bers of this class may be content merely to recognize the codes of the dominant culture (and Bourdieu suggests such recognition occurs despite the conscious intentions of individuals), others attempt to acquire the distinguished relation to culture. Yet if the style of the bourgeoisie in relation to high culture is one of relaxed familiarity, that of the petite bourgeoisie is one of tension or pretension. The constant self-monitoring of the petite bourgeoisie originates in the context in which they acquire culture. Unlike the bourgeoisie which is likely to have acquired a sense of culture as 'second nature' through early experiences in the family, the petite bourgeoisie picks up a sense of culture through formal education, or worse, through its efforts to teach itself.

Bourdieu maintains that the marks of this mode of acquiring culture are unmistakable: '(The petite bourgeoisie) takes culture...too seriously to escape permanent fear of ignorance of blunders, or to side-step tests by responding with the indifference of those who are not competing or the serene detachment of those who feel entitled to confess or even flaunt their lacunae.' But the new petite bourgeoisie is not entirely excluded from the game. This class fraction, 'having abandoned the somewhat morose asceticism of the rising petite bourgeoisie', forms a 'natural ally' for the new bourgeoisie mentioned above. Both are engaged in establishing and responding to the need for new lifestyles. Bourdieu's brief but highly suggestive description of these new lifestyles recalls arguments made by Foucault and others about sexuality and therapy: 'The fear of not getting enough pleasure, the logical outcome of the effort to overcome the fear of pleasure, is combined with the search for self-expression and "bodily expression" and for communicating with others ("relating"—*échange*), even immersion in others (considered not as a group but as subjectivities in search of their identity); and the old personal ethic is thus rejected for a cult of personal health and psychological therapy.'

At the bottom of the cultural hierarchy in Bourdieu's framework are the working classes for whom the very choice of a lifestyle is heavily influenced by restrictions imposed by necessity. Bourdieu suggests that the working class aesthetic is the very antithesis of aesthetics, at least in the Kantian sense. Thus the members of the working class apply the standards of everyday life to aesthetic objects, disdaining "frills" and "fancy nonsense" in a range of cultural products including household decor. Working class women reject the 'typically bourgeois idea of making each object in the home the occasion for aesthetic choice, of extending the intention of harmony or beauty even into the bathroom or kitchen...' And they also reject the efforts devoted by bourgeois women to personal appearance. Working class men, Bourdieu goes on, are even less likely to waste time in the 'pretension' of personal style. Such pretensions are viewed as both bourgeois and feminine. In this regard, Bourdieu suggests that the culture of virility is a kind of psychological refuge for the working class male.

Bourdieu, as might be imagined, is very critical of romantic views of working class culture or any other form of counter culture. In his view, the values and codes of the dominant culture are pervasive and produce effects on conduct despite the activities of those who would reject them. These effects are even found in the area of explicitly political discourse. Because of their relation to language, the working classes are apt to distrust the generalizations and verbal strategies of politicians and other specialists in the production of political discourse. While this perspective on working class culture may suggest a certain pessimistic undertone in Bourdieu's work, it does not by any means preclude an understanding of roots of progressive social change.

That *Distinction* constitutes a major contribution to our understanding of the significance of culture in French society, and with some modifications in other national contexts, is indisputable. But the precise nature of that contribution is hard to specify. The theoretical insights noted earlier are of a high order. The methodological and rhetorical achievements are unique and imaginative. Bourdieu has developed a compelling albeit difficult narrative using as an empirical foundation the results of interviews combined with the results of a questionnaire that surveyed tastes as well as demographic data. But how far does *Distinction* take us towards an understanding of the role of culture in social reproduction, the question Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams suggested was fundamental for Bourdieu?[1]

To those who object that Bourdieu has neglected the historical and conflictual aspects of social reproduction, I would suggest that his approach conforms to a logically defensible division of intellectual labour. There is no reason why Bourdieu's concepts cannot be applied to advantage in ethnographic studies of culture as well as in analyses of determinant factors in class formation, cultural resistance and political struggle. Though space prohibits an adequate consideration of this problem here, I would argue that Bourdieu's theoretical perspective is suited to a discussion of both social stability and social change.[2]

The charge that Bourdieu's analysis of the universe of lifestyles has a problematic connection to a theory of the major institutional influences on culture is more valid. There exists a danger, to which *Distinction* is by no means immune, that a discussion of lifestyles may become too far removed from an appraisal of the role of the state and private corporations in cultural and social reproduction.[3] The result is an ambiguity with respect to the relative importance of various forms of power and capital in society.

This latter reservation aside, I feel that *Distinction* and many of Bourdieu's other publications will prove to be invaluable resources for the study of culture in Canada and elsewhere. Bourdieu is well aware that those doing sociology are themselves part of the struggles of the social world insofar as they contribute to definitions of the nature of those struggles. Perhaps more than anything else, his work provides a refreshing example of what intellectuals can accomplish when they set out to explore the politics of culture fully aware that they are starting from the intellectual's relation to culture.

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Notes

1. Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the sociology of culture: an introduction.' *Media, Culture & Society* 3 (1980), p.211.
2. For a detailed analysis of this issue see Bourdieu, 'On Reproduction, Habitus and Education'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 2 (1984), pp.117-127.
3. For a relevant analysis of changing influences on cultural production in the United States, see Paul DiMaggio and Michael Useem, 'The arts in class reproduction', in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education: Essays on Class, Ideology and the State*, ed. Michael Apple (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), pp. 247-274.

FACE VALUE: The Politics of Beauty

by Robin Tolmach Lakoff and Raquel L. Scherr
(Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)

Of the many personal issues that the women's movement has thrown up for political debate in recent years, one powerful issue has been long evaded. As the two authors of *Face Value* ruefully remark, we have discussed almost all of the issues that before made us feel alone and insecure—all except personal beauty. Happily for us in *Face Value* they have taken the challenge of analyzing the power that beauty holds over us.

Beauty? A political issue? Certainly, argue the authors, for 'it figures in the exchange of power and influence.' Beauty is not, they explain, power in itself. It is a passive attribute existing only through the judgement of others. But for women, systematically excluded from power, beauty is hugely significant. It is the one value that enables us to attract those who do have power. The ideal traditional marriage is just that exchange of her beauty for his wealth, influence and power.

Face Value is a disconcerting reminder of how much women are still valued, and feel valued, primarily on the basis of our looks. Beauty is fundamental to our sense of selves as women whether we beautify ourselves or not. Many women are indeed 'controlled by the tyranny of looks, by the threat of having approval, and with it power, withheld.' The authors argue that 'discrimination based on beauty is more prevalent than discrimination based on race.' The book explores how and why beauty holds so much power.

The authors examine the myths and stereotypes of beautiful women, their visual representation in painting and sculpture, the language of beauty, men and beauty and the effect of white standards of beauty on other races. The book's eclectic focus shifts constantly, segregating rather than integrating these component issues. Unfortunately, through the cracks of their approachs the question of why beauty is conferred with such power finally slips away unanswered. In the meantime the authors give us fascinating and insightful descriptions of the power of beauty in our lives.

In 'Beauty in Our Times' the authors examine the role of the camera and the media on beauty. In the process they give us a great description of capital's commodification of beauty. Mass production and mass communication turned beauty from something rarely beheld to something constantly beheld. Beauty, once the privilege of the leisured class, became available to all. The ingredients of beauty could be bought everywhere inexpensively and the media's message that we must be beautiful reached into the lives of people of all classes.

> *Mass production and mass communications turned beauty from something rarely beheld to something constantly beheld*

Visual images of beauties—professional beauties—bombard us daily and we respond by buying, we buy constantly at magazine racks, cosmetic counters and movie houses. Stars such as Greta Garbo or Farrah Fawcett Major set standards of beauty that affected millions simultaneously. Literally thousands of women made themselves over in those particular styles. Already narrowly focused on one race, the range of prescribed beauty shrank to one style, one fashion at a time, elusively out of the reach of most women.

'The message we are given daily by the myriad images of beauty is that women must look a certain way to be loved and admired—to be worth anything.' Yes, but it's all too easy to confuse the message with the response. There's no denying that most women at some point in their lives measure themselves against the current norm of beauty and find themselves woefully lacking. But what we do about it will differ according to our age, our class background, our race and our personal circumstances. *Face Value* tends to assume both that white western standards of beauty are powerful universal standards and that all women respond docilely to the imperative to be beautiful.

Women of all races have fought back against normative messages of beauty. Blacks in western society have rebelled against the equation of white with beauty and against social ranking in the black community based on lightness of skin. White notions of beauty lie at the heart of racism and, as the authors state, 'Beauty is never more political than when it is used to prop up the power of one race while it renders others powerless, immured in self hatred.' But the black is beautiful rebellion has only minimally penetrated the visual media and its standards of beauty. Black models and actors by and large are still obliged to possess under their skins the Caucasian features of the white ideal of beauty.

Beauty's power is used to divide men from women, women from women, race from race. To be beautiful is compensation for lack of power, but a beautiful woman is not a powerful woman. It is beauty, not woman, who has the power, and in pursuit of power we seek beauty. 'Perhaps until recently women had so little else to make their lives comfortable, psychically as well as physically, that they needed the promise of beauty, and the thrill of competition with

other women in this arena, to make living worthwhile.'

What are the psychological roots of our responses to beauty? Unfortunately the authors didn't get very far with that question. Their research turned up only contradictory positions. 'Academic psychologists link beauty with happiness, competence and goodness. Psychoanalysts link it to misery, passivity and immorality. Both claim "empirical" evidence...The two together form a whole —the whole of our myths, literature and popular stereotypes about beauty.'

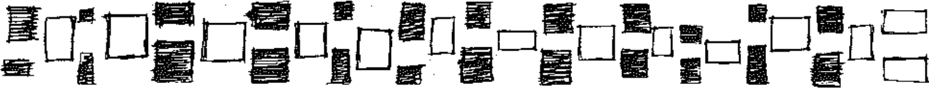
In their own surveys the authors found that, without exception, all the women they interviewed claimed that beauty was important to them, though none could elucidate why. Many felt guilty at admitting its importance, believing that their concern for personal beauty was antithetical to feminism. In the fight to be valued equally and on the same basis as men—for our activities—parts of the feminist movement have often poised on the edge of puritanical views. The call that we no longer should shave our legs, paint our eyes or participate in the exchange of beauty for power and influence served two ends. It liberated some from tedious cosmetic routines but put many others off feminism. The image of the ugly feminist endures, especially among younger women.

We worry in private about our looks and we go to extraordinary lengths to enhance or reclaim them once ageing and birthing threaten to permanently mark our bodies. *Face Value* describes in wincing detail the self-mutilations, from ear-piercing to face lifts and implant surgery we elect to undergo. In our efforts to maintain ourselves in the current image of slender beauty we put out health at risk. The current adolescent look in which sexual innocence and knowingness are simultaneously suggested by sexually experienced women in the slim firm bodies of the immature, has led many women to dangerous lengths to obtain a slender body. Women let their body weight fluctuate dramatically and unhealthily and consume dangerous dietary 'aids' by the millions. Ten thousand women a year in the United States alone are poisoned each year by diet pills, and thousands more are left exposed to hypertension and strokes.

In the quest for beauty, ageing women shell out thousands of dollars for cosmetic surgery. While the signs of ageing are popularly considered to enhance the attractiveness of men because they are evidence of his experience in the world, the prime virtue of manliness, the same bags and wrinkles and greying hair are, for the same reasons, considered ugly in a woman. The signs of ageing not only deny our innocence, they also blur the male/female distinction at the root of the ideal of female beauty.

Beauty is the power of the weak, but while women are relatively powerless in other ways in western society, can we renounce the one power we command? Would we ever want to give up the pleasure of seeing or being a beautiful woman, of at least trying? *Face Value* suggest that only when women are valued primarily for our activities and gain real power will beauty relinquish its powerful grip. Perhaps then we can enjoy beauty without compulsion or guilt. We need to use this book and the other writings that ought to follow as a starting place to shake this 'final great divider, the ultimate thing we worry about as individuals'.

Dinah Forbes



THE CITY AND THE GRASSROOTS

by Manuel Castells

(Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 1983)

The most common form of political action any of us are likely to take these days involves urban issues. It might be joining a tenants' group to protest the disrepair of the building, or fighting off an attempt to raise rents. It could be rallying around a particularly impressive old building scheduled for demolition or about the desecration of a ravine. It could involve the environment, such as saving a stand of trees, worrying about industrial wastes or deteriorating water quality.

What's amazing is the extent of these actions. People take them everyday in every city—apolitical people, folks who would never put themselves out to shake the hand of a walking, breathing member of Parliament. Often these kinds of struggles aren't seen by the traditional political analysts as being of much importance—they are on the fringes, people amusing themselves on the periphery of life. But when one of these minor irritations erupts into a battle, grand and impressive, then there's much scurrying to report the size and shape of the action.

One thinks of the fight around the Spadina Expressway and the attempt to change the direction of transportation policy and urban form in Toronto. Think of the bitter fights to save important downtown landmarks in Halifax, Montréal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, and to prevent the worst of the developers' excess. Most other Canadian cities were involved in these kinds of struggles, with a noticeable effect on urban politics.

And there are other, perhaps more significant political actions. Every large Canadian city had its urban renewal fights, as working people did battle with governments to preserve their neighbourhoods. Many communities have spent much of the last two decades fighting off developers. and their high-rise towers, in the process demanding that more opportunities be given for citizen participation in decision-making and that elected politicians be more accountable to those they supposedly represent.

Does any of this activity mean anything in the long term? Critics have often argued negatively—even for the Spadina Expressway fights—using classical marxist jargon to point out that most urban battles are not drawn along class lines, and therefore add little to the only thing that will change the social structure, namely class struggle. The individuals involved in these battles shrug, let the critics say what they will, and continue right on bashing their heads against the wall. They think the battle is worth engaging in, whatever those on the sidelines say.

Now along comes Manuel Castells, eminent marxist political analyst, in an attempt to make sense of urban action. What emerges out of 336 very large pages of type, shored up by 60 pages of appendices, followed by notes and no less than 17 closely spaced pages of bibliography, is a revisionist view. He concludes that the urban action makes sense but the marxist analysis doesn't. At one point he cries out '...although marxist theory might not have room for social movements other than the historically predicted class struggle, social movements persist. So experience was right and marxist theory was wrong on this point and the intellectual tradition in the study of social change should be recast.'

What Castells attempts to do in this book is develop a theory that will make sense of urban grassroot political movements. His approach is to discuss some of the more spectacular urban fights in cities across the world, going as far back as Castillian Spain in 1520 and the Commune of Paris in 1871, to a dozen other examples this century in Europe, South America and the United States. The stories are ones that are not well-known—after all, urban struggles have not been treated with much respect by scholars.

One learns for the first time about the remarkable rent strike in Glasgow in 1915, the tenant action provoked by the prostitutes in Veracruz in 1922 and the bitter struggles of the early 1970s in the Grand Ensembles—the post World War II new towns in the commutershed of Paris. There are intricate discussions of the Mission District in San Francisco as well as the urban impact of the gay community in the same city; explanations of squatter communities in Lima, Mexico and Santiago de Chile, and the profile of the citizens' movement in Madrid in the mid-1970s.

Unfortunately, none of the stories turn out to be terrifically interesting, at least not they way they are told. Castells recounts them not for their own sake, but to draw out his thesis and that means he hasn't the time or inclination to outline the characters firmly and to inject all the details of the battles that make them so fascinating. (Take a look at John Cheevers' marvellous book *Oh What a Paradise It Seems* to experience how well fragments of these urban stories can be told.) When something can't be drawn out to fit in any way with the thesis—as indeed happens in regard to the Madrid struggle—Castells is reduced to saying, 'These stories offer no lesson.' Well, thank goodness he let me know, but it hardly provides enlightenment.

Castells generally concludes that 'urban movements do address the real issues of our time, although neither on the scale nor terms that are adequate to the task ...they are more than a last, symbolic stand and desperate cry: they are symptoms of our contradictions, and therefore potentially capable of superseding these contradictions.' What does this actually mean? I'm not quite sure. It is but one of many examples of a paragraph starting out with panache and direction, then ending in a puddle of words that have lost their sense. There is a romanticism about Castells' conclusions that is irritating. One wishes he'd be a bit tougher about exactly what he is saying.

The thesis he proposes is certainly simple enough. He proposes that an urban movement will achieve its maximum impact if it meets the following four criteria:

Many communities have spent the last two decades fighting off developers and their high-rise towers

1. It must have goals related to collective consumption demands (such as lower rents), community culture (that feeling of being part of a neighbourhood, for example) and political self-management (such as participation in decision-making). Indeed, he shows that the important struggles always include these three elements, and if you think of significant battles in any Canadian city, chances are they will be there. Take the case of the fight of the Toronto Island residents. They want reasonable rents, the right for their community to continue its existence and a say in how their community is run. Those kinds of criteria are handy to keep in mind as one assesses the seriousness of a community struggle.

2. It must be conscious of its role as an urban social movement. In other words, it must have a sense of history, rather than being an instantaneous backlash worried only about its own status.

3. It must be related to society through the media, professionals and traditional political parties.

4. It must be autonomous of any political party. We all know the damage that a political party—a group with its own agenda—can cause to a community group.

Castells has a great deal of sympathy for struggles involving these elements, in spite of their limitations. 'Urban social movements are aimed at transforming the meaning of the city without being able to transform society. They are a reaction, not an alternative; they are calling for a depth of existence without being able to create that new breadth.'