

While political correctness has mainly been a target of the Right, it has also raised the ire of some Leftist intellectuals, many of whom have argued that p.c. represents a discursive withdrawal from politics. More concerned with esoteric changes to language than with substantive shifts in power relations, these Leftists have accused p.c. advocates of retreating into an endless array of language games. In her essay, sociolinguist Deborah Cameron seeks to challenge this assertion by focussing on the "power of language." She argues that the various discursive changes engendered by p.c. politics are welcome and necessary developments.

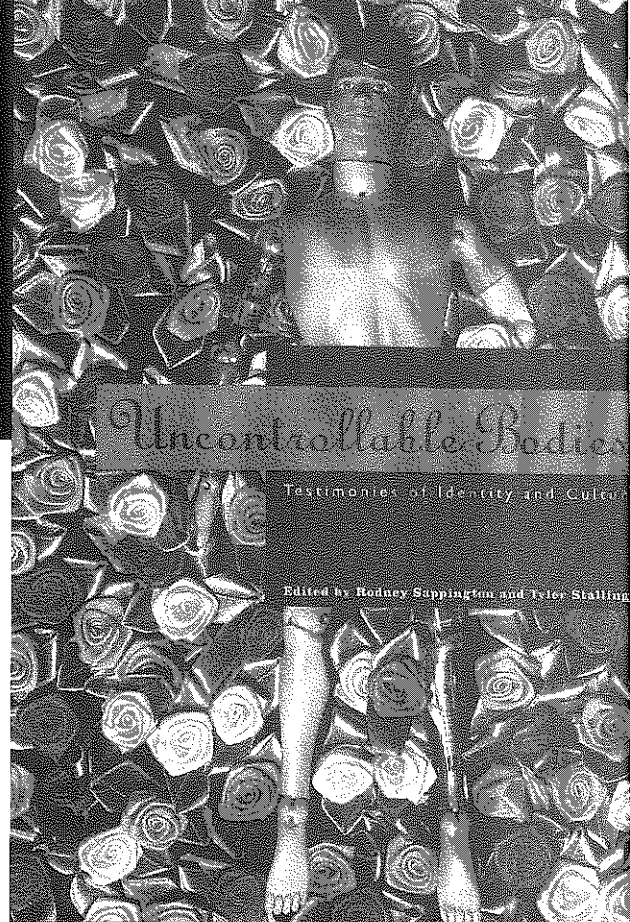
In the concluding essay, Stuart Hall argues that p.c. reflects the fragmentation of the political landscape and the breakup of social constituencies that no longer adhere to collective master narratives such as those built upon class and/or labour. In this regard, Hall views p.c. as the inevitable result of the rise of identity politics. Hall also points out that the discursive and individualist notions encapsulated in p.c. politics are symptomatic of a larger intellectual culture that has undergone "the linguistic turn." Without discounting the political relevance of language, Hall maintains that many champions of discursive change are guilty of clinging to the "belief that if things are called by a different name they will cease to exist" (186). Therefore, against the claims of some who view alterations in language as progressive in and of themselves, Hall argues that such positions are decidedly limited in their ability to address broader social relations of power, exclusion, and marginalization. In the attempt to suggest some "politically incorrect" pathways through the maze of p.c. politics, Hall states that unless p.c. is coupled with a strategy which is democratic — in the sense that it genuinely addresses the real fears, confusions, and anxieties as well as the pleasures of ordinary people, tries to educate them to new conceptions of life, to win them over and thus to constitute majorities where there are now only fragmented minorities — it is destined to fail in the long run, whatever its little local successes (177).

Rodney Sappington and Tyler Stallings (eds.), *Uncontrollable Bodies: Testimonies of Identity and Culture*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1994.

BY Gordon Brent Ingram

These are the times when we are increasingly expected to have healthy, perfect bodies, even as we resist the imaging they produce. This contradiction, between the body as armour and commodity and the growing discomfort that many feel about this, is the subject of *Uncontrollable Bodies*. Lesbian-owned Bay Press of Seattle has produced yet another disturbing anthology in a series that engages topics such as AIDS activism ("AIDS demo graphics"), violence against women, and terrorism. Editors Sappington and Stallings introduce "testimonies" with the vision of the body as "a site of physical and psychological trauma, institutional control, and enforced sexual norms and practices" (11). These, however, are not stodgy discourses on sexual politics; they are personal narratives where the boundaries between story and interpretation break down.

These sixteen testimonies to personal, emotional, and erotic anxiety are impactful. Most are more than a bit disturbing. The authors obviously get off on making themselves into what Stallings calls "spectacle." There are sudden vasculations in most of the pieces between postmodern psycho-babble and raunchy rap. But *Uncontrollable Bodies* is not about gratuitous dirty talk (though when it does occur it often creates oases of directness in murky monologues). Robert Flynt's homoerotic photographs of men together, seemingly underwater, set the stage for the collection's miasmas and dreams. New York-based AIDS activist and video artist Gregg Bordowitz, who recently showed his work and gave a workshop at Vancouver's Video In, tells a powerful story about his willingness to engage in unsafe sex: "I wanted him to fuck me without a condom. I received his cum as a gift. I wished for a legacy that I could receive in



I can remember thinking that my father's having his penis on the outside of his body was another sign of his vulnerability, his fragility

Lynne (age eight or nine): Aren't you afraid you're going to break it?

Daddy: What?

Lynne: Your penis Daddy collapses on the couch, laughing.

ROUTLEDGE

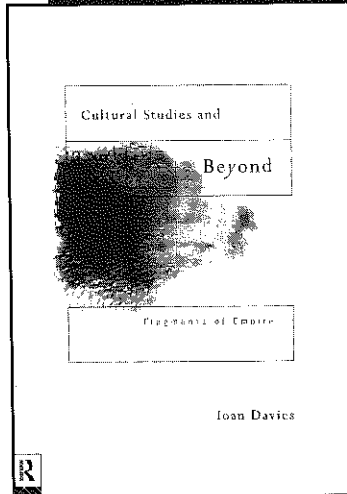
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shows how the fantasies of being "supersolid" (108) may be more about coping with a gnawing vulnerability than about simple narcissism, sexual aesthetics, or wanting to be "hard."

The second half of *Uncontrollable Bodies* spins out beyond the realm of mild nausea to depression and unresolved questions about pregnancy, sex work, and male sexual hysteria. Sadly, Dennis Cooper's poems on drug dependence, hustlers, and violence are just too predictable. Editor Stallings shares his own sexual fantasies — to be a "Vulcan sex slave" (194) — through Star Trek imagery and his unresolved desires for Jean-Luc Picard. Queer Chicano performance artist Luis Alfaro ruminates on language, drag, and the demise of the Quebecois porn star Alan Lambert, "a cute if not overly eager bottom." Lambert's major reason for his suicide at age twenty-six was "his fear of getting older. He stated that this body was at peak physical condition and that he could not see himself in any other way. This from a man who wasn't even HIV-positive" (231).

The power in *Uncontrollable Bodies* is not in finding solutions to the discomfort of living through these times of new disasters, epidemics, and "mastering" by medical science, but rather in giving voice to chronic aches and pains that, once upon a time, might have been considered trivial. Most of us will feel soiled and confused, but more conscious of our own psychic pains, by the time we finish this book.

the form of a gift — the love and approval of a father" (30). Years later, he announced at a meeting of ACT UP New York, "I got infected because I have a drinking and drug problem that has prevented me from being able to negotiate and insist on having safe sex" (31).

Lynne Tillman's "An Impossible Man" contains girlhood recollections of her father, including the first realizations of his penis. In contrast to many incest survivors, she loves him. I can remember thinking that my father's having his penis on the outside of his body was another sign of his vulnerability, his fragility

Lynne (age eight or nine): Aren't you afraid you're going to break it?

Daddy: What?

Lynne: Your penis . . .

Daddy collapses on the couch, laughing. (46)

By the time the book moves to film critic Vivian Sobchack's essay on the dread of aging, conveyed in a low-budget horror film, there is a strong sense that all of us are trapped in our bodies — or will be. As a prelude to discussing her own aging, survival of cancer, and limb amputation, she deconstructs the 1960 B-movie horror, *The Leech Woman*.

The piece that I like the most is by Scott Bukatman, "X-Bodies (the Torment of the Mutant Superhero)," on 'zine culture and the cult of bodybuilding. Given the simplistic put-downs of gay "gym rat" culture and the "hypermuscled body" (106) that have become so fashionable, this article is a must. Bukatman

**Border/Lines is
is Your
Alternative?**

James C. Robertson, *The Casablanca Man: The Cinema of Michael Curtiz*. London: Routledge, 1993.

In *The Casablanca Man*, Robertson makes a scholarly attempt to rescue the life work of Hungarian-born film director Michael Curtiz (1882–1962), emphasizing that “Curtiz was a director of outstanding cinematic merits.” Robertson’s book has got an ironic title: it shows that Curtiz’s cult film, *Casablanca* (1942), has overwhelmed his oeuvre. For Robertson, *Casablanca* isn’t even Curtiz’s major achievement. He emphasizes that it is in Europe that any panoramic survey of Curtiz’s work must begin because, arriving in Hollywood at thirty-seven years of age, the director had “some sixty films behind him.” Moreover, Robertson repudiates the critical views that Curtiz’s European work was “a mere prelude to a Hollywood career pinnacle” and that “the American influence upon him was greater than vice-versa.” However, it is Curtiz himself who is to be blamed for the mixed views about his work. His own films were of little interest to him; he was even surprised when reminded about sequences from them.

Soon after I finished *The Casablanca Man*, I turned on the TV and saw an image I immediately identified as a photograph from Robertson’s book. It was from Curtiz’s *The Breaking Point* (1950). It showed the glimmering water displaced by a boat front, which is shot from the bottom. I savoured the atmosphere of menace and was prepared for the impending threat to domestic life depicted in the film. / A. E. de O.

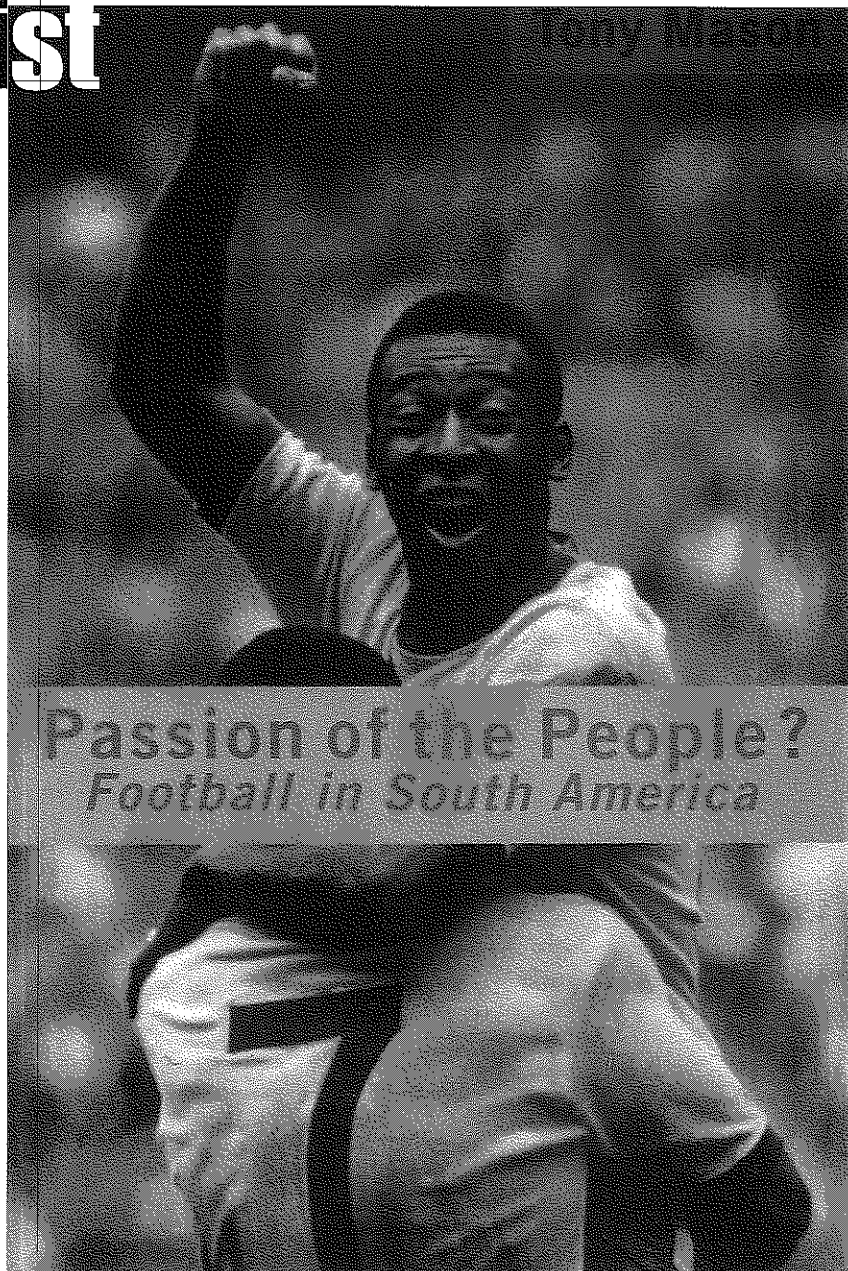
B. Girard (ed.), *A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993.

A Passion for Radio is a collection of essays, examinations, memoirs, and personal accounts of what has loosely been called, in North America at least, “community radio.” Twenty-one radio producers, scholars, journalists, and programmers from Senegal, Quebec, Sandy Lake (Ontario), Vancouver, Springfield (Illinois), Moscow, Martinique, and elsewhere, contributed to the book. The work ranges from analyses of one station’s cooperative structures to interviews with another station’s audience members to personal accounts of life at different community stations. The broad and varied collection is comforting, engaging, and powerful.

A few of the more distinctive writings come from the most marginalized people. Sandy Lake, a Cree village in northern Ontario for example, is one

of forty villages that make up the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Thirty of these have (or had, before 1990 government cut-backs) a community station linked to others by Wawatay Radio Network. Lavina Mohr provides background research and numerous interview fragments that attest to the history and value this locally based radio network has for geographically isolated communities. José Ignacio Lopez presents, in stop/start whirlwind prose, a brief version of the history of Radio Venceremos, the official voice of the FMLN of El Salvador; the full version is collected in a newly translated edition published by Curbstone Press. The essay is a narrative of spliced-together interviews and passages from political and personal narratives. It attains a momentum like nothing else in the book. Numerous other stories and analyses describe situations closer to home: Radio Centre-Ville in Montreal and Cooperative Radio in Vancouver are examined, as are Pacifica Radio in California and Zoom Black Magic Liberation Radio in Springfield, Illinois (now

B/L List



Passion of the People? *Football in South America*