.

R. William Hill is a Toronto based artist and writer. His current hobby is loathing the Harris government.

## TRANSMISSION RUSES

### small medium and not large

BOOKS AND COLLAGES, 1982 TO PRESENT BY LAIWAN  
GRUNT GALLERY, VANCOUVER, JULY 16–AUGUST 8, 1996

REVIEW BY KARLYN KOH

A postcard falls into my hands.<sup>1</sup> It is an invitation to the opening of “small, medium and not large: books and collages, 1982 to present” at the Grunt Gallery in Vancouver. The card poses the question: “Who knows at what depth of spirit you long to be enjoyed?” For days these words keep me company. Someone spies the card in my kitchen, and exclaims. She tells me that for hours she and her friend pondered over this question, marveled that perhaps this is what desire is all about. I did not know that these letters have spread like a rumour, burning at postal stations unknown to the artist.

On one face of the postcard is printed an alluring triptych, a sixteenth century Chinese painting split into three panels. It depicts a courtyard with a pavilion in which an aristocrat lounges. Another figure stands in the garden surrounding the pavilion, head turned to the right, but we cannot be sure where the gaze ends. In the third panel, a labourer balances his burden. The panels, hinged by the spaces that separate them, read like broken pieces of desire, dispatching the cipher that circulates so publicly: “Who knows at what depth of spirit you long to be enjoyed?” The figure in the middle—a woman? Why do I think so?—expedites the incompleteness of a broken narrative.

At what and whose expense is a life of solitary, detached leisure available to one such as the aristocrat? Laiwan remarks that this painting, originally titled *The Garden for Solitary Enjoyment*, suggests the

objectification of nature and the serving class that facilitates the aristocrat's pleasure in his garden. Indeed, as Marx writes, “everything which appears for the worker as an *activity of alienation, of estrangement*, appears for the non-worker as a *situation of alienation, of estrangement*.”<sup>2</sup> The postcard solicits this reading as well as makes one think of what pleasures supersede this political economy which does not recognize the unoccupied worker. Such is the impropriety of the figure in the middle of the post card, who appears to me to be stealing a moment of distracted pleasure. Is she looking at the white flowers on the right, enjoying a forbidden moment of solitary delight (in all its coded sexual nuances)?

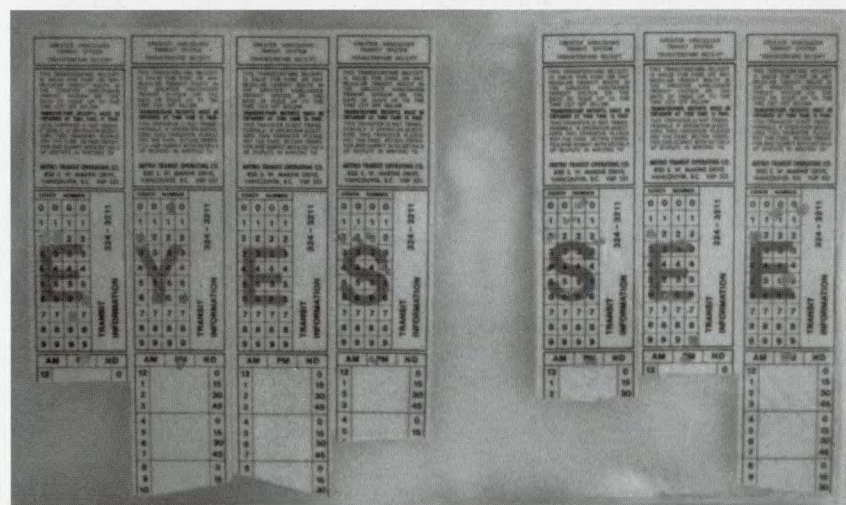
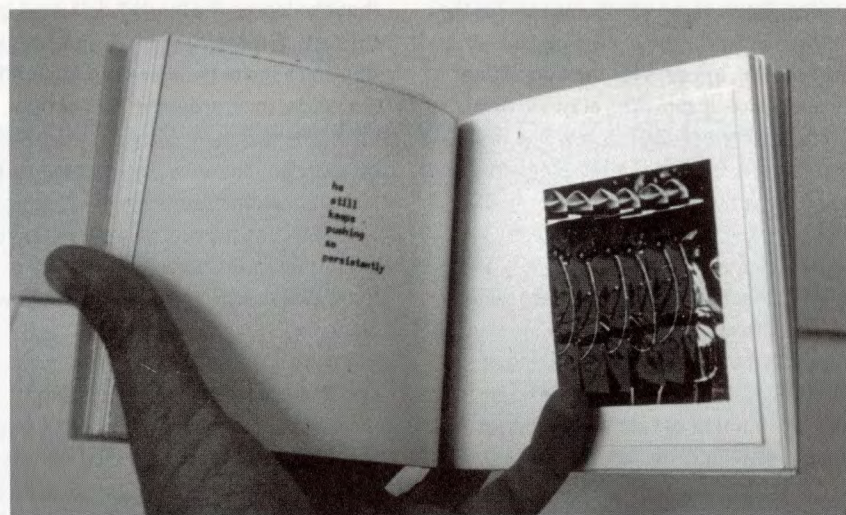
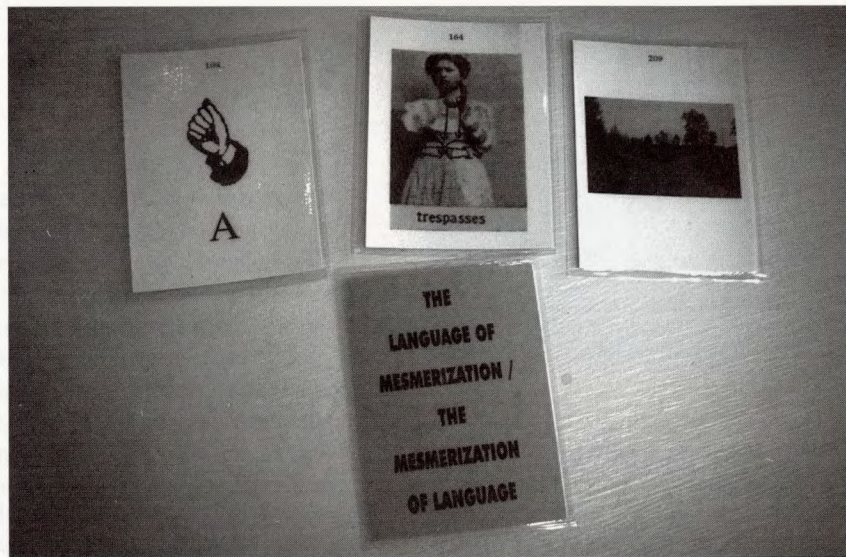
The generic postcard is coded as “an object arising out of the need of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia,” and moves “history into private time.”<sup>3</sup> Twisting this logic, the postcard I received is not actually a memento or copy of an original art piece found *in situ* at the show. Instead, it is a bit of paper circulating on its own in the postal system, existing outside the gallery proper, hence out of place. Indeed, as Laiwan points out later, the postal system functions as an immense gallery in this case. Furthermore, framed by a curious question, this card speaks not of sixteenth century Chinese history proper, nor even of the language of Orientalism, but of the silence on which these two discourses are based.

*The Language of Mesmerization/The Mesmerization of Language* plays with the

idea of flashcards as mnemonic tools for instruction, whereby bits of information are repeatedly flashed to the student so that she learns the “truth” delivered by the card. The instructions accompanying this piece invite the viewer to re-shuffle the cards, to re-order the syntax that forms the language embodying love, memory and identity: “The Language of Mesmerization casts its own hypnotics. The viewer as translator is requested to work from its equation and to shuffle these flash cards according to their own pleasure.”

The first part of this piece is titled *Obsession: Possession*, and recites a fragment from Sappho to investigate ways in which “love” articulates a desire to possess an other, and appeals to the viewer to re-write the language of love without symptoms of jealousy and ownership. In the second part, titled *Spell*, each card is printed with a letter which forms sentences—Biblical axioms on the word becoming flesh, and the Lord's Prayer—being “written” in sign language by a woman from the Victorian era. We are asked to translate our private pleasures, to build another narrative of memory, and to literally conjure new spellings (naming, substituting, hypnotizing) of the self.

Laiwan writes in her artist's statement that her interest has always centred around ideas. What she finds challenging is “to translate an idea successfully so that it is not overwhelmed by the medium or technology.” This challenge in turn



spurs Laiwan's interest in the "process that destabilizes the theme or idea, or a process that makes visible the embodiment of those ideas in our being." For example, in *she who scanned the flower of the world*, the beautifully poetic text and the detailed prints of petals subtly draw the viewer into a contemplation of "a metaphor for a working psychic ecology," and of "working towards a sensual economy and its embodiment" (artist's note).

*ETHOS* is an eight-piece collage exploring the idea of character, and the system of transfers (tickets) which facilitate travel. The Vancouver transit system of 1981-82, when *ETHOS* was produced, chose specific alphabetic letters for its transfers to form a sixteen-letter alphabet. A letter from this alphabet was assigned for each day. A passenger then used this ticket to make transfers along the established routes of the city. With this sixteen-letter alphabet, Laiwan sought, from the Webster pocket dictionary, words in English that used only these sixteen letters. From this she wrote the poetic text that makes up *ETHOS*, which is a captivating and complex evocation of the minute characters whose alienation or destruction is necessary to support certain systems and bodies of power. What ethos identifies and embodies subjects? What ethos, based on gendered identity markers in this piece, must you embody in order to transfer across the system?

In *African Notes*, a book piece, Laiwan examines the vestiges of colonization through a series of photographs, accompanied by text, of the area around Great Zimbabwe Ruins and Lake Kyle in Zimbabwe, where she was born. The photographs in part one, titled "Feet of Clay," celebrate the power of indigenous architecture evident in the majestic eleventh-century curved walls, which still stand despite being built of rocks placed one on top of the other without the assistance of mortar. As well, by

studying and photographing the survival of the monument, Laiwan creates a visual-text that cryptically reveals "the colonial culture, desires, and agenda that have imbedded a foundational weakness/fault in the building of contemporary post-colonial structures of independence" (artist's note).

*dotting like flat beads: this is the english i learn* again employs conceptual puns to underscore the ideologies feeding colonizing and exclusionary systems. The title of this piece is an allusion to the style of brush strokes for foliage in Chinese painting. The piece, a collage-painting using pages torn from an English-Chinese dictionary, prods ironically at minimalism's quest for the inexpressive. In it, the juxtaposition of classical Chinese art and Western minimalism zeroes in on the lies of universality and equivalence in cross-cultural translation and pedagogy. Specific sections of these dictionary pages are blanked out by brush strokes of correction fluid so as to highlight key terms, and each page is then pasted onto a Chinese calligraphy scroll, accompanied by a Chinese seal. On one scroll, the artist uses a page that defines and translates the words "advise" and "advocate" from English to Chinese:

If you will let me *advise* you, go to Australia as a colonist  
— R. Stevenson.

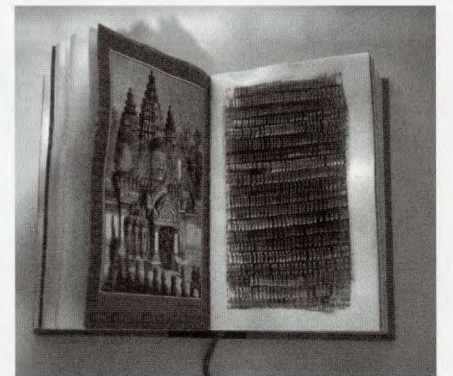
He is an *advocate* of the oppressed.  
He is an *advocate* of peace, of reform, of socialism.  
He is an *advocate* of the truth.  
They *advocate* free trade.

The Chinese seal the artist uses to supplement this section is translated as: "Who Knows Best?" Through the artist's strategy of whitening-out and reverse translation, we are reminded of the ways by which texts of imperialism are delivered in transnational contracts. This piece

thoughtfully re-translates the fabrications passed from one language to another, and asks what complicities mark the dissemination of knowledge in cultural translations between "east" and "west."

As with the previous piece, *Little White Simpy* and *Ten Little White Boys* pun on the idea of the white-out. Using white correction fluid again, Laiwan whitens the crude black caricatures from *The Story of Little Black Sambo* and re-writes it *Little White Simpy*. These examples of conventional children's rhymes and stories deliver and station corruption at the heart of childhood. Packaged as stylized and rhythmic memory aids, the original recitations hide their spell to identify with the white-out. Who must "we" be in order to learn from and pass on these chants? *Little Black Sambo*, as well as the ditty "Ten Little Indians," are parts of the systems of white-wash that enact and deliver the violent erasure of the narratives of First Nations peoples and peoples of colour in (post)colonial knowledge production. In erasing and correcting these white lies, Laiwan writes-over particular sentences charting the courses of racism and colonialism.

In Laiwan's work at the grunt, found books are torn and written over, or transformed into records of other memories (for example, *Working Text Diary*, *The Blind Heart [a fan book]* and *Sketches from the Heartless Series: Little Women*). The fifteen works in this show delve into cultural encyclopedias thick with violence and silence, and in so doing, collect, tear and re-route the misplaced, lost or forgotten pieces of "truth." If we see "ideas" as torn bits of documentation and writing, how are they transmitted? How might one recognize "ideas" as they are transferred from one medium to another? "Imagine a city, a State in which identity cards were post cards," Derrida writes.<sup>4</sup> In this police state, how might one recognize the illicit interceptions that attempt to circumvent official lines of communication? We may



*Working Text Diary*, 1986, found books, acrylic paints.

have to learn new ways of reading and thinking about the characters that mark our sanctioned identification papers. The works in "small, medium and not large" powerfully yet cryptically intercept the monotonous gradations of logical thinking that, by omissions and commissions, sentences the performance of prescribed identity acts along authorized transmission lines.

Karlyn Kob is writing her doctoral dissertation. Her recent publications include a monograph on Canadian literary institutions and the politics of identity (*Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Washington*). Her work on bp Nichol and Canadian avant-garde poetics is forthcoming in *Tessera*.

Notes

1. My reading of the postcard here is taken from Jacques Derrida's *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans., intro., notes A. Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).
2. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts [1844]," *Early Writings*, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (London, Middlesex: Penguin, New Left Review, 1992), p. 334; original emphasis.
3. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 135, p. 138.
4. Derrida, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Top: *The Language of Mesmerization/The Mesmerization of Language*, 1996, found images, text, photographs, laminated flash cards, detail.  
Centre: *Unknown Cause/Unbekannter Grund*, 1982 colour and B&W photography, text, handbound.  
Bottom: *ETHOS*, 1982, seven panels of laminated bus transfers, detail.



# CURTAIN DRAWN ON RISING SUNS

## Red Reflection I

YASUFUMI TAKAHASHI

MERCER UNION, TORONTO, NOVEMBER 7–DECEMBER 21, 1996

REVIEW BY KYO MACLEAR

A shaggy-haired German teenager confronts his aging father in the family living room where the father sits buried behind his newspaper. This might be a ubiquitous domestic encounter, but it is Berlin in the late 1960s and this young son has come with a heavy heart to ask about his father's involvement in World War II. He wants to know: Where were you? He wants to know. And yet, he doesn't want to know. In this possible scenario, resentment, guilt, anger and sadness are pouring forth in a soul-drenching alchemy.

The 1960s—a decade remembered by many for its rage and passion—were reportedly full of such familial fisticuffs in Germany. The postwar generation was just awakening to adolescence when the Eichmann trials in Jerusalem re-broadcast the horrors of the Holocaust. Having grown up in relative peace and prosperity, many German youth began, for the first time, to reflect on a legacy for which they were too young to bear direct responsibility, but to which they felt themselves to be nonetheless obligated.

A younger generation is suddenly afflicted by war memory, and a crashing sense that something vital has been suppressed; reflection of this kind can be a wrenching experience. Japanese artist Yasufumi Takahashi knows this, and this lends disquieting force to his touring installation *Red Reflection I*. At thirty-four years of age, Yasufumi Takahashi might play 1990s counterpart to our shaggy-haired teenage Berliner. Takahashi, too, has a father who served in World War II. And while a majority of his peers, faced with a contracting Japanese economy, have their eyes set on the future, Takahashi feels compelled to think about the past.

Yet, unlike his German counterparts, whose art has

been sustained by several decades of postwar reflection and public debate, Takahashi has found himself joining a very nascent and often reluctant dialogue in Japan. For decades, the specific history of Japanese wartime aggression in Asia has been largely off-limits; with Japanese teachers, artists, and journalists generally observing formal and informal censorship codes. The silences surrounding the war were only really challenged in the late 1980s when the Pandora's Box—sealing off Japanese war crimes—was lodged open by former “Comfort Women” and other Asian victims of Japanese expansion who delivered searing testimonies about their experiences to international audiences. The death of the Showa Emperor Hirohito in the early 1990s also prompted younger Japanese to start asking more questions about the war years.

Yasufumi Takahashi created *Red Reflection I*, in the spirit of looking back, as an indictment of war and patriotism. Made in 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end, the work is comprised of a circular quilt (approximately seven meters in diameter), made of dye-soaked clothes. But unlike our erstwhile Berlin teenager who may have dealt with war responsibility by electing to point the finger outward in stiff accusation, Takahashi's finger is curled inward like a question mark.

Takahashi's reflection takes the form of a giant red sun, which, attached to the wall by menacing sabre-shaped hooks, spills across the floor like a curtain skirt. While reminiscent of the Japanese



*Red Reflection I*, 1995, mixed media. Photo: Cheryl O'Brien. Courtesy Mercer Union. Opposite: detail of wall mounting brackets for *Red Reflection I*.

flag, the flag's usually poppy red center is now sun-faded, all dusty crimsons and amber orange remnants. The graphic and rhetorical pull of the red sun stands in contrast to the viscerally evocative clutter of clothes Takahashi has assembled.

A crooked hemline, a worn crotch, a torn sleeve, provide these castoffs with an elusive aura of personality. Those who have worn store-bought second-hand clothes may recall wondering about the previous wearer. Takahashi's red circle encourages us to look for such odd traces of individual life: inviting us to encounter unknown children, men, and women through the creases on a nightgown; the lace trimming on a baby bonnet; the pocket flaps on a dress shirt; the breast cups springing from a dress.

All this feels very intimate and beautiful, which might give pause to those who feel postwar mourning should be a more structured, monumental affair. But the beauty here is intentional: a “trap” or lure for spectators. We need to understand beauty, Takahashi insists, because beauty is a seductive and ever-present companion to “death, fear, violence, armament, killing and sacrifice”. One need look no further than Leni Riefenshtal and Albert Speer—renowned aesthetes and architects of fascist horror—to understand how the *lure* of beauty has been exploited with great consequence.

So, if Takahashi wants to re-stage and reflect on the tension between beauty and terror, it is only to ask: *Why is war*

*beautiful? How does it seduce?* Children yearn for war toys despite their fears of being hurt. Adults admire the beauty of a ripening mushroom cloud; wonder in awe as brilliant green lights streak through the Iraqi night sky in the wake of a missile attack... The glory never dissipates entirely. It is simply reincarnated.

*Red Reflection I* is about catching those moments when beauty might become its opposite. Toward this end, Takahashi has invited us to partake in a ceaseless vigil. The hope here is that the spectacle of a rising red sun will never again blind people to its awful wraths and furies.

*Kyo Maclear is a Toronto-based writer, critic and visual artist.*

# Index volume 19

COMPILED BY  
ROSEMARY HEATHER

## AIDS Issues/Awareness

Folland, Tom  
"What's in a Name?: Critical Misreadings, Conservative Values and Rereading Victim Art," column, no. 2, 7-10.

Lee, Robert W. G.  
General Idea: "Infe@tions, 1994," (S.L. Simpson, Toronto), review, no. 1, 32-33.

## Anti-Racism

Folland, Tom  
"What's in a Name?: Critical Misreadings, Conservative Values and Rereading Victim Art," column, no. 2, 7-10.

Fung, Richard  
"Convergence 1996: The Aesthetic, Political and Ethical Issues in Cross-cultural Art," column, no. 4, 7-10.

Garneau, David  
Minquon Panchayat: "Doors," (Latitude 53, Edmonton, 1996), review, no. 5, 45-46.

Nadeau, Mary-Jo and Katarzyna Rukszto,  
"Issues of Race and Gender in Canadian Women's Writing," (Coomi S. Vevaina and Barbara Godard, eds., Creative Books, New Delhi, 1996), book review, no. 5, 47-48.

Walcott, Rinaldo  
"Lament for a Nation: The Racial Geography of the "The OH! Canada Project," feature, no. 4, 15-23.

## Art/Exhibitions

Anderson, Elizabeth  
Bill Burns and Marie-Paul MacDonald: "Wearable Environments: Garmets to Inhabit, Affordable Harrishomes to Wear," (471 Richmond St. W., Toronto, 1995), review, no. 2, 41-42.

Barber, Bruce  
"The Art of Giving," feature, no. 2, 21-28.

Doyle, Judith  
"The American Trip," (curated by Philip Monk, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, 1996), review, no. 4, 45-47.

Garneau, David  
Minquon Panchayat: "Doors,"

(Latitude 53, Edmonton, 1996), review, no. 5, 45-46.

Golden, Anne  
Cathy Sisler: "La Femme Écran/The Reflexive Woman" (curated by Nicole Gingras, Oboro, Montreal, 1996), review, no. 4, 38-40.

Harwood, Andrew  
"Juicy Fruit" (curated by John Massier, Koffler Gallery, North York, 1995), review, no. 2, 44-45.

Ingram, Gordon Brent  
"Public Art and Its Discontents: Urban Design and 'Public' Art on the Margins," column, no. 2, 11-13.

Jessup, Lynda  
"Art for a Nation?" column, no. 4, 11-14.

Lee, Robert W. G.  
General Idea: "Infe@tions, 1994," (S.L. Simpson, Toronto), review, no. 1, 32-33.

Maclear, Kyo  
"Flagging Cultures in Motion: Japanese Contemporary Art in the New World Order," feature, no. 3, 20-30.

Maskegon-Iskwew, Ahasiw  
"Native Love: Subverting the Boundaries of the Heart," (curated and developed by Nation to Nation, Saskatoon, 1996), feature, no. 4, 24-33.

McIntosh, David  
Pedro Alderete, "Call-777 Nganga," (Oliver Bolton Studio, Toronto, 1996), review, no. 5, 42-44.

Osborne, Catherine  
"From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices" (curated by Mimi Gellman, 179 John St., Toronto, 1996), review, no. 3, 43-45.

Richardson, Joan  
Ron Benner: "All That Has Value," (curated by Peter White, Edmonton Art Gallery, 1996), review, no. 3, 41-42.

Root, Deborah  
"If Only I Were An Indian," (directed by John Paskievich, 1995)  
Marilyn Burgess, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Rebecca Belmore: "Indian Princesses and Cowgirls: Stereotypes from the Frontier," (Oboro, 1995), review, no. 2, 46-47.

Root, Deborah  
"Ritual Practices: Projecting Art and

Magic Across Borders," feature, no. 5, 14-22.

Singh, Indu  
"Asian Heritage Month," (Toronto, May 1995), review, no. 1, 36.

Stevens, Caroline  
"AlterNative," (curated by Lynn Hill, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1995), review, no. 1, 34-35.

Young, Nora  
"Frieso Boning's 'Greatest Hits'" (curated by Jeff Gillman, St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, 1996), review, no. 5, 40-41.

Walcott, Rinaldo  
"Lament for a Nation: The Racial Geography of the "The OH! Canada Project," feature, no. 4, 15-23.

## Artist's Project

Aquino, Eduardo and Walter, Katherine  
"A Sign of Vandalism?," no. 1, 22-23.

## Asian Culture and Politics

Dhaliwal, Sarindar  
"The New Republics: Interview with Sunil Gupta," no. 5, 34-39.

Foo, Kuan  
"Paintings by J.J. Lee," (Pitt Gallery, Vancouver, 1996), review, no. 4, 43-44.

Maclear, Kyo  
"Flagging Cultures in Motion: Japanese Contemporary Art in the New World Order," feature, no. 3, 20-30.

Maclear, Kyo  
"Pop Goes the Grrrl: Japanese Bands Go Global," column, no. 5, 9-13.

Singh, Indu  
"Asian Heritage Month," (Toronto, May 1995), review, no. 1, 36.

## Black Culture and Politics

Ford-Smith, Honor  
"Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories," (by Olive Senior, McClelland and Stewart, 1995), book review, no. 1, 44-45.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America," (by Tricia Rose, Wesleyan University Press, 1994), book review, no. 3, 46-47.

## Books

Doyle, Judith  
"life and life support systems: zines, nets and outlets by artists—the late '70s and some now," feature, no. 5, 23-33.

Ford-Smith, Honor  
"Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories," (by Olive Senior, McClelland and Stewart, 1995), book review, no. 1, 44-45.

Ingram, Gordon Brent  
"Public Art and Its Discontents: Urban Design and 'Public' Art on the Margins," column, no. 2, 11-13.

Nadeau, Mary-Jo and Katarzyna Rukszto,  
"Issues of Race and Gender in Canadian Women's Writing," (Coomi S. Vevaina and Barbara Godard, eds., Creative Books, New Delhi, 1996), book review, no. 5, 47-48.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America," (by Tricia Rose, Wesleyan University Press, 1994), book review, no. 3, 46-47.

## Censorship

Carol, Elaine  
"The Chill Continues: Artists after Bill C-128," column, no. 1, 12-17.

Doyle, Judith  
"The American Trip," (curated by Philip Monk, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, 1996), review, no. 4, 45-47.

Folland, Tom  
"What's in a Name?: Critical Misreadings, Conservative Values and Rereading Victim Art," column, no. 2, 7-10.

## Culture and the Nation State

Crean, Susan  
"Now You See It, Now You Don't: Two Decades of Cultural Nationalism and the Arts in Canada," feature, no. 3, 13-19.

McIntosh, David  
"360 Degrees of Separation: Notes on Facts and Fictions of Self and Nation in the Recurring Quebec Referendum," feature, no. 2, 14-20.

Springer, José  
"Birds of a Feather: Canada, Mexico, NAFTA and Culture," feature, no. 3, 31-38.

## Curatorial Practice/Criticism

Folland, Tom  
"What's in a Name?: Critical Misreadings, Conservative Values and Rereading Victim Art," column, no. 2, 7-10.

Fung, Richard  
"Convergence 1996: The Aesthetic, Political and Ethical Issues in Cross-cultural Art," column, no. 4, 7-10.

Jessup, Lynda  
"Art for a Nation?" column, no. 4, 11-14.

Walcott, Rinaldo  
"Lament for a Nation: The Racial Geography of the "The OH! Canada Project," feature, no. 4, 15-23.

## Feminism

Golden, Anne  
Cathy Sisler: "La Femme Écran/The Reflexive Woman" (curated by Nicole Gingras, Oboro, Montreal, 1996), review, no. 4, 38-40.

Nadeau, Mary-Jo and Katarzyna Rukszto,  
"Issues of Race and Gender in Canadian Women's Writing," (Coomi S. Vevaina and Barbara Godard, eds., Creative Books, New Delhi, 1996), book review, no. 5, 47-48.

Root, Deborah  
"If Only I Were An Indian," (directed by John Paskievich, 1995)  
Marilyn Burgess, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Rebecca Belmore: "Indian Princesses and Cowgirls: Stereotypes from the Frontier," (Oboro, 1995), review, no. 2, 46-47.

## Film and Video

Curtis, Robin  
"Kanada in Berlin: Cultural Difference and the Function of the Festival," (Berlin Film Festival, 1996), review, no. 4, 35-37.

Golden, Anne  
Cathy Sisler: "La Femme Écran/The Reflexive Woman" (curated by Nicole Gingras, Oboro, Montreal, 1996), review, no. 4, 38-40.

Reinke, Steve  
"Corpus Loquendi: Body for Speaking-Body-Centred Video in Halifax 1972-82" (curated by Jan Peacock, Oakville Galleries, 1995), review, no. 1, 37-38.

Root, Deborah  
"If Only I Were An Indian," (directed

by John Paskievich, 1995)  
Marilyn Burgess, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Rebecca Belmore: "Indian Princesses and Cowgirls: Stereotypes from the Frontier," (Oboro, 1995), review, no. 2, 46-47.

Spires, Randi  
Inside/Out: "The Fifth Annual Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival of Toronto," (1995), review, no. 1, 39-41.

Tisch, Karen  
Film & Video News, no. 1, 8-9.  
Film & Video News, no. 2, 6.

Tulchinsky, Karen X.  
"Out On Screen: Lesbian And Gay Film/Video Festival, Vancouver," (1995), review, no. 1, 41-43.

## First Nation/Inuit Culture and Politics

Maskegon-Iskwew, Ahasiw  
"Native Love: Subverting the Boundaries of the Heart," (curated and developed by Nation to Nation, Saskatoon, 1996), feature, no. 4, 24-33.

Podedworny, Carol  
"New World Landscape: Urban First Nations Photography—Interview with Jeffrey Thomas," no. 2, 34-40.

Stevens, Caroline  
"AlterNative," (curated by Lynn Hill, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1995), review, no. 1, 34-35.

## Funding/Arts Organizations

Blades, Joe  
"Towards an Arts Policy in New Brunswick," Issues and Events, no. 1, 10-11.

Crean, Susan  
"Now You See It, Now You Don't: Two Decades of Cultural Nationalism and the Arts in Canada," feature, no. 3, 13-19.

Doyle, Judith  
"life and life support systems: zines, nets and outlets by artists—the late '70s and some now," feature, no. 5, 23-33.

McKenzie, Heidi  
"Braving the Storm: The Canada Council, the NEA and the Corporate Hurricane," column, no. 5, 5-8.

## Interviews

Dhaliwal, Sarindar  
"The New Republics: Interview with Sunil Gupta," no. 5, 34-39.

Podedworny, Carol  
"New World Landscape: Urban First Nations Photography—Interview with Jeffrey Thomas," no. 2, 34-40.

Tulchinsky, Karen X.  
"Out on a Limb: Chrystos Interviewed," no. 2, 29-33.

## Jewish Culture and Politics

Osborne, Catherine  
"From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices" (curated by Mimi Gellman, 179 John St., Toronto, 1996), review, no. 3, 43-45.

## Lesbian/Gay Culture and Politics

Golden, Anne  
Cathy Sisler: "La Femme Écran/The Reflexive Woman" (curated by Nicole Gingras, Oboro, Montreal, 1996), review, no. 4, 38-40.

Spires, Randi  
Inside/Out: "The Fifth Annual Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival of Toronto," (1995), review, no. 1, 39-41.

Tulchinsky, Karen X.  
"Out on a Limb: Chrystos Interviewed," no. 2, 29-33.

Tulchinsky, Karen X.  
"Out On Screen: Lesbian And Gay Film/Video Festival, Vancouver," (1995), review, no. 1, 41-43.

## Mass Media

McIntosh, David  
"The Lucite Box: Futurism, World's Fairs and the Phantom Teleceiver," column, no. 3, 6-11.

Treleaven, Scott  
"Straight Up," (CBC TV, 1996), review, no. 4, 41-42.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Kill, Kill, La, La, La: Pop, Punk and the Culture Industry," feature, no. 1, 24-31.

## Music

Genosko, Gary  
"Mommy-Daddy-Tommy: The Theatre of Family Values," column, no. 1, 18-21.

Maclear, Kyo  
"Pop Goes the Grrrl: Japanese Bands Go Global," column, no. 5, 9-13.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Kill, Kill, La, La, La: Pop, Punk and the Culture Industry," feature, no. 1, 24-31.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America," (by Tricia Rose, Wesleyan University Press, 1994), book review, no. 3, 46-47.

Young, Nora  
"Frieso Boning's 'Greatest Hits'" (curated by Jeff Gillman, St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, 1996), review, no. 5, 40-41.

## Performance

Barber, Bruce  
"The Art of Giving," feature, no. 2, 21-28.

Doyle, Judith  
"life and life support systems: zines, nets and outlets by artists—the late '70s and some now," feature, no. 5, 23-33.

Golden, Anne  
Cathy Sisler: "La Femme Écran/The Reflexive Woman" (curated by Nicole Gingras, Oboro, Montreal, 1996), review, no. 4, 38-40.

Root, Deborah  
"Ritual Practices: Projecting Art and Magic Across Borders," feature, no. 5, 14-22.

## Photography

Podedworny, Carol  
"New World Landscape: Urban First Nations Photography—Interview with Jeffrey Thomas," no. 2, 34-40.

## Pop Culture

Genosko, Gary  
"Mommy-Daddy-Tommy: The Theatre of Family Values," column, no. 1, 18-21.

Maclear, Kyo  
"Pop Goes the Grrrl: Japanese Bands Go Global," column, no. 5, 9-13.

Treleaven, Scott  
"Straight Up," (CBC TV, 1996), review, no. 4, 41-42.

Wodskou, Chris  
"Kill, Kill, La, La, La: Pop, Punk and the Culture Industry," feature, no. 1, 24-31.

Young, Nora  
"Frieso Boning's 'Greatest Hits'" (curated by Jeff Gillman, St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, 1996), review, no. 5, 40-41.



**GEIST** is home to the Honourary Canadian Awards, the Trans-Canada Phrase Book, the Canadian Mall Writing Competition, the Who the Hell is Peter Gzowski survey, and the very best in story, picture, essay, memoir, crossword, toon and little-known fact. In print since 1990. "A publication that is, in this country, inimitable." - *Toronto Star*



**GREEN TEACHER** is a forum for teachers and parents seeking to promote environmental and global awareness among young people from K to 12. It offers perspectives on the role of education in creating a sustainable future, practical cross-curricular activities, reviews of the latest teaching resources, and successful ideas from green educators.



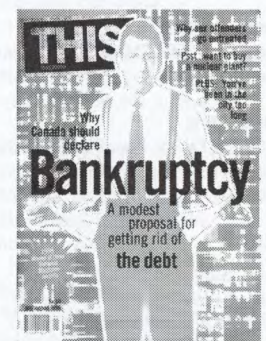
**NEW INTERNATIONALIST** magazine turns the issues inside out and explains what's really going on. It's the best guide to the major issues from the arms trade to AIDS, from human rights to hunger. Each month, *NI* tackles one subject, and gives you the facts and the arguments. To influence what's happening to you, you need to know what's going on.



**NEW MARITIMES** is regional politics, environment, labour, culture and history, all from a refreshing perspective. Regular columns on Maritime books, political economy and Third World issues. This bimonthly is a unique adventure in radical regionalism that, into its second decade, still refuses to bow to the powers that be.



One of Canada's hottest independent literary quarterlies, **SUB-TERRAIN** features the work of writers, artists and photographers from Canada, the US and foreign locations. Each issue is a stimulating fusion of fiction, poetry, graphic art, commentary and book reviews. "Eschews geography in favour of a borderless world" - *Vancouver Mag.*



**THIS MAGAZINE** is a 30-year-old national magazine of politics and culture. A 1996 winner of two gold and one silver National Magazine Awards for investigative journalism and political criticism. *This Magazine* prints fearless reporting, showcases groundbreaking literature, and critiques culture - high and low - with attitude, personality and style.

# BOAP

## BEST OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

Looking for an adventure in magazine reading?

Order a sample copy of the best of Canada's other press by simply filling out the request form below.

# BOAP

## REQUEST FORM

To place your order, please:

### 1/ Indicate the magazine(s) you wish to receive.

Alternatives	Briarpatch	Broken Pencil
Cdn. Dimension	Geist	Green Teacher
Herizons	Kinesis	Lat. Amer. Connexions
New City	New Internationalist	New Maritimes
Our Times	Outlook	Peace Magazine
Rung	Sub-Terrain	This Magazine

### 2/ Fill out your name and address.

name \_\_\_\_\_

suite no. \_\_\_\_\_ street \_\_\_\_\_

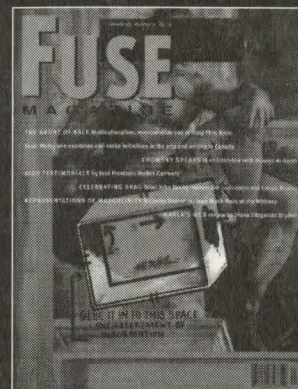
city \_\_\_\_\_ prov \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

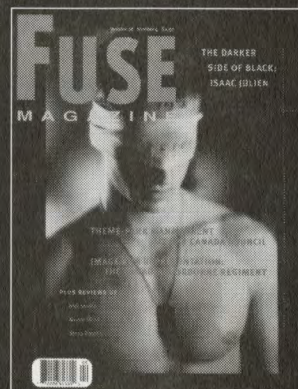
**3/ Calculate your payment.** The first magazine you request costs \$5.00, each additional magazine is \$2.50. For example, if you order three magazines, your payment would be \$5.00 + 2 x \$2.50 = \$10.00. GST is included. **Please make your cheque or money order payable to Chaos Consulting.**

**4/ Mail this form with your payment.** Send to: Chaos Consulting-BOAP, PO Box 65506, Stn F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5K5. **For inquiries only (no orders),** e-mail chaos@axionet.com or fax: (604) 875-1403.

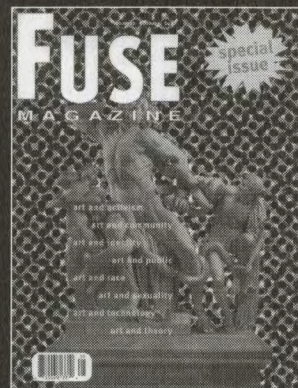
## USE THIS FORM TO ORDER FUSE



18.3



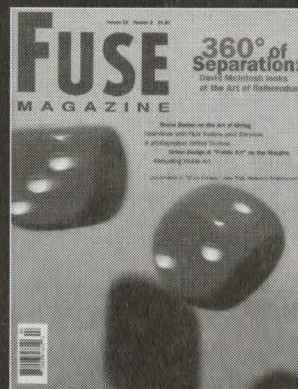
18.4



18.5



19.1



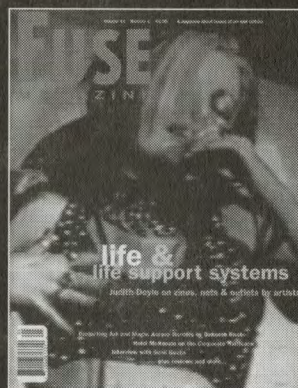
19.2



19.3

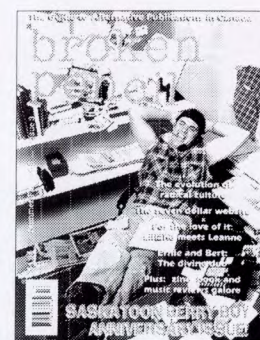


19.4

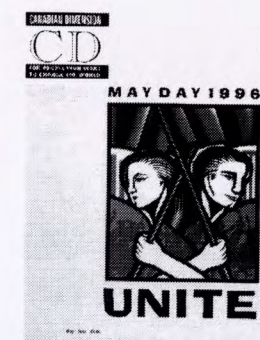


19.5

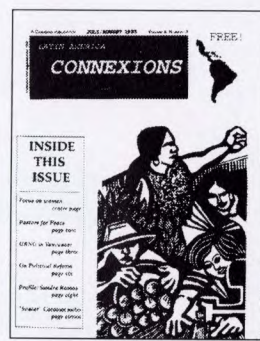
TO MAIL: FOLD ALONG THIS LINE AND USE TAPE TO SEAL EDGES.



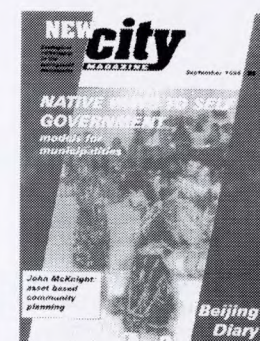
From political zines to hilarious comics, from small press books to indie music, **BROKEN PENCIL** maps the ephemeral world of independently produced Canadian culture. Featuring hundreds of reviews, interviews with creators, and excerpts from everywhere, *Broken Pencil* puts the reader in touch with the creators and their work.



Principled. Radical. Independent. For over 30 years, **CANADIAN DIMENSION** has been a place where activists can debate issues, share information, recount our victories and evaluate our strategies for social change. Our pages are open to all progressive voices - debate makes the movement stronger. And it makes for lively reading!



**LATIN AMERICA CONEXIONS/ CONEXION LATINA** provides commentary on the struggle for peace and justice in Latin America, and promotes a continent-wide, internationalist vision. This bilingual publication includes current accurate analysis of Latin American events, and information about resources, campaigns and organizations.



**NEW CITY MAGAZINE** believes in a distinct and sustainable Canadian urban culture and identity. Featuring articles, stories and histories about the city and its people, it is a critical forum on the modern city. *New City* strives to build a better understanding of urban maladies and the possibilities for change.



**PEACE MAGAZINE** is a multi-partisan voice for peace, conflict resolution and non-violence in our homes, in playgrounds and between nations. For over a decade, our magazine has been a forum on how to create a more peaceful and just world. "Your solace in conflicting times." - *Broken Pencil*



**RUNGH** means colour. *Rung* is a forum of critical commentary exploring contemporary culture and politics abroad and at home. *Rung* negotiates with a culture made out of the dilemmas, hopes and differences between the struggle against racism and other social movements for dignity, well being and emancipation.

the welfare of workers. *Our Times* is an excellent educational resource for those interested in labour issues. Don't miss out! Published six times a year.

Germany and Eastern Europe. Promoting peace in the Middle East and the world, *Outlook* supports multiculturalism and promotes self-determination of all peoples.



**GEIST** is home to the Honorary Canadian Awards, the Trans-Canada Phrase Book, the Canadian Mall Writing Competition, the Who the Hell is Peter Gzowski survey, and the very best in story, picture, essay, memoir, crossword, toon and little-known fact. In print since 1990. "A publication that is, in this country, inimitable." - *Toronto Star*



**GREEN TEACHER** is a forum for teachers and parents seeking to promote environmental and global awareness among young people from K to 12. It offers perspectives on the role of education in creating a sustainable future, practical cross-curricular activities, reviews of the latest teaching resources, and successful ideas from green educators.



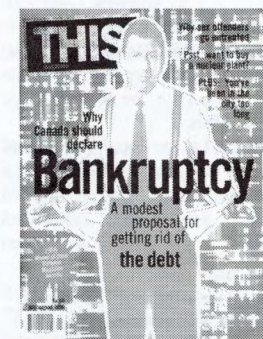
**NEW INTERNATIONALIST** magazine turns the issues inside out and explains what's really going on. It's the best guide to the major issues from the arms trade to AIDS, from human rights to hunger. Each month, *NI* tackles one subject, and gives you the facts and the arguments. To influence what's happening to you, you need to know what's going on.



**NEW MARITIMES** is regional politics, environment, labour, culture and history, all from a refreshing perspective. Regular columns on Maritime books, political economy and Third World issues. This bimonthly is a unique adventure in radical regionalism that, into its second decade, still refuses to bow to the powers that be.



One of Canada's hottest independent literary quarterlies, **SUB-TERRAIN** features the work of writers, artists and photographers from Canada, the US and foreign locations. Each issue is a stimulating fusion of fiction, poetry, graphic art, commentary and book reviews. "Eschews geography in favour of a borderless world" - *Vancouver Mag.*



**THIS MAGAZINE** is a 30-year-old national magazine of politics and culture. A 1996 winner of two gold and one silver National Magazine Awards for investigative journalism and political criticism. *This Magazine* prints fearless reporting, showcases groundbreaking literature, and critiques culture - high and low - with attitude, personality and style.



## BEST OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

### Looking for an adventure in magazine reading?

Order a sample copy of the best of Canada's other press by simply filling out the request form below.



### To place your order, please:

#### 1/ Indicate the magazine(s) you wish to receive.

Alternatives	Briarpatch	Broken Pencil
Cdn. Dimension	Geist	Green Teacher
Horizons	Kinesis	Lat. Amer. Connexions
New City	New Internationalist	New Maritimes
Our Times	Outlook	Peace Magazine
Rungh	Sub-Terrain	This Magazine

#### 2/ Fill out your name and address.

name \_\_\_\_\_

suite no. \_\_\_\_\_ street \_\_\_\_\_

city \_\_\_\_\_ prov \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**3/ Calculate your payment.** The first magazine you request costs \$5.00, each additional magazine is \$2.50. For example, if you order three magazines, your payment would be \$5.00 + 2 x \$2.50 = \$10.00. GST is included.

**Please make your cheque or money order payable to Chaos Consulting.**

#### 4/ Mail this form with your payment.

Send to: Chaos Consulting-BOAP, PO Box 65506, Stn F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5K5. **For inquiries only (no orders)**, e-mail [chaos@axionet.com](mailto:chaos@axionet.com) or fax: (604) 875-1403.



## VOTE FOR THE ISSUES

#### INDIVIDUALS

- FUSE me for 1 year (save 25%)  
5 issues for \$20, includes GST (\$24 US outside Canada)
- FUSE me for 2 years (save 45%)  
10 issues for \$32, includes GST (\$38 US outside Canada)

#### INSTITUTIONS

- 1 year for \$32, includes GST (\$38 US outside Canada)
- 2 years for \$47, includes GST (\$55 US outside Canada)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVINCE/POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

- Send an additional \_\_\_\_\_ year gift subscription to:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVINCE/POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

- Enclosed is my cheque or money order for \_\_\_\_\_ subscription(s) plus \$6.00 for each back-issue ordered, for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

OR:

- Charge my Mastercard for the total \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Number \_\_\_\_\_
- Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_
- Signature \_\_\_\_\_

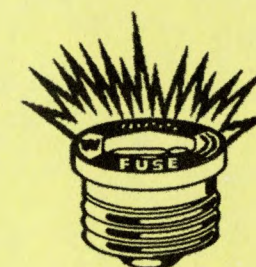
TO ORDER BY PHONE CALL (416) 340-8026

the welfare of workers. *Our Times* is an excellent educational resource for those interested in labour issues. Don't miss out! Published six times a year.

Germany and eastern Europe. Promoting peace in the Middle East and the world, *Outlook* supports multiculturalism and promotes self-determination of all peoples.

decade, our magazine has been a forum on how to create a more peaceful and just world. "Your solace in conflicting times." - *Broken Pencil*

made out of the dilemmas, hopes and differences between the struggle against racism and other social movements for dignity, well being and emancipation.



# FUSE

## FUSE yourself

to the only magazine in North America that deals with art and culture without avoiding the issues.

"FUSE pokes my coals and provokes my soul. FUSE is gas for my cultural turbines, fuel for my critical furnace.

FUSE is a magazine by artists for artists."

— John Greyson

Director of award-winning film *Lilies*



**GEIST** is home to the Honorary Canadian Awards, the Trans-Canada Phrase Book, the Canadian Mall Writing Competition, the Who the Hell is Peter Gzowski survey, and the very best in story, picture, essay, memoir, crossword, toon and little-known fact. In print since 1990. "A publication that is, in this country, inimitable." - *Toronto Star*



**GREEN TEACHER** is a forum for teachers and parents seeking to promote environmental and global awareness among young people from K to 12. It offers perspectives on the role of education in creating a sustainable future, practical cross-curricular activities, reviews of the latest teaching resources, and successful ideas from green educators.



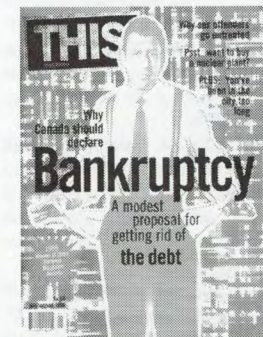
**NEW INTERNATIONALIST** magazine turns the issues inside out and explains what's really going on. It's the best guide to the major issues from the arms trade to AIDS, from human rights to hunger. Each month, *NI* tackles one subject, and gives you the facts and the arguments. To influence what's happening to you, you need to know what's going on.



**NEW MARITIMES** is regional politics, environment, labour, culture and history, all from a refreshing perspective. Regular columns on Maritime books, political economy and Third World issues. This bimonthly is a unique adventure in radical regionalism that, into its second decade, still refuses to bow to the powers that be.



One of Canada's hottest independent literary quarterlies, **SUB-TERRAIN** features the work of writers, artists and photographers from Canada, the US and foreign locations. Each issue is a stimulating fusion of fiction, poetry, graphic art, commentary and book reviews. "Eschews geography in favour of a borderless world" - *Vancouver Mag.*



**THIS MAGAZINE** is a 30-year-old national magazine of politics and culture. A 1996 winner of two gold and one silver National Magazine Awards for investigative journalism and political criticism. *This Magazine* prints fearless reporting, showcases groundbreaking literature, and critiques culture - high and low - with attitude, personality and style.

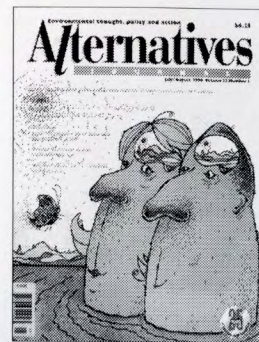
FUSE MAGAZINE  
401 RICHMOND ST W SUITE 454  
PO BOX 15357 STN BRM B  
TORONTO ON M7Y 2W1

01897373 -M5V3A8-BR01

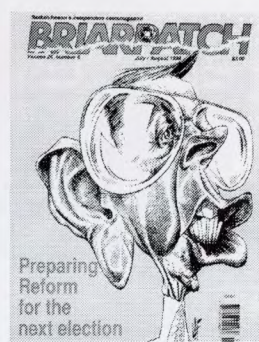


MAIL POSTE  
Canada Post Corporation  
Société canadienne des postes  
Postage paid  
Port payé  
if mailed in Canada  
Business Reply  
Réponse d'affaires  
01897373 01

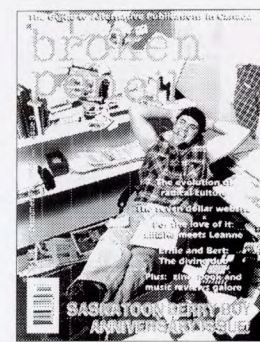
Send to: Chaos Consulting-BOAP, PO Box 65506, Stn F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5K5. For inquiries only (no orders), e-mail chaos@axionet.com or fax: (604) 875-1403.



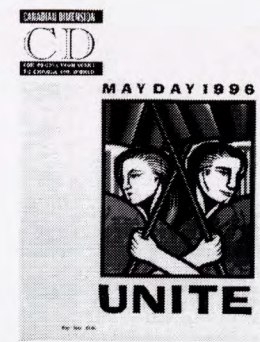
**ALTERNATIVES** is Canada's foremost environmental journal since 1971. Thought-provoking articles go beyond band-aid solutions to consider concrete alternatives for those interested in politics, unions, the environment, women's rights and international affairs. We publish articles the mainstream media won't touch. Ten times a year.



**BRIARPATCH** is Saskatchewan's award-winning political magazine which provides an alternative view on issues and events in Canada and the world. Essential reading for those interested in politics, unions, the environment, women's rights and international affairs. We publish articles the mainstream media won't touch. Ten times a year.



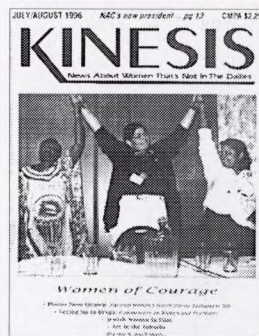
From political zines to hilarious comics, from small press books to indie music, **BROKEN PENCIL** maps the ephemeral world of independently produced Canadian culture. Featuring hundreds of reviews, interviews with creators, and excerpts from everywhere, *Broken Pencil* puts the reader in touch with the creators and their work.



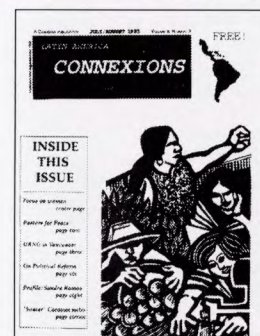
Principled. Radical. Independent. For over 30 years, **CANADIAN DIMENSION** has been a place where activists can debate issues, share information, recount our victories and evaluate our strategies for social change. Our pages are open to all progressive voices - debate makes the movement stronger. And it makes for lively reading!



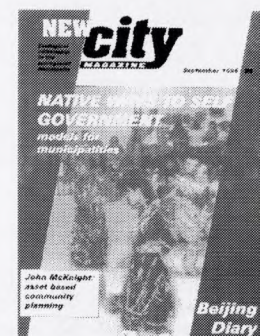
As Canada's largest national feminist magazine, **HERIZONS** explores women's health issues, the law, work and culture, and entices readers with provocative reviews and columnists. Unabashedly feminist, *Herizons* is written in a way that is relevant to the daily lives of women. Canada's much-needed answer to *Ms.*



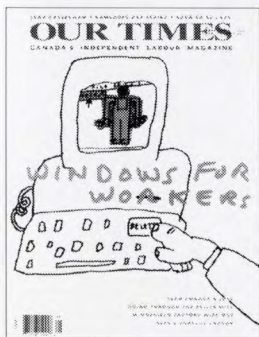
An indispensable news source and Canada's foremost feminist newspaper, **KINESIS** takes you where the dailies don't bother going. Through investigative reports, timely interviews, cultural affairs and national/international news, *Kinesis* provides a fresh look at what women are thinking - and doing - about their lives.



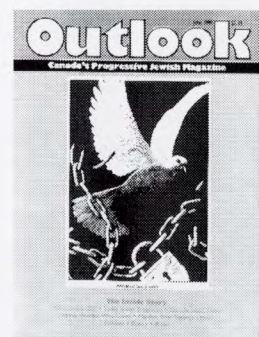
**LATIN AMERICA CONNEXIONS/ CONEXION LATINA** provides commentary on the struggle for peace and justice in Latin America, and promotes a continent-wide, internationalist vision. This bilingual publication includes current accurate analysis of Latin American events, and information about resources, campaigns and organizations.



**NEW CITY MAGAZINE** believes in a distinct and sustainable Canadian urban culture and identity. Featuring articles, stories and histories about the city and its people, it is a critical forum on the modern city. *New City* strives to build a better understanding of urban maladies and the possibilities for change.



**OUR TIMES** is Canada's pro-labour magazine. Each issue features voices of union and community activists across the country who are concerned with the welfare of workers. *Our Times* is an excellent educational resource for those interested in labour issues. Don't miss out! Published six times a year.



**OUTLOOK** provides a Jewish secular-humanist perspective on political and cultural issues. It features original articles, stories, and reviews by writers from Canada, the USA, Israel, France, Germany and Eastern Europe. Promoting peace in the Middle East and the world, *Outlook* supports multiculturalism and promotes self-determination of all peoples.



**PEACE MAGAZINE** is a multi-partisan voice for peace, conflict resolution and non-violence in our homes, in playgrounds and between nations. For over a decade, our magazine has been a forum on how to create a more peaceful and just world. "Your solace in conflicting times." - *Broken Pencil*



**RUNGH** means colour. *Rungh* is a forum of critical commentary exploring contemporary culture and politics abroad and at home. *Rungh* negotiates with a culture made out of the dilemmas, hopes and differences between the struggle against racism and other social movements for dignity, well being and emancipation.

# WARNING:

**MORE PEOPLE HAVE GRANTA STOLEN  
FROM THEIR HOMES THAN ANY OTHER MAGAZINE**

## TEN REASONS TO STEAL GRANTA:

### 1. FICTION

T. Coraghessan Boyle, Martin Amis, Louise Erdrich, Richard Ford, Isabel Allende, Allan Gurganus, Jayne Anne Phillips, Italo Calvino, Margaret Atwood, Don DeLillo, Kazuo Ishiguro, Paul Auster, Tim O'Brien.

### 2. POLEMIC

Germaine Greer on Cuban women, Günter Grass on the German character, Gore Vidal on God, Martha Gellhorn on why she will never return to Germany, Neil Steinberg on the tragedy of spelling bees.

### 3. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Ivan Klíma on his childhood—in a Nazi concentration camp, John Updike on his stutter, Richard Rayner on his former life as a petty thief, Mary Karr's horrifying 'Grandma Moore', two murderers on what it's like to kill.

### 4. FIRSTS

Salman Rushdie's first statement after going into hiding; the first (and only), publication of Sappho Durrell's diaries revealing the dark side of her relationship with her famous father, Lawrence.

### 5. REPORTAGE

James Fenton on the fall of Saigon, Jonathan Raban on the flooded Mississippi, Amitav Ghosh on dancing in Cambodia, Helen Epstein on Aids in Africa, Nuha Al-Radi in Baghdad during the Allied bombing.

### 6. PHOTOGRAPHY

Gilles Peress in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Eugene Richards in a Denver emergency room, Mary Ellen Mark on Spring Break at Daytona Beach, Steve Pyke's portraits of the very, very rich.

### 7. TRAVEL WRITING

Bruce Chatwin's unpublished notebooks, Bill Bryson with fat girls in Des Moines, Redmond O'Hanlon in the Congo in search of the last dinosaur, Paul Theroux in the New York subways and in a Malawi leper colony.

### 8. REVELATIONS

James Ellroy on the sexed-up, drugged-out world of LA in the fifties, Ian Buruma on memory and forgetting at Buchenwald, Mikal Gilmore's story of growing up with a homicidal brother—Gary.

### 9. PRIZE WINNERS

Nadine Gordimer, Ben Okri, Gabriel García Márquez, Saul Bellow, William Boyd, Jeanette Winterson, Mario Vargas Llosa, Tobias Wolff, Tracy Kidder, Heinrich Böll.

### 10. DURABILITY

Ninety-two percent of our 80,000 readers never throw a single issue away, ever. That's why we print each 256-page issue of *Granta* on high quality, acid free paper with a striking full-colour cover—it's meant to last.

## ONE REASON TO SUBSCRIBE

### 1. YOU SAVE 30%

You'll save over 30% from the cover price with this offer. (Each issue of *Granta* sells for \$13.99 in bookshops.) Besides, stealing could get you into trouble.

'*Granta*: the most highly praised paperback magazine... the praise is deserved.'  
—*New York Times Book Review*

'If there is a document of our time, *Granta* is it.'  
—*Spin*

'An exciting index of the freshest international writing.'  
—*Newsweek*

## SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Enter my subscription to *Granta* at the special introductory rate of only **\$43.50**CDN (includes GST) for one year. I'll receive four 256-page issues and save over 30% from the price in bookshops. **Guarantee:** If I am ever dissatisfied with *Granta*, I can cancel my subscription, and *Granta* will refund me for all unmailed issues.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ Province/ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

A7BFUD

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed.\*

Check  
(\$43.50CDN on CDN bank or \$21.95US on a US bank)

Am Ex  MC  Visa  Bill me.

Card no. \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Credit cards will be charged at US\$ rates.  
Please allow 4 - 6 weeks delivery.  
Rates outside of Canada:  
USA \$21.95 US,  
Mexico/S.America \$28.95 US,  
Rest of World \$39.95 US.

## GRANTA

**Return:** Granta US Offices  
250 West 57th St.,  
Suite 1316  
New York, NY 10107 USA  
**Telephone:** (212) 246 1313  
**Fax:** (212) 586 8003  
**Web:** <http://www.nybooks.com>

