

Angela McRobbie. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

In McRobbie's collected essays (a number of them published elsewhere) she consistently and cogently argues for analyses of popular culture that locate gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity in critical tension with each other. Her well-formulated and articulated arguments for postmodern

B/L List

theoretical positions in cultural studies balance a number of theoretical approaches. McRobbie is at her best in the essays that focus on youth cultural practices—she locates a number of directions in which research on youth cultures needs to go. McRobbie's essays stand out as texts that announce the "adulthood" of cultural studies in the postmodern era. /R. W.

Carole Boyce Davies. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Boyce Davies is one among many currently charting and mapping the sites of convergence and divergence of black diasporic identifications. Boyce Davies' reading of black women's texts across a wide range of "geographical-memory" neither homogenizes nor reduces black women's experiences to a unitary simplified reading. Her archeological re-covering of black women's multiple, conflicting and shifting subjectivities might be understood through the author's own migratory practices. Hers is a travelling intellectualism that recasts "travel writing" as a black women's genre of resistance, self-affirmation, doubt and the possibility of community. Boyce Davies' text would read well alongside Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*. /R. W.

John Beverley & Jose Oviedo (Eds.). *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America: A Special Issue of Boundary 2*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993.

An excellent overview for Anglo readers of the ongoing debates in Latin America over the meaning(s) of postmodernity on the periphery. The purpose of the volume, state the editors, is "less to present a 'regional' variant of postmodernism than to resituate the concept itself, which risks being colonized by Anglo-European provincialism, in a more genuinely international framework." In the process, this collection introduces North American readers to a number of important South American theorists, including Nelly Richard (editor of *Revista de Critica Cultural*), Beatriz Sarlo (editor of *Punto de Vista*) and Néstor García-Canclini (author of *Culturas Híbridas*, translation forthcoming from U. of Minnesota Press). /M. H.

Pilar Riaño (Ed.). *Women in Grassroots Communication: Furthering Social Change*. London: Sage, 1994.

This collection brings together articles by media activists and theorists from Latin America, Africa, Asia and North America which both celebrate and problematize women's alternative media projects. The volume is celebratory in two senses: first, it brings together the experience of many committed media activists whose work is little known; second, at a time when much of the liberatory potential of cultural studies

is wrapped up in reception studies, it (implicitly) issues a challenge to complacent theorists to turn the computer off and go out and do some active political work in their field. To this end, these articles provide a critical interrogation of concrete projects of alternative communication which will be useful to media activists. /M. H.

John Nguyet Erni. *Unstable Frontiers: Technomedicine and the Cultural Politics of "Curing" AIDS*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

The purported aim of this book is "to examine the phenomenon of 'curing AIDS' from the perspective of the 'discursive field' in which it occurs." Unfortunately, if the aim is clear, the development of these ideas is not. This book reflects the kind of magical thinking so pervasive in the cultural studies of HIV/AIDS (always buttressed by stale readings of Foucault). The book remains in the realm of ideas, disconnected from lived experiences and community action, and it contributes to the immorality of talking about AIDS, wrapping the topic in thick jargon and doing nothing about it. /F. I. C.

Naomi Salaman (ed.), intro. Linda Williams. *What She Wants: Women Artists Look at Men*. London-New York: Verso, 1994.

For women artists to "capture" men it is necessary, apparently, to frame, if you will, the photographs in question. The absence of a history of erotic representation of the male nude by the female artist "demands...an historicizing and theorizing." Linda Williams, author of *Hard Core*, as well as four others provide the printed justification for the images that follow. To construct a female gaze, deconstruct a male one—as well as offer a riposte to anti-pornography feminists such as Mackinnon and Dworkin: these are their focuses. The photographs themselves present, in turns or together, a fetishized, aestheticized, sexualized male body. Puns, transgenerating poses and anti-realistic scenarios predominate over austere presented cocks. /S. F.

Reviews by Stan Fogel, Michael Hoechsmann, Francisco Ibañez Curasco and Rinaldo Walcott.

What She Wants: Women Artists Look at Men

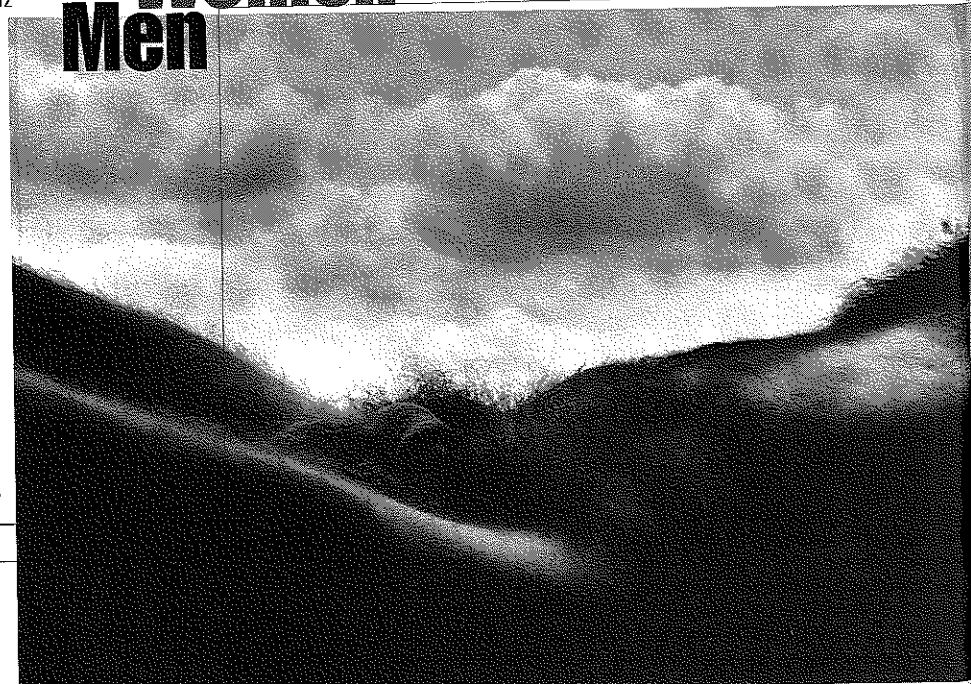


Photo by Diane Baylis, "Abroad." From "What She Wants."

Mexarcane

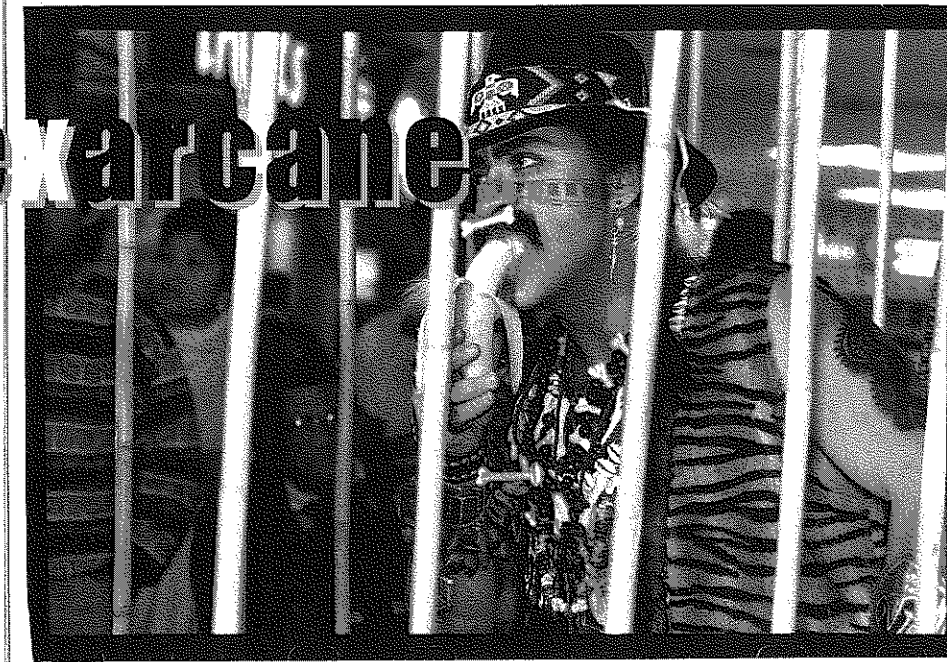


photo by ka yin fong

The Corporate Future of the Couple from Guatinaui

Mexarcane International: Ethnic talent for export. (performance/installation)
Coco Fusco & Guillermo Gómez-Peña
Dufferin Mall, Toronto
Nov. 11-13, 1994

by Michael Hoechsmann

'Naftartists' Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña recently brought their new performance/installation, "Mexarcane International," to Toronto's Dufferin Mall. In the press release for Mexarcane, Fusco and Gómez-Peña explain that they "perform as representatives of a mythical multinational that specializes in supplying "exotic human resources" for restaurants, fashion shows, music video backdrops, films and commercials, parties, and singing telegrams." Fusco, the corporate secretary, conducts market research on shoppers to determine consumer desire for exotica and to suggest a "live action" which might correspond to the particular consumer's needs. Gómez-Peña, the sample of ethnic talent, then gives live action demonstrations for the benefit of the individual consumer and curious bystanders.

Mexarcane is the follow-up to Fusco and Gómez-Peña's Quincentennial counter-commemoration in which they were displayed in public spaces as two undiscovered Amerindians from the island of Guatinaui ("Gringoñol" for "what now"). Among other sites, this performance was undertaken at the symbolically charged Columbus Plaza in Madrid (Columbus took several Arawaks to Spain in 1493, one of whom was on display at the Spanish Court for two years) and Covent Gardens in London, where "ethnological" display had also been practiced. Whereas Guatinaui took up the history of European exploitation and exoticization of conquered peoples - see Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *The Drama Review* 38, 1, Spring 1994 - Mexarcane takes a somewhat futuristic look at the commodification and continued exploitation of 'post-colonial' cultures.

Situated in a busy intersection between the food court and a shopping arcade, Mexarcane both fits into and stands out from this commercial private/public space. The slick corporate-style booth could easily have been located in front of the adjacent Body Shop as an ancillary to its "Trade, Not Aid" marketing program. Even Fusco's extraordinary carnivalesque outfit (read Rio, not Bakhtin) merges seamlessly into the spectacle of corporate culture as translated into the marketplace. Gómez-Peña, on the other hand, shatters the illusion. Whether clutching his boom-box, or exalting his President's

Choice Ancient Grains cereal box, Gómez-Peña mobilizes memories of another space, be it of time or of place, where spectacle coalesces with community. Despite his silence, Gómez-Peña is nonetheless the shaman, *el brujo*, the coyote, the storyteller.

Over the three day period at Dufferin Mall, hundreds of people had the opportunity to see Mexarcane. Typically, a crowd of 30-50 people were gathered around the performance. It would take some diligent investigation to begin to develop some idea of the popular response to Mexarcane, but if stopping people in their tracks and giving them cause for reflection was part of the project, as in the case of Guatinaui, then it was worthwhile. The biggest apparent departure from Guatinaui is the consumer interview which, by overdetermining the responses into reductionist dualisms, much more heavily-handedly enforces an ethnocentric gaze upon the viewer/participant. By rupturing the zone of safety which critical distance affords, this strategy of in-your-face culture-shock therapy challenges the smug complacency of privileged white folks who think that they already have racism figured out. At a time when the backlash to multiculturalism and anti-racism is picking up steam, this is no small feat.

Mexarcane International will be performed at the Exploratorium in San Francisco in early 1995.