

# FUSE

MAGAZINE

VOL.15 NO.1&2 FALL 1991 \$3.50

**WHEN QUEER IS NOT ENOUGH:**  
IDENTITY AND POLITICS IN QUEER NATION  
STEVEN MAYNARD

**VENTRILOQUISM AND VOX:**  
A REVIEW OF THE JOURNAL'S REVIEW OF NO NEW LAND  
—PLUS: THE JOURNAL AND CBC RESPOND!  
ZOO SULEMAN

## IMAG(n)ING RACISM:

SOUTH ASIAN CANADIAN  
WOMEN WRITERS  
BY ARUNA SRIVASTAVA



**ARTIST'S PROJECT: GWENDOLYN**

**PROBLEMS OF PUBLISHING AND POLITICS**  
IN HARBOUR, THE MAGAZINE ON ART AND EVERYDAY LIFE  
ROBERT LABOSSIERE

**& SEX AND IDENTITY, RACE TO THE SCREEN, IMAGES 91,**  
HEALING IMAGES, AND OTHERS REVIEWED.



**GEORGE LEGRADY**  
Between East & West  
October 23 - November 16

**JONATHAN ROBINSON**  
Sight unseen: a travellog  
November 20 - December 21

**MINA TOTINO**  
When the Ice Cubes Melt  
November 27 - December 21

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:**  
YYZ invites artists working in time-based media to make submissions for exhibition of their work in the screening room.  
Deadline: January 15

# YYZ

Artists' Outlet

1087 Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada, M6J 1H3  
Tel: (416) 531-7869 | fax: (416) 531-6839

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

**COLIN CAMPBELL:** Curated by Bruce Ferguson  
**MEDIA WORKS** Organized by The Winnipeg Art  
1972-1990 Gallery  
**ILVA KABAKOV &** Curated by Richard Rhoades  
**JOHN SCOTT** Organized by The Power Plant

PUBLIC OPENING:  
NOVEMBER 15, 1991, 5:30 P.M.  
EXHIBITIONS CONTINUE THROUGH  
JANUARY 5, 1992

GALLERY HOURS: Tuesday to Saturday,  
noon to 8 p.m.  
Sunday and holidays,  
noon to 6 p.m.  
Closed Monday

**POWER PLANT**  
The Power Plant  
Contemporary Art at Harbourfront  
231 QUEEN'S QUAY WEST  
TORONTO, ONTARIO  
CANADA, M5J 2G8  
416-971-4949

CELEBRATING **20** YEARS OF INDEPENDENT  
VIDEO & AUDIO PRODUCTION IN **1991**

**COLLECTION**  
**10**  
Trinity Square Video  
presents its 10th  
Annual Screening of  
Independent videos  
purchased for its  
Collection.

**JANUARY 17TH, 1992**  
**ARTISTS' DAY**  
**TWO SCREENINGS.**  
**For times and more  
Information call  
593-1332.**

• Presentation  
• Production  
• Distribution  
• Marketing

**TRINITY SQUARE  
VIDEO**  
Trinity Square Video, 172 John St., 4th  
Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1R5,  
1332 13th for the past 20 years providing  
public access to the tools of video and  
audio production.

FOUNDATION FUNDS  
ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
**ARTS**  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
FONDS DE FONDATION

## FOUNDATION FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR NEW ARTISTIC VENTURES

Assistance from a new endowment fund is available to Ontario-based professional artists. The Venture Fund will assist artistic projects that are challenging, experimental, and risky, such as:

- projects expressing artistic ideas new to the artist;
- projects that are new to a particular community;
- projects that involve unique interdisciplinary collaborations.

Projects are not limited to 'avant garde' or previously unexplored art forms.

Application Deadline: February 14, 1992

For more information on eligibility requirements and guidelines, please contact:

The Department of  
Development Ventures  
**ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL**  
151 Bloor Street West, Suite 500  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1T6  
Telephone (416) 961-1660, or  
toll-free 1-800-387-0058  
Fax: (416) 961-7796

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

## A JOURNAL FOR WOMEN ARTISTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT AT THE CROSSROADS

Arising from the virtual absence of documentation of Black Canadian women's art, and the apparent need for a cultural and political magazine encompassing a wide range of issues,

Poetry, short stories, journal entries, experiential writing, radio plays, theatre, interviews, screenplays, transcribed performance pieces, reviews, essays, and all other forms of creative writing are invited. Also accepted are photographs, prints, graphic illustrations, photographs, murals, mixed media, painting, collage, sculpture, quilts, beadwork, textiles, etc.

PLEASE SEND PHOTOGRAPHS AS FAX & WRITE OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORK DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS!  
All submissions should be accompanied by a bio and a short paragraph describing the work. Other relevant information, ATC is especially interested in receiving contributions from women in the Maritimes region and writers who have not yet been published.

Deadline for first issue is January 15, 1992

SEND TO: AT THE CROSSROADS: A JOURNAL FOR WOMEN  
ARTISTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT, CO-KAREN AUGUSTINE,  
P.O. BOX 517, STATION P, TORONTO, ON, M5S 2S8

**BREAKING BREAD**  
INSURGENT BLACK  
INTELLECTUAL LIFE

By bell hooks  
and Cornel West

Thought capturing  
dialogue and passionate  
essays, hooks and West  
grapple with the dilemmas,  
contradictions, and joys of  
Black intellectual life.

0927129456X \$14.95 pbk  
09271294551 \$34.95 hdbk

betweenlines



**TORONTO WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE**  
 73 HARBORD ST.  
 TORONTO, ONT. M5S 1G4  
 (416) 922-8744  
 NEW HOURS:  
 MON.-THURS., SAT. 10:30-6  
 FRI. 10:30-9, SUN. 12-5  
 WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

**article**

**SALLE 1**  
 3 installations  
 Line Blouin  
 Mary Sol Wong  
 Mariela Boveilo  
 du 16 novembre au 15 décembre 91

**SALLE 2**  
 Les voleurs  
 Andrew Carlisle  
 du 19 octobre au 10 novembre 91

15, mont-royal ouest, #105, montréal H2T 2R9 842 9686  
ARTICLE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY CAROL PODDOWORNY; ILLUSTRATION BY MARIELA BOVEILO; DESIGN BY CAROL PODDOWORNY

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

**BEYOND 1992: EXPERIMENTS IN CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION**

**A SPACE**

183 Bathurst  
 Suite 301,  
 Toronto, Ont.  
 M5T 2R7

**Deadline for submission of the proposal/project-description is January 31, 1992, the decision regarding selected participants will be announced by March 15, 1992. Send your submission, including CV and brief statement of intent by each participant to: A Space, attn. "Beyond 1992."**

"Beyond 1992: ..." is envisioned as a "process" exhibition which will take shape during the months leading up to October 1992. Both the actual interdisciplinary/collaborative works produced, and/or the documentation of the working process,

**FUSE MAGAZINE**

**VOL. XV NO. 1 & 2**

**EDITORIAL BOARD**  
 Catherine Crowston, Pat Dejaridin, Dora Espoo, Bryan Gee, Sandra Haar, Lura McDough, Loyd Wong

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
 Mary Louise Adams, Colin Campbell, Brent Cahan, Ray Cronin, Yashar Essop, Heather Frise, Monika Gagnon, Gwendolyn, Martha Judge, Robert Labossière, Larissa Lai, Stephen Lee, Steven Maynard, Gillian Norman, Andrew J. Paterson, Carol Podedworny, Norman Richmond, Florence B. Sticoll, Aruna Srivastava, Zoel Suleiman, Anne Vespry

**STAFF**  
 Sandra Haar (Production)  
 Loyd Wong (Administration)

**DESIGN**  
 Burkhard Design Collective

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Karl Beveridge, Catherine Crowston, Pat Dejaridin, Dora Espoo, Clive Robertson

FUSE is published five times a year (includes one double issue) by Aron's Cultural Affairs Society and Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist organization. Our offices are located at 181 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5T 2R7, tel: (416) 367-9159. All news items should be sent to this address. Second class mail registration No. 4455. Copyright ©1991 Aron's Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International Copyright Union. Copyright is shared equally between the authors and the publisher. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Aron's Publishing assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscript not accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. Publication of an advertisement in FUSE does not include endorsement of the advertiser by the magazine. Opinions expressed outside of specially invited editors are not necessarily held by members of the editorial board.

FUSE acknowledges financial assistance from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Government through the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the many hours of volunteer and partly paid labour which are provided by everyone listed on our masthead.

Subscription rates: \$15 per year (institutions \$22 per year) in Canada only; for US and elsewhere add \$3.00. Dissentions regarding who qualifies as an "individual" subscriber remain the right of the publisher.

ISSN 0838-403X

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index  
 FUSE is a member of the  
 Canadian Magazine Publishers' Association  
 Printed in Canada by Delta Web Graphics

**CONTENTS**

VOLUME 15  
 NUMBERS 1 & 2  
 FALL 1991

**ISSUES & EVENTS**

4 **What Does "Empowerment and Marginalization" Mean Anyway?**  
 The Women's Art Resource Centre's conference by Anne Vespry

5 **(Many Different) Images 91**  
 Independent's festival and satellite screenings by Andrew J. Paterson

8 **Problems of Publishing & Politics in Harbour, the Magazine on Art and Everyday Life**  
 by Robert Labossière

11 **Culture Jocks**  
 Race to the Screen in review by Larissa Lai

14 **When Queer Is Not Enough**  
 Identity & Politics by Steven Maynard

19 **COLUMN**  
**Ventriloquism & Vox**  
 A Review of *The Journal's* Review of *No No Land* by Zoel Suleiman

25 **FEATURE**  
**Imag(in)ing Racism: South Asian Canadian Women Writers**  
 by Aruna Srivastava

35 **ARTIST'S PROJECT**  
**Gwendolyn**

38 **REVIEWS**  
**Sex and Identity**  
 by Brent Cahan

41 **Women, AIDS & Activism**  
 by Mary Louise Adams

42 **Healing Images**  
 reviews by Heather Frise, Martha Judge, and Florence B. Sticoll

46 **Malcolm X: The Last Speeches**  
 by Norman Richmond

47 **Yellow Peril: Reconsidered**  
 reviews by Stephen Lee and Monika Gagnon

50 **Lucy**  
 by Yashar Essop

52 **Now You See It:**  
 Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film  
 by Gillian Morton

54 **The Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival**  
 by Colin Campbell

56 **In Control**  
 by Ray Cronin

59 **Robert Houle: Indians From A To Z**  
 by Carol Podedworny

60 **INDEX for volume 14**

# ISSUES + EVENTS

4 FALL 1991 FUSE

## What Does "Empowerment and Marginalization" Mean Anyway?

BY ANNE VESPRY

A FRIEND OF MINE SUGGESTED that "Empowerment and Marginalization" is just a fancy way of saying, "You can stand up, if you don't rock the boat." I doubt the Women's Art Resource Centre intended that interpretation when they planned the *Empowerment and Marginalization Conference* (Toronto, April 5-7, 1991). Yet, their intentions were not clear. This left confer-



FROM CONFERENCE POSTER: BINARI CULTURAL PERFORMER, WOMYN RISING FESTIVAL photo Regan McClure

throughout the conference.

The first panel set the tone for the rest of the weekend. Presenter Maketa Silvera, of Sister Vision Press, began by describing the position of women of colour writers in both mainstream and feminist publishing. Or, rather, she described various positions outside of, or in opposition to, the white-owned publishing industry. Thanks to the Ontario NDP, a Black woman is more likely to be elected to provincial parliament than have her manuscript accepted by Canada's commercial presses. Feminist publishers have a better record, but Kitchen Table Press (in the U.S.) and Sister Vision Press (both women of colour presses) still offer the best chance for previously unpublished women of colour authors.

Having staked out a position on the far fringe of the literary margin, Silvera went on to discuss ways of empowering both writers and small publishers. She firmly linked empowerment to financial success and mainstream attention. She first questioned where readers find out about new authors, and then decided that readers read the mainstream. Her vision for empowerment included pressuring bookstore chains into stocking small press books and getting papers like *The Globe and Mail* or *New York Times* to give equal prominence to reviews of small press publications. While this was a logical conclusion, it does a great disservice to authors, publishers, and bookstore owners who are working hard to create networks of mutual support. The discussion following the

showing of Debbie Douglas's and Gabriela Micallef's *another love story*, a video about women and AIDS that features an interracial lesbian couple, reestablished the question. One of the audience members disagreed that racism and homophobia had anything to do with the reluctance of school boards or white feminist organizations to show *another love story*. Her thesis was that, by not including enough documentary information, Douglas and Micallef had given the establishment an excuse to reject their video.

If they wanted to succeed as videographers, she maintained, they would have to satisfy all possible criteria that the Board of Education, or anyone else, might demand. She refused to understand that if someone with power is looking for an "excuse" to reject a work, they will find that excuse no matter what. Her argument, however, also made clear a group of assumptions about "empowerment." These include: Empowerment means mainstream recognition. Empowerment means leaving the margin and becoming part of the societal centre. Empowerment means making money. Douglas and Micallef were quick to point out that financial success was not their main motivation. Had it been, they "would have made *Parky's Three*." At least, they would have known better than to start a political lesbian feminist production company. Their purpose is not "trying to get a piece of the mainstream pie." Rather, their goal, their vision of empowerment, is "to change the structure so there is no margin."

The next day, Joy Asham Fedorick picked up the theme of defining and dealing with being

marginal to mainstream culture. In her experience, "being in the margin is like having one foot in the bush and one foot on asphalt. There you can see things other people don't see and experience things that others do not experience." She spoke eloquently of the pain inherent in being marginalized. Despite this, she clearly believed margins give us the outlook necessary to perceive the emperor's nakedness. Most importantly, they can also be the best vantage to find those who might be our allies in the emperor's overthrow.

In effect, then, the question of the meaning of "Empowerment and Marginalization" depends on whether one desires individual or collective empowerment. Cultural producers have a choice. We can throw energy into gaining attention from mainstream consumers, and, if successful, reap the rewards of mainstream success. The alternative is to celebrate the clarity of vision inherent in our position. We can link with other "marginal" peoples forming a margin and becoming part of the mainstream could ever be. It and creative space than then the Fedorick said during the closing panel, that given time the mainstream tends to move to the margin, and take upon itself what has known better than to makes it more vital that we who are already here be responsible for creating the best damn margin possible. We must learn to see, as Debbie Douglas put it, "living and working on the margins as a powerful place."

Anne Vespry is a queer, Black writer and member of the scanalines film collective.

## (many different) IMAGES 91

BY ANDREW J. PATTERSON



LAST SPRING, THE SECOND annual Northern Visions Images festival was held June 6th to 11th. In 1990, all of the screenings were presented at the Euclid Theatre, Toronto's own theatre for the alternative or experimental film and video community. In 1991, The Euclid was still the main site of screenings during the festival's formal duration, but the retrospective of Quebecois filmmaker Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's features was held at the NFB's new John Spotton Theatre. Workshops and panel discussions were also presented at the Spotton. Expanding upon a 1990 initiative of "satellite" screening of tapes and films by First Nations producers at the Council Fire Native Centre, in 1991 Northern Visions decided to enlarge their satellite programming.

Over the past few years, Toronto has witnessed a marked increase in film/video festivals and/or combination festivals with panels and lectures. Just



gramming is asserting itself into Toronto.

From its inception in 1988, the *Images* festival has had a mandate for the inclusion of voices either excluded from, or seldom contextualized within, larger, more mainstream or "general" festivals such as Toronto's mother of all festivals: *The Festival of Festivals*. However, in comparison to the more "site-specific" festivals and/or conferences mentioned earlier, *Images* is itself rather "general,"



its mandate has included a balance of film and video (both through-out the festival and within all programmes, excluding the retrospectives), a commitment to showcasing national, racial, and sexual diversity, and an acknowledgement that different artists work with many different aesthetic modes with wildly varying budgets. These mandates are honourable, and even wonderful, but implementations are dependent upon resources, the choice of programmers, and the range of submissions—particularly within the "Open Call" or



"New Works" programmes. To my own eyes and ears, although I was unable, of course, to attend each and every individual programme, the quality of exhibited works was an improvement over any of this festival's three predecessors.

There were not the glaring discrepancies between the guest-curated programmes and the "Open Call" programmes, which have marred previous *Images* festivals. *Images 91* contained a greater degree of international content than ever before—perhaps due to the lower quantity of works submitted by Canadian and particularly Toronto-based producers.

Zainub Verjee's "Media Mirage" programmes were curated to allow a pluralism of representations of Arabs. This pluralism stood in contrast to the dominant Western media's stereotypical characterization of "the Arab," which the United States and its allies have been employing for years as if in preparation for their inevitable war in the Persian Gulf. The two programmes of two works each formed tightly focused and portable entities: they were well received within the main festival, as well as at the satellite screenings.

The five programmes curated by veteran film/video buff Claude Forget occupied a position somewhere in between the "Media Mirage" and the "Open Call" programmes. Forget's programmes had thematic links, but they also seemed to be connected on a more abstract basis—for example, certain visual motifs would recur throughout specific programmes. Each programme had a feel to it as well as a theme or subject. The "New Works" programmes, in parallel, seemed less thematically forced than they did in previous years.

It is problematic, however, that the "New Works" jury (Colin Campbell, Betty Julien, and Almerinda Travassos) had to solicit specifically lesbian and gay works through American distributors such as San Francisco's Frameline and Chicago's Video Data Bank, while very little queer content was submitted by both Canadian and international artists and distributors. I don't believe that *Images* has necessarily been scooped by the freshly faced Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival; believe there is room for both, or even more. But in the catalogue of the most recent *San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, there was no call-for-submissions-advertisement placed by the Northern Visions organization on

the behalf of *Images*. If there is indeed a problem of profile for *Images* among gay and lesbian producers (or, for that matter, among other communities or demographics of producers), a few strategically-placed submission calls could help rectify this situation.

The relative paucity of submissions from a particular demography of producers raises the sixty-four thousand dollar question of who exactly is *Images* a festival for? or, exactly what are this festival's focuses as well as its constituencies? I have always considered this festival's mandate to be one of diversity of independent production, which is not the same as being about diversity(ies). (I have both exhibited and programmed in the context of this festival, albeit in different years.) In order to avoid degenerating into merely an alternative generalist *Festival of Festivals*, *Images* has targeted specific communities and/or audiences. In 1990 posters indicating particular works of interest to specific audiences were circulated to those audiences in an effort to attract potential viewers to the screenings at The Euclid. In 1991, *Images* decided to expand its previously tentative satellite programming.

The objectives behind the satellite programming were articulated by panelists during "Critical Frameworks: Programming Work by Producers of Colour." The panelists agreed that, in order to expand a festival's audiences, the festival in question had to centralize itself in a large city or in any other large geographical entity. Potential audiences should not be expected to transport themselves into distant neighbourhoods. American panelists writer/curator Coco Fusco and veteran programmer/administrator Tony Gittens were particularly adamant advocates of satellite programming. Too many barriers—such as distance, schedules, histories of either outright exclusion or token inclusion, and language—have combined to create an impression of white artist-programmed media arts festivals being inaccessible to producers and audiences of colour.

Satellite programmes extended *Images*' mandate to present films and tapes to specific cultural communities in order to address audiences from which the works originated and for whom the works were (at least initially) intended. *Images* attempted to meet audiences in their own languages, employing simultaneous translation where possible and utilizing appropriately bilingual catalogue notes. *Images* administrative director Sybil Goldstein considered the satellite programming to have been relatively successful in both establishing and then strengthening contacts and working relationships for the festival. Audience sizes were, with one exception, considerable and responses favourable. The one

relatively disappointing turnout occurred at the York Woods Library in North York, where, in retrospect, Goldstein felt that if this particular screening (like others in the satellite programmes) had been organized in conjunction with and co-sponsored by a community group, rather than with an institution such as a library, then it might have enjoyed a larger audience.

For the 1992 *Images*, Northern Visions would like to continue its evolution towards becoming more of an umbrella for variously-situated screenings and activities, rather than simply an organization dedicated to one centralized, albeit sprawling, festival. However, the satellite programming was draining on personnel, and there is a movement among the Northern Visions collective to continue the satellite outreach but on a more informal level. (Filmmest D.C.'s Tony Gittens only halfheartedly suggested that projecting film onto a clear wall in a shopping mall was the most effective type of satellite programming—almost guerrilla-style intervention rather than a tightly-organized community event.) It is unlikely that *Images* will undertake anything that quasi-spontaneous; but Goldstein feels that meeting people in their own languages means doing it perhaps less officially than previously. Northern Visions plans to hold the *Images* festival earlier next year—in April rather than in June. Excessive summer heat may have limited audiences' attention spans both at The Euclid and in the late June satellite programmes at the Council Fire Native Cultural Centre.

Unfortunately the Inside/OUT Collective is planning to hold the second, expectedly huge and successful Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival only one week before *Images 92*. This is not at all good timing for *Images*. Saturation may result from extended filmfest viewing for practically all potential audiences; and *Images 91* had lower attendance figures than did *Images 90*. The movement towards a more temperate weather is a good idea and so is acknowledging the potential of university audiences. But two film and video festivals within one month assumes that potential viewers have both a lot of leisure time and extraordinary amounts of stamina and money (since neither of these festivals are ideologically in opposition to one another, many viewers are favourably disposed towards both). *Images* festivals have been a welcome screening and viewing format for many different enthusiasts since their onset; this festival's move towards becoming an umbrella for the presentation of a diversity of works to an array of audiences is a sound strategy, as long as the festival can maintain and challenge its initial base of the alternative or experimental film and video communities.

**Andrew J. Paterson is a Toronto writer, actor, and video artist.**



# Problems of Publishing & Politics

*in Harbour, the Magazine on Art and Everyday Life*

BY ROBERT LABOSSIERE

Stephen Home and Lari Maestrà, editors  
Harbour Publishing, Halifax/  
Harbour Art texts, Montreal

**PUBLISHING IS DOMINATED BY** those who can afford its high organizational and technological costs. For artists to self-publish requires an appropriation of organization and technology. This is a critical project in itself.

Artworks on the glossy pages of commercial art magazines usually do not raise the issue of the power of artists or others in the face of corporate publishing. The failure to do so obscures the issue, with the result that art is appropriated for the institution of high art commerce instead of for increased efficacy of art and artists.

By contrast, artist books, local art magazines, pamphlets, posters, even their '80s cross-over counterparts, fanzines, appear more authentic than the secondhand reviews or ersatz art work in commercial magazines. A new art magazine, *Harbour*, published originally in Halifax and now in Montreal by artists, is a welcome new con-

tributor to critical art discourse. From the first issue it was apparent that *Harbour* differed from other Canadian art publications.

It features artworks and writing focused on issues of politics generally and in art specifically.

*Harbour* is part of a critical resistance to the economy of publishing and represents an attempt to salvage authentic art out of an industry reduced to simulation by commercialization.

Admittedly, politics is not new to Canadian art publishing. Some of this territory is covered by existing art magazines; by *Fuse* magazine, for example, and by *Parachute*, *C. Impulse*, and *Canadian Art* magazines somewhat. However, unlike *Fuse*, *Harbour* contains no editorials, no news and does not substitute visual art within a generalized concept of cultural production.

Unlike the others, it doesn't only occasionally introduce artworks with a political focus as if they were merely examples of competing art strategies. Rather, *Harbour* is exclusively art-centred and thoroughly political in content.



VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1 (SUMMER 1990)

publishing today and current issues in art discourse.

*Harbour* publishes artists' projects rather than reproductions of art. The publication of art works as art and artists' work in publi-

cations are not new; there are many precedents in this century. Artists in book form, do posters, or employ mass

*Harbour*, like all art magazines, works on many levels. Each art magazine belongs to the history of art and of publishing. Each has an editorial focus and style. But each also endears to distinguish itself from its predecessors. In the struggle something is offered up that reflects the conditions of art

with what is published as art in magazines today. The context for publication of art has become much more commercial and meaning obtains to the published artwork in a necessarily different way.

The re-introduction of the artist print project into commercial art magazines in the '70s and '80s illustrates how changed the context for art publication is. There, the artwork most often appears to be the poor and homeless relative of an otherwise rich family of authentic original artworks resting more comfortably in the artist's studio or gallery. In the commercial venue, the published artwork drops the name of its richer relative, but usually without elaboration or extension.

Published reproductions of artworks do not even make the artist's work available to a wider consumer group, for they are not for sale.

At its worst, the commercial publication of art reproductions contributes nothing as art but merely simulates art and publicizes the artist. The failure is critical because it creates confusion about what the reproduction is in relation to art. One reason for this may be that only rarely do the art reproductions clearly the problems raised by the act of publication—issues of authenticity, reproduction, originally, and mass distribution.

Yet, the medium of graphic production and the technology of mass reproduction can be used to confront these issues without compromising the immediacy that is necessary to art. For example, if artists work creatively with the formal vocabulary of print media instead of merely reproducing a drawing or paint-

ing, the false allusion to fine art in its more conventional form can be avoided. The mass reproduced object is less likely to be confused with the unique one.

Similarly, if issues in the world outside art are raised explicitly in the artwork, it can be more engaging, in part because the expectation that publica-

tions provide information is satisfied. The pages of a magazine are not confused with the walls of a gallery. Further, if the publication is editorially cohesive and can be read as a whole, each part relating to all the others, then there is even greater resistance to confusion because the artwork does not appear isolated.

And, as noted above, the magazine as a whole will satisfy expectations that it operates as a vehicle of communication rather than advertising. All of these features can be combined by the creation of an artwork interwoven with the process of production and distribution and mediated by the discourse of publication.

Granted, it is a difficult challenge for commercial art magazines to provide artists the opportunity to work so closely with the medium or to play with the content of the magazine as a whole. What such magazines do achieve in their traditional role—



VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2

Informing their readers about current art trends—needs be acknowledged. But the failure of the commercial magazines to approach issues more fundamentally to artists—issues of medium, venue, and audience—remains critical if the print medium's tendency towards promotion is not to defeat its potential authenticity.

Now three issues into production, *Harbour* has demonstrated a firm commitment to addressing the more fundamental issues of art publishing. Though diverse in subject matter, the art/text works in *Harbour* demonstrate a broad range of approaches to art publication and art politics.

Not all the artworks in *Harbour* succeed as good art or even good politics, despite the fact that many critical devices, such as print media technique and reference to the social world outside art, are employed. Carol Lang's "In Memoria" and

Andrew Carlisle's "Laws of the land, the laws of nature," in the first issue, failed to overcome the difficulties in reproducing newspaper photographs. More generally, many works in the first issue relied too heavily, in my opinion, on accompanying text, conceding too much to the conventions of journalism.

Michael Fernandez's piece was an exception. He successfully used photos borrowed from other sources with a sparing use of the words "scratch scratch, punch punch" to give an active sense to the subject of economics and partition raised by facing images of a banker's house and people crowding onto the Berlin Wall.

Angelika Festa's "Fish, Bread, and Body," also achieved a certain inseparability of concept and realization where other works in the first issue didn't. Although Festa's work was a text, it had an art theme woven into it and a delicacy of layout and typography that clearly located it outside of literature.

Festa's text was ingenious, moving through violent images until the text obtained a dream-like quality. The narrative sparked, then frustrated, my expectations that it should be just story-telling, just fantasy, just biography, or just description. In the process of describing her personal experience as woman/subject/artist, Festa developed a politic of form also.

And here I see my work as performing for others convertible lenses that magnify on one side and reduce on the other. Except, that when everything is said and done, I continue to bleed more or less in spite of myself. I can imagine it never stopping, going on forever. But I remember the

paranoia of not really having been (p. 40)

There are oppositions here which, from a structuralist critical point of view, qualify the text in classic and mythological literary terms: the real and the imaginary; power and its victims; the process of perception and the concretization of art. But in the end, Festa's memory and fear of "not really having been" threatened to end interpretation more literally, to close down experience. This philosophical cynicism reflects, in some measure, what is a disturbing if not unnerving intuition for many artists: that the odds are that art cannot sustain itself against the real.

Heidigger in "The Origin of the Work of Art" proposes that for art to work, it must reveal something that reality itself does not, something essential to being. He called this something the unconcealment of Being. For Heidigger it was "harbour" in the artwork itself, consisting of more than either what the artwork is made of or what it depicts, realized only when the viewer recognizes through art the effort to embody a truth.

Festa's artwork performs in this philosophical sense by creating a not pleasant but nevertheless profound sense of being an artist and a woman and a subject. Her work is contradictory and complex but also committed to the difficult project of dealing self-critically with the limitations of art.

To discuss *Harbour* more generally is difficult when there is not a well-developed critical vocabulary for discussing art publishing. The commercial bottom line will not do. And aes-

thetic judgments too fall too far into the consumer world.

Fortunately, the magazine itself gives some direction as to how it should be approached. The name *Harbour* obviously refers to the geological formation which Halifax surrounds and upon which its economy is based. Naming a location only slightly less obviously refers to past site-specific art, the same art that led to the concept art for which the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design was removed and around which revolve or evolved several of *Harbour's* editors and contributors. These concerts are interesting. But more importantly (Sam Mallin's essay in the first issue gave up this clue), the name also refers to Heidigger's concept of the work—the thoughts that the artwork gives rise to are "harboured" in the work. *Harbour*, the magazine, literally represents its locale and a certain local art history but it also promises to give this art shelter

just as art itself shelters meaning.

For Heidigger, the concept of location is pivotal to the philosophical understanding of art: "That for which room is made is always granted and hence is joined, that is, gathered, by virtue of a location . . . Things like such locations shelter or house men's lives." (Building Dwelling Thinking, Horstader, trans.) To follow the lead Mallin gave us, there is promise that the magazine as such a location will offer up this Heideggerian integrity between what is represented and how it comes to be.

*Harbour* also features more conventional articles and interviews sensitively integrated with artists' projects. Interviews with Richard Layzell and Freda Gutman in the first issue discussed political art from the artist's perspective and practise. The interviews were casual, short, and informative. They didn't risk a lot either in challenging the artist or in reaching for complex discourse but they served well to give a practical impression of art practice and to introduce readers to artists they may not know well.

Reviews and analytic writing constitute another supporting aspect of *Harbour*. In the first issue, Sam Mallin's review of Phin Baugh's Dance-Theatre

analyzed the way the theatre performs challenge comfortable assumptions. The audience, Mallin said, discovers theatrical presentation and reception to be points on a continuum of social behaviour which is subject to assumptions and prejudice as are other forms of behaviour. Which is to say that a certain social reality has been revealed to be hidden, there is an "unconcealment" that is experienced. This experience opens the possibility, Mallin concluded, of modifying experience so that it becomes more genuine.

In conclusion, *Harbour's* modest production and straightforward presentation belies a depth in the materials it contains. In taking up the task of publishing original art, independently and with a clear editorial focus, *Harbour* demonstrates that the artist-run press can do much more than bring local art to a wider audience. It can elaborate aspects of current discourse and give artists an opportunity to take on much larger issues, such as the fundamental problems of integrity presented by the publication form. *Harbour* privileges art not by facsimile but by providing an authentic site of publishing. Today, when so much information is received via the medium of print, this is an important achievement: integrating art with its surrounding discourse in order to effect an actual art experience in the reader who no longer remains only a spectator and consumer.



Sam Mallin's review of Phin Baugh's Dance-Theatre

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3 (SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, 1991)

# Culture Jocks:

BY LARISSA LAI

## Race to the Screen in review

IN ITS SCOPE, *RACE TO THE SCREEN* (January 26 to February 3, 1991) was a highly ambitious project. In posing marginalized racial identity as the subject of this week-long film/video festival, its organizers juggled with definitions and, of necessity, must have articulated them in an arbitrary way. The participants of the festival were a diverse lot; they had to be, if the terms "Asian," "Black," or "Native" are general in terms of the people and practices to which they refer. "Race" and "racially marginalized" is much more general. When we speak of racial marginalization, we usually mean marginalization with respect to a white mainstream. Such a definition, however, is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, because of the tendency in Western practice to dichotomize every struggle, there tends to be an assumption of both the homogeneity and the "Blackness" of that group which exists in opposition to the white mainstream; and secondly, it

gives primacy to definitions espoused by mainstream culture, using it as the norm by which people of colour are judged. Because, in this case, the definition was kept loose, it was possible for certain debates to arise. Firstly, when we speak of race and racial discrimination, are we talking in terms of skin colour or in terms of culture? Secondly, if we are talking about marginalization, can we isolate race as a factor by which people are marginalized? Finally, what are the implications of racially marginalized people making their own media works? How is our subjectivity affected and how have we used/can we use film and video to establish our identity in a North American context?

The debate concerning the socially constructed nature of race was the subject of the Saturday morning panel. Most of the speakers on this panel, speaking from their own experience, adhered to the point of view that it is white colonialism, media, and racism that has defined and continues to define race. Cat Cayuga, not fitting into the media stereotype of what a Native woman should look like, discussed the constructed nature of that image as a product of a racist Hollywood whose "Indians" are always clearly signified as Indians through mainstream stereotypes. In terms of initiating her own projects dealing with Native identity, she has come up against government imposed barriers because she does not look the part. The flip side, as Roger Simon, a white Jewish man, pointed out, is that by their invisibility, culturally marginalized people who appear while maintain access to power.

Up to this point, the main concern seemed to be who could and who could not lay claim to racially marginalized identity, and a frustration with the knowledge that it remains the white mainstream that has the power to define this.

Poet/activist Marlene Nourbese Phillip adhered to a reactionary stance vis-à-vis identification on the basis of culture. She claimed that it is by her skin colour that she and members of her community are identified and harassed by members of the public and by the police, and that until these overt instances of racial aggression cease, the question of culture is not relevant. She suggested that the racist focus of the media with respect to the Royal Ontario Museum's exhibit, *Into the Heart of Africa*, was triggered by the association of hyper-emotionality with the Blackness of the protesters. (Reviews of the exhibit concerning colonial exhibitions into Africa, which was eventually cancelled, down-

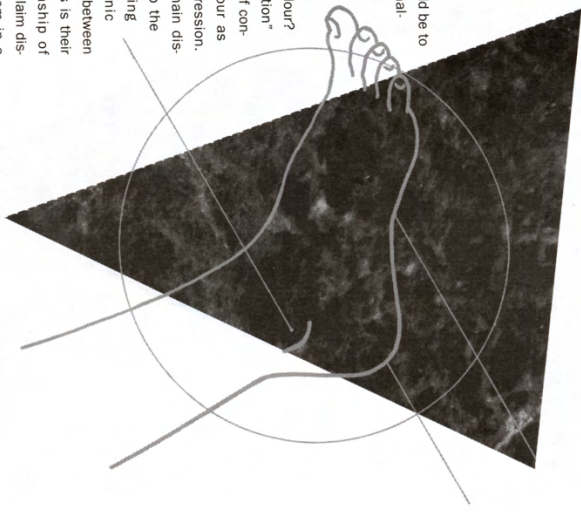
Robert Lussis is an artist and writer living in Toronto

played the concerns of protesters, focussing instead on the emotional nature of their dissent.)

Betty Julien eschewed such a position as denying diversity amongst Blacks, and denying race as a social and political agenda hinging on oppression not only by violence, but also by more insidious means. If Blacks identify themselves by their skin colour and their relationship with respect to the dominant culture only, then they deny their cultural diversity and place their internal activities, debates, and histories as secondary to monitoring of the activities of whites. She and Richard Fung seemed to support a less monolithic view of race and racism as defined and controlled by the white mainstream, although this notion was certainly not denied. Each described a "culturally confused" upbringing. Julien as an adopted Black child of white parents in Nova Scotia, and Fung as a child of Chinese descent growing up in Trinidad, forcing each individual to constantly negotiate her or his identity because of the contradictions involved. To further problematize the question of hybrid identity, Richard Fung pointed out that while most people whose ancestry is a mixture of African and European identity as Black, those of mixed Asian/European descent are merely confused. Accepting that the mainstream plays an enormous part in how a person identifies himself or herself, Fung was careful not to deny individual agency in that identification.

To deny that agency would be to pose all racially marginalized people as victims with no control over their own perceptions.

A talk by Richards Dyer entitled "Of No Colour? Whites and Representation" reinforced the dangers of concentrating on skin colour as the focus of racial oppression. In the prelude to his main discussion, he brought up the problem of identifying whites as an "ethnic group." The distinction between whites and other groups is their position in a relationship of power. Whites can not claim discrimination against them in a culture in which they undeniably and overwhelmingly hold such a power advantage. In fact, by their ubiquity in the media, they are perceived as diverse and are not considered "a group" at all, except in the context of discussions surrounding race. Having said all that, however, he presented a number of Hollywood stereotypes as ethnic representations of whites. Dealing primarily with the function of light in such films as *Way Down East*, *Girls in Uniform*, *Pandora's Box* and *Bus Stop*, he illustrated how only the whitest of white women can embody the ethereal, angelic goodness of Hollywood heroines. After demonstrating how light is used differently with Black and white characters in *In the Heat of the Night*, he suggested that Hollywood technology was designed in such a way that only whites could feature as the good guys. In a section of



his presentation entitled "Blacks Have More Life," he suggested that the emotionality of Blacks so often portrayed in Hollywood films was a positive attribute, and that whites were stereotyped as bloodless and sedate. However, the discussion was problematic in that it did nothing to counter the stereotype of Blacks, yet posed them as a sort of cultural norm against which whites, as an ethnic group, could be juxtaposed (still leaving those who are neither Black nor white out of the picture). Admittedly, the whole discussion was rather tongue-in-cheek. Whiteness in this case might be considered a metaphor for homosexuality, or at least the homosexual subtext of many of Hollywood's narratives. It might be added, however, that it

is still a white male subject (even if homosexual) that this subject treats.

For lesbians and gay men of colour, racism is irrelevant unless discussed within the context of heterosexism. As Kobena Mercer brought up in his talk "Dark and Lovely," to talk about double or triple oppression makes little sense in terms of establishing a subjective identity. Existing as whole individuals, it is only by standing outside ourselves, objectifying our position(s) that we are able to perceive ourselves as fragmented in this way. To a degree, racism in the gay and lesbian community and homophobia in the Black, Asian, and Native communities forces us to separate these identities from one another. Mercer talked about living on the

### There is no monolithic, unified "racial marginalization", to say there is entails placing ourselves in a position which can only perpetuate the status quo, identifying ourselves to the enemy to save them the bother.

intersection of our communities, laying ground that insists on the diversity of each. Both he and Midge Onodera (in "No No-No's: Exploring Form and Sexuality," a discussion with Atom Egoyan) discussed the dilemma which faces gay or lesbian artists of colour, who find themselves holding the power to represent their (singular) community under the mainstream's assumption that, for example, all Asians, or all lesbians are the same. Midge Onodera has made tapes on sexuality and on cultural identity—the subject is clearly identifiable in each (*Ten Cents a Dance/Parallax and The Displaced View*). Her only attempt to "integrate" these identities in "Heartbreak Hotel," an episode of CBC's *Inside Stories*, was edited (by the CBC) to deny the protagonist's lesbianism. The fragmentation of race and sexuality is constructed under force.

Kobena Mercer brought up strategies used by Black gay male filmmakers to undermine this insistence on the heterosexuality of Blacks and the whiteness of queers. Marlon Riggs' *Tongues United* features numerous Black gay men speaking for themselves, thus emphasizing the diversity amongst them, and breaking down the authority of the white male heterosexual voiceover that so often accompanies documentaries, especially those concerning such "sensitive" topics as sexuality. Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* deals directly with the homosexuality of the well-known Black American writer Langston

Hughes, whose sexual identity and that of many of his peers became buried increasingly deeper as his work was popularized.

Much gay and feminist work in *Race to the Screen* focussed on the colonization of the body. Kobena Mercer was concerned with how gay male culture, the work of Robert Mapplethorpe in particular, has appropriated and idealized the Black male nude as an object of white male desire. *Looking for Langston* questions this action through a Black male subject, who also perceives the naked body of a Black man as desirable.

Because of white gay culture's appropriation of this image, however, the object is unattainable, the property of white men. At the same time there exists an identification with the object. He experiences both pleasure (identifying himself as desirable) and frustration (at his inability to obtain the object of his desire).

Helen Lee's film *Sally's Beauty Spot* deals with a similar problem with respect to the heterosexual Asian female subject and her body. Although the protagonist, Sally, seems to feel no resentment at the representation of Suzie in *The World of Suzie Wong*, the viewer is encouraged to do so, as clips presented clearly exemplify the racism of that film. The act of taking pleasure in her desirability affirms Sally's subjectivity. When she discards the bottle of concealer with which she was attempting to hide her beauty spot and embraces a Black man,

she recognizes her power to act, to affirm herself. This alters the viewer's "reading" of Suzie's behaviour. Suzie actively pursues recognition of her desirability, albeit one that a "liberated" Western audience might find funny. ("Please, won't you let me tell my girlfriends you hit me?") She wants a mark, Sally, who already has one, after much turmoil chooses to take pride in it, thus affirming Suzie's want, Suzie's desire, as legitimate. It might be noted that Sally's affirmation of her small spot of Blackness, reinforces the notion of race as polarized (i.e., Black and white), merely inverting the mainstream notion that white equals good and black equals bad, rather than transcending it. While Sally's actions reinforce that notion, her presence as a "Yellow" woman denies it, leaving the viewer to ponder other possibilities.

Work which is clearly lesbian seems to hinge on the need for acknowledgement. Michelle Monabeer's *Exposure* features a discussion between two lesbians of colour. The "processual" nature of this tape, however stereotypical, does affirm the existence and the issues of these women. There was, unfortunately, a lack (though not a complete absence) of work clearly dealing with lesbianism. While Richard Dyer and Kobena Mercer were present to give solo discussions about, directly or indirectly, male homosexuality, no lesbian producer, of colour or otherwise, was featured in this way.

In the end, I am having great difficulty. By the nature, or as a historical construct, a review requires the condensation of a larger body of work. A particular method employed by almost all the speakers in this conference was to speak from experience, to speak from knowledge of their immediate, sensory, day-to-day perceptions. The end result in writing about it becomes something entirely different because the sense of community is lost with the details, which must be flushed away to achieve this piece. There is no monolithic, unified "racial marginalization"; to say there is entails placing ourselves in a position which can only perpetuate the status quo, identifying ourselves to the enemy to save them the bother.

While such umbrella terms can be important to reassure us in our individual struggles that we have much in common, it is the particularity of each identity, small incidents and fragments of lives that have impact, and the acceptance and remembrance of them which will keep this loose association from flying apart.

Lanissa Lai is the co-ordinator at SIMU Video and assistant curator for *Follow Perf: Documented*. Other articles have appeared in *Independent City*, *Mix*, and *Video Guide*. Peery has appeared in a number of literary journals.



# When QUEER IS NOT Enough

## Identity & Politics

BY STEVEN MAYNARD

WE SEIZED THE LABEL "QUEER" away from bigots and bashers, printed it in big, black, bold letters, and proudly stamped it on our shirts and on the streets. We raised our queer voices to shut down Christian fundamentalists and to remind everyone that "we're here, we're queer and we're not going away." And we shoved our queer tongues down each others' throats in front of unsuspecting suburban shoppers who made the mistake of venturing into the heart of our downtown territory.

These were only some of the actions that accompanied the birth of Queer Nation in Toronto during the summer and fall of 1990. As fall turned to winter, need to balance critique with the need for protection and affirmation in our communities. Rather, what I want to do is examine Queer Nation to see what it can tell us about lesbian and gay politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In many ways, Queer Nation embodies some of the possibilities and problems of lesbian/gay politics in the past few years, particularly concerning the contested roles of "identity" and "community." I want to do this by drawing on the emerging critique of the politics of queer nationalism, particularly as it is coming out of the United States, and by looking at some of the experiences of Queer Nation in Toronto. In doing so, we need to remember that while I will often talk about Queer Nation in terms of what it represents on a broad political level, there are many important differences between individual Queer Nation groups.

Let's begin then at a Queer Nation meeting in Toronto. At one of the meetings I attended in the fall of 1990, facilitators were experimenting with a process which attempted to give speaking room at meetings to women, people of colour, and people of differing abilities. In many ways, this process was representative of a broader politics within Queer Nation, a politics based on identity. Much has been written about the topic of identity politics. In recent years, it has come under sustained criticism by feminist and lesbian/gay theorists. Within the lesbian/gay milieu, a serious rift has evolved between a theory that stresses the limits of a politics based on identity and the shape of much practical political organizing which often relies on an appeal to sexual identity to

mobilize people. This is nothing new. In the early days of gay liberation, activists appeared to identity using such slogans as "Gay is Good." But in the early gay liberation movement there was an understanding that while adopting sexual identities was necessary for organization, the longer term political goal was to challenge the very basis of sexual (and gender) identity, to dismantle a system that used the labelling and categorizing—indeed, the very creation—of identities to regulate sexual lives. One of the problems in more recent appeals to a "queer" identity is that they lack the second part of that political strategy.

It is not difficult to understand why this has happened. The late 1980s were not the early 1970s. After more than a decade of rule by the forces of conservatism in most western capitalist countries, a period in which our very right to exist has been challenged, further exacerbated by AIDS, lesbian and gay politics have been pushed back onto a narrow playing field. Over the years, our agenda has narrowed from a broadly conceived lesbian/gay liberation to one of marking out the fairly limited boundaries of the queer nation and defending those borders. No longer able to challenge the whole notion of sexual identity, we instead assert and cling to the primacy of a queer identity. What this does, among other things, is leave that far more powerful nation of straight people and their sexualities relatively intact. When, in the early '70s, gay liberationists called for an end to monogamy and the nuclear family (a strategy not without its own set of problems),



QUEER NATION MARCH AGAINST VIOLENCE AT METRO TORONTO POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON COLLEGE STREET. Photo: Jake Peters, courtesy Xena Magdonie

they struck right at the heart of the institutions of heterosexuality, calling into question the foundations of all sexual identities. What I am getting at here is simply that Queer Nation and how it handles issues of identity are very much the product of a particular historical moment. As we think through our politics we need to keep this historically specific and variable character of lesbian/gay politics in mind.

Let's return, then, to the Queer Nation meeting to further explore some of the implications of identity-based politics. When, during the meeting, facilitators called for someone of differing abilities to speak, one man wandered aloud, "Does that mean me?" The man was quickly told that Queer Nation does not define the criteria of membership in any particular category or identity, only individuals can decide that for themselves. Here, a curious individualism was, willy-nilly, inserted into the meeting. It was my first exposure to one of the central contradictions in the Queer Nation: we queers may be a nation built on our shared identity as queer, but we are a nation that also respects the individual. Again, it is not difficult to figure out where this focus on a nation of individuals comes from. After more than a decade of Reagan and Thatcher, the ideology of the individual is well-entrenched. The ways, however, in which Queer Nation has been shaped by, and in turn helped to reproduce, the practice of individualism is seldom acknowledged. This has important political implications. In terms of the meeting process, rather than contest the limiting politics of individualism by, say, discussing and coming to a common or collective vision of the definitions and needs of different communities, Queer Nation unwittingly becomes complicit in propping up the dominant ideology of the individual.

On another level, this focus on the individual can serve to obscure the structural or institutional basis of power. Again, returning to the meeting process, because it functions on the basis of individualized notions of identity, the ways in which race and gender (and a host of other differences) are also constituted in broader structures outside of the meeting gets missed. This, in turn, means that a whole series of important issues do not get addressed. For example, what about how racism and sexism within lesbian and gay organizing prevent more women and people of colour from coming to Queer Nation in the first place? Raising issues of gender and race at the level of meeting process and individual identities is important, but it is not enough.

One Queer National put it this way: "Queer Nation is individuals confronting individuals. This is not about institutions." As Peter Kent-Baguley, a British gay socialist, has argued (somewhat harshly), groups like Queer Nation are "nothing more than the thinking of collected individualism, the belief in the thoughts and destiny of the individual with no regard for the structural reality of power." Allan Berube and Jeffrey Escorrier echo these thoughts when they suggest that Queer Nation is based on "the politics of cultural subversion..." (Platter than a strategic politics that confronts powerful institutions. "At different times, Queer Nation Toronto has bucked this trend, aiming its direct actions at such powerful institutions as the political parties of the moral/religious right, the censorship activities of Canada Customs, the Metro Toronto police department and the Canadian military during the Gulf war. It seems to me that there is potential in the Queer Nation Toronto model to incorporate the best of both worlds—to take what is best about the creative cultural impulse of Queer Nation, the politics of propaganda, and mix it with the analysis of the institutional bases of power developed over the years by the lesbian and gay liberation movement.

For some time now lesbian and gay political theorists have been calling for an end to the kind of identity politics upon which groups like Queer Nation are based. While I agree with much of this work, I think we need to be careful about completely rejecting the framework of identity politics. Let me explain by first throwing in my own identity-based issue. In

short, what about class? Let me give a few examples. The occasion was a meeting in the summer of 1990 to discuss responses to the escalating violence against lesbians and gay men, a meeting in which issues of violence something peculiar to Toronto. As Gerard Koskovich has explained: "There are class issues in being queer. I came from a working-class background to Stanford as a graduate student on full scholarship. A lot of people that are the mainstays of the queer social groups in San Francisco are from class positions that marginalize them." My point is that "class issues in being queer" are rarely taken up as part of Queer Nation politics. This tells us several things. First, on a personal level, appears to a queer nation ring false to me. They seem to hide and obscure the divisions among queers. In this case the ways in which class cuts through the queer nation. I also think this lack of sensitivity to class issues, never mind class politics, is also reason for the need to maintain something of identity and gay political organizations—

and Queer Nation is only one example—in which class issues and politics are ignored or rejected, to claim and speak from a working-class identity remains one of the few ways for those of us who desire to put ourselves and our class politics on the agenda. Put another way, when class politics and an understanding of the experience of working-class lesbians and gays are put back into lesbian and gay politics (as they have at different points in history), then I will put aside my working-class identity.

It is also interesting to note in passing that when class does surface within lesbian and gay politics these days it is often in the context of discussions about queerbashing. It is, as I have indicated above, often the opportunity for some to unleash a few angry stereotypes about working-class people as vulgar and inherently violent. For a recent intervention into the issue of queerbashing that takes up the spectre of class from a different perspective, people should see John Greyson's recent film *The Making of Monsters*. In his film, Greyson challenges the automatic link between queerbashing and the working class and instead locates the roots of anti-lesbian/gay violence in gender and the socialization of boys and young men. Framing his film around the 1985 murder of Kenn Zeller, Greyson unravels aspects of this socialization process, suggesting how such things as the education system and organized team sports encourage a particular heterosexual masculinity based on, among other things, aggression and violence.

Unlike class, race and gender are two identity-based issues that have received some attention within Queer Nation. Reflecting on his participation in the United Colors of Queer Nation (San Francisco)—the focus group for queers of colour—one man explained that "until Queer Nation takes on race issues, most people of color will stay with their respective communities." As Maria Maggenti got involved in Queer Nation New York, she began to worry that "the map of the new queer nation would have a male face and that mine and those of

my many colored sisters would simply be background material." In Toronto, struggles around issues of racism and sexism eventually led to the exodus of some white gay men. Rather than take up the challenge to confront their own sexism and racism, many men chose instead to view the process as a personal attack and accused divergence from issues of queerbashing.

While race and gender have become hotly discussed issues within Queer Nation, there appear to be few ideas about how to proceed ahead. For Maria, the answer was to leave; she stayed in Queer Nation for only three weeks. In Toronto, when issues of sexism and racism were raised, men retreated feeling personally or individually attacked rather than viewing it from the perspective of their place within broader structures or systems of racism and sexism and their responsibility to make changes. This again points to the need to challenge the counterproductive role of individualism within Queer Nation. In more recent months, men still associated with the reconstructed Queer Nation Toronto have written letters to Xtra expressing their support for continued attempts to understand the interconnections of oppressions. Two things stand out: class is still conspicuous by its absence and the understanding of power relations remains on the side of the personal or individual rather than the structural. Queer Nation must also recognize that not all the people it attracts necessarily place their queerness at the centre of their identity. As Tomás Almaguer puts it: Queer Nation

has "blithely ignored the (homonizing) spectre of queer nationalism.... Part of what we struggled for in the 1960s and 1970s was the right to reclaim and retain our cultural distinctiveness.... Why can't they accept the fact that being 'gay' is not the primary basis of my self-identity?"

It strikes me as ironic that in the same years that the feminist movement has been sharply divided by, and has seriously begun to tackle, issues of difference, lesbian and gay politics have fallen back on an appeal to a homogeneous nation. Current appeals to a queer nation are not unlike the monolithic "lesbian and gay community" that has so often been invoked in the past. Next to a queer identity, the notion of a nation or community of queers is a centrepiece of the politics of queer nationalism. Who and what is this nation or community?

As Charles Fernandez has written: "In the melting pot that is our Queer Nation, all difference becomes subsumed under the homogenizing 'gay and lesbian community.'" Fernandez notes that this has not always been the case: "The agenda of the early gay liberation movement was meant to transform society and, in the process, liberate a safe social space for lesbians and gay men. But, social space, which was originally meant as a metaphor for the freedom to live openly gay lives, became concretized in the gay ghettos of our major cities. That quest for social space has now been taken a step further with the rise of queer nationalism. One may well wonder if all this won't result in a call for a queer homeland anytime



QUEER NATION POSTERS ON TORONTO STREETS  
Photo: David Whoberg, courtesy Xtra Magazine



soon.<sup>19</sup> Fernandez's words encourage us to remember that the space we are able to carve out remains very limited. For example, while it contests the dominance of white, middle-class gay men and assimilationist politics, Queer Nation nevertheless sets up its own identity, look, and lifestyle. I have heard more than one lesbian or gay man say they felt excluded or alienated from Queer Nation because they didn't feel they had or didn't want "the look." And while Queer Nation shoves itself into the face of suburbia or into straight bars, perhaps making a few people aware that we are here, we must reflect on the effectiveness of our political tactics. Queer Nation actions certainly may get us media attention and they may even create a bit more space for those of us who live within the relatively small (and ultimately regulated) confines of the visible queer nation, but what about others? As Peter Kent-Baguley has written: "Self-appointed lesbian and gay spokespersons who constantly premise their pronouncements on behalf of us all, rely on the myth of the community. . . . Lesbian and gay politics, premised on community rather than class (and I would add race and gender), has done little more than move some people from the closet to the ghetto. Little tangible change has been achieved for lesbians and gays living in rural areas and provincial cities, in marriages and institutions, in youth and in ethnic minority groups."<sup>21</sup>

It is, of course, much easier to critique and find fault than it is to suggest what needs to be done. Following up on some of my comments, however, I would

argue that Queer Nation needs to investigate class politics not only to become more inclusive, but because the history of working-class or socialist politics is one of the few places we can look for and find a sustained commitment to collective visions of change. This might serve as a good antidote to the workings of individualism within the Queer Nation. More attention to class politics might even help to forge some alliances with the labour movement. Writing about OutRage (England's equivalent to Queer Nation), Jon Johnson and Peter Kent-Baguley have argued that their "predilection for cliché rather than analysis, leads them to publish stickers which exhort us to 'stop the straight war against queers,' thus falsely elevating identity above ideology and antagonising working-class heterosexuals, the very people we need in our struggle for equality. Haven't they any experience of workplace struggles supported by heterosexuals?"<sup>22</sup> The point here is that Queer Nation might benefit from learning about the history of cooperation and successful campaigns between the lesbian/gay and labour movements. Those who attended the Inside/OUT Collective's recent *Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival* and saw *Dancing in Dulais* about the British "Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners" campaign will already know of one important example.

Against the homogenizing tendency of nationalism and the exclusivity of a new queer uniform and style, Queer Nation needs to assert the diversity of queers. This has a strategic importance. Presenting ourselves to the world as a unified

nation carries a certain power. But this can also work against us by making what is "queer" overly familiar, identifiable, and therefore, containable. Better to present queers as unified, but always different and ever-changing, as in some ways unknowable and therefore all the more threatening. Regarding issues of gender, the formulation must be changed from a focus on sexism as solely the work of women to the problem of gay men. Attempting to create more space for women, for example, is a good step, but too often such a strategy leaves gay men and our masculinity unchallenged. It will do little good to give a woman the opportunity to speak while in the background, out of turn, some gay man is yelling at the top of his lungs.

In all the excitement that has come along with the emergence of Queer Nation as a new form of political activism, there has been little attention to history or the work done by others prior to Queer Nation. In the words of one Queer Nationalist: "The strength here is in acting out of the present. . . . People are tired of groups with egos, processes, personality cults, and politicking. . . . We do not want a budget, charter, or a history."<sup>23</sup> In this easy dismissal of history, there is little understanding that it was just such groups, processes, politicking, and charters that provided the preconditions for the emergence of Queer Nation.

Again, Queer Nation Toronto seems poised to avoid the excesses and arrogances of some elements within the Queer Nation movement. Their recent "Queer Stories" and "Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past" campaigns seem designed to

bring home the importance and power of knowing our histories. Obviously much remains to be done. Given all the problems and contradictions, I still include myself in that task. The next time Queer Nation takes on one of the institutions that regulate our lives, I will be there. I will be there not because I hear my name called in the appeal to a queer nation, but hopefully because we will be a group united into action by some shared ideas about social and political change.

**Steven Maynard is a socialist gay activist.**

Thanks to the students in the 1991 Ryerson "Lesbian and Gay Realities" course who heard and commented on a version of this article and insisted on a more balanced tone and account.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Alexander S. Chee, "A Queer Nationalism," *OUT/LOOK* (Winter 1991), 15.
2. Peter Kent-Baguley, "Class in the Nineties," *Rage* (Autumn 1990), 19.
3. Allan Berube and Jeffrey Escoffier, "Queer/Nation," *OUT/LOOK* (Winter 1991), 14.
4. My thinking here owes much to bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," in *Reneging, race, gender, and cultural politics* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990), 23-31.
5. Gerard Koskovich in *OUT/LOOK* (Winter 1991), 22-23.
6. Karl Knipper quoted in Alexander Chee, op. cit., 9.
7. Maria Maguire, "Women as Queer Nationalist," *OUT/LOOK* (Winter 1991), 20.
8. See, for example, David Vance, "Last in Rage," *Xon*, 26 April 1991, 17.
9. Tomas Almgren, Letter, *OUT/LOOK* (Spring 1991), 4-5.
10. Charles Fernandez, "Undocumented Aliens in the Queer Nation," *OUT/LOOK* (Spring 1991), 22.
11. Peter Kent-Baguley, op. cit., 19.
12. Jon Johnson and Peter Kent-Baguley, "Let Another Cause," *Rage* (April-June 1991), 13.
13. Alexander Chee, op. cit., 15.

From shot of Ian Hononmising on screen first of *The Journal*.

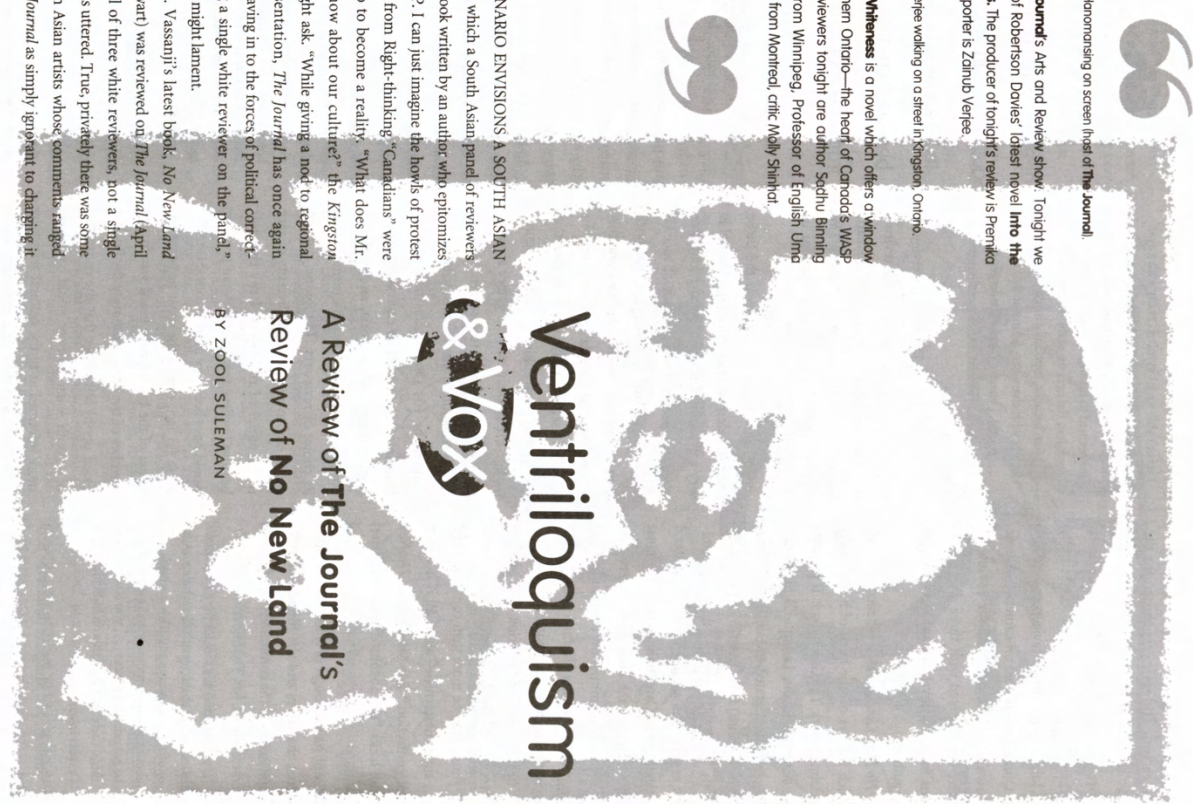
Welcome to **The Journal's** Arts and Review show. Tonight we present a review of Robertson Davies' latest novel **Into the Heart of Whiteness**. The producer of tonight's review is Penelope Rothman and your reporter is Zanub Verjee.

Shot of Zanub Verjee walking on a street in Kingston, Ontario.

**Into the Heart of Whiteness** is a novel which offers a window into the life of Southern Ontario—the heart of Canada's WASP community. Our reviewers tonight are author Sadhu Binning from Vancouver; From Winnipeg, Professor of English Uma Poranneswaron and from Montreal, critic Moly Shinhui.

THE ABOVE SCENARIO ENVISIONS A SOUTH ASIAN parallel universe in which a South Asian panel of reviewers comment upon a book written by an author who epitomizes the acronym WASP. I can just imagine the howls of protest which would arise from Right-thinking "Canadians" were the above scenario to become a reality. "What does Mr. Sadhu Binning know about our culture?" the *Kingston Wing-Standard* might ask. "While giving a nod to regional and gender representation, *The Journal* has once again shown itself to be caring in to the forces of political correctness by not having a single white reviewer on the panel," *The Globe and Mail* might lament.

Yet, when M.G. Vassanji's latest book, *No New Land* (McClelland & Stewart) was reviewed on *The Journal* (April 2, 1991) by a panel of three white reviewers, not a single public comment was uttered. True, privately there was some grumbling by South Asian artists whose comments ranged from labelling *The Journal* as simply ignorant to changing it



# Ventriloquism



A Review of *The Journal's*  
Review of *No New Land*

BY ZOOL SULEMAN

COLUMN

with racism. The reviewers chosen for the task were writers Bronwyn Drainie (Toronto, Ont.) and Susan Musgrave (Sydney, B.C.), and journalist Rex Murphy (St. John's, Nfld.). In the review produced by Jill Offman and hosted on-camera by Laurie Brown, the comments of the reviewers where interspersed with three dramatizations from the novel and an interview with the author.

*No New Land* is Vassanji's second novel, which follows on the heels of his critically acclaimed work *The Gummy Stick*. It presents the story of Nurdin Lalani and his family who have immigrated to Don Mills (a suburb of Toronto) from East Africa in the early 1970s. The book's narrative traces the family's experiences as they try to understand and adjust to Canadian society. The dust jacket describes the book as an observation of a particular immigrant community and the problems of the "human spirit caught between one world and another."

In his review of the book, Mr. Murphy states that he would recommend the book. He found it to be more than competent and less than masterful—"all in all it is a very neat confection." For Ms. Drainie, *No New Land* lacks "the absolute basic that [she] require[s] out of a novel." For her, the novel did not have enough of a focus upon individual characters and she found too much emphasis upon the community in which the characters lived. Ms. Drainie comments:

[I] see the novel as a tool for the exploration of individual character not of a whole society or of a whole community. This is a book about a whole community and even though he has nominal figures . . . you lose track of them, there isn't the focus on individuals that I expect in a novel.

Similarly, Ms. Musgrave dislikes the book because

I wasn't able to get involved really with any of the characters in any kind of lasting way. I mean none of them have stayed with me. No one seemed to distinguish him or herself more than the next one I think that this is a problem because, especially when you are dealing with characters from another country . . . (pause), I wanted them to be larger-than-life . . . (pause) at least one of them larger-than-life.

In my critique of *The Journal's* review, I am not concerned with whether the reviewers liked the book. My critique, instead, focuses upon the conscious choices *The Journal* made in airing the review and in what those choices reveal.

To begin with, the choice of the three reviewers demonstrates that *The Journal* is very conscious of issues of gender and geographic representation but not of race. It obviously wanted to make sure that both men and women reviewed the book and that at least three of Canada's six main regions were represented. Why is it important that gender and geographic diversity be represented? Presumably, so as to gather a variety of viewpoints. The latter comment is, in turn, a recognition that for men to speak for women or for Ontarians to speak for Maritimers is, at best, an exercise in representing falsity and, at worst, an exercise in domination through ventriloquism. Yet, in its choice of reviewers, *The Journal* did not see fit also to represent the diversity of race in its panel of reviewers. I say this not because I believe that a South Asian reviewer would have been any more favourable to the book (in fact, one of the most negative critiques of the book I have heard was from a member of the very community the book is based upon) but rather that the comments of a South Asian reviewer would have been more informed as to the cultural references of the book and the challenges which visible

I doubt that a reviewer of South Asian descent would have found the South Asians in Vassanji's book to be exotic rabbit-like (or is it

bee-like?) creatures who hop from one floor to another and engage in activities . . .

minority immigrants face in settling in Canada. There is no shortage of South Asian writers, critics, and academics in Canada. Why was none chosen to be one of the three reviewers?

I suspect that had a South Asian reviewer been present s/he would have challenged Ms. Drainie's comments which for me constitute the most offensive part of the review. Referring to the group of apartment towers in which a large portion of the book's immigrant community resides, Ms. Drainie states: "This warren, this hodgepodge of . . . of chapatti shops on one floor and . . . and a shoe repair place on another floor and children doing koran lessons after school on another floor and the kosher butcher on another floor. It absolutely blows my mind. I'll never be able to look at those buildings the same way again." (emphasis added)

On the subject of the religious convictions of the community portrayed, Ms. Drainie notes:

The religious roots and the spiritual roots of their life are so strong and especially when you see them against the lay secular

background of Toronto life where religion really means almost nothing anymore on the streets. The idea of these people rushing away from their jobs and going to some dreary little high school auditorium that has now been turned into their mosque and taking off their winter rubber boots and doing their religious observances and then going to have to grab on again its such a very poignant image of trying to transplant your spirituality to a place that is completely inhospitable for it." (emphasis added)

As one of those people who lived in a warren and who grabbed for my winter boots in some dreary little high school auditorium, I must state without condition that I find Ms. Drainie's comments, though probably well intentioned, utterly offensive. Her comments objectify my experiences and represent a "western," orientalist response to a community that she does not understand. Ms. Drainie's comments and to some extent those of Ms. Musgrave, are orientalist in as much as they attempt to create and portray an image of South Asians as seen through their (white) eyes. I find Ms. Drainie's comments akin to those of a Barker enticing ribs at a carnival to come see "Abdul, the Swordswallower from Arabia" or "Scherazade, the Mesmerizing Storyteller." Not unlike the Barker, Ms. Drainie lets the viewer know that there is an exotic group of apartment dwellers in Don Mills who run from floor to floor eating chapatis and reciting the Koran. When not clomping on chapatis, this group grabs for shoes in dreary auditoriums in an attempt to fight a losing battle to practice their religion in an inhospitable environment. I find Ms. Drainie's paternalism and pathos to be misplaced, ill-informed, and offensive.

I doubt that a reviewer of South Asian descent would have found the South Asians

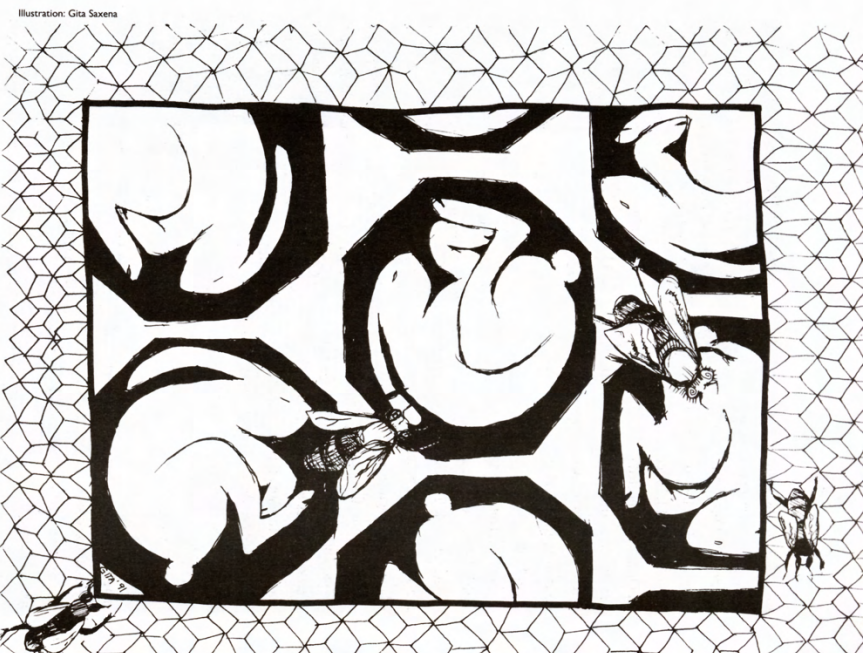


Illustration: Gita Saxena

in Vassanji's book to be exotic rabbit-like (or is it bee-like?) creatures who hop from one floor to another and engage in activities which defy their difference from the dominant culture which they see about them! Ms. Drainie's mind-blowing realization shows, if nothing else, how out of touch she is with the quickly changing demographics of Toronto, in particular, and Canada, in general. Surely, *The Journal* cannot be ignorant of the voices of visible minorities who abhor such representations of their culture in the mainstream media. Why is it then that *The Journal* is aiding in the continued exoticization of visible minority cultures through reviews such as this?

On a related issue, I find the needs of both Ms. Musgrave and Ms. Drainie for strong, memorable, central characters in the novel quite puzzling. After four years of studying English literature as an undergraduate, I find these comments redolent of a Euro-centric approach towards what constitutes "good" literature. Why, I wonder does Ms. Musgrave feel that when "dealing with characters from another country" at least



# THE JOURNAL

Volume 11, Number 4  
October 1991

October 1991

Dear Mr. Blumenthal:  
The "Canadian experience" scene in *The Journal* is a masterpiece of... I am not sure if it is the best scene in the novel, but it is certainly one of the most powerful. It is a scene that deals with the issue of racism in a way that is both subtle and direct. It is a scene that shows the reader the human cost of racism in a way that is both clear and moving. It is a scene that is a testament to the power of the novel as a form of social criticism. I am sure that you will find this scene to be one of the most compelling in the novel. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both clear and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving.

Dear Mr. Blumenthal:  
I am not sure if it is the best scene in the novel, but it is certainly one of the most powerful. It is a scene that deals with the issue of racism in a way that is both subtle and direct. It is a scene that shows the reader the human cost of racism in a way that is both clear and moving. It is a scene that is a testament to the power of the novel as a form of social criticism. I am sure that you will find this scene to be one of the most compelling in the novel. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both clear and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving.



one of them should be larger than life? Does this mean that fiction from Europe, Australia, and the United States should have larger than life characters (they being other countries)? Or does she mean that when she reads literature based in non-European cultures she feels lost unless there are exotic and memorable leading characters?

If both Ms. Drainie and Ms. Musgrave truly find it difficult to enjoy literature which does not have either larger-than-life characters or which focuses upon a community of people rather than a single individual, I feel sorry for them. A great deal of literature which has already been written and which has yet to be written will always be closed to them. I am also at a loss to understand why such reviewers were chosen to comment upon a book which focuses upon a community of characters. *The Journal's* choice of reviewers, in this instance, leaves the show open to charges of neglect of the public trust bordering on incompetence.

Finally, I would like to note the portions of the novel which *The Journal* chose to dramatize. Two of the three scenes deal with the protagonist of the novel, Nurdin Lalani, coming into touch with different aspects of Canadian society. In one scene the audience is shown Nurdin at Honest Ed's Department Store in Toronto (p. 40-41, in the novel). The scene explores the brazen and alluring consumer society in which Nurdin finds himself. The second of the two scenes dramatizes Nurdin's anguish at not being able to find a job since he has no "Canadian experience" (p. 44-45). Of course, Nurdin can never acquire "Canadian experience" since no one will give him a job. The third dramatization deals with a crisis of conscience which Nurdin faces upon eating pork for the first time (p. 127). As a practis-

ing Muslim, Nurdin begins to wonder about the effect of such a transgression upon his soul.

In my opinion, one of the underlying themes of the novel is the effect of racism upon a visible minority culture attempting to settle in Canada. Aside from the internal battles of conscience and values which all immigrants undergo, if they are members of a visible minority group they also have to deal with issues of race. No *New Land* provided *The Journal* with several ready-made scenes for dramatization (no one sitting next to Nandji on a full bus, Esmail being victimized by racist thugs) but instead *The Journal* chose to soft-pedal the issue of racism. I use the term "chose" because there is no doubt that out of the entire novel certain scenes were chosen and others omitted. The scenes which were chosen were probably selected for a myriad of reasons: importance of the

scene to themes in novel, visual allure for the viewer, cost of shooting, etc. I find it hard to believe that the producer of the review, the on-air journalist, and the myriads of other people involved with the production of the review were simply not aware of the issue of racism inherent in the novel. If they were aware of this aspect of the novel, why did they choose not to portray it?

The "Canadian experience" scene is as close as *The Journal* came to acknowledging the issue of racism, yet, the dialogue which accompanies the segment only highlights Nurdin's loss of self-esteem and frustration. It is the victim's pain which was displayed, not the perpetrator's motives. The motives of those nameless and faceless individuals in the novel who deny Nurdin a job are portrayed, in the novel, as being racist. I find *The Journal's* choice to include the "Canadian experience" scene particularly telling given that immediately following this segment in the novel is a perfectly scripted scene of racism in the workplace. In this alternative scene Nurdin is denied a job in a very specific, racist manner and by a very specific type of potential employer (white, paternal male). The oppressor, "Mr. Rogers of Eaton's," is given a name, a face, and an identity. The perpetrator's and the victim's relationships of power (dominance and sub-servence) are made clear. The scene very accurately portrays the nature of the humiliation which many visible minority immigrants have undergone and continue to undergo in this country on a daily basis. I cannot help but wonder why "the Mr. Rogers from Eaton's" scene was left out. My point is not that *The Journal* did not choose the scene which I prefer. Rather, given *The Journal's* decision to deal with the issue of racism in the workplace (and in Canadian

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
P.O. Box 4678  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1B 3S8

October 16, 1991

Mr. Bob Graham

Dear Mr. Blumenthal:  
I am not sure if it is the best scene in the novel, but it is certainly one of the most powerful. It is a scene that deals with the issue of racism in a way that is both subtle and direct. It is a scene that shows the reader the human cost of racism in a way that is both clear and moving. It is a scene that is a testament to the power of the novel as a form of social criticism. I am sure that you will find this scene to be one of the most compelling in the novel. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both clear and moving. I am sure that you will find it to be a scene that is both powerful and moving.





**ARTICLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: IN PROSECUTION**

**RESPONSIBILITY**

REPORTS STRICTLY TO THE EDITOR: CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROPER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF A FREE PRESS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS.

**NOTE**

THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS.

**ARTICLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: IN PROSECUTION**

**RESPONSIBILITY**

REPORTS STRICTLY TO THE EDITOR: CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROPER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF A FREE PRESS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS. THE EDITOR'S OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ARTICLES OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS.



society), why did it choose to dramatize a scene in which the victim feels sorry for himself over a scene which exhibits the prejudices of the racist?

Given the criticisms of *The Journals* review of *No New Land*, how should they have approached the review?

First, they should have made sure that at least one of the three reviewers was South Asian. I am tempted to say that the reviewer, instead of having to be South Asian, should simply be familiar with South Asian culture but in this age of armchair experts ("I am a multicultural consultant") and "third Bennetton culture" ("we are all the same under the skin, you know"), I fear that

"familiarity" may be nothing more than ignorance masked with liberal guilt and arrogance. Since we recognize that when we speak about women, women should speak and that when we speak about Newfoundland, Newfoundlanders should speak, is it so hard to recognize that when the dominant culture speaks of a particular visible minority community, at least one member of that community should be allowed to speak?

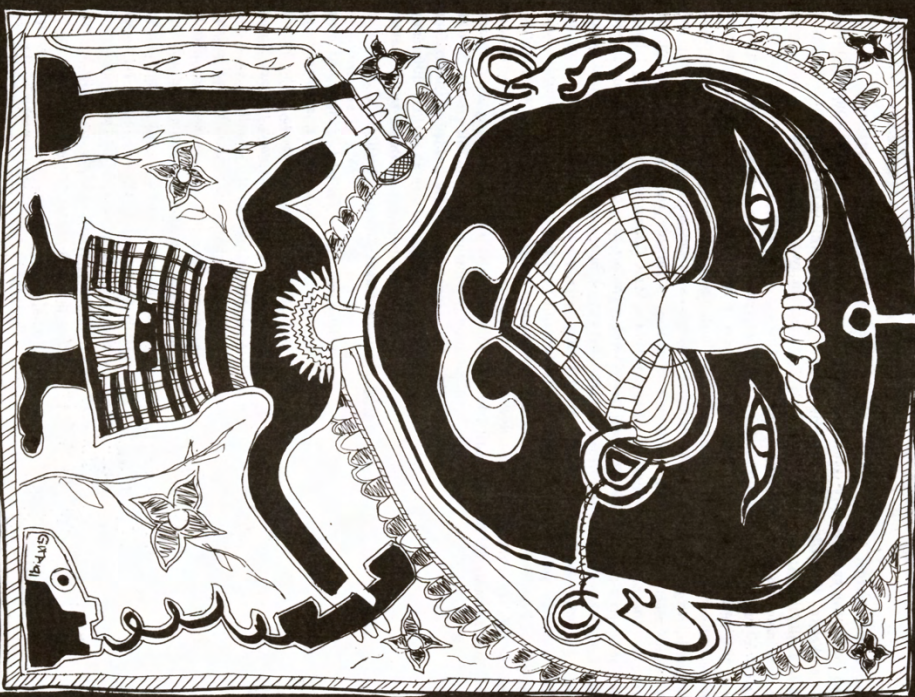
Second, the portrayal of visible minority characters and their interaction with the dominant culture should be dealt with sensitively. For example, whether to give the third person narrator of the dramatizations an "East Indian" accent or not is an important

issue. Many South Asian who were born elsewhere and in Canada have accents, many do not. Did Nurdin have an accent? Did the author envision his character with an accent? Even if Nurdin had an accent, would he talk to himself in an accent in his internal monologues? Did the author envision the third person narrator of the novel as having an accent? Would the use of an accent only further aid the stereotyping of South Asians? These are questions which need to be asked and addressed. If, after asking all of them, those involved with producing the segment still felt that an accent should be used, so be it but the process of questioning in itself is crucial. Hopefully such questioning sensitizes those who shape the image of visible minorities in the media to issues of race and representation.

In contrast to Ms. Musgrave and Ms. Drainie, Mr. Murphy's comments possessed the very type of sensitivity to which I refer. He acknowledged that the novel provides the reader with a "peer into an avenue or a corner of a fairly large strand of existence that normally is taken away from us" and he does not profess to impose his own world view upon the world view of the Shamsi community portrayed in the book.

Third, more reviews and discussions of visible minority cultural production in Canada have to be allowed onto television (and other media). As we enter into the '90s, well-intentioned but ill-executed attempts to "do the right thing" are no longer sufficient. "The right thing" in this context is to admit ignorance. If you know not of what you speak, ask; consult; listen! Even better, let those who do know do the speaking.

**Zool Suleman is a South Asian writer and cultural worker based in Vancouver. He acknowledges the support of *Arbutus* in the writing of this review.**



"Strategic identities:  
I imagine wearing a kilt one day,  
a sari the next, jeans the next:  
Hybridity: a costume of kiltsarjeans,  
parts thereof, with holes,  
in tatters unrecognizable."

Illustration: Gita Sivema

# IMAG(in)ING RACISM: South Asian Canadian Women Writers

by Aruna Srivastava

## Re-imag(in)ing Racism: South Asian Canadian Women Writers

Scene (appropriately enough):

Foreword, afterword, afterwards:  
Revising this paper for consumption by readers of a conference proceedings (Imag(in)ing Women, University of Alberta, March 1990) has proven to be a difficult task: the revisions requested and suggested were by no means major and would undoubtedly "improve" the paper, but Imag(in)ing Racism is so much a product and a process derived from its oral, conference context that I felt I had to come up with other ways of de- and re-forming that context so that it was still recognizable, recognizably different. What follows, then, is the paper as written/spoken with authoritative intrusions—afterwords, afterwards—afterthoughts, both mine and others; responses to the paper, post-paper elaborations, even re-revisions, re-creations. As I suggest earlier, below, the academic convention of foot- or end-note postscripts violates my intention(s): fallacious as they might be, I choose to interrupt your reading with these afterwords, my hope being to re-create through re-writing, re-imag(in)ing, re-imagining (racism) (women), a conference that has been the most important for me, both personally and politically, that I have had the opportunity to attend.

An Ethiopian restaurant in Vancouver. Time: Late evening. Topic: Being struck halfway through the paper I'm to deliver in two days. We reminisce on the presence and absence of racism, repression, displacement, academia, conferences, frames, contexts, language, and the imagination. I return to my computer the next morning able to finish the paper which I fully intend to be made up of women's voices only, among them my own. The male voices to intrude are my own creation: those mythical White Male Colleagues of the story I have written and which you are here to hear. But I cannot quite sustain that fiction, or relegate my intellectual and personal debt, academically, to the feet and ends of my narrative. One doesn't read out the footnotes, after all. And, as we post-colonials know, the margins define, redefine, and undefine the centre. . . . All writing is autobiography, someone said. Someone else said all writing is plagiarism. And yet another someone said this tale grew in the telling. The tale I have written, and have headed with this footnote before I tell it, would have been an entirely different one if it were not, underwritten and inhabited by the voice of my friend and colleague Richard Cavell.

[Afterwords: The tale, re-told, clamours with other voices, conference voices, voices from the past, afterword voices, four women, Linda Hurchion, Jamelle Hassan, Ashe Varadachari, Anita Srivastava, who ground this story; two men, Thomas Hastings and Ashok Mathur, shifting the grounds. A question put to me after reading this paper on male mentorship and feminist theorizing still haunts me, directed not only to considering other feminists and the men in their theoretical lives, but to myself as feminist as well. The problem of men-in-feminism is not a subject of this paper but certainly (in)forms the subject(s) in this paper. My answer? Male mentorship and, influence, patriarchal theorizing, can be subverted, created anew, hybridized by the feminist for her own strong theories. Does this work answer necessarily, slide the indisputable contributions of my male mentors to this work, this process?]

The tale:

Once upon a time there was a girl of seventeen, away from home for the first time to start university in Sudbury, Ontario. Entranced and enchanted by the perils of residence life and the cold, lunar landscape of her surroundings (a far cry from the steamy sunniness of southwestern Ontario), this girl came face to face for the first time with the word PAKI. To her puzzlement, it referred to her, and was meant, she later discovered, all in good fun and the spirit of friendship. What an odd word, she remembers thinking. I am/we are not from Pakistan. This girl had a lot to learn about words (she was just starting a translator's degree after all), about the power of words, the subtlety of metaphor, about racism, both her's and others'. I am not from Pakistan. Perhaps it comes as a surprise that this literal-minded girl ended up doing her doctorate in English Literature.

Years later (I am under no constitutional obligation to specify how many, on the grounds that is may discriminate me), or twice upon a time, this woman is writing her PhD dissertation. (She is a woman now by virtue of years and her immersion, meanwhile, in feminism.) She has been asked—because she is a woman and a rapidly-becoming ethnic—to speak about Women in Indo-Caribbean Literature. She can't locate any, and is pondering, between thesis chapters on the British Raj, how she will write this absence, to be presented a week from now (our heroine's work habits are by now entrenched). It is a beautiful summer day in downtown Hamilton, Ontario and, as she ambles homeward mulling over this difficulty, she encounters two men and a bulldog. Don't get too close, enjoins the dog owner, to that PAKI brood. She forgets the incident immediately, later to ruminate about her first encounter with that Freudian fiction, repression. What a perfect ending to the paper, though. So she relates the incident to conclude her ironic discourse about academic feminism, identity formation, First World arrogance, and postcoloniality. To her minimal surprise, the published version of her paper has been substantially condensed.

ironic musings, and most importantly, the story of the encounter with dog and Man editorially excised. What place for imagining racism in conference proceedings?

Three upon a time, roughly a year later. Interview time at the University of British Columbia (the ending of which chapter you can all guess). The same paper, re-theorized, over-theorized, focusing more resolutely on how we academics come up with our narratives. The racist incident unrelated, lesson learned, is displaced instead with the following poem of Madeline Coopsammy's by way of conclusion. But before that reading, a comment on the responses of her colleagues-to-be to said poem: not, thought two of them, an appropriate ending to a fragmentary and uncited paper; why in/clude with such polemical, and at that, poor poetry? Not to worry, they themselves answered their rhetorical question: this is only the view of a woman (said one), and an immigrant (added the other).

Whoever were those mocking gods  
 who thought it fit to lead us  
 from the green wastes of the Indo-Gangetic  
 to the sweet swamps of the Caroni  
 then in a new migration  
 to Manitoba's alien corn  
 never thought to state  
 the price to be exacted  
 or how or where it would be paid.  
 Images of a just society dangled  
 harlot-like before our eyes  
 we thought that here at last and now at last  
 the spectres of colour  
 would never haunt  
 our work, our children's lives, our play  
 that in the many-faceted mosaic  
 we, angled and trimmed to fit  
 would find ourselves our corner of the earth.  
 How could we not know  
 that time, which heals  
 just as frequently destroys  
 and like the sixties flower darlings  
 we too, would soon become anachronisms  
 be reminders of a time  
 a time of joy and greening  
 We are the mistakes of a liberal time  
 you did not really court us, it is true  
 rather, purging us with sugar-coated pills of  
 medicals and points and two official languages  
 your tolerant humanity  
 festered woundings of "brain drain"  
 While our leaders pleaded, impotent in agony  
 "Do not take our best!"  
 "We want your best,  
 No Notting Hills for us," you warned.  
 And so again we crossed an ocean  
 convinced that little Notting Hills we'd never be.  
 Now lounging in our bike-sized backyards  
 and pretending that we do not see  
 the curling vapours of our neighbour's burger feast  
 (the third this week)  
 waiting across the picket fence  
 we know that careless of our birthright  
 we have sold it for  
 a mess of pottage. (227b)

[Afterwords: An assault on my/self, this whitewashing reduction: only an immigrant's, only a woman's perspective—hers, Madeline's, and mine: partial, incomplete, unjustified . . . images of a just society. So many migrations in the immigrant woman's life, from place to place, self to self, from whiteness to brownness, back and forth. This job interview is the start of a new migration for me, South Asian Canadian woman, into gainful academic employment. This paper, imagining racism, my second migration, a year later, not to Manitoba's, but to Alberta's alien corn, so that I can find myself a displaced voice—among imagining women—with/in the academy, that bastion of liberal values, my values? We are the mistakes of a liberal time . . . ]

If, as Gayatri Spivak would have it, the lesson of "heroic liberal women" is "to return to the third person with its grounds mined under" (89), the lesson of our less-than-heroic questor is now to return to the first person with its grounds similarly giving away under my feet. Besides, I can't get further than three upon a time, as convention would have it. And so to my latest encounter with the imagination of racism. March 1990. Term is ending and trees are blossoming at the University of British Columbia. The Engineering Undergraduate Society publishes their infamous newsletter with its usual dose of sexism, homophobia, and racism, a longstanding tradition. What particularly catches and horrifies the imagination of the university community this time, however, is a (Native) "Indian Job Application Form" covering almost an entire page and containing almost every hateful stereotype directed against native people imaginable. [Afterwords: Resisting the temptation, here, to reproduce, and thus reinscribe, examples from this not-so-blank page, marginalized on two sides by jokes directed against women and against gays. A tale within: that this funny "job application form" is proudly tacked up in a bank in the interior of our fair province. Another story, true: a proliferation of chapters in our fair province of the Ku Klux Klan, one of the largest and most active being in a town with the highest population concentration of Indo-Canadians.] The university administration acts quickly and punitively, to many people's surprise. . . . There is a place for racism and sexism, you know, boys will be boys intones a liberal (White) (Male) Colleague, angered at the furor, especially the threatened suspensions for the students involved. Native as always, I am entirely taken aback. [Afterwords: Freedom of speech, academic freedom constantly brought forth as justification, explanation. These freedoms, as opposed to others? thought to be obsolete, inviolable, true.]

But my most pressing anxiety is how am I to deal with this in class? I am so enraged, so personally offended and involved, that my first instinct is not to mention it at all. But how, in good conscience, can I, who have attempted consistently to foreground the issues of racism, sexism, homophobia and their direct relation to literature, avoid them now in my classes on Canadian and Commonwealth literature? I cannot be silent this time. Nevertheless, the issue raises for me an irresolvable pedagogical conflict—how to maintain decorum, distance, a level of analysis which I myself cannot muster? In the first, a second-year Canadian literature course, I drop all pretence at dialogue and discussion, silence my students, preach at them, and still barely able to keep myself professionally intact, make a grand exit after the sermon. Racism, I intone, is a failure of the imagination. I've had an effect, but not, I am certain, on those who chuckled appreciatively over the offending page with their First Nations classmate present and speechless. [Afterword: "First Nations" is becoming among many a term preferred over "native" and certainly over "Indian." In the Canadian context, I suggest that the term is an ironic reinscription of the historical and cultural priority of the First Nations people and more than an innocent political gesture pointing to the role of nationalism in the oppression of indigenous peoples.] I read with cynicism the predictable response in the student newspaper of an upset Engineer: I am not Native and don't know how it feels.

In my fourth-year Commonwealth class, I introduce the issue in the last twenty minutes of class, fully intending to pack up my briefcase and flee immediately. My cowardice doesn't protect me this time. Decorum abandoned, both I and my somewhat startled class voice our emotion and frustration and anger, our academically sanctioned inaction, our worried complexities and silences, our belated recognition that the university, especially in the eyes of its pupils, is not a sanctuary of higher education, but like the "real world," a place of fear and hate as well. Gay students (in)articulate their oppression, women talk about the Montreal murders, we wonder what we can learn in this institution of higher learning. We ask whether these graduates can take anything from the class. As a cynical observer later noted, we are testifying. Many of us are in tears. I don't preach or profess this time and never as a (fledgling) professor have I felt more professionally threatened, underestros, out of control, and full of doubt. Himani Bannerji's "A Savage Aesthetic" seems a timely reminder, and a comfort:

"Remember, poetry too is architecture  
 all else is redundant except the form, the style—  
 what you call—the texture."

. . . and so the poetry class unending  
 Always the same, Sharp, academic  
 an exhibition of smug narcissism. Full of apt  
 and self-conscious quotations, allusions and message  
 in a voice that plays with a joke or two,  
 calculating, avoiding emotional excess.  
 So stands this hour of aesthetics, an exact reflection,  
 of the confidence of the glass and concrete phallus  
 that arises on an erased slum or broken shanty town.  
 (667)

Imagining racism. The title for this paper is suggested not only by the conference's title, but by encounters with students reading Bharati Mukherjee's "An Invisible Woman." To a person, it seems, these students accuse Mukherjee of imagining things, of interpreting incorrectly, of not being fair, not looking at all sides of the question. None of them close readers, they refuse the once upon a time-ness of Mukherjee's story of Canada, her claim that it is indeed a story of "politics, paranoia and bitter disappointment" (36, 38). After reading her short story "Tamurlane," student opinion is confirmed: Mukherjee is extremist; these things don't happen. There is always another side to racism. The racists' side, I assume. [Afterwords: Racism exists elsewhere, in the United States: how dare she find sanctuary, there? Become American? ] And I begin to wonder, quite seriously, about what racism is: I've heard it modified in so many ways: benign racism, benevolent racism, unconscious racism, institutional racism, yes, even harmless, justified racism. I am, for instance, tempted to say that I myself rarely encounter racism, but hastily qualify that to overt racism. Again, Himani Bannerji:

And a grenade explodes  
 in the sunless afternoon  
 and words run down  
 like frothy white spit  
 down her bent head  
 down the serene parting of her dark hair  
 as she stands too visible  
 from home to bus stop to home  
 raucous, hyena laughter,  
 "Paki, Go home!" (FALL GO HOME—19)



What, then, am I to make of those who make so much of my patronym? Who accuse me of being a "professional ethnic"? Who, benignly, assume my automatic knowledge of and identification with a particular community? Which one, I want to ask? South Asia? Do any of us/then identify with that geographical fiction? India? Pakistan? Trinidad? Sri Lanka? The Philippines? What really unites us/them, makes us cohere? Not any fictional nation. For we are all here now, for now, Canadian South Asian women, deterritorialized, unhoused in a country that has severe doubts about its own territory, its homeness—the myths of multiculturalism, even of biculturalism and bilingualism, unravelling as I speak. Our otherness, inessential, ephemeral, defined by—what?—perceived gradations of colour, by accent, by name, is defined against our Canadianness, so that we "not-quite Canadians," to use Bharati Mukherjee's apt phrase, are always, already, continuously, continually, dispossessed, and displaced. [Afterwords: And I cannot do better, afterwards, than to cite the readily marginalia of Ashok Mathur here: "and . . . invisible often, to use Mukherjee's terms, the consciously 'othered' communities are so often gendered." (All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave).] Sumit Nampjoshi tells us

"How to be a Foreigner"  
First,  
You take off your clothes,  
Your titles and name  
And put on a robe,  
Sterile and clean,  
With neat black letters  
Marking THE STRANGER.  
Then,  
You walk down the street,  
Alone in fancy dress. (10)

Sometimes, a stranger to myself, I imagine the marriage, the Scot in me asserting it/myself, parading the fancy dress of kilt, not sari. But then I wouldn't be "The Stranger," wouldn't be one of those immigrant once-children who is "precluded by their skin colour from merging inobtrusively into the society at large" (A. Mukherjee: 59); I have both chosen and been forced to assume and profess my ethnic identity. Am I therefore fueling the imagination of racism? Surely not; surely I am conscious of the pitfalls and the pleasures of the "politics of identity formation," situating myself as a South Asian Canadian woman in a rigorously "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Srivak: 205). I often turn, as I have just done, to Gayatri in times of need and theoretical self-doubt. And I cling to that notion of strategy,

for it is empowering, just as strategically asserting my identity as a woman is. But . . . it was strategy that sent me racism-hunting in Canadian South Asian women's writing and a scrupulously visible political interest that found me wondering what to do with the amount of writing that is not about racism. Cultural displacement, yes, especially in children: many of these women write stories for children, encouraging them to celebrate their multiple identities, often in the face of ridicule, or—as in this poem by Parameswaran—they explore the poet's pain as she watches her children go through this process:

Ma, you think you could change my name  
to Jim or David or something?  
. . . . When the snow comes, ma,  
I'll get less brown, won't I?  
It would be nice to be white,  
more like everyone else  
you know? (11)

or questions, like Lakshmi Gill, her own place in a new home:

blue ice  
(O My Canada)  
can I call  
you mine  
foreign sad  
brown that I  
am ("See")

I cannot argue, as I have of myself, that these writers repress racism, fail to imagine it. Their act of displacing racism, in their own political and personal interests, warns me of the signal failure in the imagination of a critic, especially a Canadian South Asian woman, who reduces writing to theme, to its about-ness. I read with renewed interest, then, Surjeet Kalsey's poem of "Farm Worker Women" in Vancouver:

Women come and work in the broccoli fields  
smiling energetic they come  
tired with aching feet and  
hands sore they go home  
Women women women  
working working working  
Women from the Punjab  
come and work in the Canadian farms  
brides wearing silk and gold  
with soft henna coloured palms  
women with holding babies  
women with pre-schoolers  
women with grandparents  
women with large families  
women work for them  
Women work in the blueberry  
and raspberry fields  
Women pick mushrooms, cut  
broccoli and sprouts  
Women work on the marshy land  
Their hands get blisters  
their feet get swollen  
their eyes and noses become  
watery they breathe in fumes  
and their arms, necks, faces  
get infected with killer pesticides  
women work round the clock  
late at night after coming home  
women cook food for their children  
for their men, for their large families.  
women wash every body's dirty clothes  
women wash every body's dirty dishes  
women take care of the crying hungry  
or sick children in the house  
women look after every body's needs.  
They go to bed very late and get up very  
early to go to the fields again.  
In the fall when the season ends  
and they get their stamps to live  
through the winter, farm worker women  
usually join English classes in their  
neighbourhood to learn how to talk  
to the strange world around who do not  
understand their tongue.  
Farm worker women are brave: ZINIDABADI (12)

[Afterwords: The un(literary)-critical contextualizing of my subject positions vis-à-vis these poems begins to break down here: we have more poem than "text." I recall a question about the literary quality of "ethnic" poetry: what do we do with the fact that we preserve some poems to be, simply, "better" than others? I answer, predictably, by pointing out that notions of literary quality are inevitably ideological, that we are as readers and critics resolutely historically situated, and that, additionally, my reading of the above poem fails (in a way that Surjeet's own readings don't) to capture the repetition, monotony, drudgery of the work these women are subjected to and to capture the celebration-through-repetition of their woman/women-ness. For the moment, I leave the poem whole. To "speak" for itself?]

As I read (and type) this poem, however, I become increasingly conscious of how difficult it is going to be to (re)cite a poem like Nita Gupta's "So She Could Walk," visually dependent as it is on conventions of typography: [afterwords: but reading it aloud is a searing experience, conveying to me (the performer) the pain, the fragmentation of self that accompanies the imagination of racism.]

and a man is pushed onto the subway tracks  
and the train go home paki is coming the  
young men shout and laugh the t.v. screams  
a young family on the elevator up holds open  
the doors on the 10th floor to let some  
adolescents in who brandish broken beer bottles  
in return the parents must fall on their  
children to protect them felled spray of  
glass jagged blades and everywhere a sab-  
bing child developmentalists say everything  
is as it should be everything is unfolding  
according to plan (13)

As if in answer to Bharati Mukherjee who, some years ago, wrote, "My Indianness is fragile . . . my use of English as a first language has cut me off from my desh [homeland]" (Calcutta, 170) and that "to be a third world woman writer in North America is to confine oneself to a narrow, address, tightly roofed arena" (285), some of these Canadian South Asian Women writers use English literary forms and the language "as she is writ" against itself, transformatively. Gupta's "poem" is, yes, about racism but is not reducible to it. Jamila Ismail's "poetry" From the Diction Air continues in the feminist project of rewriting and rethinking the words we use, of deconstructing that Great Book, the dictionary. An example: "patriarchy 'am I going to be a father', she wondered, patriarchy." Or Jamila's re- and de-definition of

"To her puzzlement, it referred to her, and was meant, she she later discovered all in good fun and the spirit of friendship. What an odd word she remembers thinking. I am/ we are not from Pakistan."



Illustration: Gita Saxena

the word serendipity:

about serendipity, oxford & britannica have it that sarandib, a former name of ceylon (now sri lanka), is an arabic 'corruption' of the sanskrit simhaladvipa . . . & that an englishman hitched -ly into serendip to make serendipity. well, that's one way to do it: english a word by romanizing an arabesque of sanskrit & grafting on a latin tail. it's a tail that wags the dog, for latin sends on its imperializing ways, but a colonizing onomatopoeia (ceylon became a crown colony in 1802) needn't be an onomatopoeer: one could learn by it to resuffix paris-ian with an -ite, or decline 'british' to 'brutish,' me, i like e.s.l. trips, such as 'united states.'

when serendipity was coined in the 1750s it meant 'the faculty of making happy & unexpected discoveries by accident,' a brutish example. from the 1750s might be, the takeover of bengal; which financed the english 'industrial revolution,' & so england went on to Empaah. no of course i hadn't it figured this way when the word first buzzed me, testily, in the 1960s in hong kong.

I want to continue this excursus on these writers' resolute attention to the surfaces of language and form, the (to some) radical notion that all language is metaphor, and that therein lies its power . . .

At the same time, I want to make connections, to point out part of what underlies my narrative, to use Bharati's words again: "Indianness . . . is not a fragile identity to be preserved . . . but a set of fluid identities to be celebrated. . . . Indianness is now a metaphor . . . for partially comprehending the world" ("Introduction," 3). I want to do this because, comforting, it takes me back to Gayatri, to strategies, to that simultaneous assertion of and undercutting of my identity, my identities. It leads me forward to that optimistic ending of many of the stories, poems, and plays I've read, to that space opened up by reading elsewhere that "the postcolonial inheritance is that of hybridization" (Trinh: 13). Strategic identities: I imagine wearing a kilt one day, a sari the next, jeans the next. Hybridity: a costume of kitsartleaus, parts thereof, with holes, in tatters, unrecognizable.

[Afterwords of South Asian American "immigrant" poet Meena Alexander:

Appearance then was a problem: not just how to appear—saris, kurtis, jeans, the choice of garment, women's issues, in the weak sense of the word—but the very fact of appearing, of existing for the eye. To what extent I might ask myself if I were to take a theoretical distance from all this, was my sense of self-identity invoked by the gaze, by the look of a world to which I was Other. But there was no way in which I could stand apart from this question. It was what I was and in many ways am, this perpetual reconstruction of identity. (60)

Unimaginable.

At the same time . . . at the same time, something buzzes me, testily, for there are those men (and women) who take up their positions, too, strategically situate themselves in scrupulously(?) visible political interests, some of which I, too—shifting—share. And they say there is a place for racism and sexism they say she's just a woman—and an immigrant they say where's your sense of humour? they say i am free to speak, you are free to object they say they're just words they say PAKI go home.

[Afterwords: A salutary warning to those of us (un)comfortable with our strategic identifications:

I confess that I have become increasingly suspicious of the recurrent appeal to "political strategy" or "tactical necessity" in recent critical disputes. . . . for no matter how reactionary or dangerous a notion may be, it can always be salvaged and kept in circulation by an appeal to "political strategy" . . . . Perhaps the question we must always keep before us is: "politically strategic for whom?" (60-61)

Imagining racism, I said, I preached, you will remember, to my silent students that racism is a failure of the imagination. And in a certain way, I still believe that. I am a fan of literature, after all. But my imagination, too, failed. Failed to recognize that there is no such thing as racism. Racism is as inessential as race. It is a metaphor: not just a word, but a word none the less. Racism, in all of its forms, is an act of the imagination.

[Afterwords: my words racism is a failure of the imagination caught the imaginations of several people who heard or read the paper. But to stop there is an imaginative failure. Some resisted what they perceived to be the political implications of what I see as a crucial idea, worth repeating: that racism is also an act of the imagination, depends on ways of imagining the world. Perhaps the conflict here lies in how we imagine the imagination: as individual, transcendent and transending, unfettered, essentially free, independent, creative in all the best ways? A romantic view of the imagination which still has great power; indeed, can be empowering. But those who create images of harm—racism, for example—however passively, do not lack imagination; they fail only to conform to a particularly limited and liberal image of the imagination. We must recognize the power of all manner of imagining.] Racism, as imagination, has a grammar and a syntax, a pervasive and almost impenetrable narrative power, a power that makes a poet like Himani want to stop writing, stop using words, remain silent. This is her poem "doing time," which opens her collection of the same name:

This is not a poem, nor the introduction to my poems, because I cannot write poetry anymore. . . . as I was saying I cannot write poems anymore because I don't know what language, what words, what metaphors or myths I could use to describe the world around me or express what I feel or think about it. And I am not sure that there should be any more of these metaphors around, or myths, or signs and symbols, or whatever they call them. In fact never more than now have I felt, things have been ever more of themselves. They are what they are. They are fully un-covered. All the bricks, barbed wires, concrete, chrome, glass, gasses, bombs, helicopters, dogs and Wallstreet Journals are there for us to see. (9)

Of course, her story, her poetry does not end there; she does not fall silent: who among us can forget the image of those racist "words run[ning] down/like frothy white spit"?

There is a series of discussions at my university called "Hate Hurts." This slogan seems almost trite, clichéd, and of course, this cliché underwrites my rhetoric, my story here. As long as hatred exists in the form of racism, that imaginary and imagined concept, I can and will, if uncomfortably, inhabit the interstices and contradictions of my own—and others—imaginative theories.

For me, there is a value—always to be questioned—in my trying to find homes in imagined communities and in participating in the fight against the power that racism holds over our imaginations.

As Fall also runs

I have felt the effects of racism's power and will continue to hunt for it, track it down, and wish to eradicate it. Contradictorily and finally, then, I claim the authority and the community of experience. [Afterwords: "How are we to negotiate the gap between the conservative fiction of experience as the ground of all truth-knowledge and the immense power of this fiction to enable and encourage [us]?" (see 116)] Theoretically, politically correct? Of course not; but I myself must be the first to criticize, question, shift my positions? both personal and political. It is this self-examination that I have attempted in this paper and I have been informed by the context, the frame that this conference has provided. I will therefore not complete that other frame and end my story [even afterwords] with a "happily ever after." Instead, I begin again, imag(in)ing racism and imag(in)ing women with the help of Himani Bannerji:

If we who are not white, and also women, have not yet seen that here we live in a prison, that we are doing time, then we are fools, playing unenjoyable games with ourselves. I won't go so far, however, as to say that we deserve what we get.

(Doing time, 9)

Aruna Shrivastava is an Assistant Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of British Columbia.



LIST OF WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

Alexander, Meena. "The Poem's Second Life: Writing and Self-identity." Toronto South Asian Review (Fall/Winter 1997/86): 77-85.

Banerji, Himani. "doing time." In *Doing Time Poems*. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1986. 9-11.

—. "Pulse Go Home." In *Doing Time Poems*. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1986. 15.

—. "A Savage Aesthetic." In *A Separate Sky*. Toronto: Domestic Bliss, 1982. 46-47.

Cooperman, Madeline. "The Second Migration." *Kunapipi* 8.2 (1986): 72-73.

Fuss, Dana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Gill, Lakshmi. "Song" in *her First Clearing* (an immigrant's tour of life) : poems. Manila: Estancia Press, 1972/6.

Gupta, Nita. "So She Could Walk." In *Sheena Mukherjee, ed. The Best of Frenetted*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1986.

Innaji, Janita. *From the Diction Ave*. Unpublished chapbook, 1989.

Kalder, Sujat. "Fam Worker Women." In *Footprints of Silence*. Poems. London: Third Eye, 1988.

Mulherjee, Arun. "South Asian Poetry in Canada: In Search of a Place." In *Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition*. Stratford, Ont.: Williams-Walace, 1988.

Mulherjee, Bharati & Clark-Baise. *Days and Nights in Calcutta*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977.

Mulherjee, Bharati. *Introduction*. In *Darkness*. Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1985.

—. "An Invisible Woman." *Saturday Night* (March 1981): 36-40.

—. "Tantrique." *Darkness*. Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1985.

Nahappok, Sarit. "How to be a Foreigner." In *More Poems*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1971.

Parameeswaran, Uma. *Untitled poem*. Toronto South Asian Review 13 (1982): 15.

Speck, Gayatri Chakravorty. In *Other Worlds*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Trihi, T. Mithila. "Introduction." *Decore* 1.12 (Spring/Summer 1989): 5-18.



Why should a prostitute  
be a social outcast?

—Honey

Gwendolyn

Women are goin' to jail  
who have kids to support  
for communicating  
for 30 days 6 months whatever  
Right  
They get out of jail  
They got to fight the system  
to get their kids back  
Then they go right back to the street  
So the laws are stupid as far as  
prostitution goes  
—Sheila Pieschke



Linda and Sasha



People have a way of being rude out there  
when they see us on the street  
It's like they kind of give us a dirty look  
They get really rude  
I just walk away from them  
I just say I'm happy to be what I am, you know  
I am a prostitute  
And that's the way it is  
—Tina Gibson

Pictures and voices from Gwendolyn's new  
video, *Communicating for the Purpose*.

photos by Regale

## SEX AND IDENTITY

lesbian and gay artists  
 Artefact Gallery, Toronto  
 April 9 - 27, 1991

BY BRENT CEHAN

## REVIEWS

IDENTITY IMPLIES UNITY AND sameness but also, contradictorily, individuality and uniqueness. *Sex and Identity*, organized by Philip Cairns, Martha Judge, and Tracey Trief as part of Toronto's *QueerCulture* festival, attempts to initiate dialogue on how differences in gender, race, and personal and community histories interact with sexual practice. These areas are often dismissed in favour of an assimilationist concept of sexuality as a single—i.e., white, male, gay (not bi)—issue by dominant gay culture. (The Toronto gay magazine *Xtra*, in its review of this show, only mentioned male works.) But as Dyke-versions (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986), *Rites*' anti-racism supplement (March 1991), and the debates in *Xtra* on Queer Nation have shown, such assumptions are clearly inadequate. As a white, gay (not bi), male writer, I'm mindful that the issue for marginalized groups is both inclusion and self-representation. Many of the artworks in *Sex and Identity* question the traditional relationship of the representer and the represented as well as the viewer's assumed privilege to consume meaning, label, delimit, or identify.

Inevitably, mirrors both real (Carla Murray, Greg Loudon) and represented (Andy Fabo, Stephen Andrews) are a motif. Without trying to be pedantic, the relationship of the self to the mirror image, an approximation of how we are seen by others, seems to be the paradigm for the relationship of the self to identity—something other than us, yet still us. Although their works are very different, I thought at first that Jude Johnson's and Tony Wilson's subjects seem to gaze in both self-assessment and assessment of the viewer. The plane of the works function as both the mirror surface and the window through

which the subject is observed. Both artists contrast a "constructed self" and a "true self" by representing their subjects starkly against theatrical backgrounds, respectively, a red velvet curtain and a clothes' closet painted like a jungle. The themes of self-representation and perception by others also bring up the mirror phase in which a male child's self-identification in a mirror becomes both his basis for differentiating himself from others and his model for seeing himself in pictures. The use of the theatrical also differentiates much of the artwork in the show.

The sharpest division in the show is between gay male and lesbian aesthetics. The men tended to draw on more traditional mediums and strategies while most of the women worked in conceptual photography. The contrasting techniques reference distinct cultural histories: gay men's (limited) accommodation with the traditional art canon vs. women's more recent feminist models in critical photography; gay men's earlier role modes in privileged "high art" vs. feminist analysis of privilege; men's oppression on the basis of sexuality vs. women's oppression on the basis of gender; gay porn vs. continuing feminist debates on objectification. There are important exceptions, (identity, while a useful framework, often seems to mean negotiating generalizations): Andrew Sorlie's works in conceptual photography and Andy Fabo draws on its theories, while Nicole Tanguay's poem and drawings integrated lesbian identity with Native spirituality. But gay men's place in the art history canon doesn't always work to their advantage. Open Emmanuel Cooper's gay art history, *The Sexual Perspective*, and the potential of gay art seems to be limited to pictures with naked men in them. Ironically, the revelation that so many established artists were gay men only maintains the art system and its standards while short-circuiting the potential for a more thorough political reading of gay art, not to mention more thoroughly political gay art.

Last year's show *Row Fantasies*, also held at Artefact Gallery during *QueerCulture*, featured mostly male artists, and paintings and

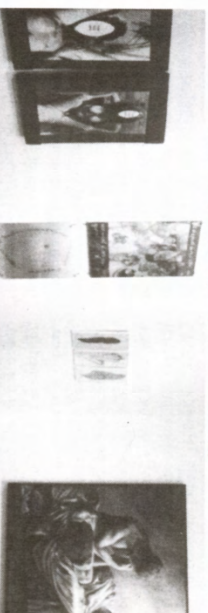
drawings of male torsos and buttocks. This type of work spoke to a gay male audience who (not unexpectedly) weren't particularly concerned with art theory but who were familiar with similar idealized renderings—through porn or gay art in bars. This isn't necessarily a bad thing and I don't want to write another condemnation of objectifying men or leave the impression that the only possible "good" gay/lesbian art must bear the stigma of post-modern theory. The criterion that art must emerge from specific communities tempered by a critical assessment of the mode of representation is ironically a privileged dominant discourse. But a general source of my aggravation with the men's work continues to be the attention paid to the historical modes of representation dominant culture has given us as art (for example, the solitary nude) and the absence of reference to contemporary culture, politics, or social organization. While I agree with Tom Folland that we don't need another "aggrandizing history of famous gay artists" in the absence of other models or critical histories that stage a confrontation between our political needs and our visual culture, we're left with more of the same.

Much of what I want here is plain old mimetic (bars, parks, recognizable bodies) tempered by a representational theory developed from our own experience. Our political history, after all, contains a continual analysis of (mis)representation. In contrast, much of the lesbian work drew from critiques of the structures traditionally used to objectify women, what critic Laura Mulvey termed "visual pleasure." I essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which demonstrated how film, and by extension most visual culture, assumes and panders to male viewers, has almost been exhausted. I've sat through

enough discussions of the gaze which reconstruct male/female binaries by refusing to acknowledge a potential lesbian/gay/bisexual viewer, and seen more than enough art that uses the essay as a licence to (re)present oppressive visual traditions under the guise of critique.

Some of the best works here avoid these pitfalls by specifically assuming a lesbian viewer. In addition, when the viewer actively participates in these works, she is placed in the role of the represented. In Claire Lawlor's photographs of lesbian sex, the women's faces are replaced with the text "Your Face Here." Carla Murray's "Not All of Me" features three vertically aligned mirrors labelled "het," "bisexual," and "lesbian," and four near-life-sized photos of women (also divided into threes) their heads, torsos, and legs alternately forward and backward. By analogy, the viewer, attempting to align her reflected body to a sexual label, is "bent out of shape." Because lesbian oppression encompasses gender and potentially race and class, defining oneself in sexual terms howers ironically between self-affirmation and another form of being labelled. Komie Ling's buttocks depicting lesbian sex identify both the represented women and the person wearing the buttock as "exotic," "sick," "lesbian" or as a "social worker," "girl," "police," "sue." The artist suggests that one acquires these simultaneously derogatory (when applied by others) and rebellious (when adopted by oneself) labels by accident; she placed the buttocks in a lottery cage and, on opening night, sold them from a paper bag. (I got "slim rat.")

In Sandra Haar's untitled piece, text around a photo of a table laden with food challenges, "Who is a princess? Who is selfish? Who makes demands? Who takes pleasure? Who is aggressive? Who is a les-



WORKS BY CLAIRE LAWLOR, SANDRA HAAR,  
 NICOLE TANGUAY, STEVE WALKER

## WOMEN, AIDS & ACTIVISM The ACTUP/INY Women & AIDS Book Group, editors Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990. 301 pp.

BY MARY LOUISE ADAMS

AS A GROUP, WOMEN ARE THE FASTEST growing category of people receiving new AIDS diagnoses. In the United States, 73 per cent of all women with AIDS are women of colour. In New York City, AIDS is the leading cause of death of women between the ages of 25 and 34. Would you know this from reading the AIDS coverage that many women have access to in, say, *Chateline* or the "Life" section of the local newspaper? Not likely.

These figures are from an anthology produced by the Women's Caucus of ACTUP/New York (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an activist group that's radically changed the shape of AIDS politics and organizing. In the case of women, this has meant going straight to the basics of feminist healthcare. Step one: To understand any women's health issue you have to understand the position of women in this society. Step two: To make change and to take control of our health, women need information. Step three: Act.

It's not surprising, then, that *Women, AIDS & Activism* was originally produced for a grassroots teach-in. It's an effort to address the tremendous need for and scarcity of information about treatment, prevention, and transmission of HIV in women. The book begins to fill a factual vacuum that exists not only at the community level but in the upper echelons of "serious" AIDS research as well. And in spite of what medicine and science reporters might tell you, the flow of information—because of teach-ins and projects like this book—is at times more often from the former to the latter.

In the Canadian context, this anthology reads almost like a piece of dystopic science fiction. Its focus on the situation of people living with AIDS (PLWAs) in New York City seems jarring, indeed frightening, to anyone with some knowledge of AIDS in urban Canada. In New York people may wait for treatment for up to 24 hours in the corridors of hospital emergency rooms. Estimates of the number of children in that city who will be orphaned by AIDS run from 20,000 by 1995 (according to the NYC Health Department) to more than 75,000 by the year 2000 (the Panos Institute). Some people estimate that New York is already home to at least 26,000 HIV-positive women of childbearing age. (In comparison, estimates put the total number of HIV-positive Canadians at 20,000.) Thousands of people with HIV are currently homeless and living on the street. The question for the Canadian reader is, always: Will this ever happen here?

Perhaps not to the same extent. But we have much to learn from New York, and we shouldn't kid ourselves that there are no similarities. Here, too, women are becoming a greater percentage of all those who are testing HIV-positive. Here, too, women die more quickly than men and don't receive adequate care or support for themselves and their children. We can hope that the imminence of New York's tragedy will not be repeated here, but it's important not to assume a false sense of security. Right now there are women in this country living with HIV and AIDS. The crisis for them is already life-threatening.

*Women, AIDS & Activism* has been edited to fit the terse, pointed style of a no-nonsense and committed activism. Parts of it read like an extended laundry list of issues and demands. And that list is long: from research on women's symptoms, to better treatment agendas for women, to better prevention education for women of colour and lesbians, to support services geared to women's responsibilities for children and partners. There isn't a single area that does not need drastic improvement.

The editors have made some effort to detail the different ways AIDS, as both illness and phenomenon, takes shape in dif-

ferent communities. As much as possible they have avoided the oppositions between "us and them," the positives and the negatives, that tend to appear in a lot of writing about HIV. This book doesn't present wide-scale AIDS as the spectre of an unfortunate future; the presence of the virus is simply assumed.

Much of the material in the book will be familiar to women who are already involved with the AIDS issues. However there are three pieces in particular that expand significantly on current discussions. Zoe Leonard, Cynthia Acevedo, and a woman who chooses to remain anonymous each write about the process of integrating safer sex into their relationships. Two of these women sleep with women, one is HIV-positive. They raise important questions about setting limits or not, about keeping sex hot or giving up on it, about trust, expectations, and asking questions. While gay men have been able to have these types of discussions in the context of an educated and aware community profoundly affected by HIV, women have not. As any safer sex educator will tell you, the ability to prevent transmission of the virus is not just a matter of using a condom.

*Women, AIDS & Activism* is a valuable handbook. It's got a great annotated bibliography compiled by Polly Thistlethwaite, though you actually have to read the thing to get at all the references. Between the lines made sure to include an extensive list of Canadian organizations and resources in their version of the book. Further, they arranged for all royalties to be donated to the Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange in Toronto. After you read to book, give it to your doctor. Remind her or him that knowledge can, and does, move from the ground up.

Mary Louise Adams is a member of AIDS Action Now in Toronto.



"VIRTUAL IDENTITY" AND  
"VIRTUAL RELEASE"  
BY ANDY FABO

drawings depicting women's bodies fusing together as a single entity, continue the exchanges of the spiritual and physical.

There are links between the feminist consciousness of the viewer's positioning and the men's work in the show. Andy Fabo's "Virtual Identity" and "Virtual Release" seems to diagram the mechanics of a gay male gaze. In both, male nudes are painted on pages from a book of Roman sculpture—the historical "model" and "foundation" of these images. In the first panel, a reclining man holds a mirror between his legs to reflect his (or is it the male viewer's?) unseen face. In the second, a small sketch of a man in a pose reminiscent of the "Dying Slave" is enlarged so that the figure's genitals correspond with a Roman statue. (I'm alternately reminded of a Victor Burgin reference that men identify the phallus with their genitals because they are visual and of the Herb Ritts photo of a pumped-up guy holding two tires.) Andrew Sorleat overlays a photograph of a urinal, a deserted and silent location for public sex with a monologue which internalizes homophobia as an erotic framework. The viewer is granted an uneasy freedom to choose amongst unsteady texts whose shadows literally fall and become lost in the image. Tony Wang photographs his body to tentatively correspond with images of femininity, both classical (Botticelli's Venus) and modern (high-

heeled shoes). Stephen Andrews' selection from his work "Sins of the Fathers" suggests an ironic relationship between the viewer and the object of desire but also problematically reconstructs the Narcissus myth.

Rather than developing an over-reaching thesis, I want to restate the importance of cultural production specific to cultural location. I find that, as a legacy of the fight to define their own forms of pleasure, many of the gay artists here have articulated an object of desire that tends to deny people entrance as desired members of the community. What I identify with in the lesbian work is its ability to both draw from and respond to feminist aesthetics and political agendas. It's a model for and example of work that is attentive to the lessons of our struggles, the gaps in the community we've created, how we're looking, and what we've seen.

**Brent Cohen has been trying to work his telephone number into his recent pieces. No results so far.**

### ENDNOTES

- Since this review was written, Tony Wilson has died. As one of the founders of ChromaZone and an artist in his own right, he participated in a history I am only now beginning to discover.
1. Ken Kuhl, "Queer Culture," *XOXO*, April 26, 1991.
  2. Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective* (London, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).
  3. Tom Folland, "Ureasy History," *C*, Spring 1991.
- Also see Andrew Sorleat, "Homonymy," *Fuse*, Fall 1989; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, 43 (1975).
5. Victor Burgin, *Museum of Contemporary Art*, Altagracia (1987). At first I thought Burgin had it the other way around, that men feminize the visual because their organs are visual. Burgin quotes Kessler who says that, although women are represented as the symbolically "castrated," their whole body is represented as a phallus to compensate for their "lack." But Ritts represents the male body as phallus, as indicated by the exaggerated muscles from the focus of physical power. Without taking away from Fabo's work, this complex and eventually contradictory cross-referencing is why I'm more immediately concerned with analyzing the social manifestations of the gay male gaze—crisis, but culture, self-image, porn—before attempting to transcribe a psychoanalytic model.

HEALING IMAGES

A Bunch of Feminists collective, organizers art exhibitions, film & video, panel discussions, performances, Bloor Street and Trinity St. Paul United Churches, Euclid Theatre, Ontario College of Art, Toronto November 7 - December 11, 1990

"You're all a bunch of fucking feminists." —Marc Lepine, December 6, 1989

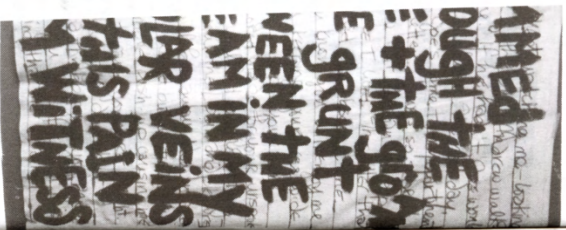
ONE YEAR LATER, A COLLECTIVE OF NINE WOMEN NAMING themselves—yes—A Bunch of Feminists responded to this mass killing as a continuum of unnoticed and, in many cases, socially-condoned terrorism against women from murder, rape, and battery to economic and social privation. Art works printed on the following pages are from exhibitions that were part of the event. *Healing Images*. The multi-media symposium also included screenings, performances, readings, workshops, and panel discussions dealing with topics from incest to race, class, and gender.

We caution ourselves, as women, not to get too involved emotionally in the specific, sensational event of Montreal; we know that it was, in part, these women's privilege that placed them on the front pages. *Healing Images*—in memory of 14 women in Montreal (not the 14 women)—concentrated on how women survive, name, and recover from the violence directed at them as women. We caution ourselves, also, not to forget these women as they remind us all of the constant presence of violence, and our right and responsibility to each other to name it.

MARTHA JUDGE



MARY ANNE LACEY



DETAIL FROM "JOE"  
BY KAREN  
AUGUSTINE

Film and Video

The Euclid Theatre, Toronto  
November 24, 1990

BY HEATHER FRISE

DESPITE BEING TRIVIALIZED BY THE media spectacle, the Montreal Massacre raised critical questions and indicated the urgent need to examine the ways in which violence affects women. The Massacre unleashed fear and rage in women who recognized it as a bloody manifestation of the violence that permeates their own lives daily.

A screening of 12 films and videos at the Euclid Theatre in Toronto presented a myriad of perspectives. From a woman in El Salvador who has lost her children in a North American sponsored war to the daily terrorism of walking down an empty street at night.

Whether expressed as experimental narrative, dramatization, or documented stories, central to all the work was women speaking from their personal experiences of

violence. As more and more women have the courage to speak out, they contribute their stories towards the construction of a history, a history which prevents the Massacre as being perceived as an individual act in isolation and separate from the day-to-day oppression and sexism of society.

Lynn Moss Sherman's video, *Fourteen Young Women in Montreal* (1989) was the only work shown that was made in direct response to the Massacre. Created only days afterwards, Sherman links her personal history as a target of violent abuse with the deaths. Text endlessly recounting acts of violence scrolls over the image of a rope empty room, evoking a horrible, visceral sensation of pain.

Individual testimony of abuse links *Rule of Thumb* (Angela Sulcaton, 1983) and *I Am One Of Them: Mothers Speak Out Against Incest* (Hollie Levine, 1989). By sharing stories women recognise patterns and extend their context beyond the isolated, individual experience. They can redirect their rage outwards, towards their abusers and towards social and legal institutions that combine to silence them.

Identifying violence is a difficult process when it is so deeply entrenched in social and cultural institutions. Sexist codes produced by architecture or urban planning have been examined before. But *Cityscope* (Wendy Rowland, 1988) is an especially insightful film because it illuminates the way urban structures and environments are designed in a male-centered way. The camera takes on a woman's perspective in the city. We travel down empty streets; through isolated and poorly lit spaces; underground parking lots with male foot-steps approaching from behind; reverbating; tunnels; dead end streets; and so on. These urban spaces make women vulnerable to male assault day or night.

*Slings* (Janice Cole, 1990) and *Prowling by Night* (Swendolyn, 1990) expose the sexist violence of the criminal justice system. The prison letters of a woman (*Shaggy*) give voice to the psychological and physical torture she suffered. While imprisoned, *Shaggy* was treated as state property, forced to have a tattoo removed, forced to have a hysterectomy, forced isolation. Her only possibility for freedom and control over her existence was found in her suicide.

*Prowling by Night* stresses self-representation. Instead of just filming women working the street, the prostitutes being portrayed made cut-out figures of themselves, which were used to act out the visual story. They short-circuit our usual objectification of them. These women talk about their experience on the streets, about police use of power to harass, intimidate, and physically and sexually abuse them. One woman gives an account of being forced at gunpoint to give a cop a blowjob. Criminalized women's bodies are state property. How do sex trade workers ensure their right to their bodies and their trade? Representing their

bodies on film is a political act. And watching stories about the women organizing themselves, initiating safe sex projects and demanding decriminalization of the sex trade is empowering in itself.

Violence inherent in racial and political oppression was brought forward by including the films of and about marginalized women, such as *Sally's Beauty Spot* (Helen Lee, 1990) (see FUSE 14:3, 18-21), and *Human On My Faithless Arm* (Valerie Teresko, 1990). The latter referred to violence as it is inherent in the oppression of a lesbian mother who also has a hearing disability. The film was, at once, visually rich, diverse, and disturbing—altering sound, emphasizing colour and texture, and using poetry, voiceover and dramatization.

Women who have survived, who are still fighting, need a healing process. *Womanspirit* (Okana Hlodan, 1989) stood out as a work which explored healing from the perspective of a Native woman. The docu-drama traced her recovery from domestic violence, through a traditional healing circle within her community, and her re-discovery of the empowered role of women in Native culture.

Ultimately, *Healing Images* stayed true to its name. As painful and emotionally upheaving as the films were, they did not portray victims. There was an emphasis on survival and the growing supportive networks that women are forging to counter violence and oppression.

"SHE WALKS ALONE"  
IRENE KINDNESS



**Panel Discussions**  
**Race, Class, Gender and Violence Against Women;**  
**Media Representations of Violence;**  
**Defining the Issues of Violence and Women's Rights: Fighting Back;**  
**and Men Against Violence Against Women**  
**Trinity St. Paul's United Church**  
**and Bloor Street United Church, Toronto**  
**November 16, 21, 28, and December 8, 1990**

BY FLORENCE B. SICOLI



"WHERE TWO REALITIES MEET"  
 TASSE GELDART

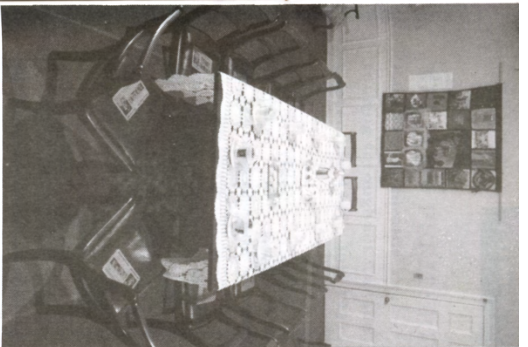
OUR ERA'S APOCALYPTIC ILLS—misogyny, racism, and the environmental crisis, to name just three—come down to one huge social blight that may be termed "the old ultra violence," to use Alex's phrase from *A Clockwork Orange*.

When artists create works that name and image some of that ultra violence against women, non-whites, and the natural environment, as visual artists, writers, and scholars did at the *Healing Images* mega art exhibit and symposium, the results shatter our society's usual silence and numbness about violence.

*Healing Images* marked the first anniversary of the misogynist murders on December 6, 1989. The focus of the four panels, however, went beyond misogyny. Despite its new-age-sounding name, *Healing Images* brought to the Toronto arts community a hard-hitting metaphor for perhaps the most critical art and social project of the '90s: What can artists offer in the face of the unthinkable loss of human freedoms and the environment? Can artistically ordered images, ideas, and feelings help us survive this age of ultra violence?

and multi-racial answers came from the panel "Race, Class, Gender and Violence against Women." York University professor Indu Katiagoal described the "good wife and good mother" role that traps working immigrant women "between a cultural patriarchy and and economic patriarchy." Social worker Joan Green suggested that racism lives in feminism through "the silencing of non-white women. . . . Some white women see equality for women as equality for white women."

White feminism was also the target of anti-racist worker Reeta Kouhli at the



EVELYN MITSUI

panel "Defining the Issues of Violence and Women's Rights: Fighting Back." Addressing white women in the audience, Kouhli said: "I raged, mourned, and grieved with you over the killing of 14 white, middle-class women in Montreal. But you have yet to cross the barriers of race and sex to grieve the lives of poor, non-white, and immigrant women. No woman is free until all women are free."

At the "Media Representations of Violence" panel, writer Monika Gagnon said that her studies of media coverage, including that of the Montreal Massacre, show that women are depicted as having "vacant bodies, corrupt personalities" and thus deserving of any violence they get. Artist and York University professor dian marino linked the commodification of women and animals in advertising images of the designer fur trade. DJ Marva Jackson questioned whether feminist critiques of rap music are tinged with racism since they fail to acknowledge "the progressive rappers who deal with issues of violence."

(In an ironic footnote to media coverage of violence, one media representative's

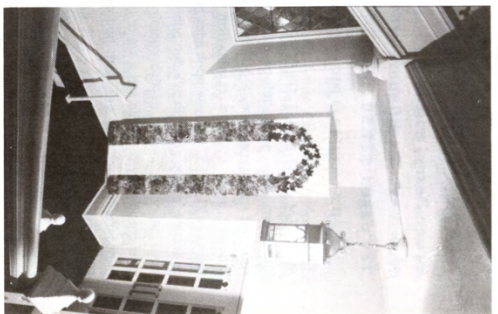
"territorialism" toward *Healing Images* media personnel has been well-documented by FUSE contributor Andrew J. Paterson. See "Rude Media Men: Get That Guy Out of Here!" FUSE 143, 17.)

Assisted by men artists and the Metro Men Against Violence group, A Bunch of Feminists also presented an experiential panel of poetry and writings about male violence by five men and one woman. Playwright Michael Glassbourg's monologues from "Boys Will Be . . ." probed the psyche of "a successful, middle-class, intelligent, and friendly wife batterer." My own poetry offered images of "jackboots ram-paging/through forest and homespilling blood/Violence in our planet and homes/of what wants remembering."

While some may argue that this predominantly male panel was contentious for a feminist project, it was not only the best attended panel, with men accounting for at least 65 per cent of the audience, but it also demonstrated that some men show a readiness to publicly work with feminist groups and on their own toward ending violence.

Since mainstream media continue to lag behind in naming and imaging the extent of violence in our society even a year after Montreal, *Healing Images* artists and panelists provided a much needed visual and conceptual definition of our violent times. Focusing on domestic violence, poet, lawyer, and writer Marlene Nourbese Philip questioned during one panel: "How do we assess a civilization where we and our children are not safe anymore?"

A member of A Bunch of Feminists collective, Florence B. Sicoli is a Toronto-based writer and educator who is completing a Master's (sic) in Environmental Studies focusing on gender and nature at York University.



FROM ELAINE CAROL'S PERFORMANCE,  
 "MARC LEPINE THOUGHT HE WAS  
 A HERO IN UNIFORM"



## MALCOLM X: THE LAST SPEECHES

Bruce Perry, editor

New York: Pathfinder, 1989

189 pages, \$21.50 (pbk.)

BY NORMAN RICHMOND

**MALCOLM X: THE LAST SPEECHES** IS A collection of six never-before-published speeches and interviews by El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz prior to his assassination on February 21, 1965. The new book adds to a collection of six other Pathfinder publications on or by Shabazz. It also contains a brief chronology of his life and a set of rare photographs, including one with him and Fidel Castro.

The introduction reveals how the book's editor, Bruce Perry, tracked down one of

Grenadian relatives. Shabazz's mother, Louise Little, was born in Grenada and his father, the Reverend Earl, was born in Reynolds, Georgia. Perry also reveals that he is writing a new book on Shabazz which was to have been published in 1990. This new biography was to coincide with the 25th anniversary of Shabazz's assassination and his 65th birthday. A group of grassroots African-Americans declared 1990 as The

Year of Malcolm X. During the last months of Shabazz's life

matter in a speech given at the Corn Mill Methodist Church in Rochester, New York on February 16, 1965, Shabazz said:

Many of us fool ourselves into thinking of Afro-Americans as those only who are here in the United States. America is North America, Central America, and South America. Anybody of African ancestry in South America is an Afro-American. Anybody in Central America



MALCOLM X WITH  
FIDEL CASTRO  
IN HARLEM,  
SEPTEMBER 1960

Shabazz's chief aides, James 67X Shabazz—now Abdullah Abdur-Razzaq—in Guyana where he had escaped shortly after Shabazz's murder. He supplied Perry with the tape recordings of most of the speeches that appear in *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*. After years of corresponding, Razaq and Perry finally met in Grenada shortly after the late Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement came to power.

In the book's introduction, Perry also speaks about making contact with Shabazz's

he was almost fanatic in his desire to see African peoples in the Americas and Europe unite with those of the African continent. As a step in that direction, he attempted to develop terms to unite all Blacks in the Americas. Shabazz lived during the period when people of African ancestry were referred to as Negroes; but at the time of his death in 1965, he used both the term Afro-American and the term that is currently gaining mass acceptance: African-American. He clarified his position on this

of African blood is an Afro-American. Anybody here in North America, including Canada, is an Afro-American if he has African ancestry—even down in the Caribbean he's an Afro-American.

Norman Richmond is a radio producer for the Development Education Centre. DEC's radio show *From a Different Perspective* is heard on over 20 stations across Canada.

## FILM &amp; VIDEO

## YELLOW PERIL: RECONSIDERED

Paul Wong, curator

touring throughout Canada

September 1990 - July 1991

film and video section

BY STEPHEN LEE

IT IS RARE THAT WE SEE A COLLECTION of film and video artists of Asian-Canadian identity. As such, the *Yellow Peril* Reconsidered exhibition represented an important step towards the evolution of Asian-Canadian artists. Although the exhibition displayed works of photographs, films, and videos, this review is only concerned with the film and video portion of the exhibition.

In Paul Wong's introductory essay in the *Yellow Peril* programme booklet, he mentions that the Asian-Canadian art community is only in its infancy and should not be scrutinized. Wong writes:

It is a racist practice to judge marginalized work and new ideas that have never been given the opportunity to evolve. When confronted by work that is different, we don't understand because we do not know how to see.

Disagreeing with this viewpoint, I believe critical examination of film and video is a necessary step in the progress of an art community. Curiously enough, many of the works use highly evolved genres such as the narrative and the documentary. Both content and form should be discussed, allowing the artists to mature.

The twelve *Yellow Peril* videos and films centre on four main concerns of Asian Canadians: self-image; imposed-image; repression; appropriation.

The videos and films respond to each theme in a variety of methodologies and emotions. As well, history is frequently used in assessing cultural and personal identity within the four thematic boundaries.

The program consisted of documentary, narrative, performance, and experimental/montage modes of film and video. The two most accessible films are both documentaries: *Chinese Café* (Chan, 1985) and

we also come to grips with our own dilemma of self-image. At the end of the film, Onodera comes to a revelation via her grandmother: "Through you, I've discovered who I am."

For me, the two narratives, *Silence into Silence* (L'Amite Chinoise de Montréal/Le Vidéothèque, 1989) and *The Compact* (Lem, 1990) are less innovative in style and tackled less engaging problems than the documentaries. *Silence into Silence* dramatizes the well-worn dilemma between family duty and personal fulfillment—whether to follow the family to Edmonton and help set up a new restaurant or stay in Montreal and become a graphic artist. Directed, edited, and acted in an amateurish, stiff manner, the issues it tries to present become muddled in the video's inadequacies. Yet, the film does show some insight into the experiences of the elders in the Chinese community. In these sequences, the grandmother talks of her ambitions and frustrations in Canada, creating one of the few inspirational moments in the story.

In *The Compact*, the narrative is more elliptical and thus more convoluted. The film centers on the personal exigency of a Chinese Canadian woman and her interracial relationship. The motifs of "self-image" and "imposed image" are seen in the woman's flip-flop between Japanese and Chinese identity—a white person's amalgamation of "oriental." Although confusing at times, the story does contain pertinent issues of power and control.

Power and control are also seen in the performance pieces *Rage* (Hirabayashi, 1988), *The Journey* (Truly, 1986) and *Nobuo*



FILM BY BRENDA JOY LEM  
THE COMPACT

Kubota at the Western Front, Part II (Kubota, 1990). The video Rege documents a dance, music, and performance piece expressing the anger at the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII. Although a highly intense work, the use of anger as the single emotion throughout makes critical insight of the internment camps almost impossible. The redundancy of the performance overshadows the importance of the subject matter.

In *The Journey*, frustration is the emotion that Ruby Truly uses to express her feeling towards being displaced. Using a circle of raw eggs, Truly slowly steps on them with her bare feet while the narration speaks of her inability to accept "going home." The overuse of reverb adds at times to the lack of clarity in the voices, but overall, it is an interesting metaphor to examine her problem.

In contrast to the previous two heavy performance pieces, Nubuo Kubota's oooops and poooops his way in front of the camera in *Nubuo Kubota at the Western Front, Part II*. This humorous exploration into sound and language is one of my favorite abstract works. Since the context is so vague, I'm allowed to work my own context within it. Instead of a message being explained, this piece has a relaxing inert quality so that the meaning is constructed by the individual viewer instead of by the filmmaker.

The intent of the montage and experimental films from the collection are not as open as Kubota's piece. These films deal mainly with identity and displacement. In *5000 Years of Good Advice* (Lu/Sarnwald, 1987) the theme investigates the connection between perception and image. From a displaced observer's point of view, video images of children from China performing ritual exercises juxtaposed with video images of a pacing caged lion creates a metaphor of cultural restriction. This provocative motif is skewed by the unstructured music, sound effects, and narration. The narration itself is performed in three dialects—Mandarin, Fukian, and Cantonese — addressing a wide spectrum of Chinese-speaking people while simultaneously limiting its comprehension to

another spectrum of the non-Chinese-speaking audience. The inability to understand dialects creates a certain mystery and, in effect, a distanciation from the images we see adding to the remote quality of the images. The observer perspective is used again in the anthropological examination of *Air Air Han* (Oliveros, 1986), a dance performed at Luneta Park in Manila, 1986. What is captured best in the video is the exuberant enthusiasm and joy of the dancers. The minimal editing and the home-movie quality of the video adds to the spontaneity of the celebration and to the enjoyment of the work.

Covering other areas of cultural restrictions are Richard Fung's *Chinese Characters* (1986) and Helen Lee's *Sally's Beauty Spot* (1990). Both pieces look at how others impose cultural images upon Asian gays and women, respectively. In Fung's film, gay erotica is seen through an Asian gay perspective. It is the White male obsession in gay pornography that motivates Fung's search for his identity.

The final film of the *Yellow Pearl* collection, *Sally's Beauty Spot*, seems motivated by Lee's obsession with the film *The World of Suzie Wong* (Quine, 1960), dwelling into the representation of Asian females and interracial relations. The constant sounds of plumbing make the film humorously sardonic—a refreshing method in exploring the subject. The only disappointment of the film is the sometimes superficial way it looks at image, relying predominantly on somewhat minor physical features.

It is important that curators such as Paul Wong collect Asian Canadian videos and films to develop a representational base to examine our status within Canada. What must occur is a reconsideration of our existence beyond the four thematic points of self-image, imposed image, repression, and appropriation. There must develop an intercultural understanding to move beyond the mere emotional reaction of the artist (usually anger). Although justified, an emotional response to injustices is only the beginning in perceiving who we are. Finding a new visual language for Asian Canadians will come from a multiplicity of reactions, both emotional and intellectual.

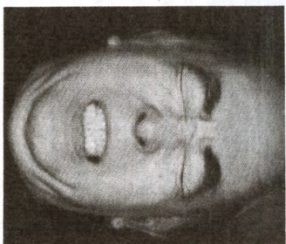
**Panel discussion  
Gallery 44, Toronto  
November 5, 1990**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE exhibition *Yellow Pearl: Reconsidered* in Toronto in the fall of 1990, Gallery 44 presented a discussion panel which included artists from the exhibition. Curator Paul Wong put forward a series of questions to Miki Onodera, Larissa Lai, and Richard Fung, engaging them in conversations about their catalogue text contributions, the different contexts of their work, multicultural policy, personal identity, and the intersection of communities. The following are very brief fragments excerpted from these insightful discussions.

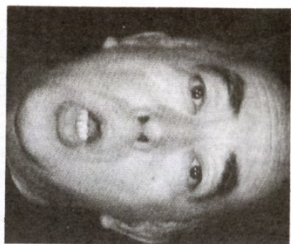
**TRANSCRIBED AND SELECTED  
BY MONIKA GAGNON**

**Paul Wong:**

I've created a fake sense of community. In organizing this exhibition, I very much wanted to include emerging, mid-career, and senior artists, and I wanted to include community-based work and high level conceptual work. I also wanted to only piece this exhibition within the artist-run centres and network as a strategy. It must start where production and critical debate, exhibition, and distribution are controlled by the artist.



STILLS FROM NOBUO KUBOTA,  
AT THE WESTERN FRONT PART II



**Larissa Lai:**

You become aware of an anger which collects and builds up; it's a tremendous amount of energy. I was interested in how that energy could be controlled, what constructive things could be done with it, rather than lashing out at this white, liberal thing out there that you could put your finger on and criticize, and say that no matter what you're doing, you're not doing enough, you're not giving us the support we want, on and on and on... I became tired of the tirade, tired of having to put on an angry face. This [catalogue essay] was a nice way of making that angry energy positive again, of saying, Well, where can we go from here? We know that we're mad about what's gone on in the past, we're mad about the Head Tax, or about daily things that happen, but there have been things that have been done in protest. This was a way to have a sense of community of self, of belonging, of finding a centre. We've always identified ourselves as marginalized, within society as a whole and within the artist-run movement; I wanted to explore the possibility of a place where it's okay, where you have the support that you want, where you don't have to constantly be explaining yourself.

What I found myself doing, was going on a nostalgia trip, looking for pieces of myself, or what I think might be myself, in things Chinese that I never had, that were never around the house or in my environment when I was growing up.

**Richard Fung:**

We are fragments that have been brought together for a common experience of racism. When we come to dealing with race, we have to acknowledge a sense of resistance, that race is a fiction—when we construct it, as much as when it's constructed about us. I prefer to talk about communities.

As generations go on, nostalgia becomes stronger and even more eccentric. I think in the diaspora, many of us reclaim whatever our whole country might be in a very problematic way. Born-again Asian friends of mine would reclaim Samurai or Chinese painting or stories of Emperors, when, of course, many of us came from peasant backgrounds and would only see the Emperors if we were about to have our heads cut off. A lot of the work in an anti-racist context tends to focus on a yellow/white axis, a binary opposition, and we tend not to make those very important links to see other people who are dealing with similar kinds of issues. There has traditionally been a notion of otherness versus subject and we tend not to acknowledge that within every individual there's a subject as well as an other. We also have agency. I'm interested in looking at Asians not only as the subject of racism, but also people who have the power to perpetuate racism against other people and against themselves. I've tended to get sources from the U.S. or Britain, Trinh Minh-ha and the Black British work, and not from Canada. And this has led to a peculiar kind of re-appropriation of someone else's situation to deal with what I had to deal with. The lessons learned in these situations are not always transferable. In Canada, we have, since 1988, an official multicultural policy which, while it recognizes two founding nations, not including the Native people, sees a multiplicity of ethnicities. We don't get our leverage to power from drawing on history. What has inheriting this multicultural system meant for culture and arts funding? It spreads apart two notions of culture that are mutually exclusive: one culture as art, which has been funded through a stream of excellence through the arts councils, and

the other as an anthropological phenomena, what do you eat, etc., through multiculturalism and the Secretary of State. There's a traditional kind of split in cultural funding. One of the issues we encounter [as artists] is which kind of funding do you go for in producing a film or tape?

**Miki Onodera:**

A fear I have in the multicultural climate that we're in, is that there are a lot of developing artists, filmmakers, and video artists who are now beginning to work in media simultaneous to there being a lot of media artists in the early stages of their development are going to be expected by the public to be producing brilliant, outstanding, entertaining, politically correct work, even though they're in the beginning stages of learning how to deal with media as an artform.

As an audience, as consumers of this work, we're putting too much pressure and emphasis on these new works, and saying that if these artworks do not meet our standards, why are we even considering multicultural money to be made available, why are we going out of our way to encourage these new voices to happen, obviously, they can't handle the media. I think this is dangerous, because any artist has to have the time, certainly the financial resources available if we're talking about media, to experiment, to play with the form, to learn how to use the technical components of film and video. I'm nervous that a lot of producers of colour are set up to fail, because of the audience expectation that's attached to these works. There is an enormous void of works by and about people of colour. I'm not talking about white producers producing work about other communities. I'm worried that audience expectation is very high. I personally feel that artists in the early stages of their development should be given the opportunity to grow and make mistakes, without being penalized for it.

Monika Gagnon is a writer, critic, and co-editor of *Parallellogramme*. She contributed "Belonging in Exclusion" to the *Yellow Pearl: Reconsidered* catalogue.

## LUCY

Jamaica Kincaid

New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1990

BY YASHAR ESSOP

LUCY BY JAMAICA KINCAID RESUMES its author's intense concentration upon mother-daughter relationships. The Antiguan-born writer, now a resident of New York and a frequent contributor to the magazine *The New Yorker*, has published three other works. The short story collections *At The Bottom of the River* (1983) and the novel *Annie John* (1985), like *Lucy*, deal with the complex and problem-ridden relationships between mothers and daughters. A *Small Place* (1988) aroused controversy because of its attack upon the corruption that is the only inheritance left behind in Antigua by its European colonizers. Kincaid blames the Europeans for leaving behind the worst of western values and nothing more.

Kincaid, for all the doubt and ambivalence she displays for America and its values, is confident that it offers certain things. One of these is success, and this Kincaid has achieved in no small degree. Kincaid's writing career had a modest beginning in the rock-and-roll profiles she assembled for *Ingenue*, a teen magazine. Contributions to the "Talk of the Town" section of *The New Yorker* evolved into the beginning of Kincaid's discovery of her voice as an artist and to widespread public recognition, as many of her shorter pieces of fiction were published in the magazine. As a writer, Jamaica Kincaid is unabashedly self-referential. She writes from her own experience and without apology: "On the whole, I'm just exploring my own self in

writing. If that sounds self-indulgent, tough," Kincaid's fiction is marked by a flat tone and simple language that mask and are undercut by ironic detachment or overburdened by intense feeling.

Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* charts a young black woman's immigrant experience in some vaguely defined American landscape, presumably New York. Lucy is a heroine without any illusions about men, women, race, or the barren promises of her new American landscape. To say that Lucy is not a young woman given to poetic flights or imaginative excesses is an understatement. She relentlessly strips reality to its bare bones and what she notices is usually not heartening.

Haunted by the past, in particular by her love-hate relationship with her mother which is the mortal coil in her own journey to self-discovery, Lucy realizes that there is no escape from her heritage of suffering. Any physical distance she achieves from her mother and from her island homeland (Antigua) is illusory: her troubled relationship with her mother still figures as the overriding influence in her new life, and her memory is dominated by images and impressions of her experiences in Antigua. "I was not like my mother—I was my mother"; the narrator-heroine accepts the constraints imposed upon her own identity by her past and eventually comes to identify that past as perhaps the only really concrete element in her present experience. The memories of a past in which her mother's overwhelming love paradoxically stifled Lucy and seemed to deny her the freedom and personality she

strongly defends (she is named not for any colonial namesake but for Luther himself), remain with Lucy in her new environment, where she is a dispassionate and often cold-blooded observer of the ruin and emptiness that underlay her prosperous and apparently perfect employers' lives. Lewis and Mariah and their four children.

Lucy remains an outsider both by choice and through the forces of circumstance. Her experiences and emotions are deep and violent and prevent her from sympathizing with the pampered Mariah's problems and concerns:

Mariah, with her pale-yellow skin and yellow hair, stood in this almost celestial light, and she looked blessed, no blemish or mark of any kind on her cheek or anywhere else, as if she had never quarrelled with anyone over a man or over anything, would never have to quarrel at all, had never done anything wrong and had never been to jail, had never had to leave anywhere for any reason other than a feeling that had come over her.

Lucy's attitude towards her blessed employers seems at times to border on contempt and loathing.

If Lucy is given to tersely stated pessimism, she is also a fast and accurate judge of character and situations. Lucy quickly sums up Mariah's best friend Dinah as a vain and dangerous woman who covets Mariah's best-of-all-possible-worlds lifestyle. Subsequent events confirm her suspicions when Dinah becomes sexually involved with Mariah's callow lawyer husband, Lewis. Lucy's background has taught her that women are at best only slightly more to be trusted than men: "Where I came from, it was well-known that some women and all men in general could not be

## JAMAICA



## KINCAID

her. Thus the need for Lucy to abandon her job as a nanny, which is seen as an oppressive and ambivalent role, demanding sexual restraints and model behaviour which Lucy derides both in thought and in action.

*Lucy* tackles the issue of the colonization of the black and native imagination by images that are alien to their actual lives and everyday existence. As a child, when Lucy is at the height of her self-professed two-facedness, "outside false, inside true," Lucy is forced to memorize and recite Wordsworth's poem "Daffodils." Her immediate reaction upon seeing these flowers in her new environment is to wish for a scythe with which she could mow down these daffy flowers which caused her so

much pain before she had ever seen them. The novel also criticizes the middle-class, masculine myth of the artist that is embodied in the life of the painter Paul Gauguin, who escaped to Tahiti and to unbridled creativity and sexual expression. For Lucy, no such escape is possible, her flight to North America is accomplished by putting on the mantle of the servant.

Feminism is also attacked in the novel. Lucy dismisses the textbook feminism embraced by Mariah because it is too remote from her actual experience. It will suffice for Mariah with her small experiences, trivial emotions, and shallow needs, but for Lucy the fabricated rhetoric of academic feminism provides little explanation and even less of a panacea for the tribulations and despair of everyday life.

Mariah's concern with environmental conservation, too, does not escape Lucy's amused contempt. Mariah's good intentions are directly at odds with her place in society. "And that was the reason I couldn't bring myself to point out to her that if all the things she wanted to save were saved, she might find herself in reduced circumstances." Ultimately, all concerns outside of the individual and her integral reality, that is made up of the present and the past, are false and trivial because they entrench illusions instead of stripping down reality.

A basic theme in *Lucy* is the stripping down of reality through relentless analysis and an active imagination. This theme is expressed through Kincaid's pated down, at times skeletally ironic, style, the humour of which resides in its ability to convey the truth with the least amount of fuss and pretension. If Lucy's experience is characterized by pain and scarring, Jamaica Kincaid's spare and elegant style provides a neat counterbalance.

**Yashar Essop is from South Africa. He is a graduate student at University of Toronto where he is studying English.**

## NOW YOU SEE IT: STUDIES ON LESBIAN AND GAY FILM

Richard Dyer  
London: Routledge, 1990. 328 pp.  
BY GILLIAN MORTON

IF YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE '60S parodies produced by the Gay Girls Riding Club, or if you've tried to track down the first film to be made directly by and in the name of a gay organization, or if you've wondered when a "fondness" for pinks and pastels and vaginal imagery first hit the feminist art scene, read Richard Dyer's *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*.

The publication of *Now You See It* means that we no longer have to solely rely on sifting through journals, magazines, and anthologies looking for work on lesbian and gay film. The title's unspoken conclusion, "now you don't," suggests why books like Dyer's are crucial, reminding us that movements and subcultures can be "virtually disappeared from memory."

Although not a comprehensive guide, Dyer discusses a broad range of work: the first gay and lesbian films in Weimar Germany; *Un Chant d'amour* and the importance of Genee (the man and the myth); the American underground in the '40s and '60s; lesbian cultural feminist film in the '70s; and, lastly, films "from and for the movement." *Now You See It* is an accessible book with a minimum of jargon and some fun British colloquialisms ("grotness" is my favourite). The book includes an invaluable list of titles, critical references, and filmmakers, although there are some oddities: titles by John Greyson and Richard Flung are listed without being cited as video, for example.

Despite his stylistic simplicity, Dyer's project is an ambitious one. In his earlier books, *Stars and Heavenly Bodies*, Dyer expanded our notion of stars by examining how screen images of stars are constructed and how shared ways of reading develop for particular audiences. Likewise, *Now You See It* offers more than close analyses of individual titles and film genres, although I think close analysis is Dyer's forte and the book's major strength. *Now You See It* also

attempts to sketch the dynamics of lesbian and gay cultural production.

To do this, Dyer examines the interaction between lesbian and gay subcultures and filmic traditions. He uses a variety of critical approaches rarely integrated in film criticism: he outlines the conditions of production; the histories of screenings; the intentions of filmmakers; the audience responses and critical readings (both contemporary and historical); the dominant ideas of the subcultures; and, in less detail, the states of gay and lesbian organizing. Although fairly comprehensive, *Now You See It* lacks an explicit methodology. Dyer does not draw on these approaches systematically, and while the book is exuberant and provocative, the reader is left to sort through an accumulation of facts, arguments, and "interpretive frameworks."

For example, in Dyer's appreciative, close readings of the films, a sense of what he means by "pleasure" emerges. One of the few film critics who can convey both the form and content of a film in detail without being tedious, Dyer refers to the pleasures of play, sensuality, camp, eroticism, and even spirituality. Dyer does not presume that all audiences share the same responses, often quoting different reactions from spectators and critics, as well as eloquently describing his own responses. He points out how audience responses vary over time depending on "how lesbian and gay identities are . . . culturally perceived and constructed."

Yet Dyer's notion of "pleasure" is left too undefined. For instance, he often uses the French word "frisson" to describe a response to a particular moment or element in a film, the term suggesting both a visceral and an untranslatable quality. He tends to use notions of narcissism, exhibitionism, and voyeurism as if they were self-evident, neither unpacking the terms nor



Still National Film Archive



FLAMING CREATURES  
Film JACK SMITH

subjecting them to interpretation. Dyer's readings refer to collective subjective responses and cannot provide a more critical and exploratory account of how pleasure is experienced and understood.

Given that many discussions of pleasure are framed only by psychoanalytic concepts, mostly unproductively, Dyer's avoids what has too often been a trap for lesbian and gay interpretations. However, Dyer's lack of analysis of pleasure can be a drawback when discussing debates about politics and pleasure. For instance, when discussing Genee's *Un Chant d'amour*, Dyer points to feminist and anti-racist readings, rehearsing interpretations that argue "that there is no pure realm of 'the sexual' which exists apart from social 'realities' and contrasts them with views that argue for a celebration and advocacy of human sexual diversity, outlining the conflict between the impulse to be critical of pleasure versus the impulse to assert the rights of pleasure."

Dyer does not extend or evaluate these interpretations, nor detail how these debates have been played out within movements. He merely explains the different impulses towards criticism or celebration

means more films made by and about men than women, and next to no representation of non-white, non-Northern/Western people . . . [and] the specificity of the idea of "being" lesbian or gay means that the very different way same-sex relations are constructed and experienced in Japan or Third World countries does not come into my purview." Leaving aside whether dealing mostly with films made before 1980 is an issue of "manageability" to be "arbitrarily" decided, Dyer might have drawn more consistently on post-1980 critical concerns regarding how "sexuality, class, race, and gender intersect in the social construction and lived experiences of individual and collective subjectivities."

For instance, Dyer, for the most part, integrates arguments about race when they are part of the critical reception of the work but does not initiate such analyses. Dyer's recounting of feminist critiques of lesbian cultural feminist films shows how these films passed off "as universal particular, rather white, rather vanilla version of lesbianism." Dyer's analysis of these films suggests that their claim to authenticity and to collective truth demands a more explicitly politicized reading that the underground films which employ camp and artifice and claim a personal, idiosyncratic vision.

At other moments in the book, Dyer may allude to how films raise issues of desire, class, and race but does not discuss the political effects of these representations and their implications for the movements at the time of the films' production. Dyer does not suggest, for instance, how notions of whiteness and masculinity may have effected male-identified notions of homosexuality in Weimar Germany, although he refers to a reinforcement of bourgeois nationalism. Likewise, the kitschy, fake orientalism of underground films and other issues of appropriation are treated as playful camp or part of the filmmakers' personal expressions.

Dyer's tendency is to account for, but not challenge, the limitations of various genres: to Dyer, the films "are what could be done within actual social and historical reality." He outlines the states of the les-

bian and gay movements at various times, suggesting what elements of the films gave audiences a sense of immediacy and the films their "campaigning edge." Of course, as Dyer says in his introduction, it would be impossible to provide a "comprehensive guide to the total subcultural and filmic states." As a film critic, Dyer subordinates the histories of gay and lesbian organizing to the readings of the films, stating, "It is this interaction, this within and against, of historically specific lesbian/gay subcultures and particular filmic traditions, as worked through in the texts of the films, that is the focus of this book" (emphasis added). With this focus for his "frameworks of interpretation," Dyer cannot adequately explore the political effects of the work. Dyer's emphasis is on the divergence between filmic traditions and the "deviant" positions of the lesbian and gay subcultures, not the interaction between the agendas and activities of the movements and those of artists located both within and without the movements.

Thus Dyer concludes his book with a valorization of the strategies of "post-affirmation cinema," arguing that such work (of which Ulrike Ottinger's *Madame X* is his final example) combines an "awareness of surface, construction and play with a sense of urgency and edge." *Madame X*, says Dyer, moves "beyond the quality of many of its postmodern peers, in which there is a bit of this and a bit of that but nothing much matters." But Dyer does not challenge the assumption that the awareness of surface and the construction of appearance is the best (or even a necessary) filmic "strategy of survival," particularly within the period of "re-enrichment against lesbian/gay sexuality" and the rise of homophobia. How effectively is this work grounded "in political realities?"

Despite these limitations, outward-looking film criticism like Dyer's in *Now You See It* surpasses the work of most cultural analysts. Dyer outlines the relationship between different kinds of political practice and film form; discusses the dynamics of lesbian and gay cultural production; documents some of the changing conditions of film production and reception; and briefly

**FILM & VIDEO**

**TORONTO LESBIAN AND GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL**

**Inside/OUT Collective, organizers**  
**The Euclid Theatre, Toronto**  
**March 21 - 31, 1991**

**BY COLIN CAMPBELL**

examines the agendas, strategies, and levels of struggle in the history of the movements. This is the kind of film criticism we need to begin to understand both the political potential and the actual effects of gay and lesbian cultural production on gay and lesbian movements.

**Gillian Morton studied Cinema at Yale, with Jodie Foster.**



**MADAME X**  
**Film ULRIKE OTTINGER**  
 Still National Film Archive

**ONE OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE AND** sexually explicit works in the first year of Toronto's *Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival* depicted heterosexual (?) sex in *25-Year-Old Gay Man Loses His Virginity To A Woman*. This work was in one of the "boys' programmes, but one had to wonder just how to classify the sex that was happening between good-natured Annie Sprinkle, recently heterosexual, briefly lesbian, currently bisexual, and Phillip Roth, gay but latently heterosexual. Roth, all questions and "how-am-I-doing, Mom," looks to the camera as he queries Sprinkle, obviously has located her cervix; Sprinkle, obviously losing academic distance and hovering dangerously on that thin line between heterosexuality, gasps, "Oh who knows and who cares?" The primarily gay male audience enthusiastically applauded the film and made me wonder if I had witnessed:

- a. The harbingers of New '90s Sex
- b. Gay Imposters. Sprinkle and Roth are really heterosexuals who enter lesbian and gay festivals because no straight festival would programme such a hilarious depiction of heterosexual.
- c. The birth of a New Gay Hero With Qualifiers. Hero: He can actually get it up for a woman. Qualifiers: Why does this make him a Hero? Why are we clapping?

There were three programmes devoted exclusively to AIDS, which all attracted small audiences. This was surprising and disappointing, since a lot of the material had never been screened in Toronto. The first two films in Rosa Von Praunheim's trilogy on AIDS activism, *Silence=Death* and *Positive* drew mixed response. *Silence=Death* is a disturbing film due to the lack of critical distance by Praunheim as he documents performances and interviews artists with AIDS or working on AIDS projects. The opening scene of *Silence=Death*, a man firing a gun up

his anus with attendant gushing blood, tests even the staunchest of viewers. *Positive* has the ACTUP people storming the Montreal World Health Organization conference on AIDS with many a mention of Aids Action Now/Action Sida's contribution as host activists. *Positive* is saved thanks to the engaging host Phil Zwicker, who questions Praunheim's motives as sensationalist, then guides both the filmmaker and audience through the labyrinth of grassroots organizations fighting AIDS. The programme on women and AIDS featured the accomplished *anOTHER* love story: *Women and AIDS* and the well-intentioned but frequently patronizing video *Family Values* by David Stuart, which documents the response to the AIDS crisis by lesbians in San Francisco. Three men attended this screening. I mention this figure because it is alarming to think of concern about AIDS as gender-specific. The overall lack of attendance for these programmes is deeply discouraging. I know people going to a festival want to have a good time. I know that people are burned out from the AIDS crisis. Many of these works offered wisdom and humour, plus resourceful, inspiring, and inventive ways of dealing with AIDS. It's a shame more people didn't see them.

**THE BATTLE OF READING GAOL**  
 Film RICHARD KWIETNIOWSKI



**SPRINKLE AND ROTH in**  
**25-YEAR-OLD GAY MAN LOSES HIS VIRGINITY TO A WOMAN**

Still courtesy the filmmaker

Special emphasis was placed on work on or by lesbians and gays of colour. Marlon T. Riggs' *Tongues Untied* was one of the most intriguing (boys only) works, combining autobiography, poetry, and documentary footage into a rich collage commenting on Black invisibility in the gay community. Riggs' *Affirmations*, a follow-up to *Tongues Untied* felt more like out-takes than a new work. James Baldwin: *The Price of the Ticket*, a documentary on Baldwin, was wonderful when Baldwin was speaking. Baldwin was witty, searing, and incisive. The rest of the documentary consisted of endless numbers of people duly telling us how wonderful Baldwin was. Thanks, but we already knew.

One of the nicest surprises of the festival was Quebec's Jean-Yves Laforçé's *The Heart Exposed*. With a screenplay by Michel Tremblay, the well-acted, superbly-written feature about the developing romance between an older teacher and a young aspiring actor who is the father of a five-year-old son, succeeds with grace and humour. The refreshing shrug of worldly Gallic humour and wisdom is such a welcome contrast to all the angst and painful sexual anxiety displayed by Anglo-Canadians. And they produce it for television. England's Richard Kwietniowski had three films in the festival: *Affligo*, an alternative alphabet of gay slang, *Flames of Passion*, a gay take-off on *Brief Encounter*, and *The*

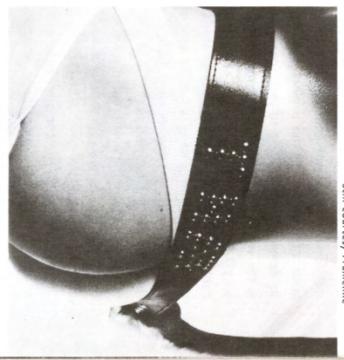
*Balled of Reading Gaol*. All three are beautiful, accomplished films, but *The Balled of Reading Gaol*, re-firing Oscar Wilde's testimony before being sentenced to Reading Gaol to two years hard labour, is mesmerizingly stunning in its use of text and carefully-composed images.

A festival of any kind always raises the question of who the targeted audience is. The Inside/OUT Collective states in the programme notes: "The purpose of this festival . . . is to redress the historically inadequate distribution and exhibition opportunities for these works which best reflect our community." The 100-odd videos and films screened at the festival were primarily produced in the past five years, with only three works from the '70s. The audience for the festival, predictably, was primarily lesbian and gay. The only distributor I saw straight friends or acquaintances at was *Paris is Burning* (which the distributors have requested not be reviewed until after its commercial release). Because the programmes (each about two hours long with one feature or up to ten shorts) were either exclusively lesbian or gay in content, the audiences tended to break down pretty much by gender, with a low percentage of mixed audi-

ences. Consequently, few gay men saw work by lesbians, and vice versa, and virtually no straight people saw anything by anyone.

Hopefully, this festival will bring attention to the ongoing work being produced by lesbians and gays in this city. You don't need to wait for a festival to see the work. It's out there all year round, frequently at the Euclid Theatre. The day the festival opened, festival publicist Liz Czach was already talking about next year's event. Liz, concerned that The Euclid was too small a theatre to accommodate what was expected to be sell-out crowds for many of the programmes, said the Inside/OUT Collective is considering the mammoth Bloor Cinema for 1992. One would have to see The Euclid lose the festival, but repeat screenings (I'll arm, perhaps) or a larger theatre are necessary to alleviate the problems evident this year in long lines and turned-away customers. The festival seemed to run smoothly but some work is needed on details like passes for participating artists and press. Hopefully, next year's festival will also feature shorter programmes.

**Colin Campbell is a videomaker and filmmaker. He teaches in the University of Toronto Fine Arts department and is involved with artist-run centres.**



**THE BATTLE OF READING GAOL**  
 Film RICHARD KWIETNIOWSKI

Still courtesy Frameline

IN CONTROL

Lorenzo Bui, curator

Patricia Warren, coordinator

various locations, Windsor, Ontario

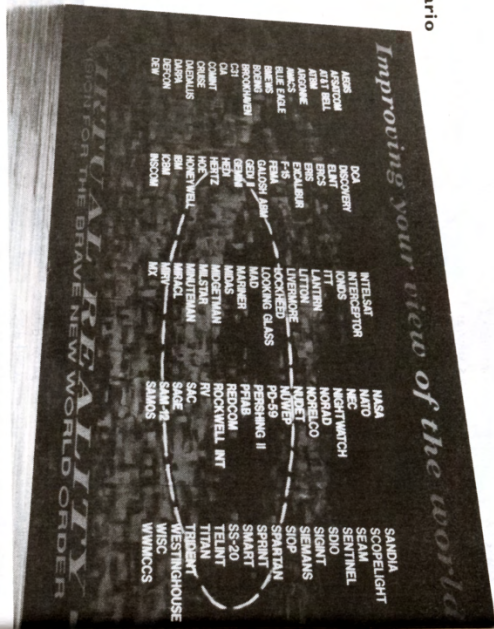
June 15 - August 4, 1991

BY RAY CRONIN

THE ARTIST-RUN CENTRE, ARTCITE Inc., recently commissioned works from seven artists for a city-wide billboard project. Three of the locations were commercial billboard sites—works by Janelle Hassan, Christopher McNamara, Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge; three were sites with "billboard"-type formats—a piece by Ron Benner on the front lawn of the Art Gallery of Windsor, one by Michael Fernandes (from Halifax) on a lot in an industrial/commercial section of town, and one by Christine Burchall that was intended for the lawn of the University of Windsor's Visual Arts building. This site was devoted to Artcrite by the University at the eleventh hour (four days before the opening) and, as a result, this piece was on display in the gallery until an alternate site was found—on the side wall of a downtown building that is slated to become a performing arts centre.

The show attempted to address issues of control (which is ironic given that the municipal government and the University both acted to control this project, the city by denying Arctite access to park space). It is the seeming lack of a specific mercenary purpose that is both disturbing and memorable about these works. They present themselves in the guise of a familiar urban site/sight: the advertising billboard. Because there are actually four distinct types of billboards, there are very different responses to this advertising environment, each with differing results.

The challenge in the commercial sites is to use their built-in connotations without being compromised by the advertising milieu—without being perceived as just another ad. This challenge was met differently by each artist in the commercial sites—the curation of this show has served to choose artists who manifest similar con-



"VIRTUAL REALITY"  
Photo: Ono Bui

cerns (loosely grouped under the term "political") but who share little in the way of working methods, sensibility, or "style." Significantly, none of these artists had worked in the public billboard format before.

Curator Lorenzo Bui has written that: "Commercialism and culture are often indistinguishable in Western industrialized societies." This is a theme that recurs throughout these works, making it impossible to speak of them in purely aesthetic terms. In fact, this slippage of the commercial into the cultural is one of the main elements of control as it is manifested in advertisements—and in the artworks.

Janelle Hassan's work, which dealt with issues raised by the Gulf War, obliquely questioned our perceptions of this last war, particularly the gross generalizations employed by both governments and media to encapsulate an entire culture under the icon of Saddam Hussein. His very name pushed the buttons that called up any number of "horrors" that were used to justify that massive action against an entire people.

The text, "Because . . . there was and there wasn't a city of Baghdad," had the cadence of a storyteller: in discussing the work, the artist has said that it is purposefully reminiscent of *The 1001 Arabian Nights*. The image on the billboard, the dome and minaret of a mosque, "triple[d] the visual effect of the two actual skylines, with Windsor's physically and perceptually overlapping neighbouring Detroit." The photograph evoked both the reality of the city and our stereotypical views of "Araby," posing the question of just how easily we accept media images and how uncritical we are of them. It is the introduction of the "other" city, Baghdad, that resonated in this work—the text calls up not the stereotypical images of Arab oilmen and strongmen,

not the mustachioed face of the "evil" villain of the war, but the stories from childhood of Ali Baba and Sinbad. The mosque also brought home the otherness of this other city—the history, the religion, its closeness to peoples' day-to-day lives. This juxtaposition with the beauty of Windsor effectively used the advertiser's art of

hyperbole—as in the majority of media images of Iraq, there is no room here to disagree: the viewer absorbs this view as if it were the truth. Whether it is or isn't didn't seem to be the point, rather it spoke of another version, another city of Baghdad.

Our western eyes aren't used to this version; the evocative text seemed ready to spin us a tale, placing us in the position of the sultan (in *The 1001 Arabian Nights*, he held Scheherazade, the storyteller, under a death sentence, but was so spellbound by her tales that he spared her). Unfortunately, there was no Scheherazade for the real city of Baghdad.

Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge made a piece that spoke directly to concerns of this border town—their "Shut Down Free Trade" was an allegory with a political message. The central figure was a woman on a shop floor looking out directly at the viewer, with her fist clenched in rage or defiance. Behind her (but in black and white) was another woman (perhaps the same one. . .) crying in despair. An empty high chair sat beside her, with an almost empty cupboard and the image of a computer screen listing stock prices behind all of this. It had a distinct feeling of aggrivation, with the central image of the woman serving as an heroic icon of "the worker." This piece was on a wall facing north, which in this city means facing Detroit. Like Janelle Hassan, they felt it important that the skyline of Detroit be visible while looking at their work, though the motivation seems to be different. This was the most didactic piece in the show—its tone was almost shrill and it easily overpowered the advertisements beside it. In many ways it was the most effective piece as a public, "temporary monument"—its meaning was clear, it could be viewed easily from a passing car, it dealt with the plant closures that are part of the everyday fabric of this border city—yet it seemed almost too earnest, too didactic, too naïve in its heroic iconography. It is important that artworks challenge the viewer intellectually as well as politically, something that this work did not do. The sagged quality of the original photographic work, which involved hiring actors, building

sets, etc., achieved a formal complexity that addressed the history of photography as much as it did any particular issue. This formal complexity, however, was lost as the final product was a printed image.

Chris Michnamara's "The promise . . ." was the third work on a commercial billboard. This work rendered of a photograph of a small house in a sepi tone, with text over and under the image. There was smaller lettering on the image itself. This text read as follows: "The promise: jam tomorrow . . .", and written on the image itself, "we had a little cottage." The text on the image was the most evocative, harking back to an idyllic time—a sad memory framed by a more didactic text. This text, with its ironic tone, questioned the middle- and working-class dream of owning a place of one's own, an extra place, a refuge (a desire that is probably served more now by television than by little cottages). The text itself had a nostalgic tone and was reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* ("The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today"). This "billboard" was somewhat problematic to

me, primarily because of its scale, demanding an intimacy and a study that did not fit the site or the format. While the smaller text may not have been vital to the piece, it tempered the banal tone of the rest of the text, adding a level of poignancy to the work that enriched it.

"Native To The Americas" by Ron Benner was a reminder to most North Americans that unlike tobacco, corn, squash, coca, marigolds, pumpkin, chestnut, and myriads more, we are not native to the Americas; that we are not aware of the facts surrounding our incessant consumption; and that this "mindless consumption" is the root of the historic and present-day injustices that we have imposed on the First Nations of the Americas. This work consisted of a 8 x 16 "billboard" with a garden planted around it. This garden consisted of beans, squash, tobacco, peppers, and other indigenous American plants. The text read "Native To The Americas." Below it were several columns of names of indigenous



"BECAUSE . . . THERE WAS & THERE WASN'T A CITY OF BAGHDAD"  
Photo: Ono Bui

EXHIBITION

ROBERT HOULE: INDIANS FROM A TO Z

Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg  
February 11 - May 6, 1990  
closing until December 1991  
BY CAROL PODEDWORN

ROBERT HOULE: INDIANS FROM A TO Z features 23 works culled from the last ten years of Houle's artistic production. It presents few surprises for the viewer familiar with Houle's work, as all of the artist's most significant are here. (Omitted is the 1984 series comprised of *The BNA Act, The Indian Act, The Royal Proclamation*, and *The Constitution*.) Nevertheless, the exhibit is revealing and without dismissing the work—the paintings are powerful and imposing statements which exhibit a rich "bilingual" legacy—it is on the catalogue essays that I wish to focus, for aside from their raison d'être as introductions, biographies, and critiques, they tell us much about how we think about the First Peoples and their cultural productions.

Dr. Brown's essay considers the stereotypes "banzais" which the "whiteman" has created and attached to the "Indian." Brown ponder's—somewhat bemusedly—about the how and why of them, about their falsity, and about what they ultimately tell us of those who created them. The author identifies the homogenized "ethnic" which pervades Canadian cultural politics and how dominant white culture likes "ethnics" to be "pure and authentic"—thus explaining much about why contemporary Native art is relegated to the anthropological past and the ethnographic museum. Brown concludes that Native cultures are not anthropological but dynamic and that today, artists such as Robert Houle have as much to say of wisdom and relevance as do the Elders.

Brown's essay provides us with a perspective with which to view the Native artist and his/her culture and productions that matter-of-factly acknowledges difference without dread, fascination, apology, or awe. Madill's essay, while establishing an analogy between the rise of the avant-garde and contemporary Native art, which is quite original, tells us little new about Houle, his work, or contemporary First Nations art in general. We have read before that the artists are straddling two worlds, that their work is not primitive but contemporary, that they have roots in the West and in North America, and we know that Indian cultures are capable of persistence and change or do we? It is difficult to discern if it is Madill who is new to this information, or if the essay comes as a result of her assumption of the ignorance of her audience.

The most enlightening essay in this collection is written by Gerald McMaster. The essay—part of which is entitled "My Writer Count," after the Plains Indian tradition of "history"-making—reveals McMaster's connection with his subject and is both enlightening and emotive, as perhaps one writing from outside the culture could not be. Much of what McMaster says comes in the form of direct quotes from the artist or from conversations between the artist and writer. From a position of sameness, McMaster offers those of us in a position of difference a means of interpreting the art of an Other—through listening to their voice(s). Also important, beyond the power of McMaster's understanding, is what he has brought that is new to the study of Houle's art. Specifically, he discusses what the artist calls the "de-masculinization" of the Native man, and how Houle's *perfectione*—beyond being a contemporary version of the traditional *pouche*—is also a symbol of "calm and rupture."

What this exhibition tells us, upon reflection, is that in looking at First Nations art we have often erred on the side of ethnocentrism. Work by the so-called "innovators"—Houle, Poitras, Beam, et al—is often perceived as being formally grounded solely in a traditional history of art in the West. One cannot help but wonder if this is not, at least in part, one reason why this art has been accepted—although grudgingly—by the mainstream in the first place. Yes, if we look at Houle's work (and that of others), at works such as *7 in Steel* (1989), those paintings which make up the series *Perfectiones for the Last Supper* (1983), and others, we will find that much of what has been attributed to a Modernist or Formalist vocabulary, is also that which might be attributed to Houle's Saulteaux heritage, to a Plains Indian tradition of abstraction and symbolism in various forms of visual representation. And, when we combine our thoughts on the simplicity of the images and our feelings about the power of their spiritual, political, or moral statements, we surmise that possibly—probably—there is more informing Houle than simply the precepts of Western art movements called Abstraction or Minimalism.

Carol Podeworny is a curator/arts writer living in Hamilton.

Ray Goin is a sculptor living and working in Windsor, Ontario.

ENDNOTES

1. Lorenzo Bui, *Park Press*, Vol.13.6.
2. Janette Hasson quoted in ibid.
3. Christopher Wickhamara is quoted in ibid., saying that the quotation used is also based on an original by Madill.
4. Madill, *Carl Lulihar, Culture is Our Business*, New York: Ballantine Press, 1970.



"NAIVE TO THE AMERICAS"  
Photo Otto Bui

world as creating it. This piece, with its overt quoting of the advertising vocabulary, was a most effective piece of political art.

The large amount of rather small text meant that, while viewers could read the main "titles," they could only make sense of a few of the acronyms at a time, building up a sense of the piece upon repeated viewing. Its new site was at a stoplight, which has a lot of pedestrian traffic—all in all almost as good as its originally intended site (denied by the University of Windsor) at the entrance to the Ambassador bridge.

Michael Fernandes's piece was the most poetic of the show, and the least overtly political. It is also the most difficult to write about. The painted hand that made up most of this piece was facing the viewer, palm out, with the thumb extended to the top of the "billboard." The text on the left side of the thumb read, "Inhabited by a spirit," and on the right, "worshiped by savages." This piece had religious overtones, the open hand suggesting Christian iconography. It also had a large dose of the "high" art sophistication of conceptualism. This work, on a busy street in an industrial neighbourhood, functioned quite well as a "billboard" on this strip. The text evoked a duality, though not necessarily about simple oppositions—"spirit" and "savages" aren't opposites. The desire to use it as a dichotomy was very strong, something Fernandes used

plants. This text surrounded a central photo taken from within a shopping cart, looking up at another cart and the woman pushing it. On this image was superimposed the words "First Nations." Not only are we prisoners of our consumption but we have made the First Nations peoples prisoners as well. The garden that surrounded it created an environment within which to view the work, and its setting in a park-like context on the front lawn of the Art Gallery of Windsor, with high pedestrian traffic, made it easy to approach as an object, one to be walked around, examined, and above all to be experienced as a space. This piece was also solidly in a public space, not a commercial one like the others.

Christine Burchhall's "Virtual Reality," "advertised" several acronyms of organizations, weapons systems, and companies under the rubric of "Virtual Reality—Vision for the Brave New World Order." This text (with overtones of Huxley's *Brown New World*) and the reams of vaguely familiar names, contractions, and acronyms worked directly on the viewer the way advertising does. This work wasn't selling anything per se, but it seemed to be. The ironic tone of this piece cut through the seeming innocuousness of these terminologies to the heart of the "brave new world order": it is dependent upon technologies which are not so much "improving" our view of the



"7 IN STEEL," 1989.

Photo Ernest Meyer, courtesy Winnipeg Art Gallery.

# index

## for volume 14

COMPILED BY SANDRA HAAR

Numbers in brackets refer to issue; numbers following, to page(s)

### ARTEHIBITIONS

Acocoe, Carolyn F.  
review of *Seeing Red/ish/Petras, Boyer, Carolin/Schubert, Petras*  
(182) 47-48

Gill, Ron  
review of *Milton Serres*  
(3) 36

Marks, Laura U.  
review of *Adrian Piper: Reflections 1967-87*  
(182) 40-42

Therriault, Normand  
journalment du terrain culturel au Québec/Québec: Mapping out a cultural space  
(182) 30-39

Ward, Andrea  
review of *STREETMART*  
(4) 45-46

Yeo, Marhan  
review of *It's Too Personal/Shirron Zentil Come*  
(4) 47

### ARTISTS' PAGES

Clark-Greenberg, June  
(182) 25-27

Shinhat, Molly Kaur  
review of *Forbidden City, U.S.A./Arthur Dong*  
(3) 44-45

Shinhat, Molly Kaur  
review of *Meng Gan: Recipes Qui Pousse/Trenblay and Petropoulos*  
(3) 45-46

Shinhat, Molly Kaur  
review of *Tong Ren, Jr.: A living archive*  
(182) 22-23

Yoon, Jin-me A.  
artists' pages  
(586) 2-3

### BLACK CULTURE AND POLITICS

Phillip, Marlene Nourbese  
The New Jerusalem—in two and a half minutes  
(4) 20-23

Phillip, Marlene Nourbese  
The Six Per Cent Solution  
(182) 28-29

Scheier, Libby, with Lenore Keeshig-Tobias  
Writing Authentic Voices: The Writers' Union & anti-racism  
(182) 14-15

Black, Ayanna  
interview with James Berry  
(182) 18-19

Brynda, Bianca Nwajig  
review of *Songob/Morame Koplon*  
(4) 44

Essop, Daria  
review of *Afrofunk: A Spirit That Lives On*  
(3) 40-41

Mart, Raena  
African Owl Power: In Defiance of the Colonialism of the Written Word  
(586) 18-21

Marks, Laura U.  
review of *Adrian Piper: Reflections 1967-87*  
(182) 40-42

Oshimbo, Deborah  
Word to the brother...  
(586) 12-15

Walker, Klive  
review of *Broken Arrow/Mogih*  
(182) 46

### BOOKS

Bell, Shannon  
review of *I Am Still Trying To Make It: Stories from Scarborough Adult Learners*  
(182) 44-45

Evling, Bob  
review of *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian critical theory/Carol J. Adams*  
(4) 48

Morris, Roberta  
review of *Linked Alive/Morze, Block, Douglas, Morde, Michela, Some*  
(3) 41-44

Robertson, Clive  
review of *Sound by Artists/Dan Lander & Michel Lexter*  
(3) 11

Wickens-Feldman, Renate  
review of *Contra Fends & Kodak Gifts: 50 Selections by and about Women in Photography, 1840-1930/Peter E. Palmquist, editor*  
(4) 40-42

Black, Ayanna  
interview with James Berry  
(182) 18-19

Brynda, Bianca Nwajig  
review of *Songob/Morame Koplon*  
(4) 44

Essop, Daria  
review of *Afrofunk: A Spirit That Lives On*  
(3) 40-41

Mart, Raena  
African Owl Power: In Defiance of the Colonialism of the Written Word  
(586) 18-21

Marks, Laura U.  
review of *Adrian Piper: Reflections 1967-87*  
(182) 40-42

Oshimbo, Deborah  
Word to the brother...  
(586) 12-15

Carpenter, Sandra  
review of *A Wheelchair View*  
(586) 28-31

### EDUCATION

Bell, Shannon  
Just Binder's Playhouse: Mother Jones, Lewis Hine & the March of the Mill Children  
(4) 13-14

Bell, Shannon  
review of *I Am Still Trying To Make It: Stories from Scarborough Adult Learners*  
(182) 44-45

### FEMINISM

Bell, Shannon  
Egocentric Television: The talk show and the postmodern subject  
(586) 6-11

Bird, Kym  
The Phallic Gaze of The Sun  
(586) 40-43

Bocourkiv, Marusa  
Chick Flicks: Festival de films et vidéos de femmes de Montréal  
(182) 20-21

Evling, Bob  
The Sexual Politics of Meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory/Carol J. Adams  
(4) 48

Fisher, Jennifer  
The Comic Mirror: Domestic surveillance in Mary Wroth  
(586) 50-53

Oshimbo, Deborah  
Word to the brother...  
(586) 12-15

Perrin Adams, Kathleen  
Bad Steers: Punk Culture and Feminism  
(586) 22-27

Phillip, Marlene Nourbese  
The Six Per Cent Solution  
(182) 28-29

Rimpau, Ina  
We Are Not Just Good Friends: The Lesbian Subject in Female Buddy Movies  
(586) 58-61

### WALKER, KATHRYN

Walker, Kathryn  
artists' pages  
(586) 48-49

Wickens-Feldman, Renate  
review of *Contra Fends & Kodak Gifts: 50 Selections by and about Women in Photography, 1840-1930/Peter E. Palmquist, editor*  
(4) 40-42

Yeo, Marhan  
review of *It's Too Personal/Shirron Zentil Come*  
(4) 47

### FILM & VIDEO

Benjamin, Jody A.  
review of *4th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Festival: Focus on Black Gay Men*  
(3) 33-36

Bocourkiv, Marusa  
Chick Flicks: Festival de films et vidéos de femmes de Montréal  
(182) 20-21

Brynda, Bianca Nwajig  
review of *Songob/Morame Koplon*  
(4) 44

Carpenter, Sandra  
Movies: A Wheelchair View  
(586) 28-31

Czegedy, Nina  
Videobridge: European hookup  
(3) 14

Pike, Bev, with Kathy Driscoll  
Painting a Collective History: Manitoba artists for women's art  
(182) 15-17

Fung, Richard  
Seeing Yellow: Asian film & representation  
(3) 18-21

Kesley, Susan  
review of *4th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Festival*  
(3) 31-32

Keeshig-Tobias, Lenore  
review of *Inngas: Decolonization programme/Lorinda Todd*  
(182) 48-49

Munger, Andrew  
review of *Color Schemes, Le Gout de Mon Espoir, Shining, Sales Images*  
(182) 50-51

Rimpau, Ina  
We Are Not Just Good Friends: The Lesbian Subject in Female Buddy Movies  
(586) 58-61

Roshuk, Alex  
review of *Barchone/Celine Bortl*  
(182) 51-52

Shinhat, Molly Kaur  
review of *Forbidden City, U.S.A./Arthur Dong*  
(3) 44-45

Shinhat, Molly Kaur  
review of *Meng Gan: Recipes Qui Pousse/Trenblay and Petropoulos*  
(3) 45-46

Tomczak, Kim  
Video News  
(182) 24; (3) 9; (4) 12

### LESBIAN & GAY CULTURE AND POLITICS

Adams, Mary Louise  
review of *Dwelling the Line/Kiss n Tell*  
(182) 42-44

Barnes, Brenda  
Wide World of Sports: Gay Games (un)covered  
(3) 5-6



Benjamin, Joy A. review of 4th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Festival. Focus on Black Gay Men (3) 33-36	<b>MEDIA</b> Barris, Brenda review of <i>Broken Arrow/Mogin</i> (unlowered) (3) 5-6	Walker, Kline review of <i>Broken Arrow/Mogin</i> (182) 46	<b>SEXUALITY</b> Adams, Mary Louise review of <i>Drawing the Line/Kiss 'n' Tell</i> (182) 42-44
Bocourkiv, Marusa Police: Terrorists (182) 10-11	Bell, Shannon Epitaphary: Television. The talk show and the postmodern subject (586) 6-11	<b>NATIVE CULTURE AND POLITICS</b> Acoose, Carolyn F. review of Seung Red/sh-Petrus, Boyer, Cardinal-Schubert, Polaris (182) 47-48	Bell, Shannon Epitaphary: Television. The talk show and the postmodern subject (586)
Bocourkiv, Marusa The Phobic Gaze of The Sun (586) 40-43	Bird, Kym The Phobic Gaze of The Sun (586) 40-43	Cooly, Glenn Aunshwabe Healing: Native traditions in health care (182) 12-14	McDonald, Cyndra Sophic Scenes: Looking through a history (4) 24-39
Eamon, Christopher Gay Shorts and Sports (586) 16-17	Chater, Nancy Someone Hume happens to be... Toronto Star writer rases himself in reflections on black art (4) 10	Keeshig-Tobias, Lenore review of Inages: Decolonization programme/Loretta Todd, curator (182) 48-49	<b>THEATRE</b> Bell, Gay Jude Bider's Prophouse: Mother Jones, Lewis Hine & the March of the Mill Children (4) 13-14
Flack, Robert artist's papers (586) 37-39	Fisher, Jennifer The Comic Mirror: Domestic surveillance in Mary Worth (586) 50-53	Young-ling, Greg Negotiating Self/Rule: interview with Eligh Harper (182) 7-9	Folland, Tom review of <i>Ban This Show/Sky Gilbert</i> (4) 43-44
Folland, Tom Ruined Representations: Reading Gay Life in the Popular Press (586) 32-35	Folland, Tom Ruined Representations: Reading Gay Life in the Popular Press (586) 32-35	Young-ling, Greg What Columbus Didn't Know: First Nations self-determination (4) 5-6	<b>WRITING &amp; PUBLISHING</b> Gibson, Jennifer and Shani Hoosoo Hester & Gaidin of the Vancouver International Writers Festival (4) 7-9
Gupta, Sunil In San Francisco (4) 17-19	Paterson, Andrew J. Get that gay out of here! (3) 17	<b>PERFORMANCE</b> Okano, Haruko review of Powell Street Festival (3) 47-48	Marr, Rozema African Oral Power: In Defiance of the Colonialism of the Written Word (586) 18-21
Kealey, Susan review of 4th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film Festival (3) 31-32	Paterson, Andrew J. There is No Place Like Home: The Rise and Fall of David Lynch (586) 44-47	<b>PHOTOGRAPHY</b> Adams, Mary Louise review of <i>Drawing the Line/Kiss 'n' Tell</i> (182) 42-44	Queen Press New lesbian & gay book publisher opens in Toronto (4) 9
MacDowell, Cyndra Sophic Scenes: Looking through a history (4) 24-39	Waters, Jack Madness: Howing It Ben Ways (586) 54-57	Essop, Daria review of <i>Africville: A Spirit That Lives On</i> (3) 40-41	Scheier, Libby, with Lenore Keeshig- Tobias Writing Authentic Voices: The Writers' Union & anti-racism (182) 14-15
Queen Press New lesbian & gay book publisher opens in Toronto (4) 9	<b>MUSICAUDIO</b> Odlumhoo, Deborah Word to the brother... (586) 12-15	Shihata, Molly Kaur Tong Ren jie: A living archive (182) 22-23	
Rimpau, Ina We Are Not Just Good Friends: The Lesbian Subject in Female Buddy Movies (586) 58-61	Robertson, Clive Making Waves: Radio art symposium (3) 10-12	Wickens-Feldman, Renate review of <i>Cameo Friends &amp; Kodak Girls</i> : 50 Selections by and about Women in Photography, 1840-1930/Peter E. Podnigist, editor (4) 40-42	
	Robertson, Clive review of <i>Sound by Arvid/Dan Lander</i> & Michael Laker (3) 11		

# Living with HIV

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Are you HIV positive? Got something to say about it? FUSE wants to hear from you!

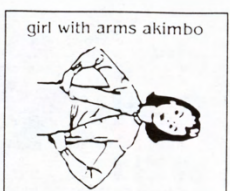
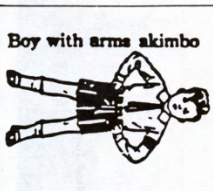
We are planning a special issue for late spring of 1992. All contributions will be from people living with HIV.

We are looking for personal essays, critical pieces, non-fiction, illustrations, photo-collages, pictures, snap-shots... any kind of response that speaks about living with HIV from first hand experience. (The only thing we don't publish is fiction and poetry.)

If you're interested in contributing or know someone who might drop us a line or give us a call. Better yet, show us your stuff! All work will be returned if requested.

Deadline is March 2, 1992.

FUSE MAGAZINE, 183 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario  
M5T 2R7  
(416) 367-0159



## FEATURE FILM APPRENTICESHIPS

Toronto-based film production company DREAMWORKS INC. will commence production of the feature film, *SUNSHINE OF THE MOON*, directed by Mel Croden, in mid-February 1992 under the sponsorship of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship and the Ontario Film Development Corporation/Association of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto/Multicultural Drama Film Fund. We are pleased to offer several paid training positions which will provide opportunities for First Nations, People of Colour, cultural minorities and women. The purpose of this program is to allow these individuals the opportunity to gain practical experience in film production. This intensive program offers on-the-job training under the supervision of industry professionals. The film producer will be based in Toronto. Travel, accommodation and living expenses will not be provided. We are seeking applicants from practicing media artists, filmmakers and video producers for the following positions:

- 1 x Assistant to the Production Manager
  - 1 x Assistant to the Director
  - 2 x Production Assistants
  - 1 x Librarian
  - 1 x Assistant to the Art Director
  - 1 x Camera Trainee
  - 1 x Camera Trainee
  - 1 x Assistant Sound Editor
  - 1 x Assistant to the Editor
- Eligibility: Filmmaker or Video Producer with a minimum of one film or video directing and/or art directing credit. Emphasis on the creative visual aspects of film. (11 weeks)
- Eligibility: Practicing artists who are interested in developing their own film-related projects. (8 weeks)
- Eligibility: Practicing artists who are interested in developing their own film projects and who illustrate a commitment to media production. (1 x 10 weeks/1 x 5 weeks)
- Eligibility: Filmmaker or Video Producer with a minimum of one film or video directing and/or art directing credit. Emphasis on the technical aspects of film. (11 weeks)
- Eligibility: Filmmaker or Media Artist with a minimum of two film directing and/or camera credits. Emphasis on the technical aspect of film production. (5 weeks)
- Eligibility: Filmmaker or Video Producer with a minimum of three film directing and/or editing credits. Emphasis on the technical aspects of sound editing and post-production work. (10 weeks)

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Title of position applied for.
2. CURRENT RESUME including production credits, work and education experience.
3. COVERING LETTER which outlines why you wish to participate in the program and work goals.
4. BREF SYNOPSIS of your camera/media project.
5. At least two names of references, preferably one from a person in the film industry or arts community.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 2, 1991.** Program pending confirmation of funding. Successful applicants will be called for a follow-up interview in mid-December 1991. Do not send any films or videotapes as support material. No material will be returned.

SEND TO:  
Dreaming Productions Inc.  
689 Queen Street West  
P.O. Box 74  
Toronto, Ontario M5J 1E6  
Or FAX to: (416) 594-1385  
RE: APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



VIDEO DATA BANK presents the 1991-92

## TOURING VIDEO EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Nine curated video exhibitions from venues across the country are now available for rental to arts organizations and educational institutions. Illuminating the wealth of content within grassroots, community and art-related independent video, these programs combine visually engaging styles, challenging subject matter, and a diversity of voices.

Programming schedules can be organized according to your needs. Please call for more information.

### Reframing the Family

curated by Micki McGee, Anasa Space, NYC

### Feeling the Faltis

Confronting Disease through the Medicated Body  
curated by Chris Hill, Halifax, Buffalo NY

### The Mother and Child Reunion

curated by Michael Nash, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach CA

### Voices and Visions

curated by Robin Kelly, 9111, Seattle WA

### Video for Women's Lives

Artist and Activist Works on Women's Lives  
curated by D. Meenan, D. Nasrallah, K. Ranspacher, DCTV, NYC

### Magnetic Youth: Teen-Powered TV

curated by Gina Lamb, LACE, Los Angeles CA

### Video Witnesses: Festival of New Journalism

curated by Barbara Lataroz, Halifax, Buffalo NY

### Body Politic

curated by Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archives, Berkeley CA

### Reconstructed Realms

curated by Michael Nash, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach CA

# VIDEO Data Bank

37 SOUTH WAVERSH, CHICAGO, IL 60603  
312.899.5172 FAX 312.263.0141

# OUT OF THE DRAWER

a multi-media exhibition of Canadian women artists

presented by the Women's Art Resource Centre  
December 21 - January 25  
opening Thursday, January 9, 7-10 p.m.

A Space Gallery,  
183 Bathurst St., Toronto

# CARO

CANADIAN ARTISTS' REPRESENTATION ONTARIO

AN ASSOCIATION OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS SERVING WORKING VISUAL AND NEW MEDIA ARTISTS

183 BATHURST STREET  
TORONTO ONTARIO M5T 2R7  
PHONE: (416) 360-0780  
FAX: (416) 360-0781

# the other side of tv

Words and Voices, Strains and Stages by Dalibor Martinis, 1990

Whatever is a Colour is Necessarily Red by Rodney Wenden, 1991

Memories from the DEPARTMENT of AMNESIA by Janice Tamaka, 1990

Niibo Apinewin by Ted Myerscough/Anishnawbe Health 1991

Beyond the Helms of the Seasons by Balser & Falso, 1992

This is Your Messiah Speaking by Vera Frenkel, 1990

Legal Memory by Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak, 1991

Boloi Boloi by Gita Saxena & Ian Rashid, 1991

Can You See Me Now? by Holly Natall, 1991

Bodies in Trouble by Marusia Bociurkiw, 1991

GENERATION Zero by Caterina Borelli, 1991

Somwambulsi by James MacSwain, 1991

Battle of Tralalgar by Despite TV, 1990

U.C.I.C. by Michelina Zangari, 1991

Love Potion by Rhonda Abrams, 1991

Way of Love by Sanja Ivekovic, 1991

Heads or Tails by Dennis Day, 1991

## Canada's video information and distribution CENTRE

183 BATHURST STREET, TORONTO, CANADA, M5T 2R7 ring: (416) 863-9897 fax: (416) 360-0781

Still from "Doing Time" by Lorena Boschman, 1991

# NEW SERIES



# v t a p e

V Tape is Canada's most comprehensive information and distribution service for videotapes by artists and independent producers.

From art galleries or museums to classrooms and lecture halls, from community education centres to international festivals and symposia, videotapes by artists and independent producers present a diverse resource, exploring the artistic, social and political issues of contemporary culture.

V Tape's distribution service provides Canadian and international clients with videotapes for single screening events, special library screenings and multiple screening rentals for extended exhibitions. Individuals and institutional clients can also purchase videotapes through V Tape for their collections.

**Canada's video information and distribution centre**

183 BATHURST STREET, TORONTO, CANADA, M5T 2R7 ring: (416) 863-9897 fax: (416) 360-0781

Still from "Doing Time" by LORNA BOSCHMAN, 1991.