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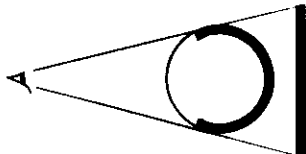
What ever happened to the pink parts of the map?

Interview with Terry Eagleton

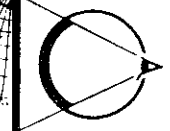
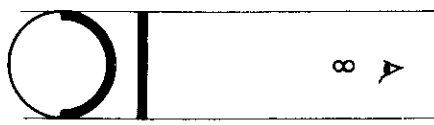
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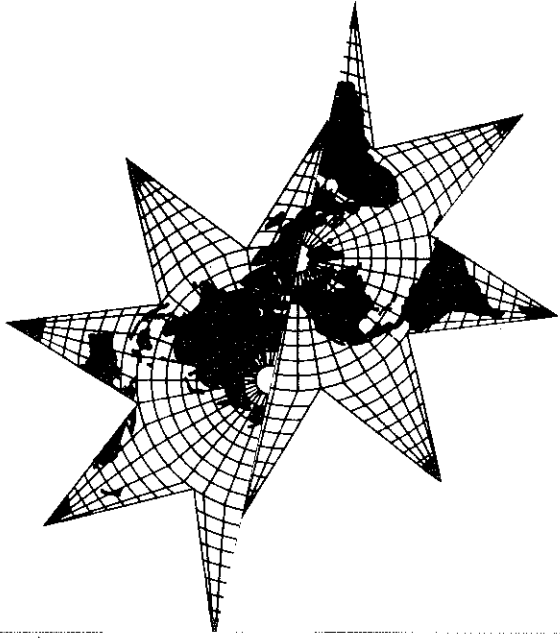
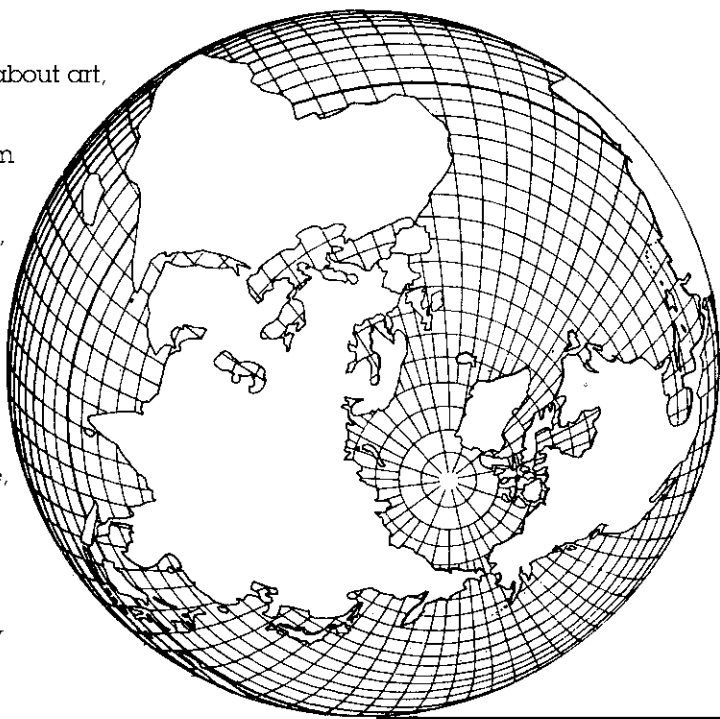
across borders/between lines

BORDER/LINES

Border/Lines is an interdisciplinary magazine about art, culture and social movements. We publish writing from many different positions, and we are open to artists, musicians, filmmakers and readers.

An indispensable companion to contemporary culture in Canada and elsewhere,

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Erratum: In our last issue, we misspelled the name of Kim Echlin, who wrote "Where the Hell is Ebeye?" Our apologies.



To See or Not to See: Festival Fiction

Andrew James Paterson



James was experiencing a major writer's block at ten o'clock on the Wednesday evening before the official opening of the Festival of Festivals. Indeed, what had seemed at first to be a clever script idea now seemed to be a dead end, so he was not angry when the sound of Andrew's key negotiating the front door latch signalled an end to his working day.

"Ta da!" Andrew was bleary-eyed because he had sat through three consecutive press screenings; but he still looked terribly pleased with himself. He pointed to the press badge hanging awkwardly from his jacket lapels. But James was not about to be impressed.

"Andrew, you don't need to tell the public that

you are a member of the press. You have only to show your badge to the ushers."

But as he listened to Andrew argue that wearing his badge on his jacket lapel was the safest way of not losing it, James realized that Andrew wished for strangers and other pass holders to approach him in the queues. Andrew regarded to be a man whose opinion was sought out regarding this or that director's latest film or concerning whether or not a particular festival programme was indeed successful. Well, it was not James' concern if his room-mate wished to be surrounded by contradictory opinions and socially incompatible queue-mates. He himself had had enough of such aggravations during previous film festivals; and that was why he had chosen to take advantage of his room-mate's possession of a press pass in order to concentrate on his own script.

Actually James had toyed with the idea of attending the Festival's Trade Forum. Never mind the two hundred and seventy-nine films from thirty-eight different countries in eight exciting programmes; that was for those who had time and money on their hands. The trade forum was for those who wished to participate in the film industry. Perhaps next year, when he had finally completed a marketable script, he would attend. He would have a reason for attending seminars, workshops, and networking parties. Now if only he could get over his writing block.

In the morning James couldn't wait for Andrew to leave. His room-mate was going on as if he were embarking on a world-wide vacation; leaving James instructions as to what particular foods his cat preferred and remembering to pack Dexatrim tablets so that he could avoid all the fast-food outlets. James hoped Andrew would remember to pack breath mints; one of the most



irritating aspects of the Festival of Festivals is overenthusiastic cinephiles with severe cases of halitosis.

Now James had the apartment to himself again and slowly but surely an idea occurred to him. He had become bogged down on his script-in-progress because the script was not rooted in an obviously identifiable milieu. Now he had a milieu to work with. He would write a screenplay about a group of cinephiles reacting to the Festival of Festivals. It would be what was referred to in the trade as an "urban comedy," and Andrew's end-of-the-day dissertations would provide James with material. James was indeed feeling pleased with himself.

James did not require Andrew to supply any

information for the ex- predict that his room-mate sitting through *The My* (Tulio Demicheli)—became a session with dictatorial then have to make a dif- restored print of *Blackn* (*Le Cri du Hibou* (Fr. have always been *de ri* While scanning the m- noticed that this year t- keeping a relatively l- Scott provided patrons and, like it or not, su- always helped eager selections.

By the time Andrew to a party shortly after- pleted a few expository- be altered at a later da- while preparing instan- how he had narrowly- tween two hopelessly- philes—Eric Everett E- don Parnell—while wa- *England* (GB, Derek- himself. Such altercati- laughs in conventiona- the one he had decid- mused after Andrew- routine and had left fo- No conflict, no script!

On the festival's th- day) Andrew had cor- pooped for any more m- proceeded to pontifica- Soviet film retrospecti- due to its location in th- Bloor Cinema and in

land. And *Kino Eye*—a- previously somewhat- spirit of *glasnost*, mor- deed been trumpeted- Toronto festival durin- muttered, this was all- pino director Lino Br- thirty extraneous min- plot he had tacked ont- order to compromise- that momentarily tlea- when Andrew emphas- any vehement confron- and his viewers durin- the film, James decid- not provide him with

information for the expository scenes. He could predict that his room-mate would, after dutifully sitting through *The Mystery of Eva Peron* (Arg. Tulio Demicheli)—because of his life long obsession with dictatorial power and its excesses—then have to make a difficult decision between a restored print of *Blackmail* (GB, Hitchcock) and *Le Cri du Hibou* (Fr. Chabrol). Such decisions have always been *de rigueur* for festival patrons. While scanning the morning paper James had noticed that this year the *Globe's* Jay Scott was keeping a relatively low profile. Usually Mr. Scott provided patrons with a suggested itinerary and, like it or not, such "critic's" suggestions always helped eager patrons in making their selections.

By the time Andrew returned (only to go out to a party shortly afterwards), James had completed a few expository scenes which could easily be altered at a later date if necessary. Andrew, while preparing instant coffee, was recounting how he had narrowly avoided being caught between two hopelessly incompatible local cinephiles—Eric Everett Edwards and George Gordon Parnell—while waiting in line for *The Last of England* (GB, Derek Jarman). James smiled to himself. Such altercations were always good for laughs in conventional urban comedies such as the one he had decided to write. But where, James mused after Andrew had finished his vanity routine and had left for the party, is the conflict? No conflict, no script!

On the festival's third evening (second full day) Andrew had come home for dinner, too pooped for any more movies, let alone parties. He proceeded to pontificate about how the *Kino Eye* Soviet film retrospective was being marginalized due to its location in the out-of-the-way repertory Bloor Cinema and in the pocket-sized Cumber-

crepancies between catalogue notes and a film's actual content were not that unusual, although they were undoubtedly irritating to patrons.

The next day James decided to select six of Andrew's friends and then imagine their conversation as they stood in a corner of the Festival's Hospitality (or Hostility) Suite. The actual suite consisted of one large central room with a buffet and a bar, and two adjoining rooms where it was easier for, and two adjoining rooms where it was easier for, entourage to recede into a corner, lower their voices, and compare notes. Andrew and his friends would all agree that *A Short Film About Killing* (Pol. Krystof Kielsowski) was an amazingly visceral work despite the painful sincerity of the young lawyer whose character dominates the final third of the film. They would also be debating whether or not *The Thin Blue Line* (USA, Errol Morris) withheld as much evidence as it exhibited. James could particularly hear one of the seven, a journalist named Natalie, lecturing about how all of the Russian movies she has seen so far were about heroism (the conflict lay in the opposition of the personal and the private with the public and the state-sanctioned), and how it seemed so appropriate that the first Russian comedy on her itinerary (*The Adventures of a Dentist*, Elem Klimov) would depict an incompetent man who was mistakenly believed by the local politburo to be a hero. And so on. James was having fun appropriating the voices of Andrew's friends. They were all so full of themselves in the manner of Rohmer (or Woody Allen) characters. The seven were carrying on with their vodka-induced seminar, oblivious to the fact that the room contained a number of Latin American and Asian directors here with their films. Andrew and his friends were background action masquerading as foreground action. Now *that* was a comic situation!

woman had demanded that the director account for the piece of shit he was exhibiting. The director was a kid, and a member of the audience. He wasn't an icon like David Cronenberg (*Dead Ringers*) whose work is supposed to be disturbing and divisive. So Andrew and his colleagues were drunkenly arguing whether or not obvious camp was automatically dehumanizing, whether or not the film contained any discernible analysis as to just why women—for whom meticulousness and vanity were professionally demanded—were especially prone to *anorexia nervosa*; and whether or not any sympathy was possible for characters who were after all represented by Barbie dolls instead of actors. What really provided fodder for James was the fact that the kitchen debate was not strictly gender-polarized. Men attempting to accommodate the "woman's point of view" were always good for a chuckle.

But this was only a potential departure point. Where could James go from here? After approximating the kitchen table seminar, James tried to project his characters into emotional confrontations triggered off by their intellectual differences. But he felt stymied. He was after all dealing with a particular group of cinephiles who were notoriously constipated emotionally—although at last year's festival his freelance writer friend Dan had met and fallen in love with Mark Oliver, a gossip columnist for a Metro monthly. But the movies had always been a testing ground for seeing whether or not people's tastes would be compatible; and therefore potential relationships had a tendency to short-circuit. Damn!

Andrew was not making matters easy for James either. The fool was frying himself, taking in five movies a day and then coming home and promptly becoming comatose. The only thing worse than a lugubrious room-mate was a cata-



land. And *Kino Eye*—an extensive programme of previously invisible but now, in the spirit of *glasnost*, more visible movies—had indeed been trumpeted as a major coup for the Toronto festival during the summer. Yes, James muttered, this was all true but predictable. Filipino director Lino Brocka's public apology for thirty extraneous minutes of heterosexual subplot he had tacked onto his film *Macho Dancer* in order to compromise with his distributors—now that momentarily tweaked James's curiosity. But when Andrew emphasized that there had not been any vehement confrontation the director and his viewers during the question period after the film, James decided that this incident would not provide him with any material either. Dis-

But there was still no conflict. The spectacle of incompatible groups of festival patrons existing side by side while remaining oblivious to each other was only amusing up to a point. It wasn't until the end of the festival's third full day, when Andrew actually brought his friends home for nightcaps, that James was able to zero in on a potential conflict. Because Andrew was under the illusion that James was sound asleep, they all felt free to engage in vehement arguments about a short film titled *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (USA, Todd Haynes).

So far, this had been the one film which was immediately controversial. Usually post-screening questions are painfully polite, but this response was something else. Right after the film a

tonic one. Except . . . one morning Andrew had been in such a hurry to get out of the apartment that he had forgotten his pocket notebook. James became excited, but only before reading Andrew's barely legible scribbles. Then he became angry.

His room-mate was writing standard "criticism": the Festival of Festivals was "a time-compressed museum," and so on. This was of no use to him. James had already established the intellectual pretensions of his characters; now he needed to somehow explode them. He flipped the pages, hoping for something different. But Andrew had cluttered his notebook with even more gobbledygook about the festival as a vacation and the patron-as-tourist. Andrew was milking his

Lives; Virgin Machine; Hamlet Goes Business; Lightning Over Braddock; A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.

Film stills from left to right: Distant Voices/Still

analogy beyond what it was worth. If patrons who primarily attended the galas were akin to tourists who brought their own instant coffee to Brazil, the cinephiles who went to subtitled movies without a working knowledge of the necessary languages were dilettantes. This was all very true but, since Andrew was indeed aware of his own dilettantism, why did he so relentlessly persist in it? Because Andrew would never change; and neither would his cinephile cronies and their ilk. And people who never change don't make good script material. Urban comedies of manners are one thing, but James needed a plot. So he decided that the Festival of Festivals was not such a great milieu for his script after all.

As Andrew became simultaneously more exhausted and more tired the festival shifted from being an eclectic itinerary to being a straight-forward marathon. He had already decided that this year's three major themes were: 1) "forbidden" films—films made under "difficult" or downright intolerable conditions; 2) films made in countries in which American economic domination created a tension between Hollywood and more idiosyncratic, "personal" cinematic language; and 3)—Andrew's favourite theme—movies concerned with the borderlines between private concerns and public spaces. Now Andrew had stopped taking notes in the ever-lengthening queues and begun to concentrate on enjoying as many good movies as he had the stamina left to enjoy.

Sure there were too many movies for the amount of available cinemas. Sure this was creating a situation in which many passholders with every right to see their first choice were lucky to even see their second choice. The Festival of Festivals is not a curated exhibition; it is an attempt by the City of Toronto to compete with all the other urban centres of the world. And competition requires accumulation, not reduction. Besides Andrew felt that since he was sampling an enormous number of movies without having to pay for anything but popcorn and caffeine, concentrating on obvious irritations about the festival was downright nitpicky and ungrateful to boot. When James glanced at Andrew's list of personal highlights he was angry at himself for missing the boat. Well, maybe next year...

Just for the record, here are some of Andrew's personal highlights, not necessarily in any order: *Virgin Machine* (FDR, Monika Treut); *Hamlet Goes Business* (Fin. Aki Kaurismaki); *Distant Voices/Still Lives* (GB, Terence Davies); *Forbidden to Forbid* (FDR, Lothar Lambert); *Latent Image* (Chile, Pablo Perelman); *Hard Times* (Port, Joao Botelho); *Talking to Strangers* (USA, Rob Tregenza); *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Cuba/It./Sp., Fernando Birri); and *Lightning Over Braddock* (USA, Tony Buba).

Andrew Paterson is a Toronto writer and video and performance artist. His "detective" novel The Disposables (1986) is available from Art Metrolople. His video tapes may be viewed through V-tape in Toronto.



Linocut by Malcolm Reid

Chronique d'Amérique Writers!

Malcolm Reid

Who's Who in the Writers' Union of Canada, a directory of members published by the Writers' Union of Canada (24 Ryerson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2P3), 1988. \$20.95.

The Writers' Union's new directory is out, and after being dazzled, like all its subscribers, by my own portrait of myself in it, by its pocket-mirror quality, I want to savour it. To sense Canadian writing through it. Canadian writing and Canadian personality.

It's not exactly a work, so not really suitable for praise or reproach. What it is is a window, a glimpse. It has been well and simply put together by a committee, Joan Clark and Valerie Frith leading things.

It's a wonderful textbook of Canadian literature and makes concrete for me my vague list of Canadian books I want to read. Concrete and compact for the first time, because of its neat absences: all that is *old* is absent. And the writers not described here—for a moment anyway—seem uninteresting, lacking the bare solidarity to join the union.

All except 120 who are listed at the end as members, but not directoried for some reason:

these include many of the stars.

All except them and Leonard Cohen. (Who will herein stand for the haughty who didn't care to join, but who in spite of me, come imperially to my mind.)

Then there are those who are in. Each is represented by a page, no more, no less, these pages written by themselves.

What do I feel about them, leafing?

(I say "I" where in a normal book review I would say, "What do we feel about them?" Can't say "we" here. For the very essence of the book is to convey to each writer: you're in this with all these others, sister; but you're *you*, they're *they*.)

I'm struck by how much writing is a woman's trade in Canada.

I'm struck by how many former Americans are part of Canadian writing. My long-held sense that the Vietnam era refugees have contributed to the tone of Canadian life is suddenly, clobberingly, confirmed. Cyril Welch, Audrey Thomas, Jane Rule, Irene J. Robinson, Betty Nickerson...I'm flipping at random. Californian by birth, born in Binghamton, New York, born in New Jersey, born and educated in California, born during a Kansas tornado, grew up in Oregon... These people came at different ages and in

different years, not years. Some seem to some fairly well-of note, avow, that the anyway their membership union avows it.

They all came from same Dominion, and more modulated countries, sometimes, perhaps, modulated at all, and which to blaze forth.

In an argument that said: "Free trade with the United States will be different countries, that isn't going to be see a considerable part of the U.S.A. breaking will come of this?"

There is a corollary.

There are groups striking, that are striking. So few Italian names. Chinese ones (have university corridor late Portuguese ones, or

Pakistanis. (The French are institutionally absent, having the Union des Écrivains Québécois as their focus, except for, page 3, the shining sun of Marie-Claire Blais.)

There are also many British immigrants. But this is so consistent with my sense of English-Canadian cultural life—Barry Morse on the air of my childhood—that I don't especially remark upon it. I've always thought of England as forming more cultural people than its institutions could use; but not until now had I thought of the U.S.A. that way. There *are* immigrant currents: Eastern Europeans, for example, seem intent on carving a territory out in Canadian letters.

Canada, here, comes on as a persistently Anglo-Saxon and Celtic place, as in the old days. Walk our street, though. Do you still feel that? The strangers are inside the gates; *mais le verbe est à nous!*

And there is the contrast with the Quebec situation. (The Union des Écrivains publishes a directory, with nothing but the names and addresses in it.) This contrast, for me, is both strong and expected. Canadian writers are scattered through towns and cities everywhere; even their *publishing houses* are. They are overwhelmingly little-knowns, and large and interesting bodies of work that I had never even *heard about* poured out of the directory at me one after the other. With big stars simply sprinkled here and there. Whereas Quebec writing is largely Montreal writing, and the biggest group in the Union des Écrivains is what you might call medium-knowns. Their writing exists in their people. Unlike the English Canadians', which doesn't, as a body, have that kind of resonance.

It is the Montreal literary scene itself which is the shaking, focusing, filtering mechanism for Quebec writing that this 483-page red book is striving so bravely to be for English Canada. (There is, to mention the first blunt fact that comes to mind, no American TV in French. Whereas mass culture, for so many English Canadian, just proceeds as if there were no Canada.)

Then there's the most important thing.

There is a note, so often struck...

It is a note of self-mockery. It is of trivialization done to convey that the writer knows it's no good at all to be trivial. It is there in the filling-in of the biography space with a *parody* of a writer's biography, because you do not know what *would* be the way to talk briefly about yourself and your work.

Why do so many Canadian writers do this? Do I do it myself? Are there some who don't do it at all, who get the tone right?

One point: I like modesty. I think it is indeed a virtue. And I've read a lot of self-approving words by writers in this century, boastful words about their selves, their gang, their work, a lot of arrogance. I'm glad that's not here. But why the carnival of self-deprecation?

Ed Gould: "After three years as a Swivel Servant..."

Terry Gould: Illustrates his page with a photo of himself as a child actor.

Claire Mowat: "It wasn't considered subver-

sive then to share the workload with the guy you married."

Farley Mowat: "Most of what is fit to print about my life has already been printed..."

Why?

There seems to be some way in which being a writer in Canada needs some joking apologizing-for. There seems to be no tradition, taken seriously, of Canadian writing being there, solid, needing only a flow of new additions, new directions. And young writers to bring these.

And yet it *is* there, is it not? To me it needs above all *one* new dimension. That is the dimension given by the writer as radical seer. Imaginer of weird pictures of the past because he is an imaginer of a liberated future. Some small lands have this. For example...

Had the strongest black voice speaking out from these pages, Marlene-Nourbese Philip, a Torontonian from Tobago, moved, instead of north to Canada, south to Columbia or Brazil, can we imagine her saying: "I am the first accredited Caucasianist (specialist in Caucasian life, affairs and culture)?"

I can't, and here I am, both the audience and the target for this joke, the white caller-forth of more black culture in Canada.

I'll have to read *Thorns*, Marlene. I'll have to keep looking till I find a joke I do like. As a Canauthorist (specialist in Canadian writers, their humour, their seriousness), I like jokes. But I want more of them aimed outward at life-destroyers, and fewer aimed in, at the self. I could go for, say, a 75-to-25 ratio.

"I am a New World writer," you say. *That* I want more on.

And there's another guy who really got through to me: Jean-Guy Carrier. That brooding face, that brooding life-text: "I am most proud to have remained a socialist and a writer."

So I'll also have to read *My Father's House*.

Here's an opinion I dare to hurl out, a wishful thought:

Not most, but about 25 percent of the people in this book, I think, are like Carrier. Socialists as well as writers, and proud of it. But the time of the radical seer isn't here. They fear the quaintness and the dissonance Carrier's kind of sober statement would give them, in the mainstream of Canadian life where they seek their audience. Or, really, their image. "Feminist" goes down better, but not to the point that the men will use it; there is in these one-paragraph autobiographies, a failure to find the seer's words. Their self-teasing joke is their way of handling that. I didn't say "socialist" either; my word was "rebel".

We're a gang searching for our words, we're gingerly, we're fearful-playful. I feel us in this book, pressing our way to existence.

We're not so different from the writers in France, the writers in Poland, the writers in Africa. I hear, in this book, a quiet murmur on the left. I'm going to stay tuned.

I'm going to keep up my subscription to the pocket mirror.

Malcolm Reid's column is a regular feature in Border/Lines.

different years, not all Vietnamishly-flavoured years. Some seem to have come rather poor, and some fairly well-off. Many of them mention, note, avow, that they are Canadians now. But anyway their membership in this nationalistic union avows it.

They all came from the same Republic to the same Dominion, and the choosing of a smaller, more modulated country than one's own is there: sometimes, perhaps, because the person was not modulated at all, and wanted this new context in which to blaze forth.

In an argument the other day at our house, I said: "Free trade might not be such a bad idea if the United States were divided into four or five different countries, as in the novel *Ecotopia*. But that isn't going to happen." No. But here we do see a considerable part of the intellectual talent of the U.S.A. breaking off and moving north. What will come of this?

There is a corollary.

There are groups in Canada, big in Canada, striking, that are striking by their absence here. So few Italian names, so few black faces, or Chinese ones (have you strolled a Canadian university corridor lately?), so few Greek names, or Portuguese ones, or Hispanic. So few Indians and



"What does Report on Business say?"

PRESIDENT REAGAN IS COMING TO DETROIT,
12 NOON, SEPT. 24 AT COBO HALL

**BRING THE
PRESIDENT
YOUR PISS!**
DRUGS ARE AMERICA'S #1 PROBLEM!
(HE SAID SO ON TV!)

FORGET ABOUT: SOUTH AFRICA
NUCLEAR WAR
THE ENVIRONMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT
THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF WORK & CONSUMPTION
INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA
THE MISERY OF DAILY LIFE

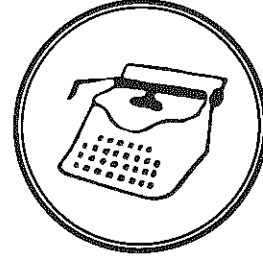
THESE ARE NOTHING! IT'S DRUGS!

Let's show our President we support his war on drugs! Bring him a sample of your urine to present to him at Cobo Hall to show you are drug free! Join with the hundreds of model citizens there who will demonstrate advanced compliance by offering up their urine for testing before they are asked. As a special gesture, several of us who want a Drug-Free America have collected a mass 5-gallon urine sample from a large number of citizens to be given to President Reagan personally! One drug user among the many could ruin the sample for the rest of us represented. Can we pass the test? You bet we can!

Eat the Rich Gang, Workers Revenge Party, Citizens for Clean Urine,
Box 02548, Detroit, MI 48202

LETTERS

We welcome letters. We also welcome found images and artifacts such as the ones on this page. If you would like to propose an article, please send for our "Guidelines for Contributors." The address is: **Border/Lines**, 183 Bathurst Street, #301, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2R7



Dear Borderlines,

As a Socialist, I am all for collectives and therefore am renewing my subscription to your magazine.

Sorry that I have neglected this, but I have received so much "junk" mail in the last god-knows-how-long, begging for donations to good causes, that I did not open your reminder till today. Wish I could be a benefactor to all good causes but I cannot afford it right now. Have to be selective.

I like your emphasis on culture from a Socialist point of view—as well as the humour, rather lacking in more earnest Socialist publications, such as that *Socialist International* I took for just one year. The N.D.P. must have given them my name—an lifelong member and supporter at election times.

We have such a lousy government in B.C. that we need all the outside news we can get!

All the best!

Marian Hale (Mrs)
North Vancouver, B.C.

Border/lines

Please enroll me onto your subscription list. The last issue I managed to pick up (in Vancouver—in the rest of B.C., Jim Pattison's monopoly has made it illegal to sell offbeat or leftist magazines) had the wrestlers on the cover, so please start my subscription with the next issue.

Thanks,

Steve Robertson
Vanderhoof, B. C.

Lest We Forget
signatories, but by the
Alliance shared office
proponent of free trade

George Bain
Former political columnist
Mail and the Toronto *Star*

Alex Colville
In 1983, Colville told the
lects sports cars, keeps
and sells his paintings for
\$100,000.00.

Andy Donato
Cartoonist at the Toronto *Star*

Arnold Edinborough
President and CEO of the
and the Arts in Canada.
proprietor of *Saturday Night*

David and Linda Friedman
Son and daughter of Barbra
larly for the Toronto *Sunday*
Idler. Linda has recently
Canadian universities.

Robert Fulford
Writer and columnist, *Saturday*
Night. Married to Gerald
at the University of Toronto

Mira Godard
Proprietor of Mira Godard
which shows Mary and
Alex Colville. Her gallery
artists at 49th Parallel, a
space sponsored by Ext

Edward Greenspan
Toronto criminal lawyer

Fela Grunwald
Proprietor of Grunwald

George Jonas
Hungarian-Canadian writer
Barbara Amiel, who is
Sun, where Jonas writes

W.P. Kinsella
Resigned from the Writers
their opposition to free

Nick Auf Der Maur
A columnist for the *Montreal*
member of Montreal city

Lest We Forget This ad was placed in the *Globe and Mail* on 19 November 1988, two days before the last federal election. It was paid for not by its signatories, but by the Canadian Alliance for Trade and Job Opportunities, whose founding directors were Peter Lougheed and Donald MacDonald. The Alliance shared offices with the Business Council on National Issues, a lobby group of the 150 largest corporations in Canada. The BCNI was the initial proponent of free trade within the Mulroney government.

George Bain

Former political columnist at both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*.

Alex Colville

In 1983, Colville told the *Financial Post* he collects sports cars, keeps a gun in his bedroom, and sells his paintings for an average of \$100,000.00.

Andy Donato

Cartoonist at the *Toronto Sun*.

Arnold Edinborough

President and CEO of the Council for Business and the Arts in Canada. Former editor and proprietor of *Saturday Night*.

David and Linda Frum

Son and daughter of Barbara. David writes regularly for the *Toronto Sun*, *Saturday Night* and *The Idler*. Linda has recently written a party guide to Canadian universities.

Robert Fulford

Writer and columnist, and ex-editor of *Saturday Night*. Married to Geraldine Sherman and teaches at the University of Toronto.

Mira Godard

Proprietor of Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto, which shows Mary and Christopher Pratt and Alex Colville. Her gallery also showcases its artists at 49th Parallel, a New York exhibition space sponsored by External Affairs.

Edward Greenspan

Toronto criminal lawyer, writer and broadcaster.

Fela Grunwald

Proprietor of Grunwald Gallery, Toronto.

George Jonas

Hungarian-Canadian writer and ex-husband of Barbara Amiel, who is ex-editor of the *Toronto Sun*, where Jonas writes a column.

W.P. Kinsella

Resigned from the Writers Union of Canada over their opposition to free trade.

Nick Auf Der Maur

A columnist for the *Montreal Daily News*, and member of Montreal city council.

ARTISTS & WRITERS
FOR FREE TRADE

We Are Not Fragile

We, the undersigned artists and writers, want the people of Canada to know we are in favour of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement.

There is no threat to our national identity anywhere in the Agreement. Nor is there a threat to any form of Canadian cultural expression.

As artists and writers, we reject the suggestion that our ability to create depends upon the denial of economic opportunities to our fellow citizens.

What we make is to be seen and read by the whole world. The spirit of protectionism is the enemy of art and of thought.

JERRY ADAMSON, designer	CHARLES JAFFE, painter
JIM ALLEN, photographer	GEORGE JONAS, writer
GEORGE BAIN, journalist	W. P. KINSELLA, writer
EVE BAXTER, art consultant	IRVING LAYTON, poet
MICHAEL BLISS, historian	DR. SAUL LEVINE, author
ROBERT BURNS, designer	RICHARD LUBBOCK, writer
BARRY CALLAGHAN, writer	DEBORAH MACIDSON, filmmaker
MORLEY CALLAGHAN, writer	NICK AUF DER MAUR, journalist
NEIL CAMERON, historian	ERIC McLUHAN, writer
ALEX COLVILLE, painter	JOHN METCALF, writer
WAYNE CONSTANTINEAU, mine	JOHN MUGGERIDGE, writer
BARRY COOPER, philosopher	DAVID OLIVE, journalist
ANDREW COYNE, journalist	CERARD OWEN, journalist
DANIELLE CRITTENDEN, writer	I. M. OWEN, editor
KEN DANBY, painter	CHRISTOPHER PRATT, painter
ANDY DONATO, cartoonist	MARY PRATT, painter
IAN DRUMMOND, author	LOUIS QUILICO, opera singer
ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH, critic	HARRY RASKY, filmmaker
ANASTASIA ERLAND, writer	DANIEL RICHLER, writer & broadcaster
JOHN FERGUSON, architect	MORDECAI RICHLER, writer
THOMAS FLANAGAN, writer	ANNE ROCHE, writer
PETER FOSTER, writer	WILLIAM ROWE, writer & broadcaster
DAVID FRUM, journalist	JAN RUBES, performing artist
LINDA FRUM, author	SUSAN RUBES, performing artist
ROBERT FULFORD, journalist	JARED SABLE, art dealer
MIRA GODARD, art dealer	GERALDINE SHERMAN, journalist
EDWARD GREENSPAN, author	JOSEF SKVORECKY, writer
FELA GRUNWALD, art dealer	ALEXANDER SZEMBERG, broadcaster
ELLIOTT HALPERN, screenwriter	MORLEY TORGOV, author
DENISE IRELAND, painter	HAROLD TOWN, painter
	KITSON VINCENT, producer
	DAVID WARREN, journalist
	PAUL YOUNG, painter

This advertisement is the responsibility of the signatories. It was produced with the assistance of the Canadian Alliance for Trade & Job Opportunities, & The Idler Magazine.

Eric McLuhan

Son of Marshall. A principal at McLuhan and Davies Communications, he teaches at York University, and is active in the anti-choice movement.

John Metcalf

Arch-critic of the Canada Council.

Gerald Owen

Managing editor at *The Idler*.

Daniel Richler

Son of Mordecai. Has worked as a Toronto veejay, an arts reporter on *The Journal* and writer for *Saturday Night*.

Mordecai Richler

Canadian editor of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Jared Sable

Proprietor of Sable-Castelli Gallery in Toronto, which is associated with the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City.

Geraldine Sherman

Former producer of *Ideas* and various arts programmes at CBC.

Josef Skvorecky

Czech-Canadian writer and publisher, teaches at the University of Toronto.

Alexander Szemberg

Ex-husband of Fela Grunwald and producer of *Realities* on TV Ontario, which is hosted by Robert Fulford and Richard Gwyn.

Labour Mags

Vivienne Muhling

In this age of electronic media, we are nonetheless bombarded by the written word. Special interest newspapers and magazines are proliferating, and most of our labour unions have

Some unions opt for tabloid size newspapers that can be stuffed into a pocket to read at lunch break; some have simple weekly newsletters, plus polished monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly publications. All aim to balance the impact of the

Recent issues of *Solidarité* and *National Union*: two slick examples of the new face of labour union magazines.



graduated from modest newsletters to magazines with full colour covers and catchy headlines in a bid to compete for the small percentage of time devoted to reading. Labour movement literature is generally mailed directly to the homes of union members. Some public access libraries receive a modicum of copies, but there is very little available at the Toronto Metropolitan Library. I did find a fair selection at the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations, but not sufficient for the purposes of this article.

management-oriented daily press. "The people who sit across the bargaining table from the workers are often the same people who own the media," says Catherine MacLeod in the *National Union Magazine*, Canadian Auto Worker's award-winning publication. "Those in power have the ability to shape, direct and exploit the perception... That's why workers need their own media." The following observations are based on a limited survey. It includes publications by twelve

unions, two provincial Canadian Labour Councils, *Labour*, and *Our Times* independent magazine. sample demonstrated that the union's contribution standards is due to the Canadian Association of Labour Unions' 160-member national skill-building work program. service items and grants. presents annual awards. all papers that look like CALM bug on the market. Among the non-union value per dollar in the Alberta Federation of Labour *The Activist*. It carries advertising ten-dollar per page more pages are taken over to the Workers' actual contribution Publishing actual dollars. sional fund-raising p... ify businesses and in... to know how much th... to shame other dono... butions than they ha... order to match or be... competitors. The V... under the charity that b... twisted" to support... is therefore embarrass... emulating one of th... tions that solicit fun... achieve social status. Who are the ran... labour publications... people still seem to t... blue collars, disinte... tural activities beyon... tor sports. In reality... be blue, tie-died wh... neck. In many union... gamut from less th... university degrees. individual publicatio... effectively with the... ship. They are aided... whatever their colla... noted, "gradually... thinking...become p... editors of labour lit... within this inform... However, I do not kn... researched how man... than a cursory glance... Free trade was ti... labour's current issu... who were not gettin... and consider Canad... stand are those who... unions—unless the... publication *Canadi...*

unions, two provincial federations, an issue of the Canadian Labour Congress' bilingual *Canadian Labour*, and *Our Times*, a labour-oriented independent magazine. The fact that most of the sample demonstrated high literacy and production standards is due in no small measure to the Canadian Association of Labour Media. This is a 160-member national organization which offers skill-building workshops, camera-ready news service items and graphic services. CALM also presents annual awards for excellence. Almost all papers that look good and read well bear the CALM bug on the masthead.

Among the non-CALM papers, the poorest value per dollar in the sample would seem to be the Alberta Federation of Labour's eight-page *The Activist*. It carries a one-third page ad soliciting ten-dollar per year subscriptions. Three more pages are taken up by acknowledgements of donations to the Workers' Health Centre, noting actual contribution figures beside each name. Publishing actual donation amounts is a professional fund-raising ploy, frequently used to gratify businesses and individuals who want society to know how much they can afford to donate, and to shame other donors into making larger contributions than they have initially volunteered, in order to match or better their business or social competitors. The Workers' Health Centre is undeniably a worthy labour cause, but so are most of the charities that business executives are "arm-twisted" to support more liberally. This outsider is therefore embarrassed to find a labour paper emulating one of the tactics used by organizations that solicit funds from people who wish to achieve social status through financial largess.

Who are the rank and file workers to whom labour publications are addressed? Far too many people still seem to think of them as stereotypical blue collars, disinterested in any social or cultural activities beyond beer-drinking and spectator sports. In reality, their workaday collars can be blue, tie-died white, pink or academic turtle-neck. In many unions, educational levels run the gamut from less than grade school to multiple university degrees. Within the mandates of their individual publications, most labour editors deal effectively with the challenge of diverse readership. They are aided by the fact that unionists, whatever their collar colour, as one union rep noted, "gradually absorb certain ways of thinking...become part of the union culture." The editors of labour literature generally come from within this informal working-class culture. However, I do not know whether anyone has ever researched how many union members give more than a cursory glance to their trade papers.

Free trade was the burning topic for most of labour's current issues. The only union members who were not getting ample opportunity to read and consider Canadian labour's anti-free trade stand are those who belong to locals of American unions—unless they read the CLC's excellent publication *Canadian Labour*, or a provincial

magazine with the qualities of the Ontario Federation of Labour's *Ontario Labour*. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees International magazine, *Catering Industry Employee*, for example, has only one page of Canadian news, with a French translation overleaf. Even on this page, there is barely a mention of the free trade pact in any of their recent issues.

The *Sheet Metal Worker's Journal*, also an American union publication, does give excellent recognition to its Canadian locals. It talks about "two independent nations, one independent union," or, as SMWIA sometimes puts it, "Two Flags! One Union!" In preparation for an international business agents meeting in Ottawa, their August 1987 issue was devoted almost entirely to Canada, but it nevertheless downplayed Canadian labour's concern over the free trade agreement. The only reference was in an article about the Canadian Federation of Labour which, it said, "has been a major player in the national debate concerning international trade and specifically a new trading agreement with the United States...(and) a leader in voicing labour's concerns with regard to trade issues." Does that tell American labour or Canadian members of the SMWIA that the Canadian labour movement is a leader in the fight to thwart the free trade pact? I hardly think so.

Conversely, I discovered one of the most concise and convincing anti-free trade articles in the March/April edition of *Steellabour*. This magazine, which bears the subtitle "Voice of the United Steelworkers of America," received an award for general editorial excellence at the International Labour Communications Association Conference last year. It is published in Canada, and available to all United Steel Workers Canadian locals. In his foreword to the March/April 1988 edition, the National Director for Canada, Gerard Docquier, states that the Steelworkers have studied the free trade accord in detail and consider it dangerous to Canada's independence. Further on, Hugh Mackenzie's two-page illustrated article is both factual and easy to follow.

By contrast, CAW's *National Union Magazine's* Winter 87/88 article is dry and demanding to follow, despite an attractive layout. The back cover ad, however, calling for an election mandate before the free trade deal is ratified, is to the point and effective. Many of the magazines examined carried similar ads decrying the free trade deal.

CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, is a prolific publisher. *The Leader* is a tabloid newspaper, with good layout, but marred by unjustified right-hand margins. It is distributed within a bi-monthly titled *The Facts* which has cartoons that I consider to be over-simplified and poorly executed and has, again, unjustified right-hand margins. It is also shipped within their impressive glossy quarterly, *The Public Employee*. Of all the varied labour approaches to the

free trade proposition examined in the sample, I found *The Public Employee's* Summer, 1987 presentation to be by far the most persuasive. The full-colour cover depicts one arm of a brass weigh scale, suspended by chains that bleed off the page. In the scale arm are doll-like depictions of the many varied workers CUPE represents; below, boldly yellow on blue, is the title of the leading article: *Defending Fairness*. Open to the centrespread and the brass scale dominates, the worker—full arm beautifully balanced by the other arm, which contains one enormous maple leaf; below it, an excerpt from a speech by CUPE National President, Jeff Rose.

This two-page excerpt spells out the historic landmarks of Canada's efforts to achieve a caring and sharing society, argues the importance of many of these efforts to his readers, both as citizens and as unionists, and states that there are powerful forces trying to change our traditions, forces that don't accept the legitimacy of the people's involvement, through government, in determining social and economic priorities. Only towards the end of the excerpt does he use the words "free trade." By then, he has built a substantial argument for defending the quality of Canadian life that he believes to be threatened by potential americanization.

The Jeff Rose approach, stressing the positive, was a welcome alternative to the plethora of articles headed *The Free Trade Threat* or *The Free Trade Charade*. It was clearly written, required no great effort of mind to comprehend, and yet showed respect for the reader's intelligence and powers of deduction. *Defending Fairness* is a soft-sell call to action that appeals to both the heart and to the mind. Bravo, CUPE!

On the whole, I believe that most of the publications in the sample have high production and editorial standards. By and large, there is a good balance between specific work and personality topics and the larger social issues of such matters as politics, environment, health and safety. Over the past two years, commentary on the free trade pact has become more and more dominant. But, as D'Arcy Martin, CWC's national education representative wrote in *Our Times*:

The labour movement is caught between a rock and a hard place when addressing broad social issues...unionism isn't just a social tool nor just a guild... Its culture goes far beyond the narrow demands of a mere self-interest group...(it) is the organizational core of the social resistance in Canada.

Our Times is the only independent journal in the sample. Published by a cooperative, it features writers from within the labour movement. It is Canada's only overview of labour thought, action and attitude that is regularly available to the general public by subscription and on newsstands.

Vivienne Muhling is a freelance writer and a regular contributor to the Canadian Jewish News.

Politics and Literary Theory

An Interview with Terry Eagleton

Richard Dienst &
Gail Faurschou

The following interview took place in December 1987 at Duke University in North Carolina, where Terry Eagleton was concluding a semester of teaching and lecturing (not to mention an onerous schedule of guest lecturing across the U.S.). As perhaps the foremost Marxist literary theorist in Britain, his scholarship exhibits both an eclectic breadth and dialectical rigour characteristic of the most sophisticated of contemporary cultural critics. Eagleton's work is situated in the interdisciplinary tradition of cultural studies forged in Britain by Raymond Williams, although Eagleton's criticism of Williams (to which he refers in the interview) has provided this tradition with some of its most interesting debates. Eagleton was a student of Williams at Cambridge in the 1960s and later a colleague until he moved to Oxford in 1969. Last year Eagleton accepted the position of Lecturer in Critical Theory at Lineacre College—a post Oxford finally created for him in (long overdue) recognition of his international importance.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Eagleton as a writer that certainly bears mention is the eloquence and originality of his critical style. Like such literary theorists as Roland Barthes and Fredric Jameson, Eagleton's concern (and obvious pleasure) in stylistic innovation designates much of his criticism as a form of literary prose in its own right. It should come as no surprise then that he has recently published a novel, *Saints and Scholars*, which has received critical attention in Britain, and especially Ireland which, given Eagleton's working class Irish roots and continuing interest in Irish nationalism, is no small source of pleasure for him.

Among Eagleton's most well-known books are *Walter Benjamin: Toward a Revolutionary Criticism*, *Criticism and Ideology*, and more recently his "bestseller" in critical theory, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (which Eagleton refers to as his "bluffer's guide" to the field). But Eagleton's potentially most significant scholarly endeavour is his forthcoming book on aesthetics and history which promises to constitute a major contribution to Marxist criticism and cultural theory.

Nevertheless, Eagleton is not simply a man of letters. His position as an "engaged" intellectual has a long history. While at Cambridge, Eagleton edited and contributed to a number of radical periodicals and pamphlets, among them the 1968 *May Day Manifesto*, a collective effort with Williams and other political intellectuals that was a direct attempt to affect the positions taken by the Labour Party. However, most of Eagleton's later political activism has taken place in the arena he knows best. Continually involved in the politics of the academy, he is one of the founders of The Oxford English Ltd. which publishes *News from Nowhere*. The group is dedicated to a critique of the institution and structure of academic and literary teaching in England.

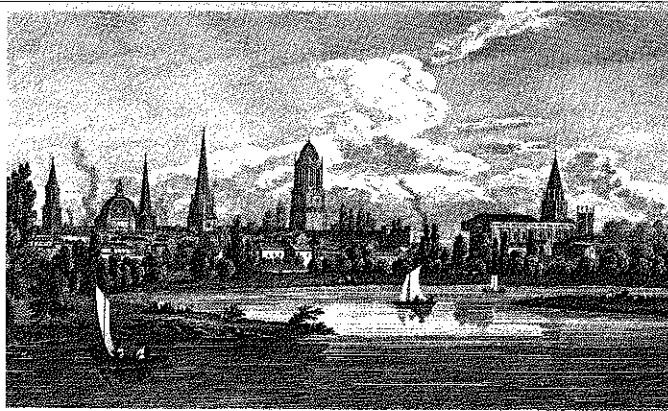
Less known is Eagleton's lighter side. His talent for song writing, especially satirical and political songs set to traditional Irish music, have earned him a tuneful notoriety unrivalled by other British academics. Expanding upon these creative talents, Eagleton has written a musical which was produced a few years ago at "The Fringe" of the Edinburgh Festival.

The following interview focused on issues that arose out of discussions and debates that took place formally and informally during Eagleton's term at Duke. As such we included questions that ranged from Eagleton's perception of current politics in Britain to the latest theoretical turns he has taken in his own work.

Border/Lines: That the funding of the u raises at least two im To what extent has been a crucial figure lectual resistance to the increase of Brit America represent a spect to their institut tain or America?

Eagleton: Well, I th in Britain who were being have been pu being in those admin say, by having to cutbacks imposed on tional system. Those ica are less, I think, t young scientists from fortune in the New V age who have become lackeys of Thatcher. in those administrat has been made in Br line would be to fu the budget cuts in yo iversity asked to dec implemented would The argument agains ment would simply t and enforce its own example of the pro along with the syste and save student pla of autonomy, or do more radical stand iversity, which ha a stand on anything except on God and a stand against Th honorary degree. T went. In the eyes o jumped-up petty bo shopkeeper.

To follow up on certain kind of acade a political fine line Therefore, yes, into something now of a state attacks and in But it's understanda have been courageo period should get fe away to the U.S. He American left wing their actual practice for radical academi



Border/Lines: Thatcher's prolonged attack on the funding of the university system in Britain raises at least two immediate questions. The first: To what extent has the university administrator been a crucial figure in the development of intellectual resistance to Thatcher? Secondly, does the increase of British intellectuals teaching in America represent any significant shift with respect to their institutional position in either Britain or America?

Eagleton: Well, I think quite a few intellectuals in Britain who were not previously considered radical have been politicized to some extent by being in those administrative hot seats, that is to say, by having to administer or cushion the cutbacks imposed on them by the British educational system. Those who have moved to America are less, I think, the traditional bright aspiring young scientists from Britain going to seek their fortune in the New World, than people about my age who have become finally weary of being the lackeys of Thatcher. It's very hard now for people in those administrative positions. The argument has been made in Britain that the correct political line would be to refuse to implement whatsoever the budget cuts in your own university. Each university asked to decide how those cuts will be implemented would then just to refuse to do it. The argument against this is that then the government would simply take over the university itself and enforce its own cuts on it. It's a very good example of the problem of how far one plays along with the system. Do you try and save jobs and save student places and a minimum amount of autonomy, or do you take a chance and take a more radical stand? All I can say is that my university, which has not been notable for taking a stand on anything in the past seven centuries, except on God and on the state, did actually take a stand against Thatcher by refusing her an honorary degree. That, however, is as far as it went. In the eyes of Oxford, Thatcher is just a jumped-up petty bourgeoisie, the daughter of a shopkeeper.

To follow up on the second question: to be a certain kind of academic in Britain now is to walk a political fine line whether you like it or not. Therefore, yes, intellectuals actually do have something now of a historic role in resisting those state attacks and in defending higher education. But it's understandable, I think, that people who have been courageously fighting over this whole period should get fed up, tired, and be attracted away to the U.S. Here I think I differ from some American left wing academics, or at least from their actual practice. I don't think it can be right for radical academics to accept so easily the

academic community as one's primary patch of political activity. In Britain a lot of people, simply by staying where they are now in academic institutions, are caught in this political battle and are now fighting to defend whole departments. But there are also other political strategies open to the far left. If you move to the U.S.A., you are going to a society where politics is not, on the whole, of that kind. One choice that then faces those who leave is whether to opt to be an academic as their major political commitment, or to engage politically, as I try in a modest way to do myself, in the broader culture.

Border/Lines: In the last decade, in England elsewhere, there are relatively few new academic jobs opening up, creating a large ghetto of part-time lecturers who, in spite of their research and teaching, are virtually shut out of the institution. In this situation would a migration of intellectuals from Britain necessarily be a negative thing?

Eagleton: The migration I was referring to was a middle rank one. Certainly the job situation in Britain is dire. It has been for many years and shows no signs of getting better. There is now an estranged new sub-class, a kind of lumpen intelligentsia, who are hanging on by their teeth and who are not getting jobs partly because the jobs aren't there but also because they are too clever by half. They are regarded to some degree as potentially disruptive by those who got their jobs 20 years ago, who haven't kept up with anything, and therefore who are worried about the effects of new ideas. In this constricted situation the jobs, even more than usual, tend to go to safe and rather dull people. One's ideological position is consequently more foregrounded and significant.

Border/Lines: What is interesting about this then is that there comes a moment when cultural studies is attempting to establish itself at the institutional level.

Eagleton: Yes, it's a dramatic example of the disjunction between theory and practice, isn't it? — a disjunction we can theoretically understand — because the historical irony of the situation, in Britain at least, is that there has been an explosion of radical ideas in the society exactly at the time when it doesn't seem easily applicable in the academy. There is something inevitably ironic about floating new, long-term, radical schemes to transform the substance of intellectual life, in a situation where what you are actually doing most of the time in the context of Thatcherism is defending people's jobs. So you might say there is an embarrassing discrepancy between theory and practice; but it is only by holding open that long-term perspective that the energies for short-term resistance will be secured. You have to

know what you want politically, you have to have a desire and a goal to work towards, to act as a critique of the present. But certainly it's a kind of embarrassment for the left that there seems to be very little connection between what we might be forced to do just to defend the institution, and the kinds of more utopian ideals that we have, at all costs, to develop.

Border/Lines: In England, besides the universities, the local councils, particularly the Greater London Council have also fallen victim to Thatcher's policies. Public agencies that once served, however indirectly, to promote new and more participatory forms of popular culture have now been disbanded. This has meant that theatre groups, for instance, as you have mentioned in other contexts, are now going underground.

Eagleton: Yes, there has been a rolling back of the radical theatre movement. But their changed situation has, I think, less to do with financial restraint—although that has an effect since their funding has always been precarious—than it has to do with the shift in the political climate generally. That is to say, they are not so sure any longer who they are fighting for, what audiences they are addressing. It's a changed situation from the 70s. A lot, however, has been done in terms of community arts. Devolving the highly centralized metropolitan-based arts, the Labour party has shown it would be committed to carrying out, a fairly radical cultural program, in the drafting of which I have been marginally involved. For one thing it doesn't cost that much. This is one part of what one might call the public sphere which intellectuals can get involved with. Since Thatcher and since the restrictions on local government spending, the arts have been, of course, the first thing to go, and so a lot of these projects have been closed down. However, as I say, a more positive sign is that the Labour party has taken the arts seriously in the last few years and have been at work on somewhat more radical proposals.

Border/Lines: In *Against the Grain*, you describe the political and theoretical contexts that led to your engagement and disengagement with Althusserianism. At the end of *The Function of Criticism*, you reject the overly rationalist character of Habermas' socialist future in favour of a politics of the body which here and previously in *Literary Theory* you argue is one of the most vital contributions of feminist theory. What is the status of this new emphasis on the body in your present work, particularly as it figures in your recent lectures on aesthetics? Is there a political and theoretical context that has spurred this direction in your work?

Eagleton: First of all just a point about Haber-

mas. I have said, like many others, that his theory is too rationalistic as it stands, but I am interested in those aspects of it which could be redeemed and could figure alongside or with a politics of the body. This revolves around the question of need, expressivity, and the life-world. When I say that I am now working on the aesthetic, I suppose that it's a term for the body, because what I

feminist project is more paramount in Europe than in the United State—the society in the world most virulently hostile to socialism. And that hostility is in my view limited some American feminist theory.

Border/Lines: Do you still see value in a phenomenological approach to the body such as, for example, in the work of Merleau Ponty?

I understand radical politics to be about needs. Needs are rooted in the body, but the body overreaches itself, becomes non-identical with itself. It doesn't stay equipped with a given set of needs; it transforms those needs into that continual going-beyond we call history.

am trying to show in the work I am doing now is that this is what the aesthetic in the 18th century is originally all about. Aesthetic thought runs back to an anxiety about the absence of the body in certain rational discourses, though the various attempts to put the body back in have fallen foul of various modes of idealization and stylization. One must think that project through again, but this time from a more corporeal standpoint. What that means is not at all simple. It's a project fraught with risk, partly because the body has become now such a fashionable theme, and partly because it's not easy to know how to avoid various forms of reductionism, naturalism, or the supposed self-evidence of body experience. How would you handle the corporeal or how is one to think the body, not in a Nietzschean lineage that is simply the ruin of a rational politics, but in a different style? I understand radical politics to be about needs, as a start; needs are rooted in the body, but the body overreaches itself, becomes non-identical with itself. It doesn't stay equipped with a given set of needs; it transforms those needs into that continual going-beyond we call history. I want to find a new way to do this, looking at Marx and Freud as both trying to think through the cultural project again from that somatic standpoint. Obviously I suppose those are things that connect with present feminist theory and certainly my own interest wouldn't have developed at all without that vital context. But the proper attention of feminism to gender or sexuality is asking only one crucial side of the question. There are also related questions, as I have said, about the productive body, the speaking body, which involve but aren't reducible to a theory of gender. I would hope therefore that the work I'm doing would strike a lot of resonance with the feminist project, if there is one such project. Perhaps I should say that the socialist

Eagleton: Yes, very much so, I was very excited by Merleau Ponty early on and he would be an interesting example, wouldn't he, of someone who takes over a highly rationalistic discourse and then tries to rethink it in terms of the body. Now some people would argue that this is not possible, and it's what Husserl once called the tension between a rationalist universalism and a greater sensitivity to the *Lebenswelt*. On the one hand I think we have inherited a lot of rationalistic schemes that clearly don't connect with lived subjectivity. At the same time I don't think we want to fall back to a philosophy of the subject of consciousness. We can't do that after Freud, and if we are therefore to develop an adequate position it has to be one that takes its standpoint not in the cogito, not in the ego, but in that ambivalent subject-object, the body. In that respect Freud's ego is very much a body ego, as he himself insisted.

Border/Lines: In light of this, how would you characterize Fredric Jameson's aesthetic/political project of cognitive mapping which calls for, as he says, almost an unfathomable attempt to think the universality, the totality of late capitalism that structurally can no longer be grasped in phenomenological terms, the experiential terms of an embodied subject?

Eagleton: It is true that we are in a world where the body as we know it simply can't find its way around any more, a world which goes so far beyond its own limits. Technology is an extension of the body which then returns to plague it. Wittgenstein once said that philosophy is an answer to the question: I've lost my way, I can't find my way around. So what you do, obviously, is get yourself a map. But you might well say, on the other hand, that the point is not to cognitively map the world but to change it. If, as in the Jamesonian project, cognitive mapping might

relate to change, fair enough, but it's not always clear how it does. I think we have to beware of simply being thrown back to a contemplative stance where one would summarize, connect, or totalize this and that, which isn't in itself an advance on idealism.

But then again I'm not convinced the totality has to be purely contemplative, because actually it's part of classical Marxism to claim that the totality is always grasped and constructed from a specific, practical, tendentious standpoint, rather than from a speculative one, in the manner of transcendental idealism. It seems to me that in the postmodernist, postmarxist age, we are continuing to offer, on the one hand, either clearly discredited idealist notions of the totality, or on the other hand, a readiness to settle for a kind of more localized and limited brand of micropolitics, often so small as to be invisible. Whatever the difficulties with the idea of totality — and they are real — such micropolitics sometimes almost wilfully ignores the fact that in one fair and obvious sense, we are already in a total system. It may not be total in the way the totality has been grasped by idealist thought, but ironically, the epoch of the micropolitical is exactly the period in which in a certain sense, the system's totalized interconnections have become more painfully obvious than ever.

Border/Lines: In the conclusion of a recent paper on aesthetics you state that for the Marx of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* the true sublime is that infinite, inexhaustible, heterogeneity of use-value—of sensuous, non-functional delight in concrete particularity which will follow from the dismantling of abstract rational exchange-value. Could you comment on this reading of use-value particularly in the context of Baudrillard, among others, who criticize what they call Marx's productivist bias?

Eagleton: I think my promulgation as it stands doesn't sufficiently take the pressure off the critique of productivism which Habermas and others launch, and I think I have to reframe that formulation in terms of a Marxism less productively based. (Which is to say, in part: male-based). However I think that my formulation is a legitimate extrapolation from Marx, in the sense that I think Marxian use-value is all about the sensuous, self-delighting body. I think, however, that the wider Marxian sense of productivity is vulnerable to the charge that it is still part of the old philosophy of the subject, that is to say, the old metasubject whose essence is to express, produce, realize itself. There is a lot in that, but it tends to leave in suspension questions such as what we should produce, which powers and capacities we should realize. Therefore, all this talk of production has to go on in some context of

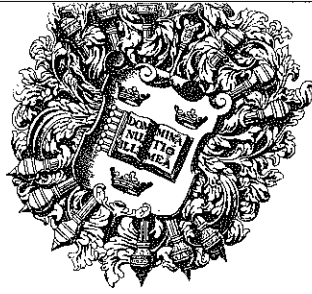
intersubjective discursive point. I think it would be romantic or libertarianism, such that some value is in itself a problem would be expressed, held back. old romantic expression though it's indeed **Border/Lines:** Would the reception of your *Scholars*?

Eagleton: The reception very gratifying particularly well in Ireland there, which please I hope without too much of my Irish heritage English in certain ways political issues back it has had such a good every publisher tell realism sells.

The other interest that it has been quipped, critics, reviewers a think it would just hardline. They have novel than they have work. I think if the heavy and ideological done so with alacrity haven't quite managed of them would like

Border/Lines: Realist working class family realist techniques rejected. Is this a veil today or does it refer issue of style, or between theory and fiction

Eagleton: I feel that the theoretical work has literary realism to occasionally I've been his novels, which some of 20th century *M*. I think that the inflections' theory and gravely understating He was putting together on modernism just that he had a life-long novels he had begun fiction, to move beyond novel he was engaged of a Welsh community major *theoretical* interesting convergence



intersubjective discourse which is Habermas's point. I think it would be a mistake to take only a romantic or libertarian interpretation of Marxism, such that something called concrete use-value is in itself valorized, and then the only problem would be the fact that it is being suppressed, held back. Marxism must not fall for the old romantic expression/repression model, though it's indeed deeply influenced by it.

Border/Lines: Would you care to comment on the reception of your recent novel, *Saints and Scholars*?

Eagleton: The reception of the novel is so far very gratifying partly because it has been received well in Ireland, it is indeed a best seller there, which pleases me a lot because I'm proud, I hope without too much of the usual sentimentalism, of my Irish heritage; I feel more Irish than English in certain ways, and I'm involved in Irish political issues back home. I'm also pleased that it has had such a good reception in an age where every publisher tells you that only documentary realism sells.

The other interesting aspect of its reception is that it has been quite well received by literary critics, reviewers and commentators who might think it would just be cerebral, humourless and hardline. They have been a lot less severe on the novel than they have on some of my theoretical work. I think if they had been able to say it was heavy and ideologically turgid, they would have done so with alacrity. And the fact that they haven't quite managed to say that, much as some of them would like to, I must confess pleases me.

Border/Lines: Raymond Williams' novels of working class families are written with sober realist techniques which you seem to have rejected. Is this a verdict on the status of realism today or does it reflect a deeper concern with the issue of style, or perhaps with the tension between theory and fiction?

Eagleton: I feel that Williams sometimes in his theoretical work has pitched the importance of literary realism too high, and I must say that occasionally I've been rather harsh about that in his novels, which sometimes tend toward a kind of 20th century *Middlemarch*. At the same time I think that the influence of modernism in Williams' theory and practice has somehow been gravely underestimated, by myself and others. He was putting together a collection of his essays on modernism just before he died. It is something that he had a life-long interest in. Even in his later novels he had begun, by the use of, say, science-fiction, to move beyond realism. The most recent novel he was engaged in was an enormous history of a Welsh community, which I think may be his major theoretical work of this period—a very interesting convergence between theory and fic-

tion. They have always been deeply implicated with each other, and Williams has always seen his fictional work as a part of his overall enterprise.

Border/Lines: Returning for a moment to the question of style; your own has been characterized as pointed, witty, polemical, sometimes conversational, particularly in reference to *Saints and Scholars*. In your essay on Jameson you spoke of style as something like an excess in analytic discourse and of the pleasure of style itself as a lateral gesture that figures almost as a utopian dimension of the work in its own right. How important is the question of style in relation to your own work, or more specifically is there a "politics of style" that is taking on a new dimension here? Does Roland Barthes still figure prominently in this issue?

Eagleton: First of all, I like to think that my actual style of writing can be rather clear, that is to say, I like popularizing and think it a political duty of a socialist intellectual. If I can make it funny, all the better. Some of my other work is more high-pitched and rhetorical. I'm a great believer in style as adaptable, as different forms of writing suiting different situations, and I think too many contemporary theorists adopt an invariable style. Obviously style is such a deeply unconscious process that there are consistent trade-marks, however one might try to variegate. But a concern for style would seem to me to be part of the business of trying to deconstruct the boundaries between fiction and theory. I like to write theory in a metaphorical way, and to use some devices commonly associated with fiction. To pick up on the reference to Roland Barthes,

learned so much, ends up putting style on one side and ideology and politics on the other, which in a way brings us back to the question of the local instincts and practices of the body, on the one hand, and a more ambitious politics on the other. Barthes was very much a part of the drift at that time away from the global to the local, in which I see certain gains, but also a certain defeatism.

Martin Amis, the darling novelist of British youth, once said he would sacrifice all to a well-turned phrase, and though I have turned the odd phrase myself I find that aestheticism, on our present blighted planet, objectionable. There is a sense, as I have argued with respect to Jameson's work, that style in writing resists commodification, in a world where it is part of the effect of the commodity to desensualize; but it can of course become commodified in its turn. I think we have to find a way to resist that form of commodification in the letter of the text, as Keats found a way of resisting commodification by sensuousness, by a kind of shameless overlaying of the language which brought down on his head charges of cockney vulgarity from the guardians of literary consciousness. I dislike the anaemic, colourless writing of which the left has alas been so prodigal. If you look at a certain tradition of philosophy from Nietzsche and Kierkegaard to Adorno and Wittgenstein, they have all been marked by this attempt to break out of the straight-jacket of orthodoxy in the very letter of their texts, by developing new forms and styles of writing. I don't have that sort of status, but perhaps in a modest way I can follow suit. For one thing, I write songs, and would rather write a good satirical political song than a good essay any day.

In the postmodernist, postmarxist age, we are continuing to offer either clearly discredited idealist notions of the totality or the readiness to settle for a more localized and limited brand of micropolitics, often so small as to be invisible.

one of my greatest favourites is Oscar Wilde, the Irish Roland Barthes. There is in Wilde what I see as an Irish concern with style and display, with humour, wit, rhetoric and subversion, as against a leaden, puritanical British tradition. Wilde is very political, if not in an obvious way. There are many interesting parallels between Barthes and Wilde. Since my book on Walter Benjamin, I've been interested in the relationships between politics and comedy, which my novel in a way tries to deal with too. I find it saddening, however, that Roland Barthes himself, from whom we all

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What Use is Canadian Culture?

Tom Wayman

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Whenever free trade with the U.S. is denounced, or when the arts in Canada face cut-backs in government funding, the threat to Canadian culture is raised as an issue. In these debates the *value* of Canadian culture is often accepted as a given, or is touched on only briefly. But the question of how useful our culture is to our society has never seemed that simple to me. I find the commonly-given explanations as to why Canadian culture has worth are unconvincing at best and transparently false at worst. Yet I believe Canadian culture does have merit. Determining what is valuable in our culture is a tricky matter, however, as I hope to show in what follows.

Before I continue, though, let me be more precise about what I mean by "culture." A review article by Ian McKay in Memorial University's *Labour/Le Travailleur* a number of years ago (8/9 [1981-82]) pointed out there are nearly 300 definitions for the word in current use (for instance, "logging camp culture," "women's culture," etc.). I intend to refer here to a non-anthropological sense of the word. By "Canadian culture" I mean those artifacts produced by Canadians that are commonly referred to as part of the fine arts, performing arts, literary arts, etc.

To begin to assessing the worth of Canadian culture, I have to note English-speaking Canada's history as a cultural colony first of England and then the U.S.A. This has resulted in many of us being affected by culture in bizarre ways. I was giving a talk in 1987 to a class at Vancouver Technical Secondary School. The teacher of this English class had chosen, despite

the approved curriculum, to present her students with a whole term of contemporary poetry about Vancouver. I told the class how lucky they were to have this still-rare opportunity. When I was growing up in B.C. in the 1950s and 1960s, the culture I was aware of was entirely produced by and about people who lived elsewhere—either geographically or in time. Thus, for example, we learned poetry was written by dead Englishmen. And as for the culture we were exposed to outside of school, the idea of a rock n' roll star being based in Vancouver was unthinkable.

I described for the class my own experience of driving from Vancouver to California for the first time in 1966, and how when I initially drove into Los Angeles I felt that I was at last present in a real place. Of course I knew Vancouver was real. But I was tremendously excited to be among the place-names that I had so often heard mentioned in books and songs, or seen in movies. To be heading at high speed down the freeway, past the signs for *Hollywood Boulevard, La Cienega Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard*, was for me to have finally arrived on the planet Earth.

And I did not gain much sense of perspective, I informed the class, until a couple of years later when I took a job in northern Colorado as a university instructor. The town where I taught, Fort Collins, is close to Laramie, Wyoming. Since Laramie is the setting for, or referred to in, a number of Western stories, movies, cowboy ballads and so on, I was anxious to see the place. Yet when I finally visited, I was shocked to discover that it appeared to be a small town, not

much bigger than, say, Squamish, at the head of Howe Sound north of Vancouver. I left Laramie thinking hard about why *Squamish* wasn't famed in song and story. Surely fascinating events had happened to the people who had settled and worked in and around that town. And even if not, why couldn't Squamish be a locale for fictional occurrences, just as Laramie was, given that the towns were of similar size? I also pondered what a difference it must be to grow up in or near places that are considered worth celebrating in the culture around you.

"Culturally, things are somewhat better for you," I told the class. "After all, Canadian literature is now taught in our colleges. And here and there in certain high schools like this, you students are shown writing about your own city and your own era, as we never were."

"Of course, there's still an enormous distance to go," I continued. "For example, you'll see lots of movies about teenagers attending high schools. But," I intoned, "these films won't be based on what it's like to go to *this* school. You'll see movies about Hollywood High, but nobody is making a movie about Van Tech Secondary."

At this, the class broke into loud laughter. I stared at them, bewildered, until the teacher came to my rescue. A U.S. film crew had recently spent some days at Van Tech filming a movie, she explained. But, like many of the movies made in the last few years in B.C., the locale was supposed to be the U.S. In fact, the setting for the film shot in the halls and classrooms of Van Tech was supposed to be...Hollywood High.

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These students were aware that part of their own reality was about to be presented to them transformed into somebody else's. And yet they also had a teacher willing to show them that their own streets and mountains, and the experiences of their parents and fellow citizens, could also be the subject of culture (in the poems they were considering this term). Unlike my introduction to culture, these students were at least conscious that different possibilities for culture exist.

But if we start to consider in more detail that cultural possibility called "Canadian culture," to better understand what value it might have, then the first problem surely is: *which* Canadians are we talking about? What is the range of experiences and ideas currently included in Canadian cultural artifacts? *Whose* Canada do we mean when we speak of "Canadian culture?"

We can see this problem illustrated by a trip, say, to the B.C. Provincial Museum. Visitors are shown, among other exhibits, the interior of a "typical Victorian-era house." But this is false. On display is the interior of a home belonging to people of a certain social class—in this case, a fairly well-to-do family. We are not shown the interior of a "Victorian-era house" belonging to, for instance, a mine employee or a millworker. Then, as now, there was not one British Columbia, but many existing simultaneously. If we are to assess the worth of Canadian culture, we had better start by being clear about the particular Canada a given cultural artifact speaks about or to.

I've noticed cultural producers or commentators sometimes attempt to avoid this task by explicitly or implicitly denying that economic divisions between Canadians exist. Or, if these divisions are observed, their cultural significance is denied. A fascinating attempt to simultaneously recognize these economic differences, while downplaying their significance, was made by Petro-Canada in their television ads promoting the oil company's sponsorship of the 1988 Winter Olympics torch relay. In the ad, the inhabitants of a small town are shown getting ready to watch the relay runners carry the torch through their community. We see a well-dressed businessman shutting up his shop, and we also see a welder turn off his torch and push his goggles up onto his forehead, in preparation to leave to witness this momentous event.

Seconds later we observe these representatives of the two major economic divisions of Canadian society, employers and employees, stand side-by-side in a crowd watching with evident pride and joy the Olympic torch being carried past. The welder turns to the businessman and give him a mild, comradely punch on the shoulder, as evidence that the emotions surrounding this event have dissolved class distinctions and, by gosh, we Canadians are all in this together. The businessman wipes away a tiny tear from his eye. This is of course crude propaganda, but it arises out of an actual wish people have for

unity, for a feeling of community. That wish may not be the motivation that inspires museum directors, cultural commentators and corporations to blur the distinctions between the lives of the majority of Canadians and the lives of the minority who have economic control over us. But it is certainly that wish that causes many Canadians to uncritically accept this view of their own society and culture.

In fact, not even colossally expensive public spectacles like Calgary's 1988 Winter Olympics or Vancouver's Expo 86 can abolish the differences in economic interest between those who are employed for a living and those who employ others for a living. Large taxpayer-funded spectacles are inevitably the occasion for corporate advertisers and public relations experts to generate a great wave of sentimentality about a region or the nation in the hope of motivating sales of various products. But the reality remains that no businessperson would reverse a decision to fire somebody on the grounds that the person affected is an Olympic supporter, or because the man or woman to be fired is a fellow *Albertan* or *Canadian*. Nor would any employer refrain from automating or moving operations to a different part of the world in search of cheaper labour costs on the grounds of patriotism.

Corporations like Petro-Canada may call themselves "proudly Canadian." But the same federal government that owns both Petro-Canada and Canada Post did not hesitate for an instant to employ scabs to attempt to break the strikes by Canadian postal workers in the summer of 1987. The issue at stake, as in most strikes, was the employer's wish to save money. On the other side of the dispute was employee resistance to measures that would worsen working conditions and lower their standard of living. The consequence of a victory for the employer's demands would be to depress the quality of life for one group of Canadians. This is surely a strange technique for demonstrating pride in one's country.

Always, then, we have to watch closely when people begin to invoke "Canada" to justify culture—or any other activity or cause. Who represents this "Canada" we're asked to identify with? And while sorting this out, we have to be clear about a second matter: our own idea of what a *country* is. In other words, what is Canada *for*? Does it primarily exist to provide a place where men and women who own enterprises can maximize profits? Or is it intended to be a sort of co-operative venture, whereby all those who live here work jointly to ensure the maximum happiness for each other? When the federal government decides to spend \$8 billion to obtain a nuclear submarine fleet rather than, say, to provide food for the users of Food Banks in the country's cities and towns, the government acts on a specific belief in the purpose of Canada.

Or, is the nation's aim is to provide a free and democratic environment in which the people who live here can make their own decisions and solve

their own problems? If so, how far should this democracy extend? Within the past 75 years we have seen political democracy spread to women and Orientals—two groups formerly denied the vote. But have we now attained a fully democratic society? Is it right that, as at present, democracy ceases for the majority of us the moment we enter the office door or the factory gate? If we're adult enough to decide the affairs of state in national elections, are we not adult enough to democratically control the enterprises where we work? How democratic is a situation where a handful of non-elected Canadians have enormous economic and social power over the rest of us during our hours each day at the job?

For me, thinking about the value of Canadian culture includes being definite about what group of Canadians are referred to, and whose vision of the country's purpose is being openly or indirectly endorsed. Yet the impassioned spokespersons on behalf of Canadian culture seldom stipulate which Canadians and what concept of Canada they mean. Instead, I hear three major arguments repeated when these spokespersons do try to indicate *why* Canadian culture might be worth protecting.

One explanation they give for culture's importance in Canadian society is that culture, especially high culture, raises us out of the humdrum of daily life, *inspires* us, gives us new vision. "Culture lifts us out of ourselves," as one speaker put it at an anti-cutback rally I attended in Edmonton some years ago.

However, the capacity to lift us out of ourselves is the characteristic of a narcotic. Any narcotic—whether alcohol or some other recreational drug—gives us the illusion of escape from the everyday, fills us with dreams of other possibilities for our lives, and then cruelly returns us to the same daily existence from which we sought to remove ourselves. Far from being a means of escape from our present situation, a narcotic reinforces present realities by keeping us occupied with illusions, instead of us letting us gain knowledge or skills to solve our personal and social problems. Any narcotic, such as going to cultural events, is potentially addictive precisely because it does *not* lead to changes in our daily life. The only way we can feel that good again is to have another hit, to take another trip into a beautiful never-never land.

Mainstream ballet, for example, seems to me to teach that the essential truths of this world are to be found in fantasy, far away from the joys and difficulties of everyday existence. Like much of mainstream culture, ballet's celebrations of artificial and impossible characters and situations appears to offer me escape from the sources of my daily unhappinesses and problems. As we've seen, though, such escape is bogus, since nothing is altered in my daily life by this cultural product. I gain neither understanding about the causes of my difficulties nor ideas about overcoming injustices inflicted on myself or others. At the end of





the performance I am returned to a world that is exactly as I left it. I may have gained a memory of some delightful moments, but I also know what I must purchase to experience those moments again.

And as for the Romantic concept that exposure to high culture will influence people's day-to-day behaviour for the better, World War II appears to have put an end to that notion. The image of Germany, once considered the most cultured nation in Europe, adopting Nazism as a means out of its difficulties demonstrates conclusively mainstream culture's narcotic, rather than rehabilitative, function. Consider the symphony orchestras the Germans organized from concentration camp inmates for the enjoyment of the camps' guards. How responsive to human feelings did experiencing this wonderful music make the guards?

A second attempt to explain the usefulness of Canadian culture I hear from time to time is that Canadian culture defines who we are. Without specifying the "we" here, this argument seems to me absurd. I certainly don't feel defined by Karen Kain's dancing, or Margaret Atwood's new nov-

Since the governing influence on our lives is the job we do (or our lack of employment), any cultural artifact intending to articulate our personal and social existences would have to take into account what happens while we are at work and the ways our employment affects our time off the job.

el, or Bryan Adams' new record, or some video artist showing her or his work to a group of fellow artists at a state-supported gallery. I personally don't know anybody who does feel their lives defined by such activity.



And in British Columbia, at least, the gap in attitudes between various sectors of the population has become so pronounced that it would be difficult to imagine any encompassing "British Columbian"

point of view that a cultural artifact could define. The B.C. government, duly elected by a slim majority, reduced already-inadequate welfare payments to offset its growing deficit. Funds then were allotted to provide \$5,000 worth of fireworks every night for the six months of Expo 86. The gulf in values is enormous between those British Columbians who believe a community has a duty to help its members who require assistance, and those British Columbians who believe the community's first duty is to use its financial resources to attract tourists (i.e., customers with money from elsewhere). I've yet to see cultural artifacts that incorporate both sets of values, to the satisfaction of those who hold these divergent views. Who, then, is the "we" this culture supposedly defines?

The third defense of the worth of Canadian culture that gets articulated is a monetary one. In this argument, culture has value and should be supported because government subsidies to the arts generate profits for business. Advocates of this line of reasoning have the figures to show that each symphony ticket sold results in extra consumer spending on restaurant meals, taxis, baby-sitters, drinks after the concert, and so on. Similarly, the Canada Council program of support for public readings by Canadian authors is regarded as a subsidy of the airlines, plus a boost in book sales to the benefit of printers, paper-makers and book stores.

Where this argument seems faulty to me is that it tries to create the impression that people are attracted to become artists in order to benefit business. I don't believe this is true. People I know who have become writers, painters, musicians, etc., didn't do so out of a philanthropic wish to aid the downtrodden business community. They became involved in producing cultural artifacts because they want to express some truth as they see it, or because they enjoy play with words or sounds or forms or colours, or because they find being involved with the arts enables them to feel and think and observe life in new and exciting ways. Their obsession with whatever cultural form or forms they adopt amounts to a rejection of the concept so beloved of business that the only means to measure value on this planet is the dollar.

In my experience, the business community senses this fundamental clash of values between the cultural world and themselves. If the dollar is *not* the paramount means of assessing worth in our society, then somebody who has adopted this philosophy has made a hideous error in her or his life. Overall, that's one main message of culture. So I don't find it surprising I've never seen anyone opposed to an appreciation of the arts who was won over on the grounds that culture is good for some businesses.

In contrast to the three standard justifications of the usefulness of Canadian culture, I have a different reason for regarding Canadian culture as important. I believe culture that is about a clearly defined group of Canadians, that celebrates and explores their lives, can help provide these people with a sense of self-confidence. Such cultural artifacts suggest to these women and men that their lives are worthy of being the subject of art, and thus that what happens to them is significant.

On the other hand, a lack of this self-confidence tangibly harms these people, individually and as a group, and leads themselves and the rest of the human family to overlook their achievements and potential.

The group of people I feel should be the central focus of Canadian culture is the majority of those who inhabit our portion of the globe--those of us who are employed for a living. Since the governing influence on our lives is the job we

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At present, as I elsewhere, a strict portrayal of work in exceptions, an insid go to work each da missing. And this ample, because da culturally important possible futures ar curriculums: As a embark on years of sion with only the what a job is like a affects the human absence in our cultu of our work also l isolation. We are a lems at the job, or p work because of ou we are the only or unsure and isolated for a collective ar collective means to

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do (or our lack of employment), any cultural artifact intending to articulate our personal and social existences would have to take into account what happens while we are at work and the ways our employment affects our time off the job. Further, since many aspects and most nuances of how our work shapes us are known only to an *insider* to our situation, it is up to ourselves to create the culture that reflects and illuminates our lives.

At present, as I have written about at length elsewhere, a strict taboo surrounds an accurate portrayal of work in Canadian culture. With few exceptions, an insider's look at what it is like to go to work each day in contemporary society is missing. And this taboo hurts people. For example, because daily work is not considered culturally important, its history, present form and possible futures are largely ignored in school curriculums. As a result, students frequently embark on years of training for a trade or profession with only the haziest or glossiest notion of what a job is like and of how this employment affects the human beings who perform it. The absence in our culture of any accurate depiction of our work also leads to a profound sense of isolation. We are aware we have certain problems at the job, or problems that arise away from work because of our employment. But perhaps we are the only ones who feel this way? Left unsure and isolated, we are less likely to search for a collective answer to our difficulties, a collective means to improve our lives.

A further negative consequence of the taboo is a mystification of how products and services come to exist. One consequence of this mystification is that when we don't know much about each other's jobs, don't know much about how the goods and services we need or want are created, it becomes easier to believe negative reports about people who in reality are very much like ourselves. That is, we are willing to accept the received idea that postal workers are lazy, people on strike are greedy, etc. Yet the more we accurately understand about each other's working lives, the more readily we can feel a kinship with them, and can practice solidarity with them when they run into difficulties.

All of this begins to change if our cultural world recognizes the importance of the work we do: how that work determines our standard of living and the amount of time and energy we have off the job, plus the ways our employment influences our beliefs, friendships, where we live and much more. As *Canadian* employees, we are doubly disadvantaged when the cultural artifacts around us present neither our working lives nor our geographic and historical experiences. And since an accurate consideration of the working lives of women and of people of colour also has been largely absent from mainstream culture, these individuals face a triple and/or quadruple disadvantage in looking to Canadian culture as a source of self-esteem.

To me, then, culture has value when it breaks the taboo and gives a majority of Canadians self-confidence. And I don't say this just because I think self-confidence is a nice quality for people to have. I believe self-confidence is the root of democracy. If I don't consider myself important, why would I think I have the right to participate in determining what happens to me and to my community? Self-confidence on the part of the majority is *necessary* for the maintenance and extension of democracy. Since I consider democracy to be the form of social organization that offers the best chance for creating a fair, equitable and happy society, I regard a culture that promotes self-confidence as a *requirement* for the preservation and enhancement of human dignity.

A culture that diminishes or retards people's self-confidence, either through what it proposes or omits, I believe is a threat to democracy. When what we do and who we are is not considered culturally significant, when our contribution to society is hidden behind "big names" (for example, when a corporate executive is said to "make" the product our labour and imagination help create, or an architect is described as having "built" the building we worked on), then the worth of our lives is diminished compared to the value of a comparatively few other people. It is only a step from this to thinking that a "name" person is more important than we are, and hence that his or her thoughts, activities, opinions, etc. are more worthy and should have more weight than our own. This last idea, of course, is counter to the very basis of democracy.

And if we don't consider our lives important, then it is unlikely we will do much to change our lives for the better. Most movements in history that lead to a deepening and broadening of democracy begin with a belief among the activists that they *deserve* the changes they are battling for. In short, people involved with achieving social change have self-confidence. The barons who confronted King John to obtain the Magna Carta, no less than the men and women who fought for and won the eight-hour day, no less than the women who successfully struggled for the right to vote all had the self-confidence that led them to demand changes that were considered radical, unnatural, impossible to the established wisdom of their day. If Canadian employees are to achieve an extension of democracy to that part

of our lives where we don't yet have the right to vote—the workplace—we will need the self-confidence that we *deserve* democracy in every aspect of our social existence. Similarly, if Canada is to survive as a nation, Canadians will need the self-confidence that they *deserve* to be a separate country.

I look to Canadian culture to give us this self-confidence, but in a positive, enabling way. This means the self-confidence as provided by culture must not shade over into arrogance, into myths of unity or power that are harmful to ourselves or others in the long run. We have the U.S. example of the myth of the cowboy. This myth leads to the mentality of the man with the gun who is a law unto himself. As celebrated in culture, the cowboy myth can pave the way for U.S. armed intervention in Third World struggles. This myth, incidentally, also obscures the *reality* of the cowboy as an underpaid agricultural labourer, whose protests against living and working conditions have included from time to time strikes and efforts to organize unions.

Even with all these qualifiers I see as necessary for Canadian culture to be of value, I remain convinced that the cultural artifacts produced by Canadians can rise to the challenge. I am heartened by the appearance here of the new poetry, fiction and drama written by people about their own daily work—however overwhelmed this material still is by the bulk of our cultural products. Because all Canadians share the strange experience of being culturally invisible in their own land, Canadian artists have the ideal background to understand the importance of articulating the lives of the previously hidden majority. I do not think it is an accident that the new imaginative writing about work appears more often in anthologies of contemporary literature by Canadians—and by U.S. women and people of colour—than it does in anthologies of writing by mainstream (i.e., mostly white and male) U.S. authors.

I am therefore optimistic that Canadian culture will assist the majority of Canadians to find the self-confidence we require. I am aware, however, that the success of this project must involve a serious change in the artistic and academic status quo, since up to the present an accurate depiction of the lives of the majority of us has not been the goal of Canada's artistic or academic taste-makers—mainstream or avant-garde. Indeed, over the long haul the resistance of these authorities to admit the concerns of most Canadians into our artistic or academic agenda may pose a larger threat to the development of Canadian culture than either free trade or cut-backs in state sponsorship of the arts.

Tom Wayman is a poet and educator living in Vancouver. The poems that accompany this article will appear in his new collection, *In a Small House on the Outskirts of Heaven*, due out later this year.



MARSHALL-WELLS ILLUMINATION

for Jim Daniels

One bright morning, I was sent
to the wholesale cash-and-carry hardware,
glad to be out of the pounding and saws
of the jobsite, to drive the city streets
and walk into the wooden-floored building.

At the counter, the lone clerk
I had spoken with several times before
—an old man, surely past retirement—
fussed at his order books, precise
as his usual shirt and tie
concerning *common or finishing*,
galvanized or not,
lengths and amounts needed.
The stock numbers were passed
to somebody else for fulfillment
and I stood waiting, in my workclothes and boots.
Motes of dust
rose and drifted in the sunlight
that leaned in from windows down the long room
where a dozen other people toiled at desks.
Then a man entered
from outside, older than me,
younger than the clerk, dressed in coveralls
and leather carpenter's apron.
He pulled a list from a pocket
and stepped aside, as the counter clerk
bent once more to flip the pages of the catalogs
to set the number of each item
on the proper form.

And the man in coveralls,
perhaps for pleasure at the new day,
suddenly shifted his heavy boots back and forth
in a clumsy part of a dance
and stopped, grinning.

The motion caught the clerk's eye, and he frowned.
But the man
stomped his boots
in another quick pattern. He paused
under the clerk's dour gaze,
then resumed: the thick soles toeing the planks
and tipping back on heels,
nails falling from the pouches of his apron
as his arms flew out for balance. The man,
laughing, looked over at me for approval.
And the clerk also faced in my direction
shaking his head to invite me to mock
the ridiculous swaying.

But at this moment

I knew
neither gravity nor
centrifugal force
spins the Earth through space.
Our planet revolves
under the dancing feet of this man
and those like him: through their efforts
the immense bulk of our home
is moved. And I understood
as the boots crashed down, this joy
finds even in the dreadful agreements we labour in
what we have been given
under our invincible shoes.

Yet the three of us

hung suspended
in the amber light:
Grandfather Paper and Order,
Father Happiness and Measuring Tape
and myself. The rest of the office watched us
from their file drawers and typewriters
as I saw the planet lurch forward
with each kick of these feet
and the Earth also pushed on
by the weight of an invoice
dropped from an aged hand, saw Father and
Grandfather
both turned to ask me to choose
—one motionless, the other beginning to slow:

what could I do
but dance?

THE WRECKERS

One morning, along the lake road
it was as though vandals had passed by in the dark
and torn each mailbox from its post
at the top of the gravel driveways
and then hammered the metal containers
flat on the ground.
Where the mail receptacles could not be ripped
away from their supports
the entire structure had been pulled over
before the metal was dented in.
And when we, one by one, showed up
at the village post office to request them to
hold our mail while we repaired the damage,
we found the small building gutted by fire:
the blackened boards still steaming
in the noon light.

We telephoned the police
to report our loss and to inquire
who could have done these things
and why. But the constable at the other end
sounded uneasy. *It was authorized*,
he said. Later we learned
this is what he told everybody,
yet at the time we were each staggered
by his statement. Disbelieving,
we attempted to obtain more details from him,
beginning to argue. *That is all I can tell you*,
he said curtly. *Any other information
will have to come from
your elected representative.*

But they, too,
were little help. Those men and women we voted for
who belong to the groups out of office
blame the ruling party for what happened, promising
if we change who has the majority
there is a good chance matters will improve
—as long as what we want is
fiscally responsible.
The women and men in power
seemed sympathetic at first,
blaming these unfortunate events on decisions by
past office management
they vowed to look into
in the near future. But when we continued
to ask for assistance
these representatives

became sterner, said our attitude
is monetarily unwise. They announced to the media
country highways are more environmentally appealing
without the clutter of individual mailboxes
and hence their removal will increase tourism,
benefiting the entire community.
They proclaimed the village building
was not burned down
but spontaneously aged and decayed overnight.
They added that the wisdom
of the post office executives they appointed
will be evident in five or ten years
provided the new policies are given an opportunity to
work,
and the resultant improved cash flow
will demonstrate to every Canadian
that those who opposed these measure
are liars.

Yet as we listened to the speeches to reporters
and to the chambers and houses of legislation,
we noticed one noun
that flashes and sparkles
repeatedly among the statements and rebuttals,
two syllables
rolled lovingly around these tongues,
a word uttered with awe,
the way orators had once pronounced
God or the people. That cherished word
is *money*.
More significant than our needs
or wishes, this substance is invoked
to explain and defend
all these legislators
do. By how they speak the word,
it is obvious dollars are what they represent
in their assemblies: cash, not ourselves,
has elected them
to govern on behalf of cash;
they are the honorable members
from Money.

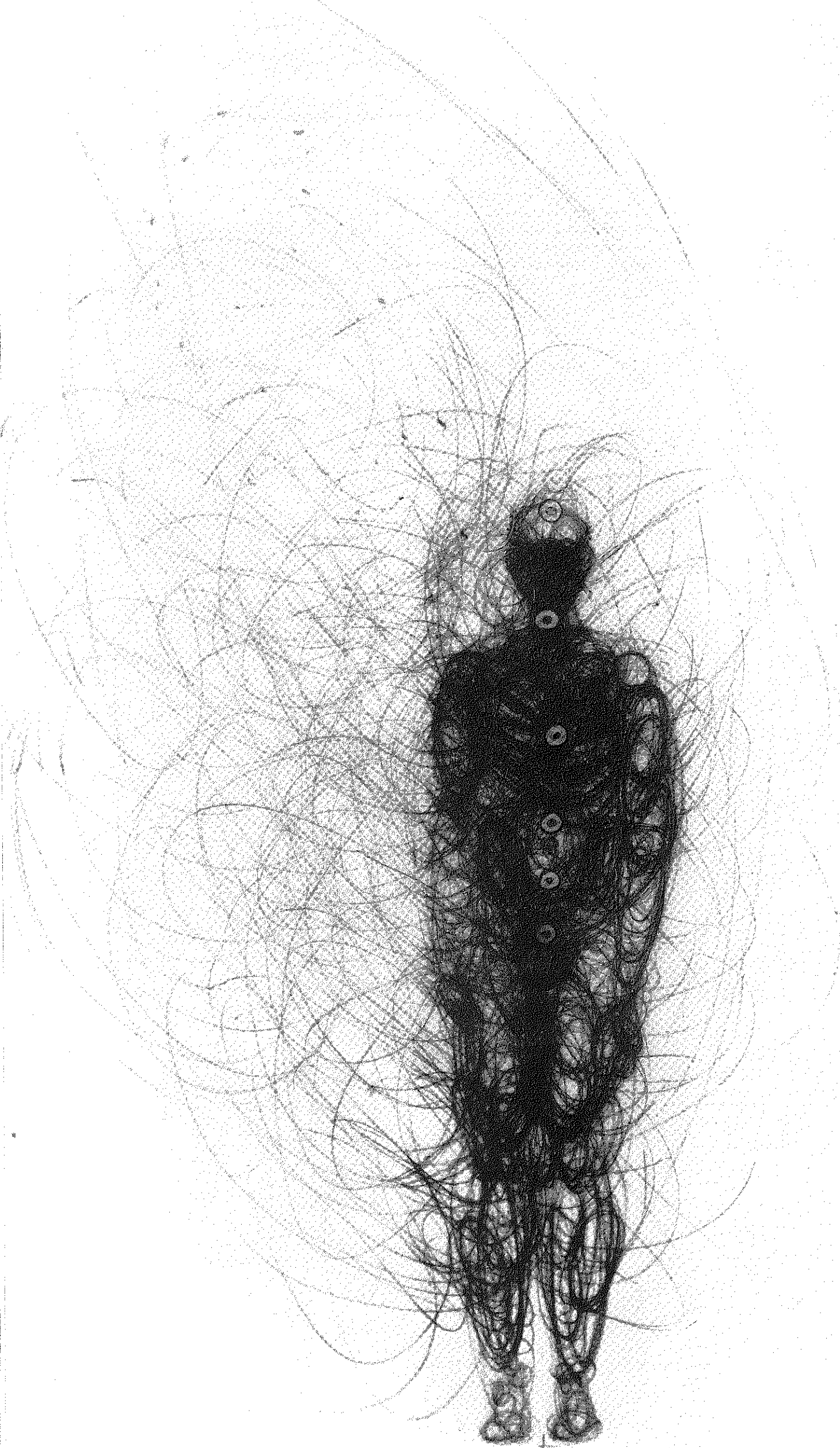
No wonder when we arrive before them
with our delegations and petitions
they appear resentful
and confused: we don't look like money,
we don't behave like money.
Why shouldn't they be anxious
to brush us aside
to meet with the real folks from home:
dollars?

Thus as we gather
to discuss among ourselves and create
from our lives—on the ruins
other men and women have caused—
different values,

by such acts we sustain
a fragile concept
older than the first settlement
at the north end of this valley,
a belief that endures through poverty and better years.
Each time we together refuse
what diminishes us,
what those who rule us have ordered us to accept,
it is not only rural dignity we
struggle to give birth to
and help grow,
but
human dignity.

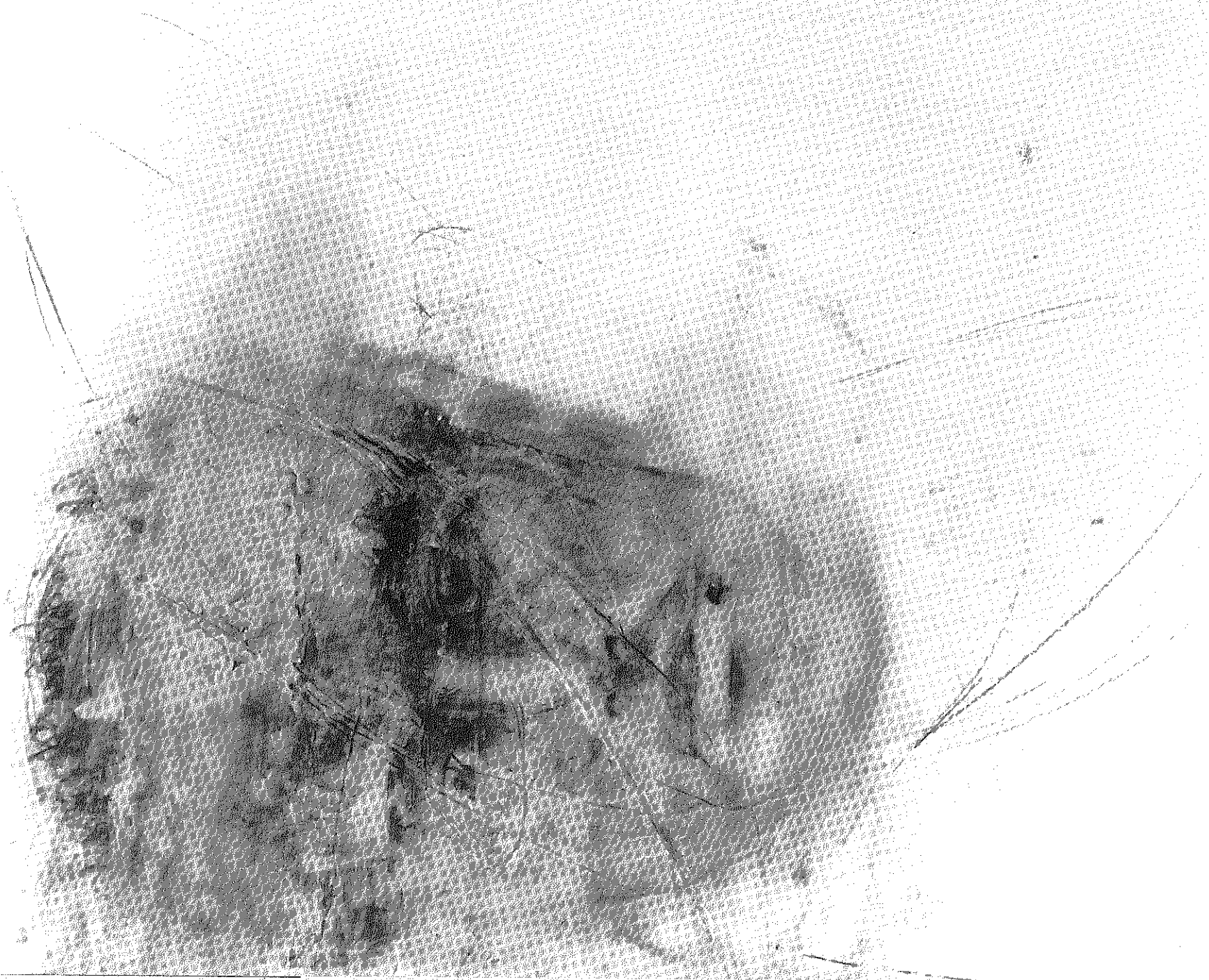
his body stephen andrews





28
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here today, then poof, you're gone



they kept his head for an oracle so that when the time came the head might whisper its secrets

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Nothing is irre
defined and ca
unclear and ca



Evenings Out

Attending Political Theatre in West Bengal

Himani Bannerji

Nothing is irrelevant to society and its affairs. The elements that are clearly defined and can be mustered must be presented in relation to those that are unclear and cannot; these too have a place [in our theatre].

Bertolt Brecht: *The Messingkauf Dialogues*

The experience of theatre starts long before the curtain rises and the play begins. Our theatre exists in the world in which we live, and our theatre experience, shaped by that world, rises from it and returns to it. The world of theatre is not sufficient unto itself. Neither art nor its experience is a separate reality.

Towards the end of the 1930s, and especially since the foundation of the Indian People's Theatre Association (1943), there developed among the middle classes of Bengal a political theatre movement which was centred in Calcutta. This movement, which originated and continued to develop in the context of a growing Marxism and communism in India, created a new tradition of explicitly political theatre which has become dominant in non-commercial theatre in West

Bengal and thrown up figures who are considered the most important theatre producers of West Bengal in the post-independence (1947) era. These playwrights see their theatre work as a form of conscious intervention and a part of the overall revolutionary process, and as such they are entirely preoccupied with representations of class and class struggle. My attempt here has been to describe the audience of two actual performances of such plays. These two evenings out are meant to capture the cross-currents of social relations which structure the audience's experience of the mainstream political theatre in Calcutta, West Bengal.

The two descriptions are meant to reveal certain features which are crucial both to the construction and study of this theatre. If we look at them closely, it becomes apparent that they arise in relation to an ex-colonial capitalist economy and a bourgeois socio-cultural environment. They display certain dramatic forms and social-political relations which are peculiar to these realities. On the one hand, we have the direct political intention of the playwright-directors, on the other, equally political, through indirect and unstated, the pressure of the existing social relations and dramatic conventions which shape the representational efforts. These mediational aspects of theatre production shape indirectly the final politics of this theatre, as they also shape the way reality is represented.

An Evening in an Auditorium

It was 5:30 in the afternoon. I was waiting at a bus stop going to see a play that started at 7 p.m. The bus-stop, as usual, was very crowded, and each time a bus came people rushed to get in. I missed three buses, then spotted a taxi, hurled myself into it before it quite stopped, and arranging clothes, bag, hair, said, "Academy of Fine Arts please."

We sped through street filled with vehicles and people. The crowd of buses, cycles, rickshaws, cars, taxis and pedestrians parted and swerved and made room for each other. Through the taxi windows I looked at the houses that we passed by—two to four stories high, old, shoulder to shoulder, every balcony jammed with people, clothes drying. They could all do with repairs and a coat of paint. And the ground floor of each had a small or a middle-sized shop. Shop keepers sat on chairs at the door of the shops. No electricity because of "load-shedding"—a term for eight to ten hours of power cut every day. Small kerosene lamps and big petrol lamps were being lit. Some better off shops had private electrical generators roaring away. Hot and humid weather. Clothes stuck to the body. Everywhere on the walls people had put their politics in bold letters, colours and images. Bright red hammer and sickle signs with "Vote Communist Party of India (Marxist) for a better life" confronted the amputated right hand of Congress (Indira) raised in benediction. The taxi sped through this towards the Academy of Fine Arts.

As we went toward the Academy the streets changed. Sidewalks had walking room and the stalls and vendors disappeared. The houses were



big, set back within a garden. They had high walls, topped with pieces of broken glass and often gneading tobacco in their palms. Parks were filled with flowers, not hovels and clothes drying on bushes. The poor featured now in some service roles and every house had electricity, meaning their private generators. The few shops there featured expensive goods. We passed by the Calcutta Club, with a Victorian fat-bottomed opulence, and the housing complex of the American consulate with its 12 to 14-foot-high walls topped with electrified wire. Now I had reached the edge of the huge "maiden", an open stretch of parklands and trees, containing Fort William, the race course, and the golf course. Rising out to a sea of dark green foliage, against a shell-pink sky, was the cupola of the Victoria Memorial Museum. The angel on the dome, now a silhouette against the evening sky, raised her head to blow her trumpet.

There it was, the Academy of Fine Arts, across the tree-flanked street, a place of new culture facing the old culture of colonial India. It stood among a cluster of what could be called "cultural buildings," such as the Nehru Memorial Museum, Calcutta Information Centre and Ravindrasadan, a huge auditorium, complete with fountains, murals, mirrors, red carpets, chandeliers and plush seats, named after the nation's poet, Rabindranath Tagore. The grounds of this building are going to be shared by the West Bengal government's new cultural complex. To the left of the Academy there is the huge neo-gothic Anglican Cathedral of St. Paul's. The grounds are laid out sumptuously and spires of the church soar out of a huge clump of trees.

The Academy of Fine Arts is a two-story building but relatively tall, dove grey, with brick-red trimmings and terra-cotta friezes. It occupies a large compound filled with tall flowering bushes and flower beds, with a fountain at the entrance and old, massive trees beside the high wall that surrounds it. It has both an auditorium and an art gallery. In the left section of the grounds there is a small two-story bungalow, which belongs to Lady Ranu Makherji, the owner, who has taken the private initiative to create a public space for art.

In front of this cultural edifice I got out in a hurry. I had neither booked nor bought my ticket, but my hope was that a few university teachers that I know, who are also theatre critics and writers, would have got here earlier and bought them. I rushed over to the box-office windows and found that indeed my friends had bought the tickets, and what is more, the director, who is a friend of some of us, was standing there. With my friends there were three men, whom I knew slightly, who are novelists and critics. I greeted these people. The director said that he had to go in, to put on his costume and make-up. He was both the lead actor and the writer of this play. As we walked towards the entrance of the auditorium, we ran into many people we knew. They were all somehow connected with writing, teaching and theatre. The editor of the well-known left theatre magazine, *Group Theatre*, was with us.



He stopped every few steps to chat with someone. At the three other box-office windows which sell tickets for shows on other days, people were buying advance tickets. I passed by the greenest of lawns strewn with sculptures that looked ancient and uncanny in the evening light. I overheard conversations about a film by a young left filmmaker, about the new German cinema, about bits of politics. There were a few women walking past me, who looked as though the chauffeured cars waiting outside the gate belonged to their families. The theatre producers were not themselves rich.

As I stood there thinking, waiting for the first bell to go, someone tugged the end of my sari. I looked around and saw this young person, an urchin, he could be called, a little vendor's boy, who said eagerly, "Didi (older sister) do you want tea or coffee?" He was a great contrast to the well-clad people, who bustled around the place or stood in small groups, the men smoking. He was very thin, contrasting with the pudgy softness of many of the others, his skin lacked their smoothness. It was dry and ashen looking. He was very short, probably small for his age, and his collar bones stood out sharply. Around his young bird-like scrawny neck he wore a sweat-soaked twine from which hung a copper amulet. His large eyes stood out in the dark small face like two pale shells on a dark surface. Now he was projecting a great intensity through them. He was eager, expectant and pleading. He varied his address for me and said, "Buy some coffee, or fanta or thumbs-up, *mem Sahib*." The word "mem Sahib" was originally used as an appellation for white women, and by now applied to westernized and upper class Indian women. "You think I am a *mem sahib*?" I asked. "No, *didi*," he said, "But I try everything. Do you or your friends want tea or coffee?" I asked him to bring four coffees and two teas. He ran up to the snack bar, filled with covered boxes of snacks and kettles of tea and coffee. A very thin man who was a thin as the boy, with tight lips and oiled hair, stood at the bar. He was better off than the boy, having a pair of intact trousers, and a graying and stained shirt. He and another similarly dressed man standing by him, unlike my companions, were not "gentlemen," *bhadralok*. They were only "men". When I went to pay he spoke to me in the honorific "you" and I should have used the familiar form. His teeth were stained with *pan* (betel nuts and leaves). They surveyed this theatre scene and culture-seeking people calmly—only interested in their business.

"Have you seen this play?" I asked.
"No," said the thin man, "we don't go to shows here."
"Why?" I persisted. "Too expensive?"
"No," he said rather curtly. But his companion was more loquacious, "These things are for you people, for the gentlefolk. Don't understand what's going on, what's being said."
"More fun," said the boy.
"How do you know what it is like if you haven't seen it?"
"Oh, we've been inside once or twice, and he," pointing to the boy, "goes in with messages

all the time. But why do you want to know all this *mem sahib*?"

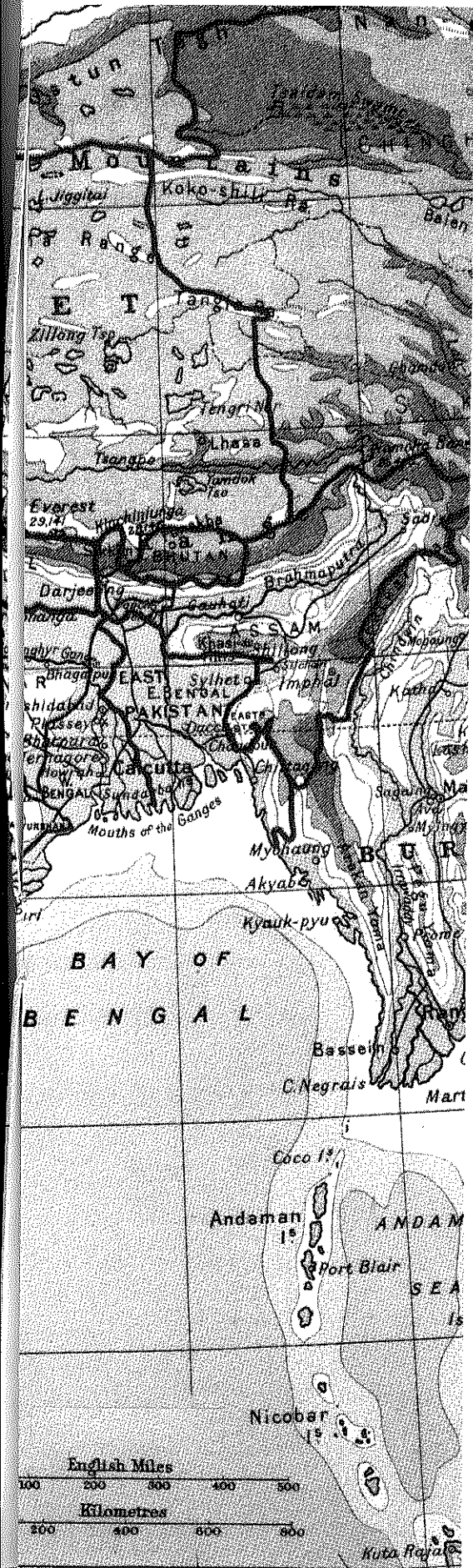
"Oh, just curious. Never mind. Here's your money."

His palm was broad and the line of fortune had been rubbed out by callouses, his nails were dirty and broken. I could hear the first bell, I walked toward the entrance, past the mural and the statues. The play, called *Jagannath*, was about to begin. It is about a landless peasant who has become inadvertently mixed up with nationalist politics. The poster at the door showed a man in a torn undershirt, thin, with sharply pointing collarbones, not unlike the vendors themselves.

Unlike the outside, the air-conditioned auditorium was cool and dry. I sat in the second row of an auditorium which holds 850 people, including the seats in the balcony. And before the light went out I looked around at the audience. They were people like myself, genteel and middle class—no flair, no flash. Educated men and women—office-workers, teachers, writers, critics—"cultured" people, who have been the backbone of Bengali culture since the last century. People of modest or even low income who attend political theatre—plays about the peasantry. The same people would also go to plays because it was "art" rather than "entertainment." It is their patronage that developed the non-commercial theatre of Calcutta from the early 1940s. They had some understanding of the non-commercial theatre's project of connecting public education and art. Many of them seemed to be coming from work. They had briefcases with them. The women wore no make-up. They wore nice cotton saris, not silk, nor many ornaments. They were "decent" Bengali women. They were probably among those in the cities and the countryside of Bengal who had voted the communist-led left front state government into power, and helped to maintain it there. Plagued by inflation and unemployment, it made sense that they would be there, trying to understand the role of the peasantry in Indian politics. Like them, I was here as well, waiting for the curtain to rise.

And the curtain did not rise as the lights went out. We sat in a pitch darkness which only auditoriums can have, and people waited expectantly. Someone said, "Oh bother, its load-shedding here too!" People coughed and fidgeted and a voice, over the amplifying system, very clearly enunciated the following lines—"Jagannath Das has been hung by the British government as a terrorist. We will now observe a minute's silence to show our respect for him." The voice had a magical effect, the audience stopped fidgeting and whispering. Without expectation, even those who had not realized that this was the beginning of the play, fell into a deep silence. A minute felt endless, and having produced the necessary attention, the lights at the foot of the curtain slowly went into action and the curtain began to rise. At this point we noticed a man standing on the outer edge of the apron of the stage. In a prisoner's striped clothes he stood, framed by a circle of light, isolated by that light as though in his prison cell.

The stage had minimum properties. A raised



platform at the back with a sacrificial block that is used in temples, a barred door on the right-hand corner, and a door frame on the left side, that was all. A little group had formed in the corner of the stage, of three or four men. They discussed the British government's curious freedom struggles in India. Why hang Jagannath as a freedom fighter, they asked? Born in the lowest caste and the lowest class, a cowardly, landless peasant, something of a slave and a buffoon, an opportunist that knocks on any door, including that of an informer. Why was he hung in an exemplary punishment by the British state as a political activist? This great unknown, the poorest of the rural poor, how had he become mixed up with our nationalist politics? Who was he really, this Jagannath Das?, asked the most militant of the freedom fighters, upon which one of the other men stepped out of the group and came to the very edge of the stage.

Facing the audience, talking to them directly, he said, "I have known Jagannath since his childhood. He is from my village..." The rest of the play was an attempt to answer the question of the freedom fighter—not however as an individual's biography, but rather as a display of a set of social relations to the lives of such people as Jagannath. It was interesting that it was the middle class ex-freedom fighter who had initiated this long-awaited question about the peasantry. The play was more an exploration of a problem rather than a story. The story, if one can call it that, through extremely fragmented narrative techniques, was inspired by the True Story of Ah-Q by the Chinese novelist Lu Hsiang-shan.

The people sat, as though mesmerized, throughout the play. Combining different acting styles, using a great deal of the lead actor's body, using Grotowsky-style physical acting—the play came to a conclusion when Jagannath slowly climbed up to the steps of the gallows, smiled at the audience, took up the noose and put it around his neck. The audience broke into a thunderous applause. All through the play they had been very quiet, and the auditorium had no children, nor frequent getting up and coming back.

During the break I sat out and smoked with my friends. They felt that it was a very well-done play, very well acted, with evenly paced movement from scene to scene, but that the episodes with women characters smacked of sentimentalism and the acting style of Bengali commercial cinema. There were also questions to be asked about the representation of the nationalist movement. People sat and chatted in small groups or stood around smoking. When the bell rang they trooped back in and some people, returning to their seats just as the curtain rose, lowered themselves so as not to obscure the view of the stage. Altogether it was a theatre-trained, or rather an auditorium-trained audience.

What, I asked myself in my journal, happened that evening between me/us, the audience and the stage? The play, having begun in this abrupt way, drew us right in, but again pushed us away by using the stage in a stylized, non-naturalistic way. The groupings/blockings on the stage, the enactment in sketches of the main/formative

episodes of Jagannath's life, the expansion of each of them into a scene, all made it apparent to us that this was theatre, not life—that this was a problem, not a biography. And yet, and for that reason perhaps, the play carried us relentlessly to the end. The director was playing with both what is probable and what is possible. The multiplicity of enacted possibilities, and not only the excellent acting (particularly that of the director/lead actor Arun Mukherji), outlined some of the roles for peasants in politics and the relationship between them and the middle class. Class became palpable as a social relation in each episode between this cowardly, abject, yet imaginative and angry peasant and his superiors and equals. I, and all the other members of the audience, sat at the edge of our seats and saw ourselves and our ancestors, members of the middle class and landed gentry, and we saw in Jagannath a man with whom our contact through centuries has been only through exploitation and servitude.

We saw him as our silent servants, the squatting obedient voter or the bussed-in rally-attender, the rickshaw puller who won't meet your eyes, the street vendor who sells roasted maize, the coolie at the railway station whose back is prominently bowed from carrying massive weight. Many faces, many functions—all of servitude. His body itself is humble, thin, straining at each muscle, like a weak buffalo harnessed to a heavy cart. And we also saw his anger—which we glimpse in the ferocious struggle with the coolies at the railway station, the cold ruthlessness with which they will cheat you, the angry eyes of the rickshaw puller when you, by mistake, don't give him the union rate, their servant as he stands at bay in front of the master unable to balance his account because he can't count, with his eyes smouldering.

Jagannath's ineffectual fantasies of power, his cheerful fantasy massacre of the landlords, showed the sleeping, smoking volcano in the peasant's mind. What are we, the middle class, supposed to do? After all we do want to engage in a revolutionary communist movement, and with people like him, about whom our knowledge is at best incomplete, mostly inaccurate. It became clear that this man's servitude will not make him a valid political agent, but his anger will. But that anger is directed towards our class, us as employers or servants of the class, us the urban, educated middle class—rational and civilized. If we want to be part of this politics, or more accurately want him to be a part of ours, then we must learn to deal with his anger and our fear. And here we were—actors, director, playwright, audience—all middle class, asking and trying to answer, without a peasant audience or peasant actors or any form of input from the peasantry—what is a peasant's state of political consciousness? What can be his contribution to a revolutionary movement and how must the middle class leader of a movement conceptualize the peasant? We have the right and the necessity to ask the question, but do we have the ability to answer it? Throughout the evening my head buzzed with questions. The play had a Brechtian quality to it, and had made us think. It

Before the lights w
people like myself.
"Cultured" people,
last century.

A Calcutta street. Photo



Before the lights went out I looked around at the audience. They were people like myself, genteel and middle class—educated men and women. “Cultured” people, who have been the backbone of Bengali culture since the last century.

A Calcutta street. Photograph by Michael Kuttner.



also had a lyrical touch to it, a sadness that moved us. For me, there was also a sentimentality and lack of clarity about women's roles, which bothered me a great deal. I was moved, critically stimulated, irritated—all at once. Who is representing whom and to whom, this was my main thought or concern. After the play was over we went to the “green room.” In the lighted mirrors, I saw the illusion being stripped. Old torn shirts, dirty *dhotis* were replaced by trousers and “bush” shirts or *punjabis*. Eyes and faces with pancake make-up, shadow and eye-liners were being rubbed off with vaselined rags. Another face was emerging from the peasant's face—that of the Bengali *bhadralok*, a *Babu*, a middle income, genteel gentleman. The vendor's boy that I met earlier in the evening was now serving tea busily. Arun, the director/lead actor/playwright—my old friend—met my eyes in the mirror and smiled. “How was it?” was the question that came next. A man's answer silenced me: “It was amazing what you did,” he said, “such a typical peasant. You were more authentic than what we see nowadays. Now they are all gentlemen, you know, with their bikes, watches and transistors!”

What do they mean, his words? From where did he know what a peasant “typically” is?, I thought as I sat in the bus on my way back home. This evening had given much to me, to all of us. It was a very complex set of thoughts and emotions that had been stirred up in me. What went into our responses? What shaped the theatre? How could we see clearly into what we call our experience?

An Evening in a Field

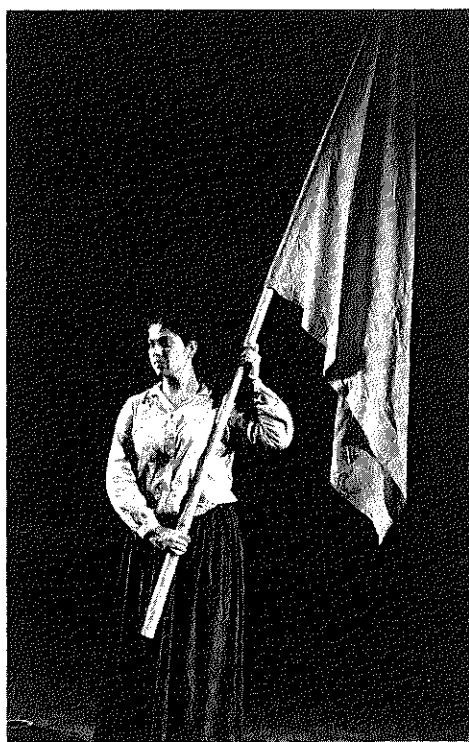
8 March 1983—*Chetana* is putting on a production of Brecht's *Chetana* is putting on a production of Brecht's *Gorki's Mother*. So we have a production which moves from Gorki (Russian) to Brecht (German) to Bentley (English) to Arun Mukherji (Bengali). It was part of a week of festivities—part of the National Convention of the student wing of the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI(M)).

It was taking place in the open grounds near a college where the conference was being held. Something must be said about this locality (Garia district), both sociologically and politically, if we are to place the audience for this theatre. The people living there were mainly displaced by the partition of Bengal at the independence of India (1947). The 1970-71 disturbances in Bangladesh brought in a fresh spate of people. They were either indigent or had very little money, they were of petty bourgeois origin, some urban some rural, and they were not able to find a secure niche for themselves in the economic organization of the new country. They were “gentle folk” (*bhadralok*) however, and unable to do work of the working class. Later there were others who moved into the area—businessmen, professionals, etc. who were forced by inflation to move out of the inner city. Now it is a densely populated area with isolated pockets of well-to-do people—with small factories and businesses. Once itself a hinterland for Calcutta's markets, supplying vegetables and fish, it still supplies maid-servants and day labourers who come from the

dispossessed rural people and the outer edges of this area. This combination of a population of the somewhat educated thread-bare gentry, generations of clerical workers and the working class (with peasant traits) make up the people that are the CPI(M)'s constituency. It is for their entertainment and edification that the play was going to be put up.

At six o'clock I appeared at the place where the play was going to be shown. They had fenced off a big field where the local youth usually play soccer. Now they had constructed a wrought-iron gate with red flags with hammer and sickle flying all over it. On either side of the gate, on two sides of the road, were tea stalls, push-cart vendors of all kinds selling fried chick peas, ground nuts, cigarettes, etc. Extending from either side of the gate, hugging the bamboo fence were display stalls, or exhibition booths as they were called. They exhibited different aspects of rural and urban development and public welfare undertaken by the left front government. The stalls displayed photographs taken at different projects and some gave information about different types of small technology used in agriculture and urban projects. There were also booths with art work by the Democratic Writers and Artists' Front—which is a coalition of creative/cultural producers with left/progressive sympathies—in particular CPI(M)-related. These booths were arranged in circles, each touching the other, forming an inner wall—leaving in the middle a circular open space which was supposed to be the auditorium. Red flags on high bamboo poles flew everywhere and there were several huge microphone speakers tied atop of other high poles. The place was teeming with people—the microphones were blaring out songs of struggle from the Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA), and a beautifully draped stage with blue cloth had been constructed at the north end. The stage was quite high, about four feet above the ground, presumably to be visible to a crowd of about 5,000 people. The ground, which had been walked bare in the course of the last few days and was hard as rock with packed, dry clay, was now covered with cotton rugs. There were no chairs—as is common with large outdoor performances. Many people were already sitting in clumps, smoking, etc. Everywhere people talked, shouted. The air was full of dust. A vast movie-like sunset in purple and orange overhung this scene. A Bengali version of "At the Call of Comrade Lenin" played on the microphones while the actors prepared themselves behind the scene.

The audience was probably three to four thousand in number and seemed to be mostly women and children. A great many seemed to be of working class origin. One could tell this by the way they dressed—either wearing their saris in the way women wear them in villages, or wearing them in the urban style but too high. Tucked in the wrong places, they lacked that impractical, flowing, graceful touching-the-ground look of the middle/upper middle classes. The women looked thin (middle class people are sort of plump), angular, awkward by middle class standards. Their hair was well-oiled, slicked back, the ver-



The women look thin, angular, awkward by the plump standards of the middle class. Their hair was well oiled, slicked back, the vermilion put on thick and bright on the part at the middle, big red spot in the centre of the forehead, with lots of plastic and imitation gold jewellery.

million put on thick and bright in the part at the middle, big red spot in the centre of the forehead, with lots of plastic, imitation gold jewelry. They had put on their best clothes, and dressed their children too in bright clothes with hair tightly braided. The men that sat or stood about dressed in the usual pants—frayed at the edges, cheap—also with hair oiled and slicked back, seemed lower middle class, and working class. Some men were in *lungis* (like a *sarong*) which no gentleman would wear out for the evening. There seemed to be a student youth population floating about—of threadbare gentility, most likely unemployed. They came from the local "refugee" families. CPI(M) has a very strong base among this part of the population. But the majority of the people, while generally positive to CPI(M), certainly not afraid of communism, were there because it was their neighbourhood, and every evening there were songs, movies, plays and speeches from the different departments of government and the Party.

The directors of the play asked me to keep an ear open to audience reaction. They had distributed a questionnaire at some previous shows at the Academy of Fine Arts, but since the method of a questionnaire-based opinion survey seemed to make no sense here, and since he had no part in the play, the director Arun Mukherji decided to

plant himself and some of us in strategic places to talk with people during the break and after the play. So about six of us—members and friends of the group—spread ourselves in the audience.

I found myself sitting in a group of women—two or three old women and a few young ones—as well as a child who was fidgeting all the time. The women seemed to be of the social status of maidservants—actual/potential—and called me *didi* (older sister—an address of respect) and used the honorific "you." But on the other hand, when I used the same honorific "you" to them, they were uncomfortable. One woman—an old one—said, "Why call us *Apni* (vous/usted)? Call us *Tumi* (tu)." We started talking. Initially they were uncomfortable, not used to nor trusting of social exchange with superiors. My clothes, accent, way of holding myself, my vocabulary all show my class as well, as an employer of women like themselves. A kid who was driving her mother and us insane provided something to talk about. But at the same time parts of the conversation were somewhat disturbing for me. "See this *didimoni*," they said to her, "keep quiet or she'll get really mad at you." This of course had an effect on the kid because she had accompanied her mother to the employer's house—where the ladies of the house—the powers that be, had told her to keep quiet, to sit still, or had probably even

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given her a candy sometimes. "How come you are here at this time?" I asked. "No cooking for the evening?" "Aunt here cooked in the afternoon, while we were at work," said one of the younger women. "Nothing much to cook anyway. They can heat that up and eat later." "You are sisters?" I ask. The two young women sitting with the kid laugh—how could we be together if we were? How foolish of me—married women living together in a family were sisters-in-law of course! "So you like plays," I continue. "Well, we saw more *palas* (indigenous plays) when we lived in the village, I still see quite a few during the Puja season when I visit my father," said one of the young women, "but here in the city there is not much by the way of *pala*. Kids from the neighbourhood put on one in the field of the library during Saraswati Puja—but now what we see are movies in Aleya (nearby movie theatre)". "Hindi movies?" I ask. "Hindi and Bengali both." "Do you understand Hindi?" "Very little—but there are songs, dances and lots of fights—if you look at what they do you get it sort of." "Which do you like best?" "Hindi," said a couple of women. Of the old women who were silent so far—one said, "I saw a Bengali movie some years ago. It was a holy picture—about visiting some distant shrines in the Himalayas." She touched her folded palms to her forehead. "*Didima* does not like songs and dances," explained someone. "But you do?" "Well I do—but also I like Bengali films—more feelings, very sad—I saw one the other day and I cried a lot. I really liked it." At this moment they announced the play was beginning. "Please quieten down now," said the voice, "and mind your kids. Don't let them run around wildly or scream." At a distance I saw a friend, she heads the Democratic Women's Federation for this area, dragging two urchins by the arm.

The play was about different stages of revolutionary development—the story of a mother's love for her son slowly changing into an understanding of the revolutionary process. Firmly established within the frame of class struggle Brecht traces a movement from the immediate and the local into that of class consciousness. The protagonists of the play are working class. The main protagonist is a woman, and there are quite a few women in the play. The world portrayed is that of the poor and the problems dealt with were the everyday worries of the working class—strikes, lay-offs, etc. In terms of content and concerns, there was quite a lot for the audience to identify with, including the beginning point of the transition, in which a mother gets involved with politics—not to be politically engaged but as an act to protect her son—and agrees to take the chance of being caught. She is an illiterate, god-fearing, unpoliticized working-class woman. Many of the women there could identify with this woman, at least more than I could. And yet the play seemed to happen even farther away than that—at a level which was not higher, but more abstract. It seemed distant, artificial; stiff, and yet sentimental. It had a kind of ideological blindness to everyday life that was all the more emphasized by the posters of Lenin, the slogans on placards or cloth banners, the red flag of the

strikers, and the heroic stance of the dying worker. The play seemed like a garish, over-coloured political poster. The performance was both rigid and timid, as though the director did not know the terms of the play or the politics, but had copied the stances, sequences and groupings from a Soviet poster book. The image of the working class came from book to life, not the other way.

And of course this problem was heightened because not only was there an established convention of acting, but also the names of the characters, their clothes (not so important for men, but for women) and their food were alien. But the most important distancing device was that of language. The workers, in the play as a whole, spoke in the language of "political literature," in the language of pamphlets and posters. And finally there was the stage—the raised proscenium stage—which in this field, where the audience was on the ground, made the action seem to happen at a literally "elevated" level and marked it off from "life." This was didactic theatre to educate the masses, to inspire them to class consciousness to expose them to the different elements of revolutionary struggle, and to hold before them a typical example. It was a highly normative theatre.

What did it really tell the audience about class relations and organization? How did it organize the relations during this performance, in this setting itself? How did it depict class and gender relations, for instance?

During the break and even during the performance I spoke to people. The director had great expectations of this production. The Party had approved of it—that is why they were invited here—and later in the year he was taking it to the industrial workers. So whether or not the "masses" actually related to this play was an important thing to find out.

My impression was that people were watching the play intently. This audience of three to four thousand people was very quiet. The women I sat with never talked, except to ask me at times what was being said (the microphone was not always working so well) and also to quieten the kids. During the break I asked the young woman next to me how she liked it. She pondered a bit and then said, "I like it—I don't know—it's different from the *palas* we see at home. It's got less story—no kings or queens—it's not about the gods. In fact it's hardly got a story at all except that he (Pavel, the son) dies and she is sick and then she gets up to go out and gets into a fight with people—they hit her. I can't get what that's all about, the copper (Russia and World War I). To be honest I can't get this story, but I like some of it. I think they are kind of communist." "Why?" I ask. "What makes you say that?" "The flags," she says, "they have flags like that in front of the Party office in our neighbourhood." "Are there communists in your village?" I ask. "Many," she said. "The cultivators are turning communist." "Why is that?" "Because they help out the poor," she replied.

During this conversation others were listening with a keen interest. Now I got offered a *pan*

(betel leaf) from a little box tied at the sari end of one of the elderly women. The other young woman who was in a green sari and liked Hindi movies now spoke up. She said, "I knew they were communists from the very beginning—way before they brought the red flag. Remember they were speaking about strikes. I have seen a lot of strikes. When they closed the Usha Company and laid off workers, I worked at a house near there. Every morning I saw people at the gate—they spoke—god, so loudly!—like everyone around them was deaf! They kept on saying, "You have to accept our demands." "So did you like the play?" I asked. "The pieces I understood, but they were not speaking like we do. When people speak like that I don't understand. I get something of what is going on—the old woman got something into the strike somehow—and then some fights, but I don't get what happens, they want a *biplab* (revolution)—but there are all these words. For instance, what does 'bourgeois' mean?" I said, "Well, the rich—the *malik* (the owner)—rich businessmen." "Well why don't they just say that?" An old woman says, "They were saying it's a play about Mother—but where's the mother in this?" "There is a mother—you know that woman in the blue dress?" replies another. "That's a mother! She's dressed in a frock like a little girl." "Grandmother," said one of the girls, "that mother is not like you and me. It's white people's mother."

These two descriptions speak for themselves, because they are not simply an expression of an immediate experience, but to quote Brecht, they each record an experience with "something equivalent to comment being incorporated in it." But there are a few points to which the reader's attention must be drawn, because these are basic issues of socialist/communist cultural practices, at the heart of the project of revolutionary social transformation. Since socialism/communism matures in bourgeois society, we have to watch out for contradictions, both in terms of maintaining or smuggling in bourgeois social relations and cultural values, and in terms of overturning them. The contradictions operate mainly at two levels: a) using bourgeois dramatic forms and physical or social locations and bourgeois social relations to perform socialist/communist theatre; and b) at the level of agency, implicating the social relations between the classes which are represented and representing. It is obvious that those who are being represented by the middle class cannot take part in creating their own version of life or offer their own political analysis. Yet the overt political intention of the producers is socialist/communist, and within this political framework the lower classes are seen as the historical protagonists for class struggle and revolution.

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Black Australians Watch and Wait

Raymond Evans

Earlier this year, on SBS television's *Australian Mosaic* series,* I watched black activist and author Robert Bropho travelling across from the Western Australian mainland to Rottnest Island, once a detention centre for Aborigines under colonial rule and now a local holiday resort. I watched Bropho as he tried in vain to discover some recorded hint, some recognition that his people had suffered so much and that so many—more than 500 of them—had perished here. But there was nothing. The place where the prison barracks had been was now a mini-golf course, and the black prisoners' cemetery was merely a levelled camping ground, with a roadway running across it, for the convenience of happy holiday-makers. There was no perception among these care-free people of what had happened here and,

*SBS is the Special Broadcasting Service, a state multicultural network for non-Anglos.

indeed, *no concern to know*. Bropho wandered—a conspicuous black presence, looking oddly out of place—through the crowds of white sea and sunbathers, watching for the spirits of his ancestors, unacknowledged, also moving silently amongst them.

Seeing this, I wondered—as a frustrated historian—if we will ever shift the bland imperturbability of average white Australians towards a confrontation with the realities of their past in this land, the painful truth of what has happened here in the winning and losing of it. And I wondered, too, if there was any other nation on this planet which possessed the monumental insensitivity and the cool insolence to construct a playground upon a death camp. (Perhaps somewhere there is; but that surely cannot excuse the terrible sin of obliteration which such an act embodies.)

Was Rottnest, perhaps, I thought, a pristine symbol of the Bicentennial, which has largely encouraged Australians neither to ponder, to sorrow nor to commemorate, but rather to party mindlessly across what indigenes would term “the country of our bones.”¹ No wonder the historian Roger Milliss, during an academic debate on Australian History and the Bicentennial earlier this year, stated in a barely controlled outburst that black history and invasion history needed to be “ram[med]...down the throats’ of white Australians to try to bring them to their collective senses.”²

For my own part, Bropho's odyssey dramatically called to mind a similar act of obliteration played out much closer to home. On Fraser Island, at Bogimbah Creek between 1897 and 1904, hundreds of Queensland Murriss*, forcibly removed in small groups from dozens of tribal areas across the colony and state, were incarcerated; and almost 200 died there, from mal-administration, malnutrition, sickness and plain broken-heartedness. It was the Queensland

*The term Aborigines use to describe themselves.

government's first reserve experiment under the notorious 1897 Act. Of the 117 survivors transported north to Fitzroy Island, as the institution dissolved in chaos, only 25 remained alive in 1910. “How these people pass their time I cannot imagine,” reported the Cairns police magistrate that year. “I don't know whether to laugh or cry at what I saw there.” A year later, only “some ten or so” were left. Yet, again, there is no monument, no cairn of commemoration, to these dispossessed people today on either of these islands where, like Rottnest, the holiday-goers throng. The graveyards of Bogimbah Creek were simply erased.³

At Fraser and Rottnest islands, and at all places inbetween where Aboriginal land rights are still denied, the act of dispossession continues in 1989, as does the accompanying act of white memory-bank erasure. The Bicentennial year of 1988 was rich in telling black and white contrasts. Blacks throw mourning wreaths into the ocean from which the “Tall Ships” were greeted by a million white celebrators. Dazzling pyrotechnical bursts of pure white joy exploded above Sydney Harbour, beside which black artists from Arnhem Land erected 200 burial poles—“one for each of the 200 years since the invasion of Aboriginal Australia.” As Ramingining Artists Community Adviser John Mundine described this exhibition, launched at the first site of white occupation;

Originally being living trees, the Aboriginal memorial is like a forest—an Aboriginal artistic vision of the landscape. Each hollow log is ceremonially a bone coffin, so in essence...the forest is really...a war cemetery, a war memorial to all those Aborigines who died defending their country. The poles were commissioned to represent the 200 years of white contact and black agony...⁴

White Australians, of course, are very fond of erecting war memorials, but apart from the Kalkadoon obelisk at Kajabbi, near Mt. Isa, there are no cenotaphs which commemorate the tens of thousands who fell in the Anglo-

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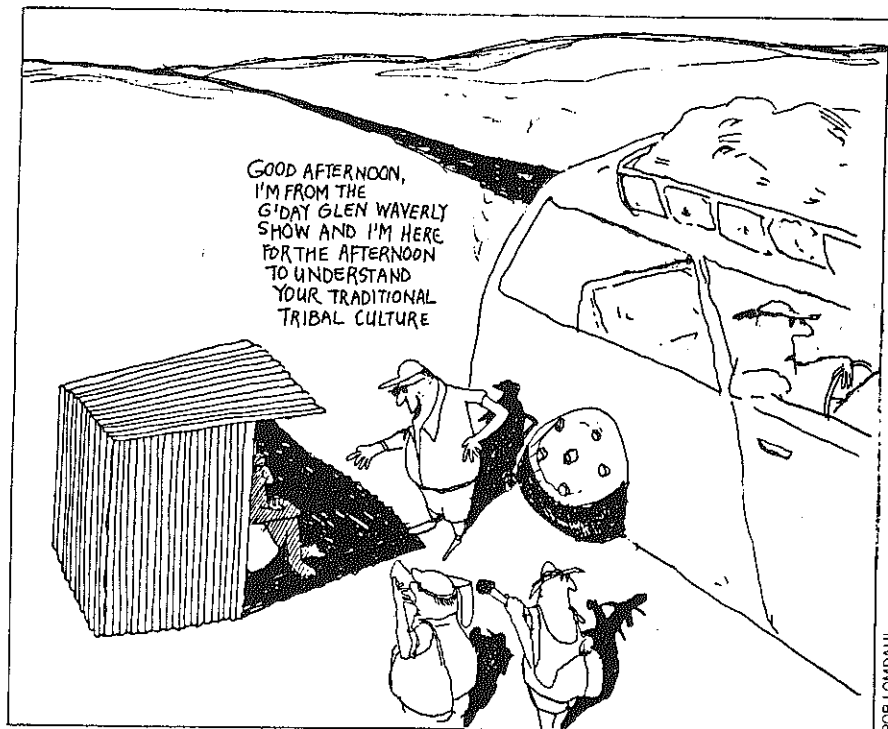
Aboriginal land wars of Australia.

Aboriginal people have faced and survived a disease frontier as well as firearms and chemical warfare frontiers. They have survived the enforced segregation and assimilation experiments of the post-frontier era; the nuclear testing frontier of the fifties and the mineral resources frontier of the transnationals since that time. And they have never ceased to struggle against their dispossession. As the frontier war in Central Australia wound down in the 1930s, urban and rural protests by the dispossessed were escalating. In a chapter of *Staining the Wattle*, published in August 1988, Heather Goodall recalls the Cumeragunja strike on the Murray in 1939; Wanggumara walkout from Brewarrina in 1941—a 190-mile trek to regain their territory; the Pilbera pastoral strike of 1946-9, so movingly recreated recently in the documentary *How the West was Lost*, and the spirited Palm Island resistance of 1956.⁵ In the same volume, Gary Foley reminds us of how the Gurinji in 1966 struck against Vestey's of Wave Hill for nine years until they obtained their land rights objectives.

"Nine years!" writes Foley:

[Vincent] Lingiari showed Australians that Aboriginal people could stand up. Not only that, he showed black Australians that if they stood up for themselves, it didn't matter how long it took or how much struggle they had to go through, they could win.⁶

Are black Australians winning in 1989? On the white side of the picture, the signs are muddled: A white federal government, which reneged on its land rights commitments in 1984, offers through consultation at Barunga a compact which, although welcome for its promise, remains to be tested for its substantive worth.⁷ Simultaneously, the federal opposition promises to rip up this treaty when it regains office. As John Howard (leader of the Liberal party, which held power in the late 1970s) explained in a recent *Bulletin* interview, entitled "Why I am right":



For a country to make a treaty with itself is absurd...To talk about treaties only breed hostility...I acknowledge that in the past wrongs were done to Aborigines. But they weren't done by me. They weren't done by my parents. They weren't done by my generation...

Black "deprivation," according to Mr. Howard, cannot be assuaged by land rights, which are "fundamentally wrong," but can "only be cured in a pragmatic way over a period of time." He does not say how long.⁸

And while John Howard denies contemporary white responsibility for racial "wrongs," the Muirhead Commission into Black Deaths in Custody realizes the size and enormity of its task. Why, for instance are 35.6 percent of those in jail and 91.7 percent of those processed through police lockups in Western Australia Aboriginal people, when they only comprise 2.7 percent of its population?⁹ Why are Aborigines the most heavily imprisoned people in the world? And, of course, as the Commission sits, the black custody deaths and the instances of endemic police brutality continue to occur, as the recent Geraldton and Redfern riots have underlined. Outside the jails, Aborigines are still dying more than 20 years earlier than whites do; and their babies have five times more chance of dying in infancy than white offspring. Aborigines are six times more likely to be unemployed than whites; and, when working, are clustered in the lowest paying, most arduous and dirty jobs. Their average wage is less than half the white average wage and some 90 percent of them are living below the poverty line. The foul statistics keep rolling off the tongue until, ultimately, they stick in the throat. Yet that is what dispossession in 1989 is all about.¹⁰

And even as black activists form sympathetic alliances with progressive whites; and even though white academics may congratulate themselves for their hard-researched contributions towards public "enlightenment" in publications such as Henry Reynolds's *The Law of the Land*, Peter Read's *A Hundred Years War* or Burgmann and Lee's *A People's History of Australia*, the daunting reality is that attitudinal racism towards Aborigines and Asians is presently more vigorously expressed than it was, say, 20 years ago. 1988 registers historically—much as 1888 has—as a year of rampant racism, as anti-racist whites lose out in the

battle for public attention to certain bigoted politicians, pressure groups and media spokespersons. There is something about Australian centennials, it seems, which in promoting buoyant nationalism, also unleashes a fevered racism in its train.¹¹

On the black side of the picture, a number of the signs seem brighter and less ambiguous. On "Invasion Day" 1988, black demonstrators and their supporters staged the largest and most successful land rights demonstration this country has witnessed: i.e., a minority population of 250,000 managed to put more than 50,000 people, mobilized from across the continent and Tasmania, onto the streets, all "cryin' out for land rights." This was proportionately a more amazing congregation of humanity than the million or so revellers who crowded Sydney Heads that day. The same degree of zeal, networking ability and organizational skills which accomplished this was replicated in May last year at the Brisbane anti-Expo protests and at the Barunga festival in June. Black morale and mobilization power seems very high now, and firmly sustained.

Similarly, a Black Cultural Renaissance is burgeoning which, in its breadth and creative depth, is more than comparable with the Gaelic cultural revival in Ireland early this century, or the Harlem literary Renaissance of the 1920s. In every branch of traditional culture as well as in every adapted facet of European culture, Aboriginal creativity is peaking. It seems impossible to name another time in the last 200 years when black articulation has been so publicly inspired and pronounced. Dr. "Nugget" Coombs recently stated in *Land Rights News* that the last 20 years have seen the emergence in white society of a black "intelligentsia" of "writers, playwrights, actors, artists, dancers and rock bands...administrators and politicians." "And what's important," Coombs adds, "is that all of them identify with and use their skills for the Aboriginal cause. That means that the structure of self-determination and self-management is already there."¹²

Yet another hopeful sign can be discerned in the expanding contacts black Australians are making with dispossessed indigenous groups in other affluent countries—the so-called "Indigenous Nations of the Fourth World": the Maoris; the Inuit of Canada, Alaska and Greenland; the Indian nations of the Americas; the Sami people of Scandina-

via; the Ainu of Japan as well as the Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians of the Pacific colonies. All of these people share strikingly similar social problems arising from land deprivation and all are struggling against the consequences of historical and contemporary colonialism.¹³ Aborigines share, and at times surpass the new militancy of the World Council of Indigenous People, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Asia/Pacific Region Conference and the Indigenous Rights Group to the International Labour Organization in Geneva. As Gary Foley stated last July:

Individually we're all tiny, insignificant groups of people in the world today. Collectively we can develop a very powerful interest group in the region to back each other up in disputes like the Kanaks have got with the French, the Maoris...with the New Zealand Government and like we have with the Australian Government.¹⁴

White misconception, fear and intransigence, however, still stand in the way of a successful accession to a national system of land rights. It is as if white Australia has been as benumbed and hamstrung by its farcical doctrine of "Terra Nullius" as white South Africans have been by the biblical fundamentalism which nourishes Apartheid. We must break from its mouldering grasp if a proper justice is to be achieved here—a natural, compensatory justice in place of the rough justice of the past. Then, with the return of land, a day may arrive when Aboriginal Australians, along with the Canadian Indian, can say, "The pain has passed." In the meantime, to paraphrase what Dorothy Hewitt wrote of those Pilbara strikers of the late forties: "...and they keep on fighting, and they keep on coming." The black land rights struggle, begun in 1788, continues 200 years later. And the spirits of the 800 million who have lived and died here since the land was first sung and black occupation began, continue to watch and wait.¹⁵

Notes

1. Julian Berger, "Echoes of history" *New Internationalist* 186, (1988), p.21.
2. Roger Milliss *et al*, "Why Write White History?" *Australian Book Review* 41 (1988), p.21.
3. Raymond Evans and Jan Walker, "These Strangers, Where are They Going?": Abo-

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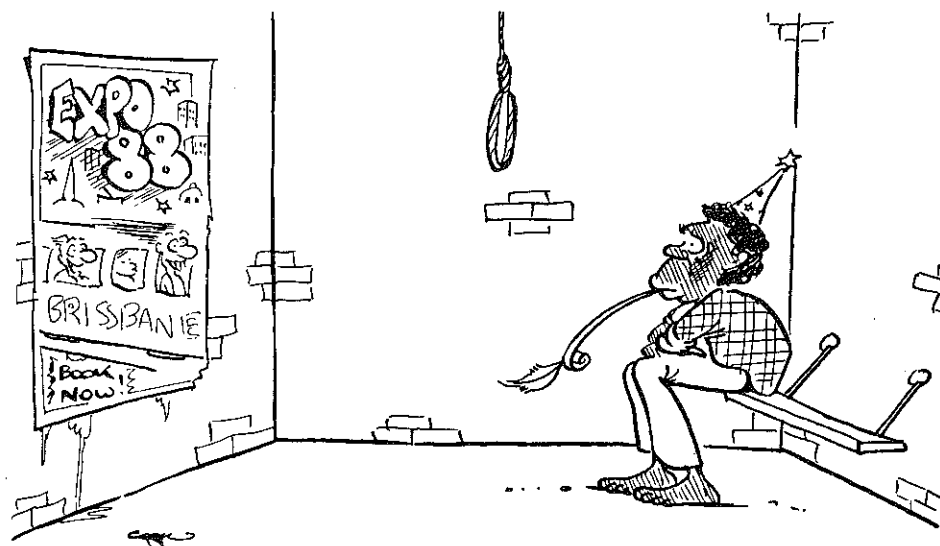
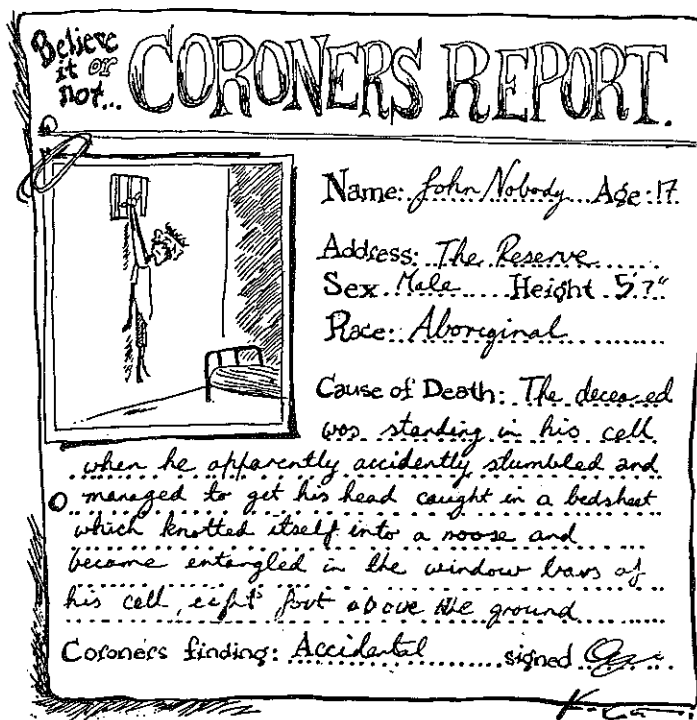
4. "Aboriginal Me" 2, 9 (1988), p.3.
5. Heather Gooda "Rights", in *Staircase History of Australia* Burgmann and McPhee Gribble
6. Gay Foley, "Te" *Ibid.*, p.203.
7. "Barunga: The News, 2, 9, (1988)
8. John Howard (net), "Why I ar" ber 1988, p.159
9. Jan Mayman, "face", *Australia* 33.
10. Julian Berger, *R State of the W* (London: Zed Wayne Ellwood Native Peoples *nationalist*, 18 Berger, *Aborigi* (London: Anti-5
11. Henry Reynolds wood: Penguin *Hundred Years and the State. (A People's Hist* by Verity Burg wood: McPhee
12. Herbert Cole C Reason for Ho (1988), p.21.
13. Julian Berger, pp.177-220.
14. "Bonds of Frie Growing" and Delegates Stan *Rights News*, 1
15. Marie Wilson, *Internationalist* Brown, *The Bl* lasian Book So

Raymond Evans Merthyr Tydfil in five with his work assisted immigrant Australian history studies at the Uni is the co-author, w Relations in Col sion, Exploitation the author of Loy Conflict on the Q 1914-1918, and T of Intolerance.

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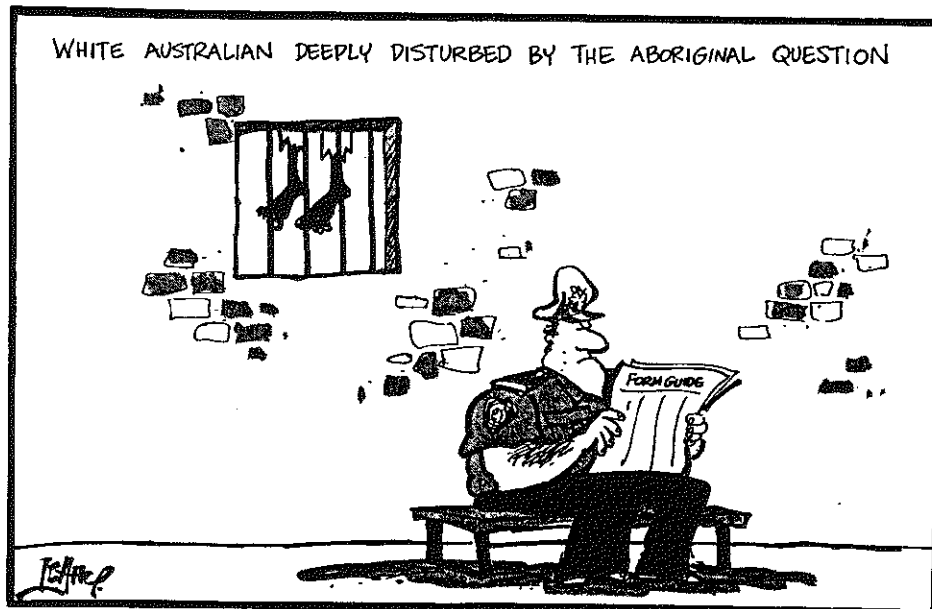
4. "Aboriginal Memorial", *Land Rights News*, 2, 9 (1988), p.32.
5. Heather Goodall, "Cryin' Out for Land Rights", in *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia*, 4, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988), pp.193-5.
6. Gay Foley, "Teaching Whites a Lesson", in *Ibid.*, p.203.
7. "Barunga: The First Steps", *Land Rights News*, 2, 9, (1988), pp.23-26.
8. John Howard (interviewed by David Barnett), "Why I am right", *Bulletin*, 6 September 1988, p.159.
9. Jan Mayman, "The issues W.A. still won't face", *Australian Society*, April 1988, pp.32-33.
10. Julian Berger, *Report from the Frontier: The State of the World's Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books, 1987), pp.183-4; Wayne Ellwood, "Back From the Brink: Native Peoples and the Future", *New Internationalist*, 186 (1988), pp.5-6; Julian Berger, *Aborigines Today: Land and Justice* (London: Anti-Slavery Society, 1988), p.43.
11. Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987); Peter Read, *A Hundred Years Way. The Wiradjuri People and the State.* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1988); *A People's History of Australia*, 1-4, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988).
12. Herbert Cole Coombs, "Nugget Finds Good Reason for Hope", *Land Rights News*, 2, 9, (1988), p.21.
13. Julian Berger, *Report from the Frontier*, pp.177-220.
14. "Bonds of Friendship and Solidarity Are Growing" and Terry O'Shane, "Aboriginal Delegates Stand Firm at the ILO", *Land Rights News*, 11 and 17.
15. Marie Wilson, "The Circle of Reason", *New Internationalist*, 186 (1988), p.19; Max Brown, *The Black Eureka* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1976).

Raymond Evans came to Australia from Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales at the age of five with his working-class parents under the assisted immigration scheme. He teaches Australian history, race relations and war studies at the University of Queensland. He is the co-author, with Kay Saunders, of *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, and the author of *Loyalty and Disloyalty: Social Conflict on the Queensland and Homefront, 1914-1918*, and *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*.



For black Australians there was nothing to celebrate.

Cartoons from *Beyond a Joke: An Anti-Bicentenary Cartoon Book*, compiled by Kaz Cooke (Victoria, Australia: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988).





REVIEWS



Publishing in a Global Village: A Role for the Small Press

by **William M. Brinton**

San Francisco: Mercury House, 1987.

When I first glanced at William Brinton's book, I had every intention of writing a favourable review. After all, I agree with the major premise of the book; namely, that the ready availability of increasingly affordable computer technology allows for the possibility of a strengthened and financially healthy small press. Unfortunately, *Publishing in a Global Village* does not lend itself to favourable review. It is poorly written, badly edited, and full of typographical errors. There are many misspelled words, and numerous quotations are opened and never closed. As well, the text is littered with extraneous words and obvious instances where words have been accidentally omitted. There is no index, which makes the book unsuitable for reference purposes. The table of contents lacks any indication of where the chapters begin, thereby again drastically reducing the book's usefulness to the reader. As a first draft, it shows promise. As a book, it is a dismal failure.

This failure is indeed ironic, as the book is itself a product of the San Francisco-based Mercury House, a small, independent, computerized press headed by Brinton. As a consequence of all the glaring technical and editing deficiencies, form undercuts content; while Brinton argues for the vitality of independent publishing, the book stands as a testimony to the failure of the small press. Brinton states that he "empathize(s) with all authors, particularly those who have something to say but can't get published." Of course, the small press can and should offer a forum for controversial ideas that the mainstream publishers won't touch; however, small presses must at the same time ensure that the quality of their output matches that of the industry giants with whom they compete. Unfortunately, the amateur efforts of Brinton only serve to discredit the reputation of all small presses.

As Brinton argues, small presses can benefit from cheap computer technology; everything from typesetting to editing takes less time and money when computerized. He points out that

while the publishing giants exercise a great deal of power over what gets published, each year small presses in the United States produce over 50 percent of all new titles. This means that small publishing houses together represent a large contribution to our literary heritage. While Brinton expresses the benefits to society of such decentralized, local presses in a typically capitalistic way—"...the free exchange of ideas in the market place is still the best test of truth"—his point is well-taken. The computer now allows for community control of print, a development which must be seen as empowering people's lives. No longer is the production of a newspaper, magazine or book outside the reach of the majority of the population. What we are witnessing is the democratizing (in the original sense of the word) of print. Brinton in fact underestimates the importance of such a revolution with his simplistic "competition of ideas in the marketplace" formulation. It is by increasing people's control over their own lives that the computerized small press is today so important.

The tasks a computer can perform for the small press are endless: editing, spelling correction, typesetting, indexing and accounting are but a few. Not only does Brinton outline the publishing end of producing a book, he also looks at how computers can benefit the whole interlocking system of wholesalers, distributors, bookstores and, finally, consumers. As Brinton points out, anyone who is involved in the production, distribution or sale of books can save a large amount of money by investing in a computer, printer, communications equipment and software. Programs such as Ventura Publisher allow for the production of camera-ready text, while word processors like Microsoft Word provide for easy text editing and spelling correction. Brinton is quite correct in his argument that the use of such technology makes independent publishing an economically sound business. The technology is changing so quickly, in fact, that Brinton's 1987 estimate of US \$52,000 to fully computerize a small operation is, today, too high. Currently, it would be possible for a small press to buy the needed equipment for no more than CAN \$25,000. Consequently, the arguments Brinton makes in favour of a computer-based publishing are even more compelling today, just one year after *Publishing in a Global Village* was published.

Before taking up publishing, Brinton spent 39

years practising law in California—and it shows. He frequently uses legal terms and concepts that are unfamiliar to anyone not involved in the legal profession. He includes long transcriptions of American court cases which deal with the freedom of the press and state control over expression, but these are not coherently analyzed. Brinton's lack of clear reasoning is unfortunate as the issues are important everywhere; for instance, the Conservative party's proposed "anti-pornography" Bill C-54 places limits on the freedom of expression of Canadians.

Brinton's writing is confused and obtuse, with legal arguments thrown in haphazardly and without purpose. In fact, there are times when it is impossible to discern Brinton's own point of view amidst the myriad of quoted court cases and judgements. His obsession with intricate points of law misses the mark. While the judiciary may attempt to legislate the "truth" and thereby force it onto the people, it is rather in the streets, in the resistance of people to such regulation, that truth is at least momentarily achieved. The fact that computer technology is making such resistance even more possible for an ever-increasing number of people is unfortunately lost on Brinton.

In Toronto alone, over 25 "underground" publications and journals are produced by activists and artists, each challenging the right of corporations and courts to define who we are and what we read. Not all of them rely on computers; some are even opposed to the use of high technology. Computers are, however, becoming more common in the underground. Their use by these small publications often means the difference between publishing and going under. The fact that a computer system costs so little allows these groups to be truly independent—they can publish what they want without fear of reprisal from advertisers and the like. It also allows for a decentralized movement—which is, of course, difficult, if not impossible, to suppress. This is a strength of "desktop publishing" that Brinton, with all his legalese, does not appreciate.

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Hollywood from Vice

by **Robin Wood**

New York: Columbia

1986, 328 pp.

Robin Wood's *Hollywood from Vice* is a brilliant and... I'm sure the infu... Wood takes films seri... erable interpretative sk... a fine art.

What is Wood ap... rary theorists is his w... a close textual analys... interpretations. Using... lenging, if at times i... also does a lot to shake... porary film theory. Hi... homosexual subtext"... many films of the 198... radical reevaluations.

Wood's critical fo... centres on what he c... These are films th... intelligence...at work i... degree of involvement... [yet] ultimately, they... what they want to say

The interest in the... Beginning with *Cahie*... 1969 article, "Cinema... looking back to Marx'... Lenin to Tolstoy, criti... the merits of works t... ambiguous manner w... ogy. Wood broadens... looking well beyond t... order to investigate se... films of our era. W... worked on Ford's *Ye*... turns to such B films... *Dead*.

The most challeng... take on horror films... politics of Martin Sc... Michael Cimino's *De*... tion of three films r... *Cruising*, *Taxi Driver*... bar. In a remarkable... turn the critical tide o



Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan
by Robin Wood

New York: Columbia University Press,
1986, 328 pp.

Robin Wood's *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* is a brilliant and infuriating work of criticism. I'm sure the infuriating parts are deliberate. Wood takes films seriously, and with his considerable interpretative skills raises film criticism to a fine art.

What sets Wood apart from many contemporary theorists is his willingness to move beyond a close textual analysis and to engage in bold interpretations. Using strong language and challenging, if at times idiosyncratic, ideas Wood also does a lot to shake the cobwebs from contemporary film theory. His belief for instance that "a homosexual subtext" appears consistently in many films of the 1980s throws open the door to radical reevaluations.

Wood's critical focus throughout these essays centres on what he calls the "incoherent text." These are films that "have a discernable intelligence...at work in them and...exhibit a high degree of involvement on the part of their makers [yet] ultimately, they are works that do not know what they want to say."

The interest in the incoherent text is not new. Beginning with *Cahiers du Cinema's* influential 1969 article, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," but looking back to Marx's comments on Balzac and Lenin on Tolstoy, critics on the Left have debated the merits of works that seem to belong in an ambiguous manner within the dominant ideology. Wood broadens this stream of criticism by looking well beyond the prestige productions in order to investigate some of the more despised films of our era. Where the *Cahiers* editors worked on Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*, Wood turns to such B films as Romero's *Day of the Dead*.

The most challenging sections of the book take on horror films of the 1970s; the sexual politics of Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* and Michael Cimino's *Deer Hunter*; and the reputation of three films rather disliked by the left: *Cruising*, *Taxi Driver* and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. In a remarkable chapter which attempts to turn the critical tide on these three films, Wood

states that although they may not be great works, they're certainly provocative. "Their incoherence...proves that the issues and conflicts they dramatize can no longer even appear to be resolvable within the...dominant ideology." They testify eloquently, he believes, "to the logical necessity for radicalism."

Wood's historical chronology of the crisis in U.S. ideology will probably ring true to most readers of *Border/Lines*, but he argues its contours in a particularly forceful manner. The early sixties breakdown of classical Hollywood, running parallel to the general crisis in U.S. hegemony, culminated in the mid-seventies with a number of fascinating films that dramatized the unresolvable tensions of this crisis. *It's Alive*, argues Wood with his usual passionate language, "shows that it is no longer possible to view normality itself as other than monstrous"; *Sisters* analyzes "the ways in which women are oppressed within patriarchal society on two levels"; and *Heaven's Gate*, a box-office disaster, "is...among the supreme achievements of the Hollywood cinema."

Wood has a great love for popular cinema. He takes it seriously and knows the conventions inside out. But he's no popular cultist and he could never be mistaken for John Harkness. In the one chapter of the book not engaged in a defense of specific, overlooked films, Wood systematically attacks the "all-too-coherent" cinema of Reaganite entertainment. His discussion of *Star Wars*, *E.T.*, *Ordinary People* and the screen characters of Debra Winger examines themes centred on "childishness", indicating the urge to evade responsibility in both audience and filmmakers; "special effects" in which the entertainments of late capitalism become more luxurious; and a "restoration of the Father," whereby the father should be understood symbolically as the law and literally as white, male and heterosexual—the "guarantee of the perpetuation of the nuclear family and social stability."

For Wood "reassurance is the keynote" in these films, and what seems most troubling is that the West's crisis in ideological confidence which occurred in the seventies has not been resolved, but merely forgotten.

The most radical and sustained theme running through the books stems from Wood's belief that all human beings are innately bisexual; that this nature has been massively repressed under capi-

talism and patriarchy; and that a "homosexual subtext" appears consistently in many crucial films of the 1980s. His analysis of Scorsese's *Raging Bull* and *King of Comedy* demonstrates the validity of considering these concepts seriously. That Scorsese also glimpses, though not quite endorses, those ideas, certainly gives the films considerable distinction.

Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan stakes out a clear (and clearly unorthodox) position on the left, and it is particularly refreshing for a writer to combine sophisticated prose with a frank description of his political orientations and beliefs. Yet Wood's interpretations often seem curiously distant from currents of debate within the progressive movements he supports—critical debates among other anti-racism, left and feminist writers. At times Wood senses this and tries to anticipate difficulties that readers might have with his interpretations. For example, he acknowledges violence against women in the horror films, violence against gays in *Cruising*, and anti-Asian racism in *The Deer Hunter*. Nevertheless his mention of these "deadly" contexts remains unevenly integrated into his analysis.

Excusing and glossing over the pervasive racism in *The Deer Hunter* with arguments about realism versus realistic effect strikes me as a refusal to acknowledge the social context of the film. Further, his statement that radicals didn't have problems with *The Deer Hunter* (only liberals did) reveals an ignorance, for example, of the superb critique by B. Ruby Rich in *Jump Cut* and the grilling that Robert DeNiro was subject to when he attended the 1985 Havana Festival.

Readers should judge for themselves Wood's success at turning critical opinion on *Cruising*, *Sisters* and *The Deer Hunter*, but of course the "correct" reading of a film misses the purpose of criticism, and is not his aim. Good criticism encourages active and critical viewing and Wood certainly succeeds with that.

Robin Wood has written a major work of criticism—serious, political, entertaining. His



partial detachment from the general currents of progressive opinion provides the basis for both the strengths and weaknesses of his analysis but any thoughtful reader will profit immensely. For my part I'd now agree that *Dawn of the Dead* is an important work, but he'll never convince me about *Last House on the Left* and *The Deer Hunter*.

Peter Steven works in film and video distribution at DEC in Toronto. He is the editor of *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics and Counter-Cinema*, *Between the Lines Press*, and is currently producing a video on new refugees to Canada.



NeWest Plays by Women

Eds. Diane Bessai and Don Kerr

Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1987, 272 pp.

The events which structure women's lives do not justify optimism. Women are still atoning for their guilt, still making compromises and rationalizations. This is the unintentional message of four plays by women from Western Canada published recently as a collection—the first of its kind—by NeWest Press. In her introduction Diane Bessai notes that all the plays are “in some manner regional,” although only one of the playwrights still lives in the West, and only two of the plays were originally produced in Western theatres. Their regionalism, rather than a sense of place, is a common mind set: unfortunately, what these plays share is their translation of the experience of marginalization, most acutely the manifold marginalization of women, into helplessness, hopelessness, and acceptance. Classism, ethnocentrism, and sexism, which on some level inform all of these sometimes funny (although never comic), sometimes tragic plays by women, are made to seem inevitable and even excusable patriarchal ideologies which women cannot step outside of or get past, even in their fictions, and hence imaginations.

Joanna M. Glass' *Play Memory* is a historical play set in Saskatoon nearly 40 years ago. As the title suggests, the events are narrated retrospectively by Jean, the daughter of a prairie salesman who, after being fired from his job, becomes an alcoholic and destroys both his own life and the life of his family. Jean's tale is a coming to terms with the physically and emotionally damaging behaviour of the father and an attempt to recuperate and justify her tragic past in a way that makes it understandable and palatable to herself, if not to the audience. “You're an illiterate, peasant, German-descended country bumpkin!” Cam bellows at his wife in a drunken passion. She replies, “And you're a wordy, Scots-descended, whiskey-sodden son-of-a-bitch!” The father's ethnocratic expression of his wife is just one expression of his belief in the cultural superiority of a white male anglo heritage. The play, of course, critiques this attitude, as in the wife's bitter retort, and yet its vision of the world remains predominantly that of the father. This is not a play about the marginal peasant woman immigrant but a romanticization of the fallen “Canadian aristocrat.”

Cam too is a pawn and a victim. He begins as a good capitalist, successful, motivated and convinced of the worth of his profession, but ends a sacrificial lamb. His job is with the regional office of a centrally controlled Canadian firm which ousts him from his position and leaves him an unemployed alcoholic. His hard drinking, which gives him the bravado and arrogance necessary to do the job, when he is out of work is an addiction which disarms him: rather than fighting the arbitrariness of company politics he retreats and disposes of himself.

The “benign” sexism that dominates Cam's relationship to his wife and daughter in success, turns to verbal and physical abuse in failure. His wife and daughter, although guilty of his self-destruction and the treatment he affords them, are unable to escape. The liberation which finally comes to them is attributed, in Jean's memory, to the nobility of the father: in allowing them to leave, he has given them their freedom. In this way the last act of patriarchal destructiveness is rewritten as “the most admirable thing he'd done in his life.” There is an oppressive fatalism in all this: not only in the depiction of women as unable to take action and the power of the past to contain our lives, but especially in the romanticization of the father as an agent of that oppression, a romanticization perpetuated and perpetrated by his victim.

Fatalism is also a key note in Wendy Lill's *The Occupation of Heather Rose*. This comes as quite a surprise in view of her previous political works on Winnipeg garment workers and women's suffrage. Unlike Joanna Glass, who sentimentalizes oppression, Lill's black humour is instrumental in making the audience aware of the suffering and oppression that white incompetence and naivety cause Native society.

The Occupation of Heather Rose is a solo piece: rather than the depiction of women in the shadows of dominating men, there is a woman alone on the stage. However, Heather Rose, a young nurse, is weak and dependent upon the patriarchal order. She comes from Ontario to Northern Canada as an agent of the central state with virtually no understanding of the Native society in which she suddenly finds herself. Her social work approach to the problems she encounters (she tries to set up fitness and nutrition classes) makes an absurdity of any form of effective action and the ineffectual translation of the female role as mother/nurse/caretaker into the professional sphere makes a mockery of women's traditional work.

Heather's helplessness and horror reach a climax as she watches Naomi, a young Native woman, die from sniffing gasoline. Heather survives this experience by running away, an option which we assume was never available to Naomi. And although the pain of the experience has undoubtedly taken its toll upon her, Heather's summer camp attitude to her placement in the North, in a luxuriously furnished pink townhouse, her evenings spent in a bubble bath, abandoned gossip or *Chatelaine* magazine, her dreams of a future trip to Europe—all make it impossible to read her confession, “It's inside me now,” as more than another sentimentalization, this time of liberal guilt.

Pamela Boyd's *Inside Out* is also a solo piece but this time focuses upon the mother in the domestic sphere. This play is paradigmatic of women's continuing oppression and exploitation in the home for the sake of a husband who enjoys the excitement and diversity of a public life. It traces the tensions and problems in the choice between a woman's role as mother and her desire to realize herself in a profession outside of the home. Unlike the other plays in the collection this one takes place in Toronto. However, the domestic is to the public as the prairies are to central Canada, an isolated and marginalized space.

The humour in the depiction of a day when everything goes wrong, which is unquestionably



the charm of this play... dramatic level the pain... And yet her domestic prison is... her domestic prison is... that she fantasizes... subsequent guilt over... sity for self sacrifice... with a sentimentaliza... restrictions which her... her—to her son she... God”—and in this way... itulates to the very id... insidiously oppressed

Like *Play Memory*... *Six Cadenza* is dom... conception of the wor... under which men liv... They labour long hou... die from a sudden... deterioration. For mos... options. Johnny, the o... who refuses his fate... East, takes up with M... lives of the women ar... more subservient. Lea... who is murdered bec... father/lover; Dolly is... and with his death... happily-ever-after re... Farley, the only wom... opinion of her own, co... the men and has no... advocate of the temp... “thin old mangy cat... farcical, nagging, dis... tent.

In the face of the... fabricate multiple ev... the miners are alcoh

Despite their 130-year history in Canada, the Chinese have not assimilated because of Canadian policies which have prohibited them from participating in mainstream social life.



The Chinese in Canada

by Peter S. Li

Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1988,
164 pp.

Although Peter Li wants to write about Chinese-Canadians, he finds that their historical experience only permits him to write about them (as the title of his book indicates) as the Chinese in Canada. His book is the study of the marginality of one group of Canadians, which shatters the myth that Canada has been relatively free of institutionalized racism. With the aid of historical materials and an immense number of statistics, Li illustrates the social condition of Chinese-Canadians, from their arrival in 1858 to the present, the racism against them, the structure of their community and their recent occupational mobility in Canadian society. His work provides two main emphases: the study of Chinese-Canadians through a focus on the larger Canadian society, and an analysis of racism from the perspective of class.

The novelty of Li's book seems to stem from his first emphasis that one cannot understand a minority group in the absence of a majority. Unlike sociologists who examine the condition of Chinese in Canada through their cultural background, Li begins his study by focusing on the structure and policies of Canadian society. He claims that the experience of Chinese-Canadians and the characteristic of their community are more the result of interaction with the larger society than the influence of traditional Chinese values or in-group activities. The Chinese have not assimilated despite their 130-year history in Canada, not because of adherence to traditional values, as commonly believed by sociologists and the general public, but because of policies passed in Canada which prohibited them from participating in mainstream social life. In the history of Canada, Li tells us, no other immigrant group was subjected to as many discriminatory laws as the Chinese. They were the only ethnic group which was required to pay a head tax to enter this country. They were never regarded as permanent residents of Canada, and were often considered as a menace to racial and moral purity. They were prohibited by law from acquiring Crown lands (Statutes of B.C. 1884, c. 2), from working in mines (Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Act, 1890), from admission to provincially established homes for the aged

the charm of this play, partly defuses on the dramatic level the painfulness of Ellen's entrapment. And yet her desire to escape the bonds of her domestic prison is worked up to such a pitch that she fantasizes murdering her child. Her subsequent guilt over doing so drives the necessity for self sacrifice even deeper. The play ends with a sentimentalization and fatalization of the restrictions which her role as mother places upon her—to her son she says, "You are a child of God"—and in this way she rationalizes and capitulates to the very ideology which keeps her so insidiously oppressed.

eyed; Mr. Big rants of the cosmic significance of the universe. The final, senseless tragedy would seem to undercut these intoxications, yet Johnny's last words are, "It may have been all lies, but that still doesn't mean it weren't true." Ultimately, with its dissolving images, its gossamer and gauze, the play and its theatricality are complicitous with these romanticizations, a complicity which in the end romanticizes fatalism and hopelessness just as much as it does dreams of escape. One is left with an ambivalent yet oppressive vision of the miners and the bootleggers and the women they abuse: in this romanticization of the brutality of the patriarchal order, life is colonial yet cosmic, fated yet full of promise, coal and gossamer.

Like *Play Memory*, Sharon Pollock's *Whiskey Six Cadenza* is dominated by men and their conception of the world. The material conditions under which men live are extremely difficult. They labour long hours in mines, drink hard, and die from a sudden accident or slow physical deterioration. For most of them there are no other options. Johnny, the only son of the Farley family who refuses his fate, failing to find a job in the East, takes up with Mr. Big, the rumrunner. The lives of the women are equally as bleak, and even more subservient. Leah is a victim of child abuse who is murdered because of her infidelity to the father/lover; Dolly is bereft of her young suitor and with his death the dream of a woman's happily-ever-after romance is shattered. Mrs. Farley, the only woman in the play with a will and opinion of her own, commands little respect from the men and has no influence upon them. An advocate of the temperance movement, with her "thin old mangy cat" manner, she is drawn as farcical, nagging, dissatisfied and utterly impotent.

Each of these plays depicts aspects of women's oppression with some degree of insight. However, when read together, they seem to suffer from a number of disturbing tendencies. If women have in the past been victims and continue to be so in the present, is it necessary to confine our representations to such women? If in the past women have contributed to the ideologies which oppress them and continue to do so in the present, is it necessary for our representations to acquiesce to and continue this act of complicity, even if with ambivalence? While these plays expose the oppressive destructiveness of patriarchal dominance, their almost total lack of utopian vision—and, even more, their sad ability to make excuses for the patriarchal order—set definite limits on their potential to help women reinscribe themselves otherwise, and rewrite their worlds. We await the voices of other Western women, voices less trapped in despair and self deception.

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In the face of their hardships, the characters fabricate multiple evasions of material reality: the miners are alcoholics; the lovers are starry-

"Heathen Chinees: 'Why you sendee me offee?'

Amor de Cosmos [premier of B.C.]: 'Because you can't or won't assimilate with us.'

Heathen Chinees: 'What is datee?'

Amor de Cosmos: 'You won't drink whiskey and talk politics and vote like us.'"

—turn of the century Canadian political cartoon



(Provincial Home Act, 1893), from holding liquor licences (Liquor License Act, 1899), from hiring white female employees (The Women's and Girl's Protection Act, 1912), from working in the civil service (Civil Service Act, 1927) and from entering the professions of law and pharmacy. Anti-Chinese legislation reached its peak in 1923, when the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act which excluded Chinese from entering Canada for 24 years, until the bill was repealed in 1947. It was only until after the Second World War that Chinese-Canadians had the right to vote. The Chinese did not assimilate because they were not allowed to assimilate! Reduced to second-class citizens, subjected to racial, economic and residential segregation, they responded by retreating into their own ethnic enclaves. Thus, the development of the Chinese community was in large part due to factors in the larger society.

Li argues that sociologists would not be able to present an adequate analysis of racism without focusing on political economy. He steers away from the cultural aspect of race-relations, claiming that the discrimination against the Chinese and whites' fear of non-whites. It was mainly linked to the exploitation of labour within a capitalist structure. The early Chinese immigrants were recruited as cheap labour to fill the shortage of white workers during the economic expansion of western Canada in the 19th century. They worked in such labour-intensive jobs as mining, lumbering, and most of all, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Racism, Li explains, benefitted capitalism by reducing the social standing and market value of this group, and thus justifying their low wages and unequal treatment. In times of economic recession, the Chinese were convenient scapegoats for economic problems

(i.e., as threats to white workers' jobs) and social ills (i.e., as public menace because of their "inferior" culture). Such scapegoating subsequently led to large numbers of racist laws which denied their political and civil rights.

Even in the present time, with the absence of discriminatory laws, Li claims, there is still a cost for being Chinese in the Canadian labour market. The Census of Canada 1981 indicates that the average schooling for all Canadians was 11.56 years; for Chinese-Canadians it was 12.12. Yet, the census indicates, on average they had an income level of \$1,295 below the national average. Furthermore, being a racial minority still places a limit on their choice of professions. The early Chinese immigrants avoided competitions and hostilities of white Canadians by limiting themselves to restaurant or laundry works. Chinese-Canadians today are still in professions away from public involvement. Statistics show that many have occupations in the scientific and engineering field which require technical expertise rather than social skills or interactions with the public.

The conditions of Chinese-Canadians in recent years have no doubt improved. Yet these changes, Li claims, are brought about mainly by changes in the economic structure rather than by racial equality or greater assimilation into the larger society. They are mainly determined by new immigration policies in the post-war period which reflect the need for new types of workers in the contemporary capitalist economy. The make-up of the Chinese community with its large number of professionals, skilled workers and people of higher education level is the result of such need.

Peter Li's *The Chinese in Canada* is no doubt an invaluable, insightful sociological study. My only problem with it is his over-reliance on statistics. Being a good empirical sociologist, statistics are, of course, important to him. But their quantity can make his book rather dry and dull for readers who are not statisticians. At times, they can even divert from the experiential aspect of the social condition of Chinese-Canadians. In the midst of charts, graphs, numbers, decimals and percentages, his illustration of the experience of being Chinese in Canada tends, at times, to be obscured. This is more so with regard to this analysis of contemporary Chinese-Canadians. There is a noticeable difference in his analysis of Chinese-Canadians before the Second World War and those who came after the war. With respect to the former, Li conveys the experiential aspect of their condition through the use of historical documents, eyewitness reports and a style of writing that relies less on statistics and

more on sensory metaphors. The reader gets a sense of the emotional involvement between the writer and the people he writes about. However, in his analysis of the latter, such involvement is totally lacking as the pages become filled with statistic after statistic. Perhaps there is a bias on Li's part (being a sociologist who stresses class analysis) to place greater focus on the experiential aspect of Chinese-Canadians in the pre-war era, who were poor, uneducated, unskilled labourers of rural background as opposed to contemporary Chinese-Canadians who are affluent, educated professionals who dwell in large urban centres.

In spite of such problems, one must still give Li credit for presenting an original, in-depth study of Chinese-Canadians. By focusing on the structural context of Canadian society in his understanding of Chinese-Canadians, his book in essence is about Canada and how Canada has treated a minority group. So far, the picture of such treatment does not contain much to be proud of. Perhaps a better picture may emerge if we begin with the view, as Li has done, that Chinese-Canadians are not foreigners but people who do belong here.

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The Vernacular Muse by Dennis Cooley

Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1987, 311 pp.

Not long ago I attended a panel discussion on the relationship between writing and feminist criticism. The panellists were writers rather than academics, so they tended to approach the question of theory from the standpoint of being involved in a game as players, not as sideline strategists. I should make it clear that the participants were respectful of theory and what it could offer in terms of understanding the necessity of rigorously examining texts. But there also seemed an unstated consensus that each writer's creative process couldn't be, and shouldn't be, dictated by

theory. So the relation between feminist literary criticism and this particular forum, is not simply sharing space but also keeping the conversation open.

As a writer myself, I am inclined toward literary criticism, a close look at why I write. In reading *The Vernacular Muse*, eight critical essays by Dennis Cooley, this Manitoba critic challenges the standard and insisting upon the importance of a text. Talking about the text, analyzed, and a new education, nothing to do with such a view whose work has so much to do with the vernacular (meaning, as Forché points out, that it is formally acceptable, and that it should be cheering, right in the sober dwelling of criticism, a renegade declaration).

This is a common and to use yr own voice in under the smother of reported and "high." To name and proclaim a spoken but never written able to us would not be.

Part of me did cheer writes with (un)scholarly laid bare but because inventively. Part of me a bad thing, of course. *Vernacular Muse* is an eye pay attention. But I re often with the nature of with Cooley as a practical thinking that comes do having different relations.

In an essay called "Berger wrote that" comes from a single ambiguity of experiential work, language is at criticism, by the nature standards, an organization can't be ambiguous theory. Loses, in other which is based on na this is true even of criticism, such as that *lar Muse*.

A considerable change with the analysis of Michael Ondaatje, M Duncan and Sinclair

theory. So the relationship between writing and feminist literary criticism, at least according to this particular forum, appeared to come down to simply sharing space in the house of literature. And to keeping the connecting doors open.

As a writer myself, I've always felt ambivalent toward literary criticism. But I'd never taken a close look at why I felt this uneasiness until reading *The Vernacular Muse*, a collection of eight critical essays by Dennis Cooley. Here is this Manitoba critic championing poetry that challenges the standards of "literary Mounties" and insisting upon the examination of the politics of a text. Talking about the voices of the marginalized, and a new economy of poetry that has nothing to do with succinctness of style. Those of us whose work has sometimes been judged polemical (meaning, as American poet Carolyn Forché points out, that it doesn't celebrate politically acceptable, and therefore invisible, values) should be cheering, right? Finally we have an ally in the sober dwelling of Canadian scholarly criticism, a renegade declaring that:

This is a common and a continuing fight—to be able to use yr own voice in yr own world. To get out from under the smother of an official culture that is imported and "high." To be at home in the world. To name and proclaim an unwritten part of ourselves, spoken but never written because the writing available to us would not accommodate our worlds.

Part of me did cheer, not only because Cooley writes with (unscholarly) political conviction laid bare but because he does so clearly and inventively. Part of me wanted to argue, too—not a bad thing, of course, since it proves that *The Vernacular Muse* is engaging enough to make me pay attention. But I realized that my quarrel was often with the nature of criticism itself rather than with Cooley as a practitioner of the art. And I think that comes down to writers and critics having different relationships to language.

In an essay called "The Credible Word," John Berger wrote that authenticity in literature "comes from a single faithfulness: that to the ambiguity of experience." Within this framework, language is about possibility. But criticism, by the nature of its discourse, sets up standards, an organization of understanding that *can't* be ambiguous or it loses its authority as theory. Loses, in other words, its legitimation, which is based on narrowing possibilities. And this is true even of the most anti-conservative criticism, such as that contained in *The Vernacular Muse*.

A considerable chunk of the book is taken up with the analysis of work by Dorothy Livesay, Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Laurence, Robert Duncan and Sinclair Ross. These essays were a

critic's criticism—insightful, but not as interesting to me (as a writer) as Cooley's work on the vernacular in poetry. So most of my remarks will concentrate on two essays on this topic, as well as a complementary piece on line breaks.

Cooley points out that "literary value resides...not as is often supposed, independently and inside the poem, but in how we decide to read the poem, and our thinking will vary tremendously depending on a whole series of assumptions, strategies and claims we bring, however unreflectingly, to bear." And he goes on to speak for "refusing the presented terms" and "bringing unassuming voices into the poem." I'm with him all the way on this (ideological) stand. How we differ is in strategies.

In the opening essay, Cooley compares "eye" poetry and "ear" poetry. He is careful to say that he finds merit in both forms, though he also makes evident, in his delineation of their characteristics, where his greater allegiance lies. No pretence of disinterested scholarship. He regards eye poetry as more individualistic, setting up a particular hegemony: "the poet's eye—a *different* eye, a higher understanding—presides...over a spatialized, silenced, and therefore scarcely populated landscape" with the poet as "originator of meaning."

Ear poetry, on the other hand, doesn't depend on dazzling metaphors or expressive language so much as colloquial patterns of speech, the quality of a "found" text. In contrasting the two modes, Cooley argues "how important the matter is: for one poet, in soliloquy, unengaged in a dialogic way, sings her sensitive impressions to herself—monologic; the other poet enters dialogue, acknowledges a social setting...—dialogic." (Cooley describes vernacular, or ear poetry as more often written by males and eye poetry by females, but unfortunately he doesn't pursue the social/cultural factors that might account for this difference.) He admits that the two forms aren't mutually exclusive but *because criticism is based on opposition*, he ends up not considering ambiguities. Scrupulously fair on the surface, he is quick to say "we can cultivate *both* of them, enjoy each for what it is."

But look at the political implications of the two forms as Cooley has characterized them! He suggests that "we witness the migration of authority from author to reader" in poetry that abandons metaphor and nuanced language; that vernacular poetry subverts the dominant order through its resistance to formal structure and conventional interpretation. Essentially, that meaning resides in form.

I realize that content is a dirty word nowadays and that meaning is ambiguous anyway (like

experience itself). My concern with language-based theory (what we've been talking about here and finally naming) is exactly the same objections that Cooley raises to contemplative poems as being merely "objects of interpretation whose primary interest is semantic." Like him I'm often impatient/dissatisfied with the inwardness of much formal poetry. But the apparent outwardness of the vernacular doesn't necessarily mean that the form is less central in the poet. The organizing sensibility of the author is always situated in the text, even though it may be disguised; the problem is how to open up the authority of the poem, whether using colloquial language and/or metaphor.

I think Dennis Cooley and I would be in agreement about this, since all of the essays in *The Vernacular Muse* refuse to be cloistered, isolated from the social context. They challenge the unthinking use of language—as does good poetry. Proving, I guess, that whatever problematic the relationship between writing and critical theory remains, because of their respective forms, there is a common bond.

Barbara Corey is a poet and reviewer who was recently appointed managing editor of Books in Canada.

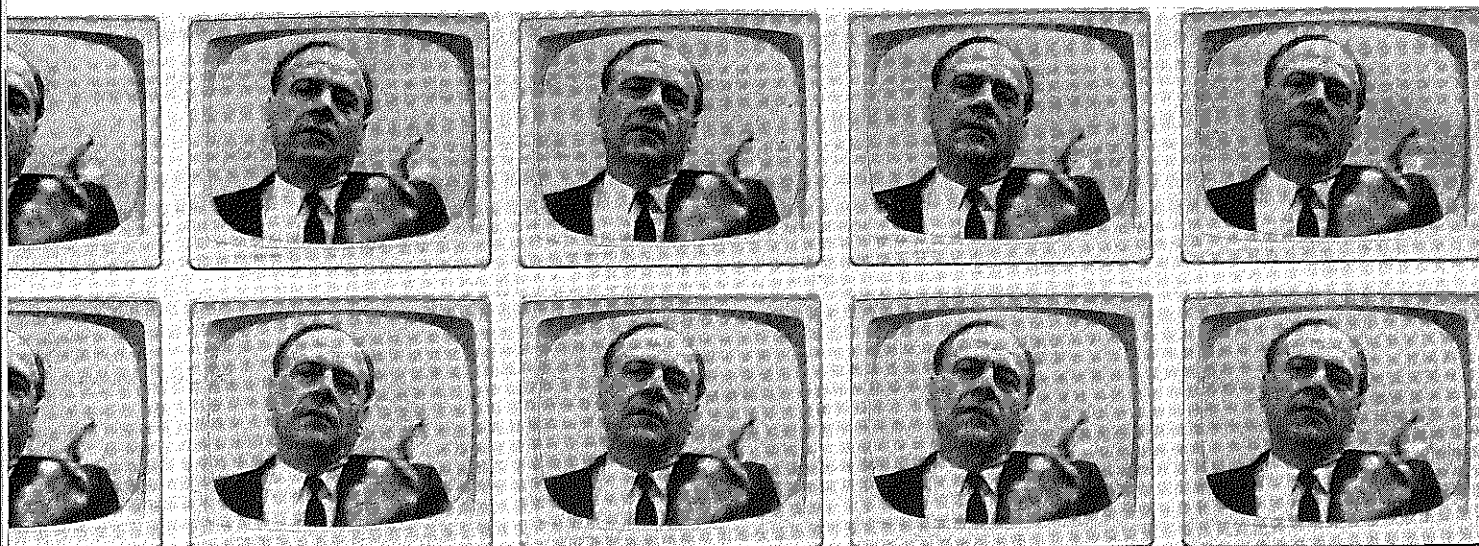


**The Last Intellectuals:
American Culture in the Age of Academe**
by Russell Jacoby

New York: Basic Books, 1987, 290 pp.

The gist of *The Last Intellectuals* is the argument that a dramatic attitudinal and behavioural shift took place between the past two generations of American—and Canadian—intellectuals, and that the recent predominance of academic institutions is largely responsible for this phenomenon.

According to Jacoby, many intellectuals of the older generation—those born in the first decades of this century—were able to convey their ideas to the educated public in plain English; they stimulated many discussions across the nation and were instrumental in enriching the intellectual life of all Americans. As a result, a number



of these people, whom Jacoby calls public intellectuals, became almost household names: Lewis Mumford, Edmund Wilson, Jane Jacobs, Irving Howe, J. K. Galbraith, Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills, Marshall McLuhan, just to name a few. In contrast, intellectuals of the present generation—roughly those under 45 years of age—are virtually unknown to people outside their specific disciplines. Younger intellectuals have a predilection to express themselves in convoluted, cumbersome, jargon-filled sentences. Their writings, typically published in specialist journals, are not intended for the educated public; they are usually unintelligible and of minimal interest to anyone not trained in the particular field or school of thought to which the writers belong. Put simply, intellectuals today aim at small groups of specialized audiences, whereas those of the previous generation addressed the educated public as a whole. Generalists, or men and women of letters, no longer have a legitimate place in society.

Jacoby maintains that the crucial factor for this dramatic shift is the large-scale migration of younger intellectuals into universities. Unlike their predecessors, who considered academic life just one of several career options, intellectuals today are almost as a rule academics. And as academics, they do not need the public for livelihood or recognition. The determination of salary level, promotion, prestige and even survival in the profession is completely dependent upon the rules of the academe and the opinions of colleagues. It is understandable that university-based intellectuals must learn to play the academic game: they cautiously tread along a path defined by limited academic freedom, they publish in specialist journals and attempt to impress colleagues, all at the expense of the educated public. Intellectuals are now cloistered within invisible campus walls.

The migration of intellectuals into universities, in Jacoby's view, is itself the outcome of a series of social changes. Life for most independent intellectuals had always been plagued with uncertainty and poverty. As public demand for their literature dwindled, those who wrote for the public, especially the less established ones, had little choice but to seek alternative ways to make

ends meet. At about the same time, major literary magazines became reluctant to publish articles by writers of the younger generation, thus denying them not only a source of income, but also some of the best opportunities to establish themselves as public intellectuals.

One dimension of intellectual life which Jacoby stresses is the need for community. In the first half of the century, bohemia provided a fertile milieu for independent intellectuals. Inexpensive dwellings permitted low-income writers to survive and to reside in proximity to one another; cheap cafes offered them informal meeting places. However, subsequent urban renewals proved detrimental to bohemia: members of the community were forced to scatter, mainly to the suburbs. Lacking frequent face-to-face contact, the once dynamic community failed to rejuvenate.

In the late 50s and 60s the American university system expanded at an unprecedented rate. Budding intellectuals of all persuasions were absorbed into the system. Even radical social thinkers, who previously could not dream of being part of the establishment, accepted academic positions. Although some of these latter ones encountered resistance, hostility and rejection from conservative elements in the academe, the majority of them settled down to a middle-class life. With the exception of using apparently radical rhetorics in specialist journals, which outsiders cannot comprehend anyway, so-called radical intellectuals today are virtually indistinguishable from their conservative colleagues, at least in the eye of the public. That is the basic message, and complaint, of *The Last Intellectuals*.

The noun "intellectual" has been employed in so many ways that it requires clarification. For some, an intellectual is simply an educated person, or roughly one who holds a university degree in any field; some others restrict the term to one who creates theoretical knowledge, as opposed to one who merely applies or disseminates knowledge. Historically, however, "intellectuals" were a very specific type of people. The term gained currency during the Dreyfus Affair almost a century ago. A group of educated people who defended the innocence of Captain Dreyfus

against the accusation of the state called themselves "intellectuals." They acted in the name of justice. In return, antagonists of the group referred to group members likewise, albeit with a pejorative connotation. Since then the term designates a learned person who is profoundly concerned with the basic values and moral standards of society, and criticizes various ideas and practices on that moral basis. This specific concept of an intellectual, rather than the broader ones mentioned earlier, is essentially what Jacoby has in mind.

As a result of social and political differences, discussions on the role of intellectuals differ on two sides of the Atlantic. For instance, certain European Marxists hail intellectuals as the revolutionary vanguard: the writings of Lenin, Gramsci and Althusser represent variations of this theme. But liberal, democratic and individualistic America has never been fertile soil for serious ideas of revolution. Even radical thinkers perceive themselves mainly as critics, not revolutionaries. One of Jacoby's heroes is C. Wright Mills, "the American rebel—obviously the rebel with a cause. There are many more reasons why Europeans and Americans belong to distinct traditions.

It is clear that Jacoby looks at American intellectuals in terms of the recent American tradition. Not only does he refuse to borrow the European intellectual scene as a point of reference, he deliberately excludes foreign-born and foreign-educated thinkers in America from his study. He ridicules the present generation of fashionable European theories: like sleek foreign cars, these theories appeal to trendy academics much more than the "clunky American models." Jacoby is by no means xenophobic: he is in fact well-versed in European ideas himself, as he has demonstrated in his numerous other publications. What he recognizes is that America has its uniqueness and its own reading public. The prevailing trend of abandoning one's tradition while embracing the exotic reflects the inability and unwillingness of current intellectuals to relate to the American public.

Throughout the book Jacoby persistently depicts the power of academic institutions as

insurmountable. He offers a partial neo-conservative analysis, systematically supporting accomplished scholars on the political spectrum (Part II), which ultimately failed. The modern intellectuals show respect for differences in spite of differences in typically, of course, and administrators tend to be ideologists they do not block any appointments of desirable elements, as J. in the book. Academic

Academic intellectuals well thrive in the system and scientifically in. They establish their empires: friends, associates together for mutual own achievements, conferences and journals, not being attracted. The ideas seems immature of the literature pro value; some of it is do. Jacoby expresses mu scene. He could have of bureaucracy: the characteristic of wh "climbers," who streries of their respective environment breeds a few monsters.

The book devotes a comparison of Jewish intellectuals. It seeks to refute Jews are more radical Jewish thinkers of the children of immigrants dominant values of craved acceptance in few exceptions, youth conservatism, Jacoby phenomenon as the p setting. Again, the e

The Last Intellectuals books addressing the



insurmountable. He cites the case of an influential neo-conservative writer (Daniel Bell) enthusiastically supporting the tenure application of an accomplished scholar at the other end of the political spectrum (Paul Piccone). The bid eventually failed. The moral of the story is that *true* intellectuals show respect for one another, despite differences in their political views. More typically, of course, academics as well as administrators tend to be intolerant of adherents to block any appointment share: they try their best to block their appointment of what they brand undesirable elements, as Jacoby illustrates elsewhere in the book. Academic freedom is fragile.

Academic intellectuals who play the game well thrive in the system. They act professionally and scientifically in every respect: obscure jargons and elaborate models are their hallmarks. They establish their power bases by building empires: friends, associates and disciples band together for mutual benefits. They gauge their own achievements by noting successful conferences and journals, not to mention research funding attracted. The quality of their intellectual ideas seems immaterial. It turns out that the bulk of the literature produced is of questionable value; some of it is downright glorified nonsense. Jacoby expresses much contempt for this entire scene. He could have made reference to theories of bureaucracy: the behaviour he describes is characteristic of what Anthony Downs calls "climbers," who struggle to expand the territories of their respective groups. The bureaucratic environment breeds these creatures, along with a few monsters.

The book devotes considerable space to a comparison of Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals. It seeks to refute a certain popular notion that Jews are more radical. Jacoby explains that Jewish thinkers of the previous generation, being children of immigrants, could ill afford to reject dominant values of their host country; they craved acceptance in mainstream society. With few exceptions, youthful radicalism matured into conservatism. Jacoby thus interprets this Jewish phenomenon as the product of a particular social setting. Again, the environment is decisive.

The Last Intellectuals is one of several recent books addressing the current state of intellectuals

and intellectual ideas. Two other books that have received wide attention are Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and E. D. Hirsch, Jr.'s *Cultural Literacy*. All three are critical of the status quo, albeit from different perspectives. Bloom is a self-appointed guardian of traditional American values. Defending what he claims to be traditional and thus presumably good, he passionately attacks the dissemination and cultivation of pluralistic ideas in universities today. Hirsch also opposes pluralism in the educational system, but he does so on pragmatic grounds. If people in the same society lack a common body of knowledge, he argues, they are incapable of communicating effectively with one another. The stress here is on shared information rather than shared values. For Jacoby, however, education is more encompassing than what one receives in schools and universities. It is an ongoing process. One has to keep learning and thinking critically about the changing world for as long as one lives. That is why Jacoby is gravely concerned about the disappearance of public intellectuals, who are public educators in the broadest sense. Confining intellectual activities to academic departments deprives the majority of the population from continuing their education.

Few of the ideas in Jacoby's book appear to be original. The reader has probably encountered many of them diffused in works by Lewis Coser, Emily Abel, Alexander Bloom, Richard Mandell and several others. So what are the merits of Jacoby's contributions? Most fundamentally, he brings into prominence the theme of the lost intellectual voice—a theme that hitherto has not been properly developed. The need for *public* intellectuals in this age of specialization and professionalism is a notion that has received only peripheral treatment. His emphasis on the rift between the two generations calls attention to the gravity of the situation. Unlike a myriad of sociologists and historians, Jacoby never pretends to be a disinterested observer: he seeks to persuade the reader and, implicitly, pleads immediate action. In other words, he functions as a technical specialist, but as an intellectual, in the very sense in which he uses the term.

Furthermore, he brings the discussion up to date: the book is a rich source of information on

the American intellectual scene. In addition to injecting vigour into an extensive body of literature, the author frequently draws on cases of well-known intellectuals and performs his share of muckraking. This approach gives his account an unusual vividness. Jacoby has the courage to candidly criticize the people he associates with. Considering that he himself is an untenured academic, he might be biting the hand that feeds him. Although he is sympathetic with ideas on the left, Jacoby admires conservative thinkers for their integrity. He is able to look beyond the various schools of thought to search for the common problem.

Perhaps Jacoby places an excessive blame on academe. Each type of institution has its constraints and yet simultaneously offers opportunities. Despite all its drawbacks, the university provides intellectuals with job security and income stability. Even academics without tenure are financially better off than most bohemians, who constantly have had to resist the temptation of commercial success if they wished to remain intellectuals. As long as academics do not insist on keeping career advancement as their top priority, there is still a chance for them to overcome barriers to emerge as public intellectuals. While Jacoby reproaches certain academics—especially the supposedly radical theorists—for their blatant careerism, he virtually discounts all possibilities of individual initiative. Inadvertently his pessimism may have rationalized the attitudes and behaviours of many intellectuals in academic institutions.

Given the scope and complexity of the problem being investigated, the author has done an admirable job. The cogent and thought-provoking argument presented in this book is something all members of the educated public should contemplate. The writing style is lucid, eloquent, confident, witty, sarcastic and, most importantly, neither technical nor pedantic. At the very least, Jacoby has qualified himself as a public intellectual—a sign that the picture he paints need not be so gloomy after all.

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across borders/between lines

