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Ten Years Of Border/Lines

A Reminiscence. A History.

In 1983 some of us took part in a conference organized at York University on "The Alternative Press in Canada," which explored various journals and magazines operating outside the commercial mainstream of Canadian publishing. These included *This Magazine* (represented by Susan Crean and Rick Salutin), *The Canadian Forum* (represented by John Hutcheson), *Rampike* (represented by Karl Jirgens), *Impulse* (represented by Eldon Garnet), *The Body Politic* (represented by Alex Wilson), *Last Post* (represented by Patrick McFadden and Rae Murphy), *Shades* (represented by Sheila Wawanash and Paul Wilson), *C Magazine* (represented by Richard Rhodes), *La Vie en Rose*, *The Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* (represented by Arthur Kroker), as well as stringers for *Canadian Dimension*, *Parachute*, *Fuse*, *Vanguard*, *Parallogramme*. Even the student press was there (the editors of *Excalibur* at York who are, for instance, now the proprietors of *Now*); so was Luc Jutra from the Canada Council. Of these magazines at least six do not exist anymore and one, *CJPST*, lives on in an electronically mutated form.

Some of us, who had tried to establish a Canadian Studies association (lethargy and disorganization prevented it from getting too far), decided that it was time to establish a magazine - not a journal - which would create a different presence on the magazine scene. We had all worked with different magazines or journals (I with *CJPST* and the *Forum*), but in many ways the conference showed some of us that there was an evident gap in combining academic perspectives and cultural/social happenings. Thus, two groups were drawn together, one academic (which included Philip Corrigan, Jody Berland, Ian McLachlan, Bruce Elder, Peter Fitting, Ivan Varga, Alan O'Connor, Jody Berland, Geoff Miles, Monika Gagnon, Andy Payne, Gail Faurischou, Janice Williamson and Michael Boyce) and one practical (Rosemary Donegan, Alex Wilson, Christine Davis), though practice and theory

necessarily overlapped. We debated titles, format, editorial structure, funding, printing, everything that a magazine needs to think about. We settled on *Border/Lines* as a name (not without disagreement), a large format, and a collective structure. We found some seed money from York University and individual donors and somehow came out with issue #1 in October 1984. The editorial collective formed and reformed, and we struggled to find money to put out enough issues so that we could apply for public funds. Alex Wilson, in effect, became the (unpaid) Managing Editor, and the offices were split between York for business and his house for editorial work until, in 1986, we found editorial offices in the basement of a Christian charity on Madison Avenue.

There were disagreements on the direction we were taking. In 1988 some of the collective split off to establish their own journal, *Public*. As the *Public* exit showed, debates within the collective formed an ongoing exercise in thinking about what cultural critique was for, and also what our collective purpose was. (Canada Council juries regularly asked the same questions.) We realized, however, that we were nothing if not monitors of discourses in cultural analysis everywhere and that, at best, we were the only magazine in Canada that tried to establish a bridge between academia and a wider public on a whole range of cultural issues. With the scarce resources that were at our disposal, we were able to give our readers a sense of the critical issues that emerged in Russia, Hungary, feminist discourse, Britain, South America, India, the culture of nature, TV news coverage, the Vancouver Expo, prison writing, First Nations.

We decided that we had to keep going and try a slightly different tack. The cost of publishing was a major issue. We had always employed a designer (in particular David Vereschagin who produced some marvellous work), but this cost us one-third of our production costs. For two issues we had employed Lachlan Brown as Managing Editor, but we

also retained the services of David. The budget could not cope. Why not merge the post with that of managing editor, reduce the size to the standard 11 X 8, and systematize special issues? In this, we could put our budget to good advantage and also consolidate what was best in our work. Thanks to Stan Fogel, who joined the collective in 1991, and also to Joe Galbo, Kass Banning, Gary Genosko, Michael Hochsmann and Alan O'Connor, we put the magazine on a course which alternated theme issues with general ones. Above all, we found Julie Jenkinson. With her appointment as Managing Editor, we found a designer, office manager and friend, who would keep us all in place and produce the magazine in a style within which we would all feel comfortable.

The issues that have appeared since 1991 display this new organic sense. The issue on First Nations was established when Lauchlan Brown was Managing Editor, but, in many ways, set the pattern for subsequent special issues on Latin America, Race, Queer Culture and Virtual Reality where guest editors, in or outside the collective, put the issue together. With the general issues, which alternated with them, we tried to be both Canadian and international. We would like to think that the new *Border/Lines*, will be taken into classrooms, onto picket-lines, into the different workplaces within which we all spend a large part of our creative lives, so that it informs the culture of the everyday as practice.

As you read through this Miscellany and Index, which we hope you will find useful in finding us in libraries or in buying past issues, we hope that you will also think about your part in a wider collective. We would like your input. There has been a moral basis to our work: there has to be an alternative voice to the suffocating, smelly subterfuge of those who would take culture as that which is only commercially viable. Are we that voice? How can we improve?

Please let us know. **Ioan Davies**

MISCELLANY: A B/L RETROSPECTIVE: 10 PROGRESSIVE YEARS

Selected by Stan Fogel

1984

#1: "From time to time literature must be revitalized by new materials and new techniques. As Synge, who wanted to give utterance to the peasantry of Western Ireland, said to Yeats, style is born out of the shock of new material. We have the English novel in part because of the English Dissenters and their preoccupations - money and the growth of the soul. Recently we have seen the impact of various submerged groups on Canadian and American literature: Blacks, women, gay men and lesbians, all with compelling stories to tell. New writing by newly vocal communities may become fashionable for a while, but the only enduring ways to keep the work available are the alternative networks of presses, bookstores, and magazines, enterprises which are often run as co-ops."

Bert Almon, review of *The Republic of Letters: Working Class Writing and Local Publishing* and *Dockers and Detectives*

#2: "Until Canadian country music songwriters feel able to draw with equal facility for their images, analogies, and metaphors from within Canada as well as from the geographical mythology of the United States, they can do little to further the cause of Canadian identity. In the meantime, Canadian country music will simply have to remain as Canadian as possible...under the circumstances."

John C. Lehr, "As Canadian As Possible...Under The Circumstances"

#3: "One of the most consistent and public statements about the Kreuzberg area and the Instandbesetzer movement is the local graffiti which permeates the entire district and speaks the politics and emotions of the neighbourhood. . .

the symbol of the squatters who repair both the architecture and the community fabric
 Occupied - that is enough
 Too bad cement doesn't burn
 Unrest in the deep freezer
 You have the power but we have the night
 Power is always without Love
 Love is never without Power
 Taking a house is better than waiting to be given one
 It is better that our youth squat houses than foreign countries
 Be realistic - demand the impossible
 It is better to squat and repair a house than to own a house and let it fall into ruin
 Under the paving stone - the beach"

Rosemary Donegan (ed.), "Tom Burrows on Squatting, Instandbesetzer Graffiti"



South Bronx, 1984. Photo by Tom Burrows