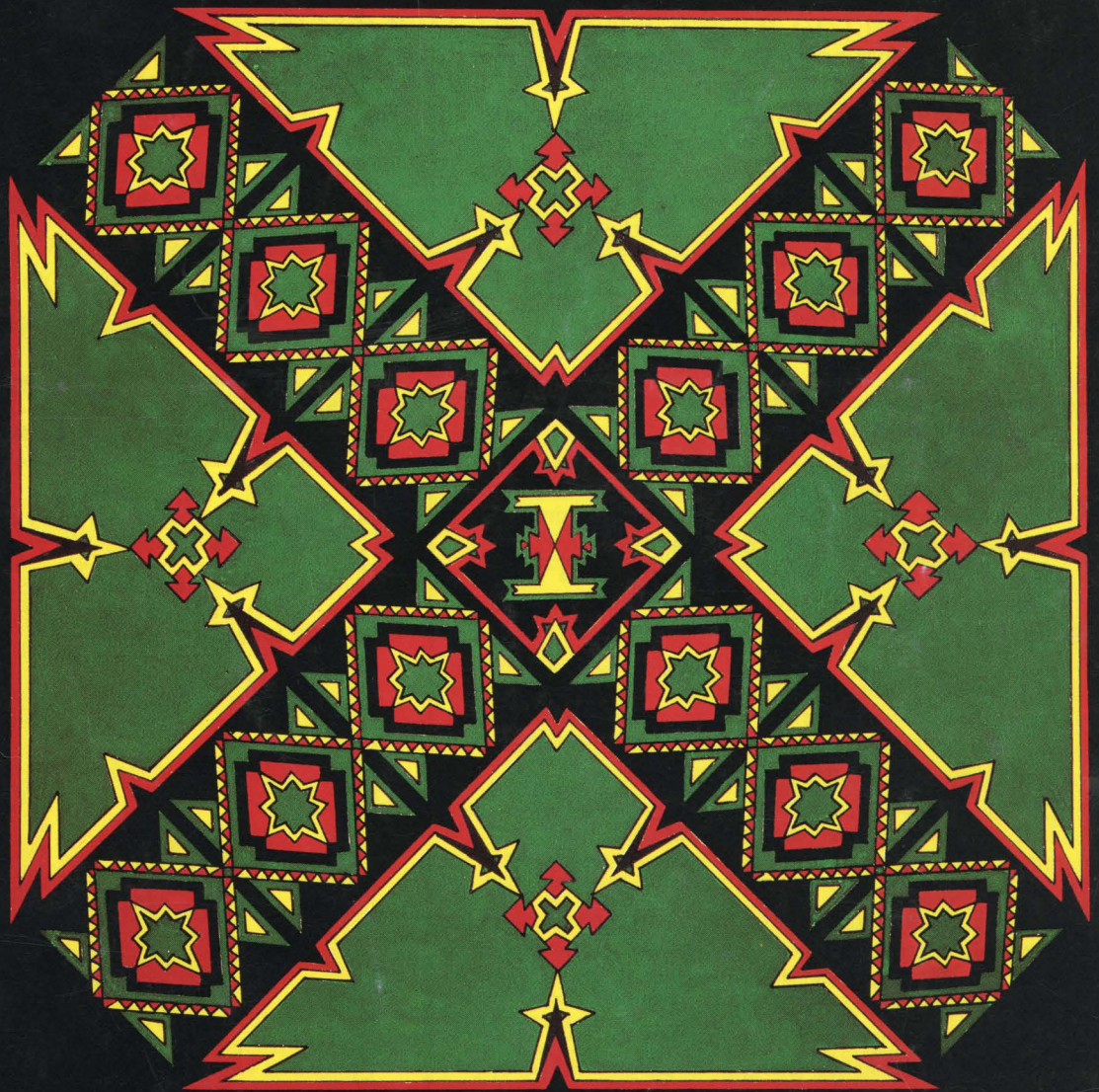


# FUSE

MAGAZINE

VOL. 15  
NO. 6  
1992  
\$3.50



## FRIGHT the POWER

by Cameron Bailey

ART COUNCILS &  
THE SPECTRE OF  
RACIAL EQUITY

MORE BACK TALK • RACE, SEX, DIFFERENCES AND LITERAL METHODS by Ayanna Black & Roberta Morris

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1. **Cover letter** which outlines why you wish to participate in the Fall Lab and your experience as a writer, director or producer.
2. **A resume** which includes a list of support material (please describe either film, video or work published).
3. **Support material** of no more than two examples of previous work on 1/2" VHS tape.
4. **A brief synopsis** of your feature-length project in development and the **screenplay**.
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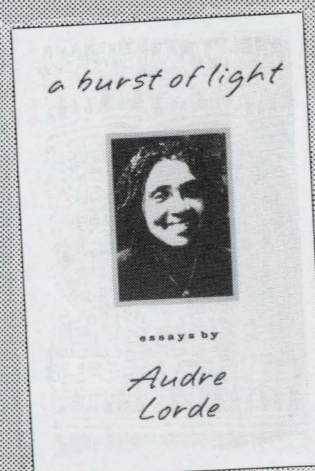
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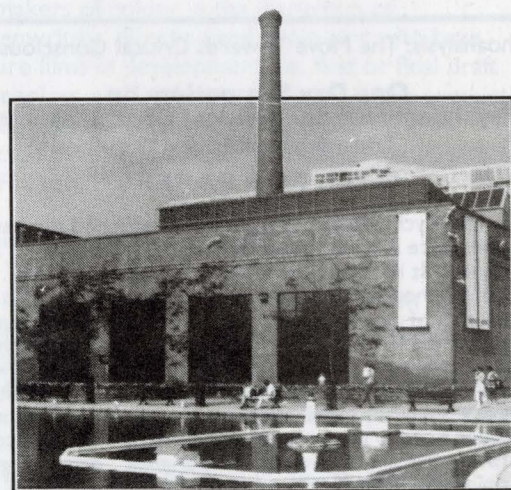
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**VOL. XV NO. 5**

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FUSE is published five times a year (includes one double issue) by  
Arton's Cultural Affairs Society and Publishing Inc., a non-profit  
artist organization. Our offices are located at 183 Bathurst  
Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5T 2R7, tel: (416) 367-0159.  
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FUSE acknowledges financial assistance from the Canada Council,  
the Ontario Arts Council and the Government of Ontario  
through the Ministry of Culture and Communications and the  
many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour which are  
provided by everyone listed on our masthead.

Subscription rates: \$16 per year; Institutions \$26 per year (in  
Canada only). Outside Canada \$18 per year; Institutions \$30.  
Decisions regarding who qualifies as an 'individual' subscriber  
remain the right of the publisher.

**ISSN 0838-603X.**

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

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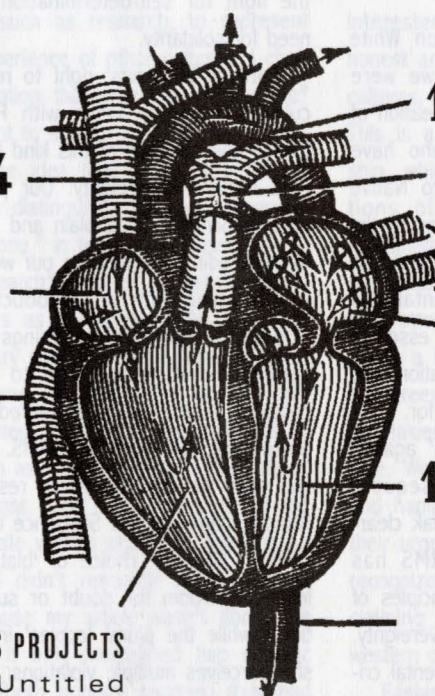
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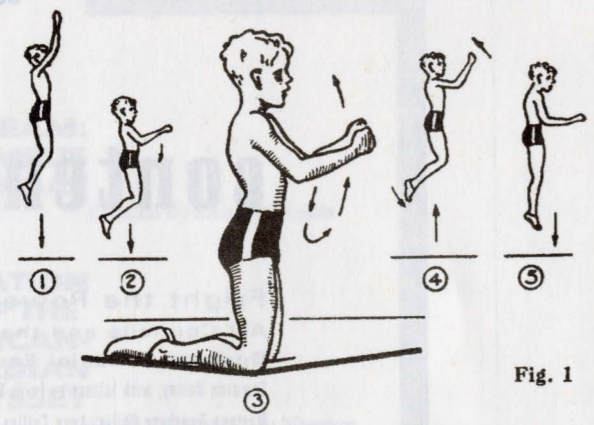


Fig. 1

**TO THE EDITORS,**

In reading Richard Hills' article on White appropriation and Native voices we were pleased to see a more precise delineation of FASTWÜRMS' position as artists who have "appointed themselves to speak to Native cultural issues." Although intended as ironic, Hills' choice of words is really quite accurate in terms of FASTWÜRMS' representational politics in that it gets down to that essential difference in the issue of appropriation and voicing: speaking to is not speaking for.

In reference to our 'accusations' against Cardinal-Schubert and Hill's subsequent defense of her criticisms, let us speak clearly. From its inception FASTWÜRMS has researched and recognized the principles of Aboriginal Title and First Nations sovereignty. We see these issues as the fundamental crisis of Canadian identity and consequently of Canadian constitutional politics. We believe there is no true authority in Canadian federal or provincial governments to take away or give back Native sovereignty. Whenever FASTWÜRMS is asked about this question we do not mince words. Nor do we fail, as Hill claims, to "respond to their (White) histories of power and racism." In fact in our artist's statement from *The Salvage Paradigm*, which Hill himself quotes, we are explicit in our description of the "dominance rationale of western culture" as "pathological, criminal behaviour." We recognize the First Nations' sovereignty and we also recognize that in

the fight for self-determination there is a need for solidarity.

Cardinal-Schubert's right to represent her culture is not an issue with FASTWÜRMS. Clearly any question of this kind is internal to First Nations sovereignty. Our problem with Cardinal-Schubert is a plain and simple issue of her credibility relative to our work.

Beginning with an introduction stating "Money, it does strange things to people" Cardinal-Schubert goes on to assert that "ancient ceremonies and sacred rituals are being mimicked" by FASTWÜRMS. Furthermore she says we are specifically responsible for "blatant copies of the Sundance ceremonies." (FUSE XIII) Her choice of 'blatant' doesn't leave any room for doubt or subtle distinctions; while the plural 'copies' indicates that she perceives multiple violations. The motivations for these 'rip-offs' she easily explains as the strange effects of greed and money.

Sundance ceremonies are very serious, very sacred, with precise and distinctive iconography. Within the context of First Nations cultural and spiritual sovereignty, Cardinal-Schubert could not make a more damaging or serious charge against FASTWÜRMS. For the public record FASTWÜRMS can say emphatically and unconditionally that we have never made copies of the Sundance ceremonies, never, no where, at no time, not even close.

This is the basis of the credibility problem we have with Cardinal-Schubert.

In similar fashion Hill goes so far as to equate our letter with a denial and trivialization of personal experiences of racism. In solidarity, Hill escalates the war of words claiming that we are trying to alienate Cardinal-Schubert from the "good Indians" with the old colonial tool of divide and conquer.

We don't want to conquer anyone. What we want is to divide the truth from lies, fact from fiction, a good argument from a bad one.

This is an important issue. If, as Hill claims, "the only power we have to keep Whites from using our culture as they please is our ability to convince them on moral grounds that they shouldn't" then it makes sense that any argument for cultural sovereignty should respect specificity and difference, be well researched from primary sources, be impeccable and credible.

Lies, even those made for a good cause, have no moral authority, and ultimately no power to convince. Lies are destructive of friendship, mutual respect, and understanding.

Sincerely,  
FASTWÜRMS  
Dai Skuse  
Kim Kozzi

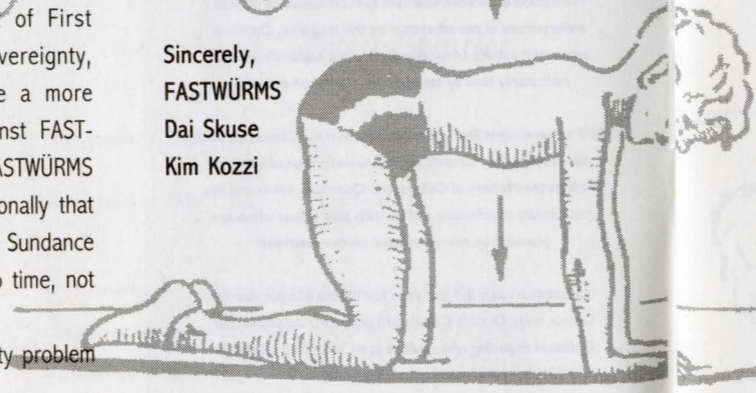


Fig. 2

3

**RICHARD HILL RESPONDS:**

The Fastwurms letter was sent to *Fuse* with the heading, "RE: One Part Per-Million," yet I find it difficult to locate much specific comment on my piece of writing. The majority of their letter is spent attacking Cardinal-Schubert who, unless I'm harbouring a multiple personality I'm unaware of, is not me.

The article that I wrote briefly critiqued two written statements by the Fastwurms that regarded appropriation in the context I was addressing. Their letter, in which they defend themselves against things I didn't accuse them of, creates an indignant smoke-screen while failing to adequately respond to the two criticisms I did raise. Despite this they feel comfortable writing that an argument about appropriation should respect specificity. Okay. I agree. My critique of their letter was specifically aimed at the strategy they used to invalidate Cardinal-Schubert's ability to speak as a Native person. Now the Fastwurms claim that her, "right to represent her culture is not an issue," yet in their previous letter to *Fuse* they made it an issue by accusing her of being, "a self appointed spokesperson for Native artists." Either they are confused or they have changed their collective mind about how to critique her article.

None-the-less Fastwurms continue to use various strategies to discredit critics like myself. Their constant but rarely explicit focus on my credibility as a writer (my supposed failure to do impeccable research, the accusation of lying) plus their efforts to distance themselves from the issue of appropriation, which they refuse to deal with conclusively, once again conflating complex cultural issues entirely into the realm of individuals where, "truth and lies," not issues and perspectives, battle it out.

The question (and questioning) of research seems to be a key component of Fastwurms challenge to my article—but what does research really mean? One of the first points they make is that they have, "researched and recognized the principal of

Aboriginal title and First Nations sovereignty." I suppose this "research" is set up as a contrast to my own alleged failing in that discipline, otherwise I can't see what this sentence has to do with my article.

Aside from my suspicions about how Fastwurms might (or might not) do research as a unit, this defence makes me wonder about the validity of research in contrast to experience. One of the strongest challenges to academic authority that the question of appropriation raises regards the inability of traditional, formal means of constructing knowledge, such as research, to represent the lived experience of other cultures. I challenge the notion that only the "impeccable" have the right to speak, and I just as strongly contest the idea that the Fastwurms are equipped to distinguish, "a good argument from a bad one," in terms of this issue.

The "research" I did for my article was to live 24 years as a Native person. (If that's not a "primary source" I don't know what is.) I think this was reflected in the way the article was written. I spoke about incidents of appropriation as I came across them, I never actively sought them out. This seemed the most legitimate way to share my opinions on this issue. I didn't research the Fastwurms project because my article wasn't about the Fastwurms, it only mentioned two specific statements (both primary sources) they had published that I found problematic.

The second critique I raised in my article was that Fastwurms avoid their own involvement with issues of Western domination and racism by claiming to be a non-Western culture. Their defence is to quote themselves as having written that "the dominance rationale of western culture is pathological, criminal behaviour." Seeing the follow up to this quote, however, should explain my original criticism. From their artist's statement in the *Salvage Paradigm* catalogue:

"...FASTWÜRMS (their capitalization) makes reference to other non-western cultures because FASTWÜRMS considers itself,

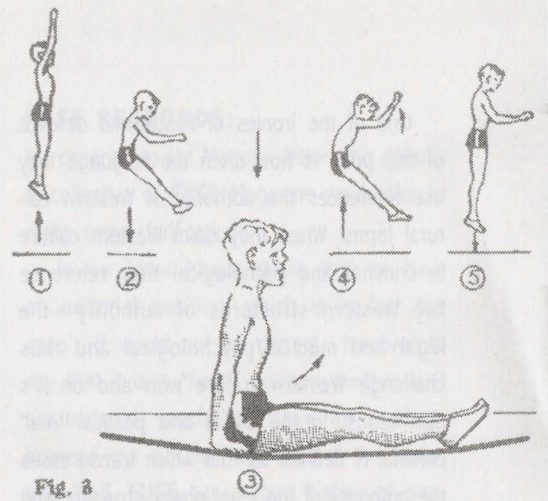


Fig. 3

intrinsically, to be a non-western culture. As a small independent culture, FASTWÜRMS is interested in forming new, creative, more honest and healthy relationships with foreign cultures, both western and non-western alike. This is a program of diplomacy and friendship, which extends outside western definitions of culture to include the highly esteemed beaver culture, birch tree culture, rattlesnake culture, bee culture, skunk culture, otter culture, leech culture, etc..., etc..."

As a Native person I believe that animals and trees have spirits but cultures? This is the flakiest new age crap I've heard in a long time. Worse, it makes a joke out of culture and hampers people who are trying to have their urgent and very real cultural differences recognized. Not everyone has the luxury of claiming difference and independence from western culture as if it were a game.

Fastwurms say they don't fail to respond to their histories of power and racism, yet they claim to be completely outside of western culture and are thus unimplicated in the charges they level against it. It's become a sort of self deconstructing cliché for Western people to claim they are external to their own culture. I'm especially suspicious of anyone who claims to be outside their culture's racism because I know that no matter how hard I try to fight it within myself I can't completely extinguish my own racism or cultural ignorance. White racism has also lead me to have deep doubts about my own abilities to question my own worth. How can anyone be totally exempt from this?

One of the ironies of Fastwurms defence of this point is how often the language they use references the authority of Western cultural forms. When they claim Western culture is criminal and pathological they reference two Western structures of authority—the legal and medical/psychological and thus challenge Western culture with and on its own terms. In the social and political 'real' criminal is defined as that which transgresses the authority of the legal power structure and the pathological is that which science and rationalism deems to be deviant. Fastwurms critique then fails to penetrate let alone escape the rationalist Western paradigm, because it depends on the assumption of a universal norm in the case of the pathological and of the universality of the Western legal concept with regard to the criminal. So much for being culturally autonomous.

A more blatant use of rationalist authority is their falling back on a truth versus lies dichotomy. Lying, which is the deliberate spreading of an untruth, is a charge which I was always taught to take very seriously. Do the Fastwurms really believe I'd deliberately spread knowledge I knew to be untrue? Have they even openly challenged the "facts" of anything I wrote? Perhaps they should be a bit more "impeccable" in defining their terms.

I'm also interested to know where they received the rather god-like ability to, "divide the truth from lies." Isn't the question of appropriation based on the notion that truth

is a shifting and culturally various proposition? My truth is not their truth is not Cardinal-Schubert's truth etc... It would be just as easy and just as meaningless for any of us to fall back on it in its singular form.

In fact it would be an evasion of the issue. Fastwurms claim that their letter against Cardinal-Schubert's article wasn't trying to conquer anyone, it was simply an effort to arrive at the truth. But whose truth? Arrived at by what strategy? By suggesting that this is only a matter of, "dividing the truth from lies" they deny that the truths they confidently propose throughout their letter are subjective in the extreme, and are in fact agencies of their own argumentative strategy. The term conquer is crude, but the analogy is basically accurate. The Fastwurms original letter outlined a contrary position to Cardinal-Schubert's article in the form of an attack on her, with the intent of "conquering" or winning their point and restoring their position.

Discourse and knowledge are inherently entangled with and composed of agencies of power. By trying to appear outside this process Fastwurms effectively ignore the question of appropriation. The history of Native people in Canada shows very clearly that in this context those "speaking to" Native issues (politicians, anthropologists, artists, mass media or whoever) have also, undeniably, been speaking for us in so far as we've had very little access to means of response on our own terms. I'm trying to change that—and so far Fastwurms attempts at, "forming new, creative, more honest and healthy relationships," with Native culture haven't been too supportive. Perhaps they'll have better luck with the, "highly esteemed birch tree culture..."

Impeccably yours,  
Richard Hill

RICHARD HILL RESPONDS:  
The Fastwurms letter was sent to FUSE with the heading: "RE: One Part Par-Million," yet I find it difficult to locate much specific content on my part of writing. The majority of their letter is spent attacking Cardinal-Schubert who, unless I'm misreading a well-known personality I'm unaware of, is not me. The article that I wrote briefly critiqued two writer statements by the Fastwurms that regarded appropriation in the context I was addressing. Their letter, in which they defend themselves against things I didn't accuse them of, treats an important gender- and race-related issue in a way that is both unhelpful and unproductive. The article that they refer to was my critique of their letter, not the other way around. My critique of their letter was only aimed at the strategy that led to the critique. Cardinal-Schubert's reply to me was as a native person, not the Fastwurms. I did not write to respond to her critique. I was first made aware of an article by Richard Hill that was a critique of my letter. I was not in any way involved in the critique. I was not in any way involved in the critique. I was not in any way involved in the critique.

**TO EDITORIAL BOARD,**

I have hesitated to respond to Richard Hill's article on **White Appropriation and Native Voice** (FUSE Winter 1992), figuring that his manipulation of my work and statements was made more for rhetorical effect than critical purpose. Also, because a point by point defense of my position will only continue a dead-end debate that has turned into a cycle of accusation and denial.

The strategy of galvanizing guilt around a few individuals for what is in fact a systematic social problem has limited value, and serves only to deflect attention from the more critical aspects of the issue. More important is that "the violent spectacle of it all" provides an easy escape from self-examination for the majority who busy themselves with pointing out the "guilty". All we learn from this is that we retain our Victorian ability to turn a complex issue into a simple dichotomy.

Granted for a nation that has always fancied itself sublimely unracist it is a big challenge to come to terms with the truth about relations between native and white cultures. I may not have approached this aggressively enough to suit Richard Hill, but as it's **my** life, **my** psyche, **my** history that I'm questioning, I'll do it the way I see fit.

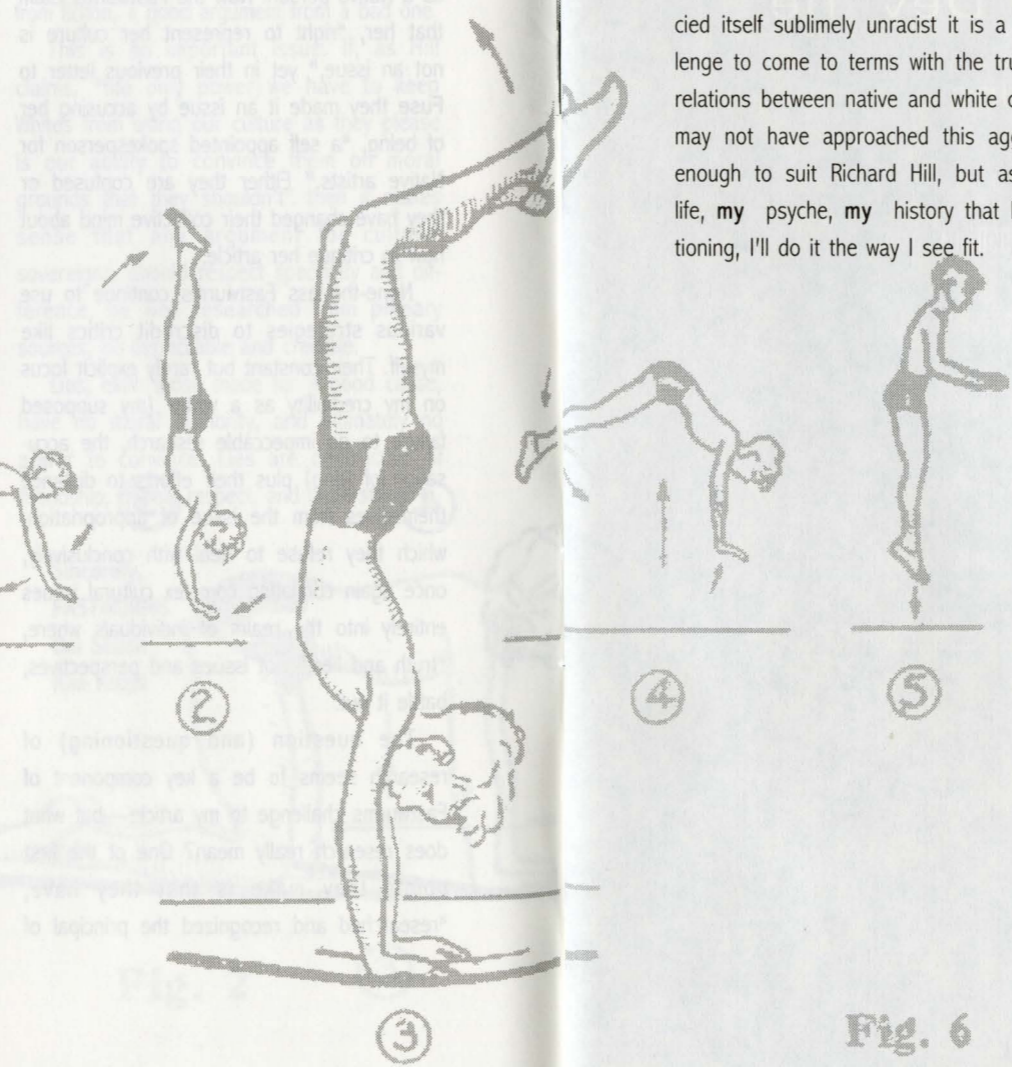


Fig. 6

The critical question is, of course, where does my story end and his begin. I'm concerned that I don't cross the line. With all the froth and foam-beating it's very difficult to see where that line is sometimes.

For white people the pressure to admit and atone for our history of racism grows at the same pace as the pressure to cease all reference to aboriginal culture. This is a double-bind that has us dazzled with its impossibility. There must be a way around it and so our question should be "how do we proceed?" and not "should we try?"

From this point of view I'm disappointed that the editorial board at FUSE offers so little to its readership in this regard. In the 18 months since Cardinal-Schubert's piece in FUSE there has been nothing that attempts to define what 'appropriation' is. Nor has there been any effort to examine differences in the intentions of white artists who have been cited as 'appropriators'.

In the case of FASTWURMS, who have been accused of using sacred imagery, there has been no attempt by the editors to verify whether this is true or not. It's as though the editors at FUSE have made up their minds about the whole issue and discussion is used only to confirm an editorial position. In its fixedness, FUSE reminds me of **The Globe and Mail** and its manipulative promotion of the "freedom of imagination" argument. Although the **Globe** draws on many writers, they consistently leave out the issues of power relations and disparate access to means of expression; just as the writers for FUSE consistently give priority to race over culture and fail to define their terms.

Surely there is a vast territory between Alberto Manguel and Joane Cardinal-Schubert, but what journal encourages exploration of the dark, scary places on the other side of polemics? Relinquishing false beliefs and phoney identities is a long, slow process not aided by fear. We need to hear more.

Yours truly,  
Liz Magor

**FUSE RESPONDS:**

In response to Liz Magor's letter, the editorial collective of FUSE Magazine would like to make some clarifications.

In her letter Magor states that we have an editorial position, which is in fact the case. It would not be correct however to say that it is a "fixed" position; neither is it accurate or useful to draw an analogy between our position and that of the **Globe and Mail**. FUSE has a long history of supporting and encouraging discussion and facilitating debate about issues of race and culture and views this debate as integral to the process of developing definitions and establishing ethical practices. Consequently we do not feel it is our responsibility to become an authoritative body obliged to determine a 'fixed' signification, nor one which legislates guidelines for the use of such a politically volatile term as 'appropriation.'

Magor states that there has been no effort on our part to examine the differences in the intentions of white artists who have been cited as 'appropriators'. On the contrary, FUSE has been, and remains open to any serious considerations of the ethics of intercultural exchange. Whereas Magor refers to the pressure for white people to "admit and atone for" a history of racism, we see this as a political issue, not a moral one. We do not see FUSE as facilitating a discussion of racism primarily in a tenor of morality.

Considering the larger context and the power of the **Globe and Mail**, we see the publication of articles such as those by Joane Cardinal-Schubert and Richard Hill, as an important part of our function.

**FUSE Editorial Collective**

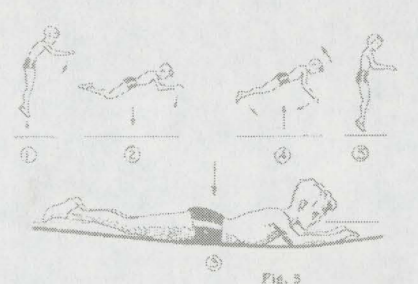


Fig. 5

## Artist's Project

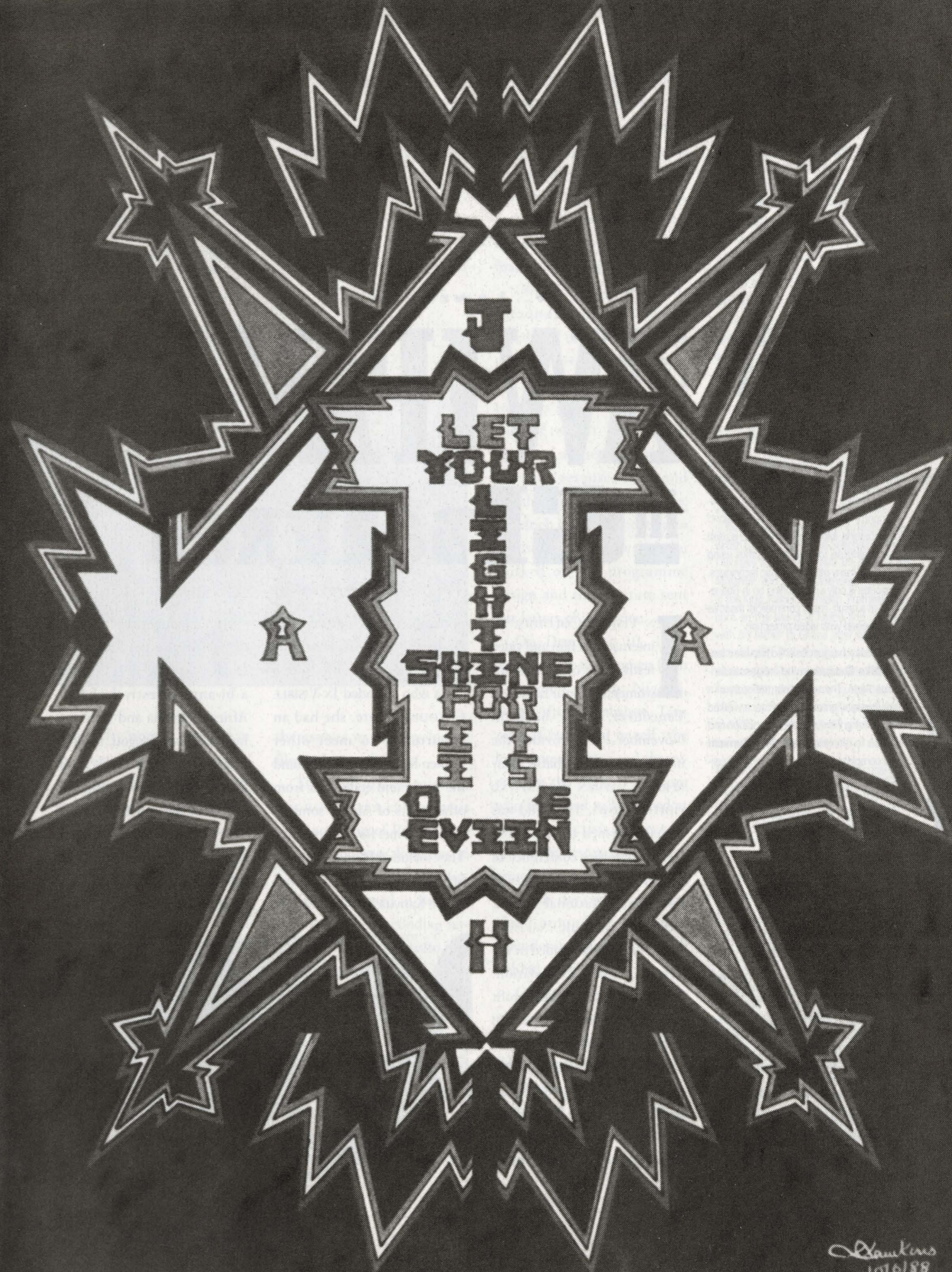
### Let Your Light Shine For It Is Devine

Trevor Dawkins

Trevor Dawkins was born in 1950 in Kingston, Jamaica and immigrated to Canada in 1971.

Self-taught, his artistic career began in Kitchner, Ontario in 1978, essentially as a response to the racism he encountered on his assembly-line job. His paintings incorporate elaborate geometric designs which he uses to evoke his deep Rastafarian spirituality.

PHOTO BY THOMAS BALINT



IN PRODUCTION  
AFRICA

**GHANA** What's new in Ghana is the emergence of video features in a country where there are no colour processing labs for film. Shooting in colour, whether its 16 or 35 mm means shipping the footage to another country in Africa or to London, England for processing. More and more, video is used as a substitute for film and is shot using slates and many other cinematic techniques. Timecode is only just catching on in Ghana. Also, as a result, many commercial theatres are equipped with video projection.

Kofi Yirenkyi has just finished his video feature **Sika Sunsum** in the indigenous language Akan. The video tells the story of a man driven by greed. Yirenkyi once worked at the Ghana Film Industry Corporation and is close to retirement age. **Sika Sunsum** was completed with the help of two businessmen brothers Kofi and Oscar Owusu as Producers. He begins production on another video feature based on Ghanaian folklore in January 1992.

Kwaw Ansah, undeniably Ghana's 'star' independent filmmaker, having completed two feature films **Love Brewed In the African Pot**, 1980 and **Heritage Africa**, 1988, is in post production with **Harvest at 17**. Working in video is a departure for Ansah. What is unique about this production, is that it was shot in both the Akan language Twi and English, using the same actors. The video drama is commissioned by Ghana's National Commission on Culture to address the growing mortality rate due to back room abortions. The English version was scheduled to premiere in December 1991.

Alexandra Akoto Duah, an editor/actress turned screenwriter, is working to fundraise

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Glace W. Lawrence

# AWIFAV in Ghana

**I**N VISIBLE COLOURS, an international film and video festival and conference for women of colour hosted in Vancouver, B.C. back in November 1989 provided the initial impetus for what is today **AFRICAN WOMEN IN FILM AND VIDEO (AWIFAV)**. The guild was actually formed in December 1991 at another conference of women in the industry hosted by Ghana's National Film & Television Institute (NAFTI) in Accra, Ghana and funded by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The foundation is a non-profit educational institution based in Germany with offices around the world and is mandated to facilitate the training of people (with a special emphasis on women) to work in media. The driving force behind this gathering of

primarily African filmmakers in Anglophone Africa is Afi Yakubu, a community video artist who attended **IN VISIBLE COLOURS**. There, she had an opportunity to meet other women filmmakers from around the world and colleagues from other parts of Africa, some of whom she met for the first time. They included Flora M'bugu-Schelling from Tanzania and Grace Kanyua from Kenya.

If Vancouver was the kindling for the conference in Ghana, then the 1991 FESPACO, a bi-annual festival of Pan-African Cinema and television held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso was the spark. FESPACO was formed in 1969 under the initiative of African filmmakers. The 12th edition of FESPACO (February 25 to March 2, 1991) was dedicated to African professional women in cinema.



BELOW: dir. Ousmane Sembene on location in Thiés, Senegal with GUELWAAR.

FACING PAGE: Conference participants during a tour of Ghana Film Industry Corporation in Accra with laboratory supt. Matilda Asante.

PHOTOS: G.W. LAWRENCE.



Some fifty women involved in audio-visual media, including directors, editors, actresses, screenwriters, producers and distributors from Africa as well as the African diaspora met at symposiums and workshops. These sessions were organized by FEPACI, the Federation of Pan-African Cinema-Makers at the request of women filmmakers who attended the previous FESPACO in 1989. The meetings were an opportunity for women to review and analyze the position and problems they were faced within the film, video and broadcasting industries and to make a place for

themselves in the developing film industry of Africa.

The result of these meetings was PAFECIT, an autonomous working group of Professional African Women/ Females in Cinema, Television and Video. It was to be based in Burkina Faso with a corresponding setup in Kenya. FEPACI was to provide support and facilities to the new group which hoped to develop a resource bank of professional women in Africa working in media, a sub-regional rotating training workshop for women, training the staff of these travelling workshops, and supporting the participation of women in film

festivals in Africa, the Caribbean and world wide. While many of the women at this initial meeting were excited at the prospects and possibilities of such an organization, months passed after FESPACO and there was no follow up due to linguistic difficulties and financial constraints.

Over in Ghana however, Alexandra Akoto Duah, a member of the PAFECIT working group and FESPACO participant Afi Yakubu continued to work towards some of the initial goals of PAFECIT. Akoto Duah initiated a questionnaire to start the resource bank and Yakubu was approached by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation to organize a conference. Yakubu worked on the programme design and the institute sent out letters of invitation.

On December 10, 1991 some twenty-five women from Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ghana and myself (the lone representative and observer from the African diaspora who happened to be placed at NAFTI on a CUSO & CAN:BAIA sponsored research trip) were present for the official opening of the six day conference organized around the theme of "Developing Skills of Women Behind the Camera".

Over the next six days the women tackled and solved such issues as the definition of Black Films. A media headline reporting on the opening day of the event read "AFRICAN ACTRESSES MEET" This is indicative of the obstacles of sexism

IN PRODUCTION...

continued from last page

for a family TV series she's written. The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) doesn't seem to have room or money to support independent productions. She's contemplating getting her colleagues together to shoot a pilot which she can pitch to the GBC or to another country with the hopes of securing some serious financing.

M.B.M. Imoro is the director of the impressive woman's story **Talata**, made while he was attending Ghana's National Film & Television Institute. He holds a day job like many other independents in this country, but he is about to begin shooting his second project, which he says will be another woman's point of view video.

The National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) in Ghana has completed a co-production with Radio and Television Seychelles (RTS) **Return to Mahe**. The fifty-four minute video, funded by UNESCO details the exile of King Prempeh I of Ashanti in 1896 by the British Government to the Seychelles Island. The story is written by NAFTI's director Bill Marshall, and follows the direct grandson of the King, Francis Prempeh. Prempeh was born on the island of Mahe and returned with his father to Ghana after some thirty years in exile. The story also locates itself in present day Ghana and the Seychelles as Francis Prempeh returns to the Island in 1991 to visit his late mother's grave. NAFTI and RTS are currently looking for distribution and broadcast deals.

**KENYA** Filmmaker Anne Mungai who attended the conference of Women in Cinema and Television in Ghana has completed her feature film **Saikati**. The story focusses on a young woman's attempt to pursue an education despite family pressure to marry a chief's son. Part of the film was shot in Kenya's Masaai Mara.

**BURKINA FASO** There is a noticeable difference in Burkina Faso, just north of Ghana. This is home to Idrissa Ouedraogo, who also lives in Paris part of the time, director of film festival favourites like **Yaaba and Tilai**. His currently project takes him back to his other home Ouagadougou to scout locations for his next feature film which he plans to complete shooting in 1992.

Abdoulaye D. Sow came to filmmaking late in life but completed **Yelbeedo** which screened at the 1991 FESPACO the festival

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that these professional women face. Conference participants composed primarily of producers, directors, writers and distributors were outraged and encouraged conference organizer Yakubu to meet with the editor of the newspaper. In the end, there was no retraction printed but articles that followed were accurate.

As part of the conference, participants had an opportunity to screen each others work and tour institutions such as the Ghana Film Industry Corporation, a corporate entity established by law in 1971. While on tour of the sound stage, sound recording studio, editing suites, neg cutting and processing rooms, conference participants encountered mostly female lab technicians. Participants found it interesting that only women were employed in this section of the corporation. In response officials claimed that it was 'due to their (women's) patience and careful handling of the negatives'.

There was also a presentation by Joe Daniels, Deputy Managing Director at GFIC "Promoting the Image of African Women through Films, Production Budgeting, and Experiences with International Co-productions". It appeared that Daniels was unaware that he was speaking to professional women in the industry. Participants were subjected to a Budgeting 101 session. I was impressed by the patience of the delegates in sitting through his lecture.

I and other participants were personally inspired by the work of Ghana's major independent

filmmaker Kwaw Ansah. After a screening of his second feature film *Heritage Africa*, we had an opportunity to visit with the filmmaker and tour his company, Film Africa Ltd. Ansah spoke of his early encounter with a cinema which was Eurocentric and which influenced him to direct, produce and write dramatic feature films which focussed on African identity, traditions and heritage.

By the end of the conference AFRICAN WOMEN IN FILM AND VIDEO (AWIFAV) was launched. The guild is comprised of Black African women behind the camera and the organization maintains a non-profit, non-aligned policy. At a press conference the group cited its formation as an affirmative action initiative "...to adjust the inherited conditions of Black women in film, video and television as well as images of Black women resulting from colonialism, imperialism, racism and sexism on the the African Continent." The guild's aims include the enhancement and promotion of positive images of Black African Women and the development and awareness of a Black African feminine aesthetic. It also endeavors to guarantee and protect the technical skills and productions by Black African women in cinema, television and video. AWIFAV is based in Accra, Ghana while acknowledging that its founding members are also from the Cameroon, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania. The Secretariat includes Afi Yakubu as Secre-

tary General (Ghana), Doris Adabasu Kuwornu (Ghana), and Anne Mungai, (Kenya) as 1st and 2nd Secretary respectively, Alexandra Akoto-Duah (Ghana) as Treasurer and Adjoa Abankwa-Duodo (Ghana) as Publicity Director. The guild is anglophone in its operation and is mandated to hold a film and video festival and market every two years, rotating in different countries throughout Africa. The first exhibition is scheduled to take place in Ghana, 1994.

Meanwhile, implications of this new development are being felt in Burkina Faso, home of FESPACO. There are concerns that the guild could break or disrupt the Pan-Africanist vision towards African and the African diaspora cinema and television. The formation of AWIFAV could impede the development of the Professional African Women/Females in Cinema, Television and Video, PAFECIT which was formed at the 1991 FESPACO. On the other hand, it could give that working group the push that it needs to move forward and work towards its initial objectives in time for the next FESPACO, which is scheduled to take place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso February 20th - 27th, 1993.

**Glace W. Lawrence is an independent video/filmmaker in Toronto. She is the Artistic Director/Programme Co-ordinator of the Film & Video Programme at CELAFI, Celebrating African Identity—the 3rd NCA International Conference of Artists hosted by Canadian Artists Network: Black Artists In Action (CAN:BAIA) in Toronto July 7 - 12, 1992.**

## IN PRODUCTION...

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of Pan-African Cinema and Television. The film tells the story of an abandoned child who is taken in by newlyweds. Distribution is a major issue. The film is in French and needs sub-titling to reach a wider market. **Yelbeedo** is a co-production between Burkina Faso and Togo. Abdoulaye D. Sow is planning to shoot another feature, and is looking for a producer.

Aminata Ouedraogo is probably the only woman video/filmmaker working in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. She's completed two documentaries, one in 1984 on the new world information order and the other in 1988 on a fair featuring local artists. She is currently working on a documentary about alcoholism which will involve shooting in a border town between Ghana and Burkina Faso where alcoholism is said to be prevalent. Her second project is a docudrama which she intends to co-produce with Swiss financing.

Gaston Kabore another of Burkina's internationally known filmmakers of features like **Zan Boko** and **Wend Kuuni**, was in production of a BBC commissioned video project which deals with the environment. Previously titled **The Potter, The Blacksmith and the Tortoise** the video was renamed as **Rabi** and aired on TV Ontario in June 1991 as one of a six-part series of films directed by developing country filmmakers to coincide with the UN's Conference on Environment and Development.

Although there is more feature film verses video production in Burkina Faso, the issue of financing is still crucial to many new independents. Major feature films can get assistance from the government but filmmakers still need co-production financing which is usually found in Europe.

**SENEGAL** The big news in Senegal is that Ousmane Sembene 'the father of African cinema' was in production of his tenth film in Thies, just outside of Dakar. **Guelwaar**, is a saga about the religious conflict that erupts when a Muslim is buried in a Catholic ceremony and vice versa. As is the case with many feature films shot in Africa, crews are a combination of European and African technicians. Sembene's production crew included Senegalese sound technician, Moctar Ba and boom person, Alioune Mbou.

# Local Colour Protests



Haruko Okano at the protest rally in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Nov. 19, 1991

IN NOVEMBER, 1991, A NEWLY formed group called the Artists' Coalition for Local Colour held a protest outside the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). The Coalition was formed primarily by South Asian artists and cultural workers in response to the Vancouver Art Gallery's lack of accountability to its constituency, the inherent systemic racism within its programming and educational programmes, and the lack of access it affords to local artists of colour.

The Coalition was incensed by the VAG's recent activities, most particularly the importation of a South Asian art exhibition from England, entitled **FABLED TERRITORIES**. Despite the fact that there are many South Asian artists in Vancouver, and that numerous works are being produced within the local artists of colour community that address issues of race, cultural identity and marginalization, the VAG made this decision to import a show that dealt with these very issues, from a British perspective.

Local Colour was not opposed to the presentation of the show *per se*, but was angered by the fact that artists of colour are denied access, and lack opportunities to show their work in mainstream galleries. The VAG's subsequent actions added fuel to the fire. Instead of convening a formal opening to celebrate the exhibition, word got around that the VAG had opted for a private viewing, to which not a single individual from the local South Asian community had been invited.

The Coalition convened a public information meeting on December 5, 1991, to which rep-

resentatives from the VAG, members of its board of directors, funding organizations, local artists and cultural workers were invited. Over one hundred individuals attended. Participants included representatives from alternative art galleries, funding organizations, and arts and cultural workers.

In the hot and crowded atmosphere of the Tamahnous Theatre, Coalition spokesperson, Sher-Azad Jamal, introduced the agenda for the evening. A panel of artists and cultural workers which included Métis filmmaker Loretta Todd, Japanese-Canadian artist Haruko Okano and Aruna Srivastava, a South Asian professor at the University of British Columbia teaching post-colonial literature and theory presented their perspectives. Moderator, Chris Creighton-Kelly introduced the panel and framed the meeting as an invitation for dialogue about issues of racism, accountability and accessibility. As he put it, "arts institutions have not kept pace with the changes [in the larger society]."

In the ensuing discussion period, the moderator invited representatives of the VAG to



respond. Director Willard Holmes 'gently' rebuked the Coalition for what he perceived to be its changing agenda. He stated that he had only been invited to speak when he arrived at the meeting. "[True] dialogue starts with the equality to speak," said Holmes. He added that the issue of systemic racism is not confined to the art gallery but is symptomatic of society as a whole. The VAG, according to Holmes, has taken the necessary initiatives to include people of colour. Pointing out that several members of the Coalition were engaged with various committees at the VAG was his proof of this attempt at inclusion.

At this point, a key member of the Coalition, Zainub Verjee, remarked that while it was true that specific members of the Coalition were involved in working at the VAG, this did not detract from the institution's lack of accountability and access, and that systemic racism within the VAG was a reality. As Verjee pointed out, she believed in working "from within and outside the system." The fact that she was working on particular committees did not mean that she was immune to the racism prevalent in the institution as a whole.

Is it incumbent upon communities that have been historically excluded from participating in mainstream institutions to then approach these institutions? To this end, an individual from the audience reminded the representatives from the Art Gallery that the Japanese-Canadian community had approached the VAG to

exhibit a particular show dealing with the Japanese internment experience. The Art Gallery had declined. Holmes responded by stating that that particular exhibit was problematic.

The evening consisted of four hours of such 'dialogue,' raising important issues and concerns. The most vocal opposition was articulated from the members of the First Nations community. They reminded the audience that equity involved recognizing that not all individuals have equal access to accreditation, to acquiring the tools that could enable access. In the words of one First Nations member, it is only "when white folks are in a position of a minority," that they will begin to realize the kind of barriers that First Nations people face. Another remarked on how First Nations and people of colour are constantly cast in a position of having to educate those in positions of power.

The evening's conclusion was hastened by representatives of the VAG asking the Coalition members to articulate their demands. The Coalition argued for inclusion at every level of the VAG's decision-making structure; it argued that artists of colour have to have representation on the board of directors, and in every committee within the VAG's bureaucratic structure. Further, that any exhibitions which are to be curated at the VAG should involve discussion with representatives from the various communities of colour and First Nations peoples, and that documentation be available point-

ing out the reasons for the acceptance or rejection of any show.

Approximately three weeks later, the VANCOUVER SUN's Saturday edition printed a letter from Willard Holmes, in which he once again reiterated the initiatives that have been undertaken to include "ethnic" groups. It appears that Mr. Holmes missed the point of the public meeting of December 5, for in his letter he states, "the Vancouver Art Gallery took the initiative in bringing the FABLED TERRITORIES exhibition here to create a dialogue with the East Asian artistic community and to this end organized a women Artists' workshop with Sutapa Biswas." Clearly Mr. Holmes does not realize that there is a great deal of difference between 'South' Asian and 'East' Asian. Such differences are levelled and contained in a monolithic category describing all peoples of colour. Moreover, the intent to engage in dialogue was circumscribed to a "women artists' workshop" and did not involve any kind of outreach or public awareness of the exhibit within the South Asian community at large.

The task of changing these 'dinosaurs' of a previous age, these monocultural institutions, has to be initiated both from within and outside. The alternative is to restrict oneself to the 'parallel universe' — the marginal institutions of society. But, how long will the parallel universe survive? Furthermore, do the institutions inhabiting this parallel universe follow race relations poli-

cies that actively and aggressively push the boundaries for equality? Is systemic racism only confined to mainstream institutions?

It is clear that there are many alternatives within the larger sub-universe that already exists. With the funding situation becoming more precarious, with the increasing number of alternative groups, what will the coming decades witness in the art scenes of metropolitan cities throughout the Canadian cultural landscape? The hybridization of concerns, the multifaceted exclusions that groups experience, the ever growing need to carve out alternative definitions: all these strands resemble a colonial situation wherein the dominant powers engage in a 'divide and rule' strategy to subordinate the masses. Systemic racism appears to be the driving force; the quintessential instrument for 'dividing and conquering,' for setting up the hierarchies of the colonizing elite.

As for the Artists' Coalition for Local Colour, its work has just begun. By taking on one institution, it has shed light on others. If systemic racism, is to be rendered powerless, if it is to be eradicated, then the mindsets of those in positions of power will have to change; differences will have to be perceived as non-threatening, as a powerful vehicle to facilitate survival and as a path towards evolution.

**The views expressed in this article are entirely those of the author and do not in any way reflect those of the Artists' Coalition for Local Colour.**

**Yasmin Jiwani is a graduate student at Simon Fraser University, and a member of SAWAN (South Asian Women's Action Network).**

# THE APPROPRIATION OF NOISE

by Selina R. Williams

RECENTLY I READ AN ARTICLE IN THE AUGUST '91 issue of Vancouver's NOISE Magazine which accused the Native Canadian band *Kashtin* of "appropriating" "pop music," its clothing, instruments and stage gimmicks. This article claims that "pop" is "a musical genre developed and popularized by "non-Native white people" and accuses *Kashtin* of using a deceptive marketing ploy which touts the band as "world beat" and "traditionally based" to access the "politically correct concert goer." The article was written by a white male, Amphetamine Headbone whom the magazine describes as its "infamous and obnoxious musicologist." But I did not find this pseudo self-effacing "devil's advocate" to be

cute, campy or any of the other euphemisms that are often used to dress up and hence permit bigoted commentaries.

Before reviewing *Kashtin*, the article goes into an intense description of the Vancouver thrash scene and what a reliable and enjoyable local cultural form it is. As I read through the blatant discrimination in the article, I recognized the replaying of a pattern which recurs in my personal life and in the broader cultural arena. I was reminded of my own experiences within the "alternative" scene in the mid- to late-'80s. I recalled spending time with people in the "new wave" punk scene who adorned themselves in black and a scathing euro-centric arrogance that was derived from

both imported and local notions of European cultural superiority.

This Eurocentrism rendered my cultural and racial status inferior even when it came to listening to "campy" music like disco, for it was/is appreciated with the same condescension as Partridge Family tunes, which are never to be confused with "high art." This discrimination, much like that which A.H. aims at *Kashtin*, was harmful to me because it denied the history and contribution of my British West-Indian relatives to those musical forms, contributions which I did not have the benefit of knowing about. This negated my value as a person of colour both at home (in Canada) and abroad. Had I ever been naïve enough to divulge the fact that I am of British decent when



talking about these cultural forms, the concept would have been lost on most of these people because, as it stood, they could barely grasp the notions that I was mixed or Canadian and Black.

As with many other aspects of musical sub-cultures which refuse to evolve, the cultural arrogance of some of the "new wave," punk culture has solidified into a stale rite of passage for younger people. Today some people from that generation have left their arrogance and prejudice and black clothing intact while others have merely exchanged their clothing for "Third World" clothing, jewelry, and nose rings. Today many artists appropriate "Minority" raw cultural resources and "magically" transform them into "high art" after processing them through their ethnocentric vision. This vision which both nurtures and feeds off the ignorant views of persons like Amphetamine Headbone.

Ignorance like Amphetamine's is not uncommon in many popular culture magazines. The article raises larger issues of cultural appropriation in music and many other aspects of pop culture. In the arena of the pop culture it seems that formerly colonized or "Third World" persons are destined to remain the primary resources and support system for cultural products that are claimed by the dominant white society. Amphetamine is both a product and member of the industries which perpetuate inequities in cultural production. He is merely one of many blank spots in a perpetually expanding void in cultural and political awareness.

Like many of his contemporaries, Amphetamine has fallen under the influence of that collective white male delusional fantasy of the pop industry. The fantasy is dependent upon the rewriting of musical history in magazines like **Rolling Stone**, **Spin** and on television specials which honour the grand cultural imperialists of the western world, by setting them up as great innovators or "discoverers" in music.

Consider the angry stories told by Black jazz musicians about holding back-room jam sessions and allowing some white guy to listen in, only to find the next week that their tunes are riding

the crest of the radio hit waves and that the same white boy's name is riding on top of them. In addition, Little Richard has "gone on" many a time about how upset he was about Pat Boone stealing his music. There are also many stories that have not been told, namely those of the First Nations peoples of North America and South America. In spite of today's information on the history of the expropriation of music and the resentment and damage it has wrought, comments like those of Amphetamine Headbone bear testimony to the fact that little has changed.

I think we can take it as a given that too much of the First Nations people's contributions to society have been negated. North American music is composed of multiple cultural influences, some of which are European. "Pop" music comes from rock, blues, jazz, hip-hop, folk influences and even alternative influences like punk, "new wave" and other musical forms like reggae, ska, funk, and the list goes on.

Through the pop culture machinery, the Stones have been lionized for bringing blues to rock. (It's no wonder Chuck Berry is rumoured to regularly do things like literally "piss" on Keith Richards for stealing all his licks.) Robert Plant has been deified for colonizing the work of Black blues

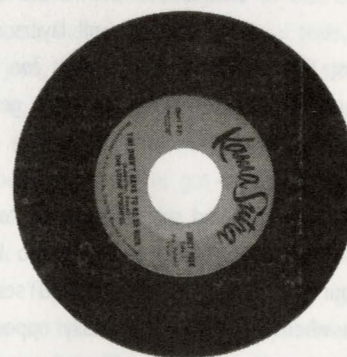
artists who are still struggling with the record companies to get their royalties. Punk itself has heavy rock influences. "New wave" draws directly from the music of the South Asian (Indian) peoples who have, along with West Indians, have been in Britain for about 40 years. The beat of "new wave" is well known to be sped up reggae. I understand that the "hip-hop" beat is now being called the "Manchester beat," not after James Brown, of course, but because of the "new wave" white musicians who are presently co-opting it. If you look at many bands today you'll find coloured musicians in the background, supporting the white ones who are front and centre.

Although their intentions for the most part may be good, Paul Simon, Sting and Peter Gabriel are praised in the music industry for propping up their lyrics with music and rhythms drawn from the experience of African, South American, Jamaican, and Brazilian "Third World" musicians. Ultimately, in mainstream culture we find Simon, Sting, and Gabriel being touted as great "discoverers" of "world beat"; freeing the rain forest and liberating "Third World" music while gaining handsome financial and political profits from it. It seems that these days the appropriation is quite direct and indiscreet, which ironically might ultimately



bring out more truth if we are willing to allow ourselves to see it. In light of all of this I think it's safe to say that A.H. and his contemporaries appropriate "pop" by calling it the music of "non-Native white people." And when these ideas are perpetuated, history is re-written again.

Perhaps A.H. should be asking himself why this music was popularized by whites. One answer is because white people have generally had the economic and political power to do so. The dominant white culture has claimed ownership to, expropriated and just plain stolen, the history of many musical styles if not music itself. Is it possible that, far too many white males like Amphetamine have learned about music from the dominant culture's perspective? Perhaps in drinking in these lies he and many others like him have succumbed to a massive ego massage which has lulled them into an intense state of collective



self-delusion, that is maintained by regular doses of mainstream or "alternative" hype.

Cultural appropriation occurs when a culture which holds more power defines another culture in its own terms and denies their own definition of self. Appropriation is when a domineering culture goes on to benefit materially from and lay claim to the history and discovery of another culture and its cultural products.

The real issue for amphetamine and like-minded others is the fact that Native Canadian and other "minority" bands like **Kashtin** are finally "cashing in" on music they've contributed to making. If Amphetamine and others like him were really concerned about **Kashtin** misleading their audience in the promotion process, he would criticize **Kashtin**'s promoters (who are most like-

ly white males). Furthermore, he should criticize common notions of "white music." Amphetamine might also ask himself if obvious "politically correct concert" marketing ploys don't bring in those white liberals who wish to indulge in the latest (ethnic music trends), while simultaneously alleviating their white liberal guilt.

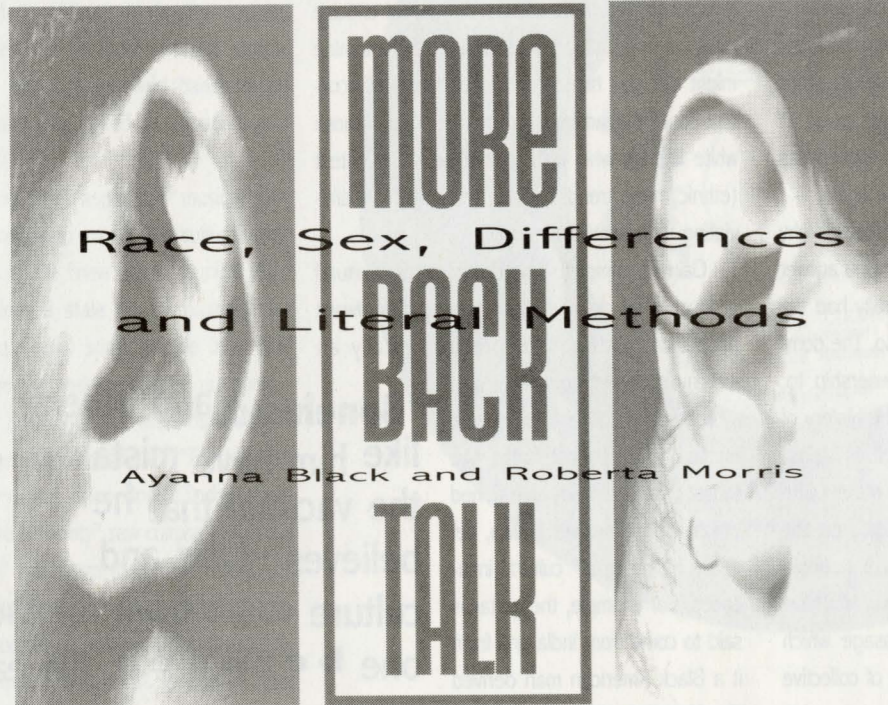
Claiming complete "ownership" of any cultural product, be it clothing, film, music, etc. is always problematic. "Pop" culture is basically an extremely diluted, commercialized synthesis of all other less anaemic musical and cultural forms like those I have already mentioned which are themselves drawn, yet again, from "other" cultural influences. For example, the guitar is said to come from India and from it a Black American man derived

the electrical guitar. The British punkers of the eighties took some of their "looks" directly from anthropology books, safety pins and all. We all know where the "Mohawk" came from. In addition, white people who are now wearing dreadlocks are now calling them "rat tails." Consequently, A.H.'s claim that the instruments and clothing of bands like **Kashtin** are products of "non-Native white people" is meaningless. I think Bonehead and others like him have mistaken the vacuum that he believes music and culture come from for the one between his ears.

All popular music and culture is composed of a multiplicity of influences, not just "white" ones. Although I personally dislike "pop," which I'm not sure is the proper term for what **Kashtin** plays, I know where its influences come from and that they should not be negated or denied, no matter how saccharine or nauseating "pop" music and culture become in the commercialization process. It is time everybody woke up to these issues. Asian, Native, Latin American, South Asian, Black and other colonized peoples have been brainwashed by the dominant culture too. As for Boneheads like Amphetamine, well, they could start by using a white band like Anthrax or Consolidated as an alarm clock. In fact the latter even wrote a song about him, it's called "White American Male."

**'Bonehead and others like him have mistaken the vacuum that he believes music and culture come from for the one between his ears.'**

**Selina Williams is a Film and Communications student living in Vancouver. She is also a freelance writer and actor.**



(What follows is an excerpt from a much longer essay written by Ayanna Black and Roberta Morris in the summer and fall of 1991. It will be published in its entirety, and details of publication will soon be available. The ellipses indicate the omissions and transitions from the original text.)

It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice.

—bellhooks<sup>1</sup>

WE'VE TALKED, THOUGHT AND WORKED together often and for years. "Ten years or so, Ayanna?"

"Something like that."

Still, there's tension between us. When issues of race and language arise, Ayanna's frustrated and Roberta looks away. Perhaps this is a line we've drawn, a commitment we don't share, or it may be an intellectual itch that needs scratching. We dialogue. And at some point we decide to write it down.

In the writing it changes. We need to bring in bits of life we keep losing to the page, our physical needs and pleasures. To carry on a dialogue, specifically a feminist dialogue, that ignores our bodies would be a defeat. No matter that it's intellectually titillating, we would in fact be forgetting ourselves; while remembering our body-ness acts as herbal cultural medicine. Pleasure brings us back to ourselves and gives us a better understanding of ourselves. To have pleasure doesn't mean we constantly agree; we disagree and find pleasure in that...

**Ayanna:** I'm suspicious. It's my sixth sense at work. I'm sceptical of all the various discussions and writings that are being done. There have been some changes, but they come very slow. I don't think the dominant culture is really committed to dealing with the nitty gritty issues of comprehensive accessibility. For example, after all these years of exclusion from the Canada Council, finally they have committed themselves to hire six people of colour—management trainees—right at a time when there's the possibility of the devolution of Canada Council. We are constantly peeling off layers and

layers, like anthropologists digging for lost testaments of history, except we never get to the scriptures....

**Roberta:** Racism and sexism are going to be elements in any cultural emanation so long as our culture remains racist and sexist. Even when a work is specifically opposing racism or sexism, the opposition always carries within itself that which it stands against, because opposing forces shape each other. But we aren't stuck in Hegel's world of struggle, its not the only way we create change. Both sides of the dialectic are human constructs and many more exist, shades of colour and blades of grass that grow up in the cracks, that break concrete. That's why I tend to favour subversion over revolution theoretically, and writing over politics in my own practice. Of course we have to do it all, but I'm not attempting any ideological purity in it, any political correctness. Politically correct thinking feels like the repressed thinking of people who are afraid to expose our racism and sexism. Are we above it all, somehow taking a leap outside

our culture? I love contradictions, and call me a slob but I'd rather that people's uglies hang out. We can't critique what isn't exposed.... You think I'm being frivolous when I talk like this?

**Ayanna:** Yes, Roberta.

**Roberta:** That I'm not taking your issues seriously?

**Ayanna:** No, Roberta. I don't think you are.

**Roberta:** But I'm talking about serious play, play that's transforming, more radical than any debate unless it's playful. Politicians debate terms; artists play with them.

**Ayanna:** Wait a minute, Roberta. Black people's asses have been tickled to blue-black, whipped, like scribbled lines, visual texts, like the jews, the numbers, the silenced stories. Yet we have birthed the blues and jazz and rock and roll Roberta; that's a hell of a lot of serious playing. We've got the world playing, we've transformed the world by giving the music world an incredible synthesis of cultures. Yet, we were still denied our rightful place in history, not to mention financial remuneration. This is our fun playing and serious playing. It's all integrated; it's living and this is our life. I call your attention to another important example, ancient Nubia and Egypt. How many people are aware that these are ancient black countries and that when European culture prospered from the intellectual achievements appropriated from the area, these were black people's intellectual achievements? This is not being taught in schools. I call it "systemic stolen moments"; it has happened throughout the centuries, but white people have not yet addressed these injustices. After all, you have inherited this history as well. Do you think its appropriate for you to write yourself in this history? This may tickle you pink, but let's correct the history that has been appropriated.

**Roberta:** I don't write history, but for those who do, yes, please get it right.... My point is simply that the word appropriation has to do with ownership, property, and now, the way it is being used in arts circles, we're extending the notion of property to experience and then to artistic voice or intellectual work. I object. I don't want cultural activity to be subsumed in our notion of commodities. We have our own (personal) experiences and histories, but we can't own (possess) experience. Experience isn't a thing nor are words. Words are air with cultural meanings. I guess I can understand how a painting might be stolen, but words aren't words unless they are being exchanged, and they aren't lost in the exchange. They aren't coins—if I take one, then you lose it...

**Roberta goes into her thirteen-year-old daughter's room and finds a tape of songs pirated and titled, "Andrea's Tape of The Best Fucking Songs Ever".**

**Roberta:** See this? If any artist objects to their song being stolen for my daughters' "Best Fucking Songs Ever" tape, well, please let me know. As for me, I would be honoured if someone loved my work enough to steal it. I say, go ahead; take my words, use them if it's any help, and they'll come back to me eventually and I'll be richer for it. Anyway, if those words of mine weren't yours also, you wouldn't have understood them, so there's some communion there already. Words are essentially communal.

**Ayanna:** I agree, but I would also ask, how are they used communally? For I believe that some words are respected and appreciated more than others, just like some voices are. For example, it seems to me that your daughter Andrea has recognized the importance and the value of these songs and appreciates them. But there's no financial gain for her and that's a big difference. And what about the larger society? It seems to

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me that's your point. I think we have to examine, who is being appropriated, and in what way, and who benefits financially?

**Roberta:** ....This is why the offence that limited accessibility to a predominantly white press remains an issue. And, the issue of that press in fact remaining predominantly white. I mean, let's savour the irony here. No, we can't savour it; it's just too bitter. Native writers are asking, rather politely, to tell their own stories at a literary party being held in the house that's been in their family as far back as memory serves—Canada that is—and people like me are here quibbling about the metaphor that is implied in the term appropriation. This scene is really gross, but I think we have to remember that we writers produce manuscripts; publishers produce books. The lack of access effects writers and readers who want more and different books, but access is the publishers' responsibility. And as for the publishers it's first and foremost a business issue, maybe a political issue, but not specifically an aesthetic issue.

**Ayanna:** It is an aesthetic issue and Chinua Achebe says it best: we are not

simply receivers of aesthetics... we are makers of aesthetics.<sup>2</sup> We approach publishers who are not familiar with or don't want to understand our aesthetic, and we see the same patterns with the arts councils and especially the Canada Council juries where artists are making decisions about work that they don't understand, different aesthetics than theirs. I'm not saying that all black artists are experts but I do believe that the empathy is inherent...

**Roberta:** Of course a writer is responsible for what we write, but that is very different

than the position taken that, no matter how it's done, the fact of telling a story from a point of view other than the writer's own is in itself racist. That's how I understand the term appropriation is being used.

**Ayanna:** Yes, you have said it and very well indeed, but I know you are not sympathetic with the latter and I wonder why.

**Roberta:** Because in creating fiction the writer works with pluralities, expressing the community of the personality. It's a strategy of liberation, which I think serves in part to explain why women writers gravitate toward the novel. Take the experience of the survivor of childhood sexual abuse. When being physically colonized, a part of the child's personality splits away. This is quite common. Say it's a little girl; she sees herself above the scene, watching, or she goes somewhere else all together through the power of her own imagination. Insofar as she can accomplish, this she is not being wholly taken over. Multiplicity is a strategy for survival, and I'd say ultimately for liberation. There is always an element of appropriation in the process of creating fiction, new possibilities for the self and ourselves. The writer takes different points of view, makes the stretch, borrows, steals, goes backwards and forwards in time, making new time, arguing both sides at once, trying on some new reality to see how it works itself out...

**Ayanna:** For one thing, I don't tell writers what to write; that's not my responsibility. But I think the issue of appropriation has to do with access; it is rooted in the problem of access. For 300 years we, women, we people of colour, have had no access to many institutions in this country...

**Roberta:** True, but in any case I don't think that's a question of aesthetics. I think there are more general questions of respect, justice, ultimately of our capacity to love...

**Ayanna:** ...I want to get back to the term I use, "comprehensive critical analysis", in which I look at the historical, social and cultural understanding from which the writer draws, despite geographical boundaries and different aesthetics... For me it was important to listen to and respect the voices of my ancestors' traditions by paying homage to their myths, proverbs, their legends, politics and rhetoric—the language of the call and response for example. With bell hooks' piece I felt all these were incorporated and what I was captured by was her strong rhetorical language. This really excited me because it is very important to our aesthetics. And for me it's very important to make sure that this is included in criticism... What I'm talking about is the breeze, the spirit, the oral. You live it and then it's past, like Roland Bastien's art; it's the experience of the breeze, the notion of orality, and for us as black people it's the orality that's important, and I think that's a big difference between black and european literature, where the orality is separated. In terms of entering another person's space, it's like giving the inner child or inner voice permission to be fulfilled. When I'm in that space all my senses are at work. In the African oral tradition, when the griot tells her story, the message must be understood immediately. I would think that there are some elements of prose in that medium. The more that I listen to and read writers like bell hooks and Cornel West the more I become aware of how they have been bathed in the Baptist Church rhetorical style where there is a mixture of both prose and speech. Another writer that evokes that same style is ex-slave John William Robertson in his book *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery*<sup>3</sup> introduced to me by George Eliot Clarke. I feel that in our life and language there is a mixture of both prose and speech. I think that is why black writers utilize both oral and literary techniques in their prose, be it fiction, poetry or dialogue—because it is life for us, because for us these things are not separate, they're all part of life.

**Roberta:** Cornel West refers to one of the African resources in black christianity as being the **kinetic orality**<sup>4</sup> that permeates black sermons and songs. But put on the page, it seems to me, we've lost the kinetic aspect and many qualities of orality...

**Ayanna:** Creating the space is very important. It's not a simple question of the creators finding their particular process instead of being pidgin-holed; we've got to take that space. There is space in theory as well. That's what I'm trying to do with my writings, whether it be poetry or criticism...

**Roberta:** Perhaps it's not access to an old programme but rather new literary spaces we're trying to create...

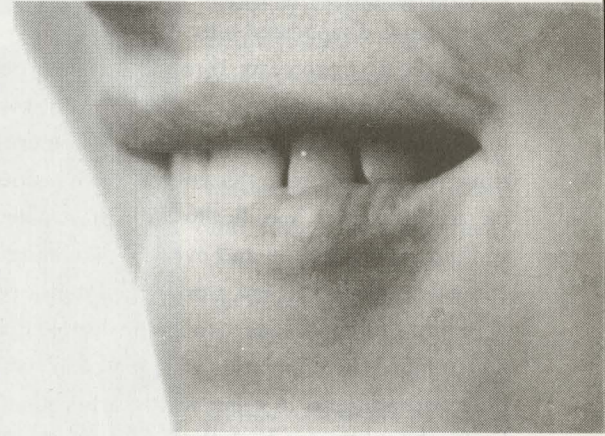
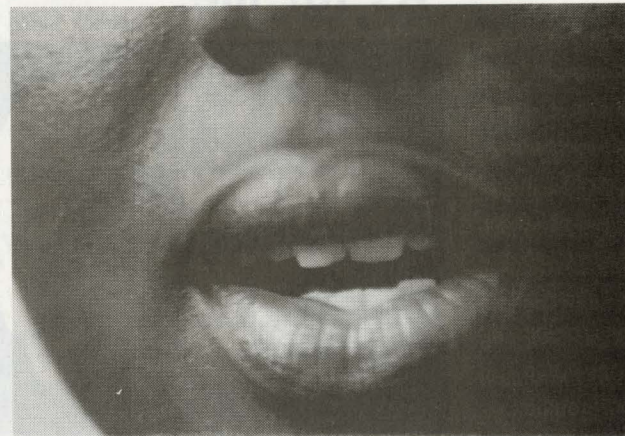
**Ayanna:** I'm hungry, Roberta. Let's make dinner.

**Ayanna Black is a poet living on Toronto. She is the editor of, and a contributor to, *Voices*, a collection of new fiction from 15 Canadian authors of African descent.**

**Roberta Morris is a freelance writer and author of the novels *Vigil* (Williams-Wallace, 1986) and *Miriam: An Autobiography* (Edition Trois, 1992).**

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 bell hooks, *Talking Back; Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989, p.9
- 2 James Baldwin and Chinua Achebe, "In Dialogue to Define Aesthetics: James Baldwin and Chinua Achebe", in *Conversations with James Baldwin* edited by Fred L. Stanley and Louis H. Pratt, Jackson S: University Press of Mississippi, 1989, pp. 210-221
- 3 John William Robertson, *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery*, Halifax: N.P. Nova Scotia publ., 1854.
- 4 Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments*. Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1988, p.4.



# FRIGHT the P

# OWER:

By Cameron Bailey

TO SCAVENGE T.S. ELIOT: BETWEEN THE IDEA and the reality, between the motion and the act, stands the spectre.

As the 1980's drew to a close, a shadow fell across the doors of arts councils across Canada—a shadow because the thing itself couldn't be recognized, couldn't be named, not in polite company anyway. In a hundred different ways, councils sought to ease the discomfort the shadow created, to lighten the pall it cast, to alter its shape and its weight and its consistency. This is how racism lost its name, anti-racism lost its voice, and a thing of substance disappeared into "diversity."

In the past two years, three reports have been issued from three of Canada's major arts councils, each seeking to address longstanding concerns among artists of colour that the institutions funding culture in this country have historically operated by racist principles. Specifically, critics have pointed out that the staffing, jury selection and everyday communications of arts councils excluded all but a privileged minority, and that the definitions of excellence, professionalism and art itself which underpinned their operation were biased in favour of European high art traditions. In other words, arts councils were relentlessly white, ignoring both the complexity of the communities they served, and the dangerous internal rot indicated by systemic racism. In a country where a working artist is almost by definition a government-funded artist, this situation amounted to state-sanctioned cultural apartheid. Arts councils were set up to recognize and fund a certain limited range of art in the white Euro-American tradition, with only the most talented and culturally bilingual artists of colour squeezing through. Outside that loop stood the majority of artists from African, Asian, First Nations and immigrant communities, finding little or no support from the granting structures, and so unable, by definition, to exist as working artists in Canada.

Putting all this in the past tense is a bit misleading, though, because as these recent reports illustrate, change is often slow (or misguided) when it comes at all. The three documents—

Recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts and The Response of the Canada Council (January, 1992); Consultations With Artists in a Culturally Diverse Society: A Report From the Ontario Arts Council (December, 1990); and the Toronto Arts Council's more manageably titled Cultural Equity (June 1992)—represent very different approaches to the (sometimes unstated) problems of systemic racism and historical inertia within arts councils. What they say about the existing state of affairs, and more importantly how they say it, paints a picture of councils working in a new context of fear. As they shrink and turn and balk and lash back in response to the spook sitting by the door, their contortions beg questions. Just how much change is being initiated out of fear? How much can actually be accomplished out of fear? What changes when the shadow becomes a spectre?

## Arts Councils & the Spectre of Racial Equity

The Canada Council's Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts formed in April, 1990 in response to, among other things, widespread grassroots lobbying from artists of colour across the country, and internal discussions on multiculturalism within the Council. Vancouver artist and administrator Chris Creighton-Kelly was hired in March, 1990 to coordinate the Council's "cultural diversity" efforts. He put together two advisory groups—The Racial Equality committee, and another formed specifically to address Aboriginal artists' issues. (The Aboriginal committee's report has not yet been released.)

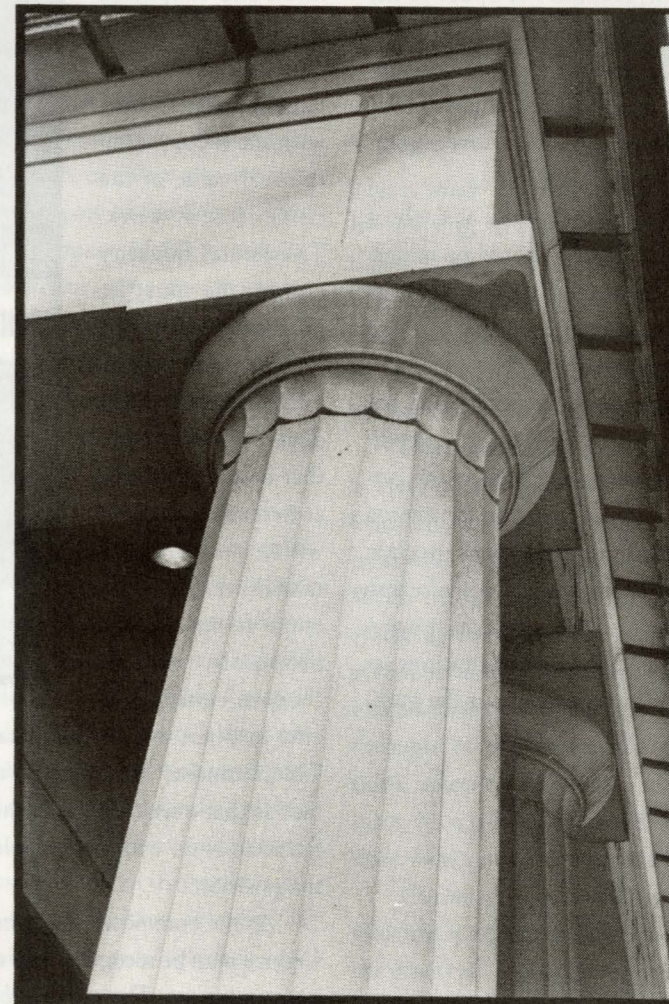
From its beginning, the Racial Equality committee engaged in a number of different conflicts—or maybe it was all the same one—with the Council's administration. The committee's members—Dartmouth visual artist Henry Bishop, Toronto video artist Richard Fung, Montréal filmmaker Leopoldo Gutierrez, Edmonton writer Jane Hewes, Vancouver performing artist Margo Kane, Winnipeg performing artist Pamela Rebello, Toronto writer and performer Itah Sadu, and Montreal writer Lamberto Tassinari—began by rejecting the Council's original multiculturalist framework. As Creighton-Kelly summarised in an April, 1991 internal report, "Multiculturalism acknowledges difference but it makes equivalences from these differences.... (T)he fundamental issues of power ... go unacknowledged."<sup>1</sup> The first page of the committee's own report observes that "We found it impossible to work within the constraining definition and

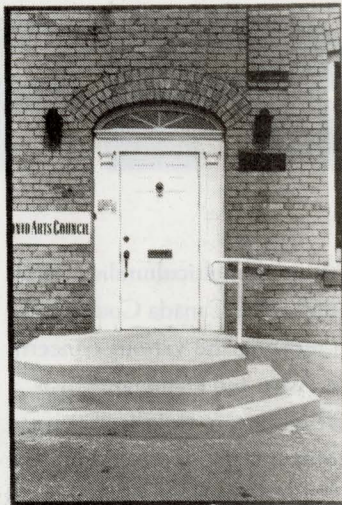
blurred vision that the connotation of 'multiculturalism' lends to most discussions.... (W)e propose the Canada Council take a pro-active leadership role in meeting the various concerns and needs of Aboriginal, African, Asian and immigrant artists."<sup>2</sup>

However, with a Board of Directors weighted toward Conservative patronage appointments, and Council Director Joyce Zemans making motions of change but unwilling to go the full distance, the committee found itself operating in hostile territory. Original committee member Marlene Nourbese Philip, a Toronto writer, quit over the Council's refusal to accept an explicitly anti-racist framework, followed by Vancouver musician Leslie Komori. Much of the conflict focussed on the name and terms under which the committee would operate, between multiculturalism and anti-racism, they eventually settled on the compromise "racial equality."

The committee's recommendations were put to the Canada Council Board of Directors in June, 1991. The Racial Equality committee met in May, October and November of 1990, before presenting its recommendations to the Board of Directors. After taking the time to prepare their responses, the Board released the final report in January, 1992.<sup>3</sup>

The Ontario Arts Council's report was researched and written by its then new Multicultural Coordinator Lina Fattah. Its findings were gleaned from 14 half-day meetings, or "soundings" conducted with artists between August 1989 and May 1990. They were framed





by a broad conception of "diversity," and divided according to the OAC's different disciplines or "granting interests," i.e. separate soundings for theatre, film and video, Franco-Ontarian artists, and so on.

**Cultural Equity**, the Toronto Arts Council report, was initiated in late 1989 when the TAC's Board of Directors "commissioned a comprehensive examination

... of artistic communities underserved by TAC."<sup>4</sup> Cultural policy advisor and former director of Toronto's A Space Artist Run Centre E.A. Julian was hired to research and write the report. Julian met with people at all levels of the TAC organizational structure, as well as taking part in arts community consultations, and conducting interviews with artists, arts organizations and relevant City of Toronto officials.

What follows is an attempt to look critically at each of these three documents, something I believe should be undertaken by as many people as possible, in and out of print, for as long as these documents hold any power over the work of artists of colour. Since I am not a policy analyst, I'll be approaching the reports only from the perspective of someone who has been engaged in anti-racist issues in culture, both within and outside of institutions, and as someone with an interest in the language of such documents. All that follows should be considered alongside an understanding of how these reports will circulate in different contexts. A bundle of paper can be a comforting thing, and these three bundles will no doubt serve, in however small a way, to defuse anger directed at arts institutions, as well as to assuage fears within the institutions about the gathering shadows outside the gate.

### Mo' Voice-Over at the Canada Council

The Recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts and the Response of the Canada Council is an 11-page double-voiced document that engages in a sometimes tortured game of point-counterpoint, alternating committee recommendations and Board of Directors' responses. The 23, very focussed recommendations come listed under 12 headings: Communications, Human Resources, Juries and Advisory Committees, Board Appointments, Organizational Review, Designated Funding in Sections, Definition of Professionalism, Voluntary I.D. and Database, Continuing Commitment, Accountability, National Conference and Press Release. The ridiculous white artists' furor

that greeted the report's release zeroed in on and simplified one issue in one recommendation—cultural appropriation—without recognizing the real value of the committee's work. The Racial Equality committee must be praised for crafting the most succinct, detailed and powerful half-document yet released that aims at instituting anti-racist strategies within a national cultural institution. They make firm, specific proposals, and tie them to equally specific numbers and implementation dates. Under "Continuing Commitment," for instance, the committee not only recommends that a staff person be hired to implement its proposals, but follows up with a timetable, a budget and a framework for the position.

As the committee deserves high praise for its work, so the Council must be recognized for responding to a number of the recommendations. The committee's broader and no less rigorous definition of professionalism has been adopted by the Council. Its proposed entry-level program for Canada Council officers "that would actively solicit Aboriginal, African, Asian and immigrant applicants" led directly to the Council's new internship program.



However, the Canada Council report remains an enormously compromised document because of the nature and structure of the official responses. Simply on a rhetorical level, the responses act as a control strategy. They ensure that no recommendation is left to act alone on the reader. They redirect the focus of reading the document to a question-and-answer, catechismic style, with the answer as the point of repose. And, since most of the responses show some sort of action, the Council can come off as the hero of the piece, reinforcing the institution's self-image as a seat of fairness, good judgment and considered action. The very structure of the document returns the Council to the position of "reason," recentralizing its authority, and in a way its subjectivity.

Nor is the language chosen by the Council board any friendlier. The overall tone manages to express both institutional authority and testy defensiveness at the same time. The very first words of the first Response are: "The Council is fully aware..." Well, no matter what follows it's off on the wrong foot, because the committee's report and all the work that led up to it are predicated on the belief that the Council is anything but fully aware. To begin its dialogue this way is a mark of either massive stupidity or massive belligerence on the part of the Board. That near-bullying tone continues through many of the responses, couched sometimes in defensive assertions, sometimes in vaguely condescending "reminders" of the Council's past work.

Taking their content and their form together, the responses can be divided into a number of different categories. Some are bait-and-switch responses, where, for example, a recommendation suggesting particular kinds of staff sensitization sessions is answered with a description of something similar that's already been done at the Council, seemingly negating the need for the very specific work the committee proposed. Some perform a creative balk, none more plainly than the response to Recommendation 3a, that "juries (with five or more persons) and advisory committees in all sections of the Canada Council include at least two persons of colour." The Council's response waffles like mad, admitting first of all the priority it places in jury selection on fair representation according to gender, region and language, and attempting to suggest that it considers people of colour just as important. But in between the recommendation and the response falls a shift from "persons of colour" to "artists of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds," which is a not so clever way of saying everybody.

Some responses say nothing at all. The committee's recommendation on cultural appropriation stresses, despite all the alarms sounding from op-ed pages, respect and knowledge, not policing. The Council's response, however, opts for empty,

evasive posturing, terming the debate a "serious issue" and moving on.

It's in the response to Recommendation 5, that the Canada Council Board's position becomes clearest. The committee writes:

**Whereas systemic racism is a result of the everyday functioning of all Canadian institutions, we recommend an organizational review of the Canada Council be conducted to locate all other areas of bias. (7) [my emphasis]**

The Council begins its response:

The Council, while sensitive to the issue raised by the committee, cannot endorse this general statement regarding Canadian institutions. (7)



This is straight stonewalling, and for me, the crux of the report. By refusing to admit the existence of systemic racism, the Council refutes the reason for the committee, its recommendations, the whole enterprise. It is easy, however, to see how much an admission of systemic racism might threaten an institution, given the psychic damage the mere mention of the word racism does to unthinking white people.

The committee's wording of this central recommendation is clearly deliberate—"everyday functioning of all Canadian institutions" leaves no room for institutions to adopt a not-me pose; the Council's quick bolt from that scene is no surprise. While that phrasing is clear, there may be some confusion generated by the word "result." Its use here could mean either that systemic racism is a *product* of institutions, i.e. that it would not exist without them, or that systemic racism comes about through, or as a part of the everyday functioning of institutions, reflecting a general system of racism in other social structures. It's a subtle difference, but the fluidity around that word does weaken the recommendation.

Overall, the committee's recommendations remain strong and effective statements. What's fascinating is how the responses of the Board of Directors, a heterogenous group of people, so often speak with one single voice, the voice of nettled authority.

## Late Out the Gate at the Ontario Arts Council

In light of the Canada Council committee's recommendations, the Ontario Arts Council's *Consultations With Artists in a Culturally Diverse Society* emerges as a tremendously regressive document, fixed firmly within an old fashioned and less helpful "diversity" paradigm. The word racism is mentioned only once, and nowhere in the document are the specific concerns of African, Asian and First Nations artists addressed. Admittedly, each document was conceived differently. The process of soundings staged and reported on by an in-house staff member is vastly different from the Canada Council's external committee, and did not allow for the sort of autonomous decision making that marked the Racial Equality committee's recommendations.

The OAC report groups its findings under "three major areas of consensus": communications, participation in decision-making and juries, and "Canadian Art" and "Multiculturalism." Under this last category, report writer Lina Fattah notes that sounding participants "felt that labels such as 'multicultural' and 'ethnic' stereotyped them and excluded them from participation in the general stream of Canadian art."<sup>5</sup> The three categories are further divided into general findings, then suggestions, then comments, which serve as the responses of the OAC. Unfortunately neither the suggestions nor comments give any sense of how they've been framed. Were the suggestions actually prepared and worded at the soundings, or distilled by Fattah? If the latter, what was the process of distillation? And who is behind the comments? The OAC Board of Directors? The chairperson? The Executive Director?

The tone used in articulating the findings from the 14 soundings is similarly problematic. More often than not the emphasis rests on perceived ignorance and mistrust within the "culturally diverse community" rather than on Council inaccessibility. The text repeatedly gives the impression of clueless, fearful people with near-superstitious misconceptions about the power of the OAC, and dim recognition of all the good it has done: "The fact that OAC has been consciously dealing with 'multiculturalism' since at least 1982 came as a surprise to all participants." (8)

The Ontario Arts Council report is riddled with problems of process, structure, language and above all focus. To take one critical example, the phrase "culturally diverse" is consistently used as a polite codeword that includes people of colour but doesn't necessarily exclude anyone else. Systemic racism gets a passing mention rather than the focus it demands. Why the timidity? Why the fear to name? Only a year older than the Canada Council's report, this document already seems horribly dated.

## The Toronto Arts Council Gets Specific

E.A. Julian's *Cultural Equity* provides a significant alternative to the Canada Council and OAC documents. This report groups its 38 recommendations under the general headings of Cultural Equity, Organizational Structure, Board of Directors, Arts Discipline Committees, Juries, Programs, and Staff and Management. These recommendations are distilled into nine major recommendations to the TAC and one to the Council of the City of Toronto. This last major recommendation is especially important, because according to the report's estimates, its proposals will require an additional \$1 million to be added to the TAC's budget: \$750,000 in grants and \$250,000 in additional staff, communications, research, and professional development. This is a comprehensive document that succeeds best in its analysis of staff and management, including some pointed critiques of the TAC Board's commitment to change. However, it is written in a wordy, bureaucratic style that weakens its effectiveness, especially for those unused or less than eager to read such reports in the first place.

This lack of clarity in the writing becomes a real concern when trying to get at the ideas underpinning the report. Julian rejects both multiculturalism and cultural diversity as unhelpful ways of thinking through the report's issues, putting forward "cultural equity" and a companion concept, "specific cultural communities" as the conceptual core of the piece. But cultural equity as a working principle could do with more specifics—the basis of cultural inequity in the Eurocentrism of Canadian arts institutions since their inception isn't made explicit, nor are the exact conceptual areas that must be addressed to achieve the cultural equity named.

To an even greater degree, the report hinges on the phrase "specific" cultural communities:

Specific Cultural Community(ies) refers to 'community' in terms of a group of persons with a shared communication, interest or expression. 'Specific' is to indicate difference based on culture, ethnicity, gender, language, race and sexual orientation. This concept makes the language of arts and cultural support inclusive of all art and cultural expression and product. (1)

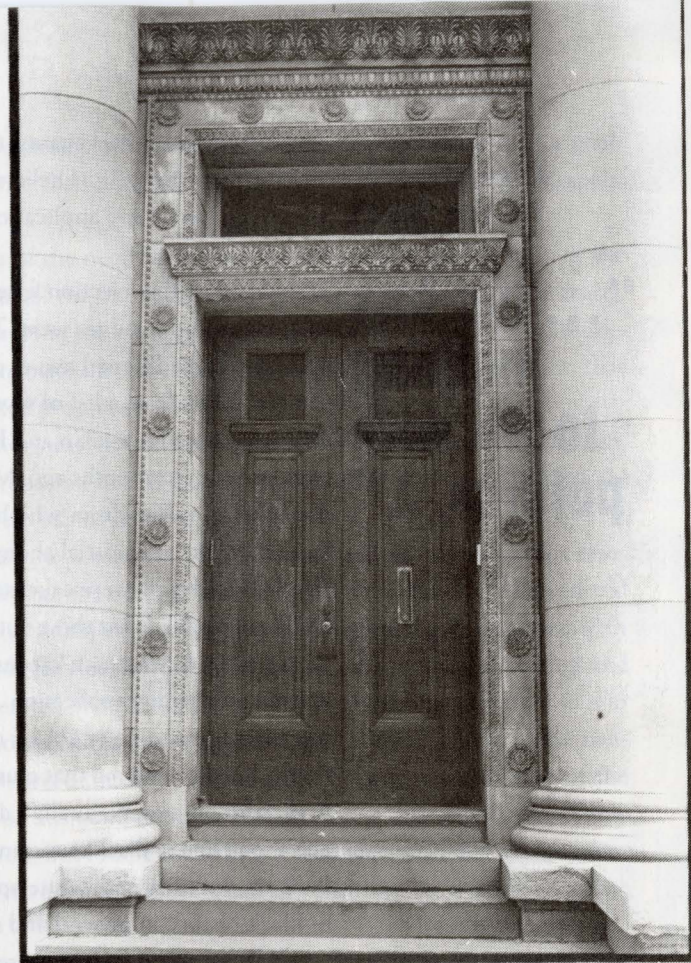


While the definition of community works, "specific" is less than clear, and the problem lies, as it so often does, in the word "difference." One has to ask, difference from what? From a constructed mainstream that is white, anglophone, male, straight? Or could the difference also be a relative one, difference from each other? Both options are tricky. If the difference intended is from a dominant culture, why is that culture not named, defined and problematized? If the difference is meant to suggest a sense of communities defined in relation to each other, it falls into the same trap of false equivalences that makes the multiculturalism framework unworkable. In either case specific systems of exclusion and discrimination—racism, sexism, homophobia—are only hinted at. Later references to the term, for example, "Many groups from specific cultural communities find it difficult to access information regarding the TAC," generate further uncertainty, lumping together groups with very different histories and specific patterns of exclusion. And it is only on page 21, in the report's conclusion, that Julian specifically identifies "African/Black, Asian and First Nations artists ... as the most underserved artists from any community." Finishing rather than starting with this assertion is a mistake. Overall, *Cultural Equity* is an impressive achievement, though its significant flaws make it less effective than it might have been.

It's too early to know what the results of all this report writing activity will be on actual cultural production in Canada. From where I sit I feel like institutionally marginalized cultures have been and are strong enough to survive whatever happens, but the age when we have to fight harder than anyone else to get half the crumbs has to end.

At this point, those of us engaged in culture, those in the centre of the debates have to press forward in at least two areas. Any attempt to redirect the discussion back toward what it all means for institutionally privileged artists—the *Globe and Mail's* "cultural appropriation" debate, for instance—must be fought hard. And any attempt by Canada's arts councils to distance themselves from race, to erase the shadow of systemic racism, must be challenged, always and every time. Call or write the Canada Council (613-598-4365, call collect), the Ontario Arts Council (toll-free at 1-800-387-0058) or the Toronto Arts Council (416-392-6800). Get copies of these reports, and go at them.

Cameron Bailey is a regular reviewer of film and video for *NOW Magazine*, and is currently programme co-ordinator of the *Perspective Canada* series at the Toronto Festival of Festivals. He participated in the Ontario Arts Council's 'sounding' on film, video and photography.



## NOTES

In researching this article, I have benefited from conversations with Chris Creighton-Kelly, Richard Fung, Marlene Nourbese Philip, E.A. Julian, Susan Ditta, head of Media Arts at the Canada Council, and Helen Lee. Their insights are gratefully acknowledged.

1 Creighton-Kelly, Chris. *Report on Racial Equality in the Arts at the Canada Council*. Unpublished report, April, 1991. 4-5

2 *Recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts and The Response of the Canada Council*. January, 1992. 1

3 Near the end of the committee's term, the Council hired Koko Amarteifio to implement many of the recommendations. According to an exchange of letters between committee members and Council Director Joyce Zemans, Amarteifio's job title was changed from Racial Equality Coordinator to Cultural Diversity Coordinator to Equity Coordinator, all without the knowledge or cooperation of the Racial Equality committee. Once again, the Council does some shadow dancing: two steps forward, one step back.

4 Julian, E.A. *Cultural Equity*. Prepared for the Toronto Arts Council. Unpublished report, June 1992. 1

5 Fattah, Lina. *Consultations With Artists in a Culturally Diverse Society*. A report from the Ontario Arts Council. December 11, 1990. 4

August 17, 1991  
To: Alan Gottlieb

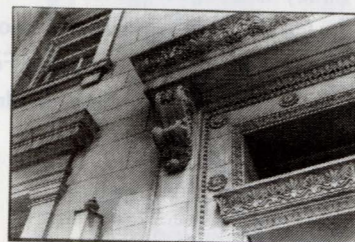
**“...this has nothing to do with politics...”**

This letter is an appeal against the decision to reject my application for an Arts Grant for music. I believe that the jury had a race and gender bias which resulted in my application being denied.

Upon reading the rejection letter for my Arts "B" Grant application I had to know who the judges were. The head of the music division, a caucasian man named René Lavoie, proudly told me he had personally chosen the judges from a list of seventy names. He also added that he himself was a noted musician and had just gotten this straight gig as head musaue man 18 months ago. Mr. Lavoie refused my request for a list of the seventy names from which he had chosen judges, citing Canada Council policy on judicial anonymity. Mr. Lavoie did inform me that all five judges chosen were caucasian and only one member was a woman. Mr. Lavoie added that three out five of the judges played a derivative of jazz. To Mr. Lavoie such 'credentials' rendered these caucasians acceptable for judging my application. When I told Mr. Lavoie that the jury did not have any people of colour on it and that jazz was Black traditional music, he informed me that music was music and did not have anything to do with politics. Naturally I disagree with this simplistic idea of music and a long line of Black musicians are rolling in their graves at the notion. But I am not surprised, white appropriation and discrimination are part of Black history in general and most definitely in terms of Black music.

When I asked if there were any comments about why my application was rejected Mr. Lavoie stated the only written comment was that I have a good voice and that the judges didn't need to comment nor was it their responsibility to write comments. They were merely recruited to listen and to judge whether or not I met the criteria. To my knowledge, I fully met the criteria of being a noted Canadian recording artist and composer who needed time off from performance to study and further my skills. The Canada Council jury did not meet the requirements of a jury, and that is that any fair jury must be composed of one's peers. Albeit, this jury did enlist the consultation of a South Asian person. Yet, she was not a judge and according to information about how consultants are used, she probably consulted on a particular application. It seems that only caucasians are allowed to sit in judgment as experts on Chinese, African, African-Canadian, South Asian, Native, Indonesian, Korean, Japanese... music, deciding who gets the grants and whose music is valuable to whose community. Until we have representation on these juries, we will only be tokens. Decisions made under these conditions are fundamentally unfair and therefore unacceptable given the evident racial and gender bias. Music is reflective of peoples' culture and my culture as a Black Canadian woman was most certainly not represented here. Neither was that of other Canadians who are not of European descent, or caucasian, or male. This is an issue of racial and gender equality.

Sincerely to justice and equality,  
Faith Nolan



September 20, 1991  
Dear Ms. Nolan:

## In response to your letter of 17 August

I must first express my regret and concern regarding your feeling that the jury which studied your grant application for the 1 April, 1991 competition "...had a race and gender bias which resulted in [your] application being denied."

The Canada Council is acutely aware of the need for careful assessment and adjudication in the jury process, which forms the very foundation of the Council's assistance programs for professional artists. For that reason, juries are assembled from among the most qualified available professional artists working in Canada. The juries are instructed to make their recommendations based on artistic merit, that is the artist's ability and his or her submitted program of work.

The jury that assessed your application was composed of the following musicians: Buff Allen, Geneviève Paris, Gene Smith, Libert Subirana and Bob Witmer. I am confident that this jury was fully qualified to assess the applications that were submitted to it.

The Council's appeal policy states that the Chairman of the Council will review all serious cases brought to his attention in writing and will examine them to ensure that due process was followed and that they were assessed by competent and qualified professionals. Following my discussions with Richard Dennison, Head of the Arts Awards Service, I believe that the jury did follow due process and rendered valid recommendations. It deliberated on and studied the 164 applications submitted to it in the 1 April Music II Competition and recommended the twenty-five applications which, in the context of an extremely strong competition, were the most meritorious. I regret that because of the Council's limited funds, the success rate for this competition was slightly less than one in six. I know this will be of little or no consolation to you, but I hope it will help you understand that a large number of deserving applicants suffer the consequences of the Council's inability to provide adequate funding.

The Council has identified racial equality as one of the key issues in its planning process and has taken a number of steps to ensure equal access and opportunity for Canadian artists of all backgrounds. As a matter of policy, it instructs its officers to assemble juries of professional artists in such a way as to ensure the widest possible representation of artistic practice. While it is not always possible to achieve a fully satisfactory representation on every jury, we are aware of the importance of broadening the mix of professional artists who serve on the Council's juries and benefit from its programs of assistance.

Over the past year the Council has consulted with the advisory committees on issues relating to racial equality in the arts and has already begun to implement a number of their recommendations, including the broadening of representation on juries and the forthcoming appointment of a Racial Equality Coordinator to assist Council in its activities in support of Canadian professional artists of all backgrounds. With the assistance of Employment and Immigration Canada, the Council is creating an internship program that will make it more sensitive and responsive to the needs of Canadian artists of Aboriginal, African, Asian, and immigrant backgrounds.

On several occasions in recent years, the Council has urged the government to broaden representation on Council's board to make it more reflective of Canada's cultural and racial diversity. We were very pleased with the appointment of Carol Geddes and hope that through continued effort, the Council's board will better reflect the pluralistic nature of Canada's population.

I realize that the Council must continue its efforts to be fully responsive to the needs of all professional artists working in Canada, but I hope you will agree that the above measures will heighten the Council's sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in Canada and indicate a true commitment on its part to the issue of racial equality. Let me assure you that Council and its management at all levels are fully dedicated to this task.

Yours Sincerely,  
Alan Gottlieb  
Chairman



Marlene Nourbese Philip:

## An open letter to the writing and arts community

October 5, 1991

Dear Writers and Artists:

I WAS RECENTLY TURNED DOWN FOR A Toronto Arts Council (TAC) grant and believe that the issues surrounding this decision are illustrative of the weaknesses of this particular granting process, weaknesses which allow for all manner of abuses to occur unchecked. To borrow and amend the legal maxim that justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done, the granting process should not only be fair, open and unbiased, but be *seen* to be fair, open and unbiased. It is for this reason, and not because I believe I ought to have received a grant—that would be arrogant in the extreme—I have taken the unusual step of taking this matter to the public.

My 1991 grant application to the TAC was the second half of a longer project in which I set out to analyse the issues surrounding the ROM display, *Into the Heart of Africa*. The first half of the project looked at the display itself and all the issues it gave rise to—particularly those having to do with racism and colonialism. This was funded by the OAC and was recently published in the international journal, *Third Text* (London, England). The second half of the project, funds for which I approached the TAC, intended a detailed look at the role of the media in that particular dispute.

I proposed to use the model set up by Noam Chomsky in his work *Manufacturing Consent*, in which he analyses the role of the media in Western democracies. The media, Chomsky writes, "serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity...their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analysing them in such terms." Alongside this, I argued, the media treats culture as an area evacuated of any political relevance; it becomes either High Art or pure entertainment. I stated my interest in looking at the special interests dominating the state of Canada with respect to issues related to the intersection of race and culture. I argued that the Canadian media, while neither consistently nor blatantly stereotypical, continue to marginalize and diminish issues of racism, as well as those individuals who raise these issues. I gave examples of the ways in which this was done: making individuals involved appear emotional and irrational, emphasizing the importance of other issues such as censorship over racism, as well as refusing to publish articles which dealt with racism in a critical manner.

Chomsky also suggests that "the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace" and that "it is their function to amuse, entertain and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society." My application asserted that "the special interests that dominate the state and private activity in Canada as it relates to race are those that insist on the innate superiority of white-skinned peoples, and that it followed that the cultural practices and representations of these groups would, therefore, be privileged in the media. In keeping with this, my proposal continued, when cultural practices are challenged on the grounds of racism, it was the media's role to portray these challenges and challengers in such a way as to diminish their validity and competence. My stated position was that the Canadian media continue to resist acknowledging and accepting that racism exists in Canada, and that while lip service may, at times, be paid to the existence of racism, the media's treatment of cultural issues where racism was a factor, belied any expressed willingness to treat the matter seriously. The role of the media in the debate around the ROM display, I concluded, was both exemplary and illustrative of this position. I also indicated I had an extensive clippings file on the ROM exhibit on which I would be able to draw.

While the TAC application form provides but one page—8 x 12—on which the applicant must describe her project, and warns the applicant that any material in excess will not be read, I made my arguments, summarized above, of what are very complex issues as completely and succinctly as possible.

The TAC has a two tiered assessment procedure: "Committee members for the Writers Grants program are asked to identify their area of expertise for the purposes of reading the applications prior to shortlisting. Applications are then sent out on the basis of matching the Committee member's area of expertise with the genre of the application—poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama. Each application is read by at least two members. After dividing the applications by genre, the applications are arranged alphabetically in groups of around fifty. Each group of approximately fifty is sent, as I stated above, to a minimum of two readers *expert in the genre of the application*. (my emphasis) In order to make the shortlist, the application has to receive a positive recommendation from at least one Committee member—or conversely, there must be unanimous agreement among readers for an application not to be shortlisted." (September 16, 1991 letter from Rita Davies)

In July 1991, I received information that my application had not even been shortlisted. I requested both verbally and

in writing the names of the committee members who had made the decision not to shortlist my application. By letter dated September 16, 1991, the TAC, under the hand of its Executive Director, refused me this information on the grounds that like the "Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council does not identify particular comments with any one individual adjudicator." At no time did I request to be told which adjudicator made which comment; I did not even request the details of their comments. I merely asked to know the two individuals who had made the unanimous decision not to shortlist me. This is information I believe I am entitled to. The stated similarity with other arts councils is a false one, since in both the case of the Canada Council and the OAC, *all* panel or committee members read *all* the applications; unsuccessful candidates are, therefore, fully aware of the individuals who have decided their application. This is the only information I was seeking. The TAC has not even identified the committee members who described themselves as expert in the genre of non-fiction writing.

The following comments concerning my application were provided to me and identified as being made by the TAC jury, although as Rita Davies states, only two members of the jury made the decision:

- (1) The subject of media bias in support of state policy has been well covered by Noam Chomsky; the project definition was vague on how the writer proposed to extend or elaborate Chomsky's insights.
- (2) The sample of writing supplied was on the same topic as the proposal, but again gave no sense of where the writer intended to take the material. Though the writer is both well known and well-published, the jury felt this particular grant application could have been better supported by the writing sample than it was.

Dealing first with the second of the two reasons given above; it was always my understanding that the requirement of the sample of writing was not to show where the applicant was taking the project, but so that the committee members would have some evidence of the *writing ability* of the applicant in question. For a committee member to state that my supporting material gave no sense of where I intended to take the subject is patently ludicrous. To the best of my recollection, the sample of writing supplied to the TAC was cogently and thoroughly argued article on the topic of the ROM exhibit itself; this article had already been published in the *Toronto Star* and also formed part of the recently published *Third Text* piece mentioned above. One would have thought that providing a selection

panel with published material related to the same topic would be of some assistance. It seems, however, I was penalized both for supplying material on the same topic, as well as for not showing where I was "tak(ing) the material."

The first reason is the more insidious of the two: Noam Chomsky is an American scholar; the work in which he set up the framework to look at the media in Western democracies, *Manufacturing Consent*, was based almost entirely on the American media. While Chomsky does mention the racism of some of the American media in their reporting of events in "Third World countries," his work in no way addresses the issues of racism in the manner in which I intended to look at it (as outlined above); nor did he consider the matter of the intersection of race and culture. Nowhere in *Manufacturing Consent*, have I been able to find reference to the representation of African Canadians in the media in general, or more specifically, to the ROM display, and how the media in *Toronto* dealt with that issue and the African Canadians who were critical of it.

To dismiss out of hand the role of the media in the articulation and practice of racism against African Canadians in Toronto, by saying that Noam Chomsky has already covered the issue of media bias is, in fact, a profoundly racist comment; such a comment disrespects the significance of this issue for African Canadians, and trivializes the severity of the polarization this city over the ROM display. It also makes light of the fact that many African Canadians may obtain criminal records as a result of their opposition to *Into The Heart of Africa*. It will not be Noam Chomsky who will have the last word on the fates of these individuals, but a legal system which, for all its claims of impartiality, has shown itself to be intrinsically hostile to those Canadians who are also African, Asian and First Nations. To suggest that I was vague on how I proposed to extend or elaborate on Chomsky's insights, when clearly I had stated that I intended to cover ground not covered by Chomsky, is mischievous and ludicrously perverse. Further, to suggest that Noam Chomsky has the last word on racism in Toronto would be risible, if it were not expressive of such deep seated colonialism and racism. The fundamental lack of respect with which this application has been treated bears out exactly what I set out to demonstrate in my project about the practice of racism in the area of culture.

What disturbs me about these comments, is not only the egregious racism, but that the present TAC system of assessment allows for these kinds of opinions to go unchecked and unchallenged. At the first level of reading there are, in fact, no restraints on individuals. At this level committee members do not have to justify or defend their decisions to other committee members,

as happens at the Canada Council and OAC in general discussions of applications, and as happens at the TAC at a later stage. Expert in their genre, these individuals (and their decisions), remain unchallenged in their assessment, knowing full well that they will never be held accountable, since the TAC provides them with the cover of apparent confidentiality. By refusing to identify the two members who read my application, the TAC is, in fact, making an entire jury responsible for a decision which is blatantly racist. And until the TAC provides me with the information I requested, I have no other recourse but to hold the entire committee responsible for this decision. Rita Davies has informed me that the committee members are: Ann Collins (Chair), Mark Czarnecki, Karen MacCormack, Michael Miller, Libby Scheier, Antanas Sileika, Makeda Silvera, Whitney Smith, Winston Smith and Moyez Vassanji.

The presence on the TAC literary committee of Canadians of African, Asian and First Nations heritage, raises difficult and important issues with which arts councils must grapple. The present case is illustrative of some of these issues. It would be difficult for me to contend that *only* an African person would be able to understand the issues in my application; it would in fact be tragic if that were the case. By the same token, I must accept that an African person could have rejected my application for either of the two reasons given above. However, while membership in a racial or ethnic group which has traditionally suffered discrimination, does not necessarily ensure sympathy, understanding or solidarity with that group, the general assumption behind the appointment of individuals from African, Asian and First Nations groups to art council committees and panels, is that these individuals bring

with them certain resources. These are the resources and expertise acquired in attempting to live and practise their discipline, with some dignity, in a society that is essentially racist. One expects these experiences will inform their art, albeit not necessarily overtly; one hopes they imbue the writer/artist with a greater sensitivity to related issues. To insist, therefore, as Rita Davies does, that applications are only sent to be shortlisted to those who are "expert in the genre of the application," is short-sighted at best. Being expert in the *genre* of the application has no bearing on the person's approach to, or sensitivity to issues of racism, sexism, or issues of sexual orientation. This point cannot be stressed too much, since it is *at this level at the TAC* that decisions are being made virtually in private, and not in the more public forum, as happens when the shortlist comes to the entire committee.

The TAC's mandate is that of the City of Toronto; in its establishment of The Mayor's Committee on Racism, Toronto recognizes racism to be the significant problem that it is. It has, I believe, become a truism to say that racism permeates all areas of life in the city, including culture. As I indicated in a letter to Rita Davies, my concerns on the matter of the application would have been substantially modified,

had any of the projects funded in the TAC in their 1991 competition addressed issues of racism and culture in Toronto. None, in fact do.

When I interviewed Rita Davies in 1988 for an article on racism in the arts in Canada, the representation on TAC committees of individuals from African, Asian, and First Nation backgrounds was so poor as to be virtually non-existent. As a result of public and informed critique on racism on arts councils, and lobbying by many artists and writers, the TAC has

responded and there are now at least four such individuals on their literary committee. This change is to be supported if it does, in fact mean real change, *not* if it is merely window dressing. I applauded the fact publicly in 1989 (letter to *Share* newspaper) when, for the first time in its history, the TAC awarded grants to a number of African, Asian and First Nations writers. I applaud the fact that this pattern has continued into 1991. This, however, cannot justify a granting procedure that is patently unfair and which has the potential to foster the very inequities the TAC claims to want to eradicate; it must not be used to protect what are essentially racist opinions.

I was one of the many artists from African, Asian, and First Nations communities the TAC approached in 1990 to write letters of support for increasing funding from Metro Toronto. Also, in 1991 the TAC encouraged artists from these communities to approach their M.P.'s to solicit increased funding for the Council to meet increased demand from these very communities. It is, therefore, ironic that committee members of this same Council dismiss and trivialize significant issues of racism that have profoundly affected African Canadians in this city.

While the TAC has every right, after a fair and impartial assessment to reject an application that it believes does not meet its requirements, what it does not have a right to do in coming to such a decision is to disrespect an individual or group. This is what the TAC jury did in its reasons given for turning down my application. I am, therefore, calling on the TAC to do three things:

- (a) release to me the names of the two committee members who made a decision on my application;
- (b) take immediate steps to amend its granting procedure so that it becomes a fair, open and unbiased system which is not as open to abuse as it is at present.
- (c) ensure its literary committee and Board apologize in general to African Canadians who live in the City of Toronto, and in particular to those individuals who are still facing court cases, for the trivializing of an issue which is of vital importance to them.

#### M. Nourbese Philip

cc. Karen Haslem/Minister of Culture and Communications, Kim Leavis/CIUT, Marva Jackson/CKLN, Metro Cultural Affairs, Rosario Marchese, M.P., *Share* Newspaper, The Anti-Racism Secretariat, The Board of the Toronto Arts Council, The Canada Council, The OAC  
The Mayor's Committee on Race Relations



**December 13, 1991**

**Dear Ms. Nourbese Philip:**

We are writing in response to your "Open letter to the Writing and Arts communities" dated October 5, 1991. In your letter you express concerns with the adjudication process regarding your application to the 1991 TAC Grants to Writers program. Since each Arts Discipline Committee of the Toronto Art Council is responsible for establishing its own adjudication procedure and criteria, the Board of Directors of the Toronto Arts Council has asked us to reply to your letter.

We have considered your comments and thank you for your analysis. In striving to make our adjudication process as equitable and accountable as possible, letters such as yours challenge us and provide a valuable departure point for discussion and constructive change.

Your letter alleges serious defects in our adjudication process and in it you call on the TAC to do three things: release to you the names of the two Literary Committee members who did not shortlist your application; take immediate steps to amend our granting procedure, so that it becomes what you would consider a fair, open and unbiased system; apologize to African Canadians in Toronto—and especially to those facing court cases as a result of the controversy over the ROM exhibit *Into the Heart of Africa*—for trivializing the issue of racism and culture in Toronto.

With regard to the Grants to Writers program, our greatest concern has always been to get as much grant money as possible into the hands of as many deserving writers as possible. Our grant allotment must pay for both grants and adjudication fees for the Committee members. In the past, we have restricted adjudication fees to a small honourarium so that as much money as possible would go to writers; our Committee members have effectively been working on a volunteer basis.

The number of applications to the program has been rising steadily each year. In the spring of 1991, we received an unprecedented 272 applications (a 65% increase over the previous year). We believe that our procedures were fair and unbiased and that our system of dividing the applications by genre, and allotting roughly 50 applications to two or three members with expertise in the relevant genre(s) to achieve a shortlist, was the most equitable under the circumstances. It was clear, however, that, because of the significant increase in applications and the commensurate increase in workload, in the future we would have to modify our adjudication procedure, and possibly spend more of our allotment on adjudication fees.

As a result of the increased volume in applications, we started to examine our adjudication process at our final adjudication in June. In September, we decided to establish a separate jurying system, independent of the Committee's other work. In January we will outline a jury structure and submit it for consultation and approval by the TAC Board of Directors. We welcome any suggestions you or Toronto's arts community might have as we go through this process.

As for releasing to you the names of the two members who did not shortlist your application, we will not do so because the Committee as a whole stands by the process which was followed in adjudicating the grants. To single out the individuals who made those choices would damage the integrity of the Committee as a whole.

We regret that you feel our treatment of your application, and our comments explaining our decision, trivialized the issue it addressed. Please understand that for us to decline funding does not carry with it any implication of lack of respect for the issues contained within an application. In our words and deeds there is no disrespect to you, to Toronto's African Canadians, nor to those facing court cases as a result of the ROM controversy.

We hope this clarifies our position and answers your requests. We would be happy to meet with you and discuss these issues and any other concerns you may have regarding our Grants to Writers program at our mutual convenience.

Your sincerely,  
**Anne Collins**  
Chair, 1991 TAC Literary Committee

On behalf of the Members, 1991 TAC Literary Committee:  
Mark Czarnecki  
Karen Mac Cormack  
Michael Miller  
Libby Scheier  
Antanas Sileika  
Makeda Silvera  
Whitney Smith  
Winston Smith  
Moyez Vassanji

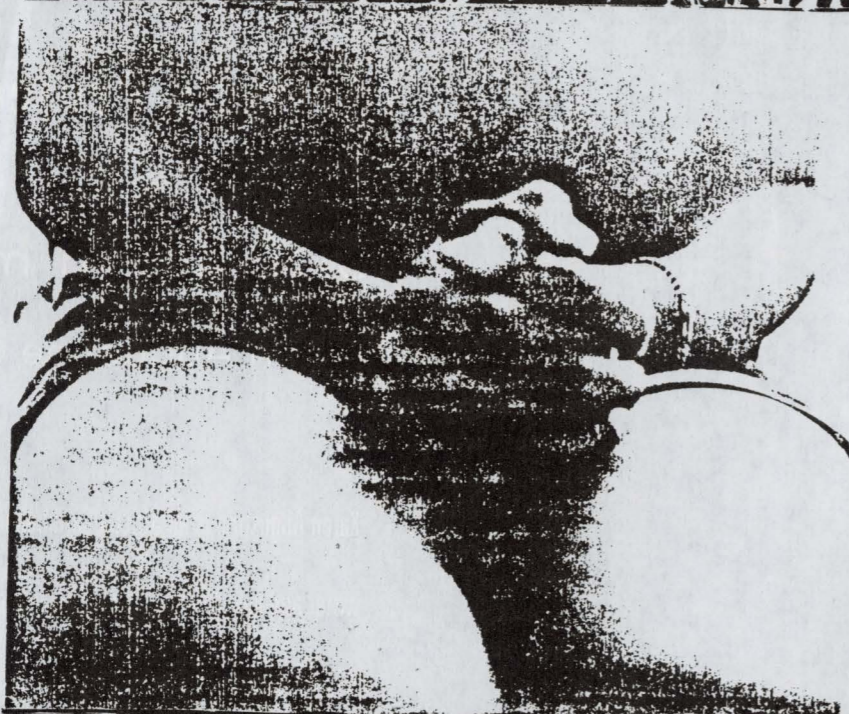
## Artist's Project

JOE/not in me

Karen Augustine ©1992

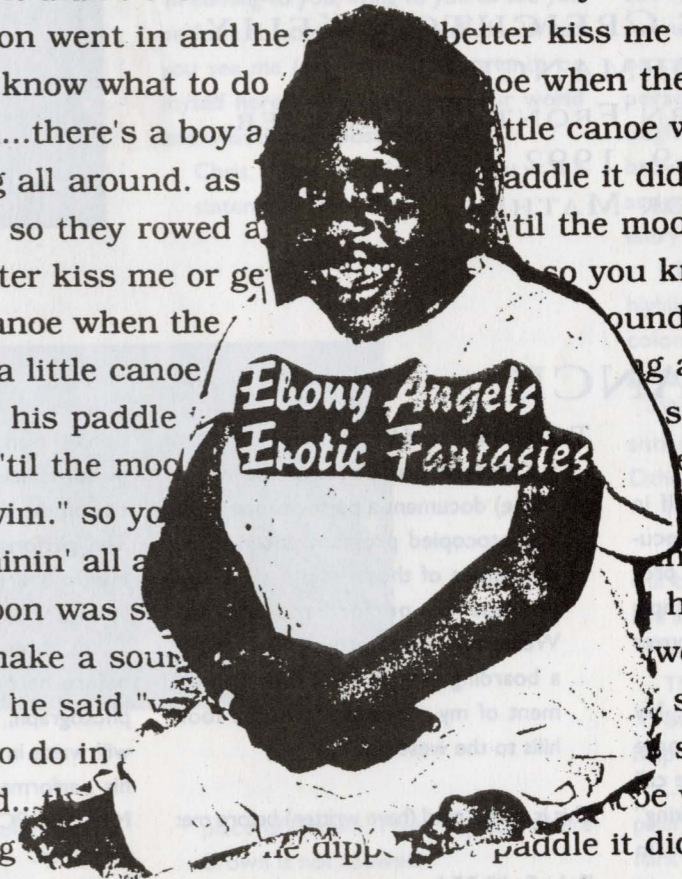
Karen Augustine is an African/Caribbean/Canadian writer and mixed media artist. This piece is part of a larger series of works dealing with sexual violence and its affects on Black Women.

HE HAD ME PINNED TO THE BED/I TRIED  
SO HARD TO FREE MYSELF UP FROM  
BENEATH HIS WEIGHT/I COULDN'T MOVE  
FINGERED ME/SEARCHING FOR A  
WETNESS/HE SHOVED ANOTHER FIN-  
GER IN ME THEN RAMMED HIS  
WHOLE HAND UP ME/I SCREAMED  
HE TRIED TO CALM ME DOWN/HE  
SAID THIS WAS BEAUTIFUL/HE  
SHOVED HIS HAND UP ME AGAIN!



I WAS BLEEDING/I WAS NAKED/HE  
CHASED ME AROUND THE APT./HE  
FORCED ME BACK INTO HIS BED/I'VE  
BLOCKED OUT EVERYTHING ELSE/  
I REMEMBER HIS HARD WHITE COCK  
PRESSING AGAINST MY THIGHS/HE  
HELD ME AGAINST HIM TIGHTLY/  
HE LET ME LEAVE THE NEXT  
DAY/I WAS SORE FOR A WEEK/  
HE SAID HE LIKED CHOCOLATE ♀

ere's a boy and a girl in a little canoe when the moon was  
round. as he dipped his paddle it didn't even make a sound  
wed and they rowed 'til the moon went in and he said "y  
e or get out and swim." so you know what to do in a little  
hen the moon was shinin' all around...there's a boy and a  
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addle it didn't even make a sound. so they rowed and the  
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d swim." so you know what to do in a little canoe when t  
is shinin' all around...there's a boy and a girl in a little car  
e moon was shining all around. as he dipped his paddle i  
en make a sound. so they rowed and they rowed 'til the r



[GOOD EVENING]  
WELCOME TO  
I.D.

CHRIS CREIGHTON-KELLY  
PERFORMANCE  
WESTERN FRONT, VANCOUVER  
FEB. 8-9, 1992  
BY ASHOK MATHUR

## a PERFORMANCE of a REVIEW

The following writing reviews itself in performance. The following is a document that tries to view itself in the process of reviewing. The following attempts to document a performance in Vancouver in early February, 1992.

This is what I read before me: My name is Chris Creighton-Kelly. Some people call me Si Si Kai. Some people call me Goo. I've been "doing" art, "making" art since late 1975. Some people say I'm an artist.

This is what I have before me: Two cards. A black. A white. Post-performance leftovers. Remnants of identity.

This is what I see before me: a photograph in Front Magazine, a man pointing (at whom? to where?) above the upper case lettering: CHRIS CREIGHTON-KELLY, above the word "performance", above the title:

I.D.

an explication of identity  
on the cusp of the Post-Colonial age

This is what I read before me:

a Keystone notebook whose words (mine) document a performance  
a photocopied program documenting the names of those who assisted the process of performance at the Western Front, Vancouver;  
a boarding pass for AC 228, a document of my migration from the foothills to the west coast.

This is what I read (have written) before me:

**Feb. 5, 19:35 hrs,  
Calgary International Airport**

Land of look between. I sit. Drink peppered tomato juice to help down a Sudafed tablet. Sit. In a darkened airport caf. Watch. Planes taxiing down a dark runway. City lights as a backdrop.

This is a place of goings. True, people arrive here, greeted by friends, family, taxis and limos. But waiting, you never see the arrivals. Only the goings. The perpetual goings.

I am going to Vancouver. I will visit Others who know me and others who

don't. I plan (I say) to write a review of a performance: "ID: an explication of identity on the cusp of the Post-Colonial age." The performer is Chris Creighton-Kelly. He is a friend. An acquaintance. A stranger. An Other.

It's three days and a couple of hours before he performs. Before I note-take, photograph, 'cover' the show. 'Til then, I will write in his performance. I will write his performance as a post-colonial voice. My voice PC's its way toward a PC performance.

I board the plane.

**On board. The**

overhead light doesn't work. I write in the dark. Rather, in the ambient light of the baggage panels. Plane half-empty. Going any moment to where it's supposed to be going.

Three seats to myself.

This is about post-colonial identity, is it? More people arrive. Disturbing. Will they end up next to me?

Will they sit?—where?  
So strange.

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION BY ASHOK MATHUR



This poem is delivered to you brown to brown to brown. Tell me when the postcolonial moment hits you.

Is it now?

The drink is done—vodka to dim the effects of the tomato juice. My thumbs go numb.

I feel like an artist.

Brossard rolls through my brain.

**You see, I**

'm coming to you, flying to you to see you perform. I wonder what you'll do. When you see me (am I placing importance on myself here?) when you see your world and what it does, post-colonially.

Chris, this is not a letter to you. It is a statement. From the

me—printed published plane-written PAGE.

Time's up. I arrive.

**Bathos. Feb 6, 13:40 hrs. Sit in** the lobby of Buchanan Tower (capital T, modified by 'ivory'/white?) drink coffee. I'm cold.

In half an hour I will enter a senior class in po-co lit. We will discuss Nervous Conditions by Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangaremba—this is Aruna's class—brown all around? Not on campus. Aruna, the only woman of, person of, colour in the entire UBC English faculty. Me, an out-of-town browner, (self-)imported for a writing assignment, borrowed through love for entry to a class.

I haven't read NC—only skimmed highlights. There will be discourse. Post-colonial discourse. As usual, I will feel guilty at privileging issues over 'the Text'.

Will I have to deal with white solip-sists (the world is white, the coloured are Other)?

Tonight an opening by brown artists.

Tomorrow a black critic speaks — I will be able to listen to voices of colour and authority.

bell hooks. cultural worker.

The day after that, ID.

But now, how will class be? Will this help my always deferred piece on CC-K?

... in the classroom now, i stare at palimpsestic patterns on the floor, a remnant of desks once-bolted to their place. Reminders of a situated place. A pattern unalterable. A review that circles 'round and won't bolt itself down to a definable place ... we talk of power in a circle. the palimpsest of authority (un)bolted to the floor ... we are forced to move to another room by another class (authorized to use this space?) ... I say something incomprehensible about spatial politics, the politics of space. A place to stand? A place to learn?... a combination of Sudafed, Benadryl, and caffeine makes my head cloud over in wooze.

I'll get a Globe. To pass the colonial time.

There's an "airfone" on the seat in front of me. I want to call ahead.

The drinks arrive. A post-colonial memento? momento?

This is odd, the feeling of migration. To the land of the brown, I call it. To the land and the love of the brown.

Race unrelations.

—Do you hear me coming, Chris? To your brown performance. Brown arms. Your brown voice. A chance for self-love, SAFE love, race love.

place of Brown. From a place where Brown is not allowed.

We descend.

Into the land of the Brown. I dream of Michelle Cliff's words now.

Her sense of skin.

I enter a comfort zone. My voice comes out.

Will out.

You're close now. (oh, safety zone, not to write what I wish to think.)

Closer to the Western Front, to Granville, to Dunbar,

to the tread of the Other unothered. touts les champs

let this body skin its brown-ness onto

### Thursday night, in

side a BMW built for four, seating six. We're going to an art opening at the Richmond Cultural Centre. One of the featured artists, Shani Mootoo, travels in the backseat with us. I tell her I'm out here to write a review for Chris' performance. She asks me if I'm "in" the performance. I think on that. No, I guess I'm not "in" the performance. She tells me a lot of people, herself included, are involved in CC-K's ID po-co show. I shift position, crowding someone else. Wonder if I am part of the performance too.

The art show is entitled Kaleidoscope: Fragments of Self. The artwork is very good. But too many people. A decidedly multicultural air to the crowd and conversation inside. A variety of ethnic food. I get jittery. I'm waiting to determine a post-colonial identity.

Tonight, as bell hooks speaks at her opening engagement, i'm here.

Aruna asks me how I respond to openings. I talk of feelings of confusion—distance. She talks of out-of-body feelings. We talk of discomforts. I leave and enter the library to write this down.

### line-up for bell

hooks. Feb. 7, 11:30 hrs. a half-hour wait, but people to talk to.

Aruna notes that almost all of her women's studies students are here. And almost none from the po-co class. bell hooks: a feminist but not a decolonizer? How may she be read?...

Last night at Simpatico's, four of us talk about what we know about "ID"—are the cards to be distributed too uncomfortably definitive? Can we subvert this process? We decide to create question-mark cards—will Chris be disturbed—distracted? Angry?

...bell hooks is introduced as a feminist scholar—no mention of any po-co connection.

### Performance (ID) jitters

Feb 7, 15:15 hrs. ID set-up is happening this afternoon. I've been told about

mosquito-netting (and hear talk/question of nude dancing women), candles, jokes about pouring rice patterns.

Take a 9 Broadway to the site—the Western Front. I've been there before, read there, seen readings. But still I get lost. Where Broadway switches from west to east, I become disoriented.

And I find myself easing down Broadway (the wrong way). It's getting dusk and I feel lost, depressed, paranoid, disoriented. Without place, false destination; I look for an island of help: a phone booth with attendant book, to find the Front's address. I find 3 phone booths, all bookless, unguided tele-phoning. I keep wandering.

Finally a phone book. An address to confirm I'm going the wrong way. Hopelessly disoriented. I turn back.

### At the Front, the lights are on,

the door is locked. I buzz. A voice (Chris') asks who I am. I say Ash, not Ashok. Ash, a truncated me that passes over anglicized tongues with greater ease (why do i use it here?) - marmalade vs chutney. I hear an OK. A buzz. (passage). I've gained entrance. I take a bathroom break before wandering upstairs. Upstairs is Chris. He's bigger than I last remember him. He touches my shoulder. I hold his thick forearm and draw him to me. He kisses me. I hug him.

"I didn't expect to see your face here," he says. An odd statement. Zool told him two days ago that I was coming in to Vancouver. But no, I realize, Chris means, of course, he didn't previously expect to see me here. Confusion, as I think myself.

I walk around.

Sure enough. There's the mosquito-netting. Sher and Donald pour rice on the ground in S-shaped swirls around Perrier bottles. They use funnel-shaped tinfoil.

Chris counts out Ikea ka-candles, asks if I want to help. I say no. He says he understands, jokes about journalistic objectivity.

But, in my mind and body, too much

happening to think about getting involved with the ID performance. I feel I've already begun performing my own ID.

### At dinner with Chris, Sherry, Donald, Terry.

The talk surrounds the act of performance, the process of performing, the politics around performance. As always, politics dominates the talk. Chris wonders if he should change certain elements of the piece. There are strong political concerns that need addressing. Issues of colour, gender, sexuality: a postcolonial world is complex. [bell hooks says she came to theory as a process of healing—is this the energy behind performance? hooks also says we come to tremendous gain through opposition (interventions become inventions?)]

—then to politics—lesbians of colour, straight white men—their vis a vis-ness—are these politics of performance interlocking, a part of the performance?

Are the politics THE performance?

When I return, the Front is full of folks. Two men set up video monitors back to back. Musicians provide a cacophonous disharmony to the bustle on a xylophone behind the mosquito-net podium. Two women, their hair tied up, climb under the netting and practice pushing the monitors back, their bodies extending dangerously out as the monitors wheel back.

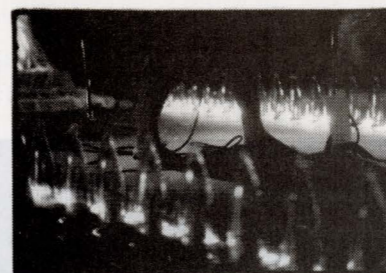
Chris moves from one pod to another. Instructions bounce -

—Description—(they) not (me) I-solate myself from the scene—"play" objective, perform objectively (as a past incarnation).

BUT. I perform ineffectively. Take no notes. I watch. I watch. Detachedly. The Observer. The objectivist. Yes.

I leave before the run-through. Don't want to "spoil" the performance for myself. I take images away with me. Candles. Netting. TV monitors. The telephone which refuses to connect me to my Calgary answering machine.

I dream of mendhi and Shani's books.



### WELCOME TO ID.

### Day of performance. Missed buses, lost lines. Feb. 8, 19:23 hrs

I bring fake ID and real ID. Zool, minding the door, turns down my realname-repertoire-theatre-membership card. He accepts me as Peter Stinson, art society member - my "name" typed in, the year crossed out. Aruna enters with her medic-alert bracelet. We get red hearts stuck to our ID's. Aruna tells me to spell her name right.

A room of people and candles, two monitors flashing questions. I-identify I say.

Chris shaves on screen, a rolling image of ago. 'Live,' 'in person,' 'in performance,' he plays and unplays a guitar. The monitors urge us to answer questions by holding up identifying cards. Few people comply. There are mixed messages on the screen, in the performing area, in the audience. Papadums are cooked and passed around. Chris is cleanshaven, an act not live but unrehearsed.

I am in the performance, an unnamed friend, a friend who didn't name himself, says Chris, who sent unidentifiable identifications weeks before the performance. This ID from the anonymous me is discarded to the floor. To Perrier bottles filled with candle. Rice, so much rice. Musicians on shelves, a cook in the corner, Chris shrouded at the front. Words spoken, and computer generated, slip by. The performance is over but cannot be.

### Feb. 9, 16:36 hrs. Today, contemplating

this putative review, I sit in Aruna's women's studies class. They talk of bell

hooks. I think of my own racism, homophobia, want to speak it but decide there are others who belong in this space, whose voices belong here before mine. Inappropriate of me to attempt such appropriation.

### Feb. 10, 14:44 hrs. I leave in a

few hours and I still haven't got over/into my sense of this po-co performance. I buy film to photograph more brown skin this afternoon. Denuded skin. To take back—to cover myself—to (pre)position this position.

Making theory real. Is what bell hooks says. Aruna does. I untry. I record and uncord, ravel silver-based emulsion over brown (sepia) tones. Place a document, this post-colonial so-journey.

### Waiting to board

Re-migrancy. becoming before.

You can return (Home)(?)

The show is over. No costume change. I leave the land of the brown for? what...?

Leaving my imaginary homeland.

Outside a space that I can only even temporarily claim.

I identify with?

Chris says I'm an artist cuz of what I publish. I reconnect to my home phone daily. I do not fax.

On the plane I recall a Bahai sign on a Vancouver storefront: "Race is an optical illusion."

In seat 20C I look at my boarding pass red on white. I look at 'my' 'cards' from ID and reflect: a white card, for 'people of colour', (or POC/abor. as the sign stated), and the irony of a

white 'of colour' card is funny and sad; a black card, for man, male, in the masculine. Cards we used to vote, auction-like when so bidden. I bid myself (or do I put myself on the auction block). The video monitor asks half-screen, computer generated questions. We read and (some of us) attempt to 'vote' accordingly.

The problem. The cards, picked up at the front of the Front, were originally to be handed out—personally, hand-picked—by a number of people. Concerns expressed from lesbians of colour, this process a double-outing (both to card-givers and recipients, even for those already considering themselves out). These concerns make the performers question—themselves, the show; some say an artist is an artist. others say the criticism has to be taken into account. Considered.

All this infects my thinking in 20C. I inspect the airplane safety folder and, for no reason, remove the airsick bag.

### I ask Chris whether

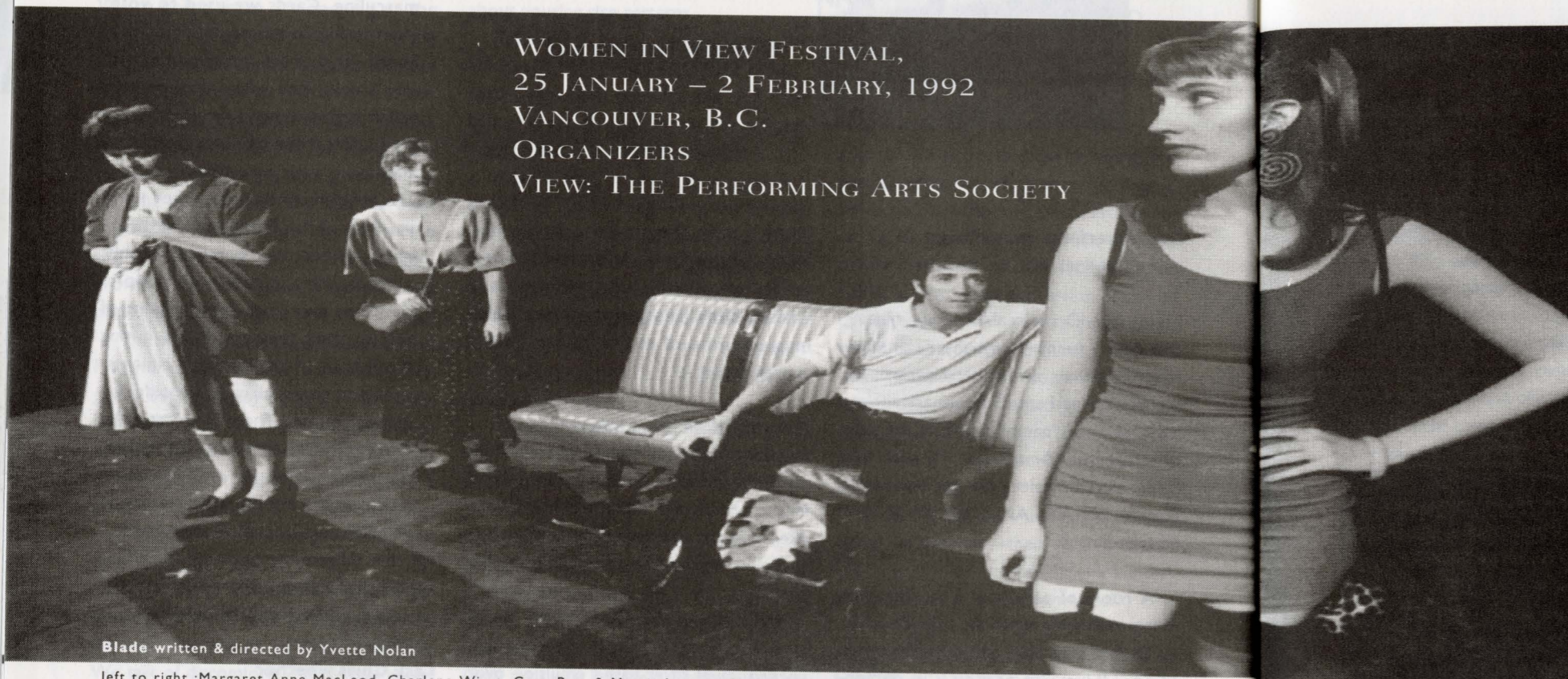
a political paralysis might not be a good thing—if you feel you are being asked not to act, well, maybe there's good reason for not acting. not complaining either.

The plane taxis, accelerates, rises. I toy with the edges of the airsick bag and unreflectingly stow it in my knapsack. My notebook's disjointed. Not enough, I chastise myself, on the performance 'itself'. Not enough of a move away from the painful self-indulgence of a diary which skims across a performance, dips in and finds the coldness shocking. This is not a review. This is a viewing. A new view of an old view, so, yes, a re-view. I think and thank of ID and think myself to uneasy closure.

Ashok Mathur teaches at the Alberta College of Art (Calgary), co-publishes the alternative poetry series *disOrientation chapbooks* and works with the literary magazine *absinthe* and the *South Asian Arts Journal*.

DIFFERENT VIEWS  
BEVERLY YHAP

WOMEN IN VIEW FESTIVAL,  
25 JANUARY – 2 FEBRUARY, 1992  
VANCOUVER, B.C.  
ORGANIZERS  
VIEW: THE PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY



Blade written & directed by Yvette Nolan

left to right :Margaret Anne MacLeod, Charlene Wiest, Gene Pyrz & Marcia Lamont. Photo by Daniel Collins.

MORE AND MORE AS THE DECADE unfolds, a recurring concern seems to be how to recognize and deal with difference—political, sexual, cultural, linguistic, and racial. From January 25 to February 2, the 1992 Women in View Festival, Vancouver, featured more than 36 performances, plus workshops, and informal talks. Leading off this fourth festival was a discussion of difference as it relates to race and culture, the subject of a full-day symposium entitled Crosscultural Politics in the Arts: Strategies for Change.

The symposium opened with remarks from a panel of artists and community activists: Djanet Sears, Karin Lee, Viola Thomas, Lina de Guevara, Sunera Thobani, Yasmin Jiwani (moderator), and San Francisco's Ellin Gavin. Participants attended workshops on "Breaking

Through the Barriers" of everyday racism; "Diversity in the Arts: How to Program Crossculturally", and "Making Your Own Space" a primer for self-starters. If the symposium began from an assumption that we are all in this together to fight racism—the workshops set about exposing the actual divides of race and privilege—for some people of colour, this meant embracing a strategy of parallel, community-based, community-driven culture.

Where did this leave people privileged by virtue of race or class? Inactive, but not necessarily inert. Participate by learning, not leading; know when to step back, step aside, shut up and listen were the overriding messages.

Into this charged atmosphere one woman ventured an intended salvo, praising First Nations artists for their profes-

sionalism at her city's multicultural festival. A Cree artist attempted to call her on her biases, to no effect. The divide opened wide; the difference between intention and effect couldn't have been more clear.

If the mainstream press were present, the issue would have likely fuelled arguments about 'political correctness'. In their absence, a local artist spoke to the treacherous divide of language; of the need for assumptions to be challenged, for language to be consciously examined and unloaded of cultural baggage so that it doesn't become a blunt weapon of unthinking prejudice, inflicting damage.

Equality, difference, diversity. Just exactly what was on view this year, and would any of these themes emerge? Performances explicitly tied in with the

symposium turned out to be more diverse than expected.

Little White Lies by Celeste Insell dealt with racism encountered upfront and on the job, the job being acting. In a series of pointed vignettes, five women go through racist hoops in order to be cast in token roles that are, as often as not, stupid and demeaning.

Another symposium-related show, Blade, suffered from a case of confused identity. "The story of a young Native woman" raped and murdered, Blade turned out to be the story of similar incidents involving a white woman. Cognizant of issues surrounding cultural appropriation, writer Yvette Nolan chose to transpose the original incident from a native to a white woman. Unfortunately, taken out of context the

original incident lost its significance and impact.

Storyteller Theatre's *The Strength of Indian Women*, from opening drum song through slides and dance, exposed the story of a wounded community from the inside, through the harsh experience of its women. Writer Vera Manuel depicted each of the four women with acute observation to detail, with each reacting to her uprooting and abuse suffered in residential schools in different ways. None of the women want to talk about it; but it is only by voicing this painful history—literally by telling it—that the women begin to heal themselves and each other. By turns slow, funny, painful, and moving, *The Strength of Indian Women* spoke eloquently of the need and benefits of First Nations women telling their own stories.

Healing by telling—and juggling, and joking, and generally cracking up—were the mainstays of *Cracked Up*, a "one-woman tour de farce" by Kate Hull. With disarming honesty and often cutting wit, Hull invests the story of her mental illness and year in an Ontario institution with edgy excitement. She never lets you forget that what you're laughing at is also true. Her slide lecture—*My OHIP Vacation*—was particularly chilling with its child-like self-portraits by other women patients.

Next to abuse, rape and mental illness, obesity, while still an issue to women, seemed light-weight. Exactly, according to the Leaping Thespians Collective of *Light on Her Feet*; but just because it seems mundane doesn't lessen the prevailing tyranny of 'thin' for women. Sporting a winsome pair of singing bosoms, reminiscent of Shawna Dempsey's swinging vulva, and a closing dance number cum celebration of goddess-like amplitude, *Light on Her Feet*, spoofed body images and celebrated girth.

From silly to serious and everywhere in between, these shows exposed specific vulnerabilities—racial and gender discrimination, abuse, mental illness, negative

body images—side by side. It was left up to the reading series and Cabaret Stir Fries to jostle writers and performers together regardless of culture. At the Reading Writers I event, Surjeet Kalsey, Nicole Brossard, Lucy Ng and Adhri Zhina Mandiela blew the lid off political correctness in several directions. On a level stage on an equal footing, different experiences and techniques gave way to diverse styles. Each writer charged the audience with her own unique voice, presentation, subject matter, and language, with Mandiela closing out the set for an energized romp, dub-style.

Having been off-centre in Toronto for almost 20 years, Beverly Yhap is detouring to Vancouver where she hopes to finish her latest play, *Body Blows*.

# WATCHING THE CHOMSKYBOYS & LISTENING TO THE DISPOSABLE HEROES OF HIPHOPRISY

## THE NOAM CHOMSKY LECTURES

WRITTEN, PERFORMED  
AND DIRECTED BY  
DANIEL BROOKS AND  
GUILLERMO VERDECCHIA.  
GREAT CANADIAN  
THEATRE COMPANY,  
OTTAWA.  
MARCH 11-21 1992.

PUBLISHED BY  
COACH HOUSE PRESS,  
TORONTO, 1991, 94PP.  
GUEST INTRODUCTION:  
JOYCE NELSON.

HYPOCRISY IS THE  
GREATEST LUXURY  
DISPOSABLE HEROES  
OF HIPHOPRISY,  
CD AND CASSETTE,  
ISLAND RECORDS,  
NEW YORK.



Michael Franti, Rono Tse. Photo by Victor Hall.

BY CLIVE ROBERTSON

WHENEVER I WRITE A GARBLED review, I re-read it and wonder what multiple signals have simultaneously reached my cortex to produce such a 'mind-rant'. It is, for sure, a serious side effect of close media-watching. One obvious solution is to focus and 'speak to the issue' but often the subject(s) under review cover issues that are four miles wide and sixty years long. The "manufacture of consent" is one such issue. The other is contemplating the relationship between the permanent adaptations of bourgeois culture, and its unending regeneration of cultural products. Has this social construction become organic, or what? Bourgeois art is not the mind-set production of any one class, gender, race or preferred sexuality. Can it—that culture which makes structural reform into a rhetorical gesture—be isolated?

A writer for TV Ontario's *Imprint* and editor of a theatre magazine reaffirmed old habits: "We choose guests and topics that work as television. Guests that twitch—he said watching me spread my fingers over my face—do not make for good television." So goes the great communicator school of entertainment and we could hazard a guess that somewhere in there hides at least one current strain of the B-word virus.

Some recent examples of rantables: 1) The Olympia & York syndrome: "Of the top 100 economies in the world, 47 are not nations at all but unelected and publicly unaccountable companies." — Gerald Caplan, *Toronto Star*, March 29, 1992. 2) The eulogies to Barbara Frum: the brave, compassionate TV journalist and unappointed Governor-General who earned \$250,000 a year and who, really not knowing, asked Nelson Mandela: "What beliefs kept [him] going?" Frum's much beloved on air practice displayed more interest in liberal containment and control than justice. 3) A Black comedian on "Live from the Apollo" rapping on environmental issues: "Save the forests? Not

me. It was white folks who began this mess, chopping down trees to build ships to pick up slaves. Save the planet? The planet doesn't need saving, its old enough to take care of itself! It will shake off the human race like a dog shaking off fleas."

4) Alessandra Mussolini, niece of Sophia Loren and granddaughter of Il Duce ran for election under the NSI neo-facist party in Italy. Says the granddaughter: "My grandfather was a 'progressive', a proto-ecologist who disliked cutting down trees for Christmas, and a proto-feminist who encouraged women to participate in sporting events." 5) David Frost quizzing Patrick Buchanan about his sister's TV ads against American public funding for the arts: "Wasn't it a joke, a mindless tactic in the middle of a political dogfight?" asked Frost. "No," said proud Buchanan, "that ad will go down in the history of TV political campaigning." 6) And finally, the collegiality of the alternative and the mainstream press all supposedly fighting the common enemy of injustice and hypocrisy: the *Globe & Mail* prints as news, a page one 'cover story' by Stephen Godfrey, based upon "secret documents 1986-91", demonstrating that the federal government gave in to the American film lobby during the bi-literal free trade negotiations. Joyce Nelson wrote the cover story, "Losing it in the Lobby" for *This Magazine* in October 1986. The *Globe's* scoop was only six years late! There is not even an acknowledgement of Nelson's impeccable analysis.

I MISSED THE NOAM CHOMSKY Lectures when it played in Toronto. The play was a hit from the time of its opening at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in February 1990. It moved to Theatre Passe Muraille the following March, played at the World Theatre Festival in June, and the Fringe Festival in July. It received a Chalmers Award. I read the book-of-the-play, the script is perky: an illustrated, chatterful and entertaining agit-lecture. The production came to Ottawa. I saw it twice. The first time on a

pay-as-you-can Sunday, the second (to watch the audience) for a mere \$20.50. I remember all the similar film, video, performance and, yes, theatre productions that didn't get this far.

I'm clicking channels and there is this Gil Scott-Heron voice and syntax coming out of a San Francisco rap duo: The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. The cut is "Television: The Drug of the Nation". Given the way that monopoly distribution works, only one local record store has ever heard of the band—it isn't on the charts. It's not up to me to tell retailers their business, but I thought knowledge of new releases and youth were supposed to walk hand in hand. Once I could track it down, I opened the cassette package and there in the 5 point type is the group's list of "Inspirators & Conspirators"; among those named are Malcolm X, Gil Scott-Heron, Angela Davis, Billy Bragg and ... Noam Chomsky.

*One of the bizarre indigenous instruments we will be using is the Artstick. It will be used by either Daniel or myself whenever one of the performers cross that fine line between art and demagoguery...Article 51 of The Noam Chomsky Lectures Charter states: 'When hit with the Artstick the speaker is effectively silenced.'*

The Noam Chomsky Lectures

*Like most in the U.S.  
Its tough to make a living,  
when you're an artist  
Its even tougher  
when you're socially conscious  
Careerism, opportunism  
can turn the politics into cartoonism  
Let's not patronize or criticize  
Let's open the door and look inside  
Pull the file on this state of denial  
Hypocrisy is the Greatest Luxury  
Raise the Double Standard*

Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy

What do the Chomsky Lectures and Hiphoprisy have in common? First their productions offer a welcome if temporary



relief, not just in the sense that they provide clear and confident oppositional voices, but also by an inclusion of a critique, not only of their own practices, but also of the fragile license afforded their work. Without having to directly say it, they know there is support but little back-up.

What is most socially significant about the recent art of common erasures and re-theorizing absences? We as cultural producers (without an immediate agenda?) protest and organize in relative times of abundance but keep our mouths shut and, alone and in groups, touch our forelocks to the nearest hand-out giving cultural institutions during tough times. We accept the level of artists fees that, combined over a year, doesn't amount to more than a cupboard full of Kraft dinner. Those of us who have, so to speak, opened the doors, socialize with cultural bureaucrats paid to keep us consenting while we look for casual employment. We refuse to exercise the privileged collective powers we've historically been allocated, and we argue locally over what is the dominant art discourse. As if somehow such an intellectual struggle had any major connections to where the larger mass culture is headed. Nevertheless we as artists act as if it affected the permanent discourses of infotainment, its propaganda and economic base in public relations.

In this country political correctness is to art what libel chill is to publishing and, relative to other countries, the other foot has yet to drop. People are now again proud to admit their political incorrectness, as if social inequity were some breakthrough—a new intellectual theory of perpetual social relativity.

It was Walter Benjamin who suggested that with the advent of mechanical reproduction, the total function of art was transformed from one based upon a practice of ritual to one based upon a practice of politics.

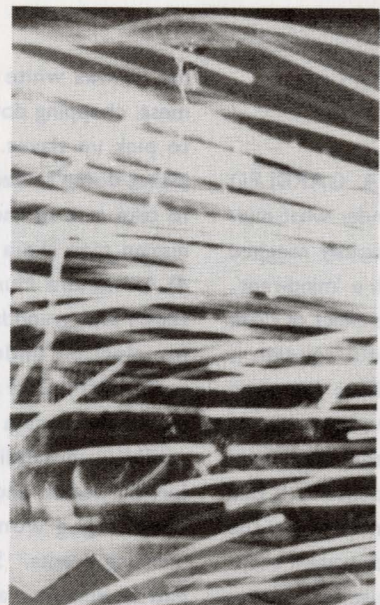
In the current world, as artists with a "social consciousness" will variously acknowledge, producing work from and

about a political assessment can be viewed as an intellectual right of passage, a passage on the way to that imagined real job or sustainable living. You have the right as an artist or as a cultural producer to 'vacate' the arena and develop your other skills and interests. There is to be sure, no lack of social consciousness within

the population. The problematic, passed on from one sub-generation to another, is how to find that voice, and how to mentally and financially sustain it. Culturally speaking we've learned to adapt to post-socialism before it was smart-bombed. We have helped elect NDP governments who, once in office, turn out to be, not governments of the party, but governments of people already empowered—with the strange result that we don't even get to rotate the elite.

This is not a cynical view of the 'state of the Art'. Cultural opposition or dissent is not at its heart an evolving or continuous political movement; for artists so engaged, it is a job, and, like most fragmented labour, it is undervalued, discontinuous and invisible. Entertainment is also a job, conversely and continuously visible. Whether or not we consider it a gift or a sentence, as it turns out, entertainers of print, radio, screen and television invade our senses, not just during our adolescence, but for eternity.

After reading **The Chomsky Lectures**, and acknowledging its clarity and the considerations put into it, what interested me in seeing the play, was the audience and its response. The play, because it is based upon Chomsky's writings, links the actors/writers and their community with, among others, students and professionals engaged in Journalism, Political Studies, Communication and Cultural



Studies. Linking these fields of knowledge with artistic practice is no easy task. As feminist art historian Christine Conley said, "for academics and their students, it's hard to relate Communication or Cultural Studies to artistic production, the different employment practices and behaviours are like oil and water."

Brooks and Verdecchia make explicit linkages of cross-ownership

and executive control between corporations and the media. And they examine and illustrate some of the social relationships between artists and journalists, between cultural organizations and their contractees/ employees, among authors, playwrights and audiences, and among art, entertainment and 'demagoguery'.

For the Chomsky Lectures the audience who has through education accessed information and who has analysed corporate management, arts management, foreign policy, and journalism gets to see and hear how it plays out in real life, at least from the artist's perspective. The same is true for Hiphoprism. The educational pre-requisite can be an informal rather than a formal cultural education, but in either case it requires an active openness to transformation.

Other artists have used similar techniques. Gil Scott-Heron as evidenced in his part-live 1978 album, *The Mind of Gil Scott-Heron*, was an expert in transforming kitchen table or street corner chats on current events into poetic, communal, learning and exchanging events. (See "The Ghetto Code : Dot-dot-dit-dit-dot-dash—It means 'damned if I know'.") The common thread is often the shared discovery of finding out things you weren't supposed to know.

The sections of the work that appear in the published text of **The Chomsky Lectures** provide an idea of how the

play is structured. 1. Introductions. 2. Clarifications. 3. Terms of the Show. 4. History (of American corporate and political involvement in South America). 5. A Play within a Play. 6. History Part 2—The Middle East. 7. Universal Wit Factor. 8. Intermission (fake). 9. Lecture—Challenging the Notion of Canada as a Nation of Peace-keepers. 10. Mainstream Press and the Manufacture of Consent: a) Choice of Topic, b) Placement, c) Ideological Assumptions, d) Blind Stupidity, e) Biased Sources, f) Quoting Out of Context, g) The Memory Hole. h) Captions and Headlines, i) Doublespeak, j) Weight. 11. Response to Critics. 12. The Auction. 13. Audience Opinion Poll. 14. Silence and Falling. 15. Digression. 16. Marketing Plan. 17. Public Service Announcement. 18. Dramaturgy. 19. Last Part.

Brooks and Verdecchia make good use of local newspaper theatre criticism to comment on, and construct devices for their show. One such device is the "Universal Wit Factor" inspired by Geoff Chapman of the *Toronto Star*. A slide appears showing a graph with the vertical axis representing "yuks/buck" and the horizontal axis representing the passage of time. During the production, the "yuks/buck" quotient rises until the History segment, at which point the reading falls below the zero line (negative yuks/buck). A dotted line shows a slow rise for the remainder of the show. Other

devices are the "Whistle of indignation"—blown when performers speak indignantly, and the "Artstick" described above.

The production of the play, as it is introduced to the audience, is constantly being updated and revised. According to Brooks, the published version of the play and its appended variations allow others to freely lift the ideas and constructions into other new works rather than simply re-staging the play with a different cast.

The 'Chomskyboys' is both a PR tag and a misnomer. Both Brooks and Verdecchia have, as actors/writers/directors, other similar engaging works to their credit. And successful as **The Noam Chomsky Lectures** are, the authors intend to move on to fry other fish. Hopefully an inspired filmmaker will quickly come forward and make a film version of this production. If TV Ontario could get beyond tourist television they would take on such a project, and others like it, themselves. (B.C.'s Knowledge Network did take such a leap with the co-production of Sara Diamond's four-part video drama, *Lull Before The Storm*.)

The Ottawa houses for the production were good, even if they were comparatively quieter and understandably different from the Toronto hothouses, where every phrase is know and tell. Brooks and Verdecchia taped, for inclusion in the production, a local CBC Radio critic attempting a dismissal of the Ottawa staging. Following the performance, a group of students stayed behind and told the authors that the radio theatre critic quoted, was also a tenured professor at Carleton University. They had enjoyed the production and were pleased to tell the authors that, yes, their professor was a domineering prick.

Hiphoprism has a tougher row to hoe. The music industry and even its fringe components are forever weeding out any real dissent, pushing artists into PR puppetry, trying to make deadwood look like living trees.

On "Hypocrisy is the Greatest Luxury", Hiphoprism looks forward by

reaching backward. They reprise a Scott-Heron metaphor from his 1973 **Winter in America** album. Scott-Heron was looking back at the losses of the sixties, and the resulting political confusion. Hiphoprism in their "The Winter of the Long Hot Summer" sing about the Gulf War :

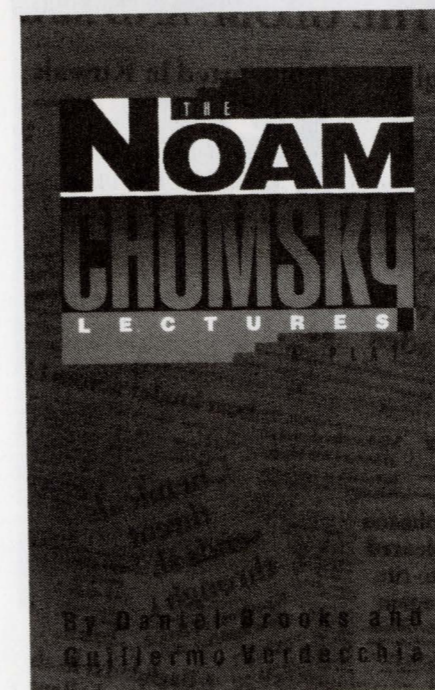
*The stage was lit  
and the lights were all faded  
The pilots in night goggle vision goggles  
Kuwaited and generals masturbated  
'til the fifteenth two days later they invaded  
Not a single T.V. station expressed dissension  
or hardly made mention to the censorship  
of information  
from our kinder and gentler nation  
blinder and mentaler retardation  
DISORIENTATION  
The pilots said their bombs lit Baghdad  
like a Christmas tree  
It was the Christian thing to do you see...*

Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprism

Hiphoprism touches on all of the above mentioned issues, beefs, and community self-criticisms. There's even a song called: "Music and Politics". They also have a line for my friend at Imprint and all those overbearingly trite newspaper arts reporters that get promoted to double as on-air experts for CBC's *Newsworld*. "Television, where straight teeth in your mouth are more important than the words that come out of it.... Television, the drug of the nation, breeding ignorance and feeding radiation."

Hiphoprism, in the cassette sleeve notes, ask for "comments, articles, and book titles of interest." I'm sending them my copy of *The Noam Chomsky Lectures*. If such material interests you, the book version and the cassette will be useful additions to your collection.

**Clive Robertson is an untiring critic of institutional culture, a performance artist, and an activist. He is member of the Board of Directors of FUSE Magazine and is a contributing regional editor for Ottawa and Montréal.**



TORONTO

Censorship and more Censorship

Another Glad Day shipment seizure by Canada Customs removes the well-known and widely read anthology of sexually explicit lesbian writings COMING TO POWER from their shelves. This

only a few weeks after close to 400 people gathered to protest Metro Police bringing obscenity charges against the same bookstore for carrying BAD ATTITUDE, a lesbian porn magazine.

According to recent revisions of the Criminal Code—in reference to the case of Regina vs. Butler—obscenity does not automatically apply to sexually explicit material but is meant to regulate “undue exploitation of sex” in the context of “crime, horror, cruelty or violence”. Additional qualifications as to what is acceptable refer to “community standards” in ways which would seem to define Canadian society as a whole as a single ‘community’, and which would seem to invalidate the notion of consent where sexual style and that ‘community’s’ normative standards are at variance.

Ongoing protest, public education and lobbying activities are being coordinated by CENSORSTOP an umbrella organization including groups such as The Ontario Coalition Against Film and Video Censorship and Coalition Against Customs Censorship.

A forum focusing on women, sex and censorship is being organized by the Feminist Caucus of the Ontario Coalition and is scheduled to take place November 7th and 8th.

\*%#! Not only are police and customs officials exercising powers of censor, here at FUSE our special issue Living with HIV ran into trouble with three printers who refused to print the sexually explicit images contained in Bruce Eves artist’s piece. According to one sales rep “we don’t want to play the censor, but...”

[Errata]

Last issue’s “Positive Women” by Roseanne and Kecia Larkin was an uncredited excerpt from POSITIVE WOMEN: VOICES OF WOMEN LIVING WITH AIDS edited by Andrea Rudd and Darien Taylor, published by Second Story Press, Toronto 1992.

The following biographies were unintentionally omitted from the last issue:

Michael Lynch, (d. July 1991) a native of North Carolina, had been a respected professor of English at the University of Toronto since 1978. An early proponent of Gay and Lesbian Studies, he organized the first gay history conference in Canada, “Whitman in Ontario” in 1980. His expertise was further put to use as a longtime member of THE BODY POLITIC. His contributions to various AIDS organizations include being either a founder or Chair of the AIDS Committee of Toronto, AIDS Action Now, and the AIDS Memorial Committee. His book of poetry THESE WAVES OF DYING FRIENDS was published in 1989.

Michael Smith (1958-1991) was a well-known queer punk and radical faerie whose committed political work on native solidarity, gay rights and AIDS issues touched and enriched many lives. As talented an artist as he was an organizer, his one-man show, “Persor Livid With AIDS”, wowed audiences at the 1990 QueerCulture festival with its passionate and articulate blend of street theatrics, autobiography, mischievous antics, politics and music.

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