

FUSE

MAGAZINE

SPRING 1991 Vol.14 No.4

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Gay Bell on Jude Binder's *Broken Bough*

THE NEW JERUSALEM in two and a half minutes
by Marlene Nourbese Philip

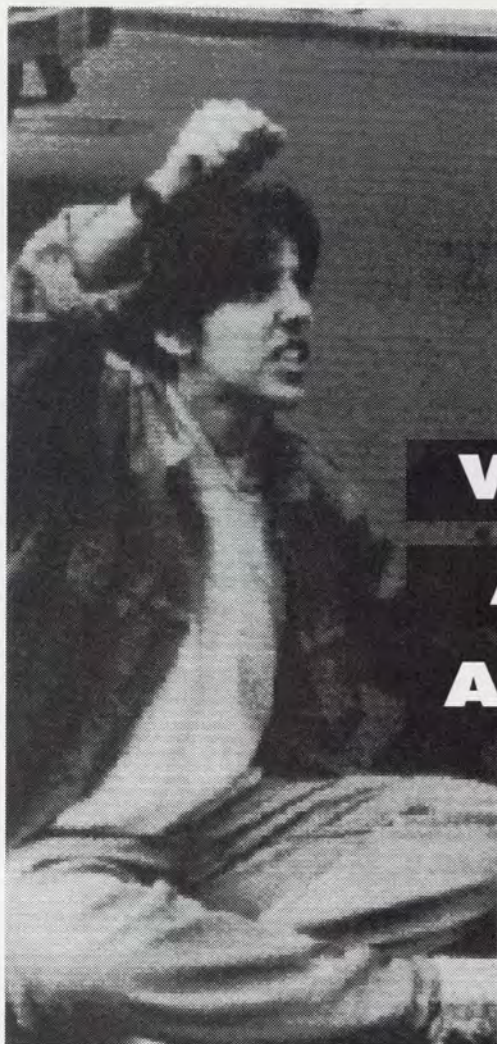
SUNIL GUPTA
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Sapphic Scenes

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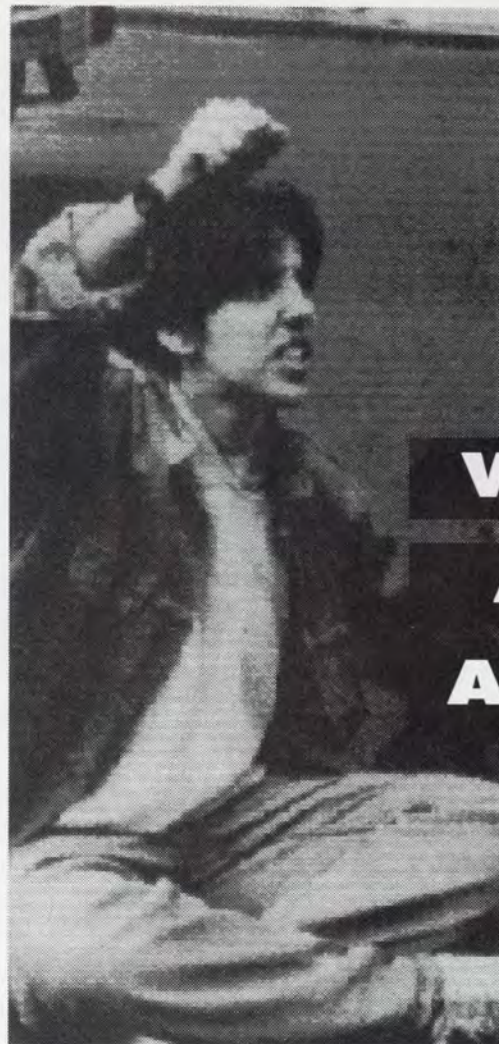
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letters

TO THE EDITOR:

Re: Andrew J. Paterson's article "Get This Guy Out Of Here" in the last issue of *FUSE* (14:3). I missed the point. The article was devoted to reciting a story about an admittedly unfortunate incident involving a CityTV camera operator at the close of *Healing Images* and ending with the revelation that "A Bunch of Feminists" did indeed have credibility at CityTV since they received an apology from the news director.

A couple of points that the writer failed to mention. CityTV covered numerous events produced by the collective in a sensitive and professional manner; more coverage than by another station in Toronto. Employees of CityTV, myself included, attended some of the presentations, assuring the collective that there was interest and regard for what they were doing.

The big picture, to me, would say that the collective had lots of credibility with lots of people at CityTV long before a letter was mailed. Paterson's inference that the credibility of the collective could be jeopardized by one camera operator's opinion is insulting.

Healing Images was an important event which should have had as much positive coverage as possible. It is unfortunate that that opportunity was missed in Paterson's article.

Susan Fairbairn

ANDREW J. PATERSON RESPONDS:

One cameraman's opinion that the credibility of the Bunch of Feminists collective would be non-existent at CityTV is in fact an insult to those at the station who provided extensive and sensitive coverage of *Healing Images* events. The cameraman's behaviour—in the context of a performance evening specifically dealing with violence against women—raises critical issues of media respect and sensitivity. The fact that an event's existence is known to the media does not make that event media or "public" property.

DEAR FUSE:

The reason I am not renewing my subscription is as follows:

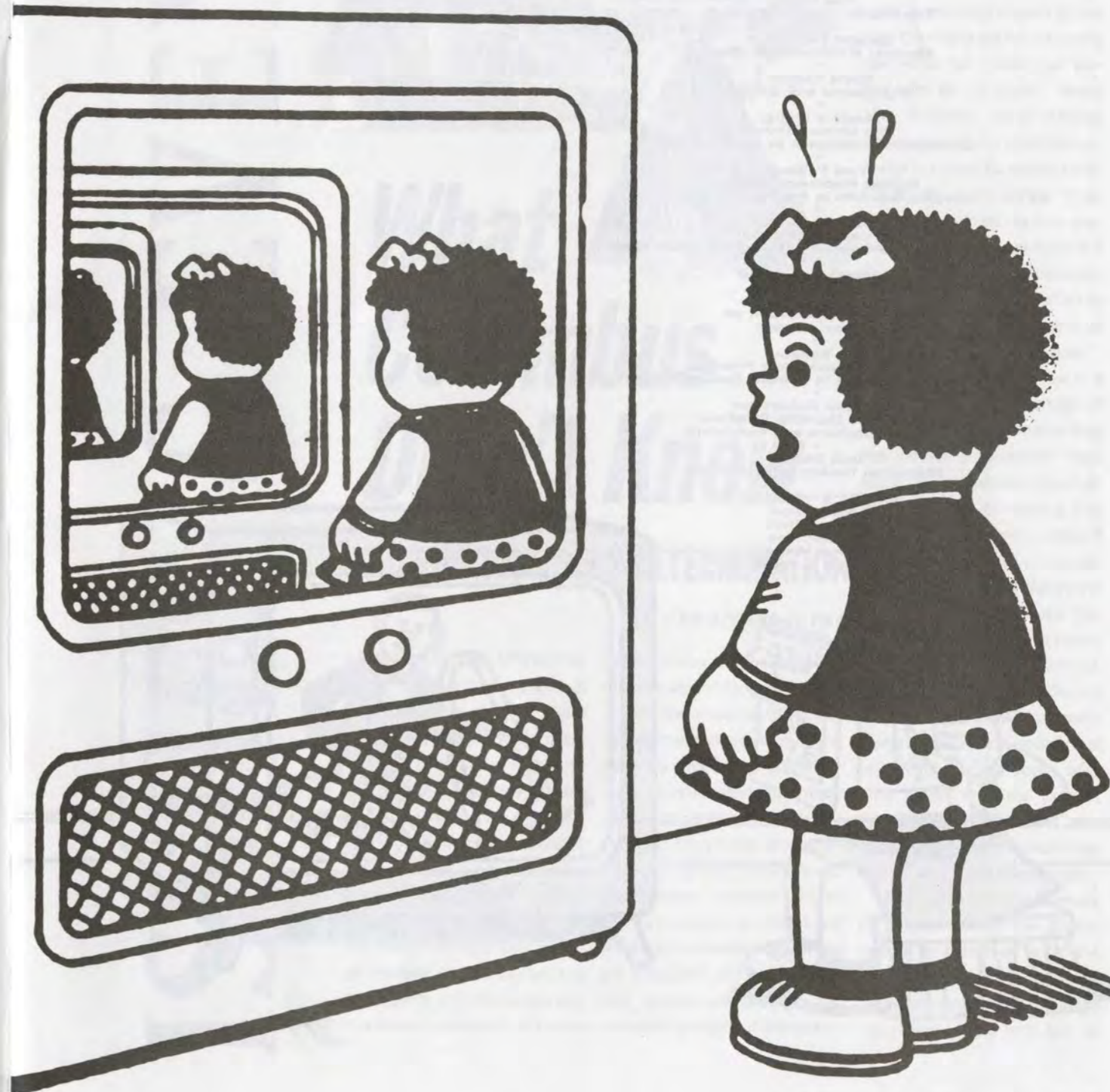
I am increasingly bored and frustrated by "artspeak." If I have to crack open the dictionary on every paragraph, just to understand that the article is saying art-making should be non-elitist, there is surely something wrong. Also, allowing rebuttals to letters to the editor, in the same issue as the letter, discourages me from writing in with my views. A hapless offerer-up-of-opinion becomes fodder for the sacred gristmill of political correctness. In short, *FUSE's* holier-than-thou attitude and use of language has lost me as a reader. I don't disagree with the opinions stated in *FUSE*, simply the way they are presented.

This is unfortunate, because there is much I like about the magazine. I like knowing what's happening across the country. The news articles are usually informative. *FUSE* is visually well-presented. It contains great information about grants and competitions. And for the most part its politics are right on. However, at this time, reading *FUSE* leaves me more angry than fulfilled.

Sincerely, Shawna Dempsey

erratum

The spelling of Dôre Michelut's original name was incorrect in the review of *Linked Alive* by Roberta Morris (*FUSE* 14:3, 42). Dôre Michelut's name, before the name change, was Dorina Michelutti, and her first poetry book, *Loyalty to the Hunt*, was published under that name.



POP CULTURE

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Ejaculatory Television:
The Talk Show and the Postmodern Subject

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The Phallic Gaze of the Sun

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Movies: A Wheelchair View

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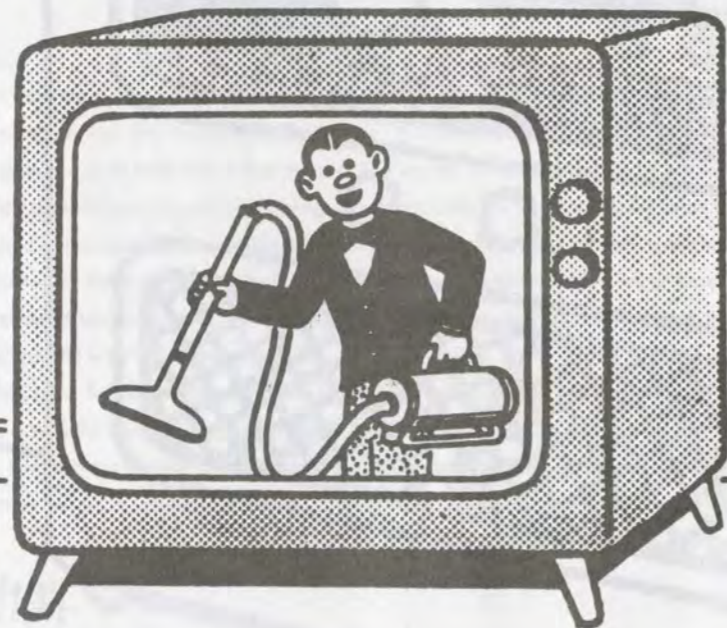
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The Lesbian Subtext in Female Buddy Movies

Kathleen Robertson
We Buried Dorothy Stratten:
Punk Subculture and Feminism

Jack Waters
Madonna: Having It Both Ways

ARTIST'S PROJECTS

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ISSUES & EVENTS

SYMPOSIUM



What Columbus Didn't Know

FIRST NATIONS SELF-DETERMINATION

BY GREG YOUNG-ING

IN THE OMINOUS AFTERMATH of the "Mohawk Crisis" and amid dangling federal government promises of major public policy changes in favour of Aboriginal peoples, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the University of Toronto co-hosted a Self-Determination Symposium during October 1-3, 1990. Held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the symposium brought together approximately 600 delegates and participants who discussed various issues, concerns, and impli-

cations surrounding the realization of self-determination in Canada. With one of the main purposes behind the symposium being to generate understanding and dialogue, representatives from many segments of Canadian society, including the private sector, unions, ethnic groups, churches, and the academic establishment, as well as municipal, provincial, and federal governments, were among the delegates and participants. The symposium proceedings consisted primarily of three panel

discussions with question and answer periods, each lasting the better part of a day's agenda.

Chief Maurice LaForme began the first day of proceedings welcoming everyone onto the traditional territory of the Mississauga Nation. Professor Chamberlin then welcomed the participants on behalf of the University of Toronto, expressing support by noting, "Columbus did not discover a new world, but established contact with an old world." Finally AFN National Chief George Erasmus made his opening comments in a powerful address stating, among others things, "It absolutely befuddles me how people can think that, because of a few missionaries, bureaucrats, and a few documents drafted by someone else, we would give up the sovereignty of our people."

Proceedings then turned to a panel discussion on the topic of "Sources of Power: What is First Nations Self-Government?" Inuit leader John Amagoalik kicked off the discussion proclaiming that "the source of power doesn't come from the crown or the constitution, but from our history and from the Creator"—a point that was reinforced by Gordon Peters in his presentation that followed. Representing the Native Council of Canada, Alberta Indian leader Dorris Ronnenburg added that while First Nations power originally comes from the Creator, International Covenants and Section 35 of the Constitution can be sources of power today.

John Tait from the Department of Justice outlined the government's perspective citing the constitution and recent Supreme Court decisions and admitting that "aboriginal people have lost re-

spect for the federal government," while adding that "working together, I am confident that we can do it." Other panellists included representatives from the Ontario Native Directorate, Osgoode Hall, and the University of Alberta. The presentations ended on a less moderate note with Ben Michell from the Innu Nation. Expressing the opinion that "since Canada will only listen if its economic base is threatened, the confrontation must proceed," he urged, "Do not be afraid to be criminalized." After a question and answer period, day one of the symposium closed with a keynote address from Yukon government leader Tony Pennikit calling on Ottawa and the provinces to recognize aboriginal rights.

David Joe, an Indian lawyer from the Yukon, opened the second day with an elaborate keynote address. Outlining his experience in negotiating the Council of Yukon Indians (CYI) land claim, he provided insight into a number of issues related to self-government and aboriginal rights. That day's panel, "Sharing Power: How Can First Nations Self-Government Work?" commenced with Allen Paul, former Chief of the Alexander First Nation, who drew an analogy between the self-government movement and "a sleeping bear that has to be dealt with when it wakes up."

On behalf of the Canadian Labour Congress, Dick Martin remarked that power sharing can only be based on good faith, but he said, unfortunately, "Indigenous institutions have been suppressed by the institutions of the Canadian state." Representing the provincial government of British Columbia, Eric Denoff's presentation which followed ad-

mitted the province's "approach to power sharing has been characterized by stubbornness" but, he added, "There is a new recognition that self-government would be beneficial to the province."

Other panellists included representatives of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Queen's University, and the University of Colorado.

The third and final day of the symposium featured the panel "Implementation: Making First Nations Government Happen." The panel got underway with a presentation by Victor Mitander outlining the CYI land claim negotiations while pointing out that "like the Quebec Cree and Naskapi the federal government is keen to devolve responsibilities to communities, but less keen to devolve the necessary resources." Gail Stacey-Moore, NWAC speaker, followed focusing her remarks on the traditional roles of aboriginal women in First Nation matrilineal societies and how those roles have been undermined by gov-

ernment policy and legislation. Dan Christmas then spoke on behalf of the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, stressing that Micmac government finds its basis in aboriginal and treaty law, not parliamentary authority.

Another highlight was Bill Erasmus's presentation outlining the Dene Nation land claim experience and criticizing the federal government for its insistence in holding onto absolute authority. He noted, "There has been no serious dialogue on sovereignty. . . . Sovereignty works in the American context and the U.S. is still there." The final panel also featured presentations from representatives of Carlton University, the University of Victoria, and Noranda Forest Products.

The symposium ended with closing remarks from chairperson George Watts and National Chief George Erasmus. His frustration visible, Watts warned, "We are headed on a collision course. . . . I am convinced that bloodshed will occur if Indian Affairs does not change its course of action." Erasmus then summarized the events of the three-day

symposium and specifically stressed the need for First Nations women to help develop a vision. Exhibiting a more moderate tone, he closed by emphasizing negotiation as the preferred means of achieving self-determination in order that "we never have the kind of confrontation that nobody wants."

All in all, a great deal of sharing of ideas and promotion of understanding arose out of the symposium. In light of the success of this landmark event, symposium coordinator Rose-Anne Morris has reported that AFN is planning to hold a similar gathering in the future to further advance the essential discussion of how First Nations self-determination will manifest itself in Canada.

Greg Young-Ing is a member of the Pas Indian Band (Cree Nation—Treaty 5) in Manitoba. He has worked with the Aboriginal Youth Council of Canada, the National Indian Education Forum, the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women's Association of Canada, and as co-producer of *Spirit Voice*, a weekly Aboriginal radio program on CKCU-FM in Ottawa.



PREMIER BOB RAE SPEAKING AT THE SELF-DETERMINATION SYMPOSIUM



Hester & Gulabi AT THE VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL Writers Festival

BY JENNIFER GIBSON AND SHANI MOOTOO

THE RAIN SPLASHED DOWN in pellets. Hester, who was visiting from Toronto, felt mascara collecting in dark canals, filling the smile lines of her face with black Revlon ink. She and her friend Gulabi were standing in the line-up outside the What Else But Seafood Restaurant. The last event of the *Vancouver International Writers Festival* had just ended. They had attended almost all 39 events. Even though it had been raining all day, Gulabi appeared dry, a characteristic evident in all natives of Vancouver, Hester noticed. Moisture seeped through the soles of her shoes and soaked her woollen socks.

Gulabi, delighted to have been able to show off her city's festival to this Torontonian, confidently said, "So it was worth coming for, wasn't it!"

Hester raved on and on about the beauty of the city, the mountains, and the fresh vegetables. Somewhat impatiently, Gulabi interrupted, "Yes, yes, but what about the festival?"

As the waitress escorted them to a window table overlooking Granville Island Hester couldn't help but compare her recent experience of attending the *Toronto Authors Festival* with this one.

Hesitantly, she ventured, "Oh, I don't know. It was so intimate.

So Canadian. So Vancouver, grassroots, you know, really quite different from the one in Toronto."

"Oh? What do you mean?"

"Oh well, you know, in Toronto they light the thing. It's very theatrical."

"Eh?"

Gulabi, not really being concerned with differences, was unaware that this was an opening. Hester was warming to her subject.

"Take Greg Gatenby for instance. Now there's a man who really knows how to put on a show. He had famous writers from around the world read at his festival. People like Rumer Godden, Françoise Gilot, Marrian Wigg. . ."

Gulabi pulled her face back into her neck. She was taken aback. She felt personally attacked. This was not Toronto. This was Vancouver! "Now just a minute. Notice you said 'his' festival. Well Alma Lee knows the heart of the Vancouver audience and, as its director, I think she's given us a festival that's very much suited to our character."

"Well you've just about summed it up, haven't you! I

mean, enough said."

The conversation was becoming acrimonious and the menus hadn't even arrived.

"This was a people's festival," Gulabi snorted, "not Ms. Lee's personal statement. Besides, Gatenby is a megalomaniac, a potentate Richard Ford is rumoured to have called him."

"Of course he is. But one must have that kind of personality to get things done. At the festival in Toronto he. . ."

Gulabi, sensitive to the implied criticism of a foreigner, snapped, "Things that work in Toronto don't necessarily work in Vancouver. People out here are much more easygoing than they are back East. We'd be repulsed by all that glitz. In B.C. we have the largest percentage of readers in Canada. . ."

"Yes, yes. I know what you mean, all those hippies and draft dodgers who flocked to the West and struck it well." Hester paused and then added, "And read a great, great deal."

"Whatever," Gulabi snapped, cutting her off. "We naturally shy away from the insincerity of flash."



But even as she huffily straightened her sweater over her lumberjack shirt, she began to feel vaguely disconcerted that the pillars of her festival were W.O. Mitchell, Richard Ford, and two giant orange pencils that stood outside the Festival Centre. Gulabi continued, "I overheard Francis Wasserlein, the box office manager, say that 95 per cent of the projected revenue was achieved. There were nine sold out events and ticket sales were up 16 per cent. I think that alone speaks for itself!"

Sensitive, aren't we! Hester thought to herself.

Gulabi carried right on. "I'd say what really characterised this festival was the prominence of First Nations writers like Maria Campbell, Thomas King, and Lee Maracle. Did you know that the First Nations Cabaret, with performances by writers, storytellers, and musicians who presented traditional and contemporary Native stories about creation and the present, was sold out? They turned away enough people to have filled the room twice over. There were also forums discussing the use/misuse of Native expressions, symbolism, and translations."

Hester could only recall hav-

ing seen one Native person reading at the Toronto festival and decided not to continue with this tedious, petty, comparison business. She changed the subject. "I'm going to have one of those Granville Island lagers, if that girl can ever be persuaded to come over here."

Gulabi caught the waitress's eye. She was not ready to leave the festival behind so soon.

"I just loved Pira Sudham's talk," she said. "He was in the 'Voices From Around The (Pacific) Lake' event. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize, you know, and he..."

"He was what?! That wasn't in the program! If I'd known that he was a Nobel nominee I'd have gone for sure!"

Gulabi continued as if she hadn't been interrupted. "Sudham talked about why he wrote in English. He said that his native Thai was the language of his oppression. He won a scholarship to an English-speaking university in New Zealand where a most memorable event occurred. He was asked to write a paper that began 'In my opinion...' He had never been asked for his opinion in his own country, Thailand, where independent thought is discouraged. English, at that instant, became

the language of his freedom."

Hester wasn't really listening. "If only they had said in the program that he was a Nobel nominee. I collect autographs, you know! How frustrating. Oh well, at least I got W.O. Mitchell's. That was nice."

They had to raise their voices to compete with the growing noise of the restaurant as it filled up. The waitress set down a beer in front of Hester and a glass of uncarbonated B.C. spring water for Gulabi.

"I must say," Hester continued, feeling that now was a time to be positive, "I did enjoy that South African storyteller, Gcina Mhlophe."

"Me too, me too! That was definitely the highlight of the festival for me too!"

"That poem, the one she performed at the end of the storytelling event, was rich with rhythm and vibrant imagery, wasn't it! It was about how long ago her mother had been a wedding dancer and how she herself had learned to dance. But that now the only big events in South Africa were funerals and the only dancers were funeral dancers. Her energetic performance and the words of the poem itself reflected so clearly her passion for the struggle of her people in South Africa."

"And we would never even have heard it if that kid in the audience hadn't asked her to recite one of her poems."

Hester hadn't liked all the kids in the audience. She wasn't comfortable with kids and nothing in the program had prepared her for the fact that the daytime festival was targeted at them. At times, surrounded by busloads of students and harassed teachers, she

felt as though she had stumbled upon a writers festival for children, which in part it was.

"Gulabi, did you think that it was a good idea to have all those kids there?"

"Gosh, yes! I hear that placing an emphasis on weekday, daytime programming for children was the organizers' response to this being the Year of Literacy, you know, fostering book awareness in children, etc. 2600 children visited events this year compared to 1900 last year! I do think it was an excellent idea, but I must say it wasn't thoughtfully executed. In some events there were children ranging in age from six to 16. A 16-year-old wouldn't exactly be interested in the same type of presentation of a subject for a six-year-old. Luckily Richardo Keens-Douglas peppered a few events.

He has a way, in a single performance, of catering to everyone—the nine-year-old who giggles at the word 'fart,' the 15-year-old whose attention is held with cool-dude-type dialect, and the tourist who remembers a particular calypso, as if it were the only one ever sung, in the old days when the West Indies was 'the' place to go for a holiday. The perfect profile of a people pleaser, but we won't get into the psychology of that. But take the case of Bonnie Krepps. First 'Romance and Reality' was presented to an audience of young teenagers and it was later put on for a group of jaded adults. Feminists! And radical ones at that! But the presentation was basically the same. The premise of her book, *Subversive Thought and Authentic Passion*, is that the myth of romantic love is a lie, which is a dreadful thing to say to young people who are notoriously 'romantic.' Needless

to say the students were incensed. But the adults nodded hungrily for more. Gosh, I myself, inflicted at times with little thought, much passion, and one heartbreaking relationship after another, went out and bought the book."

Hester thought guiltily of the Harlequin she had tucked away in the bottom of her bag and wondered uneasily what category this put her in.

It was with desire not to appear foolish that she then seized upon one of the catch phrases she had heard used to describe the festival. "They say," she began, wondering who "they" were, "that this festival was a multicultural event and I personally feel that's wonderful." Hester, at this point, was hoping to impress Gulabi, a Trinidadian immigrant of East Indian descent.

Gulabi didn't fall for this. And although she didn't like being placed in the position of being critical of the festival, she personally felt that multiculturalism came dangerously close to racism. Bringing people together because they have dark skin and slanty eyes is not terribly intellectual. She had wondered, for example, what possible reason Fred Wah, Evelyn Lau, and Jude Narita had for being on a panel together other than they were all Asian Canadians. And as she recalled, Fred Wah had expressed the same doubts. A lot of good this multiculturalism business is doing, Gulabi thought, remembering a chance encounter outside the Festival Centre with W.O. Mitchell. Upon seeing her dark skin, he immediately asked her what the most difficult part of learning to speak English was for her. And after informing him that she was originally from Trinidad, he in-

sisted on hearing her experience of coming to Canada and dealing with a new language.

The waitress had just arrived. "The catch of the day is Hawaiian Tuna grilled with fresh herbs, served with steamed organic vegetables."

Hester and Gulabi ordered.

As if by mutual agreement, the two women moved on to another subject, but not before Hester, who liked to have the last word if she possibly could, stated self-righteously, "It's very easy to criticize this sort of thing, Gulabi. But I want you to understand that I really did enjoy the festival."

Gulabi, who hadn't really criticized much at all, felt it best not to comment. Perhaps, she thought, her friendship with Hester was what really needed evaluating, not the festival, which overall she quite enjoyed.

Jennifer Gibson is a freelance journalist who recently moved from Toronto to Vancouver.

Shani Mootoo is an artist and writer living in Vancouver.



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QueerPress!

NEW LESBIAN & GAY BOOK PUBLISHER OPENS IN TORONTO

QUEER PRESS is a new, non-profit, community publishing corporation that has recently been started in Toronto. The press exists to publish the work of queer authors, poets, playwrights, and artists. The publishers' vision is to support people who have historically been marginalized and silenced, and give voice to the grassroots communities. Although there are other "alternative" publishing companies, and many lesbian and gay presses in the U.S. and several in Britain, there isn't a single one in Canada. Gynergy (Charlottetown), for lesbians, gets hundreds of manuscripts each year, and they only have the resources to publish four. Presses like the Women's Press (Toronto), Sister Vision (Toronto), and Press Gang (Vancouver) publish lesbian books, but only one or two a year. Publishing venues for gay men are even scarcer. Stubblejumper Press, for gay men, closed a couple of years ago.

Queer Press' first book is about lesbian and gay survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Regan McClure, a founding member of Queer Press, says about the press' choice of this topic, "We don't want to be the rearguard of

the movement, writing about the issues when they're already history. We wanted to challenge the communities, and make some noise." The book itself will be set up in two segments. The larger component will be people's testimonials and life stories; the other will be community responses, legal issues, issues of counselling, and analysis of things like multiple personality, responses from lovers, friends, and family, and ways in which queer communities can respond to survivors and deal with them.

Possible future publications include a children's book, an anthology of First Nations lesbians and gays, some Canadian plays, a queer cuisine cookbook, a collection of writing by lesbians and gays with AIDS, and a Canadian queers cartoon collection. Queer Press is also considering unsolicited manuscripts.

Anyone interested in donating money, becoming a member, submitting manuscripts, volunteering, or (outside of Toronto) being a regional representative should write to Queer Press, Box 485, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T1, or call (416) 516-3363.

—Info: Queer Press

Someone Hume happens to be...

TORONTO STAR WRITER LOSES HIMSELF IN REFLECTIONS ON BLACK ART

BY NANCY CHATER

Toronto Star columnist Christopher Hume fails to recognize that not only does all art have a politic, so does all art criticism. This is evident in his review of three very different exhibitions connected to Black History Month ("Reflections on black history & artists," *Toronto Star*, Feb. 15/91). Laden with deeply political assessments, he contradictorily touts the best art as that which "transcends the merely political." Working within this "transcendent" critical framework, Hume determines, for example, that it is laudable to "acknowledge white racism" but "without anger or bitterness," as a show of historical photographs of African-Canadians manages to

do by "dwelling almost exclusively on the positive."

Given the brutal history of racism in this country, that is a pretty tall order, and one that only a defensive white perspective would dare to demand. As a white reader and artist myself, I was angry that by lumping together three divergent exhibits and applying a single set of criteria (regardless of whether they were art, history, or art-historical), a false hierarchy was set up and each show was stripped of its own context and intent. Is this a case of all Black art and history looking the same?

Hume's criticisms of the group show *Black Women and Image at A Space Gallery* were erroneous

and dangerous. Despite the clear title, he bemoans the absence of the Black male, overlooking not only the focus on Black women but downplaying the fact that two of the contributing artists are Black men. The contemporary issue of the representation of Black women is far-reaching and important but he dismisses it as "narrowly political." Even worse, by suggesting that the only Black male represented is a rapist, he critically misrepresents that the rapist depicted in Karen Augustine's piece is white, and by so doing Hume replicates the myth of the Black rapist. What kind of perspective is it that sees a Black rapist when none exists? In an act

of sexism on Hume's part, a strongly analytical text about the stereotypical images of Black women portrayed in a series of photographs is labelled "querulous." Finally, he claims that the show takes the women "out of the larger context." What are male violence, damaging stereotypes, and the devaluation of Black female beauty if not part of the larger context of white-dominated culture?

In the context of Black History Month and Hume's own acknowledgement of the commonly overlooked fact of African-Canadians' contribution of some 380 years, it is more than ironic that his personal favourite of the three exhibits is the work of Roland Jean, a male Haitian artist, who, Hume reports, is "trying to create works that are specifically Haitian." This reads as yet another example of Black cultural production being less threatening and more acceptable to whites when it is situated as "from elsewhere" and exoticised. With all due respect to the artist, it is significant that Hume credits him with producing work that "happens to be by a black artist" rather than the "black art" he deems inferior because too mired in politics. Given that Hume himself notes the "tiny number of African-Canadian artists represented in the gallery system," one can ask: Is that because they produce "Black art" or because they "happen to be Black"? Either way, it is racism with which they contend.

In conclusion I ask: Is this white male criticism or criticism by someone who happens to be white and male?

Nancy Chater is a white feminist writer and activist living in Toronto.



short fuse

It's Really a Red Herring

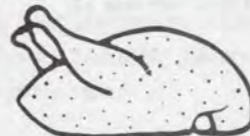


Sound Familiar?

The queasy-stomached folks in Ottawa are at it again. *FUSE* readers will recall that last year National Revenue Minister Otto Jelinek declared that some Canada Council grants (in particular, one to theatre group Buddies in Bad Times) made him want to throw up. Felix Holtmann, chairman of the House of Commons Culture Committee and a former pig farmer, has recently developed an aversion to meat, at least the kind that is now hanging in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

Montreal artist Jana Sterbak has come under attack for her 1989 sculpture "Vanitas: Flesh Dress for An Albino Anorexic" which is part of her solo exhibition entitled *Jana Sterbak: States of Being* on view at the National Gallery from March 8 to May 21. The sculpture has been criticized as wasteful because it is made from 50 pounds of flank steak sewn together to resemble a dress. The meat will be replaced once during the course of the exhibit as it dries up and falls off the dress form. Holtmann recently warned that his committee has "the power to recommend the withholding of funds (to the National Gallery)." (*Toronto Star*, Apr. 7/91) With increasingly less government money going to social services and cultural institutions, Holtmann's comments can only appear as a handy excuse for a Conservative government that cares as much about culture as it does about poverty.

Of the criticism that it is inappropriate, during a time of increasing shortages at food banks, for the gallery to display \$300 worth of rotting meat, Sterbak has simply argued that there is an abundance of food in Canada and the problem, thus, is with distribution. The solution: More food and money to food banks and Bromaseltzer all around for the bureaucrats in Ottawa!



Artists in Mexico recently gathered for the Second National Encounter of Mexican Artists held February 28 to March 3 in Queretaro, a city three hours from the capital, Mexico City. 150 artists from all over the country came to voice their needs to the Mexican Art Society (SOMART), an organization roughly comparable to ANNPAC in Canada. Despite its expressed desire to be a cooperatively-run group of artists struggling for their rights, the nature of Mexican society has meant that most SOMART activities focus on the capital. Conference representatives from various parts of the country complained of poor communication and many shared concerns that the organization needed to do more to promote regional development through such steps as regional exchange exhibitions. Other concerns included the need to guarantee artists' rights within the often abusive gallery system, which prioritizes a folkloric type of art from the provinces, not allowing artists to reflect their current reality. The problems of political repression and racism also surfaced in discussions, as well as the government's manipulation of the arts through its sponsorship of paternalistic national monuments.

—info: Jacquie Pery

Old attitude

At the conference held recently at York University in North York, Ontario (March 4, 1991), *The Contemporary Curator: New Attitudes and Criteria*, Power Plant curator Richard Rhodes demonstrated some decidedly old attitudes when, in response to a question concerning gender differences, he declared that we all see with the same eyes and have the same brain. Speak for yourself, Richard Rhodes!

Customarily OBSCENE

Toronto's Glad Day Books, which specializes in gay and lesbian publications, had 60 titles seized by Canada Customs during March and April in the most intense period of their long battle with Canada Customs and Excise. *Now Magazine* reports (Apr. 13-20/91). Customs and Excise saw fit, however, to clear *American Psycho*, the controversial book by U.S. writer Bret Easton Ellis, declaring it not in violation of Criminal Code section 159(8) on obscene literature. Spokeswoman Diana Adams stated, "[T]he controversy roused our professional interest." (*The Globe & Mail*, Mar. 26/91)

American Psycho contains graphic depictions of sadistic torture and murder of women and other people not held in high esteem by the novel's protagonist and, apparently, by the people at Canada Customs and Excise: "You reek of... shit... Do you know that? Goddamn AI, look at me and stop crying like some kind of faggot," I shout... I quickly wipe the blade clean across his face, breaking open the muscle above his cheek. Still kneeling I throw a quarter in his face which is thick and shiny with blood, both sockets hollowed out, what's left of his eyes literally oozing over his lips... I whisper calmly, 'There's a quarter. Go buy some gum you crazy fucking nigger.'" (*American Psycho*, excerpted in *Vanity Fair*, March 1991)

What doesn't routinely "rouse" Custom and Excise's interest is the safe sex and erotic literature destined for Glad Day Books but never making it there because it is detained as obscene.

American Psycho is being boycotted by the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization of Women.



Governmental OBSCENITY

While groups like AIDS Action Now! have for years been trying to secure basic civil liberties for people with AIDS and HIV infection, promote accurate and useful safer sex education, fight for access to drugs, and combat discrimination against PWAs, the Ontario government has simply gone to court and asked a judge to forbid a London, Ontario man from engaging in sexual intercourse, even if his partner is informed of his HIV status and consents. The man had refused, reasonably enough, to comply with written notice from Dr. Doug Pudden, London-Middlesex medical officer of health, ordering him not to engage in sexual intercourse and to provide health authorities with a list of his sex partners over the previous year. The government asked, and got, a judge to invoke the order, made under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Cooler heads did prevail. Stephen Manning of the AIDS Committee of Toronto said that the government's plan is "irrational and insane... The state shouldn't be mandating sexual activity. If a person wants to have sex with an HIV-infected person and knows about the condition, it's not the state's business to prevent them." The intervention should take the form of instruction or educational programs, he advised. (*Toronto Star*, Apr. 2/91)

Six women are alleged to have had sexual intercourse with the man and subsequently became infected with HIV. An article in the *Toronto Star* on April 6, 1991 claimed that for the last two years provincial health authorities have been trying to stop the spread of AIDS in women. What have they been doing—locking them up?



Video News

Toronto: *Living With AIDS*, organized by video artist Michael Balsler, has been cancelled by Rogers Cable 10. In a letter to Balsler, Ed Nasello, a Rogers Cable 10 program manager states, "I have taken *Toronto: Living With AIDS* off of the Rogers Community 10 schedule." Why? What were his reasons for axing the most important cable show ever in Toronto's history? Perhaps some safer-sex scenes were too risky for Mr. Nasello. Those how-to condom-on-hard-cock scenes. Guess again. Nasello's reasons were "... men French kissing and the caressing of thighs. I found the scene to be offensive." Is Nasello homophobic? Does the Pope wear funny hats? It gets worse, as Nasello continues in his letter to Balsler, "Rogers Community 10 will not continue to telecast any television show that, in our opinion, is in bad taste."

The videotape which pushed Rogers' Nasello over the top is *BOLO! BOLO!* by Toronto media artists Gita Saxena and Ian Rashid. This video addresses issues of HIV and AIDS in the South Asian community. I have viewed *BOLO! BOLO!* and there are no explicit scenes of sexuality, no views of genitalia. The tape is, however, loaded with information about the South Asian community, about its sexuality, and about its societal conventions. My guess is that this is what offended Rogers' Nasello: information about sexuality from one of the many communities this country tries to ignore. *BOLO! BOLO!* is a very good tape. I recommend



STILL FROM *BOLO!BOLO!* BY GITA SAXENA AND IAN RASHID

Nasello resigns from his position as program manager as he is clearly out of touch with today's (or even yesterday's, for that matter) standards of "public taste." If you are outraged by the silencing action, please write to Rogers Cable, 855 York Mills Road, Don Mills, ON, M3B 1Z1.

The Canada Council, almost escaping the slash-and-burn budget-cutting maniacs in Ottawa (they got cut by \$280,000), has decided to discontinue its videotape fund. When the fund was operating, video artists could apply for up to six blank tapes to assist in defraying some of the costs associated with video production. The fund was administered on a first-

come-first-served basis and at the discretion of the arts officer in charge. It's difficult to get too excited about this particular issue, but, I think, all artists should keep track of arts funding programs which are axed during this Conservative government's current frenzy.

Speaking of lost programs, the Department of Supply and Services (DSS) has suspended its support towards non-theatrical film and video productions. This came as a shock to the documentarians and video producers who were in the process of applying to the DSS. Marcel Masse, the minister in charge of Communications (including the

non-theatrical film and video fund), has not released the specific reasons for the drastic action. This fund, which has been operating for a couple of years, was beginning to play an important role in independent video productions. From video producers, frozen out of any hope of any Telefilm funds, the DSS accepted proposals, for either film or video, as does the Ontario Film Development Fund's non-theatrical program.

After four years I'm taking a break from writing this column to pursue other interests. Keep reading *FUSE* for the best coverage of video in any arts magazine. I know I will. Bye. KT.

BY KIM TOMCZAK



Scene from *Jude Binder's Broken Bough*. Photograph © 1990 Tyler Cather

WHAT IF THE CHILDREN CAME OUT OF THESE PHOTOGRAPHS AND SPOKE TO US?

Jude Binder's Playhouse

MOTHER JONES, LEWIS HINE & THE MARCH OF THE MILL CHILDREN

BY GAY BELL

JUDE BINDER works in theatre, dance, and mask in rural West Virginia where she started the Heartwood Dance Center. She writes theatre pieces, directs them, and trains children to perform in them. Once a year she visits her sister in Toronto and recently I got a chance to hear about her work.

Jude started out with extensive training in ballet but the standard ballet roles for women—"stories about royalty, fairy tales, women who were as light as air with no substance"—did not interest her. A class in New York by Maya Plisetskaya from the Bolshoi Ballet (U.S.S.R.) made Jude remember what she did like about ballet—the discipline, beauty and communication.

After her experience with her childhood idol, she began to study other forms of highly disciplined theatre—dance, mime, and clown technique. The women in the Wallflower Dance Order introduced her to the use of sign language and martial arts, and they helped her to understand that personal experience and political belief were legitimate material for theatre.

Congruent with her development as a dancer was her development as a visual artist—through painting and drawing, into sculpture, woodcarving, and mask-making. In 1984, Jude learned to make masks out of cloth which are suitable for theatre work because the cloth masks, along with being individually made to the

performer's face, are lightweight and so comfortable that a performer can do anything in them.

Broken Bough, a piece Jude created with 14 local children about child labour in turn-of-the-century U.S.A., started with a book of photos that a commune member had left behind as a gift.

"I opened it up and there was this little boy. He had a face that gripped me. There was more than poverty in this boy's face. The expression in his eyes was that of resignation, a look that some old people have. And there were black smears all over his face. His nose looked like a clown nose because, of course, red in black and white photos reads as black. . . . His hands were on his hips and he had these gigantic gloves on. His

body was twisted and I thought it looked like he was standing cockily, one hip raised up high, which didn't go with his look of resignation.

"I found out, through subsequent research and finding more photographs of this boy, that in fact he had a terrible curvature of the spine, that it wasn't a cocky stance at all, that the boy had been injured working in the mines."

These photographs were by Lewis Hine. He had been hired by the National Child Labor Committee in 1908 to document labour abuse, first in the tenements and sweatshops of New York City, and then across the U.S.

When Jude started doing research she found that adults in a family were fired and their children hired because the children could be paid 20 cents a day to do the same work. This was a result of the Industrial Revolution when, for instance, people were needed to change the bobbins on a machine, and a child could do it as well as an adult. But the machines were incredibly dangerous. They would tie ropes around the girls' skirts to prevent them from being pulled into the machines. Photos of the girls with their hair pulled back looked sweet, but their hair was tied back so that it didn't get caught. Little girls could be scalped by those machines.

Jude noted that, world-wide, wherever there was the opportunity to exploit children or the exploitable, it was done. Nothing has ever been done about it until a federal government is forced to take a stand and pass legislation to protect the exploitable. It was the objective of business interests to keep the attention of the federal government away from

these abuses. In individual states, business interests had more control because a manufacturer could say, "If you legislate against child labour practices here we'll go to another state."

What they say now is, "If you legislate against abuses, we'll leave the country." It's the same thing. During the Reagan and now during the Bush years, regulation of industry has been pulled back more and more.

Jude looked at these photographs of child labourers by Lewis Hine and thought, What if these pictures came to life? What if the children came out of these photographs and spoke to us, spoke to children? That was in 1974. It wasn't until 1989 that she wrote for a grant from the Humanities Council of West Virginia.

Jude had been long familiar with the American folk hero Mary Harris, who was a descendant of Irish immigrants to Canada. After losing her husband, George Jones, and her four children to a yellow fever epidemic in Tennessee and later, a small dressmaking business in the Great Fire of Chicago, she became penniless, homeless, and jobless. On call to unions, she travelled all over the U.S. and into Mexico organizing strikes.

In her autobiography, Mary Harris Jones has a whole chapter on child labour and another on the March of the Mill Children. Also she had decided that people should call her "mother" and that a mother represented everything in society that child labourers were not being given—a nurturer, a guide, a protector. Jude knew then that the character of Mother Jones was perfect for the piece which was beginning to take form in her head. So, with permission from Charles H. Kerr, publisher of

Mother Jones' autobiography, Jude lifted scenes right out of the book for her play.

One of the scenes, for example, concerns a mill strike in Pennsylvania, in which child mill workers were mutilated and sick with tuberculosis. Mother Jones organized a march with the children that took them across Pennsylvania up into New York State to Oyster Bay where then President Teddy Roosevelt had his summer home to convince (unsuccessfully as it turned out) the President that the issue of child labour had to be dealt with on a federal level.

The March of the Mill Children garnered public attention. However, they did not get to see the President. Roosevelt's secretary sent a letter saying the federal government could not help, that it was an issue for the individual states; but according to Jude Binder, "In her ever-hopeful, never-to-be-defeated attitude, Mother Jones told the children: 'The letter drops us down as they think, in a manner which disarms us, but I serve notice that the matter is not dropped here.'" That is the last line of the play and the children stay on stage doing a slow-motion pantomime of the work they'd always been doing.

As she prepared this play, Jude realized she needed to keep it from being maudlin. She wanted to make people think. She went first to Bertolt Brecht. He had used slides. She used slides to project statistics, starting with the first factory that was opened in the States by Samuel Slater. He was called the Father of American Manufacturing and he had employed children. The last slide was of stats from 1989 stating that there were over 2,000 known

cases of child labour in the U.S. and that 500 sweatshops were busted in New York City in that one year.

Brecht had used slides and songs to create a break with reality and with theatrical illusion—his "alienation effect." She decided to try to achieve this effect through the use of songs and masks, as well as slides. She has the adult characters played by child actors, with adult actors above them on a platform who do the speaking for the adult characters. The children who come out of the photos became the adults by putting on masks. The audience sees the mask of an adult and hears the voice of an adult, but underneath the mask, is little Perly Turner as she is in Lewis Hine's photograph. In that way, the children become spokespeople for themselves when they portrayed the adults who had abused them.

From participating in or seeing *Broken Bough*, Jude hoped that children would be sparked to understand that history is the history of children as well as of adults. She found out that compulsory school attendance was initially mandated to protect children from

being exploited on the labour market. She first did a short play on this theme at a school in rural West Virginia. She asked the students if they knew they were in school to protect them from having to go to work. And of course all of them said, "We'd rather go to work!" But, said Jude, after going through the testimonies of children who had worked and after seeing the photographs, they were more sober in the way they approached this issue. "They deserve a perspective. Children deserve to know the reasons why things are the way they are."

WVPB, West Virginia Public Broadcasting, taped hours of rehearsals which they called *Act Up: The Story of a Performance*. The tapes are available through educational broadcasting to teachers across the U.S. and internationally to be used to encourage teachers to include the performance arts in the classroom. Producer John Nakashima can be reached at WVPB, 191 Scott Ave., Morgantown, West Virginia, U.S.A., 26507.

Gay Bell is a popular educator and cultural worker in Toronto.



Photograph © 1990 Tyler Cather

INTERVIEW WITH

FRANK CHIPASULA

AYANNA BLACK

This interview is the second in a series conducted by Ayanna Black. The first interview, with West Indian British poet James Berry, appeared in *FUSE* 14:1&2, 18-19.

IN CONTEMPORARY MALAWI, literary censorship is harsh and pervasive. For example, poet Jack Mapanje, author of *Chameleons and Gods* (Hineman, 1981), was victim of such a system, waiting in Mikuyu prison until his recent release (May 10, 1991) after almost four years of imprisonment. According to *Index On Censorship* 6/83, "The censorship board scrutinises everything printed within, or seeking to enter Malawi. . . . The censorship board has a systematic 'index' of banned books."

I believe that political ideology and the decision to activate that ideology is ultimately innate and personal, and we bellow fully on its pain and risks. As Frank Chipasula articulates in his introduction to his long poem "NightWatcher, Nightsong": "I had almost choked on a silence that is familiar to our people. It was a different poem to write, in many ways, yet I had to break out of that vicious snell of silence."

Chipasula is a Malawian dissident, poet, editor, and fiction writer. He has been living in the United States for the last 13 years. He received his PhD at Brown University and now teaches Afro-American Literature in the U.S.

Chipasula is a prolific writer. His published books of poetry include *Visions and Reflections* (National Educational Company of Zambia, 1982); *O Earth, Wait for Me* (Ohio University Press, 1984); *When My Brothers Come Home: Poems From Central and Southern Africa* (Wesleyan University Press, 1985); and the long poem *NightWatcher, Nightsong* (Paul Green, 1986). His work has been anthologized and published in many journals and magazines.

In his article "First Word" (*Index On Censorship* 2/87), Chipasula quotes Pablo Neruda: "But before they chain all men, before they make all men cower in terror, they hunt down the writer and the singer."

AYANNA BLACK: You have been in exile now for 13 years in the States. Can you tell me what it has been like for you?

FRANK CHIPASULA: In the States, I have maintained a low profile to be able to do my work. That does not mean that I have always been comfortable. I have been homesick. As you can see from my poems I am always writing about home, so living in the United States hasn't distanced me from writing.

Black: Being a writer and being censored—what is it really like to know your work is being censored?

Chipasula: Well, what the writing censorship does to a writer, at least in my own situation, is that I become a censor in the end. So that, as I write, I'm always conscious of the fact that this work may become objectionable to some people. So I do the work of the censorship boards, in exile. And that is very, very difficult. Let me give you an example—this must have happened in 1975. I had accepted an anthology manuscript of Malawian poetry when I was working as an assistant editor in a publishing house (in exile). And

I was about to recommend it for publication, but suddenly a message came from home saying, "Stop, we can't go ahead with the project because we are afraid to be published." Well, I have family at home. So I am very careful as to what I say, except once in a while—I can't be careful all the time—I make a statement and do not know what that will do. In fact, I've been shying away from general interviews for a long time because any statement that I make might endanger people at home.

Black: Are you still in danger? Chipasula: Well, I don't invite trouble. I know they are there looking for people. I have a small kid and I want very much to raise him. I have to be careful. I can't say because I am in the States that I'm safe. Nobody is safe any more.

Black: Is there any internalized anger? And, how do you come to terms with it?

Chipasula: I think there is. If you have been silent for a long time, of course, being caught down there, what I do is write.

Black: You said that you had to learn to be a censor. The fact that you are censoring yourself in your writing, how can you release that anger?

Chipasula: Well, if you look at some of my writings they are very angry, you know. I don't think that I could completely repress that anger. Somehow some of this comes out. It is very hard to keep it inside. . . . There's a poem that I have been working on which is based on several events at home. One of them was the killing of about four ministers—members of parliament. Now you might say that those people were part of the system, but killing is killing and everybody in Malawi could be a minister today, tomorrow and could be killed. There is another poem called "A Monument to a Tyrant." The idea is that the poets should build monuments, whether for tyrants or for people who are

being killed—it is really a way of remembering whatever has been happening. Because, we have to come back one day and review the whole history of dictatorship. So you know you can't complete repress that kind of anger. It will always come back. . . .

Black: At what age did you realize that you would be a writer?

Chipasula: In fact when my first book came out, it was strange because I'd never met a live Malawian writer before. And I thought I was doing something abnormal, you know. So it was exciting and it was also a source of problems.

Black: What motivated you to be a writer?

Chipasula: I started writing at 15 so I couldn't tell you what motivated me. But I remember I wasn't a person who talked much. So I probably wanted to say things but I couldn't verbalize and writing seemed to be a way of trying to get my ideas across.

Black: Is it correct to say that you became aware of the struggle at the age of 15?

Chipasula: Much younger, you know. We were singing songs of freedom I think at age 12.

Black: Can you relate that struggle to the South African people's struggles?

Chipasula: Yeah, of course. For instance, when I was growing up, my people told me that when my mother asked me to go and buy bread, I did not buy that bread through the main door of the grocery store. I had to go around the back where we bought bread through a pigeonhole. Africans had to buy bread, or whatever they wanted, through this pigeonhole. Well, there was division by colour, which is the notion of apartheid. So even if you didn't know what was wrong in the country, you were subjected to all these restrictions. South African youth experience the same kind of thing. . . . Some of those kids, by the way, are children of Malawian mine workers.

Because mine workers are not allowed to bring their wives, they develop relationships with South African women. So, some of those kids are Malawian children dancing and demonstrating. When they chant I can hear something of my own background. . . . A lot of South African whites live in Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where my family lives as miners. These people want Black servants and they treat them in the same ways that their brothers and cousins treat South Africans. In Malawi you find a lot of South Africans, especially after independence when (Prime Minister) Dr. Banda established good ties with South Africa. Of course, it is a Black government so there is no problem with apartheid systems. But, what has developed is a kind of elitism. There are, of course, a few private schools and these charge exorbitant fees. Now the regular common people who would like to send their children to such schools cannot afford the fees. So you may say that is apartheid in disguise. You have clubs, exclusive clubs, where you have to be a professional who has money in order to be a member. So you can say class and race operate, maybe in conjunction in that case, to keep some of us out of these things. But to tell you the truth, not many people want to join these organizations because our culture is not included. So you find Indian clubs which are exclusive, you find white clubs which are also exclusive. I say it is more dangerous than it was before independence. White people are protected and we hate them for that. Any one of us can be bundled to detention any day. Just like the the Black people in South Africa. If the policemen come to your house, they don't come to protect you—you know that.

Black: The political unrest in your country was termed a tribal war. Do you agree?

Chipasula: No, it wasn't tribal. The situation in Malawi, I don't know how to put it simply. You see, soon

after our independence, there were young and very bright ministers who had disagreement with the Prime Minister, Dr. Banda. His way of solving the problem was to sack three of the ministers; then three resigned from their positions in sympathy. I mean, it was young people against their old man who thought they knew everything. So it wasn't really tribal, what happened. There were seven people belonging to each tribe who took advantage of their contact with him (Dr. Banda) and, of course, pushed for a tribal monopoly in the government and other institutions. So after that you can say the situation became tribal, but initially it wasn't. I am saying this because there were a lot of people from the north, who had no tribal hostility against the man himself. It is just that he (Dr. Banda) is a dictator and we don't want a dictator in the country. He has killed and continues to kill. I know that in the West they usually view this kind of situation as tribal.

Black: Do you consider yourself an activist?

Chipasula: I don't want to become an activist. I am a poet and I see my role as being very small in singing the troubles of my country. If someone is inspired by my work then I've done my part. So if you want to call that political activism, then maybe.

For me, literature has a powerful impact on developing awareness and for political mobilizing. And if you think about what happens in Angola or Mozambique for instance: people can recite my poems, throw away the manuscript or take it home, sing it somewhere, recite it somewhere, and other people get the message. And this has happened, you know. Someone will read a poem and know who wrote the poem. I've been told that. Some of my books have reached the country (Malawi). They are banned books but somehow they got there and the people know how to circulate them.

Black: Do you think that poetry can

bring about social change or do you write for liberating yourself and for celebrations?

Chipasula: Well, there's a poem of mine which I wrote out of Malawi characters and traditions. The first one came out of an interesting situation. I had a dream and I saw clearly in the dream a very old man dancing himself into youth. He was in the process of transformation—rejuvenation, preparing himself for war. Now in the Malawi, we wouldn't miss the message. So maybe that is the freedom I have. I can use that as a metaphor for what makes me dance. I think you need both, you know. You see exile wasn't a choice for me. I just had to leave. And if I hadn't, if I had delayed one second I probably would have vanished. So I would not encourage a situation whereby people go into exile. It's not freedom. If things changed at home today, then I would like to see all Malawians go back and sing their songs. . . .

Black: Do you have a wish and what is that wish?

Chipasula: I am like E.T. I never saw the movie, but E.T. wants to go back home. This is a long odyssey for me. And if I could just see my mother once—just once. And only if my mother could see her grandchildren.

*Ayanza Black is a Toronto poet. She is the author (with Dôre Michelut) of **Linked Alive**, a new collection of renga (a form of Japanese linked poetry) published by Les Éditions Trois.*

Art Project

BY

SUNIL GUPTA



IN SAN FRANCISCO

*In the laughter of these eyes
there are thousands of ecstatic moments.
In this city there are thousands
of free spirits like you.*

**from the film
UMRAO JAAN**

THE NEW JERUSALEM

IN TWO AND A HALF MINUTES

MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP

In the last several months, no less than three organizations comprised of African Canadian artists and artists of colour—the Black Film and Video Network, Full Screen, and the Canadian Artists Network, Black Artists in Action (CANBAIA)—have received funding from various arts funders; the 1990 *Festival of Festivals*, for the first time in its history, hired three persons of colour, among whom was an African Canadian programmer of Canadian film. 1990 also saw the following changes: the Canada Council struck the Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts to look at its funding practices as they relate to racial and ethnic “minorities”; the Toronto Arts Council hired an African First Nations Canadian as consultant to look at its funding practices and how they relate to issues of cultural and racial sensitivity; the National Gallery in Ottawa retained the services of an African Canadian curator to program a black British film series; for the first time in its history, a black nominee was short-listed for the Governor General awards; arts councils actively solicited African Canadians and other persons of colour to sit on their awards panels; and more African, Asian, and Native writers have appeared on TVOntario's *Imprint* show than ever before. No panel discussion is now complete without its to-

ken person of African, Asian, or Native heritage, albeit the topic may continue to be handled in the standard Eurocentric way. Has the “New Jerusalem” arrived in Ontario along with the NDP—at least in matters related to arts, culture, and race? Or is it merely the old Babylon in partial black face?

This remarkable flurry of activity by arts organizations and groups to make racially-sensitive changes—in many instances these changes represent at least a 100 per cent increase—suggests that systems are changing and responding to criticisms of their Eurocentric and therefore, racist biases. We must, however, question whether these changes are fundamental and lasting, or whether the systems are merely changing so as to remain the same. By their very nature, organizations function so as to perpetuate themselves *as they are*; this, combined with systemic racism, suggests that the system is merely fine-tuning its racism and becoming more sophisticated in how it continues to remain the same. It will, therefore, become even more difficult to identify, challenge, and eradicate racism.

The first wave of anti-racist work in the arts and culture in Toronto began some ten years ago with piecemeal challenges by individuals and groups such as De Dub Poets who confronted dominant Eurocen-

tric organizations like the League of Poets over the latter's racism. The issues of racism in writing and publishing that surfaced around the break-up of the Women's Press in 1988, moved the debate forward a painful quantum leap. This period culminated in the Fall of 1989 with the public confrontation between PEN Canada and Vision 21 over the poor representation of African, Asian, and Aboriginal writers at the 1989 PEN conference held in Toronto. This confrontation—a watershed event—and its repercussions mark the end of the first period of anti-racist work in the arts and culture in Toronto.

The significance of this event lies in the fact that PEN is seen very much as a “progressive” organization; if such an organization was being publicly shown up as manifesting all the shortcomings and neglect that systemic racism generates, how much more must other organizations be falling short. So, for instance, although the call for submissions to the recently published anthology *Language in Her Eye* had by that time been closed for some time, immediately after the PEN/Vision 21 confrontation, the editors issued another call for submissions, this time to many more African, Asian, and Native writers.

The run-off from this watershed event is, in no small way, directly responsible for

the various changes mentioned in the first paragraph. These changes have now segued into what I call the second phase of anti-racist work. The following case is illustrative of how an organization, while *appearing* to make changes in the area of race relations, is able to maintain a bulwark against opinion that is critical of the dominant culture in the area of racism.

“Over the last year, the print and electronic media have time and again found reasons to explain and justify why they could allow full expression to the views and opinions of a group such as PEN Canada, and why they could not do the same for Vision 21. And never once did they use the word censorship. To these reasons we must now add the requirement of ‘good television.’” (Letter dated September 24, 1990 to TVO from Vision 21)

On October 9, 1989, the subject matter of TVOntario's *Imprint* show, hosted by Jennifer Gibson and Paul Roberts, was the 1989 PEN Conference; spokespersons for the latter event were June Callwood and Graeme Gibson. During the course of the show, the hosts and guests discussed the leafletting of the PEN Gala by Vision 21. Vision 21 considered comments made about those involved in the leafletting to be derogatory of the issues around racism and anti-racism, as well as of the participants. During this show analogies were drawn, for instance, between Vision 21 and witch hunters. Vision 21 launched a complaint to the CRTC on the grounds that TVO, in its failure to give Vision 21 a voice to present its side of the issue, was in breach of its mandate to represent Ontarians and their views in an equitable and non-racist way. During the course of the complaint procedure and several weeks after the CRTC sent details of Vision 21's complaint to it, TVO's chairman, Bernard Ostry, guaranteed, in writing, Vision 21 a forum on its 1990-91 *Imprint* season. Mr. Ostry also dismissed Vision 21's complaints about TVO's systemic racism as “egregious and totally unfounded” and as an example of TVO meeting the cultural needs of Ontario's minorities he referred to the then

very recent hiring of Toronto dub poet Clifton Joseph as third story editor on the *Imprint* show. There is a strong and causal connection between Vision 21's complaint to the CRTC and the hiring of the only non-white story editor on the *Imprint* series.

Vision 21 accepted TVO's offer assuming that the forum which the latter offered would be similar to the one provided to PEN Canada and would allow Vision 21 to talk about its work and issues around racism and culture. The requirements of “good TV” were, however, to prove an impossible bar to Vision 21 being given such a forum.

TVO first attempted to invite this writer on as a guest to debate another guest. Vision 21's position was that TVO's offer was to Vision 21 *as an organization* and not to an individual and that it was entitled, at least, to a similar format as that provided PEN Canada—two guests in discussion with the host on issues relevant to its work. TVO's response, through *Imprint's* present host, Daniel Richler, was that straight-on interviews did not make for “good TV,” and that Vision 21 could “win more people to its side” by engaging in a debate. (In case you didn't know it, folks, all those straight-on interviews that make up the backbone of television talk shows make for bad TV.) Vision 21 then queried whether TVO's offer of a forum was dependent on the former engaging in a debate. In response, TVO presented Vision 21 with the unbeatable offer of the year—two and a half minutes of straight-on interview time. The alternative? Participate in a debate format. And how did TVO get to that figure? Two and a half minutes represents “the portion of the Gibson/Callwood interview to which Vision 21 took exception.” (October 12, 1990, letter from TVO to Vision 21) Vision 21 has reopened the complaint to the CRTC since it now believes that the initial offer by TVO was not *bona fide*.

The irony of this situation is that Vision 21 found the presence of a non-white story

editor at *Imprint* to singularly unhelpful, despite the fact that the position was created as a *direct result* of the former's complaint to the CRTC. The position clearly carried no power and, in fact, Mr. Joseph admitted to this writer during these negotiations that his job was merely “to carry messages.”

Little did TVO know, however, that in offering Vision 21 two and a half minutes, it was striking the signature note for phase two of anti-racist work in arts and culture in Ontario and possibly, Canada. Many of the changes outlined in the first paragraph are, in fact, the equivalent of the two and a half minutes of TV time

TVO offered Vision 21 and will remain just that unless arts and cultural organizations are pushed to give African Canadians and other persons of colour equal time. Equal time in this context means making significant structural, and not cosmetic, changes.

Two of most significant impediments to making these changes remain co-optation and collaboration. These are harsh words that dog all struggles. In South Africa, a harsh and retributive justice resulted in collaborators being necklaced in public. In Canada we repudiate such harsh measures believing our situation to be, after all, very different. But what does one do when the struggle to bring real change is compromised? What does one do when individuals acquire expertise working in community groups, for instance, which often springboard them into plum government jobs, where these same individuals then put the boot to those very organizations that trained them by refusing them funding? What does one do when individuals publicly and harshly criticize organizations of the dominant culture for their racism and

at the first opportunity, rush to join those very structures, becoming all of a piece with the very mandarins they once criticized? What does one do when the system is only too willing to use these individuals in its overwhelming need to survive unchanged? And in the face of blandishments and seducements as happened recently when the chairman of TVO, Mr. Bernard Ostry, invited this writer to dine with him at the annual Writers' Development Trust dinner, what does one do? How does one avoid compromising one's self while challenging their two and a half minutes?

I do not for one minute suggest that critically-aware individuals ought not to work for or with, or have contacts with organizations of the dominant culture. Such a position is foolhardy at best and suicidal at worst. To survive and feed themselves and their families, Africans in the New World have *always* had to work at jobs they did not like or in situations that demeaned or compromised them. Crossing the border from the private space into the space of those who oppress you, is nothing new for groups such as these. The struggle for equity and dignity can and must take place on all fronts and in all arenas. But co-optation means that the struggle is either compromised or stops entirely, and collaboration, that there is active work afoot to prevent the struggle from coming to fruition.

Those at the centre of systems of power believe and have always believed that those in opposition want in. The centre is, after all, about protecting "us" against "them." And those at the centre believe that those in opposition, because they want in, are all prepared to sell their birthright for the traditional mess of pottage. And if others have done this, it makes this possibility all the more real. Many individuals, however, *do* choose to work from a position outside the centre—from the margins. (I use margin in the sense of it being a frontier.) And any truly democratic society, of which I know none, needs the frontier of the margin as much as, if not more than, the centre. Without the margin, the centre remains

smug and unchallenged—a breeding ground for abuses against individuals and groups perceived as unimportant.

How *do* we avoid compromising ourselves? How do we help others in their efforts not to compromise themselves? And how do we challenge those organizations that are only content to offer us two and a half minutes—in whatever guise. The only way out of this is to have as clear an understanding as possible as to why we're objecting to, or challenging, the dominant culture.

Is it *only* so that we too may enter and have our share of the American dream or Canadian nightmare—two cars and a colour TV set complete with *Imprint*? Or is it so that we can change the system so fundamentally that *any* who so desire may enter, regardless of race, colour, creed, or class. Isn't it because those of us who have had our souls fired in the maelstrom of racial abuse and exploitation in the New World understand the rapaciousness of a system based on the twin pillars of racism and capitalism, the latter now embraced as the panacea for the world's ills rather than its progenitor. And isn't it because we want to change that and not to help the system change so that it can remain the same?

In its efforts to survive unchanged, the system will always ensure that the numbers of people of colour remain small and never attain that critical mass often necessary for change rather than reform. In fact, this country's immigration laws and policies are designed to work so that Africans, Asians, and other peoples of colour will remain a token presence in Canada. The premise behind this approach—the six per cent solution as I have dubbed it*—is that since such people represent a very small portion of the population, it is enough if their representation in organizations and groups merely and barely reflects their percentage presence in the society. Such arguments, however, have limited relevance to city states which Toronto and other large urban centres have become,

where people of colour often represent much larger percentages.

Two and a half minutes do not a revolution make, and individuals and groups involved in anti-racist work in the arts now have to develop strategies to increase the yield of those two and a half minutes. Those choosing to work on the frontiers of margins of the arts and culture communities must continue to be critical of organizations who, in the present climate of anti-racist fashionableness, merely make cosmetic changes while leaving the underlying structure intact. One black employee, consultant, worker, or panel member cannot make fundamental changes to an organization and it is unfair to expect them to do so; it is not unfair, however, to expect them to help to put hairline fractures in these organizations. Often the hairline fracture is all we can do while hoping that down the road somewhere, with enough such fractures, the structures will fall. African Canadians do have a right to question

those individuals who have got into positions on the coat-tails of the struggles of others. And even if the link is not that direct, individuals and groups do have a right to question what individuals from their own racial or ethnic groups are doing to help make meaningful structural changes within their own organizations. Individuals who understand the nature of systemic racism and how organizations, by using strategies of co-optation and collaboration, adjust to survive, *can* help to make the work of those on the frontiers of the margins easier. One well-placed, well-intentioned, and critically-thinking black individual in an organization is worth several who have co-opted.

What follows are checklists which may be useful in assisting us all in this second period of the anti-racist struggle in Babylon. The questions should be used to clarify the issues. Individuals and groups are urged to

develop questions that pertain specifically to the organizations in which they work. The questions can be used as a monitoring device of one's self, others, and organizations. They could also be useful in collecting data on organizations; such information is indispensable in challenging the claims of organizations that they are making structural changes. We cannot isolate ourselves from the dominant culture and we will all, at one time or another, be called on to work within its systems. We cannot, however, afford to be complacent if we are serious about replacing Babylon with the New Jerusalem.

TWO-AND-A-HALF-MINUTE CHECKLISTS

These checklists are by no means exhaustive and can be expanded, shortened, and adjusted to suit your own needs and situation.

INDIVIDUALS

1. Is the person the only one hired from his/her racial group?
2. How much power do they have in the organization?
3. Has the organization only hired persons of colour at the margins of power?
4. Have they had to lose their cultural specificity and uniqueness to function in the organization?
5. How does the organization deal with other issues around race?
6. Does the staff of the organization remain predominantly white or does it reflect the multiracial nature of society?
7. Is the organization only offering two-and-a-half minutes in terms of change?
8. Are there any African, Asian, or Native Canadians in positions of power?
9. If there are any such individuals in power, how are they exercising their power? Are they gatekeeping or facilitating the entry of other persons of colour?
10. Do African, Asian, or Native Canadians have any political voice in the organization?

INDIVIDUALS

Questions to ask yourself

1. Am I the only one from my group hired?
2. How much power do I have in the organization?
3. Do I have to become "white" to survive in the organization?
4. How am I heard within the organization?
5. How am I being silenced within the organization?
6. Is my voice delegitimized. If so, how?
7. What am I encouraged to say within the organization?
8. What am I discouraged from saying within the organization?
9. Do I have any influence or power within the organization?
10. Do others from my group have influence or power within the organization?
11. Do I/they have a political voice in the organization?
12. What kind of contact can I have with other people of colour in the organization?
13. Does institutional hierarchy prevent me making contact with other people of colour?
14. How well do I consider myself to be representing the interests of African Canadians/people of colour in my work?
15. Do I consider it a part of my job to be representing the interests of others from my group?
16. How much is expected of me from members of my racial group.
17. Do I consider this unreasonable?
18. Can I get more African Canadians / people of colour hired?
19. Where is my voice heard in the organization?
20. Do I have access to levers of power?
21. Have I been hired at the margins of power?

Illustration by Tony Hamilton.

INDIVIDUALS

Questions to ask of other individuals

1. Does the individual remain in touch with others from his/her racial group?
2. What is the individual doing to represent the interests of African Canadians/people of colour in the organization?
3. What is the individual doing to make relevant changes within his/her organization?
4. Does the individual make an effort to explain what he/she is doing to represent the interests of African Canadians/people of colour?
5. What are your expectations of this individual?
6. Do you consider them reasonable?
7. Does he/she consider them reasonable?
8. Is individual aware of expectations placed on him/her?
9. Is there a discrepancy between what the individual says and what he/she is doing?
10. Does the individual set off your bullshitometer?
11. How respectful is the individual to anti-racist work being done by others?

Thanks to Cameron Bailey for his assistance in preparing these checklists.

Marlene Nourbese Philip is a writer, poet, and founding member of Vision 21. Her books include *Harriet's Daughter* and *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*.



MORGAN GWENWALD, UNTITLED PHOTO, 1984 (FROM BUTCH-FEMME PICNIC)

Sapphic Scenes

LOOKING THROUGH A HISTORY

by Cyndra MacDowall

This historical overview of the representation of lesbian sexuality and identity has been underway for the past eight years. I began my research in 1983 with a desire to find an art and cultural history of lesbians and lesbian representation, and the hope that I would find a "lost" history of lesbian visual self-representation. I also wanted to explore the specific stereotypes of lesbianism in mainstream society, how these stereotypes appeared, and to understand and disassemble the homophobic ideas contained within them. Having been denied a history I felt compelled to constantly invent myself out of homophobic misinformation and without knowledge of the lives of other lesbians.¹

While most of lesbian history is invisible, lesbians are most notably visible in patriarchal, heterosexist culture for our sexual difference and for the frequent representation of lesbian sexual activity in sexual imagery. In seeking visual representations of lesbians, the most readily available imagery was sexual imagery.

My concentration in this research has been on photographic images, although I have also included some paintings and drawings, where appropriate. The work is limited to primarily American and white subjects. In future research I would like to expand upon information about lesbians of colour and give this work a broader, more comprehensive, international scope. I would welcome any contributions that may be offered.

BERENICE ABBOTT, PORTRAIT OF JANE HEAP (PARIS 1925-1929)



In undertaking my research I asked a number of questions about the images I was examining: Who made these images? What was their purpose? Who was the intended audience for the work? How did the images reach their audience? Where any of the artists female? Who were the models? What kind of relationship (between the subjects if more than one, and between the subjects and the artist) is indicated in the image? Perhaps most importantly, what was the social context for these images? and, what do these images reveal about social attitudes toward lesbians and individual lesbian lives?



GUSTAVE COURBET
THE SLEEP, 1866.



ACHILLE DEVERIA
THE HAREM c.1850s
(male voyeur in window).

THE VAST MAJORITY OF IMAGES OF LESBIANS and lesbian sexuality have been produced by and for the pleasure of heterosexual men. Two questions naturally arise: Why would men choose so frequently to include or suggest some form of lesbian sexual interaction? And, what are the specific forms of lesbian representation produced by and for men?

The appearance of two women being sexually active has an apparently broad and enduringly popular appeal for men. While there is much room for speculation, one factor is that depictions of lesbian sex can show sexual *interaction*, without the potentially obtrusive or threatening image of another man. In the western tradition of the sexual image of the receptive, inviting female nude, both women and men are trained to find women's bodies attractive and sensual, and both women and men are likely to respond to suggested lesbian scenarios. The presentation of two inviting women provides an additional female body for the (male) viewer. In addition, specific concerns about, and legal restrictions on, images of the penis in patriarchal society have been a factor, making lesbian scenarios a more acceptable way to imply more explicit sexual interaction.

Consistent themes in lesbian representations are the male voyeur observing lesbians, lesbians made further exotic by their depiction in a harem, or the lesbian sexual acts taking place within other exclusively female environments. The absence of men is considered to be the primary reason that women turn to each other for sexual gratification. This mythology persists in the stereotypes of lesbians in prisons and the armed forces. Although lesbians have certainly existed in both these environments,

scrutiny by male authorities has made these environments more consistently documented than other locations of lesbian existence.

While butch-femme role representations frequently appear within lesbian-made imagery and documentary images of lesbians, they rarely appear in male-produced material. When they do, these roles are frequently depicted as perverse.

WHILE LITERATURE HAS A LONG TRADITION of stories written by lesbians with lesbian characters, there is very little lesbian self-representation in the visual arts. Visual representation has been limited by costs of both time and production; in general, the greater the expense to produce and distribute the medium, the less often self-representations of "minority" voices are found. In photography the issue of identification of subjects and the potential dangers this could pose for the models has also served as an obstacle. (The theme of anonymity frequently appears in the images themselves.) In addition, literature and its consumption is regarded as a more "private" act than the public nature of visual presentations. The traditional good girl/bad girl dichotomy related to public sexual identity has also had an impact on women's ability to produce and view visual sexual material.²

Victorian Intimacy

The nineteenth century saw an enormous outpouring of sexual material in the form of books, memoirs, illustrations, photographs, bawdy stories, songs, and the birth of the new industry of pornography. During this period many sexual fantasies still operative today were established and promulgated: lesbian scenarios, cross-class sex, the virgin, flagellation, fetishes (fur, leather, shoes, boots), etc.

This was a period of enormous turmoil and change. A particularly significant change for women was the development of a widespread system of wage labour. Although women's labour was defined as worth less than men's,³ it allowed working-class women some degree of freedom to choose to live outside the family and independent of men. Consequently, working-class women could choose both to be lesbians and to live as lesbians.

Among middle-class women, the practice of "romantic friendship"—in which women, both married and unmarried, established primary intimate long-term relationships with other women—was accepted and encouraged. These relationships were seen to occupy a place of spiritual bonding and may or may not have had a genital sexual component.⁴



DAGUERROTYPE, (Anon.) 1850.



ALICE AUSTIN
THE DARNED CLUB
OCTOBER 29, 1891.



ALICE AUSTIN
MRS. SNIVELY, JULIE AND I IN BED
AUGUST 29, 1890.

The photographs of Clementina Hawarden (1822-1865) display many characteristics of Victorian photography and romantic friendship, and are unusual in the intimate eye and physical contact between the women. Hawarden's images frequently include mirrors—the reflection of one individual woman, or two women in the mirror. There are also many images containing very sexually suggestive vulva shapes in the skirts of these women. While the intimate physical contact between women in these images suggests lesbian interaction, very little is known about Hawarden's personal life.

THE PRIMARY EVIDENCE STILL AVAILABLE of nineteenth century sexual practice and fantasy are those works that were made in some kind of multiple. Successful capitalism demanded increased uniformity, and sexual fantasies and their photographic reproduction were no exception. Many of the sexual fantasies of the nineteenth century were repeated over and over again and continue to appear in the twentieth century.

From its very beginning, photography was used to produce sexual images. Through duplicate prints and their distribution to the emerging middle class, the availability of images of sex and sexual scenarios increased as a sideline to the enormous business of prostitution thriving in the new urban centres. Within nineteenth century pornography, representations of lesbian scenarios became one of the common themes in male heterosexual material, a theme that continues today. In fact, it is a genre in and of itself.⁵

Two main themes of lesbian sexuality and homophobia were established and propagated: lesbian sex as accessible and inviting to male participants; and the narcissistic evil and dangerous perversity of exclusive lesbian sex. Lesbian practice was tolerated and frequently represented, as stimulus and entertainment for heterosexual males. However, for a woman to take this practice seriously, to make it exclusive, and even develop cultural ideas and values, was to prompt restrictions and retribution from the institutional structures of patriarchy.⁶

Out from Under the Photographer's Cape

In contrast to male representations of lesbian sex, there are few representations of lesbian life and sexuality as the subject matter of lesbian photographers.⁷ Most women photographers at the turn of the century came from the middle class and maintained connections with their families as a source of support for their work.⁸ Consequently, those who did have lesbian relationships often adopted a



CLEMENTINA HAWARDEN
UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH (active 1845-65).



GOOD GOD!
The Crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah Discounted.

THE MASCOT (cover)
NEW ORLEANS NEWSPAPER, 1893.



FRANCES BENJAMIN-JOHNSTON
SELF PORTRAIT (c. 1890).



SIR JOHN LINDSAY
LE SABATT (engraving), 1898.

practice of strict privacy around their personal lives; frequently their live-in relationships with other women did not take place until after the death of their parents.

Two such women were Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864-1952) and Alice Austen (1866-1952). Johnston was very active around the turn of the century as a professional photographer, a writer who encouraged other women to become photographers, and a promoter and supporter of her contemporaries. Her work included society portraits, documentation of women workers and Black educational institutions, journalism, and architectural photography. Extremely reticent about her personal life, Johnston established at least one lengthy partnership with a woman; there are no indications of men having been similarly attached to her.

Johnston's engaging self-portrait shows her rebelliousness towards the conventions of the times—showing her ankles and petticoats, smoking, and drinking beer (although other self-portraits portray her as a conventional Victorian lady). This portrait is curious in that she does not look at the camera or engage with the viewer. There is a journalistic, observer sense to this image that may indicate an ambivalence about this representation of herself.

Alice Austen produced an enormous body of work documenting the life of her circle of friends—many of whom appear to be lesbian couples—in Staten Island where she lived for most of her life. She herself maintained a 50-year relationship with her "friend" Gertrude Tate.⁹ Austen's work is an intriguing document of middle-class life. Her images include playful humour, frequent representations of cross dressing, and a relaxed female physical intimacy between women that is rarely seen in images of the period. Austen was a passionate amateur; her subjects were her friend, and there is no evidence that she showed these images outside her community. Her freedom from economic and artistic ambitions appears to have contributed to the relaxation and ease of her subjects.

*From Sin to Sickness*¹⁰

In the nineteenth century, science assumed a new role of defining and determining morality, previously a function of the church alone. By the late 1900s, the new sciences of psychology and sexology were established and along with these, the concept of the "pathology" of women's sexuality. Male writers were fascinated by lesbianism which they saw as a part of the "puzzle" of women's sexual nature, a controversy that raged in scientific writings.

By the turn of the century, lesbian sex (along with male homosexuality) was defined as a perversion and a disease,¹¹ and frequently appeared as a form of evil in *fin de*



BRASSAI, LE MONOCLE, THE BAR. (c.1932) FROM THE SECRET LIFE OF PARIS OF THE 30s.

siècle art. The new image of the lesbian shifted to a narcissistic eroticism that excluded men.

The degeneration of society through the sexual degeneration of women appears in various images and stories produced by intellectual male artists and writers. Male doctors and sexologists, such as Freud, Ellis, Kraft-Ebbing, and others, debated the effectiveness of psychotherapy to cure homosexuals of their "illness" and developed theories about the causes of this newly-defined illness. Books written by lesbians, such as *The Well of Loneliness* (Radclyffe Hall, 1928), appeared in the early part of the 20th century as an apology and plea for tolerance for the unfortunate victims of homosexuality who were trying to lead their lives with this unfortunate illness.

A Social Life: Salons, Bars, and the Blues

During the teens, twenties, and thirties, women enjoyed new freedoms, and there is evidence of large and visible communities of lesbians living in Paris, Berlin, and New York. Much has been written about the lesbian literary salons of Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein in Paris and the various lesbian couples associated with these women.¹² Many of these women were ex-patriots from the U.S. and Britain. The freedoms they enjoyed were the result of their economic independence through inheritance, accompanied by their determination to live their lives as they chose. From this period emerges a new stereotype and role model for lesbians: the cultured, educated, wealthy lesbian who writes and participates in the development of the cultural life of the modern world. These women often exhibit butch-femme role structures in their relationships and in their appearance in the portraits that are available.¹³

Some of the strongest and most available portraits of lesbians are those made by Berenice Abbott in Paris between 1924 and 1929. It is interesting that all her portraits are of individuals—none of the couples are portrayed together in her photographs. In addition, none of the books of Abbott's work have identified these couples as such. Very little information is available about Abbott's own personal relationships. Nonetheless, the directness of the relationship between these lesbians and the photographer is strikingly unusual by comparison to other photographs we have of these women. These images have none of the flattery and forced feminization of conventional portraits of women of this era.

It is from this period that we have the first documentary photographs of lesbians and lesbian life. Brassai's images



ROMAINE BROOKS
PORTRAIT OF NATALIE BARNEY (c.1920).



BERENICE ABBOT, PORTRAIT OF DJUNA BARNES, 1925-29 PARIS.



BRASSAI
A COUPLE AT LE MONOCLE (c.1932).

of working-class lesbians in Parisian bars and gay and lesbian dances stand out as documents of everyday lesbian social life. Brassai's role as an outsider is reflected in the images: none of these lesbians directly engage with him. His descriptions of the "butch" lesbians,¹⁴ whom he finds especially disturbing and fascinating, reveal his obvious alienation. This fascination is demonstrated by his concentration on portraits of butch lesbians and butch-femme interaction. The location of the camera looking down on the subjects also lends a curious sense to these images. While it may have been simply a pragmatic choice (to keep the camera out of the way), this angle of view, accompanied by Brassai's terse titles for the photographs, heightens the sense of a superior observation of "underground" activity.

In the twenties and early thirties (until Hitler took power in 1933), Berlin was a vibrant centre of gay and lesbian life. There were numerous lesbian bars and social clubs, and many periodicals, plays, and films produced by lesbians and feminists. There were also political organizations actively working to establish legislative equality for gays and lesbians, some of which centred around Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science.¹⁵

While there is extensive documentation of the social organizations of lesbians in New York,¹⁶ some of the least known lesbian lives of the twenties and thirties are those of Black lesbians in Harlem. Recent research in Black history and especially on Black women jazz and blues singers has revealed the lesbian sexual relationships of many mothers of the blues including "Ma" Rainey, Alberta Hunter, Bessie Smith, and Gladys Bentley. Lesbian relationships amongst these women are often difficult to determine because many also had liaisons with men and sometimes married them. The unfortunate reality is that marriage to a man has been documented historically as the most significant relationship in a woman's life, unless considerable evidence to the contrary exists. Sometimes this evidence is not recorded and simply exists in the personal papers and memories of those individuals and their friends and lovers.

Evidence of lesbian sexual practice can be seen in the lyrics of their songs. "Ma" Rainey sings in her "Prove it on Me Blues":

Went out last night, had a great big fight,
Everything seemed to go on wrong;
I looked up, to my surprise,
The gal I was with was gone.

Where she went, I don't know,
I mean to follow everywhere she goes;
Folks say I'm crooked, I didn't know where she took it,
I want the whole world to know;



ANON. (c.1930 France).



PROMOTIONAL AD FOR MA RAINNEY'S
"PROVE IT ON ME BLUES"
A PARAMOUNT RACE RECORD, 1928.



BESSIE SMITH
(c.1930).

They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me,
Sure got to prove it on me;
Went out last night with a crowd of my friends,
They must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men.¹⁷

The promotional material for the recording of this song portrays Rainey dressed in a jacket, vest, tie, and hat talking to two women. The obvious coding of "butch" attire is international. The lyrics of this song reveal a central ambivalence of lesbian life. Rainey wants to declare her love and devotion ("I want the whole world to know") while the chorus of the song ("prove it on me") states that her lesbianism can't be proven by those who would seek to prohibit it.

In "It's Dirty But Good" (1930), Bessie Smith's lyrics show a cheeky, lusty sexual appetite appreciative of lesbian sex, but recognizing social censure for this "dirty" form of behaviour:

I know women that don't like men
The way they do is a crying sin.
It's dirty but good, oh, yes, it's dirty but good.
There ain't much difference, it's just dirty but good.

Gladys Bentley, another singer in Harlem, was unusual in that she lived an exclusively lesbian life during this period and found a community of acceptance and economic support.¹⁸ Tolerance for lesbians and gay men seems to have been common in Harlem during the twenties and thirties.

DURING THE THIRTIES, MALE-PRODUCED sexual images often include representations of lesbians and suggestions of lesbian interaction. Although unusual, butch-femme suggestions are occasional evident in this material.

This image, [left] made in Paris around 1930 by an anonymous, probably male, photographer, reveals an unusual pleasure and complicity between the two models and between the models and the photographer. Their direct eye contact, use of butch-femme signifiers, and humour transcend the usual representations of lesbian sex during this period.



ANON. (c.1930 France).

BY THE 1940S, THE POPULARIZATION OF IDEAS initiated by the sexologists was fairly complete and sex was seen to be a primary motivating force in individual lives. The development of a modern gay and lesbian society is tied to the changes and opportunities that grew out of World War II. During the war there was an unusual tolerance for gays and lesbians, both in the armed forces and on the homefront. After the war and during the cold war period, however, there was greatly increased repression and persecution.



UNTITLED, ANON. (c.1930 FRANCE).

***The Archetypal Triangle:
Seduction, Perversion, and Domination***

A variety of archetypal themes of the lesbian become more evident during this period. In the classic lesbian love triangle, the older "confirmed" lesbian struggles to gain the affections of the younger "convertible" woman and take her away from a man. Often the "confirmed" lesbian must die to resolve the struggle. This theme appears time and again in both high art (e.g., D.H. Lawrence's *The Fox*) and in lesbian pulp.²¹ Variations on this theme involve the older woman as a schoolmistress who seduces and controls her young students. The conception of older lesbians having a relationship of power and domination over their younger partners is a frequently repeated theme.

An extension of this theme is the lesbian/bisexual vampire, who sucks the lifeblood from innocent men and women. She is compelling attractive, dangerous, and highly sexually charged, and of course, converts her victims to her perversion. The earliest appearance of the clearly lesbian vampire is in literature from the turn of the century.²² The endurance of this theme is evidenced by the lavish production of the film *The Hunger* in 1982.

A related theme was the emptiness, sterility, and loneliness of lesbian life with the assumption than non-reproductive sex prohibited lesbians from family relationships—the centre of heterosexuality. This appears time and again, in classics such as *The Well of Loneliness* and in pulp.

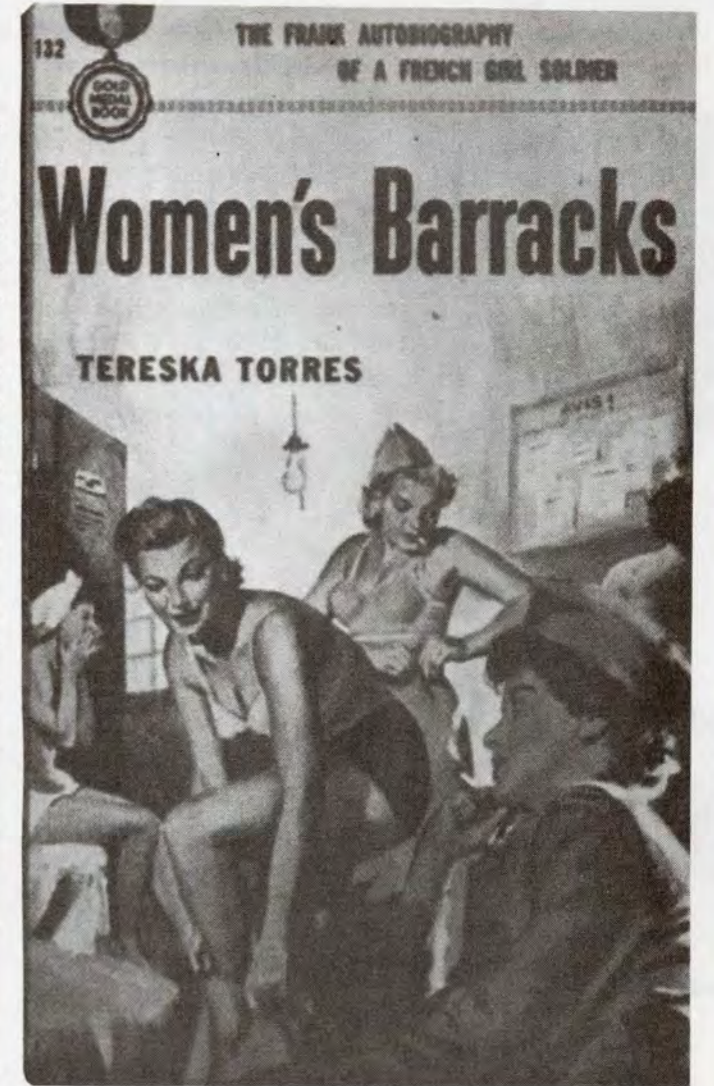
Lesbian Pulp Explosion

From the 1940s to the 1970s, thousands of novels with lesbian themes were published by the new paperback publishing houses. Widely available and frequently reprinted to meet the demand of a large readership, these novels were written by both women and men, and it seems likely that both men and women read them.²³

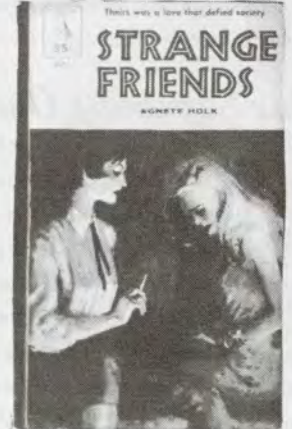
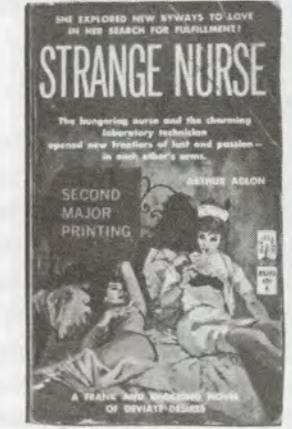
These books reveal the anxieties of the era about the existence of lesbians and the anxieties of lesbians about life in an intolerant society. The more serious of these books are often introduced by a medical doctor who makes a plea for tolerance and understanding. Unapologetic stories with attractive lesbian characters and happy endings were usually altered by the publishers to create an unhappy and therefore morally acceptable ending.

Lesbian pulp novels hold an ambivalent place for lesbians. While they provide some indication of working-class lesbian life and occasionally sympathetically examined the process of "coming out," lesbian life was depicted as fundamentally tragic.

The images on the covers of these novels were commissioned from male commercial artists specifically for the pulp



1950's PULP PAPERBACK COVER
WOMEN'S BARRACKS BY TERESKA TORRES.



STRANGE PULP PAPERBACK COVERS.

novel market. As the novels were reprinted new covers were produced in the style of each decade. The earlier covers were usually reproduced from paintings. They reveal some stereotypical ideas that were contained in the contents of the books.

While some covers portray a lonely individual woman (lesbian) questioning her future, usually there are two women depicted, generally a blonde and a brunette. One is younger, usually seated in the foreground, and is preoccupied with herself or looks off to the outer world; the older, slightly more masculine-looking woman stands behind or over the younger one in a predatory way. The women are usually disconnected—they rarely make eye contact or show equal interest. (An exception is the 1950s cover of *Women's Barracks*.²⁴)

High Art Kinkiness

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, contrasting images of the lesbian were propounded by art photographers Helmut Newton and David Hamilton. In true '60s fashion, they picked up on the classic themes of lesbian sexuality and homophobia originally seen at the turn of the century. Both produced highly successful photo books that moved in the popular art press. Newton picked up the idea of lesbian evil and created a world of lesbian high-fashion kinkiness. The viewer, in the position of a voyeur, observes the closed, very mannered, opulent world of mannikin-like lesbians coolly interacting. His work includes the books *World without Men*, *White Women*, and *Sleepless Nights*, as well as photographs for fashion magazines.

By contrast, David Hamilton produced several books and a film *Bilitis* (c. 1975), all of which repetitiously portray young girls in private girls' schools exploring sexuality with each other in the absence of men. These adolescent girls provocatively lounge around naked or semi-naked in pairs, sometimes touching or kissing each other. The sexuality here is primarily implied and has some allusions to earlier images of romantic friendship.

Our Sexuality, Ourselves

The social changes and "sexual revolution" of the 1970s and the rise of feminism (originally the Women's Sexual Liberation Movement) brought new sexual freedoms for women. Lesbians initially held an ambivalent place in the feminist movement, as feminists were afraid of making lesbian demands part of the general platform of women's equality. However, the rise of feminism and particularly, lesbian-feminism created new networks for the production and distribution of information and images of women and lesbians. Feminist concerns about the representation of



HELMUT NEWTON
INTERIOR (c. 1970s).



J.E.B. (JOAN E. BIREN)
PAGAN & KADY, 1978.
FROM EYE TO EYE, PORTRAITS OF LESBIANS.

women prompted re-examinations of images of women and support for the creation of new ones.

One response to this call for new images of lesbians was the portraits produced by J.E.B. (Joan E. Biren), published in her book *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians* (1979). This book is still important in its presentation of a wide range of individual lesbians of varying ages, races, classes, and abilities involved in activities such as work, rituals, political actions, etc.

An unleashing of information about sex accompanied the sexual revolution. Initially, a large quantity of sex manuals intended for a popular audience were written by doctors (e.g., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*). The feminist health movement strove to reclaim women's health and sexuality away from the experts and back into the hands of individual women. This was accompanied by the production of many women's health manuals, the best known being *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (initially published in 1971), which includes a section on sexuality and lesbian sexuality. Throughout the 1970s, there were numerous lesbian self-help sex manuals produced by and for lesbians and distributed through the women's bookstore network. They often included drawings of lesbians by lesbians, with vulvas being a predominant theme. Both the books and their images are characterized by a jubilant energy and breathless discovery of lesbian sexuality.

In an attempt to counteract popular ideas of abnormality and deviance, sexuality was portrayed as "natural" and there was an enormous proliferation of images of women in nature and sex in nature. Some early explorers of lesbian "erotica" are Tee Corinne, Honey Lee Cottrell, Cynthia McAdams, and Kate Millet.

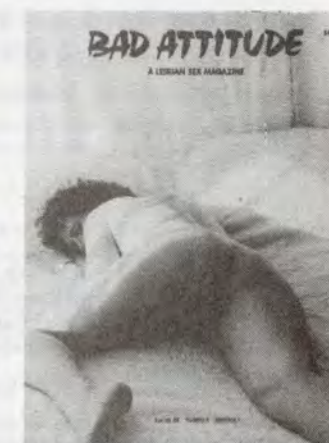
The Controversy of Power

Passionate feminist debates over pornography and censorship, and new theories about the construction of desire, prompted new images and explorations of women's sexuality in the 1980s. Lesbian explorations included images and raging debates over lesbian sadomasochism, fantasy, gender play, the return of dildos (which had been banished as unnatural and patriarchal in the '70s), and other sex toys and equipment.

In 1984, two lesbian-produced sex magazines appeared, almost simultaneously: *On Our Backs* from San Francisco, billed as "entertainment for the adventurous lesbian," and *Bad Attitude* from Boston. These magazines were greeted with much controversy, in part for their alignment with sex trade workers, inclusion of SM imagery,



J.E.B. (JOAN E. BIREN)
PRISCILLA & REGINA, 1979.
FROM EYE TO EYE, PORTRAITS OF LESBIANS.



ON OUR BACKS 1985 & BAD ATTITUDE 1988
MAGAZINE COVERS.

and their adoption of an aggressive stance as sexual consumers. *On Our Backs* was alleged to be racist by the Toronto Women's Bookstore staff (among others), who refused to sell either magazine.

Later in the '80s, lesbian sex videotape companies in the U.S. began the production of explicitly sexual videos and the exploration of lesbian fantasies.²⁵ In Canada, lesbian artists have explored sexual imagery in group photographic projects, such as *Drawing the Line* (Vancouver) and *Bed of Roses* (Toronto), and as individual photographers, video artists, and filmmakers.²⁶ In Britain, *Quim magazine* began publication in the late '80s and is a part of the continuing exploration of lesbian sexual imagery.

Continuing Fluid Explorations

Over the past twenty years, lesbians have been involved in recovering history, understanding how the heritage of homophobia impacts on our culture, and beginning the process of self-definition and self-representation. We have established ourselves as a strong political force within feminism, but the requirement to challenge persistent homophobic mythology is an everyday reality.

The AIDS crisis has prompted discussion on the variety and plurality of lesbian sex. To date, there is very little lesbian safe sex imagery and very little definite information about lesbian vulnerability to HIV. For the most part lesbians have seen AIDS as a crisis affecting the gay male community. But, increasing concern about lesbian safe sex is provoking discussion of sex toys, specific lesbian sexual practices, and an expanded definition of what constitutes lesbian sex and identification as a lesbian. This will likely be reflected in lesbian sexual images of the '90s.

The controversies surrounding lesbian sexual exploration appear to have diminished, in part by a seeming solidification of positions. However, in order for lesbians to produce, distribute, and consume sexually stimulating visual material—to be sexually present and not simply politically present in the world—we must claim public sexual space.

Cydra MacDowall is a lesbian artist and photographer. Her work has appeared in the exhibitions *Sight Specific* and *Bed of Roses*. *Bed of Roses* is currently touring Canada (1991/92). Evolving versions of this paper have been presented in Canada and the U.S. as a slide lecture since 1983.

I would like to thank Wesley Stevens for his editing and organizational assistance, and Lynn Fernie for providing information on lesbian blues singers. Financial contributions towards this research have been received from the Lesbian & Gay Community Appeal of Toronto, the Canada Council Explorations Program, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council.



TERI AND CAERAGE, LESBIAN SEX ACTORS. BLUSH PRODUCTIONS. PHOTO: DAWN LEWIS.



KATE MILLET
LESBIAN EROTICA, 1975.



TEE CORINNE, UNTITLED PHOTOMONTAGE
FROM A WOMAN'S TOUCH, 1978.

ENDNOTES

1. Note on Sources: Information about lesbian identity and sexuality is difficult to obtain, as many lesbians have tried to keep their sexual practice quiet and private. (In many instances, executors have prohibited feminists and lesbians from access to documents that might shed light on the private lives of lesbians and women whom we believe to have had lesbian experiences. Examples are Clementina Hawarden, Charlotte Whiten, and Eleanor Roosevelt. In some instances families have destroyed correspondence and other "evidence" that might confirm lesbian relationships.) I have undertaken research in public libraries, art gallery collections, archives, sex shops, and the private collections of many individuals who have lent me books from their personal libraries. I have also sought assistance from private collectors and dealers in erotica, although for the most part these materials are less available to women, especially lesbians. Libraries rarely collect sexual material. Since the early 1970s there has been a growing movement of gay and lesbian historians and researchers recovering and collecting information on lesbian and gay history. There are now several gay and lesbian archives, women's archives, and lesbian archives from which to draw information.

2. There is also the widely held theory that women are more sexually stimulated by written material, as it involves individual imagination and the consequent personalizing opportunity. This is not so possible with images, which are by their nature more literal and potentially more "closed" to personalizing than literature. While these ideas hold some truth, the social circumstances of women's greater participation in and consequent trust of literature must play a part.
3. Some of the documentary evidence of lesbian existence in the 19th century is related to the discovery of specific women passing as men in order to enjoy male wages and freedoms.
4. See Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1981) for an extensive investigation into romantic friendship.
5. By contrast, male sexual interaction is rarely if ever seen within this material and specific laws were established to prohibit and punish gay male sexual activity.
6. While lesbian sexual activity was rarely prohibited by law, various legal restrictions (such as those against cross-dressing, "disturbing public order," and "disorderly conduct") were selectively used to harass women, lesbians, and gay male transvestites whenever they were perceived to disrupt or challenge the prevailing social order.
7. While there is a strong and long tradition of women photographers, it is notable that there is little evidence that women photographers produced sexual imagery of any form as a part of their overall body of work. Imogen Cunningham's nude portraits of her husband, produced between 1910 and 1918, are rare exceptions.
8. C. Jane Grover, *The Positive Image* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 45-47.
9. Grover, p. 40.
10. This phrase is from Faderman.
11. It is interesting to note that the American Psychiatric Association did not remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders until 1973, after intensive pressure from gay rights activists and others.
12. See Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) for an overview of this period, as well as the many individual biographies of these women.
13. In seeking visual evidence of lesbian existence outside of direct sexual representation, butch-femme suggestions or simply the adoption of masculine clothing, are two of the most visible indicators of possible lesbian practice. However, it is important to remember that during this period the boyish (or garçon) look was popular for women who considered themselves modern and is not in itself indicative of lesbian practice.
14. Brassai, *The Secret Paris of the 30's*, translated by Richard Miller (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). See "Sodom and Gomorrah" section, and his descriptions of women at the club Le Monocle.
15. For a more complete history of this period see *Eldorado* (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufman, 1984).
16. Judith Schwarz's *Radical Feminists of Heterodox: Greenwich Village 1912-1940* (Lebanon, N.H.: New Victoria Publishers, 1982) examines the lives of nearly 100 women, many of whom were lesbians.
17. Sandra Lieb, *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), p. 124.
18. For more information on Bentley, see Eric Garber's article "Gladys Bentley: The Bulldagger Who Sang the Blues," *Outlook* 1:1 (Spring 1988), p. 52-61.
19. Curiously, a part of the induction process for American recruits was to ask them directly if they had ever had sexual experience with a member of their own sex. For some recruits this open acknowledgement established a kind of "normalization" of the possibility. See Alan Bérubé, "Coming Out Under Fire," *Mother Jones*, February/March 1983, for additional information on the induction process and classification of homosexuals during World War II.
20. For more complete information on this period see Allan Bérubé, "Coming Out Under Fire" and John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
21. It is interesting to note that there is very little difference between high art and popular culture in the way that lesbians are represented.
22. See Faderman, especially pages 341-348.
23. For a comprehensive listing of lesbian pulp novels see Barbara Grier's *The Lesbian in Literature* (Naiad Press, 1981). Earlier versions of this book are more complete in their listings of lesbian pulp.
24. This book and its cover were specifically cited as exhibiting the "lurid" characteristics of pulp in a 1952 U.S. House Subcommittee investigation into pulp novels. In addition, in 1953, a salesman of this book was charged with selling indecent and lewd literature. He was acquitted on the basis that the book had redeeming literary merit.
25. Canada Customs censorship practices have limited the distribution of these videos, which are primarily produced in the U.S.
26. *Drawing the Line* was produced by Susan Stewart, Persimmon Blackbridge and Lizard Jones. *Bed of Roses* was a photo production group involving women of varying sexual orientations. Lesbians participating in the project were Cydra MacDowall, Kim Fullerton, and Nina Levitt. Ruthann Tucker is a Toronto lesbian artist who has a continuing involvement in producing lesbian sexual imagery. Marg Moores, Almerinda Travassos, and Marusia Bociurkiw have explored sex in their videotapes. Miki Onodera's films have also examined lesbian sex.



CABINET CARD BY CORA WILLET, KANSAS, 1890. NOTE ON VERSO READS: "FLORA—THIS IS YOUR XMAS GIFT AND BE SURE YOU DON'T SET IT WHERE SANTA CLAUS CAN SEE IT OR HE WILL BE SCARED AND LEAVE NOTHING IN YOUR (SHOES)."

**Camera Fiends & Kodak Girls:
50 Selections by and about Women
in Photography, 1840-1930**
Peter E. Palmquist, editor
New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1989

by Renate Wickens-Feldman

MRS. FLETCHER,
PROFESSOR AND TEACHER OF THE
PHOTOGENIC ART.
RESPECTFULLY announces that she is prepared
to execute Daguerreotype Miniatures in a style
unsurpassed by an American or European
stylist . . . Ladies and Gentlemen are invited to
call and examine specimens of the art, next door
to the Union Bank, Place d'Armes, where Mrs. F.
is constantly in attendance.
Sept. 16, 1841.

This advertisement was placed in the *Montreal Transcript* barely two years after the Parisian showman and entrepreneur Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre announced the invention of photography. It is among the first indications of photography's arrival in Canada. But it is far from certain that Mrs. Fletcher was the first woman photographer. That distinction might well go to Constance

Mundy, the wife of Daguerre's rival, William Henry Fox Talbot. Ms. Mundy's correspondence clearly indicates that her early work with photogenic drawings and the calotype were intimately linked to her husband's success.

Mrs. Fletcher and Constance Mundy, like many of the women who pioneered photography, received very little notice in last year's lavish celebrations of the medium's sesqui-centennial. Clearly, it is no surprise to see women's artistic achievements denied. But what is unique about photography is the way it could both encourage women to work with enormous dedication while at the same time demean the products of that work.

The Victorian world decided that the new medium required sensibilities assumed to be natural to women: good taste, intuition, love of children, an ability to build men's egos, patience, tact. Mrs. Fletcher could work as a portrait photographer by virtue of the same characteristics that would have made her a good Victorian hostess, wife, and mother.

Other women soon found themselves working in the new profession. For some, their supposed natural abilities were handy to the men who employed them. E.F. Hannavan, in her "Appointments and Order Getting in the Photographer's Reception Room," records the social graces necessary to deal with the various egos waiting to get their pictures taken.

For other women, early photography was a domestic pursuit. They could engage in photography because the entire enterprise could be practised within the privacy of the family home. At the age of 48, Julia Margaret Cameron was given a camera to amuse herself during her "idle" hours. She soon converted her coalhouse into a darkroom and her glass chicken coop into a studio. She then went on to create some of the most astonishing portraits of the 1870s. While the popular press admired her work, the photographic establishment dismissed Cameron for having produced "bungling pupil's work." A century later, that work is recognized as among the foundations of the art. Cameron's own understanding of the power of her work is seldom better summarized than in a poem of hers anthologized by Palmquist:

Genius and love have each fulfilled their
part,
And both unite with force and equal grace,
Whilst all that we love best in classical art,
Is stamped forever on the immortal face.

Fletcher's advertisement, Hannavan's memoir and Cameron's poem are among the documents preserved in Peter E. Palmquist's anthology, *Camera Fiends and Kodak Girls: 50 Selections By and About Women in Photography, 1840-1930*. Palmquist, who considers himself a "regionalist" and an "antiquarian," is a 54-year-old Californian. Without any financial or institutional support, he has published 25 books and more than 200 articles on photography, with a particular interest in the work of women photographers.



MRS. ROSIE LASLEY (left) AND MISS BERTHA PERIGOT, BLUE LAKE 1896.

The title Palmquist has chosen for the anthology is itself an ironic commentary on the attitudes that society has displayed toward women with cameras. "The Kodak Girl" is a dilettante who passes her many idle hours by taking flattering portraits or

making pleasant stabs at derivative art. She is not like the women we meet in the anthology. Palmquist reproduces an anonymous 1895 description of the life of an itinerant California photographer, Mary Winslow. There is a piece by Josephine



ELIZABETH FLEISCHMANN. RADIOPHOTOGRAPH (X-RAY) OF A SHOE. (c.1900)

Kemp on her turn of the century work to preserve the images of Hopi people. And Palmquist prints important pieces on fine art photographers Annie Brigman and Imogen Cunningham as well as Carmen Ballen's poignant appreciation of the work of Dorothea Lange.

Palmquist also provides an especially valuable service by reprinting women's writing about photography. If the patriarchy paid little attention to women's work in photography, it paid even less attention to what women thought about the medium. And for good reason. The ultimate weapon for dismissing the work of women photographers was the dismissal of photography as a whole. As long as photography was subordinate to the established arts, then it was an entirely appropriate practice for the subordinate sex. Conversely, if a case could be made for photography as art, then some of its practitioners would have to be taken seriously.

In 1857, Lady Elizabeth Eastlake wrote one of the earliest analyses of photography as art. Her "Essay Upon Photography" introduces the arguments that would later be addressed by male photographic critics such as George Bernard Shaw, Oscar G. Rejlander, Charles Caffin, Alfred Stieglitz, and Paul Strand.

Other women writers followed. Palmquist includes Eva Lawrence Watson's "On Photography" and Mary Fanton Roberts' eloquent appreciation of Gertrude Käsebier. He also includes an extraordinary piece by

Catherine Weed Barnes. In 1890, Barnes was so bold as to question the patriarchy's patronizing attitude toward women photographers. In her essay, "Photography From a Woman's Standpoint," she objects to the awarding of "ladies' diplomas or prizes":

It is not a complimentary distinction, although intended as such, and is considered by outsiders as implying that the lady who wins it competes only against other ladies, which gravely lessens the value of the prize. . . . Good work is good work whether it be by man or woman, and poor work is poor by the same rule. If the work of men and women is admitted to the same exhibition it should be on equal terms. Do not admit a woman's pictures because they are made by a woman, but because they are made well.

What makes Palmquist's selections unique is his ability to allow the articles to speak for themselves. These are fragments of a lost history. Palmquist makes no claim for the completeness of the selection—although compared to the number of women mentioned in standard histories of photography, the book explodes with new information. But it is the archivist's discovery, not that of a would-be canon builder. Palmquist is the first to admit that there is much left to be done by the photo-historians.

Camera Fiends and Kodak Girls also helps that work by providing a detailed annotated bibliography. Palmquist has since expanded that list into *A Bibliography of Writings By and About Women in Photography, 1850-1950* (Arcata, CA: self-published, 1990), a work that contains more than 700 annotated

listings. In his introduction to the bibliography, Palmquist makes the very unusual offer to copy from his own files any article that the reader has had trouble obtaining by ordinary means.

Palmquist has written other books on women in photography. *Shadowcatchers: A Directory of Women in California Photography Before 1901* (Arcata, CA: self-published, 1990) may not be of direct interest to Canadians. But it provides a view of the women who made up 10 per cent of the photographic workforce. The thoroughness with which Palmquist researched these 850 listings also serves as a useful model for a long overdue similar effort in Canada.

One of the women listed in *Shadowcatchers* is Elizabeth Fleishmann. In 1896, Ms. Fleishmann became one of the first X-ray photographers in North America. Her San Francisco practice set standards for the entire profession. Unfortunately, neither she nor her colleagues were made aware of the dangers of the new technology. In 1905 Elizabeth Fleishmann died of radiation poisoning. Palmquist provides a small memorial to her in a pamphlet entitled *Elizabeth Fleishmann: Pioneer X-ray Photographer* (Berkeley, CA: Judas L. Magnes Museum, 1990).

At present, Palmquist is working on a sequel to *Shadowcatchers*. He has collected information on 500 women photographers who worked in California between 1901 and 1920. He is also attempting to document the lives of all California photographers, a project that, he estimates, will run to about 50,000 pages. As part of this, he has collected 100,000 stills.

None of Palmquist's books are easily available. The photographic publishing industry can always find the money to print a coffee table edition of pornographic daguerreotypes or yet another appreciation of wartime photo-journalism. There are not as many resources available for the lost history of women's photography. Palmquist's books are published by tiny presses in California and New York, usually in editions of 300-500 copies. Palmquist does everything himself from research to cover designs. The easiest—and often the only—way to get the books is to write Palmquist directly at 1183 Union Street, Arcata, California, 95521.

Renate Wickens-Feldman teaches photography at York University.

EARL PASTKO AS ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE IN *BAN THIS SHOW*.

Ban This Show

Sky Gilbert

(Buddies in Bad Times Theatre)
Beaver Hall, Toronto
September 20 - October 7, 1990

by Tom Folland

Portraiture, still-life, nude. To the post-modernist theorists of radical photographic practice in the '70s and early '80s, the traditional genre-look of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's work had nothing to do with politicized photographic practices. These practices were engaged in various critiques of representation, subjectivity, and the economic imperatives of the market in the revitalization of photography as "high art." Robert Mapplethorpe, who died of AIDS in 1989, shortly after the opening of his Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective and before the touring exhibition of his work, *The Perfect Moment*, organized by the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, appeared to belong more to the school of "art photography." Like Irving Penn, Mapplethorpe merged art and fashion, the imagery of advertising with a most conventional quotation of photographic genre, thereby embracing a very market definition of art—not really a very radical practice of art.

Now, of course, the political stakes are different. The contestation of Mapplethorpe's work by a new political right stems from the imagery that inhabited these conventional apparatuses of genre, imagery now described interchangeably as homoerotic and obscene, and imagery that was wholly ignored by vanguard postmodern critics. The homophobia mobilized by these erotic images of men in leather and chains or of nude Black men has reached such hysteria that *Globe and Mail* art critic John Bentley Mays has described even Mapplethorpe's images of flowers in terms usually reserved for his

more seditious photographs. Just as in new right parlance there is no differentiation between images of gay sexuality and obscenity, there is for John Bentley Mays no differentiation between the images of flowers and images of men in leather: "They are utterly memorable for the perfection of the artist's ruthless overpowering of whatever he chooses to depict, whether flower, child, nude male body or celebrity."¹

Given this intense political and anti-sex climate surrounding Mapplethorpe's work and the very title of the play provocatively inviting the Toronto Police Department's morality squad, I expected a rather critical and frank portrayal of what *Ban This Show* purports to represent: the sado-masochistic sex that so characterizes some of Mapplethorpe's work and so enraged U.S. Senator Jesse Helms. Unfortunately this did not hold forth. And it didn't because the play itself participates in a particular kind of genre. The photographs are treated as windows to the reality of Mapplethorpe's life, rather than as part of larger and more complex constructions around representations of sexuality. Presented in a roundabout theatre space at Beaver Hall, several vignettes are spun from Mapplethorpe's portraits. They attempt to give somewhat of the flavour of Mapplethorpe's life through enactments of the scenarios staged in the photographs: Candy Darling on the telephone; a portrait of Phillip Glass and Robert Wilson; two leathermen in their living room; portraits of Patti Smith and body builder Lisa Lyons; Louise Bourgeois holding a phallic object; and the anonymous portraits of



Black men. What emerges is a very impressionistic portrait of Mapplethorpe, something along the lines of a "great artists and their work" theme that you might see on TVOntario, although with skewed references to leather and bondage thrown in. What doesn't emerge is anything thoughtful or provocative on the issue of censorship and sexuality.

This appears, however, to have been more the intent of playwright and director Sky Gilbert. He wrote this play in the fall of 1989 before the obscenity case in Cincinnati where Mapplethorpe's photographs went before a jury to determine if the nude images of children and his more notorious photograph of a bullwhip inserted up his ass, were obscene. "I wrote this show," Gilbert writes in a *Buddies in Bad Times* newsletter, "because I opened up Mapplethorpe's book of photographs and saw a picture of a calla lily on one page and a picture of a boy's tongue on the other, and for some reason that made me cry." And it made him write a play that was, on the whole, more of a eulogy to a "great artist" and a paean to his work, rather than a critical account and exploration of exactly what is at stake in a state crack-down on representations of queer sexuality.

Tom Folland is a writer and curator living in Toronto.

ENDNOTE

1. John Bentley Mays, "Strong Poison," *The Globe and Mail*, April 14, 1990, p. C1.

Songolo

Marianne Kaplan
South Africa, 1990

by Blanca Njavingi Brynda

Songolo is about two dynamic South African performers: Gcina Mhlophe and Mzwakhe Mbuli. The documentary was filmed on location in Johannesburg, Soweto, and Natal with an entirely South African crew in late 1989, one of the most exciting periods in South Africa when the government briefly lifted the ban on public demonstrations and political prisoner Walter Sisulu was freed and welcomed by 80,000 people.

Songolo shows the powerful role that culture plays in the survival and drama of South Africa in transition. The film opens with a magnificent view of the African hills covered with the early morning dew and Gcina Mhlophe's praise poem to the women of Africa. Through the lives, words, and vibrant performances of Mhlophe and Mbuli, we are introduced to hostel dancing, township jazz, freedom songs, storytelling, and contemporary praise poetry.

Mzwakhe Mbuli, also known as "the dub poet of Soweto," is a young, immensely popular poet and political activist. Growing up in Soweto accompanying his father to watch traditional dancing, he was inspired to perform. The 1976 Soweto Student Uprising was a time of politicization. Mbuli's

response was to fight back through culture. In 1985, he joined the Cultural Desk of the United Democratic Front, becoming part of a cultural force that fuels the anti-apartheid movement. He performs solo or with his band at rallies, political meetings, and concerts. Despite being imprisoned and tortured several times, having his house firebombed, his poetry banned, and his travel restricted, he continues to write and perform. As he says: "Culture is a weapon that doesn't rust." Mbuli's most ardent followers are The Young Lions, the militant township youth able to recite his poetry at the drop of a beret.

Both Mhlophe and Mbuli were inspired by traditional African praise poets but each has chosen a different approach. Mhlophe represents a more humanistic point of view: women's issues and children are the focus of her work. Born and raised in Natal near Durban, an important early influence was her grandmother, who spent hours telling her traditional African folk tales. When she was about 17 years old she met a traditional praise poet at a tribal meeting. This man was the right-hand man to the chief and she was enthralled by his beautiful traditional cos-

tume as well as his powerful dynamic performance. Right then and there she decided that she too would become a praise poet, though this art form was restricted to men. She started writing poetry secretly. It was an exhilarating feeling and though she was very unsure of herself, soon she was ready to perform.

After finishing high school, Mhlophe went to Johannesburg, where she shared a small room with three other women. There she wrote about her loneliness and about her situation. It was very personal poetry that tended toward social comment. Drawn closer to the community, Mhlophe says: "Women make the home, family, and society. Women know that, whether it's recognized or not. Women appreciate each other and enjoy each other's company; but sometimes, the men don't appreciate women's strength." She continues: "Because Black men are stripped of their manhood by the white man, who, in most occupations make Black men feel like boys, men come home and take it out on their wives and children. . . . Woman, well, she has a really hard time: she is abused not only by the system, but also by her husband."

But Mhlophe is optimistic; she wants to share her knowledge and experiences with other people. Today Gcina Mhlophe is a very important writer, poet, actor, theatre director, and role model encouraging other Black women to become writers and improving children's lives in South Africa so that they will know an alternative to guns, teargas, and violence. Her children's book, *The Snake with Seven Heads*, has been translated into seven African languages as well as into English and German.

The director of *Songolo*, Vancouver-based Marianne Kaplan, originally from Cape Town, says she was tired of seeing films in which South Africans were depicted as victims and wanted to show the strength and survival through creative culture in South Africa. *Songolo* premiered in Toronto November 1, 1990 at Harbourfront and was broadcast on TV Ontario November 7th.

Blanca Njavingi Brynda, a Rastafarian and graduate of York University, is a freelance journalist, independent film producer/director and activist on behalf of women's rights.



GCINA MHLOPHE



TERESA MACPHEE'S SCULPTURAL RE-CREATIONS OF STRUCTURES USED IN MICMAC GAMES INSTALLED IN THE STOREFRONT OF THE MICMAC GIFT SHOP.

STREETsmART Gottingen Street, Halifax June 15 - July 15, 1990

by Andrea Ward

STREETsmART was an ambitious event organized by the Halifax art community to capture the attention of the traffic that passes through Gottingen Street, the North End principal business district, and to build a positive image of the North End as a vital commercial and residential area. Much of the Gottingen Street area has been bought up by developers in an attempt to secure its commercial potential. These buildings and lots remain vacant as they can only be rented at current commercial rates, beyond the reach of small businesses and the arts community.

STREETsmART made use of vacant shop windows in some of these properties along Gottingen Street. A jury of artists, architects, and curators chose 14 artists: Cheryl Simon, Maja Swannie, Terri Vernon, Ray

Frizzell, David J. Brooks, Mark Simkins, Bernice Purdy and David Bobier, Teresa MacPhee, Michael Fernandes, Charlene Conrad, and Bruce Johnson, Christopher Joyce and Renée Penny.

STREETsmART was a very successful visual arts event in a culturally mixed community with vital activity in the streets, the galleries, and the community centres. Historically, the North End of Halifax has been divided from the more gentrified and economically prosperous South End. The South End is marked by the glitz of postmodern shopping complexes, university student activity, professionals, and businesses. To some Haligonians there exists an understanding of a central Halifax as consisting of the provincial buildings, banking, historic properties (tourism), and big busi-

ness. More often than not, however, the tentative "centre" is perceived as being part of the South End.

Further, the division of the North from the South End is also marked by the ominous authority of the police station, the militaristic and geographic landmark of the Citadel, and a series of cold concrete highway over and underpasses. All of these divisions have enforced the distinctly different social, political, and economic development of the North End community.

In 1974, Halifax's first artist-run centre, *Inventions*, began as a women's collective in the central area of Halifax and shortly after moved to the North End on West Street where it formally became part of the parallel gallery network as *Eye Level Gallery*. The gallery returned briefly to the central area of Halifax, but it was forced back to the North End along with *Wormwoods Dog* and *Monkey Cinema* in the mid-1980s as a result of skyrocketing rents. This return to the North

End, combined with a variety of existing cultural spaces, cultivated a thriving artistic and cultural community: Center for Art Tapes, the Uptown Connection, Veith House, 2098 Gottingen Street, the Atlantic Film Makers Cooperative, The Photo Coop, Black United Front, the Micmac Centre, and very recently the Casino Theatre (which has reluctantly been rented by Sobey's to an organization which books in musicians and performers). Many members of the culture-seeking community from all areas of Halifax regularly attend events in these centres.

Participating in *STREETsmART*, Teresa MacPhee produced "The Spirit Swings" and "Waltzes." The two beautifully-crafted sculptural re-creations of traditional Micmac structures, originally built for play, appeared in the left and right showcase windows of the Micmac store. Waltzes is a game that was invented by the Micmac in the 16th century and played primarily by Micmac women and children during the long winter months. The game still provides a significant form of entertainment, play, and community interaction for many Micmac.

Both "Waltzes" and "The Spirit Swings" allude to the ideal unity valued by the Micmac culture (and in perhaps a utopian manner, to the North End community) which understands play as an educational form of harmony and community participation. Their presence in the storefront represented values that differ greatly from those in Western advertising, which promote the euphoria of consumption and the accumulation of individual wealth.

The re-creation of these historic artefacts by Teresa MacPhee is essential for the Micmac culture. People of the First Nations of Canada have had many of their historic artefacts confiscated or "collected" by museological institutions which have exhibited such acquisitions without permission, and have, at times, inaccurately presented Native culture as savage or romantic for Western consumption. The title "The Spirit Swings" parodied the title of an exhibition of works accompanying the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary. In *The Spirit Sings*, many Native artifacts were shown without the permission of the First Nations people.

Nicholas Wade's "Value for Money," was an installation with video, photographic, and textual components. The work was

arranged in a totem pole fashion with a photograph at the top depicting an image of white men's hands exchanging money for fish. Below it appeared text which read:

Since 1749 we have coveted the riches of this province; we have given you a few blankets in return. We told your parents that they were not using the Land productively and told them which trees they could cut to warm themselves and where and when they could hunt animals for food and skins. We attached cash value to the land, the animals, fish, trees, and rocks. Our zeal for the Capital these goods produced in our markets has led us all to a crisis of over harvested and despoiled forests and waters. Our will is to stay here and know that we cannot put back what we have taken. . .

Below the text, a video monitor displayed industrialized zones from Halifax and Dartmouth. Wade's work addressed the exploitation of the natural resources by the Europeans who conquered this country and their oppressive relationship to Native culture. The work not only admitted to Wade's complicity in these structures but also attempted to deal with the abstract idea of the value of goods exchanged for money.

A piece by Charlene Conrad began with appropriated segments from the United Colors of Benetton advertisements. Conrad created four portraits in total: two male and two female. Each portrait was divided into quarter sections; each quarter section represented a person from a different race. These portraits attempted to reflect the racial diversity of the North End; however, they did in a way in which difference was collapsed into a substitution of a part for the whole.

Tom Folland has characterized this type of participation as a "discursive practice of an authoritarian kind; the kind that works on the side of power to limit heterogeneity and collapse difference; the kind that can be seen in the various attempts to submit the unruly objects of photography's past to a monolithic history."¹

Conrad's images were not intended for the purpose of policing a social system. They represented a similar form of social control by creating images appropriated from an advertising campaign which seeks to erase difference through assimilation by way of commodity purchase. These portraits were not "whole and complete" but very problematized representations. Although alluding to racial representation in a sea of

white, Western advertising, they were fictionalized representations of racial equality derived from an advertising campaign of a multinational corporation.

Bruce Johnson, Christopher Joyce, and Renée Penney collaboratively produced a video installation consisting of 12 video monitors stacked in rows of four, using both colour and black and white monitors. The quality of each of the television images varied due to the condition of the monitors as found objects. The video display, which was visible only at night, consisted of two contrasting tracks which played simultaneously. One displayed footage shot from around the neighborhood; while the other spewed out images from commercial and broadcast television.

The installation was positioned in an interesting way in a storefront on the corner of a busy intersection, allowing passersby and drivers a visual experience at night. Its coherency suffered, however, as the random selection process of the second tract in combination with the first failed to examine the connection of television to the everyday experience of Gottingen Street's social and economic conditions. The two tracts exhibited their contrasting origins of information (pop cultural and regional) yet did not analyze the complex meanings of these contrast and thus rendering this information both meaningful and meaningless simultaneously.

Michael Fernandes' work was given much media attention after being called obscene by one of the street merchants. A photographically-based image of a lit match articulated in light blue accompanied by the text "MY FARTS ARE OKAY - YOUR FARTS ARE NOT," Fernandes' work referred humourously to the psychology of scatological humour while simultaneously alluding to the intolerance of difference. Fernandes symptomatically diagnosed the struggle for power using, as his entry, youthful games which display the shifting positions of dominance.

Andrea Ward is an artist, organizer, and socialist-feminist living in Halifax.

ENDNOTES

1. Tom Folland, *The Discursive Space of Recent Photography* (catalogue). Toronto: Artculture Resource Centre, 1988.

It's Too Personal

Sharron Zenith Corne

Melnychenko Gallery, Winnipeg

October 20 - November 24, 1990

by Marian Yeo

That we are mothered by woman, that in all societies women rather than men have primary parenting responsibilities, is an important social and cultural fact that still bears remarking and analyzing.

—Nancy Chodorow

Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory

The separation-individuation phase of childhood development which serves as the foundation of each individual's identity and sexuality is complex, multiform, and circular. Primary mother-child interactions largely determine all subsequent relationships.

In 36 simple line drawings hung in thematic sequences, Sharron Zenith Corne records the shifting dynamics of the mother-child relationship during this phase of childhood development, a period ending at about the age of four.

In these drawings the infant's early experience of symbiotic fusion is signified by a mother-child head, the two part-faces joined and/or divided by a single line. This central image unifies the series. The continuing ambivalence of their relationship is conveyed by eyes and lips, expressing joy, contentment, fear, desire, anger, terror, dejection, or indifference. Shoulders and upper arms hold closely, often with the child's arm disappearing into the mother's crotch, an affirmation of the psychosexual dimension of early development.

Below and around the merged body/face and arising out of a sea of small dashes are fingers, single or in groups, straight or curved, reaching out, connecting, or pushing away, as well as assorted eyes, lips, mouths, and breasts. The dynamic of each sequence is the obsessive rhythmic repetition of lines and shapes counterpointed by a multitude of minute variations which diversify the depicted experiences.

Although each drawing is simple, almost pictographic, the imagery is serial, creating a powerful interplay between the pictures which evokes ambiguous, contradictory, and overlapping emotions in viewers. The effect is cumulative, building momentum and depth

so that the viewer constructs meaning through imaginative participation and identification.

Viewers who resist piecing the images together avoid the memories of loss which often co-exist with the fear of maternal engulfment. Even intimations of these feelings can be so threatening that some viewers must reject any empathic identification with the overall thematic continuum. The difficult experiences of clinging, striving for independence, and rapprochement, which is sometimes reflected, combined with the erotic aspect of early attachment when sexual and body images are still in flux, may be so unsettling that denial is necessary.

Corne's technique is direct, intuitive, and spontaneous. Over a period of the last

seven years she has produced 18,000 sketchbook size drawings and her proficiency in editing and juxtaposing these images is a key component of her artistic practice.

Artistic conventions, as with subject matter, reflect ideology and Corne's search for formal approaches outside of mainstream artistic practice is a conscious repudiation of bourgeois, patriarchal values. The format of the small drawings also subverts the traditional hierarchy of forms which places monumental painting and sculpture at the top and drawing at the base, slightly above crafts. This virtually excludes the artist from recognition in mainstream art institutions.

Yet, both style and format are essential in the communication of Corne's unique subject matter: the emotional vicissitudes of early mother-child interaction.

Marian Yeo is a writer and editor based in Winnipeg.





The Sexual Politics of Meat

A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory

Carol J. Adams

New York: Continuum, 1990

by Bob Ewing

Carol J. Adams's book is divided into three sections that explore 1) how the eating of meat relates to the subjugation of women, 2) the role of vegetarianism in the women's movement, and 3) the cultural correlation between images and attitudes toward women and the slaughter of animals. She argues that meat eaters unconsciously support a culture that is sexist and patriarchal.

The Sexual Politics of Meat begins by establishing the existing relationship between the eating of meat and virile masculinity, as it characterizes the assumptions about men's, and particularly male athletes', need for meat. Adams then explores, using feminist literary theory, the violence directed against women and animals and develops the thesis that women and animals are linked as "absent referents" within patriarchal society:

Through the structure of the absent referent, patriarchal values become institutionalized. Just as dead bodies are absent from our language about meat, in descriptions of cultural violence women are also the absent referent. (p. 42)

The second part of Adams's book is a well-documented presentation of the beginnings of a feminist history of vegetarianism. For example, the meaning of vegetarianism in Mary Shelley's classic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* is

discussed in detail in a chapter entitled "Frankenstein's Vegetarian Monster":

The creature's vegetarianism not only confirms its inherent, original benevolence but conveys Mary Shelley's precise rendering of themes articulated by a group of her contemporaries whom I call "Romantic Vegetarians." The references that are central to Shelley's novel and to Romantic writers in general—the writings of Ovid, Plutarch, Milton and Rousseau—are all united by positive vegetarian associations. (p. 109)

In Shelley's novel the creature restores the "absent referent" by naming some of the animals used for meat when it explains its vegetarianism. "The creature's vegetarianism serves to make it a more sympathetic being, one who considers how it exploits others." (p. 110) Adams's analysis of *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* provides the reader with essential historical background as she moves forward toward present day with an examination of 20th century women writers, interpreting the connection between meat eating, male dominance and war.

As Adams identifies the cross-mapping of feminism and vegetarianism, her book depicts the work of some of the major figures in the feminist canon within a legacy of challenging the sexual politics of meat. Adams's consistent argument is that veg-

etarianism can act as a manifestation of sovereign female being, as it demands a rejection of male control.

The third part of Adams's book is entitled "Eat Rice Have Faith in Women." This part of the book draws its title from a poem by Fran Winant:

eat rice have faith in women
what I don't know now
I can still learn (p. 144)

Adams argues that a "re-conceptualization of the vegetarian body of literature is necessary in light of the growing scientific information about the human body." (p. 146) She then details the results that have been derived from anthropological sources which indicate that our "earliest hominid ancestors had vegetarian bodies." (p. 147)

The Sexual Politics of Meat provides us with a beginning for the development of a feminist-vegetarian critical theory. Anyone who is concerned with violence in our society and the oppression of women will derive benefits from Adams's book. How often do we stop and question ourselves about how what we eat demonstrates what we believe in, or how what we eat reinforces or supports socio-economic structures? If Adams's book achieves nothing else it will make the reader stop and consider these questions.

Bob Ewing is a freelance writer and photographer whose work concentrates on the belief that social action begins at the grocery store.

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