

Telling (a story?)

We were having lunch one day in a nice cafe beside the Toronto Morgantaler Clinic. We were meeting someone there who hadn't yet arrived, so we spent some time watching the "Pro-lifers". And while we were watching, a group of 10 (or so) darkly-garbed figures advanced in single file into the fray holding signs reading something like the following: DOWN WITH SEX, REAGAN LOVES YOU WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, ONLY TO PROCREATE, GAY IS EVIL, etc. We thought it quite funny. They joined the circle of "Pro-lifers" who, hence, dispersed; presumably not wanting to be associated.

While a waiter told us he knew one of them, and understood that this was a bit of "Guerrilla Theater," the organisation of which he had heard rumours about, others exclaimed: "Oh, my God, that's going too far!" "Look at those fanatics!" "Is this for real?!" We continued to laugh.

Madeleine went outside as people began to gather to watch. The police looked jittery. The "Pro-lifers" stood on the periphery, one of them took pictures. A Star reporter appeared and spoke briefly with Madeleine. "He thought they were for real!", she told me, "I tried to convince him otherwise and he just said that everyone was entitled to their opinion, I think he thought I was one of them." I was amazed; it seemed quite clear that this was a joke, "Some people are so literal-minded," I muttered.

Madeleine went back outside and she and another woman spoke with a man who told them: "If it's alright for you to get an abortion, then it's alright for me to rape you." This really was getting pretty bizarre.

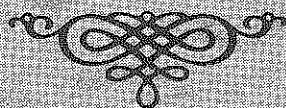
Madeleine tried to speak with the enigmatic "protestors". The brooding, cowed-ones remained silent and glum. Another man said to her: "They're trying to discredit us." "Us?!", she said. Then, seemingly in recognition of this scene, one of the mysterios handed her a square, orange piece of paper with a printed message reading: JOIN THE ANTI-SEX CRUSADE. We laughed more.

Then the TV-news-teams showed-up, and the subjects of controversy immediately left, being replaced quickly by the "Pro-lifers", who the news-teams seemed to show little interest in. The question remained: "Was that for real, or what?"

Everyone in the cafe was talking to one another. An interesting feeling of comradeship pervaded the atmosphere; we all had shared in an interesting "ambiguous" "event".

It is precisely that ambiguity which I find so "beautiful" about it all: it's efficacy was assured either way. On the one hand, if read as fanatics, they would discredit a certain species of criticism against Morgantaler, the clinic, abortions, etc.-- precisely because the ground of such a criticism would be localized as primarily reactionary, repressive, fascistic, etc. On the other hand, if read as a joke, amusement would be dependent upon, in some sense, having already discredited such a species of critique.

Whether or not this critique needs to be discredited, and/or done so in this way, does not interest me here. What does interest me--what I find interesting about this story-- is an idea, a topic, perhaps a title to be pursued further: The Efficacy of Ambiguity, or, The Strength of Ambiguity, maybe even, The Preference for Ambiguity. How might this be pursued? What kind of history would it be situated within/in-relation-to? What difference does it make? What would be the relation between such a pursuit and its own (possible?) ambiguity? Questions I suspend for now; wanting mostly to tell a story, and thus also suspending, for now, the ambiguity of such a telling...



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Michael Boyce may or may not be any of the following: a writer, a musician, a student, a teacher's assistant, a member of the Border/lines collective, a story.