

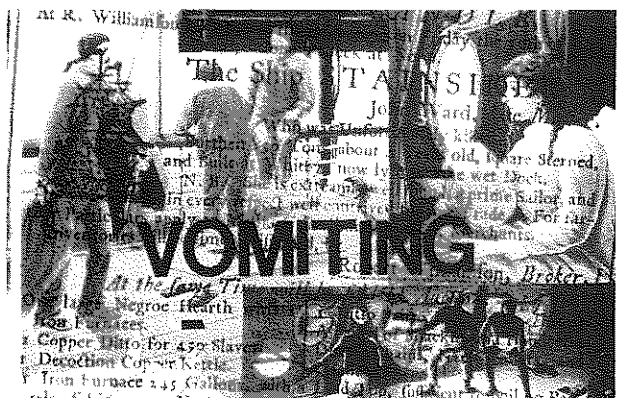
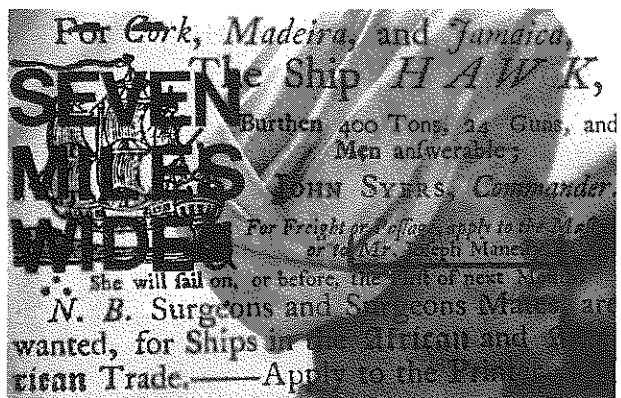
**B/L** Could you talk about the importance of critical writing to the development of a black film culture in England. One of the things that impressed me, and others in Canada, was the strategy of creating a discourse around the Sankofa and Black Audio films, and also the "taking over" of *Framework* and for a short while Screen, as you know that was indeed short lived. Or was that moment symptomatic of a flavour of the month syndrome?

**J.A.** I think the flavour of the month syndrome is a simple reading for things that were done in good faith. They weren't necessarily acts of benevolence, but they were in the end concessions which were acts of good faith. Kobena, Isaac, Martine, myself, went to the Screen board, for example, and did push for it. This is something I'm thinking through now, I think the major difference with black filmmaking of the eighties, as distinct from other black filmmakers at the time, is that so many of us came through the academy. That wasn't the traditional mode of independent emergence. People either tried to do things within the BBC or got fed up and left. One advantage was that we were familiar with the texts. So it wasn't by accident that we got into this.

**B/L** There is still the current notion (within more nationalist strains here) that theory is inappropriate or suspect as far as the black struggle goes, and that white-informed or European-informed ideas don't engage with the majority of black people's lived experience. This has been levelled at Black Audio, and Sankofa, it's even in *The Passion of Remembrance*. How do you answer that question?

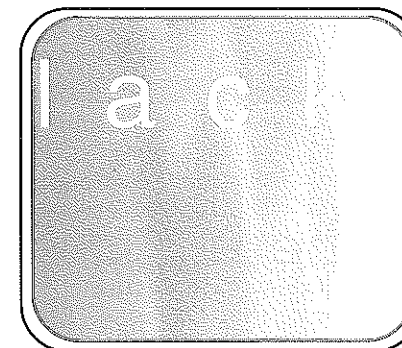
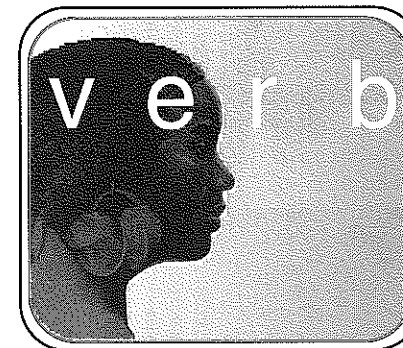
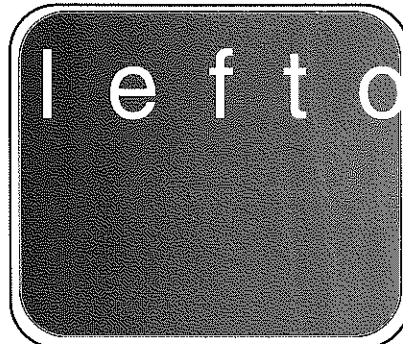
**J.A.** My sense is if people think that theory doesn't apply for them, that's fine, but it would be an act of denial on our part because it is through theory that we got into filmmaking in the first place. The second is that underlying the assumption that theory has no value, is the assumption that we are still in what Stuart Hall calls the moment of innocence, that somehow there is a moment that you can unproblematically fall from grace to bear witness, either to joys or disaster. I think we're too aware of the modes of constructing identity to simply go back to unproblematic representation. We're not in church anymore, Sunday is over.

*Kass Banning is a Toronto critic, cultural theorist, and lecturer in film.*



*Expeditions, Black Audio*

by Ramabai Espinet.



Leftover black is  
What I call myself  
On days when skin  
Is too thin to take  
The rain of blows  
Eyes too tired  
From frost and worse  
To explain

Seated between two windows  
A train rushing headlong  
Into God-only-knows-which-territory

I, signed by nothing  
Neither clothes, nor hair,  
Skin or any other mark

I signed by nothing  
Leftover Black  
Is what I call myself

On days when wounds of race  
Wounds of love, of war  
Cannot heal

(Some hidden truth  
Twisting out of reach  
Spitting itself  
Into a salt rain)

(Between two windows  
Of a rushing train  
I, sit still  
Wondering about tomorrow)

Excerpt from Poetry/Dance Performance piece "Indian Robber-Talk" by Ramabai Espinet. Choreographed and danced by Sudharshan. Presented at Desh Pardesh, 1993 and at Harbourfront's Rhythms of India Festival, 1993 by Ramabai Espinet.

Days when wounds of race  
Wounds of love, of war  
Cannot heal

When tears -  
Thin skeins of filament  
Thin threads of rain -  
Wash everything  
Even echoes  
Out of hair  
Flown past  
Like corbeaux' wings

Most days seam themselves  
Over like this  
fingering the map

**Chorus:**

Of a home  
Still to be found  
A home  
Not found today,  
Tomorrow  
And tomorrow too

**For Patricia Deanna**

(In the summer of 1976 a young pregnant Caribbean woman, Patricia Deanna, fell to her death from a balcony as she tried to escape from immigration officials who had broken down the doors to the apartment where she was baby sitting. She was in Canada, pregnant, illegal and utterly alone).

That day Patricia fell  
No elements grieved  
And all the stars swung safely  
Through their accustomed orbits.

(I, leaning over a balcony  
Found I could not measure  
The quantum and heartbeat  
Of her dread fall)

Could only imagine  
Panic, groping fingers  
Her unborn child's tears  
The desperate climb  
Away from the immigration  
Hunter-man  
And how  
In haste and miscalculation  
She missed  
And then  
The fallen heap below.

A knock on the door  
That day in summer  
And she knew  
She was alone.

From *Nuclear Seasons*,  
Ramabai Espinet,  
(Sister Vision Press, Toronto, 1991).