HEbrew Israeli Nation of Jerusalem, a group of black Jews from Tennessee who were less concerned with Bermudan nationalism or Black Power than with Old Testament communal living (including vegetarian diets, polygamy) and showing that selected blacks, now settled in the Negev, are the original Jews. Their conference did, however, produce a splinter of the underlying that might exist by a well-placed match. A black lawyer, trained at Osgoode no less, pointed out how justice and the judiciary discriminated against blacks in Bermuda, a view based in part on exposure and participation, which, as it happens, was not followed through. Clearly, the natives are restless, but we can be sure that if anything was tried, whites would be slammed quicker than you could say "Grenada".

The three million Europeans and Polynesians who occupy the islands between Samoa and Antarctica represent the ultimate in civilized retreat from northern metropolitanism, and, as might be expected, are cautious about anything that imposes on them from the rest of the world. So far they have managed to avoid cable TV, satellite dishes (Bermuda, which has no TV of its own, is littered with them), expressways and post-structuralism. Only recently, as beneficia a city built on seven relatively extinct volcanoes at the southern tip of the Kodiacs Tongi, has Auckland constructed buildings taller than four storeys. The main connection to the outside of urbanism is an abundance of massage parlours, a flourishing marijuana industry, several punk and new wave groups and the importation of British cops to keep the parlour owners, the dope peddlers, the punks and the anti-apartheid demonstrators in their place. Otherwise New Zealand is a country where the quality of life is central to all public debates, parochial in the best sense of the word, because it is a debate which is shared by all sections of the population, in the North and South Islands. The issues, not surprisingly, are sexuality (focused most recently by the decision of the government to implement the UN resolution on equal rights), Maori rights, environmental control (including nuclear energy), standard and cost of living, and censorship, all of them fighting on territory which seeks to preserve the essence of what is and challenging reformers to show why changes offer a qualitative better way. Signs at the entrance to each borough — "You are Entering Mount Eden - A Nuclear Free Zone" — emphasize the community strength of the environmental case and trace the connection between foreign policy and human rights. The resistance to nuclear warheads is a profoundly conservative position, but no less conservative than the spraying of aircraft to prevent the importation of pests who might blight New Zealand crops. Conservatism is a shielded perception of the other: who might disturb the social/ ecological balance.

In the Bermudan David Lange's Labour government is therefore echoing communal concerns. In neither respects is it that the econonic policy is more monetarist than Reagan's or Thatcher's, calling for drastic cuts in government spending. Even the government's stated support for Maori rights, sexual equality and reduced censorship cut across the New Zealand sense of conservative totality. (All are commonly described as impositions from outside even if the movements for support are strong and very energetic.) But what these issues have done is provide a focus for debate and for social organization. As a regular feature of New Zealand life there are constant political radio and in the newspapers on all the issues, complementing the action in the streets, churches and community halls. The sinking of the "Rainbow Warrior" has emphasized to New Zealanders that the battles being fought there are global, and, as the shaking of the Mitterand government has demonstrated, the "conservatism" of New Zealand is fundamentally more radical than the thin black comedy of the French secret service.

None of this struggle for greenpeace ranks high in our photographic sense of New Zealand, but for good reasons. The documentation of social struggle, of identity formation is of low priority in our conception of what "news" is all about.

Two photographic images have been with me in writing this essay: the nuclear sharks lying on the Sargasso Sea-bed waiting to destroy Atlantis, and a Pacific farmer leading his sheep through the streets of Wellington to affirm the unity of humanity and nature. This is the real news and those are the dialectical choices by which the fate of "civilization" will be decided.

Joan Davies is a member of the borderlines collective and teaches sociology at York University.

SEX/TEXTUAL POLITICS
Tracing The Imaginary In The Films Of Valie Export

By Brenda Longfellow

WHERE
are the boundaries to be drawn between inner and outer "realities"? How to separate the observer from the observed, subject from object, desire from projection?

Excursions

ne of the first images in a published collection of Valie Export's photographs and drawings from 1968-77 is a black and white reproduction of the famous Velasquez painting, "Las Meninas", which was analyzed by Foucault in The Order of Things. The painting represents a self-reflexive inscription and over-turning of classical relations of representation, of the classical distinction between subject and object. Framed by a large mounted canvas on the right, the tableau features the artist with palette in hand and a variety of figures: young girls, a midget, a dog in the foreground, all of whom are staring out of the frame at the ostensibly subject of the painter's painting — a space and a position occupied (equally) by ourselves as spectators. Here then, the gaze is foregrounded, circulated in an exchange that confounds the distinction between observer and observed, subject and object.

Export joins that particular convergence of concerns to modernity with a wry twist — placing the image of a 3mm still camera in the painter's extended right hand. This additional inscription re-situates the critical frame, and relates the problematic of representation to the 20th century field of photography and cinema — to the field, that is, of Export's own work.

Indeed, what circulates around the signature Valie Export (a.k.a. Waltraud Hollinger) is a rich currency of cinematic images, bizarre, brutally witty and devastating in their psychic immediacy. Her images blazon themselves on one's memory with all the tragic vitality of an obsession. Frag-
ments: A woman, nude, stands before a bathroom mirror, clips the hair from her face, and glues them under her nose in a maniacal parody of androgyny. A woman, wearing a nightgown and weeping, is tied to a bed. Over her head a dream projection: figure skates. A woman walking through the ice, her hair a snare. The skates transformed into an accoutrement of masochism: the blade etching a fine line over their thigh. A woman drawing on her naked body. She runs into the streets of Paris, her body transformed into life-sized cardboard cutouts. A live fish, palpitating. Decapitated suddenly on a kitchen table. Along with a rat. A bird. A fringe with a frosty outline. And the photograph of the director on it is opened to reveal a live bear. Six hundred years of pictorial history. Omens, messengers, omens, jerking off in broad daylight.2

The body: obsessions, violence are the resonances which run through the incredibly diverse output of this Austrian artist, whose work ranges from the expanded film experiments in the 1970s, through to video and performance art, photography, drawings and body actions — "body/material interactions." Export's first feature, Invisible Adversaries (screened at Vancouver's Canadian Images, 1983) presented a compilation of her work in performance and video installation. Adversaries, a diabolical feminist sci-fi flick, traced the growing paranoia of Anna, an Austrian photographer, who alone perceives a massive psychic invasion of Hystox, malignant creatures from outer space who invade men's bodies, transforming them into living, floating, flesh eating beings. Through her photography, Anna is able to capture images of the creatures, but as the world wends its ineluctable way toward destruction, she is unable to alert anyone to the danger. But — and this is the question posed by the film — are her observations and disappearances an expression of a real, or simply projections of her increasingly paranoid state? Where are the borders to be drawn between inner and outer "realities"? How to separate the observer from the observed, subject from object, desire from projection? How to inscribe the resistance of femininity against the violence and indifference of contemporary society?

The Practice of Love, Export's third feature, which had its Canadian premiere at this year's Festival of Festivals in Toronto, continues these explorations, tracing the quest through discontinuous temporalities, memories, a Viennese video journalist, shooting a documentary in Hamburg on pornography. She runs into an ancient lover, Alfons, who (unbeknownst to Judith) is involved in some shady dealings with mafia look-alikes. They quickly hop into bed. Upon leaving the hotel after this amorous encounter, Judith witnesses the death of a young man who is crushed by a subway car. She returns to Vienna a changed person, finding and organizing a married couple, and an amorous affair with Josef, a married psychiatrist whose jealousy and possessiveness provoke increasingly aggressive responses in Judith. Having decided to investigate the death of the young man, Judith finds herself embroiled in a densely convoluted intrigue which ends by implicating the young man and Alfons in an arms smuggling deal. Alfons is eventually arrested. His wife briefs the hotel clerk to cover up his affair. Judith finds masturbatory solace with her shower head.

Beyond the story, however, — a story whose telling is always epistemic, diachronic and elliptical — the film offers a rich meditation on desire, representation and sexed desire as radical exteriority is mapped onto an obsessive logorrhea (it is an interminably discursive film), which climaxes, finally, at the end of the film with a feminist theoretical poloma. If it is the dialectic of language and silence, the imperviousness of language to desire which grounds and structures the investigations of Akerman and Rainer, in Export's work, by contrast, the issue of desire is situated first and foremost in relation to imaging, in relation to a necessary (if, however, impossible) struggle for a true image. A struggle mapped through the operations of narrative as a quest for authenticity in an image saturated world.

For Export, as for Akerman and Rainer, female subjectivity cannot be experienced or thought outside of discursive institutions which comprise in the social production of identity and gender. Indeed, her films suggest that all persuasive and insidious are these forces — like the invisible adversaries in her first film — that the only form of resistance is to exploit the contradictions from within. Like the woman in her interviews who works as a model in a peep show, who would not do it if men actually paid for her, but who finds pleasure in touching herself. Self pleasure as resistance: a chain picked up and explored in the context of Judith masturbating. Like the hallucinatory images of a female body that is a body and not a body, a voyeuristic visual inscription of...
tance and refusal to accord authority to female vision.

Yet, beyond the institutional rejection of woman’s vision, what the narrative works on is the posit- ing of enigmas, in its tracing of the convoluted pattern of intrigue, is a problem — the status of the photographic image in relation to truth and evidence. What sets Jul- iet’s investigation of the arms smuggling intrigue and murder in motion is her discovery of half a photograph on which is imprinted the image of the young man who had been killed in the subway. The resolution of the enigma is thus figured as a tracing of the circum- 
avation and exchange of the photographic image — a search which results in the discovery of the missing fragment (which features Al- fons, the ex-lover). Or is it? What can we say of the status of the image in an era in which digital re- 
production and computers can construct a seamless photograph of flying saucers on the streets of San Francisco?

III

Textual Excess

Beyond the deconstruction ef- 

fected at the level of narrative, the problematization of the relation between truth and the image oc- 
curs, as well, on the level of the formal strategies of the film. As I have suggested, this implies the possibility of female subversiveness and the affirmation of identity. On the formal level, the narrative is reworked, bracketed and sus- 
pended by the forceable random? abrupt? disjunctive? insertion of video, stock footage of military build-up in Austria, memory, fantasy and dreams. Here, in contrast to the operations of classical cinema — which function to contain heterogeneity and excess by hus- 
nassing each image to narrative meaning — the image asserts its autonomy. It testifies to the per- 
sistence of social and psychic forces in the construction of sub- 
jectivity and identity.

This disjunctiveness of the film, this heterogeneity, suggests the in- 

eluctable interpellation of the unconscious and the conscious, the impossibility of separating subject from object, aggressive fantasies from social violence, in- 
dividual identity from its histori- 
cal determinants. It eliminates, as well, the possibility of securing any singular level as a site of mean- 

ing or identity. In the fragmented universe of the film, meaning and identity are dispersed across an image landscape which devours its own boundaries.

Notes

2. These memory fragments are from In-

visible Affirmations.
3. S诗er’s second feature, Remember Fezies, is a feminist melodrama about three women in love with the same man. I haven’t seen it.

Brenda Longellow is a Toronto filmmaker and writer

border/lines

is planning a series of articles on feminism and contemporary culture. If much of the concern of the first wave of feminism in the 1960s had to do with the struggle for equality, recognition and reproductive freedom, many of the issues being raised in feminist cultural politics in the 80s have to do with difference — the specificity of female experience, psychology and desire, and the manner in which this difference is inscribed or repressed within cultural representations.

We invite proposals for work that would be in the form of short or long articles, book reviews, etc. Please send abstracts to border/lines by 15 February 1986 at this address:

132a De Grassi Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4M 2K6

LETTERS

Filmakers, video artists and others: if you feel that you have been unjustly rejected by the Canada Council or excluded from its political process, please contact: Julian Samuel, filmmaker video artist, 360 Tarente St Denis, Montreal, PQ H2X 1B8. I am trying to set up a coal- 

tion of critical artists who will politicize against the Council’s jurify favour and exclusion of blacks, women and minorities. Democratize the Council now.

Julian Samuel
Montreal

M. Ramp’s “Image and Remem- 

brance” (No.3, Fall 1983, pp.7-8) 

raises an important aspect of Barbara Ehrenreich’s argument in its haste to show sympathy and common cause with contemporary feminism and the women’s movement.

In The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commit- 

ment, she states that men began to develop a so-called “playboy” philosophy alongside concerns about health and negative views of work and commitment in the mid to late 1950s, 

and that this development occurred before the emergence of con- 

temporary feminism in the early 1960s. Indeed, Ehrenreich believes that 

much of the contemporary women’s movement’s reaction and response to this earlier “flight from commitments” by men. Of course this is not to ignore the fact that the long-term result of this flight has been what she calls the “feminization of poverty”.

H.T. Wilson
Toronto