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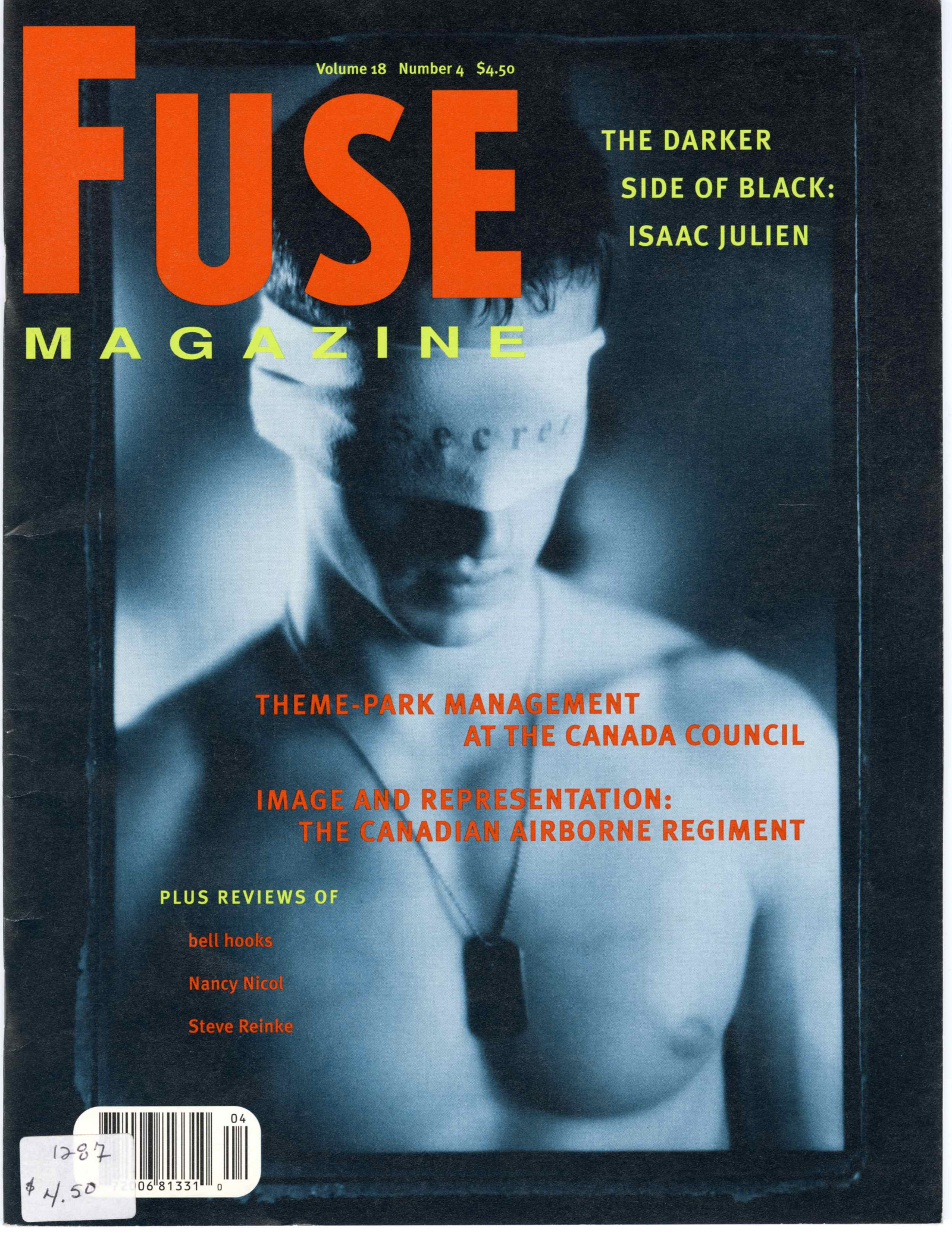
FUSE MAGAZINE



THE DARKER SIDE OF BLACK: ISAAC JULIEN

THEME-PARK MANAGEMENT AT THE CANADA COUNCIL

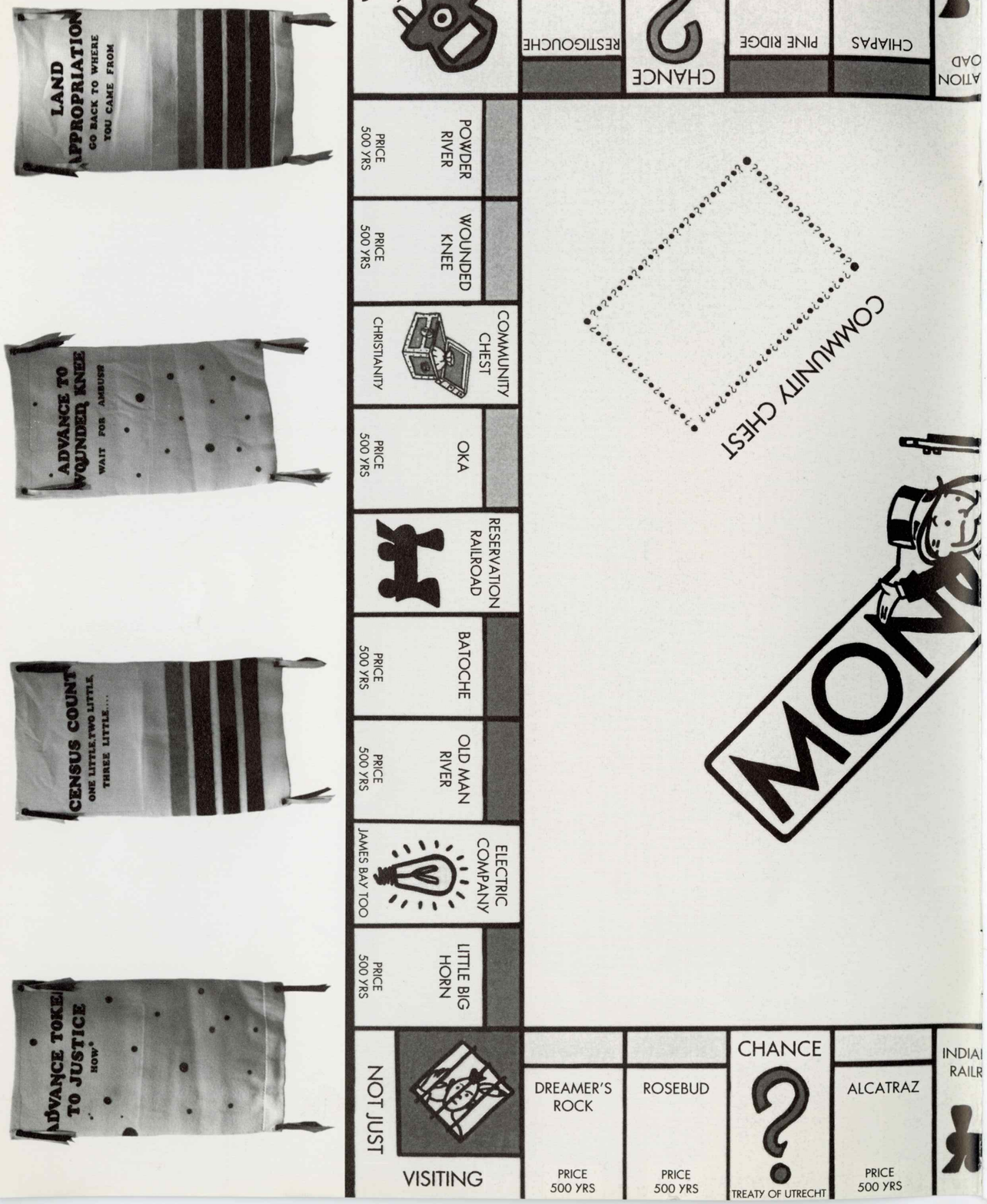
IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION: THE CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT

PLUS REVIEWS OF

bell hooks

Nancy Nicol

Steve Reinke



Garry Kibbins
P & Not-P
Mead Lake
May 24 – June 24

Kati Campbell
installation
May 31 – June 24

Home Sweet Home
film & video exhibition
July 5 - July 29

DYS
group exhibition
July 5 - July 29

Regular 8/Super 8
group exhibition
September 6 - October 7

All New Gen
VNS Matrix
September 13 - October 7

Time based submissions are reviewed on an ongoing basis
Visual arts submission deadline is November 1, 1995

YYZ Artists' Outlet
1087 Queen St. West
Toronto, Canada. M6J 1H3
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VOLUME 18 NUMBER 4 SUMMER 1995

Fig. 236.—"Desks."

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FUSE MAGAZINE

Fig. 235.—"Lift" (or "Raise.")

Columns

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Feature

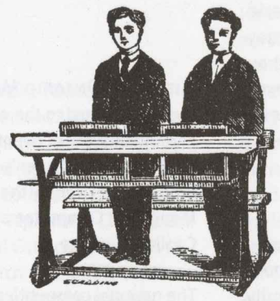


Fig. 237.—"Stand."

Book Reviews

Cover image: from *Hollow Liberty,* directed by Robyn Hutt, senior producer Isaac Julien. Part of the series The Question of Equality, a Testing the Limits production in association with Channel 4 Television, UK, and ITVS. Photo credit: Daphne Fitpatrick.

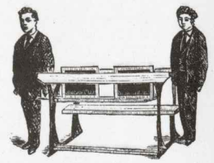


Fig. 238.—"Oct."

Visual Art Review

Film and Video Reviews

contents

Letter to the Editor

FUSE: I was pleased to see Jane Farrow's review of G.B. Jones' erotic drawings at Mercer Union (FUSE vol. 18 no. 2). However, I must disagree with the reviewer's statements about Tom of Finland. She asserts that Tom's drawings "constantly reproduce and uphold conventional roles of authority and hierarchy within sexual practice. Tom's cops and captains are, and always will be, compulsively 'Greek active.'"

Bullshit. Tom's work is full of storylines in which uniformed authority figures are taken by surprise by anti-authoritarian rebels and who quickly become (re)acquainted with the pleasures of being a bottom. If I simply take the first two storybooks that come to hand, I find that in *Highway Patrol* our hero Kake is apprehended by two hunky highway cops, one of whom is shown on the cover giving Kake a blow job, while another image in the series shows a cop cumming while Kake is fucking him in the ass. *Kake In Canada* shows Kake's idyll with a lumberjack being interrupted by a stern RCMP officer. Before you can say Dudley Do-right, the Mountie has a dick up his butt.

Tom's men are remarkable, particularly for their time, in embracing the pleasures of top and bottom with equal gusto, sucking and getting fucked without the slightest evidence of anxiety about their manhood. To give Tom his due, and contrary to what Farrow implies, he also integrated Black men into a number of his stories, portraying them with dignity and respect without consigning them to a stereotypical sexual role, and at a time when Black images in gay porn were generally quarantined as an exotic specialty.

Kake himself is the archetypal bad-boy leather rebel who adores cock but who couldn't care less about official authority. The narratives of Jones' pastiches, from what I've seen of them, actually closely parallel those of Tom's originals. In those terms, her work is much more an homage to Tom than a transgression or subversion. The critical difference is that Jones has substituted a female subject and reconstituted the narrative without the phallus, thus opening a new field of erotic possibilities. Even while turning Tom upside down — a position his alter-ego Kake loved to be in — G.B. Jones demonstrates respect for his achievements. I wish Farrow would do the same.

Robin Metcalfe
Halifax

Issues and Events

by Suzanne Methot

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM (ROM) is currently host to the winning design and the designs of twenty-two other finalists in the Women's Monument Project organized by the Women's Monument Committee at Vancouver's Capilano College.

The national competition and design exhibition is intended to honour female victims of violence and was spurred by the mass murder of fourteen female engineering students at the Université de Montréal on December 6, 1989.

The exhibit, co-organized by the Capilano Committee and the ROM's Institute of Contemporary Culture, features illustrations, artists' statements and three-dimensional models showing the ways each designer approached the creation of a national monument.

Toronto silversmith Beth Alber designed the winning entry. Entitled *Marker For Change*, it comprises fourteen pink granite benches arranged in a circle. Each bench bears the name of one of the slain Montreal women and is fashioned with a small hollow that will gather rainwater and leaves which the artist says symbolizes tears and the passage of time. The inscription reads in part: "We ... remember, and work for a better world. In memory, and in grief, for all the women murdered by men." Alber's design will be built and installed in Vancouver's Thorton Park in 1996. The ROM exhibition runs until August 13, 1995.

THE SECOND ANNUAL NATIONAL Aboriginal Achievement Awards, a project of the Canadian Native Arts Foundation under the sponsorship of the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the Métis National Council, were held in Vancouver on March 31 and televised nationally. The awards honour Métis, Inuit and those of First Nations ancestry for their work in areas such as arts and culture, architecture, community development and the environment. Recipients are chosen by a twenty-one-member jury comprising aboriginal people of diverse backgrounds.

Cape Dorset visual artist Kenojuak Ashevak was the deserved recipient of the lifetime achievement award. One of the most recognized and internationally respected visual artists to emerge from the Arctic, Kenojuak, as she is known, was born in 1927 at an Inuit camp. She was one of the first Inuit women to make drawings for the commercial market in the late 1950s. The drawings, typically featuring birds in various forms and shapes, have been made into stonecut and stencil prints and are sold internationally through the Cape Dorset Prints co-op enterprise. Kenojuak's 1960 work *The Enchanted Owl* was made into a Canadian postage stamp in 1970, and is one of the world's best-known Inuit prints. Kenojuak, who also carves, is a Companion of the Order of Canada and holds honourary doctorates of law from both Queen's University and the University of Toronto.

Haida artist Robert Davidson was honoured with the arts and culture achievement award for his work as a leader in the artistic and cultural renaissance of the indigenous peoples of Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands, off the coast of British Columbia). A carver who apprenticed under Haida artist Bill Reid, Davidson's career has spanned over thirty years and has included exhibitions in Canada, Germany and the United States, as well as a retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1993.

Other aboriginal award winners included Métis architect Douglas Cardinal, who designed the Canadian Museum of Civilization and is currently working on the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall in Washington, D.C., and Matthew Coon Come, grand chief of the James Bay Cree in Quebec, well-known opponent of the now-defunct Great Whale hydroelectric project and co-author of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations.

TRINIDAD-BORN, TORONTO-BASED author Ashley Marcelline has self-published *The Black Film and Video Guide*, a comprehensive listing of over 800 films spanning the years 1919 to 1994, 500 of which are available on video. Marcelline, who expects to publish an updated edition every year, spent four years compiling the cross-section of films into an uncomplicated, noncategorical, alphabetical — and unrated — format. Many of the films are easily accessible and, at this point, mostly American. Not all are specifically "Black films" — Marcelline has included films of a wider genre whenever necessary to trace the careers of certain Black actors.

The author says research is currently underway to ensure upcoming editions contain more Canadian titles. Having accessed the Library of Congress film collection for the premiere edition, Marcelline plans to conduct research at the National Archives of Canada for the second edition, which is due in August 1995. He's also making efforts to access titles worldwide through computer databases.

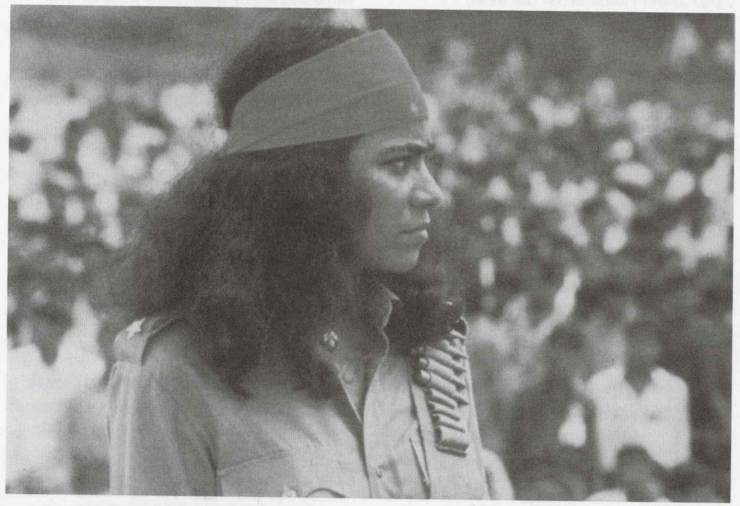
The Black Film and Video Guide, priced at $10, is available through the Black Cinema Network at 104 White Blvd., Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5Z5. For those with an access ramp onto the information superhighway, info is also available through the Internet: for e-mail, the address is ashleyma@inforamp.net; for World Wide Web, http://www.inforamp.net/ashleyma/blakcine.html.

Film and Video News

Bandit Queen Revisited

by Bhaskar Srinivasan

Filmgoers who attended the Toronto International Film Festival last September will remember legendary Indian outlaw Phoolan Devi's passionate appeal to not participate in her humiliation by seeing the film *Bandit Queen*, which claims to be the true story of her life.



Seema Biswas as Phoolan Devi in Shekhar Kapur's *The Bandit Queen*. Courtesy The Film Reference Library, Toronto.

Bandit Queen is based on Devi's experiences as India's most famous and most feared outlaw. A low-caste woman married at age eleven and subsequently mistreated by her husband, Devi became a hero to millions of low-caste Indians after she escaped from her husband and joined a gang of bandits. The bandits routinely robbed higher-caste Indians.

Devi was eventually caught by angry villagers, who gang-raped her over a three-day period. She escaped the mob but returned to the village a few months later with her gang and allegedly murdered thirty men. Devi eluded the police for five years but finally surrendered, eventually serving ten years in prison. After her release from prison, she denied all links to her past, saying the story of her life was grossly distorted and that she was the victim of media hype.

After almost nine months of wrangling, the seemingly intractable Devi has entered into an out-of-court settlement with BBC's Channel 4 (one of the film's producers), a deal that leaves a host of questions unanswered. (Devi had previously succeeded in getting the Delhi high court to issue an injunction restraining the producers from screening the film anywhere in the world and even ordering them to withdraw the film from the Academy Award nomination process.)

As part of the recent settlement Devi has received £40,000 ($87,800 CDN) from Channel 4 and has succeeded in forcing the producers to cut four scenes — the total cuts will not exceed one minute of total film time — and omit the caption specifying the film is based on a true story, but only for the Indian version of the film. Outside India the film can be shown without any changes or cuts.

The film, according to its producers, depicts the brutality lower-caste women suffer at the hands of higher-caste men. Director Shekhar Kapur portrays Devi as a martyr and a heroine, an avenging angel, the scourge of the higher caste and a protector of the people.

When the newly married Devi did not approve of the film, the filmmakers accused her of behaving like a victim and not as a liberator, of turning her back on her own life and escaping into middle-class marital oblivion, leaving behind the millions of lower-caste people who expected her to lead them on in their struggle.

But Devi doesn't look at herself as a heroine and is not about to don the mantle of the vanquisher. She says instead that she "was the worst woman in the world when that happened. Why should a woman's private life be laid bare before the whole world?"

Devi complained bitterly to the Delhi court that the film constituted an invasion of her privacy, distorting her life and causing her serious injury by showing the movie character naked, being raped and committing criminal offences.

The settlement leaves unanswered the question of whether Devi's right to privacy was violated, and also does not address "Devi's alleged consent [to the making of the film], [the] scope of her consent [or] whether she had given consent to the scenes of rape and murder," in the words of the judge trying her case.

Among all the unanswered questions is the role of the Oscar nominating committee. *Bandit Queen* was screened before members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, who gave the film a standing ovation. But after receiving the Indian court's original order banning the film, the committee withdrew it from the race for best foreign film. A disappointed Kapur accuses the Academy of "not wanting to rock the boat. There were so many complications involved that they decided to play it safe."

ERRATUM

In last issue's Film and Video News (vol. 18, no. 3) by Andrew James Paterson, the following sentence was inadvertently omitted: "Taking a cue from Richard Dyer (the concepts of "affirmation" and "post-affirmation" are borrowed by Waugh from Dyer's *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (New York: Routledge, 1990, pp. 211–286)), Waugh loosely divides The Fruit Machine's fourteen different programmes into three periods of time: pre-history, affirmation, and post-affirmation.
FUSE *apologizes for the error and any inconvenience.*

ShortFuse

Straight Up, No Chaser

News from *The Georgia Straight* is that Tom Walmsley is writing a screenplay to adapt a William Deverell novel about a Bryan Adams tour into a film. Okay, there's about four different media already, right? Walmsley is a legendary writer on the Canadian small press and innovative theatre scenes, most notably as author of the *Dr. Tin and Shades* novels, the play *The Jones Boy*, and the screenplay for the 1993 Canporn feat, *Paris, France*, directed by Gerald Ciccoritti, of Buddies in Bad Times and *E.N.G.* fame. Walmsley's rock & roll novels are brutal in their exploration of the lovely heroin-sex-violence continuum: so if anyone can have us high on Deverell, it'd be Walmsley.

The Long and the Short of It

New York-based film- and videomaker and critic Abigail Child was in Toronto recently to show & discuss her work. She's smart and her videos and films are hard to watch in a neat way. So why she didn't like her work being referred to as "sampling" and why did she say she thought of her videos as drawings and her films as paintings? Kind of a weird, filing-cabinet hierarchy: she said she thought of films as taking longer (they do in her case). But that's ... ?

Free for All

Everyone likes symposia at film festivals — or some do, anyway — 'cause they're usually easier to digest than reading the latest issue of *October*. At the super Images fest one talk was about appropriation and they got someone from Duke to come up — Jane Gaines, doing the now fashionable literary-legal theory nexus. Steve Reinke spoke about his own practices and talked about his essay vs. illustration division of image appropriation. Very Smart. But there was a weird and unquestioned valorization of the "free" going on, as if all images are free for the taking, when Reinke also admitted he has his own system of ethics (not taking images from other marginal productions w/o permission seemed to be one of them). Instead of just stigmatizing lawyers as clumsy rich guys and corporations as the Other, maybe a discussion unafraid to address both democratic public policy on images and their copyright and artist's freedoms would be useful.

— eds.

Theme-Park Management at the Canada Council

Contextualizing the New Strategic Plan, and an Interview with Author and Council Director Roch Carrier

by Clive Robertson

"Like any other academy or formalized society for the promotion of the arts, the Canada Council will itself probably go through a cycle of brash and enthusiastic youth, then a tired, bored — and therefore boring — middle age followed by conservative old age and senile decay; then there should be an overthrow of the arthritic tyranny by a younger generation of revolutionaries. At some period remote from us, the cycle of normalcy will, you be sure, begin again."
Alan Jarvis, director of the National Gallery, in a speech to the Canadian Arts Council (now the Canadian Conference for the Arts), June 11, 1955; two years before the creation of the Canada Council.

On March 1, one day after the federal budget was announced, the Canada Council released its much-awaited strategic plan (*A Design For the Future*) following a heavily criticized, quick cross-country consultation tour plagued by organizational and informational problems.

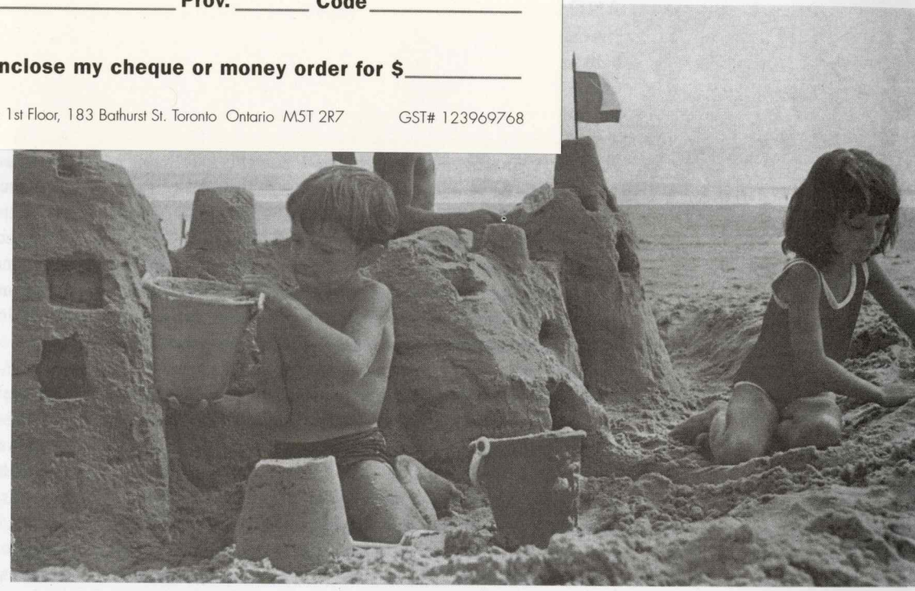
The Council's new plan announces self-imposed cuts of almost fifty percent to its administration; the end of the Art Bank and the deaccessioning of its holdings; and cuts to funding for professional training schools and national service organizations that lobby on behalf of their membership for, among other things, continued government support of the Council.

Since its inception in 1957, the Canada Council has been an institution critically supported by three generations of artists and cultural producers.

The Canada Council has been the only federal arts or cultural institution in which artists have been allocated a structural role, through peer assessment and consultation, in reviewing and participating in the administration of the Council. While in practice such a role has not created any guarantees on matters involving Council policies, there has been an *integrity* and an intelligence that has prevented this agency from being bureaucratically and expediency-driven like government or limited by profit and shareholder expectations like business.

That said, recent federal appointments of chairperson of the board of trustees and the position of director illustrate complex and confused ideological sympathies. The last Tory government appointed Allan Gottlieb as chair of the board and Paule Leduc as director. Gottlieb, a former Canadian ambassador to the United States, will most likely be remembered (like Conrad Black) for his "libel chill" action. Leduc, a senior administrative academic and former government bureaucrat, was made director with the responsibility of overseeing an "efficiency cost-cutting" measure: the amalgamation of the Canada Council with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and cultural programmes from External Affairs.

At the time of her appointment, Leduc was already the director of the SSHRC;



and Roch Carrier, populist author and most recently director of a different political hot potato — *Collège Militaire de St. Jean*, the Quebec military college — as director. The few artists appointed as minority members (trustees) within the Council are those whose work has found support within the marketplace. In other words, no one whose personal, intellectual or material needs have, in recent memory, required the existence of the Council. Because of shifts in the delicate balance of authority between trustees and senior management, the trustees are unable to report to the artistic constituencies they have been placed there to represent. Leduc banned arts programme officers from attending Council meetings, and one future test of the strategic plan will be to see whether or not this reporting access is restored.

As in other national institutions and, more ominously, in Canadian government, we have seen within the Canada Council a "management shift" from

is a simplification of what the Council means, what it has been and done and what it can do. There are subtle but important changes. For example, the plan reaffirms accepting "advice from peer juries." In the past, the Council honoured and accepted the *recommendations* of such juries.

In what is also a break from the past, the final version of the strategic plan was authored solely by senior management and board representation after preliminary input from staff. It was not seen by the Council's disciplinary section heads or by the programme officers prior to its release. Nor were drafts of this plan seen by the artist advisory committees.

Them Man Cana

CON

promotion of the arts, the Canada Council will itself probably go through a cycle of brash and enthusiastic youth, then a tired, bored — and therefore boring — middle age followed by conservative old age and senile decay; then there should be an overthrow of the arthritic tyranny by a younger generation of revolutionaries. At some period remote from us, the cycle of normalcy will, you be sure, begin again."
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At the time of her appointment, Leduc was already the director of the SSHRC; she subsequently proceeded to downgrade the Council's arts division management in the blueprint for the new superagency. Fortunately the legislation for the amalgamation was, after small-scale but relentless lobbying, denied approval in the Senate. The plans for the amalgamation — including the costs of moving into a new building shared with the SSHRC and the hiring of additional senior management — occurred even as Mme. Leduc left her Council position. Additionally, the Council's board was reduced from twenty-one to eleven members.

The Liberal government recently appointed Donna Scott, former publisher of *Share Magazine*, as Chair, and Roch Carrier, populist author and most recently director of a different political hot potato — *Collège Militaire de St. Jean*, the Quebec military college — as director. The few artists appointed as minority members (trustees) within the Council are those whose work has found support within the marketplace. In other words, no one whose personal, intellectual or material needs have, in recent memory, required the existence of the Council. Because of shifts in the delicate balance of authority between trustees and senior management, the trustees are unable to report to the artistic constituencies they have been placed there to represent. Leduc banned arts programme officers from attending Council meetings, and one future test of the strategic plan will be to see whether or not this reporting access is restored.

As in other national institutions and, more ominously, in Canadian government, we have seen within the Canada Council a "management shift" from ideological and historical premises of "public interest" and citizens to a corporate model of rationalization based upon consumers. In the Council's case, the premise of an arm's-length relationship to the government appears to function only if the Council's management goals are in step with the government's own priorities.

The Canada Council's new strategic plan is, on the surface, an artist-positive document outlining "five priority areas." The plan definitely strengthens the Council's commitment to the production, presentation and distribution of living Canadian artists' work — an emphasis long overdue. However, the document

is a simplification of what the Council means, what it has been and done and what it can do. There are subtle but important changes. For example, the plan reaffirms accepting "advice from peer juries." In the past, the Council honoured and accepted the *recommendations* of such juries.

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Among Council watchers there are pressing but unanswered questions: why has what was once a shared authority been down-sized? Is this down-sizing being locked in by the announced administrative cuts? What do those occupying recently created management positions who are not connected to the primary mandate of Council want to do with their power?

Are we witnessing a "dumbing-down" of the Council or an overthrow of perceived past elites? In whose names would such an overthrow take place and for what purpose? Is this cut in administrative costs really going to be spent upon art production, or is the Council still paying off associated costs of the failed Tory-imposed merger with the SSHRC?

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A ROCH AND A HARD PLACE

The following is excerpted from a March 2, 1995, interview between Roch Carrier, director of the Canada Council, and Clive Robertson, a contributing editor and member of the Board of Directors of FUSE.

ROBERTSON: Enactments of new policy documents like *Design For the Future* make those most affected — in this case artist clients or Council staff — very nervous in this anticipatory moment of present and future federal budget cuts.

CARRIER: The artists should not be nervous after what we did with the strategic plan. First, the plan is not related to the [federal] budget. We did the work before the budget. If you will notice we are saving a lot in management; we plan to save $510 million from the administration side and keep as much money as we can for the artists, so I don't think the artists should worry.

ROBERTSON: Who can take the credit for the minimal 2.5 percent allocation cut, assuming that there is no additional carry-over cuts from past federal budgets, and how will the self-imposed administration cuts assist public perception and further rates of federal government subsidy?

CARRIER: I don't know the exact answer to that, but I believe that our will to prepare a strategic plan, our will to have made a consultation tour across the country, listening to the people, and our efforts to have our actions well-known by people who make the decisions — I think it brought the results that we have.

ROBERTSON: The press release referring to the authoring of the strategic plan states that there was "excellent collaboration from the staff, board members, the members of the arts community."

CARRIER: Oh, yes, there was excellent collaboration and it was not always easy. It was terribly difficult sometimes but the will was there. We wanted to listen, we wanted to take and borrow ideas, to have suggestions. We went through the exercise and finally, yes, the result is a collaboration of many people — staff, board, the artistic community — and it's not over. This document is the first step.

ROBERTSON: I'd like to ask you now about underlying changes in the Council's structure. Philosophically the Council, for close to forty years, has conceptually exercised a balance of authority between public appointees, professionals hired by the Council as senior advisors, and peer assessors including both artists and arts programme officers. Because of the top-level managerial restructuring that was carried out by your immediate predecessors, and the subsequent resignation of several arts division section heads, this historical balance has been disrupted. Is this balance of shared directional responsibility for the functioning of the Council to be restored by you or do you have another model in mind?

CARRIER: You probably had the time to read the strategic plan. Certainly we express at the beginning of the plan that we believe in the arm's-length principle. It's something we will not change; we will protect this very special status for our organization. Also, we believe strongly in the peer assessment process. During the tour we put the [assessment] process on the table because we wanted the community to talk about it, and everybody told us that peer assessment was essential and vital and, yes, to keep the peer assessment principle, but we also want to try and improve it based upon suggestions we received from Victoria to St. John's. We want to make that process more transparent and coherent. When someone receives a grant they will know why; if such a person is rejected he or she will know exactly why.

ROBERTSON: Aside from peer assessors on the juries you also have some sixty artist advisory committee members giving ongoing advice and recommendations to the Council. How do you feel about their input at this point? What role will they play in the internal management review? And isn't their approval required to properly enact a document like this?

CARRIER: That's a very good question. We just made the first step. We will at the Canada Council have a transition team. We have fifteen or sixteen people and we had our first meeting to invite them to join this team. Their responsibility in general will be to suggest new ideas. So in the framework of the strategic plan they will advise the management and the board. This transition team will have to talk to their peers inside and also communicate and consult with the community.

ROBERTSON: The plan mentions that the Council "will continue to assume and reemphasize its leadership and advocacy role on behalf of the arts and artists," and yet *The Globe and Mail* reported your chairperson, Donna Scott, as saying, "I'm not sure why we are funding research and advocacy groups" — referring in part to the artist-controlled national service organizations that have already received cuts and are further threatened in the plan by Council-authored cuts. How, as an argument to save money and return to a primary focus, can the Council justify taking a leading role in arts advocacy when it is cutting those organizations who have, at the community level, been reorganized as having the political responsibility for handling issues like copyright, equity access and so on? Shouldn't, for example, the advocacy for continued funding of the Canada Council best come politically from the community level and not the Council itself?

CARRIER: Everywhere on the consultation tour we were told that the Canada Council should be more present on the scene and that the Canada Council should be the advocate for the artist and we should show more leadership. They believe that the strategic plan is proof we are ready for leadership. As far as the national service organizations are concerned, I must say it is not an easy question. We have to establish priorities and the priorities are in the book. I don't believe that national service organizations are a priority unless they serve the cause we identified from the mandate, that being to support the creation, production or distribution of art. In the real world we are supporting twenty-seven arts-service organizations. Sometimes, because we are giving them so little money, I question their effectiveness. Can they really do something with so little money? It's a difficult question.

ROBERTSON: It's ironic that without the existence of such organizations as the Canadian Conference for the Arts (CCA), there would never have been a Canada Council.

CARRIER: If they're doing that work, how come everywhere we were told "Do your job, be leaders, do some advocacy?"

ROBERTSON: The pressures for advocacy, for example, on issues around regional, gender and racial representation and equity have historically come from the community into representative organizations and often — with some delay — been usefully endorsed by and enacted as policy within the Council. It's hard to blame such organizations for their lack of public profile when major media access is not in their hands.

CARRIER: Perhaps. I think that reconforming to our mandate of artistic creation, production, and dissemination gives us a way for, let's just say, not having those organizations being completely absent.

ROBERTSON: Maybe we can end by you telling me what is going to happen next in this process.

CARRIER: I prefer not to talk about what's coming — it is implementation, it's not easy, it's very challenging but interesting. We have a great transition team and we start next week. You will hear about us very soon after we do the job.

ROBERTSON: Thank you. I appreciate your time.

CARRIER: I appreciate talking with you. Good luck with your magazine. Tell me, do you receive a grant from the Canada Council?

ROBERTSON: Since about 1976.

CARRIER: I will ask for more information. I know your magazine but I didn't know your situation. So good luck with the Canada Council.

Clive Robertson is a Research Fellow, 1994-95, at the National Gallery of Canada and a Ph.D. Candidate in Communications Studies at Concordia University in Montreal.

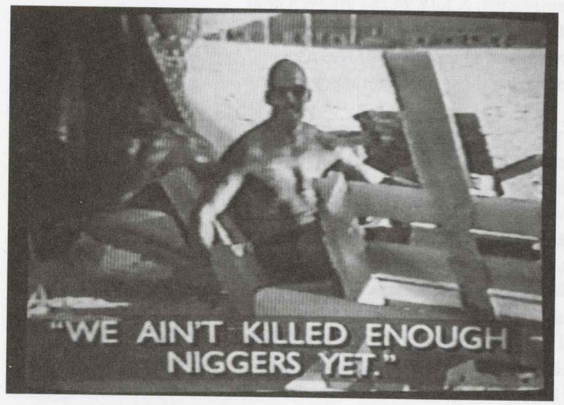
Image and Representation:

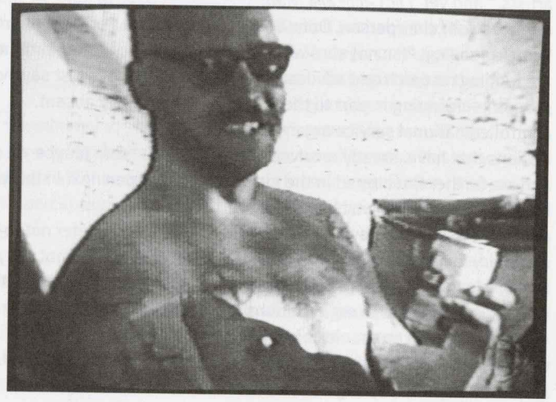
What the Canadian Airborne Regiment Means For Artists

by Clint Burnham

This past winter's furor over the activities of the Canadian Airborne Regiment reveals that the Canadian media, in collusion with the government, is unwilling to deal with real violence and its causes in our society, but ready to crack down on represented violence.

If an artist with a B Grant had made the videos of beatings or defecation, Reform Party flacks and media trollops would have been all over the artist — all artists. The reasoning is simple: such art can cause violence, therefore it must be stopped. But in the case of the real violence, well, as Scott Taylor, who released the hazing video to the media, says: "There are elements of the tape...that will shock polite civilian society but that will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with military life." Now let's not get excited, they're having a good time. It's consensual (if not sensual) shit-eating and racism.





Stills from amateur video shot in Somalia showing members of the Canadian Airborne.

Taylor is a former member of the Canadian Army and the editor of the grunt magazine *Esprit de Corps* — and an Ontario College of Art graduate, lest we get too smug. ("Grunt" is a mildly offensive term for the average soldier.) *Esprit de Corps* is trying to clear Private Kyle Brown, one of the soldiers involved in the torture and killing of Somalian teenager Shidane Abukar Arone. Arone was beaten and tortured to death while in Canadian custody in early 1993. He had been arrested for allegedly stealing — or perhaps for merely violating the regiment's perimeter.

The Airborne was in Somalia in a combat-like "peacekeeping" mission. UN peacekeeping/making missions are a form of the new colonialism. Using foreign troops impotently pretending to intercede, the missions are feeble slaps, gestures from governments no longer keeping up with globalized business.

Brown, along with Clayton Matchee (who tried to hang himself when arrested and now has brain damage), was present and may have played some part in the torture/murder. But beyond that, Brown seems to have been the least murderous of the Canadian soldiers that night. As part of the press feeding frenzy after the murder, it became general knowledge that some members of the regiment were self-avowed neo-Nazis. Photographs of soldiers posing with Confederate flags circulated in the media.

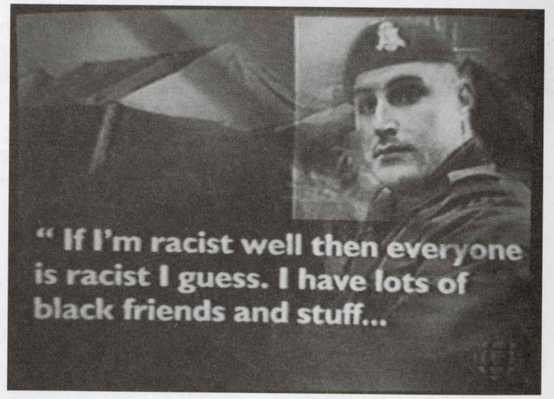
The media response to knowledge of a deep racist substratum in the Canadian military was appropriately postmodern: focusing on issues of gossip-magazine proportion (which minister was responsible, how the knowledge had circulated) that have the pomo signature of jaundiced thirty-something media workers (students of Linda Hutcheon, readers of Eco). That is, structural racism is ignored and replaced by issues of individualized blame, with even more blame attached or challenged in regard to other players outside of the event. Real violence — the path of power, constructed economically and rendered racially and sexually — is outside the purview of this policing regime.

The policing regime of Canada is overly concerned with images of violence and underconcerned with real violence. Pornography, drawings, films and videos, body piercing magazines: such are repressed, and we are lectured in sarcastic tones by eager baby-faced boomer newspaper columnists. Women's shelters are underfunded and attacked for destroying records (again, violence at the signifying level is taboo) while pornography is stopped at the border with the aim of "reducing violence against women." Finally, the violence in contemporary discourse — especially art and popular culture, and as much as it reflects or deals with violence in the social — is a libidinal reminder of freedom, of some Utopia outside the state.

Violence as meted out to women in domestic situations, to Natives in the geopolitics of colonialism as well as on the streets of the cities, violence against gay men and lesbians, or economic and criminal violence experienced by people of colour: these forms of violence, usually carried out by men, are not being attacked in a substantive way by most governments.

This general rule or theory just seems to explain why the reaction to the two Airborne videos released in January 1995 was so focused on questions of the media. One video, released to TV and newspapers on Sunday, January 15, showed Canadian soldiers in Somalia talking about "killing niggers." This led to controversy and politicians doing a lot of talking — but mostly about punishing the regiment. So the most action, the absolute limit, was the nature of military discipline. Military officers commented on the lack of leadership, chanting like a mantra Napoleon's reputed dictum "There are no bad soldiers, only bad generals."

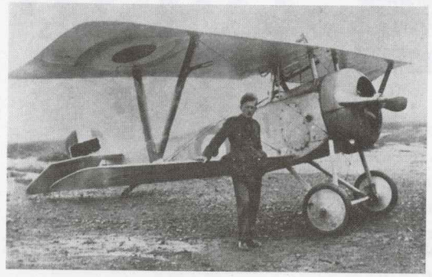
An article referred to "*Esprit*'s Frankenstein," ignoring questions of racism in the military for measuring media-savvy and adding in literary references. Peter Worthington, journalist, is champion of Private Brown but no *seeker-out* of racism. Worthington has written about Taylor in *The Toronto Sun*, where Taylor has also written. When a second video was released on January 19 — showing Bataillean initiation ceremonies involving shit, piss, mock sodomy, blow jobs and abject racism directed at a Black soldier — the degrading nature of the materials involved was the focus, as well as more media semiotics. Little has been said so far on widespread racism and male violence.

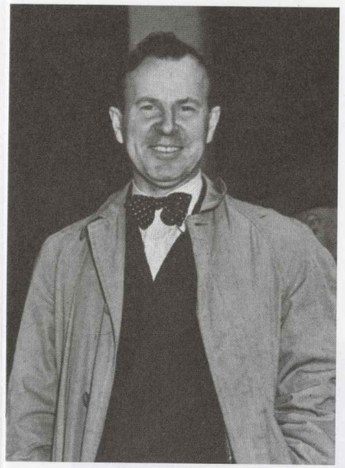


Still courtesy CBC News.

The January videos confirmed the views of hysterical liberals: that those nasty soldiers should all be punished (*et cetera*) — and *this* confirmed the diehard Legion-Reform burghers' and politicians' views that

those pansy liberals don't know what the world's really about. The shit and piss are so troubling to the media bourgeoisie for precisely the Bataillean/Kristevan reasons familiar to everyone but Rick Salutin: foregrounding the corporeality of the body, they constitute a revolutionary questioning of metaphysics. Well, sort of. But of course this wasn't consensual SM: as far as we are (I'm) concerned, a video about hazing as a male-violent ritual would be interesting. But the real thing is a lot more dangerous than a zine or an installation.





Top: Captain W.A. (Billy) Bishop, World War I Canadian Ace.

Bottom: Lester B. (Mike) Pearson, architect of the UN peacekeeping forces during the 1956 Suez War, for which he received the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize. (Photo c. 1942)

As for the media attacking issues of racism, of colonialism, of male violence on a continuum: well, don't ask. A few guest columns, in some dailies, raised these questions. And there was a lot of discussion in the art community and in the ethnic and progressive/artists' press about precisely this issue, of course — but this rarely made it into the mainstream media most Canadians read.

This doesn't mean ordinary Canadians bought the media message: common opinion seems to be, particularly among those either acquainted with the military or with knowledge of violence in society, that it's a widespread problem. But Canadians tend to have a Billy Bishop notion of our military: the young lads off to war or, more recently, doing the blue-helmet peacekeeping thang. It's all so Pearsonian, one last relic of that great Liberal consensus from the 1960s — our own toned-down Kennedy/peace-corps thang. Liberals and Tories alike believed in peacekeeping until the Reform Party came along. It was tough enough for all but the most militaristic of the right-wingers (who often didn't realize the conditions in which peacekeeping took place) and idealistic enough for the flakiest of the NDPers. Our military Symbolic thus is both a suture or even a blanket to soothe our collective angst and a refutation of the American way. A residual anti-Americanism and Canadian nationalism resident in virtually anyone socialized in Canada is here expressed through pride that "we" didn't support the United States in Vietnam and did accept draft dodgers.

This place of the military in the Canadian Imaginary was and is contradicted by the knowledge of many who see it up close or who have a progressive, post-colonial cynicism about history and Canada's place within it. But this cynicism, based on a desire to end violence, not images of it, found little expression in the media reaction to Arone's death.

The media and public perception of the military in Billy Bishop/Mike Pearson terms is why, unlike the United States but like some European countries, gays were "accepted" into the Canadian military in 1992. Our perception of the military here is young men: "our boys." In the United States, for instance, where the military functions much more abjectly as a signifier of masculinity and virility, homosexuality — admitting its existence in the continuum of male bonding in the military — caused hysteria in the press and in various stakeholders. But Canadian signifiers are hardly pure. Or, rather, the very purity of the sign (the smooth-faced lad — a Ganymede, almost), even if one disputed by groups like the peoples of Quebec and Oka, meant that it could not admit our boys were capable of the vicious and terroristic violence being discussed.

Liberal media hysteria around the issue means that the path or circuit of the event — its Baudrillardean change from event to simulacra, that is — is what now comes under scrutiny in the press, and not the event and its causes. Funny how police or military violence is less important than media analyses. The law-and-order crowd is more concerned with policing the signifier than with actual violence. Carleton University's Christopher Dornan, writing in the January 21 *Globe and Mail*, analyses the irony of how Taylor, grunt spokesmodel, becomes an unwilling participant: as if the key issue of the entire revelation is not systemic violence and racism in the military (which clearly mirror, if not intensify, that of society itself), but one guy having to answer the phone a lot one weekend. Oh, to be on the front line of the media war!

Clint Burham is a small press activist and member of the FUSE *editorial collective. He is author of the* Jamesonian Unconcious: the Aesthetics of Marxist Theory *published by Duke University Press.*

Interview with Isaac Julien

by Bruce Morrow

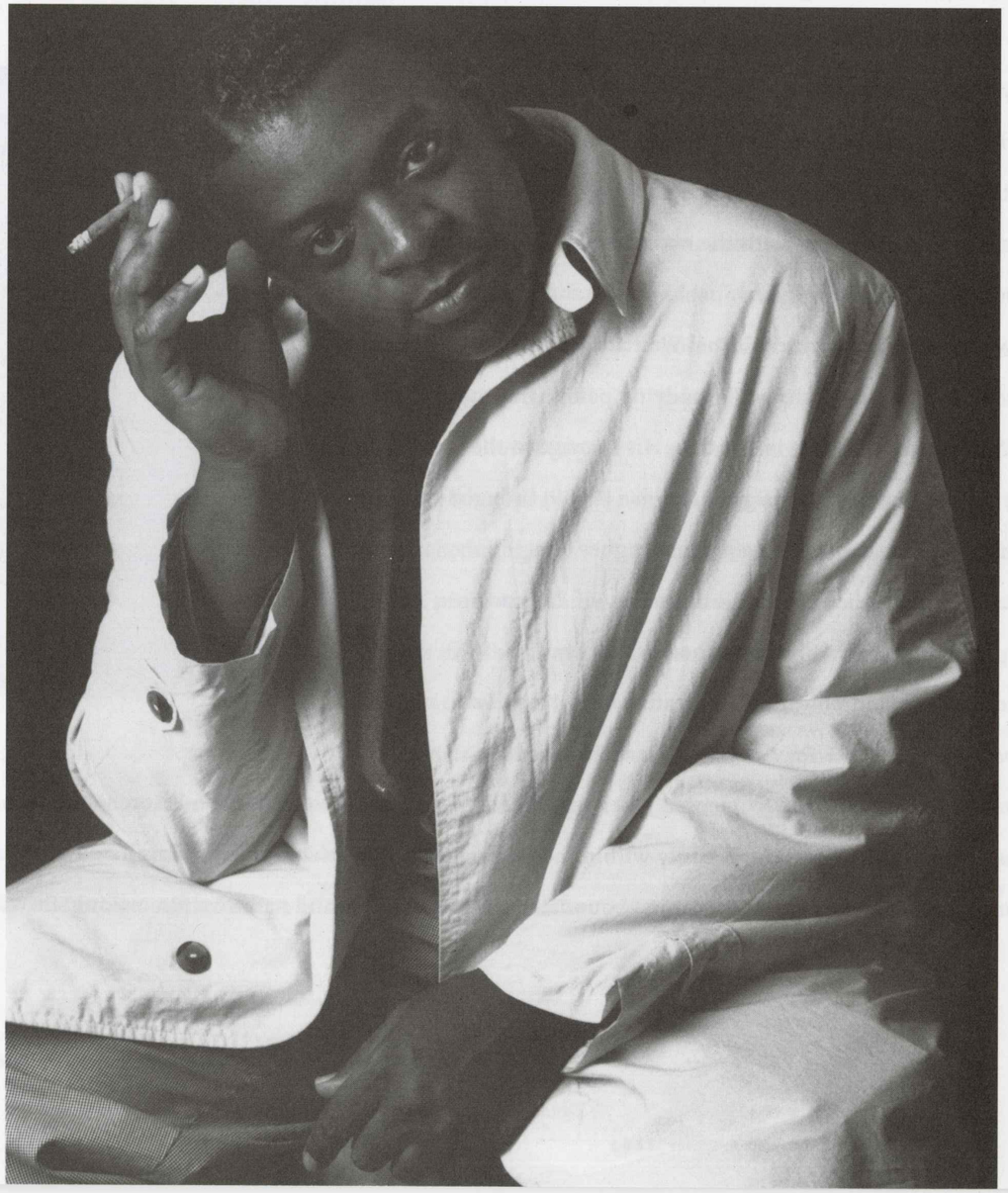
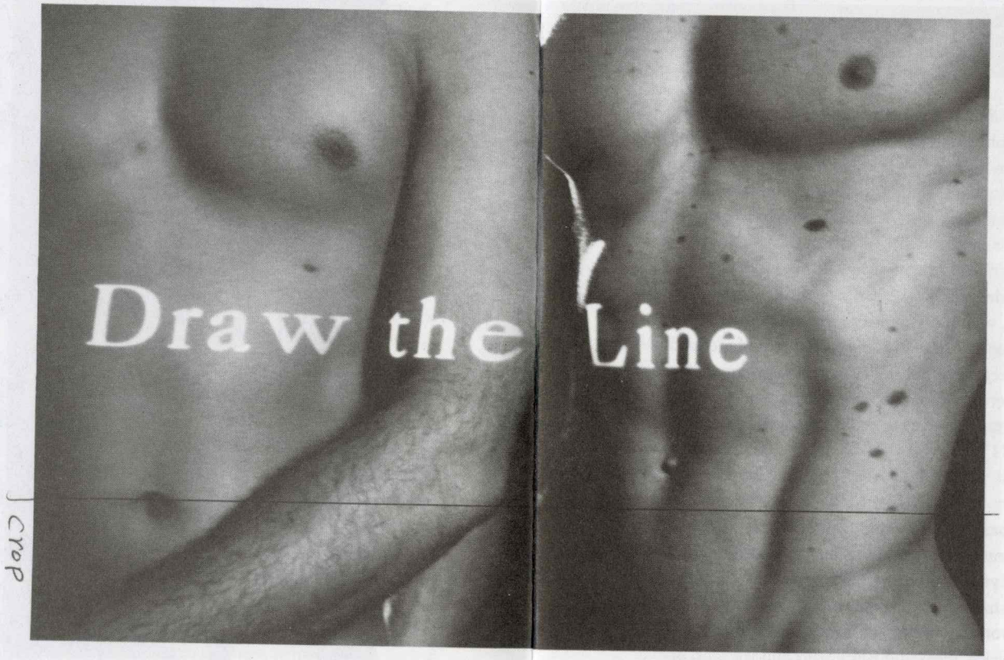


Photo: Michael Libby. Courtesy the Toronto International Film Festival.

Isaac Julien is the director of such films as *This Is Not An AIDS Advert* (1987), *Looking For Langston* (1989) and *Young Soul Rebels* (1991). His latest film, *Darker Side of Black* (1993), examines nihilism in Black popular culture, specifically the homophobic and violent lyrics in hip-hop and Jamaican dancehall music. Shot in London, Jamaica and New York City, *Darker Side of Black* was produced for British television. "It's really not a cinematic experience. It's more televisual," says Julien. "There's just been a big demand for it in festivals and such." *Darker Side of Black* has been screened at the 1994 Berlin Film Festival, the New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, the International Gay Film Festival in Turin, Italy, the South African Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival. The film contains interviews with the musicians Ice Cube, Buju Banton, Brand Nubian, Shabba Ranks and Monie Love, and the social critics Cornel West and Tricia Rose.

Julien made his first films while studying painting at the St. Martin School of Art in London. His homage to the Harlem Renaissance, *Looking For Langston* (1989) brought him international attention after the Hughes estate refused to give Julien the rights to use any of Langston Hughes' writing in a film about homosexuality.

After his first (and only, thus far) feature film, *Young Soul Rebels*, won the 1991 *Prix de la Critique* at the Cannes Film Festival, many critics compared Julien to director Spike Lee. The comparison is surely based on race alone: while Lee's films fit easily within the Hollywood marketplace, Julien's films have been more experimental, pushing the formal boundaries of documentary and narrative filmmaking. Erroll Morris, director of the brilliant documentary *Thin Blue Line*, or Derek Jarman, the director of *Caravaggio* and *Edward II*, would be a better match.



Tucked away on the fifth floor of a nondescript building on 14th Street in NYC, Julien's office at Testing the Limits, the production company of a four-part documentary series on the gay civil rights movement in America, is small and crowded but well organized. There are towering stacks of neatly labeled folders strategically placed all over his desk. Yellow Post-its, storyboard drawings, scheduling charts, promotional posters (for the films *Tongues Untied* and *Darker Side of Black*) and eye-catching pictures cut out of popular magazines line the walls. Julien is casually dressed in a blue denim shirt, khakis and brown suede loafers. His sleek-looking portable computer is always on and he's constantly sending and receiving e-mail messages.

Before we start, while Julien works on his computer, I stare at one particular picture: of two handsome white men, arm in arm, face against face—twin brothers or lovers, possibly, dressed in frosty sorbet-colored oxford shirts. What's interesting about this familiar-yet-generic advertisement, though, is that Julien has torn it in half, vertically, and overlapped the pieces so the two men's faces meld into one. Like his films, the altered advertisement now seems more provocative, filled with meaning—and less simply a commercial ploy.

BRUCE MORROW: I guess you really like that picture up there.

ISAAC JULIEN: Which picture?

MORROW: The Benetton advertisement you've altered. The one with the two men. Are they twins, brothers or lovers?

Still from *The Question of Equality*, a four-part series produced by Testing the Limits for public television. Photo courtesy the Independent Television Service.

JULIEN: Yeah, I like Benetton artwork. Contrary to other critics of cultural representation I think they're quite interesting because they signify race and global multiculturalism in the marketplace and can signify any political point of view—even right-wing ideology. Signs are never fixed in history. Benetton's ideology is this "family of man" image, an "all the races together" image, one happy race—which is a fiction, of course. At the same time, if you look at Benetton's race images, you have to distinguish between each of the advertising campaigns. Some of them are really transgressive with content, some of them are transgressive but contentless.

MORROW: One of your first videos was sort of an advertisement, *This Is Not An AIDS Advert.*

JULIEN: It was an advertisement for gay desires at the time I made it, in England in 1987. In Britain, the government had financed campaign ads against unsafe sex. They were seen on television every night. These advertising campaigns were usually directed by very famous directors and they tended to equate sex with death, and promiscuity with infection. They were really scare-mongering advertisements. They promoted safe sex, or the idea of safe sex, as a "say no to any sex" policy.

MORROW: In America, I think we were envious that the British government were even doing advertisements. Everyone (in England) was paying attention. Our reaction was like, "Wow, why can't we have that?"

JULIEN: [Laughs.] Yeah, of course. In relation to the questions around representation and sexuality in broadcasting in Britain, there tends to be a more progressive broadcasting system than in the U.S. In America, because of conservative, moralistic codes and the recent penetration of the religious right into what should be nonsectarian cultural discourse—i.e., "the cultural elite" and "family values"—disenfranchised groups don't have the same access to broadcasting. So, in America, there are really very few attempts to even represent the existence of an AIDS crisis.

This Is Not An AIDS Advert was a pro-sex advertisement for gay desires. What I wanted to do was to make a less didactic tape as compared to ACT UP's more vigilant tapes, which came out during the mid '80s, tapes such as *Voices From the Front. This Is Not An AIDS Advert* was a tape about mourning. It was dedicated to Mark Ashton, a gay political activist, who was one of the first people I knew who died of AIDS. And it was also a tape that celebrated "gay desire." The first part is set in Venice and it has this very elegiac mood, portraying representations of mourning and loss. The second part is a slow-rap or text-montage advertisement for gay desire. The main or, if you like, signature tune is "Feel No Guilt in Your Desire." The refrain in the song is "This is not an AIDS advertisement. Feel no guilt." I used this text in the song as a counterstatement to the "official" advertisements that promoted the idea of guilt.

MORROW: The idea that gay desire equals guilt and sex equals death.

JULIEN: Kind of, that sex will equal death. That was very direct and very problematic to me.

MORROW: I want to talk about *Darker Side of Black.* My immediate reaction to the film, which is about violence and homophobia in dancehall and rap music, was one of fear. I immediately thought of myself, my person, my body in danger and I wanted to be able to defend myself. As a gay Black male I wouldn't want to be in that hostile situation or environment, as you were in making the film. What was that experience like, making *Darker Side of Black?*

JULIEN: Well, you know, before we made the film, we had lots of discussions with critics from Jamaica, such as Stuart Hall, who is now a very important figure in popular cultural studies in England. And he helped us really strategize the preproduction period of the filming in Jamaica. But, because of the subject matter, most people were nervous, including myself. They were nervous about my being there. And I was nervous for my own well-being. But sometimes you've got to do what you've got to do.

MORROW: There were no situations—

JULIEN: My fears around dancehall subculture really came out of an overall societal homophobia—the normative assumptions heterosexuals make about gays and lesbians. One hears this articulated in the lyrics of dancehall music and in stories about Jamaican culture in general. It's very disturbing. And in Jamaica everbody's a fan of dancehall. It's the backbone of Black working-class cultural expression in Jamaica—the expression of the urban poor in Jamaica, including Black gays and lesbians, of course, who are all consumers of dancehall like everybody else in Jamaican society.

MORROW: What is the difference between reggae and dancehall?

JULIEN: There really isn't a big difference. Dancehall is technologically different, the marrying of technological innovations and the bass, creating a new sound. The sound was created by Sly Dunbar and Robby Shakespeare. It's similar in sound to hardcore rap and hip-hop, and both have a very in-your-face, hard attitude. I think the in-your-face attitude has always been there but it's emphasized more now by the technological innovation and also by this triumph of the rapper, using spoken words, over the singer singing lyrics. It also marks the triumph of the DJ over the singer, over the musician. Dancehall prioritizes this phenomenon. You have to sound hard; they have to sound good. Ragga is what it's called in Britain.

Still from *The Darker Side of Black*, 16mm, 1993, 55 min. Distribution: Drift Releasing.

MORROW: What inspired you to make a movie about violence and homophobia in dancehall and hip-hop together?

JULIEN: Not the current Black middle-class or white anxieties about it. Two years ago a good friend of mine, Paul Gilroy, said, "Hey, have you heard this song 'Boom Bye-Bye'?" I replied that I hadn't, but that I'd been told what it said. He got me a copy of the record. I then received several phone calls from different lesbian and gay groups asking me to join the campaign to ban the song—which I declined to do. "Boom Bye-Bye" came very close on the heels of Buju Banton's "Boogle," which was number one in the ragga charts in Britain; it became like an anthem of dancehall music. "Boom Bye-Bye" was very much pushed by the sound systems. And it became very popular. It brought to the forefront the homophobia of heteronormative attitudes in dancehall in Jamaica and in all of the Black Diaspora.

"Boom Bye-Bye" tries to enlist from its audience a heterosexual hardcore idea about Black masculinity as the only true version of Black masculine identity. The song's lyrics represent a societal attitude toward homosexuality. The effect of that song in the West Indian Diaspora—through TV and the "global village" culture of MTV—was to give its fans more strength to be homophobic by promoting homophobia as a lifestyle, cultivated as a way, as Cornel West says, "to police Black sexuality." And it made it easier for people to articulate that. And that was the experience of a lot of people, Black gays and lesbians who lived in Black areas like Brixton in London. I would feel a general tension if I were to go to the London Annual Black Carnival now more than ever, for example. There would be several other records that would promote this sort of homophobic attitude in the lyrics, such as "Dis the System," "Batty Boy fe Die," "Buggering." A lot of white people who didn't understand what it was saying, because it was patois, would be happily dancing along. I mean, it does sound good. So, I think what we're facing here now are the limits of a Black popular culture.

Now some people might argue that Black music was never meant to be politically emancipating, which I would agree with. The articulation of punk in the '70s sort of proved that nihilism was a new aesthetic. It was quite aggressive—dystopic. It sort of expressed the discontent, the dissidence of a type of young white male working class and an art-school culture that did not believe in the "system." There is this aspect to dancehall, as there is this aspect in rap, gangsta rap particularly, where we see this expression of the "darker" desires of those societies. I see dancehall as a '90s allegory of that effect. Nobody believes in singing about positive Black representations, but dancehall has its limits, and the limit is around the Black Queer body. Basically, for the masculine integrity of this race to live, Black Queers must die—symbolically as well as in actuality. This has serious consequences, not only for UK lesbians and gays, but for Black people ourselves, because it is a promotion of "black-on-black" violence, that is, to quote from the voice-over narration in the film, "it's not me you want to kill but the image of yourself that you see in me."

MORROW: But you do come to the conclusion in your film that rap and dancehall music is pretty much the thoughts of youths—young straight men. These are only their opinions and their opinions are allowed attention and space in the marketplace of pop culture.

JULIEN: Yes, we have to look at the accessibility of these new technologies for what it is. The access of Queers or women is extremely limited. And in relation to the music industry, we know that homophobia is rife. And there are hip-hop women acts. I'm thinking of Posse, in particular, which promotes a similar sort of aesthetic as the boys in gangsta rap. It would be interesting to see what that access would sound like if we had it. But we don't. Not yet! Young, Black, straight men do have a space and voice to articulate their anxiety, frustrations and their phobias. And fantasies. I'm not against repressed homophobic fantasies. But I think that it has to be looked at for what it is. It's only one section of the Black working-class voice. But it makes a lot of money, and I guess that's what counts in the commodification of Black popular culture.

MORROW: There's nothing being done to dissuade rappers and other musicians from writing homophobic lyrics. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. "Boom Bye-Bye" was a big hit and the protest against its homophobic content made it legendary. In your essay with Kobena Mercer, "True Confessions," you state: "The stereotype of the threatening Black 'mugger' is paradoxically perpetuated by the way Black male youth have had to develop macho behaviours to resist harassment, criminalization and the coercive intrusion of white male police forces into their communities.... In sports, for example, there are concrete advantages to be gained from appearing to play up to white expectations." Would you comment on this in relation to music? How can we change?

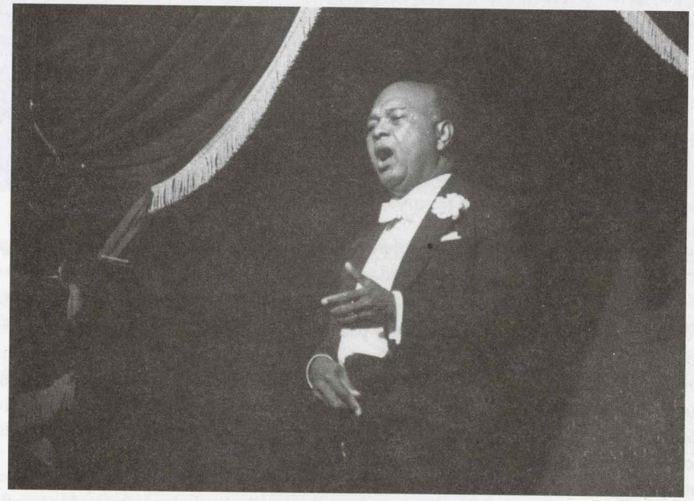
JULIEN: You're slightly decontextualizing the statement when reading it back to me now in relationship to this film. But what Kobena and I were trying to say was that various strategies, or signifying practices, have been adopted by Black men to protect themselves. The posing and posturing of a machismo identity is a reactive one, really. It conceals the fact that Black men are vulnerable on the street. Now we recognize those images and representations for what they are, poses. In this context I read the lyrics of songs like "Boom Bye-Bye" as a shift—we wrote the article in Britain in 1988 and it's now 1994—in regard to what they articulate and in terms of the violence exhibited toward Black Queer visibility in popular street culture. Part of that shift has to do with the AIDS crisis. They're either identifying and trying to blame Queers and, obviously, in a way, verbally punishing, if you like, Queer Black bodies for that. The only problem is you're not going to get rid of AIDS or Queers. You're not going to get rid of the anxiety surrounding AIDS or Queers by wishing them dead. You're not going to get rid of AIDS by symbolically shooting Queers either. The Black heterosexual moral panic behind songs like "Boom Bye-Bye" signifies the insecure construction of Black heterosexuality and an unease with anal sex in particular. What politically responsible cultural activists should do is challenge those "common-sense" assumptions around the Black male body. And one way of doing that is to create a space, a dialogue, around this taboo subject in the Black Diaspora. That means Black, straight people have to be forced to take part in that debate. I don't think that Black Queers can afford the luxury of having a debate just in the lesbian and gay community.

MORROW: Is it not just about homophobia? Is it also about sexism and misogyny?

JULIEN: Well, I think questions of misogyny and homophobia are different. Actually, I think that the promotion of this sort of hardcore essentializing masculinity generally is about a certain heteronormative assumption that promotes a very fixed-gender idea of Black masculine behavior. This, in turn, produces a conservative reaction to questions of sexual difference. The conservatism around sexual difference fixes on gender roles. And these representations are signified and parodied in the general promotion and commodification of hip-hop and dancehall culture in the marketplace. The visual representations that dancehall and hip-hop reproduce in the dominant culture can always be read against the grain. But in terms of verbal articulation in the music, we hear a fixing of gender roles around femininity and masculinity. Black homophobia is just a manifestation of a certain misogyny and misanthropic desire on behalf of Black straight males.

In dancehall you've got women DJs whose records do appeal to women as heterosexual women. Even if it's being read against the grain, which it is. Lesbians do dance and buy dancehall records, as do Black gay men. So there is this subversion going on in their relationships to pleasure. It's not that strictly linear or as didactic.

MORROW: In *Darker Side of Black* you show the possibility of the influence of gay culture on dancehall.



JULIEN: Of course. There's that influence of, if you like, campness in dancehall. I think there's an interesting parody or irony in dancehall. But there is a strict set of codes in relationship to sexual behaviour. Very strict. And in that sense, although I think there is a deep sort of misogyny at work, I don't think women necessarily have to read it as that. In fact, I think that straight Black women can be just as homophobic as straight men. But reading against the grain in Jamaican and Black British working class gay culture, gay men parody the role of straight women in the dancehall by switching gender roles when they dance to the music.

MORROW: You mean on the dance floor.

JULIEN: Yeah. If you go to the one gay club I went to, but couldn't film in, in Jamaica.

MORROW: In Jamaica?

JULIEN: In Jamaica. Homosexuality is still illegal but it is a myth that there is no gay culture in Jamaica. That's complete fiction. But in relationship to spaces and territories, there are no spaces for Black Queers to "come out." So it's not a metropolitan first-world Queer identity like you get accustomed to in New York or in London. It's an extremely oppressive situation.

MORROW: Let's talk about form and the construction of your films. How do you build your movies visually? Layer the visual elements in your films? In *Darker Side of Black* there are the two legs with the Bible held in front of them. The legs are in thick iron shackles. The man holding the Bible is dressed like a priest. These images make for a recurring visual motifs in the film. Tableaux. Phantasms. This is so different from a normal documentary. These images appear, disappear and reappear. How do you go about creating these tableaux? How do you put them into your films? You use the same style in *Looking For Langston*, with the men dancing in the club.

JULIEN: Forms in these films are usually derived from paintings and photographs. A kind of *tableau vivant*.

MORROW: You studied painting.

JULIEN: I went to St. Martin's School of Art to study painting. But, in fact, I don't feel that those scenes have been totally successfully achieved in *Darker Side of Black*, because I wanted to have moving tracking shots around those constructions and my producer wouldn't let me have them. So in a way, they're not as successfully

Still from *Looking for Langston*, video, 1989, 40 min. Courtesy Albany Video Distribution, London.

Still from *The Attendant*, 16mm, 1992, 8 min. Courtesy Frameline Distribution.

achieved as I would have liked them to be, cinematically speaking.

MORROW: Because it's expensive to have tracking shots on location?

JULIEN: Exactly. It's expensive. But I think it's a necessary evil. [Laughs]

MORROW: But you also use certain — different — visual elements that gave a hazy, fish-eye quality to the images.

JULIEN: Well, the person who shot *Darker Side of Black* is Arthur Jaffa, who was the director of photography for *Daughters of the Dust* and for Spike Lee's film *Crooklyn*. We wanted to use a special lens to give the interviewees a sort of stylized, imagistic feeling; to get them to move away from being this sort of realist talking-head representation. Sometimes it worked — and sometimes not. But in some interviews the special effects worked particularly well, like in the segments with Tricia Rose and Shabba Ranks, who both give incredible interviews.

MORROW: What about Cornel West? You used a brilliant cobalt blue behind him and you positioned him in the frame, plus you used the same lace backdrop over and over again to different effect.

JULIEN: That's right. It was quite a low-budget film, so you improvise and you experiment with the look and the editing. Although some might be right in saying that the *Darker Side of Black mise-en-scène* is quite conventional because *Darker Side of Black* was actually made for a conventional but prestigious arts documentary television series called Arena. So my original intention was never really for it to be shown in the cinema, but to make a direct intervention on television, since this would be the film's largest and widest audience. It was only when there was a demand for its inclusion at the 1994 Berlin festival that we actually made a print because even though it was shot on super 16mm film, it actually ended up on video in the latter stages of post-production.

I really wouldn't call *Darker Side of Black* a cinematic experience. It's more televisual, really, which was correct for the subject matter, to me. Sometimes one makes a film for more important reasons than a good review in *The New York Times*, or for the mere winning of a prize at a film festival. I don't have to prove I am an artist; in fact, I see my artistic practice as cultural work, even in such films like *Looking For Langston* or *The Attendant*.

MORROW: You've also made another BBC documentary film. Tell me about that film.

JULIEN: Well, I hope my work can resist the category of a BBC documentary. [Laughs] But the first documentary I made for the BBC was called *Black and White in Colour*, which documents the history of Blacks in British broadcasting. It's a meditation on the role of memory, television histories and race. Television has played a central role in the construction of the master discourse of race, through the developing of televisual genres such as situation comedy.

MORROW: How does it relate to the Marlon Riggs documentary *Colour Adjustment*?

JULIEN: Actually, *Black and White In Colour* and *Colour Adjustment* were shown together on the BBC because *Black and White in Colour Part I* was the launch program for a series. The series was originally developed from a five-year archival research program at the British Film Institute (BFI), with the BBC. Some of the archival clips from *Black and White in Colour Part I* were broadcast in whole episodes during the week of broadcast. It was quite a televisual event, showing all these '50s Black dramas and magazine shows. So you sort of went back in time, and *Colour Adjustment* was part of that season, which I thought was perfect TV programming.

MORROW: Can you tell me about your relationship with Marlon Riggs?

JULIEN: He was a filmmaker whom I greatly admired, even though we had our differences. Some people would say it was like being with two divas, our meeting. Marlon "read" everybody — including me. I think our differences pivoted around questions of interracial relationships — he would go on to visually portray them. I felt at times quite lonely in terms of being what I would call a proud "out" snow queen. But we did share quite a lot of things, among them anger at the indifference we face as Black gay men.

MORROW: Tell me about the project you're working on now in New York City.

JULIEN: I'm working with Testing the Limits, an organization that was at the forefront of AIDS and video activism in the mid-eighties. I'm currently working with them on a four-part series called *The Question of Equality* in the capacity of senior series producer. I'm responsible for the artistic and editorial approach of all the programs in the series, as well as supervising the execution of all the aesthetic considerations in post-production and production along with each show's producer/director.

MORROW: Why is this being made in New York instead of in London?

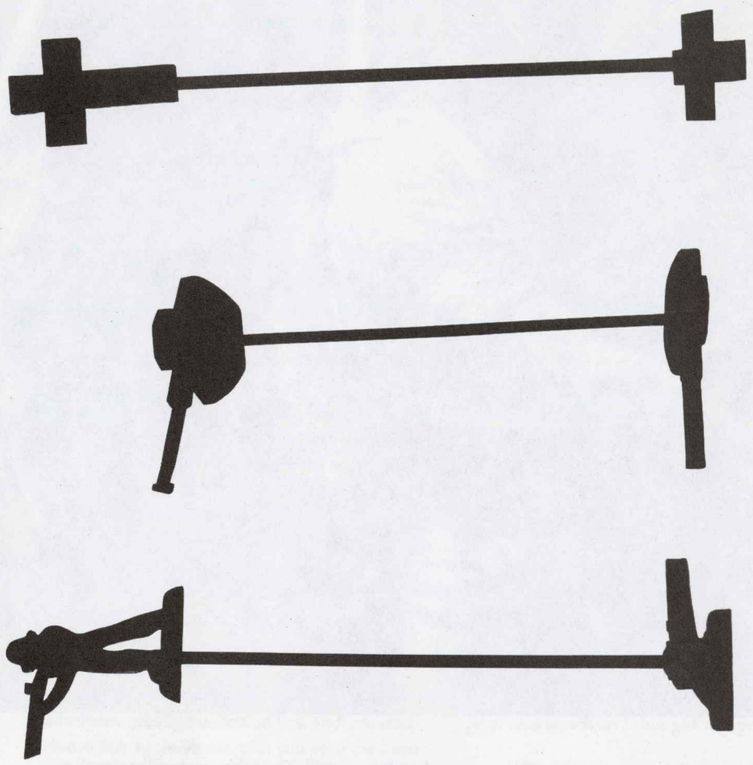
JULIEN: Hmm.... Because it's a program about lesbians and gays in America. My capacity in working on this production is really editorial, as someone who's been making films over the last ten years, someone who has certain knowledge and experiences they thought would be useful for the series.

MORROW: You've made a wide variety of films: documentary films, experimental films, music videos and you've made one feature film. Are you going to make another feature film? And in what capacity will that be — as producer or filmmaker/director?

JULIEN: This year, apart from making *Darker Side of Black*, Normal Films, a Queer film company that was founded by Mark Nash, Jimmy Somerville and me, produced a feature film called *Postcards From America* [about the life of the artist David Wojnarowicz; screened at the 1994 New York Film Festival]. I also intend to produce a feature called *Confession of a Snow Queen*, which is a working title that comes of course from the photographer Lyle Ashton Harris. I have several feature films in development. One is called *Giant Step*, which is a project I'm developing for the BBC and BFI. The film is about a young Black bisexual man who's searching for his identity as a jazz musician. And he has to choose between whether he should pursue an artistic career or one that makes money, which doesn't mean that much to him. He has this little dilemma. It's set in London, in Soho, and it's sort of a contemporary look at London, as well. The other project I'm developing is with an American scriptwriter, Robert Gardener, and the BFI, called *Kiss My Ass First*, and that project is sort of about — it's a dark comedy about Black intellectuals. And it will be shot here in New York. So as you can see I am working it!

Bruce Morrow is co-editing an anthology of Black gay male fiction for Avon Books. He's also associate director of Teachers and Writers Collectives, New York City.

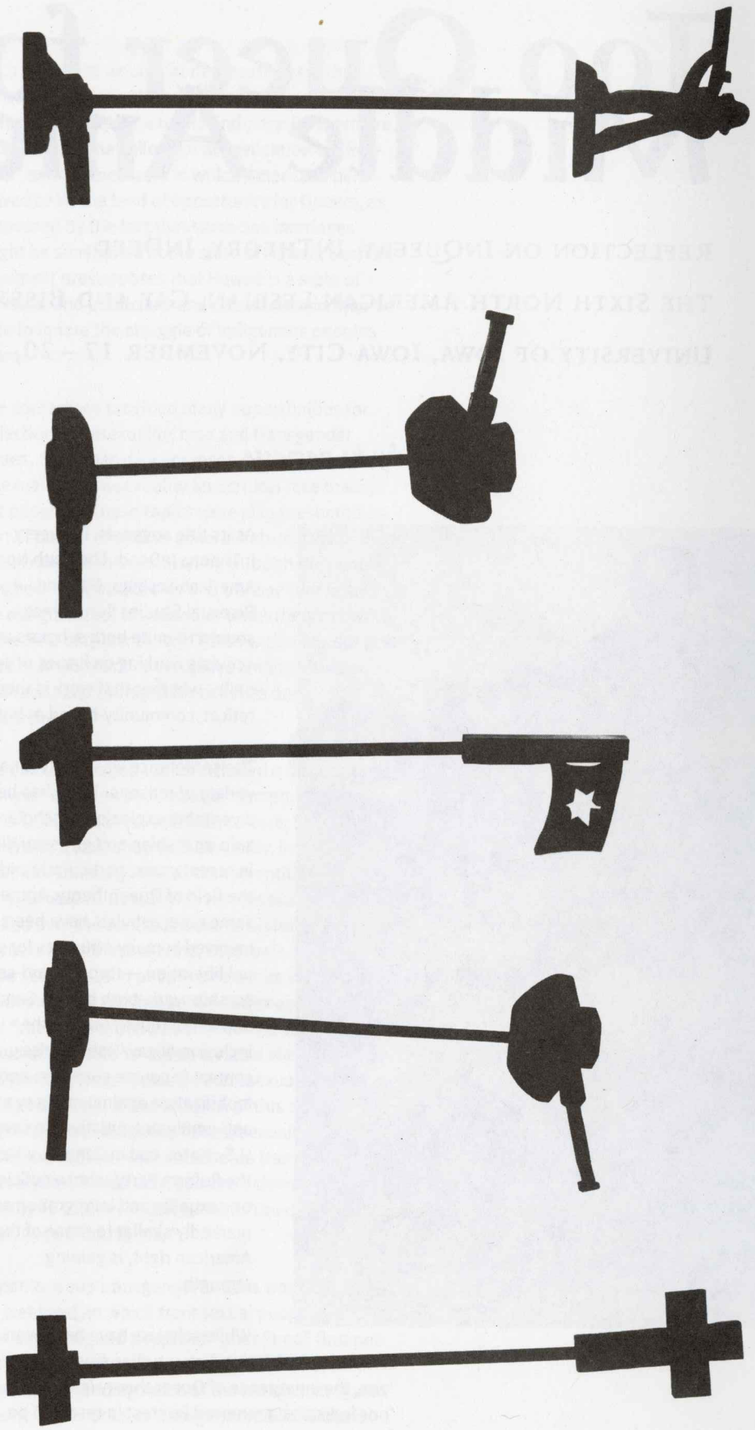
Still from *The Attendant*, 16mm, 1992, 8 min. Courtesy Frameline Distribution.



MONOPOLY

Monopoly's a game you see
for the rich & famous & elite.
It's a game of chances
of gained advances
it's a game romanced by swords & lances.
Cause monopoly my friends you see
has stolen land from the great Pawnee.
From the east to the west
from the Cree to the rest
of the Indian people
at white request.
Well they gave them lies
and trickster spies.
They gave them land
for the Indians' Band.
They gave them hope
at the end of a rope.
And gave them crosses
for their Indian losses.
Monopoly's a game you see
that pickets fences
like Wounded Knee.
It bequests sales
to the Great Whales
and makes advances
in bi-weekly trances.
Its a trick or treaty
game of seedy
reservation railroads
for the quick and greedy.

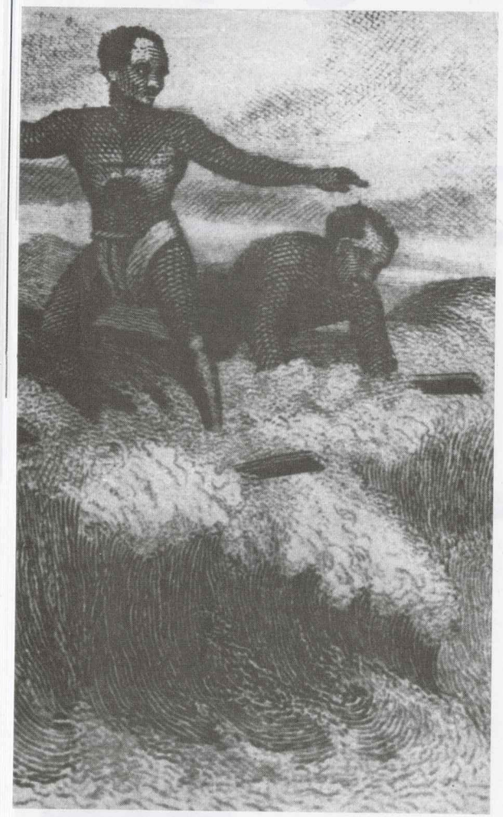
Teresa Marshall



Too Queer for Middle America?

Reflection on InQueery, InTheory, InDeed: The Sixth North American Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference University of Iowa, Iowa City, November 17 – 20, 1994

by ki namaste



As its title suggests, InQueery, InTheory, InDeed: The Sixth North American Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference sought to unite both scholars and activists working on issues of sexuality, whether that work is theoretical, community-based or both.

The conference was timely for a variety of reasons. There has been a veritable explosion of scholarship on lesbian and gay sexualities in recent years, particularly within the field of Queer theory. At the same time, activists have been involved in many struggles for sexual liberation — through anti-censorship work, both here in Canada and in the United States; the inclusion of gay/lesbian/bisexual content in course curricula; and mobilization against anti-gay and anti-immigrant initiatives in several U.S. states and in Canada, where the Reform Party, whose policies on sexuality and immigration are markedly similar to those of the American right, is gaining strength.

While scholars have been working to develop lesbian and gay studies since at least the '70s, the emergence of Queer theory in the early '90s indicates a renewed interest in research on sexual and gender politics. Despite this enthusiasm for critical work on sexuality, many Queer-theory critics ignore the fact that lesbian and gay studies have historically located themselves within the social sciences.[1] While sociologists and historians were instrumental in developing the field of lesbian and gay studies, they are now underrepresented within the new Queer theory. These disciplinary divisions were perhaps best in evidence at the 1991 Rutgers Conference on Lesbian and Gay Studies — a gathering that included few representatives from the social sciences.

The organizers of InQueery, InTheory, InDeed sought to redress some of the silences within Queer theory. The conference's call for papers encouraged the participation of social scientists, and papers that addressed questions of bisexuality, transsexuality and race were actively solicited. It was hoped that the Iowa City gathering would build significantly on the Rutgers conference. The effort to move beyond the limitations of this earlier gathering were evident in the name of the conference itself: while the Rutgers gathering designated the field of "lesbian and gay studies" — removing the term "bisexual" despite its presence in the titles of past conferences at Harvard and Yale — InQueery, InTheory, InDeed put the word "bisexual" back in.

The choice of keynote speakers reflected this commitment to addressing an inclusive political agenda: Los Angeles performance artist Tim Miller, bisexual activist Lani Kaahumanu and essayist Gloria Anzaldúa collectively represent the necessity of critical work in artistic, activist and academic settings. Kaahumanu's keynote address focused on the ways in which bisexual politics challenge the middle ground of lesbian and gay politics. She spoke of her experience as a former lesbian who fell in love with a man, and her subsequent exclusion from lesbian-feminist communities. Kaahumanu also discussed living as a mixed-race woman, pointing to the impossibility of any "pure" identity. She suggested that the ways in which questions of race and sexuality are figured — in either/or terms — provide an important point of departure for any critical sexual politics. Drawing attention to the construction of borders, Kaahumanu proposed a kind of bisexual politics that is actively anti-racist, feminist and transgender-positive.

Kaahumanu began her talk with a statement on the movement for recognition of sovereignty by indigenous Hawaiian peoples. She asked people to think about where most Hawaiian people worked — in low-paying, service-industry jobs — and requested that if individuals choose to travel to Hawaii that they learn about the history and culture of indigenous peoples there, including their contemporary struggle for self-determination. This reflection on indigenous Hawaiian sovereignty is especially important within the context of American lesbian and gay politics. Legislation is currently pending that would legitimate same-sex marriages performed in the state of Hawaii. Since a marriage in one American state is considered valid in the entire country, such legislation would effectively legalize (and institutionalize) lesbian- and gay-coupled relationships. If the legislation passes, many American lesbians and gays would fly to Hawaii in order to have their unions legally recognized. Yet as Kaahumanu's remarks point out, such a practice would not necessarily help the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and may in fact only contribute to the tourist industry. Furthermore, this situation may allow for an invocation of "freedom" and "democracy" in which America is perceived to be the land of opportunity for Queers, as witnessed by the fact that same-sex marriages might be sanctioned in the state of Hawaii. Such an argument presupposes that Hawaii is a state of America, and politicians and citizens would then be able to ignore the struggle of indigenous peoples there.

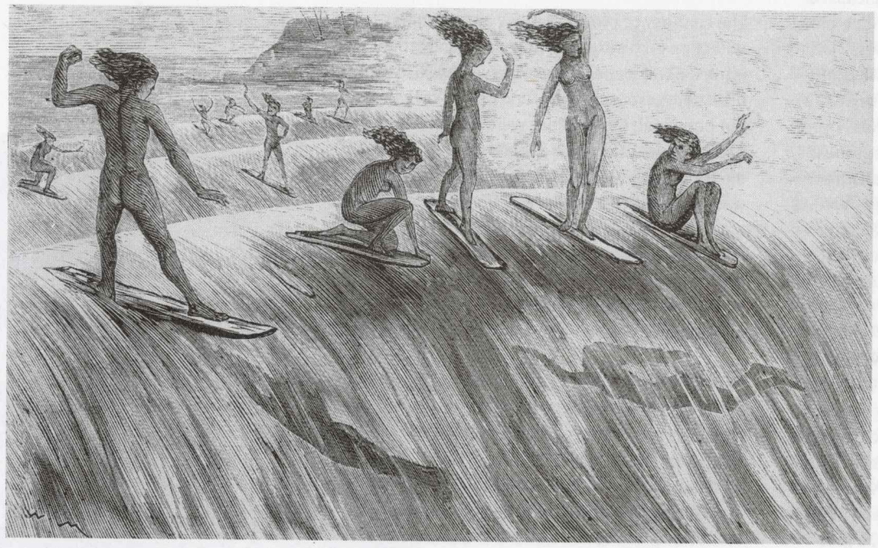
The conference provided many opportunities for reflection on bisexuality, race and transgender issues. Some panels were reserved exclusively for bisexuality, transsexuality and critical race theory, but papers on these topics were also presented as part of panels of a more general nature. One of the most common themes running through the panels was how race, bisexuality and transgender issues are marginalized, trivialized or undertheorized within the field of Queer theory. These exclusions suggest important points of convergence among bisexual, anti-racist and transgender activists and researchers.

The many workshop topics included a discussion between lesbians and bisexual women; working-class Queers; Native American culture; fighting the right; and a workshop on bisexuality, intersexuality and multi-ethnicity. In a workshop entitled Typhoid Mary: Bisexuals Respond to HIV, bisexual activists mulled over the contradictions of biphobia and AIDS discourse. On the one hand, bisexuals are perceived to be sex-obsessed people who act as vectors of contamination, the link between diseased gay men and "the general population." On the other hand, bisexuality is said to not be a viable lifestyle option — a position held by many heterosexuals as well as lesbians and gays. The paradox of this situation was cause for much laughter: "You bisexuals are just so obsessed with sex that you end up transmitting HIV to everyone. By the way, you can't claim a bisexual identity to counter this argument. You don't really exist. Get off that fence."

A spontaneous transgender caucus was held during the weekend, in which transsexual people, transgender people and people of "undefined" (but not necessarily confused) genders spoke about their experiences reading much of the criticism in Queer theory, which looks at transgendered individuals

from a perspective containing very little understanding of the everyday lives and realities of transgendered people.

In the plenary sessions, there was much reflection on the current state of Queer studies, particularly with regard to race, bisexuality and transgendered issues. The debate over the "inclusion" of people of colour was a familiar one to both academics and activists who attend conferences regularly. Several individuals stated that these same debates characterized the institutionalization (and marginalization) of women's studies, and they made a plea that conference attendees reflect on that history and learn from it. Some people questioned the ways in which these issues were framed — for example, that anti-racist activism was reduced to the mere "inclusion" of people of colour. Critics charged that this type of discourse was part of a liberal strategy where various representatives of "difference" could be visible tokens, but where the underlying institutional structures of the university would remain unchanged. It was pointed out that this liberal notion of inclusion would do little to integrate anti-racist pedagogy and research in the work of most scholars — by institutionalizing and marginalizing the issues, people of colour were left to deal with "those issues."



Above and p.26: Hawaiian surf-swimmers, c. 1817.

Along these same lines, the question of the conference name was raised, with particular emphasis on the noninclusion of the term "transgender." One of the conference organizers stated that the conference planning committee sought the support of the university's administration for the conference, and also said the committee felt such support would be jeopardized by the inclusion of the word "transgender" in the conference title. Transgender scholars and activists responded to this supposed justification by asking the question, "What makes you more Queer than me?" They urged lesbians, gays and bisexuals to think about the exclusions required by such a strategy, and they reminded people that this exclusion only repeated past events. This intervention was itself an historic moment: for the first time in American academia (though surely not in activist communities), transgendered people stood up and demanded the right to represent themselves. By claiming visibility and public space in this manner, they underlined a fundamental contradiction of Queer studies in relation to transgendered people: one cannot produce theory about transgendered people and then not say the T-word because one wants the university administration's approval. The parallels between this issue and issues of race and ethnicity were obvious: one can work on "those issues" (race, ethnicity, transgender) just so long as one doesn't get too loud and visible about that work. And just so long as academia and conferences can continue to present the "respectable" face of lesbian, gay and bisexual studies. The institution can only accommodate so many differences at one time.

The disciplinary location of Queer theory was also challenged by many — the contributions of sociologists, historians and political scientists will likely be more evident in future gatherings of scholars and activists in this field. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult for scholars in Queer theory to ignore the fact that studies on sexuality have emerged from the social sciences. Thus, the issue is not one of literary-type critics in Queer theory making room to accommodate sociologists. It is, rather, a recognition of the disciplinary location of this research, as well as how this location informs the kinds of questions intellectuals ask, and the answers they can offer.

In many ways, InQueery, InTheory, InDeed did manage to build upon the 1991 Rutgers conference. Increased visibility of social scientists and a thorough integration of bisexuality represent significant improvements over Queer studies conferences held in recent years. The conference also offered opportunities for reflection on critical race theory and politics in addition to fostering the emerging field of transgender studies.

An anthology of some of the papers presented at the conference is forthcoming from New York University Press, with an emphasis on writing concerning bisexuality, transsexuality and race/ethnicity. At present the date and location of the seventh conference on l/g/b (and t?) studies have not been finalized. Some of the discussions begun in Iowa City have been furthered at the Black Nations, Queer Nations conference, which was held in New York City this spring.

As Robert Martin pointed out in the closing plenary, it is significant that the InQueery, InTheory, InDeed event was perceived as the first such gathering since the 1991 Rutgers conference. Although the Iowa event was subtitled The Sixth North American Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference, there have been two similar conferences in Canada and Quebec since the 1991 meeting at Rutgers: *La ville en rose: Premier colloque québécois d'études lesbiennes et gaies* (held at the Université du Québec à Montréal and Concordia University in November 1992) and Queer Sites: Bodies at Work Bodies at Play (held at the University of Toronto in May 1993). As Martin put it, the inattention paid to scholarship and activism originating from Canada means, quite simply, that Canadian scholarship doesn't count, that it is somehow not part of (or not sufficiently different from) the rest of North America. A refusal to consider the kinds of activism, cultural production and scholarship produced in English Canada and Quebec is particularly regrettable given the avowed commitment to addressing questions of race and ethnicity, as well as the disciplinary location of recent Queer studies in America. English-Canadian research on sexuality has likewise emerged within the departments of sociology and history.[2] But questions of bisexuality and the issue of race have been addressed somewhat differently within English Canada than in the United States. Think, for instance, of Mariana Valverde's writings in *Sex, Power, Pleasure* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1985), in which she argues that because bisexuality exposes the fundamental contradictions of all sexual identities, it offers a valuable contribution to sexual politics. And Himani Bannerji's work on race and culture in *The Writing on the Wall: Essays on Culture and Politics* (Toronto: TSAR, 1993) specifies the need for an anti-imperialist and anti-racist framework rather than a simple multicultural perspective ("multiculturalism," a common Canadian idea, is now used by many leftist intellectuals in the United States). Rather than a call for the mere "inclusion" of bisexuals or people of colour, Valverde and Bannerji ask scholars and activists to think about how to change the institutions and social relations in which we are *all* located — bisexuals, lesbians, gays, heterosexuals, undefined; people of colour, white people.

InQueery, InTheory, InDeed offered an opportunity to reflect upon, and to encourage, the revision of Queer studies and Queer activism. While one emerging agenda of Queer studies seeks to be as inclusive as possible with regard to race, bisexuality and transgendered people, it is less clear whether this work will take place through a consideration of similar struggles in different national locations. Researchers, activists and cultural workers in English-Canadian and Québécois settings can contribute a great deal to this debate.

Notes:

1. Steven Seidman, "Symposium: Queer Theory / Sociology: A Dialogue," *Sociological Theory* 12.2 (July 1994), pp. 166-177.

2. Steven Maynard, "'In Search of Sodom North': The Writing of Lesbian and Gay History in English Canada, 1970–1990," *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (May–June 1994).

ki namaste is a bisexual writer and activist living in Montreal.

SCATTERED AT THE MARGINS

DIANE BARBARASH, YAANA DANCER, JASS HAILLEY, BRYAN LANGLANDS, R. H. LAWRENCE, SELENA LISS, J. MCLAUGHLIN, ANNE MUNN, MYRIAM NELSON, ELORA PENLAND, ANDREW POWER, ERIC RANCOURT, MYRON RUTH, CARLA ST. PIERRE, LORE SCHMIDTS, K. SHERMAN, CATHY STOYKO, WADE THOMAS, FRANCIS TRAINOR, MIA TREMBLAY, LORETTA WALZ, JONATHAN WELLS, ANGELIQUE WOOD, KAREN WOODMAN, MELODY YOUNG

Out In Context: Work by Queer students of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver

JANUARY 4 – 12, 1995

REVIEW BY ANDREA FATONA AND GORDON BRENT INGRAM

The construction of a Queer identity arises from experiences broader than sexual desires alone. The work in this show speaks to the construction of identity from a variety of moments, questioning expectations about dykes, fags and bisexuals that are consistently maintained within a larger cultural and social context. The necessity for providing a Queer context in which to view this work arises from the marginalization of sexual issues—and the invisibility of many non-sexual issues—when work by Queers is presented in a predominantly straight environment.
Exhibition Statement

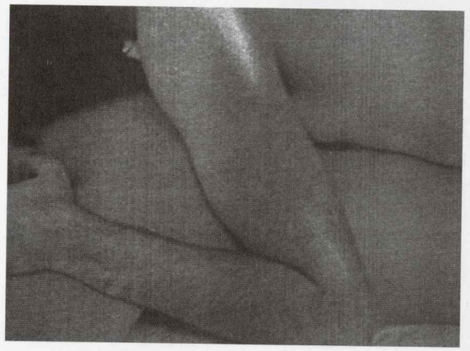
This, my friends, is the psychological equivalent of putting all of your dirty dishes in the oven and pretending that your kitchen is clean.... I am locked in. I am my desires.
J. McLaughlin, from the twenty-minute performance Genderblender, *January 5, 1995*

Lesbian and gay student group exhibitions have been staged in the art schools of North America for over fifteen years. They have usually had too many political functions within art school academe to be considered seriously for the art *per se*. Shows of the work of Queer students provide a key weathervane for the efforts at building "community" and more squarely confronting homophobia both in educational contexts and local milieus. The uses and functions of such Queer exhibitions, and the interpersonal and political efforts that have produced them, can tell us much about the ways that the winds of cultural politics are blowing. As we move into the *fin-de-siècle*, "Out in Context" provides a rich and contradictory window into a new group of lesbian, gay and bisexual artists.

"Out In Context" was a vehicle created to consolidate a Queer presence at one of the most experimental and probably least homophobic art institutes in Canada. This student exhibition was due in large part to the establishment of a regular Queer Theory course taught by video artist Cornelia Wyngarden. The organization of this particular Queer show consciously de-emphasized sexuality in deference to various marginalizations only partially derived from the articulation of erotic desires. But it was in the new formations of sexual imagery that the group exhibition had its greatest power. This contradiction between Queerness from the actual articulation of same-sex desire, in contrast to that from marginalization through assertion or lack of vocabulary to do so, dominated this collection, where each artist could only contribute one piece.

Context in this group exhibition seemed to be about giving one auxiliary clue — providing additional evidence that was probably not necessary — and these added objects were often like precious consumer items in drag. There were remarkably few pieces that actually situated experiences either in the geography of the West Coast or in particular cultural, ethnic or historical contexts. For such a multicultural city, there was disturbingly little mention about difference in terms of race, ethnicity or language. This may say more about the institution and its privileged site on the west side of the city. Personal angst is easier to manage than persistent "cultural" inequities in the art politics of Vancouver, which is in such

Kirk Moses with Bryan Langlands' *Untitled*, granite, wood, mirrors, vials of blood, 36″x18″x9″.



Stills from *Bed Space*, Eric Rancourt, film, 8 min.

rapid transition from being an overgrown logging town. Oddly, like the lesbian after whom the institute is named, the discourse in this exhibition was formed from the pain of solitude rather than new recognitions of communality.

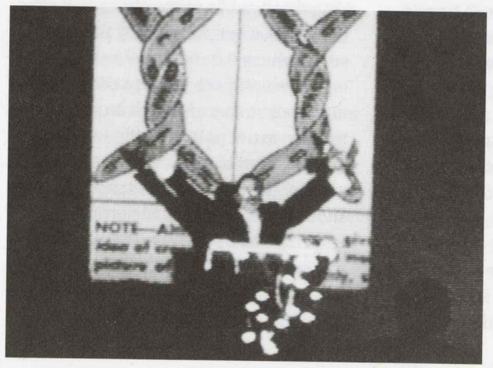
The strongest statements in "Out In Context" were about the body. The only piece of performance, *Genderblender* by J. McLaughlin, was the most passionate and best situated. McLaughlin worked carefully within the established confines of feminist and Queer testimonial but, in contrast to much of the emotions expressed in "Out In Context," there was a freshness in the humour and personal revelations that went well beyond the discomfort of disclosure.

Bryan Langlands' sculpture of granite, wood, mirrors and movable vials of his own blood, fitting columbarium-like, was the only piece that touched directly on the current phase of subdued terror, paralysis and resignation about the HIV pandemic. Its simplicity was unnerving. Langlands' piece was highly interactive, almost like a board game, with people playfully changing the positions of the taboo substance with the vials having somewhat gendered caps of magenta and blue. He chose blood, granite and mirrors in recognition of the increasing medicalization of both the AIDS crisis and the discrimination around it.

Similarly, Mia Tremblay's mixed-media piece with tampons and Cathy Stryko's *Bed of Nails* subtlety engaged in very private discomfort. Jass Hailley's *Conversations* was one of the few pieces that dealt with the ambivalent space of youthful lesbian identity. Yaana Dancer's superb seven-minute video explored the reconstruction of body space and sought the classic artistic position when she said, "I was alone and I was free.... A lone figure standing straight ahead, totally focused."

There was little rage in this show. It was much more about nagging pain and cool nausea. There were few solutions offered and there seemed to be little faith in any ideological framework. The depths of some emerging narratives of male sexual alienation and dysfunction, masked, perhaps, in the first decade of AIDS panic, were plumbed in Wade Thomas' *story of two bunnies who want to come out* and Eric Rancourt's *Bed Space*. Rancourt's grainy, eight-minute black-and-white film loop takes the emerging genre of *porn noir*, places it in a claustrophobic peephole, and forces viewers into becoming voyeurs of some rather joyless moments of gay male sex. In the accompanying text, Rancourt writes: "[I]n the privacy of your bedroom, you are still confused by guilt, and my desire to rid you of it.... [T]he loneliness in my hopeless decision to penetrate your body, if not your soul, and to explore the darkness of your fear, only serves to remember the moment before I leave." The bed, which is too small, is a metaphor for not having enough emotional "space." The result is disorienting and powerful. The importance of *Bed Space* is that emotional realism replaces the banality of pornography, thereby subverting it in order to examine the subtleties of interactions, disparities in power, internalized homophobia and unresolved feelings. At a time of the solidifying of new Queer support and family structures, *Bed Space* is about nagging loss, perhaps even an erosion of identity. It contrasts sharply with the eight-minute video *Frank's Cock* (1993), by Mike Hoolboom. Screened in Vancouver the night of the show's opening, *Frank's Cock* is about understated but deeply loving bonds well-situated in a time of AIDS.

"Out In Context" was a collection of studied angst rather than utopian visions. The polarities of this group exhibition were not rage and pleasure but isolation and loss. "Out In Context" provided neither a map nor a blueprint. But in this "terminal city," the group process allowed for construction of a few more alliances and the tentative creation of some new Queer space on the West Coast.



J. McLaughlin, from the performance *Genderblender*, January 5, 1995.

Andrea Fatona is a video artist and currently the coordinator of Video In (Vancouver). Gordon Brent Ingram is an environmental planner and photographer and is an author of the upcoming Bay Press anthology Queers In Space: Landscapes of Marginalized Sexualities and Communities.

PUBLIC SPACE, VIRTUALLY

PHIL HOFFMAN, ROBERT LEE, ROBIN LEN AND SU RYNARD, JAN PEACOCK, HO TAM AND DAVID TOMAS.

Contested Spaces

THE GREAT HALL, UNION STATION, TORONTO
DECEMBER 16, 1994–JANUARY 4, 1995

REVIEW BY EARL MILLER

Is public space a virtual space? According to the press release, "Contested Spaces" — a Public Access project curated by Michael Klein — proposed to consider public context as "a virtual space, a complicated network of disparate interests and histories." Klein chose six artists to display videotapes on this theme in the Great Hall of Union Station during last winter's afternoon-to-evening rush hour, on a small slide-projection screen situated above a long line of ticket booths. This approach certainly marks a radical departure from the brief history of site-specific art where the emphasis is on the immediate context and the specific significations associated with a given space. In transcending the formal constraints of an autonomous architectural site, one opens it up to the networks of socio-political power relations that traverse any public space. To consider "virtual" space in a public context further complicates the matter, since it is another kind of space entirely.

Stills from *Union*, Jan Peacock, 1994.

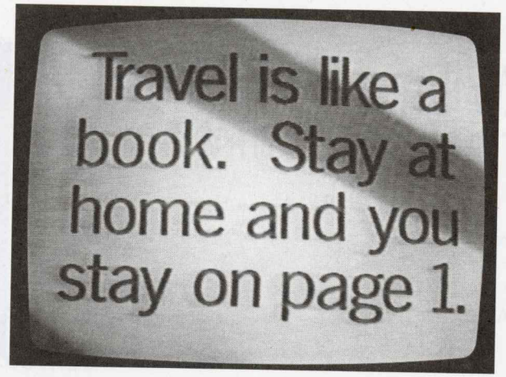
Public space, the realm of the real, differs vastly from imaginary virtual space, a faux utopia supposedly free of bodies and objects. Virtual space, cyberspace, or whatever technoterm one uses, is actually private space only modelled after the networks of public space — hence the information highway. The act of putting on a virtual reality hood to undertake a fantasy spectacle, like watching a videotape, is a private act even if it is undertaken in public. The open frontier of the Internet is accessed by an individual interacting with a machine and deciding what kind of public she or he wishes to tap into. In this sense, virtual space is misconstrued as public because of its apparent accessibility.

Given the intrinsic differences between virtual and public space, the crucial question to ask when considering the virtual amidst the real is: how may a critical reading of virtual space inform a critical reading of public space? If such an analysis is to be an active political critique — in this case one that aims to contest received ideas of public *and* virtual space — it should reveal how virtual networks have been defined by late-capitalist culture in similar fashion to public space.

As an overused pop-culture buzzword, the term needs clarification. "Virtual," as in virtual reality, implies a representation, but one that constructs an illusory seamlessness between subject and object. Virtual space is usually considered to be utopian; an unregulated, democratic cyberspace with which you, the participant, can interact. But it is precisely this utopian, global-village vision that should be called into question. Systematic bias is not about to vanish in a networked space. The power structures controlling this cyberworld are sublimated by the illusion of choice and interactivity.

Most of the included work in "Contested Spaces" — with the one exception of Phil Hoffman's *Ahead of the Rest*, a strictly formalist and unrelated collage comprising the talking heads of newscasters and other television personalities — considers virtual space through allusion rather than direct reference. Instead of depicting it literally as a space that accurately simulates the real through the imagined, virtual space is framed in the exhibition through spaces that similarly abstract the barriers between differing realms: subject and object, public and private, memory and the present, the body and technology.

Jan Peacock's *Union*, for instance, explores memory and its passage from conscious vision to subconscious storage. The impending "union," foreshadowed in the title, is of course a tongue-in-cheek reference to the tape's place of screening, and refers to the merging of the physical perception of sight and the comprehension of memory in the nether zone between the two. However, the question remains as to which socio-political forces watch over this virtual gap and influence one's perceptual and memory biases. In other words, who tells us what to see and what we saw?



Still from *Reading in Public*, Robert Lee, 1994.

What does fill this supposedly abstract or virtual cyberspace that is referenced in videotapes such as Peacock's? Given the vested government, corporate and media involvement in the information highway and virtual reality, and the military origins of these technologies, this utopia is hardly a nonpartisan democracy. Clearly, virtual space is not an autonomous fantasy world but one that shares the social imbalances of the public sphere.

Such concerns surface in Su Rynard's and Robin Len's contribution, *Navigate*, a videotape that juxtaposes the biological circulation of the body with the technological networks of train travel. The very compelling medical images of microscopic organisms and blood racing through veins takes precedence over the tape's actual critical content. In pairing these two disparate networks, one organic, one mechanical, it is suggested that the body is never absent in such technological space. Subsequently, the utopian cyberstate centred around the disappearance of the body can be seen as a false liberation, since the gender and racial inequities that society's perception of the body reflects are inescapable, even if one's body is not flesh and blood but virtual or ethereal.

With the same subtlety, David Tomas' *Thresholds of Identity* also suggests the possibility of connecting virtual networks with social ones. The ethereal locomotive depicted in Rene Magritte's 1938 painting *Time Transfixed* is referenced as a virtual vehicle that transports an anonymous individual (who, as with the Magritte train, is only implied and never actually appears in the video) through a series of family snapshots — photographs that are, of course, altered representations of the original event. Tomas points to the simulated experience of virtual travel to parallel the constructed nature of memory, both personal and photographic. However, the socio-political forces that so greatly influence memory, the media for example, are not implicit; their presence in this representation of virtual memory would only be the result of an extrapolation of the viewer's concerns.

By taking the private act of reading and analyzing it in a public context, Robert Lee, in *Reading In Public*, focuses on the intermediary space, the grey zone, where public borders on private. Absurd text about reading in public or reading in general ("Reading makes people antisocial") flashes intermittently on the screen. The text is interrupted in Proustian manner by blue-tinted clips from Kung Fu films that are reminiscent of the way one's subconscious surfaces from time to time while reading. The stream-of-consciousness presence of these exploitive B-movies amidst unrelated text suggests that stereotypical perception is systematic, omnipresent and deeply ingrained in the public psyche.

Ho Tam's video, *The Yellow Pages*, also critiques media and social stereotyping of East Asians. The tape consists of twenty-six hilarious, fast-paced clips that mock stereotyping by copying it in such a bluntly deadpan way that its obvious ridiculousness is highlighted. A shot of the gaudy advertisement for the musical Miss Saigon, for example, which graces the facade of The Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto — the Vegas-neon centrepiece of the King Street West "theatre" district — and voyeuristic tourist photos of nearby Chinatown form part of Tam's selection. In choosing to depict these public sites, Tam has illuminated the networks of colonization that run through public space, be it King West or Union Station.

The strongest work in "Contested Spaces" circulates as a critical virus around the networks of virtual space, its social layerings easily paralleled by public space because both share the same biases. The metaphor of the train station as a hub for disparate networks further accentuates this comparison. The exhibition quietly and without the aggressive intervention implied by its title points to the beginnings of a critical reading of both public and virtual space.

Earl Miller is an independent writer and curator living in Toronto.

My So-Called Life

Steve Reinke

The Hundred Videos
YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto
February 8 – March 11, 1995

REVIEW BY TOM FOLLAND

Still from *Excuse of the Real*, 1989.

Still from *Excuse of the Real*, 1989.

In a review for *XTRA!* — whose interest in art usually asks only that it celebrate the visual realm of the senses, approximating, in other words, the quick fix of pornography — David Vereschagin found Steve Reinke's exhibition of videos at YYZ Artists' Outlet lacking in profundity. Reinke's work, Vereschagin lamented, utilizes standard porn techniques, quick one-liners and ironic detachment. He went on to declare that *Excuse of the Real*, the first video in "The Hundred Videos" project, sums up just about what you can expect of the rest: no interest on the artist's part in the lives of those he depicts, "...but only how he can use [them] to his own, unstated, ends." (*XTRA!*, February 17, 1995)

Vereschagin has, of course, missed the irony he has only just attributed to "The Hundred Videos." In *Excuse of the Real*, a wry voice-over — the same wry voice-over that characterizes most of the videos — speaks of wanting to film a documentary of someone dying of AIDS and then proceeds to give a laundry list of the necessary, and by now customary, attributes of such a film: "preferably a white homosexual male," "for added empathy he must be under thirty," etc. All the while, anonymous footage of someone's childhood birthday party plays over and over. The genre is exhausted, Reinke is saying, and in its wake are the kind of disingenuous portrayals that no longer speak to the meaning of AIDS. Such work instead parades the kind of "profundity" Vereschagrin apparently wants from *Excuse of the Real*: sentimental platitudes, meaningless sex, the veracity of representation. Reinke, however, thwarts any such desire from the outset. His "ends" are more structural in nature: it is the structuring of imagery and narrative in mass culture as it relates to gay sexuality, identity and popular discourses that Reinke parodies, analyses and plays out — while never appearing to take any of it seriously. Like *Sans Soleil*, Chris Marker's documentary film about documentary film, *Excuse of the Real* might be taken to mean that there can *be* no real insofar as its representation is concerned. Experience has been depleted by its endless textual and iconic duplication, a sentiment played out in Reinke's endless appropriation of media imagery intercut with pornography and fictive autobiographical statements.

Many of the sixty-seven videos in Reinke's unfinished "The Hundred Videos" project refer to an autobiographical self offered in first-person narrative, or running as text at the bottom of the image. *Jason, Deaf, Muriel, My Personal Virus*, and others all purport to document everyday forms of experience — self-doubt, desire, dreams and wishes — with banal and benign imagery culled from science programs, home movies, television talk shows or even, as in *Ghost Production*, security-camera footage. *The End of My Death* excerpts an Oprah interview with Jeffrey Dahmer's father cut with childhood footage and overlaid with Reinke's voice speaking as Dahmer. *Lonely Boy*, the 1960s film biography of child star Paul Anka, is spliced with porn footage of a young boy masturbating indifferently in his bedroom. *Lonely Boy* speaks directly to the media construction of personality and the sublimation of sexuality. *The End of My Death* highlights the media trope of pathology in representation of gay sexuality.

The title itself is a minimalist conceit: 100 videos, no more, no less. The content conforms to an arbitrary number, announcing from the outset Reinke's interest in the structuring of sexuality and popular cultural imagery rather than its content. If there's no real, there's no genre: Reinke collapses the boundaries between documentary and fiction, between the most banal forms of film and video imagery and the most exalted. Moving through them all with equal abandon, Reinke creates a kind of shrine to a loss of the self in representation.

Tom Folland is an independent art critic and curator and a member of the FUSE editorial collective.

Still from *Family Tree*, 1990.

This Is (Not) A Comedy: Black On White and the (De)Construction of the White Superiority Myth

Black On White

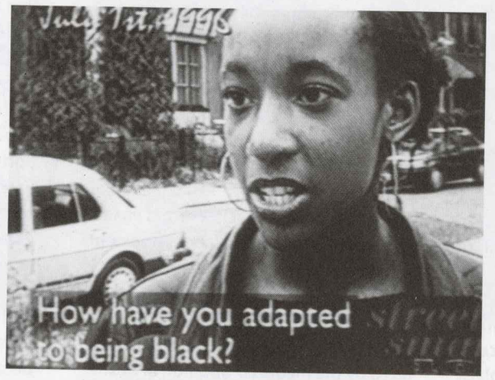
Director: Peter Karuna, Video, 1994, 27 min.
Distributed by V Tape, Toronto

REVIEW BY LESLEY DOUGLASS

In a scene from Peter Karuna's newest video, *Black On White*, businessman George Smallwood must tackle his terrified wife, Barb, onto their bed in order to prevent her from fleeing. "For Christ's sake, can't you see? It's me!" His plea is completely agonized. But no one recognizes George these days — his employer has fired him, his business associates and friends have abandoned him. As a matter of fact, his wife doesn't want to be seen in public with him, either.

If you're wondering whether *Black On White* is a video about AIDS, or something akin to *The Elephant Man*, I suppose one might say, somewhat sardonically, that you're not too far off. For what Karuna has produced is the ultimate "black" comedy: a white man is stricken with permanent pigment reversal (PPR), and in the humorous scenario that ensues, we watch as George is suddenly faced with dilemmas he could never have envisioned living with as a white person. *Black On White* is a delightfully savage satire in which a depleted ozone layer and excessive exposure to the sun cause George to turn black on his drive to work one morning. This news sends the greater part of the white Canadian population on a panic-stricken stampede to the nearest drugstore to buy up all the Sta-Wyte sunscreen they can possibly afford.

Karuna's earlier videos (*My Father Was an Englishman* and *Missing Culture*) have been largely autobiographical and/or documentary. They have challenged white colonialist ideologies and constructions of race in white western language and culture and reclaimed ideological/cultural territory so that colonized people could begin to reinscribe themselves and redefine existing paradigms. *Black On White* is Karuna's first purely fictional work.



In the past, Karuna has been an innovative manipulator of his form, arranging sound, visual frames, sequences, textures and colours in ways that create silent and powerful commentary on his subject matter. But in *Black On White* he takes his experimentation further, to create what one might describe as metamedia — a dense, twenty-seven minute Friday-night-in-front-of-the-boob-tube-style work where viewers are virtually bombarded with and forced to analyse the multitude of ways in which television media constructs whiteness and reinforces the notion of white superiority for its consumers. A recurring "advertisement" for Sta-Wyte sunscreen, *The Sheila Show*, 792 Allnews, Street Smart 101 street interviews and a Human Rights Canada public service announcement (PSA) are all set against the backdrop of the "sitcom" in which a white George turns black.

In the Sta-Wyte ad, viewers are presented with a highly overexposed image of a white woman clad in a scant bikini, modelling sensuously on a blindingly bright beach. Karuna plays with white society's constructions of white womanhood and the ways in which that womanhood might be threatened throughout the entire video, but his Sta-Wyte commercial is the most obvious construction through which he challenges white male notions of femininity, female sexuality and whiteness itself as the world's most valuable commodity (and all in one thirty-second swoop).

The Sheila Show panelists provide comic, unwitting commentary on the sitcom, but Karuna does not allow the underlying seriousness of the issues to escape us. A powerful scene in which the new George makes love with his wife — it *is* the first equipment any white woman would want to try out on her "neo-black" husband, isn't it? — is continuously interrupted by the talk show, in which three white

women (one of whom has a husband named, you guessed it, Rod) talk about their experiences after they made a "conscious eugenic decision" to marry black men in order to preserve their future offspring from ultraviolet microwaving.

While the discussion begins on a humorous note, examining some of white society's deepest stereotypes and its fear of black men, it ends with the women's observations about the "tiltedness of the [level] playing field" for blacks in the race game and all those white men whining about what they perceive as unfair equal-opportunity hiring practices. Karuna's collage of talk show and bedroom creates a kind of frustrating *coitus interruptus*, if you will. The scene of forbidden desire, of black (man) on white (woman), is disrupted by talk-show allusions to racial inequities, frustrations and fears — especially the fears of white men. (One of the panelists dubs white men "*homo inadequs*," males who "can't live up to this 500-year-old white-supremacist propaganda they've invented.... They're part of the same species of inadequate men that we women know only too well. You know, the ones trying to live up to some male hero myth and failing....")

On another level, the explicit lovemaking scene between a black George and a white Barb creates a jarring and frustrating juxtaposition of emotions. I couldn't resist the powerful eroticism of the scene but, throughout it, I was forced as a black woman to examine my own internalized socio-cultural censors about "black on white" — in considerable discomfort.

It is the multi-layeredness of Karuna's work that I find most engaging. *Black On White* is full of double entendres and complexities of meaning. The title itself, an allusion to an actual porn movie depicting black men and white women, carries an entire load of baggage by suggesting not only George's position in relation to his white wife (as forbidden, exotic, a pet) but also the fact that the video is a Black examination of white constructions of whiteness — a refreshing disruption of the usual and tired whites-examine-black/other motif.

Street Smart 101 and 792 Allnews give up-to-the-minute reports on Canadian and world news developments — reports like the one about an indiscriminate UN bombing encourage viewers to make connections between the events of the sitcom and some very real and disturbing neo-colonialist political issues presently facing us all. As the video progresses, other reports are directly related to the panic caused by a white man turning black, and the possibility that other white Canadians are endangered.

All of the television segments eventually fold in on one another: George's predicament in the sitcom becomes part of 792 Allnews: Allnews also announces that Sta-Wyte sunscreen has enjoyed massive sales and that entire stocks have been bought out; the Human Rights Canada PSA assures nervous Canadians that PPR is not a disease but a wonderful white adaptation called Caucasian adaptive response (CAR); and Barb's eagerness to appear on *The Sheila Show* as wife of the first man to be afflicted with PPR/CAR is rewarded. This unexpected conflation of news, advertisement, sitcom and PSA creates a deliberate confusion between our sense of reality and our complicity in the media-constructed version of it, both in *Black On White* and the world at large. It reminds us of that familiar confusion fostered by the media co-optation of desire, which sends people like Barb scurrying for the limelight.

Karuna's manipulation of visual imagery — frames within frames; frames that literally push each other aside; frames that shrink, enlarge or flip away like flicked playing cards — signals that we are looking at a representation and that we are to question the pictures our media creates about whiteness and blackness. In the bedroom scene where George confronts his wife for the first time as a neo-black — disturbingly suggestive of the black-man-as-rapist stereotype — distortion, tilt, strobe, digital video effects, colour reduction and tight frame act in concert, creating a kind of inescapable monstrous reality. Yet we find ourselves laughing at the ludicrousness of the situation.

Laughter itself becomes a contentious issue in *Black On White* because, like the curiously disjunctive, at times distant and always hollow canned laughter of the soundtrack, our own laughter is often strained and problematic. White audience members weren't sure they *should* be laughing. My own laughter was often bitter.

Karuna draws our attention to the canned laughter. What I initially judged a clumsy and unsuccessful attempt at sitcom simulation I later interpreted as a deliberate, obscene gesture to white injunctions that blacks "lighten up" when talking to whites about issues of race and racism.

What is funny about racial stereotypification and white constructions of whiteness and blackness depends on one's vantage point. Some white audience members were a little tense, perhaps because the portrayal of whites was too close to home or perhaps because Blacks found that portrayal funny — after all, whites aren't used to being laughed at. For the most part, however, the video allowed the predominantly white audience to feel relaxed enough to laugh at itself.

In the final analysis, the laughter is always a little edgy and uncertain, because Karuna is in your face with things the fragile white ego wants to take lightly: jokes, stereotypes and assumptions. But none of this subterfuge can mask the energy and huge resources (not-so-lightly) expended to ensure white-skin privilege and sustain the myth of white supremacy.

Lesley Douglass is a writer and a member of Half the Sky Theatre in Hamilton. She is a founding member of Sojourner's Truth Theatre and is currently writing a Ph.D. dissertation on orality, sermon and Black theatricality in the writings of Black women in nineteenth-century America.

THE TELLING OF OUR STORIES

Hands of History

DIRECTOR: LORETTA TODD
NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, 1994, 51 MIN.

Keepers of the Fire

DIRECTOR: CHRISTINE WELSH
NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, 1994, 54 MIN.

REVIEW BY SUZANNE METHOT

With rare exceptions, non-Native attempts at documenting the reality of Native existence and the history of Native people through film have failed. In reel after reel of patronizing and zealously ethnographic documentary films — think elementary school, 1960s, past-tense titles like "How The Indians Lived" — Native culture has been placed within the "dead" or "dying" files, forwarding non-Native social and political agendas through stereotypes perpetuated by the idea of the white man's Indian.

The key difference between documentary film that works for Native people — serving our needs, addressing our concerns and balancing the "history" written about us — and documentary that does not serve our interests is how much control Native people have in the creation of the film and the extent to which Native voice remains unfettered by commentary offered by outsiders. Realizing this simple truth, aboriginal filmmakers have taken up the camera and are telling aboriginal stories from an aboriginal perspective, using aboriginal voices — and present tenses.

Two recent films from the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) feminist Studio D highlight this reclamation of voice. Métis filmmaker Loretta Todd's new film, *Hands of History*, is a serene take on four aboriginal women artists, Rena Point Bolton (Stol:o), Doreen Jensen (Gitksan), Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Blood) and Jane Ash Poitras (Chipewyan). In flowing shots often resting for long moments upon details of exquisite artwork, and with the help of connecting scenes combining drama and voice-over narration, Todd has fashioned a film documenting the ability of four women to conjure beauty through both traditional and contemporary means.

Still from *Hands of History*, directed by Loretta Todd. Courtesy the National Film Board of Canada.

Hands of History raises several disturbing points about how First Nations art has been — and often still is — regarded within the academic world. The works of Bolton, a basket weaver, and Jensen, a carver and button-blanket maker, illustrate the ways in which First Nations art has been misidentified. Bolton was trained from an early age to carry on the tradition of basket and mat weaving, work situated as anthropology and classified by ethnographers as vulgar or simplistic "women's work" and subsequently ignored or dismissed by western art historians as little more than "primitive" archeological artifacts. But these objects — baskets, blankets, mats — are evidence of the almost indescribable beauty inherent in the most mundane tools of everyday Native life, and they speak of more than mere handicraft.

Jensen creates ceremonial robes using trade materials. Ethnographers and art historians often criticize work created with European materials as being inauthentic, forgetting that it was their governments that pushed the First Nations to assimilate and trade away ancient lands for a few pieces of cloth and some shiny buttons. Western ethnographers and historians — and documentary filmmakers — usually examine Native culture as if it were static, and art historians have often preferred to study ancient works while ignoring the present reality and the changing face of Native art.

First Nations art has always been defined by outsiders, and both Jensen and Bolton make clear their belief that anyone outside of Native tradition cannot effectively critique First Nations art. This is not a popular concept within the art world. But both artists argue that aboriginal people need to put aside labels that have been imposed on aboriginal creativity; labels that serve the needs of others. It is clear that non-Native attempts to deconstruct Native art have necessarily served non-Native discourses that validate non-Native critics and dominant-society paradigms. Bolton and Jensen mean to reclaim aboriginal women's art/work from the realm of simplistic artifact.

Both Poitras, a painter and collage artist, and Cardinal-Schubert, a mixed-media artist, chose art. Illustrative of the dispossession and fracturing of Native culture caused by colonization, they were not selected by elders to contribute to the community as artists but instead chose the discipline themselves. Poitras, raised in a non-Native foster home, often selects healing and reclamation as predominate artistic themes. Todd's camera follows her as she journeys to the American Southwest to participate in ceremonies there; the resulting spiritual explorations are evident in her work. Cardinal-Schubert, for her part, enjoys playing with European ideas of art history: Whose art? Whose history? Cardinal-Schubert expresses through her art her belief that Native people need to be deprogrammed, that First Nations people have been forced to accept non-Native falsehoods as truths, and that these things need to be unlearned.

Hands of History is a successful film because it describes First Nations art from the point of view of First Nations artists. If Canadians pay attention, they will understand the message in the media without changing and/or appropriating the content or context.

Christine Welsh's second documentary film is *Keepers of the Fire*. Stories that became defining moments in the relationship between Canadians and First Nations peoples — the Oka "crisis," the environmental standoff on B.C.'s Lyell Island — are here discussed from the point of view of some of the women involved. Welsh's film highlights the contributions and sacrifices of Native women in very recent history, contemporary contributions often ignored or overlooked by those in search of past romantic tales of "Indian maidens" (Pocahontas comes to mind). The film asks Native women, indeed all women, a question: "What kind of warriors are *we*?" Aboriginal women have fought the same war as aboriginal men, yet our stories have, for the most part, been lost or erased from official history.

Keepers of the Fire is a well-planned film. Never falling victim to talking-head syndrome, it frames the voices of the women with long shots of the land for which, or upon which, they fought. Welsh also sprinkles in media footage, lending the film an almost surreal sense of place.

Beginning with the still-harrowing images of the standoff at Kanehsatake (Oka) during the summer of 1990, the film also asks what it is that turns ordinary women into warriors. Iroquois society is matrilineal; the land is cared for by the women. Faced with the desecration of ancestral burial grounds by the Canadian government, which wanted to enlarge a nearby golf course, and continuing a fight that began with proposed logging of the site in the 1950s, the women of Kanehsatake accepted their burden and stood up for their families and their nation. In the Mohawk language, "warrior" is literally translated as "one who bears the burden of peace." Ellen Gabriel, the official spokesperson from behind the lines that summer, offers important testimony not found in mainstream media documentation of the standoff. And Gabriel is just one of the many aboriginal women who are fighting for peace and whose voices are still not being heard.

The film also profiles the women involved in the standoff at Lyell Island off the coast of British Columbia in the winter of 1985. Fighting the clearcutting that was destroying sacred and traditional lands used by the Haida of the area, these women, many of them elderly, travelled six hours by boat and then transferred to helicopter in order to reach the site. (Located at the southern tip of traditional Haida territory, the island is lashed by storms for ten months of the year.) Of the many who successfully defended Lyell Island — there is no logging now and the area is returning to its natural state under protection from what is considered the greatest environmental victory in Canadian history — the women elders, who asked to stand at the forefront of the barricades, made a brave choice by jeopardizing what was probably uneventful old age with possible death and definite arrest by the RCMP. (Of the seventy-two Haida arrested for defying a B.C. Supreme Court injunction, nine men and two women actually went to trial.)

Welsh lingers on footage showing RCMP officers reading Haida elders the text of the arrest warrant and leading them away covered in Haida blankets, the elders requiring assistance in walking. The grandmothers who defended Lyell Island illustrate well the strength of tradition, which has ensured the continued survival of the First Nations. Native people are what they are because of the land. Without the land, we cease to live as the Creator intended.

The last two profiles in the film, however, are less successful portraits of aboriginal women's history. The women, Maliseet artist/activist Shirley Bear from Tobique, New Brunswick, and Anduhyaun women's shelter executive director Catherine Brooks (Ojibwe) from Toronto, speak a language inspired by the dominant society's feminist movement. It is a language that does not often mesh with aboriginal reality, past or present. For instance, Bear says that "being a warrior means confronting tradition." Whose tradition does she mean? What tradition? Certainly not First Nations tradition.

There is no doubt that the women of Tobique fought an important battle: realizing the unfairness of the Indian Act — which decreed that any aboriginal woman who married a non-Native lost her Indian status and the right to live on her reserve of birth — they forced the Canadian government to enact Bill C-31, which reinstated Native women to status and full rights to housing and benefits, no matter who they married. And Native men turned out to be the Tobique women's greatest foes. Co-opted by an imposed system of government, these men fought against the women in an effort to block reinstatement and keep the power they had been given under band council provisions.

But the women of Tobique seem to forget that all Native people, to some extent, at some point in their lives, have bought into the inequities of the Canadian system in an attempt to survive. And they seem to have forgotten that the government system that has divided First Nations communities into status and non-status does not belong to First Nations people. The fight for Bill C-31 raises some troubling questions about admittedly sovereign First Nations buying into western ideas of government and the dependency on government legislation to afford aboriginal women rights they have always traditionally held.

Instead of addressing any of these questions, Welsh allows the Tobique women to voice their personal (as opposed to collectively understood) ideas about Native culture, ideas that may reinforce dominant society stereotypes about the place of aboriginal women in aboriginal society. With a Native filmmaker at the helm, one does wish that the documentary could have been framed by some narrative context, or that other women's views had been explored. But if Welsh has set out merely to afford Native women the time to speak without interruption, then she has succeeded.

The work of Anduhyaun's Brooks raises other questions about Native women who are in the healing or recovery process, who may have just escaped abusive partners or life on the street, and their understanding of just what is traditional and what has been learned from the dominant society. Statements like "Healers must be warriors" certainly don't wash with the elders, who know that such things must always be kept separate. And calling healing women "warriors" is a dubious attempt at liberation. Telling a woman she is strong before she has proven that she is can cause more damage and lead to more problems than if you allow her to acknowledge her weakness during the healing process.

A look at Welsh's last film, *Women In the Shadows*, affords viewers the opportunity to glimpse the personal journey of the filmmaker, and it may offer clues to the deficiencies of this film. Welsh grew up thinking she was Native but never really knowing her history or her roots. Both *Women In the Shadows* and *Keepers of the Fire* document her search for a past and her struggle to undo the cultural assimilation that robbed her of it. Welsh seems hungry for knowledge, which is a good thing. Whether or not this self-discovery process translates into effective critical analysis, however, or as effective counterpoint to the bad documentary made about Native people in the past, is doubtful.

Suzanne Methot is a Cree woman originally from Peace River, Alberta. She is editorial coordinator at FUSE.

QUEERS IN THE STREETS VERSUS QUEEN'S PARK

Gay Pride and Prejudice

DIRECTED BY NANCY NICOL; VIDEO, 2 CHANNELS, COLOUR, 1994, 60 MIN.
DISTRIBUTED BY V TAPE, TORONTO

REVIEW BY GARY KINSMAN

Gay Pride and Prejudice is the first and so far only video made about the 1994 struggles surrounding Bill 167—the Equality Rights Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill would have recognized same-sex spousal and relationship rights in Ontario, creating the most progressive legislation of its kind in North America. Videomaker Nancy Nicol not only provides important documentation of this major debate, she also gives back to lesbians and gay men the images and sounds of our struggles, defeats and celebrations. Nicol is a Toronto lesbian video artist, socialist and anti-censorship activist whose previous work includes *A Choice for Irish Women, The Struggle for Choice* and *Working for Piecework Wages.*

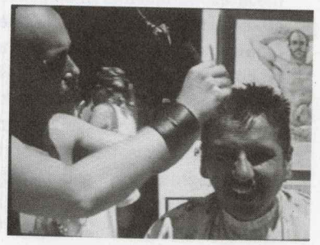
Gay Pride and Prejudice is an innovative two-channel video production (with two monitors and two distinct video), allowing Nicol to bring together contrasting images, narratives and struggle. The videos contrast the official parliamentary debates inside Queen's Park with lesbian and gay protests and celebrations in the streets. The two-channel form is well suited to producing interactive, conflictive effects—interlinking two narratives, with queer street celebrations and demonstrations intruding from time to time into the official world of parliamentary debate. The production is further multiply layered, with one subtext referring to the infamous Oscar Wilde trial of the 1890s when Wilde was tried for his homosexuality and his life was destroyed.

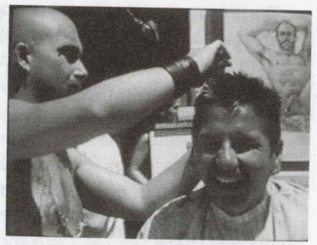
Gay Pride includes footage from the angry demonstration of 8,000 the night of the defeat of the bill and the massive Lesbian and Gay Pride Day march of far more than 100,000 people in Toronto in 1994. The march was more militant and political than in years because of the defeat of Bill 167. The Pride Day footage includes shots of the surrounding of Queen's Park with pink ribbon and tens of thousands of Queers affirming "We Are Family!" and also a smaller militant demonstration against anti-gay violence in October 1994 that followed the beating of two gay men on Church Street.

To get us in the mood, the video starts with Marion Boyd introducing Bill 167 for second reading on one monitor while on the other we see and hear the demo following the defeat of this bill and the rainbow flag being hoisted at Queen's Park. In the background we hear "Sweet Dreams Are Made of This" by the Eurythmics.

Gay Prejudice includes Liberal MPP Joan Fawcett telling us that social problems "can all be traced to the breakdown of the traditional family." Using humour and sarcasm, along with jump cuts, freeze frames and inversions, the video documents and pokes fun at the hypocrisy of the opponents of Bill 167. The "queen of flip-flops," Liberal leader Lyn McLeod (also dubbed "A Woman of No Importance"), flips upside down on two occasions on the monitor. Nicol really goes to town with NDPer George Mammoliti, who made some of the vilest remarks in the debate. He refers to a letter from the Pope but he just can't quite get the humpty dumpty nursery rhyme story right. We hear a number of these people complaining about how hurt they feel for being called bigots and hypocrites. In contrast NDP MPP Gary Malkowski, using sign language, emerges as the most passionate defender of our rights in Queen's Park.

I especially liked Nicol's rejection of the "positive images" strategy adopted by some groups, which argues that lesbians and gay men can only gain social acceptance and rights if we act like straights, and look as much as possible like straight couples and families if we are demanding spousal and relationship rights. Nicol does not just present images that are





Stills from *Gay Pride and Prejudice*, left channel.

politically palatable to the gatekeepers of heterosexual normality. The claim to "We Are Family!" that emerges from *Gay Pride and Prejudice* is not based on any replication of the "normal" heterosexual family.

It is in Nicol's critique of the "positive images" strategy that implicit questions are posed about limitations to struggles based simply on letting Queers into current constructions of spouse and family. While these struggles may challenge heterosexual hegemony, they can also participate in "normalizing" only some lesbian and gay relationships: those that most clearly look like heterosexual family relations. These normalization struggles can also lead to the social responsibilization of some lesbians and gay men while constructing other Queers who are not interested in being seen as families or in having spousal relationships as "irresponsible."

Nicol is largely successful in capturing diversity in the lesbian and gay communities, including the Two-spirited and anger over the defeat. It evoked pride for those involved in the struggle and sparked badly needed discussions over what images of us are best for straights to see, and also over what strategies are most effective in securing our rights—especially activism and militancy versus back-room lobbying. This shows the power of the video. This is engaged video documentation for our movements at its best. These are crucial at a time when the federal government is once again stalling on enacting our basic human rights as lesbian and gay men, and when the seeming decline of Queer activism has helped allow the federal Liberals to put our rights on the back burner and to allow caucus members Roseanne Skoke and Tom Wappel to foment and support bigotry against us.

I have only two small criticisms of *Gay Pride and Prejudice.* It would have been good to have included some footage from Pride Day or elsewhere of lesbians and gay men with their children, since many of us do have kids and this would have been extremely useful in deconstructing the hegemony of the "normalized" hetero family.

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Unfortunately I was not in Toronto during the final debates over the defeat of Bill 167, so I was delighted that this video allowed me to "live" some of this through the TV screen. *Gay Pride and Prejudice* ends with the vote result and the resulting protest in the House. Security guards wearing latex gloves are shown throwing lesbians and gay men and supporters out of the Queen's Park gallery with chants of "Shame, Shame!" in the lobby as Queer activist regroup. I at first could not believe that large numbers of people chanted "Burn down the house!" at the angry assembly at Queen's Park that night, but here it is recorded as part of our Queer histories. The video closes with Talking Heads' "Burning Down The House." The spirit of Stonewall lives!

Gary Kinsman is a gay, socialist and AIDS activist. He is the author of The Regulation of Desire *and is currently teaching sociology at Laurentian University in Sudbury.*

QUEERS I

Gay Pride an

DIRECTED BY NANCY N
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REVIEW BY GAR

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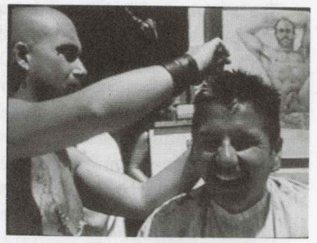

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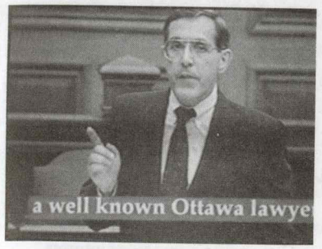

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Nicol is largely successful in capturing diversity in the lesbian and gay communities, including the Two-spirited Peoples of the First Nations, drag queens, dykes on bikes, the Metropolitan Community Church, lesbian, gay and bisexual youth, leather women and men, a Latin American gay group, socialists and AIDS activists. Nicol plays with and deconstructs a number of stereotyped or mythological Queer images. We see leather men with teddy bears, and we see a man licking and cleaning a leather boot, which then is revealed to be a man licking a woman's boot.

When shown two occasions in Sudbury, *Gay Pride and Prejudice* provoked memories of about the Bill 167 struggle from those involved in it, feelings of pain when the Queen's Park vote is relived, and anger over the defeat. It evoked pride for those involved in the struggle and sparked badly needed discussions over what images of us are best for straights to see, and also over what strategies are most effective in securing our rights—especially activism and militancy versus back-room lobbying. This shows the power of the video. This is engaged video documentation for our movements at its best. These are crucial at a time when the federal government is once again stalling on enacting our basic human rights as lesbian and gay men, and when the seeming decline of Queer activism has helped allow the federal Liberals to put our rights on the back burner and to allow caucus members Roseanne Skoke and Tom Wappel to foment and support bigotry against us.

I have only two small criticisms of *Gay Pride and Prejudice.* It would have been good to have included some footage from Pride Day or elsewhere of lesbians and gay men with their children, since many of us do have kids and this would have been extremely useful in deconstructing the hegemony of the "normalized" hetero family.

There is also nothing about the struggle that preceded the introduction of Bill 167. How was it that the NDP came to introduce this bill? This part of the story remains to be documented and examined. Limitations of format and footage also mean that even though Bob Rae becomes Dorian Gray, and there is footage of AIDS Action Now!'s Bob Rae Lottery float protesting the Ontario NDP government's inaction on AIDS/HIV drug funding at Pride Day, there is still not adequate political analysis of the actions of the leading bloc of the NDP. While some critique is generated of Rae and the NDP for allowing a "free vote" on this question, not as much is made of their construction of our rights as a troubling moral question, and that they were able to throw away some of the major provisions of the bill at the last minute suggesting that our rights are expendable. This ceded ground to the right wing and helped to create the basis for the defeat of the legislation.

Unfortunately I was not in Toronto during the final debates over the defeat of Bill 167, so I was delighted that this video allowed me to "live" some of this through the TV screen. *Gay Pride and Prejudice* ends with the vote result and the resulting protest in the House. Security guards wearing latex gloves are shown throwing lesbians and gay men and supporters out of the Queen's Park gallery with chants of "Shame, Shame!" in the lobby as Queer activist regroup. I at first could not believe that large numbers of people chanted "Burn down the house!" at the angry assembly at Queen's Park that night, but here it is recorded as part of our Queer histories. The video closes with Talking Heads' "Burning Down The House." The spirit of Stonewall lives!

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DECOLONIZING THE CLASSROOM

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom

(LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 1994)

BY BELL HOOKS

REVIEW BY RACHEL ARISS

bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* will change the way you stand in front of (and sit down in) a classroom — physically, intellectually and spiritually. Through essays discussing feminist solidarity; theory in the struggle for Black liberation; Black feminist scholarship; essentialism and experience; class; and language, hooks weaves her conviction that pedagogical practice — not just materials and ideas — must itself be critical and liberatory in order to dismantle the hierarchy of race, sex and class in which we live.

The author describes her discovery of learning as an act of liberation:

> We learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization. Though they did not define or articulate these practices in theoretical terms, my teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anticolonial.... Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by so doing uplift the race.

hooks' essays in *Teaching to Transgress* continue this understanding of and commitment to learning — as, about and for freedom that she found in a rural, segregated southern school.

In the essay "Theory of Liberatory Practice" hooks discusses the role of theory in political struggle and, in particular, the struggle of Black women. Her own search for theory came from her need to grasp hold of the source of her pain, although she acknowledges both the benefits and the difficulties of theorizing from within pain. She shows people engaged in critical pedagogy and theoretical exchange and "coming to voice" in such diverse locations as a restaurant in the southern United States, a Black men's reading group in a prison, and a radio show. She tells the story of incarcerated Black men reading her work: "[T]o let you know from first-hand experience that all

our feminist theory directed at transforming consciousness, that truly wants to speak with diverse audiences, does work: this is not a naive fantasy."

In "Holding My Sister's Hand: Feminist Solidarity," hooks analyses relations between Black women and white women through slavery, segregation and early feminism. She critiques current relations between the two groups and outlines how problems have emerged. To improve these relations she suggests that women must look at racism in the past and present — the way white supremacy informs relations between white women and Black women — and says that women must be willing to learn from these observations. This cannot be done from a distance; it is collective work for women of all races. The power of hooks' writing (and teaching) is clear in this essay as she moves from a thorough critique of white women's denial of the role of racism in the relations between Black women and white women to forward-looking conclusions.

hooks believes "women have the skills (developed in interpersonal relations where we confront gender difference) to make productive space for critical dissent dialogue even as we express intense emotions. We need to examine why we suddenly lose the capacity to exercise skill and care when we confront one another across race and class differences."

In "Essentialism and Experience," hooks discusses Diana Fuss' work on essentialism in the classroom. She acknowledges that "the authority of experience" can be used in exclusionary ways, but points out that in the traditional classroom, white, male, middle-class experience never had to be named — its claim to authority was unspoken. If everyone's experience was truly welcome in the classroom, experience would not be used to win the competition for voice that "dead-ends" discussion. The author envisions experience in the classroom as a domain from which to engage theory and relate it to practice. Its role is not authoritarian but passionate. She believes "the passion of experience" is a vital part of learning. In this essay, and in her dialogue with Ron Scapp, she emphasizes the importance of recognizing that students come to the classroom with experience. Teachers cannot ignore this. Engaged pedagogy is most fruitful when the whole student is involved.

hooks considers the student's responsibility for making the classroom a learning community without losing sight of the power the education system, the teacher's own fear of questioning identities and student habit invests in the traditional professor. The difficulty for the professor is that critical pedagogy demands that she/he question his/her identity. The professor is no longer there to lay out the facts from a position of authority, but to actually offer something of him or herself, to teach and learn along with the students.

Another risk for the professor engaging in critical pedagogy is that she/he may become responsible for the transformation of students' lives. hooks remembers her own fear when one student testified that the class (on internalized racism in fiction) had "deeply affected" and changed her in that she no longer believed she had to straighten her hair in order to "look good."

The author often draws on her own experiences, those of other professors and her students in her discussions of critical pedagogy. This method — which she focuses on in the essay "Essentialism and Experience" — illustrates the importance of experience in teaching and learning. Experience is used to illustrate theory, and is a focal point for critical engagement. This method also conveys the time and commitment necessary for critical thinking and learning. In this essay she also explains how her own attitudes and critiques of different concepts have changed. Growth in learning and in self-actualization takes place over a period of time and living. A four-month course with an exam at the end that encourages parroting of the professor becomes a sad parody of learning given the time and thought that real engaged learning requires.

The final two essays of the collection are primarily about the role of emotion in the classroom, in particular, joy and Eros. They are moving and empowering as they confirm hooks' conclusion that "The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility."

hooks is concerned that liberatory educative practice is not taken seriously. Sometimes students interpret a transgressive classroom structure as requiring less discipline and less work. Many traditional professors criticize students' enjoyment of a class — which hooks sees as joy in learning — interpreting it as a lack of seriousness.

The author notes that her conscious decision not to write in a conventional, academic style is political and "motivated by the desire to be inclusive, to reach as many readers as possible in as many different locations." This has had some negative repercussions in that her work is sometimes criticized as not scholarly enough.

In her introduction, hooks notes that colleagues were disappointed when she told them that this book would be about critical pedagogy and, in the last essay, that students and colleagues find her cultural criticism and feminist theory to be her most interesting work. Critical pedagogy, as hooks says, "is not intellectual work that most folks think is hip and cool."

As a student who aspires to teach, I found hooks' collection of essays inspiring. This book should not be seen as a departure from hooks' previous work in feminism, race theory and cultural criticism, rather, it is about how she teaches that work and applies critical, theoretical thinking to the difficult work of teaching.

Rachel Ariss is a master's student in law at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

UP ESCALATOR, DOWN ESCALATOR

Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture

(New York: First Vintage Books Edition, 1994)
By William Leach

REVIEW BY YASHAR ESSOP

William Leach's *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* describes and traces the development of consumer culture as it evolved in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. The bulk of the book is devoted to the history of the department store and its inextricable link to consumer culture. Leach clearly establishes how the originators of department stores were (self-professed) capitalist visionaries who wanted to stimulate an endless desire for new products in their customers by stimulating their imaginations and selling not the mere product or material good but its suggestiveness as a symbol of abundance.

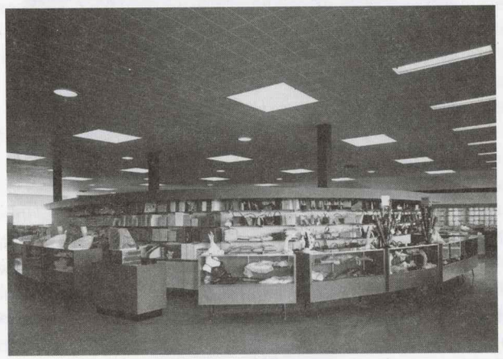


Photo: Mr. Ralph Morris of Jones and Morris Photo Digital Imaging.

At the end of the nineteenth century the good life had potentially become available to all American citizens with the gradual entrenchment of industrialism as a fact of American life. The multitude of consumer goods that were constantly being replaced by newer goods demonstrated dramatically the availability of this new and heady consumer paradise.

Of particular interest to the reader is Leach's detailed descriptions of how important commercial interiors were in selling this consumer dream of ownership and abundance. Painters, muralists, window dressers, set designers, interior decorators and stylists were crucial to the promulgation of consumer culture during the early decades of the twentieth century. The illusion of the good life was inseparable from mass production and mass consumption, which depended neither upon scarcity or necessity but upon desire, surplus and endless repetition (of both the purchasing and production cycles).

Department stores were careful to separate the sweaty and unappealing means of production from the goods, which were the result of the invariably underpaid labour of women and often children.

Department stores frequently had floors devoted to manufacturing, but it soon became necessary to conceal and finally to eradicate this evidence of unsavoury human labour so much at odds with the capitalist heaven of instant gratification embodied in the specialized and seemingly endless departments of the new American retail giants.

Leach is also adept at pointing out a fact often neglected or overlooked by economists who focus upon industrial production alone: that the fashion and the garment industry has abused and exploited labour almost from their beginnings. For the sake of fairness, Leach also notes that the department store did benefit women in that it offered employment in numbers previously unheard of — although mostly as (lowly paid) sales assistants. Few women worked in managerial capacities except for a small elite of female fashion buyers, who had the added freedom of traveling abroad. Indeed, John Wanamaker, patriarch of the gigantic Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia and New York City, found it necessary to counteract the widespread perception of female sales assistants as being in particular danger of loose behaviour and even prostitution by mounting a publicity campaign to demonstrate their wholesomeness.

Central to the development of mass merchandising and the retail giants (the department stores) of the United States was the displacement of conventional religion by new neo-philosophies emphasizing happiness, positive attitude and self-esteem (people deserved as much as they could possibly get) and downplaying and eventually suppressing the consciousness of sin, death, suffering and spiritual maturity, which had been characteristic of America's Puritan forebears. These neo-religions are still around today in one form or another. New Ageism and its many fashionable offshoots are the obvious examples, but the most powerful and enduring has probably been scientology (which has apparently always had money behind it). These pseudo-religions were motors to the capitalist machine of consumption and production because they encouraged people to believe that happiness was alive and well in the land of plenty and that a positive attitude and a view of life that refused to incorporate a consciousness of misery and suffering were all that were needed for perpetual bliss. Unlike Protestantism, these new religions encouraged people to believe that worldly fulfillment was a desirable human goal, that a life of luxury and consumption was to be sought after.

The marriage of commerce and neo-religion that characterizes the culture of desire is well documented by the author. Traditional religion, particularly Protestantism, with its emphasis upon self-denial, discipline and hard work, and its strong consciousness of sin, did not have a place in the new utopia filled with consumer goods wherein immediate gratification and an insufferably positive outlook were the ultimate values. One of the prophets of the culture of consumerism was L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz* and (some of) its many sequels. Appropriately, Baum was a window-display artist and a crockery salesman before he became a successful writer. Leach analyzes *The Wizard of Oz* as a fairy tale for the new consumer culture. Anxiety, fear and suffering are rigidly excluded from the land of Oz. In Oz, dull and ordinary Midwesterners experience makeovers and become glamorous, in keeping with their brilliant surroundings, a glossy Technicolor utopia. A positive attitude (and some otherworldly help) is all that is needed to defend oneself against the wicked witch. Unlike traditional fairy tales there are no horrific events, no psychically traumatic abandonments or separations from parents or any terrible obstacles to overcome. Dorothy remains, essentially, the same little girl at the end of *The Wizard of Oz* that she was at the beginning. In the brave new world of consumer culture, desires are fulfilled but individual growth is rarely achieved and little human effort is expended. Wish gratification is of paramount importance. *The Wizard of Oz* functions as a kind of secular *Pilgrim's Progress* for the new consumer culture. Baum believed in the mind cure, that the power of positive thinking and the banishing of "poverty thoughts" would lead any American who truly desired happiness and wealth to the holy grail, which was nothing less than the fulfillment of all his material wishes and the living of the good life.

Leach's extensive, scholarly and groundbreaking research on mass-market retailing and some of the key figures in its development makes this book compelling reading for both the general reader and the student of economics. As a critique of consumer mass culture one of *Land of Desire's* drawbacks is that although it describes and outlines the history and the symptoms of a society obsessed by novelty, consumption and the ephemeral, and seems to condemn the vacuity of the consumption, production and fake happiness machine that propels the United States, this condemnation is never dealt with explicitly or at length. The book suffers from its scholarly moderation. For instance, readers are sometimes clued into the fact that the weakening of conventional religion is one of Leach's sore points, but one cannot take issue with this potential stance because it is never explicitly stated. One senses that Leach identifies with the Puritanism of America's pioneers, indeed that he is religious and conservative, but the limitations of such an identification are not accessible to scrutiny because the author's viewpoint is never clearly stated. Leach's secret history of America's consuming passion — consuming — is curiously silent about its author's intentions in writing this book. I seriously doubt that it is intended as straightforward "objective" history, if such a thing exists. As polemic, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* is oddly lukewarm. Although the evidence is all there, convicting capitalism as a vapid and clever con game, using every wile to sell an American dream of rampant consumerism to a gullible public all too ready and a bit too enthusiastic to make the purchase, the verdict is never delivered with the power that might have accompanied it.

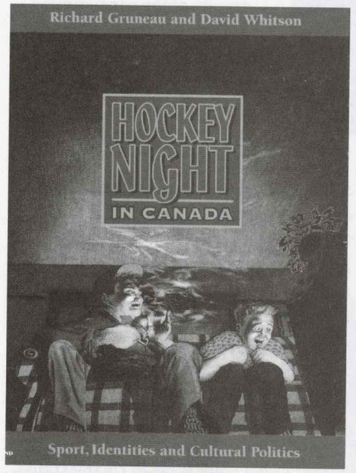
Yashar Essop is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto. He is from South Africa.

WHAT IS THE PLURAL OF HOCKEY?

Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics

(TORONTO: GARAMOND PRESS, 1993)
BY RICHARD GRUNEAU AND DAVID WHITSON

REVIEW BY GARY GENOSKO



When *The Village Voice* ran excerpts from the libretto of Torontonian Brad Walton's hockey opera *The Loves of Wayne Gretzky*, which stages an affair between the Great One and Pittsburgh Penguins star Mario Lemieux, the routine subjective formations (masculine, white, patriotic) that have typified hockey culture were effectively queered. Gay hockey opera may be a fleeting genre, but its implications for making the hockey subject aware of his/her homoerotic investments in the game is substantial.

Then there were the articles in *Xtra West* and *The Vancouver Sun,* extolling the virtues of Vancouver Canuck star Pavel Bure: his "androgynous, fawn-like features...lips like rose petals, bedroom eyes and fashionably coiffed hair." Coverage centering on hockey fans in Canadian gay communities, in *The Globe And Mail* and by television commentator Don Cherry — who, in one Hockey Night in Canada broadcast, referred to foreign players as "sissies" while simultaneously welcoming gay fans into the fold — have brought the diverse constituencies of hockey to the fore and further invested the game with a remarkable pluralism.

If one were to look for these kinds of openings to new plural hockey subjectivities in Richard Gruneau and David Whitson's book *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics*, one would only find disappointment. Hockey, as a mainstream cultural phenomenon, is not usually a site for the augmentation of queer subjectivities. In keeping with the mainstream, the authors explore heterosexual masculinity and, in certain important instances, the breakthroughs of young women such as goaltender Manon Rheaume at the professional level.

Perhaps, then, as both a criticism and a defense, one could say that the timing of this book is completely wrong. Not only did Gruneau and Whitson miss the blossoming of Queer hockey culture, but they were unable to contribute to the most significant pre-strike hockey issue: the successful lawsuit by so-called "old-timers" over pension-fund benefits. While the authors are better prepared methodologically to understand labour issues, they lack the expertise to speak convincingly of culture and identity — in spite of the subtitle of their book. A few references to cultural theory appear here and there in the text, but they only enable Gruneau and Whitson to conclude that hockey is part of a global, postmodern and capitalistic culture. But, as Walton's opera and Don Cherry's televisual performances have demonstrated, hockey can offer new spaces for identity formation to new (or previously unheard from) groups; groups that the authors of *Hockey Night in Canada* remain suspiciously silent about.

What, then, is the plural of hockey? Or, even better, where are such *hockies* played out?

Thomson Highway understands well the strange effects a hockey game can have on a community. In *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, the fictional reserve of Wasaychigan Hill experiences a "revolution" when, in Zachary Jeremiah Keechigeesik's dream, the women of the reserve form a hockey team called the Wasy Wailerettes. In his dream a "particular puck," which circulates throughout the play, finds its way into the bosom of Gazelle Nataways, only to be shaken loose later during another game. The repetition of the question "Where's the puck?" heralds a nightmare in the first game sequence, in which Nanabush (in this instance as the spirit of Black Lady Halked) sits upon a "giant luminescent puck." (It needs to be recalled here that in the opening sequence of the play it was Nanabush, as the spirit of Gazelle Nataways, who, with a bump of her hip, turned on the television — to Hockey Night in Canada.) Later, when Zachary awakes from his dream to return to the reality of his wife, Hera, and their new

Scene from *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* by Thomson Highway. Left to right: Ben Cardinal, Errol Kinistino, Graham Greene. Theatre Passe Muraille, 1984. Photo: Michael Cooper.

baby, he remarks on how much the moon looked like a puck last night — hearkening back to the vision of Nanabush — and asks his wife whether she has ever thought of playing hockey, to which she replies: "Yeah right. That's all I need, a flying puck right in the left tit, neee...." With the hockey game long over and the Smurfs on the television screen before him, all Zachary can do is point out that Smurfs don't play hockey!

You won't find Thomson Highway in *Hockey Night in Canada.* And you won't hear about Maple Leafs great George Armstrong, whose mother was Ojibway and French Canadian, and who was subjected to the kind of racism that almost every hockey writer covering the "original six" — NHL teams, not nations — considered inevitable: he was nicknamed "Chief."

Gruneau and Whitson confess that they grew up in the 1950s and '60s in Toronto. They do not tell us if they remember Armstrong's nickname, or what it meant to them to have Tim Horton's name separate itself from hockey and become just another doughnut shop. Neither do they reflect on the sports-legend phenomenon and its relationship to the creation of consumer identities through, for example, the consumption of doughnuts while clothed in leisure clothing from the Gordie Howe Collection promoted by Zellers. They meticulously avoid analyses of specific products. Remarkably, they even avoid the important matter of collecting in hockey circles. Gruneau and Whitson claim that "'communities' formed around acts of consumption...are not political communities in any meaningful sense of the word" (p. 219).

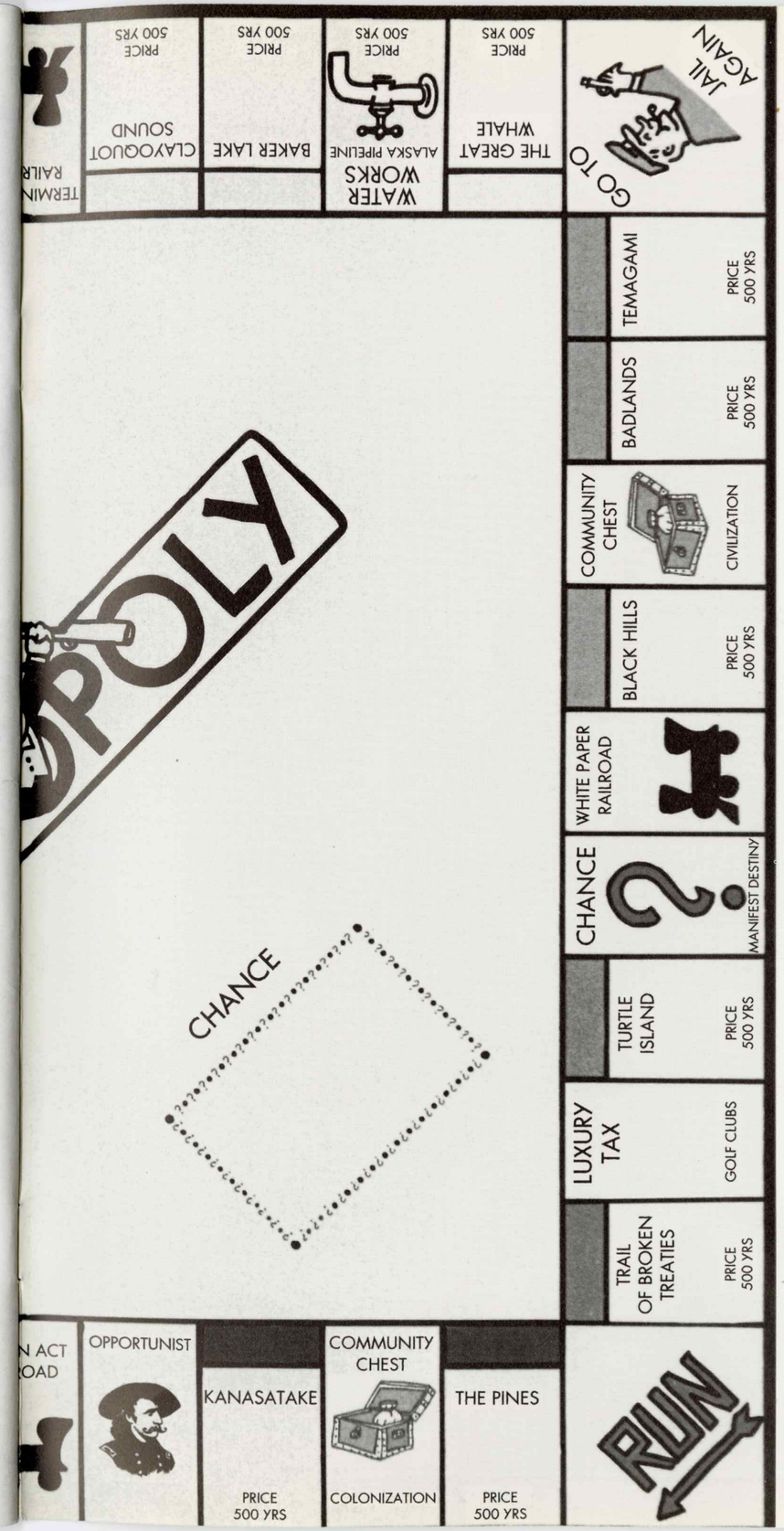
One can agree that an understanding of hockey through consumption needs to be freed from the more popular spectatorship and caps-and-shirts analyses in order to move into areas of "social identification" that may be less obvious but no less political. I am not advocating the metaphysical concept of participation so dear to cultural studies theorists. The very notions of social and public and community have rendered identification problematic. There is no easy choice, as Gruneau and Whitson seem to think, between pseudo-communities based upon consumer choices and meaningful political communities. Liberatory paths of subject formation and identification are tangled up in doughnuts and memories and the fictional fact that dry lips oughta move to the Kap because she fell down, blocking the slapshot of her teammate Hera Keechigeesik and denying her a sure goal.

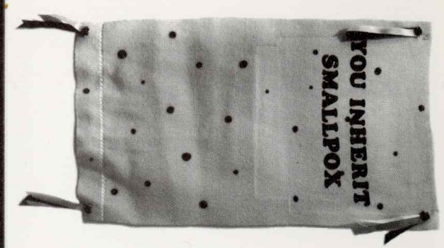
Hockey has also served as a versatile image bank in aesthetic explorations of the two solitudes of French and English Canada. From Roch Carrier's short story *Une abominable feuille d'érable sur la glace* (*The Hockey Sweater*) to Serge Morin and Serge Dufaux's 1983 film *De l'autre côté de la glace*, political allegiances have been registered through hockey's potent symbols. Still, one needs to break apart this Canadian binarism without diminishing the importance of artistic accomplishments based upon it, and in so doing let

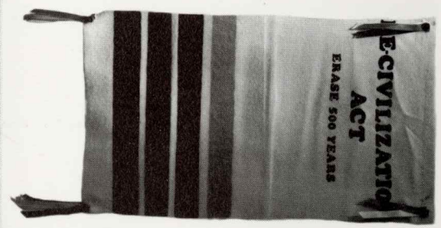
the *hockies* being played across the country engage a broader understanding of the subjectivities, cultures, and rituals of the game with tolerance and respect.

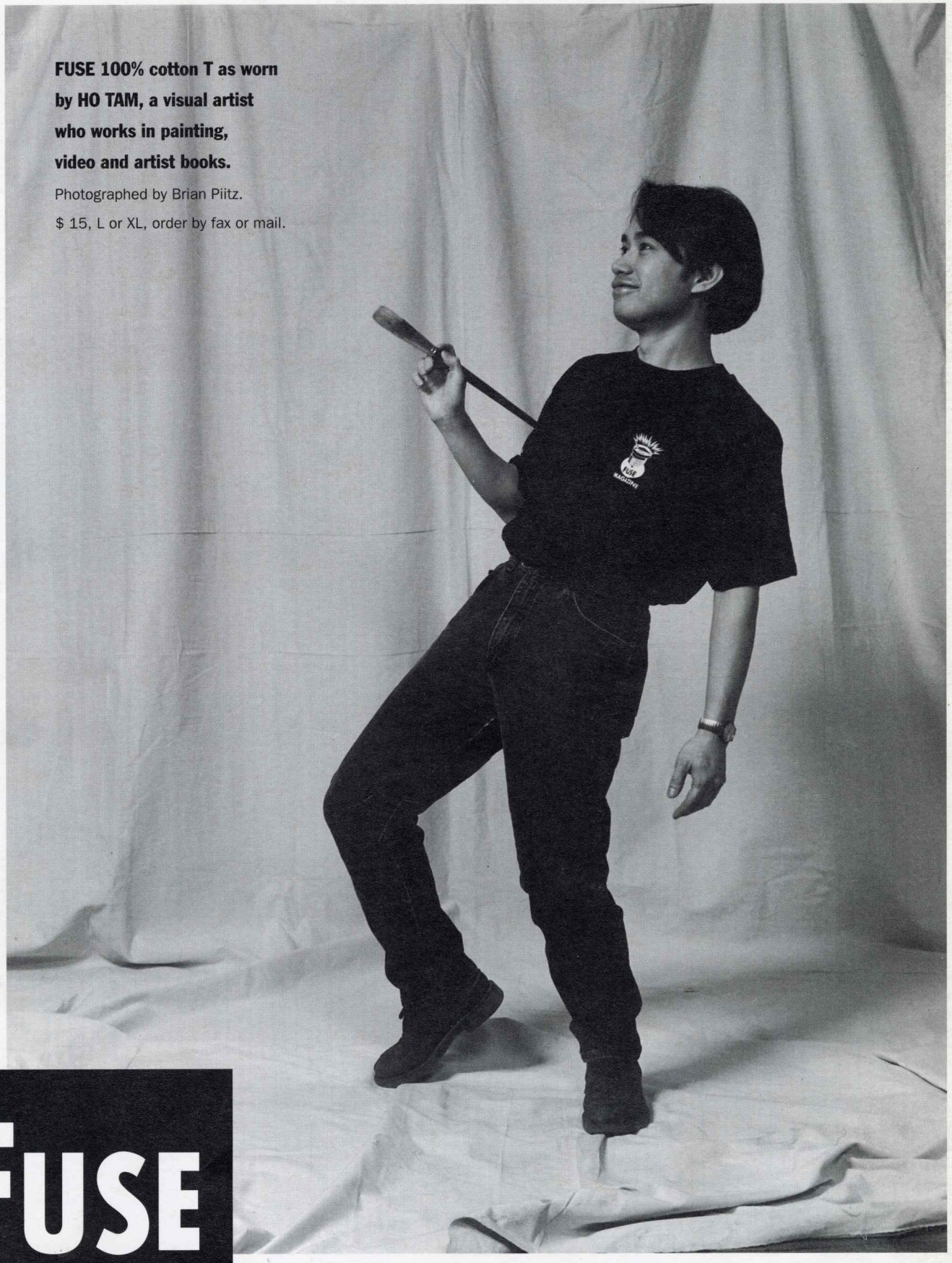
Gary Genosko is a writer living in Kingston, Ontario.

Writer's Reserve application deadlines for 1995:
August 1 and December 1





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