Ten Years of Border/Lines

A Reminiscence
A History

In 1983 some of us took part in a conference at York University on "The Alternative Press in Canada," which explored various journals and magazines operating outside the conventions mainstream of Canadian publishing. Those included this Magazine (represented by Susan Gross and Rick Salutin). The Canadian Forum (represented by John Hamilton), Rumble (represented by Karin Zuganis), Imprint (represented by Elizabeth Downes), The Body Public (represented by Anna Wilson), Last Post (represented by Patrick MacPherson and Tony Murphy), Shades (represented by Sheila Wawanaskw and Paul Wilson), C Magazine (represented by Richard Rhodes), The View on Race, The Canadian Journal of Public Policy and Social Theory (represented by Arthur Koskia), as well as various from Canadian Dimensions, Prose/Hour, Foreign Affairs, Parliament Magazine. Even the student press was there (the editors of Excalibur at York who were, for instance, near the province of Annapolis) — so was the Duke from the Canada Council. Of those magazines at least six do not exist anymore and one, C Magazine, lives on in an electronically mutated form.

Some of us who had tried to establish a Canadian Studies association (labour and disappointment prevented us from forming the association), decided that it was time to establish a magazine - not a journal - which would create a different context in which to publish on the issues we were interested in. We had all worked with different magazines or journals (with C Magazine and the Forum), but in many ways the conferences among some of us had been an occasion to reflect on the current political and social contexts and the forms of analysis and communication that were necessary to address the issues that we perceived. This our desire was then to produce a magazine that would be a medium through which we could express our ideas and reflections on the issues that were of concern to us.

The first issue of Border/Lines, in 1984, was a 16-page tabloid, with a cover design by Martin Szulewski, and included articles by John MacDougall, Don MacEachen, and Karin Zuganis. The first issue was distributed to a small number of subscribers, and was available for purchase at a few retail outlets. The magazine was published quarterly, and often featured articles on the issues of the day, as well as book reviews, poetry, and interviews with notable figures in the Canadian cultural and literary scene.

The first issue of Border/Lines was a critical success, and has continued to grow in size and influence over the years. Today, the magazine is published biannually, and is available for purchase through a variety of retailers and online. The magazine continues to feature a range of perspectives and voices, and is committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in its content.

The success of Border/Lines is due to the hard work and dedication of its contributors and editors, as well as the support of its readers and subscribers. We are grateful for their support, and look forward to continuing to bring you engaging and thought-provoking content in the years to come.
“Love of the Same is necessary for there to be love of the Different. And from this point of view, it is true that the mother-daughter relation is the most complex and much more potential, productive...”

“An interview with Luisa Picana...”

“By removing the lace borders and stockings, braid, ribbons, objects upon which the fetishization of Madonna, the strippee, are pinned, the structural function of these fetish objects is destroyed, for they no longer close her ‘back’...”

“Miki Gagnon, ‘Bouton dama: Madonna at a Gancel and in Retrospective’

“In grade school I learned our notorious p'tit cahetism and read Kate Keene conim ‘In My Room’ with the Beach Boys. at convent I went to mass every day. and fantasized about Marianne Faithful up through grades called imitation verification, detergent friends turned pleasures and fans of our choros (folkdrong--songwriters) but the stones put on the touch so I detected, ex-il in Anglophoria. so close yet so far away of the Main. love arrived: ‘Dissipative assimilation of the dominant model is a typical language attitude of the colonized, the bourgeoisie being the class most affected.’

Sussie e. Lotoski。“Write le Body Billiken’

“In both Quebec and Catalonia, the current situation suggests that little respite is in store for those who feel that there are specific national communities worth defending. Those Quebecois who expected that economic progress would obviate the basis for national demands should look at the history of Catalonia, whose development demonstrates that such a pattern cannot be taken for granted. In fact, despite unequal and even diverse patterns of development, the specific national concerns experienced in Quebec and Catalonia today are fundamentally similar. To the extent that those concerns are born out of resistance to operations of delimitation and marginalization on the part of larger central states, their respective responses will have much to learn from each other. At first Catalonia may be tempted to look toward Canada for glimpses of a more generous federal system and Quebecois toward Spain for a peak at the national politics. But in the end, I would suspect they would do better looking at each other, learning from their respective interrelations with their central states. Thus they may plan the political and cultural forms of intervention that will make their collective futures viable.”

Robert Schwarzwald. “Health and Nation: Modern Nationalism in Catalonia and Quebec”

“Telemarketing is a contemporary instance of the interplay between speech and writing, and of our belief in the presence and precision of speech and verbal communication over the immediacy of the pen and the written word. The phone gives you the first five minutes of the undivided attention of the other which you must use expeditiously: make your sale, disguise your intention, for telemarketing -- aural sex -- is capitalism’s ultimate talking cure.”

Kim Sawchuk. “Telemarketing and the Decadent Void”

“I will not place the word race in quotation marks as Gates (‘Writing’). (‘Talking’) and Trevor Treadon have suggested because, although I believe it is important to point out how racial difference is constructed, I do not believe the concept can be dissolved entirely. It persists as a mode of ordering: ‘Gates in particular still works with an idea of “black” as being essentially different from “white” at the core of his writings. Although he wants to locate black criticism in culturally determined manifestations, he still refers to “black” or “white” authors and critics. This seems to connote something like race.”

Cameron Bailey. “Writing Blackness: The Call and Response of Black Literary Criticism”

“As native tourism development proceeded, its geographical focus shifted from natural features of the landscape to “artificial” ones like golf courses or African animal safari parks. The reasons for this are complex, but they had mostly to do with the need for the industry to differentiate its products in order to serve a rapidly expanding market. Social legitimacy came to rest on the marketing strategies of the tourist industry as well as the vagaries of land speculation. All these changes led to new fields of study like tourist motivational assessment and scenario evaluation, which by the 1980s had become the subject of intense scrutiny within the industry.”

Alexander Wilmot, “The View From the Road: Nation Tourism in the Provincial West”

“With the rise to power of Pierre Trudeau in 1968, the pressure was on to settle the Indian lands “problems” once and for all. Accordingly, Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, then Indian Affairs Minister, concocted the ironically-named White Paper policy. Its objective was to complete the job of assimilating the Indian people by placing them under the jurisdiction of the provinces. They proposed repealing the Indian Act and amending the constitution to eliminate all references to Indian people.”


“Corporations like Petro-Canada may call themselves “prudently Canadian.” But the same federal government that owns both Petro-Canada and Cananda Post did not hesitate for an instant to employ scabs to attempt to break the strike by Canadian postal workers in the summer of 1987.”

Tom Whyman. “What Is “Canadian Culture”?

“In (practical) aesthetic terms, Lacan’s thesis allows us to understand a range of listening behaviours described by those studying the social behaviours of audio consumers: why, for instance, many people listen to the radio or other audionic equipment in darkened rooms or just prior to sleep; why listening aids digestion; why music increases commodity production in factories and commodity consumption in shopping malls.”

Bruce Beber. “Radio: Audio Art’s Fugitive Parent”

“Justice Moray. In a remarkable departure from conventional courtroom practice, allowed the Haida to give testimony in traditional oral fashion, without lawyer interrogation, and it is this element which drew me to the text. Working from the printed transcript (for which I thank the Council of Haida Nations) I attempted to “hear” Diane Brown’s words in a way that might, hopefully, give them meaning in the white, Eurocentric context of this magazine.”

The nother might situate her or himself in approaching this text, as a kind of case-studying on an ongoing interethnic, intercultural conversation. Part of the problem of inter-american aboriginal communication and discourse is the question of place: how, and therefore where, does the discourse happen? On the printed page, the oral, which is essential to the way of speaking, is rendered mute. On the other hand, if the text or oral testimony does not get “out,” beyond the specific location where the words happen, its political potency is reduced.”

Harriett Montross. “Speaking with Diane Brown: A Test of Negligence”

“I really am asking writers how we can develop and popularize a language of reproductive freedom: how can we convey and clarify the subtle and complexity of our concepts? We need to hear from media workers how we can influence the media to take up our frame of reference and how we can stay on the media’s agenda, even when our issue is not “hot.” I think cultural workers exploring how theatre, poetry, fiction, painting and other media could portray women’s strength and independence as they fight to control their reproduction can make a significant political contribution to the choice movement.”


“The moist, wet, inner pink space of her mouth had become a tender womb to bad words, any words -- mother’s cuts, picks, clicks -- the words were embezzled deep inside Miranda filling up all the secret places and spaces created by the forbidden. Like Chaucer’s man of the woods who had plumed her depths — mother’s cuts and all. No one, even the guardian of space and words, her mother, could take them or any of her words from her. They’re all mine now, Miranda thought as she lay in bed, remembering how she had parted and her forehead had broken out in sweat after she was done sweating.”

Beverly Barks.

“With the message implied by the producers of the Wall fragment is clearly a thinly veiled ideology. Capitalist free market ideology asserts itself by offering itself to the consumer, trying to get in one fell swoop every hint that there might be any choice. What makes it a collector’s item is not really that it is in limited supply; it is a collector’s item only while it still contains an aura of the Cold War. In its commodity form it’s sold as if it were a cultural treasure. In the examples on display at the major shopping malls you’ll find it enclosed in a velvet drawstring bag.”

Joyce Nelson. “Gaultier and Agriculture II: Monoculture”
"Cultural Studies now and in the Future? Within the academy, what should the future of cultural studies be? Should it aim to become a "discipline," thereby imparting a set of skills to students and perhaps reconceiving the university, yet probably capitulating to the forces of corporatization and institutionalization? Should it remain instead a program or centre, thereby requiring its radical edge, yet probably remaining highly eclectic and peripheral within the university?”

"My friend Karen (who is in this class) and I decided we would get together on the full moon, which happened to fall on the day after the class on Goddess Religion and celebrate our womanhood and the fact that we are goddesses. We got together and talked about how OINT is beautiful and how we are unafraid and proud of beautiful OINT. I drew up her birth chart and we look at that, and then I spilled my guts about the problems I have been having with my boyfriend and how I don’t really feel like I have been treated much like a Goddess lately. To my surprise, tears came as I told her the story (it is very hard for me to cry), and she hugged me and gave me a back massage. We talked about what I could do to patch things up with Steve and she said, "Angela, you are a Goddess!" Then she took my fancy calligraphy pen and on a piece of paper she wrote GODDESS, boxed it up, and gave it to me, saying, "Go talk to him." I did, and I told him everything that has been bothering me…. Afterward, he has treated me like the Goddess I am. A Goddess appreciates herself enough to not need anyone worship her, but loves herself enough to ask for what she needs, and if she is rejected, she loves herself enough to heal. Well, Steve and I are still together and he has dubbed me the Honorary Goddess of "Black and Tan" beer at the Lion’s Brew Pub. I have never had a more bonding experience with a female than I did yesterday with Karen under the full moon.”

"My brief excursion into the prostitution of Hawaiian culture has done no more than give an overview. Now that you have heard a Native view, let me just leave this thought behind. If you are thinking of visiting my homeland, please don’t. We don’t want or need any more tourists, and we certainly don’t like them. If you want to help our culture, pass this message on to your friends.”

"In Cronenberg on Cronenberg, Cronenberg states that he felt so close to Burroughs when writing the screenplay that had Burroughs died he could write his novel. The limit to this fusion is quite evident—Cronenberg implies that it is his heterosexuality which disconnects him from Burroughs and which forced him to make his own very different Naked Lunch. This paradigmatic distinction is rehearsed throughout the film.”

"Hallelujah! It works. We blew the shit out of them. We blew the shit right back up on their own ass. It works. We blew the shit out of them. They suffocated in their own shit! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord for all good things. We blew them into fucking shit. They are eating it. Praise the Lord for all good things. We blew their bats into shreds of dust, into shreds of fucking dust. We did it. Now I want you to come over here and kiss me on the mouth.”

"American Football is a reminder upon the Gulf War?”

"When the first leather jackets and Elvis pompadours appeared on the streets of the barrios, the over-tinted guardians of culture, nervous that Mexico City youths would arm themselves with shotguns and roar Harleys through elegant Zona Rosa establishments a la Marlon Brando in The Wild One, mounted an all-out assault. Films like The Blackboard Jungle were pulled from movie theaters and newspapers compared the populace of the dangers of rock music's: gang violence, lax morality, and, especially, the destruction of la cultura nacional. Maybe the single thing the government, the Catholic Church and the Marcos left could agree on was that Mexican Youth was impelled by the Protestant, declassed and individualistic North.”

"The subject area of "homosexuality, lesbianism" — Library of Congress designation, H725 - is not only a region within a map of the logic of power, but also a place and time made physically concrete. Here, the discursive taxonomic abstraction is made articulate within a non-discursive institution.”

"...one cannot be a Latino without recognizing one's African heritage: without it, we are caricatures of the Europeans, or we are "American" simulacra, not Latinos.”

"One Hundred Starting Points of the Postmodern..."