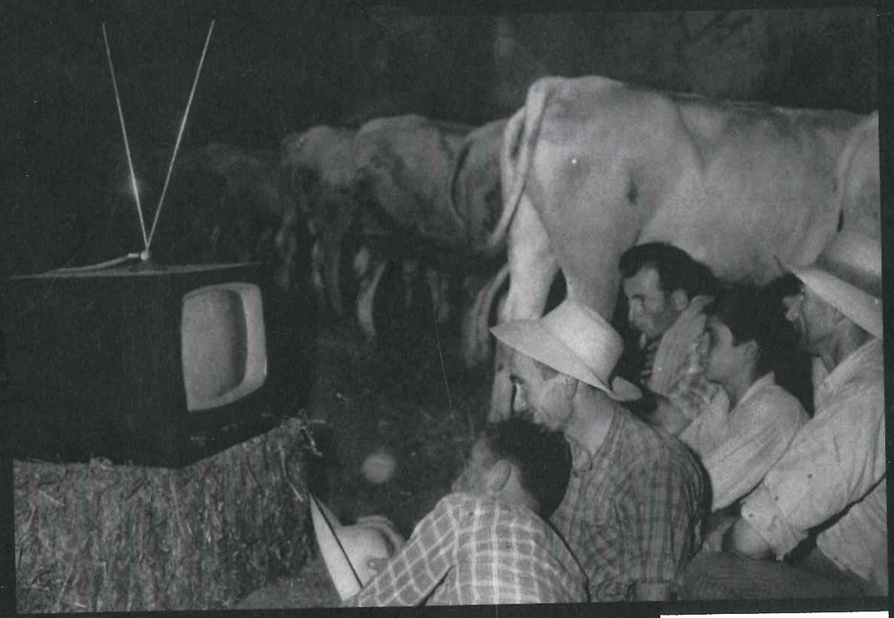


02
7 72006 02008 4

BORDER/LINES

DOUBLE ISSUE No. 38/39
$6. Cdn. $5. U.S.

M. NOURBESE PHILIP on
Bernardo, Homolka,
the **Mona Lisa** and
the press

CAMERON BAILEY on
Race and the **Net**

Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation

SPECIAL SECTION ON TV:
Moses Znaimer:
Counter-revolutionary;
Reality Programming;
Gals, fish and TV and more

Editorial
No. 38/39

Winter is a time of the year when an insistent and heavy lassitude weighs upon the fabric of things. Darkness closes in early and remains a long time, causing us to seek solace in remembrances of warmth and light, or to devise convoluted plans of escape towards them. This year, such fanciful thinking is harder to come by. Our ideological landscape has become the stomping ground of the new right; neo-cons whose lines of complaint and resentment pull at their mouths and who exercise the closed logic of religious zealots. We first saw their arrival in the pulsating light of the 19 inch screen, a bizarre hallucination whose increasing frequency was consensually held to be real. Now that the reality has indeed become virtual, we await further injury with an air of malignant expectancy. At this time, at this time of the year, it is tempting to claim that the world is emptied of generosity and of caring; is full of outrage and acts of cruelty.

Nonetheless, we still have the madness of possibility at our disposal. Let us embark upon reckless acts of expression, sublime and daring feats of communication. Let us allow irony and play to perform their work of mocking normative convention. Let us reveal that these new emperors—despite their immense privileges—are indeed without intelligence or foresight, and that their monetarist rhetoric is but a cheap designer knock-off whose shoddy fabric won't stand up to close inspection. It's time we tart ourselves up, put on our best party frocks and get down to the serious business of exposure.

Beth Seaton

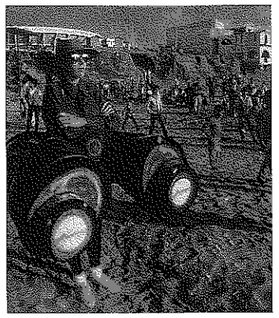
Special thanks to co-editor Stan Fogel and also to
Michael Hoechsmann, Julie Jenkinson and Alicia Peres.

contents no. 38/39

features

articles

book reviews +

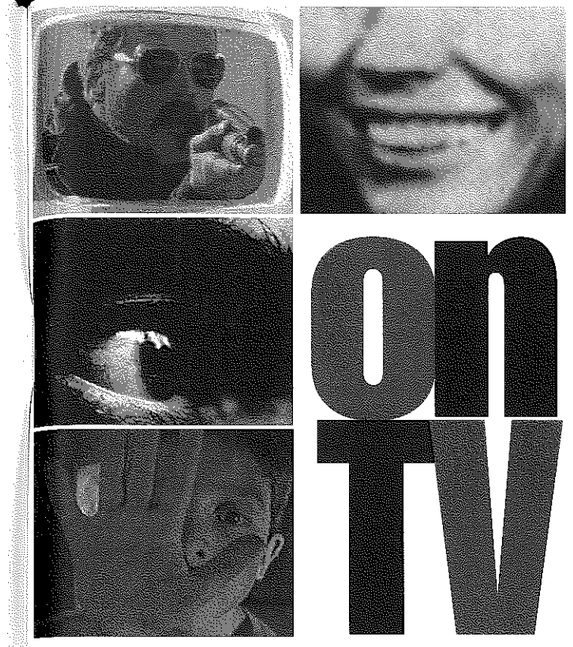


interview

literary corner

sports

the village VOICE



on TV

art no. 38/39

Gilbert Boyer
Robin Collyer
Cathy Daley
Dianna Frid
Jesús Romeo Galdámez
Julie Jenkinson
John Marriott
Andrew J. Patterson
Keith Piper
Rochelle Rubinstein
Lanny Shereck
Kathryn Walter
Laurel Woodcock

Cover: "Monolka," designed by Julie Jenkinson
Inside front cover: from *Album Di Famiglia Della TV*
Back cover: from *Album Di Famiglia Della TV*

Printing:
Glenpair Litho

Editorial Address:
P.O. Box 459 Stn. P
704 Spadina Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5S 2S9

Phone:
416-921-6446

Fax:
416-921-3984

Subscriptions: (four issues)
Individuals: $20 Low Income: $16
Institutions: $35 - Outside of Canada please add $5.00
Foreign subscriptions for all countries are payable in U.S. dollars. Rates for air mail delivery are available on request.
Border/Lines is published four times a year by *Border/Lines* Magazine Society, Inc., a charitable organization engaged in producing written, visual and audio educational materials on culture, the arts and contemporary social issues.

Federal Charitable Status No. 0681528-29-13, donations welcome.

Border/Lines is indexed in America: History and Life, Historical Abstracts, The Alternative Press Index and in the Canadian Magazine Index by Micromedia Ltd. Back volumes available in micro-form from Micromedia at 20 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 2N8 (416) 362-5211

We would like thank the following people for their funding assistance: Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, Ontario Publishing Centre.

CSA #02685825606812
Date of issue December 1995 ISSN 0826-967X

Printed and Published in Canada 1995, by Border/Lines Magazine Society Inc.

Dear Border/lines

I am puzzled by a posture in Julia Creet's contribution to issue 37, "Pagliattack: Mary Walsh vs. the Heistmeister." Why, twice, does she ponder what "the Native Canadian" (or "the Native communities) would make of Joe Crow? Who is she talking about? I agree with a politic that recognizes situated interpreters and situated interpretations, but not in some odd posture that locates the only plausible interpretation within some authentic representative. Who could that possibly be? I thought cultural criticism was less about essentializing ourselves into rigid little boxes and more about learning the power (and betrayal) in representation.

As an urban working class female, raised White speaking English in upper Canada, working in the academy, I think Joe Crow is funny. What is funniest is the parody of non-Native expectations of Native people. Joe Crow, in my reading, communicates from within stereotypes, and exposes their limitations: the excruciating point of the parody comes in a heavily stereotyped figure reporting the news in all its political reality. Each Joe Crow episode is a 45 second scripted issue of *The Nation* (an English journal of current affairs published by the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec) being interpreted by an editor of *The Globe and Mail* (who doesn't get by stereotypes in his reading). This is what *This Hour* is so good at, bringing truths about racism, classism, sexism (and traditions of over-intellectualizing everything) into a frame where we can laugh at them. Every consumer of the media needs to be a careful interpreter: we can't make it somebody else's responsibility. But the point is more why am I not an adequate interpreter? The point is whether or not my role as interpreter displaces someone else. Joe Crow, to my delight, displaces *The Globe and Mail*, which is a good thing given imbalances in economic and ideological resources between real Native leadership in Canada and conservative national newspaper. Now, why isn't Garth Drabinsky investing in Thomson Highway plays? There's an issue. I would also like to re-subscribe, so please forward enclosed to subscriptions department please.

letters to the editor

Sincerely,

Wendy Russell
London, Ontario

Border/Lines

Although I realize that it seldom is in good taste to bite the hand that has fed me—thanks for the bucks—I still believe that it is important for me to finally address a concern that has been gnawing at me ever since I received your recent issue of Border/lines.

I appreciate any publication that provides a forum for those people whose voices are seldom heard in the mainstream media. However, I am disturbed that you didn't even consult me, let alone inform me, that my poem would be nothing more than a cute little subtext for the photograph which juxtaposed it. Or is the photograph of that pale cadaverous S & M poster boy/girl supposed to be my mirror identity? Or were you just trying to put some Paki bitch in her place? Pardon me for not being a genius, that is, a person (usually male) who has been endowed with the supreme intellectual capability to authoritatively dictate what is the operative interrelationship between textual and visual data—I never had aspirations towards being the next Camille Paglia anyway—But what was the fucking point, fellas?

I have spent most of my adult life adamantly asserting my inherent right to not be tied, bound, or flogged by any individual, institution, or dumb ass lit crit theory. As you recall, I had also submitted a poem entitled "I Ain't Your Fucking Harem Girl." I had assumed that it gave you a graphic idea of where I was coming from. I am not an afficionado of that violently pretentious narcissism which has been actively celebrated and deified by The Children of Columbus: "Tie me up! Tie me down! But I'm not oppressed! Because I'm the New Primitive and I am in control!" Will any of us dare to take the risk to LOVE?

Oh dear Goddess, lest I sound like an hysterical prude as opposed to an "orgiastic feminist," I will attempt to calmly and succinctly summarize my philosophical outlook on sex via the following words: If you try to hurt me, YOU WILL DIE. My desires have usually been respected, albeit reluctantly. Whoever chose to shove that "artistic" photographic still next to my poem, obviously didn't respect my right to say NO.

All the best. I look forward to reading your next issue, especially if it will feature an article by the brilliant, irrepressible Marlene Nourbese Philip.

Sincerely,

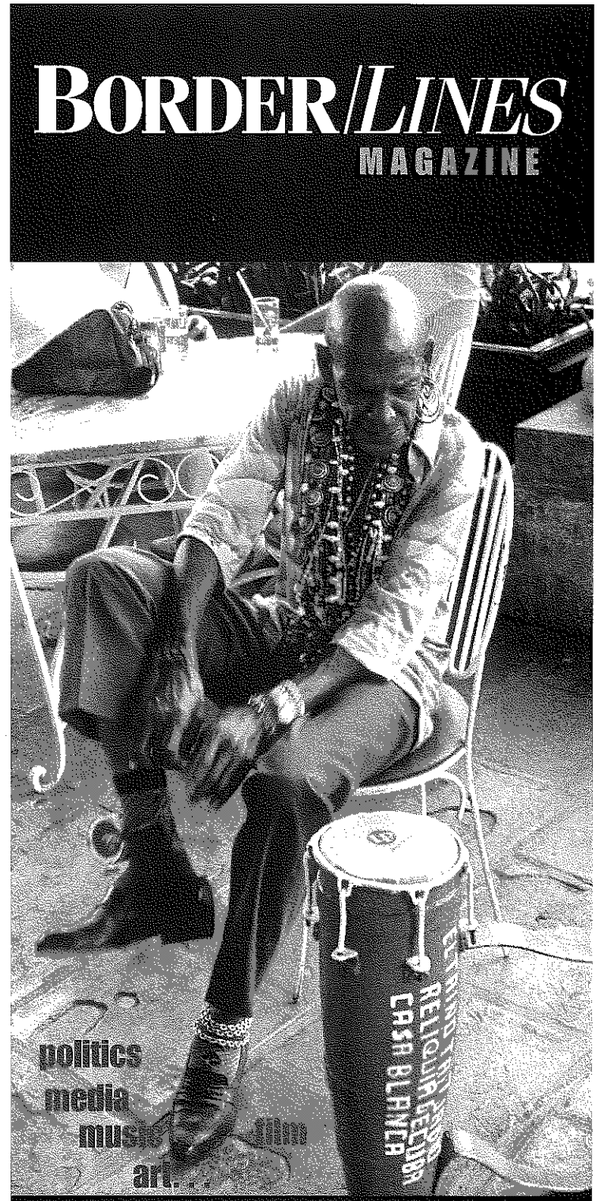
Raj Pannu
New Westminister, B.C.

Errata

In *Border/Lines* no. 37 the reproductions of Lutz Bacher's *Sex With Strangers* were printed without their respective captions. The following captions should have appeared beneath the images:
Page 30 (left): Unfortunately, many females in Sandra's situation have failed to report such incidents to the police.
Page 30 (right): The rapists inflicted considerable pain during the sex acts.

From the Editors

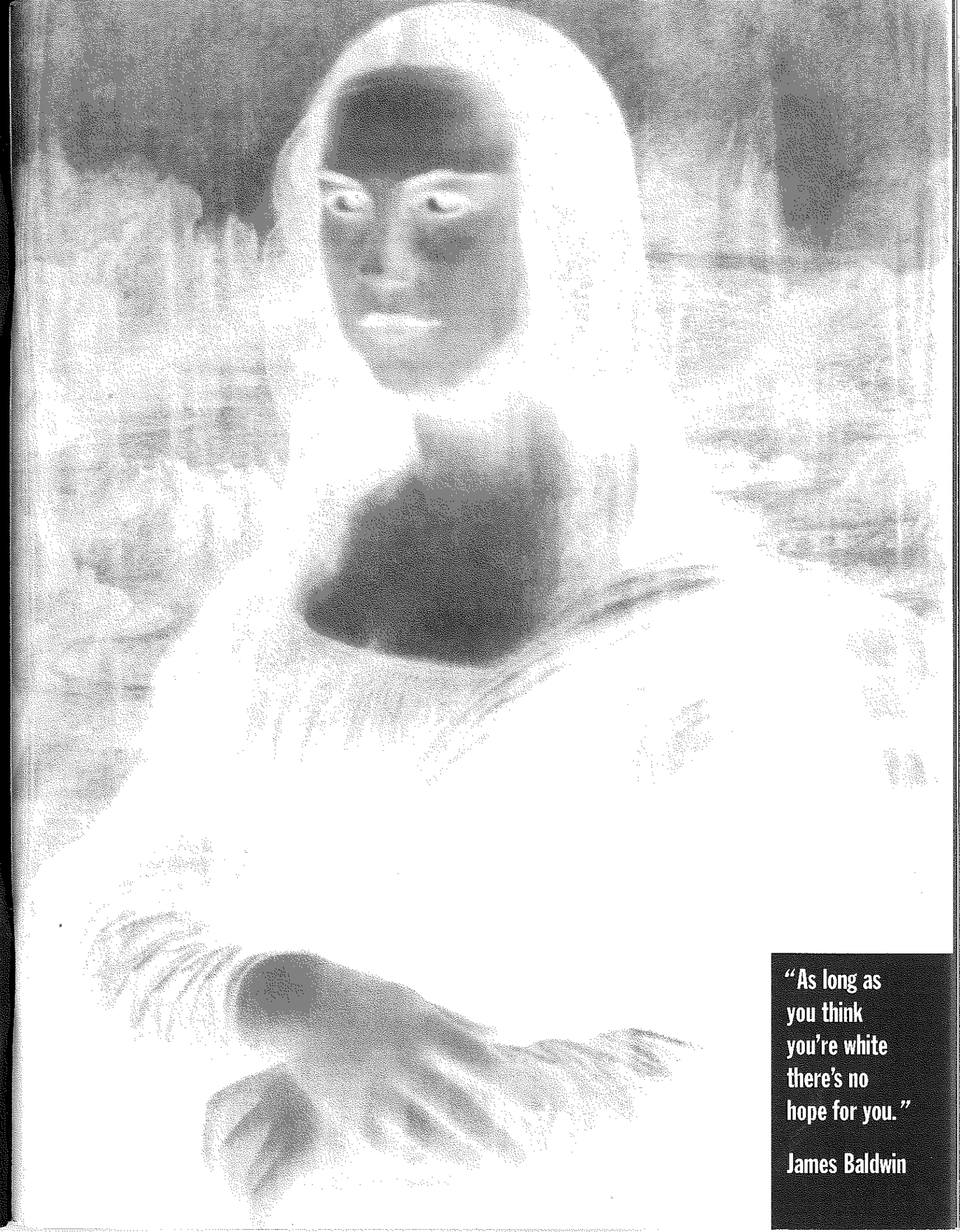
M. Nourbese Philip, a regular contributor to Border/Lines, recently won a Toronto Arts Award. The Border/Lines collective congratulates her. We think of her as one of Canada's finest writers: an incisive commentator on arts/race/culture and a superb poet and fiction writer.
That her award provoked racist, obscenely vituperative remarks on CFRB (Toronto) by Michael Coren—out on a limb-augh, as ever—reaffirms our commitment at Border/Lines to continue to make available commentary that is progressive, powerful—and too often absent in other media.



M. NOURBESE PHILIP

HOW WHITE IS YOUR WHITE?

On the lack of colour in the Bernardo/ Homolka affair.



"As long as you think you're white there's no hope for you."

James Baldwin

Real conversation in the Oakwood/St. Clair area, Toronto, Canada.

"Gurl, thank god Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka not Black." I breathed this sentiment over the telephone to a macomere [Caribbean demotic for confidant] of mine in the first few weeks of sordid testimony. "Damn right!" she replied. "All like us so would have got our deportation orders by now." My macomere then wondered aloud how come The Sun *was not calling for them to be deported back to where they came from . "Where's that," I asked. "Hell?" She laughed. "No - somewhere in Europe." "Same thing," I replied. She laughed again and suggested we start a campaign to deport them.*

*Lawrence Brown and O'Neil Grant were arrested and charged in the robbery and shooting that took place at the Just Desserts restaurant on April 5, 1994. Clinton Gayle has been charged in the murder of a white policeman on June 16, 1994.

This may seem an odd take on a trial whose reporting has served us up, in consistently terrifying and horrific details, the life, times and murderous activities of these two white yuppies from hell, more recently displaced to St. Catherines, Ontario. But not so odd when you consider how the media have dealt, or not dealt, with the issues of race and ethnicity as they relate to this trial.

Bernardo and Homolka. The names reek of "ethnicity" in the way in which the word has come to be defined in Canada: all those who are white but not Anglo-Saxon or French. The white ethnics. In multicultural Canada there is a sense in which ethnicity has become the preserve of the white ethnics, while Africans, Asians and First Nations remain the sole occupiers of the terrain of race. Which too often means that race=colour=blackness. Seldom is whiteness given the tangibility and solidity attributed to blackness. As a colour. As a category. Except in conversations among Black people. While he may have overstated the case with respect to Europeans–"no one was white before s/he came to America"–James Baldwin understood that neither were Africans "Black before [they] got here...[and] were defined as Black by the slave trade." In other words, over and above ethnicity whiteness is as much a construction as blackness, and both can be located in specific historical, socio-political contexts. One of the most pernicious effects of the construction of whiteness in the New World was the projection of all negative characteristics onto the Other - first the Native then the African. Whiteness, according to David Roediger, in *Towards an Abolition of Whiteness*, then becomes not so much a culture, "but precisely the absence of culture. It is the empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."

(Imaginary conversation "overheard" on the Bathurst bus.)

> *"Girl you know what ethnic group dem two white devils belong to?"*
> *"All I know is dem white-"*
> *"But don't Bernardo and Homolka sound foreign to you?"*
> *"Damn right - as foreign as some of those African names I hearing."*
> *"Child, you notice how no matter how foreign and strange white people does be, nobody making dem out to be different."*

The names Bernardo and Homolka are far more "foreign" sounding and "different" than Clinton Gayle, Lawrence Brown, or O'Neil Grant, Black men, who, in 1994, galvanized media attention and public discourse around issues of race and crime.* Bernardo desired to, and at one point did, change his name to the less foreign-sounding Teale; he and Homolka refused to live in Toronto because of all the immigrants and crime! Yet there has been no exploration of these issues (except when it relates to rap music... but more of that later). Where are the outcries to send these individuals back to where their DNA originated? Around the time of Clinton Gayle's arrest, I recall one CFRB reporter advocating that Canadian citizenship be revoked in cases where the crime was serious enough. **By any standard, the crimes carried out by Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo qualify.** Further, in the internment and treatment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, there exists more than sufficient historical precedent for the revoking of Canadian citizenship and "repatriation" of individuals. It was their blood and ethnicity that determined what happened to the Japanese. It was their race that overrode Canadian birth and Canadian citizenship. Issues of origin, nativity and citizenship dominated and shaped the public discourse around the arrests of Lawrence Brown, O'Neil Grant and Clinton Gayle, and established Canada as a space of purity and innocence that was somehow contaminated by the presence of Black people and "Black crime." These issues have been noticeably missing in the case of Bernardo and Homolka: all we have been left with is a mysterious woman and a man who longed to be a white rap musician.

What ethnic groups do these two I-didn't-do-it-s/he-did-it white criminals belong to, anyway? Since the trial, newspaper accounts have revealed that Bernardo's DNA is of the hard-working Italian type from his father's side and Anglo-Canadian from his mother's. The name Homolka **sounds** Eastern European. Nothing, however, has been revealed about this woman's ethnic background. And whatever the various ethnic communities to which this couple belongs, none has been called on to explain how it is going to control this type of heinous crime by its members. Neither is the white community (is there such a thing?) or the various white communities called on to explain how they have produced such monsters. Where are the calls for the control of **white** crime, particularly **white** sexual crime? The silence resounds all the more loudly because it hasn't been addressed or broken.

What is the colour of white ANYWAY? The colour of power - physical and economic - the colour of fear and, at times, loathing. From the perspective of many Black people that is. Similarly, the colour of black, from the perspective of many white people, is also the colour of fear, loathing and threat - primarily physical. What makes the experiencing of these two racial colours different, however, is that it is **white people** who control the production of images of Black peoples. The latter lack similar control over the portrayal of whites and for the most part even of themselves. Further, integral to being socialized as a Black person is the acquiring of a sensitivity to **how** you are seen through the eyes of white people - what W.E. du Bois described as "second-sight" or "double-consciousness" that only allows you to see yourself "through the revelation of the other world." Black people bear constant witness to the fear and loathing in which they are held. From the smallest act of someone instinctively drawing away from them in fear or disdain, to the much larger picture of the primarily negative representation of Blacks in the media, Blacks see their blackness represented back to them in unwholesome, unpalatable ways.

It is uncommon, however, for white people to experience or even see themselves as white –they just are–let alone witness their whiteness as a representation of negativity. Everything around them conspires to show them otherwise. One of the most memorable scenes in Spike Lee's movie *Malcolm X* is of the epiphanic moment when the young Malcolm, sitting in the prison library, understands how the meanings of the words black and white bear witness to the lived experience of Black people.

Like blackness whiteness is highly visible (to Blacks and all those upon whom it impacts negatively) while being simultaneously invisible. Invisible because, in a society steeped in racism and ethnocentric ideology, white and whiteness become equated with normalcy, while its effects - primarily negative (for white people as well)- remain remarkably visible to all those who care to look. Integral to the invading, settling and exploiting of the peoples and lands of Africa, Asia and the Americas was the ideology of white supremacy. Yet so out of touch with reality is the ideology and practice of whiteness, that in 1992 the United States, Canada and other like-minded nations were hell-bent on "celebrating" the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the New World. That this "discovery" meant genocide for Native peoples seemed not to matter to the celebrators.

The essence of whiteness is its irrevocable link and untrammeled access to power, accompanied by an inability to countenance being threatened in any way. The backlash against affirmative action policies both in Canada and in the United States bears overwhelming witness to this. "By giving special attention to other races," Andrew Hacker writes in *The Nation*, "[affirmative action] devalued being white. Thus for the first time...Caucasians were made to feel they no longer came first...they had a taste of what it might be like to be black...they haven't enjoyed the experience...." In pretending whiteness doesn't exist, that normal equals white, the power of whiteness grows exponentially. It metastasizes. It also

The names Bernardo and Homolka are far more "foreign" sounding and "different" than Clinton Gayle, Lawrence Brown, or O'Neil Grant, Black men, who, in 1994, galvanized media attention and public discourse around issues of race and crime.

Border/Lines

grows crazed, and because one of its aspects is never being able to see its own self, never being able to see how **others** see you, never being able to see that your presence and action may cause pain, whiteness is essentially oppressive. But not only is it "oppressive and false" as Roediger writes, "...whiteness is **nothing but** oppressive and false." And in never being able to see itself, whiteness must feed on something else. On the Other. So that Paul Bernardo becomes understandable, according to some media, only when we explore his desire to become a rap musician. "This is the closest you get to look inside the mind of Paul Bernardo when he committed the crimes," reports *The Toronto Star* quoting Crown Attorney Greg Barnett. And that epitome of whiteness - of white middle-class blandness which Italians so appropriately and succinctly call "mangiacake" - that self-described product of rap music, Paul Bernardo himself, states that he "grew up with this shit. It's in my veins." And "(w)hite kids were eating the stuff up," opines the *Star* reporter in profound conclusion.

In all the copy written about him, the **only** time Paul Bernardo is identified as white is when his desire to be a "**white** rap artist" is reported (in *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*). Bernardo, we are told, spent "hours watching old movies, stealing lines for his songs," but these movies, these old **white** movies, we must conclude, failed to influence him. It was the "rapper image," *The Toronto Star* tells us, "the guns, the **defiance of authority**" that he longed for. "He emulated big rap artists like Marky Mark, Ice-T and Vanilla Ice, playing their music over and over." (The appropriation of Black music by white musicians like Marky Mark and Vanilla Ice will be left for another time and place.) The *Star's* argument goes something like this: Paul Bernardo, a **white** male, was living the **white** middle-class life–complete with smuggling cigarettes across the border. He was, in this society, an integral part of the system of authority, so much so that police handled him with kid gloves; sat on his DNA samples of blood and saliva for well over two years; failed to follow up on tips and leads given to them by various people; never so much as laid a finger on him to beat a confession out of him; never roughed him up; didn't fire any guns at him. This man desired to defy authority. And his models? Black rappers giving voice to the often suicidal defiance of Black youth in the face of the terrifying and totalising presence of the police in their communities. (I have in mind here the U.S.A and Canada.) Whose authority was Paul Bernardo defying? His own? Locked as he was in his whiteness, he was unable to see that he represented the very thing that many rappers critique - whiteness and all that it connotes.

Young white audiences undoubtedly find the rebellion, sexuality and humour of rap seductive; rap, however, also serves up a trenchant critique of whiteness that most of them ignore. By virtue of representing certain aspects of Black life, which **is,** after all, human life, rap is necessarily complex, contradictory, passionate and exciting. Rap is "at once part of the dominant text," Tricia Rose argues, "and, yet, always on the margins of this text." While reflecting

In all the copy written about him, the only time Paul Bernardo is identified as white is when his desire to be a "white rap artist" is reported.

For the record, it should be noted that despite the (for many) unsavoury lyric s of gangsta rap, no rap musician has kidnapped young girls, raped them, killed them and cut them up.

the "sexual and institutional control over and abuse of women" rap is also profoundly subversive, bringing "together a tangle of some of the most complex social, cultural and political issues in contemporary...society." The media have ignored these complexities and battened onto the gangsta rap image of Black men as violent and predatory. In so doing they have scapegoated rap and diverted "attention away from the more entrenched problem of redefining the terms of heterosexual masculinity." So too, in focussing on Bernardo's aspirations to become a white rap musician, the media have diverted attention away from him as a white, middle-class, heterosexual male. For the record, it should be noted that despite the (for many) unsavoury lyrics of gangsta rap, no rap musician has kidnapped young girls, raped them, killed them and cut them up.

The point here is a simple one: because of the veil of protection that whiteness (and to some degree class) offers its devotees and disciples, Paul Bernardo was able to walk around raping and murdering children and women for much longer than should have been allowed. Contrast this with the passionate enthusiasm, energy, and violence exercised in the policing of Black people. On the streets. In their neighbourhoods. In their homes. And often for minor offences, or no offences at all. Consider the number of Black people shot by the police. Some, like Lester Donaldson and Albert Johnson, in their homes. Then consider again. Paul Bernardo.

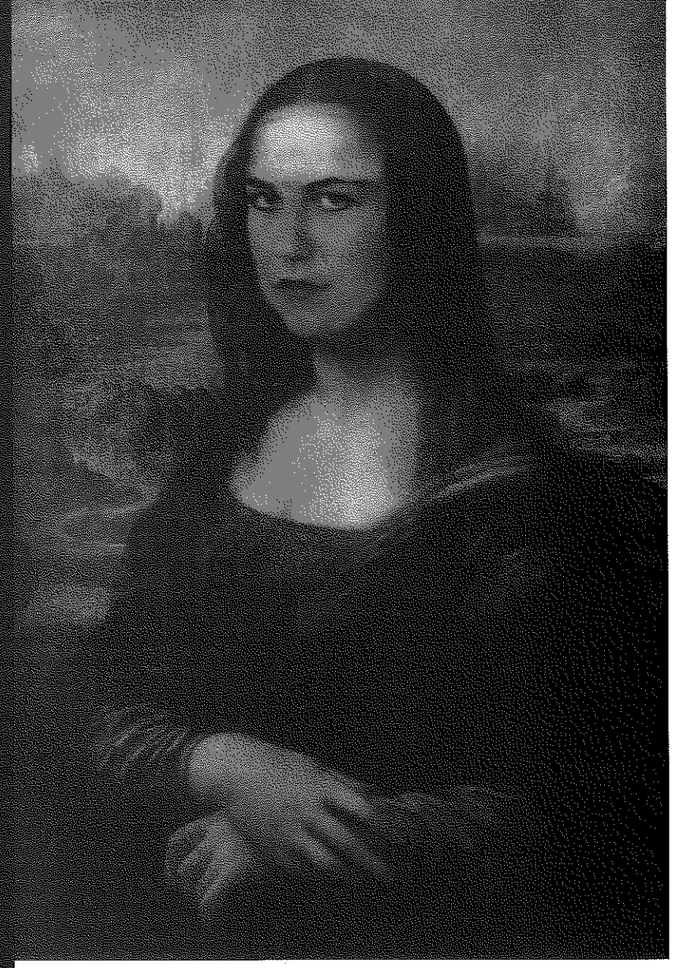
Not only does whiteness become a shield against wrongdoing, as described above, but in the use of rap music–an expression of Black culture–as **the** way to understand Bernardo's psychopathic personality, there is also an insidious veiling of whiteness. In suggesting that it is only through rap that we come to understand Bernardo's crimes, the media foster an image of whiteness whose qualities of innocence, wholeness and purity are contaminated only when they come in contact with Black life, in this case rap music –when it is ingested: "white kids were eating the stuff up." Once again Blackness is pathologised: it becomes the contaminant of whiteness–Bernardo himself–as well as the **only** way into his disturbed mind. **White** movies made by **white** producers, featuring **white** actors and **white** themes which he also copiously ingested and, we are told, lifted lines from, apparently had no effect on him.

Similarly, in the sole reference made to gayness (*Toronto Star*) - the allegation of Bernardo being a male hooker in the Boystown area of Toronto–gayness is pathologised. What the reader is then left with is the intact white, heterosexual, middle-class male whose contact with gayness, Blackness and pornography - in the kingdom of whiteness these are interchangeable pathologies–contaminated him and turned him into the killer he became.

Where there are no such markers, as in the case of Karla Homolka, only mystery remains. There being no recognition that whiteness exists and is as much a construction as Blackness, there can be no pathology in what does not exist. The media - the white media - cannot understand how Karla Homolka might be the logical creation of a culture that has lodged materiality and individuality at the centre of all human activity. A culture that instills in girls and young women the desire for the perfect man, the perfect marriage and the perfect house, and which has created an environment in which girls, women and children of both sexes are at physical risk; a culture in which women, despite being tax-paying citizens, cannot fully enjoy their environments for fear of being raped and/or murdered. A culture of whiteness that, in hierarchizing cultures, peoples and genders, "attempt(s) to build an identity on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."

Consider the refusal of Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo, descendants of immigrants themselves (as is everyone in Canada save the First Nations peoples), to live in Toronto. Why? Because there were too many immigrants - read Africans and Asians. People of colour. Black people. And too much crime! In the easy assumption of this couple from hell, that they were superior to darker-skinned peoples, is to be found that absolute and ineffable expression of whiteness. Under European colonialism, buttressed by racism and white supremacy, **the** most lowly white person, **the** most depraved white person, could go out to the colonies and immediately assume a position higher than that of an African, Indian, Chinese or Native person of greater moral standing, higher education and a better socio-economic standing. This ideology of whiteness has meant that

Hers is a case of whiteness melded to gender. The result? A teflon princess to whom nothing sticks. Not even a murder rap. The media have described her as mysterious— the archetypal mysterious woman— even compared her to the Mona Lisa!



the most corrupt and debauched white person in South Africa could assume greater rights, respect and treatment and consider him or herself better than any African. Whatever their standing in their communities. Whiteness has meant that the most uneducated redneck could pull rank on the most educated Black person in the U.S.A. or Canada. Today in the United States, for instance, it means that African Americans are far more often legally murdered by the state for killing a white person than whites are for killing blacks (or other whites). And finally whiteness means that Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo after raping, degrading, killing and dismembering young women could think themselves better than the thousands of hard-working, dark-skinned immigrants to Toronto whose moral stature is infinitely superior to theirs.

Make no mistake about it, this trial has also been about whiteness. But because it has been allowed to remain invisible, whiteness remains unscathed.

The role of videotapes in this and two other recent crimes elucidates how Blackness and whiteness function differently. Although the video tape presented graphic evidence of the Los Angeleles police assaulting Rodney King, the jury chose to believe that Rodney King, because he was Black, was still the aggressor and that the police were "protecting" themselves.

In the case of Karla Homolka the jury and public were encouraged to disregard the graphic evidence that she was a full participant in the crimes against the young women and believe that it was all an act on her part - that she was being forced to do what she did—the way the L.A.police in the Rodney King case were being forced by factors we did not and could not see to behave in the way they did. Homolka's excuse was that she was being abused; the L.A. police's that Blacks are aggressive and physically violent. In neither case were these external factors visible on video, but their suggested reading of these videos call into question the adage that seeing is, indeed, believing.

Like the L.A. police defendants and his wife, Paul Bernardo also urged the jury to disregard what they saw on the tapes and conclude that although he appeared to be in control of much of what was happening on the tape, he did not actually kill Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffey.

Consider for a moment the videotape released around the time of the Just Desserts robbery to assist the police in their search for the perpetrators. Blurred, inaccurate and indistinct, but startlingly clear in its representation of young Black men. All young Black men. The public, as judge and jury, were encouraged to believe they could see what was in fact not visible—a clear representation of the faces of those young men; they were then sicked on the collectivity of young Black men in Toronto. All of whom became guilty by virtue of being Black. In the high visibility of Blackness the absence of detail becomes irrelevant; in the low visibility of whiteness, the plethora of detail immaterial.

Experts have opined at length on the rarity of women indulging in crimes such as Homolka's and Bernardo's. The only explanation we have had for Karla Homolka's behaviour is that she was battered. And though there have been experts who have said that her abuse - whatever its extent—is not sufficient to explain her behaviour, the image of Karla Homolka remains one of an abused woman—a victim.

At the time of writing, there has been no challenge from the women's movement of the use of the Battered-Wife Syndrome in her case. Only relatively recently recognized in law, this defence has been used to explain why women kill their abusers. **Not** to excuse the rape, torture and murder of young women. To have this defence used to explain away Homolka's participation in these crimes makes a mockery of the work done over the years to have this defence recognized in law. Why the silence?

Despite her involvement in these crimes, however, at some fundamental level the image of Karla Homolka remains strangely untouched, and whiteness once again becomes a shield and is shielded. Hers is a case of whiteness melded to gender. The result? A teflon princess to whom nothing sticks. Not even a murder rap.The media have described her as mysterious - the archetypal mysterious woman - even compared her to the Mona Lisa! While there is no little stereotyping in this description, it also serves to protect her image as a white woman. She may be a sadist, she may have lured young girls to their deaths, she may even be a murderer, but she is bright. No dumb blond this, but in the top 10% of the population in intelligence. If this doesn't undo (and it won't) the nonsense about high I.Q scores guaranteeing anything, I don't know what will. She has been shown to be feisty, tough and resilient under cross-examination. Now contrast the image of the Mensa Mona Lisa with a penchant for sadism with that of Audrey Smith, the Jamaican woman who complained about being strip-searched by the police in public. Based on recent "analysis" and "research" by the likes of Phillipe Rushton and Herrnstein and Murray of **Bell Curve** fame, we know her I.Q to be sub-normal. Rosie di Manno of the *Toronto Star* confirms this: Audrey Smith is telling the truth because her "simpleness...just sits there like a lump on a log." And as for mystery - the only one is why this Black woman from Jamaica was sitting on a bench in the Parkdale area late at night. That mystery has now been resolved by the investigating panel's report with its strong suggestion that Audrey Smith was a drug pusher. No drugs were found on Audrey Smith and the issue before the panel was whether she was stripped in public. **Not** whether or not she was selling drugs. Karla Homolka, the "petite" blonde with the "pouting" bottom lip, is a woman who "felt at ease with men..., men always seemed to find her most believable." Audrey Smith one the other hand is "bovine" and "lumpen" (di Manno again).

That Audrey Smith has been treated shabbily is beyond denial: She has come to Canada on many occasions to seek justice, only to be returned to Jamaica without having her case heard. She has been summarily stopped at the airport in Jamaica on her way to Canada and told that the Immigration Department would refuse to allow her to enter Canada because she was masquerading as someone else. Her reputation has been slandered. Audrey Smith has not raped, tortured, or killed young girls. Audrey Smith is Black. And where whiteness reigns, her skin becomes a marker of guilt. Even when she has committed no crime. Conversely, even when the most heinous crimes have been committed, whiteness becomes a shield, offering protection and safety.

Despite the Paul Bernardos, the Clifford Olsons, and the Karla Homolkas, the most enduring image of the criminal, which has greatest currency today in Canadian society, is that of the Black male. The Bernardos remain failed **white** rap artists, the Homolkas intelligent Mona Lisas with pouting lips who feel at ease with men.

Contrary to recent reports that there are too many Chinese in Markham, too many Jews practising law, medicine and accounting and, of course, too many immigrants, what Canadian society is suffering from - ever since the first white settler arrived here—is an excess, an excrescence if you will, of whiteness. Until and unless we "attack whiteness as a destructive ideology" and "focus political energy on exposing, demystifying and demeaning the particular ideology of whiteness," as Roediger writes, Africans, Asians and First Nations peoples—the Other as post-modernism has so aptly named us—will continue to carry the disproportionate load of deviance in this society. In the meantime, as my macomere says, "after what dem white people doing to Black people during slavery time,nothing surprising me about what dem white devils doing today."

SPORTS

by

Gary Genosko

OBITUARY NOTICE

On August 29 of this year, Jeff Z. Klein and Andrew Hsiao, who were *Village Voice* sports editors for 1993-95 and 1992-3 respectively, penned an epitaph as the paper ended its sports coverage. Since 1983 the *Voice* had cultivated, as they put it, "an irreverent, progressive point of view" on sports. Race, gender, labour—did I mention queer—issues were all part of this unique reportage that blazed a trail for cultural studies of sport in North America.

Whether cultural studies in its American incarnation will pick up the trail remains as yet unanswered, although indications are strong that it will, despite the recent remarks of those such as Elliot Gorn who claims that "the booming field of cultural studies seems oblivious to the work done on athletics. This is ironic, because cultural studies... is exactly where the study of sports is most needed." Michael Oriard's *Reading Football*, for example, is a study of football's cultural narratives (the gladiator, "scientific" football, heroic masculinity, etc.) in the popular journalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There were treasures to be discovered in the *Voice* sports columns (the gossipy *Jockbeat* and Mike Geffner's baseball report, *Rundown*) and the one or two articles in each issue. For example, I was staggered by the implications for research of the recent casual cultural history in the *Voice* by Gersh Kuntzman of the "high-five" celebratory gesture in baseball, which turns out to constitute a rhizome crossing baseball and college basketball, involving the mutation of handshakes, butt-slaps, low fives ("giving skin"), high fives proper, high tens, the full moon, and the forearm bash (recalling with neanderthal enthusiasm the fist bash).

Where do we go from here? Specifically, a comparative analysis of the history and meaning of the celebratory gesture across sports remains to be written, in the context of a broader study of gestural sporting behaviour of athletes and fans alike. "The wave" would be examined, so too would be the waving of all sorts of gimmicky objects such as "Homer Hankies" in baseball. In hockey there is the long-standing tradition in Detroit of throwing octopuses onto the ice; there is also the racist "tomahawk chop" used by Atlanta Braves fans and widely protested by native and other groups. In hockey, equipment imposes a set of what may be called syntactic constraints upon innovation. Within these confines, one may recall retired Maple Leaf and Canuck Dave "Tiger" Williams' celebratory rush down the ice, arms pumping, as he positioned his stick between his legs in order to ride it like a hobby horse. Then there is the usual fist pumping, air punching, stick swinging, twirling, embracing, patting, petting, and rubbing, etc.

More generally, the progressive reader of sports has to become a writer (even though, as Nick Hornby reminds us, the word progressive has, for some, the unfortunate connotation of the music of King Crimson and Emerson, Lake and Palmer) Short of this, the pickings are slim and, in Canada, at least, almost non-existent, the exceptions being few and far between: one thinks of Daniel Gawthrop's queer hockey and sports reportage in *Xtra West* and elsewhere, as well as Doug Smith's recent article in *This Magazine* on the political and fiscal follies of the drive to save the Winnipeg Jets

"The truth is this: for alarmingly large chunks of an average day, I am a moron."

Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch: A Fan's Life*

BOXING AND DEATH

"When a boxer is "knocked out" it does not mean, as it's commonly thought, that he has been knocked unconscious, or even incapacitated; it means rather more poetically that he has been knocked out of Time. (The referee's dramatic count of ten constitutes a metaphysical parenthesis of a kind through which the fallen boxer must penetrate if he hopes to continue in Time.)" Joyce Carol Oates writes this in her collection of essays *On Boxing*. To be out of time is to be counted "dead." The knock-out constitutes a symbolic death with its own rhythm: the count of one-to-ten. To resist this rhythm and re-enter time, continuing the bout, is to return from the dead; succumbing to this rhythm and letting it run its course brings the fight to an end. Let's note that this symbolic death is embedded in the rules of the sport; it is a dramatic part of the rit-

ual. Despite being extra-temporal, it is not altogether separate for this death takes place in the ring. It is for good reason that Oates uses the concept of parentheses to describe the knock out. This turns the referee into a kind of priest with exclusive control over a restricted domain. It is by means of the referee's power to mediate between the temporal and extra-temporal, between the living and symbolically dead, that a boxer can return from the dead. The referee mediates the communication between the living and dead. These symbolically dead boxers have a crucial role to play in the match because, in boxing, it is normal to be, in this way, dead. This is what is extraordinary about boxing: death is not spirited away and dressed up for viewing, but remains in circulation amid the living who are simultaneously repulsed and fascinated by everything that happens in the parentheses. Boxing's refusal either to repress death or to hide it away in an extraterritorial space also explains why it is reviled by so many, without an investigation of other reasons, such as its interminable scams and scandals, alleged mob connections, and violent spillovers of every kind.

The history of boxing is littered with real thanatospraxis as well, in the ring itself, and the slow death of the retired boxer. Every time a "bum of the month" is produced from the ranks to face a superior opponent, every time a match is allowed to go on a few seconds too long before being stopped, every time a boxer suffers a career-ending injury, death becomes a factor. Boxing does not refuse the boxer his death; it does not have the power to suspend death. The boxer's death is always at stake, and this is especially true in mismatches, in which a boxer is not properly protected by his handlers, and in the strategy adopted by a fighter, such as the innovative but physically costly rope-a-dope introduced by Muhammad Ali against George Foreman in Zaire in 1974. The rules do not prevent a violent death from being at stake.

Books and Articles Mentioned:

Elliot Gorn, "Taking Sports Seriously," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (24 March 1995).

Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch: A Fan's Life* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

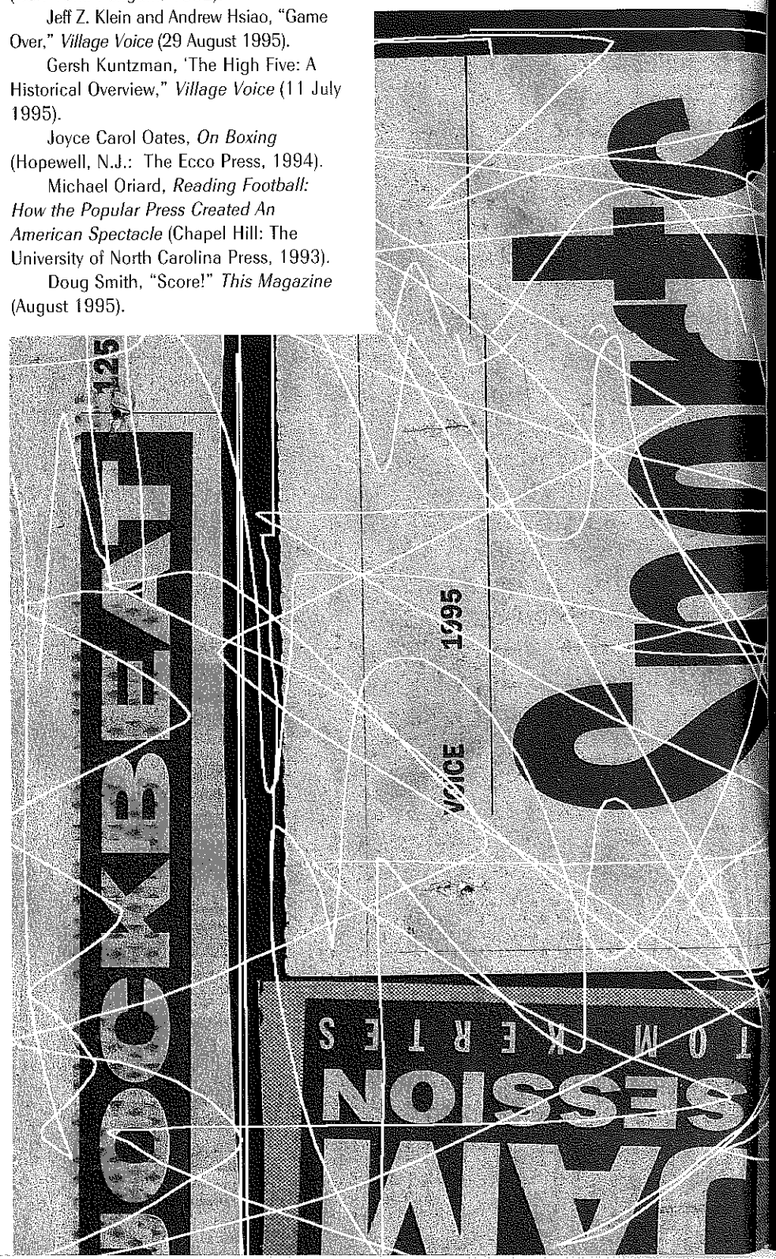
Jeff Z. Klein and Andrew Hsiao, "Game Over," *Village Voice* (29 August 1995).

Gersh Kuntzman, 'The High Five: A Historical Overview," *Village Voice* (11 July 1995).

Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing* (Hopewell, N.J.: The Ecco Press, 1994).

Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created An American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Doug Smith, "Score!" *This Magazine* (August 1995).



Guidelines for contributors

Who Are We? *Border/Lines* is an interdisciplinary magazine committed to exploring all aspects of culture — including popular culture, fine arts, visual arts, gender, literature, multiculturalism, mass communications and political culture. Although its geographic focus is Canada, this is taken as meaning anything that is relevant to understanding Canadian culture.

Who Are You? *Border/Lines* aims to fill the gap between academic journals and cultural magazines. Our audience is diverse and eclectic: so too are our contributors, drawn from a broad base of writers, artists, culture producers and animators. Potential contributors should bear this diversity in mind and try to address cultural issues with spunk, humour and the occasional sideways glance. Please avoid pedantry, footnotes as well as excessive allusions and isms.

We Welcome New Writers. Send your feature article, commentary, review, poetry, fiction, etc., to our editorial address below. All correspondence should be accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. If your manuscript is on disk, please send it, too. (Mac format is preferred).

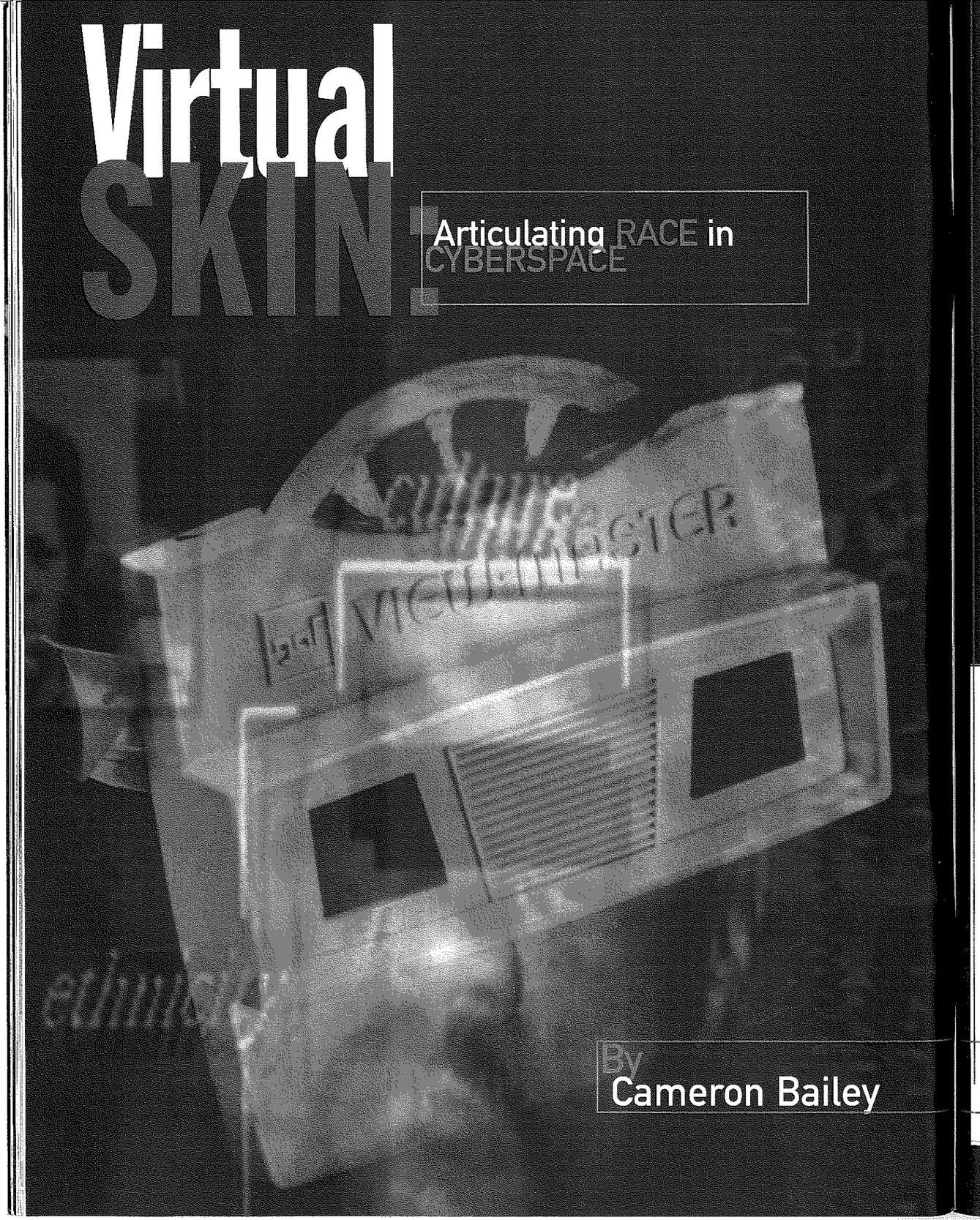
We Want Your Visuals. We encourage you to send illustrative work with your manuscript. We also encourage visual artists to submit work. Please carefully consider the reproductive qualities of your submissions, as well as the page proportions of the magazine. Include any captions, photo credits and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. Final design decisions rest with the collective.

Border/Lines P.O. Box 459 Stn. P 704 Spadina Avenue Toronto Ontario Canada M5S 2S9

tel. 416-921-6446

Virtual SKIN

Articulating RACE in CYBERSPACE



By Cameron Bailey

Does race matter? Can it sustain itself in the shifting space of virtual communities?

Is "race"* corporeal? Is that all there is to one of the most complex and contested discourses of the modern era— skin, eyes, lips and hair? Clearly not. Most theories of race reject a biological basis altogether, in favour of a tangle of social, political and psychic forces that work their strange and funky ways on each one of us every day. That's how it goes in the real world.

But what about cyberspace?** Do the same laws apply? Recent writing on electronic communication systems insist that despite its disembodied nature, cyberspace remains what Michael Benedikt calls a familiar social construct "with the ballast of materiality cast away." That means race may function in much the same way that it does in the world, where we are more directly accountable to our bodies. It may mean that, but it's hard to tell, because very few of the thinkers currently probing cyberspace have said a word about race.

Faced with the delirious prospect of leaving our bodies behind for the cool swoon of digital communication, the leading theorists of cyberspace have addressed the philosophical implications of a new technology by retreating to old ground. In a landscape of contemporary cultural criticism in which the discourses of race, gender, class and sexuality have often led to the next leap in understanding—where, in fact, they have been so thoroughly used as to be turned sometimes into mantra—these interpretive tools have come curiously late to the debate around cyberspace. It may be that the prevailing discussion of digitally-assisted subjectivity has focused not on the culture of cyberspace as it exists today, but on the potential of cyberspace, on utopian or dystopian visions for tomorrow. Since we never reveal ourselves so much as when we dream, it's worth noting that most speculations on the future of cyberspace return questions of race in particular to the margins.

But does race matter? Can it sustain itself in the shifting space of virtual communities? It would seem clear that the safety of binary oppositions—self/other, black/white, male/female, straight/gay, writer/reader—would evaporate in the forcefully uncertain world of electronic discourse. A message comes and goes without a face; communication takes place without bodies to ground it, to provide the deeper layers of meaning below the surface upon which we all depend. This is especially important given the extent to which social interaction depends on embodied communication, on stable, known genders, sexualities, races and classes being somewhere present in the communicative act. Without this there would be no power flowing through communication, and without the flow of power, what would we have to say to one another?

Cyberspace communication challenges all that. In the online world, identity is often chosen, played with, subverted, or foregrounded as a construct. There appears to be in this a demonstration of the freedom provided by disembodied communication, the ludic—or "play"—element that is central to cyberspace activity in general, as well as the influence of 25 years of postmodernity. What makes cyberspace so interesting as a public sphere is how none of the usual landmarks can be trusted. Also, the old economy of readers and writers, speakers and listeners is turned sideways; with the simultaneity and multidirectionality of online communication, authority is won and lost with such frequency that it becomes nearly irrelevant.

But online interaction is anything but a utopia of democratic communication. Feminist critics have pointed out how cyberspace is gendered to reproduce boring phallocratic limits on expression. Many have noted that the ideal of unfettered democracy touted by so many champions of the Internet contains its own ideological dead-weight. Like the democracy of the ancient Greeks, today's digital democracy is reserved for an elite with the means to enjoy it. So it is with race. Existing racial discourses find their way into cyberspace, not simply as content, but also as part of the shaping structure of the place. As with any other arena where identities are produced and exchanged, this aspect of cyberspace rests on the question of representation.

It's necessary to examine how variant communities are constructed online, as well as the access that different communities have to communication technology. In the United States, for instance, there is a growing movement among African Americans to resist being excluded by those corporations getting ready to wire the suburbs for the forthcoming ideology—a.k.a. information—superhighway. While this is primarily a consumer issue that only grazes deeper questions of engagement with the apparatus, there comes

Photo collage by Julie Jenkinson includes image from Keith Piper's video installation "Surveillance's (Tagging the Other)."

**As an initial flag, I place the word "race" in quotation marks to acknowledge the work that Henry Louis Gates, Tzvetan Todorov and others have done to explore how race is a constructed discourse, not a biological or even a social fact. However, I do not believe that quotation marks resolve the question—what do we do with all of language's other slippery concepts?—so from now on, I will leave race to fend for itself.*

***My focus will be on the domain of online communication—bulletin boards systems, commercial online services and the Internet, i.e., the aspect of cyberspace that exists as a public sphere.*

with this mobilization a push for greater technological literacy among blacks and other disenfranchised people.

In personal terms, we need to explore what it means to construct identity without the aid of racial and cultural markers like physical appearance, accent, and so on. Here, I will be dealing exclusively with those forms of electronic communication that depend on text instead of any figurative representation of the physical body—i.e., Internet newsgroups, online forums, e-mail, and text-based environments such as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). On the surface it would seem that these are literary domains similar to an exchange of correspondence or the letters page of a newspaper. One presents oneself in language as is done in all forms of writing, which requires all the acts of identity construction, selective editing and lying committed by anybody who has ever written anything. But online communication adds something more—speed and uncertainty. MUDs operate in close-to-real time, providing an instantaneity that remains disembodied like writing, but is nonetheless immediate like the telephone. And the literary contract between writer and readers becomes blurred. In the world of Internet newsgroups, mailing lists and electronic bulletin board systems (BBSs), writers post messages simultaneously to individuals and to groups sharing a similar interest. The question of address becomes more complex. Also, the way in which these messages are retrieved and read gives the reader a power akin to the hiphop sampler's authority over source music—it's a consumer's market. All of this uproots the online writer's sense of his or her centred self. If identity is created solely through text and the text is as fluid as this, things fall apart in interesting ways.

My entry points for exploring the special glow of virtual skin are, first, the perspective of an online browser who has been involved in local BBSs, such as the Matrix and Magic in Toronto, the CompuServe commercial networks, as well as the less-regulated Internet; and second, a continuing interest in the formation of new communities. Like all good postmodern citizens, I've learned to move with shifts in imagined communities, to ride the knowledge that, as Alluquere Rosanne Stone notes in her article, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures," "technology and culture constitute each other." I may not swim, but I've learned to surf.

My first experience of virtual community came in Rock Dundo, Barbados, 1969*, when I first jacked in to a smooth, plastic, khaki-coloured View MasterÖ. My mother, thousands of kilometres away in Canada, sent me both the machine and its software—disks that brought to life before my eyes images I had never seen before: Niagara Falls and Flowerpot Island and Toronto City Hall in stereoscopic vision. It would be two decades before I tried on a helmet, but I knew the thrill of virtual reality right then. I was transported. Every time I returned to that machine I left the postcolonial sunshine behind for the marvels of Canada. Immersed in the depth, resolution and brightness of those images I became a part of Canada, sharing an experience with every tourist who had paused to get a good look at new City Hall, who had marveled at the Falls. More importantly, by entering these images, I could share the desire for the spectacle of Canada with my mother, who had recently immigrated there.

Now, producing these words on a newer piece of fetish hardware—a matte-black IBM ThinkPad™—I can extend into corners of cyberspace, remaking myself by will and accident, reading and misreading others. It's exhilarating at first, but it's not new. As Stuart Hall and others have pointed out, migration is a central part of the postcolonial experience, and it necessarily involves shifting identity. It's the nature of Asian and African new-worlders to pass through different allegiances, belief systems and accents—for me it was Wembley, Rock Dundo and now suburban-Toronto—as a common part of life. At the same time, one develops a hyper-awareness of the relationship between physicality and identity. Like women, like lesbians and gays, people of colour[7] living in Western metropoles live a crucial part of their existence as body-people, as subjects named and identified through their flesh. One need only hear "Monkey!" or "Water-buffalo!" screamed at you on the street every once in a while to be reminded of that.

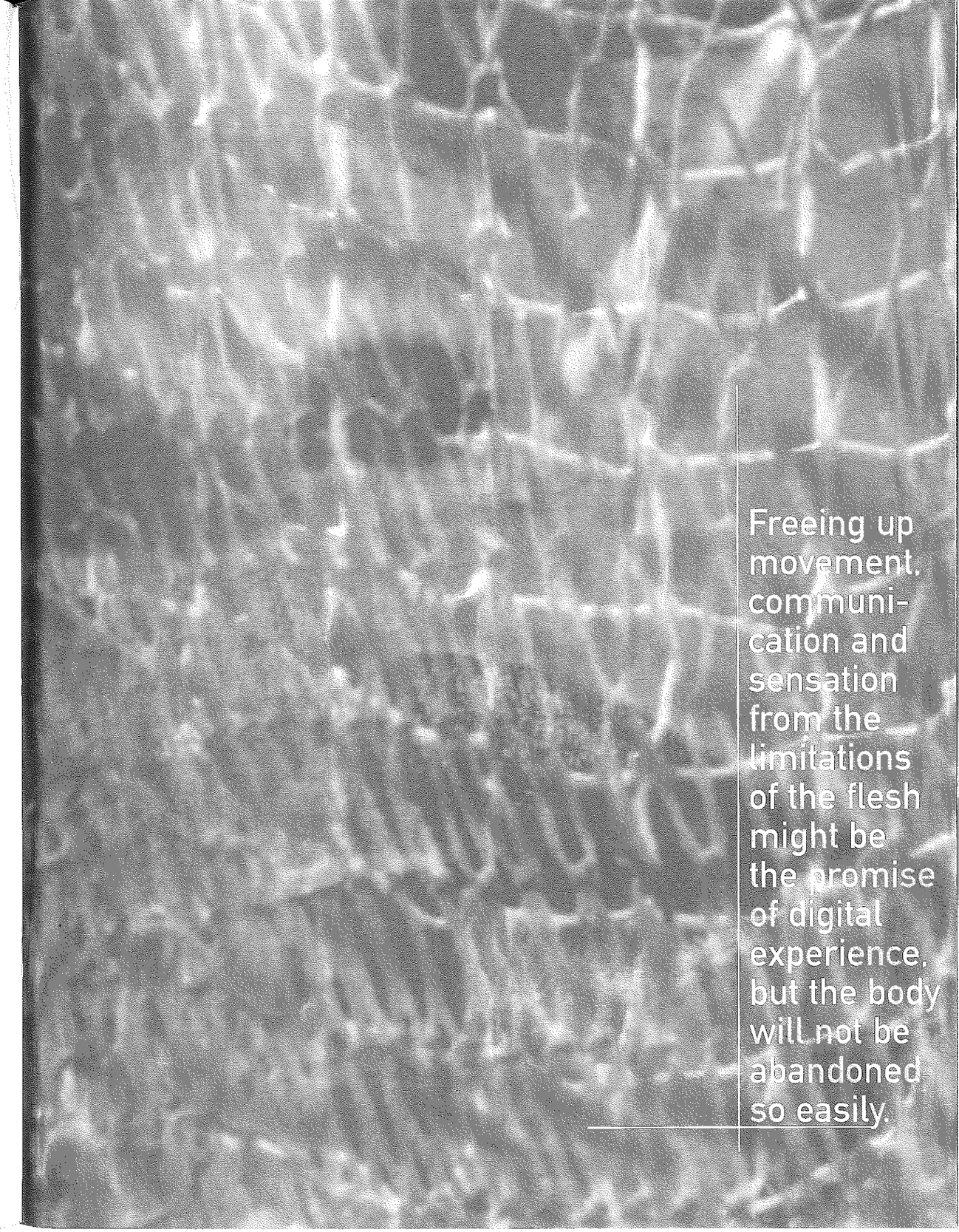
The cybersubject as currently figured is male, white, straight, able-bodied and ruling class. So what? Any identity that occupies the shadow-half of these categories (i.e., female, black, queer...) remains lashed to his or her body. Libraries of feminist thought tell us that a woman's identity has historically been defined and maintained through the body. The same holds true for Africans in the West, Aboriginal people, and so on. Biology is destiny. Physiology is law. Subjecthood lies over the horizon. This becomes especially interesting in a domain which privileges giving up the body so eagerly. That process is neither universally simple nor universally desirable.

It's important to distinguish here between the cybersubject, as a figure produced by current thought about cyberspace, and the actual people who enter cyberspace every day. In the same way that film theory distinguishes between the cinematic spectator as a function of the cinematic text and "real-world" viewers of movies, we must note that the cybersubject defined above is produced by still-limited notions of the experience of cyberspace, and has a relationship to, but is in no way co-extensive with, the millions who communicate online or enter virtual reality. Cyberspace is built for that unified subject, but inhabited by a happily chaotic range of subjectivities.

Freeing up movement, communication and sensation from the limitations of the flesh might be the promise of digital experience, but the body will not be abandoned so easily. We have said that the quality of imagination is what allows all manner of disembodied experience, from being "immersed" in narrative to the spatial metaphors of cyberspace.

*Coincidentally, this same year saw the start-up of CompuServe as the computer network of the H&R Block tax preparation company. In fact, the period from the late 60s through the late 70s, with the beginnings of the Internet and the development of the first computer bulletin boards, coincides with the final melting of First World national-ethnic borders, as more and more immigrants arrived in western metropoles from Asia, the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America.

**I will use "people of colour" to refer to all those who identify themselves as being, in whole or part, of African or Asian descent. Though my focus will be on African American and African Canadian experience online, I want to include Asian and Aboriginal activity as important and necessary comparisons. The histories of Africans, Asians and Aboriginal people online are as different as they are off, but, as in the real world, the experience of creating identities out of marginalization lends a common character to the process.



Shareware

"Umntu ngumntu ngabantu"—
"a human being is a person through (other) people."
Bantu proverb.

So what is the nature of the online community? First, the economics of online communication require that participants have access to a computer, a modem and a telephone line. Cancel tens of millions of North Americans. Until recently, Internet access required membership in an elite institution—a university, government department or major corporation. Millions more gone, but not evenly across the board. In the United States, African Americans and Hispanics are overrepresented among those without Net access, as are Aboriginal people in Canada. Owning the means of participation is a class issue, and another example of how class is racialized in North America. In writing about poverty and information, Karen G. Schneider argues that "the information-rich, however well-meaning, have largely determined and prioritized the issues of the information revolution according to their own visions and realities." What happens when the class of the information-rich is also racialized, when it continues to be predominantly white?

Beyond economics, there is a somewhat harder to quantify culture of cyberspace. The Net nation deploys shared knowledge and language to unite against outsiders: Net jargon extends beyond technical language to acronyms both benign (BTW, "By the way") and snippy (RTFM, "Read the fucking manual"). It includes neologisms, text-graphical hybrids called emoticons, and a thoroughgoing anti-"newbie" snobbery. Like any other community, it uses language to erect barriers to membership. It's worth noting that Benedict Anderson suggests print culture is crucial to the formation of nations. The Internet is nothing if not a riot of publishing, often about itself. Popular guides such as Brendan Kehoe's *Zen and the Art of the Internet*, as well as the countless lists of "Frequently Asked Questions," serve to provide a body of common knowledge and therefore enforce order on the Net. There is in these codes of language, and in the very concept of "netiquette", something of the culture of suburban America; one gets the sense that these structures are in place not simply to order cyberspace, but to keep chaos (the urban sphere) out. It's no stretch to suggest that in the turn to cyberspace, the white middle-class men who first populated it sought refuge from the hostile forces in physical, urban space—crime, poor people, desperate neighborhoods, and the black and brown.

So the suburban ideal of postwar North America returns in virtual form: communication at a safe distance, community without contact. Is it any wonder that when movies visualize the Net's matrix of communication, it so often resembles the cool, aerial patterns of a suburb at night?

One, often overlooked, dimension of Net culture is the ludic aggression of adolescent masculinity. We have seen how cyberspace is gendered as masculine, but the community of hackers, late night Net surfers, BBS sysops and virus writers has often included large numbers of teenagers. Particularly since the era when popular culture first came to be identified with teen culture, adolescence, especially male adolescence, has been accorded profound importance and created a profound disturbance in Western society—just look at all the mechanisms in place to control it. In acts both constructive and transgressive, adolescent boys have used cyberspace to express the flux, despair, anger, restlessness and pain of coming to adulthood. In doing so, they have shaped the character of online community to reflect hostility to authority, secrecy and game structures. The sense of combative play engendered by this group extends the range and focus of the imaginative act that entry into cyberspace requires. Alluquere Rosanne Stone points out that

> **Many of the engineers currently debating the form and nature of cyberspace are the young turks of computer engineering, men in their late teens and twenties, and they are preoccupied with the things with which postpubescent men have always been preoccupied. This rather steamy group will generate the codes and descriptors by which bodies in cyberspace are represented.**

What's interesting here in terms of racial discourse is the relationship established between young white men and the sizable numbers of Asian American and Asian Canadian teenage boys who have also contributed to the development of Net culture. The closest parallel is with indie rock and 'zine culture, which is also populated by a predominantly, but neither exclusively nor aggressively white teen tribe. In both cases, Asian youth participate according to the terms of the subculture, which demand a cultural "neutrality." Black youth, with their own clearly defined and visible youth culture, must engage in a more complex negotiation.

The online nation has constructed itself as a community that is not by stated principles racist, but, because of the way nations are always constructed, has built affinities (and by definition, exclusions), that have the effect of shunting aside certain voices, languages and vernaculars. However, this historical condition is now in tremendous flux as the online world grows to become a collection of communities. *Time* magazine has shrieked that "now that the population of the Net is larger than that of most countries in the world... the Internet is becoming Balkanized." I prefer to see the change as more in keeping with the established, decentralizing spirit of the Net. Now at a transitional stage before commerce steps in, cyberspace is open to the free play of subcultures.

Some examples:

~Soc.culture.african.american is one of the busiest of Usenet newsgroups, accumulating hundreds of posts every few hours.
~Dozens of other newsgroups are devoted to a variety of self-defined cultural communities. The speed, anonymity and diffusion of newsgroup debate mean that subjects usually confined to safe, private conversation among friends or family are given semi-public airing on Usenet. Genocide theories and interracial dating are perennials in soc.culture.african.american: everything from assimilation to eating dogs comes up in soc.culture.asian.american.
~In addition to this kind of debate, Aboriginal activists use alt.native and soc.culture.native to get the word out on local struggles and call for support from the online community.
~African American cyberspace activist Art McGee compiles and distributes regular surveys of mailing lists, newsgroups and BBSs of interest to African Americans. The catalogue of mailing lists numbers more than 60, including lists devoted to the Association of Black Sociologists, Cameroonian students studying in London, and departed jazz guru Sun Ra. McGee's signature line is: "The revolution will not be televised, but the proceedings will be available online."
~The creation of NativeNet, a North America-wide online network, organized in part by Aboriginal artists working through the Banff Centre For the Arts.
~The dozens of black-specific electronic bulletin boards in North America, including Black Board International in Toronto, Imhotep in Brooklyn, New York, Pan-Africa Online in Pasadena, California and Girlfriend! in Arlington, Virginia. Many of these BBSs are linked through a U.S. network called Afronet.* Afronet has recently been joined by Melanet in linking people of African descent in cyberspace.
~The Russell County BBS in Hobson, Montana, designed as a meeting place and Native art gallery. Russell County is one of a small number of bulletin boards using NAPLPS (North American Presentation Level Protocol Syntax) to compress and distribute Native visual art and children's animation.
~The sale and exchange of digitized porn images caters increasingly to racial fetishes, with white and Asian women carrying the highest currency. The narratives of interracial desire remain popular on porn BBSs; even on African American porn BBSs such as Ebony Shack, images of black male-white female scenarios sometimes outnumber all other configurations.
~As Aboriginal people and people of colour organize online, so do far-right organizations. According to Reuters and U.S. News and World Report, neo-Nazi hate literature has been discovered by browsers on bulletin board systems in Germany, Sweden, France and the Netherlands.

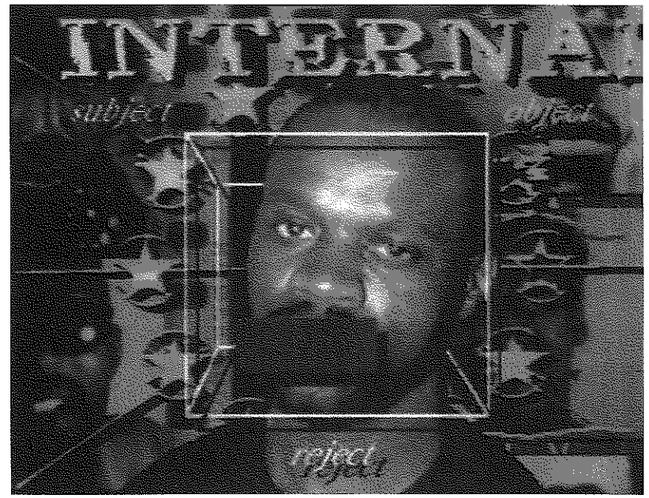
Usenet culture in particular encourages subcultures; with its devotion to trading arcane knowledge and to the same celebration of spontaneous opinion that one finds all over North American talk radio, this medium is tailor-made for generating communities within communities.

Digitalia

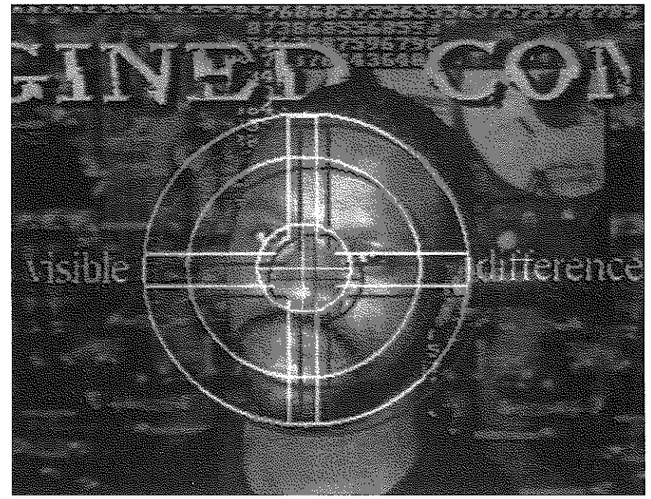
"I occupied space. I moved toward the other... and the evanescent other, hostile, but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea."
—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

The discourse of race is, by history and by design, rooted in the body. Cybersubjectivity promises the fantasy of disembodied communication, but it remains firmly connected to bodies through the imaginative act required to project into cyberspace. What cybersubjectivity actually offers is re-embodied communication. So how should I re-embody myself amidst the Net's possibilities for self-presentation? Where should I look for my digitalia, that odd conflux

Keith Piper. Frame grabs from "Surveillance's (Tagging the Other)." Video installation commissioned by Impressions Gallery for "Photovideo," York, England, 1991.



[KEITH



PIPER]

**According to Art McGee, "Afronet is an echomail backbone supported by African and African American BBS sysops across North America. The goal is to distribute notice of conferences with African and African American themes throughout North America. It was originally conceived by Ken Onwere."*

of intimacy (genitalia), foreignness (marginalia) and wires? Should I announce myself racially, give myself a secure racial identity? As an experiment, I conducted a poll in CompuServe's African American forum, asking how participants situated themselves online:

> More often than not I do not identify myself when I interact with people except in forums such as this one. Why should I, really? I have had more negative experiences with people being overtly racist in cyberspace than I have in FTF (face to face) life. I find it intriguing to experience what people will tell me when they think I am White. —Deborah Carter

> In the other CompuServe forums and Usenet newsgroups which I frequent, I encounter a lot more racist (and sexist, and homophobic, and anti-Semitic, and otherwise bigoted) messages than in "real life." I think the anonymity of on-line communications is very enticing to bigoted fools. —Peter Jebsen

> Here's a thought: Do you think bigoted people are attracted to cyberspace, or are "normal" people encouraged to show their hidden bigoted sides? — Michelle Pessoa

> I have heard people making derogatory comments about Mexican Americans, Asians, Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals, etc...and although I am not a member of those groups, I feel it is essential that I confront intolerance, period. So I suppose letting people know who I am is not as important to me as letting people know what I will not put up with. —Deborah Carter

What was most interesting about the response was how quickly the thread moved away from the question of how one identifies oneself to a more manageable debate about racism. From what I've been able to glean in this and other online conversations (my survey was limited in sample), many African Americans are unwilling to probe too deeply into what part racial identity plays in their conception of themselves, what part of them stays black when they present no "evidence" of blackness. Race is either "taken for granted" or deliberately left unspoken. In a GEnie conference on African American access to information technology, a quiet consensus emerged on the value of racial anonymity online:

> One nice thing about online communication is that everyone is equal; no one knows how old a participant is, or what color, or what gender, or what religion—which frees our minds a bit to listen to more diverse opinions.

Another participant commented:

> When you type away, no one online need know your skin color. Accents don't matter as much. High-tech is a wonderful way to fight snobbery!

Given that cyberspace is a racialized domain, this sort of virtual transvestism is by no means neutral. In an another era it used to be called passing.

There is another option. Taking a cue from the adolescent boys who determine so much of cyberculture, I could play. I could try to extend my engagement with cyberspace beyond the ludic economies of North American teenagers to include trickster traditions, signifying, and elements of spirituality that lie outside Western rationalism. That way subjectivity need not be a fixed racial assertion nor a calculated transvestism; it could be more fluid, more strategic. William Gibson was the first to write about various cosmological approaches to cyberspace, contrasting his protagonist Case with the Rastafarian-derived "Zionites" in *Neuromancer*, and making extensive uses of vodun in *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. While this offers enormous possibilities, there is a danger, at least in fiction, of surrendering to the same sort of essentialism that defines people of colour in exoticizing, body-oriented terms. Michael Heim, for instance, in lamenting cyberspace's retreat from the physical body, offers Gibson's Zionites as a symbol of salvation:

> Gibson leaves us the image of a human group who *instinctively* keeps its distance from the computer matrix. These are the Zionites, the religiously *tribal folk* who prefer music to computers and intuitive loyalties to calculation.... As we suit up for the exciting future in cyberspace, we must not lose touch with the Zionites, the *body people* who remain *rooted in the energies of the earth.* (italics mine.)

In the novel, the Zionites are rooted in both technology and spirituality. But taken by Heim as a symbol, they get reduced to "body people."

I prefer to go all the way back to that View Master™, holding it up to the bright Barbados sun so I could see Canada better. Maybe this is an answer: the ecstasy of projected community and irresolvable difference, both claimed at the very same moment.

This article is excerpted from a longer version published in Immersed in Technology: Art Culture and Virtual Environments *(published by the Walter Phillips Gallery and MIT Press).*

The research and writing of this article were assisted by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council's Arts Writing Program.

Further Reading

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983.

Benedikt, Michael, ed. *Cyberspace: First Steps.* Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1991.

Bhabha, Homi. "Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative." *Anatomy of Racism.* Ed. David Theo Goldberg. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 183-209.

Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Descartes, René. *Philosophical Writings: A Selection.* Trans. and eds. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach. London: Open University, 1970.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer.* New York: Ace Books, 1984.

Green, Noah. "The Sixth Borough: A Bulletin Board Grows in Brooklyn." *Village Voice* July 12, 1994. 38-39.

Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." In *Black Film, British Cinema.* ICA Documents 7. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988. 27-30.

Hayward, Philip and Tana Wollen, eds. *Future Visions: New Technologies of the Screen.* London: BFI Publishing, 1993.

Kehoe, Brendan P. *Zen and the Art of the Internet: A Beginner's Guide to the Internet.* Internet: 1992

Maw, Joan and John Picton, eds. *Concepts of the Body/Self in Africa.* Wien: Afro-Pub, 1992.

Mercer, Kobena, and Isaac Julien. "De Margin and De Centre." *Screen* 29.4 (Autumn 1988).

Murrell, William, host. "Information Highway Discussion on African American Issues." GEnie. June 13, 1993, 10:00p.m.

Schneider, Karen G. "Poverty and Information." Usenet post: kgs@panix.com.

OH TELEVISION. OH CANADA.

Does either really matter anymore? There seems to be a sense these days that both TV and nation have nothing left to communicate—that each contains repetitive gestures that we've seen too many times before. Forget that old "effects" model of communications which holds that TV can somehow powerfully persuade us all to adopt specific attitudes, behaviours and moral values. When nothing really flows through the glass tit anymore except for "Friends" and its ilk, does this matter? And forget the once-grand idea of using television for the purposes of nation-building. At a time when the Canadian state is actively involved in the wholesale embrace of a global market, and the CBC has been cut back not just to the bone, but now to the marrow, such nationalist concerns are treated only as minor irritations. And yet, such disparaging words about pedestrian objects fail to account for the complexity both of TV and nation as forces for the reworking of social and cultural life. We still long for their stories, however untrue, meanspirited and overwhelmingly driven by profit they may be. And in these days of radically shifting parameters—of technology, of capital, of social value—we need to be attentive to the ways in which these new reconfigurations may allow or disallow certain tales to be told. Today, programming has left the hands of the transmitters (the state, the networks), and is now found in the transmission devices of computer modem, VCR and remote control; it also resides in a populist individualism. We may all now zip and zap and time-shift through a structured agenda at will. Does this allow for new freedoms? Or only ensure that more frightening tyrannies prevail?

BETH SEATON

Moses Supposes

BY Charles R. Acland

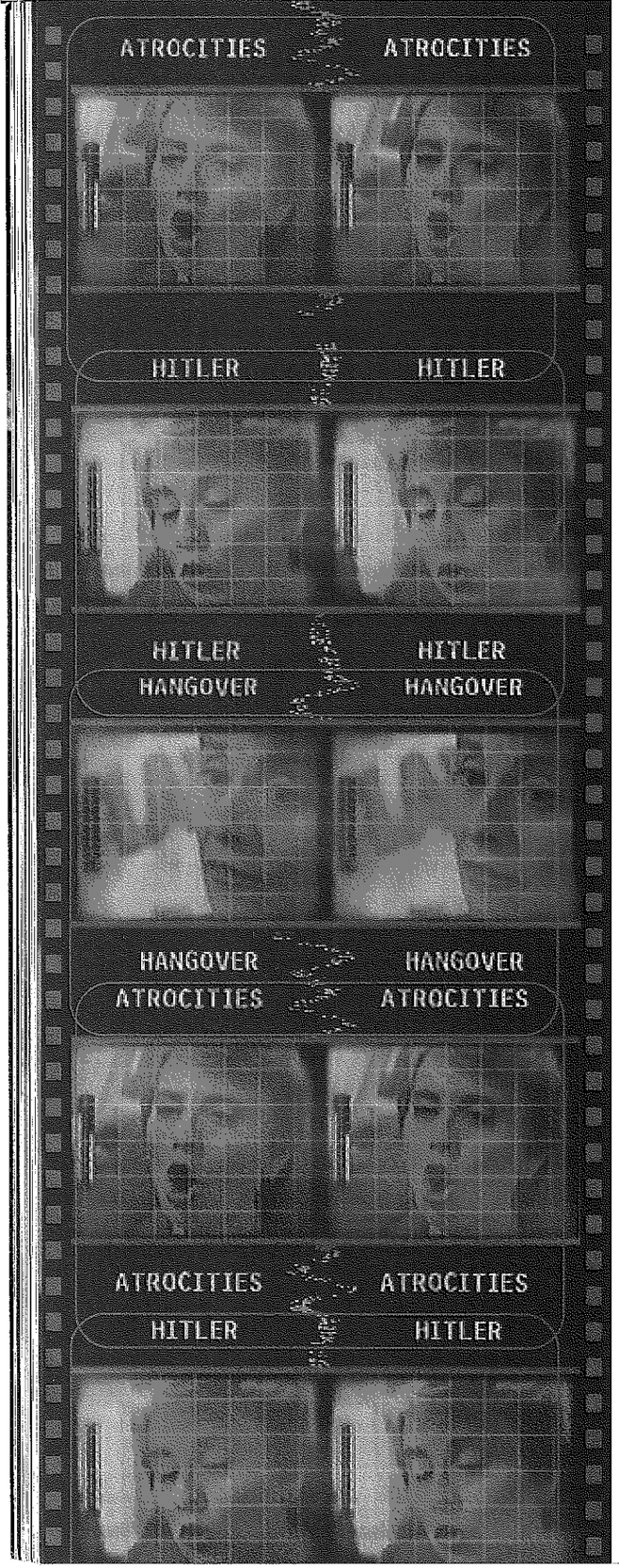
Everything you never wanted to know about television

"It's time. It's time to start the body count for one of the great battles of the second half of the twentieth century, the battle between the image and the printed word." With this introductory statement, Moses Znaimer begins his polemic, hyperbolically titled "The TVTV Revolution." According to Znaimer, the image has won and those pundits of print—meaning writers, journalists and academics alike—are creative anachronisms at best and "constant carpers noted mostly for their meanspiritedness" at worst. From the evidence of the programme itself, and the image it presents of commercial television's world domination, it is hard to disagree; the show is an intricate and self-indulgent exercise in image-making. This includes the making of Znaimer's own image, perhaps to such an extreme that it eclipses all other issues.

Znaimer's three-hour opus on the new world of television opens on our vaguely nefarious host, a swirling camera offering uncomfortably intimate close-ups of him in an underlit set. The film noirish effect and his general demeanour, complete with the standard urban-chic uniform, suggest that Znaimer is still in character from his bit part as a hood in Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*. After various changes of persona and costume, ranging from a baseball player to General Patton, Znaimer appears in a trenchcoat against a brick wall backdrop, to hold his "blasphemous" ten commandments of television to the camera—written on scrolled parchment, no less. I doubt that many actually take this character of dealer–prophet as a sign of street credibility; the wardrobe is obviously that of a media huckster, a successful entrepreneur and participant in Canada's

"The TVTV Revolution"

CBC, April 9, 1995
Executive producers:
Moses Znaimer and Jay Switzer
Producer and director: Jim Hanley
Writers:
Richard Nielsen
and Moses Znaimer
Narrator: Moses Znaimer



"Paglia provides a stream of consciousness monologue, without any pretence to consistency, let alone intelligibility..."

media elite who, typical of many so-called "players," enjoy adopting the identity of the outsider. From the opening moments of "The TVTV Revolution," we are in the realm of an image whose truth-value is slippery at best, and whose aim is not to reveal but to construct an impression. One of "The TVTV Revolution's" key assertions is that images can't lie, which, of course, the show successfully proves is a lie.

Beyond the extravagances of this mega-broadcast, the programme is symptomatic not of the state of the medium, but of the way television is talked about by those who profit from it. While Znaimer plays himself as an eccentric rebel of the media biz, he is far from the vanguard; not once does he present a portrait of himself as the media player that he is. Instead, Znaimer wants us to take him seriously as a disinterested philosopher of television's future. "The TVTV Revolution" becomes a symposium of sorts, with Znaimer stringing together propositions about our "new" image-based culture and those who work with it.
Unfortunately, his ideas are comprised mostly of misinterpretations of Marshall McLuhan, whose ghost hovers over every word that comes from Znaimer's mouth. If anything the show demonstrates how stale and familiar these thirty-year old ideas about new technology and the global village have become. Far from revolutionary, McLuhan's legacy lives on primarily in venues friendly to the myth of the "rebellious" *Wired* organization man. Far from being the manifesto of a revolutionary cell, the ten maxims about television--"I use them in my work," says Znaimer--are at home with the policy elite of this country. After all, we only have to watch Znaimer's Bravo!, MusiquePlus, Muchmusic, Toronto's CityTV and now Alberta's Access TV to conclude that this is not the trackrecord of someone the CRTC is out to exclude.

What Znaimer's ten commandments amount to is not a radical vision of the democratic paradise of television; instead, they reveal a fragment of what is an authorized language promoted by policy elites and cultural entrepreneurs alike. In certain circles, most of these claims are received wisdom. If there is a dominant theme running through the list, it is an attack on public culture that reduces the concept of public ownership and service to a simple case of elitism. This is implied in the aesthetic suggestions of maxims 1 and 2, in the technological essentialism of maxims 3, 7 and 8, and in the accusations of governments' ideological control in maxims 9 and 10. But it is maxim 6 that most completely captures the link between the aesthetics of the medium, the "true nature" of the technology, and the politics of culture: "In the past, television's chief operating skill was political. In the future, it will have to be mastery of the craft itself." By implication, Znaimer would have us believe that, in the hands of cultural entrepreneurs, those who have "mastered the craft," the political dimension of culture and policy disappears. In this view, public culture is always politically and ideologically tainted, and the forces of the market are unbiased and pure.

While studiously avoiding commentary from those contemporary cul-

1

TELEVISION IS THE TRIUMPH OF THE IMAGE OVER THE PRINTED WORD.

2

THE TRUE NATURE OF TELEVISION IS FLOW, NOT SHOW; PROCESS, NOT CONCLUSION.

3

AS GLOBAL TELEVISION EXPANDS THE DEMAND FOR LOCAL PROGRAMMING INCREASES.

4

THE BEST TV TELLS ME WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, TODAY.

5

TV IS AS MUCH ABOUT THE PEOPLE BRINGING YOU THE STORY AS THE STORY ITSELF.

6

IN THE PAST, TV'S CHIEF OPERATING SKILL WAS POLITICAL. IN THE FUTURE IT WILL HAVE TO BE MASTERY OF THE CRAFT ITSELF.

7

PRINT CREATED ILLITERACY. TV IS DEMOCRATIC. EVERYBODY GETS IT.

8

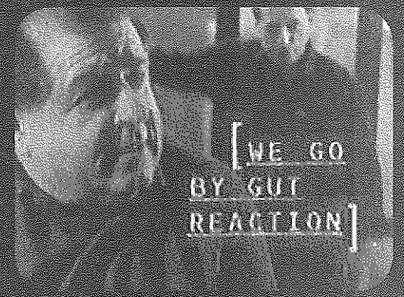
TV CREATES IMMEDIATE CONSENSUS, SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE CHANGE.

9

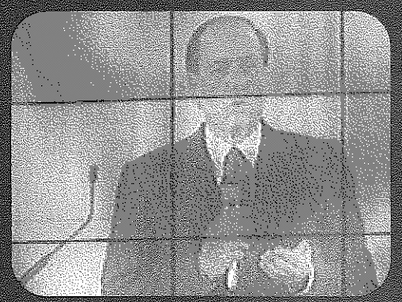
THERE NEVER WAS A MASS AUDIENCE, EXCEPT BY COMPULSION.

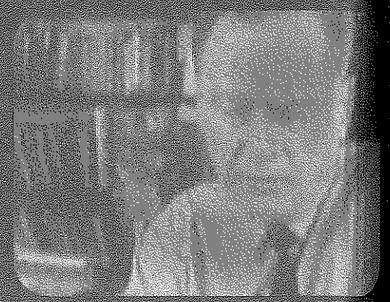
10

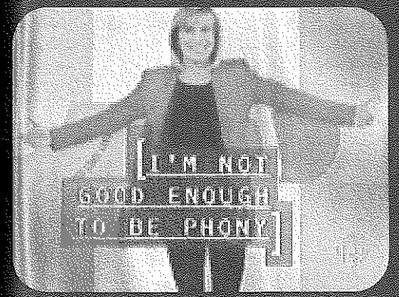
TELEVISION IS NOT A PROBLEM TO BE MANAGED; BUT AN INSTRUMENT TO BE PLAYED.

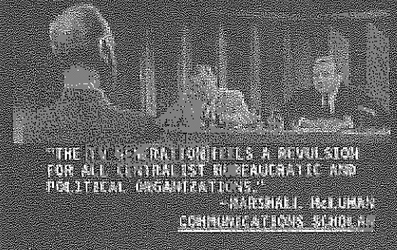


"The TVTV Revolution" committed one of Znaimer's cardinal sins: it was boring.









One of "The TVTV Revolution's" key assertions is that images can't lie, which... is a lie.

tural and communications theorists who work to develop and challenge ways of understanding media. "The TVTV Revolution" concentrates on the opinions of producers, politicians, and executives of media corporations. Interviewees include such diverse media "experts" as Henry Kissinger, Oliver Stone, Camille Paglia and Ronald G. Keast, formerly of Vision TV and currently a partner with Znaimer in the newly privatized Access TV. David Peterson talks about how environmentalists became media terrorists and led to his government's collapse. Michael Jay Solomon, in charge of international sales at Warner Bros., relates how small markets need cheap U.S. programming because of their insufficient indigenous talent pool. Other clips include McLuhan, talkshow host Jenny Jones, and her producer David E. Salzman, Sylvio Berlusconi, U.S. producers Sonny Grosso and Larry Jacobson, and British producer Richard Price.

In his selection of interviewees, Znaimer only finds like-minded company. Camille Paglia provides a stream of consciousness monologue, without any pretence of consistency, let alone intelligibility, about the new "pagan sources of the sensual torrent" (and me without my umbrella!). Oliver Stone contributes a kooky commentary about the "scums and parasites" of the media establishment out to beat him down. Nonsense like "out of the word, into the screenplay"—as though screenplays are not written works—comes from Stone, the inside of the inside insisting that he is "oppressed" by bad reviews. If *JFK* and *The Doors* really are misunderstood examples of what Stone calls "the wash of Dionysian politics," then, as Kevin Costner would say, "We're through the looking glass, folks." Stone's insistence that "you can't lie with a movie like you can lie with a word" is so meaningless that the inverse appears on screen under a close-up of Stone as "you can't lie with a word like you can lie with a movie." Suddenly, an unintentional howler allows a bit of critique to squeak through.

It would have been nice if Znaimer had taken his position as a media guru seriously and presented some well-researched ideas rather than bad armchair philosophy. The astounding level of mis-information represented in "The TVTV Revolution," about political campaigns, about communications theory, about television history, left me longing for an old-style, grumpy leftie like Norm Chomsky to chronicle the mistakes and errors.

Instead, Znaimer begins discussions with awful generalizations worthy of bad high school essay writing, for instance, "entertainment through history can be reduced to one essential element—story." Oh? By whom? To the exclusion of what? Or, "entertainment, to paraphrase Marshall McLuhan and Northrope Frye, does not take us out of ourselves but into ourselves." Well, which is it, McLuhan or Frye? And what did each say on the topic? In fact, many assertions in "The TVTV Revolution" remind me of comedian Mike Myers's classic parody of essay topics, "The Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire. Discuss."

Znaimer's contention that television has taken us from the print-centred world of the ear to the image centred world of the eye is a straightforward inversion of McLuhan. Theories regarding communication and social transformation posit that print is the visualization of language; television, on the contrary, is an aural medium, one whose role is to introduce what Walter Ong called a "second orality" and to place the ear back at the sensory centre of contemporary human society. The many, many critiques of these claims, in particular their functionalism and essentialism, get no play in Znaimer's argument. Instead, a quick, unthoughtful, and inaccurate claim is all we receive.

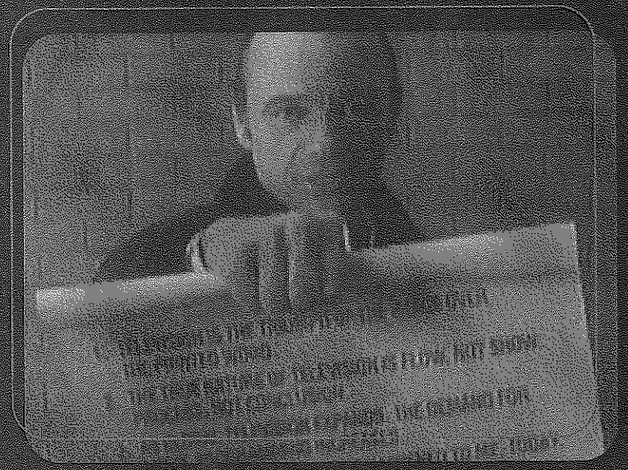
But what is going on here? Why this feigned interest in media theory? Certainly, there is a degree of authority afforded to those who step into the futurist's shoes; indeed, we tend to pay inordinate attention to anyone who claims to have a handle on near or distant tomorrows. But this reveals more about our sense of place in a narrative of progress than about the figures who occupy our attention.

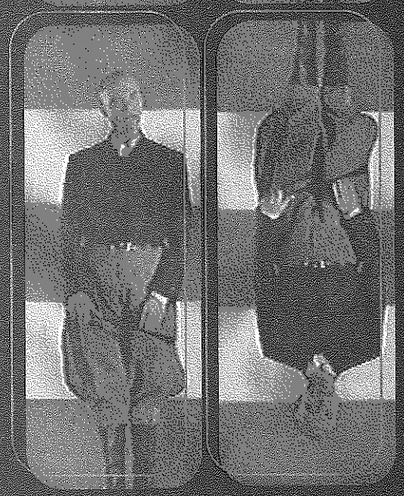
On a different tack, in order to understand fully the show and its context, one has to agree that Znaimer has been able to tap into a popular sensibility about Canadian cultural policy. Historically, cultural policy has engaged in a denigration of popular pleasure and thus created a gulf between a perceived "official" culture and people's everyday cultural consumption. It is acknowledged in this country that there are few realms in which the work supported by Canadian policy and that consumed by Canadians are one and the same. Znaimer, then, is quite right to criticize a history of cultural policy that has been as exclusionary as the economic forces it was developed to combat.

It is in this context that CityTV and the two music video channels have been such exciting developments; they are decidedly about youthfulness, about popular taste, and against the musty airs of "quality" television. It is hard to dislike television that bravely breaks so many of the codes of critical distance, daring to improvise and daring to be sloppy. The jumpy, stammering, wandering hosts teeter between refreshing and irritating; the sweeping hand-held camera makes much of the programming appear like a cross between a cable-access community bulletin board and a mock-war documentary. In its best moments, the quick and dirty methods of these channels produce fascinating television. Further, MuchMusic and MusiquePlus have generated a real connection to their environments, making their Rue Ste. Catherine and Queen St. locations metonymic sites of a national youth culture. They are places which appear solidly in the minds of English Canadian and Quebecois youth, and provide an idea of a televisual community that in many ways the CBC can only dream of achieving.

Problems arise in Znaimer's argument when he assumes that any criticism of him and his "image centeredness" is elite culture's attack on "low" popular taste. In fact, he may have been more shocked than the rest of the Canadian arts community when the CRTC awarded his Bravo! the arts network license over the more "respectable" CBC application. Instead, he should ask himself why his attacks on the tyranny of elite culture in Canada have landed him the high arts channel. The inescapable conclusion: the policy establishment warmly embraces his approaches and ambitions.

For someone so devoted to kinetic, lively programming, "The TVTV Revolution" committed one of Znaimer's cardinal sins:

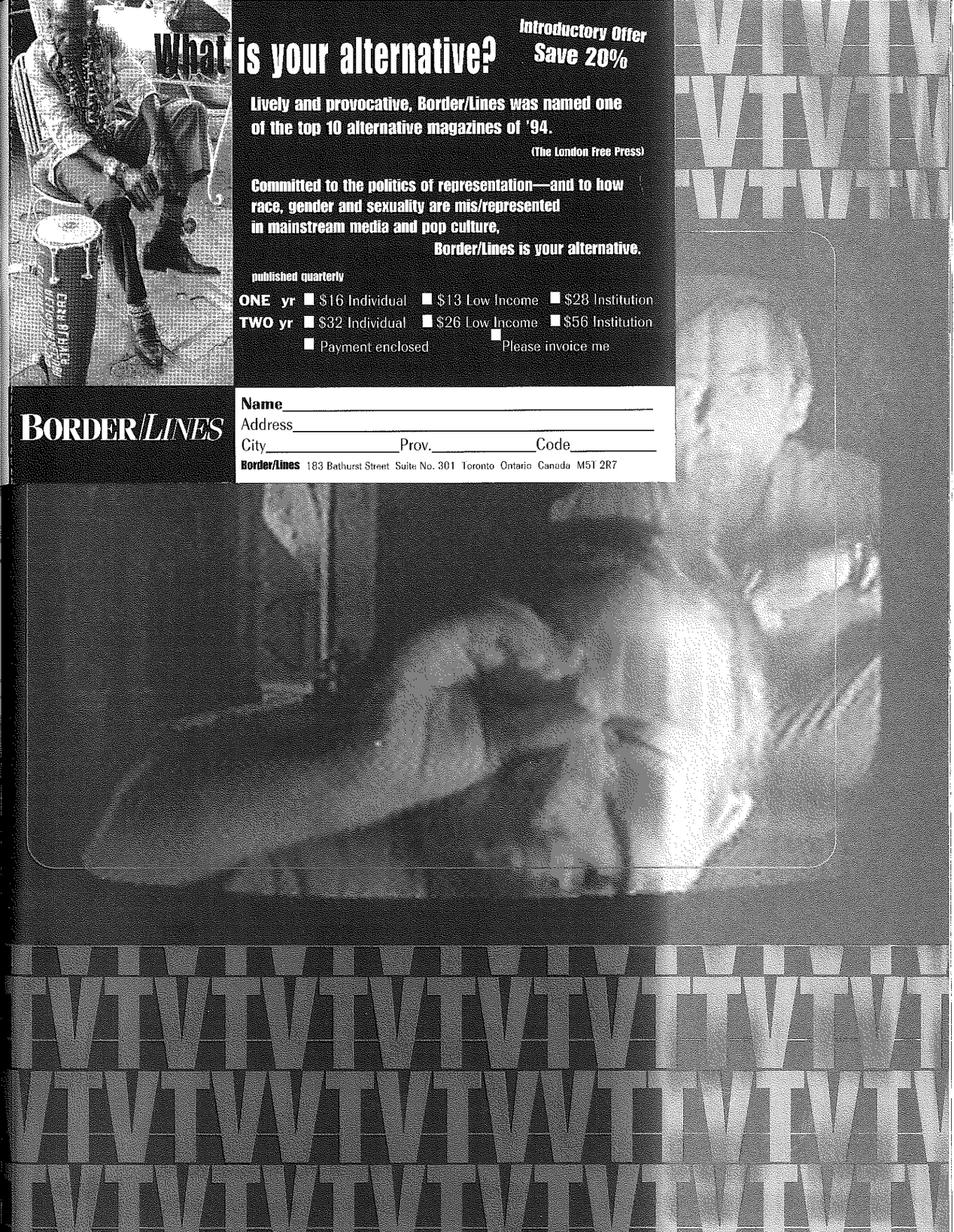


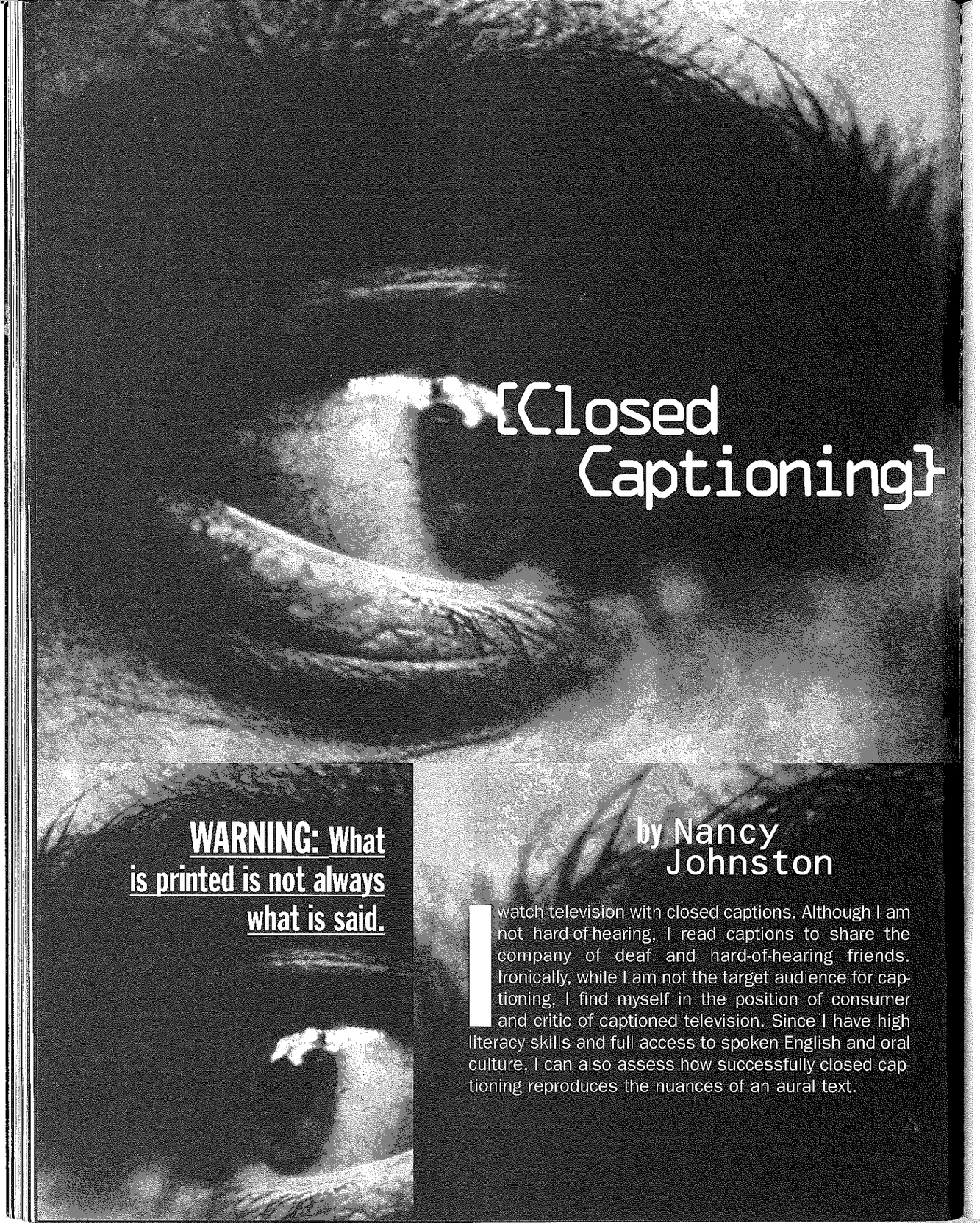


it was boring, ranking along with other CBC snooze-fests of which Znaimer is so critical. The show was less innovative in style than the average episode of the TVO hit (an oxymoron for Znaimer–horrors, a success in public broadcasting!) *Prisoners of Gravity*. Like so much of Znaimer's "image is all that counts" rhetoric, when "interactive tv" is wheeled out as the future for television production and democracy alike, this becomes nothing more than graphics of computer pull-down menus; in "The TVTV Revolution," choice is only the image of choice.

This programme does hit home with, or at least finds echoes in the discourse of, an important audience: cultural-policy makers and other industry participants and beneficiaries. Versions of this argument, certainly not of Znaimer's making, circulate, are taken as "truth," and form the basis of future directions for mass media in this country. Recently, we have seen a new agreement about the television industry, about convergence, about consumer choice, about the economics of production, and about international culture. In this context, the clothes of the cultural nationalist are put on the cultural entrepreneur, with little regard for Canadian culture, even when participating in a common cry for decreasing regulations and increasing the consolidation of media corporations. Currently, the alibi of technological convergence supports the ambitions of budding oligopolists for vertically integrated cultural empires. Entrepreneurs eye global markets, and are increasingly interested in distribution and less in "software." Consequently, cultural policy becomes a vehicle for the authorization of local technological infrastructural managers, instead of cultural production. In this vein, Znaimer, like other CEOs turned cultural critics, claims to have found the essence of a technology; he knows the true nature of the medium, how, as he puts it, "to play it like an instrument." Far from an innovator, he is an owner and manager of a slice of the media infrastructure for whom production is but an expense to be minimized as much as possible. "The TVTV Revolution" becomes nothing more than an appendix to a licence application, nothing more than Znaimer's filibuster.

In an image so cliched it barely deserves mention, the prophet Moses presents his ten commandments from up high. Through its participation, the faux-public broadcaster, CBC, presents an argument for its own status as a failed enterprise. No contradiction there, it's being increasingly forced into that position. Regardless of the clothes he wears, Znaimer is no media visionary; visionaries don't reproduce, let alone incorrectly, ideas from the 1960s about the future. It may be a sign of cultural exhaustion, of historical repetition, or simply a mirror to our gullibility. But, what should be a revolution for popular pleasures and for innovative television is only the same small cadre of investors vying for position in the new technological universe. What might have been a challenge to the structures of Canadian media is part of the process of consolidation and exclusivity.





[Closed Captioning]

WARNING: What is printed is not always what is said.

by Nancy Johnston

I watch television with closed captions. Although I am not hard-of-hearing, I read captions to share the company of deaf and hard-of-hearing friends. Ironically, while I am not the target audience for captioning, I find myself in the position of consumer and critic of captioned television. Since I have high literacy skills and full access to spoken English and oral culture, I can also assess how successfully closed captioning reproduces the nuances of an aural text.

Closed captioning transcribes the aural portion of a programme, whether a television broadcast or a video rental, into a line of printed text that can be decoded with a captioning decoder box, which resembles a cable converter. Captions appear as white characters and symbols against a black or grey bar at the bottom of the television screen. Ideally, closed captioning makes television accessible to all viewers by providing a near transcription of a television broadcast or a commercial film.

The problems inherent in closed captioning make it a political issue for many users. I was aware from my casual TV watching that captions sometimes distracted from the visuals (by covering the best bits of naked bodies), that they sometimes increased in pace to unreadable speeds, and that often captions missed significant off-screen sound effects such as song lyrics. However, I had not recognized this as an issue of cultural censorship and access until five years ago, when I sat down with a hard-of-hearing friend to watch the captioned TV premiere of the movie *Robocop*. At that time captioned TV movies were a rare enough phenomenon to warrant excitement.

The following scene from *Robocop* occurs in the street with a group of villainous gang members welcoming their compatriot Emil, recently released from jail. For some unexplained reason the captioned dialogue for the following scene was omitted altogether:

> ***"Hey Emil! How was the Crow Bar Motel?"***
> ***"Not bad, they let me keep the shirt. Nobody popped my cherry."***
> ***"Hey!"***
> ***"Emil, how are you doing, man?"***
> **[At this point, the men begin to wrestle over the possession of an immense gun.]**
> ***"Fuck!"***
> ***"Give it up, faggot!"***
> ***"Let a man handle it."***
> ***"No, butthole, get your own."***
> ***"I'll get you, faggot!"***

Until I pointed out the blank textual space and what the captions had missed, my hard-of-hearing friend did not register the absence. The scene was either too short or the faces too obscured by the night scene for lip reading. At the time, I wondered if a commercial captioner had censored the scenes arbitrarily, eliminating profanity and provocative dialogue throughout the movie, or if the expurgation was some consequence of the broadcaster's discretion. In any case, my friend was adamant that she had the right "to see the swearing." As a cable subscriber she wanted to make the choice to tune out or tune into a programme that might offend her. Her choices were already so limited that she resented any further censorship or limitations imposed by the television broadcaster.

Closed captioning is not free; nor is it a service guaranteed through Canadian affirmative action or equity rights legislation. Deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers pay to view captions by subscribing to a local cable service (or by erecting an exceptionally good antenna) and they must own or rent a closed caption decoder to descramble the signal. The price of commercial decoders has plunged recently in Ontario largely as a consequence of the importation of American televisions with captioning capacity. With the passage of the American Disability Act (1993), American manufacturers are now required to accommodate the needs of potential consumers by incorporating the technology into new televisions. By requiring that any manufactured or imported television sold in the U.S. measuring over thirteen inches be equipped internally with decoder circuitry, the U.S. law makes the conventional decoder box obsolete. If Canadians cannot afford these new televisions, a "free" decoder can be obtained, on loan for a deposit, directly from Ontario cable companies.

When closed captions flicker out in a cliffhanger episode or turn into incomprehensible garble across the bottom of the screen, as they do all too frequently, it is hard to believe that anyone in the broadcaster's studio is checking the quality of the service. Given that closed captioned television was not even available in Canada until the early 1980s, it is perhaps not surprising that it still remains poorly monitored. The Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) ensures access to captioning by allocating a cable band (line 21) for the exclusive display of closed captions. Recently, in response to lobbying by consumer groups, the CRTC has begun to require that broadcasters increase the overall percentages of captioned programmes. Previously, the CRTC did not monitor closely the use of captioning technology by Canadian companies or the on-screen quality of captioning in the television industry. A broadcaster could then claim that the six o'clock newscast would be "closed captioned for the hearing impaired" when only the news headlines (such as KILLER STORM or POLITICAL UPSET)—as little as 2% of the overall programme—were actually captioned. An active lobby by the Canadian Association of Captioning Consumers and other organizations for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, armed with comprehensive studies of broadcaster services and quality, has been urging the CRTC for years to strengthen industry standards. Acknowledging the problems in the television industry and the research of lobby groups, the CRTC under Commissioner Gail Scott announced this summer that broadcasters will have to meet a target of 90% captioning of their programming by 1998.

Forget TV guides and newspaper listings. TV channel-surfing is probably still the most accurate method for caption consumers to find closed captioned television programming. Of the estimated 31% of the overall daytime broadcast schedule captioned in Southwestern Ontario, only 51% of the actual captioned program-

ming schedule is accurately indicated in these guides. In the remaining programmes, the garbled, partial, or disappearing captions are very familiar to deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. I suspect that the regular disruption of captioning in rerun programmes, especially Star Trek, may be the result of the subtle speeding up of the taped programme to accommodate additional commercial time. Elsewhere, gaps in captioned dialogue, especially the final dramatic dialogues and off-screen comments, may be a consequence of last-minute editing after captioning has been coded. In any case, hearing TV viewers are not expected to tolerate a blank screen during the final scenes of "Northern Exposure" or an on-air apology that sound was unavailable for a broadcast of "Hockey Night in Canada."

Even renting a video is a gamble. If your tastes run to alternative films or anything produced outside of the major American studios, you may be out of luck. It goes without saying that what dialogue exists in a pornographic film won't be closed captioned. Even if Zippy Video has what you want and it carries the closed captioning logo, there is still a good chance that you have blown your three bucks on an uncaptioned video.

Closed captioning functions much like a translation, from one source language into a target language. It is often intended to circulate the contents of a given work and to make it available to wider audiences. It is much more than a simple mechanical process; it involves value judgments, accommodation to publishing standards and print technologies, and a certain amount of creativity. In the case of commercial captioning, captioners are restricted by practical considerations such as the literacy of their audience and the capacity for print absorption by the average reader. This is especially true for children's programming where the captioner must determine whether captions should be verbatim or condensed to conform to a child's understanding of linguistic complexity. Average adult literacy allows for a comfortable reading speed of 200–250 words per minute, but must account for a drop to 120–140 words per minute when a television screen is animated with background visuals. Unlike reading a book or newspaper, reading a captioned TV programme does not allow reviewing a complicated sentence or looking up an unfamiliar word. For these reasons, commercial captioners are sometimes compelled to smooth the syntax in order to retain clarity. Children's programming, for example, is often completely rewritten to accommodate the reading levels of young viewers and to make explicit the inferences of vocal tone that are suggested to a hearing viewer. In the process, subtleties of tone, humour, and cultural differences within spoken English are often sacrificed for what is deemed be the more important overall message. The captioned text of a children's programme also promotes a cultural conformity and blandness reminiscent of Reader's Digest Condensed Books.

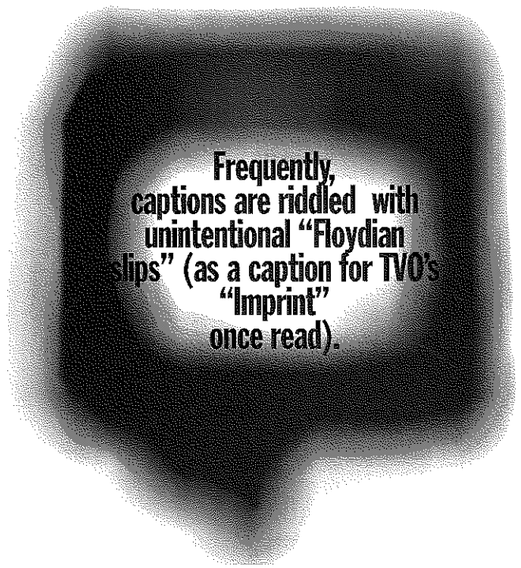
The limitations and cultural knowledge of commercial captioners create another serious problem. During live broadcasts and taped programming, these highly trained individuals are not always briefed with the spellings of proper names for individuals and are expected to caption accurately highly specialized vocabularies. More seriously, most captioners are not adequately prepared by broadcasters or producers to discern subtle linguistic variations within spoken English. In "real-time" captioning, a high-quality captioning produced simultaneously on-air, captioners are at a serious disadvantage. Although the best captioners are highly qualified and flexible practitioners, the act of transcription is a process which produces as well as captures meaning.

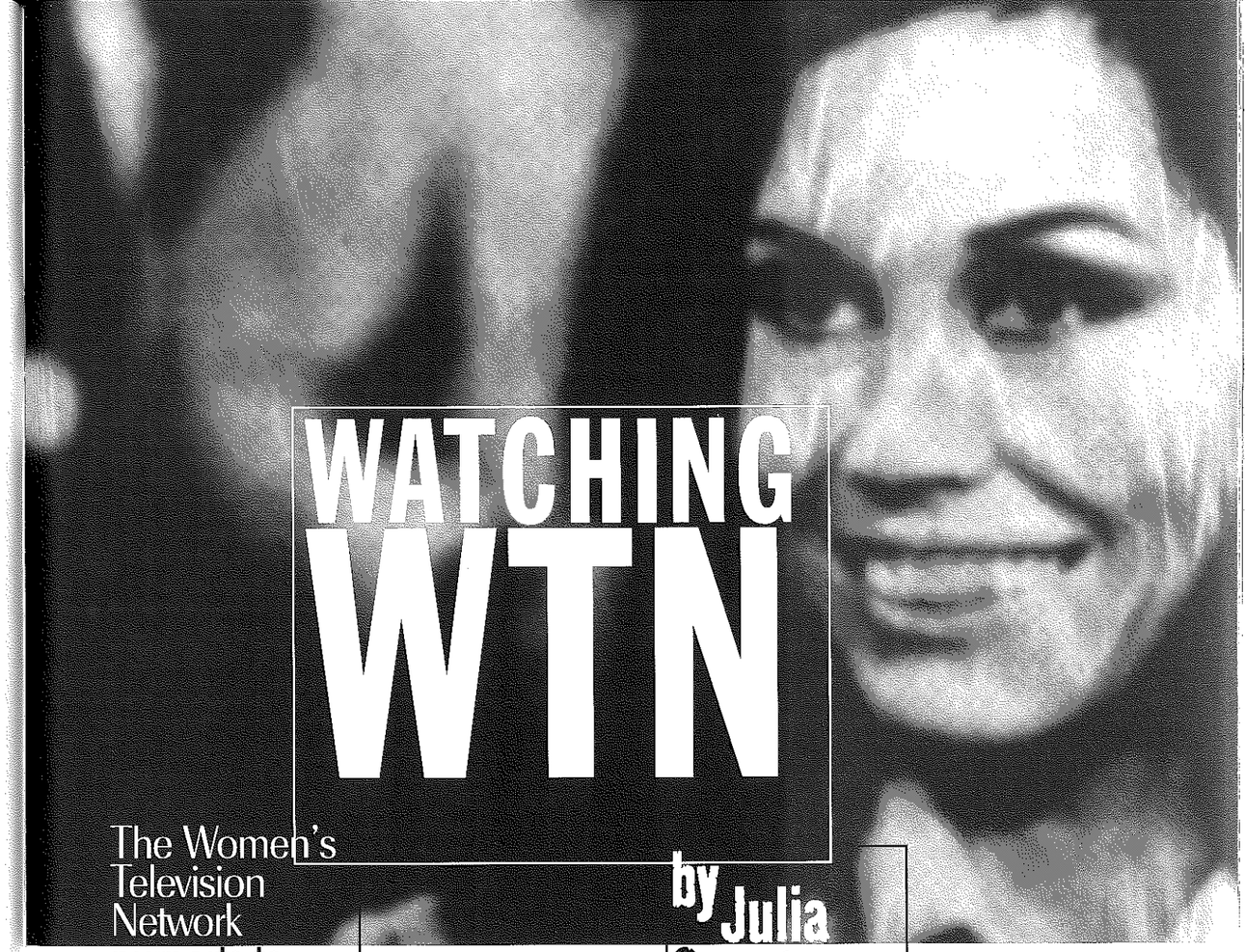
Frequently, captions are riddled with unintentional "Floydian slips" (as a caption for TVO's "Imprint" once read). For example, when the singer Della Reese appeared on the Arsenio Hall show, the first late-night talk show to offer captions, she was very animated in her description of "signifying" with the late comedian Redd Foxx. It was apparent by the context of her story that, by "signifying," she referred to word-play which has its origins in the African American community. To signify, according to Roger D. Abraham, is to play the trickster and to "talk with great innuendo, to carp, to cajole, to needle, and to lie." Reese described a spontaneous session of outrageous insults flying back and forth between Foxx and herself and, to underline the excitement of the verbal sparring, Reese remembered how comedian Richard Pryor encouraged them by shouting, "Signify, signify!" Any subtlety in this exchange was lost as the captioner repeatedly misrecorded her phrase as "Satisfy, satisfy!" Despite the narrative context, the captioners mediated the story by supplying those words that were "heard" or which made the most sense in their understandably limited experience. Rather than criticize the captioners, I would rather point to the limitations in the practice itself. Captioning, like translating and editing, is an ideological practice which has the potential to smooth over cultural difference and distinctions. This dimension is largely unmonitored. In the past, the work of advocacy groups and the CRTC has focussed on the larger problems of consumer access and on the quality of closed captions in general. Very little has been done to foreground the ways captioning, as a form of cultural mediation, influences and intervenes in the acts of television viewing for deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. Satisfy, indeed.

Note

All statistics are quoted from the only comprehensive Canadian study on the quality of closed captioning:

The Canadian Captioning Development Agency. *Canadian Captioning Profile: "The Monitor Project."* Toronto: CCDA, January 1993.





WATCHING WTN

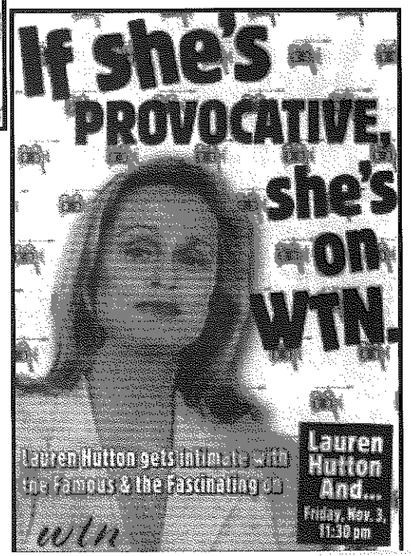
The Women's Television Network purports to be for women, by women, and about women. **IS IT?**

by Julia Creet

"No!" shrills girlfriend. "Don't stop there." My thumb on the clicker, clicks again. The Women's Television Network disappears into the continuum of mostly unwatched and unwatchable channels. The response is visceral. The thumb clicks on in its inexorable impatience. But what if we lingered a moment longer? Would we see something we want to watch? Would we see ourselves? Is the channel not for us? Named after us? Does it not call out to us by name? "Come Women. Come watch." Does it not hail us in our cozy living room from its cozy living room set? "No!" says girlfriend, "I don't care if you have to write about it, watch it when I'm not here."

It was a lucky thing then–I guess–that I had lots of free time this summer, days to idle away, or I would never have been able to write this article. I would never have been allowed to watch enough WTN to write something based on more than second-and-a-half slices, speakers cut off in mid-sentence, complaints half-articulated but entirely predictable.

That's where it started, this aversion to WTN. It started with the immediate impression that its feed was a litany of troubles presented live and in person. Unlike the day-time talk shows, which openly thrive on the exploitation of sorrow, misery on WTN lacks entertainment

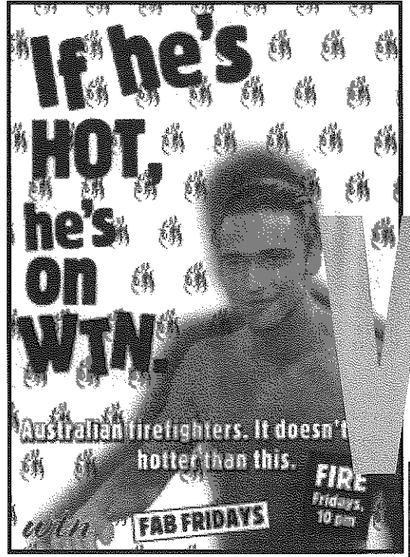


"Unlike the day-time talk shows, which openly thrive on the exploitation of sorrow, misery on WTN lacks entertainment value. It has none of the scopophilic pleasures of the talk show carnivals, or the carnage on the nightly news."

value. It has none of the scopophilic pleasures of the talk show carnivals, or the carnage on the nightly news, or the engrossing real-time dramas of CNN. WTN takes a moral approach to misery: it is for information only, consciousness-raising, community-building. But this is exploitation of another kind. Television is a voyeuristic medium, looking in on someone's imagined living room or someone's all-too-real crisis. If it shows the disenfranchised, they are shown as spectacle, as Other to the viewer. But in the hands of WTN, the Other is producing shows about itself. And me. It hails me. "We are producing shows about you." What would be human interest stories on any other channel are women's interest stories on WTN. Women are supposed to be interested in other women as a matter of political principle. Now would I admit, after years of schooling in the feminist arts, that I am not always interested? That I don't want to be represented in this way? Not if I want to keep my job preaching to the converted. But in the privacy of my own home the encouraged reflexes of my thumb battle with my political ideals. They produce a sensation I can only describe as the embodiment of ambivalence. Intellectually, it is like an Althusserian nightmare.

Louis Althusser (a French philosopher who strangled his wife and whose presence therefore represents a second order of ambivalence in this essay) wrote about the process by which ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. It can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace "Hey, you there." You turn around, knowing that you are being spoken to. In his example, a policeman shouts and you turn because, being a subject of a policed state, you already feel guilty. Althusser described a circle of recognition—"interpellation," in his terms. For my purposes, you could say that Althusser described how people are interpellated into categories by recognizing themselves to be a member of the group. Thus women recognize themselves to be Woman; gays and lesbian, Gay and Lesbian; brown and black, Black and People of Colour: states of subjectivity, but somehow legislated nonetheless. Cultural, state, and political "apparati" produce different categories of people, but they are all ideological, left and right. Television is one of those apparati *par excellence*, and "Woman" one of those categories.

A là Althusser then, a woman watching the program knows it is addressed to her. She is hailed by an almost obsessive repetition of the word "Woman." She knows that she is a member of a target audience, a commercial category built on an unbreakable circle of semiotic recognition. If you watch WTN you will be seen more clearly as a woman; your opinions, as a woman, are being represented to you and the rest of the television-viewing audience. WTN is offering broader social recognition— within a narrow

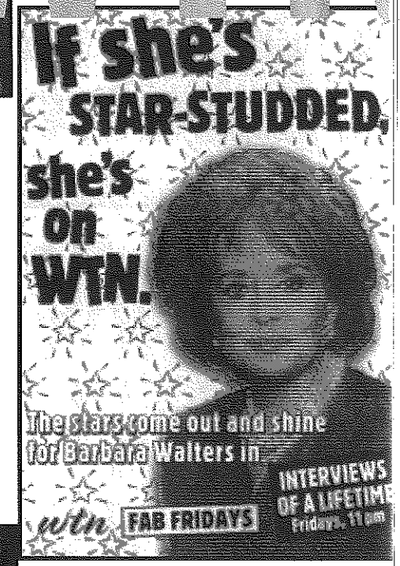


set of acceptable parameters. Remember, the bottom line is selling air-time. What is so disconcerting about WTN is that it inadvertently highlights the ideological nature of both the women's movement and television together.

Television is a advertising-driven medium that, in a bottom-line kind of way, must be able to identify its audiences and sell them things. Thus, when the initial advertising research for WTN produced a demographic that said that the people who would watch were older adults, sixty percent of whom were female and forty percent male, programming was conceived accordingly. "Feminist" was declared a dirty word because focus groups indicated it would be perceived as man-hating and would turn away viewers. Yet the stories were to be driven by women. They were to show women as capable of being decision-makers. The market researchers were wrong about their audience. It was younger and hipper and, by definition, feminist. Women who were already quite capable of making decisions had made theirs.

My unscientific market survey (I asked my friends) of who watches what, if anything on WTN, produced these results: reruns of "Mary Tyler Moore" and "Kate and Allie" have a faithful following of gay men; "French and Saunders," a British comedy series which is about as far from politically correct as two women can get, is a universal favourite; "Girl Talk," an MTV style, upbeat girls-on-the-street show, aimed at adolescent and young adult women, seems to draw a crowd; and "The Natural Angler," a fishing show which last year starred former Olympic high-jumper Debbie Van Kiekebelt, has high kitsch appeal. (On it I saw one of those truly perfect, "I can't believe I am seeing this" moments. Van Kiekebelt became semi-orgasmic with a fish on her line. "O.K." she said, breathlessly, "Let's reel this guy in." Each fish hooked produced close ups of red fingernails and her high-pitched repetition of key phrases. All the fish were guys. Unfortunately, even this show turned into a human interest story when Van Kiekebelt, satisfied with her day's catch, takes us on a little tour of a nearby historically accurate recreation of an Indian settlement. "I like to make a day of it by taking little sidetrips," says the angler turned theme-park tour guide; typically this show infantilizes its audience.) (See Jody Baker's article "Women and Fish...," on page 49 for another take on "The Natural Angler.") Any show with remotely controversial material is flagged as "adult viewing." So "Shameless Shorts" was shown at midnight, making it very shameless indeed, and "The Creators," a series on women artists, warrants "discretion advised." A whiff of controversy might at least produce a badly needed public profile.

So why did we not watch WTN more? (Past tense here because I have hopes that the current season may prove better.) Look, for example, at the flagship show, "Point of View: Women."



"The absence of signs of lesbianism quite clearly demarcated the limits of what WTN has decided is a profitable representation of "Woman."

"Typically WTN infantilizes its audience.

"POV: Women" was (it has been replaced this season by a new show, "Take Three") a current affairs program which, according to the promotional material, "looks at the world around us from a woman's point of view." It was to represent the mandate of the channel: "Specifically designed to portray the woman's perspective and to celebrate her achievements, WTN endeavours to ensure that all women are represented, regardless of age, ethnic or socio-economic background.... Television for women, by women, and about women and their worlds." Anyone who has been around awhile will recognize the unreconstructed 1970s rhetoric and its rhetorical problems: the mantra-like repetition of "woman" and that of her singular "woman's perspective."

"POV: Women" had three hosts, Helen Hutchinson, Sylvia Sweeney and Jeannette Loakman. They were, as promised, visually diverse: older White, Black, and Asian, respectively. One had the sense that they were very interesting women with opinions. But we, the viewing audience, seldom heard their opinions since they occupied the strange place of objective interviewer, representative of their category, and stand-in for women as a whole, all at the same time. P.O.V. wasted the talents of the hosts. Ankles crossed primly at the heels – it is difficult to sit any other way when left defenceless in front of a television camera on a stiff chair with no desk–they did their best to make their guests say something interesting only to cut them off as soon as they warmed up. The assumption behind the selection of interviewees seemed to be that any woman (and some men) would have something interesting to say if stuck in front of a television camera. Helen Hutchinson's discussion on depression with Mike Wallace had some depth and meaning, but it's hard to go wrong in conversation with such a seasoned broadcaster as Wallace. Jeannette Loakman had a good accent, that British film type, but her obvious intelligence was corralled by scripted questions, which tried to anticipate both interviewee responses and audience objections far too much to be interesting. The interviewers couldn't pretend that they were objective with a title like "Point of View," but how could subjectivity be this constrained and boring? Taped but not edited, "POV" was often painful to watch.

The interviewers fared slightly better when they were in the field. One memorable video report showed Sylvia Sweeney interviewing Susan Powter, a popular fitness personality. Sweeney, six-feet and Black, towers over the bleached and kinetic Powter. Powter hypes on about food and the body in flesh-tight spandex against the background of a gym. Sweeney looks bemused from her graceful height but says nothing about her experience of what must be an extraordinarily powerful (woman's) body. Shortly after I saw this interview, *The Globe and Mail* ran a front-page story on Sweeney (July 29, 1995). Her accomplishments are stunning. She's a ten-year veteran of the Canadian national (women's) basketball team, now a television producer herself who won accolades for her documentary on her uncle, Oscar Peterson. But you'd never know it from seeing her on WTN.

Once though, I saw a discussion with three young "Trekkies" with good attitude (one at least slouched); "Trekkie" was the authoritative tag given to all of them. One was obviously a dyke and about the only lesbian I've seen on the Network who actually showed signs of being one. The absence of signs of lesbianism quite clearly demarcated the limits of what WTN has decided is a profitable representation of "Woman." And my desire to see signs of lesbians proves how irresistible the circle of recognition is. I want to be included, knowing that my inclusion would be determined by a board which would have decided, on balance, that trying to sell me something was worth the risk of losing other viewers to whom they might sell something.

This is the paradox of WTN. Powerful women behind the scenes are neutralized or invisible in front of the camera. Sweeney isn't the only WTN associate to have been profiled as a female success story in *The Globe and Mail*. (One assumes that this a measure of what constitutes "celebration of her achievements.") Barbara Barde has been written up several times in the business pages of both *The Globe* and *The Star*. Formerly Vice-President of Programming and one of the driving forces behind WTN, she left suddenly after the first season. She now heads Up-Front Entertainment, which will this season produce independently in Toronto what were formerly WTN's in-house programmes. (It's a deal that she's reluctant to discuss, since the move from in-house to independent production satisfies promises made to the CRTC, but seems to me like a bit of a shell game, particularly in light of her departure from head office in Winnipeg.)

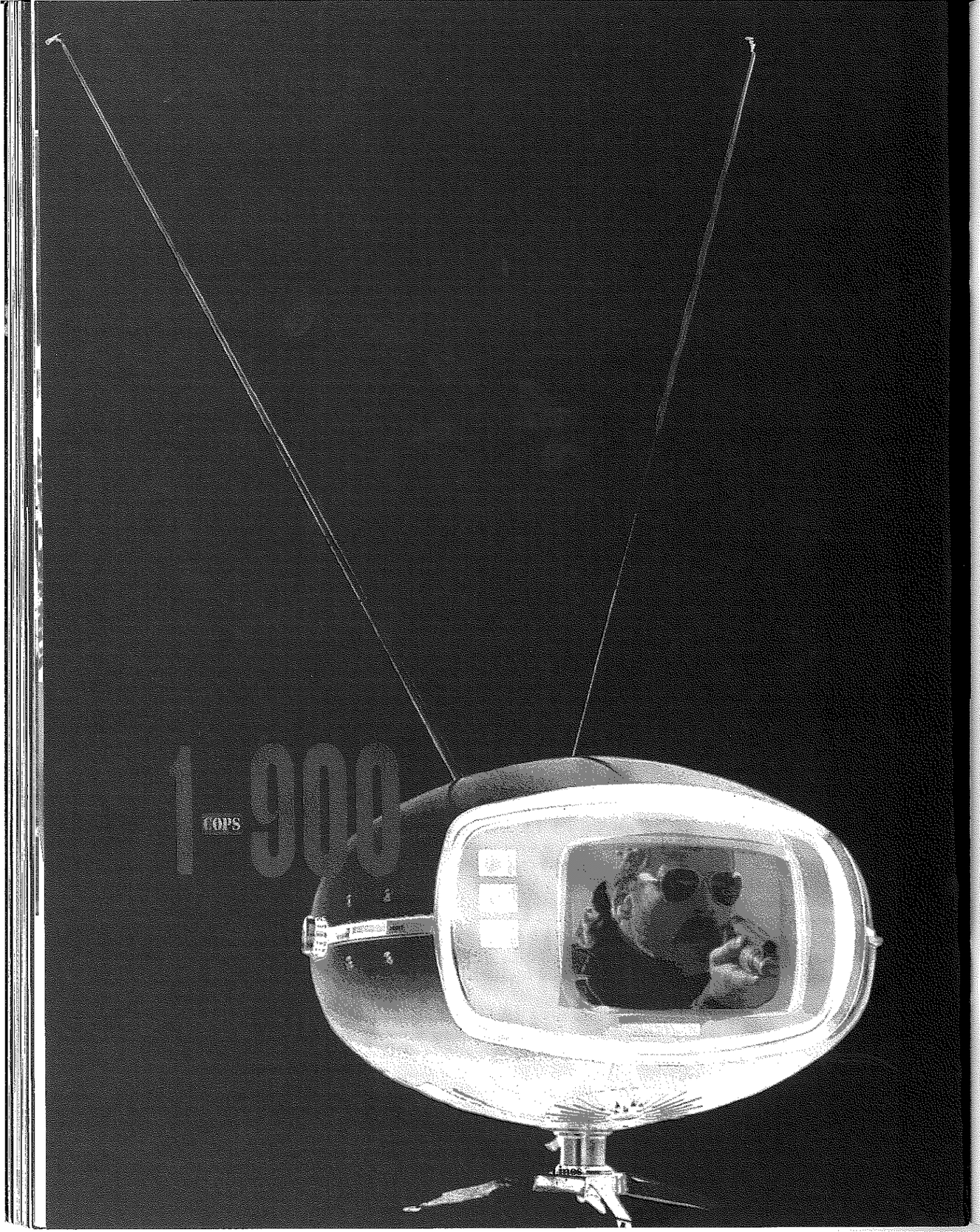
First and foremost, WTN is a business. It is sixty-eight percent owned by Randy Moffatt of Moffatt Communications, the owner of the Winnipeg CTV affiliate. Ron Rhodes (whose theory of feminism comes from Carol Gilligan) and a partner own fifteen percent. Linda Rankin, the recently fired president, owns another ten percent. Barbara Barde and The Barde group own eight-plus percent; there are other–minority–shareholders. The original application for a licence made to the CRTC was for a station called "Lifestyle Television." There's "Lifetime," a similarly named and targeted, channel in the United States which plays mostly talkshows and reruns of old sitcoms. It did sponsor the women's crew of "Mighty Mary" in the America's Cup and it broadcasts a few PSAs on Breast Cancer to placate its viewers, but it is primarily market-driven.

Regarding WTN the die was cast early, when the marketing department, rather than look exclusively for sponsorship for programming–as independent producers had in the case of "The Natural Angler," sponsored by the Canadian Sportfishing Association, or the also popular "Car Care with Mary Bellows," sponsored by General Motors–decided that it would try to raise additional revenue through heavily discounted advertising sales sold by the CTV advertising department, under the direction of Randy Moffatt's son, Craig. For a show on older women and sexuality the suggested products were adult diapers and denture glue. Sponsorship then became increasingly difficult to organize since it was more expensive than the cut-rate advertising time. If it weren't for some very smart negotiating to get WTN included in the second tier of cable subscriptions after Roger's negative optioning scheme backfired, the channel would never have survived.

Since I was concerned that I present a balanced story on the channel, I called WTN's offices for information. No one from head office in Winnipeg ever called me back and several other women associated with the channel were reluctant to say anything. In spite of much instability–Carlyn Moulton, director of independent production, Kate Thomas, director of sponsorship, and the President, Linda Rankin, were all gone within the first year – there is a loyalty to the original vision of the channel and a desire to see it succeed. Barbara Barde isn't afraid of the media, however; she thrives on it. Over our three hour breakfast I am almost won over by her. Her history of how WTN made it to air is a mix of heroism and apologia. Apparently, no one expected that the CRTC would really grant the "Lifestyle Channel" a license. The CRTC licensing approval came in June of 1994. Program production started in October. WTN threw on the switch at midnight, December 30th, 1994. In three months, starting from when the office was opened, with limited equipment and money, WTN put on air a brand new television channel with twenty new series in production. It would have been impossible without the fervent belief of all involved in it. Ninety-five percent of its staff were female and they worked night and day. (Many of these women gave up other jobs to work at WTN and many independent producers agreed to work for relatively low wages). One imagines that many of the women dedicated to the promise of WTN were like Barde – smart, funny, tough; a bit of a snake-oil saleswoman.

Smart, funny, tough. That's what Barde hopes the new season will be. She winces when I mention "POV," even though the show was originally her idea. She promises that "Take Three" will be better. She admits the first season was monotonous, too serious. This season will be more interactive, will appeal to a broader audience. New ideas are percolating–such as "Class Act," an etiquette show. Only one problem she says: we can't figure out who would host it. I laugh. It's perfectly obvious, I say. Hire a drag queen. Light bulbs go off for Barde. Only one problem she says, where would we find one? We live in different worlds, it seems. [I've since heard that they've asked Peter Schneider, a nice, but quite proper, gay man to do the job, for no money but just the glory of being on WTN.]

There's one more thing I want to know. One wonders, with Sweeney and Kiekebelt's involvement in the Network, why there aren't some serious (women's) sports broadcasts. We do, after all, have a world championship (women's) hockey teams in both the lesbian and straight-acting divisions. This season, Barde tells me, WTN will air monthly a half-hour British women's sports digest in addition to the one-half hour a week show called "On Your Mark" (which I still haven't stumbled upon after months of impromptu viewing). TSN has apparently bought the rights to most women's sports even though it broadcasts a very small percentage. I think about suggesting that WTN do highlights from the Downtown Toronto Women's Hockey League. After all, Saturday night at Moss Park Arena is one of the best shows in town. WTN material? Probably not. But most of the women–smart, funny, and tough – playing hockey in this league are just what WTN wants, especially in the corners. But maybe I just want to be on television.



AFFECTED by ARTIFICE: The Populist Resentments of REALITY TV

by Beth Seaton

Why "America's Most Wanted" and other shows like it make you lock your door at night.

There are moments in time when certain events appear inexplicable, whose severity and meanness seem just too sharp to grasp. "How did this happen?" we ask, and the answer we give, if we answer at all, tends to avoid difficult or uncomfortable explanations in favour of the easy response that such things are simply beyond our control.






In the city of Toronto, this response has become something of the chosen explanation for the election of Mike Harris and the outright meanness of his Conservative government's cuts within the social and cultural sectors. For those of us who live in this city whose choking air and ugliness are only made tolerable by its strong cultural environment, who consider ourselves enlightened and urbane, and who only last spring were laughing at the mediocrity of this man with the face of a corrupt choir boy, the consensus is that Harris was nominated by forces outside of our dominion. Simply put, it was those people out there—out in the expansive wasteland of exurban monster homes, or farther out in the more pastoral, but equally mysterious rural territories—who brought Harris and his Tory government to power. These are people who, it may be presumed, have little or no understanding of the life and experience of the city.

While there may be some truth to this rationale, the success of Harris's "common-sense revolution" extends beyond a simple tale of the country and the city. Nor may it be found within an economic explanation (the deficit), which is itself only a heuristic fib dressed up as a truth. Rather, the conditions of this "revolution" may be found within the far more nebulous and affective terrain of culture: that place where a hegemonic "common-sense" secures its nomination.

Harris's election is indicative of a fundamental shift in the cultural machinery of representation—where what is important (particularly for the task of building consensus) is not knowledge, but feeling, not critical distance, but an emotional closeness. Harris was able to push his politics into the sphere of consensus by speaking to people on a very subjective level. His attacks upon the deficit were not voiced in the dry language of economic rationale, but rather outrage. His attacks upon the poor—labeled as "welfare cheats" and "immigrants"—tapped into a mean and irrational paranoia of "the other." Nothing was explained, only felt.

What is disturbing about the success of this "common-sense revolution" is how neatly it appears to parallel a shift in audio-visual culture: particularly in terms of how television now defines and shapes social problems. Television, as all students of the medium know, acts as an important—if not the pre-eminent—public sphere. The social meanings which are circulated and constructed within this apparatus matter very much to our lives. As a commercial medium geared towards the entertainments of promotion, television's persuasive powers and existence have long been dependent upon its ability to sell us things—commodity goods, social values, common sense—just as we are sold to advertisers. As a mass medium which is also a household object, television is doubly articulated between private lives and public worlds; it offers a felt connection between what is here and what is there, between what is actual and what can be imagined.

Much has changed in terms of the quality of television's mediations over the past ten years. Certainly, it remains an important part of the process by which consent to the existing structure of power in society is produced; however, the process by which this production takes place has changed. Television, which is equally an aural as well as visual medium, no longer expresses its hegemonic grammar in calm and measured tones, but increasingly in the stammering staccato of a talk-radio host, a carnival huckster or a populist politician. Its persuasive intonations tap into and bring forth not the new knowledges of insight, but the older abstractions of emotion: abstractions which pose the complexities of society in sensational and spectacular terms.

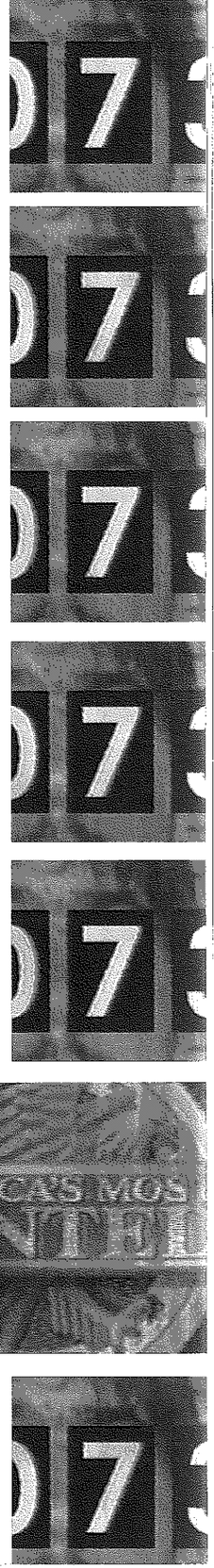
Television (and this is old news) has gone tabloid. It has moved away from public affairs into private matters, and, in the manner of any skilled gossip, it does so with a sophisticated interweaving of the truth and the lie. The staid work of television news has become entertainment: anchors engage in "happy talk," events are illustrated via computer generated re-enactments, and the "soft" melodrama of human-interest stories takes precedence over "hard" news. (Indeed, many news programmes are now produced under the networks' entertainment, rather than news, divisions). Conversely, entertainment programming, such as the police dramas, *Homicide: Life on the Street* or *NYPD Blue*, mimic the whirling hand-held style of documentary reportage, and often base episodes upon "real-life" crimes. The lines between an authoritative real and popular representation have blurred, and the chosen culprit for this mess of distinction is "reality programming."

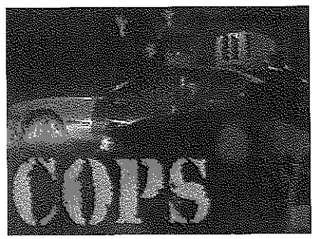
Reality programming refers to an expansive industry label which includes the syndicated and network programmes of tabloid television news-magazine shows, video-verité and re-created crime, rescue and "man-hunt" programmes, and family amateur video shows. While the programmes grouped under this generic rubric are admittedly varied, there are three consistent characteristics which underscore each. First is the reality show's visible reference to, or dramatization of, "real" events, people or problems. This depiction of the "real" involves a flexibility which, while promising an unmediated relation to actuality, sometimes strains the bounds of the credible. Rather than solely relying upon actual documentary or "live" footage, reality programming often draws upon a mix of acting, news footage, interviews and re-creations in a highly simulated pretense of the "real." Moreover, this dramatization of actuality—involving the liberal use of flashy graphics, creative editing and evocative music—is largely geared towards self-promotional, rather than informational, ends. In essence, the effectivity of the "real" in these shows is drawn from popular memory and forms, specifically the popular forms of commodity culture. Second, these programmes are the stuff of moral disorder and deviance—crime, corruption, sexual infidelity, victimization—particularly as they take place within a private sphere. While the random violence of everyday life is tempered in the family video-shows towards the "happy" pratfalls of domesticity (with the hardest fall awarded a cash prize), the tabloid and cop/manhunt sub-genres pose criminality and deviance as a constant threat whose existence demands social and moral redress. Hence, the supercilious condemnations of the tabloid, or the cop/manhunt shows and their weekly variations on the theme of Nancy Reagan's staged crack-house bust, in which police, with camera crews in tow, make a "live" show of their powers, their "compassions" and their moral convictions.

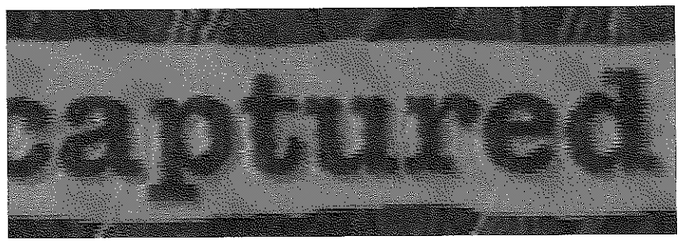
Finally, reality programmes express their social or moral dilemmas in highly emotional terms, for this is crucial for their (self)promotional function. Importantly, it is feeling, rather than seeing, which is the basis for believing in these shows. Stress is laid upon individual and immediate ramifications, particularly in terms of how someone feels or responds to the reported event. In this respect, it is no longer a distanced or neutral gaze which acts to establish actuality, but rather an appeal to subjective identification, wherein what matters most is the proximity of the depicted event to the experience of the audience. In other words, the adulterous affair on *Inside Edition*, the brutal mugging on *Cops*, and the groom who throws up at his wedding on *America's Funniest Home Videos* are all events which could ostensibly happen to the viewer. This appeal to subjective involvement is further established through certain participatory strategies that, in the sacred tenet of "consumer choice," encourage audiences to interact with the programme. Thus, viewers of *Hard Copy* are offered 1-900 numbers in order to place phone-in votes at the end of the show ("Burt or Loni? Who do you believe?—Callers must be 18 years or older"). *America's Most Wanted* asks its viewers to assist in the capture of suspected fugitives profiled on the show by calling the toll-free hotline 1-800-CRIME-TV. And studio audience members of *America's Funniest Home Videos* vote for the "funniest" video shown during the programme.

There was a time when the tabloid shows were laughingly dismissed as the vulgar and insipid freaks of the programme schedule. Just as some of us, in a not-too-distant past, found Mike Harris and his supporters to represent only the more regressive or "backwards" extremities of an oxymoronic Progressive Conservative Party, so too were these shows held to address only a small constituency of the television audience: the depths of a lowest common denominator. Consumers of these programmes were imagined as the televisual version of those big-haired women who supposedly frequent the supermarket's check-out lines - checking out the tabloid's sensational stories of lust, adultery and the occasional Elvis sighting - while waiting to buy the week's supplies of cheese-whiz, wonder bread and diet coke. In effect, both the tabloid shows and their audiences were derided within an evaluative framework of gustatorial, aesthetic and moral distinctions: signifying not only the processed junk food of a "feminine" mass culture which holds no productive or aesthetic value, but the bad taste of the "feminized" masses, who are consumed by the urge to buy into the small fibs and excessive fabrications of the tabloid's screaming headlines.

As reality programming was to mutate and expand beyond the "tasteless" confines of the tabloid show, its presence came to be perceived as less of a joke, than a threat. Emerging during a period of intensified competition for viewers and advertising revenues, reality shows quickly proved attractive to networks and syndicators in that they were not only cheap to produce (and buy), but were solid ratings performers. Before the 1988/89 season, the little vulgarities that *Fox* built - the tabloid show *A Current Affair* (which debuted in 1986), the video-verité reality series *Cops* (1988), and the re-created "man-hunt" series *America's Most Wanted* (1988) - stood alone. Soon after, however, similar candidates were offered by the Big Three networks which had the foresight to recognize a good thing when it hit them in the ratings. It was then that the dismissive laugh became a panicked cry. The menace of mass culture was at the gates, and we were asked to be vigilant to the ways in which, in the words of the *Globe and Mail*'s John Haslett-Cuff, "the sometimes tawdry techniques of tabloid journalism were seeping into the mainstream." What was perceived as a greater threat than its tawdry tastes or generic expansions, though, was the reality show's confusions of the "real": that necessary component of television's supposed capacity to depict actuality accurately and neutrally. Reality programming's willful







contempt for the journalistic conventions of naturalism raised questions about our ever-more impaired relation to reality.

Undoubtedly, much of the excessive expansion of reality programming may be attributed to the economic demands of a competitive television market. The crisis and confusion represented by the mutations of reality programming also find correlation among other changes in social sensibility. There is great attention paid these days to what are perceived to be radical shifts in the thresholds of social and moral value—not only in terms of a perceived "epidemic" of crime, single motherhood, youth violence, homosexuality and uppity women—but more generally in terms of an overall denigration and demise of once-stable societal "truths." In any number of articles debating the existence of "chilly climates," the "fairness" of affirmative action, or the ground lost by white men, the explicit or implicit complaint is that social categories (of race, of gender, of sexuality, of class) will no longer stay in their places. Anyone may be a victim these days, anyone an aggressor. In this respect, condemnations of reality programming's "feminine" violations—its emphasis upon moral disorder, its appeal to the subjective, and its perversions of "the real"—may be read as symptomatic of a culture in which the lines drawn between reality and representation, between the private and the public, and around categories of social identities, have become muddled. More particularly, in its hyper-dramatization of "the real," reality programming may be seen to comment upon itself, foregrounding its own constructedness and cultural status as television, and "bad" television at that. Hence, the faked factuality of reality TV can be found to reveal the codes and processes of an ideological realism, rather than to disguise such codes as common sense.

Despite such self-conscious expositions, reality TV acts in the service of repairing, rather than tearing, the more insidious weave of a conservative ideology. Its violations of "the real" cannot be extended onto a celebratory logic which reads reality TV as, in the words of media scholar Kevin Glynn, a "primary site of rupture in the ideological fabric of bourgeois culture." (Such readings in fact belie a peculiar, and largely bygone habit of some analysts of culture whose myopia won't allow them to see the hegemony for its "resistances.") The obligations of reality programming are guided more towards the re-assertion of once-stable social truths; its onus is to provide a simulated relief from the assault upon once-sanctified cultural and moral values. Ironically, this restoration is conducted through the exhibition and policing of a private, "feminine" domain.

This private domain does not strictly refer to the home, nor does it necessarily encompass a "feminine" place. Rather, it pertains to those places which have historically served as repositories for, or domains of, social difference. Such a place could be the home, it could be a park which at night becomes a"queer space," it could be the street (and increasingly, for poor people, it is). It is that place which, for whatever historical contingency, remains excluded from the universalist rights of a public sphere.

In Canada, as in the United States, the state expresses its norms and regulations in neutral and general terms, wherein political rights are said to be available to all, irrespective of social differences. While not entirely banished, but certainly transcended within the discourse of public rights and responsibilities, difference is argued to be important only within an experiential or personal venue. It is thus the domain of the private which harbours difference, as all that which remains other than a universalist or normative standard.

Not surprisingly, Harris' cuts are aimed at those public institutions responsible for alleviating the difficulties of difference, particularly as this difference is

articulated in a private sphere: welfare, childcare, legal aid, health care, work equity, public transportation. In a like manner, it is the domain of the private which is the televised site of ideological conflict and difference and thus the scene of social policing. While reality programming's voyeuristic scrutiny of the scandals of the private plays up the demise of once-sanctified social and "family" values, such scrutiny, conversely, is also the means by which an embattled dominant order now simulates reprisal upon the homes and bodies of those outside of its normative purview. This social and moral redress is evidenced in tabloid TV's hyperventilating personalization (and thus domestication) of often murderous social/sexual/racial conflicts, wherein the challenge which difference may pose is erased of any material or ideological conditions. We see such reprisals most punitively in the video-verité cop shows, whose simulated actuality is anchored to a faith in the spontaneous and uncontrolled "truths" of the camera. Rather than exposing reality for the purposes of social critique, such programmes are geared towards the production of social consent, wherein the spectacle of violence condones the authority of a violent policing power. The reality "discovered" by this process is in fact constructed by it. The faces of perpetrators—overwhelmingly black, chicano or women, overwhelmingly poor—are rarely obscured in these programmes, but shown, close-up, as the gruesome physiognomic evidence of criminality. The cops give a running narrative to the authorless and mutely adoring camera, talking of the prevalence of crime in their city and their frustrations in dealing with it. The camera runs on as police, dogs and camera crews literally crash into the privacy of people's lives, bursting into their homes in the middle of the night, turning over tables, turning up drugs, turning over their children to state authorities, all in the best interests of a universal constituency, "the people."

Producers of the cop and man-hunt shows, perhaps in an effort to distance their product from the "trash" stigma of tabloid TV, like to describe their programmes as "pro-social," as offering a form of public service. Supposedly, these shows are designed to foster a solid consensual ground of social and moral certitude. In their appeals to viewer identification, the helpful "crime tips" offered, and the participatory strategies of 1-800 numbers used to report a suspicious stranger, neighbour or friend, they presumably offer a rhetoric of citizenship and engagement, whereby collective watching translates into the collective practice of caring.

This moral and social consensus is directed less towards collectivist ends than to an individualist and conservative populism. It is addressed not towards the "public" citizen, but the citizen-consumer, whose primary motivations involve the pursuit of self-preservation and self-protection from the cruel (and largely economic) exigencies of the world. The social dimensions which these shows express encompass a crude rendering. Crime is rampant out there—committed by all those crazies and coloureds and deviants—and it's inexplicable. There is not much to be done except sit back, watch, and hope it doesn't come your way. The feelings mobilized on these shows are not those of caring (except about one's self), but those of fear and insecurity; feelings which are simultaneously raised and then allayed with the ebb and flow of emotional closeness and self-conscious artifice. By making a spectacle of "the real," reality TV acts to exaggerate the "nearness" of this condition, while insulating the viewer from its touch, keeping misery at a proper and categorical distance. As a genre which promises an unmediated or direct engagement with "the real," it nonetheless offers a sensational flight from the social crimes of the real world. It professes a love of truth and compassion in all of its dramatized forms, but never in its complex substances.

During a period in which "gated" communities are rapidly becoming the standard for suburban housing, the attempt to keep difference at bay—away from the guarded dwellings of the "normal"—has become not only a developer's dream, but also the obsession of a new privileged class. In so far as it supports such an obsession, reality programming may be the placating panacea of a new feudalism: a divisive society where the exurban elite remain safe behind their gates, while in the decaying city, the images of the deviant poor (Mike Harris's "special interest groups") are captured and broadcast back to them, reassuring them in their limited understanding, their meanness, and their populist conceits.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and The Faculty of Arts, York University towards funding of research for this article.

Featuring **CHICANO SECRET SERVICE**

Written by **COCO FUSCO, TOMAS CARRASCO, LALO LOPEZ, & ELIAS SERNA**

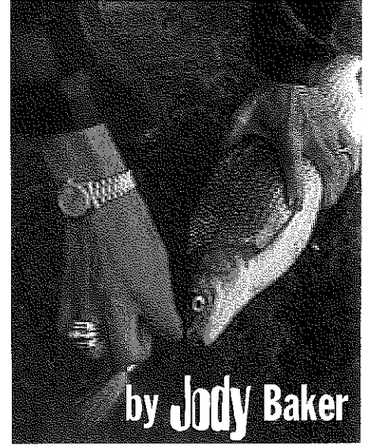
Also Starring **NORA BONNER & YOLANDA GONZALEZ** Special Appearances by **LUIS ALFARO & MARIA ELENA GAITAN**

Videography **ALBERTO DOMINGUEZ, NESTOR MORENO, MIHA VIPOTNIK** Art Direction **ALEX DONIS** Music **CHOLITA**

Associate Producer **GLORIA WESTCOTT** Editor **RAUL FERRERA BALANQUET** Produced & Directed by **COCO FUSCO**

POCHONOVELA was produced with support from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the Long Beach Museum of Art Video Annex, and the Wexner Center for the Arts.

Women & Fish: WTN's



by Jody Baker

"The Natural Angler"

"Finally in the Net after a Long Battle!"

Here is an image of fishing at its most essential: landscape, man, fish. This postcard depicts the male angler alone in the wilderness, apart from civilization. Or rather, he is alone with the fish with whom he is engaged in an intimate relationship; the caption, "Finally in the Net after a Long Battle!" constructs a sense of bonding, as if the two were on equal footing, partners for a moment in the eternal struggles of nature. Here is the moment of truth, where a man encounters nature directly, an experience apparently unmediated by the complexities of social life in modern times.

"Fresh Fish Fry"

Another postcard, "Fresh Fish Fry," shows us a slightly more developed social world, a father and his son about to bond over a pan of fresh fish. The pair have set up camp in a vast, empty landscape. And yet it is a generous landscape, a natural utopia of abundance. Here, so it seems, one can live "off the fat of the land" and pull fish from the water with a minimum of effort. Survival is represented as an uncomplicated affair; without wage labour or exchange, sustenance is taken directly and immediately from nature.

"A Perfect Camp-Site"

Finally, there is the all male group of "A Perfect Camp-Site" (next page). Their (and our) attention is focussed on the display of the catch; the "trophy shot" is perhaps the most common image of fishing. Our gaze is also directed to the boy as the men—and we—partake of his pleasure. He is of central importance as the postcard speaks of the didactic function of fishing. A boy learns about nature and his proper relation to it. At the same time he learns what it means to be a masculine subject—he learns to be a man among men.

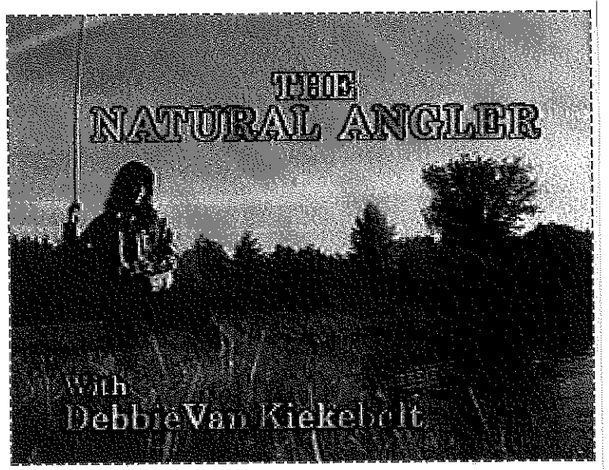
These three postcards, harvested recently from a motel in New Brunswick, appear to be generic photos with the suitable location simply stamped on the back. Their function is twofold: they operate as tourism advertisements, that in X location one can obtain such experiences; and they express, define, and validate the experiences of the angler who collects or sends the card. The men who are in the images are not necessarily the main subject; rather, these cards are just as much about the landscape that surrounds them. These images of landscape express a nostalgia for a preindustrial past of natural abundance and simplicity of lifestyle, a world supposedly removed from (modern) society. But if these cards contain nostalgia, they lack history. They lack history because they lack specificity; they represent a *generic* pastoralism. Obviously, all three cards present a social world—namely, the culture of the outdoorsman, camper, fisher—but angling is represented here as an escape from modern, urban or suburban social pressures and obligations. We are drawn into a world of fishing that is represented as natural and authentic. In a strange—but not uncommon—inversion, what the camera records or signifies is the absence of culture, history, and thus the camera's *own* absence.

Of course, to be *represented* as "natural" is a contradiction in terms; these cards are themselves codes. The postcards' hyperreal colours belie their constructedness. The fishers depicted are far "off the beaten track," but it takes a good deal of culture—of dress, objects, gesture, and a little added colour—to signify the natural. We can see in these images that fishing requires a great deal of cultural baggage. The fisher's world is one of a vast array of equipment, dress codes, hierarchies of practices, elaborate moral and ethical rules, as well as often complex government regulations. Behind the seemingly trivial kitsch of these postcards lies a social world composed of several layers of meaning that resonate within complex—and often contradictory—interrelations: nature and culture; individual and community; the exploitation and conservation of nonhuman life; an ethic of respect for both the land and one's fellow sportsman; and particularly the cultural roles of gender.

Fishing from the Nature/Culture Divide:

"The Natural Angler" and the televisual construction of nature

The aforementioned issues are the basic components of sport-fishing in general, and they form the symbolic substance of the full spectrum of fishing shows on television. From the popular to the obscure, the local to the national, the ordinary to the slick ("Fishing the West," "Hank Parker's Outdoor Magazine," "Fishin' with Orlando Wilson," "Fishing with Roland Martin," "Rod and Reel Streamside," "The Walkers Cay Chronicles," "Great American Outdoors," "Fishin' Canada," "Celebrity Fishing," "Bass Masters"), the production of knowledge on fishing shows goes far beyond technical know-how; it reproduces fishing culture. But "The Natural Angler," the Women's Television Network's recent feminine incursion into the male domain of the fishing genre, exposes the tensions and contradictions of fishing culture.



"The Natural Angler," which used to be hosted by Debbie Van Kiekebelt, emerges from a fairly well-established tradition. Fishing shows have become a notable feature of low-budget cable networks—TNN, ESPN2, TLC, WTN—and have long established their place in the weekend ghetto of banality. As a hybrid of those other low-budget weekend staples, nature documentaries and marginal sports contests, fishing shows take us to the fringes, to the peaceful hinterland of the television medium. But from their marginal cultural position fishing shows speak to matters of no small importance to contemporary audiences. These shows, "The Natural Angler" included, are about much more than the fish and their capture; they also establish relations between the fisher's world and that of the fishes, people and their "natural" environment—culture and nature. It is, in fact, this nature/culture dichotomy that serves as the foundation for the production of knowledge on fishing shows; the other issues they raise, such as ethics and gender, are layered on top of this dualism.

Nearly every shot of the fishing show expresses a negotiation between nature and culture. The overwhelming majority of fishing shows are shot from the confined space of the fishing boat from which the hosts and guests fish. Typically, it is the boat from which we look out upon or across the surface of the water. So the division between nature and culture is expressed as that between inside and outside and we are asked to have a seat on the inside. On the inside is a close, confined and somewhat contained world, a masculine world of camaraderie, a world of jokes, slights or congratulations, and the production and exchange of knowledge and fishing morality. The social world of the boat is most often contained on-screen and the waterscape—or nature—lies just off-screen, on the edges of the narrative. The meanings of the social place and natural space are distinct but codetermining; they resonate off one another, and each provides a context for the other. The fishing show thus represents and fixes, despite the mobility of the boat, a social *place* that floats upon the surface of a natural *space*.

When the full oeuvre of "The Natural Angler" is viewed against the backdrop of its genre, what is most extraordinary is that Van Kiekebelt *never* fishes from a boat. One reason for this is certainly budgetary. Like the rest of WTN's fare, the show is low-budget and down-to-earth. But a boat and the closed world it represents would be out of sync with the overall tone of the show. Although "The Natural Angler" draws upon the conventions of the genre and falls well within its parameters, it tries to offer a unique, "feminine" perspective on fishing. It carries a different emphasis; for example, it does not emphasize technique so much as the ethics of fishing or safety; it places fishing as a cultural activity in a larger social context. Van Kiekebelt addresses the viewer directly throughout an entire show; direct address is a rarity in mainstream, masculine shows where the exchange of lore and expertise between on-screen anglers is the norm. She tends to eschew gadgetry in favor of edification, often breaking from fishing to visit a local cultural point of interest such as the Crawford Lake Indian Village Site, fishing resorts, clubs, or bed and breakfast inns:

When I go fishing I like to make the most of my fishing trip and I like to cruise the area, discover some unique, hidden places that make that particular fishing area special.

Or she may stop to lecture on the function of boat locks, fish farms, native fishing practices, the choice of proper clothing, fishing with children, and so on. The didactic function of this programme is often tied to a particular effort to bestow upon the viewer an appreciation of nature—thus the title of the show. As she looks across a mountain vista she expounds:

Absolutely breath-taking. As you can see I've traded in my fishing vest and my hip-waders for hiking boots. I want to make the most of my experience. There's a lot more to fly-fishing on the river than just fishing. As you can see from this vantage point: the lush habitat; the farmland; the wildlife to appreciate in this particular area is the white-tailed deer; there's the beaver, of course; and because of the drop in elevation here I'm told there's turkey vultures around, but I haven't seen anything. So when you go out for a day fishing, get up early, enjoy yourself, catch those fish while they're biting. But then go out and really make the most of your day. Whichever area you choose, relax and enjoy yourself; whether you are with friends or family, come out and enjoy the beauty around you, and appreciate and conserve it.

What is significant here is the relationship between natural and cultural experiences. For Debbie and her viewers, fishing, although practised in natural surroundings, is in essence a cultural experience. Her hiking boots give her the agility to move back and forth across the divide between nature and culture.

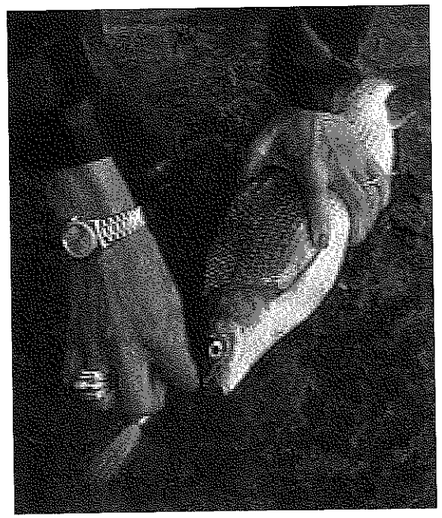
Other fishing shows tend to efface the construction of nature and maintain a rigid distinction between what is considered social and what must remain natural. While fishing arctic char in the hinterlands of Alaska, the host of "Great American Outdoors" instructs his viewers on how to maintain this distinction:

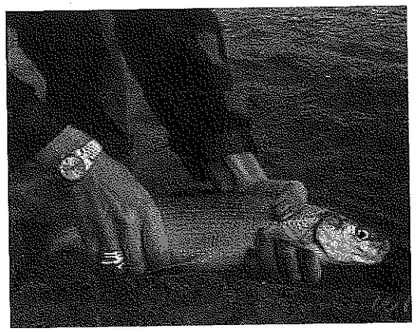
For goodness sakes, when you have those tag ends left, roll them up and put 'em in your pocket. Don't you just hate to go fishing somewhere around the pond or creek and see some monofilament line or some evidence that someone was there before? I mean, this is beautiful country and the next guy that's here fishin', I don't want him to see any evidence that I was here, and likewise I don't want to find any, so keep your tag ends in your pocket.

And if the manufacturing of nature is revealed it is done with ambivalence. For example, the host of "Rod and Reel Streamside" tells us,

These fish didn't just materialize up here because it's Canada or because it's the wilds. They were actually stocked in this area and there has been a lot of effort, ever since the early 1900s, to preserve this area and to maintain this fish population. It fascinated me that so much effort had gone into creating this wonderful fishery.

The fascination seems to be aimed at more than simply the amount of time, labour, and capital expended to create this "wonderful fishery"; he seems genuinely concerned and uncomfortable with this confrontation between social production and a particular notion of nature as (Canadian) wilderness. Van Kiekebelt, on the other hand, seems untroubled by such paradigmatic breakdowns and if anything she encourages them. She fishes below hydro dams, in obviously constructed ponds and from docks and concrete embankments. Most of her shows have her angling in the constructed landscapes of fishing clubs and resorts and she often interrogates their owners or employees about their hatcheries and the practice of stocking fish. What is perhaps most startling—and wonderful—about "The Natural Angler" is that Van Kiekebelt, a strikingly beautiful woman by traditional standards, wears the full complement of ornamentation while fishing: lipstick, eye shadow, several rings, oversized earrings, bracelets, etc. To see her wearing bright red nail polish, with several rings, a gold watch and half a dozen bracelets while fishing is to witness a radical departure from fishing's traditional rugged masculinity.





Fishing Was Invented by a Woman: the Domestication of Nature

Young guest: *Could you tell me who invented fishing?*

Van Kiekebelt: *I'm sure it was a woman, Jake.*

"The Natural Angler" can locate itself on the frontier between the natural and the cultural because it is about the domestication, not the conquest, of nature. When all of nature becomes domesticated, there is little need for any distinctions between nature and culture. At the same time, the show represents the domestication and feminization of a masculinist genre. With just a touch of feminist irony, Van Kiekebelt asks her guest and long-time fisher Donna Salmon about the feminization of the sport:

Van Kiekebelt: *Now do you find a lot of women fishing?*

D. Salmon: *I'm finding it's improving.*

Van Kiekebelt: *Do you and your girlfriends go out for a beer and say, "Let's go fishing this weekend?"*

D. Salmon: *Well, that's stretching it a little. I wish there were a lot more women out there to join me with this. And I find that slowly but surely women are picking it up a bit more often.*

Thus, "The Natural Angler"'s attempt to confound the distinctions between nature and culture is linked to an agitation of gender roles; it is significant that "The Natural Angler" is scheduled just before "Car Care with Mary Bellows." But if this foray into the male domain of fishing is a feminization of the genre, it is rarely, if ever, feminist. As her female child guest squats over a minnow bucket, Van Kiekebelt teaches her what it means to be a woman among men:

Van Kiekebelt: *Now Whitney, I'm going to tell you a secret. Your brother wouldn't touch one of these [minnows]. Now what kind of guy is he? Shall we show him what a real woman is? Do you want to put your hand in there?*

But to be a woman angler means to bring traditional female roles to the sport. If "The Natural Angler" posits fishing as a cultural, rather than natural, activity, for women anglers it is a culture of domesticity. It is linked to the culinary arts:

Van Kiekebelt: *I love to barbecue whitefish. It is so tender; it is so nice. . . . A little bit of garlic, a bit of butter; Mmmm, I can taste it already.*

Or, in a discussion with Donna Salmon, fishing becomes craft, rather than sport:

Van Kiekebelt: *What do you think about fly-fishing. You just got into it recently?*

D. Salmon: *Well, I really enjoy fly-fishing and it seems to be that there is less technology involved; it's more you and the fish. You've got only the line between you and the fish and there is a bit more skill involved than. . .*

Van Kiekebelt: *I think there is a real art to it.*

D. Salmon: *Oh, yeah. And when you get into the other aspects: the education, the fly tying, which is a beautiful, beautiful craft. . . it's crafty! It's great for women to do. There's such neat flies out there. There's a whole new realm when it comes to fly-fishing.*

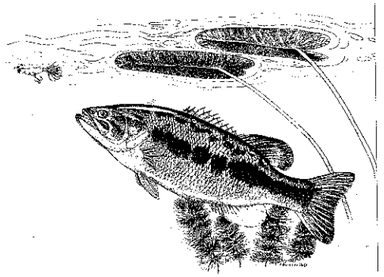
Van Kiekebelt: *You know a lot of people say fly-fishing for a woman . . . almost go hand in hand* [sic]. *There's a real touch, there's a real art and it's a very sensitive style of fishing.*

The "female instinct" for fly-fishing comes from women's sensitive nature, and that means a woman should take her nurturing abilities with her when she goes fishing:

Van Kiekebelt: *[I have] what I call my emergency measures, or my care package. You know, kids get restless, and sometimes they get hungry and you want to make sure that they're happy the whole time they are out there. So I always have a couple granola bars, a couple lollipops, something neat, easy, that I can put in my pocket.*

Of course, like the rest of television, this programme is produced to deliver appropriately socialized consumers to advertisers. "The Natural Angler" is sponsored by Ford, Hi-Tec Sporting Goods, The Kettle Creek Clothing Co., and two tackle manufacturers, Berkley and Fenwick. The show's audience is also packaged and sold to a wide range of advertisers: those selling fishing equipment, of course (although big-ticket items like boats and fish finders are notably absent), but also producers of what are considered feminine items which are often pitched with particularly regressive representations of female consumers: Secret anti-perspirant; SugarTwin; face, hair, and body care products; domestic soap products; and an array of food products (all noticeably absent from male fishing shows).

The nature/culture, outside/inside, male/female dichotomies that are negotiated on-screen in "The Natural Angler" actually parallel similar dichotomies that have emerged historically in the larger field of television and its place in everyday life. Since its development in the 1950s television has offered a closer relation between the indoors and the outdoors; television is a means to master the outdoors and nature and carry it into the domestic interior. Along with the development of suburbs, TV was designed for spatial domestication. Fishing shows, "The Natural Angler" in particular, are clearly the fulfillment of such a function in their ability to bring the fish into the living room while offering an experience of nature which is safe from any dangerous ambiguities and excesses of meaning, meaning which might threaten the carefully constructed world of postwar North America. The construction of nature on television goes hand in hand with its construction in our homes and yards, in suburban design and development, along our highways, in parks and preserves, and so on. "The Natural Angler" participates in the historical processes of containment, domestication, and rationalization of social and natural life.



Althusser Goes Fishing

The smallmouth will slip up behind it, and hail it quickly.
"Rod and Reel Streamside"

Fishing is the art of hailing, of bringing the fish *into the social world of the angler.* The lure is addressed not just to any fish but a specific species or a specific fish in a specific place: "Hey you there! Hey you, *Bass*!" As Van Kiekebelt suggests, hailing can work in both directions:

> Van Kiekebelt: *They [the salmon] are just beckoning for me to come and catch them.*

The surface of the water is ever-present on the screen of the fishing show. It is a membrane that separates two worlds: the water-world and the air-world. These different worlds are defined not just by the concrete, material elements of which they are composed, they are also different subjective worlds: the fish-world and the human-world. The fishing line negotiates between person and fish and their worlds:

> Van Kiekebelt: *What appeals to you about fishing . . . what attracts you to the sport?*
>
> D. Salmon: *I think the relaxation* and *the adrenaline that you get every time you catch a fish. . . . As well as the enjoyment, especially with catch and release, to be able to catch a wild animal, to appreciate playing with them, and allowing them to go back to nature and live again is really thrilling to me and I really enjoy that part of it.*

The orgasmic moment–the "money shot" of this genre–occurs when the membrane is violently ruptured and the fish, by its own effort or by that of the fisher, violently enters the air-world. On "The Natural Angler", like other shows, a jumping fish will elicit cries of joy from the anglers, and the higher and more violent the jump, the more respect is extended to the fish. This rupture can signify violent death for the fish, but it is also a face-to-face meeting of fish and fisher, nature and culture after a sometimes prolonged foreplay of communication between the two through the fishing line:

> Van Kiekebelt: *There's nothing like that feeling of casting and that hook set; like knowing that you've beaten the fish and outwitted them. And then putting up the fight and bringing them in. There's a real bond between the fish and the angler.*

It is significant, too, that the TV angler often speaks *to,* as well as about, the fish,

> Van Kiekebelt: *I am definitely going to eat him for supper tonight.* [To the fish] *I'm sorry, don't hate me.*

This boundary between the fish world and the human world is crossed discursively: *that is the primary function of the fishing show.* In a couple of episodes of "The Natural Angler" we are shown underwater shots of the fish. These shots are found in abundance in the print advertisements for lures and jigs and often show the fish taking or about to take the lure. We are placed within the fish's subjective world; we are asked to see the practice of fishing from, quite literally, the fish's point of view. The central problem of lure choice and manipulation is to discover or predict what will be recognized by a particular species of fish, in a particular environment at a particular time, as an attractive meal. (Van Kiekebelt demonstrates a precise and detailed knowledge of lure function in relation to fish behaviour and environmental conditions.) A great deal of effort is expended attempting to come to terms with the other-world of the fish, so what distinguishes the skill of the fisher is not only skill in casting or handling a hooked fish, but also her familiarity with fish perception and interspecies interpretive and communicative abilities.

At first glance, the cultural practice of fishing seems to be primarily a leisure activity, a sport that offers a set of pleasures in the pursuit of game and the domination of nature. Without the justification of subsistence, fishing might seem a *pure* sport, nothing but a game played out at the expense of the fish. But "The Natural Angler" foregrounds what is only a subtext in most fishing shows: a reciprocity between the human and nonhuman, fisher and fish. That reciprocity is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in the practice of catching and releasing fishing. Catch and release is exhorted on nearly every fishing show, but "The Natural Angler" is particularly obsessed with the practice. Releasing the fish back into the water has become nearly as important symbolically as the catch; on "The Natural Angler" there is almost as much instruction on proper release methods as on those of capture.

> Van Kiekebelt: *Oh, jeez, this guy is tough. Come on, come on. O.K. Come to Mama [laughs]. Come to Mama. All right. O.K. I'm going to pull him in now. Here we go. [As she picks up the struggling trout] Oh! Oh! Hang on; hang on; hang on! O.K. I'm going to grab him just in front of his fins, hold him there [holds the fish under the water. I'm giving him oxygen. Oh, he's a beauty. He is gorgeous. Of course I used a barbless hook because we really want to release him. Hang on; hang on; hang on! O.K., let me go for my hemostats here because I am having trouble getting this hook out of his mouth. Hang on, buddy. There we go; there we go; got it out. Always remember when you release him, put him back in the water, let him get a little oxygen, let him recover, take it easy until you feel–oh, he's a strong one [as fish swims away] and release. . . . Oh, that's great . . . away he goes back to his natural habitat.*

While it makes little sense in terms of fishing as a means to harvest resources, this elaborate ritual makes perfect sense within a cultural practice that attempts to generate a symbolic exchange with the environment.

This fishing show suggests a relation to fish based not only on representation, but also on communication and symbolic exchange. The literal and figurative understanding of the fish-as-subject has important consequences for fishing as a *cultural* practice. As I have suggested, fishing is much more than a leisure activity; it is primarily an ideological practice laden with ethical and ultimately ecological significance. Although a cursory glance at the fishing show would suggest an ethic of exploitation and domination, "The Natural Angler" reveals something quite different: interspecies communication and discursive reciprocation. The show's disruption of the symbolic boundaries between nature and culture points the way toward different relationships to nature.

"The Natural Angler" may offer an ecological ethic based upon a somewhat radical reformulation of human and nonhuman relations. Because it does so in the context of the feminization of sport-fishing, it begs the question that lies at the centre of ecofeminist debates: Are women, because of their biological roles as mothers and social roles as caregivers, somehow closer to nature and more "in tune" with ecology, or does the domestication and feminization of nature simply function to naturalize subordinate social roles, leaving women outside politics and outside history? WTN's contribution to fishing culture brings us no closer to resolving this question and only muddies the water further. This is because the show hangs in a web of tension and contradiction between its ethical, didactic impetus and the economic function of commercial television. The show's apparent ecological concerns are tempered by television's role as an advertising medium and a means of socialization. If feminized fishing sets up symbolic exchanges between women and fish it also sets up exchanges between commodities. If the show disturbs the gendered division of consumption of television, it also reinforces traditional gender roles in order to sell "feminine" products. So although "The Natural Angler" exists in one of the most obscure and remote corners of the mediascape, it nonetheless engages some of the broader and more significant issues, contradictions and practices of contemporary western culture.

The author wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

BACK to the FUTURE of QUEBEC

by M. NOURBESE PHILIP

THE YEAR IS 2020. A woman's body has been found frozen in the Canadian north. Biotechnology has so improved that her body has been thawed out and she has been restored to life. Gwyniad, as she is known, was buried in an avalanche in 1993. While she remembers some things, her political memory has been affected, in addition to which she is unaware of many developments in Canada, not least of which are Canada/Quebec relations. What follows are letters—in some cases excerpts from letters—written by Canadians to Gwyniad in response to her publicised requests to be brought up-to-date on what has happened regarding Canada and Quebec.

Dear Gwyniad:

In an attempt to help you to understand Canada/Quebec relations I went back to the journal I kept around the time of the 1995 referendum to see what my thoughts were:

October, 1995: "My Canada includes Africa. I've decided to put these words of greeting on my answering machine. It's an attempt on my part to counter the overwhelmingly Eurocentric context in which the debate over Quebec has taken place.

Do I have any legitimacy to say anything about Quebec? After all I am a newcomer to this land—this space called Canada. A space which, despite being a land of immigrants, has not traditionally welcomed all immigrants equally. Not all immigrants are equal.

My Canada includes Africa. And India. And China. And Japan and... The so-called ethnics. The very ones who, according to Parizeau, lost them the election. And money. He never said whose money. Ethnic money, perhaps? Non-ethnic money as in Anglo money?

My Canada includes Africa. An odd configuration of the greater being contained in the lesser/smaller. But for now it works metaphorically."

Gwyniad, I hope my letter fills in some of the gaps.

Dear Gwyniad:

I am so happy that you have been thawed out and brought back to life! It seems odd to talk about Quebec's independence since so much is now taken for granted. As you must now know, Quebec has been independent for some 15 years. It hardly seems memorable any longer. Everyone in the ROC (Rest of Canada) now accepts it and no longer sees it as such a terrible thing after all. We still go to Quebec to get a taste of Europe—Paris, France. Montreal continues to be very cosmopolitan and multicultural although Toronto still has it beat. But it's got class, Montreal does—you've got to give it that. What is it like trying to catch up with 20 years of history? Difficult and stressful I imagine.

Dear Gwyniad:

I was saddened to learn of your setback but happy that the doctors were able to fit you with a bionic arm. I'm sure other people have told you that it really isn't so different from how it was before. And Quebec and Canada have recently sent a joint team to take part in the winter Olympics in Norway.

At the time of the 1995 referendum I was a student at the University of Toronto and had done a paper on the role of the media during the referendum. An excerpt from my paper follows:

"Brooding, silent and inaccessible...an empty land with wonders" is how one writer describes Canada. This is the myth on which Canada was founded and exploited. For instance, if the land were, indeed, empty then issues related to First Nations people become less valid. This description is, in fact, very much the description of the settler and the silence identified in the above quotation has expressed itself in many pernicious ways, not least of which has been the way in which the media have dealt with First Nations issues.

The CBC failed to frame the issue of the 1995 referendum accurately, but to do otherwise would have meant talking about how this land had been settled, what had happened to the First Nations peoples in the process and how the Canada/Quebec issue is premised on the silence and the silencing of these peoples.

There was very little mention of First Nations issues in post-referendum analyses on the mainstream media. For example, the Morningside show the morning after the referendum only mentioned First Nations issues twice. After some two hours of discussion and panels, Barbara McDougall, former Conservative MP, alluded to the outcome of the referendums held by the Cree and the Inuit. The overwhelming vote to stay within Canada, she opined, had helped the Federalist side.

A First Nations man made his appearance on a panel of "minorities" assembled to discuss Parizeau's comments about the "ethnic vote." This was the second time a First Nations perspective was given and the only time a First Nations voice was heard on this show at least. His placement on the "ethnic" panel clearly reveals how the CBC contextualised the issues relating to Native peoples.

It was no different on television and there were times when I

Left: Modification of Enrique Chagoya's "When Paradise arrived," 1989 and detail from Gerald McMaster's exhibition at UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1992.

grew quite disheartened, so few people appeared concerned with the issue of aboriginal claims. Was I was being unrealistic? I confess to feeling that way until I read an article by R. Pierre Baril in *The Globe and Mail*: "the relative silence about aboriginal issues during the recent referendum campaign is an ominous sign of Parti Quebecois vulnerability on this issue. After 300 years, most Montrealers still whisper the anglicized word "Caughnawaga" (the Kahnawake Mohawk reserve just south of Montreal) with a nervous mixture of derision and fear."

I remembered how my mother would tell me that my grandfather, when he would get drunk, would say the most terrible things to my grandmother. He was Francophone and she Mohawk. He would tell her that she was a savage and they should have killed them all when they came to Canada. This went on for years, my mother said, until my grandmother fixed him so he never talked again. But why am I telling you all this? I don't know—maybe because I see me in you.

What I wanted to know back then was how you could separate a country like Canada when Quebec flowed in Canada's veins and vice versa, and First Nations blood in both. It would be like my trying to separate myself into the French part, the African Haitian part, and the Cree part. How could I do that and still remain whole? But then I would read about what was happening in Bosnia, in the former Yugoslavia where Serbs and Bosnians had intermarried for generations. It hadn't stop them entering a bloody, internecine conflict that went on for years. And I would grow cold thinking that this could happen in Canada.

Dear Gwyniad:

The seeing and sawing went on for several months, the accusations, the denials, the you-did-it-no-you-did it, the recriminations with talk about the Night of Long Knives. Finally someone suggested they should decide the issue through hockey. Don't know why it took them so long; they clearly hadn't read my work, The Zen of Hockey. Having the teams compete meant that Canada and Quebec wouldn't actually have to fight. The winner of the series would get to decide the issue of the separation of Canada.

This being Canada there were the arguments about whether there should be women on the team. And of course the issue of "ethnic" players was front and centre. The Canadian team must be multicultural, some people argued; after all it was one of the fundamental principles of the country. Others said that they couldn't have affirmative action policies deciding the outcome of Canada. They wanted the best. It was all very Canadian. Very polite. Very hypocritical. And very racist. All at the same time.

Finally we had the Canadian dream team—representative of all Canada: a couple of women, one African, one Asian, and one Native person who was also a woman. Quebec's team was very much "pure laine" and "vielle-souche." The organizers felt that the ethnic players hadn't quite mastered the game. And the women? Well, their best female players were unfortunately all pregnant. So there we were, in the year 2005, Team Canada vs. Team PQ.

I can still see it as if it happened yesterday. The game of the century. You've got to hand it to us for being opposed to violence and being peaceful. What other country decides its fate through a game. But then it's all a game isn't it—and that was what my book was all about. Of course the stock markets were in a flurry. With each goal the market would lurch this way then that way. The loony became a fucking yo yo. (Excuse the language but emotions ran high.)

Team Canada's top scorer was a woman of Jamaican heritage—a right royal amazon on blades. As luck would have it she was ill for the last game. Did the Quebecois win? I say no because the goal was off-side. But the referee ruled it was a fair goal.

If nothing else Canadians and the Quebecois take their hockey very seriously. There was rioting in the streets—in the snow actually. Guerrilla armies got started and these wars and skirmishes lasted for a good two years. Eventually, people got fed up with it all and finally the entire matter was taken to the Supreme Court of Canada which decided that the country had to abide by the hockey score. And that, my dear Gwyniad, was how Quebec finally got its independence.

Except it was all a dream. The result of all the stress caused by the constant constitutional discord in this country. It might as well be decided by a game I remember thinking at the time, so little of it appeared to make any sense any longer.

Yo Gwyniad:

Man that's some cool name. Gwyniad! Sounds like a queen or something. I read somewhere that it meant winter. Makes me shiver just thinking of it. Having a name like winter. Is that for real? Anyway you've been tripping out in the cold so long you've missed some real far-out happenings here in this country they calling Canada.

It was the unity rallies that grabbed me—especially the one in Montreal held the Friday before the Monday referendum. A couple of weeks before that—October 16th to be exact—the brothers—one whole million of them—had marched on Washington. The Nation of Islam's main man, brother Louis Farrakhan, had called it as a day of atonement for the Black man. I wasn't down with all that atonement shit, because I didn't think we had anything to atone for, but the brothers came, atonement or no atonement. Gwyniad, my sister, it was outta sight to see the brothers assembled there at the Washington monument. Now that was a nation. A great Black nation, or one part of it, that had suffered, shared a common history, a common language, and had had a common experience of oppression despite all the Oprahs and Michael Jacksons.

How down you are with your history?—I know you're Quebecois and First Nations but you're also Black—from the proud nation of Haiti, the place where those African slaves kicked white butt—French butt at that—and led by General Leclerc, Napoleon's brother-in-law himself. That showed me that no amount of paper and so-called law could make a thing out of a man. Or a woman for that matter. The first and only successful slave revolt! That's what Haiti means to me and I'm sure to you too.

I was into comparing what kind of demo these folks from the great white north could pull off. Gwyniad, my sister, excuse my informality, I was impressed. Shit man there was emotion! I didn't know these white folks could feel so much and even show it. These white folks could really get down when they felt like it. They were laughing and crying—with their faces all painted up with the fleur-de-lis and the maple leaf. Last time I had seen all this emotion among white folk was when I went to the Gay Pride Day, but I didn't know these straight white folks could get it up like that. Man I was real proud of them. Now, don't get me wrong, sis Gwyn. We still had them beat—they were a million Black people at the Million Man March. Period. Any one want to challenge that can call me. They weren't half as many of them as of us, but it was rich, man, rich with singing and waving and showing how much they loved Canada. They had come by plane and train and car and bus and it wasn't warm either. And they were there to big up Canada. Snow and ice and all.

Even T.O. had its share of unity rallies, with all the cultural bigwigs and icons standing up for Canada. But you know what, Gwyniad my sister, I couldn't help wondering how come it was all so wwwwhiiite man! I mean especially in Toronto. Now, I myself didn't actually go to the rally. With all the shit that Harris the Hun and his henchmen were laying on the people back in those times, you could easily have spent all day every day going to rallies to protest something. I was all rallied out so to speak around that time and had to make my choices. So I didn't check out the T.O. rally. But I read the papers, looked at the television and all I could see was pure white face Gwyniad, pure white face. There was the odd brown or black face, but very odd.

Now don't get me wrong, sis Gwyn, pardon the familiarity, but I feel I know you. I take full responsibility for not going to the rallies. And maybe the brothers and sisters felt like I did, that they weren't really part of the debate. Whatever the reason, we—what the white folk calling minorities or ethnics—have to take responsibility for not showing up. But guess what, there weren't no black or brown faces on any of the platforms either. Not even a token. Sister, I ask you, couldn't the organizers find a few "ethnics" to show off how multicultural Toronto was? Back then they were always touting Toronto as the most multicultural city in the world—but I didn't see no multiculturalism during this debate. Only when Parizeau got his butt kicked and presto! there we were in our accustomed position—being blamed!

Sis Gwyn that's like light years away! Lord but we lived through some serious hard times. That Harris the Hun man made us suck some real salt. One way or another Black people always sucking salt, so we were kind of used to it, but that was definitely what I call the white times—same as what white folks liking to call the dark ages.

But hey, Gwyniad my sister, at the time I felt that whatever happened Quebec had given the ROC an outta sight gift—I mean thousands of people coming out and spreading their loving for Canada for the whole world to see. Yes, Gwyn sister, love. This showing of love was far-out man, far-out. Whether or not you supporting nationalism and think it's a good thing, whether you questioning why people wanting Quebec to stay in Canada, it was a serious witnessing of something.

Speaking of why people wanted Quebec to stay in Canada—dig this: I actually heard this woman on the radio saying that she wanted to keep Quebec in Canada because it was nice to have a bit of Europe in Canada! Say what! Where had I been living all this time, I wondered. Africa? Asia? the Middle East? Last time I checked I could see made in Europe stamped all over everything. I wanted to ask this woman if she even cared whether Quebec wanted to stay in Canada. Shit man it was like having a picture in your living room—it's nice knowing that it's there.

But as I was saying—love, Sis Gwyn—it's a hard emotion—don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Many years ago I saw a sign at the Montreal airport saying that Rapid Air would take you straight to the heart of Toronto. "Dig that," my lady at the time said, "The heart of Toronto! Toronto doesn't have a heart!" We cut up about that one. It was supposed to be a real heartless place, Toronto. This was what a Quebecois sister once said to me—that Quebec was the heart of Canada. Many people were really down with this belief. Even the Deputy Prime Minister, Sheila Copps, shed some eye-water in the House of Commons saying that without Quebec Canada would be "only an empty shell... The heart of Canada is Quebec." Maybe, Sis Gwyn, that was what all those people were demonstrating about. When somebody's about to rip out you heart, you can't just chill out, smoke a joint and say, that's cool, man, that's cool. You get your butt moving and do something. Anything. It's bad enough to lose a limb, but once you lose your heart, you either have to grow another one, have a transplant, or you die. Since Montreal has left, sis Gwyn, Toronto has had to grow a heart—a big, wide multicultural and multiracial heart.

And Canada did not die—she just grew another heart. I'm outta here Gwyn and you look after yourself now that you're back in the real, or is it unreal world. Speaking about love and all that, Sis Gwyn, I don't mean to pry but what about you?—I mean you're fine looking sister and all that. You've been gone for what some 20 years? It must be lonely. Anytime you want to talk to me just pick up your pen or get on that e-mail. My address is: allblak @ af.rica

Dear Gwyniad:

It is not often one has a chance to be a part of living history and I want to add my voice to the others.

What I feared most was that the fed-

Top: Clarissa Sligh, detail from "Seeking comfort, I sucked my thumb," 1989.
Middle: Lorraine O'Grady detail from "Art is...," 1985.
Bottom: Postcard from the collection of Henry Louis Gates Jr.

illustrator unknown, New Yorker magazine, May 1994

eral government would make all these concessions to keep Quebec in Canada and at the end Quebec would still leave. And we would be left with a Canada that would be substantially weaker—a country only in name. Unless there was a miracle of some sort it was only a matter of time before the sovereigntists won.

There was a fundamental flaw at the heart our country and that was what had happened to the First Nations people; unless we settled that we would be condemned forever, I felt, to agonize about whether or not we had a country and what that country was.

"But the French have been here for 300 years!" This from a progressive friend in response to my concern about First Nations issues. The implication being that by virtue of their being here for such a long time, this somehow justified? rationalized? explained? why they should become a nation.

I challenged her with two examples: the presence of Africans in the United States for some four hundred years which as of 1995—and to a large degree still today—had failed to ensure that as a people they enjoyed the rights of full citizenship, let alone have their own nation. If length of time and exploitation were prerequisites for nationhood then African Americans should have been at the top of the list.

The second example was that of Israel. The Zionist claim to the re-establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine was based on the idea of an unbroken connection of the Jews with the land of Israel which goes back to biblical times. Despite the fact that the Jews had not lived in Palestine for centuries. My point? That clearly nationalistic claims to land are not necessarily extinguished by the passage of time. Neither does passage of time (as in the case of African Americans) necessarily give one greater rights to a homeland and nationhood. The fact that the Quebecois had been here for 300 years meant simply that—that they had been here for 300 years. It did not necessarily cancel out the claims of aboriginal people who, unlike the Jewish people, have always been on this land they call Turtle Island.

I'm not sure if my friend got my point, but I hope that you do and that my letter helps you to understand a bit more about what happened to Canada and Quebec.

Dear Gwyniad:

I had to go back to my journals and letters to see what I thought—it all happened such a long time ago and it seems like so much dead history.

Except for this letter to a friend—October 1995: "I have had moments of feeling "enough already"!—to France with Quebec!... More than a little bending of the truth has occurred regarding the description of Quebec's position in Canada. Recently that is. Then I thought that maybe Quebec leaving would create that moment of instability which might have a destabilizing effect on politics in Ontario. And perhaps in that moment we could bring enough pressure to bear on Harris' regime and its scorched earth policies. I have dismissed that because people aren't ready to take advantage of any such moment, and I suspect it will degenerate into chauvinism and ethnocentrism.

I do question this commitment to the nation-state that is supposedly Canada when our economic life is really controlled by the bond brokers like Moody's in New York. Further, with the rush on the part of the federal government to evacuate (eviscerate?) areas like health care, social services, unemployment insurance, I ask myself: what use government? Isn't it more than a little ironic that at this time when there is a move by the right to reduce government, to paint government as a monster (arguments made by militia movements)—and sometimes it is—we in fact have the government reducing its role? At the same time we—and the Quebecois—are expected to believe that there is some value to maintaining this fiction called the nation-state.

A couple of weeks ago I finally understood why I am opposed to Quebec separating. And the answer lay in language. For Quebec to separate and set up its own nation is to hark back to a time of settlement of this country by the Europeans. It is to enter the discourse of colonialism, isn't it, complete with warring European powers? Surely today, in 1995, the language we ought to be speaking, the discourse, if you will, we should engage in is that of resolution of First Nations issues including the return to First Nations people of illegally obtained lands. Surely this is what should be galvanising us and not the dreams of the descendants of a small band of European settlers whose women don't have enough children. We are in a time warp aren't we? For Quebec to separate is to give validity to that discourse which is fundamentally flawed by its inherent immorality. So for all that it is worth—which is nothing—my answer is no, although I believe that it probably will not be worth the trouble trying to pacify and keep Quebec happy within Canada. Already departments such as the cultural wing of the External Affairs are almost completely devoted to Quebec artists.

It seemed to me, Gwyniad, that this debate between Quebec and the ROC was essentially a colonial discourse—two European powers which had duked it out 2 centuries ago and from the point of view of at least one of the two, there was unfinished business to settle.

Despite the fact that Elijah Harper and other First Nations leaders had stated that there could be no settlement of constitutional issues in Canada without a resolution of aboriginal rights, they continued to be ignored for the most part. They were right to resist being included among the other ethnic minorities like myself who had come here in the wake of European settlement. They were right to resist the forced extinguishment of their rights. And while the preamble to the Canadian constitution continued to deny them recognition appropriate to their status they were right to keep challenging any constitutional accord with Quebec.

Canada has been built on the denial of aboriginal rights. It should not go into the future continuing to deny those rights. That was how I felt in 1995 when this debate was at its height. But as the African proverb says, when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers and that I believe was the position of the First Nations people vis-a-vis this archaic, anachronistic Anglo/French dispute.

The Inuit of Nunavik, above the 55th parallel, in Quebec saw the writing on the wall and moved very quickly to amalgamate with Nunavut—the eastern section of the North-West Territories. In 2000 they became a separate territory.

I did subsequently change my position to support the yes side but that will have to wait for another letter, Gwyniad. I trust that my letter has helped you.

Dear Gwyniad:

This is my second letter to you, but I felt that my first one omitted a few important issues. Time and time again the Feds told the Quebecois that it made poor financial sense to separate, but then very little made sense financially back then and in some ways it was a relief to see a people not letting their actions be determined by the bottom line as the rest of Canada was. I mean how can you weigh a pension against a homeland. I'm sure some people thought that way. You just can't put a dollar sign on love for a homeland can you?

The language the Feds used was very slippery and seductive. At the "unity" rally Chretien talked about how "we built this country." Who was the we, I wondered. The Chinese? The Japanese? The African? The First Nations person? Who, indeed, had built this country and at whose expense? What of the First Nations people whose lives and cultures were seriously compromised, threatened and in too many instances wiped out.

"We built this country": the language sounded disturbingly like that of other white settler leaders such as Ian Smith of the former Rhodesia. I don't mean to suggest that Chretien was an Ian Smith, the leader of the UDI movement in Rhodesia, but to a former colonial like myself, the language was all too familiar. The only difference between Canada and countries like Rhodesia and South Africa was that in Africa they didn't manage to wipe out Africans to the same extent they had done with Native peoples in Canada and the United States. That's all. "We built this country." As if they arrived and found a land unpopulated by anyone.

Someone else at the rally—was it Johnson, perhaps? I don't remember—talked about how people around the world wanted to come here to "this wonderful country, Canada." He failed to mention that not everyone was equally welcome in Canada in 1995, and that this had always been the case. The Jews could testify to that; so could Chinese, Asian and African peoples. Just before the 1995 referendum, this government that was extolling how people desired to come to Canada, had instituted a sort of designer-class immigrant. The only qualification—money. It had also instituted a head tax, not to mention the steep application fees which were already being charged. Fluency in English and French was also made a requirement. Increasingly the Canadian government was requiring DNA testing in cases involving Africans to prove that family relationships existed. And when they got here—those same immigrants were—and still are—made to feel that they were to blame for crime, high welfare rates and for taking jobs from Canadians. But listening to those politicians talking about how Canada was envied the world over because it was such a generous land, you would not have known this to be case.

Speaking of politicians: they never do change, do they? One would have thought that they understood that scaring the populace never worked. Bob Rae had tried to scare the voters in Ontario into voting for him a second time around in 1995. They should have. Many realized that too late, but his tactic didn't work. So too in the lead-up to the referendum the federalists kept trying to scare the Quebecois: they would be worse off financially if they voted for sovereignty. Vote for us or else. The or else in this case was financial hardship for the Quebecois. But financial hardship was what we were all living with in the ROC—high interest rates, cut backs, cut backs and more cut backs. The only verb politicians knew back then was CUT. The only principle driving society—the bottom line.

And I do remember thinking at the time that if I were Quebecois I would have thumbed my nose at the federalists and shown them my butt. What could they— the federal government—offer us? They were busy pulling out of everything that had held this country together—the health care system, the unemployment insurance system, welfare—the whole social safety net that had made us a kinder, gentler people. And what would we, the Quebecois have? A new land! Notre pays! Finally. That which we had been longing for since we lost to the English on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. And those turkeys in Ottawa just didn't get it. They wanted us to throw in our lot with them and their colossal absence of vision, their bottom-line economies that were shrinking by the day. So of course, vive le Quebec libre!

But Gwyniad, you who have been gone for so long don't know the half of it.

You would have thought that the plight of the Quebecois would have made them sensitive to issues regarding aboriginal rights. WRONG! The Cree and the Inuit had made it very clear that they were supporting the federalist side. (They had held their own referendums just before the Quebec referendum and they whole-heartedly voted to stay in Canada.) They wanted to make it clear to the Quebecois that they controlled their own destiny and that no longer were they to be seen as people without any agency who were being acted upon. They also claimed most of north of the province which Quebec saw as a resource-rich area with vast hydroelectric potential.

The Quebecois did not look favourably on these aboriginal claims. "Today's newly independent nations are one and all against their own separatists or potential separatists..." Jane Jacobs had written in her book *The Question of Separatism.* "Finland after having achieved independence from Russia in 1918 promptly refused the right of self-determination to Aland...Pakistan having won its own separation, went on to fight the separation of East Pakistan,now Bangladesh. And so on. That is the way all nations behave...But this behaviour appears inconsistent only in the light of reason. The consistency is emotional and unreason-

Detail from Gerald McMaster's exhibition at UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1992.

able." And add to that list Quebec. Emotional and irrational. What is the point of separating only to have someone separate from you? And what is the point of separating as a European people in Canada if you can't take your "native people" with you eh! How can we be just like you and equal to you if we don't have our own "natives" to oppress.

If no one has told you yet, the aboriginal peoples did separate. Despite the much smaller size of the territory that came to be known as Quebec those stalwart "pures laines" still wanted out whatever the size of Quebec.

Dear Gwyniad:

You wanted me to explain the reason for my flip flop–from no to yes. Well it had to do with the First Nations. Given that they themselves supported the no side, I suppose I should have supported their position, but it seemed to me that with a yes vote, the First Nations people could probably exert some leverage to wrest some concessions from both the Quebecois and the Feds. I didn't believe for one minute that the Feds were any more interested in resolving First Nations issues than the Quebecois, but I hoped that a yes vote would force their hands. Would Quebec or Canada have actually used armed force against the Cree and Inuit? At the time I didn't know, but a yes vote, I reasoned, would foreground the issue of aboriginal rights and so speed resolution to some of the fundamental issues. Maybe I was being unrealistic, particularly given the First Nations opposition to separation. But I also felt that a yes vote would put to rest this incessant bleeding that affected Canada over what it was. As we now know Canada did survive.

Yo Sis Gwyniad:

Why me? Self-determination! You might have been thawed but you're still a hard woman asking some damn hard questions. But let me throw a hard question back your way sis Gwyn: was self-determination intended to be invoked by settler nations which shouldn't be where they are and which nine out of ten times had obtained the land they're presently on by tricking and jiving. Do you dig it sister?

This is not to say I'm not down with the Quebecois' historic sense of oppression and exploitation at the hands of the British. Although, as my ole granny used to say, "tief from tief only make god laugh." All those robber barons and thieves–the history books calling them mercantile interests–were only too ready, just like they are today–to impoverish people. All people. Black, white, yellow, pink and brown. And I'm really down with that class consciousness shit and all that. Remember *White Niggers of America?* The Quebec brother was trying to riff on what "nigger" meant to show the plight of the Quebecois in Canada. But guess what, Sis Gwyn, when you're white you can lose the "nigger" part of that title–as the Quebecois have. When you're black...well, I'll leave that for you to complete. So you see how this race business messes with the class question.

Well I'm outta here, Gwyn my sister. Stay good and warm, and no more hard questions.

Dear Gwyniad:

I feel real nervous writing to you. I read about what happening to you, how you been frozen in the snow for so long. I'm just an ordinary woman from the Caribbean who living here for the last 25 years. When I reading how you can't have children because of what happening to you I just wanted to write and talk to you about this Quebec thing.

I come from Grenada and when the 1995 referendum happening I was in Canada for about ten years. At the time I thinking that the whole thing not really having nothing to do with me. Why? Well like it was their own problem–you know what I mean. And sometimes there was so much hell coming down on Black people head that worrying about Quebec, or if Canada was going to stay together was a luxury. When you have pickney to feed and clothe and some boss man trying to pay you next to nothing and you know no welfare there to get, your head just get hot hot and that's all you thinking about.

But I telling you something that making me real angry at that time. It was when Mr. Bouchard making his statement about how Quebecois women having the lowest birthrate of the white races. Can you imagine? I didn't believe I was really hearing what I was hearing. The white women let him have it and I think he apologised, but it seemed like to me that those women were angry because they feeling that he insulting them as women–seeing them as only baby makers They didn't really take him on because of the race part of what he saying. You see how these people really thinking.

Everybody smoothing out what he saying quick quick. And you know what I thinking about–how they breeding African women back in slavery time. You is a Black woman, you know what I talking `bout. But the really big buss up coming when on the night of the referendum–when the No side winning, Mr. Parizeau himself saying how is the ethnic vote and money that losing them the referendum. Then he saying that since the margin was so close how is only a matter of time before they winning. After that I figuring that they going to be setting up baby-making camps? Reason on it, my sister: when you take Mr. Parizeau's statement and put it together with Mr. Bouchard's statement about how white women not having enough babies wasn't that where they was heading? Breeding more white babies!

But then when you hearing how the media and the politicians in the rest of Canada trying to make out as if what Mr.Parizeau saying was so unusual, it just making you want to throw up. Mr.Parizeau shouldn't have said what he said. Is those kinds of comments that people taking to the streets to riot with. He doing the right thing by resigning. Mr.Bouchard should have resigned too. But what Mr. Parizeau saying no different from how plenty politicians, the media and ordinary white Canadians thinking in the rest of Canada. Look here, in this same city, some police strip-searching a Jamaican woman on a street corner not to long before that and they getting away with it. That telling you how they thinking about us. I don't know who they think they fooling by pretending they were so shocked. Look at the way they treating Black people and writing about them. As if we nothing but dirt. Mr.Parizeau must be letting the drink fly up in his head, but he only saying what plenty of them thinking.

Anyway, Gwyniad, I never do anything like this before–writing to an important figure, but I glad you coming back to life and I hope my letter helping you to understand Canada a little better.

Dear Gwyniad:

Love of a country is a strange and irrational emotion. Because of its irrationality it is a dangerous and potentially violent emotion. But how to explain that emotion that can overwhelm you at the sight of a sunset, perhaps, the curve of a hill, the way sunshine glints on leaves, or the quiet of a frozen lake and snow-filled landscape, while at the same time leading to violence. On behalf of what? Those same feelings? The belief that somehow you're part of the very soil–the land?

That's the way I feel about the tiny piece of coral that I call home, floating in the Caribbean sea. A deep abiding love that simply will not die. No matter where or how far you travel. There's a fit so to speak, between you and the land. When the Quebecois speak of "notre pays" and love of it, I believe I understand what they mean. And more so if that love has been nurtured in the shadow of an exploitive relationship with a larger and more powerful entity. The danger is that this love of "notre pays" can explode into violence: to die for one's native land! Nothing more noble than that. To kill for one's native land!

Yo Sis Gwyniad:

Lies, lies and more lies! Politicians lie! I don't know if you ever knew that, but take my word for it. Then they lie some more. They always have. They always will. The 1995 referendum was a classic example of lies, lies and more lies. On both sides. But one of the biggest lies was the one that Quebec politicians laid on their people. Man those politicians had those sovereigntists believing that if they voted for sovereignty, it would ensure that they lived in a socialist paradise in North America. Vote yes! if you believe that you'll be allowed to keep your unemployment, your daycare, and your medicare system without user fees!

We pay for everything now, Gwyniad, but back then user fees was still dirty words. For the life of me I couldn't understand why those Quebecois people believed that they would be allowed to be the one country in the Americas with a fully developed social net. Did they really believe that all those suits running the international financial organizations and the bond brokers in New York would somehow come over all dewy-eyed and tender at the vision of these newly independent Quebecois still damp with the birth experience? Yes, sis Gwyn they did, they did. Suckas are born every minute and continue being suckas. They seemed to forget that the very same right-wing forces that went to work on the ROC would set to work on them. If nothing else, to let Quebec remain as an example of an alternative just would not be allowed. It's like Cuba and the USA. Working examples are more dangerous than talk and rhetoric.

I'm not saying that was reason for the Quebecois to vote No, but politicians need to be down with the people and be honest with them. But as I said honesty and politicians don't really go together.

You hang in there sister. I hear you're making great progress. Way to go!

Dear Gwyniad:

Greetings on your return to society. I am sure that it's very different from when you left. I hoped that the Yes side would win in the 1995 referendum. I wanted something definite and I didn't believe it would be the end of Canada, as you have seen for yourself.

"The threat to Canada isn't over yet. Not by a long shot....We've been sleepwalking toward extinction as a nation, and I hope last night was a wake up call for all of us." That was part of a letter that was sent to me after the 1995 referendum. The extinction of Canada! Why would Canada be extinct, I thought. It wouldn't extend from sea, to sea but many many countries have survived amputations and continued: India, Pakistan, and Russia (when Finland achieved independence). Yes, there was the very real danger of violence as we had seen in the Yugoslavian example, but I wasn't sure why the letter writer thought Canada would become extinct. The people would still be there, I thought. So would the winter, so would all the natural resources that help to make this a great country.

When a significant percentage of a nation's people want to secede, how can you talk of a nation, extinct or otherwise, as if it were unmediated by this reality.

The sovereigntists may have lost the battle but they won the war. They succeeded in bringing the issue of Quebec to the consciousness of the nation in such a way that it could not go away. They had outed the rest of Canada, outed their love for Canada which was as passionate as the Quebecois'. Many Canadians had harboured a hidden love for this land and desired a wholeness which they saw as including Quebec. But just as the whole can be more than the sum of its parts, with Quebec's attitude at that time, the whole was infinitely less than the sum of its parts. There was already a hole in the whole that was Canada. And the closeness of the vote spoke to that; it was really only a matter of time before that fracturing became reality. What Canadians couldn't see was how they could be whole after Quebec. I knew they would be. They needed to believe in themselves.

Yo Gwyniad:

The nation is dead. Long live the nation! The Queer nation! The Black Nation! The First Nations! Were we nations? Could you have a nation without a homeland; without shared boundaries; without shared languages. Could we abandon the notion of nation? Should we abandon the nation? Those were some of the questions that I was chilling out with in those far-off days in 1995. How would I feel if there was a possibility for a "homeland" for Africans in some part of the Americas? Man we have certainly put in some hard time and we have earned it. But, and there is a but there somewhere and I'm not sure why.

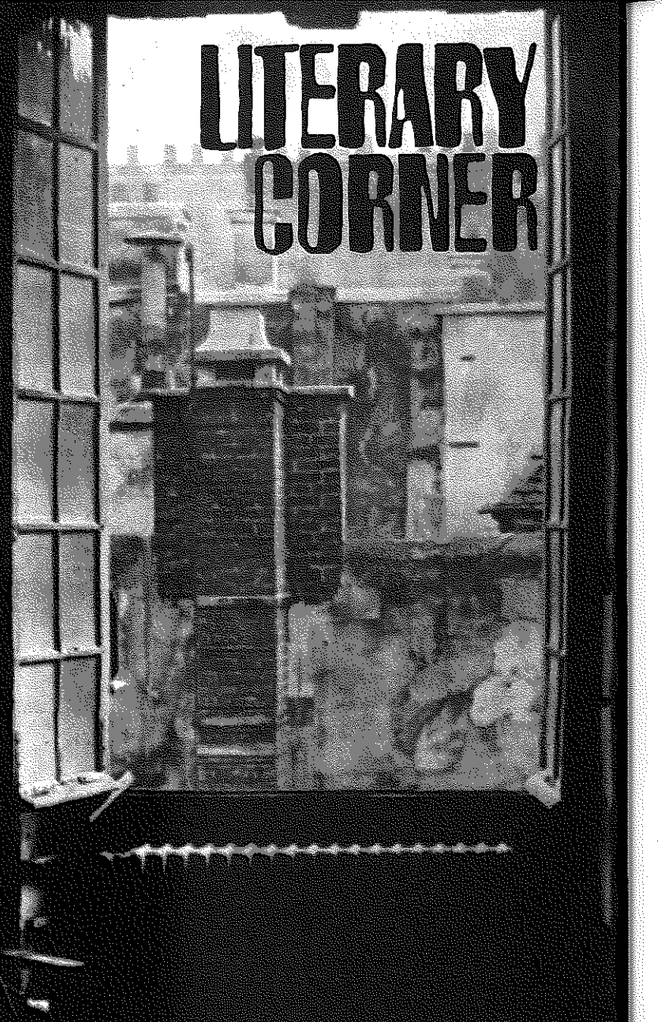
Maybe Canada is a space–a space where many nations can riff together within a common set of boundaries. There is a sort of fixity that is a part of "nation" when you think of it as being located in a specific space and time. But what about shifting nations? Nations and nationalities in constant flux, but in a positive way. So today you might be part of the Queer nation, but tomorrow part of the Black nation. Is that groovy or what? But we have to keep the damn politicians out of it, because you know they're going to fuck it up and as I told you they lie.

Anyway, Sister Gwyniad, all peace to you and I want to big you up for surviving the snow. Be talking to you and I'm outta here.

P.S. Gwyniad, one idea I was pushing back then in '95 was making one of the First Nations languages an offical language. Mind you, somehow offical and those languages don't go together–too much poetry. Anyway it didn't fly. Although thinking of Chretien trying speak one of those languages was enough to crack me up for a whole week. But it's still not too late. After-all, with Quebec gone we don't need French anymore. So why not Cree or Ojibway. I'm outta here.

LITERARY CORNER

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



an excerpt from *Radar Angels*, a novel in progress

BY Catherine Bush

A year ago, I headed off for a three-day trip to Sarajevo with my friend Hanna Sargent, who is a war correspondent. At first I had not wanted to go. I was frightened to go, I admit it. And, as I told Hanna, I did not necessarily see the point in going, or at least the purpose in *my* going to Sarajevo, even if I was associate director at the Centre for Contemporary War Studies. "Hanna," I said, "a war-torn city doesn't need another tourist. It doesn't. Or another journalist to live out the cliché of being able to claim they've stayed in the Sarajevo Holiday Inn."

"We shan't stay at the Holiday Inn," she said decisively. She had a flood of red hair and a manner that tended, at moments, towards brusqueness.

"Where shall we stay then?"

"With some friends of mine." She stubbed out her cigarette in the ashtray on the table between us, at the back of the Café Sans Souci on Upper Street in Islington, and looked up again, sharp-eyed and scrutinizing. "But someone like you should go, Cay."

I was still frightened, sitting buckled in the seat next to Hanna on the flight to Zagreb, where we would apply for our U.N. accreditation before riding in on one of the relief flights to Sarajevo. But when we arrived in Zagreb, we found that the Sarajevo airport had once more been closed after a mortar attack, and there was nothing to do but hang about or return to London.

We found a small hotel room, nearly squalid but serviceable, jammed with a pair of lumpy beds. At night, we undressed and slept side by side like sisters. During the day Hanna was happy enough: she had a story, there were the most recent arrivals out of Sarajevo to interview, and plenty of U.N. officials. And I? I walked the streets of Zagreb, a city that, if not currently in the front line of a war, was nevertheless steeped in it. Soldiers filled the streets. As lights began to change, crowds surged across intersections as they did in any city. In cafes, I watched people eat croissants and drank chocolate in a frenzy of delectation, licking their fingers and spoons, not quite as they did in other cities. In people's eyes, time seemed to pass differently.

At night, I lay in the dark in my sagging bed, staring up at the ceiling and thought, *What am I doing here? How did I come to be here?* And raged a little against Evan and Neil, the two young men whom I'd last seen in a Toronto ravine. *What have you made me into?* Hanna's breath gusted solidly in her sleep.

On the third day, the Sarajevo airport was still closed and there seemed little immediate sign of change. It could, of course, be weeks or months before it opened again. I told Hanna I was thinking of leaving, that I ought to get back to work.

"We could try to get in overland," she said, sucking in on one of the strong French cigarettes she liked to smoke. She breathed out deeply. "Or into the countryside."

"Really, Hanna, I —"

"You go back then," she said.

I managed to hire a car to take me to the Zagreb airport in time to catch the flight on which we were in any case to have flown back. Only, the flight was delayed. I imagined Hanna's little snorts of impatience, imagined disasters, airplane crashes. For practical reasons I imagine possible disasters, because it is part of my business to do so, because this seems better than to ignore them. The pall of war still hung like a film, like invisible bacteria, over everything.

Hoisting my knapsack over my shoulder, I made my way to the airport bar and ordered a shot of vodka, which I drank standing up. The man on the bar-stool next to me, clad in an overcoat, turned and looked up, asked me in English where I came from. London, I told him.

"But you aren't English, are you? American?"

"Canadian."

He told me his name was Daniel Jacobsen, and he was originally from Boston, although he hadn't lived there in years. He assumed I was another journalist until I told him otherwise. He'd flown out of Sarajevo four days before, which I could feel on him, a strange superabundance of energy pouring from his skin, a stunned fixity as his gaze latched on the walls across the room or the glass in front of him. He stared at his fingertips through oval glasses, then tossed his head up, blushing slightly, fawn hair mussed, cheeks shady with a day's growth of beard, and said, "I know this is crazy, but I'm going to Venice for a few days' vacation. Do you want to come with me?"

I thought about it for a moment before I said yes, as if it were possible, by doing this, to act both out of deep selfishness and selflessness, as if the extremity of the world abandoned demanded it as a form of relief or release. A celebration of escape.

I had to buy a new plane ticket and Daniel Jacobsen insisted on helping me pay for it. We flew to Venice but did not touch. He told me he had a flat in Prague, where he was based when he wasn't on the move through Europe. Had I been to Prague? I hadn't. The shudders upon landing were the jitters of ordinary plane travel. On the ferry into the city, he slung his arm around my shoulders and asked me if I were married and I said no, though I had been, and asked if he was, and he shook his head. The shock of arrival was thickly sensual. Mere miles away across the water lay a city under siege. Now I was approaching a city in which I hadn't in the least expected to find myself. Pigeons wheeled in a high arc across the wide and oceanic sky. Water slithered along the edges of the boat we travelled in.

Once before I had been to Venice, with Matthew Cale, shortly after we'd married; we bought charter tickets from London. Now I walked beside Daniel Jacobsen through a sea of metal café

"In cafes, I watched people eat croissants and drink chocolate in a frenzy of delectation, licking their fingers and spoons not quite as they did in other cities."

tables spread across the Piazza san Marco, past the swirls of camera-laden tourists, and down a narrow street on the far side. It was as if we had bestowed a marvelous contingent trust upon each other. We crossed a small bridge over a deep green canal so still it seemed somehow interior, and then, on the far side, the street we followed grew narrower and narrower, the walls greenish and mossy, although Daniel insisted he knew exactly where we were going — to the *pensione* where he always stayed when in Venice.

And around the corner where he said the Pension Alberti would be, it was. A woman slipped through a dark curtain into the vestibule to greet us but shook her head when Daniel said in Italian that he'd made a reservation. I

"Even here, ordinary things seemed miraculous. In the room down the hall, there were sheaves of toilet paper, the toilet flushed, astonishing hot water streamed out of the taps."

could understand this much. He flushed a little in annoyance—although it didn't really seem possible to use his recent arrival from a besieged city as leverage. No, the woman insisted. Oh, but there *was* another smaller room.

Any room would do.

It was small, small as a fishbowl, with lurid green walls and wooden shutters over the single window that opened onto a brick wall no more than an arm's reach away. No view. The lighting fixtures were blood-red, blown-glass globes that lit the room to a garish hue. No matter. We closed the door behind us and threw our bags onto the bed. There was a toilet and washbasin just off the bedroom, but the bath and shower were in another bathroom down the hall.

Even here, ordinary things seemed miraculous. In the room down the hall, there were sheaves of toilet paper, the toilet flushed, astonishing hot water streamed out of the taps. I sloshed hot water over my face and panicked for a moment — just for a moment — as to what the naked body of this tall, slope-shouldered man would look like.

When I returned, he had shaved and taken off his shirt and glasses: turned shiny-cheeked and hollow-eyed. He had folded down the starched white sheets. When I switched off the red globe of the bedside lamp, it could have been any hour of the day or night. I reached out my hands and touched skin. Vigour, a pure adrenaline ardour, won out over exhaustion. Touched nipples, the furze of hair on his chest, his throat, the bob of his Adam's apple, his lips, the tongue with which he licked my fingers, as he lurched forward, tumbling his weight across the bed. He found my breasts. I touched him out of thankfulness and gratefulness and because the whole world seemed ravishing.

For dinner, we went to a small unassuming restaurant not far away, with fluorescent strip-lighting across the ceiling and a tiered dessert tray spinning in the window, and ate *linguine al nero di sepia*, linguine with black squid ink, which dyed our mouths glistening purple. I drank *café macchiato*, breathing in the smell of sex that rose from my own body. In the morning, we would stand on the creaky wood of a floating dock and ride in *vaporetti*.

We discussed issues of intervention, rules of engagement. What was necessary, we both agreed, in the case of any intervention, was for the rules of engagement to be clearly delineated.

"Isn't one of the questions—" I said, stirring my coffee, "— isn't the question partly whether the intervenor is interested in peace or justice? I mean, is the point of the intervention to maintain peace, to accept both sides as warring factions and ignore the fact that one may be a hostile aggressor, the other an internationally recognized state trying to defend itself? For instance. Is that a useful impartiality or a corrupt one? Is it fair? Does your right as an individual to be protected from attack and fed take precedence over any civic notions of self-determination? But what if one internationally recognized state is born out of the struggles of another state that is still, at least partly, recognized internationally? I'm not sure I know the answers — I'm asking."

I stepped from the toilet back into the tiny green fishbowl room, where Daniel Jacobsen lay sprawled naked on the bed, arms folded behind his head, companionably and languidly exposed. The sheets twisted underneath him. The bedside lamp glowed. All this seemed startling and strange again, the world thick with sharp, incomprehensible yearnings. I sat back down beside him, twisted back my hair, pulled my knees to my chest. "What would you be willing to risk for love?" I asked, and fixed my eyes on him.

He stiffened. "For love?" His thin hair, flying in all directions, looked faintly ridiculous, lips thickened and puzzled. He looked, now, merely exposed, almost frightened, as if he had to batten down in self-protection at the question, as if the rules of engagement had suddenly changed.

"Yes," I said. "Don't worry. It's merely hypothetical."

"Are you thinking about diseases?" Although we had been careful — had taken the usual precautions.

"No," I said adamantly, "no I really wasn't, I—"

"You mean would I be willing to throw myself in a raging river to save the woman I loved?"

"More that sort of thing, yes."

"Why?" He had recovered some aplomb, some essential self-possessed inquisitiveness.

"Because I'm curious."

"Would I settle in some city I couldn't stand, say some disgusting, polluted, mid-sized, middle-European city like Dusseldorf just to be with someone? I don't know. Have a kid just because she wanted one? What about you?"

"Not sure," I said, and licked my lips. I eyed the enclosure, the haven of the green walls that kept the rest of the world at bay, felt the heightened thrum of the tiny room between us. I stretched my hands out tight over my raised knees. "When I was twenty-one, I had a duel fought over me," I said.

"A *what*?"

"A duel. With pistols. And seconds. It's true. At dawn in a Toronto ravine."

I watched him carefully, as I do whenever I tell people this. There's always a risk. In the beginning, I did not tell people at all. Even now, it's not something you can toss out lightly. One way or another it shocks people. It does. If they believe you. Some days, it's like unbuttoning a blouse to reveal an old scar; other days like flashing a glow-in-the-dark tattoo. But to tell people, and watch them then, offers its own sort of revelation.

With an exhalation of breath, he pushed himself up until he was sitting. His gaze, which didn't leave me, had a new avidity. "Was anyone killed?"

"Shot but in the end not killed." I smoothed one hand across a patch of white sheet.

"Why did they do it?" His lips stayed parted—in a fever of fascination, in faint anxiety, which was perhaps what I would have predicted as a response from him.

"Because they were both in love with me—or is it crazy on my part to assume that? One of them I'd been going out with for a couple of years. Then I met the other one—and I was trying to decide—but I never thought —"

"How did you find out about it?"

"Someone told me."

"In advance?"

"Yes—"

"So you knew these guys were going to fight a duel over you?"

"Yes," I said, and, reaching out one arm, switched off the light.

"Arcadia." A voice in the dark, raspy and thick with fear, a voice that pulled a thick rope of fear back out of me. As I tumbled out of sleep, I heard breathing, quick and shallow and wheezy with mucus, from lungs as liquid as a lagoon. A room in Venice. With a man named Daniel Jacobsen. When he switched on the lamp at his side, he was sitting on the edge of the bed, shirtless, in jeans, his face turned toward me, drawn, pallid, sleek with sweat. In one fist he grasped an asthmatic's small plastic inhaler.

"Asthma attack," he whispered. "I'm sorry. Usually the inhaler works. It doesn't seem to be working." *Help me,* the stretched lines of his face said. A child's face, a face that no longer bothered to hide its absolute desperation. *I'm so frightened.* And at that moment I longed to be anywhere — anywhere — other than the small green Venetian room.

"Do you need a doctor? Do you need to get to a hospital?" My own voice poured out of the warm inviolability of my own body, ridiculously loud, ridiculously ordinary. People died of asthma attacks. A friend knew someone who had died this way. Not here. *Please.* Not now. I had no idea how one got to a hospital in Venice in the middle of the night if one didn't walk on water. My Italian was terrible and paltry. Should I race down the carpeted stairs, through the dark hall, to where the proprietress must somewhere sleep behind her curtained doorway, shouting out in English, *emergency, emergency!*

Tilting his head, as if listening to something deep within his chest that only he could hear, he lifted the inhaler to his open mouth and puffed on it, haggard, eyes deeper in their sockets than ever — transformed once more.

I longed for safety. Why, *why,* was there never any escape from fear? My fingertips prickled. I did not want this responsibility. A high wild note careened at the back of my head. I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be doing this. A sign, a sign. What had I pulled out of him? What do you believe in — fate or choice or chance?

"Daniel," I said.

He stood up heavily, still clutching the inhaler, eyes on the walls not on me, and began to pace, back and forth, in the tiny stretch of space beside the bed, shoulders hunched forward as if he were trying awkwardly to embrace, to shield his lungs. "Give me another minute," he whispered.

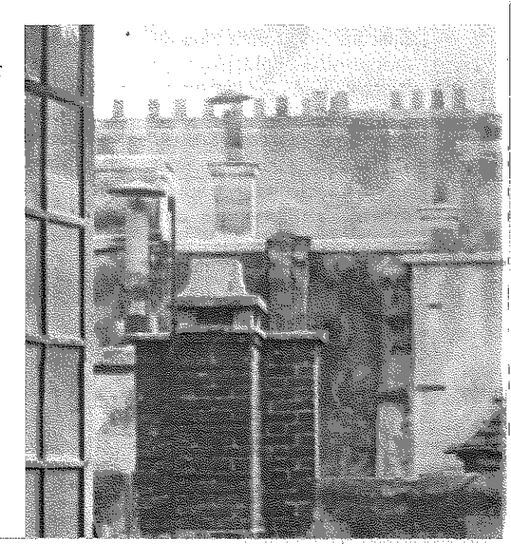
Hours later, I woke with a start beside him. A few pale blue needles of light seeped in through the slats of the shutters — the only sign of daylight. His chest rose and fell. He slept. I slipped from the bed and began hurriedly to pull on underwear, sweater, jeans. I tied back my hair with an elastic and hoisted the straps of my knapsack onto one shoulder. When I raised the latch on the door to the room, he sat up suddenly, startled, groggy, pushing back the sheets. "Where are you going?" he asked, clearing his throat.

This was my chance to change course, to say something like, *I'm going out for coffee. I'm going to find us some breakfast. Are you all right?* But I didn't.

"I'm sorry," I whispered. My tongue tasted silvery with fatigue and residual fear. "I have to go back to London."

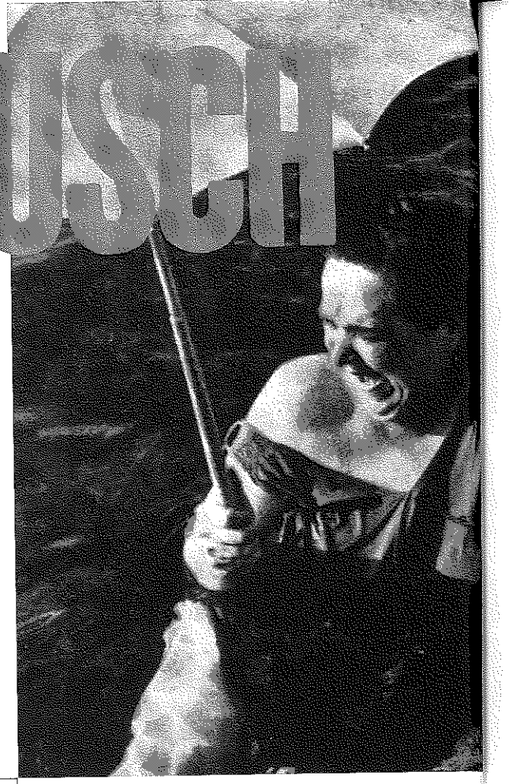
Indignation passed across his face, and fury, and dismay. *Bitch,* people sometimes shout at moments like this. Or worse.

"I'm sorry." I pulled the door shut behind me, desperate for my own white rooms, for the crazy, familiar, diesel-soaked embrace of the streets of London.



Excerpts from TIEFENRAUSCH (RAPTURE OF THE DEPTHS)

BY Bettina Klix



Rapture of the Depths (published in Berlin, 1986; translation, 1995, by Eric Miller) is a book of elliptical and elegant micro-fictions or micro-essays.

It's often a simple matter to please people whose arrogance is furtive or insecure: give them an opportunity to arrive too late. Anyone who can stand it, therefore, should simply arrive a few minutes early at the appointed place, granting such people a triumph that, today, they were perhaps for once going to deny themselves. In this way, they may blamelessly assume the longed-for condition, reveling in the satisfaction of comparing watches, breathlessly protesting. Sometimes they merely break off their gaze by way of apology while their body persists in the tremor that vouches innocently for the fact they did indeed make haste. The spectacle of the person awaiting them accelerates their last steps from a twinge of guilt or an impulse of coquetry. When even this sight actually leaves them a tranquil pace, then they are dissimulating nothing. No; then they enjoy themselves to the full.

In the course of a sedate conversation, you find a place sometimes for a second, interior conversation. Not a monologue—nothing disruptive. It's a fairly reasonable response to the other conversation or it provides a sly gloss on the situation, but it would sound decidedly unreasonable if it happened to become audible. It's really enunciated in defiance of the text, of the other person, of the whole scene—not inimically but with an impulse to seclusion. While you listen passively, you still retain the energy to realize: "Her eyes are much closer together than I had thought." Yes, you're cautious; you don't address the interlocutor in this silent commentary. Yet all the same you wish that he would become suspicious. You're staring and you're dissatisfied with that; you have to put it into a sentence. "He is so beautiful, so beautiful."

To speak badly of people not present often amounts to nothing more than an awkward gesture of friendliness toward those present He doesn't want to hear anything about himself: he has already communicated that through his brusqueness, gaucherie. I want to be suave now because I have an obligation be friendly to him. I allow him analogies; I put him in flattering relations; I shut out other people with my descriptions. For my audience, I summon up the distasteful elements of anecdotes; this tactic permits him indirectly to feel himself respected. I've never really thought this way at all about those who are absent when they were actually beside me, or when I was alone with their absence.

"Can I pose reasonable questions at all? Don't I ask only what I myself want to be asked? The question touches on something I'd like to talk about right after. The genre of the question is inherently egotistic: it serves first and foremost to give myself expression. It certainly doesn't strain to elicit the best from the other person, because the need to be entertained or informed isn't so powerful as the need to be entertained or informed isn't so powerful as the need to entertain and to inform.

"Sometimes I pay such paralyzing attention to the form of the question that I wholly forget to concentrate on the answer. Sometimes, in fact, a person feels so surprised by his own style of inquiry that he stops to ponder and admire it (if he has any luck, his interlocutor will join him in this exercise). Sometimes he will raise objections against his own question—and see it directed menacingly against himself."

At least they dare to consult their mirror image when they can be observed at it. If this really has to be done, they focus on some isolated detail with cursory discontent. They dissimulate their relationship to the image through grim-faced staring, irritable adjustments, nit-picking, smoothing. The gaze appears to be wholly taken up by the outward occasion; self-love collects itself together into a single point. "I'm not looking for myself, I'm just improving something." And this passes for honest work so far as other people are concerned. Only with a show of this attitude can dialogue with the mirror be made public, bearable for everybody else.

There are people who go everywhere too early. They can't bear to see something in a state of general irresolution. Through this precocity, they believe the will can be developed. But all they are doing is holding something back for themselves and acquiring besides a bleak pleasure: the power to determine divisions.

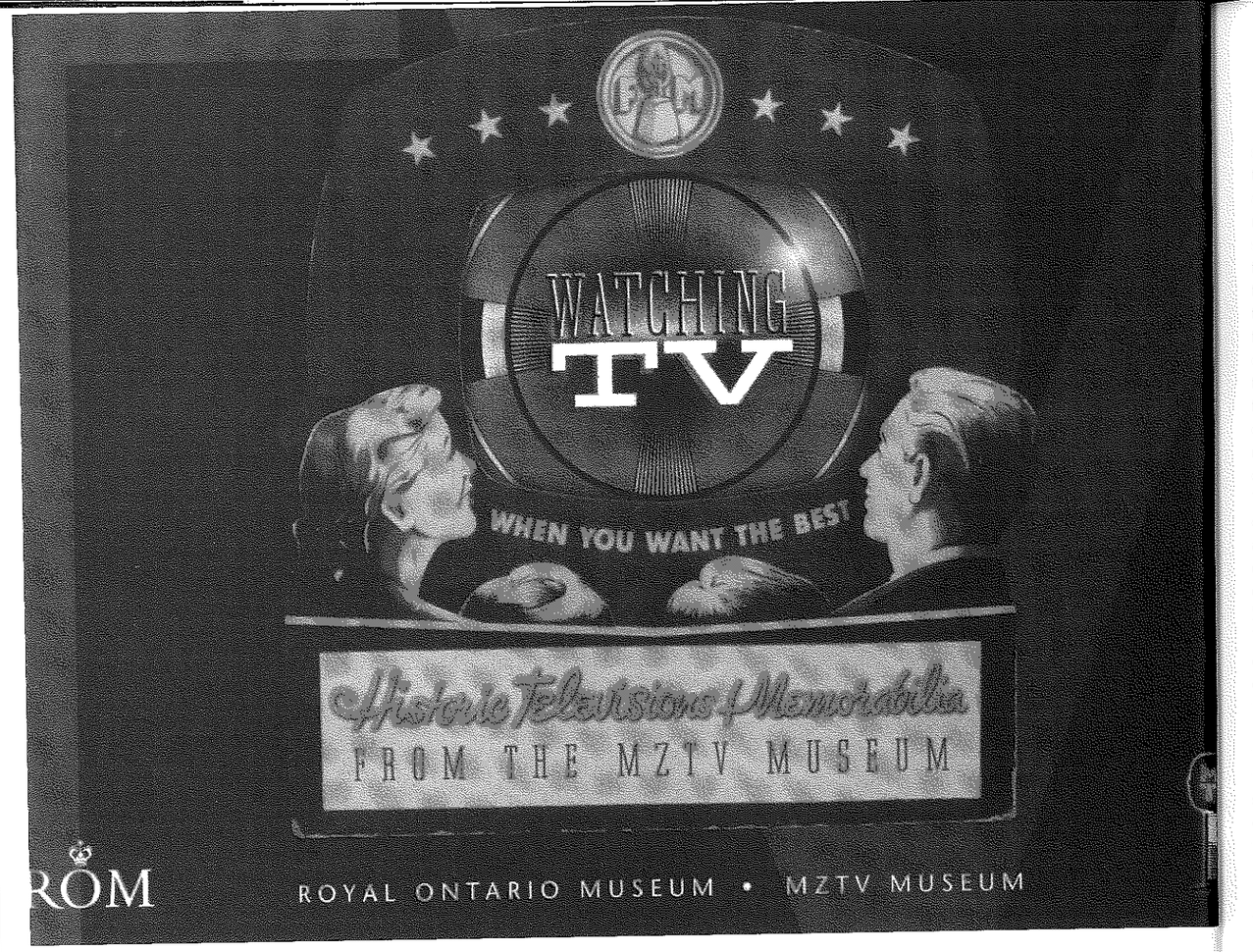
They can't restrain themselves from altering other people's hopes with a glance at a watch. When a congenial circle becomes a discontented round, in the moment of unspoken decision-making, they withdraw from the common space as if the conversation dissatisfied only them—as if nobody else had the remotest feeling for timeliness. They get bored remarkably fast because they can wilfully bring on this state of mind. The others persist in efforts of improvement, of salvage. But these people abbreviate the whole game in one fell swoop.

How pleasant it must be to sense in your wake three baffled people whose fellow-player has abandoned them. To desert a pair of apprehensive and undeclared lovers in the midst of their blundering, or to leave a couple of gauche people (who know each other only through the lost intermediary) to yield to their embarrassment! Such connoisseurs gradually perfect themselves in a means of absolute gratification.

If you can no longer stroll, but it still isn't late enough to necessitate breaking into a run, you *jog*. Right then you suddenly sense an impediment in space, in the zones that appear otherwise unoccupied, between the visible obstacles. The air itself feels unmanageable. It contains and hides an infinite profusion that for the first time, as if dumbfounded, offers opposition to your flustered and distracted eye. What usually yields itself by imperceptible degrees must now abruptly deliver its information. It can't behave as your companion; therefore, it gathers itself together into a counterforce.

When you can't vacate the space in which another person is making a telephone call, a common concession to the circumstance is a politely oblique gaze, if there's no other means of occupying yourself. You fixate on details in the room that no one has ever before so attentively observed—so judiciously observed, so devotedly, so amazedly, so curiously. Every form of involvement is possible. As you make such a survey, your sudden interest doesn't feel remotely courteous.

At first, you hadn't any desire to be so penetrating, didn't want even to look at the other person, especially because you couldn't avert your ears. But eventually you felt yourself simply drawn into the room, away and out of the noise. If you can't discover any more new sights, an amiable sort of dereliction comes into play—you just stare in front of yourself.



Watching TV: Historic Televisions and Memorabilia from the MZTV Museum

At the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario, 18 November, 1995 to 15 September, 1996

BY Beth Seaton

There is something strangely admirable about Moses Znaimer's ability to appropriate the strengths of his imagined adversaries. While known for his confusing aphorisms regarding the nature of TV, what is perhaps less acknowledged is that many of these sound-bites are actually samples: riffs poached from cultural theorists whose work on television often stands in direct contrast to Znaimer's corporate ideology. The shadowy form of McLuhan is frequently glimpsed here, as is that of Raymond Williams, whose idea of television's "flow" is easily recognized in Znaimer's oft-mentioned "commandment" that "the true nature of television is flow, not show: process, not conclusion." Like an advertisement whose words and images are mined from the detritus of consumer culture, Znaimer succeeds in the pomo art of appropriation.

Postmodern times of course demand the skill of collage: in these days of "fiscal responsibility" such (involuntary) collaborations are appropriate. In this respect, the "partnerships" of publicly-funded cultural industries with private-sector enterprises have become frequent occurrences. For Znaimer, the MZTV "Watching TV" exhibition at the ROM represents the second of such collaborative efforts. (The first was the CBC's broadcast of his diatribe "The TVTV Revolution"). Despite the prevalence of these new "associations," there is something strange about Moses Znaimer's recent alliances with public institutions, not the least of which is his animosity towards their supposed custodianship of an elitist "public taste." (Oh, but if only the CBC had such powers.) These liaisons involve a commercial broadcaster who is known not only for his self-aggrandizing promotions, but also for a programming schedule heavily geared towards promotional culture. What is perhaps oddest is that these publicly-funded institutions are now in the business of doing the promoting for him.

That said, the *Watching TV* exhibition cannot be easily dismissed. While Sony Corporation has contributed a few of its many dollars towards the show (an endowment acknowledged by the inclusion of a large SONY HDTV), the exhibition represents an important contribution to the historical study of television. Most compelling about this exhibition of 60 TV sets is its representational breadth, in which each set, located within a sequential path of technological and cultural change, is illustrative of a moment in television's evolution. Znaimer's archive includes some of the earliest and most "primitive" televisual devices. Their presence bespeaks a mystery and fascination now long departed as the "magic box" evolved into the most ordinary of domestic objects. And yet, none of the televisions on display ever succeeds in collapsing into the status of the "ordinary." While put into service of a larger historical narrative, each TV set stands alone as an artifact made novel again, the once-familiar now rendered unique and exotic by virtue of its distance from the banalities of the present-day. What is intriguing about this collection then is not only the story it tells of North America's obsession with television, but also the fetishistic objects themselves.

The premise driving this exhibition is that, as "common" household objects, television sets have been too easily consigned to the refuse bin. Thus, the MZTV collection rescues the idiot box from the trash heaps of history. Not suprisingly, this logic meshes nicely with Znaimer's oft-repeated complaint regarding the unfairly denigrated status of television (although it's questionable whether anyone really bothers to disparage television anymore). This assumption also allows for a particular type of "salvage ethnography," a common curatorial practice within museums of ethnography which argues that the artifacts of "primitive cultures" need to be saved from the contaminating forces of progress and change. Thus, *Watching TV* saves the object of television and its unfairly maligned face.

Also in line with conventional curatorial wisdom is the exhibition's expression of a national or cultural imaginary. Just as natural history museums schematically propose a "founding myth" for the education and edification of its citizens, so too does *Watching TV* lead the viewer through a foundational history of television—originating in the genius of John Logie Baird and the mechanical television, moving through the initial pre-broadcast and pre-network years, the electronic TV, and so on. History here is overwhelmingly spoken of as the unwavering march of technological innovation. Yet, this is a teleological project made all the more attractive by shifts in aesthetic as well as technology. The visually arresting TV sets on display tell an accompanying tale of how design moves compatibly with societal ideas of progress, technology., and the aesthetics of domestic life. Hence, the discernible shifts from the bakelite art deco designs of the forties (wherein TV took pride of place in the home), to the Bauhaus minimalism of the fifties (in which its presence was pared back simply to screens and receivers), to the monstrous console sets of the sixties (in which TV was disquised as a piece of furniture), to the space-age dreams of the seventies (in which TV sets often took the form of astronauts' helmets), to the flat-black pomo functionalism of the eighties and nineties (a television set is a television set).

Such a focus also betrays the limits of its perspective. In its overwhelming concentration on television as "object," this techno-teleological treatise makes little mention of the economic forces which have informed it. As a social and symbolic, as well as material object, television has long been embedded within the structures and dynamics of consumer culture. And yet, with the exception of a brief nod to early forms of product tie-ins (namely, children's toys), any engagement with the influence of advertising on television is ignored. In fact, the question of television programming is largely left in abeyance. No wonder, really, for to raise the question of programming would also force the question of the commercial incentive which drives it. Despite the "foundational history" which this exhibition purports to represent, television here is rendered ahistorical—all contaminants of an economic and political nature safely erased.

Sadly, the exhibition catalogue reproduces this imperative. While innovatively designed, the text's three essays are careful not to disturb the soft focus upon the commercial. In sum, critical inquiryis not welcome here. Nowhere is this prejudice more visible than in ROM ethnographer Grant McCracken's essay, entitled—what else—"Moses Znaimer and the Future of Television." After all, at the end of the story, when all is said and done, this is the *real* subject here.

One invented consensus is that no one loves or knows TV like Moses, especially not cranky professors who have been teaching classes on the media and culture for the past 15 years. In his sycophantic essay, McCracken repeats this tired old refrain: academics, elites and other experts dislike TV, or think they know what's best for TV, but they don't , they are boring, they aren't hip; Moses is hip, Moses is the TV God, the TV revolutionary. This, of course, is a cover- tune written (and endlessly sung) by Znaimer himself. In offering his services as back-up crooner, McCracken's stylization strays little from the original notes. His own evidence of the presence of belly-aching elites and intellectuals is found in Dwight McDonald's "A Theory of Mass Culture" and the Massey Commission, both of which were written over 40 years ago.

Leaving such historical absences aside, it is intriguing to read what McCracken finds so innovative about Moses Znaimer's TV—*Fashion TV, Media TV, Movie TV*, etc. He writes in reference to these programmes, "Znaimer's television dispenses with...editorial presence. It invites you to watch without a lifeguard. It supplies no Adrienne Clarkson or Robert Fulford to "explain" things to you." (Oooh, those authoritative CBC elites.) It may be argued however that TV commercials operate without any "editorial presence" as well. Similarly, the programmes cited above may be easily described as extended ads, mere vehicles for the selling of (model, fashion, celebrity, techno, music) products, in much the same manner as "Entertainment Tonight." There are no anchors here, no chirpy Mary Harts doing the happy-talk thing with her big-jawed colleague. Moses' television is supposedly a medium in which there is no mediation—it's just you and the box. In fact, this is what the *Watching TV* exhibition attempts to communicate. Such disingenuous expression becomes all the more galling at this point in time. It's rumoured that Moses and ChumCity are going to buy out TVO. Would someone please "explain" this to me?

Douglas Coupland, *Generation X*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Douglas Rushkoff (ed.), *The GenX Reader*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Jason Cohen and Michael Krugman, *Generation Ecch! The Backlash Starts Here*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

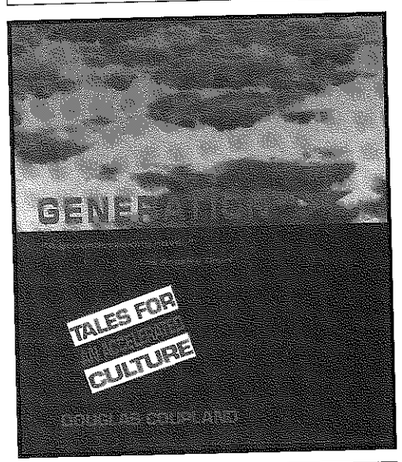
Eric Liu (ed.), *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation*. New York: Norton, 1994.

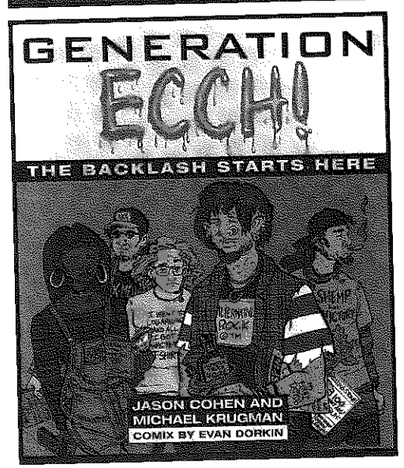
David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams, *Late Bloomers—Coming of Age in Today's America: The Right Place at the Wrong Time*. New York: Random House, 1994.

Rob Nelson and Jon Cowan, *Revolution X: A Survival Guide for Our Generation*. New York: Penguin, 1994.

What was GENERATION X?

BY Michael Hoechsmann





When Douglas Coupland published his first novel, *Generation X*, he could hardly have predicted the reception it would get. "Generation X" has eclipsed itself as simply the title of a popular book; rather it has been adopted into the canon of North American cultural literacy as the definitive statement of the world-view of a specific generation. The term has slipped smoothly into common parlance, nudging out *Time* magazine's "twentysomethings" and Richard Linklater's "slackers" as the moniker of choice for the post-boomer generation. The book *Generation X*, with its catalogue of witty aphorisms in the margins of each page, has infiltrated North American lexicon to a degree far outstripping its actual readership. Like the Bible, *The Communist Manifesto* or *The Closing of the American Mind*, *Generation X* does not have to be read to be "known."

Given the astounding reception accorded to *Generation X*, it comes as no surprise that John Fraser, the then editor of *Saturday Night* magazine, referred to Coupland as "The Dalai Lama of Generation X" (March 8-9, 1994). While not wishing to diminish the impact of Coupland upon North American popular culture—he who is regularly solicited to write for youth market magazines such as *Wired* (U.S.) and *Shift* (Canada)—it would seem premature to deify him as the voice of a generation. The slippage between *Generation X* and Coupland, while understandable, overestimates the role of the author of a tract whose time had come. Lose the title and the marginal aphorisms, and Coupland is the author of just another witty novel of contemporary youth anomie, a sort of *Shampoo Planet*, Volume 1. Coupland (and/or his publisher) showed great marketing sense by plugging his anti-commodity narrative into a sleek commodity form. This hitchhiker's guide to the new generational world-view offers the type of sound-bite wisdom which marketers and journalists require to ply their trade.

While "generation X" has taken on a life of its own, the fallout of *Generation X* spurred a small publishing boom in 1994, targeted principally to a youth audience. *The GenX Reader*, edited by Douglas Rushkoff, is the most comprehensive volume of genX lore for one-stop shoppers. Rushkoff has assembled a collection of fiction and non-fiction pieces, including canonical tracts by writers such as Coupland and Richard Linklater and excerpts from both mainstream (i.e., *Elle*, *Rolling Stone* and *Newsweek*) and alternative (i.e., *bOING! bOING!* and the *I Hate Brenda Newsletter*) publications. To get an overview of "generation X" as discourse, *The GenX Reader* serves as a good starting point.

The most critical rendering of the "generation X" phenomenon is *Generation Ecch! The Backlash Starts Here* by Jason Cohen and Michael Krugman. What Cohen and Krugman share with Xer luminaries such as Coupland and Linklater is a wry and irreverent sense of humor, but they focus their analysis on the very texts of "generation X." Cohen and Krugman point out that the texts of "generation X," which "seem to validate conservative old fart Allan Bloom's bellyaching about the accelerating vapidity of post-TV youth and their complete lack of depth, smarts, feeling or history," serve to support contemporary moral panic about youth. While their Xer tone grows wearisome, Cohen and Krugman submit their encyclopedic knowledge of genX pop culture texts to sharp critical analysis.

A clue to the problem of generalizing X is given in one of the many provocative essays in *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation*, edited by Eric Liu. In "Trash that Baby Boom," Ian Williams argues that "the only people willing to burn the calories to bitch in public about the perils of being directionless and apathetic possess far too much direction and gumption to come close to representing the kind they call their own." Liu's collection is wide-ranging and eclectic, with a focus on contradictory political positions and identities-in-process. Given that most genX literature is really about the contemporary ethos of white middle-class males, this collection, which is split along gender and race lines, is remarkably representative.

In his contribution to this volume, "Generation Mex," Lalo Lopez argues that there is a tendency in the white middle class cultural mainstream to speak in universal terms about things which are ultimately culturally and ethnically specific. States Lopez:

> **For the Gringorder, there's gotta be baby boomers and thirtysomethings, Generation Xers and slackers. I'd like to be a slacker, but my family would kick my ass. A poor Mexican worrying about esoteric emotions like angst? Get a job, "mijo."**

Of course, the term "generation" is imprecise at the best of times. Issues of difference, whether in terms of class, race, gender or sexuality, are systematically excluded by this generalizing term which puts everybody in the same boat. By ignoring questions of difference, the problems of disaffected white males can monopolize the cultural mainstream. On the other hand, if *Slackers* and *Generation X* are taken precisely as texts about disaffected white boys, if issues of difference are foregrounded, they can be taken as starting points for some productive analyses. Perhaps it is simply the case that the loud, protracted whine of "generation X" is an ethos shared by young white males, those very people who were socialized to expect social power and privilege to come easily.

What is the nature of this generational lament? The Christian Slater character in the movie, *Pump Up the Volume!* (1990), captures well the purported historical angst of North American youth so central to GenX lore:

> **There's nothing to do anymore. Everything decent's been done. All the good themes have been used up and turned into themeparks. So I don't find it cheerful to live in the middle of a totally exhausted decade when there's nothing to look forward to and no one to look up to.**

But the Christian Slater character is not a bona fide slacker, preferring to change his conditions by orchestrating his fellow high school students to rebel against the oppressiveness of their school. *Slackers* is a film about a group of white youth, living in the late 1980s of Reagan's America, in a condition of anomie and despair. The narrative of the film lazily wanders from one youth to another:

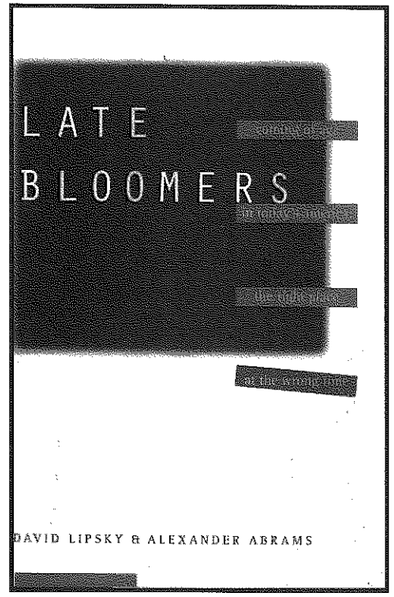
> **Same old same old... just lollygagging around. Still unemployed. I'm in this band... We're the Ultimate Losers now. And, ah, the singer's still a jerk.**

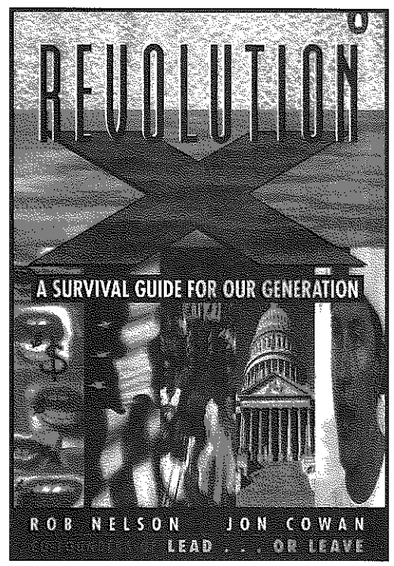
Along the way, the viewer is treated to a mix of random insights which do little to explain the situation, but rather reveal pessimism and disdain.

One of the most significant contributions to the generational lament of white youth—and one which reveals the gender bias of genX lore—is *Late Bloomers—Coming of Age in Today's America: The Right Place at the Wrong Time* by David Lipsky and Alexander Abrams. Perhaps the comment on the dust jacket that this book offers "constructive, non-confrontational analysis" and the pictures of two clean-cut young whites in suits should offer a warning, but nothing would quite prepare a reader for this: "Didn't we imagine that we'd have money, and houses, and families of our own, as we approached the end of our twenties? Didn't we imagine we'd be easy in our lives—that life would be an affair of lawns and washed cars and coming in through the front doors of our houses?" Despite the theme of lament for privilege lost, this book is loaded with research data on the new hard times for youth; nonetheless these two go-getters, worried as they are about the relative costs of a new Mustang and university tuition, seem hardly affected.

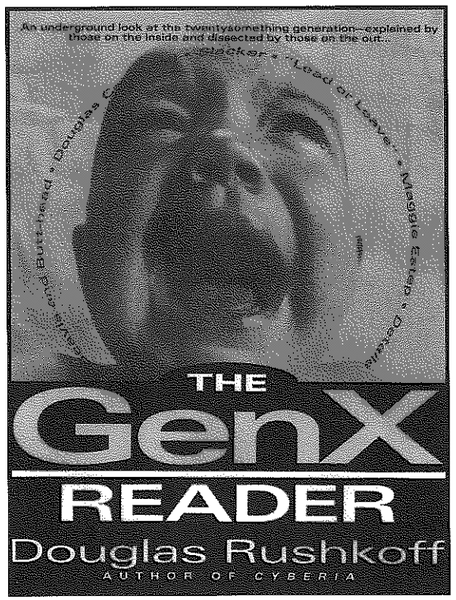
Two other energetic white boys, Rob Nelson and Jon Cowan, teamed up to write *Revolution X: A Survival Guide for Our Generation*. Nelson and Cowan, founders of the grassroots, "nonpartisan" "Lead... Or Leave" network, defy the genX stereotypes of fatalistic slackerdom to promote political engagement on the part of U.S. youth. They take aim at important social issues of the day such as the environment, crime and the debt; they attribute the latter to U.S. military spending, tax breaks to the rich and "middle-class welfare." They espouse a contradictory politics congruent with a middle-class life-style that buys into the material benefits of mainstream culture without completely selling itself out:

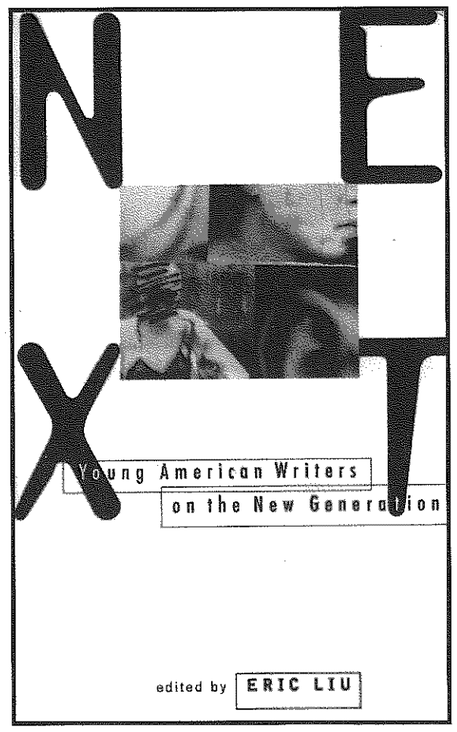
> **No fire hoses, tear gas, police dogs, or riots. Let's face it: Most of us aren't looking for unnecessary confrontation. A generation that reads *Details* and *Spin*, watches "Melrose Place," "Seinfeld," and "The Simpsons," and waits in line for the StairMaster after work is probably not going to be taking to**





book reviews





the streets with guns or Molotov cocktails anytime soon. And why should we? Just because we're not prepared to die to eliminate the national debt or wipe out poverty doesn't mean we can't get involved in changing the country and protecting our future.

Revolution X offers an extensive resource list for political action including addresses and phone numbers of advocacy groups, politicians, and both mainstream and alternative media. Unfortunately, though it is hipper and more street wise than *Late Bloomers*, it is cut from the same cloth. While Lipsky and Abrams might vote Republican, Nelson's and Cowan's "post-partisan" revolution is content to get youth out to the ballot box, presumably to vote Democrat.

The problem with *Slackers* and *Generation X*, to name the two most influential renderings of the North American post-Fordist generation, is that they substitute anthropological and literary insight for historical rigour. While genXers are in a unique position to reconsider the down sides of "free-market" capitalism, their spokespersons have rushed to characterize them as shallow, apathetic social dropouts. The fall-out of this new mythos has been a string of lamentable movies; aggressive fast-paced ad campaigns produced by an industry bewildered by Coupland's claim that "we are not a target market"; the appropriation by the music, television and fashion industries of grunge rock and fashion as a kind of urmoment of the whole phenomenon; and the emergence of Seattle as a new cultural mecca, a San Francisco of the 90s.

As the 90s wear on, however, "generation X" appears to be falling into disfavour. If there was ever a subcultural moment associated with it, its bricoleurs have moved on to new, more fertile terrain. To his credit, Coupland won't answer a question with the phrase "generation X" in it. And advertising executives, ever the perceptive ethnographers, are searching for new answers. Already in the spring of 1994, a Coca-Cola marketing executive, Sergio Zyman, asserted that "Generation X came. It took a few breaths. And it went. Generation X doesn't exist–and barely ever did" (*Toronto Star*, March 21, 1994). As if to punctuate the end of an era, the news emerged barely three weeks later that "generation X" had a martyr, Kurt Cobain, who left behind him a legacy of pain and torment.

If the New York publishers, who were in the process of unleashing a small "generation X" publishing boom, feared they had missed the boat, they didn't let on. *The GenX Reader, Generation Ecch!, Next, Late Bloomers* and *Revolution X* arrived and departed quietly from bookstore shelves. Despite its bring-back-the-80s ethos of individualism and greed, it was *Late Bloomers* that attracted some critical attention, thanks to a pre-publication excerpt in *Harper's* (July 1994). Lipsky and Abrams presented some media analysis which showed that, until 1990, major newspapers and magazines had portrayed youth as confident, ambitious, determined, fiercely self-reliant and even "older than they used to be." Suddenly, in 1990, this all changed. *Time* published a cover story entitled "Proceeding With Caution" which characterized youth as paralyzed shirkers, who were "overly sensitive at best and lazy at worst" and for whom "second best seems just fine." *Fortune*, which had

"Didn't we imagine we'd be easy in our lives—that life would b an affair of lawns and washed car and coming in through the front doors of our houses?"

Border/Lines is Your Alternative.

lauded young people in the late 80s, promptly adopted this same tone. To explain this editorial shift, Lipsky and Abrams pointed out that 1 million jobs were lost to youth between May 1990 and May 1991. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, they asked whether the new editorial stance on youth was an act of "unconscious kindness"; "after all, if we had never cared about careers and material success, it would be less disturbing for us–and for the country–when we didn't achieve them."

While Lipsky and Abrams perceptively demonstrate the impact of a changing economy on youth in general and on the discourse of youth in particular, their book shows that they are principally concerned about how that changing economy would squelch their own material aspirations. Nonetheless, to begin to answer the question of what was "generation X," the impact of a changing economy on youth must be foregrounded. But, given the malleability of the term "youth," and given the gender and ethnicity of most of the genX pundits, the question that follows is which "youth" are we talking about? As Leslie Savan writes in *The Village Voice*: "there's no Malcolm X in Generation X–except when an ad is deliberately "multi-cultural"; the X of the media mind means almost entirely grungy white youth" (August 24, 1993). To test this hypothesis, take a careful look at the current Molson "I am Canadian" campaign, which borrows all the elements of U.S. genX ads.

"Generation X," as a cultural phenomenon, corresponded to a great extent to a period of mourning of young white males who had been socialized to expect easy access to privilege and power, even if only the middle-class American Dream; today even that seems almost unattainable. While the economic conditions that gave rise to "generation X" are shared by all youth, those naming and being named by the phenomenon were predominantly white and male. The texts that they created or in which they were represented reflect that fact.

Stephanie Grant, *The Passion of Alice*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995.

The premise of this novel - an anorexic falling in love with a bulimic - supplants the gambit of the movie, *Proof*–a blind photographer taking incriminating pictures–as having the catchiest "hook" off all late twentieth century narratives. *The Passion of Alice*, a first novel, is somewhat rough-hewn. Regardless, it importantly avoids two traps: undisgorged treatment-centre realism or schematic *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* symbolism. The novel compellingly mixes horror and comedy, insight and voyeuristic fare.

About anorexics the narrator offers the following:

> **"People think that anorexics imagine ourselves fat and diet away invisible flab. But people are afraid of the truth: we prefer ourselves this way, boiled-down bone, essence. My favorite cooking metaphor (unfortunate perhaps) applies: not reduce, clarify. I know exactly what I look like, without hyperbole. Every inch of skin, each muscle, each bone."**

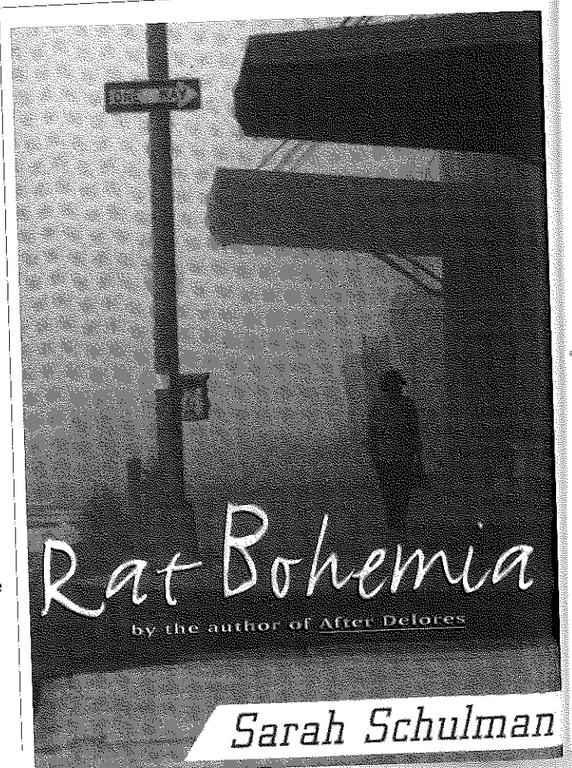
Also dispassionately, Alice recounts bulimic Maeve's rationale for throwing up in handbags instead of toilets:

> **"I got tired of putting my face where other people shit," she said. "It was giving me low self-esteem."**

Although the title hints at religion (the passion) and fable (Alice), the pleasure of the text is produced by less grandiose, more intimate strategies. Alice's long, difficult stay in the hospital (where most of the action takes place) doesn't translate into *longueurs* for the reader. **/S.F.**

James Lulle, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. New York: Columbia University Press,1995.

This introductory-level text on media and culture in the context of globalization is innovative in its integration of Latin American theoretical perspectives into the usual media studies canon of European and American works. Despite some rather plodding chapters, an extensive chapter on the movement(s) of culture in an era of economic globalization is worth the price of admission. (Lulle introduces some vocabulary for dealing with culture going global: deterritorialization, transculturation and reterritorialization). While this is not the best introduction to Latin American cultural theory, Lulle weaves the ideas of Jesus Martin-Barbero, Nestor Garcia Canclini and others seamlessly into his arguments, without patting himself on the back for some subplot of "discovery." **/M.H.**



Charles R. Acland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Youth in Crisis."* Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Given the growing hysteria over violent youth crime in Canada, Acland's detailed study of media coverage of a "preppy murder" in New York's Central Park is a very worthwhile read. Acland contextualizes his analysis of this case in a broader discussion of representations of youth in film, on television and in academic work to provide a framework for understanding the place of youth, and youthful excess, in popular discourse. This book is well-written, theoretically astute and politically significant. **/M.H.**

Sarah Schulman, *Rat Bohemia*. New York: Dutton, 1995.

The words of this novel–like those of the title–quirkily do and don't go together. As *de rigueur* as a reference to a Gregg Araki film and as conventional as a desire for "daddy," the components of *Rat Bohemia* also do and don't mesh. Deliberately. queer and straight don't mix, or at least they co-exist awkwardly here. Schulman jams the machinery that produces seamless fiction by giving three characters–two lesbians and a gay male (who dies of AIDS)–differentiated and wry–comic–pathetic monologues. The novel closes, curiously but aptly, with a "closeted" lesbian's narrative that marks the limits–in a hetero-oriented culture–of gay speak, of queer culture.

Schulman's New York–a city often constructed in literature–also reads sharply, uniquely. It's a queer space that unwrites, say, Paul Auster's or Jay McInerney's "big city." **/S.F.**

***Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, ed. Ivo Kamps. London and New York: Verso Books, 1995.**

Materialist Shakespeare: A History is not a history. Though conceived as such and organized chronologically from '77 to '94, it is really a culling "from the immense corpus of materialist Shakespeare criticism essays that are not only of exemplary quality but also typical of specific kinds and, collectively, suggestive of the broad range of materialist practices in Shakespeare studies."

The range includes feminist materialists, British cultural materialists, and American new historicists, all reading Shakespeare in the light of contemporary Marxist theories.

Materialist Shakespeare has lots of intriguing, important, and difficult ideas, but only Kamps' introduction and Fredric Jameson's afterword are new. So why republish articles already available in prominent journals?–to produce a textbook for graduate seminars. This is the expressed aim of the book, which seems designed to meet, as it were, traditional academic requirements for breadth and depth; hence, the editor's assurances that students and teachers will get materials for an intensive look at one play (three essays on *Othello*), for generic and historical coverage, and for study of "the most frequently taught plays" (which, this book implies, we should teach more often). In this sense the volume is thoroughly conventional. So too is the marketing hype, passed off as history, about the "meteoric rise" of materialist criticism and its "ascendancy . . . in Great Britain and the United States." In effect, readers are offered power, the power of being "where it's at" in the academies of the old empire and the new.

Although the packaging of the thirteen essays that make up this volume is irritating, what's in the package is worthwhile. The essays work against the grain of Shakespeare criticism by challenging customary assumptions and readings, the most disruptive being Alan Sinfield's on *Macbeth*; Walter Cohen's on *The Merchant of Venice*; Michael Bristol's on the "consoling and anaesthetic explanations" of *Othello*. Bristol concludes that "*Othello* is a text of racial and sexual persecution." Lynda E. Boose reads the "silenced history of women's silencing" in *The Taming of the Shrew*. For others, such as John Drakakis and Graham Holderness, not only early-modern, but also modern and postmodern, social history plays in and through the plays on the page, stage, and screen. Together the contributors to *Materialist Shakespeare* demonstrate the ideological clout of Shakespeare and, as such, his abiding usefulness. **/T.M.**

Reviews by Stanley Fogel, Michael Hoechsmann and Ted McGee.

B/L List

by Michael Hoechsmann

Interview

with Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña

Speaking From/To Border/Lines

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña combine their work in cultural theory with performance , video, and radio. They were interviewed by *Border/Lines* in November, 1994, when they performed "Mexarcane International," a performance piece set in a mall, which played on questions of racial and cultural identity in the corporate future staged by the new globalizing economy. Both have published anthologies of critical writings recently: Coco Fusco, *English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas* (New York: The New Press, 1995) and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, *Warrior for Gringostroika* (St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 1993). Fusco returned to Toronto in November, 1995, to participate in the Corrientes del Sur Film and Video Festival with *Pochonovela: A Chicano Soap Opera*, a video by Fusco that features the Chicano Secret Service.

Q: Guillermo, the Mexico-U.S. border has been the site for much of your work. You were a founding member of the Border Arts Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (1985) and among your many "border" works, is the film version of your performance "Border Brujo" (1990). While the concept of "border" has recently slipped into Anglo-European scholarship with relative ease, it does not appear to draw extensively, if at all, from your work. On the other hand, important theoretical work from Latin America, such as Néstor García Canclini's *Culturas Híbridas* (1989), does establish important links to your work. Could you comment on the development of the notion of "border"?

Guillermo: The border paradigm was originally introduced in the mid-'80s by artists who were working in the highly charged political context of the U.S.-Mexico border at a time of tremendous nationalism in both countries. For the PRI in Mexico, the border was seen as a site of contention against which to define "Mexinacity." For the Reagan administration, it was seen as a threat to the national security of the U.S. Neither country was interested in border dialogue, border exchange, border culture, or in talking about a border consciousness, while artists were.

Ronald Reagan and the Mexican peril

One of the contributions that border culture provided to the debates on identity in the '80s is to talk about binary identities, transitional identities, multiple repertoires of identities, hyphenated identities. That kind of language didn't exist in the Mexican discourse on identity prior to that. You were either Mexican or Chicano—you couldn't be both at the same time. Suddenly, theorists and artists started to assert that we should embrace that contradiction, that you could be a Mexicano and a Chicano at the same time, or you could be a Mexicano in the process of chicanization, and so on.

There had been a number of initiatives to engage in a politicized dialogue at a grassroots level among the Chicano, Mexicano, and Anglo communities living along both sides of the border, but in the mid-'80s, artists and activists began to talk about the need to develop a border consciousness and a border aesthetic. The border art of that time was a very contestatory, radical discourse that took place at the margins. Slowly it began to creep into academe, and by 1987 or 1988 one can witness a gradual acceptance of the border paradigm. It was a much more chic paradigm than that of multiculturalism, which was extremely problematic and had too many holes.

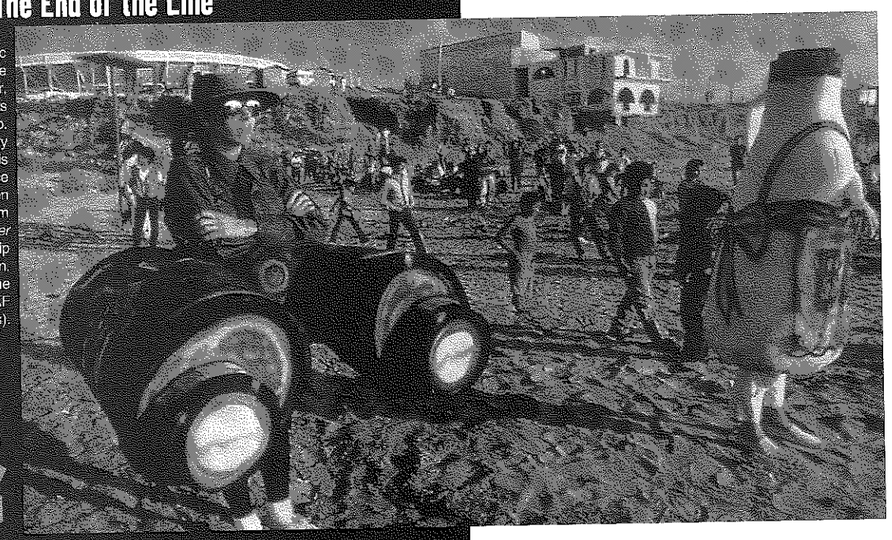
I think that at first many academics were completely uninterested in a dialogue with the radical artists and activists who had been actively engaged in the creation of this model. It wasn't until 1989 that both sides began to engage tentatively in a dialogue. Artists started to read radical social anthropologists and cultural critics, and those people began to talk about art. By the end of the '80s, you had activist artists debating at the same table with literary critics, cultural critics, social anthropologists, philosophers, etc., who had all suddenly realized that they were working in similar territories.

Unfortunately, I feel that eventually the border paradigm became saturated, overused, emptied of meaning, and slowly it became depoliticized. Currently, something similar is happening with the hybrid model, which is a very useful model for understanding many of the processes that are taking place in contemporary America. Soon it will be appropriated by conservative sectors in academe to mean practically anything and there will be a need for another paradigm. This is the ongoing process where radical paradigms become emptied of meaning.

Q: Is there an element to this discussion of borders that we might be able to attribute to a type of South–North dialogue, an intellectual contribution that speaks against the dominance of Anglo-Europeans in academe?

Coco: For me the problem is one of philosophical orientation and politics. Speaking from a position of privilege enables one to erase the political dimension of what it means to have a border, so that anything can be a border and all borders are the same because they are equally permeable. The reality of the matter is that that is a privilege of those who can cross any border without any obstacle or penalty. For those

"The End of the Line"



A site-specific performance at the U.S./Mexico border, by the Border Arts Workshop. Documentary scenes of this performance can be seen in the film *Mi Otro Yo/My Other Self*, directed by Philip and Amy Brookman. (From the BAW-TAF archives).

who really experience difficulty in crossing, the politics of which border is which and which one is permeable or not and why, is much more apparent.

Guillermo: The border as a metaphor was and continues to be very useful. It is a very malleable metaphor which allows for multiple readings, some more politicized than the others, depending on one's position. For a theorist, the border can be a very useful laboratory of thought, while for a Mexican migrant worker the border means fences, police dogs, border patrol, helicopters, raids and fear. That is why we have to very careful in terms of glamourizing the reality.

In the border model of collaboration that many artist collectives have developed since the mid-80s, I think that often the Chicanos and Mexicanos offer the ideas and the Americanos control the terms. In a sense, we are witnessing an intellectual version of a *maquiladora* and a cultural version of free trade. Under the label of border art, the Mexicanos provide the raw talent and the intellectual and artistic labour, and the North Americans are the curators, the impresarios, and the publishers, the people who control the terms of the debate, who frame the artistic product, and who organize the conferences.

We have to work against that model; what we want is a truly symmetrical exchange between the North and the South, between the Norteamericanos and the Mexicanos. For that symmetrical model to emerge, there has to be a time when the U.S. stops talking and begins to listen.

Q: Coco, you co-produced a video documentary about Cuban artists called *Havana Postmodern* (1989) that aired on public television. Recently, the concept of postmodernism has been receiving alot of attention in Latin American intellectual circles, but one strong current within those discussions is to suggest, as do writers such as Celeste Olalquiaga and Nelly Richard, that given the "*mestizaje*" of Latin American culture, postmodernism is anything but new. Could you tell us about the video and its reception in Cuba and the U.S., as well as commenting on the viability of the concept of the postmodern in Latin America?

Coco: I went to the Havana Biennial (with the two co-producers) in 1986 with the intention of making a documentary about that event. At that time there was quite a heated debate going on in Cuba as to whether the term postmodernism would apply to that context. While it is true that socialist realism was never imposed on Cuban art, in the '70s there was an official disdain for internationalist trends, for a kind of aesthetic eclecticism which had been part of the history of Cuban visual art. There was pressure to pay more attention to artists who dealt with figurative paintings, especially representations of working class people.

At the time, the same people who are now recognized as internationally acclaimed artists—José Bedia, Flavio Garciandia Consuelo Castañeda, Arturo Cuenca—were in a much more precarious position. By associating themselves with a movement that was critical of cultural nationalism, they were assuming a position that was somewhat controversial. Their take on Cuban culture involved a more realistic, more open-minded view of "underdevelopment." We were condemned by some bureaucrats who claimed that our representation of the island was too ugly. Thus, the tape was censored in Cuba and it became a kind of underground cult video for a while. We showed it in the States, but the right-wing Cubans didn't want to know that there is any art in Cuba. For the American left there was a problem because they were still into this idea that Cuban art was all posters and schematically pro-revolution. So we made the video at a moment when there wasn't much acceptance of the concept of an independent, autonomous artistic activity coming from an underdeveloped socialist revolution.

What took place in the debate over postmodernism in Cuba was the opening up of the visual arts to the aesthetic experimentation that we associate with art in other parts of the world, particularly the U.S. and Europe from the '60s and '70s.

At the time we made the tape most European and American curators thought the Cubans were just slaves to fashion, that they had read too many issues of *Artforum*. I showed the tape in London to the visual arts curators at the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art] and they told me that Cubans couldn't have postmodernism because they had never had a modernism. That was the state of things at the time; now it's perfectly fine and it's cool and everyone recognizes that the coexistence of different historical and social formations in the same society at the same time is similar to what Jameson labelled postmodernism.

In regards to the broader issue of postmodernism in Latin America, I think that it is ultimately positive that intellectuals outside of the U.S. and Europe decided to have a debate about postmodernism and that news of that debate actually got back to the "centre" and some people take it seriously. There really was a time when it was not considered acceptable for people in Third World countries to talk about postmodernity. It's not only that there was a total lack of familiarity with urban cultures and the uneven introduction of mod-

Jesús Romeo Galdámez

ernism and modernist practices to these countries, but it was also because there was this really strong sense among a certain generation of critics, including many Latin American leftists, that postmodernism was something for the hyperdeveloped world and had nothing to do with Latin America. So the attempt to interpret the relevance of that concept to a Latin American reality specifically, but also to a lot of developing countries, was a really smart move.

Guillermo: I think that a postmodern reading of Mexico is better than a magical realist reading, which is what existed prior to the introduction of this debate. Magical realism only helped to perpetuate the myth of Mexico as a partially industrialized country, not quite modernized and more connected to shamanism and a kind of rural magical thinking, than to the political, social, and economic problems of a postmodern society. In terms of art, it was the same. Americans had alot of trouble accepting the idea that Mexicans could do conceptual art, video art, or performance art, because that meant accepting the notion that Mexicans were citizens of the same time and place and not creatures somehow encrusted in an historical era existing outside of the present. To understand Mexico as a postmodern nation is to politicize the perception of Mexico, and I am all for it.

In regards to performance politics, I just want to mention the example of the Zapatistas and the figure of Marcos. This is probably the last chapter of a very novel history of performance activists in Latin America. You have the quintessential postmodern guerrilla leader, someone who is fully aware of the symbolic power of utilizing a mask and of using props, and of the importance of press conferences and of staging theatrical actions for the eye of the camera.

Q: Guillermo, you suggest that Joseph Beuys was correct to prophesize that art will become politics and politics will become art. You state that in the 1980s "politicians and activists borrowed performance techniques, while performance artists began to mix experimental art with direct political action." Could you comment on this statement in light of current developments in the U.S.? What are the current prospects of Gringostroika?

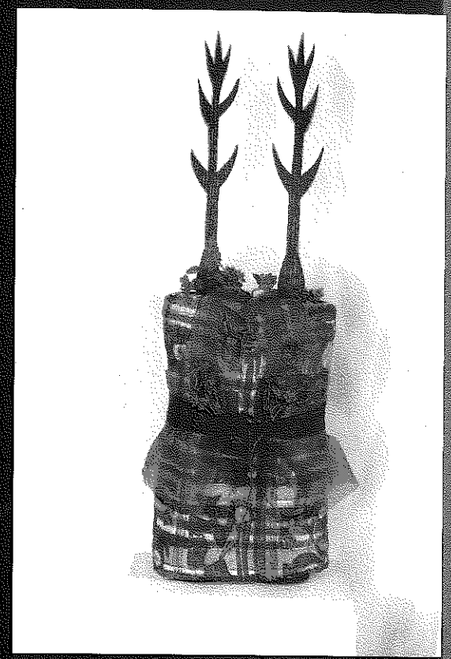
Guillermo: You are speaking to us in a very dim moment; we have just experienced a shift of power to the Republicans, as well as the approval of Proposition 187 and the reelection of Pete Wilson in California. Gringostroika as a national project, the American version of "glasnost," is being completely dismantled. What we are witnessing is an incredible retaliation from the dominant Anglo-American sectors of society. They are very well organized and they are doing everything possible to dismantle social services, education, medical access, and cultural programmes that serve people of colour, newly arrived immigrants, women, the homeless, the elderly. They are doing it so thoroughly and effectively that I think we are going to be in very bad shape by the end of the century.

Three or four years ago, many people were talking about California as this very interesting laboratory, a sort of possible future where we could develop models of coexistence. Now I think that California is becoming increasingly an apartheid state, with a kind of a cowboy version of the French politician, LePen, called Pete Wilson. Two weeks before we went on the road, a supremacist group in California started issuing stickers and leaflets telling Anglo-Californians that it was time to start killing Mexicans. Over the past two years, opportunistic conservative politicians and sectors of the mainstream media have been creating the psychological and cultural conditions for the justification of aggressive behavior towards the "illegal" immigrant community. They have been labelled as the source for all of the social ills of contemporary America. It is very dangerous. We need border dialogue right now more than ever.

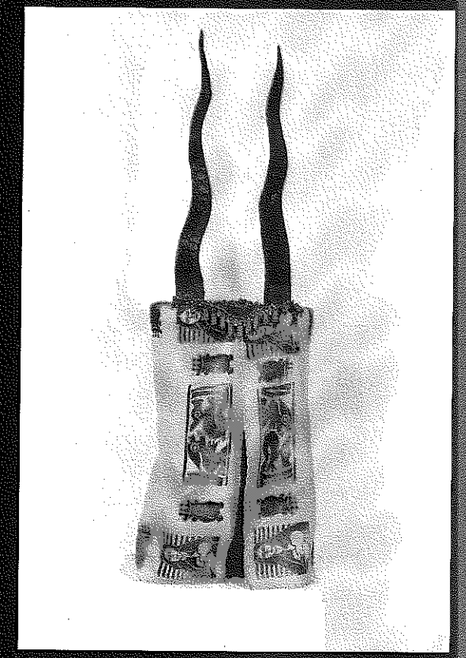
Q: Where do you/we go from here?

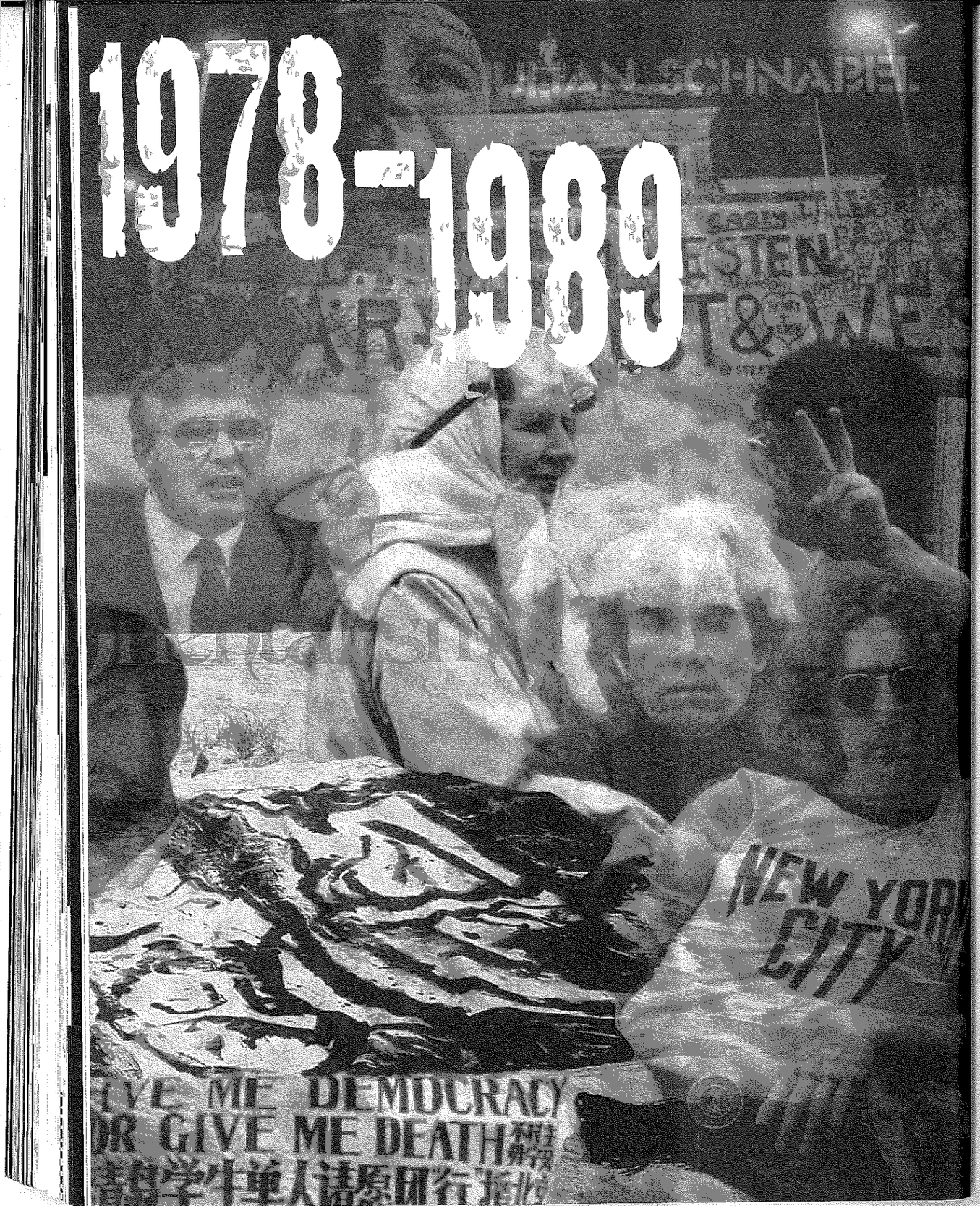
Coco: Attempts to counter the hegemonic gringorder are going to become more strident because the U.S. government has given the green light to all attempts to stop any kind of institutionalized multiculturalism. If all of the institutional attempts to account for difference and historical inequities are going to disappear, then it's all going to have to be countercultural. This is terrible, but I don't think it's the end. I believe that American culture is the product of the clashing of cultures. Even though there is a myth of a homogeneous America, it has never really existed. Aspects of other cultures will enter into the society and into the culture and we'll feel the effects of it in the long term.

Guillermo: In terms of our performance work, I think that it is time to become very activist, to speak out, to do work that is very tough and confrontational with alot of valour. It is time for artists to assume a role of leadership, and to do very risky work, because we have to fight back.



"Torahs." Torah as Icon. A female counterpoint to a traditionally masculine God.
by Lanny Shereck and Rochelle Rubinstein





WHEN DOES POST-POSTMODERNISM BEGIN?

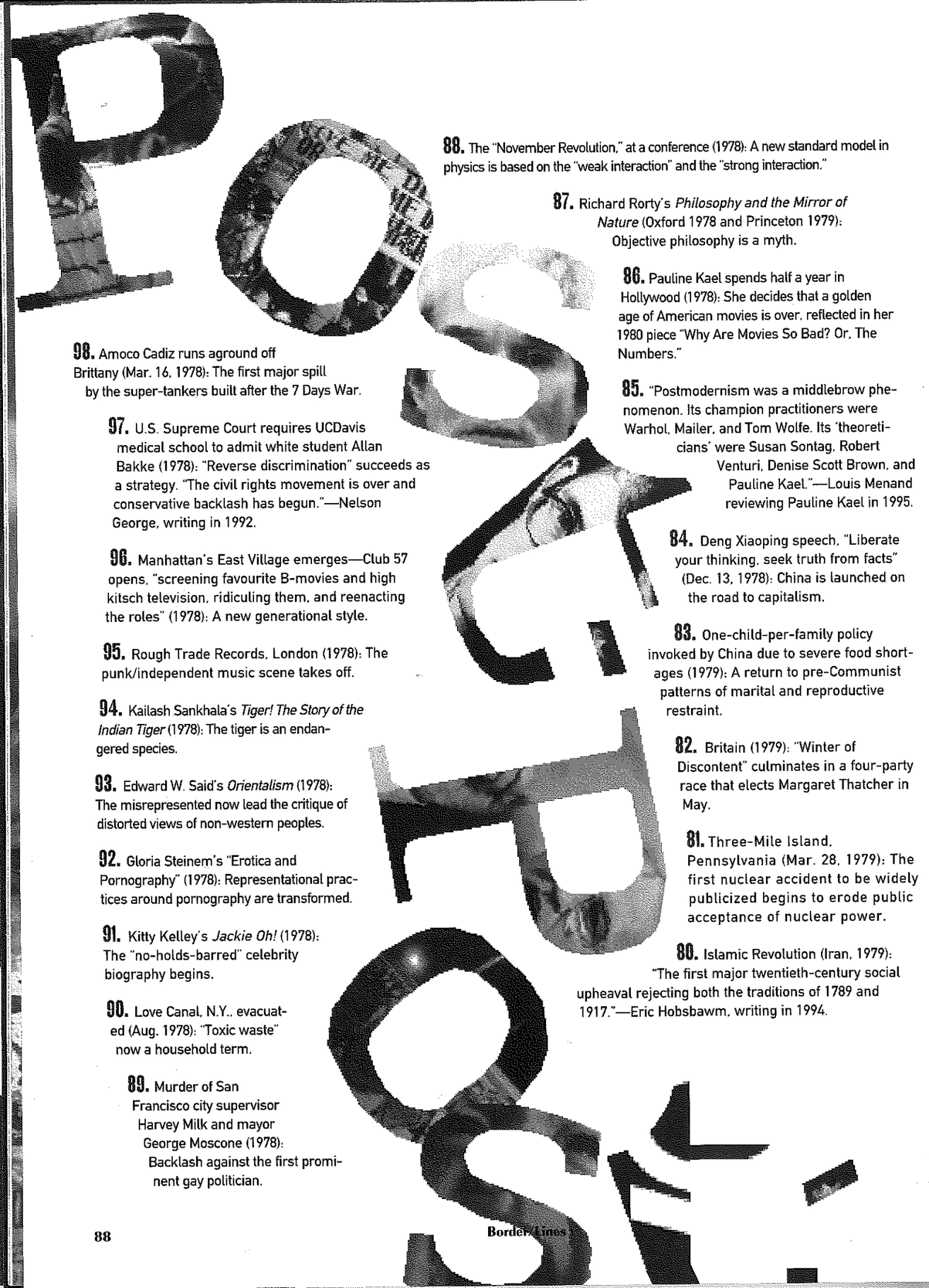
by Dennis Sexsmith

A.: 1983/84, plus-or-minus five years. From Proposition 13 (1978) to the Fall of the Wall (1989). The following is a list of One-Hundred Starting Points of the Era of the Generation that Comes of Age after the Baby Boom Generation (with a postscript on the end of the post-postmodern generation in A.D. 2000).

"We are, certainly since Nietzsche and Spengler, 'terminalists.'"
—George Steiner

100. California's Proposition 13 cuts property taxes by up to 57% (1978): Middle- class tax revolt signals the end of the New Deal and the dawn of Reaganomics.

99. Chaos theory launched at a physics conference by a group of self-trained Santa Cruz grad students (1978): Apparent randomness is, in fact, complex order.



98. Amoco Cadiz runs aground off Brittany (Mar. 16, 1978): The first major spill by the super-tankers built after the 7 Days War.

97. U.S. Supreme Court requires UCDavis medical school to admit white student Allan Bakke (1978): "Reverse discrimination" succeeds as a strategy. "The civil rights movement is over and conservative backlash has begun."—Nelson George, writing in 1992.

96. Manhattan's East Village emerges—Club 57 opens, "screening favourite B-movies and high kitsch television, ridiculing them, and reenacting the roles" (1978): A new generational style.

95. Rough Trade Records, London (1978): The punk/independent music scene takes off.

94. Kailash Sankhala's *Tiger! The Story of the Indian Tiger* (1978): The tiger is an endangered species.

93. Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (1978): The misrepresented now lead the critique of distorted views of non-western peoples.

92. Gloria Steinem's "Erotica and Pornography" (1978): Representational practices around pornography are transformed.

91. Kitty Kelley's *Jackie Oh!* (1978): The "no-holds-barred" celebrity biography begins.

90. Love Canal, N.Y., evacuated (Aug. 1978): "Toxic waste" now a household term.

89. Murder of San Francisco city supervisor Harvey Milk and mayor George Moscone (1978): Backlash against the first prominent gay politician.

88. The "November Revolution," at a conference (1978): A new standard model in physics is based on the "weak interaction" and the "strong interaction."

87. Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford 1978 and Princeton 1979): Objective philosophy is a myth.

86. Pauline Kael spends half a year in Hollywood (1978): She decides that a golden age of American movies is over, reflected in her 1980 piece "Why Are Movies So Bad? Or, The Numbers."

85. "Postmodernism was a middlebrow phenomenon. Its champion practitioners were Warhol, Mailer, and Tom Wolfe. Its 'theoreticians' were Susan Sontag, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Pauline Kael."—Louis Menand reviewing Pauline Kael in 1995.

84. Deng Xiaoping speech, "Liberate your thinking, seek truth from facts" (Dec. 13, 1978): China is launched on the road to capitalism.

83. One-child-per-family policy invoked by China due to severe food shortages (1979): A return to pre-Communist patterns of marital and reproductive restraint.

82. Britain (1979): "Winter of Discontent" culminates in a four-party race that elects Margaret Thatcher in May.

81. Three-Mile Island, Pennsylvania (Mar. 28, 1979): The first nuclear accident to be widely publicized begins to erode public acceptance of nuclear power.

80. Islamic Revolution (Iran, 1979): "The first major twentieth-century social upheaval rejecting both the traditions of 1789 and 1917."—Eric Hobsbawm, writing in 1994.

79. Sony invents the Walkman (1979): The listener is present yet absent.

78. Eric Fischl paints *Sleepwalker* (1979): The rebirth of painting begins.

77. The Fatback Band's *King Tim III (The Personality Jock* (1979): The first rap record.

76. Pierre Bourdieu's *La distinction: critique social du jugement* (1979): Taste is a function of class.

75. Julian Schnabel's second exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery, New York, has leading dealers and collectors fighting to buy his works (1979): The kick-off of the '80s art boom.

74. The revival of sculpture first heralded at British pavilion, Venice Biennale (1980): The return of mass, representation, and soma, signals the rejection of minimal and conceptual art.

73. Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (translated into English, 1980): The new history turns 180° to examine particular strata in detail, rather than speculate about the big picture.

72. Unprecedented numbers force subsequent blockbuster exhibitions to ration attendance after *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, MOMA (summer 1980): Art becomes a mass spectacle.

71. Jacques Derrida's *La carte postale* (1980: Why does Socrates always have to come before Plato? Why chronology?

70. MTV begins (1980): Pop music as TV ads.

69. Luis Alvarez's hypothesis is published in *Science*, that the great Cretaceous extinction was caused by an impacting asteroid (June 6, 1980): He "fractured the reigning tradition of Lyellian gradualism during the 1980s."

68. Computer sales surpass automaking as number one U.S. industry (1980): The information age supplants the industrial age.

67. Polish authorities permit a tenth-anniversary memorial in Gdansk to the shipyard strikers killed (Dec. 1970): The tide turns in Solidarity's favour; state communism begins to falter.

66. "Having created the Swinging Sixties, Lennon became a hold-all for the thronging credulities of the next decade, a decade whose demise coincided with his own."—Martin Amis, writing the obituary of John Lennon, 40, killed on Dec. 8, 1980.

65. Douglas Crimp, "The End of Painting," *October* (spring 1981): Critics welcome the so-called death of painting, leading to a decade of critical intolerance for paint on canvas.

64. The IBM PC appears (1981): Big business adopts what had till then appeared to be a toy.

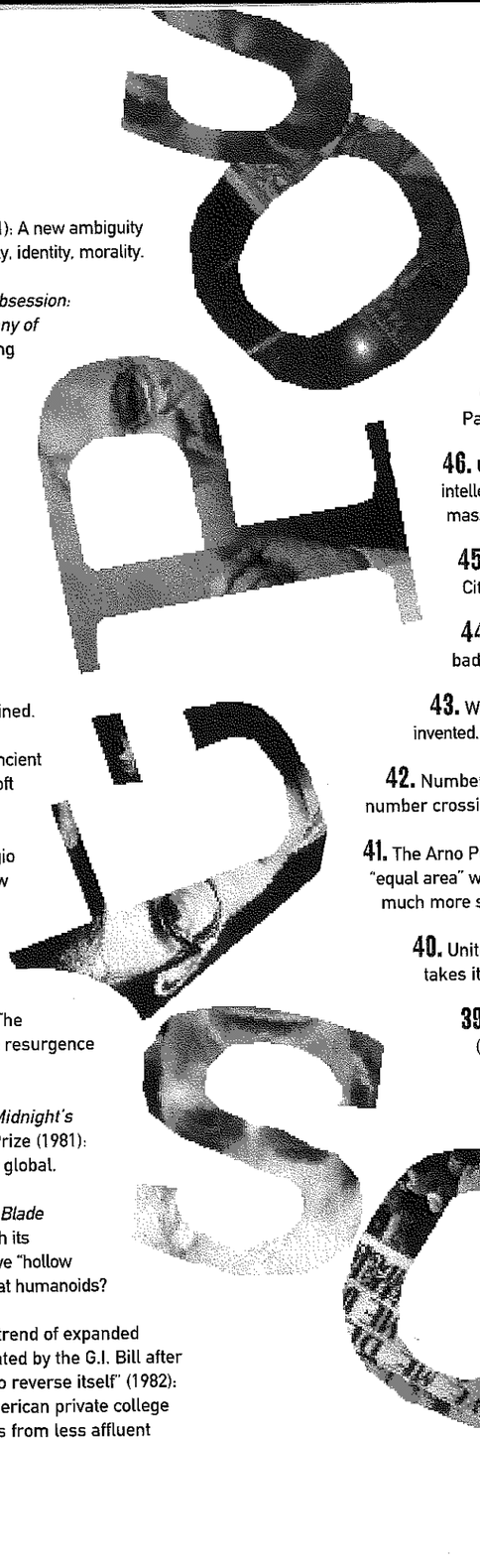
63. Space Shuttle programme begins with launch of *Columbia* (Apr. 12, 1981): The shift from the exploration to exploitation of space.

62. Ronald Reagan fires striking federal air traffic controllers (1981): The signal of open season on unions.

61. Frequent-flyer programmes begun by American Airlines (1981): A spectacularly successful marketing innovation.

60. The Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, identifies AIDS (spring 1981).

59. The first recombinant DNA company, Genentech of San Francisco (1981): Genetic engineering for sale.



58. The first American test-tube baby (in-vitro fertilization) is born (1981): A new ambiguity invests the nuclear family, identity, morality.

57. Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* (1981): Eating disorders are social, not individual.

56. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (1981): The serious questioning of radical feminism by serious feminists.

55. Florida environmentalist Hazel Henderson, *Politics of the Solar Age* (1981): The phrase "think globally, act locally" is coined.

54. Riace bronzes: two ancient Greek bronzes found in soft sand in eight metres of water off Riace remain at National Museum in Reggio di Calabria (1981): The new power of local activism.

53. Picasso's *Guernica* is surrendered to Madrid (1981): The decline of New York, the resurgence of Europe.

52. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* wins Booker Prize (1981): British culture is now global.

51. Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* fascinates with its androids (1982): Are we "hollow men"? How do we treat humanoids?

50. "The thirty-year trend of expanded opportunity, inaugurated by the G.I. Bill after World War II, began to reverse itself" (1982): The percentage of American private college and university students from less affluent families began to fall.

49. The Dow jumped forty points and a five-year bull market began (Aug. 13, 1982): The contemporary art market overheated, among other things.

48. *USA Today* appears, without a geographical base (Sept. 15, 1982): News-from-nowhere as an infotainment paper.

47. Volume of American goods crossing the Pacific exceeds that crossing the Atlantic (1982).

46. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* becomes an intellectual bestseller (English trans. 1983): The birth of mass intelligentsia.

45. Madonna's first album, *Madonna* (1983): The Bay City, Michigan, goddess begins to rise.

44. Carl Sagan, "The Nuclear Winter" (1983): More bad news about nuclear war.

43. William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984): Cypberpunk is invented.

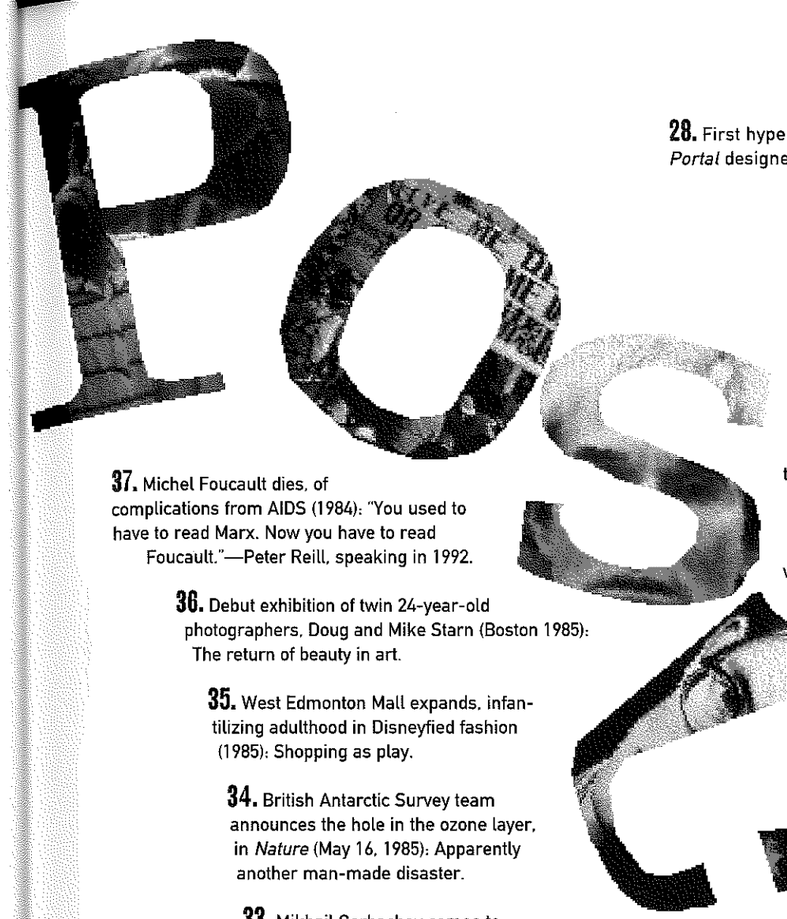
42. Number of planes crossing the Pacific surpasses the number crossing the Atlantic (May 1984).

41. The Arno Peters projection becomes the first widely utilized "equal area" world map (1984): The Third World begins to look much more significant.

40. United States withdraws from UNESCO (1984): The U.S. takes its ball and goes home.

39. Gunman kills 21 in San Ysidro, Calif., McDonald's (July 19, 1984): The new anger of unemployment.

38. Crack cocaine begins to spread (1984): "After its introduction, black youth culture becomes increasingly nihilistic and materialistic."—Nelson George.



37. Michel Foucault dies, of complications from AIDS (1984): "You used to have to read Marx. Now you have to read Foucault."—Peter Reill, speaking in 1992.

36. Debut exhibition of twin 24-year-old photographers, Doug and Mike Starn (Boston 1985): The return of beauty in art.

35. West Edmonton Mall expands, infantilizing adulthood in Disneyfied fashion (1985): Shopping as play.

34. British Antarctic Survey team announces the hole in the ozone layer, in *Nature* (May 16, 1985): Apparently another man-made disaster.

33. Mikhail Gorbachov comes to power (1985): "The man who ended the Cold War"—Eric Hobsbawm.

32. The peak of American Cold War rearmament "was reached in 1985, the last year the U.S. defense budget grew in absolute figures."

31. The Commerce department announces that the United States has become a debtor-nation (Sept. 16, 1985): "The Day the American Empire Ran Out of Gas"—Gore Vidal, writing in 1986.

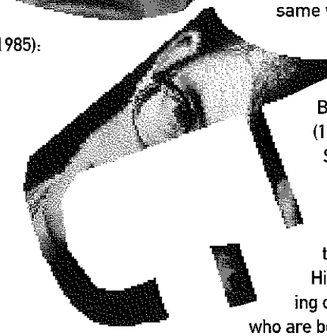
30. Plaza agreement allows dollar to fall, yen to rise (1985): Global markets erasing national monetary policies.

29. Reactor No. 4 at Chernobyl near Kiev melts down (Apr. 26, 1986): *The Nation* (Mar. 15, 1993) puts the number of volunteer clean-up worker deaths at over 7,000.

28. First hypertext novel, Rob Swigert's *Portal* designed to be read on the Apple Macintosh, allows the reader to take different paths through the story (1986): The reader as author.

27. Rafael Moneo, *Museo Nacional de Arte Romano*, Merida, Spain (1986): The return of beauty in architecture.

26. The last contemporary art exhibition before the National Gallery of Canada's move to a new building, *Image-Object-Text* in the planning stages, changes names to *Songs of Experience* when the exhibition opens (1986): The same work, redaemonized.



25. Paul Simon collaborates with Ladysmith Black Mombazo on *Graceland* (1986): The mainstreaming of South African pop music.

24. Jürgen Habermas's article in *Die Zeit* (July 11, 1986) opens the "Historiker-Streit," or Historians' Controversy, by attacking conservative German historians who are beginning to say that Hitler's crimes were no worse than Stalin's.

23. A Long Beach, California, rap concert headlined by Run-D.M.C. is halted by a riot as gangs crash the show (1986): "This incident incites 'RAP CAUSES VIOLENCE' rhetoric and is the first national inkling that Southern California's gang problem is out of control."—Nelson George.

22. Margaret Thatcher's "Big Bang," the dramatic deregulation of British banking, strongly felt in Canada and the Far East (1986): Global banking comes into effect.

21. Unexpected death of Andy Warhol at age 59 (Feb. 22, 1987): He becomes a ghost twin, with Joseph Beuys (d. Jan. 23, 1986), of late twentieth-century art.

20. Starbucks Corp., buys out Starbucks, an older and smaller company (founded 1971), to launch Italian-style coffee bars beyond Seattle (1987): The 9-to-5 style of work declines.

19. CNN "World Report" (1987): Global satellite newscasts begin.

18. Palestinian Intifada (1987): War by children and bare hands.

17. "The '80s Are Over; Greed Goes Out of Style," *Newsweek* (Jan. 4, 1988): Citing "signs of increased altruism," the decade is declared dead over two years early.

16. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's *The Courage to Heal* (1988): The recovered-memory movement rekindles the child sexual abuse issue.

15. Japanese purchases alarm Americans (e.g., Westin Hotel Co. by Aoki Corp., 1988; Columbia Pictures Entertainment by Sony Corp.,1989; Rockefeller Center by Mitsubishi Group, 1989).

14. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Canada and the United States (1988): Corporations abhor a boundary.

13. Seattle University sociologist David McCloskey publishes his map of "Cascadia," made of Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest (1988): FTA and Quebec separatism generate other ideas about redrawing borders.

12. "The postwar-era is over."—Cold warrior Franz-Josef Strauss, in 1988.

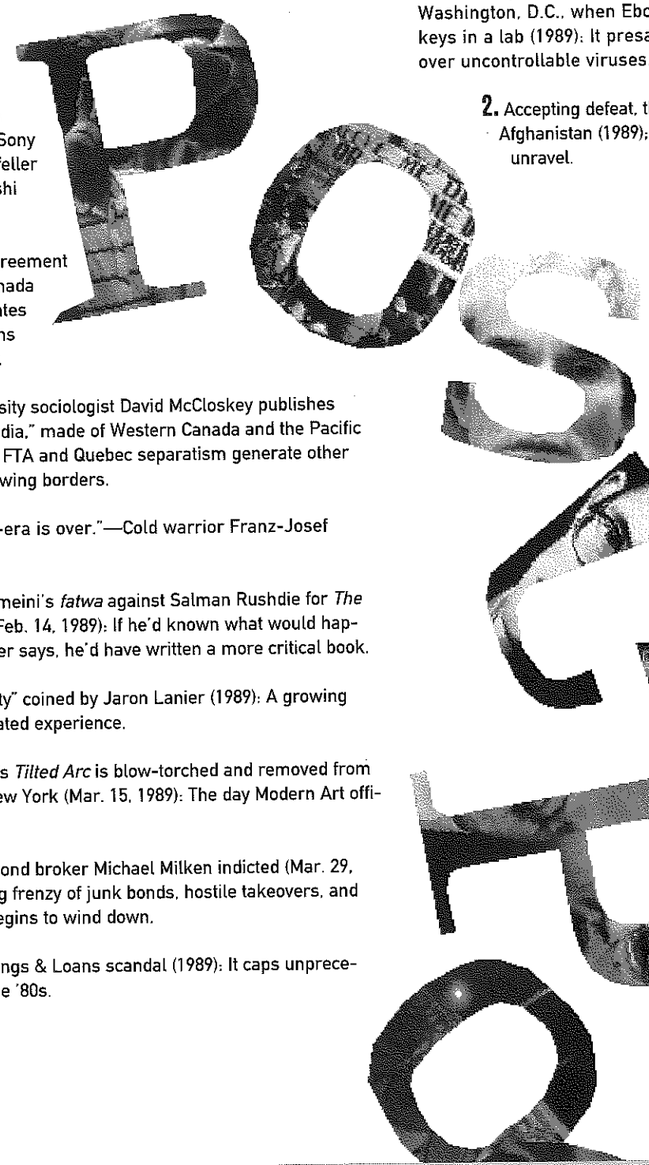
11. Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie for *The Satanic Verses* (Feb. 14, 1989): If he'd known what would happen, Rushdie later says, he'd have written a more critical book.

10. "Virtual reality" coined by Jaron Lanier (1989): A growing desire for simulated experience.

9. Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* is blow-torched and removed from Federal Plaza, New York (Mar. 15, 1989): The day Modern Art officially ended.

8. Beverly Hills bond broker Michael Milken indicted (Mar. 29, 1989): The feeding frenzy of junk bonds, hostile takeovers, and insider trading begins to wind down.

7. American Savings & Loans scandal (1989): It caps unprecedented graft of the '80s.



6. Carol J. Adams's 1989 paper eventually published as *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990): It calls for all feminists to become vegetarians.

5. Student occupation of Tiananmen Square, Beijing, violently suppressed by Peoples' Liberation Army (June 4, 1989): China is changing, but slowly and reluctantly.

4. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (summer 1989): "We are, certainly since Nietzsche and Spengler, 'terminalists.'"—George Steiner, writing in 1972.

3. Terror spreads from Reston, Virginia, near Washington, D.C., when Ebola Zaire begins to kill monkeys in a lab (1989): It presages an era of mounting fear over uncontrollable viruses.

2. Accepting defeat, the Red Army retreats from Afghanistan (1989); The Soviet empire starts to unravel.

1. State Communism in most of Eastern Europe begins to disintegrate, symbolized by the opening of the Berlin Wall (Nov. 9, 1989).

P.S. When will the Post-Postmodern era end? Presumably when the generation after the so-called "generation X" comes of age: those born between 1980 and 2000 will turn twenty from 2000 onward.

"When Does Postmodernism Begin?"—the prequel to this article—appeared in Border/Lines *31.*

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION

CULTURE~~-SLASH-~~NATION

CULTURE~~-SLASH-~~NATION

Published by *Border/Lines* Magazine,
issue no. 38/39 in conjunction
with Gallery TPW, Toronto, October, 1995
Design, Julie Jenkinson
Editor, Stanley Fogel

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION: INTRODUCTION

This insert represents the written components of an exhibition Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation, on view at Gallery TPW in Toronto from October 21 to November 25, 1995.

~~SLASH.~~

to cut with a sweeping motion
to cut slits to expose the material beneath
to lash with a whip
to criticize severely
to reduce in a drastic manner

Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation is a response to the national and provincial policies that are reducing the frame of choice and limiting discourse about how we constitute ourselves as a nation. Specifically, we ask the question, if you squeeze the culture of the nation, if you slash cultural policies and institutions that have collectively defined that nation (and "administered" culture, with all the problems that suggests), what's left for the nation to know itself by?

Today, the frame feels not only shrunken, but mutilated. It seems that the language of commerce has co-opted any discussion of how we define ourselves as a nation. So, not surprising, the artists in Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation have turned to texts for expression of their frustration: from Robin Collyer's erasure of public text from the landscape of vision, to Kathryn Walter's performative narrative of "whitewashing" public space, to Andrew J. Paterson's video interrogations of language and subtexts of arts funding, to Cheryl Simon's and Fred McSherry's video explorations of how artists and cultural theorists speak about culture and nationhood, to Katherine Knight's and Garry Conway's reinsertion of the artist's voice into the cultural policy debate through oral texts found in the CBC radio archives, to Jody Berland's and Barbara Godard's critical investigations of how culture is constituted, instituted and suffocated through public policies.

Is the slashed frame fatally damaging public space, the space of collective invention? And how do we, as artists, critics and/or activists fight for culture as a public resource? In the current slashing/cutting/lashing/criticizing/reducing, just what material is exposed beneath...and beneath what?

Co-curators,
Cheryl Sourkes and Lorraine Johnson

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION speaks

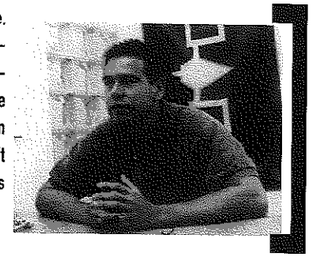
What follows are responses to slight variations on the question: Given the establishment of multi-national economic trading blocks such as the European Economic Community and the North American Free Trade Agreement, is the concept of a nation state or a national culture still functional? Is the idea of nation outdated?

~~Lisa Henderson~~

There is something very luxurious about dismissing the idea of nation when you are, indeed, a powerful one... It reminds me of the language of postmodern discourse where a great deal has been made about the decentering of the subject and the loss of subjectivity... On the one hand I accept that postmodern inflected logic. On the other I've been very struck by how some of the theorizing about the decentred subject has come from people who, historically, are quite accustomed to being the centre of subjectivity... While this is a distant analogy the problems it points to are equally those of this discourse around the nation. Only with the privilege of global supremacy does one just dismiss with the idea of the nation state as the basis of any kind of policy making... But within that discourse of the nation I would guard against nationalism coming to mean anything pure or essential in ways that refuse the sovereignty of groups within the nation who exist sometimes in resistance to the nation... That's always the tension within the concept of "nationness."

~~Gerald Alfred~~

In the context of native/white relations in the past and present, nationalism has been the feature of the white perspective. [Canada] has a European style parliament... a charter of rights and freedoms which protects individual rights predominantly over group rights. All of the laws and different attitudes embedded in the Canadian system are white European values. And it is that [form of] nationalism that is reflected in the structure of Canada. I agree with the observation that the nation state, the myth or the fundamentally wrong belief that the state represented nations or the plurality of nations in Canada, has broken down and [I think] that is a good thing. Canada has never been a hospitable place for us. The more it breaks down and the more sensitive Canadians become to the fact that there are nations with competing sets of values and different cultures, the better because that opens up an opportunity to have ours respected.



~~Charles Acland~~

It is a very bleak situation and we are talking about a situation in which the possibility of even talking about the Canadian nation is an impossibility. I'm not suggesting the need to retain some kind of boosteristic patriotism. That's not what's involved. We're talking about the loss of a space in which we can talk critically about our place. Not ours in the sense of Canada but ours being the people around my neighbourhood and the people who happen to live in the city or province next door. That's part of a loss. I think one of the places for us to start is [with the] development of that discourse. To ask how we can talk about a strategic, contingent notion of national cultural life. This isn't to say that I haven't become increasingly suspicious about the concept of national culture. I think that maybe in fact it has outlived its usefulness as a site of cultural specificity. Rather, we need to talk about other things: the culture of a city, a town and its connection to a national and an international environment.

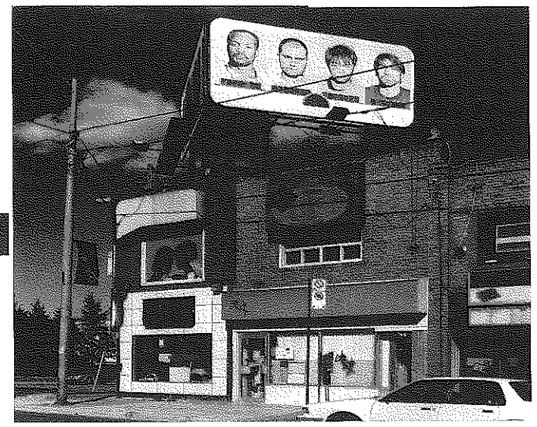
~~Jody Berland~~

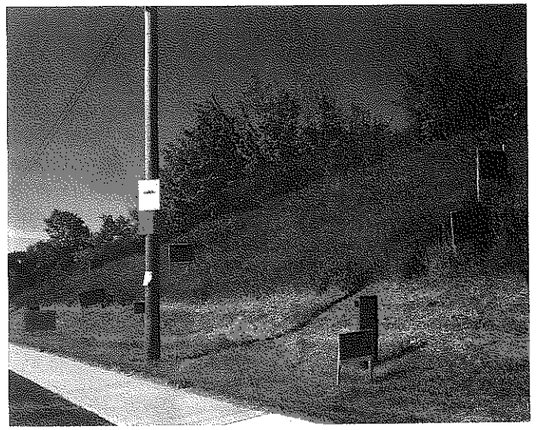
As soon as you start to define [the nation] according to modernist concepts, it's already outdated. Nations are supposed to be entities that share language, history, religion, tradition as well as boundaries. It's never just a matter of territories. When you introduce this definition to the Canadian situation, it seems outdated, and the nation appears an outdated concept. But in other senses it's not. It is still, however ineffectually, the sphere where political decisions are made and where people seek to intervene in the politics of those decisions. The swing to the right presents us with a crude choice about whether decisions are going to be made in the domain of the nation state or in the domain of the market, the corporation. Right now the state is still potentially more accountable than the corporation; until we have another space of opposition, we still look to the state as the place where we are or are not effective in meeting our needs—whether or not we have or want a national culture as traditionally defined. In this sense it is not an outdated concept. So it's outdated in some ways, but in other ways we're stuck with it.

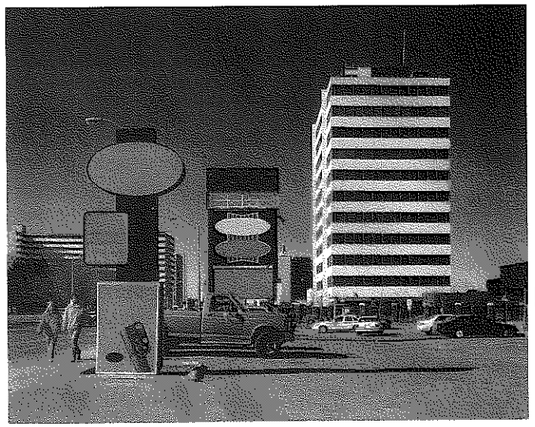
Excerpted from Towards a Definition of the Cultural Producer, a video by Cheryl Simon and Fred McSherry.

writing on the wall

by Barbara Godard







Robin Collyer

Clockwise: "Yonge Street, Willowdale,"1994; "Election Signs," "Yonge Street, Willowdale," 1995.

Is there a crisis in the arts as the hint of violence in "Culture Slash Nation" implies? S/lash. Sl/ash. Am I writing a prophesy of doom? Or, graffiti on the wall? The sense of crisis has been instilled by a succession of newspaper headings announcing changes in the funding of the arts. Each day brings a new bulletin from the front: "CBC Under the Knife"; "Budget Cuts to Grants Will Force Shutdowns, Book Publishers Say"; "Metro Cuts Arts Grants by $345,000."; "Arts Voices Petition PM to Rescue Harbourfront"; "Telefilm Shuts Foreign Offices."

Such amputations of public policies and institutions in Ontario especially have been made tyrannically by cabinet fiat, with lightning speed and no consultation or public debate. More massive changes in social organization are still to come. "Arts groups fear the sky is falling," announces another article mooting the abolition of the Ontario Arts Council. How should artists, among the poorest members of Ontario society with average incomes of $14 - 15,000 for most arts occupations, with visual artists at the lower end with $8,800, expect to be spared in what is increasingly evident as class warfare between haves and have-nots waged with new tactics and ferocity? The vulnerable are being scapegoated for problems inherent in the economic system as the wrath of the middle-class in an age of downward mobility is vented on the marginalized, the poor. Indeed, it is precisely their poverty which makes artists targets of a rhetoric of marketplace success (exchange) as a criterion of value. Art, knowledge, health—nothing can be allowed to interfere with the bottom line! Advancing arguments of economic necessity in myths of massive government indebtedness is an attempt thus to legitimize cutbacks in metaphors of "good housekeeping." This ignores the historical causes in government policy changes which have produced new patterns of public debt. The advantaged are also intervening in discursive practices with a new inflection of the term "interest group" to delegitimize collective struggles for equality and stifle public debate in what is a radical restructuring of economic and social policies underway in Canada.

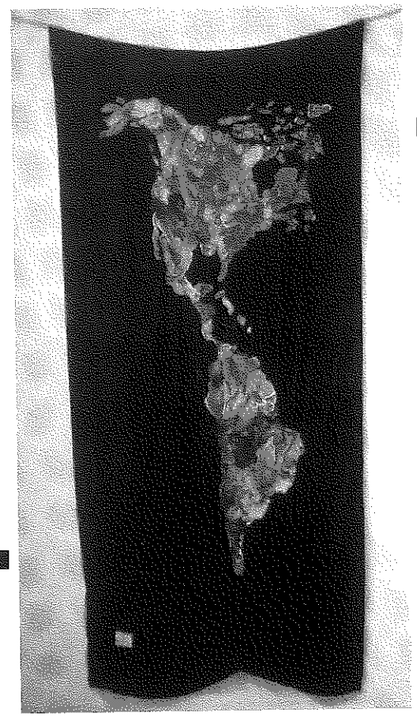
Political struggle is organized through signs with the mass media being one of the institutional sites for this contestation. "Public interest" is one semantic configuration currently undergoing such resignification. A recent column in the *Financial Post* by Michael Walker, head of the right-wing Fraser Institute, titled "Disarming special interests is key to re-engineering Ontario economy," exposed the neo-conservative strategy. Neither business groups nor bond-rating agencies, both of which have vested interests in government policy, are considered "special interests" by Walker. No concern is expressed over the $4.8 million in government support of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce last year in addition to the tax-exempt status of its membership dues, while grants of $250,000, to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women generated protest. The Canada Council has been a favourite target of attacks by conservative groups such as the National Citizens' Coalition that culture is just an expensive "special interest" the overburdened taxpayer should be spared. The label's effect in diminishing the force of claims to "public interest," a "civil society" or a collective project of society must be understood as a strategy in a discursive struggle around "interest" to position one group as speaking subject and relegate others to silence, so naturalizing a shift in relations within the social contract.

It is not my purpose to analyze cutback data but to isolate some of the episodes in a narrative that is fostering my unease. Both its repetitiveness and its generalization are disconcerting, for incident after incident involves the same two actants: state financiers and artists in fixed positions of subject and object. These tales signify a break, a

Gilbert Boyer

"Les Règles Que Je Ne Réussisais Pas À Lire"
("The Rules Which I Was Unable To Read") 1995.
Photo by André Clément

Dianna Frid



"America is Shrinking," 1991.

shift in financial commitment that will transform the cultural industries in Canada. Of what magnitude? With what shifts in policy? What is being lost?

Never addressed explicitly in the newspapers are questions concerning the interrelationship of the threatened alliance, the signifiers "nation," "culture," and, I would add, "state." What are the implications of a rupture in this alliance? What "culture" is at stake here? Which "nation"? Among the many contradictions operative in the discourses of "culture" and "nation" in respect to government policies of support to the arts, those prominent since the nineteenth century engage the artist's heterogeneous role as "unacknowledged legislator" and as seer into a superior reality, as civilizer or dissident; this is where the reemphasis of "interest" around claims to the "public good" finds fertile terrain. Rather than reading the current situation within a rhetoric of crisis, as the news media would invite, I want to insist on the ongoing nature of this "crisis" for which there are many possible scenes of origin.

Within a set of perennial contradictions regarding arts policy in Canada there is nonetheless in the present conjuncture a certain shift in relations among the terms, epitomized in Susan Walker's Janus-like New Year's summation of the arts in 1994: "Ask not what your government can do *for* you, but what your government is doing *to* you" (*The Toronto Star*). What the shift in prepositions signals is a change in the role of the state in upholding and promoting a public concept of the common good, manifest in the establishment of arts councils, under the aegis of what Guy Laforest calls "procedural liberalism" with its privileging of individual rights, which has been reshaping the Canadian state since passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. There is an additional shift signalled in the ambiguity of Walker's title: "Professional arts nags had work cut out for them." "Arts nags" (descriptive or pejorative?) are organizations mediating the relations of artists and state, in this case the Ontario Arts Network, whose disappointment in the December initiative of the Canada Council's hastily planned consultation tour is noted by Walker. Michel Dupuy, Minister of Canadian Heritage, however, not Roch Carrier, head of the Canada Council, is the "Most Disappointing Man of the Year."

The artists' criticism of Carrier nonetheless highlights a difference from earlier moments when the Canada Council carried out "Soundings" with the arts communities in order to get feedback to enable it to perform more effectively its advocacy role with the federal government. Indeed, in another period of stress for the Council on its twentieth anniversary in the late seventies, when planned cuts following upon inflation, separation from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, as well as the real possibility of Quebec independence, curtailed the scope of Council action, Mavor Moore, its first Chair from the arts community, with the Advisory Arts Panel of Council, set up a "task force" from its members to formulate policies and initiatives for the renewal of Council's mandate to "energize" or "seed" artistic activity. This proactive stance was articulated in the twenty recommendations of *The Future of the Canada Council* which announced its difference with an introduction in the form of a concrete poem. Artists themselves formed the 1812 Committee, a common front to fight government cutbacks. Documenting the economic importance of the arts, this committee made the arts an election issue in 1979. Subsequently, the first conference of federal and provincial ministers of culture attempted to make their relations and policies more coherent. This scrutiny in turn resulted in the establishment of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Applebaum-Hébert) whose report generated many counter position pieces from the Canadian Conference of the Arts, though little legislative action.

Presently, artists' support for the Council is lukewarm, squeezing it more tightly in its ambiguous "arms-length" position between arts communities and government. With per-capita spending on the Council at $3.40, the lowest in eight years, and anticipated cuts of 5% over the next four years pending the results of the Liberals' programme review, the

Council's panic is not surprising. The absence of any statement of policy principles or of a historical context for public funding of the arts in the "consultation workbook" sent to artists was disquieting in light of this critical negotiating role and the importance of such statements in previous government policy formulation. Such anxiety was justified by the subsequent decision following the federal budget to cut back funding to arts service organizations such as the Writers Union which formulate principles and open a discursive space for the arts in the political realm.

What may be forgotten, in current dissatisfaction with the Canada Council, is how it has radically transformed the situation of the arts in Canada over nearly every dimension in the last forty years from the diversification of art forms to the dispersion of venues and variety of languages. Particularly notable is the redrawing of the boundaries between professional and amateur, most visible in the theatre where the exponential rise in small professional theatres and theatre companies, the proliferation of fringe festivals, has been accompanied by a decline in the amateur little theatre movement, so important in the fifties. This explosion in the numbers of artists (double the growth rate of the total work force in the last twenty years) is the sign of the phenomenal success of arts councils—and of a limitation. Yes, there are many and varied venues for art: the CBC is no longer the only steady employer for actors and musicians. Yes: the standards of training of artists and production values of performances have increased enormously, as artists have moved through the ranks of the small professional companies to the stages of the large commercial theatres: a Mirvishization more than a nationalization of theatre! Though the existence of the arts councils has legitimated participation in the arts, authorized the profession "artist," it has not significantly changed the economic status of artists who remain mostly part-time professionals.

Artists today aren't baseball stars with million dollar contracts. Most still have salaried jobs in addition to their status as self-employed artists. There are major distinctions among the arts in respect to funding, with the three performing arts receiving 42% of grants in Toronto in 1988, museums and galleries another 40%, with writing, film and the visual arts sharing the rest in decreasing proportion. This discrepancy results from self-employment by the last-named group. Labour intensive, art becomes increasingly expensive in an age of mechanization. Yet salaries (time) are more flexible expenses than rents or materials (goods) and make weaker claims to support. Artists are still subsidizing the rest of the community by making art or performing for relatively low pay. The myth that artists are a privileged elite has itself become a form of oppression, suggests Heather Robertson, a means of segregation which, like reservations for the First Nations, works to keep them "powerless and poor" and, consequently, less creative.

Robertson's own response to this impoverishment and lack of respect has been to challenge the Arts Councils' bureaucracy, drawing attention to the inverse pyramid of benefits from grants subsidizing the art collector's speculation. The administrator is the only one with the permanent job. This situation might be overcome, Robertson suggests, by more direct government intervention to subsidize the artist without the intermediary of the arms-length councils. However, the history of the Canada Council suggests that a populist move to democratize does not automatically nationalize. Greater funding with the introduction of government appropriations in 1965 produced closer scrutiny and parliamentary interference to censor grants on moral and political grounds. Moreover, the current system of subsidy might be seen as productive in a different way, that of constituting a cultural community, both the artistic community producing a cultural discourse and the informed and involved audience to sustain the intensification of arts activity since the fifties. It is the availability of this audience to support Canadian artists which has enabled them not only to pursue careers in Canada but to produce original works responsive to the contingent, the local. With changes in the economic basis of art came changes in its production. No longer dependent on the market place of the metropole, artists could create more freely for the Canadian public. It is this explosion of creative work by choreographers, composers, poets, painters, filmmakers, photographers, etc. in the last thirty years that has transformed the arts scene, made it a place of creative innovation rather than colonial repetition.

This came about in a society with a new social contract forging an alliance between nationalism and the welfare state following the Depression and WWII which, with many contradictions, nonetheless made a space for the arts within a humanistic discourse of balance and harmony and a nationalist discourse of self-knowledge. Now, forty years after the establishment of the Canada Council, another change is underway—a shock to European humanism which has been obliterated in an era of continentalism and Free Trade and their promotion of individual rights over any collective goals a society might set. There is no place for art as a public good to be protected by the state within the individualistic, neutral, egalitarian discourse of procedural liberalism which misrepresents its production of inequality through the apparent symmetrical operation of exchange value.

The complex orientation of the Canada Council might be read in terms of shifting institutional lines of accountability from Secretary of State to Minister of Communications, then Canadian Heritage. How far back in the past does one unravel its genealogy? To the 1941 Kingston Conference of the Arts where 150 artists from across the country gathered to denounce the federal government for its apathy in regards to the arts? To the 1944 March on Ottawa by 16 artists organizations—who formed the Canadian Arts Council in 1945 (changed to the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1958)—to present a paper to the Turgeon Committee on reconstruction demanding $10 million for the arts from the federal purse? So many men had sacrificed their lives during the war. For what? The national independence they had fought for would be meaningless if Canadians did not have an established and distinctive culture. To the Massey Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Science, 1949-1951, whose report inventoried the underdeveloped state of

Canadian culture, the absence or neglect or threat to cultural institutions little able to withstand the pressure of American invasion on the airwaves, in magazines, films, and advertising? To the British Arts Council, founded in 1947 to make permanent the support to the arts which had been important morale boosters during the war effort, model of government arms-length intervention adopted by the Canadian government in response to the Massey Report? To the British tradition of government support to the arts which since the eighteenth century founding of the British Museum had tentatively entered a kind of international competition for national glory? In contrast, republican France, which had launched this competition for the state as patron of the arts to ennoble its new form of government in the international sphere, supported the arts directly through a ministry of culture. The network of traces surrounding the beginning of the Canada Council is dense.

It was none of these examples, petitions or reports, with their appeals to romantic nationalism, however, that prompted the enabling legislation from the federal government in 1957, but rather the death of two business tycoons, Dunn and Killam, whose succession duties were used to set up a $100 million endowment fund for the Canadian arts and university capital grants. Though the Massey Report framed the need for support in the strongest terms of national interest in face of an American cultural invasion, and theorized culture as the perfecting of the mind through the arts, letters and sciences—a theorization of culture as absolute to get around the problem of the division of powers and the provincial jurisdiction over education—this was not effective in securing government action until the estates were available. While the arms-length principle of peer adjudication was adopted from the British Arts Council for the regulation of aesthetic value, it was the model of the American private foundation established by robber barons to perfume their money that was adopted to finance the project. Representatives from the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations attended the Canada Council's official opening ceremonies. This endowment gave the Council freedom from state intervention in the early years, though not from criticism: "100 million for eggheads; six bucks for old-age pensions." However, the contradiction between the vast and expanding scope of its mandate—which included support of educational institutions and research funding for universities as well as responsibility for culture in the international arena in support of UNESCO initiatives—and its fixed budget in what was to become a period of rapid inflation, quickly exposed the contradictions of this partnership of the state and business. In 1965, with the institution of regular government appropriations, the Canada Council entered a period of rapid expansion coinciding with the massive spending on culture for the centenary of Confederation. The addition of the national and international mandate of the Canada Council complicates its delineation of culture in ways different from that of the provincial arts councils. Provincial responsibility for education complicates the relation of culture and personal development in the discourses of the Canada Council which was assigned the role of expanding intellectual resources and stimulating research. The decentralization of the federal system promoted a tendency to diffuse contradictions by separating them into national elitism (excellence) and regional populism (participation).

A number of such contradictions emerged in the address of its Chair, Brooke Claxton, at the opening ceremonies of the Canada Council (1957). Claxton is remembered as one of the leaders of the Canadian nationalism that emerged in the thirties. Though, in his first paragraph, he focuses on the past and Thomas D'Arcy McGee's vision of the role of art in nation-building as civilizing to unify—the "great new Northern nation" that will emerge if "every gleam of authorship" is fostered so as to "keep down dissension" and "cultivate that true catholicity of spirit which embraces all creeds, all classes, all races"—yet in his second paragraph he centres on the future: by 1980 it is forecast the GNP will be $74 billion, bringing problems both of "more leisure" and of "more complexity," which may be solved with "higher skills" and "more education," that is, technology. Claxton perspicaciously foresees a number of problems the council will face, of constant public criticism and bureaucratization. However, he minimizes the potential conflicts between the claims of artistic and scientific contributions to nation-building, with their opposed agendas of imaginative stimulation and social engineering. Indeed, the order in which he frames their relation is significant, beginning each time with the engineer and scientist before referring to the humanist and artist: "We have long felt that material things cannot alone make a great nation...we must hope to advance, too, on the spiritual front, advance in our artistic expression as a nation, advance so that we can 'lift ourselves to the level of our destinies.'" The destiny, nonetheless, is figured in material terms in metaphors of profit, as the "dividend" realized from "investment."

A potential clash arises in the contrasting vision of the co-chair, Père Georges-Henri Lévesque, who speaks of "cooperation," of "Truth, " and "Beauty" that will result from the "expansion of humanism in Canada" through the work of the Council. The material is introduced only within an ethic of concern in relation to the poverty from which artists "suffer," a state of privation that prevents them bringing forth beauty for the "delight of their fellow men." Is the Council a response to their great need? Or guarantor of their equitable share of the public purse? What is clear in Lévesque's formulation is the responsibility of the state to create a climate for creativity. Between beauty and profit, between art as an end in itself or art as the glory of the nation and the marketplace—this is the complex relation the Council is designed to mediate as a "powerhouse," its arms-length status providing the requisite checks and balances. The Council has generally been squeezed, but is now in a stranglehold between the competing claims of its various stakeholders. And the number of underemployed cultural workers has grown rather than decreased.

Analyzing the Applebaum-Hébert Report on Federal Cultural Policy as a response to this crisis of underemployment,

Thelma McCormack outlined a number of distinct models of the relationship between culture and the state in broadcasting: market, welfare, and nationalist. The crisis in the arts councils has been perennial, I would suggest, because all three models have been in competition. The divergence among the contending objectives of profit, where value is determined by supply and demand through the exchange of works with *consumers*; of access, to reduce cultural inequity of regional, ethnic or linguistic varieties for *citizens*; of collective identity, to develop national awareness for *patriots* where it has been distorted by colonialism, is constitutive in the contradictory tropes of the documents I have been examining. McCormack introduces a post-nationalist model as a corrective, one that would consider artists an *occupational group* and apply principles of affirmative action to equalize disparities. This introduces the important issue of symbolic capital constituted by grants, a recognition of the social production of creativity by the regime of power. However, this valorization is compounded by the involvement of audiences in the process of distributing funds in a communication model of art as interactional process. This returns to a focus on audience, on consumption. Recognition of different relations to the symbolic would frame culture in the plural. In the absence of an articulated theory of difference, McCormack's fragmentation of "public" into "audience" works to undermine a concept of "public interest" or "common good," the understanding of artistic activity as an integral part of public life demanding an equitable share in the distribution of public funds. Such claims to public access, as opposed to "special interest," to a sense of the demands of the polity as more than an aggregate of individual preferences, are what is at stake in the present renegotiation of the social contract.

The end of a period in which "culture and state relationships were shaped by nationalism" did not come about in 1980 with the cultural policy recommendations of the Applebaum-Hébert Report as McCormack suggests, though this was a moment of acceleration of the process along with the 1982 promulgation of the Charter of Rights: the claims of the marketplace have shaped cultural policy at least since the 1950s along with those of equalizing regional disparity among citizens and of decolonizing the collective identity. The tension among them arises from the ideal of balance in the distribution of resources not being fully met with the abdication of business from "investment" in the arts, its weakening sense of the obligations of the polity, while imposing its concept of value as exchange as absolute. In the privileging of a single fiction or frame (monetary exchange) constituting the "real," there is a constriction of a kind of exploration that makes demands beyond the instrumental, beyond the individual, which has a repressive effect on diversity and dissent. The sense of collective belonging withers in a proliferation of metaphors of "cocooning" and "dispersed systems." A force of private interest threatening to overflow its limits and to dissolve the bonds of the state is what Hegel considers the most significant menace for civil society. An articulation of the limitations of practice to bring the habitual to a crisis through critique would reframe this as a political struggle over discourses about modes of social organization. The discourse of exchange value is only one potential fiction framing the real.

In the 1940s, it was the artists' articulation of the significance of the arts in the understanding of the polity that placed the arts on the public agenda. In what is an ongoing discursive struggle over "culture" and "interest," artists' political action as resistance around the specific claims of the arts is critical to inflect the reordering of the body politic. Under the techtonic pressures of the threat to the entire post-World War II contract of the Canadian people with the state regarding social and cultural practices, new coalitions must be forged with other groups to reassert the state's balancing distributive function. This is all the more crucial in that the Canada Council, in opting to preserve grants to individual artists and cut funding for arts service organizations, sites for the articulation of artists' political discourse, is preparing the terrain for an arts community dominated by a few heroic individuals rather than providing continued support for a depth and breadth of talent and the institutional forms which have translated artists' discourse from the symbolic to the political with the power to affect the world around it.

WORKS CITED

Adilman, Sid. "Tory cuts 'disastrous.'" *Toronto Star*. August 18 1995. D1.
Cardozo, Andrew. "Opposing voices aren't the villains." *Toronto Star*. August 8 1995. A13.
Crew, Robert. "Arts voices petition PM to rescue Harbourfront." *Toronto Star*. 25 April 1995. B5.
The Future of the Canada Council. A report to the Canada Council from the Advisory Arts Panel. Ottawa: Canada Council, 1978.
McCormack, Thelma. "Culture and the State." *Canadian Public policy*. 10, 3 (1984): 267-277.
Mietkiewicz, Henry. "Arts groups fear the sky is falling." *Toronto Star*. July 20 1995. C8.
Opening Proceedings. Ottawa: Canada Council, 1957.
Robertson, Heather. "Starving Slowly: Notes from the Reservation." in David Helwig, ed., *Love and Money: The Politics of Culture*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1980, 90-109.
Stoffman, Judy. "Budget cuts to grants will force shutdowns book publishers say." *Toronto Star*. April 11 1995. C4.
Taylor, Kate. "CBC Under the Knife." *Globe and Mail*. April 8 1995. C1.
"Telefilm shuts foreign offices." *Toronto Star*. August 5 1995.
Walker, Susan. "Professional arts nags had work cut out for them." *Toronto Star*. December 30 1994. C14.
Walker, Michael. "Disarming special interest is key to re-engineering Ontario economy." *Financial Post*. (in Cardozo)

POLITICS after NATIONALISM, CULTURE after CULTURE.

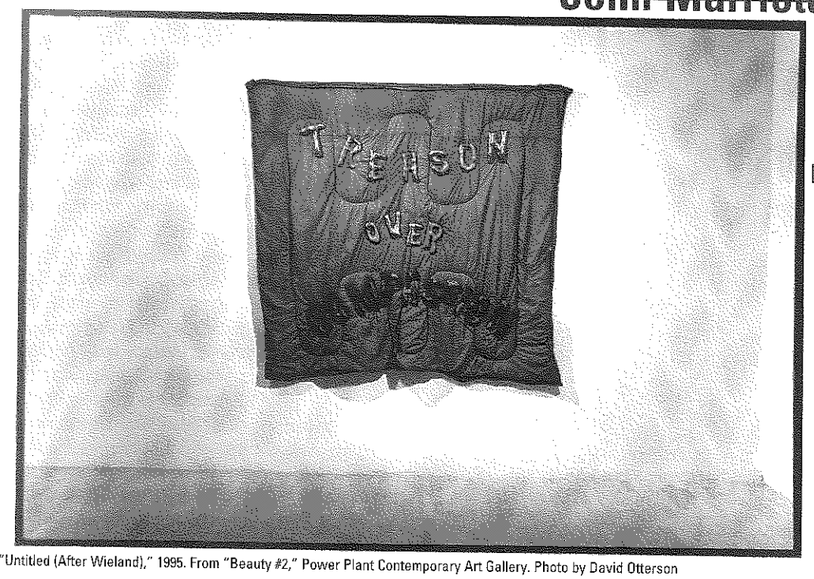
by Jody Berland

One of the works exhibited in the Power Plant Gallery's recent "Beauty #2" show is a sleeping bag hung on the wall with the words "treason over compassion" stitched onto its surface. As the subtitle, "after Wieland," reminds us, John Marriott's work owes its genesis to a well-known earlier work by Joyce Wieland, whose 1968 quilt, bestitched with the words "Reason over Passion," slyly quoted Prime Minister Trudeau's summation of Liberal politics of the era. Wieland's earlier irony seems both poignant and quaint now, for the right-wing shows no evidence of reason or passion in its present transformation of Canadian society.

The newer work offers us a chilling reflection on our cultural history and our mean-and-meaner present in an exhibition whose curatorial coolness otherwise tends to a kind of sophomoric nihilism. Marriott's work refers to a time when Canadian artists, activists and intellectuals could associate justice and benign social values with national character, and project manifestations of nastiness outward beyond the national borders. Does that work any more? A lot of people are sleeping on our streets and there will be many more before the decade ends. The work evokes compassion in a tone that is cool, ironic, and reflexively historical. There's nothing comforting about this comforter, any more than if it were all that came between me and the night somewhere on a downtown street. Yet the new motto hit me at a visceral level —it evokes the antipathy and moral outrage we feel when we look at current attacks on public social and cultural policies that have always defined Canada as different. But — to what extent can we call on a special loyalty to Canada, i.e., nationalism, as an antidote to this treason? Were we to do so, what would we sound like?

English-Canadian nationhood and its sporadic eruptions into patriotism have never looked like the nationalisms I see described in newspapers or social or cultural theory. It doesn't matter whether such theory pursues a critical analysis of the nationalisms of an earlier era, or more contemporary issues informed by post-colonial theory. It also seems to make no difference whether the "nation" in question is posited as an imperial or as an anti-imperial entity. Either way, Canada never fits the pattern. This makes it frustrating trying to draw on such theory, for it sheds only partial light on the changing constellations of state/culture/nationhood which now confront us. The contrast does reveal one certitude, which is that the idiosyncrasies of Canada's national formation have been variously beneficial and disastrous for the evolution of cultural autonomies within its territorial borders. Perhaps a second certitude now follows, rather unhappily, from the first: that we have to learn new strategies and discourses if we wish to advance or even to maintain the public assets — cultural and otherwise — which were built in the last half a century.

~~John Marriott~~

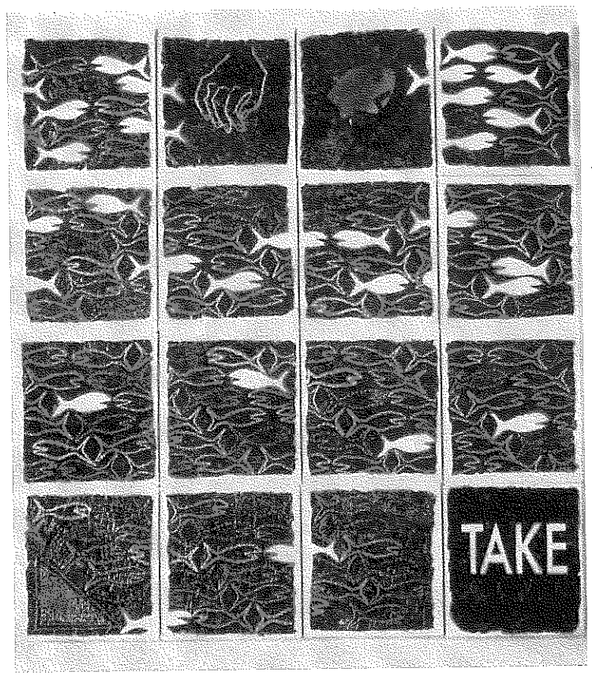


"Untitled (After Wieland)," 1995. From "Beauty #2," Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery. Photo by David Otterson

Canada's nationality is so peculiar and anomalous that one sometimes wonders how or why it does (or should) survive as a nation. It is hard to see any economic, cultural or topographic rationality to this identity, no matter how graphically illustrated are the history textbooks or how convincingly mundane are the debates that circle around the nation's capital. What do we have in common, after all? Not even language. We have no shared ancestors or genetic pool, no originary revolution myths, no common rituals for commemorating each others' births and deaths. The "natural" topography of economic flow is north-south, not east-west. Without a viable narrative or common symbolic culture (other than sometimes, maybe, perhaps hopefully, land and landscape) to legitimate the existence of this nation, why bother?

Nevertheless people intervening in public policy and cultural politics debates continue to speak as Canadians, i.e., to reconstruct a national(ist) discourse, which means not only taking a nationalist position on, say, cuts to film development funding, but also addressing the benefits, difficulties and necessities of speaking/producing Canadian culture. This discussion never reaches closure on a definition of what that is. In identifying oneself in terms of "Canada," one distinguishes oneself from the differently inferred positionings of British, European, or American voices, but each of these constructions evokes collectivity and cultural politics in a different way. Even if we wanted to we cannot situate ourselves as the-same-only-different in relation to Americans, for instance, by evoking a national identity. The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes and mobilizes too dubious and marginal a set of historical discourses to call it "identity" in any usual sense.

The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes rather a veritable catechism of national inventions: the CBC, the Massey Commission, bilingualism, multiculturalism, CRTC regulations, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the Canada Council, the (ex-)Art Bank, community radio, public hearings, briefs and lobbies, government everywhere, probably subsidizing not only the speaker but also the very paper the words are printed on. The sentence with the Canadian subject thereby nominates the speaker as participant in and subject of a complex apparatus of agencies and institutions which for over half a century has sought to administer culture as part of the larger enterprise of defining the nation's borders. This attempt to constitute borders through the regulation of culture (and culture through the regulation of borders) is the endeavour American movie mogul Jack Valenti recently (*Toronto Star*, March 17, 1995) termed "an 'infection' sweeping the world." It's not clear who is the victim and who is the



Dianna Frid

"Pacific Cartography 1/Take," 1994

physician here. But we — Canadians that is —know Valenti's rhetoric better than anyone, since (is this a good moment for a touch of irony?) he so effectively lobbies Washington to denounce, penalize and criminalize Canada's association of culture with politics and values. All that is understood.

What cannot be spoken in the sentence with the Canadian subject is a claim to a coherent national identity with deep historical-cultural roots preceding such governmental endeavours. Unlike American, Irish, Polish or Quebecois citizens, no one recalls a strongly felt imperative to forge a collective destiny within the immanent form of a nation-state. This nation is a synthetic construction initiated by colonizers and designed by royal commissioners, lobbyists and civil servants. It is a pure colonial entity, produced by colonial powers and colonial practices. Canada exists because a state manufactured a nation, rather than the reverse. The process has met with limited success, presumably, in that few Canadians believe the nation-state can or should express any particular narrative of cultural identity; indeed we tend to attack government agents when they attempt to do so.

If Canada is a pure colonial product, then, it is, by the same token, intransigently IMpure. We are not the Irish against the British, blacks against white rule, Palestinians against Israelis, or Quebecois against Canada. Unlike many emergent colonies we are embarrassed by anything but the most subtle and ironic of patriotic gestures. We are only what we were "given," what we made, and what we took: land, trees, banks, railways and satellites, agencies and institutions, narratives and codes of citizenship cooked up from what was brought from various parts of the world. We neither sprang from nor produced a common culture, race, religion or language. As Kristeva puts it in *Nations without Nationalism*, we share a legal and political pact rather than a "spirit of the people."

This genesis is difficult enough, where nationalism is concerned, but the growing diffuseness of global power has also tended to prohibit the development of classic (anti-)colonial nationalism, if by this we mean a reconstructive mobilization of (pre-)colonial ethnicity, language, culture AGAINST external rule. Who or what nationalist discourses defend us from is comparatively diffuse.

There is no singular "us" here, but there is no singular "them" against whom we might gradually invent ourselves, either. We do not oppose ourselves to an external entity so much as to a system whose values and benefits "we" partly share. Perhaps that is why "we" always seem to capitulate, in the end. Canada's collusion with the imperial enemy doesn't take (so much) the form of self-hatred, racism or sectarianism, but appears rather as a kind of technological progressivism espoused on behalf of the national interest. Its rhetoric promises that pro-business economic policies, pro-consumer cultural policies and cutting-edge technological change will protect us from an otherwise ruthless history and draw us into a new pragmatic utopia of informed citizenry. What is born from this statist collusion is not the nationalism of "a people," but rather that of a technologically constituted cultural marketplace.

Now nationalism is an increasingly problematic mode of politics in any case, for reasons which are richly explored in many critical texts emerging from Anglo-American and postcolonial theory. In any case Canada's nationalism is as idiosyncratic as its nationhood discourses and dilemmas.

Historian Ramsay Clarke has suggested that culture is one of the few domains in which the Canadian government has been able to summon the political will to impose public policies even where these counter economic/continental interests. The astute reader will note not only that this agenda is disappearing from the public domain, but also that two different definitions of culture have been mobilized herein: the kind that one produces and writes about if given adequate time/funding, and the kind that one simply lives, for instance by eating donuts or (not) owning guns or activating one's beliefs about government through voting. But no one has convinced me (contemporary left and right skepticism notwithstanding) that they do not influence one another in the larger world. A "culture" which believes (rhetorically at least) in democratic access to all public rights and resources, including airwaves, and thus comes to privilege (if only fragmentarily) an "autonomous" non-market cultural economy as a public good, will produce different symbolic discourses from a "culture" which conceives democracy as adversarial competition, mandatory self-production and cultural pluralism; assigns culture, including the airwaves, to the "free flow" of an "open" market; and otherwise reserves the term "democracy" for when invading (through one means or another) a foreign country.

Culture became one of the principle domains in which nation-building emerged as a legitimate framework for social practice, not because there WAS "culture," as this term was understood in the nationalist paradigm, but because so many social actors believed there NEEDED to be culture to fill in the vacant spaces of the national social. Thus legislators and civil servants, artists and cultural communities, the trade union and women's movements, and the nationalist left built a political coalition around the imbrication of culture and nationhood, thereby forcing government to legislate into being a body of cultural institutions and assets to define and serve the Canadian public. The state policy of support for the arts was thus predicated on a rhetoric of national sovereignty and difference, while the state's claims to the governance of sovereign space were predicated on and legiti-

mated by its protection of culture, defined more and more metonymically in terms of select cultural spaces, from the free market. It's important to remember this genealogy when we consider how far government legitimation is being transferred, however subliminally, to the anti-territorial culture of business oligopoly. The indigenously Canadian response to this process surely begins with irony.

Of course the purposeful development of a "national culture," i.e., of state-national symbols capable of evoking loyalty from citizen subjects, is not unique to Canada. Indeed this process defined and legitimated the emergence of the modern industrial state throughout Europe and its colonies in the late 19th century. But certain features of this process, in combination, were unique to this country: the repetitive, indissoluble joining of culture, democracy, national sovereignty, and resistance to a "free" market economy, first advocated in Parliament by Conservative Prime Minister Bennett in the 1930s; the ability of this discourse to mobilize and incorporate a culture-producing community; the emergence of policies emphasing technological means of delivery (ultimately precipitating a practical reversal in the approach to democratic sovereignty, which has switched its focus from producers to consumers); a complex culture of (anti-)colonial politics; and the notable absence of a discourse predicating nationhood on uniformity in language, race, history, or culture in either the Germanic or modernist sense of that term.

What defines the prehistory of Canadian collective memory, then, is the transparency of governmentally driven processes of collective invention. Since 1929, massive public policy hearings involving various publics have preceded the establishment of public agencies dedicated to support for the arts, justified by the need for national cultivation and national defense. The genesis of Canada's arts and cultural policy was thus dominated by the attempt to create a bourgeois culture which could stand in for and play the role of a displaced national history. Certain limitations of this strategy became evident during Mulroney's reign, when "cultural industries" were exempted from an agreement that otherwise promised to eliminate anything in the economic or social realm that defined Canada as different; and when Mulroney himself advocated support for culture as a means to enlist the support of Canada's intellectuals and artists for free trade. But paradoxically this same project of cultural rationalization depended on a cultural community willing to fight for and to catalyze the spaces of that bourgeois culture for its own purposes. The artists' and writers' articulations of vision, location, value and difference helped to produce a symbolic space you could point to and call Canadian. Artists helped to give expression, affect, and material form (and sometimes, though rarely, profits) to the nation's claim to difference and autonomy.

But there is another paradox in this scenario The ongoing rationalization of culture and cultural policy which ensued helped to elevate and marginalize these discourses, building an edifice of elite culture separate from the larger culture(s) whose entertainments found no such protection. Today this already contradictory project of building a(n elite) national culture has crashed into the evolving, globalizing, middle-class-destroying and equally contradictory project of bourgeois economics. This confrontation implodes five decades of compromise between building a governable national culture and engineering a viable marketplace for cultural and other commodities. The tenuous infrastructure of collective cultural invention is collapsing.

The academic and artistic left, following Foucault and other theorists, has developed a sophisticated critique of the state as upholder of those same disciplinary powers displayed in war, and has learned to view all political (meta)narratives and institutions of social management in terms of a hegemonic dissemination of power. At issue here is not the accuracy of this theoretical stance—its emphasis on particularity and plurality has made a crucial intervention in cultural theory and politics —but rather its strategical adequacy to our political situation. First, globalization won't eliminate national governments, not in our lifetimes; what it does, rather, is gradually refunctionalize/disempower them, imposing changing expectations and possibilities in politics, economics and culture. Lyotard has observed that capitalism has no need to legitimate its spreading hegemony because it prescribes no obligations. Spending money is not an obligation, presumably, but a pleasure.

It is not the getting and spending of cash, though, that unites people; it is the actions of and contestations against governments that enable people to affirm and explore the "texture of many singularities" that Kristeva describes as the ideal nation. For Canadians this is not a new insight. But the "texture of many singularities" is newly endangered, however strongly we have come to feel its necessity as a mode of culture, a mode of life. Side by side with the increasing monopolization of cultural production, a brutal skepticism towards the legitimacy of government as repository for public interest marks "neo"conservative governments like the one just elected in Ontario. Their plan to dismantle and/or privatize our cultural bureaucracies will dispossess us of the historic achievements, values, rights and assets of our public culture. We are in danger of losing the instruments for building sovereign culture(s) that were bequeathed to us, with all their flaws, by our collective history. It is especially depressing to watch real social paradoxes being manipulated so brazenly by the right, which parades its antipathy to governmental traditions with the bravado of cowboys. Its unimpeded success will be disastrous from the vantage point of a democratic "culture" in any sense of the term, even if it was (among other things) the cumulative privileging and rationalization of culture which enabled this ghastly regression. For culture is still "managed" in the reign of globalizing economics. The spaces of culture produced and then vacated by the public domain are being remobilized to produce very different kinds of symbolic order and affective desire. I will give three examples of this trend and conclude with some thoughts about their implications.

In the late 1960s, the era of George Grant's *Lament for a Nation*, Trudeau's "reason over passion," Expo 67, the FLQ, courageous public affairs programming, regional art, Vietnam, and other lively anxieties, Canada witnessed a small outburst of patriotism. It saw itself symbolized in the new flag, in popular music and film, more widely in a new style of sophisticatedly affectionate iconography. A CBC public affairs television logo of the late 1960s, now a brief blip in Toronto's CBC Museum, featured playful graphics of maple leaves, Mounties and beavers cavorting antically around the screen. Today CBC Television features digitalized graphics and global electronic flows in comparable slots, and the Mounties have been sold to the Walt Disney Co., now among the largest corporations in world history.

The transformation of CBC self-presentation exemplifies a larger process wherein the attempt to incorporate dissent into citizen subjectivity through the ritual circulation of national symbols is being displaced by the equally disciplinary (but less flexible or accountable) circulation of commercial logos and corporate loyalties. At Ontario Place, the once public "Molson Amphitheatre" is subject to a union boycott (largely disregarded) because MCA's takeover led to the elimination of union contracts. MCA's purchase of the amphitheatre has also enabled Molson and MCA to practice near-monopolistic control over pop music performances influencing not only the acts in their own theatre, but because of vastly superior monetary resources, concerts in major music venues throughout Toronto. How many pop music fans or bands will choose union or public sector loyalties over seeing/being the acts that negotiate deals with MCA?

In the visual arts, the challenge to suspend public arts funding and replace it with corporate sponsorship inspired a recent exhibition at the Koffler Gallery, whose artists produced a series of works featuring images of Wrigley's and its corporate logos. The next logical step: not only will Canadian artists, publishers and producers have to seek — and often pay for — copyright permission from Disney Co. to play with images of the Mounties, but sponsoring corporations will increasingly insist on the right to make the kinds of aesthetic decisions now claimed by Molson's and MCA.

Canadians raised with public institutions such as the CBC, the Canada Council, and the public school system learned to picture a national community sharing a benign, good humoured mythic space contiguous with a naturalized collective past. The symbolic association of territoriality and public good, making Canada synonymous with (relative) compassion, acquired over time a genuine affectivity. One wanted to be the beaver, not the eagle: the Mountie, not the Green Beret; the kind of person who waited in line, looked after the old and the poor, and respected picket lines and trees as a matter of course. These symbols were myths in every sense: they reshaped history and imposed a unifying narrative on heterogeneous subjects. They also symbolized compassionate, democratic and anti-imperialist values whose political defeat is reflected in and exacerbated by the loss of shared symbols and meanings.

In recent years the pedagogical orientation of our public culture has changed, and we are seeing an entirely different lesson about the "good citizen." What we are supposed to value in the ebb and flow of everyday life — kindness, altruism and compassion, fairness, civility, respect for difference — is no longer a legitimate basis for public morality. The autodidacts at the helm insist that public good requires brutal slashes and a cool, tough economic rationality to keep Canada solvent in the world of transnational capital. Governments, cities, old age homes, film productions, schools and galleries must be run like businesses, and businesspeople must run them. We are witnessing no less than a fundamental redefinition of the concept of democracy in the public sphere.

Culture is crucial as both site and instrument for this transformative process. This is a consequence of our history, our location, and the legacies of our (broader) culture. The political crisis faced by people and institutions concerned with culture (in its narrow sense) compels artists and intellectuals to confront again questions of culture and democracy. Despite the rhetoric, these slashes are not motivated or justified by economics. They arise from imperatives generated by Canada's "relative location" (as cultural geography terms it) in relation to globalization, particularly U.S. trade and social policies. These are reactionary pressures which demand the transformation of culture in its broad and narrow sense. Resistance to this process means catalytically defending the agencies and institutions which have enabled creators of culture to imagine, to produce, to communicate, and of course to eat. It also means opening and extending the search for meanings, values, and beautiful particularities, in ways that can touch the larger culture. And it means fighting to defend the culture in an even broader sense, using art and communication to re-member and re-store the kinds of autonomy and democracy envisaged by the alliances that made these agencies and institutions in the first place.

We have not fully realized a "texture of many singularities," or even arrived at a satisfactorily complex view of singularity itself, or texture either. But this was the vision we grew into. If we don't pursue this goal through art and invention, and through respect for difference and commonality, communities and values, autonomy and connection, politics and policies, as well as respect for the people sleeping in the streets, then that vision is truly lost.

controlled environments

~~Andrew J. Paterson~~

[A] "I still feel that memory provokes motivation."

[B] "And guilt provokes masochism. Which is probably how you came to be a cultural bureaucrat!"

[A] "You're out to lunch, B. Masochists control narrative. They're not pawns in anybody else's game.

[B] "Oooooh. I can tell what you've been reading in your off-hours."

[A] "Well, at least I don't wear my eyes out proofreading cutbacks!

[B] That will do, A. (B hangs up the phone)

"Etiquette"

"Propaganda"

[A] "Do you recall that application which seriously divided today's jury."

[B] "Yes, I recall you muttering under your breath about some sort of stalemate situation when I ran into you during your break. Now, what are the artist's initials again?"

[A] "C.P."

[B] "Right. C.P."

[A] "One of the jurors was persistently insisting that art cannot be propaganda; and that therefore propaganda cannot be art."

[B] "I'm not sure to what degree propaganda is meant to be art."

[A] "You sound like the particular juror who gave me such a headache.

[B] "Propagandists, if they truly believe what they are propagandizing on behalf of, are not concerned with subtlety. Nor should they be expected to be.

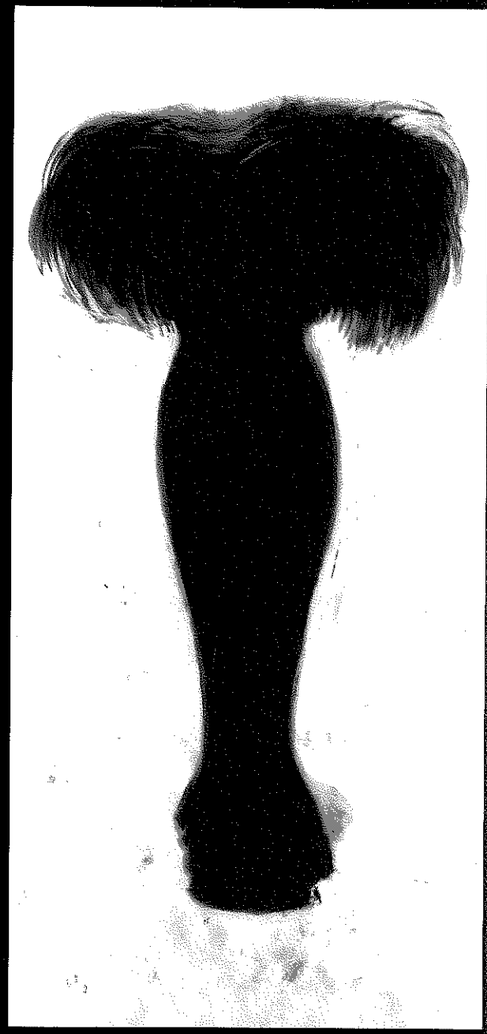
[B] "Where do you get your information, A?"

[A] "I don't even need to obtain such information about you. If you disgrace yourself at public parties then you blow your chances of being invited to private ones.

[B] "Oh. Listen to the recluse lecturing on the subject of etiquette."

[A] "There are many people, in fact a majority of people who, if they wish to be entertained, prefer to hire professional entertainers for the occasion in question. As opposed to constipated cultural bureaucrats who can't hold their booze and as a result metamorphose into fifth-rate standup comedians!"

"Etiquette"



Cathy Daley "Untitled." 1995. pastel on vellum.
Courtesy of Paul Petro Contemporary Art.
Photo by Cheryl O'Brien.