BORDER/LINES

CULTURES • CONTEXTS • CANADAS

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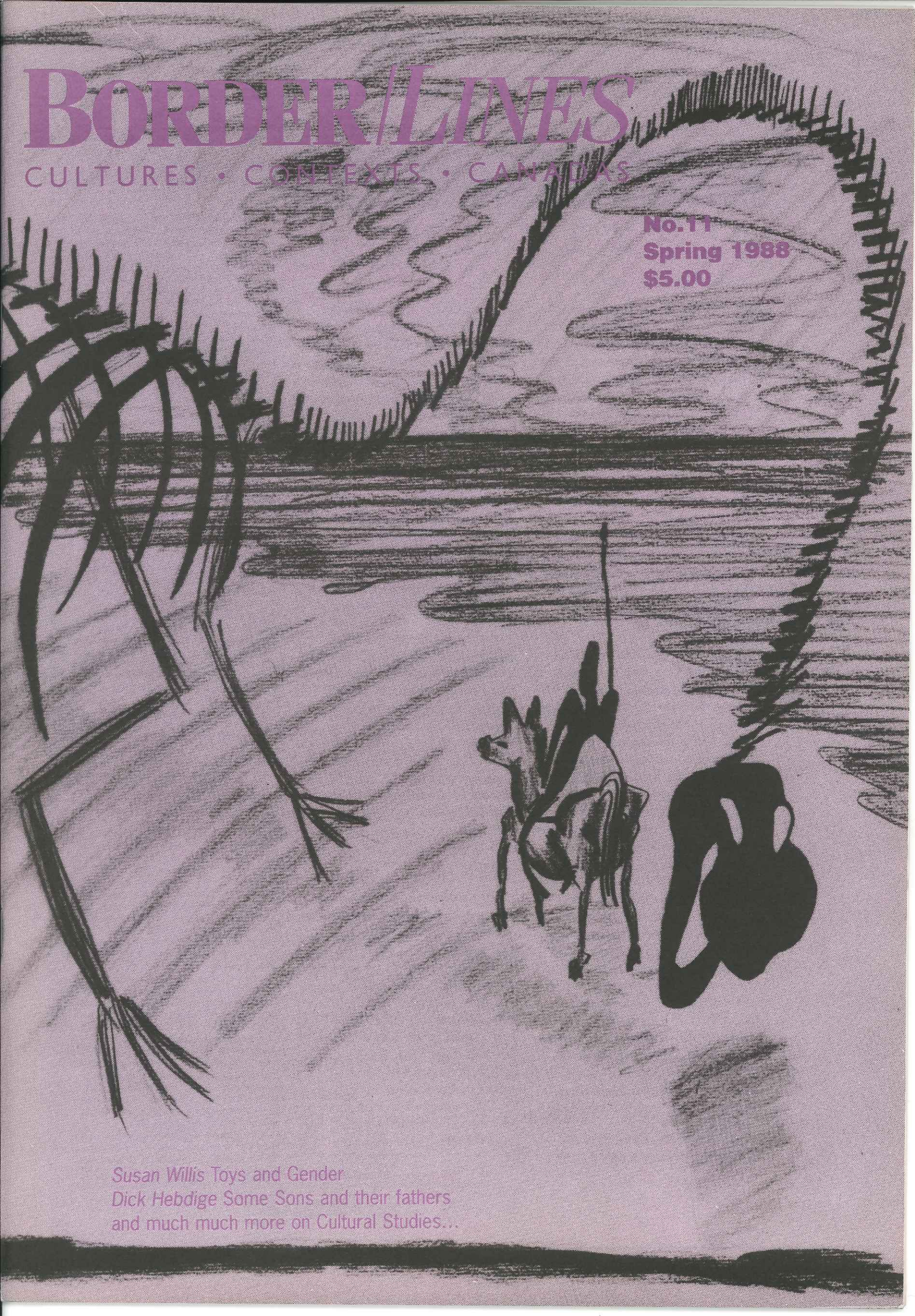

Susan Willis Toys and Gender
Dick Hebdige Some Sons and their fathers
and much much more on Cultural Studies...

Raymond Williams
1921-1988

We discover in the usual ways, from friends on the telephone or from the newspaper, that Raymond Williams died on 26 January, 1988. The networks of telling and listening attempt to fill in what is known. That he was sick last Summer. That a friend to whom someone else had spoken had seen him a few months ago and he seemed well then. That he had written an Introduction that arrived in December, only six weeks before he died. Then equally patched out of fragments is the short obituary in the New York Times that identifies Williams as a Marxist but in an understandable confusion says he had taught at Oxford University.

Williams was part of a remarkable intellectual formation that taught in workers' education in the years following the war. He was attached to the Oxford Delegacy for Extra-Mural education through the Workers Educational Association. His first books, including Culture and Society were directly related to this work. The emergence of the New Left in the late 1950s and early 1960s was associated with a renewed interest in culture and politics. What Williams had to say made good sense to this younger generation which took his work and gave it a wide readership. In 1961 Williams returned as a lecturer to Cambridge University, continuing his ambiguous relationship to the university where he had studied before and after his military service. Asked to write an article for a book entitled My Cambridge, he wrote one of his most personal essays. It starts: "It was not my Cambridge. That was clear from the beginning."

Apart from his opposition to the disciplines of knowledge at Cambridge University, Williams was active in politics for most of his life. In the late 1960s he attempted to organize a coalition of political groups to the left of the Labour Party but this fell apart over the issue of whether to support Labour in the next general election. The 1968 May Day Manifesto remains as a document of this coalition. Williams' own book Towards 2000 (published in 1983) continues this tradition of democratic socialism in which politics is a kind of permanent education.

Following some sharp debate in the 1970s, Williams reformulated his position on culture and politics in the very compact statement of Marxism and Literature. It is increasingly recognized that the scope of the book extends well beyond the keywords of the title. Taken with his historical work in The City and the Country, it is clear that Williams' work puts him in company with Michel Foucault, Edward Said and (even though the connection with feminist scholarship must be made by the reader) with Gayatri Spivak and Teresa de Lauretis.

Shortly before he died Williams had an occasion to reflect on some work he had done on television over the last twenty years. He wrote in concluding that "there are now actually more young radical professionals in television and radio, and in teaching and analysis of the media, than in the days of expansion and innovation. It is to them, in their diversity, fully sharing a sense of what they are up against, yet also sharing their confidence in new work waiting to be done, that these reflections are dedicated".

-Alan O'Connor.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
DECLINE OF THE BORDER/LINE MIND(S)

Dear Dave:
What is happening to the otherwise excellent Border/Lines? I am referring, in particular to your article, *Disseminating Scruples* (which I note does not have the integrity or plain gutz to identify just 'who' is being protected). Your sorrowful contribution to the canons of boredom may in fact be the very type of literature (well, not really literature) that makes this magazine, just another mag(rag)azine.
I am not blind (or blinded) by your cutting ability to parody what *is* in my opinion the Decline of Literary Minds: minds reduced to the excremental wide-eyed groupies (of both genders): star gazing conferences for members of the carnivore family, cocktail party networking, and a whole host of other parasitic practices. Practices which can now compete with the best of any Hollywood Star System.
Am I out of New Left fashion review, or is there something New New in what one could call, avant garde, chic or otherwise politically correct by exposing what may simply be called: a Pretentious conference? (Pretentious, not because of the participants clothing apparel, pretentious, not because of the literary Bouncers guarding the doors, nor pretentious because of the back-biting, back-stabbing.) NO. Pretentious because participants at conferences such as these, like to engage in 'make believe' and 'pretend' that they are above, or stand out-side Pretension. But, being above, or standing out-side is never one's validation of their authentic integrity. No, one must emphatically declare the members politically correct line: "Oh! how pretentious!". See, how you are included, Dave? We all are. You, no less, than anyone else.
So Dave had to purge himself after this conference. Cleanse his intellectual system by simulating his literary integrity which says, "Hey, I am not one of them- I have the gutz to expose them." Here, we can all be thankful to Baudrillard for teaching us post-moderns, when and how to simulate any politically correct posture, that the occasion calls for.
Baudrillard points to the simulation of 'morality' produced around the Watergate incident, and the simulation of Disneyland's fantasy. Well, Dave, *Disseminating Scruples*, passes the simulation test, it actually produces the surface reading of what 'appears' to be integrity. *Only*, the 'surface' effects. Dave, the rupture of integrity bursting through your surface would necessitate revealing 'who' is behind your mask. And I believe, in an earlier article which was published in Border/Lines, I pointed out that there is *NOTHING* behind the mask. But I did not believe that any article would deliver this validation as pointedly as yours has.
Let us ask though: why bite off the literary hands which feed us? Dave's piece is manufactured and produced on the same conference table, it spreads its' gossip on. Silverman, Foucault, Derrida, Wood, Kroker, DeLauretis, Weir, Irigary- to name just a few of the 'designer' labels in current Borderline fashion. These labels have been written on, written for, written against, written ad infinitum, read ad nauseum.
Of course, I confess my shock, dismay, disgust and/or elation when I meet in 'person' the 'famous' author I have come to know ever so intimately in the text. In their bodily presence, out-side their 'authorship' they are always slightly shorter (or taller), a little bald (or grey) and sometimes more shallow (or boringly arrogant and filled with their own authorship status), than I would have anticipated. But Dave, so what? Reality 'effects' produce such disturbing incongruencies with our expectations. For example, what did you expect to find at a conference that limits its audience to the 'chosen few'? I believe that you misconstrued God's chosen few with those defined by the intelligentsias. Conferences were never designed by Heavenly intervention.
To summarize, what angers this reader about this piece is its absolute false integrity. I think readers of Border/Lines should be alerted to 'Dave's' feigned superiority. Put simply, he has protected himself in the process of ridiculing others. You, Dave are just another 'great pretender', sadly, pretending to be great.

Rita Kanarek
York University

Cover
by *Sandra Miegs*
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CHRONIQUE D'AMERIQUE

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How I

learned

my labour

classix

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I've often thought of writing a book called *Mon Cours Classique.*

In Quebec until 1970, until the school reforms, the *cours classique* was the schooling a young man went through in his teenage years, if he was lucky. If his family was well off. If he was going somewhere.

The idea was that there were certain basics to a culture, to understanding how a way of life worked. That Latin was one of them, that Greek was another. That such an entry into life could not do without the philosophy of Athens. That it must also know how the fathers of the church had revised and adapted this philosophy. And that it must hear a bit of what modern thinkers were saying, too, but always within the faith, within reason, with respect for the past.

It was both liberating and taboo-rich, the co*urs classique.* My *cours classique*? It would be a little different. It would be all the readings and conversations by which I learned what Quebec considered its basics. Its nuts, its bolts, its loves, its hates, its fundamental *Québecoisérie.*

The thing about the kind of c*ours classique* is that it is often still going on twenty years after you undertake it. Only now, for instance, is it becoming clear to me how labour and the labour movement fit into the classics of Quebec.

That there was a labour culture in English Canada I knew when I arrived. Knew it even more clearly, I guess, than if I had come from a working-class family and grown up in a union.

Since it was the lo*re* of the unions that had been passed on to me, there must

be a lore, there must be a way of seeing things in the labour movement that was visible to people beyond the ranks of the movement. A way of seeing things shared by the movement, by its sympathizers, by everyone on the left.

This labour culture was a small thread in English-Canadian life. I recall a conversation about a cousin of mine with a young man who had met her at university. Now we were reporters on the same paper, this young man and I, and he was curious about my cousin's family, her roots. I said: "Her father? He's a labour leader." The young man could not have been more astounded. The son of a small businessman, he never expected to come upon a trade union outside a newspaper story.

And yet this tiny labour culture had a texture, had a warmth. I remember strolling through the corridors of the Ottawa Auditorium just on the eve of my adulthood, in 1960, at the founding convention of the New Democratic Party. From a knot of young people in sweaters and jeans a song was going up:

We're gonna roll
We're gonna roll
We're gonna roll the union on . . ..

What struck me was that the song had *made it through.* It was all 1930s and folksy, and here it was coming out in the voices of college kids a generation later. From the Old Left, it had flown over to the New. There was a culture.

At that time in Quebec—1960, the breaking of the ice in Quebec, the questioning, the preparation—labour and unions were very important. The masses of French-speaking people in Quebec and across America were working people, and their own culture took them back to before the formation of the working class. To their village, their church, their square dances.

They needed something to take them forward into the machine age, and trade-unionism played this role. It kept the collective values, but translated them into industrial terms.

All Quebec intellectuals paid homage to the work the Confédération des Travailleurs Canadiens et Catholiques had done at Asbestos and Louiseville, and the work the United Steelworkers of America had done at Murdochville. For those who were active in socialist groups, or officials of the unions themselves, this homage was woven into their work, their daily reflexes.

But the homage spread out from there.

On television the Plouffe family lived the working life; in the theatre, Marcel Dube's characters talked of the exploitation they felt in the shop and the need they felt for a union. I can still hear the father of Florence saying things like this in an amateur production of the play in Sherbrooke, leaning on the kitchen table, his grizzled jaw all forlorn.

That same year, in Sherbrooke, I read the anthology of articles on the Asbestos strike by Pierre Trudeau and his friends, and realized how vital it was to the thinkers of the middle class that manual workers were moving, acting, daring, on social-justice issues, with modernist positions. Without them, the intellectuals would have felt all alone in their protests.

In Sherbrooke in the early 60s I heard chatter and speeches by Gus Steenland, Jean Marchand, Michel Chartrand, Curtis Lowry, Lewis Craig, Jean Marc Kerouac, the personnel of this labour culture in the Eastern Townships. They gave the culture faces, words, intensity. "Social justice" is an expression I remember coming into my vocabulary then, and I remember feeling it was a Catholic term, one I'd never have learned from the labour tradition I'd known in Ottawa. I went to Asbestos and drank beer in a tavern there; I saw the great hills of asbestos dust from the open pit.

I saw the jumble of factories in the valley at East Angus, and I remember the way Lewis Craig, on his way to becoming mayor of the town, named his profession. He named it in English, though he was a francophone: "Je suis *papermaker.*"

But I could also sense the fragility of these linkages. A funny thing about the Trudeau-edited book: though often mentioned, it was a rare book. It wasn't in print. You had to get it from university libraries or from bookstores in Montreal with old warehouse stocks.

And a thing that strikes me now, about the artistic extension of the union tone. About the very art that most potently carried the union culture in my place of origin. About song. . ..

Song was then transforming itself in Quebec. In Sherbrooke it was at the *Boite & Chansons* that this was happening. But almost never did one of the chansonnier's songs mention unions.

Quebec working people were always fighting their battles in these songs. The singers were often themselves members of the Union des Artistes, which had shaken up show business in Montreal since 1959 or so. Claude Gauthier sang:

So one day Old Six-Foot-Tall
Shaved the foreman's upper lip
With a quick axe stroke.

But those who roared the choruses were the kids of the *cours classique.* They did not often think directly in trade-union terms. These songs would found a whole incredible sector of French mass culture in the 1970's. Robert Charlebois would sing:

My eyes clamped tight with sleep
Punchin' in at the factory gate

The punch card would be in this poetry. But not the union card. And yet the union struggle continued all through the 60's, all through the 70's, and all through the 80's, to be central to the ferment in Quebec.

An image from the early 70's remains with me: a trip from Quebec to Montreal with a couple in their mid-thirties whose whole youth had been in the union movement. " We also did a lot of work on the south shore with young couples, teenagers. We set up courses on preparation for marriage. We answered questions about birth control and sex . . .".

The movement as an entire framework for life. A culture. To wear oneself out for this aim. The lines at the corners of pretty young eyes.

And back in Montreal in the literary part of my *cours classique,* I read Emile

Zola's *Germinal*. A novel little read in English, but which was always mentioned to me by French-speaking friends when I spoke to them of workers and work. In it, a middle-class novelist tries to come to terms with the heart of the union life: what, in working people's existence, draws them together, unifies their action and demands; and what pulls them apart, pulls them into themselves, into their private loves and angers and glasses of gin. One of the few famous works of literature to do that, and one of the few pictures of children working in the mines in the 19th century which wonders who these children were, and in what ways they might have been *proud* of working in mines.

I had a book in mind then, that I've just brought to completion.

Mètallo, the story of the Steelworkers, at Murdochville in 1957, and after, of their legendary (I say "legendary" still hoping it is true) leaders, Pat Burke, Thèo Gagnè, Emile Boudreau. Never did I doubt this book would be pertinent. Rather, I feared someone else's writing it first.

I was so sure the story belonged on the curriculum of the Quebec *cours classique*! Two workers were killed in the Murdochville strike, and the people of Steel—the *Mètallos*—were later to be among the most enthusiastic partisans of independence in the Quebec working class. In them there was a meeting of the CIO tradition from the U.S. and the Canadian Depression; and the Christian currents I had discovered in Sherbrooke. How could such a story not be a winner?

It's true there were problems. By the time the Common Front of public-service employees was in its bitter strike with the Parti Québécois government in 1983, it was clear that the national-liberation current in Quebec was at odds with the workers'-liberation current. There was also an editing-out of the international and Canadian unions from most intellectuals' picture of unions; a retaining of only the CSN, the all-Quebec central. This was a turning away from the real union scene. And yet it is true: the "Sayessen", in its posters, its prose, its face to the world, has a sense of culture, and the internationals have almost none. Their cultural tradition exists in spite of their leaders and their officiality, in the smiles, shouts and quirks of their members. (These are what I have tried to put into *Mètallo*.)

Then there's the question of unionism's place in the present-day social ladder. This is not really clear yet to either unionists or their observers. What is clear is that early on, the movement was felt as the voice of the poor. The voice of people who had left school young and who worked with their hands — mostly, but not solely, men. (There were always the seamstresses.) And that now unionization has rushed massively up into white-collar regions, without really fleshing out its presence among the poor. So that unionism is now the voice of a certain middle region in the society, with the manual-intellectual thing as a vague surviving barrier *within* the movement. And the poor spoken for by others.

And then, I would say, there's the quite justified doubt in the mind of today's activist for a new society about whether the unions and their leaders are really awake. Whether they understand that even a booming and well-paid industrial machine pollutes. Whether they grasp their need for allies in other parts of society, and other parts of the world.

But then, the Quebec teachers' union, the CEQ, did gather thousands of workbooks and pencils for Nicaragua....

Perhaps the word "central" is the key.

Union culture has never been central in English Canada. The Winnipeg General Strike, Ginger Goodwin, the On To Ottawa Trek, Resor's Siding, Joey Smallwood against the loggers, the jailing of Grace Hartman, British Columbia's Solidarity . . .. You must be a special kind of Canadian to feel these things strongly. They are not part of the agreed heritage, not household words.

Quebec, from about the time that René Lévesque picketed with the Radio-Canada producers in 1958, to about the time that René Lévesque ruled the province in 1978, was different. Its labour tradition was within its larger tradition. Within it, and near its centre. Quebec—rebellious Quebec—was nothing without Michel Chartrand's speeches. The FLQ era was nothing without the La Granade shoe factory and the Lapalme mail truckers. The age of the "Emelles," the Maoists, was nothing without the Robin Hood Flour picket-line shootings. Quebec feminism wasn't much without the millions of women who joined unions in the 1970s. Liberation was not liberation without a union component.

And now, with the culture changed, with a large French business class as surely created by the changes as any other new force, with the independence idea shelved, the unions are . . .

Well, look at them at Pointe-au-Pic, where one of their militants died at the hands of a policeman, without, I fear, really rallying a broad group of citizens to the cause of the hotel workers there.

They're isolated.

The Quebec labour tradition was married for a decade or two to a mainstream husband who only half-understood her. Now the divorce has been completed. She must now find new companions. Fight her way back into the mainstream with new companions, perhaps non-francophone companions. The couple had only one solid child, and that is the Myth of the Asbestos Strike, 1949. This event is the object of novel, play and essay. But only rarely (as Trudeau's infuriating importance in the Myth shows) from her own proud, autonomous, self-reliant perspective.

She's feeling as the English Canadian unions have always felt, with their warm, singing-through-the-years tradition, and their little-known roles.

Her legends are now scarcely legendary.

And as I prepare *Mètallo* for the press, I feel I'm not studying the *cours classique* any more. I'm teaching it.

***Malcolm Reid** is a free-lance journalist living in Québec City. This is the first of a series of regular columns in* Border/Lines

THE MUSIC OF GORDON MONAH

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THE MUSIC OF GORDON MONAHAN

Meta-physics and Mechanics:

EXCURSIONS

The sonorities which Canadian composer Gordon Monahan works with constitute music in the same way that prolonged sound constitutes pitch. The physical and aural properties of pure and electronically-influenced acoustic sound have been the object of his thinking and performance over the past eight years. At the essence of each piece lies an idea which is simple and straightforward, informed by a broad spectrum of interest ranging from physics and found sound to popular music and technology. Monahan's concerns are manifest in three pieces in particular: *Piano Mechanics* (1981-86), *Long Aeolian Piano* (1984-86), and *Speaker Swinging* (1981-87). The recording of these last two pieces was released on November 28 at the Music Gallery in Toronto, and constitutes a concrete document in an otherwise fluid practice.

Young Gordon was born in Kingston, Ontario in 1956 and grew up mostly in Ottawa. He began playing piano at age eight, and at twelve started a rock group where he played electronic organ and recorded. He later studied physics at the University of Ottawa, then transferred to Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. to study piano performance. At Mount A. he also acted with a campus theatre company.

Monahan's early interest in electronics and recording, his knowledge of physics and traditional piano technique (facilitating his radical departure from it) and his experience as a theatrical performer influence his work. He often handles recording equipment and instruments in the most primitive way possible. "I like to work with primitive technology that has a raw sense to it ... and if I can plug something in that's going to have a life of its own and do something unexpected ... then I'll make music out of it."

Yet Monahan's virtuosity as a composer encompasses a broad range of raw materials, from homemade instruments and junk from Active Surplus to sophisticated digital studio recording equipment and video. His music can be direct and primitively produced, yet etherial and foreign as made sound. It occupies a space between sound and music, aural invention and discovery. The performances embody process and ritual. The recordings are double-feedback systems where electronically generated sound may be acoustically manipulated or vice versa and recorded in such a way that naturalness and interference are equal. Neither domain of sound evolves clearly from the other and both feed back into a whole which is integrated, heterogeneous and anti-hierarchical in its tonality.

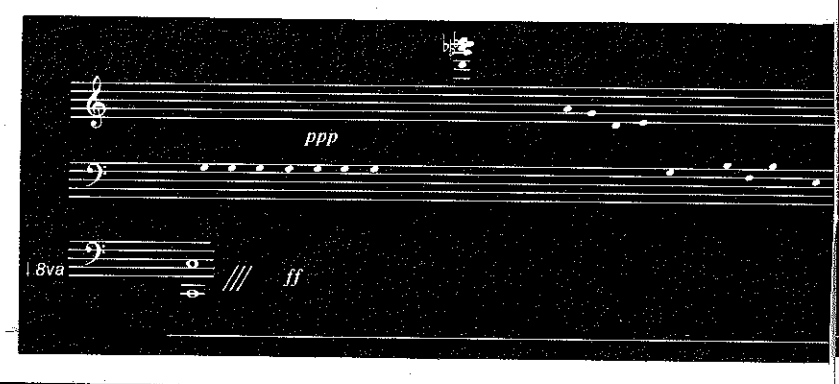
Monahan's final project at Mount Allison was a piece of electronic music based on the complex and infinitely varied tidal patterns of the Bay of Fundy. *Tidal Resonance at 45°N 64°W* was an early reconciliation and synthesis of seemingly polar interests, synthetic music and the perpetual forces of nature. When the piece was realized in 1983 at the Newfoundland Sound Symposium in South Balline, Nfld., speakers were put down on the beach and the electronic sounds arising from the patterns were played back, blending into the environment from which they had originated. This cyclical source manipulation and recapitulation and other circular patterns have since become characteristic structures in Monahan's work.

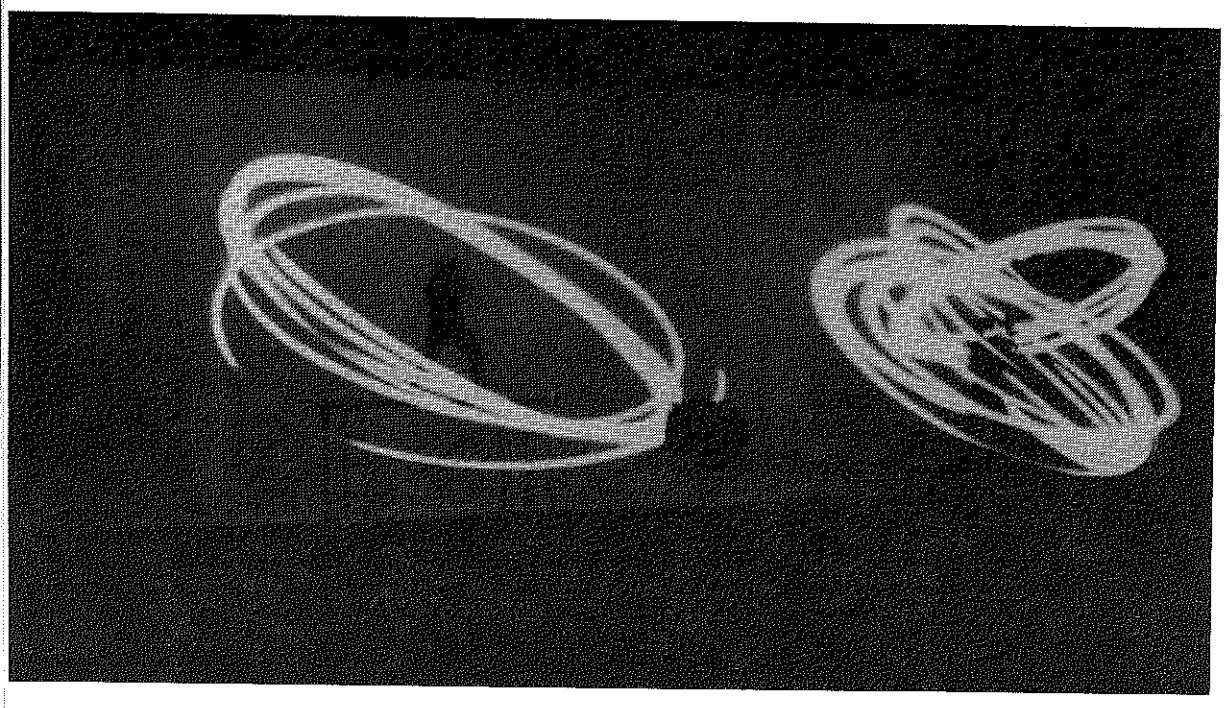
Monahan's ongoing work with acoustic piano produced two pieces which were recorded on his first album (1986), *Piano Mechanics* and the related *Large Piano Magnified*. Unlike his other work, *Piano Mechanics* is scored, the performer carrying out tasks dictated by the composer. The piece simulates the formal gestures, sounds and mechanics of machinery and the demands it makes on the performer are like something out of Lang' s *Metropolis*. It is "a catalogue of actions and activities which address the production of isolated acoustical resonances at the piano.... One' s duty with *Piano Mechanics* is to induce the piano to play like a machine ... to serve the action by playing as hard as one can. Sometimes the fingers may bruise and bleed as you hammer the key repeatedly...".

Although the piano here is in no way "prepared" or electronically reinforced, the sonorities elicited by direct and often brutal string, keyboard and pedal techniques are powerful and unprecedented. John Cage has described them as "absolutely astonishing. He produces music by playing the piano keyboard. Without anything electronic he produces in fact what one associates with electronics.... What happens is that the piano under Gordon Monahan's performance of it produced sounds that we haven't heard before."

Piano Mechanics is aurally independent of, yet indebted to, electronics and the extent to which electronic sound opened up the possibilities of Monahan's acoustic vocabulary is radical. "I would never have written *Piano Mechanics* if there were no such thing as electronic music. I was trying to create sounds at the piano that we hadn't listened to before, but at the same time my real physical basis was electronic music so that I could play something and say, yeah that sounds like it' s being processed. If I hadn't known anything about electronic music I don't think I would have gone to the aesthetic limits that I did with *Piano Mechanics*."

The final score for Piano Mechanics (fig.l) was completed in February, 1986 and exhibitied at the Music Gallery with photographs of Monahan's performance by Toronto photographer David Hlynsky. This is one of several visual collaborations which Monahan has been involved with. The recording is unmanipulated real-time taping of a performance by Monahan where the stretch and pull of sonorities described by Cage are clear and vivid.



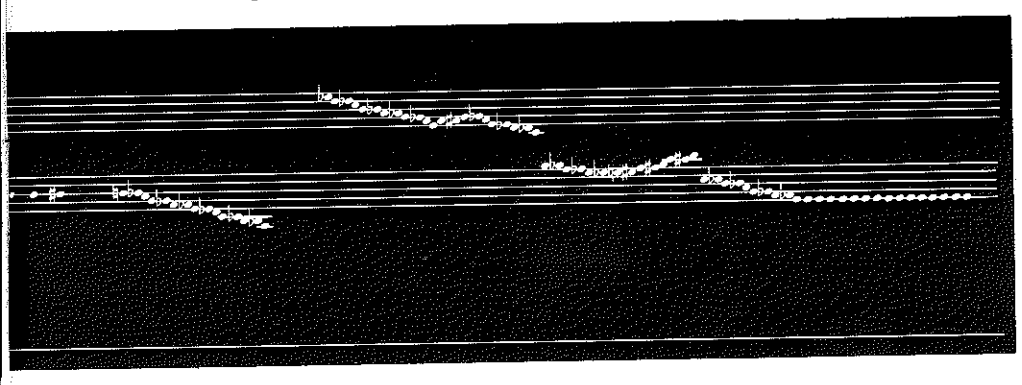


In New Brunswick, Monahan met photographer and teacher, Thaddeus Holownia. *Long Aeolian Piano* was first constructed in July 1984 on Holownia's farm in Jolicure and still exists there, "installed" in the environment. It is constructed using lOO-foot wires strung at high tension between the soundboard of a piano and posts driven at various points in the surrounding field. The piece operates on the same principle as the ancient Greek aeolian harp, a large stringed instrument built out-of-doors. Wind blowing over the strings produces continuous, varied tones and overtones, a phenomenon which the Greeks regarded as supernatural evidence of an eternal harmonic music, the harmony of the spheres. Such music occurred naturally in the universe as a generative, potential energy, to be discovered and reproduced by man. The notion of music as the condition of Origin, common to ancient Greek and Eastern religions, was reiterated by Johannes Keppeler, the neo-Platonists and Cage, and holds great appeal for Monahan.

The aural effects produced by the aeolian piano are tranquil, spatial and subliminal, again not unlike those which electronic composers strive for through synthetic means. In a 1986 version of the piano produced in Edmonton and recorded on video, Monahan integrated the installation and performance bases of his work. A small, tentative crowd was drawn to watch his careful, strenuous manipulations of the radically altered piano, reinforced and strapped to a tree with wires bolted aggressively to the front and back of the exposed soundboard. By plucking and dampening the wires and leaning against the wires and the instrument iteself, he produced subtle variations in the sound. Throughout, the atmospheric conditions of air pressure and wind velocity determined the nature and intensity of the music. These effects are left unaltered in the recording. The music co-exists with the sound of the wind — source, animator, integral element.

Monahan moved to Toronto in 1980 and on the suggestion of Holownia

began to explore ways of making music using the Doppler Effect. This involved reversing his thinking away from a conception of responsive, mutable sound emitting from a stable source



toward one of constant sound whose source is an active, mobile agent in the work. *A Magnet That Speaks Also Attracts* was an installation built with equipment worthy of any good garage sale, and rigged up in the Eye Revue Gallery, a display window in Toronto's Union Station in February, 1986. The loudspeaker, now the focus of the piece, is catapulted in mid-air and caught at the height of its trajectory by a magnet. The jolt of this action causes the needle on the adjoining record-player to skip so the speaker hangs from the magnet playing a new excerpt from *Bobby Christian, Strings for the Space Age*. The speaker is hauled off the magnet and placed back on the catapult by the mechanical system and the process is repeated. According to Monahan, the speaker catapult is a "tongue-in-cheek mechanical performing sculpture that is a combination medieval weapon system and modern musical studio system."

Speaker Swinging is the most recent process in Monahan's repertoire, literally a tour de force of his ideas and practices. Optimally, three performers whirl speakers overhead "lasso-style" in a circle twenty-two feet in diameter. The sounds emitted through the speakers are produced live in performance by six audio-tone generators which gradually vary between sine and sawtooth waves, and segments of prerecorded material are mixed with the live oscillators in process. The speed and to some extent the duration of the swinging is contingent upon the physical strength of the performers.

At the controls, Monahan modulates the sound, eventually aligning it with the resonant frequency of the hall.

During that phase of performance when this unity is achieved and the acoustic resonance of the room itself comes into play, the audience in subject to physical as well as auditory sensations caused by the music. At this point the lights are suddenly shut off. After a few moments lights affixed to each speaker are illuminated and instantly a super-modulation of shadows is thrown wildly around the room.

The listener's initial response is a strenuous attempt to reconcile the shock of sudden darkness and the hypnotic, sustained monophony of the sound. The secondary response involves the awareness of the spatial manipulations which Monahan exercises. The dimensions of aural, visual and temporal space are transformed as the music progresses, stretching and undulating like a slow-motion replay of itself, or a drastically protracted note in vibrato.

In recording, these sensory phenomena (without the vibrations of resonant frequency) come through the speakers; without the elements of surprise and fear which Monahan seeks live, the effect is one of tranquility and illusion. The recent videotape of *Speaker Swinging*, produced in conjunction with Toronto designer Bruce Mau, seeks to achieve video equivalence of the piece in performance.

Gordon Monahan is currently living and working in New York. He continues to refine performances of *Speaker Swinging* and has now plunged into fluid mechanics, developing the basis for an aeolian piano using water currents instead of air ("aquaeolian" his term). Other ideas for sound sculpture continue to involve piano, piano-string and wind phenomena, although his move to NY leaves him open to urban influences of the densest kind. As long as Monahan insists on re-examining aurality at its most fundamental levels and allows mechanics, electronics and the forces of nature itself to operate in concert, he will continue to evolve music which now rests silent, possible and profound.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS/CREDITS

Gordon Monahan, Speaker Swinging.
Photo, Reimer/Siegner.
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Gordon Monahan and Thaddeus Holownia, *Long Aeolian Piano* (detail).
Photo, Thaddeus Holownia.Page 7

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EXCURSIONS

SUN RA at the Diamond October 2,1987

Sun Ra's recent visit to Toronto has pushed me to think again about the breakdown of the classical avant-garde and the sometimes confusing and unhelpful uses of the term "post-modern" to explain this development. (The valuable exception to this confusion is Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"). In more specific terms, whether we are talking about the novel or about music, why is it that artists cannot simply continue to write and or produce their works using traditional forms? Or, to put it another way, why do some artists feel that they cannot continue to produce such works, and why are others able to continue to reproduce over and over again the same stale formulaic works.

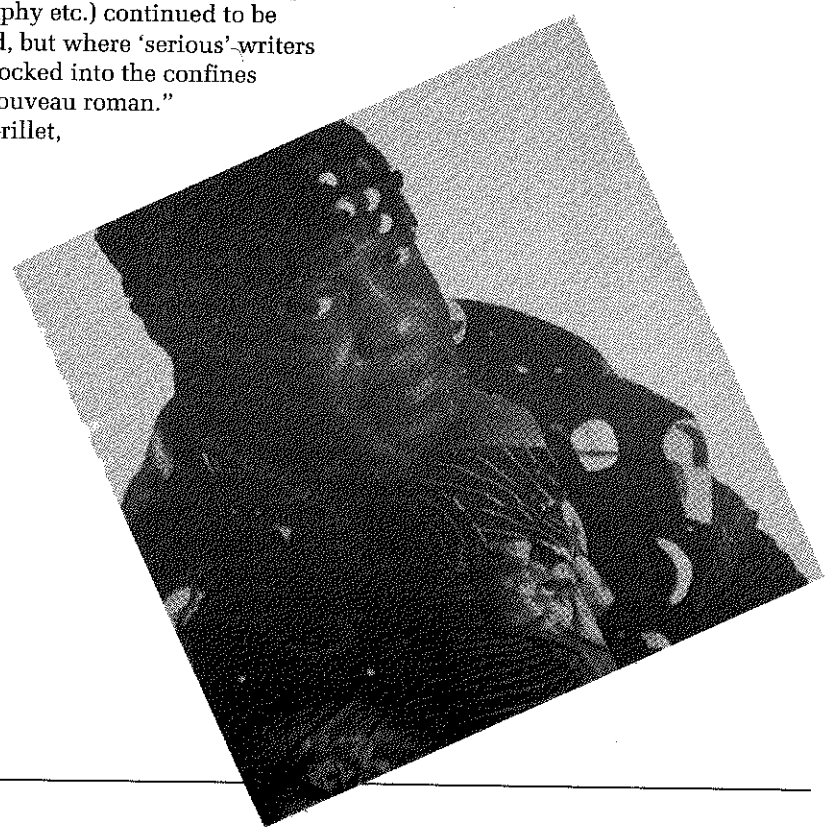
In the case of jazz since the second world war, and I am simplifying enormously, the establishment of a certain traditional newness, which today stands as a "classical" avant garde, is usually associated with the names of Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, and John Coltrane. In that music, intensity and improvisation came to the fore in the increasingly freer reinterpretations of the classics, until much jazz playing cut itself free from any relation to recognizable standards, passing from reinterpretation through quotation to something which the French refer to as "écriture": a stream of consciousness which arises not from consciousness, but from some potentially endless chain of signifiers.

In contrast to such free flowing "écriture", there have been instances too of more "deconstructive" styles, an especially extreme form of reinterpretation of standards — as In much of the work of Anthony Braxton. In opposition to an avant-garde like that of the experimental writing of the Tel Quel group in France (particularly Philippe Sollers), there was an important political dimension to the jazz of Coltrane and his followers, for these artists were black, and the violent rejection of tone and melody was readily and increasingly associated with black militancy in the 60s and 70s (best exemplified by Archie Shepp). But this was, finally, a formal or content-free politics, then, which is why I made the analogy with Tel Quel. For despite the revolutionary claims of Tel Quel during the 1960s, this was a politics with no real or final political consequences (as opposed to the Surrealists — although I am in no way reducing the struggles of blacks in the US with the *angst* of some Parisian intellectuals who, in the words of one critic, set out for China only to find themselves on the beach in California.

So what do we have? On the one hand, an ongoing mainstream jazz tradition (the playing of Dexter Gordon in the Tavernier film, Round Midnight) with its part of nostalgia (listeners whose taste stopped changing at a particular point), as in ragtime or dixieland; a mainstream which continues to grow and evolve, but whose ballads and melodies are nonetheless recognizable as such and whose survival could be equated to that of the traditional novel. And, on the other, an avant-garde which keeps developing into more and more abstraction and rigour (Braxton, Cecil Taylor, or spinning off and overlapping with more popular forms (Miles Davis's interest in rock — like Bob Dylan's celebrated switch from acoustic to electric so many years ago). This was the situation until recently, and the equivalent would be fiction writing in France where traditional fiction (not to mention minor genres like science fiction, mystery, harlequin, pornography etc.) continued to be produced, but where 'serious' writers seemed locked into the confines of the "nouveau roman." (Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Simon, Duras)

Let's return to the Sun Ra concert. Imagine fifteen black jazz musicians on stage, dressed in something between African traditional dress and Shriners' costumes. But these musicians were from Philadelphia, while the music they played had little to do with contemporary African music (King Sunny Ade, Fela Kuti). Sun Ra and his "Arkestra" is a blend of put-on and various jazz traditions which has been around for some time, but it is an interesting example of a new esthetics beyond the impasse of the traditional avant garde (as outlined using the New York and Paris art scenes in Guy Scarpetta's recent *L'Impureté*), one which can immediately be distinguished from the more avant-garde use of African dress and black music traditions by a group like the Chicago Art Ensemble.

The music included some instances of free jazz, but hammed up (the players standing on their chairs to play solos), some classics sung by different members of the band, in often very modern readings. But how do I - a white man nervous perhaps about "correct" politics — react to a group of costumed blacks hamming it up in ways which explicitly recall the racist stereotypes of twenty or thirty years ago? How do we — an audience with certain preconceptions about the separateness of serious jazz and jokes and bad taste — react to some of Sun Ra's original tunes like my favorite, "This earth is not my home"?



Or his whole science fiction/band from outer space schtick? This is not a complaint — to the contrary. I love the music. There are some wonderful readings of the classics, some great solos in both traditional and free veins, and most of all, it's a lot of fun, as at the end of the first set when they paraded off stage and through the audience singing over and over again the verses of "Slumming on Park Avenue," a humorous and enthusiastic "acting out" of their own visit to the posh white North? And this is I suppose the point. That the traditional avant-garde has reached a certain impasse. That the breakdown of barriers, genres, forms, historical breaks and divisions is increasing; and that to label these new kinds of music "post-modern" recognizes that music has moved beyond the stage of modernism even as it evades or begs the question of describing and explaining what is happening: what makes the relative traditionalism with which Sun Ra interprets a classic different and "acceptable" ("readable" and perhaps even "writable" to use Barthes's distinction in *S/Z*), as opposed to writing such music today, or even playing the standards "straight."

The first reason why many artists cannot continue to churn out the same old standards, to answer the question with which I began, lies with the artist's own dilemma and choice, (spelled out by Barthes in his *Writing Degree Zero*, itself written as a gloss on Sartre's *What is Literature?*.) The language, the form that the artist chooses is not neutral. Those forms are already caught up in various socially inscribed meanings; they have a history, and the artist — whatever his or her intentions — does not come to this material, these instruments, these sounds, as innocent raw materials. To choose to simply redo the same old classics is to choose not to see, not to know, to acquiesce to the status quo. As the music is played and repeated, the style or approach accumulates a layer of interpretation and meaning which remains, and which buries those new intentions under their historically accumulated meanings, pushing all the artist's anger and hope, the questions about music and its traditions, or about the world in which the musician is inscribed, towards commoditification and cliché, towards pre-packaged answers which erase and conceal whatever disturbing questions the artist originally intended. This is our modernity, the post-modern condition if you prefer, (a moment for which John Schaefer's *New Sounds* provides not an analysis but a discography): the ever widening circles of exploration (the limits of traditional instruments, like playing the piano directly on the strings; other non-western musical traditions etc), as well as a quickening pace of cannibalizing and quoting, and an increasing disregard for seriousness. All this could be seen and heard on stage at the Diamond; all this should be understood, even If I have only begun to understand or explain it, as an attempt to resolve the impasse into which the classical avant-garde finds itself.

To answer and push deeper these questions, one does not have to go to New York. A few weeks spent following Toronto's own various jazz scenes, where George's and The Music Gallery might stand in, retrospectively (and only some of the time), for the mainstream and the classical avant-garde; and this other, alternate track — given so much play by CKLN, our "alternate" radio station — may be seen in a number of Toronto bands, from the zany hipster pose and antics of the Shuffle Demons through Gothic City, Thin Men, Paul Cram Orchestra, Not King Fudge or White Noise. All this would provide more than enough raw material for a more complete and thorough study of jazz than the quick sketch I have made here.

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EXCURSIONS

Co-Opting the Future:

A Post-Modern Aesthetic of Our Time

Paper presented to 1987 International Communications Association Conference May 25th, 1987 Montreal, Quebec

I am concerned with a set of representational strategies which, by constructing the present as the future, seem to position us as living in the future. In a previous paper I argued that this construction is quite widespread, and that it has repressive possibilities — that projecting a familiar future, one that is in fact the same as the present, forecloses options and possibilities. In this paper, I want to continue my attempt to elaborate how this retheorising of the future works, how it is taking us away from a manifold of expansive mysterious possibilities, positive and negative, and toward a future that is old news.

A gentleman promoting airships responded in this way when he was questioned about the Hindenburg disaster:

That happened then. It's history. This is the future now."
[The New York Times, 7 May 1987, p.14]

On it's own of course, this is not necessarily an especially telling remark; it has long been the imperative of advertisers and promoters to place what they have to offer in the future, in order to associate it, as part of a depoliticising rationale (Britton, p.12), with the inevitable outcome of progress. The ahistorical sense that this allusion to history betrays is, furthermore, hardly a novelty in our culture. What I want to suggest, however, is that this association now coexists with, and is perhaps being displaced by, a closed sense of the future. There is, in other words not so much an inevitability of progress, but the attribution to future progress of inevitability that properly belongs to progress that has already happened. After all if we're in the future now, if it looks just like today, who cares about tommorrow? It is in this sense that I believe the repressive possibilities of this construction lie, and why it is important to understand the loss of a sense of future possibilities — what Frederic Jameson has called a "reverse millenarianism", a sense of endings — and to try to recuperate a refreshed and boadened sense of them. At least a part of the effect of cultural texts is ideological — they attempt to redefine the real; I take my brief from film critic Andrew Britton (1986, p. 8), who says that

> To challenge the definition of the real is to challenge a definition of what it is possible to desire and what it is possible to do...

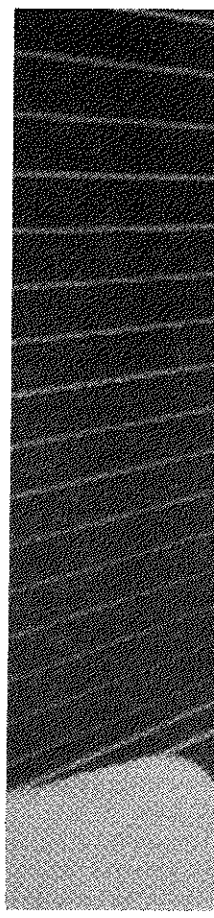
It seems to me important to pose a challenge to a construction of reality that suggests that the future is stored somewhere, fixed, immobile and immutable.

In order to draw more clearly the distinction between the former sense of time revealed in science fiction films, and the current "regressive and circular" sense, it's informative to look at films in which time-travel is a central concern. Chris Marker's film *La Jetee* (1963) is an especially useful example. From the diagetic present, in a devasted post-nuclear war world in which life is carried out in miserable catacombs, the time traveller goes both backward and forward in time —the former as training for the latter. Already, the resistance to such travel is understood to be less when going backward than in going to the future. For the "now" in Marker's film, the future contains salvation — the power source necessary to make life above ground possible again. The past contains only a wistful sense of childhood, a field of possibilities whose only utility is to make travel to the future possible.

In contrast with this, in contemporary films of this genre, the possibilities lie in the past; the only future to be manipulated is the diagetic "now" — as the quote with which I opened this paper has it, "This is the future now." In *Back to the Future,* as Vivian Sobchak says, "time travel is marked in terms of brand-name identification." (1986, p. 248) In fact she claims that there is no imagined future at all in the film; actually, that's not entirely true — but the only element in the film that arrives from the future is an artefact, a power source called Mr. Fusion Home Energy Reactor. This fascinating device consumes our refuse, our cast-off commodities, in order to supply the propulsive energy necessary to reach the future. It is the essence of a capitalist machine — it carries out what one might term "consumerism by other means" : it utterly uses up what has been made, and "produces" a future whose only distinction is that it contains new things.

In the closing moments of *Back to the Future,* the teenage protaganist is about to embark into the diagetic future (as opposed to the now-as-future referred to in the title). The motivation for this trip, however, is decidedly un-futuristic — it is merely another instance of the conservative impulse that wishes to take advantage of time as it were, to enforce present values, inflected with a 1950s version of intergenerational struggle; "it's your kids, Marty; something's got to be done about them!" — The new things of the future are not complemented by any new imagined social relations. The promise at the end of the film, then, concerns the future of a teenager who has viewed (and played match-maker for) his own parents in their teens, and who —invested prematurely with the values of middle-ag,which are themselves imported from a mythological past — is now about to leap forward to his own middle age. This whole set of differences works as the alibi, as it were, for a huge sameness, a conflation of now with *then past,* and *then future.* It's as if, to play on the title of another contemporary film, *this is then, that'll be now.*

Vivian Sobchak offers a reading of the evolution of science fiction films in the chapter of her book,Screening Space, whose title is, for my purposes, very telling — "Postfuturism" ; we are, in a sense, living after the future. Sobchak indentifies a contraction of the sense of space, and an associated change in the attitude to time. The former, she says, has become flattened, divested of both threat and promise — no longer a menacing warehouse of monstrous aliens, but something more like a flattened field characterised by "fragmentation and equivalence." [p.232] Space says Sobchak, "is semantically described as a surface for play and dispersal, a surface across which existence and objects kinetically displace and display their materiality." [p.228] She goes on to point out that "a space percieved and represented as superficial and shallow, as all surface, does not conceal things: it displays them."[p.229] The arche-



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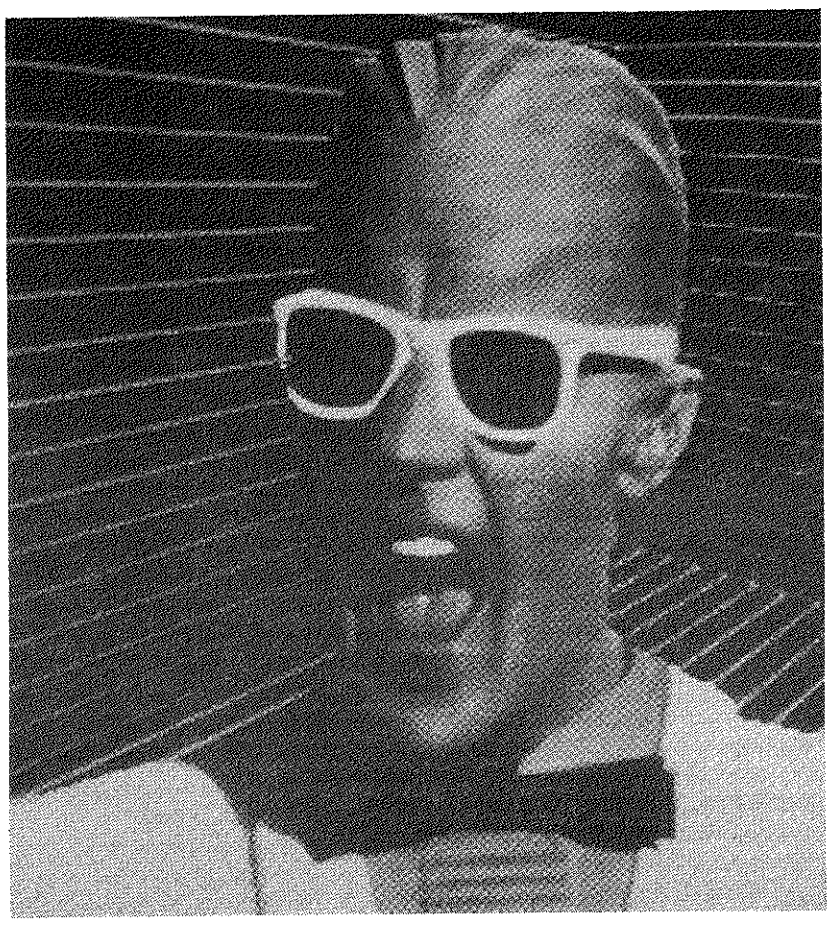

typal illustration of this, she suggests, is the Disney film *Tron,* whose space is virtual, not real, literally flattened into the electronic circuitry of a computer.

To the example of *Tron,* I would add *Max Headroom,* another electronic presence, manifested on the screen of a cathode ray tube, who Arthur Kroker has called "the first citizen of the end of the world." Max's "three-dimensional" human prototype has a problematic relationship with him, both within the story-space of the series, and in terms of the ways in which the relationship can be understood when one attempts to "read" the show. For instance, in describing Max as "simulated," *Newsweek* (April 20, 1987) attempts to keep a realness fixed to his human other, by discussing (actor) Matt Frewer as the reality in whom his character, Edison Carter, is rooted. Carter, meanwhile, is the model for Max Headroom, the "real" simulation. Always, the "outer shell" of the simulation is taken as *real*; only the video screens represented *within* the video screen are percieved as inauthentic and discarded. This typifies, to borrow a phrase from Baudrillard, "the perversity of the relation between the image and it's referent, the supposed real" (1984, p.13), a perversity that takes fragmentation for differentation, and masks a distressing sameness. I believe the point applies as well to the fragmented presents taken to be past, present and future — a notion to which I'll return in a moment. Max Headroom's subtitile places it a mere "20 minutes into the future"; how much can have changed? This is a simulacrum of the future.

In Sobchak's argument, space and time are by definition, not analytically seperable. I'm nominally more concerned with *time,* and her treatment of it, but evidence of a collapse of any difference between the two makes the distinctin an arbitrary move in the service of convenience, rather than a theoretical claim. Sobchak re-thinks the representation of time in these films, and finds it to be a loop with more potent links to a *past* than to a future; when allusions are made to the future, when the diegesis is set *in* the future, it turns out — as I've already suggested — either to be rather like the present, but dirtier, or atavistacally savage. In the latter case, there is a sort of triumph of "nature" over "culture", the outcome of the "system of differences" which makes signs *signify.*

Andrew Britton (1986, p.14) has a rather similar view of this decline. He describes the ethos of *Blade Runner* as a sort of future/past complex representing capitalism stripped to its essences — "decadent, authoritarian, amorphously polyglot... at once technically sophisticated and culturally debased." Sobchak points out that the new science fiction film tends to conflate past, present and future in decor constructed as temporal pastiche and/or in narratives that either temporally turn back on themselves to conflate past, present, and future, or are schizophrenically constituted as a "*series of pure and unrelated presents in time*". (1986, p.274) [My emphasis]

In the films Sobchak discusses, the variations thus played upon time range from this unpleasant past, to a nostalgia for a mythically perfect prior state, which mirrors the current wistfulness for a world of the nineteen-fifties. To this Britton adds that "Reaganite space fiction is there to tell us that the future will be a thrilling re-play of the past — with special effects." (1986, p.12)

The division, then, seems to be between future conceived as replicating a happier past, and futures conceived as a

regress to something more basic, less cultivated and less appetising. There is something reassuring, therefore, as *now* becomes the *future*, to discover that things are still ok; to find that the contra-dictions which stand naked in *Blade Runner* — demonstrated, for example, by the juxtaposition of high technology with disastrous culture — are still safely clothed. Sobchak connects her reading to an analysis of what I want to suggest (after Jameson, quoted in Sobchak, p.244) is a "deeply lived structure of social relations and representations", one which is not yet dominant, but which is moving to occupy a number of niches in our culture.

In "We Build Excitement: Car Commercials and Miami Vice", Todd Gitlin

offers what is , in a sense, an alternative reading, but also a complementary one — a pervasiveness of the postmodern "blankness", which shares with Sobchak's writing a sense of the collapse of difference and a consequent draining out of possibilities. I should add that, although I am using a Baudrillardian vocabulary, the meaning of "collapse" in this context is only superficially similar to Baudrillard's; for him the loss of signifying difference was absolute, a loss of the real in favour of the *simulacrum*. For Gitlin, at least, the change is the replacement of the real with signification by simulation, a negative value. I doubt that anyone is, at this stage, in a position to decide which is the more accurate understanding.

In any case, I believe the connexion between Gitlin's and Sobchak's readings may be made where the latter says that

> ...in any culture where nearly everyone is regularly alien-ated from a direct sense of self, ...when everyone is less concious of existence than of its image, the once threatening science fiction "alien" and Other become our familiars, our close relations if not ourselves. (p.229)

As the difference between ourselves and the other — and I believe that a conception of *the future* as something *other* is crucially implicated (and absent) here — as this difference disappears, with it is lost any sense of possibility for change; where, or what, is there left to change *to*? The name I want to offer for this is a *postmodern aesthetic of time*. It is a temporal component of what one might call a dis-alienation, a move that can be summarised using Sobchak's formula "Aliens-R-Us" ...she draws a parallel between an "embrace of the 'alien' " and an "erasure of alienation." We cannot be alienated from that which is not marked as different; spatially, there can be no other place, no other way to live or place in which to do it; temporally there is left no avenue unexplored, and in all the avenues one discovers one's own time, perhaps in slightly different costume, or driving slightly more bulbous cars. In her "Manifesto for Cyborgs", Donna Harraway points out that "[M]onsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations". (1985, p.99) The monsters "displayed" within the conflated array of times I've described can't fill that definitional role, since we have met them, and they *are* us. Sobchak points, for example, to *ET*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Starman* or even *Repo Man* or *Liquid Sky*, in which the aliens are no weirder than us — what formerly was perceived as radically different turns out to be *essentially* the same.

Britton, too, comments that the *others* who work as scapegoats for cultural contradictions revealed in such films represent "a symbolic catharsis of unrepresentative monsters." (1986, p.26) The difference which empowers monsters to tell us who we are has been lost; since they are not different either, the other times that give us a sense of our own temporal position can no longer tell us that this is our time, a historically determined and necessarily ephemeral moment.

I don't want to suggest that what I'm describing occurs only in science fiction films, or only in films generally; one can observe the principle in virtually any medium one looks at. My previous paper was partly based, for instance, on reading of advertisements for Honda automobiles. Even clothing labels are involved, as in the case of the bilingual tag, which in French says *vers le futur...* suggesting a conventional movement through time into the future; the other side, in English, says, *glance into the future,* which is quite a different message, as it seems to position the future so that we can look into it now. This distinction between *anticipation* and *accomplishment* captures part of the theme.

I hope, in continuing this work, to comprehend the way in which such images of future are distributed across media, genres and audiences.

One measure, perhaps, that tells how pervasive this sense of the future has become, is to ask: How different from the present is any imaginable future? In *Minds Meet,* a short story by Walter Abish, a message received from Outer Space reads

Is there any other way to live?

A sense of inevitability — a phenomenon of naturalisation which necessarily includes a presumption of timelessness, this variety of *tempero-centrism* — is clearly not new. But the connexion between this inevitability and a blank sense of non-possibilities seems symptomatic of social relations and representations which, in their unwillingness to admit a *different* future, end up allowing none at all. It is not accidental that this con-servative urge for presenting a status quo should be accompanied by the restructuiring of time. The very title of the film *Back to the Future,* as Sobchak points out, speaks volumes about this foreclosure on options.

In *representing* the world in a mode of idealised nostalgia, a material intervention is made in the field of "lived social relations and representations" within which Jameson locates the postmodern aesthetic in general. *Back to the Future* is not unique in this respect; its most obvious companion is *Peggy Sue got Married* , and it has, I believe, some parallels in the technological aesthetic of *The Terminator, Brazil,* and *Max Headroom*; there are also echoes of this in Walter Hill's *Streets of Fire* and David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, where conventional markers of time become mixed, and the diegetic "no time" connotes the sameness of all times — a formula in which *all times* covers the period from about 1950 to the present.

I end on an irresolute note, with the suggestion that my next task is to read closely some of the films I've named, as well as other texts, in an attempt to specify in greater detail the ways in which this representation of the future is made.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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They should be sent in duplicate, typed on one side of the paper, and double-spaced with a wide margin (at least 5 cm). Submissions should be titled, and should include a short biography of interest to our readers. All correspondence should be accompanied by a stamped return envelope. If your final manuscript has been typed on a word processor, please send us a copy on disk so as to save our typesetter hours of labour.

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Writers should send illustrative work with their article, or at least indicate how it might fit into the large visual environment of *border/lines*. Visual artists are also encouraged to submit work. Please carefully consider the reproductive qualities of your submissions, as well as the page proportions of the magazine. All photos should be submitted unmounted as black and white glossy prints (as large as possible) showing good contrast and clear definition of outline. Charts, graphs, drawings and so on should be rendered in black ink on good white paper. Captions, photo credits and return address should be typed on an appended sheet of paper. Final design decisions rest with the collective.

Literature Citations
Footnotes are an overused convention and we discourage them. Far more acceptable would be a short list of references at the end of an article. If you must use footnotes, they should conform to the formats below:

BOOK

Dylan, Robert Z. *From Protest to Jesus: Fragment of an Agon.* San Francisco: Leading Lights, 1985.

CHAPTER IN BOOK OF MULTIPLE AUTHORSHIP

McCartney, Paul. "Money on the Mull of Kintyre", in Lennon, J. Harrison G., and Starr, R., eds. *Letting it Be.* Bermuda: Scam Press,1970.

THESIS OR DISSERTATION

Postmod, I.M. *Necrophilia in the Split Infinitives of Jacques Lacan.* M.A. thesis, York University, 1987.

MAGAZINE OR JOURNAL ARTICLE

Lenz, J., Zoom, Z., and Stieglitz-Leica, G. "Is There Life after the Image?" *Kodakery*, vol. 28, no. 6, June 1953.

Because *Border/lines* is a (non-paid) collective, editing is a slow process. Please expect to wait at least six weeks for a reply if you submit a manuscript. Contributors are automatically acknowledged and contacted about suggested revisions.

RADICAL SCIENCE

If we look over the last decade or so, the proliferation of radical criticism aimed at the 'sciences' of the social — law, social policy, criminology — is nothing if not impressive, a flow that is becoming a torrent as Foucault's influence spreads. Yet the Left has been somewhat more reluctant to tackle the 'hard' sciences. Foucault, of course, left that work to others.

A case in point is the July-August 1986 issue of *Monthly Review,* which promised to address itself to the "not-so-benign neglect" of science as a theoretical issue by the Left. What it delivered was something less, a surprisingly perfunctory collection of articles that barely scratched the surface of the issue.

Meanwhile it is difficult to ignore the centrality of scientific and technical rationale in the current restructuring of the late capitalist state as it tools up for the post-industrial age. In Thatcher's Britain, it is the aggressive adoption of 'technical innovation' strategies that are underwriting the restructuring of the British coal mining industry.

What is easier to see and more difficult to quantify is the growing seduction of Western culture by the products and processes of *technics.* Popular representations of science, especially the glossy 'technoporn' magazines like *Omni*, speak a simple language of awe and respect, a discourse laced with added reverence since the appearance of AIDS. Like all forms of hegemony, Progress has its dark side — the Challenger, Bhopal, acid rain — but the solution is always more efficient technology.

Popular representations of science foreclose on the possibility of much serious debate over scientific issues; what is produced instead is a kind of uneasy fascination. High-tech solutions to all manner of social problems are touted as 'common sense,' erasing the role of science in power relations and leaving us with the image of the genius at the laboratory bench and the promise of Next Year's Model.

How can the Left oppose the restructuring of society by high technologies without resorting to Luddism? Are there politically progressive uses of technologies? What would a socialist science resemble?

One site at which Marxists have attempted to ask these questions and articulate a progressive critique of science and technology is the UK-based Radical Science Collective, publishers of the annual *Radical Science Journal* and a number of other collections under the aegis of Free Association Books. Their newest project, which supercedes the *Radical Science Journal* is a quarterly with the evocative title *Science as Culture.*

How successful have these attempts been? What I'd like to do here is to trace the topography of the arguments that have been played out in the pages of the *Radical Science Journal* and that promise to be aired in *Science as Culture* (since only the pilot issue is available at the time of this writing), and to locate both publications in the development of the radical science movement as a whole.

Scientists have always been concerned with the social consequences of their work, but the notion that science and social responsibility weren't synonymous first began to receive widespread public recognition as part of the fall-out from Hiroshima. Its aftermath saw physicists organizing anti-nuclear campaigns; the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, with its famous Doomsday Clock, started publishing in the same period.

As the debate over the arms race heated up in the 1960s, scientists banded together in organizations like the Federation of American Scientists and lobbied against particular weapons. They also took an active part in the opposition against the Vietnam War through the campaign against the development of chemical and biological weapons.

These critiques of scientific practice by scientists were based on what has come to be known as the 'use/abuse' model, which draws a firm line between the legitimate (read: objective) practice of science, and its abuse at the hands of ideologues. 'Good' scientists voiced their opposition to 'bad' science by invoking a discourse of expert knowledge: the feasibility of certain weapons was the basis of much of their opposition.

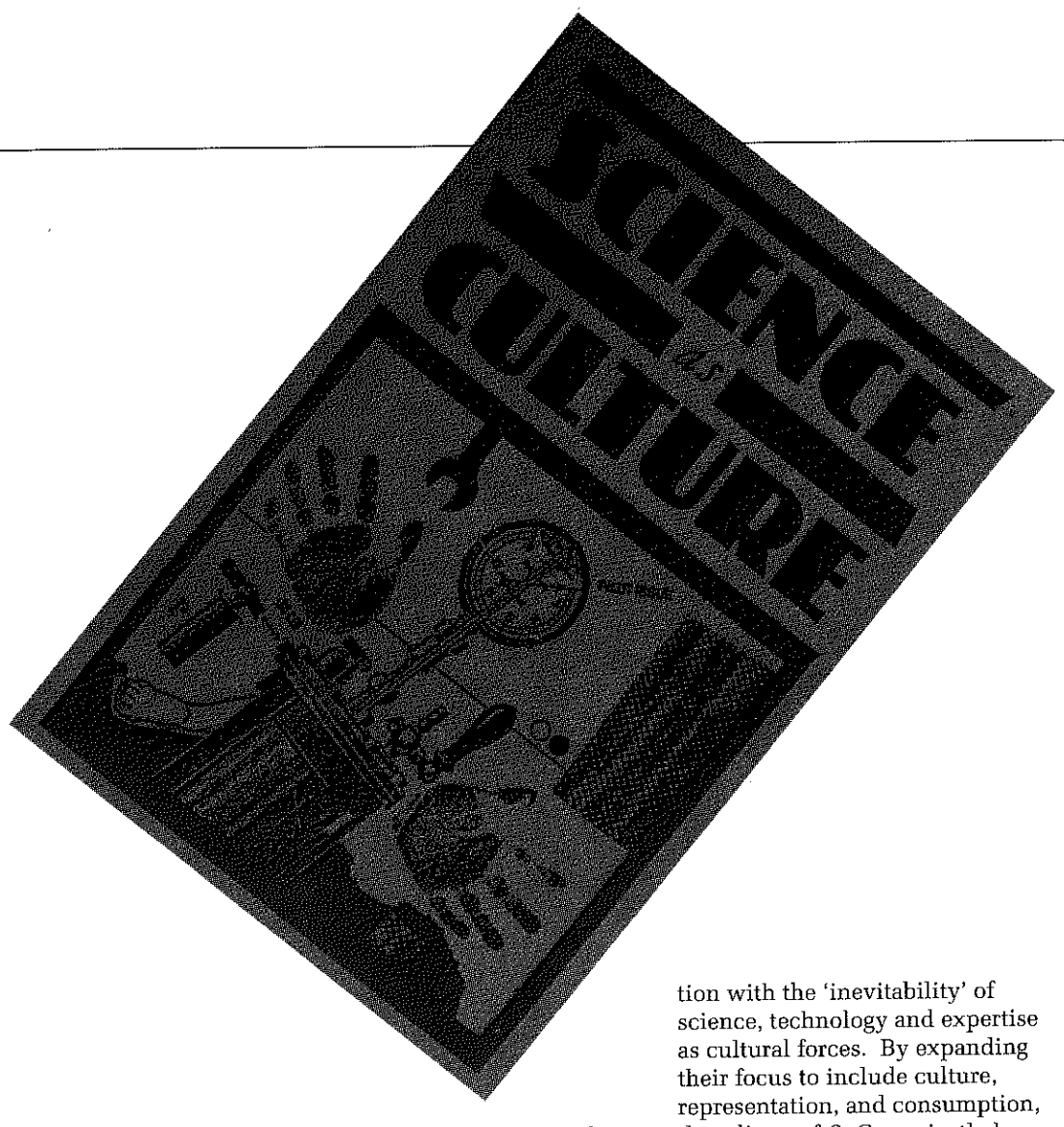
The use/abuse model remains the foundation of arguments by mainstream scientists against developments like Star Wars. It was also the point of departure for the radical science movement. What pushed many people working in science beyond a use/abuse analysis was their growing politicization around the civil rights movement, the opposition to the Vietnam War and the events of May 1968. The radical science movement as we know it coalesced around the realization of the need to challenge not just particular weapons, but the role that scientific and technological rationality itself played in maintaining the existing power relations in society.

What this meant, of course, was a decisive rejection of the epistemological privilege historically accorded to science — a privilege bolstered rather than denied by the use/abuse model. And not surprisingly, it split the scientific establishment between liberal institutions like the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), and newer organizations like the Radical Science Collective, a group of scientists, teachers and activists who began publishing the *Radical Science Journal* in 1974.

Looking back over 13 years of the *Radical Science Journal,* it is possible to see three strands of thinking emerge on science and technological progress.

The first is expressed most succinctly in the title of Robert Young's essay "Science is Social Relations", which appeared in *RSJ* 5. Moving beyond debates around the distinction between science and ideology, some members of the Radical Science Collective sought very early on to explore the ways in which social relations are embodied in technologies and scientific practices. Les Levidow's article on scientificity in IQ testing ("IQ as Ideological Reality") in *RSJ* 6/7, for instance, was a strategic intervention at a time when a group of American researchers were attempting to screen newborn males for an extra chromosome that supposedly established a genetic basis for `criminality'.

The second position has explored the possibilities for alternative uses of technology, and is most clearly displayed in *RSJ* 16, a large chunk of which was devoted to



discussions of alternativism in communications media. It is in this position that one of the central dilemmas of the radical science movement become apparent. On the one hand there seems to be a strong conviction that technologies can be put to alternative, oppositional use in pirate radio (Richard Barbrook) and the revolutionary use of video (DeeDee Halleck), an argument that seems to have drawn much from Enzensberger. Others are a little less certain of the liberatory possibilities of technologies. Tom Athanasiou's account of the contradictions faced by activists who tried to set up an electronic bulletin board in Berkeley, the heart of alternative America, is one example.

The third position — or rather, tendency — in the *Radical Science Journal* is a slight undercurrent of anti-technological sentiment that has roots both in the American counter-culture and the British Romantic movement of the last century. When this pops up, as it seems to do unbidden, one hears more than a whisper of technological determinism in comments like, "We feel the thrust of this impetus in all aspects of our life: we have not asked for colour television or supersonic aircraft..." (*RSJ* 17)

If there is an impasse reached by the radical science movement in the positions that have been voiced to date, it is the inability to get beyond the stout declaration that 'science is not neutral,' while in the late 1980s the supposed neutrality of science and technology no longer seems an issue, at least in the arena of cultural politics. Instead, as *RSJ* contributor David Dickson put it, "the central message being preached by capitalism is that technology in general — and high technology in particular — is exciting and desirable."

The appearance of *Science as Culture* marks a strategic — and long overdue — attempt to deconstruct our uneasy fascination with the 'inevitability' of science, technology and expertise as cultural forces. By expanding their focus to include culture, representation, and consumption, the editors of *SaC* may justly be accused of jumping on the postmodern bandwagon. But *SaC* is also pitched at a more popular level than its predecessor, with a grittier, more readable, more irreverent feel: clearly an acknowledgement that the radical science movement has had little impact on the non-academic public.

The pilot issue is a mixed bag: pieces on Star Wars, community radio, sex selection, and a lengthy review of *Pandaemonium*, Humphrey Jennings' epic study of the cultural ramifications of the Industrial Revolution. While it is far to early to tell whether *SaC*'s promise to "transcend the two cultures" will be borne out, its arrival is not a moment too late: in this tranced dancing, we need to know who we are dancing with, and why.urnals discussed:

Science as Culture
Free Association Books
26 Freegrove Road
London N7 9RQ
Four issues for $35 individual,
$55 institutional

Radical Science Journal
(no longer published)
Write above address for catalogue of back issues.

***Peter Laurie** is a member of the Border/Lines collective.*

Cultural Studies and the Political Hologram

Ioan Davies

Two visions keep me awake as I write this piece, visions of the role of the media in politics. One is of Ronald Reagan, the acting Emperor of an imaginary kingdom of Beverley Hills, with imaginary heroes, imaginary battles, imaginary locations but all the images playing havoc on real people for whom the imaginary and real are barely distinguishable. The other is of René Levesque, sometime leader and communicator for a social movement, for a living, vibrant culture piercing through the fog of media make-believe to demand an affirmation, a place. The one, carefully manicured, embalmed, wearing his other hair dye, lives on as the reruns of his own movies play over the wreckage which his social policies built high; the other, quite clearly dead, cigarette and *vin rouge* surrounding him on the catafalque, leaves a *difference*, a *distinction*, a *sens de l' utopie pratique* which others will have to continue to develop. The one is a fitting conclusion to a Baudrillardian fantasy world where images are more real than the strategies of everyday life. And the other, a symbol of collective survival, earth of the earthly, the rumpled, tousled, hesitant, irascible man who tore away the gauze of any theology that clung like cobwebs over the faces of the living. But he is definitely gone. Si le grain ne meurt . . . .

II

And yet. And yet. The simulacrum of the real, reality transformed into its simulacrum. We have to start knowing that that snapshot of the real (the real pain, real violence, real death) is frozen into an image that can be spliced, duplicated, reproduced in a way that defies the moment of pain/joy which gave it birth. And any talk of cultural studies has to be conscious of the split between our readings of all media (including our own), of the social conditions that the media tries to represent or distort, and of the tensions between the two. At the core of all radical/socialist concerns with culture has been the frustrations/hopes of social movement. It was true of the Frankfurt school, of the Parisian Existentialists, of the *Annales* and *Tel Quel* schools, of the Bourdieu project, even of *Encounter* and the 'God That Failed' critiques of Daniel Bell and Irving Howe, certainly of the Birmingham Centre, of the *Radical America/ Cultural Correspondence* group, of the old, middle and late *New Left Reviews*, of *Social Text* and *New German Critique* and of the transnational, decentred feminist critiques. And even though much of this work sits on the margins of academia (which is content to explore narrow ideas in narrow contexts), there is little doubt that it contributes to a critique of our contemporary world. Most of the cultural journals themselves (see the appendix to this article) are clearly now engaged in political and theoretical stocktaking. The purpose of this article is to try to situate ourselves in relation to those discourses.

In many respects the major cleavage is between what Jürgen Habermas calls the Posties (post-modernism, post-marxism, post-structuralism, or what Dick Hebdige, in the first issue of New Formations more strategically designates as The Post), and with those whom I shall call the left populists. The division is an uneasy one and perhaps should be seen in terms of polarities on the relationship of cultural studies to the linguistic paradigm at the one end and the praxis of everyday culture at the other. But because the linguistic paradigm ultimately has to confront the impossibility of saying anything about anything in a world where values and principles seem to have been made irrelevant by practices, it is doomed to examining mere surfaces. We are locked, as in John O'Neill's *Five Bodies*, or Arthur Kroker's *The Postmodern Scene* into the trap of metaphor. The 'discourses' are therefore discourses between the interpretations of facticities: we act out and display the apparent because either the real does not seem to exist anymore or because we accept that all our practices are contained in our language. But of course there is a reality behind the images, and cultural and social life goes on, whatever the post-modern dismissal or appropriation of the practices. Thus surface and deep structures provide the contrasting points of cultural studies. If the meaning of our lives is to be found merely in the languages we use, the myths we create and the films that confine us forever to Plato's Cave, then neither economy nor sex nor history nor even the transcendental can be tapped to unlock the mysteries of our existence. The game of reading the cards is the important task, which may reveal the meaning of our fate but, if not, will at least have provided a stimulating, even whimsical, occasion for examining this apparently timeless space we inhabit.

Against this, the critique based on praxis or left populism confronts culture with an alternative vision. In Paul Buhle's words "they seek out the exemplary moments when Mikhail

Bakhtin's description of the Rabelaisian world of mass carnivalistic creativity takes new life in modern conditions, or when Walter Benjamin's expectation that audience and artist will blend into one another is briefly realized." This is, of course, a far cry from earlier Marxisms and earlier radical critiques, even those influenced by Gramsci and Trotsky. It owes a lot to the recognition that the "Post" is there, that it reflects a theoretical impasse based on real political conditions (Stalinism, Hitler, Reaganism, Thatcherism, the Left's political impotence), that it carries in its wake important methodological tools (semiotics, deconstruction), but that its uncontextual, a-historical, narcissistic pessimism is based on an allegory which simply reflects the present without in any way wanting to change it. The left populist studying culture knows "that cultural studies has to be open to external influences, for example to the rise of new social movements, to psychoanalysis, to feminism, to cultural differences" but that its ultimate stand is to operate "somewhere within...the discoursive limits of a marxist position." (Hall in C/10/2). Like the "Posties", we stand in the only space we know, but, unlike them, that space is shot through with sparks of messianic light.

The journals that explore cultural studies are either pulled close to the linguistic paradigm in form (like *Raritan* or *Yale French Studies*) or to its ontological implications (like *Zone, Semiotexte* or *C* magazine), or like *History Workshop, Feminist Review* or *Social Text,* they see cultural studies as an active participant in movement. In between lie a range of academic fence-sitters (*Culture, Theory and Society, New German Critique, Telos, Cultural Critique, Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*) whose commitment is probably more to the Theory of culture than to anything else (contrast with Stuart Hall: "I am not interested in Theory. I am interested in going on theorizing"). Most, but not all, journals concerned with specific form (film, TV, art, photography, fiction) sit inside the linguistic paradigm (with *Screen* the archetype), while the Birmingham influence has generated several journals on "patterns of power and meaning in contemporary culture" (*Cultural Studies, New Formations,* and *Communication Inquiry*).

Reappraisals of these territorial boundaries abound and in a sense have been the very stuff of contemporary cultural studies since the early sixties. What is perhaps particularly important now is that the implications of what the "Posties" have been saying for 30 years has sunk in, both ontologically and methodologically, and the reappraisals have to contend with discourses which do not depend on any 'deep' structural props. And cultural studies, an erstwhile academic and political guerilla movement, is compelled to come to terms with its own institutionalization and some attempts to 'codify' its activities. Several articles stand out in this reappraisal. They include Richard Johnson's in *Social Text*, 16, Dick Hebdige's in *New Formations* 1, the reappraisal of Stuart Hall's work in *Communication Inquiry* 10/2, the dialogue between Perry Anderson and Marshall Berman in *New Left Review* 144, and the various debates round the work of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Terry Eagleton as well as Richard Rorty's review of Habermas in the London Review of Books. On the 'Post' debate Laclau and Mouffe's book, chaotic and unreadable as it is, stands as something of a watershed because it pushed neo-Marxism through the discoursive post-modernist door while daring to retain a political, engaged stand. Terry Eagleton's recent work on the other hand pulled us back from the primacy of text to resituate cultural studies in the everyday: "Men and women do not live by culture alone, the vast majority of them throughout history have been deprived of the chance of living by it at all ...."(and by 'culture' we know that Eagleton means 'text'). The debates on cultural studies are in many respects a debate between the privileged and nihilistic elitism of discourse theory and the grounded optimism of practical existence, between those of us who have had the advantages of reading all or most of the texts (which means the ones we think are significant) and those whose only 'texts' are those which happen to be around or which are heaped on them by a series of interconnecting structures.

The groundwork of left populism - the territory that it has to defend against 'the Structural Allegory', to use John Fekete's phrase, or 'The Post' in Hebdige's, is marked by four strategic positions. The first is the American populist tradition (formulated in its most eclectic and undisciplined sense in the *Journal of Popular Culture* and its offshoots, but also in its neo Marxist sense in Paul Buhle's old *Cultural Correspondence* or in some of the livelier contributors to the New York *Village Voice* or *Communication Inquiry*). The second is what, for want of a better term, might be called the Jameson/Williams/Eagleton axis where textuality is turned against itself in order to reveal the practice of being and knowing *each other*. The third, indicated by Pierre Bourdieu in France, Michael Apple in the States or Basil Bernstein in England, emerging out of an apparently deterministic sociology (Durkheim, Marx, Weber) demands to know the conditions under which we make ourselves. The 'text' here is not language, but social structure; the metaphor is not the linguistic map of hollow meanings but the biological one of reproduction. The fourth tradition is a British/French/American one founded primarily on a praxological reading of history, from the *Annalles* school (Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel), the Warwick/Ruskin schools (E.P. Thompson, Raphael Samuel) and American social history (Eugene Genovese, Herbert Gutman). Here in reading history we must recognize not only the conjunctures of events and relationships that brought us to this place but also that we have been here before and that the knowledge of these two spaces provides a dialectic for making our own culture. All of these approaches posit a collective agency, and therefore the task of critical theory is to explore the collective presence against both the elite and the personalist definition of the dominating other.

The fun of this kind of cultural studies is found in the exploration of the possible, seeking meaning in the hopeful, living in the actual while trying to overcome it. The fun of the 'Post' is the fun of amplifying the surface, the acoustics of vacant space, the engrained texture of different voices, the democracy of probabilities. Left populism tries to regain voice and reclaim the democracy of possibilities. The fun of cultural studies is in exploring our actual experiences as a conflict between how they are lived (left populism) and how they might be read as surface appearances (the 'Post). At the flattest, empirical populist extreme there stands the jouissance of claiming that everything that the people do must be culturally important, and hence the *Journal of Popular Culture,* a Disneyworld of experiences, visions, bric-a-brac. At the plumpest, phenomenological, further end, stands E.P. Thompson, who in "Writing by Candlelight", sees the whole of English cultural history, its' pretensions and hopes, in the correspondence-columns of *The Times* of London, written at the darkest hour of the miner's strike. Between the aridity of *Popular Culture's* eclectic democracy and the certainty of E.P. Thompson's cultural hologram lie the search for knowable communities, realistic transcendences: the study of culture as not only that which is there, but that which can only be there because it is *made*.

Between the textual and the collectively experiential falls the shadow of the subject. (You and Me, to those who don't like this discoursive jargon). In major ways this culture is dominated by those Feminist and Third World discourses which have brought the subject, the individual to the forefront. Where the signs of language and the collective solidarity of males has provided no apparent culture except that of servitude, the language of becoming is necessarily autobiographical. Yet this autobiography can never be written in the same way as before. No more sagas of self-appointed saviours - no more Journals of Malcom Xs, no Nehrus, no more Emma Goldmanns, Golda Meirs, or Anais Nins. The new autobiography tries to make sense against the deconstruction of itself by the signs that try to put it in its place, but also against the collective solidarities that would claim it. That is its guilt-ridden task. Its guiltless task is to affirm pleasure, desire, experience. Ronald Fraser's making sense of self against class background, psychoanalysis and Marxist solidarity was a major breakthrough in this direction, as is Dick Hebdige's account of his 'father', reprinted in this issue, or Norman Lear's TV series of the 1970s, Mary *Hartman! Mary Hartman!* or the Frears/Kureishi *Sammy and Rosie get laid*. In prison literature, Bienek's *The Cell*, Breytenbach's *True Confessions*, Adam Michnik's *Prison Journal*, Nawal el Sa'adawi's *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* - provide other examples. But the collective/separate/different retelling of fractured narratives by women and all of the world's many minorities is the point at which the structuralist allegory explodes into the new collective and down to the subjective voice. They're singing my song - no, not mine, but one with a similar tune. This is my song. I'll sing it, but if you won't listen, steal it. I'd like to hear you sing it again. It will be different, of course. But then we may be able to sing a new song together.

Singing Songs, making film, talking, writing letters to the editor, playing games, having fun: a joint project of the textual journeymen, of the collective hologram, of the affirmative self. Cultural Studies is predicated on the probabilities of their integration.

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Major Journals in Cultural Studies

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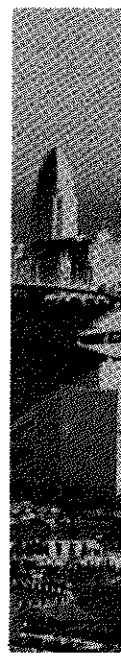
Ioan Davies

By no means is this list/appraisal definitive. On the whole I have chosen to list those journals which seem to me to have illustrated the theoretical/movement points of departure. My selection is bounded by Canada, Britain, USA, France, Australia as geographical entities and, more or less by journals (as opposed to newspapers) and cultural studies (as opposed to specific genres - science fiction, theatre, etc.) except where the journals seem to be saying something which relates to ourselves as cultural actors. My concern, above all, is to what they say to us in Canada. My distinction, crudely made, is between those journals which think about the culture as opposed to those who simply *report* it (with whatever prejudices), between reviews of the action (New York or London *Review of Books*, or *Books in Canada*, which I ignore at my peril) and rethinking what the action means. I am not interested in journals which take their own genre as the only world worth talking about (any academic journal concerned purely with politics, or sociology, or literature, or music), but with journals which see themselves as part of a wider concern. But the entries in my notebook of journals are very selective. The issue is to provide discourse. I apologize to Italians, Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese who may have marvellous journals, centres which debate their own culture. I haven't read them, nor pretend to know what they might be about. I only read the authors in translation, and therefore never the journals. In addition I do not discuss Quebec, Feminist or Third World journals which will provide theme pieces in subsequent issues of Border/Lines.

But a few books, before the journals. The Birmingham Centre published several books before its untimely demise at the hands of Thatcher and a frightened professoriat, but *Culture, Media, Language* (edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis) is still the best over-all account of what it was up to (published by Hutcheson in 1980 and reprinted 4 times since). Paul Buhle's collection of articles from *Cultural Correspondence*, published as *Popular Culture in America* (University of Minnesota, 1987) is the best introduction to the left populist catalyst of the 1970s, though Todd Gitlin's *Watching Television* (Pantheon, 1987) is the best collection of what the left populists are now doing. Colin McCabe's *High Culture, Low Theory* (St. Martin's Press, 1987) though suffering from sloppy editing and thinking, is a British rethinking in the same vein. Frederic Jameson's The *Prison House of Language* (Princeton, 1972), and John Fekete's *The Structural Allegory* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984) are probably the best introductions to the 'Postie' debate, while Brian Wallis' *Art After Modernism* (Godine, 1984) is as good a compendium as any in dealing with the aesthetic implications. Two feminist collections - *Yale French Studies* No. 62 (see below) - and Tania Modleski's *Studies in Entertainment* (reviewed in *Border/Lines* #9/10) - are important. Andrew Arato's *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* is still essential, while Raphael Samuel's collection, *People's History and Socialist Theory* (Routledge, 1981), provides the basis of British debates on culture/history. Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (see below) shows how much we have to learn from France about researching popular culture. On history, literature and theory, Peter Humm, Paul Stigant and Peter Widdowson have edited



(1986) a collection
in Methuen's 'New
if you are concerne
write what you do
Russell Jaccoby's *T*
(Basic Books, 1987
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generation."

The Journal of Pop
Journal of America
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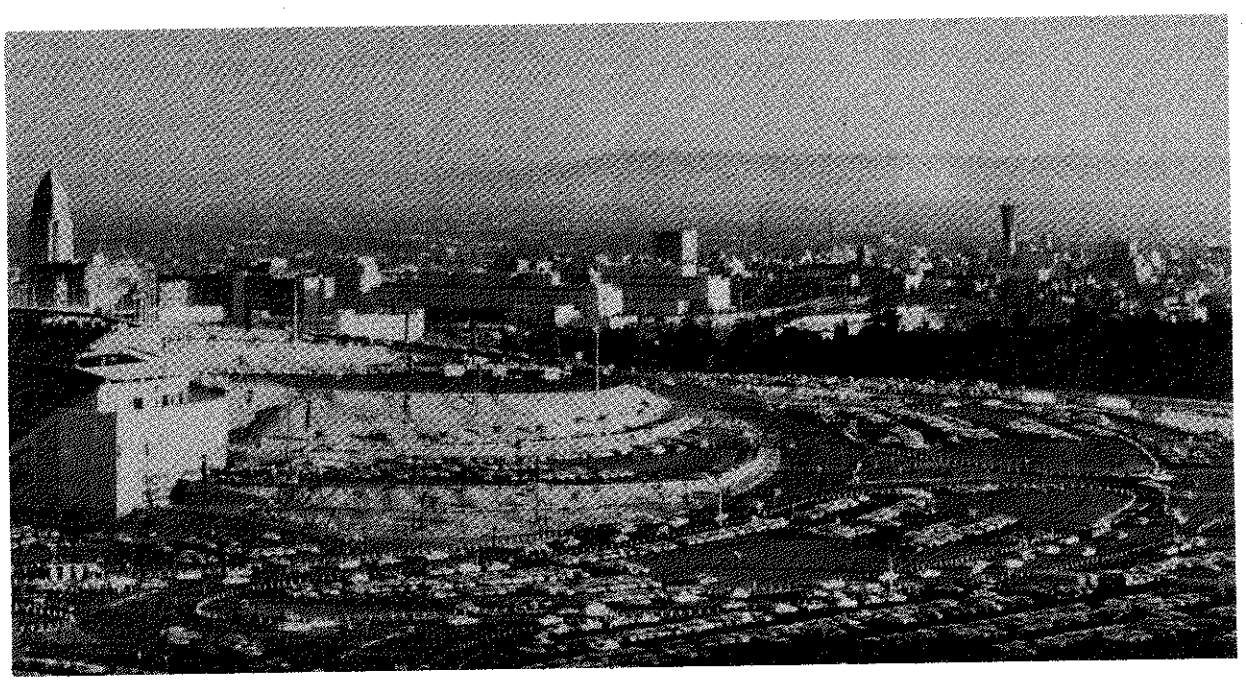


(1986) a collection on *Popular Fictions* in Methuen's 'New Accents' series. But if you are concerned about why you write what you do and for whom, Russell Jaccoby's *The Lost Intellectuals* (Basic Books, 1987) is "about a vacancy in culture, the absence of younger voices, perhaps the absence of a generation."

The Journal of Popular Culture, the *Journal of American Culture* and the *Journal of Canadian Culture* are products of a curious institution, the Society for the Study of Popular Culture, based in Bowling Green, Ohio, founded as an offshoot of the American Modern Languages Association because it did not take popular culture seriously enough. Like every American institution,it is concerned with coopting all of us to its concerns. There is, of course, no reason why we should not be willingly coopted. They have a lot to offer: bubbling energy and a belief that they are the centre of the popular culture world. There is a movement, of course, and it can be seen as a cross between Disneyworld and serious scholarship, or between the pride of place and the pride of particular discoveries. Something of a supermarket idea of popular culture. Hey! you found out *that* about Huck Finn or Marilyn Monroe or Lenny Bruce (I plead guilty) or whether Jane Austen was a Lesbian. Popular Culture is whatever you want it to be (see *Border/Lines* #3). Even Alice Monro or Quebec folksingers. Or even Hubert Aquin. Tourists of the cultural roller-coaster. Lost souls among the asphodel.

The *Journal of American Culture* costs US $25., for four books, the *Journal of Canadian Culture* costs US $12.50 for two issues, and the *Journal of Popular Culture* costs US $25. for four issues, from Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio 03403.

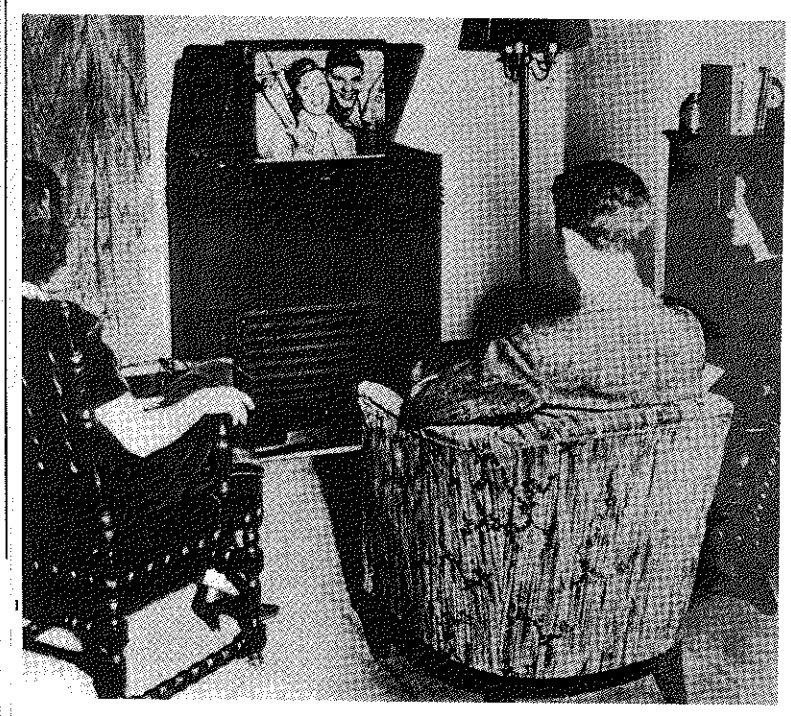
Cultural Studies. new journal, distributed by Methuen, with strong UK/Australian/Canadian bases. Editor: John Fiske (coauthor of *Reading Television*) of the Western Australian University of Technology. Reviews Editor: Tim O'Sullivan, Polytechnic of Wales. Strong on practices and texts, evolved out of *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies.* Reflective of a postmodernistic left populist position, with an emphasis on the politics of culture and the culture of everyday life. Three issues so far including one edited by Angela McRobbie. US $14. single copy, US $35. a year (3 issues). From 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P4E, UK. Ask for a sample copy.

New Formations. Also new out of Methuen, with strong UK board and US/Canadian connections. Managing Editor: James Donald of Open University, Reviews Editor: Homi Bhaba of U. of Sussex. First two issues packed with appraisals - on the body, feminism, the 'sublime', autobiographical writing, Fanon, popular culture, critical theory, 'modernism' and Mary Kelly. Essentially concerned with engaging in theoretical debates, but in a readable, lively manner. An essential consequence of the Birmingham/Open University project. Two issues so far. US $16. a single issue, US $38. a year (3 issues) from 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P4E UK. Ask for a sample copy.

Journal of Communication Inquiry. Published by the Iowa Centre for Communication Study. Is essentially an American journal coming to terms with the European revolution in cultural studies. Reprints strategic pieces from the UK, but also includes a variety of pieces from homegrown encounters with the media monolith. Critically eclectic, though with a barely-concealed agenda to rethink the Birmingham moment in American terms. Recent issues include specials on feminism (11/1), Stuart Hall (10/2) and Music TV (10/1). At US $11. for a year's two-issue subscription, the best value by far on the cultural market. From: JCI subscriptions, 205 Communications Center, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

Cultural Critique. New Product of the University of Minnesota, Emigré Colony, which sponsored Wlad Godzich's important publishing series on the history and theory of literature. This journal has so far failed to live up to expectations probably because other journals get the copy first, or alternatively because the 'movement' to which it relates is a purely cerebral one with no apparent common institutional or political foundations apart from the presence of the *New York Review of Books.* Essentially operating on the edge of a Kenneth Burkean US sensibility and a preoccupation with European-derived concerns with Culture as Meaningful, Important, Vital. A post-post Frankfurt school journal. (If you want the real thing, see below). Subscriptions US $17.50, from: Dept. of English, U. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Mn. 55455.

New German Critique. Established product of German, Central Europeans at University of Wisconsin. The essential journal for studying the Frankfurt school and the debates around the Kant/Hegel/Marx paradigms. A certain immediacy of discovering lost or unread manuscripts by Benjamin, Adorno et al. One of the three central journals in the USA which are based on retrieving and developing European critiques (the others are *Telos*, *Yale French Studies* - see below). Recent issues include a complete reappraisal of Benjamin based on the publication in German of the Arcades project (No. 39) and a special issue on German films (No. 36). Subscriptions US $16. for 3 issues. From: German Dept., Box 413 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201.



Telos. For most of the 1970s considered as the Lukacs school-in-exile, its editorial board and writers being mostly Hungarians who lived in New York, Australia or Peterborough, though masterminded by the Italian Gramscian and Marxist phenomenological scholar Paul Piccone. Fruitful discussions on Hegelo-Marxism, though as if the post-structural debate was in another world, (but it did publish an important interview with Foucault after the 1971 Attica riots and was the major promoter of Baudrillard's work in the USA). More recently has adopted the stance that the 'Post' debate should be taken as read: Central European Culture was there before. Has a passion for debating the predicament of the intelligentsia. Subscription: US $24. for 4 issues from *Telos*. 431 East 12th St., New York, N.Y 10009.

Yale French Studies. In a sense its title sets it apart from the *New German Critique* or *Telos*. The audience here is clearly university departments who are concerned with being *avante-garde* in their chosen discipline. Therefore it is eclectic, not exploring any paradigms in depth but giving reign to all. But, given that *language* is it's *raison d'être*, it is locked into the 'Post'-syndrome with textuality as the ultimate. But some useful issues, notably French Freud (#48), a feminist issue (#62) and a Cinema one (#60). It's deconstructive clone is *Glyph* which is exclusively concerned with textuality and though less hooked into the French paradigm, is in many ways the ultimate Derridderian flipover. If you want to know about "absence, authority and the text", this is your journal. *Yale French Studies* appears four times a year at $38. and *Glyph* twice a year at $34, and both are available from Canebsco Subscription Service, 70 McGriskin Rd., Scarborough, Ont. MlS 4S5.

Actes de la recherches en sciences sociales. The longest continuous publication devoted to cultural studies, a product of Pierre Bourdieu's centre de sociologie européens, the most systematic research institute anywhere which deals with all aspects of culture. Output includes studies of photography, film, newspapers, art galleries, universities, schools, advertising, cycling, cooking, fashion, the *magnum opus* probably being Bourdieu's *La Distinction* (translated as *Distinction* by Richard Nice and published by Harvard U.P. in 1984: reviewed in B/L #3). The journal itself not only publishes the results of its own research but also articles by non-Centre authors from Eric Hobsbawm to Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. Bourdieu is the consummate sociologist: no aspect of culture is outside his purview and his task is none other than to take social and cognitive structural boundaries to their limits and ask in what ways we can determine ourselves against the determinisms. Part-Durkheimean, part Marxist he offers a non-Derridean difference, strongly informed by a sense of history which is *lived*, rather than experienced through the sense of language. Influential in all aspects of Quebec cultural studies, though (where it exists) in English Canada mainly through translations of his work on pedagogy and curriculum. His work, however, may outlive the strategic moment of the 'Post'. The *Actes* are published 5 times a year at $58.22 from Canebsco (see above).

Tel Quel. The moment you have been waiting for. The journal of The Post, where it all has been happening from Levi-Strauss, to Lacan, Bakhtin, Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida and Irigaray. The moment of Saussure and the logocentricity of being. Elimination of the subject, reclamation of the subject. Escaping from, framed by the Prison house of language. Empowered by the osmosis of semiosis, free to talk about anything, but at a price: impotence and after. Masculinity deconstructing itself until the Other takes over. Ultimately Other took over: *Tel Quel* became the terrain for feminist rethinking of language (with its attendant problems: see Charles Levin in B/L #7/8). But *Tel Quel* is published no longer and survives as an archival quest.

Les Temps Modernes. Founded by Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir and others during the second World War, TM effectively replaced Andre Gide's *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* as the vehicle of the left intellectual avant-garde. Throughout the 50s and 60s the battleground of engagee French writing. Somewhat lost in the 1970s when post-structuralism via *Tel Quel* became the dominant intellectual trend, but recovered ground when Albert Camus alias Saul Lanzman (director of the film SHOAH) became editor. *TM* discovered a link between the Annales school, existentialism (or what was left of it) and critical autobiography. Recent issues of *TM* willingly display that tension. The most remarkable survival in French intellectual history. *Les Temps Modernes* is published 12 times a year at $120.98 from Canebsco (see above).

History Workshop, a journal and a workshop, based at Ruskin College, Oxford, since the mid 1960s. Listed here not because it is the only journal of its kind (*Radical History*, in the USA, *Labour/Le Travailleur* in Canada and *Annales* in France are at least as important), but because it is the one with which this author is most familiar, and because (as with Bourdieu's *Actes*) it uses its institutional affiliation to invite a large number of people to debate with it, as is instanced by its special issues (*People's History and Socialist Theory*, 1981, *Culture, Ideology and Politics*, 1982, *Sex and Class in Women's History*, 1984, *Late Marx on the Russian Road*, 1984, and *Making Cars*, 1985, all

from Routledge and Kegan Paul). *History Workshop* is the major catalyst for disciplined, theoretically aware historical scholarship that takes as its text the opening lines of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, and with a network of working-class scholars across Britain to support it. The fountainhead of British Marxist scholarship with roots (unlike *New Left Review*) in an experiential Marxism. Attempts by Thatcher's government to sabotage Ruskin College are directly related to the significance of *History Workshop* in British Marxist studies and practice. *History Workshop* appears 2 times a year and costs$40.80 from Canebsco (see above). Recently (as with *CineAction* in Canada) it has been edited by a series of revolving editors (members of the Editorial Collective who each take on one issue at a time).

Social Text. Once in a while, a journal emerges out of the US Left which makes all of us hope for real discourse. *Social Text* does just that: open to the British, the French, the Central European, and the American experimentations with meaning, it takes 'text' as a debating point; your 'text' is my piece of cast-away clothing, but not unimportant because I threw it away. If 'retrievability' has any meaning, *Social Text* displays it. Causes, long lost in the first world are taken up again in this, the stomping ground of lost hopes. *Social Text* displays the energy of discourse, where everything written has to be weighed, thought about, *used*. Among many good issues, its best was probably #16 where under the rubric of "Theory and History" we were exposed, laid bare and told how to get on with it. The controlled passion of *Social Text* suggests that it is written for the living rather than the instantly dead in academic libraries. Subscription (for 3 issues) US $16. (student US $13.) from *Social Text*, P.O. Box 1474 Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10011.

New Left Review has been through at least three transformations since it was founded in 1960 out of a merger of E.P. Thompson and John Saville's *New Reasoner* and the Oxford-based *Universities and Left Review*. For its first two years, under the editorship of Stuart Hall, it established the left populist cultural position, particularly through the writing of Hall, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Peter Worsley. After a *coup-de-main* by Young Turks from Oxford (Perry Anderson, Quentin Hoare, Ben Brewster, Gareth Stedman-Jones, Tom Nairn) it became the British voice of the Continental Left - from

Sartre and Adorno through Benjamin to Althusser and Barthes - producing a massive series of translations and an Althusserian critique of British society. This took it to the beginning of the eighties when a harsher political economism took over under the editorship of Robin Blackburn and its approach to cultural studies became less eclectic. Recently (since 1984) and following the Frederic Jameson-organized meetings at the University of Illinois at Champlain-Urbana, debate across now well-established cultural studies positions has become prominent, though very much in the context of a reevaluation of a left political agenda in Europe and the USA. Although not strictly a 'cultural studies' journal, *NLR* like *Temps Modernes* in France and *Social Text* in the USA has become so closely identified with all the radical debates in its native country that its importance in monitoring cultural studies is essential.

Several other journals in Britain have developed over the years in juxtaposition to *NLR*'s major preoccupations. In the mid-1960s *Views* a journal funded by an independent sponsor became fleetingly the refuge for those excluded by the Young Turk coup. Still later in the 1970s and early 1980s *m/f*, the Marxist-feminist quarterly, became the centre of feminist discourse, while *Marxism Today*, the monthly theoretical journal of the Communist party, became the central meeting-point of old left, new left and new new left: their discourses were weighted toward the cultural. John Saville and Ralph Miliband started the annual *Socialist Register* in the mid-1960s which, while narrowly political and third and a half internationalist Marxist, displayed, over the years, the problem of why cultural studies was not seen as being integral to Marxist politics, though E.P. Thompson gave it a great verbal wing. (The Third International without Trotsky or Gramsci, as it were). However, with the addition of Leo Panitch to the editorial committee, this narrow definition of politics may be in the process of correction. The 1987 issue includes a piece by Scott Forsythe on Rambo. An American equivalent, *The Year Left: An American Socialist Yearbook*, with a whole section on culture, is in its third year, published by Verso and distributed in Canada by Schoken.

Screen and *Screen Education* were journals, fostered by the British Film Institute which took movies and television seriously, though for a long period totally controlled by the Althusserian paradigm, semiotics and the problematics of The Post. Caught between the dilemmas of how to read, teach and politically situate the plastic arts, *Screen* ultimately saw reading as providing the site both for practice and pedagogy. But the heady debates of the 1970s are gone. Today *Screen* is about teaching and its readership is presumably those who make it their life's work to display the product. The American counterpart *Jump-Cut* keeps the old tensions alive.

New Left Review is available at $25 for six issues from *NLR*, P.O. Box 339, London, WClX 8NS, U.K.

m/f, *Views* exist no longer and *Marxism Today* is under sentence of death by the Communist Party of Great Britain. *Socialist Register* appears once a year and is available at $14 for the 1988 issue from Merlin Press, 3 Manchester Rd., London E. 14. The topic of that issue is 'Problems of Socialist Renewal East and West'. *Screen* appears 4 times a year, costs US $32. from Crystal Management Liaison Ltd., 46 Theobalds Rd., London WClX 8NW, U.K.

Synopsis of "Stone's War"

Ira Stone, an old Vietnam buddy of Crockett's, arrives from Nicaragua, seeking his friend's protection. He is carrying film of the shooting of a Nicaraguan priest by American combat troops, and is soon being hotly pursued by agents of the U.S. government. Indifferent, if not unbelieving, at first, Crockett reluctantly helps him out. When Stone is kidnapped by Maynard (played by G. Gordon Liddy), known to Crockett and Stone for his CIA drug running in Vietnam, the Miami Vice team is convinced that dirty deeds are afoot. Maynard is revealed as the leader of a large, semi-legitimate operation which is channelling arms and mercenaries out of Florida to the contras. In a shoot-out, Stone is killed, Maynard escapes, but Stone's film and his story are picked up by the media. That evening, however, Crockett hears the story on a radio news broadcast. The announcer reports that Sandinista troops have killed a priest. Crockett's mood turns reflective.

Television:

In the retrospective light of the recent congressional hearings, the celebrated "contra" episode of *Miami Vice* has taken on a somewhat prophetic character.

In fact, it was aired two days before Eugene Hasenfus fell from grace and into our laps as the first concrete evidence of the scandals to come. John O'Connor, TV critic of the *New York Times*, took the opportunity to suggest that, sometimes, television entertainment, in its role as the "Great Reflector," does tap the vein of the public's political awareness. O'Connor concludes his review of the show with the following:

> But, just as major polls continue to find significantly muted public enthusiasm for Administration policy on Nicaragua, *Miami Vice* may have gone straight to the heart of the nation's middle-of-the-road mood. Television as the Great Reflector could be wrong, or perhaps more likely could be just about on target — at least in its entertainments — in gauging the current extent of national skepticism. (NYT, 10/19/86)

What is significant about O'Connor's otherwise turgid commentary is the parenthetical "at least in its entertainments." In fact, his review has argued, perversely perhaps, that we can expect to find more in the way of truth when television entertainment broaches political subjects than when television newscasts cover politics. In its obsession with pursuing sociocentrality, TV entertainment often ends up with a popular agenda (not necessarily O'Connor's "middle-of-the-road mood") almost by default. In O'Connor's terms, TV news, by contrast, shapes and molds public opinion; it seldom *reflects* it.

For those of us who write and think about the nature of the relation between culture and politics, this sounds like an important distinction to make, between shaping and reflecting, and I shall come back to it later. For the present we might ask what it is that lies behind this distinction? Above all, it speaks to what one could call the separation of TV powers, a separation which liberals especially hold sacrosanct. Increasingly we hear the liberal complaint that the "public sphere" of the network news has been eroded and infiltrated by the private sphere of entertainment. It is high time that we disabused ourselves of any nostalgic assumptions that inform this position. The more we learn from television theory about the historically generic conventions of the news broadcast, the more we learn about its generic modes of address, its practiced language of consent, and its articulation of point of view, the less we are likely to go on issuing platitudes about a news discourse on politics that was once unmediated and immune to the contagion of the entertainment codes.

More relevant to my discussion here, however, is the suggestion that the so-called erosion of television's public sphere is manifest not so much in changes in news presentation, but rather, in the fact that it is TV entertainment which increasingly broaches volatile political issues, and that the corporate fools are rushing in gladly where the politico angels fear to tread. Nowhere was this suggestion more patronizingly aired than in the recent media controversy generated by the media itself over the ABC series *Amerika* (ABC was actually shrewd enough to cover the controversy in ABC newscasts as a news event, and not in the kind of panel discussion which usually follows "controversial" broadcasts).

The only common ground shared by all of the critics of *Amerika* was that it was *boring*. Even there, however, there was a whole gamut of interpretation, from the conventional industry point of view for whom boredom is the strongest reproach possible for a primetime TV show, to the more attenuated opinion of Flora Lewis of the *New York Times*, who floated the idea that the show's tedium was somehow a result of its association, albeit through right-wing propaganda, with left-wing totalitarian art, which we all know is profoundly boring. In an op-ed article in a Sunday issue of the *Times*, Benjamin R. Barber, searching for the anti-anti-Communist angle, found the fundamental theme of the show to have been this: we are losing our public sphere fast, and with it, we will lose any vestige of democracy that remains to us and through which we can hope to go on exercising our rights as *citizens*. Barber's comments tighten the liberal knot further. Not content with seeing the ABC entertainment division's political gymnastics as a symptomatic erosion of the public sphere, Barber finds the erosion of the public sphere thematized in the show itself.

More significant, however, is Barber's suggestion that, once formulated, in however embryonic a fashion, the producers and the writer "did their utmost to conceal this telling lesson...by burying their moral in a morass of ideological contradictions that taught quite contrary lessons." In what Barber says here we can read all of the problems and obstacles of liberal discourse about political culture. It is a discourse which wants to see politics but not the political, which wants to see ideologies but not the ideological, and, under other circumstances, which usually wants to see Culture but not the cultural.

Those who watched any of the show will know that *Amerika* was shot through with contradictions from beginning to end — this is not the time

The Great Reproducer

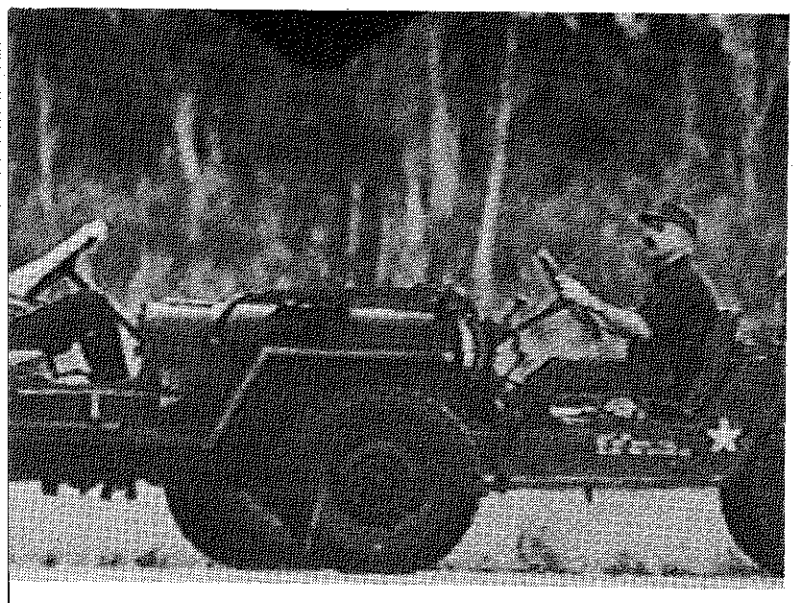
and place to go into detail. Suffice it to say that those of us who think about the relation between culture and ideology would be disappointed and not a little astonished if we did not find contradictions; ideology, after all, *is* a morass of contradictions and hidden agendas, and the work of ideology is precisely manifest in its covert attempts to conceal. What Barber, by contrast, means by "ideological contradictions" is that *Amerika*, given the opportunity, failed to present politics as a game of single issues and clearly recognizable positions. For the political liberal like Barber, politics cannot afford to be any more or any less than *rational* and noncontradictory. Liberal discourse is the discourse of the Enlightenment which cannot brook the idea of a contradiction and which wants to be able to say: what you see is what you get. But television does not say this. Television says: what you get is what you see — because it is a medium which assumes in us a certain knowledge about its own working practices, a knowledge about its commercially limited sociocentrality, a knowledge about its own conventional fantasies of the commodity world of which it is an organ.

There are those, like Barber, who would say that the television viewer, inasmuch as he or she is a consumer of images, constitutes an impoverished definition of citizenship. The fact is, however, that for some decades now, television, and I mean all of television — not just the news — has been and increasingly will be, the only public sphere we have. A radical cultural criticism of television must start from that fact, and not simply lament it.The dream of the fully participatory *citoyen* is for others.

If the formal contradictions of *Amerika* were partially explicable by the conflict between the right-wing megafantasy that flourished at the core of the script and the mega-fantasy of profit on the part of ABC's corporate managers which irradiated its mise en scene, then the show itself told us almost nothing about the relation between politics and commodification. In this respect it was faithful to the hornlocked fantasy of the Cold War oppositions which it was called upon to play out.*

Nothing could be further from the fluid world of postmodern politics which *Miami Vice* inhabits, Friday evening after Friday evening. The critical prestige which *Miami Vice* has accumulated usually centers on its valorization of style or other formalistically innovative features which it has introduced to prime time TV. Less commented upon is the fact that the show, unlike any other primetime program, regularly addresses real political events, and more generally, is staged in a world which is saturated with politics: Central America, Vietnam, Cuba, Latin dictatorships, (although not the Middle East so far, to my knowledge), Greenpeace, the CIA, the KGB, the IRA, the NRA, political assassinations, left, right, and center, the death squads, corruption in government and finance banking, local and global, the politics of rape, baby running, the death penalty and third world debt, in addition to the staple of narcotics and arms trading. It is a world of North-South and not East-West politics, and therefore does not profit, in narrative terms, from the ethical certainties of the Cold War imaginary. Instead, what we have is the fast-track "rush" of multinational politics, where capital flows along trade routes with little or no respect for the ideological frontiers of global politics recognized, say, by the United Nations.

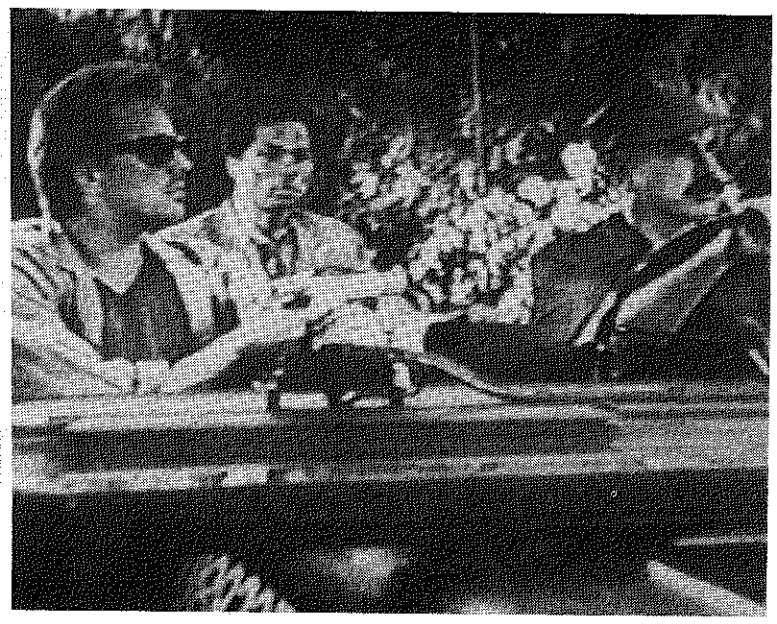
Beneath what is often represented in the show as the bewilderingly contingent map of transnational politics, there is however the more specific, libidinal trajectory of the show. This libidinal trajectory, which is tied not only to the history of the main characters, but also to the baby boom history of the largest target audience, moves from the political innocence of the fifties and early sixties, through the hard school of Vietnam to the current shouldering of responsibility for, or policing of, U.S. involvement in Central and Latin America. In this respect, the Miami location is crucial. Aside from Miami's current geopolitical significance on the map of multinational capitalism, and its "exemplary" status as a model of postmodernist urban development and postindustrial transformation brought about through the exploitation of cheap migrant and immigrant labor, Florida, unlike any other locale in the continental U.S., can provide the kind of semi-tropical, guerrilla-like setting redolent of Vietnam and the Central American terrain to the South. Unlike any of the other mythical sites of American identity, the Middle West, the North East, the West, and even the deep South, it has no sacred meaning as an iconic site of territorial authority or legitimacy. In this respect, there is less at stake, less to lose in the way of American legitimacy in the fight against the politics of transnational vice. (It's not unlike the merely semi-legitimate status of Southern Air Transport and other elements of North's Project Democracy — not identified legitimately enough with the Washington establishment for the latter to suffer from their otherwise scandalous exposure). On the other hand, as I shall now argue, *Miami Vice* does dramatize, in its continually frustrated struggle to



...the so-called erosion of television's public sphere is manifest not so much in changes in news presentation, but rather, in the fact that it is TV entertainment which increasingly broaches volatile political issues, and that the corporate fools are rushing in gladly where the politico angels fear to tread.

assert the legitimacy of local, or territorial justice, some of the contradictions which mediate local and global features of the new political map drawn by multinational capitalism.

In this respect, O'Connor's comments about the concluding scene of the contra episode are a sorry misreading of the significance of Sonny Crockett's response to a radio news broadcast which he perceives as Washington disinformation; O'Connor writes that "Crockett looked off sadly into the distance in a moment of introspection that is rare in this action series." Such moments are not at all rare in *Miami Vice*: in fact, it is quite common for episodes to end with this kind of generic Crockett look. Neither is it a moment of introspection that is represented. What is inscribed on Crockett's face is a radical *indifference:* the indifference of a more global ethics to his own attempts to legislate locally. On the one hand, Crockett's look elicits sympathy by signifying the inadequate reach of his limited authority as a law enforcement officer: the police are truly up against it, they can only do so much with the powers they have. On the other hand, it is a look which invites passivity in the face of what is represented as the overly complex effects of transnational politics: it's not for us to understand, we often can't even tell the difference between left and right, the third world has a political logic of its own, not ours, etc.



I have written elsewhere about the problem of difference in *Miami Vice*, especially sexual difference with reference to the narrative agency of interethnic male bonding between Crockett and Tubbs (*Oxford Literary Review*, 8, 1/2, 1986). Here I want to say a few things about the politics of the commodity as it is expressed within the show itself. In its delineation of what is crime and what is not, *Miami Vice* offers distinctions between good consumerism and bad consumerism. The stool pigeons in the first season of the show, Izzy Merino, the "hispanic" hispanic, and Noogie Lamont, the "black" black (to play off the "whiter" ethnic presences respectively of Castillo and Tubbs), these stool pigeons (Noogie dropped out after the first season, Merino has a less fixed role to play) both steal and deal the exchange-values of the good commodity — specifically clothes and hi-tech merchandise. Like the small-time entrepreneur and the advertising sponsor, their crimes are "soft," and although they claim that police intervention is a "thorn in the side of free enterprise," their sanctioned, semi-legitimate function as willing informers underscores the fact that their activities are in every way continuous with the show's own proven capacity to create a high-profile consumer market out of the powerful representation of the *Miami Vice* lifestyle.

Bad consumerism is expressed in the form of what I call the transnational vice commodity, especially arms and narcotics, because, as commodities, they expose and flaunt the liquid *indifference* of the system of commodity exchange. Narcotics do not hide their lack of use-value, and therefore they cannot retreat behind the facade of pragmatic utility demanded of the regular market commodity. The pure pleasure or pure waste that they offer is much too demonstrably an effect of exchange-value and nothing else. In an early episode of the show we hear a Thai druglord explain that "opium is no different from tapioca or tin ore from Malaysia. It is simply a product for which there is a demand." In saying this, he is only partially correct. The consumer who wants tapioca is also likely to want other commodities, and is thus an active consumer. The narcotics consumer is physically dependent on only one commodity, his or her buying power is wholly consumed by this one market and cannot easily be redirected to hook into and regenerate other markets. Narcotic consumption is a zero-sum game; tied to the means of destruction and not the means of production, it is immune to the liquid transfer codes of the free commodity market.

To illustrate more concretely what I mean here, I want to say a little about the issue of arms trading, not only because it is a frequent subject of *Miami Vice* investigation (Crockett is always complaining that the "arsenal of democracy" is too much like a Sears Roebuck catalogue), but also because it forms an important historical backdrop to the contra question and the involvement of arms sales to Iran, a backdrop that was barely scrutinized in the course of the recent hearings.

Marxist economists argue that the production of arms for the great European dynastic wars was a major early source of primitive accumulation of capital. By the turn of the century, we see that the arms business is far and away the most international industry in the world. The massive post-war boom in U.S. arms trading has been interpreted in two ways. For presidents like Nixon, Ford and Reagan, the selling of arms is an orthodox extension of nineteenth-century diplomacy. In fact, it has long since replaced ideology as the most efficient and persuasive instrument of global foreign policy. And with respect to the Third World, it fulfills the logic that the acquisition of arms is a natural element of the development of the so-called developing nations. On the other hand, the post-war shift in the U.S. to a permanent arms economy has solved what Baran and Sweezy, in *Monopoly Capitalism*, call the "On What?" question of monopoly capitalism. The State, in order to stave off periods of economic depression, needed a stable commodity on which it could spend its money. Soon the whole domestic economy is tied to the stability of arms production and military expenditure, and looks upon it as an automatic pump primer; as the conventional and nuclear arms industry begins to fall under the threat of global regulation, Star Wars redemptively looms up over the horizon. As for the overseas market, arms trading proves to be a godsend in times of international economic crisis, especially during the seventies boom when arms transfers increased by a dramatic 80%. During the oil crisis of 1974, the West was quite directly trading arms for oil, an agreement not without its own vicious contradictions, for Iran, in order to finance its unprecedented arms buildup, unprecedented for any country

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in history, had to increase oil prices to raise revenue for these arms. However, it was in the mid-seventies that this alarmingly vicious circle began to touch the ethical nerve of Congress. In 1976, a Senate Commission reported that Iran arms trading policy, initiated by Nixon was now "out of control." In fact, the US was selling state of the art arms to Iran and, under Ford, to Israel, which were more technologically advanced than those supplied to the US army. President Carter's attempts to rectify what he called "the moral bankruptcy" of this policy very nearly failed to get off the ground and was brutally short-lived anyway.

By this time, arms trading is a "natural" element of the multinational economy, which is to say that it has succeeded in stripping away its ethical accompaniment. It occupies a position not unlike that of the slave trade, once considered absolutely essential to the free trade economies of Europe. Recent meditations about the arms-for-hostages scandal have threatened to revive the old complaint that the worth of humans ought not to be measured in commodity terms. They have failed, by and large, to question the *commodity* status of weapons of destruction. Symptomatically, Carter's Southern Churches humanist position rested upon the untimely assumption that arms sales are intrinsically evil. Reaganism has taken the Salvation Army world- view that arms are weapons of God to be used against empires of evil, and has finally succeeded in showing how much the new Cold War American jihad has in common with Shiite fundamentalism.

In what respect is the transnational vice commodity different? For Ernest Mandel, the production of weapons in a permanent arms economy constitutes a third and new category to add to Marx's account of *reproduction*. Mandel would add the category of the production of the means of destruction to Marx's existing categories of the means of production and consumer goods respectively. Unlike consumer goods, the arms commodity does not reproduce the material elements of production (in fact, it threatens to destroy them altogether), nor is the arms commodity interchangeable with consumer goods. The arms economy, then, is a specific feature of what Mandel calls "late capitalism." In this respect there would be some support in Mandel for my claim about the different kinds of consumerism that are represented in the discourse of *Miami Vice*.

But this in itself cannot tell us much more about the way in which the ideological realm of consumerism is engaged in a popular television show. For Mandel's account of reproduction is a strictly classical one, and so it is limited to demonstrating only how the economic mode of production is reproduced, with or without the help of political and ideological processes outside of production. What we need is a larger account of the process of social reproduction, one which shows how the political and the ideological are constantly being reproduced, in addition to the economic. It is within such an account of social reproduction that the analysis of television can come into its own, for it is there, increasingly, that our politics and much of our social experience is lived in the form of consumption.

This brings us back, believe it or not, to John O'Connor, and the distinction which I earlier pointed to in this article; the distinction between TV (entertainment TV) as the Great Reflector and TV (TV News) as the Definer and Shaper of popular opinion and thought. It should be clear that both of these processes, reflection and definition, are part and parcel of the process of reproduction itself. In fact, to distinguish between the two, as O'Connor is led to do, is, in itself, a way of reproducing an ideological distinction that lies not only at the heart of mainstream television criticism, liberal or otherwise, but also in the demarcations of the corporate television industry, traditionally divided between news and entertainment. What difference would it have made for O'Connor to have written about the contra episode of *Miami Vice*? That TV had once again shown itself to be the Great Reproducer? What would he be saying to the readers of the *Times* that television takes no pains to conceal anyway, since its corporate-industrial needs and demands are so explicitly a part of the structure of broadcasting that they can often enter into the diegetic discourse of a show? On the one hand, the question is both facile and banal, for it asks something of the *New York Times* that it would not ask of network television itself. On the other hand, it is a question that television criticism, as it increasingly approaches a level of theoretical maturity, must examine.

It is a question, moreover, that is already dramatized each week on *Miami Vice* in the contradictory spectacle of these $350-a-week middle-class cops who possess the achieved consumption levels of the great movers and shakers of the transnational vice world while conspicuously lacking their awesome consumer buying power. This contradiction haunts these moments when Crockett is asked to make a pitch for the customary Reaganite version of Jeffersonian anti- Federalist discourse against protectionism and interventionism. Derided by a Florida redneck, in an earlier episode, for his lack of patriotism in driving a fancy Italian car, Crockett responds, "I buy what I feel like buying," which of course he cannot do.

More important, the ending of the contra episode reproduces another ideological staple, the division of labor between our political lives as working, public citizens, and as leisured, private consumers. At the end of the contra episode, when Crockett hears the disinformation on a radio news report, he is decidedly off duty; in fact, he is fishing, a time-honored locus for the pensive, white male. In the European aristocratic tradition of fishing, we are used to images of great statesman pondering over the affairs of state while casting their line into the fast flowing river of History (usually in Scotland, a privileged Romantic site of history). The image of Crockett's fisherman is a more innocently populist one, linking Huckleberry Finn and Ernest Hemingway, if not Minnesota's Walter Mondale, and in Crockett's case, he is casting his line from the St. Vitus into the Miami harbor against the backdrop of the city's monuments to capital, which he is always promising to police with righteous rigor: one of his erstwhile threats to Wall Street is that it his duty to "rock the boat until it sinks."

However, it is as a passenger on the ship of state and not as a watchful coastguard that he responds to the news broadcast. It is as a private citizen, and thus with all of the passivity required of that position that he responds to the betrayal and impoverishment of his more ethically circumscribed position as a representative of an empowered public sphere.** And, in a final twist, it is through the disinformation produced through the auspices of none other than a news broadcast that he and we are asked to learn the lesson that O'Connor and the *Times* headline as "Real World Impinges on Miami Vice."

Andrew Ross *teaches English at Princeton. He is the author of* The Failure of Modernism *(1986), and is currently completing a book about intellectuals and popular culture.*

It is a world of North-South and not East-West politics, and therefore does not profit, in narrative terms, from the ethical certainties of the Cold War imaginary. Instead, what we have is the fast-track "rush" of multinational politics, where capital flows along trade routes with little or no respect for the ideological frontiers of global politics recognized, say, by the United Nations.

*It is no surprise that George Kennan, chief author of *The Cold War Imaginary*, was moved to write a letter of protest (also published in the *Times* (1/5/87) about ABC's lack of concern for Soviet-American relations.

** This division between public on-duty and private off-duty roles helps the show to safely negotiate many of its most salient contradictions that crop up from week to week, most notably in the sexual lives of Crockett and Tubbs. More generally, this division generically structures the way in which cop shows manage to represent the links between *coercion* and *consent*, never one without the other.

This article was first published by the English magazine TEN/8: No. 17 (Special issue: Men in Camera) on 24 October 1985, and is reprinted here by the kind permission of Dick Hebdige. It was written during the miner's strike in Britain and during the Greenham Common demonstrations against nuclear war and American military occupation, both of which are referred to in the text. It is part of Hebdige's ongoing work on the relationship between images and everyday life, explored in more detail in his forthcoming book, Hiding in the Light *(London: Comedia/ Methuen, 1988). "Some Sons and their Fathers" will be part of the exhibition, "The Impossible Self," to be held in Winnipeg in April of this year (see Scanner for details). Dick Hebdige teaches at Goldsmith's College, London and is the author of* Subculture: The Meaning of Style *(London: Methuen, 1978).*

Dick Hebdige explores the relationship between fathers and sons weaving words and photographs around the memory of his own experience last year of an identity crisis.

To my Mother and Je

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Some Sons and their Fathers

An Essay with Photographs

Dick Hebdige

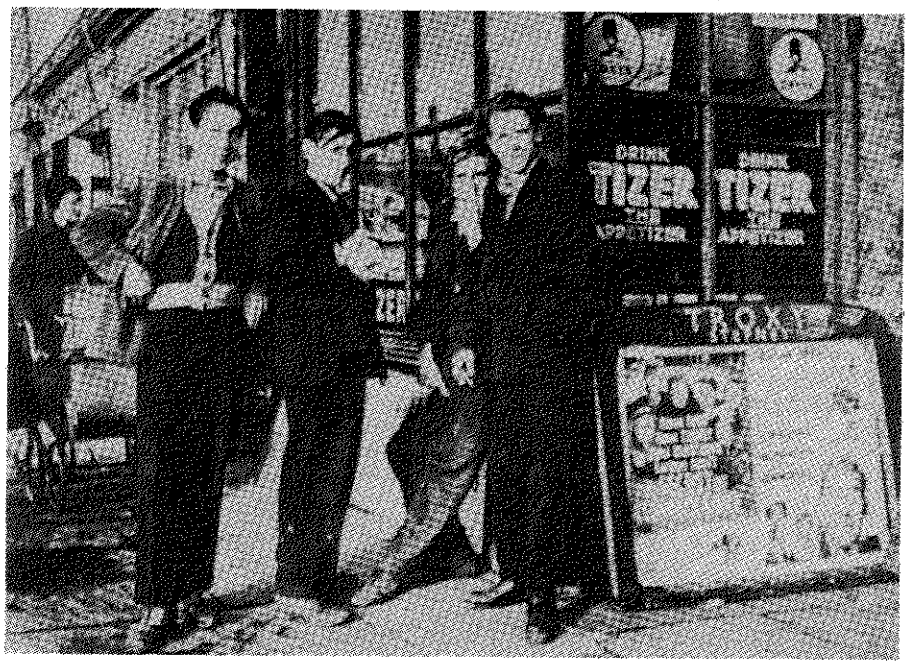
To my Mother and Jessica

Although I write and don't take photographs, I do write in images. In this essay, I want to try something new: not an analysis of images or a history of images but rather a weaving together of history, image and text - a weaving that combines personal, private and public voices and which uses different forms of story telling in an attempt at rendering my relationship to actual and symbolic filial and paternal bonds and to examine from the inside the relationship between fathers and sons, men and boys. By trying to speak in more than one dimension - by using different voices and images - I am trying to explore certain possibilities which a more straight-forward approach would, I think, obscure.

We hardly need reminding at the moment that the traditional class specific forms of masculinity are in crisis. The bloody confrontations at the miners' picket lines provide perhaps the most tragic evidence of such a crisis. As has often been pointed out, what motivates the bitterness of the antagonisms between working and non-working miners is more than just the security of the present generation's jobs in the industry. What is at issue in the current dispute is the whole future of coal and the culture: the forms of communal and family life and the strong sense of personal identity which have grown up around coal. What is being partly defended on the picket lines is the coherence of a cluster of equations between the value and meaning of manual work, manhood and class solidarity which until fairly recently has provided the nucleus for what we now call 'traditional working class culture.' The disintegration of that culture has been preoccupying sociologists for years but the process of collapse has been vastly accelerated under the present Tory regime. The initiatives taken by the Government in anti-Trade Union legislation and under the auspices of the Manpower Services Commission in Youth Training Schemes with an emphasis on vaguely defined 'social and life skills' form part of a long term strategy for reorganising the relations between employer and the employed, and for dismantling hard won notions of workers' rights and the institutional framework through which those rights where originally secured. These initiatives have found ideological support in the right wing commonsense of the 'New Realism' with its double insistence on the individual (competitive) 'career' and the primacy of the national interest (defined for us not by us) both of which serve to further undermine older oppositional forms of collective identity and collective struggle and to erode alternative definitions of shared class interest and communal rather than individual consciousness. The Tories' Y.T.S. schemes are together transforming the experience of working class adolescence by blocking the normative transitions from youth to maturity, from school to work, from dependence on the family to independence and a break

from the parental home. This is particularly clear where I teach in the Midlands where the work ethic and the wage form are very deeply embedded in the local working class culture forming the core around which the patriarchal family and the strongly marked sex roles it supports and reproduces are organised.

On the other hand, these broken transitions need not have entirely



negative implications. The newer forms of cultural and sexual politics have positively challenged or reworked the established modes of identity, for young or old, male or female. To take a topical example, gender-bending is one of the more obvious attempts within the milieu of fashion, subculture and popular music at articulating a transfigured masculinity. It is the science fiction solution to the crisis facing men: a revolution in the use of personal pronouns. Gender-bending substitutes the wholly 'it' for 'he's' and 'she's' that most of 'us' still inhabit. A less bizarre proposal has been made by the marketing people who have set out to sell us the 'new man' - a creature addicted to toiletries, terrorised by the fear of incipient baldness.

Whether or not the reader finds these solutions attractive or convincing, they hardly represent meaningful alternatives for most men. We still require positive images of a new, more responsive and more responsible masculinity. Clearly, we are living on the cusp of multiple transitions however those transitions are defined. The transition, for example, from the industrial pattern of work and the cultural forms and subjectivities it supports into something vaguely 'post-industrial' - from the known to the unknown - is the result of a shift in patterns of investment away from the labour intensive industries, but the social consequences of that shift and the brutal and sudden implementation of the new productive methods are themselves by no means inevitable. Ultimately the New Technology may lead to the releasing and rechanneling of energies and possibilities which are repressed within the current structures: freedom from dull, repetitive and demeaning jobs and the dismantling of the work ethic. It may bring a new sense of space and scale into people's lives, providing the basis for the emergence of new, more diverse and less oppressive forms of social and sexual identity. It may lead to a softening of the contours of masculinity. It should lead to a fairer sexual division of domestic labour. It may make men and women more flexible, more fluid, less driven to acquire and possess, less fearful and more playful, bound less tightly into their bodies and their skins. It may help to install — alongside the right to meaningful, socially useful labour — the rights to pleasure, joy and laughter. But at the moment (for most people), the words 'New Technology' still mean worklessness and worklessness means powerlessness: exclusion from the right to earn and spend money and to perform the consumer role. They still mean that for most people a long, perplexing and painful interregnum has somehow to be got through. That is the context in which I'd like the following essay to be read. This is how I confronted my personal identity crisis. I don't claim that my crisis is typical or representative or that my personal 'resolutions' have any general significance. I merely offer it as one man's route through the present 'evil time.'

Death of a Father

'The righteous man is the advocate for created things...In Leskov he has a maternal touch which is occasionally intensified into the mythical...Typical of this is the protagonist of his story 'Kotin the Provider and Platonida.' This figure, a peasant named Pisonski, is a hermaphrodite. For 12 years his mother raised him as a girl. His male and female organs mature simultaneously, and his bisexuality 'becomes the symbol of God incarnate.'

In Leskov's view, the pinnacle of creation has been attained with this, and at the same time he presumably sees it as a bridge between this world and the other...'

Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*

'Certainly there's scarce one found
that now
Knows what t'approve and what to
disallow.
All arsey-varsey, nothing is its own
But to our proverb all turned
upside
down
Where hell is heaven and heaven is
turned
hell.'

Michael Drayton, *To my noble friend Master William Browne of the Evil Time.*

Eighteen months ago, a very close friend of mine died. I had known him for half my life, ever since my first tentative forays with another adolescent friend into the 'man's world' of the West London pubs and clubs - a milieu which seemed to our young eyes marvellous and dangerous and thus intensely real: a place reserved precisely for the boys. It was warm and comfortable in its own way - each bar a giant living room - but it was marked off from the home - at least from our respectable working class homes - by the nimbus of smoke and raucous laughter that hung in the air and by the ever-present possibility of violence. Here we learned how to dream ourselves into manhood.

The older man, the friend who died, stood at the centre of this world like a magician or a sorcerer and it was he who gave us our apprenticeships. He took us under his wing leading us down into the underworld past all the Carnivalesque characters: the 'hard nuts', 'brasses', villains, conmen, the musicians, the boozers, the actors and the fools. He led us down in language through the 'wind ups': showing us how to weave stories, how to play chess with words, how to laugh away the fear that came spiralling up into the throat from time to time. He taught us how to enjoy the pulse of death and renewal (of individual reputations and individual fortunes), of crowning and uncrowning which made up a kind of topsy turvy order in the world of the pub.

No image could contain this man. No words could trap him: story teller, rebel, warrior, trickster, jazz musician, bandit, natural gent, ladies' man, man's man, guardian of the manor, a man born

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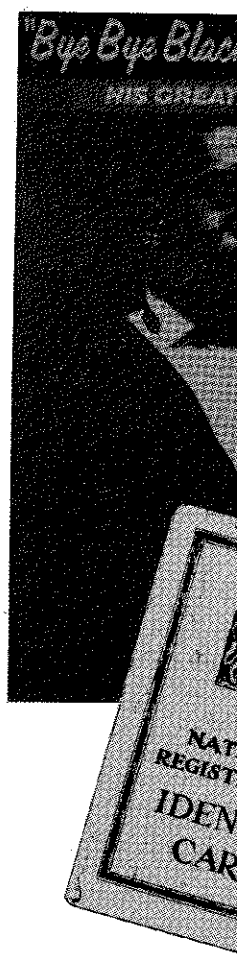


with his boots on; a man born with roses in his mouth.

When he died, the florists ran out of flowers. Big men wept and women helped to wipe away the tears. At the crematorium, a massive crowd of friends gathered round his wife who never once faltered, who never once lost her dignity, who shone with a tragic, pale brightness throughout the funeral.

During the service, the vicar forgot his name but that didn't matter. He didn't believe any of that stuff anyway.

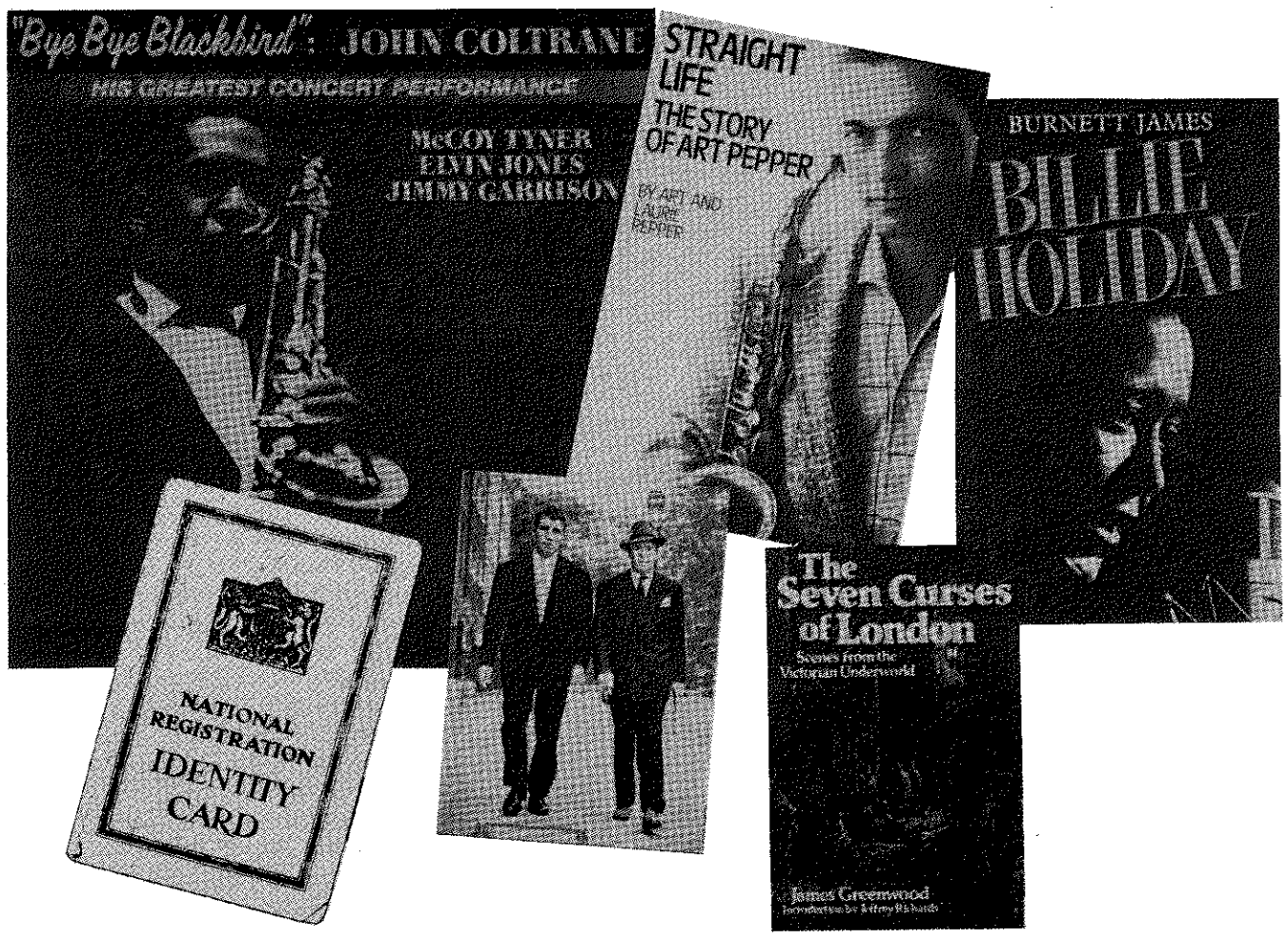
This man had also been a painter. He used to spin out abstract forms and shapes: the visual equivalents of the fat, full notes he blew down his saxophone and of the living strings of words he wound up from his belly and spat out of his lips. His speech, his painting, his music were all part of the same seamless web he wove around himself.

About a year before he died, this man began his final painting, a mural which took up one wall of the flat he shared with his wife and two kids. It was, in retrospect, his last will and testament. The mural consisted of a Noah's Ark done in clear, strong lines against a warm, tan background. A solid boat to find salvation in. Above the Ark flew a bird, a dove of peace with a sprig of ganja weed in its beak. In the housing erected on the body of the Ark, he had stuck a line of mugshots he had grown up with, fought against and fought alongside of all his life. These passport photos, taken by the men themselves in station booths and freely given for the painting formed a real rogues' gallery. They stared, grinned and grimaced out from the wall like gargoyles. By 1983 this was the last surviving local fragment of that generation of 'tough' working class men who had lived through the London Blitz, made its bones on the bomb sites of England, in the cages of the National Service, through Borstal, Soho jazz clubs, and Her Majesty's Prisons before settling down uneasily into the no less constrained, no less passionately contested regime of marriage, wife and kids or going off to seek out wild destinies as loners. The 'animals' preserved in the Ark were the magician's own dying tribe.

And when he died, his wife began, slowly at first, one at a time, to peel the photo's off the wall, to put the animals away.

When I was a boy I had thought in fear and admiration that these were the 'real men.' This zoo of 'difficult' and 'unruly' characters formed just one potent set of images in which and against which I sought to dream myself together as a man. The dream was woven out of many different coloured threads: gangster films, crime novels, the ghost written biographies of convicts, adventurers, romancers, the history of the London Underworld, Gustave Doré prints, the legendary lives of the be-bop kings, ration coupons, photographs of spivs and teds and early modernists, old television shows, r&b album covers, accounts of the Great Train Robbery, the sensuous logic of Rasta, the saucy patter of Max Miller, the bruised grain in the voice of Billie Holiday and Julie London - images and sounds and memories. When the magician disappeared, the spell broke, the mirror cracked. I began to fall to pieces.

It is so difficult to resist our own construction, to build constructively on what's already there. It is so difficult to peel back the shifting layers of images and words through which we have been made and within which we go on making and remaking ourselves so that we can stand up and say this is who I am and this is where I come from. But that struggle to put the breath right back into the voice, to speak from a motionless centre, is still right at the core of things despite all the theory and the doubts and the self-recrimination which push us back the other way against ourselves. We want to own ourselves at least. To own our own voices. We want to be authentic men and women. But when I try to speak about my masculinity I dissolve into more dreams: more images and words.




PAGE THREE SPECIAL

Mr Right . . . for Vernon AND his mum

MY NEW DAD!

I conjure up another story, another funeral, another dead father.

Is it necessary to gather up all the strains and wounds and conflicts here and lay them on the table?

To understand what's happening in this newspaper account of Jason Lake's composure at his father's funeral, we have to bracket off the real boy and the tragedy he has suffered from the way these have been constructed in the text. Those words - 'constructed', 'text' - that surgery-prising the photograph away from its anchorage in the *Daily Mirror* piece - just seems wrong. My paternal instinct is to leave the boy in peace - to let him be. The death of Diana Dors from cancer in May and Alan Lake's suicide five months later have been scorched into the popular memory, as a dark and ominous configuration. These tragedies filled the front pages of the tabloid press for weeks. Lake's death pushed aside the war in Lebanon as the leading item in the *News At Ten* on October 10. He was pulled before the public time and time again as the archetype of the weak and fatally dependent husband, as the little man in the big woman's shadow, as obsessed lover and alcoholic fop, as an uncompleted man (made whole only through his absorption in his 'better half'). Press reports of his passionate bond with the 'tragic' comedian, Freddie Starr, who had already gone through a very public nervous breakdown, exposed levels of emotional intensity between men which are rarely given any public airing.

Freddie said, 'Alan always came to me when he was depressed. We were like brothers. At Di's funeral he turned to me and said, 'What do I do now?' I told him to be strong and just walk away. But no one can describe the love he had for Di. She was a real part of him. When she went he was left just half a man. He tried to put a brave face on it but it never really worked. He just couldn't cope in that house. She was all around him. She was everywhere. But he was alone. When he came around to me he looked terrible. His face was drawn and he looked so thin. We sat down in the lounge drinking coffee. My wife Sandy made him something to eat but he couldn't face it and did not touch a thing. He said he just didn't know how to carry on. I tried to cheer him up. But he still seemed unable to look to the future. 'I want to end it', he said. So I tried to shock him out of it. I told him to stop thinking like that. I remember saying, 'How dare you think like that when Di fought every step of the way to stay alive.' I thought it worked. He stayed for about four hours and left at 10 o'clock. When he was going he took me in his arms and embraced me. 'I love you, Freddie. You have been like a brother to me', he said. I said, 'Don't say anything more. Save it until another time.' Then he drove away. That was the last I was ever to see of him.'1

This stuff is raw. The last thing young Jason Lake needs is to be turned into an object of analysis. But what is clear from even a superficial reading of the report of Alan Lake's funeral is that the boy is placed here in an impossible position. He is stuck at the dead centre of a set of double binds in which his 'angelic' (i.e. ungendered) essence is extracted from the tension between on the one hand his beautiful i.e. 'feminine' appearance and his heroic i.e. 'masculine' reserve and on the other, his assumed identification with a strong mother (a link reinforced by the physical resemblance between Jason and Diana Dors) and the disavowal of any link whatsoever with his weak father. There is a deeper mythological structure here too: the parents are polarised - he is dark, she is light and here the light has triumphed in the person of young Jason who is looking down the same line of vision as the blonde Starr. However, Paul Callan's prose monitoring every ripple on the surface of the boy's self-restraint threatens to turn this victory inside out. The journalist engulfs the boy. He eats him up. The world turns darkly in upon itself.

Where are the sources and resources of renewal? We have got to find a faith in being men without turning back to the old patriarchal structures, the old phallocentric images, to the complacency, and the violence and the fear, to the 'cool' frozen poses of the past. It has got to be a faith that is spun out of the gut and felt in the belly. It has got to be borne out of the darkness of the present 'evil time.'

I turn the page of the *Daily Mirror*. The world of the tabloid is the world of the fairy tale. The logic it employs draws on the ancient popular wisdoms — a tradition which antecedes the current construction of the 'popular' under Mrs. Thatcher by several thousand years. The old world turns on its axis as it has always done between night and day. There is an even distribution of light and darkness and the world is as it is conceived within this tradition turns, too, like a wheel of fortune. In the tabloids the mighty are uncrowned in scandal and the losers come up trumps: the body politic is resurrected every day in the same stories, the same balancing of the scales between the comic and the tragic, the serious and the lighthearted. Mikhail Bakhtin once described the principles upon which this alternative popular order was originally based. This order was enshrined in the medieval carnival and the tradition of the grotesque. It centred on the inversion of all the accustomed hierarchies and was based in laughter and a mythology of regeneration in which the old world is continually eaten up and replaced by the new: 'Here... the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in private, egoistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people... To degrade is to bury, to sow and to kill

simultaneously in order to bring forth something more and better...

Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of non-existence, into absolute destruction but to hurl it down into the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place.'2

So by turning back one page, fatherhood is miraculously restored unto itself: the light and the darkness, the blonde and the brunette, the male and female are reconciled once more in this happy, smiling group. The scattered elements of the nuclear family are reconstituted. 'We' the people are bound back together round the generous, laughing presence of the father. A new day, a new dad. Boyhood and fatherhood become possible once more. The transitions that were broken are now mended.

The tabloid solution to the crisis in patriarchal norms is a magical one. Any deep fractures in the petrified conception of the male role as breadwinner, 'natural' law giver and bringer of order will be slow to reveal themselves. It is moreover unlikely that the newer, more enabling definitions of masculinity and the paternal role will develop exclusively or even predominantly within the context of the traditional monogamous marriage. But that man must change - this much is clear.

Death of a Son

It is altogether more difficult to locate those points at which these pressures and forces intervene in our own individual biographies. It is hard to say exactly where and in what ways the word 'crisis' cuts into our bodies and our lives. My own personal crisis was no less real, no less imaginary than the melodrama of the tabloids. In April of this year I had a total nervous breakdown. For a few terrible months I descended into a netherworld where I believed that eternal Holy War was being waged between night and day, between male and female, between blonde and dark haired people.

I believed myself to be at different times John the Baptist, Christ, the AntiChrist, the instrument of a vengeful Jehovah, a warbling hermaphrodite, the Once and Future King, a human sacrifice, Tiresias: a seer half man, half woman. I dragged myself and my family and friends backwards through the centre of my own heart of darkness. I shall never forget the loyalty, love and steadfastness they showed me when all the lights went out, how they stood by me and led me gently forward like a little child.

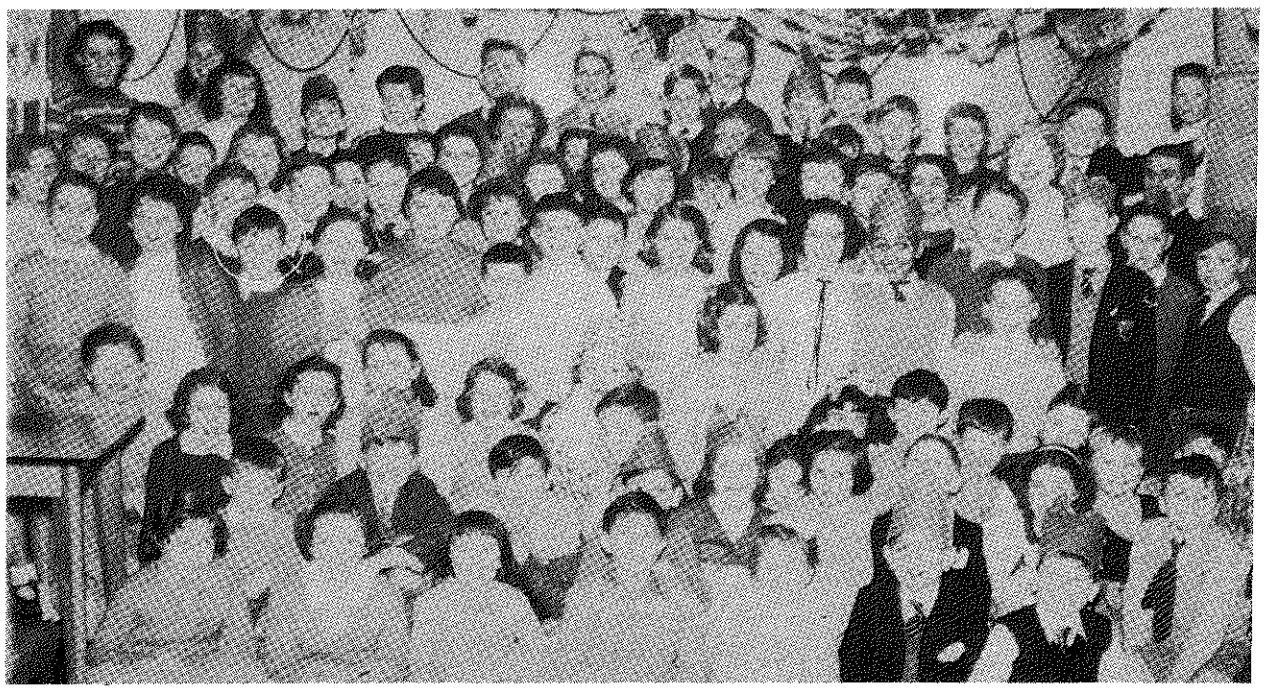
I went into crisis when I tried to write a version of this article last Easter in the West Midlands in the middle of the wilderness this country is threatening to become under the present Government, in a locality where only 1 in 10 of last year's 16 year old school leavers have found jobs. I had taken as my opening texts Michael Drayton's poem *Of the Evil Time* written in the English Civil War and Mrs. Thatcher's famous statement from 1979: 'If you have got a message preach it. Remember those Old Testament prophets? They said: "This is what I believe." I sat and worked at my desk and eventually after several days without sleep I followed her down into my own desert.

I wrote as I descended:

Thatcher and her thieves will be forced to give us back our language because it is ours' by right and she shall not take it from us. There is something that begins to stir in the gut of the nation when it is confronted by the demeaning spectacle of a Government attempting to purchase Trade Union rights won at the cost of immense effort and suffering for the piffling sum of £1,000 as a necessary step on the road to 'freedom.' Forget India. Forget the 'glory' that was the British Raj. This is the real jewel in the crown and it will not be bought with money.

I wrote as I descended:

Something begins to burn out of the heart of the darkness of this present 'evil time' when a young woman like Sarah Tisdall is imprisoned for speaking out for what she knows is right. Forget the golden boys of Oxford and Cambridge. Forget the victories won on the sportsfields of England. She shall drive our Chariots of Fire. These are not empty words stolen from the ether. They are filled with a lust for justice which has sustained the generations of the righteous down the centuries and they shall not be bribed and cheated into silence.



I wrote as I descended:

Where are the sources and resources of renewal? They are here in the fibre of our bodies, in the bright and burning core of righteousness which lies hidden in the heart of the living English language. But the English language is no longer the language of Shakespeare and Cobbett and the Tolpuddle Martyrs. It bears the scars of other Wars and the blood of other struggles. It contains other voices and they too are clamour-

ing to be heard.

I wrote as I descended:

It is not foolish or unseemly to see the dreams of the early Trade Unionists or the visionary socialists being lived out through other bodies in a different time just because those bodies now belong to women and have different coloured skins. It is not to render ignoble or forever obsolete the Trade Union tradition and the Labour Movement to say that new forms of idealism are being forged in the fires which broke out on the streets of Brixton and Toxteth in 1981 or around the fires which are burning out against the darkness at the Greenham Common base.

And when I finally fell through the glass that holds the world in place for each of us, I wrote:

The new movements are not, as some would have it, the worm in the socialist rose but rather the thorn in the crown of the future... The body of socialism will be resurrected as it has been in the past on the basis of both passion and compassion... It is there amongst the tribes which even now are gathering in the margins that the phoenix is rising from the flames.

When the police arrived to investigate the shouting, they found me crouched in a rotting fairground float in a yard in a small wood which is situated behind the College where I teach. Braying like an ass at the moon on that mild Easter night I felt convinced that at last I'd found my voice. I was speaking out. I was coming clean. Little did I know at the time how easily the 'still small voice of reason' can be swept aside in that sudden violent seizure of the right to have one's say. How could I know? There was no 'I' to do the knowing. Little did I realise then that the jangling in my ears was the sound of the bells in the Fool's cap I was wearing. How could I realise? To my crazed ears the bells were pealing out in triumph at a glorious ascension: 'Rejoice! Rejoice!'

This was the beginning of the end of the time of Margaret Thatcher. And then the fear moved in. I spent the next three months in and out of different hospitals and slowly, slowly thanks to the love and patience of my family and friends I began the journey back.

It is taking me time to dream myself back together as a man again. The pieces refuse to fall back into the old patterns but I am trying - if I can - to dream in a different key, to dream myself into something better that before. A New Year requires New Year resolutions:

We shall have to learn to be less defensive, less demanding, stronger and less powerful, more open and more openly desiring.

We shall learn from the women at Greenham Common who are spinning out a new language of positive dissent in the wool and in the photographs of loved ones which they hang in the perimeter fence and in the mirrors they use to shine back the evil contained within the base. It is no good us saying that the intensity of that desire for change is irrational or 'typically feminine' or that such beliefs are held only by a lunatic fringe. It is sufficient that they exist and that they carry within themselves a bright, prophetic power that will brook no compromise.

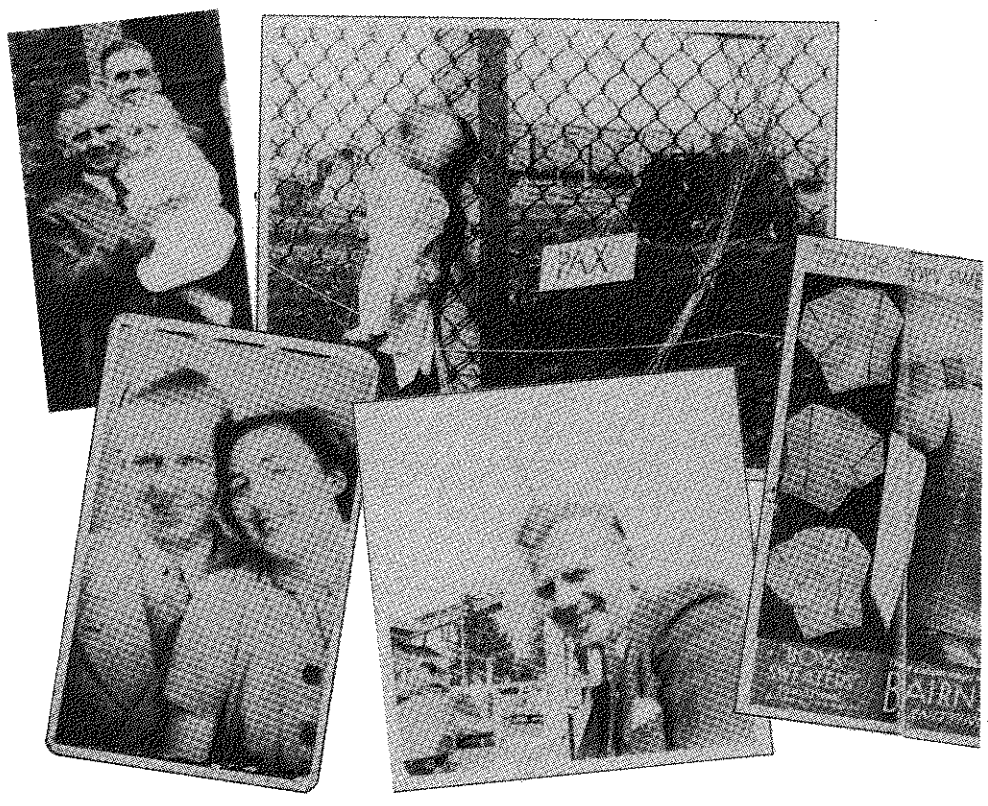
We shall have to recognize that the fragmentations and dispersals that we're living through today require a new kind of integration and synthesis. We shall have to go beyond our bodies, beyond the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake and learn to cultivate instead a responsible yearning: a yearning out towards something more and something better than this and this place now.

We shall use a logic which is no longer cramped and stifled and no longer held in service to the narrow egotism of dogma - a logic charged with power and with life.

We shall seek to maintain what has always been the source of all good thinking and feeling: the reverence for unity in difference, the reverence for unity in separate struggle.

New Year's resolutions are easily broken and, in the end these are just words and what matters is less what we say than what we do. In the end, we are just men and women doing what we can, trying to survive and to snatch some joy, however sweet and bitter as it passes, and trying, too, if we get the chance to build something better for the next generation. I am just beginning to learn all that.

In terms of effecting change, what counts now as always is collective action, and such action in this context requires a long, gradual process of articulation: finding ways of linking



with and expressing emergent and residual forms of masculine identity, tracing out how these new forms are related to and shaped by institutional pressures and broader social and economic forces. This process of articulation is a far slower, more subtle and more delicate affair that imaginary rhetorical 'solutions.' The future will of course have to be struggled for. It cannot simply be willed into place. But nonetheless we still have to dream and to know in what direction to desire. We have to go on making new connections, to bear our witness and to feel the times we're living through. There is still some sharing to be done.

I used to dream in front of a mirror but the mirror cracked for me 18 months ago. Last April is shattered into fragments. Something old and tired died then but the seed that was sown in that dying may, I hope, engender something new, something more fruitful and less turned in upon itself. Meanwhile, I shall try to bury the past because there really is not a lot of time in a life: the future is already here sitting in its pram, playing in its playgrounds. When we walk down the streets it toddles alongside us at knee height. It doesn't fill me with despair — this future how on earth could it? — it's more inclined to make me laugh. The mirror lies in pieces.

'When we free the children we also drown Narcissus in his pool.'**3**

A final story for the next generation. Once upon a time there was a man. He was born in Yorkshire. At the age of 14 he left school and moved to London where he worked as a framemaker. He went to work on the first day wearing short trousers. His future wife worked at the same furniture factory as an upholsteress. When they met he was 19, she was 16. During the War he poached a few salmon with some Geordies. He made the Normandy crossing a few days after D-Day. He sprained his knee running across a field but managed to run the rest of the way when German shells smashed into the soil beside him. One day he saw a black and bloated corpse. On the same day he and his mates found some roses in a bush and put them in the netting round their helmets. After the War, he married and his wife had two children. He was a gentle, loving father who played Robin Hood with his two sons on Wimbleton Common and went fishing with them most Saturdays in summer. He sang the youngest son old music hall songs that made him cry. His hands were hard and dry and smelled of sawdust. He helped his wife to cook and clean and shop. He used to meet his old comrades every Friday night to talk about old battles. A least once a week for a number of years he would go a visit a special friend who was crippled with arthritis and he would rub the man's ailing back and laugh away the older man's fear of dying.

That, of course, was, indeed still is, my *real* father.

Footnotes

1.*Daily Mirror,* Thursday, October 11, 1984.
2.Mikhail Bakhtin *Rabelais and His World* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1968)
3.William Kennedy *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game,* (Viking Press 1978)

Key to photographs

Page 28
John Topham Picture Library.
Women's Realm. This picture appeared with the following poem: Pretend that you are happy/ Though your spirits may be low/ Wear a cheerful face, and sing/ A little as you go./ Pretence like this is courage,./ Spreading sunshine on your way/ And you'll often find the effort/ Clears your troubles right away.
Page 29
Top: Nick Hedges, Born to Work (Pluto Press 1982).
Bottom: Boy applying make-up in Gent's at the Powerhouse, Birmingham. Part of a project entitled: *The Alternative* at the Powerhouse, 1983, by Jet Palmer.
Page 30
Above: Photo Nigel Henderson, Bethnal Green series.
Page 31
Collage, clockwise: Bye Bye Blackbird: John Coltrane album cover, 1981. Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper. Book cover (Schirmer 1979) from photo by Bill Claxton, 1956. Billie Holiday book cover based on photograph of Billie Holiday, mid 50's. The Seven Curses of London. Book cover (first published 1869), this edition Blackwell, 1981, cover based on Gustave Doré print. Billy Hill with Georgie Walker in London after returning from the 'Flamingo.' From Billy Hill's autobiography, *Boss of Britain's Underworld* (Windmill Press 1955).
Page 32
Alan Lake consoled by Freddie Starr at Diana Dors' funeral. Photo: Syndication International. Below left and right: *Daily Mirror,* 18 October 1984.
Page 33
Christmas party organised by workers at the Slumberland Furniture factory, Wandsworth, 1956/57. The author is ringed.
Page 34\35
Clockwise: My father and me at my christening, 1951. The fence at Greenham Common, Photo: Belinda Whiting. Shop's chairman, shop steward (my father), shop's convenor of union at Cinnamon's furniture factory, Hackney with sweets and Coronation mugs to be presented to workers' children at Hackney Town Hall, Coronation Day, 1953. Cover of *Weekly Illustrated,* October 7, 1939: 'Goodbye Daddy.' Knitting pattern, 1950's. My father on a work's beano to Southend or Margate 1950's. My mother and father, booth photograph, 1936.

Writing B(l)ack:

The Call and Response of Black Literary Criticism

Cameron Bailey

It is "call and response" for these reasons. "Call" because black literary theory and criticism [1], like any emerging body of thought, announces itself, states and overstates its legitimacy. "Response" because black literary criticism was born in reaction — to the neglect or misunderstanding with which Western critics greeted black literature; to persistent stereotypes of blacks in literature by non-blacks; and to the felt political imperative to prove the human worth of black people by demonstrating the existence of a complex, rich body of black literature. Finally, it is "call and response" because the activity of black criticism is dialogic; as much as they speak to mainstream critics and to the literature itself, black critics speak to each other. Not only do they engage criticism that has gone before (this is the usual method of the critical industry) but they seem to write directly *to* their peers, anticipating a response. Especially at this point there is a sense of an ongoing debate; questions are followed by more questions.

There are two related "projects" of black criticism. The first is the uncovering and interrogation of stereotypes of black women and men in literature. This is the familiar text-to-text search for counterrevolutionary images that occurs just after any revolution in criticism. Since, like the various feminist and Marxist criticisms, black criticism is socially based, "correct" mimesis will always be a concern. The second aim is the development of a uniquely black critical language, a method or group of methods that, to use American critic Henry Louis Gates's term, pays attention to "textual specificity" ("Talkin'," 206). This involves a thorough and close reading of black literature and, as importantly, of black culture. Uniting these two goals of black criticism is the concept of difference. Difference is also what generates the most complex debates within the field. Arguing that black American literature, for example, is intractably different from the literature of white America, and hence calls for different critical tools, leads one to the question of race [2] and the dangers of essentialism. This essay will explore these two branches of black literary criticism, and attempt to trace how black criticism defines its position among the web of existing critical theories and the black vernacular tradition.

Into the Art of Darkness: What to Do About Metaphors, and the Difference Difference Makes

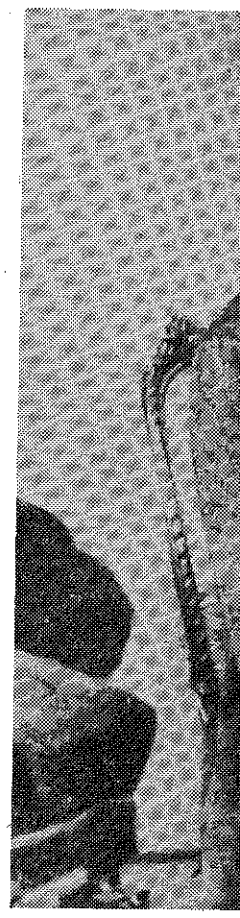
> *in this great mass [Africa] numerous groups of savage languages form what at the first glance is a hopeless chaos. We need to throw the light of history upon this confusion of races and tongues.*
>
> ***— Lefëvra, "African Races and Languages,"*** (155)
>
> *shaking that wildroot cream-oil on your knotty head, jackets buttoning up to your chin, so full of white man's words. Christ. God. Get up and scream at these people. Like scream meaningless shit in these hopeless faces.*
>
> ***—LeRoi Jones,*** *Dutchman, (513)*

If black literary criticism is primarily about finding a voice for what we call blackness, then it faces a problem with the language. If it calls out in the tongue of its colonizers (English and French mainly) must it use the inflection of colonization? Black critics, by their very activity of course, operate on the assumption that it is *possible* to talk about black literature and black experience in Western languages, but there is always a sense of what Kimberly Benston calls the "linguistic marginality" of a transplanted group (152).

There are at least two consequences of such a marginality. The first,the one that has largely been superceded, is silence. The second is a willful misuse or subversion of the received language, a kind of double speech that Houston Baker locates in the black's recognition of dichotomies in Western culture as well as language:

> *Recognizing the irony/absurdity of the disjunctions between the words (concepts) they were adopting and their own native concepts, as well as the disparity between the European's gift for civilization and the realities of the slave trade,Africans would scarcely have adopted in toto the meanings of their European exploiters. . . Africans were not completely bound, in other words, by the categories of European languages. They could engage, at will, in a process of semantic inversion. (Baker, Journey, 156)*

Africans, it seems, quickly grew adept at the sliding signifier trick. It has been suggested that black American writers (or the writers who make most use of the black American tradition) approach language from a slanted perspective, that parody and irony — "signifying"— are the tropes that allow the marginalized writer to write (see Gates, "Blackness"). In the same way that critics have found defamiliarization to be a technique that lines up with Marxist strategy, and non-linearity to be hospitable to a feminist literary practice, the true 'black' text is claimed to be parodic and elusive. This line of thought allows black critics to reclaim certain stereotypes of black (male) behaviour and find in them the source of critical models. The sly, smart-mouthed black man (from African trickster figures to Eddie Murphy) comes to personify the black creative use of language.



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"Black" has traditionally been associated in Western culture with all that is evil and inscrutable.

But not all black stereotypes are as easy to transform. "Black" has traditionally been associated in Western culture with all that is evil and inscrutable. Blackness is inextricably linked with darkness, and darkness means the underworld, the fearsome, unknowable Other. Whether this Other is the site of paranoid hatred or the transgressive allure of the exotic makes little difference. Black, as concept, is not merely marginal to white, it is its antithesis. One might argue that "black" and "white" are only names, but names are important [3]; the abstraction of pink and brown people into polar opposites had its reasons and its results. As Jacques Derrida has argued, Western metaphysics has always privileged one term in a binary opposition over the other; one need not reason long and hard to determine which term reigns in this pair.

It is only a small step from the subordination of the concept of blackness within a binary opposition to the subjugation of actual black people, and this is where the idea that black people are opposite to white people (and that there are such beings as "black" and "white" people) gains significance. James A. Snead has argued that Hegel's idea of the African "has an absolute alterity to the European" (63). The demarcation of an opposite space for the black, the construction of race, begins with the European.

In Hélène Cixous' appropriation of Freud's famous "women are the dark continent" comment ("The Laugh of the Medusa," 877-78), in Pierre Vallieres "white niggers of America," black is the colour of the oppressed. "Nigger" connotes the limit of otherness, all that is despised in that which is not oneself. With all of these negative associations attached to the idea of blackness in Western thought and literature, and with the firm connection between blackness and Africans, it begins to appear inevitable that Western literature be filled with images of filthy, evil blacks. As a black reading canonical literature, not sharing its equations of "fair" skin with purity, and "swarthy" features with guile, a certain amount of anthropological distancing is required. One — I— must step back and try to decipher the other messages in a given passage, distinct from the often obvious, blinding racism.

The cultural upsurge that accompanied the American civil rights protests of the 1960s — the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic movements — aimed to reverse the values given to "black" and "white". While they still worked on the assumption of fundamental racial differences, these movements attempted to read "black" as positive rather than negative, presence rather than absence (see Brown, 367; Gates, "Blackness," 315). Of course this is largely a *reaction* to the problem, not its solution. This strategy of inverting previous hierarchies may ring of the feminist's reappropriation and celebration of traditional notions of the "feminine," and indeed there are many similarities between the goals of black critics and those of some feminist critics. Both begin from and must work through the idea of difference. In his assault on Western xenophobia, Gates connects ethnocentrism with logocentrism, by the same sort of process that coined the term "phallogocentrism" ("Jungle," 7). And both camps attempt to understand and decode stereotypes of themselves that have been propagated by the dominant culture.

Some of these stereotypes exist at the

Black women in Western literature and visual art are thus imaged either as (large) intuitive mother figures, or as the human embodiment of animal sexuality.

juncture of received ideas about blackness and about the feminine: the figure of the temptress or wanton woman, for example, is linked to the myth of black prurience; the "maternal instinct" is linked to the black's "instinctive feel" for the rhythms of nature. Black women in Western literature and visual art are thus imaged either as (large) intuitive mother figures, or as the human embodiment of animal sexuality. In both cases the physicality of the black woman is important; her body is the site of Western male projections of desire and repulsion. In fact, black women in Western art tend to be all body; there is a history of Western science's fascination with physiological differences between European and African women, particularly genital differences, that turns up in literature and painting as well (see Gilman).

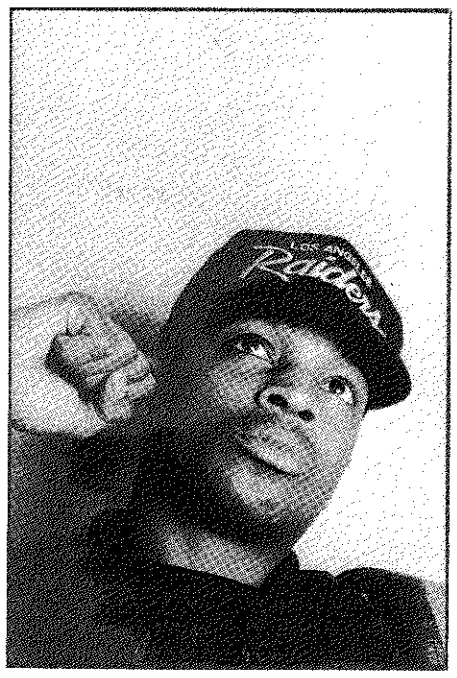
But black feminist criticism is not the uniting of black and feminist concerns. Instead it seems to have defined itself in resistance to both. Black feminist critics lay the same charges against the black critical establishment that feminist critics have hurled at the mainstream establishment — charges of ignorance and exclusion.

Gates, who seems aware of these complaints, stumbles over another problem in trying to compensate. He commits a typological fallacy, placing the repression of woman in black literature within the paradigm of a 'larger' repression suffered by blacks at the hands of whites. In a brief analysis of Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* he writes: "Celie and Shug's omnipresent 'man,' of course, echoes the black tradition's epithet for the white power structure, 'the man'" ("Writing," 14). The ease of his "of course" marks his condescension; he constantly fits the resistance of black women's writing into the more general resistance of all blacks, not acknowledging that what black women are often resisting is oppression by black men. This is certainly the case in *The Colour Purple*. Also, Gates's canon-making is suspect, placing Ishmael Reed, a writer black feminist critic Barbara Smith has called a "notorious misogynist" (173), in a predominant position. The record of black African criticism fares no better; according to Katherine Frank it remains "almost an exclusively masculine domain" (35).

Everybody Say Yeah: Orality and the Myths of the Black Vernacular Tradition

The black rhetorical tropes subsumed under signifying would include 'marking', 'loud talking', 'specifying', 'testifying', 'calling out' (of one's name), 'sounding', 'rapping' and 'playing the dozens'
— Gates, "Blackness," (286)

Supreme people who was born to talk,
And over sucker-MCs all day I walk.
— Run-DMC, "Hollis Crew"



Chuck D. PUBLIC ENEMYPhoto By Rick McGinnis

Black vernacular culture retains some of the characteristics of purely oral societies [4]. Walter Ong's description of "primary" oral cultures in *Orality and Literacy* touches on many aspects that have been attributed to black popular culture [5]. For example, Ong writes that "protracted orally based thought, even when not in formal verse, tends to be highly rhythmic, for rhythm aids recall, even physiologically" (34). Rhythm is a (sometimes dangerous) cliché of black culture, but it is an integral part of the black vernacular traditions, from American rap music to Jamaican 'toasting' to Ghanaian ceremonial poetry — so much so that there are virtually no forms of black oral performance in which music does not play a part [6]. Ong further suggests that oral culture is "agonistic"; from the *Iliad* to African epics, bragging and verbal putdowns are a part of oral-based literature. Apart from the realities of living in a hostile culture that make bragging almost a social imperative, rap's excesses of self-affirmation appear to have a root in oral culture generally. In black American vernacular culture the performer is inscribed quite clearly in the performance: rap music is about the rappers rapping before it is about anything else. There is a similar concern with the mechanics of the form. The typical rap follows the process of creative production: writing the rap, delivering it, the response it receives.

There are other elements of black vernacular culture that aid in an understanding of its literature and criticism; Snead has cited repetition as one of the controlling principles, for example. He makes a distinction between European and African forms of repetition, noting that

in European culture, repetition must be seen to be not just circulation and flow but accumulation and growth. In black culture, the thing (the ritual, the dance, the beat) is 'there for you to pick it up when you come back to get it.' If there is a goal (Zweck) in such a culture it is always deferred; it continually 'cuts' back to the start. (67)

One thinks of African polyrhythmic music, or certain forms of jazz, or American go-go and house music as exemplifying this sort of repetition, where it seems that one can enter and leave the music at any point without disturbing its movement[7]. Snead shifts the emphasis of the traditional European idea that the African lives in the present with no care for the distant future; instead, the African is "always already there, or perhaps always there before, whereas the European is headed there or, better, not yet there" (63-64). Snead contends that twentieth-century Western culture is moving in the direction of black culture, toward an anti-progressive repetition, towards circularity and away from strict teleology (78).

Henry Gates has seized upon the trickster figure of black American folklore, the Signifying Monkey, as embodying elements of black culture important for the study of its literature. Not surprisingly, the Monkey shares some characteristics that Snead attributes to repetition. According to Gates the Signifying Monkey is "he who dwells at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language — [he] is our trope for repetition and revision" ("Blackness," 286). Gates traces variants of the Signifying Monkey to Brazil, Cuba, throughout Africa, and to its origin in the Yoruba figure Esó-ElÉgbƚra. Esó is a messenger of the gods (Gates parallels him to Hermes, partly in order to make the connection with hermeneutics), but his role is to disperse, not focus meaning: "Esó is the Black Interpreter, the Yoruba god of indeterminacy, the sheer plurality of meaning" (287).

Hence the black American activity known as signifying is only tangentially related to the semiotic sense. It is "a

rhetorical strategy unengaged in information-giving. Signifying turns on the play and chain of signifiers, and not on some supposedly transcendent signified" (287). Signifying is indirect, polysemous, and deliberately impudent [8].

One can see how recent readings of black vernacular culture manage to align it smoothly with poststructuralist thought; the way Snead and Gates make it sound, the decentring, signifyin(g), "always already" world of black culture has just been waiting all this time for the Western mind to come around. As we shall see later, the connection between poststructuralism and the black vernacular is not an innocent one. But a poststructuralist stance does allow the black critic to link the black vernacular and formal traditions. Making use of oral culture loosens the rigidity of the 'literate' tradition as poststructuralism undermines previously unquestionable notions in 'serious' criticism.

Stealing Home: Appropriation and Transference

...thieves that we are, we have tried to filch your fine language. Liars that we are, the names I have mentioned to you are false.

— Jean Genet, The Blacks

"Understand my rhythm- my pattern of lecture,
and then you'll know why I'm on the run."
— Public Enemy , MIUZI WEIGHS A TON

Signification is a theory of reading that arises from Afro-American culture. . . I had to step outside my culture, had to defamiliarize the concept by translating it into a new mode of discourse, before I could see its potential in critical theory.

— Henry Louis Gates, "Blackness," *286*

So the task of the contemporary black critic is to regain the vernacular culture — often lost in the process of 'education' — and speak to literature from that point of view. According to Baker this places the critic in league with the black writer. The critic provides a "thick description" of the literature (based in a study of the culture and politics that produced the work, in addition to rigorous textual analysis), aware that, in doing so he or she "both perceives, and half creates" the work (Journey, 164). This textual/contextual approach is also favoured by black feminist critics (McDowell, 188-90).

For Baker the black difference in English-language literature is the distinct set of "semantic levels" underlying black culture's use of an adopted language (Journey, 157-63). Baker is not entirely clear on how this semantic difference works, but it seems to boil down to intentionality. The idea is that a black poet's work means (both connotes and intends) something different, even if it uses the same words in the same ways as the work of a white poet, for instance. This notion that black writers use language in a different, often subversive way provides a link with Gates's concept of the black text's "signifying," its playing of ironic pranks with the master tongue. Gates defines signifying, both a literary practice and a method of reading, in this way: "it is tropological; it is often characterized by pastiche; and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures, and their difference" ("Blackness," 285-86).

Both Gates and Baker appear to take the idea of a black linguistic specificity as a given. Gates's argument for his own critical practice places his specificity beside what he sees as the established limitations all critical schools impose on themselves. "Theories of criticism are text-specific: the New Critics tended to explicate the metaphysical poets, the structuralists certain forms of narrative" ("Talkin'," 207). But his dictum that the critic of black literature must "read the texts that comprise our literary tradition, [and] formulate (by reasoning from observed facts) useful principles of criticism from within that textual tradition" (207), as scientific as it sounds, does not follow from his discovery of textual specificity in other critical schools. Firstly, Gates overemphasizes what is admittedly a significant point: New Criticism did *tend* to work more with metaphysical poetry, but that is not nearly all it did; can Gates's theory of signification work with literature by non-blacks? More important is the question of deriving criticism from literature. While one can grant that New Criticism and metaphysical poetry, or structuralism and narrative are connected, would it not be reductive (or simply wrong) to say that one sprang from the other? This seems to be the process Gates is suggesting for black criticism, but in doing so he obscures some of his own biases. Based on the traditions of the trickster figure and signifying, Gates finds that a playful, parodic strain characterizes black literature — and on this he will found his criticism. But what he finds in black literature is already determined by his schooling and participation in the current poststructuralist climate which valorizes play and indeterminacy and the self-reflexive text. Snead's proposal of repetition as a governing trope in black culture and Kimberly Benston's concern with naming and unnaming are similarly informed with current theory. All of this can easily take on an air of quick-step revisionism: 'well, black culture was deconstructing itself long before Derrida knew which end of a sign was up.'

An examination of the négritude movement of the 1940s provides some background for the contemporary black American debate in criticism, as well as perhaps teaching some lessons. Though the term "négritude" was coined by a Martinican poet, Aimé Césaire, it was developed as a philosophy by the Senegalese poet (and later head of state) Léopold Senghor. Like signifying, and Baker's blues matrix, it is founded upon black difference, though in this case the difference is deemed inherent, not merely cultural; Senghor finds the African perception of art to be based in " 'a sensitive participation in the reality which underlies the world, that is, in a surreality, or rather, in the vital forces which animate the world.' " (Fraser, 44-45). One can see in Senghor's conflation of the language of Parisian intellectuals with the traditions of African culture something of Gates's technique. But négritude is usually taken to be a failed effort at integrating black difference within the larger realm of all human experience (according to Fraser it never did catch on in English-speaking Africa), partly because of its indebtedness to French thought at the expense of African experience. Wole Soyinka criticized Senghor's négritude for being a liberal romanticization of Africa, praising Chinua Achebe's unselfconscious Africanness over Senghor's négritude (Fraser, 69-72). Theorizing the vernacular has its problems.

So what, if any theory is most profitably applied to black literature? Sunday Anozie's African structuralism has more or less been dismissed as possibly the most ill-fitting. Anozie commits what Anthony Appiah calls the "Naipul fallacy," attempting to understand Africa in wholly European terms (146)[9]. In fact, when they are not ignored, formalisms are rejected outright. Although Houston Baker criticizes the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic movements for a lack of analytical precision, for what he sees as a dependency on polemic and desire rather than careful investigation *(Journey,* 132-143*)*, his own is not a scientific criticism. He is not, for example, above such polemical, even irksome techniques as deploying the term "whitemale" to refer to the dominating racial/sexual order ("Cali-

Most black critics do retain a respect for rigorous textual analysis, but none would stop at the bounds of the text.

ban"). It does have an emotional impact, but the term smears distinctions a little too easily.

Most black critics do retain a respect for rigorous textual analysis, but none would stop at the bounds of the text. Perhaps for the same reasons that they reject structuralism, black critics seem to have little use for psychoanalytic or Marxist methods: the taint of a dominant Western thought system is too strong. Black American feminist critics do appear to adopt feminist practices whole (although from the position of outsider) and add to them; their sisters in Africa pick and choose what is relevant to their concerns, "the historical/sociological, discovery/recovery and re-evaluative," according to Frank (43).

Even Henry Gates's "signifying" is ultimately in aid of what has been a restrictive practice in Western criticism — the construction of a canon Gates very much wants to create (or strengthen) a black literary tradition, and signifying is the criterion by which works will be judged. Gates places and judges Ralph Ellison by the degree to which he rewrites Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston by what she does with slave narratives, and Ishmael Reed by his revision of all of them. But to create a canon, in which these writers will take preeminent positions, is to follow an old, possibly irrelevant pattern. Gates is an academic critic; perhaps this is why he does not question the value of assimilating black literature into a Western framework. Assimilation of course presumes difference. In the end (and this is not that) it all comes down to difference. As I understand it the whole project of black criticism came into existence as a result of colonialism. Without colonialism, without slavery, such a thing as 'black' literary criticism would be a redundancy: African criticism would simply develop, as has Chinese criticism, for example, with its own literature as the universal model. No difference. But black criticism labours under the eternal presence of Western thought (perhaps a psychoanalytical approach, with an Oedipal drama at its centre, *would* benefit); debates about what is uniquely black can only occur where blacks are among non-blacks. It is from a position of resistance that such debates spring; in an Africa untouched by the West one might instead find heated debates about what is uniquely Yoruba, for instance. What we do with difference forms the crux of the debate: do we assimilate with the 'other', or do we barricade ourselves in ourselves?

This is the problem, in black and white.This is the problem with black and white.

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FOOTNOTES

1• When I use the term "black literary Criticism, " or "black literary theory" I am referring primarily to the work of American and English-speaking African Blacks. My discussion of French-speaking African literary criticism is limited to *"négritude"*. An examination of the criticism and theory of West Indian, Cuban, Brazillian, and other black literatures is beyond the scope of this paper. The project of black British cultural criticism (Stuart Hall, the *Framework*, and *Ten-8* writers, among others) does overlap to some degree with black literary criticism, though these writers are far less concerned with what Americans would call a text.

2• I will not place the word race in quotation marks as Gates ("Writing", "Talking") and Tzvetan Todorov have suggested because, although I believe it is important to point out how racial difference is *constructed*, I do not believe the concept can be discounted entirely. It persists as a mode of ordering: Gates in particular still works with an idea of "black" as being essentially different from "white" at the core of his writings. Although he wants to locate black criticism in *culturally* derived manifestations, he still refers to "black" or "white" authors and critics. This seems to connote something like race.

3• Whether the name is Negro, Negre, Nero, Negerou, or Schwartzer, the connection between people of African descent and the colour (and concept) black is always explicit. *The Oxford English Dictionary,* traces the derivation of Negro to the latin *nigrum* or *niger,* meaning black (*The Oxford English Dictionary,*v.7, 82).

4• Gates has pointed to the importance of voice even in the most literary of black literature. According to him "the figure of the voice in the text — of the talking book" first appeared in slave narratives as a scene of instruction for the slave ("Writing" 12). It is a metaphor that persists in contemporary black literature, representing, by the inscription of the voice, both the proof of rationality and the bond between speech and writing. (See also "Blackness", 296).

5• Ong takes pains to point out that his discussion of orality is based in a study of primary oral cultures, those untouched by any form of writing. Black popular culture is of course not that, but as Irish or Russian literature make use of an oral *tradition,* so black literature and music draws upon cultural forms shaped by orality. As Ong points out, our access to pure orality is always clouded by our literate modes of thinking.

6• Robert Fraser stresses the interpenetration of music and oral verse, particularly in Ghanian *akpalu* (elegiac dirges) : "the *akpalu* is at once poem and song, dance and percussive fantasia" ("Oral" 10). In addition, Ewe, the language of the region, is a tonal language, "where pitch determines meaning" (13). Fraser also notes that the metre of African oral poetry is determined by the "master-drum" which accompanies the poem in performance.
Houston Baker has asserted that the blues, or what he cals "the blues matrix," is fundamentally tied to the American vernacular, almost that the blues *is* the American vernacular. But Baker's privileging of the blues is nostalgic: the blues song is an atrophied form, like European opera; we know that because we can discern its rules. Vernacular performance always changes.

7• Something that Beatrice Stegman has written (quoted in Katherine Frank's article) about the communality of African societies is reminiscent of Snead's idea of the ceaseless repetitive flow in black cultural forms. Stegman writes of African culture's "value of submergence rather than self-realization. In traditional African societies, the role of each citizen is to perpetuate the status quo, to assure continuity of the clan, to work within tradition" (46). Snead's system allows for more individual freedom (the participant can enter and exit at will) but the properties of the governing structure are the same.

8• Gates, in a Derridean turn, often spells the word "signifyin(g)," to connote both the linguistic and the black vernacular senses of the word. One might question his assumption that it is a mark of blackness to drop final Gs, but perhaps he means it to connote American colloquialism rather than as a black mark.

9• Appiah's somewhat barbed critique of Anozie dwells as much on the critic's inability to do anything with structuralism as it does with structuralism itself. It's true that despite all his syntagms and diagrams Anozie never seems to get the reader closer to the subject.

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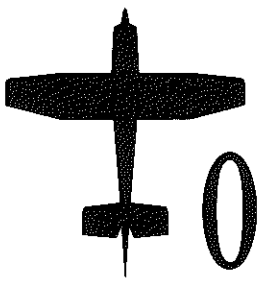
Karen Klugman

Our culture is mass culture, where one of the strongest early influences on gender is the mass toy market. It is appalling that today there is a much greater sexual division of toys defined by very particular gender traits than I'd say has ever existed before. The recuperation of sex roles in the eighties is a stunning reversal of the Women's Movement in the late sixties and early seventies, which called into question children's sex role modeling. Dress codes were condemned, co-ed sports flourished, fairy tales were rewritten, and toys were liberated. We tend to imagine that our parents and grandparents conformed to strict sex role modeling practices. And we like to think that the cultural turmoil of the sixties changed everything. This is not true. In mass culture today masculinity and femininity are more narrowly defined than ever. Walk into any toy store and you will see in the aisle arrangement the strict separation of the sexes along specific gender lines: Barbies, My Little Ponies, and She-Ras line one aisle; He Mans, Transformers and Thundercats another. Although many nursery schools now mix the dolls and trucks on their play area shelves, everyone — kids especially — perceives toys as originating in a boy vs girl context.

Commodity fetishism erases production and presents the toy store (or TV commercial) as the toy's point of origin. Children generally refuse to believe that the writing on a doll's back says "Mattell" rather than the doll's name. They do not conceive of the toy ever having been made. It has no reality previous to its display on the toy store shelf where it conforms, as if by magic, to a clearly gendered universe. The logic of a boy vs girl universe is not questioned or even understood as having been produced because the labour of stocking the shelves is largely performed after hours. Young children conceive of gender from the point of view of the consumer. This is the same point of view that perceives the bank solely as a window that dispenses cash whenever you run out. Parents who try to explain the realities of cheques and savings deposits quickly realize how difficult it is in consumer society to restore notions of production. In the toy store, the essentialized notion of gender (and the boy vs girl universe) fall apart only when the mass-produced toy falls out of favour. Reduced for quick sale, it is thrown helter skelter in a "Sale" basket with other out-of-favour toys where gender, like the toy itself, no longer matters.

In order to highlight the retrenchment of gender in the eighties, I want to cite two people whose experience of childhood is more immediate than my own. The first is my daughter Cassie, who almost a decade ago when she was three was asked if her teddy bear was a boy or a girl. She responded, "My teddy is both a boy and a girl." Her words give simple and direct testimony to the pre-oedipal child's recognition of polymorphous, or multidimensional sexuality. Yet just the other day, my four year old son, Cade, made a very different comment. He was playing with some foam rubber dinosaurs, whose sexual



TOYS & GENDER

Susan Willis

characteristics are as erased as they are in a teddy bear. I asked him if his dinosaurs were girls and boys. "No", he said, "just boys and boys." In its syntax, his remark suggests the possibility for masculine and feminine, even while his words affirm that boys can only be boys and play with boys. There is some evidence to suggest that little boys in our society are more strongly determined in their conception of sex role differences than little girls. Parents seldom reprimand little girls for playing dress-up in boys' or men's clothing. But all the day-care teachers I've spoken with report that most parents show some degree of displeasure (occasionally rebuke and violence) for their young sons who experiment with skirts and gowns while playing dress-up. However, I think the real difference between my two children's remarks has more to do with history. Cassie's comment reflects the mid seventies, while Cade's speaks for the mid-eighties and the absolute retrenchment of gender based on essentialized notions of sex.

Consider Barbie and He-Man. Their popularity demonstrates how children are socialized as consumers, and their physical attributes show how gender is defined in our society. Barbie has withstood the decades with the same pert nose, frozen smile, pointy breasts, hard body and pencil long and thin legs. In contrast, He-Man is having trouble surviving two marketing years. His position as top boy toy has been taken over by Lion-O of the ThunderCat TV series and GI Joe, who has returned from the Viet Nam era. He-Man's precarious fame is a product of the rapid changeover in the mass toy market. He-Man last year, Lion-O this year, next year some new "already legendary" folk hero without a past or a future. What's important in these TV spin-off toys is that they all derive from the same basic model. Each has a different costume and a different range of super powers. But all are young men with muscles and a mythic group of helpers who battle an equally muscled and mythic army of evil-doers. My reference to He-Man is, thus, a reference to this particular model of toy whose specific appearance depends on which legendary folk hero is currently being promoted in TV programming.

Barbie and He-Man are both most popular with a particular age group of consumers. From my observations, I'd say four and five year old boys want He-Man, whereas girls from five to seven want Barbie. (These ages are confirmed by the appearance of the children in the TV commercials for these toys.) No longer toddlers and not yet beginning to experience puberty, this age group represents in our society true childhood. Clearly, Barbie and He-Man do not offer the child the possibility of prolonging polymorphous sexuality or developing an open notion about gendering. Instead, they define the polarization of narrowly conceived gender possibilities. My hypothesis is that both toys play on the child's conscious and unconscious notions about adolescence. They focus the child's conception of the transformations associated with adolescence in a singular fashion, and they suggest that change is somehow bound up in commodity consumption.

Advanced capitalist society offers the growing child very few means to register the experience of individual development and bodily change except by way of commodity consumption. In the United States ritual ceremonies that mark stages of growth and integration with the adult world, like the Jewish barmitzvah or Catholic communion, are marginalized, diminished or assimilated to the commodity form. While the First World tends to perceive the rites of passage in primitive societies as backward or barbaric, these do satisfy the individual's need to focus the fears, excitement, and expectations associated with moments of change and to overcome these through group-social practice. We may lack rites of passage, but we have not transcended the need to experience ourselves and our changes in relation to a larger social collectivity.

For most people growing up in the First World state, the birthday is the moment when the individual intersects with the desire for social gratification. We tend to experience our birthdays as moments ripe for the reinvention of social rituals. This is especially true of children. They plan and discuss and imagine their birthday parties months in advance. Most often they talk about who will be invited to their parties, not as an exclusionary, but an inclusionary practice. In naming their guests, children are in touch with the social group who will observe their moment of transformation. It is important that the social group represent continuity, hence children tell each other who will come to their parties all year round.

Children live their birthdays as magical moments of change even if they are not celebrated with a party. Many children undergo emotion-fraught weeks leading up to their birthdays. When my daughter Stacy turned five, she demonstrated all the behaviours generally ascribed to women turning forty: sleeplessness, depression, touchiness. For children, birthdays are more than transitional moments. They are felt to include actual physical transformation. I have heard more than my own children ask to be measured upon awakening on their birthdays, fully expecting to have grown an inch in the night.

Adolescence is the period when growth really does mean change. Young children anticipate adolescence both consciously and unconciously. In consumer society their anticipations are met more quickly and easily by commodities than by social institutions like family and schools. Commodities offer the young child a means to articulate his or her notions about the transition to adolescence. No matter what the adult (probably male) toy manufacturers had in mind when they created Barbie, she represents for the six-year old girl the acquisition of the adult female body. Her accentuated length suggests height, which is the young child's most basic way of conceptualiz-

Young Children concieve of gender from the point of view of the consumer

ing age or adulthood. And her accentuated breasts signify — directly and simply — femininity. Clearly, six-year-old girls sense that adulthood and femininity are far more complex. If only through their parents, they experience the labour, care, worries, discussions, desires and satisfactions that constitute adulthood. If only through their mothers, they know the shapes, softness, rhythms, odours and expressions that define femininity.

Barbie negates all of these, just as He-Man reduces adult masculinity to the simple formula of hard, overly muscled body. Popular culture includes a long tradition of male superheroes, such as Superman, Captain America and Batman, whose physical strength and super powers imply the penis and give expression to the domination associated with the phallus. He-Man is a part of this tradition. But for the young boy of four or five, muscles mean muscles. He-Man's muscles bulge so grotesquely that my own son first called them "bumps". This is the commodity's one-dimensional definition of masculinity. It seizes one of the characteristics children associate with adolescence — a visible and controllable aspect (boys can work out with weights and control the size of their muscles) — and makes this one trait the place of the complexities it negates. Another toy currently marketed for young boys is a voice-transforming machine. The boy speaks into it and his childlike voice comes out dramatically deepened, although slightly roboticized. Like developing muscles for the first time, voice change can be a traumatic experience for the adolescent boy. The voice-transforming machine teaches young boys that commodities have an easy answer for what would otherwise be a difficult, perhaps painful situation. The familial relationships that might help a child through awkward periods of development are put aside, supplanted by a magical machine available at just over ten dollars.

In analyzing the relationship between adolescence and commodities, I am focussing on a single moment in the child's relationship with the toy. This is the moment when desire is enacted in consumption. It does not matter whether the child actually buys the toy or merely voices desire, "I want that!". In advanced consumer society, the act of consumption need not involve economic exchange. We consume with our eyes, taking in commodities every time we push a grocery cart up and down the aisles in a supermarket, or watch TV, or drive down a logo-studded highway.

What the child does with a commodity is another situation entirely. An analysis of the way children play with Barbie and He-Man would alone fill a book. Barbie can slide down avalanches just as He-Man can become the inhabitant of a two story Victorian doll house. I've observed such situations where play disrupts gender roles, and day care teachers can describe thousands more. Ivan Illich suggests an interesting way to understand the function of play in his book *Gender*, when he characterizes women's domestic labor as the work of putting "utility" into the hollow commodities that fill up daily life. As he describes it women's "shadow work" transforms the meaningless store-bought egg into an ingredient for a meal, which then constitutes social relationships and wholeness. Leaving aside the nostalgic tendency in Illich's writing, I'd say children's play functions along these lines. Children transform commodities into use values. What's more, they don't recreate lost values or utility, as Illich would have the contemporary housewife do by somehow dredging up the long lost relationship of the peasant woman to the freshly laid egg. Rather, children's play produces newly imagined social possibilities, where gender is no longer the most essential attribute, but only one quality among many other interesting human features.

A closer look at the moment of consumption demonstrates that no matter how deeply it articulates our inscription in capitalism, it also includes utopian dimensions, particularly for children. Buying is a form of exchange where the social interaction that defined older systems like barter is reduced to the universal equivalent: money. In buying Barbie or He-Man, the young child is able to experience the transition to adolescence as an act of consumption. However, because young children do not control money and have not been taught to think abstractly, the child's experience of consumption is somewhat different from that of the adult. Even if the child performs the purchase with money he or she received as a gift or an allowance, the moment of exchange includes dimensions of play acting, of mimicking what adults do when they hand dollar bills to the clerk and get change back.

For children, the moment of consumption, which for adults is focussed primarily on pocketbook and cash register, is expanded to embrace the

child's peer group of playmates. When a young girl buys Barbie or receives Barbie as a Christmas or birthday present, she experiences consumption in relation to a collectivity of young girls who have or want Barbies. In their acts of consumption, children enact the same desire for social collectivity as they exhibit in their preparations for birthday parties. For adults, the social practice of consumption is reduced to competition. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is the fully deformed and commodified version of the child's sense of collectivity in consumption. Often adults believe their young children's desires to have the same toys as other kids is a demonstration of greed or rivalry. A young boy who already has He-Man, Lion-O and an assortment of their respective helpmates may well ask for GI Joe or Rambo, not because he wants a more militaristic toy, but because a friend brought his GI Joe or Rambo to school for "show-and-tell". While such a child is indeed being conditioned by capitalism to consume, and consume massively, the child is simultaneously voicing the desire to participate in his friend's world and experience. Similarly, many children enjoy "sleeping over" at a friend's house, and young children often look forward to and discuss their first "sleep overs". This is how children break down the nuclear family and restructure themselves in a collectivity of caring. By playing with the friend's toys, eating at his or her table, watching the friend's TV, and sleeping in the friend's bedroom and bed, the child makes the notion of the extended family a concrete experience. Just as children's play transforms commodities into use values; so too, does children's relationship to consumption reveal utopian social dimensions.

These examples of the social dimensions that haunt commodity consumption are all impoverished and contained by the larger system of capitalism. If young children recognize these social dimensions and bring them forth in their speech and play, while adults are blind and inured to them, it is because children's experience of capitalism is less immediate (because they are neither producers nor for the most part reproducers) and because their experience is simply less long. My intent is not to essentialize childhood, to make it the equivalent of some basic human nature or state, but rather to show how the child's perspective is precisely historical and social. Because children come into the world dependent upon adults and older siblings for their care, their experience is primarily the experience of social interaction and relationships. Socialization into capitalism is a process of learning to substitute alienation and commodities for human relationships. When children recognize utopian social dimensions in otherwise highly commodified situations, they challenge us all to liberate the social from the commodity form. This is the same challenge Marx made to the working class in the nineteenth century to recognize and seize the buried human relationships in labour and in the products of labour which have been abstracted and alienated by wage labour and the commodity form.

In their acts of consumption, children enact the same desire for social collectivity as they exhibit in their preparations for birthday parties.

The challenge is how to define gender in truly human terms. This may not be possible under capitalism where group social practice is commodity consumption. If we subscribe to the notion of gendering as process — and I think this is the only fruitful way to see it — then we must confront the fact that gender, like all our attributes and expressions, is bound up with the commodity form. As I see it there are two possible responses. The first: the separatist solution, holds forth limited success. In a society defined by sexism and male domination, lesbian separatism functions at the level of sexuality in a fashion similar to a homesteading community with respect to capitalist production and commodity consumption. Both represent a political choice, but neither is transformative of society as a whole. The problem with the separatist solution is its marginality. Either it is so different from dominant culture as to have no impact on the rest of society, or it includes points of attraction for capitalism in which case it is readily co-opted and assimilated. The most to be gained from separatism is reform. Lesbian separatism can stimulate tolerance for alternative sexuality but it cannot transform male domination in society at large. Similarly, communities based on alternative modes of production can promote an awareness of less exploitative economies and non-polluting energy sources, but these communities are not transformative of either capitalist economics or its relationship to petrochemicals,

nuclear arms or computer chips.

The most radical response to daily life under capitalism is to develop a mode of criticism and practice along the lines I have been demonstrating here. This is a more difficult activity because, lacking separation and autonomy, the culture critic risks being engulfed or simply dismayed by the contradictions he or she seeks to reveal. Nevertheless, there is a real need to recognize in all our commodified practices and situations the fragmented and buried manifestations of utopian social relationships. Such a practice meets the challenge Herbert Marcuse set forth in his *One-Dimensional Man*. It takes his critique of capitalist culture one step further into daily life and one step deeper into the commodity form. This is a truly transformative approach to capitalist culture because it has the power to unlock the desire for liberating social relationships from within the system itself.

I want to expand what I have been saying about the individual's experience of commodities and gender, which I have defined primarily in terms of social practice, by rethinking these considerations in relation to a larger historical context. My hypothesis is that just as children want to experience their individual changes concretely and socially; I would say that so too does society as a whole long to experience change and to register change historically. Because young children's notions of change have largely to do with growing up and becoming adults their sense of change is localized in adolescence and articulated in relation to gender and sexuality. The question is: what then, are the historical equivalents of the sort of changes individuals experience in their lifetimes? Is change even conceivable under capitalism?

Theodor Adorno, in writing the great critique of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, posed this same question and responded by attacking the notion of progress. For Adorno and the other Marxist intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, time and history under capitalism are portrayed as an abhorrent and bleak sameness that recapitulates domination. Homogeneous time is how Walter Benjamin characterized capitalism's negation of change. It is a history propelled by the notion of progress, but going nowhere. Instead of change, capitalism is punctuated by events, like moon shots and scientific discoveries; or by the horror of events, like nuclear holocaust. True there are struggles for change: Civil Rights, the Women's Movement, anti-nuke and anti-war movements. But in a history dominated by progress these struggles can yield no more than reform.

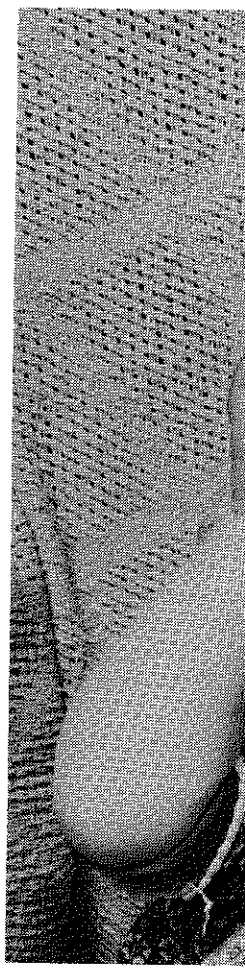
"Everything transforms but nothing changes" is a fitting motto for late-twentieth-century capitalism, particularly as it is embodied in the mass toy market. One hundred years from now, when anthropologists from another planet visit the earth and begin poking around in the heaped up residues of our culture, they will find buried in the stratum marked 1980's a vast array of toys whose singular purpose is to transform. Trucks, planes, boats, tanks, cars, helicopters, space vehicles and submarines all turn into robots. Some robots turn into lions, insects or dinosaurs. These are the Transformers, Gobots and Dinobots. Often the complicated series of manipulations required to produce the transformation from car to robot and back to car again baffle the adult left reading the toy's instructions while the four year old child, using fingers and intuition, performs the transformation unaided. What's interesting about the Transformers is the way the notion of transformation suggests spontaneity and change, while the reality of the toy teaches programme and pre-programmed outcome. As the child's fingers fold in axles and wheels and pull out arms and legs, he or she learns that change is already inscribed in the machine. The Popple is an ugly sort of teddy bear in blotched pastels and with a commodious pouch sewn into its back. By turning the animal head over heels and stuffing it into its own pouch, the child turns the Popple into a ball. Such toys demonstrate that consumption is essential for transformation. Further, their programming undermines the possibility of conceptualizing change in any other way. Finally, the commodified version of change compensates for the absence of meaningful change in society and history.

The current popularity of transforming toys may well reside in our utopian yearning for change that the toys themselves manage and control. Much of popular culture articulates the same contradictory relationship between the desire for change and its control.

Animation is a good example, as if by magic, the animated cartoon makes lines appear to move spontaneously and brings figures to life. This filmic illusion, however has nothing to do with magic but is, instead, produced by a highly rationalized work force and a deeply technologized production process. When Mickey Mouse wiggles his magic fingers and brings a broom to life in *The Sorcerers Apprentice*, he enacts an extended metaphor for the magic of animation. When his single broom multiplies and becomes a threatening horde of marching brooms that necessitates the intervention of the master Sorcerer to restore order, the scene articulates another extended metaphor. This time it depicts the need for control in the production process. Nowhere in our society are the contradictions of capitalism rendered so visible — yet presented as if they were so "normal" — as they are in popular culture.

The icons of twentieth century popular culture are all deeply infused with the desire for change. By comparison, the nineteenth century was populated by concrete folk heroes such as Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill and John Henry, who may have grown very large, but who never metamorphosed into someone else. These heroes spoke for historical development and continuity and the centered, very solid construction of masculinity. This is certainly no longer the case with the advent of the twentieth century superheroes. Superman, Batman, the Incredible Hulk, Spiderman, Aquaman, and all the other "-men" (as well as a few feminine adjuncts like Wonder Woman), are locked into the perpetual articulation of the moment of transformation. Clark Kent/Superman, Bruce Wayne/Batman, Peter Parker/Spiderman, and now Prince Adam/He-Man — all the super heroes demonstrate that transformation means that masculinity is constructed as a duality. The weak, sometimes bumbling, even nurturing aspects of masculinity are portrayed as somehow necessary to the emergence of the super hero so long as these can be kept separate from the superhero's omnipotent form.

Peter Parker gives a clue for interpreting all the super heroes as representations of change on the individual level. He is the perpetual articulation of the transformation from adolescence to adult manhood. No matter how many transformations he undergoes, Peter Parker never advances beyond high



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school and the chem test or basketball practice he inevitably misses in order to swing through the city as Spiderman. Similarly, Superman may be portrayed as an adult man, but for Clark Kent's boyish ineptitude he, too, suggests adolescence. Prince Adam/He-Man is the 1980's version of the same super hero complex. Boyish in his humour, loving of parents, friends, and his giant pet cat, Prince Adam sports about the Palace of Eternia with very few duties, obligations or woes. He-Man is in every respect Prince Adam's antithesis. Resourceful, courageous, dynamic, he battles the enemies of Eternia and bears the burden of his world's future. As in the case of his superhero predecessors, almost no one knows the mild mannered Prince Adam is really He-Man. Hence, the transformation to He-Man is depicted and experienced as a moment of explosive power. Prince Adam seizes his sword, commands the power of Castle Gray Skull, and KABOOOOM!: "He-Man." Contrarywise, the transformation back to Prince Adam is portrayed as a moment of humiliation. Because he is never around during his people's crucial battles, Prince Adam is felt to be a"wimp".

It would be simplistic and reductive to interpret the Prince Adam/He-Man complex as an extended metaphor for the penis, even though the sword, the sudden empowerment and the return to relaxed wimpishness make the vulgar Freudian reading unavoidable. Similarly, it would be limiting and essentializing to interpret the dual construction of masculinity as two separate, perhaps age differentiated, but nevertheless, equal male gender possibilities. Such an analysis does no more than equate gender with a set of attributes and fails to question why at this point in history, masculinity appears to be conceived as a duality. And it fails to consider how gender and our thoughts about it are bound up with our conceptualization of change at the individual and historical levels.

The question, finally, is not which is a better manifestation of gender, but how we might begin to imagine an alternative process of gender formation and expression? Is it possible to bring forth a totalized expression of masculinity that neither recreates the centered and solid nineteenth century folk hero or the twentieth century dualistic superhero?

When little boys buy Prince Adam to compliment their He-Man dolls, they are affirming the separate and dual construction of masculinity. But, even as they yearn for He-Man's muscles, they are also demonstrating an appreciation for all the boyish and nurturing traits Prince Adam embodies. Uncovering the utopian aspects of the young boy's fascination with Prince Adam begs a larger consideration: what about young girls? In a society dominated by mass culture and the commodity form is it possible to imagine a gendering process that boys and girls might experience reciprocally? Or are there only Barbies and He-Men - or worse yet: "boys and boys"?

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Cheech and Chong

• Utopianism in the Eighties •

Cheryl Herr

I first encountered the film productions of Richard "Cheech" Marin and Thomas Chong when I answered a morning radio show's trivia question — "What was George Orwell's real name?" — and won two tickets to a local theater that specialized in films like *Big Meat Eater, The Attack of the Killer Tomatoes,* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Pseudonyms and real names, dystopias of the future and of the past, the trivial and the meaningful, eccentricity as a barometer of mainstream culture — these are the themes that might easily be developed from the casual coalescence of social forces that produced my seeing, for the first time, *Cheech and Chong's Next Movie* (1980). When I'd returned from viewing *Next Movie,* however, I instead drafted twelve pages on what I called "The Utopian Vision of Cheech and Chong." The next morning, when I mentioned this effort to a medievalist colleague, she looked blankly at me and merely asked, "Why?" It has taken me some years to return to this essay, to try to answer that question in a way that provisionally satisfies me.

One of the events that occurred between my seeing that film and the writing of this present essay was the publication in 1981 of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious.* Reading nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction, Jameson concludes that all literary works project both a "master narrative" of class struggle and a "Utopian" impulse that makes literature a sustained "meditation on the nature of community." Many critics have responded to Jameson. Again and again in these responses the topic of utopianism arises, with its promise that literary criticism might justify at a level of praxis the increasingly suspect activity of being an intellectual and getting paid for it, a claim that becomes, in some circles, especially difficult to defend when one writes about popular culture.

On what grounds do I choose to compare Jameson with Cheech and Chong (CC)? First, both find their most potent insights in generic inquiry, Jameson of narrative forms and CC of widely varying cultural "events" such as talk shows, rock concerts, film festivals, drug busts, telethons, science fiction, and (in the very structure of their movies) the adventure story. These events are, of course, what Baudrillard calls "simulacra," the constructed "realities" of the drug world, the gay world, the world of television. Both turn up, through these inquiries, unexpected but powerful moments of at least temporarily fulfilled desire for dialogue, for recognition and response, for the plenitude of a full stomach, for community. Both, that is, attend to class struggle and to emancipatory pressures within generic ideologies.

A second point that compels comparison is the shared context that both Jameson and CC evoke. Jameson makes no secret of his own formative moment; his recent joint editing of and writing for *The Sixties Without Apology* (1984) speak directly to that issue. For their part, CC always evoke the Sixties in dress, language, attitudes, actions, and goals. Chong *embodies* the Sixties in his usual role as burned-out hippie: he'll try any drug ("don't tell me what it is, man, let it be a surprise"), and he has a kind of fearless optimism about deviant behavior.

Third, although their comedy routines punctuated the late sixties and seventies, CC films are, like Jameson's brand of marxist criticism, a phenomenon of the eighties. Now, this temporal gap has created in the media the recurrent strategy of "trashing" the sixties. And it is at this level, that of what Baudrillard calls "mediatization," that CC films address both the sixties and the eighties. Their films communicate, mostly through parody of media genres, the function of sixties rhetoric in today's "simulacral," late-capitalist media-machine. My point is that, from the nostalgic collision of decades, they create subtextual rhetorics that may best be read as utopian.

CC's dominant mode is unmalicious self-indulgence that leads to conflicts with authorities and with law-abiding citizens. In their conflicts, CC enact "sixties" symptoms; they relentlessly resist establishments by being only marginally aware of them. Social restrictions that produce uptight behavior in others fall before weed, tastelessness (conceived as a political instrument, I would argue), and a benign misconstruing of others' intentions. Consider the conflict in *Nice Dreams* (1981) between CC and their tidy, garden-conscious next-door neighbor. Like the Philadelphia neighborhood whose distress over the deterioration of the house occupied by MOVE led to the bomb-burning of sixty-three homes, CC's neighbor eventually winds up with his garden and home in ruins. The point here has nothing to do with the virtues or demerits of destroying bourgeois property — far from it. Instead, we become aware that even as CC foil our expectations of retribution from their assaults on commodities, so any attempt to enforce some abstract notion of an underlying, necessary social order renders itself pathetic in the face of unchartable and uncontrollable forces like commodification, reification, dehumanization, and mediatization. The conflict of ordinary decent folks versus hippies, which has been so often replayed on our TV screens, CC take to an illogical extension that mirrors the real. The illogic involves a kind of utopian resistance. Because along with their endless capacity to alienate those who respect the decencies of middle-class life, CC possess the ability to attract without effort upper-class comrades who join them to share in a pleasure which is more so for its being non-exclusivist.

Hence, in their recent (1984) historical excursion, a satiric remake of Dumas's "The Corsican Brothers," the twin brothers played by Cheech and Chong, cast out of aristocratic French life because they're illegitimate, escape the evil autocrat Fuckair as well as the guillotine and eventually scramble the class structure that has oppressed them. Strikingly, Fuckair is as intent on victimizing the legitimate Queen as he is the peasant masses; when the Corsican brothers produce a revolution, this materialistic middleman finds himself replaced by a utopian cross-class picnic at which the Queen is at last able to indulge in her favorite pastimes of feasting and gossiping. Partly taking their cues from Dumas, CC argue that upper and lower classes share common values, which can be expressed freely with the removal of bourgeois power-mongers. This theme finds itself replayed at the end of *Still Smokin'* (1983) when a Cheech and Chong comedy concert unites in humor the Netherlands' Queen Christiana and her people, after the symbolic narrative ferreting out of embezzling entrepreneurs.

In *The Corsican Brothers,* CC implicitly critique both contemporary class relations and the generic demands of Dumas's romantic narrative. Obviously, prescribed happy endings both do and do not take on persuasive utopian force; we may appreciate the energies of the Corsican twins while remaining ourselves unmoved to revolutionary activities. But Jameson compellingly sketches the way in which romance forms continue to emit ideological signals of mystery and reconciliation. Strikingly, Cheech and Chong are drawn repeatedly to stories that end "happily" and that emphasize the protagonists' abilities to produce harmony from social discord. Such provisional concords leave the larger powers less unmanned than temporarily disarmed, but the utopian elements in their filmic worlds remain active messages as they recode stereotypical situations to enable social fluidity.

More recently, perhaps in response to the considerable backlash against the sixties ethos, CC have become increasingly aggressive in their criticism of existing social relations. They entered the video genre with a parody of Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." Springsteen, erstwhile working-class hero, used the song
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hero, used the song as a keystone for his largest concert tour in 1985. When the inevitable documentary of that tour aired, it was clear that audiences had both identified with the tune and misconstrued its message. Deeply ironic, the song tells of a ghetto kid pulled from the frying pan of urban poverty into the fire of Vietnam combat. The refrain of "Born in the U.S.A." speaks to displacement and the horrors of war rather than to patriotic identification with an American "cause." And yet, the documentary showcases a wheelchair-bound Vietnam Vet who found the song a rallying cry ("we're all Americans") that helped to heal the divisive social wounds produced in Southeast Asia.

The 1985 CC remake, "Born in East L.A." (which was written jointly with Springsteen), shows both the slipperiness of their parodies and the fact that the underside of satire remains, even in the eighties, the desire for community actually voiced by Springsteen's audiences. Quite apart from the mythos of Rock-Concert-as-Utopia that enters into live performances from Woodstock to Farm Aid, the song, even in its appropriated form, fulfills rock's generic expectation (demands quite different from those of punk or pop) of joyful communality. But not before CC introduce a persistent theme in their work, the status of American ethnic groups. Cheech's story of deportation to a "foreign land" involves not Vietnam but Mexico. The Man who sent him there is not an agent of the draft board but of the immigration authorities. Starved, powerless, dispossessed, and hunted, Cheech does find his way back to the East L.A. celebrated in the song. He enters, like the other Hispanic persons portrayed in the video, through a manhole, and then leads a joyful crowd through the city's streets. Overtly, the categories of who does and does not belong become confused. Under the surface, however, the stereotype of an America of freedom, an America worth celebrating, remains vital. Oppression, it seems, is part of the mechanism by which community arises, at least in this upbeat version of the illegal alien issue. But it bears repeating that the turf is east L.A., and in Los Angeles, east and west mostly do not mix. Apart from the corner stores and barbershops, the hookers and gangs — the paraphernalia of urban "neighborhood" ethnic life — stands the shadow text of Hollywood, Rodeo Drive, and UCLA. The tropes of east and west L.A., of ethnicity and enfranchisement, point to the central conflicts that inform CC's productions. That is, ethnicity presents itself as an urgent issue not only because Marin is hispanic but also because he persists in charting the relations of power that in our culture ethnic prejudices help to air.

A theme related to ethnicity occurs in a daydream sequence from *Still Smokin'* called "Con Talk," a TV show hosted by an ex-convict, Sleepy Gonzales, with whom a notorious prisoner, Joe the Hole Cool, is to discuss gun control. In a twist on the old saw, the con argues that "Guns don't kill people, cops kill people." In fact, guns are the tools of his trade, he argues — right before accidentally shooting himself. What interests me here is the airing of the tangible group conflicts being routinely negotiated by generic or patterned media events. The films of Cheech and Chong respond similarly to other anxieties of cultural life by spoofing and satirizing the forces that create those conflicts. Not that the powers-that-be are in any way disconcerted by their withdrawal from competition and assertion of primacy through comic satire, but within their comedy, we can discern both a literary utopian agenda (comic resolution, class harmony) and an additional evocation of what, following Christine Buci-Glucksmann, I'd call a transgressive utopia.

By a transgressive utopia, I mean not a place, not even a remade social formation, but a process — enacted (hence at some level highly theatrical as well as potentially spontaneous) moments of self-definition and group-emancipation within a hegemonic structure. Again let me emphasize that it is the gap between the ruined sixties and the relentless eighties that constitutes a sense of history and of possibility for the viewer of CC movies. Within that gap, the characters portrayed by Richard Marin and Thomas Chong unpack the "blind zones" (to reappropriate a term used by Jameson) of sexuality, animality, exclusion, ethnicity, poverty, and self-indulgence. Delving into these zones, they locate cultural manholes, channels that allow access both to social supertexts that intend to oppress and to cultural undertexts that insistently shift the terms of programmed interaction. Their critique is a form of willful misunderstanding; they misconstrue others' enmity and their own putative malfeasance; they relocate the site of conflict by jumbling our sense of who the victims are and who has power. The essential act involved, of course, is shifting contexts, from conditioning society to differentiated society, from eighties to sixties. CC show us the extent to which, like the nineteenth-century texts faintly communicating utopian subtexts, their films emit sixties' signals within a contemporary format.

A similar assertion was made by Ernst Bloch, whose concept of the "not yet" assumes that events in the present contain messages about the ultimate destiny of human society, that within the desecrated everyday there are utopian, anticipatory messages. In contrast to the work of Marxist theorists like Althusser, who do not account for the possibility of historical change or of individual deviation from social conditioning, Bloch enjoins us to contemplate a dynamic utopia. Within that dynamism and the multiple possibilities for historical change that it implies, there are intimations of creative transgression, moments that gain in value when they are linked across time-gaps to solicit our attention to their shared assertions about the role of the individual in a community.

I am arguing that we can project an alternative utopianism of transgressive difference which, rather than fetishizing an idealized past or future, inheres in a process of critique, in recognizing and recontextualizing usable community-oriented moments from the past. These moments look toward a non-ideal but nonetheless utopianist future. Correlative to this theory is CC's comic agenda that, not content with a simple inversion of power, keeps flipping back on itself in endless ironic play. The point is not to "get there" but to keep alive, through whatever means are available (irony, parody, pastiche, instinctualism, tastelessness, inversion, reversion, and so on) a perception of utopianism-as-process and as-possibility.

Basing an argument partly on the unexpectedly parallel visions of such disparate figures as Fredric Jameson and Richard Marin, I conclude that at some level Bloch's theories about utopianism might be substantiated. It may be possible that within any phase of capitalist culture, representational activity like film and fiction projects, in low key or high, a utopian content, a hope for some form of classless society. In this era of post-everything, when even apocalyptic doom and attenuated survival have been endlessly previewed on TV, such content can be seen principally in a skeptical vein or simply ignored. Yet it remains, built into the formats of mainstream popular culture, where the desire for community is persistently either affirmed or ridiculed. In the case of CC, both responses occur, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes consecutively, but also insistently, for it was in the sixties to which CC constantly allude that the rhetoric of community, often in specifically Marxist terms, most recently sought renewal on a mass scale.

As Baudrillard reasonably argues in For a *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, the May 1968 general strike in France quickly fell victim to the numbing "mediatization" of its words.

"The conflict of ordinary decent folks versus hippies, which has been so often replayed on our TV screens, CC take to an illogical extension that mirrors the real. The illogic involves a kind of utopian resistance"

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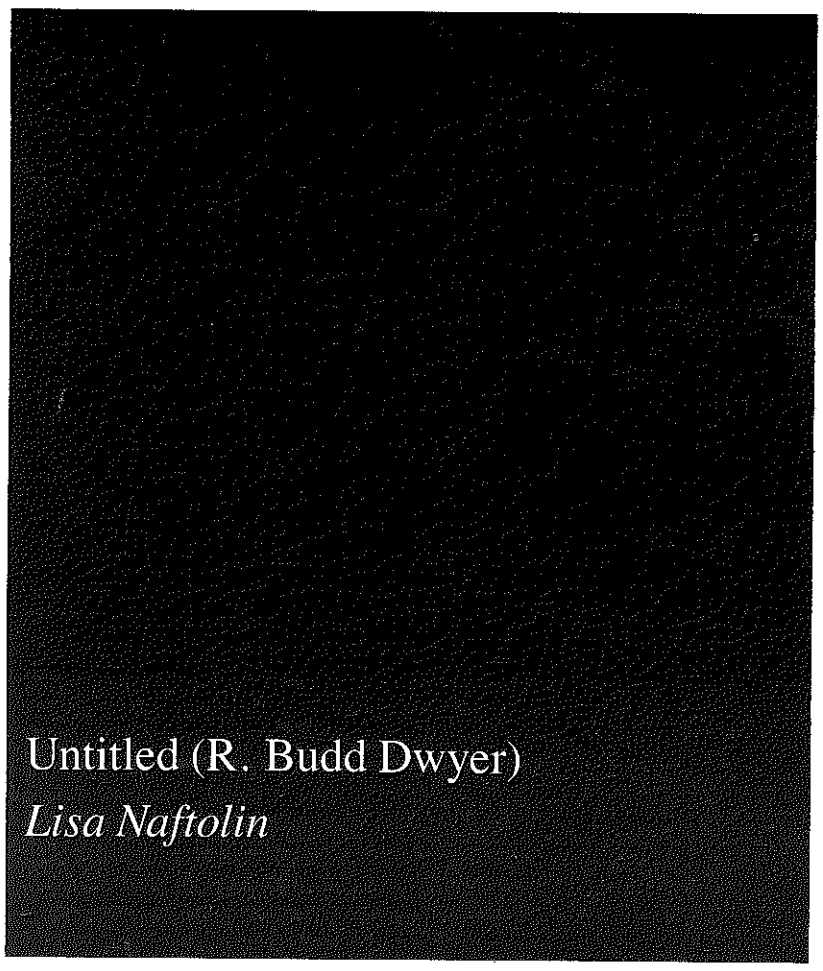
HEROINE
by Gail Scott
Coach House Press, 1987.
Toronto

"A remarkable oversight" is how Craig Owens prefaces his re-vision of a Laurie Anderson performance piece. The second glance in his essay "Postmodernism and Feminism" in Hal Foster's anthology *The Anti-Aesthetic* is prompted by Owens' belated recognition that the performance is an enactment of sexual difference. The most significant development in contemporary culture in nearly every field of activity during the past decade, he ultimately concludes, has been the emergence of a feminist practice with a corresponding energetic feminist production. This is grounded in a critique of the high modernist tenet of the autonomous nature of the aesthetic from the feminist understanding that all meaning is socially constructed. Theories of post-modernism, Owens continues his *mea culpa*, have neglected or repressed this production: "The absence of discussions of sexual difference in writings about post-modernism, as well as the fact that few women have engaged in the modernism/post-modernism debate, suggest that post-modernism may be another masculine invention engineered to exclude women."


Untitled (R. Budd Dwyer)
Lisa Naftolin

While this may be the case in American postmodernist debates, it is certainly not an accurate description of Canadian theorizing about post-modernism, where there has long been recognition of the validity of Owens' hypothesis that feminist insistence on non-hierarchical difference is an "instance of post-modern thought." Especially in Quebec feminists have played an important role in theorizing post-modernism through their intervention as editors of the prominent periodicals *La nouvelle barre du jour* and *Spirale* of which, respectively, Nicole Brossard and Gail Scott were founding co-editors. The feminist editor of *Island* and *Periodics*, Daphne Marlatt, fulfilled a similar, if less lauded, function in English Canadian writing. Feminism in these milieux has been seen as the salient feature of post-modernism through its deconstruction of binary oppositions and its critique of the master narratives of Western culture, indeed its critique of all narratives and all totalizing theories. The publication of new fictions by these leading feminists and postmodernist writers of francophone and anglophone Canada, *Le désert mauve* by Nicole Brossard, *Ana Historic* by Daphne Marlatt, and especially in this case, *Heroine* by Gail Scott, reminds us once again of the pertinency of this linking of these discourses of critique. The dialogue between anglophone and francophone feminists in Canada and Quebec has been the only point of contact between these two literatures. It has stimulated the most innovative writing of the last decade and with the impressive roster of young women whose first books are appearing on the appropriate small press lists this year, promises to do so for several more years.

Among the more active participants in this dialogue is Gail Scott, bilingual journalist and co-editor of *Tessera*, a bilingual journal of feminist theory and experimental writing. For a number of years she has participated in a theory discussion group along with other prominent feminist writers, Louky Bersianik, Nicole Brossard, Louise Cotnoir, Louise Dupré, Daphne Marlatt, France Théoret and Betsy Warland. Through their talks, theoretical articles and texts, this discussion has been shared with an audience stretching across the continent. These writers have already published texts announcing their resistance to the line, to any party line, but especially to the line of narrative. With its insistence on temporality as causality, so grammars of minimal narratives instruct us, narrative emplotment is entrapment. The narrative line catches readers making them accept as inevitable and hence as natural that which is constructed, fabular. With their focus on the endings of marriage or death, the plots of fictional narrative — especially the "heroine's plot," as Ellen Moers has called it, the marriage plot of the realist novel— are deadly traps for the independent feminist reader and writer. She must resist the line,

Brossard's writing, writing as research in her words, is a writing of resistance. In *L'amèr, où le chapitre effrité (These Our Mothers: Or the Disintegrating Chapter,* 1975, 1983), she developed a theory of sexual difference as relational difference, deconstructed the master fictions through which the reality of women's lives has been constructed, and disrupted the line. Chapters disintegrate as the text circles around five discrete moments: "Strategic wound or suspended meaning— combat." "Fiction begins suspended mobile between words and the body's likeness to this our devouring and devoured mother." In this suspension, the sentence is also disrupted, syntax abandoned. Brossard works on language deconstucting its gendered plot(ting) and opening multiple new meanings through her work on the material signifier. In *Spare Parts*(1981), Gail Scott focuses on short narrative sequences which are further broken up in resistance to the line when individual sentences or paragraphs fly off in new directions as in the surrealist *cadavre exquis*. Such syntactic and narrative dicontinuity is reinforced by an exploration of the fragmented female body. The excessive and detached parts are both grammatical and corporeal, the title of the collection foregrounding the ruling metaphor of this phase of feminist exploration of language and meaning.

In her new book, Scott extends her resistance in new directions particularly into the problematics of the referent in the creation of the "reality effect." She risks the line in exciting new ways. *Heroine* is the most important feminist fiction yet to emerge in English Canada and in its short life has already attracted enthusiastic audiences. (The first printing sold out almost immediately.) Part of the pleasure for the reader lies in the possibility for nostalgic reminiscence on the left wing political and intellectual scenes of the seventies which the narrator evokes in bits and pieces of exceptionally vivid detail while she negotiates a rite of passage, trying to make sense of her life and orient herself in a new direction. The narrative remains in suspense, however, between the rhythm of Marxist political action, legacy of the open love affair with a left wing leader where passion has died, and the shadowy promise of feminist sororality held out by a friend, Marie, who urges the narrator to participate in demonstrations in support of abortion. In suspension between them, the narrative questions Marxism's marginalization of the "woman question" and feminism's lack of a coherent theory to ground praxis.

Nostalgia is a trap, though. With the recall of the politics and café scenes of the seventies, the "reality effect" is strong and compels the reader's identifica-

tion. The referential power of images seems destined to overwhelm feminist critique as in the feminist films *Working Girls* by Lizzie Borden and *A Man in Love* by Diane Kourys where the images of love scenes reinscribe the dominant narrative of romantic love which the films set out to defamiliarize. Scott's novel runs the risk of the referent as well. However, oscillating between the interpellation of nostalgia and the distancing of disruption, the fiction keeps the reader on a seesaw.

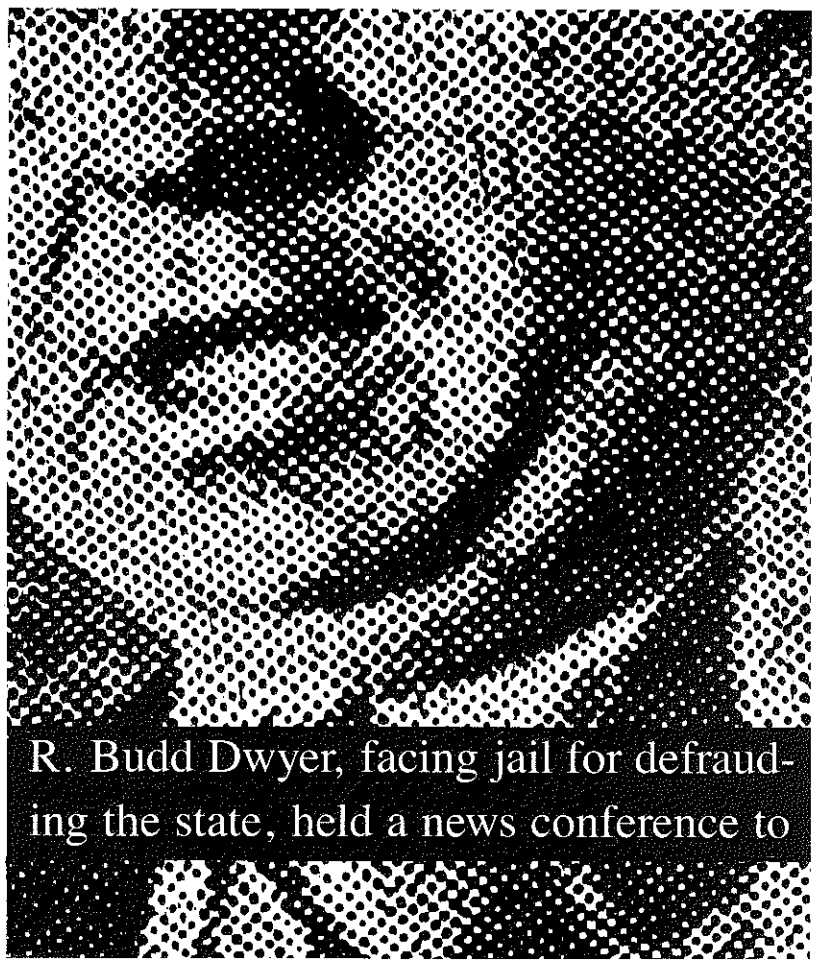
Memory is purely fictive, a word-being called "Sepia," with whom the narrator engages in monologue. The temptation to empathize with the character is further undermined by the narrative framing. The narrator is seated in a bath in a rooming house on the Main trying to plan out a novel, struggling with the difficulty of creating a positive heroine in a context where symbolically women do not exist. Through its meditation on the negative image of women — "she looks instinctively for her own reflection in a store window, But it's too dark to see clearly" — the fiction offers a critique of representation intertwined with a critique of patriarchal domination of the symbolic. The mimetic element in the novel is undercut by the processual hermeneutic of the narrator's self-reflexive discussion of her difficulties of writing, of the problem of gaining enough distance from her character. Maybe this would be easier if she got out of the bath she wonders.

But the "reality effect" is also undercut by a blurring of levels of narrative. The only dialogue the narrator has in the text is with her heroine in a confounding of fiction and reality on the level of the text; this foregrounds and defamiliarizes the tendency for the reader to enter into dialogue with the fictional narrator. This is further encouraged by the blatant overwriting evident in the intrusion of the autobiographical contract in a work of fiction: both the author of *Heroine* and the aspiring fictional writer in the bathtub are named Gail. This deconstruction of the fictional conventions might have been further emphasized with numbers as used for dramatic texts with such embeddings, Gail I and Gail II. The constructed and aleatory aspects of the narrative are also laid bare through two other narrative devices — the grey woman who inexplicably appears on the Montreal streets to both narrator and heroine, and the black tourist whose bird's eye view through the telescope on the top of Mount Royal is the opening scene of the novel. His progress through the city provides the frame for each chapter. This panoramic view presents the city in which desire is inscribed in every reflective surface, shop window or mirror-like wall; desire in which the narrator's future creates itself as she lies in her rooming house in the heart of the city. (In this aim to write woman into the city, into the polis, we hear echoes of the project of Brossard's *French Kiss*). But the black tourist has no story to tell, does not engage with the characters, remains an inexplicable figure undermining our attempts to effect closure and make sense of the narrative. Closure is resisted also in the parodic reworking of the heroine's plot which lays bare it's grammar: the heroine does not choose a marriage partner, but is chosen. Even more passive is the heroine of Scott's novel within a novel; she is the epitome of negativity. Needless to say *Heroine* is an ironic title.

Although the past is fictive and the future unrepresentable, the present of narration is lucid. Scott's prose is densely textured as a poem, indeed like a poem it echoes and rechoes, structured not around the temporal sequence of clauses but around repeated segments which allow the work to take shape in the mind's ear. This clashes with the emphasis on detailed visual imagery which creates the scintillating surfaces of the novel. Everything is illusion. In the same way the extraordinarily rich symbolic imagery clashes with negativity to create further paradoxes which disrupt linear logic. Scott's fiction also disrupts linguistic norms with its mixture of English and French. Such a novel, needless to say, does not end. The final selection entitled "Play It Again, S" invites us to think associatively through this collage. It breaks off after a list of sentences stating what she thinks or she does (183) in mid sentence with the word "She —."

To herald this as the most outstanding work of the year as one is tempted to is perhaps premature in light of the forthcoming works promised by several major avant garde woman writers. However, it will be hard for them to surpass the brilliance of Scott's writing in her critique of representation and of narrative.

Barbara Godard is the editor of ***Gynocritics/Critiques: Feminist Approaches to The Writing of Canadian and Quebec Women*** *(Toronto: ECW, 1987). She is also the translator of Nicole Brossard's* ***Lovhers****, Montréal : Guernica Press, 1986.*



THE MILTON-PARK AFFAIR
Claire Helman
Montreal. Vehicule Press.

The affair that Claire Helman recounts — the Milton-Park neighbourhood's 20 year battle to exist in Downtown Montreal — is more than just an affair of the heart. Using a descriptive narrative, the author highlights one developer's attempt to crawl into bed with the Sugar Daddy of Montreal, former Mayor Jean Drapeau. Ms. Helman begins with Concordia Estates' seduction of the seemingly willing civic administration vis a vis La Cité, a nightmare of rampant urbanization — 6 blocks of office towers, luxury hi-rise apartments, and endless strips of exclusive specialty shops. These concrete monoliths would not only increase tax revenues, but they of a possible 852 units. Plenty of hard work as well as all-important trilevel state support, transformed Milton-Park into Canada' s largest ever housing co-operative. To be honest, Ms. Helman chronicles for us a not-so-pretty reality. Her account intrigues as well as informs the reader about the effects that unchecked uses of power have upon quality of life in a neighbourhood like Milton-Park. The author, who perceives this urban setting to be a "safe, diversified, low-rental district with a pleasurable degree of interaction among residents, correctly emphasizes how any corrupt power base — whether it be developer or citizen — could and would dismantle the Milton-Park

community. Readers of Toronto citizen-developer confrontations written about in the early 1970' s by noted journalist and author Janice Dinneen, or activist, columnist and bureaucrat John Sewell, may be put off by Ms. Helman's style. In keeping with her position as Director of Audio Visuals for the National Film Board of Canada, the author seems more interested in presenting a spectacle than in outlining a basis

of traditional economic thinking standing in the way of social values. Economics is not the big obstacle; it is the way people think. People have to be made to realize that they can have an effect on their own environment.

Unfortunately, their move toward pressure group and task-oriented community action was too little, too late. By the early 1970' s the fire in this movement of students

Try to do and say only that which will be agreeable to others. In conversation, as in

for community activism. The on-again, off-again rhythms of her prose however, suggest both the themes of the Milton-Park Citizen's Committee (MPCC) in its various lives, and the "generational class split that plagued the whole Milton-Park movement". Initially and perhaps somewhat naively, the MPCC of the 1960' s expressed its "raison d' etre" in terms of the abstract concepts of structural conflict which immobilized the largely non-politicized majority of residents. While "on occasion the young idealists became anxious and uneasy about what they were doing and for whom," it wasn' t until the late 1960' s that the movement, frustrated by repeated failures at confronting class inequalities in and around the development issue, began to articulate a more radical perspective:

We have to overcome the problems

and professionals had all but gone out. Unhindered, Concordia Estates proceeded with phase One of La Cité , and 255 units were lost to the wrecking ball. From the ashes of the movement, however, an economic, political and social phoenix rose. Quebec' s poor economy, when combined with the fact that Concordia could not lever any capital from the public coffers of its civic lover (unlike the Olympics, La Cité was not a monument to Jean Drapeau), created a series of financial crises for the developer. At that time the pro-development *Montreal Star* unintentionally published a single, pivotal story about the struggle from the citizens' point of view. The article raised the question, "Can developers do what they want?" and introduced the idea of a Non-Profit Housing Co-operative — financially supported by the Quebec Housing Corporation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Section 56. of the National Housing Act) who bought the remaining property from the cash-poor Concordia Estates. Finally in 1976 a by-law, "backed by local merchants who could no longer afford the huge costs associated with high-rise construction," was passed by a pressured Montreal City Council. The by-law, which limited the height or bulk of new buildings to 4 storeys, prevented Concordia from completing La Cité with any capital it might access from private sources. With Concordia Estates out of the way, the focus of the book shifts to a handful of Milton-Park leaders entering into boardroom negotiations with those beauraucrats and decision makers who eventually underwrote the costs of the Milton-Park project. To this day, deals are being struck between representatives from senior levels of government and Milton-Park. Ms. Helman notes that the Milton-Park project, which officially opened in September 1983, is by no means problem free. Yet, she goes on to elaborate that the project itself helps us understand how even a semi-active community can serve as the means of bringing power back to the citizenry. Certainly this self-proclaimed urban historian gives us some useful history and a call to action comparable to struggles, past and present, in inner-city Toronto; however, it provides less of a basis for action than we might have hoped for. Reading Helman leaves us with the same uneasy feeling shared by concerned Torontonians during David Crombie' s vague but winning "Save Our Neighbourhood" mayoralty campaign in 1972. Then, as perhaps now, our uneasiness was well-founded. Shortly after the election, the "tiny, perfect" mayor and the majority of his prodeveloper Council used the "Save Our Neighbourhood" platform to accede to the Meridian Group of Companies' plan to add three more twenty-nine storey towers to the St. Jamestown development. This development for affluent singles had been erected on the site of a well-publicized battle between long-time residents and radical reformers on the one hand, and Meridian and City Hall on the other. Unlike the fairy tale conclusion to the Milton-Park struggle, the story of St. Jamestown ended in compromise. The neighbourhood retained twenty-five of their own houses in South St. Jamestown. The developer built eighteen apartment towers in St. Jamestown, which made this one-tenth of one square kilometre area the most densely populated block in Canada. Fifteen years later (thanks to a Toronto City Council who supported the wholesale destruction of entire neighbourhoods), more than 11, 000 people are forced to live like rats in a rapidly deteriorating and downwardly mobile St. Jamestown. Toronto City Council's neglect of the plan for a just and humane city is similar to the neglect Ms. Helman seems to project for the Montreal of tomorrow. She avoids a discussion of future implications for affordable housing in Montreal, and overlooks the necessity of expanding the city' s non-profit housing sector. In addition, she completely locks out any mention of the urgent demand for Montreal' s citizens' movements to question who benefits from the ownership of property. By so doing, Ms. Helman fails as an urban historian for us. And, she may well end up falling into bed with those women and men who don't give a damn. Whether it be Montreal or Toronto, a city must be planned, and any affair, illicit or other-wise, must be exposed and analysed in order to address the future needs and rights of the majority of the non-owning public who find themselves city bound.

A community activist since, 1979, ***Larry Morris*** *has worked with the First United Church in Vancouver, and is presently of the Open Door Centre and Rooms Registry Service in downtown Toronto. He is currently working on a book which focusses on issues underlying homelessness.*

THE SOLITARY OUTLAW
Bruce Powe,
Lester & Orpen Dennys,
Toronto, 1987.

Bruce Powe's *The Solitary Outlaw* demonstrates two things clearly: that alarms over the state of literacy are generally poorly conceived, and that the influence of McLuhan is occasionally pernicious. McLuhan's "message" (really) was that a literate man in a post-literate world has found

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himself suddenly outside the realm. His supersession by electronic media, Powe maintains, has led to a dangerous drop in cultural level and endangerment, even, of individual human identity. Powe's remedy asks that the writer exploit his new position as an "outlaw" to the age, threatening, probing, puncturing sleep, a solitary individual at once irritating and attractive, capable of bringing "the crowd" into momentary reflection.

What this means is a bit clearer when we look back at Powe's first book, *A Climate Charged* (Mosaic Press, 1984), a collection of provocative essays on major Canadian writers, the literary-political environment of the last quarter-century in which their work largely appeared, and the role of government, the C.B.C., and the universities in the production of literary reputation. The book is framed by a heroic opposition between two writing styles, the one represented by Marshall McLuhan (as hero) and the other by Northrop Frye. Far better the contradictions and excesses of McLuhan, Powe says, inviting controversy and audience involvement, than the self-contained "theoretical packages" and "Themes" of Frye. Frye is too "slow, logical and professorial"; whereas McLuhan, the better-tempered critic, is "urgent, sharp, and immediate," right for the times.

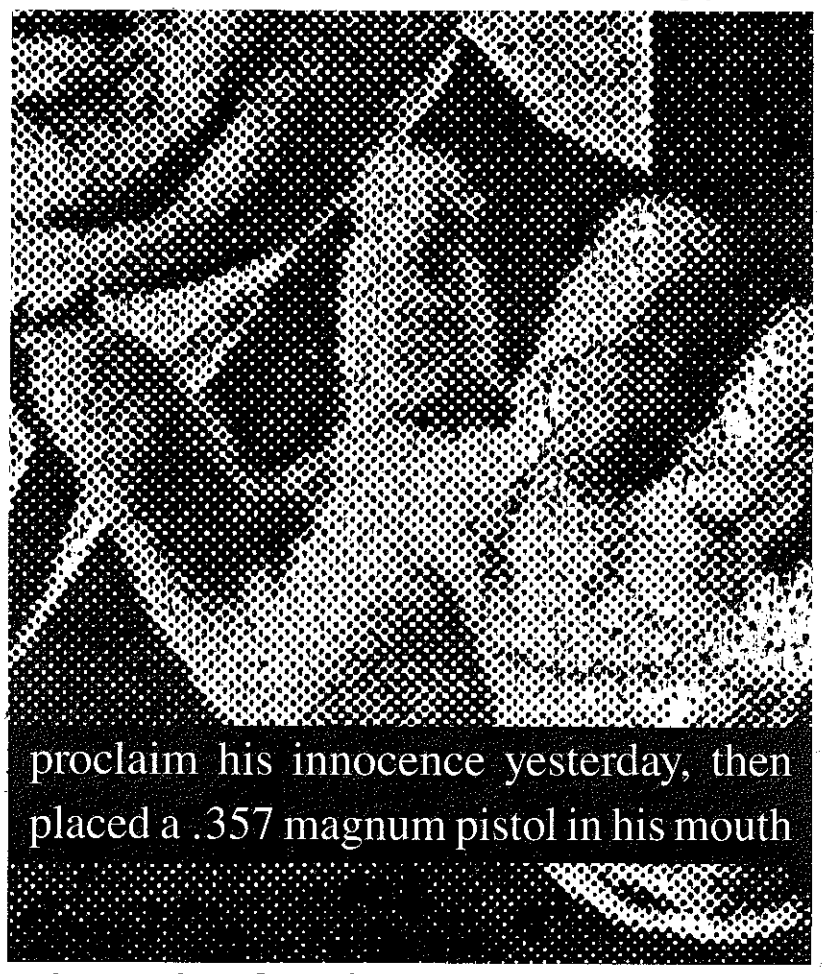
The dichotomy is carried to quite personal extremes. Where McLuhan is eulogized in an introductory essay that reads like the *Phaedo*, Plato's tender account of the last days of Socrates, poor Frye is rendered from behind a bush. Powe on Frye going home after class:

> *Thus we see him after class, ambling along Avenue Road, briefcase in hand, disappearing into his obscure inward reveries, his mind enclosed in archetypes, the timeless, the mythical. He shyly avoids the stares and stuttered "hellos" of students and vanishes into his office with his typewriter and books, leaving behind on chalkboards various diagrams and grids, a system of concepts and categories, a world without moral judgement, himself perhaps a construct now, a fiction, hardly existing, Northrop Frye, a catalyst for vast impersonal schemes that exist a priori, like one of Jorge Luis Borges' creations, a man who dreamed himself out of reality, away from the sordid streets and hideous suburbs, in his inaccessible den, with Apollo, and the other great gods of dreamland.*

With much less pretty flourish, this sort of abuse is repeated in the new book; bad manners evidently form part of the new writer's etiquette.

Of Powe's motley group of knights exemplar, none demonstrate his point about the special efficacy of the new bandit style. Wyndham Lewis, the original "solitary outlaw," was not read even in his own day. Pierre Trudeau and Glenn Gould, provocative and elusive individualists, highly literate, nonetheless had their effect not as writers but as performers in the electronic media. While Powe borrows from Elias Canetti only an image, the burning of library books, deploying it as the romantic backlight for his many "live" locations: a London flat, a Montreal restaurant, Keith Davey's livingroom, a nightclub somewhere else.

What Powe's outlaw band have in common (apart from the fact that McLuhan hand picked them all) is a certain adept blend of the personal and the intellectual, whether as writer or media personality: not any blend of this, but one which combines elements of gesture, confrontation, brooding, and puckishness as the modus operandi for communicating issues of moment to modern man. Powe's own performance in this style is enlightening. He broods, certainly; he makes notes to himself (by parentheses, mostly); he declares, he stops abruptly at a word or phrase, copies out lists; he makes a sentence of a word or phrase; he dialogues, he meanders, he turns over "broken bits"; he muses; he takes us to see the sites (sic), analyzes, satirizes; he experiments, he puns (terribly), he mimics Vico (terribly), and above all, he warns. He observes that no single writer in Canada has availed himself of the "exciting promise for contemporary writing" of the malleability of prose. Perhaps; but if Powe's own prose is an example of this malleability, we must look forward to the return — with a vengeance — of the personal letter, which is what this style resembles. That the essay form, with its power to present arguments, should ever be replaced by a public personal letter, in whose malleability I read 'lack of discipline', strikes me as
a) untrue, and
b) exceedingly odd.
It is a symptom of the strain of sympathy for this kind of anti-intellectualism that Powe's book has been again well-received. I leave the *Globe and Mail* and



Books in Canada to reflect on this. But for this reason Powe's assumptions are worth glancing at. His project founders, in my view, because he uncritically accepts the idea that literacy is somehow in crisis (as though the electric environment could only be inimical to it) and because he takes the whole of McLuhan more or less at face value, something no one else could ever do.

McLuhan's value is well-acknowledged. He made popular the idea that human culture was dependent in invisible ways upon its technologies and that it was generally good practice to try to see ourselves better by making these dependencies visible. It could not be too late in 1964, he wrote, to sort out the effects of print, first introduced into England in 1476. But of course he was also spelling out the new effects of the new mass media and generally raising everyone's consciousness of them. Coping with the novelty of this sensible approach was part of the difficulty of coping with McLuhan, to say nothing of the dazzle of his insights, the strong, forward drive of his rapid prose, the sudden turns and dips in his kandy-kolored road, and the many bizarre views. He was an intellectual well-suited to the psychedelic sixties.

McLuhan's problems with his critics may be put down to two overriding tendencies: the one to make great, sweeping generalizations, and the other to argue by metaphor. McLuhan was never forthcoming with the complex detail that makes a generalization supportable. What he appeared to rely on was his sheer intuition and his power to make arresting claims. Similarly with his metaphors.

To give one example: McLuhan (following Innis) argues that the invention of the phonetic alphabet, in conjunction with the use of papyrus (as opposed to brick and stone), transferred political power from the priests to the military. The alphabet was easily learned, i.e. not so easily monopolized by a priestly class,

and papyrus was transportable, so that commands over distance became administratively practical: hence ancient empires. He illustrates this development in terms of the myth concerning Cadmus, a semi-historical king said to have "introduced the phonetic letters into Greece." It was Cadmus who sowed the dragon's teeth that sprang up as armed men. McLuhan observes (suddenly) that the teeth and the phonetic letters are one and the same. And as teeth are for grasping and devouring, he continues, so letters are for building empires. Teeth also have a lineal visual effect. And so on.

One wonders:
Does this apply to the 500-year Hittite empire of the 2nd millennium BC, or th Akkadian empire of the 3rd BC?

"I don't explain," McLuhan said, "I explore."

What clearly McLuhan's sense of literacy was, besides the mere existence and use of letters, we don't know. An image arises of a man fond of books, with a ready facility for quoting Shakespeare. Such nostalgia forms the operating bias in Powe's book. No discussion of the concept of literacy anywhere appears.

The term 'literacy' has various senses. For Cicero, a 'litteratus' is a rhetorician, someone with a flair for the right word. In the modern sense, the literate person is first of all someone who can read and write; and secondly, perhaps, someone who has achieved through language some degree of lucidity. By lucidity I mean a certain awareness of the power of language, as language, to symbolize and measure out the world, whether in literature, folktale, philosophy, or conversation. This second sense, which advances us beyond the mechanical power over the word to a more general power over the body of words, is closer to Cicero's original sense, which locates literacy in the context of rhetorical speech. It is this locus in the speech base which suggests (to me) what should perhaps be literacy's fundamental sense: the power, broadly, to employ language to good effect, to communicate more or less well. Homer, whether or not he could read or write, was certainly not illiterate.

The emphasis on orality restores to literacy a primary sense, and permits us, incidentally, to return to oral cultures, past and present, a basic human respect. Perhaps we can say that all human cultures are oral. On this view, reading and writing are secondary enhancements of oral literate skill, printing a further development (in the way of a mass medium), and the communications media of the 20th century greater enhancements still (in the way of more mass media). In other words, there is no pre-literate or post-literate, only greater and greater resources for the communication of the "right word." What makes people think that literacy is in danger in the 20th century is that the "word" has become so active; it is not, for the moment, easily circumscribed.

With regard to the *perception* of literacy, television, by establishing in the home a form of ongoing public world, has had two important effects. It has first of all made popular culture so very visible, and in its own way coherent, that it has acquired the power of a public norm. In this atmosphere, it is not hard to think that books and their authors are being shunted to the side — an optical illusion, I think. But, along with the other oral media, television has, secondly, brought us a public language which has evolved for itself an oral standard. While hardly equivalent to prose, this oral standard has had the effect — good, I think — of informalizing all communication, including written. The majority of good writers seem to have adjusted their "sets" to an idea of the reader as "tuned in" to this standard. This does not mean that writers write less intelligently or that they write conversation, as Powe does partly; but it does mean that in the making of their prose they draw on the oral public language as an expressive resource.

A notable casualty of this development is formal propriety in written English expression, often seen as deterioration or loss of grammatical standard. This is wrong, as linguists keep trying to impress upon secondary school teachers. Powe's idealization of the 18th century as a golden period of expression is purely pastoral. Even at the mechanical level, the world becomes more literate. If there are nearly a billion illiterate today, it is also true — as UNESCO reports — that the illiteracy rate has dropped from about half the world's population in 1950 to a quarter in the present day. People adjust.

Literacy in one form or another belongs to every distinct community. Its relation to that given community's sense of itself is clear whenever we see two literacies competing. An interesting example today is the fundamentalist criticism of secular humanism in the schools; according to the former, teaching the child to have a "positive self-concept" prevents the child from "coming to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin." This example makes clear that if human identity is somehow dependent on literacy, we must look to literacy itself as the greater danger (a point opposite to Powe's). McLuhan noticed that the acquisition of lettered skills tended to separate an individual from his home community. We have a resonance of this when a country neighbour complains that a local son has gone off to university and got himself "ideas."

From the "culture" which the sophisticated literacy of today is producing, we do derive a secondary kind of identity. The more primary kind of identity, rooted in localized community and in an individual's emotional life, goes begging meanwhile. The challenge this presents to the world society we are becoming lies in how we find opportunities to re-form communities stable enough to allow our emotions, still tribal, to be authentically and fully communicated to our fellows. The problem is complex, and well beyond the grasp of the quixotic masked man, who cut a figure and demonstrated his proficiency in letters, shows us nothing more than a flamboyantly slashed, bare "Z."

The widening perspectives associated with greater literacy, the mathematization of sense and humanity, have tended to make personalities abstract,and perhaps overly contemplative. A heresy from our point of view, but it does seem clear that "personal" satisfactions have had to retire somewhat from the central arenas of human activity, to positions eccentric to the edifices of knowledge. Surely, this is where Powe's alarm really belongs: to the pressure on "individuals" to become servants of our knowledge, integers of meaning in an all-repeat pattern of universal culture. We must hide our boasts, unlike the barbarian saga kings, who we recognize now, bemused only in the television wrestling ring.

most things, the popular "middle ground" is best. Certain subjects, even though

REVIEWS

The above article is
(with additions) fro
(November, 1987). I
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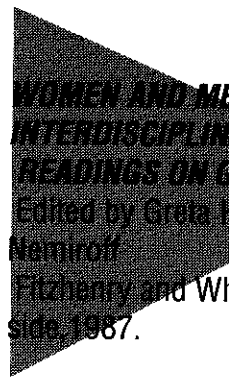
Journalism Award i
view category.

***Roger Langen** is in
PhD. program at Yo*



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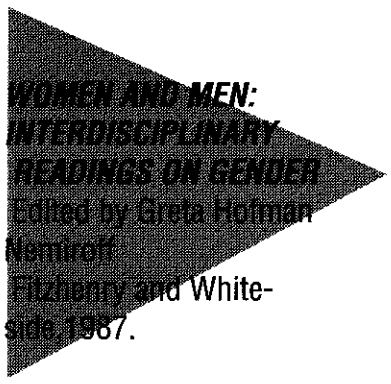
The above article is re-printed (with additions) from COMPASS (November, 1987). It has recently been submitted for a National Journalism Award in the bookreview category.

***Roger Langen** is in the English PhD. program at York University.*



This is a big book. My decision to prepare a review was based more on duty than desire. It looked like a life's work, and, generally speaking anthologies, especially those intended for the compulsory markets of undergraduates, are not my favourite read.

I should not have been surprised that it turned out to be a very good book. The editor, Greta Hofman Nemiroff, is a formidable Montreal feminist and teacher. Persuading, cajoling and threatening thirty authors to submit manuscripts — interesting manuscripts covering a wide range of theoretical, methodological and substantive ground — might well have left her undaunted. Way back in the early 1970's Nemiroff co-taught the first Women's Studies course in Montreal with her close friend (and contributor to this volume) Christine Garside Allen, now Sister Prudence Allen of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. For several years the students hung from the rafters in their course, and together the two feminist scholars mobilized colleagues, staff and students to found Concordia University's Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

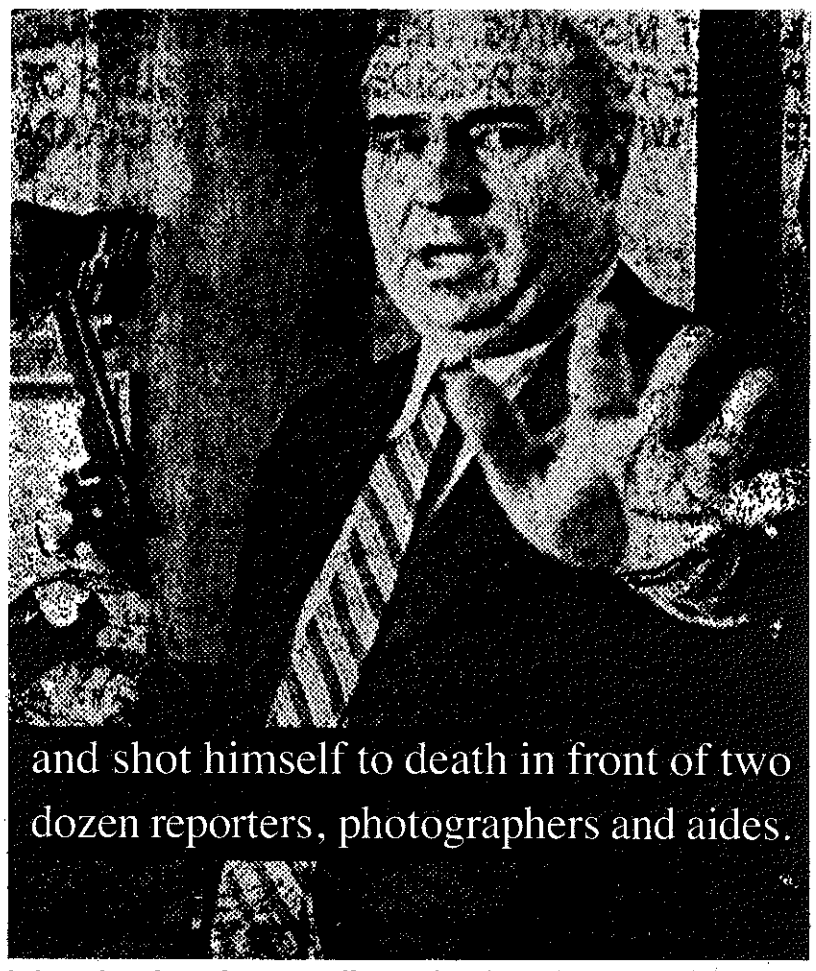
Then came the dark days of the counterrevolution. Hours after Allen went on sabbatical in August 1979 Nemiroff, who was director of the New School at Dawson College, was informed that her services would not be required at Concordia that September. Nemiroff was too energetic, too political, too charismatic and most especially too committed to student centred teaching for many of those in the new institute she had been so instrumental in founding.

The entire episode raised, and many said answered, the question: to what extent will a university incorporate oppositional practices and perspectives? In this case, the university was prepared to tolerate plummeting enrollments in the women's studies course to save it from radicals and democrats. Students protested; so did some colleagues, and Nemiroff was indefatigable in struggle, stoic in defeat. And why not? As she puts it in the last chapter of *Women and Men*, "We are living in a mass revolution which has been especially active for over a hundred and thirty years. When we remember this, we will not lose hope or patience."

Through this book Nemiroff has found another way to reach students with her tough-minded but eclectic feminist scholarship and politics. The book's unadventurous title belies its contents, for here, in one article after another, students are introduced to the wide wide world of feminist critique. And the overall message conveys Nemiroff's view that the feminist struggle takes place everywhere, that it is a struggle between the powerful and the powerless, and that it is a *process*. The ultimate goal is successful revolution, but the only serious question is, which side are you on?

More than half of the articles in the collection are reprints, but most of them appeared in small journals with limited readership. Pat and Hugh Armstrong's "Beyond Numbers: Problems with Quantitative Data" moves beyond the now standard critique of sexist bias in data gathering and selection towards an exploration of the limitations of number-crunching for capturing the dialectics of history, daily life and oppression. Margrit Eichler's creative use of Kuhn's work on paradigms in scientific work is useful for new students and veterans alike. That her article ends with a question: how is it that work done within a sexist paradigm (eg. Kuhn's) can be useful for feminist social science? is a wonderful antidote for students who expect their books or their teachers to have "the answers." It is a question, moreover, that has preoccupied a whole generation of socialist feminists, unwilling to discard marxism, and a growing number of feminists who are now raking over the works of Freud for insights into the perpetuation of patriarchal society.

Cerise Morris, on the other hand, in "Against Determinism: The Case for Women's Liberation" (written for this text), argues that feminists must discard both Marx and Freud. As a psychotherapist, Morris is properly interested in



helping her clients become willing and able to make conscious choices, to abandon the protection racket that keeps us in our place. But her commitment to phenomenology leaves her with no analysis of the subtle interplay between structure and agency that, in my view, has been the hallmark of not only the best of feminist scholarship, but also the leitmotif of the no longer new social historians.

Absent from the text is the work of the feminist historians. Only in Pat Armstrong's excellent synthesis of her own work, "Women's Work, Women's Wages" would students derive any historical sensibilities. Nor is the challenging work in feminist jurisprudence represented. There are accounts of feminist encounters with the state, notably in Chaviva Hosek's account of the taking of 28, women's struggle for the equality provisions in the Canadian Constitution, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg's descriptions of the women's peace movement. There is also an innovative article by Jill McCalla Vickers on the patriarchal roots of nationalism. Drawing on the work of Mary O'Brien and others she provides a devastating critique of the current stock of theories on nationalism in which she uncovers the centrality of control of reproduction, and, therefore, of women and their sexuality to national and state interests.

In her concluding chapter Nemiroff also provides an account of the taking of 28 which differs sharply from Hosek's account. But she does not explicitly draw attention to the difference, and, herein lies a major fault with this anthology which it shares with so many others. For it should be the editor's role to bring the contributors into dialogue with each other, pointing out what they share, and where they differ. This work is left to the reader, and because this is really an introductory text, this is problematic. Students are not initially in a position to recognize different sets of assumptions, let alone to judge between them. If there is a second edition Nemiroff should consider being more of an editor, both in this way, in

providing an overall bibliography, in standardizing format, and in insisting some authors update their material. Esther Greenglass's, "A Social-Psychological View of Marriage for Women" uses statistics that end in 1979. Given students' penchant for believing that relations between the sexes have turned around in the last ten years, and that their feminist teachers belong in a class with Mrs. Grundy for forecasting doom

you are sure of the ground upon which you are standing, had best be shunned.

REVIEWS

and penalties, they will assume that 1979 represents medieval history, and that the analysis, therefore, has only arcane value. There are some very interesting articles by men in this volume which help answer the question that Ann Hall raises in her excellent article, "Knowledge and Gender: Epistemological Questions in the Social Analysis of Sport": can male researchers (some of them convincingly feminist) comprehend and interpret women's experience? As Hall points out, a feminist epistemology is grounded in the assumption, that one can see "more" from the bottom looking up, an assumption shared by marxists. A most engaging article by Stan Grey on integrating women on the shop floor in a factory in Hamilton provides evidence that the privileged can *choose* to see the world from the perspective of the unprivileged. Those with a memory for Montreal history will remember that Grey was a leading figure in the McGill Francaise movement in the late sixties. Perhaps the women on the shop floor at Westinghouse were the beneficiaries of skills honed in earlier struggles of the oppressed.

There is a distinctly personal aspect to the accounts of the male authors, and unlike so many of their sex who have chosen to see "liberation is for everyone" they begin from the point-view that men are privileged, that they are privileged because they are men, and that they must work towards divesting themselves of that privilege.

That the personal is political is explored by many of the authors, but in a most original way by Nemiroff, Judith Crawley and Arlene Stalker in "Art and Daily Life." This is a wonderful weaving together of their lives as women, mothers and daughters with their artistic production, visual and literary. Crawley's photographs, though strangely unacknowledged, appear throughout the book, not just in this article, and they are wonderfully evocative.

If there is one aspect of our society that students are most reluctant to criticize it is the ideology and practice of romantic love. Kathryn Morgan's article extends de Beauvoir's existential critique of romantic love onto broader theoretical terrain, and also finds that it obstructs personal growth and the taking of responsibility. Like the other articles in this book it leads students, not always gently, towards a critique of patriarchal society.

In its conventional form — a big fat anthology with a nice glossy photograph on the cover — this book is deceptive. For between its covers is the counter-hegemonic ideology of feminism, in all its rich diversity. Such ideologies, as Gramsci pointed out, and as Mary O'Brien has recently reminded us, are fundamental to the struggles to transform society. In Nemiroff's words, "not only must ideology precede action and inform it with both consistency and meaning, but it is only through the discipline of a shared ideological base that the 'powerless' may become empowered to assume rightful control over their own lives." (P. 531).

Roberta Hamilton *is the coordinator of Women's Studies, Queen's University, and author of* The Liberation of Women *(London: Allen and Unwin, 1978).*

CAMBODIA: A BOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO FIND TELEVISION TOO SLOW
Brian Fawcett
(Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1986) pp. 207.

"My metaphor is either the Global Village or the Trojan Horse, I am trying to see one through the other." This may be one of the more telling quotes from Brian Fawcett's new book *Cambodia,* which, as the subtitle implies, is not meant for the idle postliterate reader accustomed to the essentially slow speed at which one receives information from television.

Cambodia is not conventional fiction as there is no plot or sustained dialogue. What there is, is a series of "investigative fictions" which, among other things, probe discomforting truths about life in the Global Village. The history of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge reign of terror is the physical subtext for these stories, which runs throughout the book on the bottom third of every page. Against the subtext of Cambodia, Fawcett counterposes thirteen satirical chapters that explore modern life under the impact of the mass media. So there are, in this rather unusually organized book that purports to make its subtext visible and palpable, a number of overlapping narratives. The reader ricochets between the Global Village, a wasteland of tawdry diversions in which fleeting impressions are mistaken for information, and the Khmer Rouge, who aspired to build socialism in Cambodia from the rice roots upward only to create murderous lunacy in its stead.

Engaging the reader with a two-tiered text is admittedly dicey, but Brian Fawcett is a forceful writer who shapes his material with skill, humour, considerable bravado and some fine investigative work. His essay on the Khmer Rouge and Cambodia is arguably one of the better detailed summaries of that debacle. Fawcett's analysis may lack the authority of those Khmer scholars like Michael Vickery and Ben Kierman, but it is more pertinent and imaginative. The literary imagination often fails when it confronts evil so grotesque and senseless. Fawcett, however, never loses his ability to rouse the reader. The strength and beauty of this book lies in Fawcett's ability to create a troubling juxtaposition between the attempts of the Khmer Rouge to tribalize Cambodia and the tribalizing tendencies of the Global Village. Fawcett, who consciously echoes the sentiments of Joseph Conrad, argues that what went on in Cambodia involved the release of a tribal violence of the type that occurred in the Congo nearly a century ago. Between 1890 and 1910 the Belgian administration in the Congo allowed colossal tribal brutalities to take place in order to suppress rebellious natives who were interfering with the expansion of rubber plantations. When it was over, 15 to 40 million Africans had died either by massacre or starvation: a conservative figure puts the slaughter at 25 million. In Cambodia, a group of petty bourgeois intellectuals (Pol Pot, one of the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, had studied radio journalism in France) in a country

devastated by U.S. bombs and American and Vietcong intruders tried to install a primitive version of war communism by mobilizing a politically illiterate peasantry. Within three years of the Khmer Rouge takeover, as many as two million people had died either by execution, torture or exhaustion. Both of these nightmares involved the release of tribal violence. Each country in turn became places without any vision of either future destiny or the horrors of history.

By analogy Fawcett shows that in the Global Village memory is also obliterated. Knowledge about both the Congo and Cambodia has somehow disappeared from public consciousness. It may surface parenthetically when one reads Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, or when watching a movie like *The Killing Fields*, but only to recede all the more quickly as we go about our daily life. That Cambodia, the Congo, Armenia, Auschwitz, and numerous other modern day genocides can be effectively erased from the minds of a large portion of the well-fed and comparatively educated population of the First World seems preposterous, especially since the people who live in this relative comfort zone insist on claiming that the basis of their society and culture has now become information.

Yet the kind of information that is fed to us by the electronic media, says Fawcett, bears a striking resemblance to the historical amnesia enforced by the Khmer Rouge. After having taken the capital Phenom Phen, the Khmer Rouge evacuated a large part of its urban population into the countryside and to certain death. It then proceeded to whitewash every single sign in the city: "traffic signs, advertising, street signs, identity markers of all kinds." These transmitters of non-information were mediums without messages which pointed to the destruction of urban civilization. The analogue of the medium without the message, argues Fawcett, is found in the profusion of information spewed by the electronic media, for here we have signs that contribute to a different kind of mind-numbing darkness. Under the barrage of instant electronic stimuli, the denizens of the Global Village retreat towards constantly expanding areas of forgetfulness as their direct ability to understand the world around them is replaced by ersatz experience.

Fawcett's satirical chapters are designed to show how the white noise of the Global Village is drowning out the last solitary shreds of public discourse. Each chapter is a vignette, the focus of which is a different aspect of the process of rationalization which, as the chapter on "Malcom Lowry and the Trojan Horse" makes clear, becomes the other major metaphor of the book. The Trojan Horse was the product of duplicitous thinking that prefigures on the one hand the technological domination of nature, and on the other political control through the manipulation of abstractions and the sophistry of images. With the Trojan Horse, one may say, we have the beginning of Western rationality, and with the Global Village we have its triumph: an artificial world of images that constrains the will and confounds the sense of reality.

Some of these chapters are wildly funny. "The Entrepreneur of God," for instance, tells of Marshall McLuhan meeting St. Paul on the road to Damascus and convincing him to use the new medium of Christianity as a form of franchise capitalism. In "The Kerrisdale Mission for Destitute Professionals," Fawcett, who is also an urban planner, envisions a Bentham-like scheme for the management of out-of-work professionals. In the end the mission turns out to be a comfortable Panopticon in which professionals happily live out their unemployment (and presumably their lives) with the company of satellite dishes and their personal computers. Throughout these "investigative fictions" one is constantly deciphering the connections between text and subtext. The contrast between the two can often be stark. Nowhere is this more obvious than with "Universal Chicken," where a comparison emerges between a fast food franchise — the "homogenized, blenderized, humiliation of materiality" — and the carefully processed bureaucratic horror of the Khmer Rouge. Finally, "Fat Family Goes to the World's Fair" offers another disturbing contrast between individuals, like Howard, who are mindful of Cambodia and still remember a world before it was reduced to the facetious insignificance of the spectacle, and those, like the members of the Fat Family, who are effortlessly integrated into the distractions of the Global Village. Howard commits suicide.

In our own tribalized world, says Fawcett, civilization and memory have been marked for execution, and subjectivity, uniqueness and identity have little hope of survival. What this also tells us is that the proponents of the Global Village failed to recognize the link between mass destruction and tribalization: "that every outbreak of genocide in this century has coincided with the propagandizing of tribal consciousness. Nazi Germany was one, Pol Pot another." Yet there is something flamboyantly wrong with this kind of argument. What went on in Nazi Germany or Pol Pot's Cambodia cannot be easily explained by the large metaphor, "tribalization of consciousness." The idea of seeing civilization as a thin veneer of protection against the atavistic roots of life owes a lot to Conrad as well as Freud, who makes the primal family the source of unspeakable violence, while civilization with its emphasis on control and self-understanding moves us away from the miasma of barbarism. This view of the world highlights the recurrent possibility of disintegration and hence is fundamentally apocalyptic. It also sets a false dichotomy between civilization and barbarism. Such dramatic oppositions, while perfect for fiction, makes for bad history and for bad sociology.

Fawcett counts himself lucky that he is a Canadian colonial, "perhaps the only kind left." He still remembers and can maintain an imaginative relation to the Imperium: "the libraries, museums and galleries of London, New York, Paris — the repositories of Western Civilization's attempts to achieve self-understanding." These too sound like the memories of a sainted past. Indeed, Fawcett treads on very thin ice when he, somewhat self-indulgently, uses the notion of the marginal "colonial" in order to find kinship with the writers of what he calls "the interzone": V.S Naipaul and Joseph Conrad, to name two. Since all of these writers were or are marginal to the society about which they write, marginality becomes a kind of intellectual high-ground that permits writers to make sense of the disjunction they feel between experience and understanding.

But once again we should be careful of these kind of blanket statements. Marginality is a convenient concept precisely because it is remarkably vague. It can be all things to all people. For some, and Fawcett falls in this camp, marginality is a zone of skepticism and detached objectivity; for others, it is a sanctuary that shelters inaction and voyeurism; for others still, it is a source of frustration and vengance that creates psychopaths like Hitler or Pol Pot. To be in the interzone, or to take on that posture, does not in any way give one a critical stance. Such a stance probably has more to do with the actions one takes rather than the place in which one stands *vís -à -vís* the power structures.

But Fawcett can certainly be granted this little indulgence, and even his large metaphors, for he has written an outstanding book. His idiosyncratic fiction is still undergoing development, and one certainly hopes that he will continue on the singular path his fiction has taken him. Whatever shortcomings this book may have, in terms of vision and sheer imagination it easily surpasses the predictable conventions of Can Lit. Without a doubt, this book is a necessity for anyone who cares about the state of contemporary culture.

Joe Galbo *teaches at York University and is a member of the Border/Lines collective.*

A listing of academic, political and cultural events, compiled by DL Simmons. This section aims to bring together the various events, particularly in Canada, which are not generally publicized. Information to be published in future quarterly issues of Border/Lines should be sent to us care of :

Scanner, 31 Madison Ave., Toronto, Ontario M5R 252.

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS

CERAMICS: WAYNE HIGBY AND JERRY ROTHMAN

Peterborough, ONT., 27-29 May. A weekend of lectures and demonstrations presented by Fusion: The Ontario Clay and Glass Association. These two well-known ceramists will demonstrate techniques and discuss their philosophies. Also, Fusion's annual general meeting and banquet, panel discussion on jurying, plus informal events. Info: Fusion, 140 Yorkville Ave, Toronto, ONT. (416)923-7406.

COMMON GROUND

A new Audio Visual production which examines the common problems of Maritime and Third World farmers. Available from DEVERIC, 3460, Halifax, NS, B3J 3J1. (902)429-1370.

3RD ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN ANARCHIST GATHERING

Toronto, ONT., 1-4 July. Hosted this year by the Toronto Anarchist Circle. Will include workshops, food, and shows. Write PO Box 425, Station P, Toronto, ONT.

THE IMPOSSIBLE SELF,

Winnipeg Art Galley, Winnipeg, Man. April 10— July 10, 1988. Artists: Raymonde April, Sonia Boyce, Klaus Von Bruch, Miriam Glin, Francesco Clemente,Anthony Gormley, Dick Hebdidge, Astrid Klein, Avis Newman, Jana Sterbak Catalogue available from Winnipeg Art Gallery, includes interviews with artists, text by Dick Hebdige, co-curaters Sandy Nairne, Bruce Fesguson and interview with Ingrid Sischy.

s c a n n e r

CONFERENCES

POLITICS, HERMENEUTICS, AESTHETICS

Notre Dame, IN, 21-23 April. 13th annual meeting of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature. Contact Gerald Bruns, Dept of English, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, 46556.

FILM STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (FSAC) ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Kingston, ONT., May 26-28. Hosted by Queen's University. Special panel focus will be on Canadian Film: State of the Art. Information may be obtained from the Film Dept, Queens University, Kingston, ONT.

COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, SOCIALISM

Ottawa, 28 April-1 May. Annual conference of the Union for Democratic Communications at Carleton University. Sessions on Contradictions between Critical Discourse and No Action; Politics of Teaching Popular Culture and Media Studies; Solidarity Groups and Media Production; Writing Media Criticism; Policy Making; Feminism and Socialism in Cultural Theory; Technology/ Militarism/Media; Imperialism/ Nationalism/Canada; and special student session, undergrad fair, graduate exchanges, party, dance, art performances.... Contact Peter A. Bruck, Centre for Communication, Culture and Society, Carleton University, Ottawa, ONT., K1S 5B6. (613)564-7432.

LEARNEDS SOCIETIES CONFERENCE

Windsor, ONT., 28 May-11 June. Societies of interest with scheduled symposia include: The Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Post-Modern Thought; The Canadian Society for Comparative Study of Civilizations; The Humanities Association; The Sartre Society; The Canadian Society for Aesthetics; The Semiotics Society; The Canadian Universities Music Society; The Canadian Society for the Study of Names; The Society for Socialist Studies; The Anthropology Society; the Canadian Communication Association; The Canadian Political Science Association; the Canadian Journal for Social and Political Theory; The Canadian Association for Future Studies. Contact the Secretariat, The Learneds Societies Conference 1988, Room 2129, Windsor Hall West, University of Windsor, Windsor, ONT., N9B 3P4. (519)253-4232.

HOUSING, POLICY AND URBAN INNOVATIONS

Amsterdam, Holland, 27 June-1 July. International research conference under the auspices of IFA's ad hoc committee on housing and the built environment. Speakers include Ray Pahl (Housing and Formal/Informal Labour Markets) and Lynn Losland (Changing Neighborhoods). Contact 1988 Conference, OTB/TUD, Postbus 5030, 2600 GA Delft, The Netherlands.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URANIUM MINING.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.,16-21 June 1988,

Canada is now the world's largest supplier of uranium. At a time when resistance to the nuclear state is increasing, the Canadian industry is expanding into food irradiation, Slow Poke reactors for the third world, enrichment plants for weaponry, and the use of Canada as a nuclear waste dump.

The social, environmental and economic impact of uranium mining has become unbearable in many parts of the world.

This conference will be held in Saskatchewan, the capital of the multinational uranium industry, to reassess the promises, dangers and alternatives to uranium mining. The conference is broadly supported by women's, peace, labour and native groups here and abroad. Papers, performances, films, panels, etc. are all solicited. Send proposals to: Intl. Uranium Congress, Programme Cmmte, 2138 McIntyre St, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2R7. Phone (306) 522-4168.

ORGANIZATIONS

CANADIAN ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS AND PLANNERS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CADPSR)

Toronto. A group of concerned design professionals and students who have organized to focus on issues of social responsibility, affiliated with the American ADPSR. Organizes and produces newsletter, design competitions, lectures, conferences, articles, advertisements, posters, exhibits. Works with schools, university students and faculties to introduce its agenda into the education of design professionals. Coordinates activities with like-minded organizations by sharing ideas, information resources, and co-sponsoring programs. New members welcome. Contact Archie Hughes, #3, 359 Davenport Rd, Toronto, ONT. (416)921-6251.

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTRE

A community-based education and resource centre working on the issues around anti-racism, employment equity, women, immigrant settlement, housing and in particular those issues which affect immigrant women, various ethno-cultural groups and refugees. Contact 965 Bloor West, Toronto, ONT. (416)530-4117.

CALLS FOR PAPERS AND ART

1988

1988 is the 20th anniversary of 1968, a momentous year in radical history. Editrice A and IRL are collaborating on an anthology of articles analyzing the year's significance and long-term impact. To contribute, write Editrice A, Cas. Post. 17120, 20170 Milan, Italy; or IRL, c/o ACLR, 13 Rue Pierre Baanc, 69001 Lyon, France.

PHOENIX RISING

Don Weitz, editor o
psychiatry journal,
personal or eyewitn
psychiatric torture
contribute, write D
Bain Ave, #27 The
Toronto, ONT., M4

NATIVE CU

**CONFERENCES AN
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**NATIONAL STUDE
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Ottawa, 24-25 Nove
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Contact the Associa
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1915, Ottawa, ONT.
(613)238-3525.

**FIRST NATIVE MU
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Brandon, MB, 26 Ma
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Brandon University,
R7A 6A9.

WOMEN AN
FEMINISM:

**CONFERENCES, OR
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FAMILY VIOLENCE

A 5-year program wh
inform, create aware
public debate on the
costs of, and solution
violence. Publishes
Has developed biblio
Coordinates and com
with victims, profess
and community mem
Canadian Council on
Development, 55 Par
Ottawa, ONT., K1Y 4

WOMEN AND POLI

Ottawa, ONT., 6-8 Ma
conference organized
Women for Political
tion, a group working
and support women
Contact Canadian Wo
Political Representati
2202, Station D, Otta
K1P 5W4. Or Janie Fo
(613)567-8739.

PHOENIX RISING

Don Weitz, editor of this anti-psychiatry journal, is seeking personal or eyewitness accounts of psychiatric torture in Canada. To contribute, write Don Weitz, 100 Bain Ave, #27 The Maples, Toronto, ONT., M4K 1E8.

NATIVE CULTURE:

CONFERENCES AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

NATIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCE ON NORTHERN STUDIES

Ottawa, 24-25 November. Call for papers. Focus on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Contact the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 130 Albert St, Suite 1915, Ottawa, ONT., K1P 5G4. (613)238-3525.

FIRST NATIVE MUSIC SYMPOSIUM

Brandon, MB, 26 March. Papers and performances on all aspects of Native music. Contact Linda Elder, Native Studies Dept, Brandon University, Brandon, MB, R7A 6A9.

WOMEN AND FEMINISM:

CONFERENCES, ORGANIZATIONS, CALLS FOR ART.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM

A 5-year program whose goal is to inform, create awareness and spur public debate on the causes of, costs of, and solutions to family violence. Publishes a newsletter. Has developed bibliographies. Coordinates and communicates with victims, professional groups and community members. Info: Canadian Council on Social Development, 55 Parkdale, Ottawa, ONT., K1Y 4G1.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Ottawa, ONT., 6-8 May. National conference organized by Canadian Women for Political Representation, a group working to promote and support women in politics. Contact Canadian Women for Political Representation, Box 2202, Station D, Ottawa, ONT., K1P 5W4. Or Janie Fortier, Chair, (613)567-8739.

LEADERSHIP AND POWER: WOMEN'S ALLIANCES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Minneapolis, MN, 22-26 June. National Women's Studies Association 10th Annual Conference. The theme this year focuses on how women of various backgrounds can work together. The conference goals include exploring coalition building by looking at culturally diverse leadership models that empower women. Contact NWSA 88, University of Minnesota, 217 Nolte Centre, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55455.

WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENTS

Delft, Holland, 5-8 July. Sponsored by the International Association for the Study of People and their Physical Surroundings. The symposium will consist of sessions on research in progress, action and policies from various countries or regions, and an open forum on priorities for research and action. Contact Denise Piché, Ecole d'Architecture, Université Laval, Québec, PQ, G1P 7P4.

WOMEN AND FILM

Kent, OH, 12-13 April. 6th Annual Kent University Conference on Film. Contact Dr. Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, Romance Languages Dept, Kent State University, Kent, OH, 44242.

WRITING AND LANGUAGE: THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF FEMINIST CRITICAL PRACTICE AND THEORY

Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, 8-14 May. Major topics: Women's texts and the "test of experience"; the politics of theory and the theory of feminist politics; psychoanalysis and feminism: (de)constructing women; writing and reading theory: Third World women; reviewing the 'politics of location'; discourse studies and feminist politics. Scholars working in Slavic literatures particularly welcomed. Contact: Elizabeth Meese or Alice Parker, Dept. of English, Drawer AL,University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, 35487.

FEMINISM, THE LEFT, AND RADICAL POLITICS

Pittsburgh, PA, 7-14 June. Sponsored by the Marxist Literary Group. Proposals for papers, panels or other presentations should be sent to: Institute on Culture and Society, Dept of English, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, 15213. (412)268-2850.

WIMMIN IN PRISON

An anarcha-feminist group has been set up to aid wimmin in prison. If you would like to help, write to WPSN, c/o Anarchist Black Cross, PO Box 6326, Station A, Toronto, ONT., M5W 1P7.

WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFRICA

Toronto, 19 May. One-day international conference. This concludes a three-day project planning exercize by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Speakers will include several noted African scholars. Info: Patricia Stamp, African Studies, Bethune College, York University

JEWISH LESBIAN DAUGHTERS OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

A semi-annual gathering is organized for eligible women. Write JLDHS, PO Box 6194, Boston, MA, 02114.

SPOTLIGHT 88: AN INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATION OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Women and the Arts is sponsoring a Sculpture Commission in conjunction with Spotlight 88 (27-31 July) for a sculpture to be displayed at a Winnipeg Venue. Open to all Canadian female sculptors. Info: Women and the Arts/Les Femmes et les arts, 512-265 Portage Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 2B2.

THIRD WORLD ISSUES

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN STUDIES

Kingston, ONT., 11-14 May. Open to the public. Proposals to give papers welcome. Contact Bruce Berman, Political Science, Queen's University, Kingston, ONT., K7L 3N6. (613)547-2894.

46TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICANISTS

Amsterdam, Holland, 4-8 July. Symposia will be presented on Anthropology and Ethnology; Archeology and Pre-Columbian History; History; Macro-Economic Problems; Rural Development and Environment; Migration; Regional and Urban Development; Social Movements and the State; Social Policy; Political Sciences; Latin American Culture: Art, Literature and Language; Contemporary International Relations.

Note especially the session "Other(s) in Struggle: Discourse(s) of Marginalized Peoples in the Americas" in the Social Movements and the State symposium. This session will focus on the problem of how members of dominant race, gender and class positions can understand and support the struggles of dominated and marginalized peoples. Each of the papers will examine expressions of struggle of a marginalized group within the Americas, for example: the Inuit in Northern Canada; Chippewyan women in the Keewatin Region; women's movements in Canada and Cuba, East Indians in Guyana, the Sendero Luminoso in Peru; and the Rastafari in Jamaica. Contact Deborah Simmons, 65 Clinton St, Toronto, ONT., M6G 2Y4. (416)534-7297.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EAST INDIAN PRESENCE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Toronto, ONT., 6-10 June. This international conference at York University will bring together East Indian intellectuals of various orientations including writers, poets, politicians, and academics. It will provide an opportunity for critical examination of the circumstances associated with the presence of East Indians in the Caribbean Independence from as many perspectives as possible. Contact Arnold Itwaru, Dept of Sociology, York University, 4700 Keele St, North York, ONT., M3J lP3. (416)736-7991.