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# BORDER/LINES

*cultures contexts canadas*

Nixon in China

Bruce Barber on Radio

Interview with Wilson Harris

Kung Fu Movies

Jewish Liberalism







**Border/Lines**  
cultures contexts canadas  
Number 15 Summer 1989

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Kim Moodie, an artist based in London, Ontario

# Haven't You Noticed the Birth of a New Quebec?

**Malcolm Reid**

Has nobody realized?

Nobody can see what is there to be seen?

Nobody quite understands? Is that it? Seeing, but not grasping?

No: I'll make those "nobodys" more specific. I'll address my questions to groups of people.

Dear Quebecois friends, don't you realize that everything has changed in Quebec since Bill 101 came into force, or nearly everything? That our tools are better, our arms are stronger now?

And dear ex-compatriots of mine in English Canada... dear friends of my childhood and youth in Ontario... dear enemies; but especially dear friends, with your striving to be sympathizers with Quebec...

Don't you realize that Bill 101 is more than a manifesto, an opinion which one shares or opposes?

That it is a piece of social legislation? That it has been in place for some time now, and that it has had effects? That it has changed the way life is lived?

When the Supreme Court brought down its (I'd say) basically ignorant judgement, I said to myself in a murmur: "And these people are supposed to be educated, cultivated, sociologically alert, subtle!" But I was only saying it, I didn't really feel it strongly. I never have placed great faith in this institution to guide the way to anything. We do not have, in Canadian law, the tradition of the resonant decision, I think. We don't have a Supreme Court — the brave abortion decision of a year ago is perhaps an exception — that announces liberation or breaking of new ground. Our Supreme Court tends, rather, to follow the consensus, the drift of society. Our top jurists do not announce change, they accept it: or, as in this case, they don't.

Simply to indicate how I feel the court might have ruled: it could have said that the right of merchants to speak and sell in the English language is very important, but that the law was within the bounds of reasonable restriction for the public good. I believe a Supreme Court which had some sense of the Quebec-Canada battles and compromises of recent years would have said that; a Supreme Court with a smattering of sociology. A Supreme court which understood what retreats and defeats were the bearable retreats and defeats of a pragmatic French Quebec, and which retreats and defeats were angering, provocative, felt to tread on the minimum that more or less all francophones feel fair, and won.

(The matter of language on signs seems to me not of huge importance. I can see how some were irked by it, but I can't see how anyone was really hurt by the French-only rule. Surely one can always look in the window under the word *chaussure* and see a shoe. But taking yet another chip out of the Charter of the French Language was important. A bit of intuition would have sufficed to know this.)

That Alliance Quebec\* crowed triumph over this judgement... nothing surprising there, either, it seems to me. This group represents the old vision of English Quebec. The old guard. The youth of many of its spokesmen doesn't waft away this air of oldness.

I was sad when fire was set in Alliance Quebec's offices. I was shocked. I lived through October 1970, and I think I can tell how you feel when such a thing happens to you.

I don't like violence. But also, the traditionalism of the group does not put me in the same rage that the arrogance of Saint James Street did in 1965. The voice, now, seems to me to be different, to have a plaintive tone to it.

But two groups did disappoint me. Really quite badly. The woodenness of their language disappointed me, the repeating of oft-stated attitudes, as if nothing had changed since '69. The slowness of change now seems to me terrible, I fear this slow, slow, slowness... I fear that things will get venomous and go backwards.

I fear, but I still have a sort of broad confidence that *le Québec français*, that hope of my youth, that essential of my discovery of Quebec, will be built; is being built. That this society *can* be "distinct."

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Here are the two groups that disappoint me:

Quebec nationalists, especially those of my own wave, who are now in their forties.

And people of the left in English Canada, who did seem to have grasped a few of the main points of Quebec nationalism of the Pierre Vallières wave, the Gerald Godin style, the Gilles Vigneault era... Who had seen its *liberation* sense.

So I shall try to say the six or seven things I don't hear you saying, dear Quebecois friends; dear English-Canadian expatriots.

## What is there new, that renders the old way of seeing things old?

Bill 101 was the fruit of a situation in which English dominated in Quebec, and showed its domination most clearly in the attraction it held for immigrants, who chose English almost to a man. Almost to a woman. And who did so even when they spoke, say, Italian, with its closeness to French. They felt English as stronger and more practical, and through them a minority that didn't have a very strong birth-rate grew and grew nevertheless, and behaved very much as if the French language simply wasn't there. And the francophones, the great majority of the society in spite of this, suffered, for in it they saw their poverty.

Bill 101 was born, too, from an independence movement which dreamed, in almost its entirety, of an *entirely* French Quebec.

When we put it in this way, I think, we have to see a remarkable moderation in Bill 101. For the law never aimed at eliminating all official recognition for English; though severe, it was legislation of compromise and prudence, with easing the pain of changing Quebec as one of its concerns. Specially, it left an English school system very much in existence.

What it did seek to do, rather, was to turn things around for the French language. To give French a boost. To make it, anyway, a coveted thing, a desired possession, a necessity, if one wished to live in Quebec. If one wished to *grow* in Quebec.

English still alive here; Italian still alive there — fine. But let French become the cement, the interchange, so that everyone at least added it as a skill. Let the pressure to learn shift from the shoulders of the francophones to the non-francophones.

But that francophones still learn English and other languages? Why not, once it was no longer a thing imposed?

"To make Montreal a French Toronto," I remember writing in a profile of Camille Laurin I did in *Saturday Night* around that time. "A French Rio."

## And does nobody quite understand?

That goal is in the process of being realized. Step by step. In ten years this very ambitious piece of social legislation has had major effects.

Could health insurance, pollution and conservation laws, or work safety, be said to have changed the spirit of people as much in that time?

The success of the language law comes from its firmness, its element of constraint. The constraint was needed, and it is still needed. For certainly a while yet, say till the new century comes in. It is the way the francophones recall to themselves, and to all, that they are the majority: "We wanted this change, and we organized to demand it, democratically."

But the success of the language law does not come solely from the constraint.

I can see five or six other factors, all important.

The Centres d'Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants (COFI) have been set up, and intelligently set up. They have become much more than French schools for the new arrivals. They are community centres, places of fun and struggles, new-age parish halls, grassroots *maisons de la culture*.

The close relationship of several of the major immigrant languages to French — Portuguese and Italian and even English — so long annulled by economics, has at last begun to be a help.

Immigration patterns have changed, in ways that help French.

Frenchmen and Frenchwomen have begun to emigrate, now, for the first time since 1759. Among the West Indians, the *French* West Indians, Haitians and Martiniquais and Guadeloupians, are suddenly prominent. Algerians come, and Tunisians and Morrocans; they do not even need the COFI.

And most of all, Spanish-Americans come.

Spanish is a very close language to French. More: one of the big and dynamic groups is the Chileans, and these people are the intellectuals of their nation, the kind of people who *never* emigrate unless the Pinochets of this world drive them out. They like French and they like French-style social struggles. Quebec's interest in Spanish has shot up, and learning a second language, suddenly, no longer necessarily means learning English.

A bizarre factor. The great response of the anti-independence people was Canadian bilingualism. This has increased interest in French everywhere, and French is, I would say, now a skill that every ambitious young English Canadian wishes to possess. It has filled — or at least sprinkled

Illustration by  
Malcolm Reid



border/lines summer 1989



— Ottawa with Quebecois senior civil servants, and with bilingual young English Canadians. It has given the language a respect and prestige it never had in Ottawa, and Ottawa has been largely French-speaking since the beginning of its existence. This is my native city I am talking about; I know whereof I speak.

These facts also make the French aces in the schools of the West Island of Montreal, yes, even there, the "future" group. The well-adapted, the going-somewhere. And steadily, too, they deprive Alliance Quebec of something it needs if it is to reassemble the old Anglo-Quebec worldview: a mass of people who are thrown into distress when they hear a French sentence spoken to them, and who would be lost and vulnerable if the face of their city became French.

When Bill 101 was being conceived, what was really being conceived was a French Quebec of many ethnic groups. Few partisans of independence and unilingualism really saw this. Few really understood this implication of their own action. The old folk-unity of Quebec is going, a new diverse francophone society is coming.

I know it's hard to face an unexpected shift, an emergence that one hasn't yearned for. What a bizarre injustice that I, as an English-Canadian in my origins, one taught to sympathize with immigrants that should be prepared for something that takes by surprise the prophetic, the Vallières, the Vigneaults.

Toronto, Ottawa, Saskatoon, with their rapid diversification, their thousands of Canadianized faces of brown and yellow, their brake on racism, their stretch of integration (the exception: Saskatchewan racism against the Indians)... I know it's strange that these cities should suddenly be examples for Quebec to study. But the important thing is that Quebec is also performing well in this area; its traditions seem spontaneously to know how to adapt to this new challenge.

One thing has surprised me in this evolution. Here I have a point to concede. An unease within me.

It is that English has remained strong in Quebec, despite the rise of French. I now see that, even were Quebec independent, English would be much spoken in Montreal.

So let us accept that, I say. This is a language with a lot of attraction for all of us that we're talking about. It's the Latin of the century. Well, there will be other centuries. It is still doable; to give priority to French, and broad and deep acceptance. But let's look at some difficulties.

I live in Quebec City, where the new Quebec is clearly visible in the downtown streets. Berber restaurants, South American intellectuals... A trip to Montreal sobers one up, however. Is it the Latin of the century I'm hearing... or the old English arrogance? In every subway train, in every restaurant, the question is with me.

I believe that French resolution and French pedagogy will eliminate this ambiguity with time. For French too has a big

share of the prestige of the century. The International Jack Kerouac Gathering proved this for me, the Quebec Summer Festival goes on proving it. Blais proves it, Sartre proves it, Senghor proves it. I think, for example, about the Portuguese of Montreal, I'm curious about them. What have they lived these ten years? French must have had its impact, and the *criancas* must be different from the old folks. (Allow this one Lusophile interjection: in Portuguese they call a child "a creation.") I know they have a huge immigrant base in France, I know Lisbon is full of rich people and poor who speak pretty fair French.

But they're the quietest ethnic group in America! How are they getting along?

Dear Quebecois friends, let's find out. Our networks are more in place than we think, perhaps. Our tools, our arms, are better now. And have to get better still; staff to be trained, funds to be allotted...

For yes: we do yield very often, in our daily lives, to things English. I myself sometimes use anglicisms for effect; I never did that before. But now that French friends do it...

The defeat of sovereignty-association in 1980 has caused more disorientation than I'd have thought. Me, in Rene Levesque's shoes, I'd have said on Referendum Night: "Here is my resignation. I've decided to go back to the grassroots to implant this fine and workable idea more firmly." But that wasn't the path taken, and now an Quebec might be *why bother?* Pop music, for example, is a sort of Battle of Batoche of culture, and pop means a lot to young people. The Metis need some help against the redcoats, kids.

There are hopeful signs, too. There is a north-south alliance operating in Chilean and Nicaraguan Spanish and Quebecois French, very lively. There is an Italo-Quebecois literary milieu, *Vice Versa* its magazine, *Guernica* its publishing house, very lively also. These things surround me with comforting presences; others have accents too. And so: I owe something to the Charter of the French Language.

My intuition whispers to me that it is the rebuilding of the Quebec left, of the communal feelings we had in 1970, that will rebuild the muscle-tone of French. By giving the language *new things to say*. This left won't be like Vallières' left, I think, it will be strangely punk, very Third World, deeply ecological.

Quebec is part of the First World, that's now clear, and it's questioned by the Third. Problems that are discussed in my city when developers propose demolishing the Cote d'Abraham and citizens propose a "popular" development of the same hill, are the same problems that Amsterdam debates, the same ones Tokyo ponders.

Vocabulary, dear friends! We need new vocabulary. The word *chaussure* no longer frightens, no longer thrills. We need 21 new worlds for 21 new concepts before the 21st century. At least.

You want my opinion? *Tout à changé.*

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

## Still Dreaming of a Multicultural Canada

Chris Creighton-Kelly

As the spectre of our virulent (maybe soon violent?) racism looms over Vancouver, this "Asian" metropolis sitting, as it were, on the coast of the Pacific Rim, it might be prudent to poke about in the Liberal closets and dust off the skeleton marked "Multiculturalism." Are there any vital signs of life here? Is this a body politic worth exhuming? The skeleton replies, "I am alive and well and Canada has a new Multiculturalism Act as of July 1988... C'est quoi le probleme?"

It's a kinda' I-like-the-way-you-move spring day on Commercial Drive. Two women walk arm in arm, a bounce underfoot. They are laughing intimately. It seems to have something to do with desire. Two youngish Vietnamese guys in an old rusty green Datsun honk and smile at this open display of pleasure. The driver turns up the radio, the other yells. The car slows to a crawl, the yell approaches a conversational feel. The shorter woman banters back while her partner silently gives them the finger. Fear and power seem minimal here; but then, it's 2:30 in the afternoon. More laughter all around... and who is joking whom? The car screeches away. The women turn into a cappuccino bar. Seven blocks up the Drive a huge 18-storey commercial development looms, its long shadow casting doubt on the future of this multicultural neighbourhood. There is no laughter; this is not a joke.

So what is multiculturalism? The Act itself states that it reflects the cultural and Canadian society and freedom of all members of the Society to preserve, enrich their cultural heritage and to prevent government homilies about multiculturalism from ringing hollow against the cutbacks to English-as-a-second-language courses, more restrictions on immigration and elimination of multiculturalism to fight racism.

We as citizens need to imagine a Canada (multicultural) a genuine "mosaic"... which is greater than the sum of its "ethnic" (ethnic in reality). Such a dream calls for a reality, however, with the power relations and cultural minorities and collective relation to the state like the Canada Communications Commission.





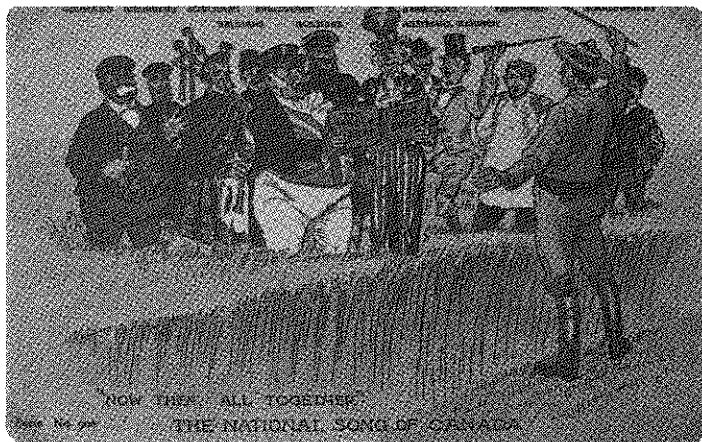
But this understanding is only the beginning. We know, as all humans have throughout history, that tradition is significant. But we also know that the weight of certain traditions (e.g. patriarchy) can be oppressive. Such is the real dilemma for people with roots in other places or, in the case of native people, in other times. How much to keep? What to discard? So much of our postmodern lives have been spent breaking with the past. As a result, we live in a society where images are deculturized and dehistoricized. White pop musicians use third world markets as exotic backdrops for their rock videos, Thai food is in vogue for grazing yuppies, reggae music sells shampoo. In a world where any image can mean anything, most images are used to make money. In our desire to discard the yoke of tradition and roots culture, in our attempts to forge a mostly emperor's-new-clothes, "progressive" postmodernism, we have thrown the multicultural baby out with the bath water.

The Italian delis and coffee bars have been here the longest. Lately a few of the owners have been rearranging the security mirrors and cash registers. They complain about the Chinese and Punjabi kids ripping off their goods after school. All kinds of children have always stolen from these stores but now it seems only Asian kids do. It dovetails nicely with the "Van Kong" graffiti springing up in other, whiter areas of the city. But on the Drive, an earnest community activist is buying some hot smoked capicollo and a few olives. He goes on about losing the neighbourhood to gentrification. The Italian owner doesn't bat a lash, pontificating about all the people who have come and gone, and anyway new people mean new business. His wife slices the meat, silently. He says he makes a lot of money from the Lotto machine now and nobody can steal that from him. The community activist asks him about buying the building and he laughs... why would he want this beat up old place? He's got first option on a new deli location opening up in the Fraser Valley; B.C. is a big place, he says, no need to worry, lots of room. The capicollo is neatly wrapped, loon coins are exchanged, the activist hurries out. The street teems: where is there lots of room in this neighbourhood anymore?

Even for those of us who want to "do" multiculturalism, there remains a host of unanswered questions. The "fine art" tradition of the college-educated elite sets arbitrary standards not only for dominant culture, but by inference, for all cultural expression regardless of origin. Sometimes ethnic or regional cultures seem amateurish by these standards. They lack the urbane slickness, the glib sophistication, the arrogance of the metropolis. The cultural bureaucracy must clean up its own act if it is serious about a real multicultural society. People from visible minorities must be on the stage, in books, arts administration, on juries and other consultative bodies, making programming decisions.

And do we want arts policy that hives off special ghetto funding programmes for minorities or do we want integrated juries? Or both? Or neither? And do we want to insist that young people "celebrate" their roots when they want to be integrated or at least hybrid? Perhaps they would not feel the need to assimilate so quickly if they could live their ethnicity without harassment and prejudice.

And who "owns" minority images and history anyway? Can sympathetic white persons make or use aboriginal images in



"Now Then, All Together"  
The National Song of Canada  
a turn-of-the-century  
postcard

their work in an effort to express their "nativeness?" Do they need permission? From whom? And what happens to work staged out of its cultural context? An Indo-Canadian play on farm workers and pesticides reads differently at a Punjabi community centre, at a folk festival and at a mainstream professional theatre. How do we present it totally out of context onstage or in a gallery and do it "in context?"

You used to find Howie in the park selling salmon out of the trunk of his car. Howie is always in trouble with the law and tells great stories about how to evade cops, even one where he just bolted out of a courtroom and ran hard and they didn't catch him. But these days he can't even sell his fish, which he claims have no poison in them because they come from streams where white people don't go. The cops will only let Howie give them away. So he "gives them away" for other food and the odd beer, cursing the situation, defying the law but not breaking it, re-inventing an old/new way of bartering. Up the Drive, the new money is coming. It knows no barter.

Finally, how multicultural can one person really be? Can we truly experience all cultures? Canada's peoples are not simply a smorgasbord of cuisines, "costumes" and dialects. For many of us it takes a lifetime just figuring out our own roots and what they mean. To eliminate racism we need understanding rather than tolerance. We also need defiance and imagination.

Chris Creighton-Kelly is a Canadian artist and writer who lives in the East End of Vancouver. He tries to "do" multiculturalism, and will be writing "From Out Here," a regular column in *Border/Lines*.

So what is multiculturalism, anyway? The Act itself states that "multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian Society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage." Fine, but government homilies about celebrating diversity ring hollow against the backdrop of more cutbacks to English-as-a-second-language courses, more restrictive immigration laws and elimination of curricula designed to fight racism.

We as citizens need to continue to imagine a Canada (many Canadas) that is a genuine "mosaic"... a whole society which is greater than the sum of its "ethnic" (ethnic in relation to what?) parts. Such a dream cannot be made a reality, however, without understanding the power relations among various racial and cultural minorities, and in turn their collective relation to cultural institutions like the Canada Council, the CBC, Communications Canada, etc.





# Nixon in China

The Dream of Democracy

Rick McGinnis



A scene from *Nixon in China*  
- photo by Martha Swope

In *The Chinese Difference*, his blandly cynical memoir of the 1972 Chinese Summit, journalist Joseph Kraft recounts this faintly surreal scenario:

**"The two men [Nixon and Chou En-Lai] leave the Great Hall of the People walking side by side but not speaking. As they go downstairs, Mr. Nixon suddenly sees the TV cameras. He begins moving his lips as if in conversation, but if he is saying anything, it does not engage the interpreter."**

Twelve years later, poet Alice Goodman, stage director Peter Sellars and composer John Adams began work together on a three-act opera to be written in couplets. The subject: the 1972 summit. Given the irreverence that has characterized Sellars's career — casting Don Giovanni as a junkie, setting Handel's *Orlando* in Cape Canaveral and on Mars — it was expected that *Nixon in China* would be an irreverent satire on the soon-to-be-disgraced president. Far from it — the far more sober personalities of Adams and Goodman dominated the finished opera, which premiered at the Houston Grand Opera in the fall of 1987.

It's one thing to say that there's little tradition for explicit political content in contemporary opera, it's another to realize that there's little tradition for contemporary opera. Of Adams's minimalist contemporaries, only Philip Glass has produced a body of operatic work, of which the most overtly political, *Satyagraha*, swathed its subject — Mahatma Gandhi — in the imagistic metaphysics that typify Glass' recent work; half Gurdjieff, half headshop. There have been, of course, other political operas written in the last 40 years, but the lifespan of contemporary opera is short — one commissioned pro-

duction followed by a quickly deleted recording, at best. *Nixon in China* has made it this far, and evidence as it played in Houston and New York, and the subsequent recording made under Adam's supervision (Nonesuch 9 79177) — *Nixon in China* has turned out to be more than a facile political revue with pedigreed music. Taking the cue from Goodman's anecdote above, Adams, Goodman and Sellars have stared long enough at the familiar rituals of statecraft, seeing past the mundane and giving shape to more ambiguous mechanisms of power.

In a short essay that accompanies the libretto, Goodman states that by mutual agreement Adams, Goodman and Sellars of the opera would be "heroic," and that "the heroic quality of the work as a whole would be determined by the eloquence of each character in his or her own argument." Embarking on her research, Goodman decides that "having started out ignorant, I was not going to become wise after the fact..." and so she makes an effort to avoid reading any material published after 1972, in effect giving her Nixon the benefit of the doubt.

The opera begins on the airfield outside Peking, and Adams music sets the tone immediately, mining minimalism for its atmospheric potential and creating, like so many old film scores, a sense of mystery and urgency. The Nixons' plane enters in the midst of a thundering series of crescendoes, dwells at its peak just long enough for the Nixons to emerge and create the familiar tableaux, then descend the walkway to where Chou En-Lai waits for them. Chou is eloquent and loquacious, while Nixon's voice breaks and stutters, making the "nervous small talk" that Kraft notes in his memoir. As he is taken down the reception line, Nixon launches into an aria, the first of many in the opera, that lifts out of the realistic action and dialogue and into nearly abstract expressions of emotion and imagery. It's not an innovation — arias have suspended stage action since Monteverdi — but the imagery employed by Goodman takes the language of journalism and geopolitics into utterly purple, romantic verse (no criticism, these arias contain some of Goodman's best writing). Nixon sings:

"...The Eastern Hemisphere  
Beckoned to us and we have flown  
East of the sun, west of the moon  
Across an ocean of distrust  
Filled with the bodies of our lost."

Keeping in mind the amplifications im-



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plied in the word *operatic*, it's a natural progression from the sentiments expressed in Nixon's own memoirs:

"I knew that Chou had been deeply insulted by Foster Dulles's refusal to shake hands with him at the Geneva Conference in 1954. When I reached the bottom step, therefore, I made a point of extending my hand as I walked toward him. When our hands met, one era ended and another began... 'The Star Spangled Banner' had never sounded so stirring to me as on that wind-swept runway in the heart of Communist China."

These are the words of someone whose life is lived in the public eye, whose every action is symbolic. The summit is a reconciliation, and Nixon's whole life force seems to propel his outstretched hand across the ocean to Chou, where they meet and climax in the national anthem, sending Nixon reeling as he crosses the tarmac under a barrage of introductions.

Whereas the thrust of Nixon's arrival and his reverie on the airfield are the focus of the first scene, the second scene shows dissipation and a hint of greater confusion to come. It was never definite that Nixon should meet the ailing Mao during the summit, and since the greater part of the Shanghai Communique was drafted by Chou and Kissinger behind the scenes, the meeting would be mostly symbolic. Adams launches the scene with an urgent pulse that is halted with the first words: Mao's lines are echoed by a trio of interpreters who will intone gravely as Kissinger, Chou and Nixon speak, building a babel of misunderstanding. Mao speaks in metaphors, and deflects Nixon's overtures on specific issues with philosophical musings, puns and riddles. Communication breaks down completely and voices descend into a murmur as Kissinger, the epitome of the *realpolitik* diplomat, mutters, "I'm lost" over and over. Mao clearly dominates the scene, and though we won't see him again until the third act, he has proven himself, as he rides over a turbulent patch of history being created with a raft of words, auto-summarizing as he goes, to be more in control of the drama's logic than either Nixon or Kissinger.

The first act ends and the second begins with enactments of the most mundane protocol — a diplomatic banquet and a sightseeing photo op. The momentum that propelled the Nixons into China and onto the stage is lost in the rituals of statecraft. Pat Nixon is taken on a tour of a glass factory, a pig farm, a People's clinic

and the Summer Palace, where she stops and sings an aria full of disparate, abstract imagery, evoking an America of truck stops, families at dinner, the Unknown Soldier rising from his tomb and "the eagle nailed to the barn door." As if responding to an audience shifting in their seats under the weight of so much staged protocol, she sings, "...let routine/ dull the edge of mortality," the most striking of the homilies that the Nixons repeat to themselves as they struggle through an increasingly alienating experience.

As act two ends the Nixons attend a performance of Madame Mao's revolutionary ballet "The Red Detachment of Women."

**Kissinger appears as a brutal, lecherous, landlord's factotum, and the Nixons find themselves unable to distinguish between theatre and reality, as Pat intervenes in the action to confront the proletarian heroine. Just as chaos breaks loose, the Nixons standing drenched by a staged rainstorm, Mme Mao stands up to deliver an aria full of bitter imagery and zealous revolutionary sentiment.**

In conventional drama, this is far too late a point to introduce a major character, but with the lines between history and dramatic licence erased, the audience is encouraged to view events unfolding as if in the media, where consideration of dramatic structure is superfluous — the subject has dictated the form.

Act three is a single scene, originally scripted as yet another banquet, but changed by Sellars during rehearsals to a line of beds in a dormitory, where the main characters have retreated, exhausted, physically and spiritually. A jaunty, Gershwinesque theme asserts itself then loses its momentum in the ponderous rhythms of the scene. Chou En-Lai and the two couples reminisce. Mme Mao and the Chairman dance a foxtrot, then recall the hardships of the Long March. The Nixons are left on a less-than-grand note — the president recalling a hamburger stand he ran in the South Pacific during the war. Chou is given a final aria full of regret and doubt: "How much of what we did was good?/Everything seems to move beyond/our remedy." The opera ends on a quiet

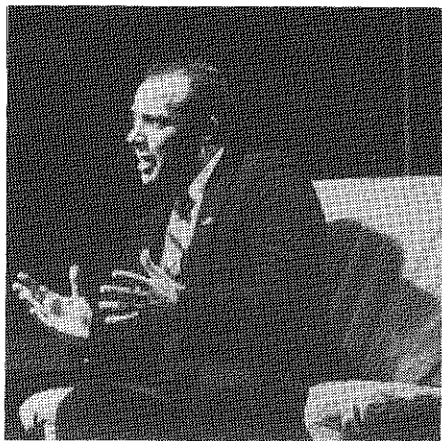
resolution, a single violin completing an arpeggio.

Goodman has remained true to her word — there isn't the slightest allusion to Watergate, she has treated the Chinese Summit for what it was, the decisive opening salvo in Nixon's campaign for re-election — a photo op. Nixon himself didn't see this at the time, as Kraft recalls the Chinese resignation in the face of Nixon's anxiousness for results. It wouldn't be for another five years, after Nixon's disgrace and the death of both Mao and Chou, that diplomatic ties would be established between the countries, paving the way for a tentative Chinese embrace of capitalism. As Mao mutters to his secretaries at the end of his meeting with Nixon: "Founders come first, then profiteers."

Goodman has also chosen to ignore the context of the summit, and has Mao dismiss Vietnam quickly in the same scene. In the end, *Nixon in China* has more to do with Reagan-era media politics than the last days of the activist sixties. As Nixon sings in his wired first aria: "They watch us now;/The three main networks' colours glow/Livid through the drapes onto the lawn." The event itself generates an independent dynamic, rolling forward mercilessly, exhausting its participants. Reeling across the airfield, Nixon stutters: "News news news news news/Has a has a has a kind of mystery." Both taking part and watching himself, Nixon is drunk on the spectacle. By the end of the opera the Nixons seem unsuited for politics, idealistic and bewildered by the roles they have come to play. Chou's final aria makes him a spectator, too, wondering whether any good will come of what they have done. As the media, fragmented by editorial bent and the demands of technology, clumsily pieces together history for a world full of spectators, we condition ourselves to our ultimate ignorance of what really happened, and speculation after the fact only breaks the event into more shards, each one more incapable of reflecting the whole picture. Goodman, in giving Nixon the historical benefit of the doubt, acknowledges her own spectatorship.

For all we can know about the '72 summit, the opera is about as real as the historical event. Goodman, Adams and Sellars have given a face to the participants, and a sympathetic one at that, but given future productions, this might not be the case. A director like Sellars can recast *Nixon in China* in any shape. Nixon's stuttering first aria and Pat's mad leaps of imagery can form the basis of a political dementia, like the profane, babbling Nixon of Robert Altman's *Secret Honour*. As Chou will never know the verdict on his life's work, Goodman and Adams will never know the shapes theirs will take. By changing the light on a historical event, reshaping it as a dream (or a nightmare), the future directors of *Nixon in China* give shape to a simulacra-like world, where politics, democracy, communism and history are only as real as the next actor who is cast as a politician.

Rick McGinnis is a photographer and writer based in Toronto.

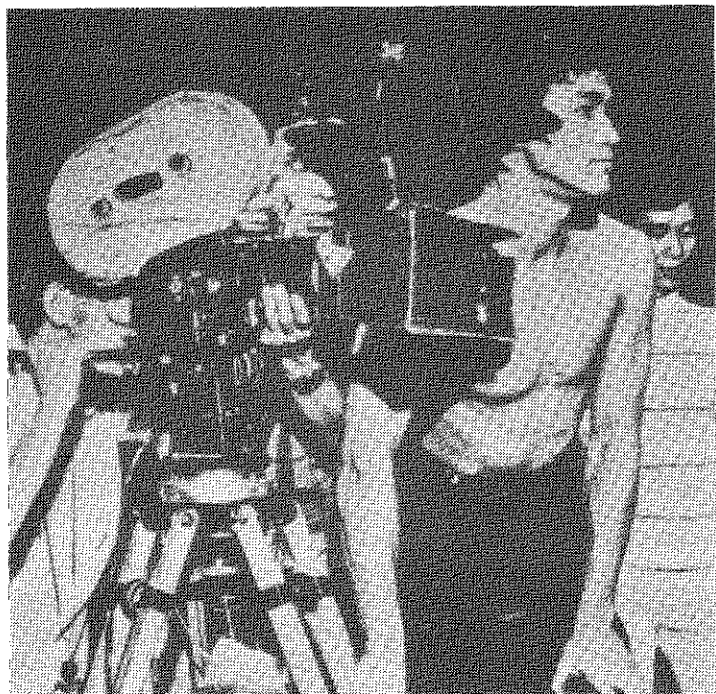


"Mao Tse Tung" and "Richard Nixon" - photo by Martha Swope



# A Viewer's Guide to Kung Fu Films

Miriam Jones



Bruce Lee directing

The Hong Kong martial arts film industry is a cultural and commercial phenomenon which burgeoned in the last twenty-five years and peaked in the 1970s, when hundreds of films a year were produced. Southeast Asia has one of the highest per capita records of cinema attendance in the world. Some estimates go as high as three or four visits a week per person, though the impact of the increasing ownership of television sets is already lowering these figures. A significant proportion of these movie goers are expatriate Chinese.

Film production is assembly-line style, and the importance of the producers is explicit and not obscured, as it can be in the West, by considerations of art and auteurism. There are no auteur directors in Kung Fu movies, no Kurosawas or Sergio Leones. Writers are practically non-existent; most directors either write the script themselves, or work in an impromptu style and a half-finished storyline. Perhaps the two biggest producers through the 70s were Run Run Shaw for the Shaw

Brothers, and Raymond Chow for Golden Harvest.

The production values of these movies are generally inferior to all but the lowest budget Hollywood films. The format is traditional, accessible, and linear; the events unroll in chronological order, and the few flashbacks are clearly delineated: they are shot in black and white, or are tinted, or are shot at a slower speed. Cinematic artistry is not as much an issue as the conveyance of solid, recognizable signs. These films bear a close relationship to traditional Chinese theatre, ballet, and opera, all of which give them a unique theatrical formalism. Most of the movies are variations on a few basic scenarios: renegade monks fighting oppressive Manchus, rival martial arts schools, or heroes seeking revenge for wrongs done to them or their families. Given the number of films and their formal limitations, it is inevitable that they become at once self-conscious and self-reflexive, designed to be judged on their treatment and variation of the basic, easily recognized devices.

Kung Fu is not only of interest to martial artists and members of street gangs; its appeal is far more popularly based. Kung Fu is culturally inscribed with all that is intrinsically and indisputably Chinese, and it is difficult to view it outside the context of the long history of foreign imperialism and oppression of the Chinese people. The earliest antecedents of Kung Fu are alleged to be over four thousand years old. The form is popularly believed to have originated in its modern guise at the Shaolin Temple in Hunan province of China, a cultural centre where Zen Buddhism and *wu tai* (martial virtue) were practiced. Kung Fu practitioners believe that all the martial arts began in Shaolin. Kung Fu developed from Shaolin temple boxing, which was originally a "soft" martial art, like Judo and Aikido, with an emphasis on circular, deflective movements. It turned into a "hard" style — meaning an emphasis on attacks and direct force — during the Manchu invasion of the Ming dynasty in 1643.

Racial and national codes are highly determined, particularly in the costume films. The story of the defence of the Shaolin temple, for example, is a mainstay of Kung Fu movies. In order to quell the monks' opposition to their takeover of the Chinese Ming dynasty, the Manchus attacked the temple and burnt it to the ground. Tradition has it that most of the elder monks chose to die in the temple, but many of the younger ones escaped and continued to offer scattered resistance to the Manchu oppressors and fight for Chinese unity and nationalism. Shaolin as a symbol is all the more potent to its largely expatriate Chinese audience for its mythic nature; even when the Kung Fu itself evokes its significance.

Western audiences are perhaps most familiar with the story of the Shaolin temple from the 70s television show *Kung Fu*, which continues in late night reruns. David Carradine played a renegade Shaolin monk who wandered through the American west in the 1870s in a New-Age-meets-Billy-Jack blend of the Kung Fu and Western genres. A symbol of Chinese tradition and nationalism was transformed for Western consumption into an archetypal story of rugged individualism with an exotic twist. Carradine's enemies were not the enemies of his people; they were his alone.

A second level of mythic coding has grown up around the Kung Fu genre itself, most spectacularly in the figure of Bruce Lee. With the exception of some French film critics, Western cultural and academic writers have largely ignored Kung Fu cinema, with the result that much of the pertinent material is generated "in house," for a martial arts rather than a general film-going audience. In this literature, Lee is often credited with single-handedly popularizing the genre, and the martial arts themselves, in the West. Aside from his record-breaking films, he was an innovator in Kung Fu fighting and one of the first to maintain the need for the martial artist to achieve general health, strength and fitness, when s/he had hitherto focused almost exclusively on the development of skill. Most accounts of Bruce Lee are hagiographic, with the requisite inaccuracies and discrepancies. There was considerable controversy over his death. He died of a cerebral edema at the age of thirty-two, perhaps brought on by an allergic reaction to the pain killers he was taking. His death was further complicated by the fact that it occurred in the apartment of a woman other than his wife.

**FISTS OF FURY** (Golden Harvest, 1971) — This is one of Bruce Lee's first movies; he plays a young man from the country who begins work at a small factory, only to discover that the workers are mistreated and the bosses corrupt. Violence erupts after the bosses have one of the workers killed and attempt a cover-up. *Fists of Fury* is a good example of the perennial Kung Fu theme of the individual battling a corrupt power structure. Although the plots are particularized, from the prevalence of

the theme of oppression, the films extrapolate about the needs of the audience.

After Lee's death, his unfinished films were completed with another actor (with his hair) standing in for Bruce Lee in clips on different color film. Some of the most interesting films were made after Lee's death, but using his star Bruce Lee, but using his precious little of that. His death made in the film industry very apparent, and probably the last cent out of the movie even used footprints.

Where were you watching?

The next important film is, in the words of Robert Clouse (*Enter the Dragon*),

Angela Mao, a beautiful actress [who] was a martial artist [who] was a fighter. In one scene, she fought where Bob White pursued and tormented her. She committed suicide. She was paid a grand total of two long days' work for Golden Harvest. She understood her true value no one around her could tell her. She was very easy to work with, English. This language any actor from Asia.

Underated and underappreciated in the racism of Hollywood, Hong Kong, Mao has the flourishing martial arts of the 70s: she is the major star. In a world where gender is rigidly codified and Norman Douglas usual co-star, exemplifying feminine womanhood, Kung Fu and uncomprehending are a welcome contrast in costume films. When essentially feminine, the same strong resolve of heroes. If there is a hero, remains secondary, and love interest, in keeping with heroic tradition.

**LADY KUNG FU** (Golden Harvest, 1971) — This movie is set in the time of the Japanese occupation. It plays one of three Kung Fu masters who leave their teacher to teach a school. They are attacked and triumph, though he is killed. She herself kills the villain. Just as there are many movies between styles, so is there often schools of martial arts. It ends with Kung Fu rivaling with bullying rivaling judo and karate. Since

1. Robert Clouse, *The Movie* (Burbank, California: Publications) 1987, 116-



the theme of oppressed workers, we can extrapolate about the working class interests of the audience.

After Lee's death, Golden Harvest put out his half finished film, *Game of Death*, with another actor (with slightly longer hair) standing in for back shots, and old clips on different coloured film stock cut in for frontal shots. Several other cannibalistic films were made which claimed to star Bruce Lee, but used old footage, and precious little of that. The hole that Lee's death made in the film industry was suddenly apparent, and promoters squeezed every last cent out of his name. One movie even used footage from his funeral.

Where were you when Bruce Lee died?

The next important figure in Kung Fu films is, in the words of American director Robert Clouse (*Enter the Dragon*),

Angela Mao, a cute little Chinese martial artist [who] was a joy to work with. In one scene, she had a memorable fight where Bob Wall and his bullies pursued and tormented her until she committed suicide. For all her talent, she was paid a grand total of \$100 for two long days' work. She made many films for Golden Harvest and never understood her true worth. Of course, no one around the studio was about to tell her. She was very unassuming and easy to work with, though she spoke no English. This language barrier hampers any actor from Asia...<sup>1</sup>

Underated and underpaid, the victim of the racism of Hollywood and the sexism of Hong Kong, Mao has a unique position in the flourishing martial arts cinema of the 70s: she is the major woman martial artist. In a world where gender roles are rigidly codified and Nora Miao, Bruce Lee's usual co-star, exemplifies the ideal of shy, feminine womanhood, Mao's acrobatic Kung Fu and uncompromising characters are a welcome contrast. She usually stars in costume films. While appearing quintessentially feminine, her characters have the same strong resolve as the Kung Fu heroes. If there is a hero in her films, he remains secondary, and she rarely has a love interest, in keeping with the chaste heroic tradition.

**LADY KUNG FU** (Golden Harvest, 1971) – This movie is set in the 1930s at the time of the Japanese occupation. Angela Mao plays one of three Kung Fu students who leave their teacher to set up their own school. They are attacked by the members of a karate school in the same town. Mao triumphs, though her fellow teachers are killed. She herself kills a Chinese collaborator. Just as there are distinctions in the movies between styles within Kung Fu itself, so is there often a focus on rival schools of martial arts. Teachers and students in a Kung Fu school must often contend with bullying rivals from schools of judo and karate. Since the latter arts are

Japanese, the whole history of Japanese imperialism against China is evoked. The Japanese are invariably portrayed as villains who attempt to conquer and diminish the Chinese, and these dynamics are played out through rivalry between schools. The lone Kung Fu artist who faces and vanquishes an entire school of karatekas (practitioners of karate) is a familiar set piece. So common is this theme that some Hong Kong actors have made a career of playing evil Japanese stock characters. Individual actors become identified with certain types of roles, and once established, rarely shift direction. The collaborator, either with the Manchus, or later with the Japanese, is also a stock figure.

Some other important films are:

**RETURN OF THE DRAGON** (Golden Harvest/Concorde, 1972) – Bruce Lee goes to Rome to help the owner of a Chinese restaurant who is beset by gangs. Chuck Norris got his big break in this film by playing a mercenary who is brought in to fight Lee. When he steps off the plane in his bell bottoms, tight polyester shirt open to the waist and aviator sunglasses, the audience knows who he is. Although he and Lee are enemies, they recognize each others' prowess, and manage to male-bond before Norris is offed in the climactic duel in the Roman Colloseum.

**THE CHINESE CONNECTION** (Golden Harvest, 1972) – Bruce Lee is reported to have gone to screenings of his own movies in disguise. He described to Robert Clouse a screening of *The Chinese Connection*, another film which features individual resistance to the Japanese occupation. A rival Japanese martial arts school challenges the Chinese Kung Fu school by taunting the Chinese as "the sick men of Asia." Lee reported that the audience was silent at this point, as the insult hit too close to home. Later, when the Lee character goes to the Karate dojo and singlehandedly defeats all the karateka, then declares to the scattered bodies, "The Chinese are *not* the sick men of Asia!" the Hong Kong audience apparently burst into pandemonium. In a famous scene at the end of the film, Lee's character chooses death rather than submission to the authorities, and is shot in a freeze frame in midair as he leaps at a group of armed soldiers. In another iconic image from the film, Lee kicks to pieces a sign barring "dogs and Chinese" from a public park. Lee is partially reconstituting his own myth in *The Chinese Connection*, but he is also tapping into a rich cultural wellspring.

**CHINESE HERCULES** (Kai Fa Film Company, 1973) – This is another film about exploited workers. The muscular "Chinese Hercules," played by Yeung Sze, is hired by the foreman of a small shipping dock to keep the workers in line. After injuring many of the workers and killing one of them, he is finally defeated by one martial artist.

Yeung Sze was also the villain in *Enter the Dragon*. The coding of hired talent in Kung Fu movies betrays a structure based on race and nationality. Russians are only

hired by the villains. Black Americans are exotic, and can be either good (Jim Kelly in *Enter the Dragon*) or bad (Kareem Jabbar in *Game of Death*). Either way, they are expendable. White Americans are often hired mercenaries. Common also are white heroes in Hong Kong, to the extent that the Chinese hero is displaced, as in the recently released American *Bloodsport*, an ultimately racist film about two Ameri-



David Carradine in the west

can martial artists, one a gymnast and the other a biker. These two male-bond in a way unheard of outside the family in Hong Kong films and defeat the psychopathic Chinese fighter who is again portrayed by Yeung Sze.

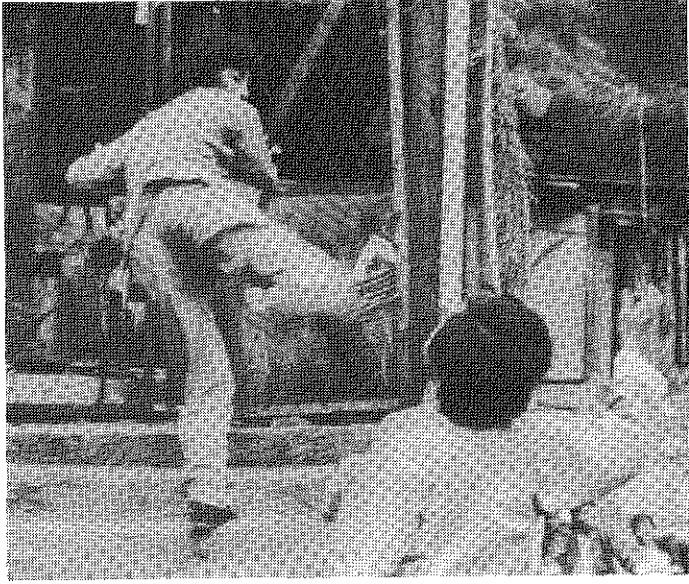
**ENTER THE DRAGON** (Warner Bros./Golden Harvest, 1973) – In this first Hong Kong/Hollywood co-production, Bruce Lee is sent to expose a drug lord who, not incidentally, is responsible for the suicide of Lee's sister. Even though this film had a relatively high budget, the fight scenes take place in open spaces or courtyards and involve minimal damage to props. This is usually the case in Kung Fu films because the materials, which are usually handmade and very flimsy, are used over and over again. There is no breakaway furniture or sugarglass: in *Enter the Dragon*, Bruce Lee cut his hand in a fight scene and required twelve stitches, because a real bottle was used as a weapon. To prepare for the prison scene, carpenters hand-sanded wood to make the bars, because dowling was more expensive than labour. Extras were hired for a few dollars a day, and often slept on the set, and the stage manager complained because they were eating the props for the banquet scene. Many of these extras were from Triads (gangs), and when the scene called for large numbers of extras and they couldn't all be recruited from one Triad, the line between cinema and reality blurred as the extras continued to fight after the director yelled "cut!" The extras in the prison scene were street people, and were paid less than the fight-scene extras. Director Robert Clouse had trouble hiring women for the film, as the Hong Kong actresses would apparently not play prostitutes, and so he had to hire real prostitutes for HK\$150 a day, more than Angela Mao got paid to play Lee's sister. So even

1. Robert Clouse, *The Making of Enter the Dragon* (Burbank, California: Unique Publications) 1987, 116-117.



though the plot of the film is escapist and mythic, and even though the production was criticized by purists because of its Western elements, it does reflect the experienced reality of Hong Kong in a very immediate way.

**THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS** (Shaw Brothers, 1979) – There are many schools and styles of Kung Fu, some very poeti-



Angela Mao, Bruce Lee's on-camera sister, in *Enter the Dragon*

cally named after particular animals whose movements they evoke. Such distinctions are given full play in the films, where the hero, a practitioner of the Tiger style, for example, might only be able to defeat the villain and his Praying Mantis style once he has also mastered the Crane style (see *Executioners of Death*, 1977). These schools are interesting on two levels: for one, they are part of the esoterica of the Chinese martial arts. And in terms of the narrative of the films, they come to take on symbolic meanings. For example, in *The Five Deadly Venoms*, five students of the "Poison Clan" studied five different "styles": the Toad, the Scorpion, the Snake, the Centipede and the Lizard. Four of these students turned their skills to evil uses, and so the names become part of the coding of the villains, analogous to the proverbial black hat in the Western.

In Westerns, the villains are often loners and mavericks. In Kung Fu movies, such fighters would be strictly seen as employees of the real villain. The hero must fight his way up the social hierarchy of hired thugs and underlings before he has the final, climactic fight with the villain, who is almost invariably a corrupt man of wealth and social consequence. Often the hero is ignorant of the real identity of the villain until the end. Even when the villain is vanquished, the convoluted and oppressive social order remains in place. And often the hero doesn't survive: happy endings are by no means obligatory in this genre.

Although Kung Fu films with historical settings may be set in a particular period, their aesthetic conventions and the repetition of the same stories give them an ahistorical vagueness. The elaborate costumes and settings, used from film to film, are

not necessarily historically accurate, but are recognizable as being somehow traditionally "Chinese."

**STREET GANGS OF HONG KONG** (Shaw Brothers, 1979) – This is the story of a young working class man who is tempted by the world of organized crime. It is intriguing in its authentic street locations and depictions of restaurant work. The Kung Fu hero is usually more contextualized than the hero of the Western; while the latter lives in splendid isolation in the open frontier society, the Kung Fu hero lives in overcrowded Hong Kong, or in a close-knit village or monastic community, and so is part of a complex and inescapable social order which he must interact with while remaining true to his personal code. He is generally working class, as is his audience, and is instantly perceived to be so through shared codes of meaning.

In Hong Kong gangster films the characters face a more complex, Westernized world, and heroism is more difficult. The themes of nationalism and imperialism of the historical films are sublimated into a background of sex, drugs and disco; gangster films are the stories of individuals caught up in the inexorable machinery of organized crime. They retain certain similarities to the arts are used instead of guns, and the world is still divided into heroes and villains.

**DIRTY HO** (Hong Kong, 1979) – This is a very bizarre film about a ne'er do well who becomes the disciple of the Emperor's heir. A comedy with intensely theatrical elements and considerable slapstick, it is so stylized that it is almost inaccessible to a Western audience. The dubbing, which always serves to scuttle the remaining shreds of our suspension of disbelief, is here even more stilted than usual. The fight scenes are so tightly choreographed that the performance element becomes part of the text of the film. The slowed action, the build-up of the traditional lute music counterposed to the comic ritual between the characters, and the synchronized balletic quality of the movements, all indicate the evolution of a highly parodic, culturally circumscribed genre form.



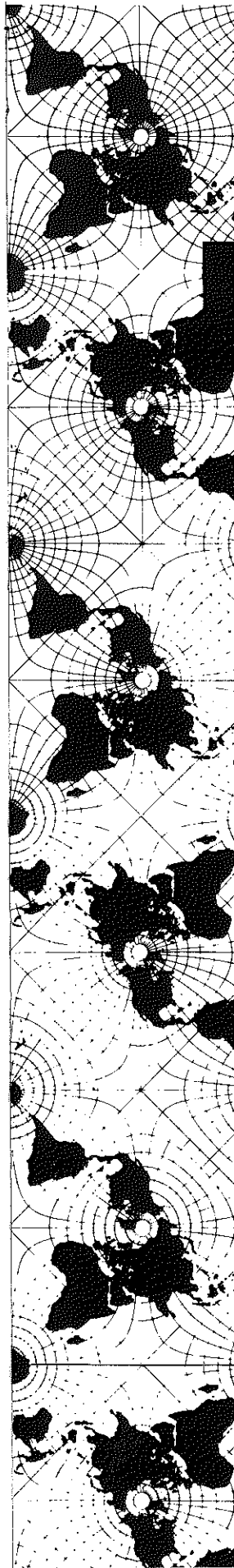
Bruce Lee in *Enter the Dragon*

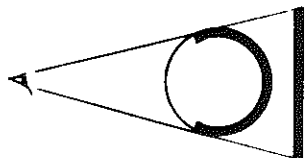
At this point, you are now ready to watch some Kung Fu movies. Start with Bruce Lee's films, for they are more commercial, and thus more culturally accessible to the West. Check the television guide: martial arts are usually on very late at night. Don't be sidetracked by films starring Charles Bronson or things with titles like *American Ninja*; hold out for the genuine article. At first sight Kung Fu movies may seem closed to Western viewers: they are repetitive and stiff, they have no plot, are low budget, etc. etc. Upon further viewing, however, these simple narrative codes offer endless permutations and nuances, complicated by the tension between the cultural significance and the extremely commercial nature of the films. In fact, it is the interplay between the B grade elements of these films and their cultural coding which provides for much of the fascination for Kung Fu cultists.

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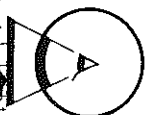
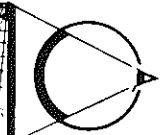
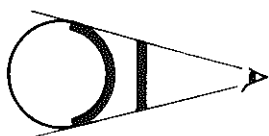
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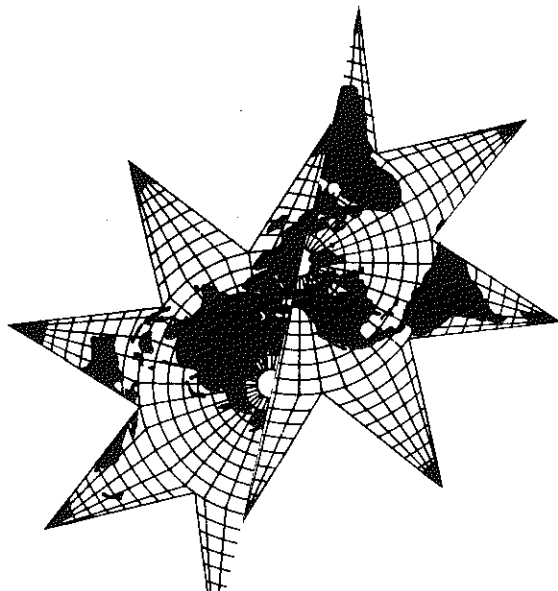
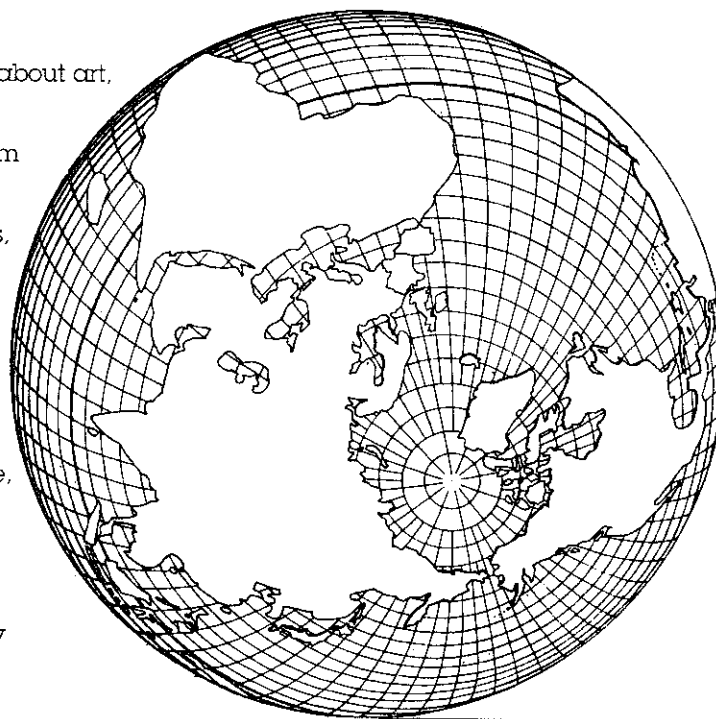
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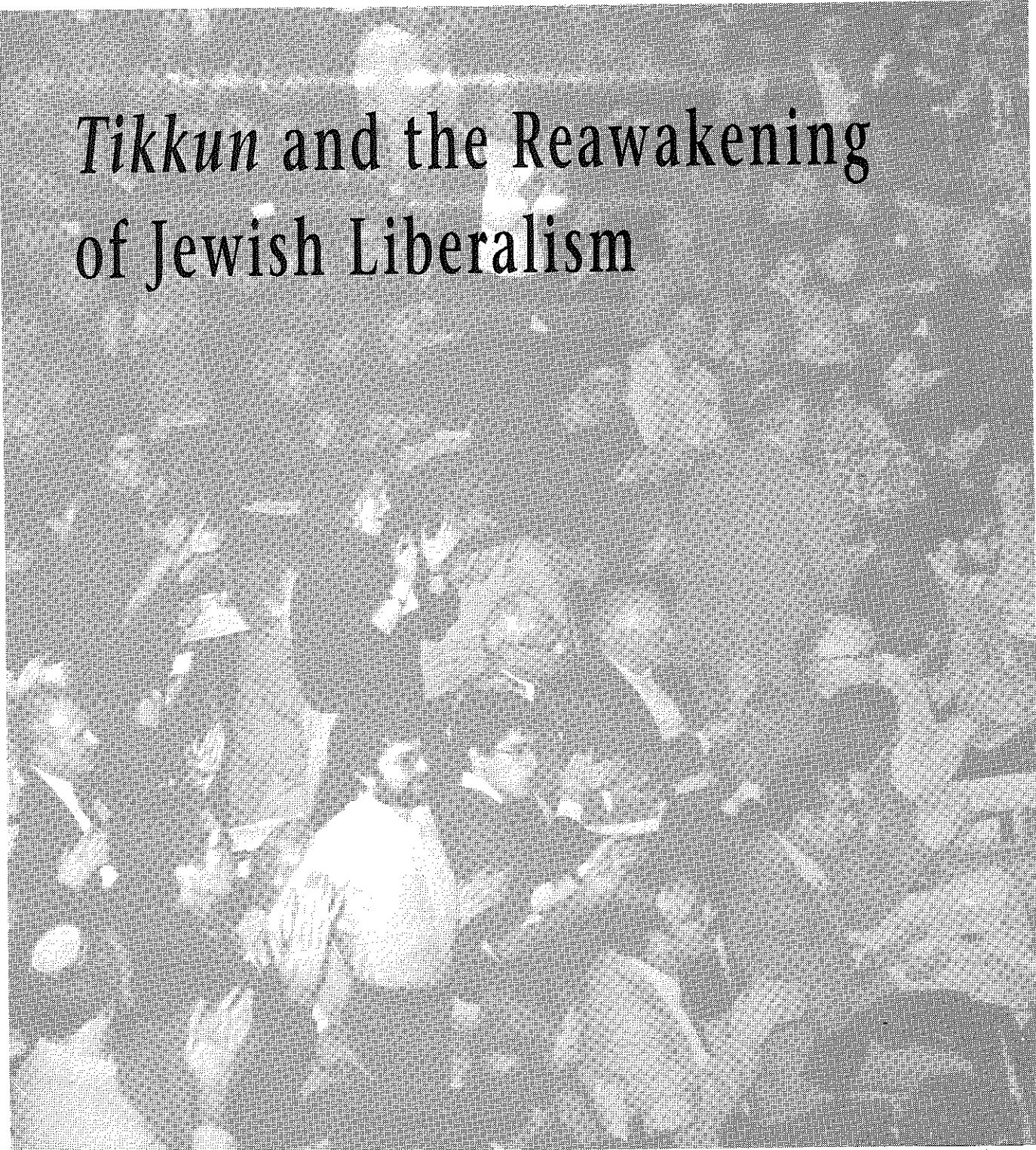
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# Tikkun and the Reawakening of Jewish Liberalism



**Joe Galbo**

Photos by Paula Rhodes

With no sign of the Palestinian *intifata* abating, a growing number of North American Jewish groups have been calling for a political solution to the Palestinian problem. Included among them is a new periodical on politics, culture & society, *Tikkun*.

*Tikkun*, which in Hebrew means to mend, repair, and transform the world, is a bi-monthly journal that began publishing in 1986. Since this time the magazine has made a name for itself for its peculiar synthesis of liberal ideals, religion, feminism, and its critique of neo-conservatism. *Tikkun* advertises itself as the liberal alternative to the Jewish neo-conservative journal *Commentary*. The claim is not inaccurate but like other forms of self-advertising it warrants close scrutiny.

It is not easy to surmise editorial views without a clear indication; nevertheless, some can be identified. On the *intifata*, *Tikkun* wants negotiations that would create and demilitarized Palestine, strongly criticised the *ary* for trotting obedience of the Israeli government Middle East policy.

In its overall politics, *Tikkun* tries to retrieve the political terrain of the Right. Michael Lerner, *Tikkun*, and Christopher Lutz, *Tikkun* editor, have been vocal proponents of this position. In the past, the Right has been unable to articulate the message and then articulate the message to touch a large majority of the Right who talk about spirituality, ethics and values, and as a result they have been ineffective in the language of reform. Recognizing the need to relate to a large population, *Tikkun* has adopted the Right's rhetorical thrust.

At the same time *Tikkun* tries to dispel the idea that Jews should not get in with the conservative America continue to support liberal and reformist ideas. But the same cannot be said for the leadership of Jewish groups which Lerner asserts is ineffective that has a vastly disproportionate voice over what gets said in the Jewish community.

#### *The conference*

It was partly to counter the influence of the Right and the influence of the organized Jewish conservative movement that *Tikkun* was founded. The editors also launched a conference, which dealt with the substitution of American values. For three days Jews from the United States and Canada met at the Penta Hotel in mid-Manhattan to hear speeches, argue, and work to build a coalition that effectively challenge the cultural hegemony of the United States and, importantly,

A three day conference sessions is almost impossible in a systematic way, especially since the conference itself did not have a coherent focus, but only for the beginning of the sessions were sessions on the Blacks and Jews, the Fundamentalism, Ferrel, the *Intifada*, the new Zionism, Modernism, Lescault, and the Political Strategy. Much of my time was spent in sessions in which I had to speak to other people and speaking to other people, though unsure about the direction towards *Tikkun*, felt

It is not easy to summarize *Tikkun's* editorial views without some oversimplification; nevertheless, some clear principles can be identified. On the issue of the *intifada*, *Tikkun* wants Israel to begin negotiations that would create an independent and demilitarized Palestinian state and has strongly criticized the writers of *Commentary* for trotting obediently in the footsteps of the Israeli government in matters of Middle East policy.

In its overall politics *Tikkun* wants to retrieve the political territory ceded to the Right. Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, and Christopher Lasch, a contributing editor, have been the chief exponents of this position. Currently, they argue, the Right has been able to identify and then articulate the problems that touch a large majority of people. It is the Right who talk about the family, religion, spirituality, ethics and traditional values, and as a result they have found an opening which has allowed them to monopolize the language of religion and community. Recognizing the appeal of conservative values to a large part of the American population, *Tikkun* now wants to steal the Right's rhetorical thunder.

At the same time *Tikkun* is trying to dispel the idea that Jews have thrown their lot in with the conservative forces. Jews in America continue to show an affinity for liberal and reformist causes, notes Lerner. But the same cannot be said about a number of prominent Jewish intellectuals and the leadership of Jewish organizations, which Lerner asserts is a conservative elite that has a vastly disproportionate influence over what gets said on behalf of the Jewish community.

#### The conference

It was partly to counter the rhetoric of the Right and the influence of a highly organized Jewish conservative leadership that *Tikkun* was founded. In December 1988 the editors also launched their first conference, which dealt broadly with the reconstitution of American Jewish liberalism. For three days Jews from all across the United States and Canada met in the Penta Hotel in mid-Manhattan in order to hear speeches, argue, network, celebrate, and work to build a coalition that would effectively challenge the political and cultural hegemony of the Right in the United States and, importantly, in Israel.

A three day conference with over 40 sessions is almost impossible to cover in a systematic way, especially when the conference itself did not offer a clear and coherent focus, but only the sparse outline for the beginning of new dialogues. There were sessions on the relationship between Blacks and Jews, the Cold War, Religious Fundamentalism, Feminism and Judaism, the *Intifada*, the new PLO position on Israel, Modernism, Lesbian and Gay Jews, and the Political Strategies of the Left. Much of my time was spent going to sessions in which I had a personal interest, and speaking to other participants who, though unsure about their own position towards *Tikkun*, felt that many old-line

North American Jewish groups and publications no longer spoke for them.

*Tikkun's* editorial offices are in Oakland California. "Being in the West is in many ways useful. It makes us mysterious," said associate editor Peter Gabel, but he added "if the magazine is to grow we need to do better in eastern cities." By having the conference in New York City *Tikkun* was trying to strengthen its eastern ties. And adding variety and fresh perspectives to the conference were many speakers from the academic and literary community of the east, especially from the editorial board of *Dissent* magazine, one of the bastions of the New York Jewish Left.

The urgent need for alternatives, the eclecticism of the conference, and the excellent advertising drew over 1800 people to the gathering: more than three times the number that the organizers had expected. The participants included academics, activists, artists, students, politicians, feminists, and union leaders. The number of women in the audience was significantly large yet there was no day care provided: a glaring omission for a group that is trying to support women's issues and recruit women contributors.

Overall, there was a general mood of excitement, as if at last the isolation and the walls of silence within a segment of the Jewish community were being shaken. The intellectual vitality found at the sessions was notably high though at some points heated disagreements were scotched. Since the conference was designed to lessen differences and bring a wide range of liberal-leaning Jews together, the organizers were particularly concerned not to stoke the fires of controversy. They were highly successful, but the price that they had to pay was to muffle some sharp questioning of *Tikkun's* values from the Left.

#### Bashing the neo-conservative Commentary

New York City was the logical choice for yet another reason as it is the home of *Commentary*. For a little more than a decade we have all watched the rise of the political fortunes of the coterie of New York Jewish intellectuals who have propelled the neo-conservative movement, the most notable among them being Irving Kristol, Midge Decter, and Norman Podhoretz. Podhoretz began his career with *Commentary* in the early fifties at a time when cold war liberal anti-communism was at a feverish pitch. Over the years, and especially under Podhoretz's editorial direction, *Commentary* went through first a narrowing and then a reversal of its liberal position. Coming from a tradition of cold war Democratic politics, it was easy for Podhoretz to make a transition to the Right.

Both Kristol and Podhoretz have now become the shrill voices of neo-conservatism. Kristol is a senior fellow for the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think-tank. Podhoretz continues to oversee *Commentary* and is a member of the ultra hawk Committee for the Free

World, while his wife, Midge Decter, contributes to *Commentary* and sits on the Board of Directors of the Heritage Foundation, a WASP, right wing anti-intellectual think-tank.

Part of the reason for the political *volte-face* of *Commentary*, and indeed for the growth of Jewish conservatism, was the cold war, which disenchanting many Jewish leftists. More importantly, the status of



Grace Paley addressing the Conference

Jews in America was rising. By the late 60s many Jews felt comfortable within the mainstream of American politics and society and that dulled the edge of Jewish radicalism. In the first volume of his highly publicized memoirs, *Making It*, Podhoretz vividly remembers the personal and cultural undercurrents of Jewish assimilation in the 40s and 50s. Assimilation had been a "brutal bargain" where much of the ethos had to be given up in return for the economic and cultural opportunities which many Jews of Podhoretz's generation quickly embraced. What spurred us on, remembers Podhoretz, was "the lust for success," which "had replaced sexual lust... especially for the writers, artists, and intellectuals among whom I lived and worked."

If Podhoretz gloats over his triumph of "making it," *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner cautions against the false security of believing that once having "made it" Jews no longer need to feel connected to the Jewish world and its moral tradition of justice and insurgence. Neo-conservatives may wince at such earnestness: the idea of the moralist as rebel is not currently fashionable. But thus far *Tikkun* continues to stress the links of Jewish spiritual identity with universalist values, liberalism, and progressive ideas. This was the prevailing theme of the conference, and especially at



the banquet honouring Irving Howe and novelists Grace Paley and Alfred Kazin, all of whom continued to be outspoken critics during the chill of the cold war.

**Jews & Palestinians**

Irving Howe is the editor of *Dissent* magazine and has been a crucial player in the Left community since the early 50s. An urbane liberal, a literary stylist and a cosmopolitan in his concerns, Howe is the essence of the New York intellectual. He is also a stern critic of the Israeli handling of the *intifada* and in his banquet speech, he focused on the double crisis faced by Jews: the moral isolation of Israel and the moral evasion by American Jews. Howe's speech accurately reflects the sentiments of many of the *Tikkun* writers.

The leaders of the Jewish community, said Howe, have organized too narrowly for the defence of Israel and consequently they are dominated by a mood of inhibition and repression. They have made Israel the religion of American Jews because in a sense Israel represents the last shred of Jewishness the American Jews have left. The worldly success of the American Jews has had its price and now the community is drained of its ground of being. American Jews avoid any sustained effort at self-reflection because if they look inward they fear finding nothing. As a consequence, Howe continuing, Israel has come to provide a rationale for their own collective experience to the extent that they are now psychologically dependent on Israel for their identity. Howe ended his speech by focusing on the problem ahead. The American Jewish organizations are trying to finesse a deepening split within the Jewish world. In the next few years, Howe prophesied, there will be a war within the Jewish community because of what is happening to the Palestinians. It will be a heated and divisive war that will force some people to pull out. But if Jews still hold firm to universalist values, they need to be prepared for a long and difficult fight.

One of the more exciting sessions in the *Tikkun* conference, and certainly one that drew the most media attention, was a Palestinian/American Jewish Roundtable. Not only was this the opening session of the conference, it was politically timely as well. A week earlier, Yasser Arafat reiterated his message in Geneva before delegates of the UN that the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist alongside a Palestinian state. Now, in a room filled to capacity, Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, both members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), were outlining the importance of this step. A critical threshold had been crossed, said Said, "the coalescence of a political view within the PLO is clear and an important political fact. The foundation of a Palestinian state must be the result of negotiations between the two parties directly involved."

Judging from the response, this was a view which found a measured support from the majority of the audience. During

the question period many were pressing Said for political assurance that the PNC would accept a demilitarized Palestinian state. Said was often irritated by such questions because, he said, they could only be answered at the negotiation table. At a subsequent session Michael Lerner added rhetorical ballast to the idea of negotiation. What American Jews need to do, intoned Lerner, is to make their voices heard. "We are not advocating support for the PLO but the start of a peace initiative,"



Abba Eban

and if Israel insists on its intransigence they should be shaken from their self-delusion: "Wake up, Israel, you do not have forever. We American Jews are calling out. Negotiation now!"

**Feminism**

*Tikkun's* position on a negotiated peace is widely supported by its readers, yet in other political and social issues there is no clear consensus. This was particularly evident in the feminist sessions where there was a sharp contrast between cultural feminists whose link to Jewishness is essential, and feminists who owed their allegiance to secular political values and rights. On the one side are women like Phyllis Chesler, who chaired the Feminism and Judaism session, and who along with a group of other women took part in an action in Israel that involved praying on the Wailing Wall, where women are not allowed. They talked mainly of the resistance and intimidation they had to face, and their struggle to broaden women's role within Judaism. On the other side are women like Ann Snitow, in the Feminist Perspective session, whose political consciousness as a feminist is linked, she said, more with secularization than it is with Judaism, and so felt that her concerns as a secular feminist were being marginalized in this conference. Snitow spoke of the importance of stepping outside women's socially constructed roles and of being critical of any facile link between ethnicity and feminism. The women's issues crystal-

ize some of the obvious difficulties of having a religious orientation to political action. As a liberal Jewish magazine, *Tikkun* has often taken the view that cultural meaning (Jewishness) should be given a privilege over a position that argues solely on behalf of secular political rights. For many women and men, however, it is the struggle for rights that informs their values and politics.

**From Max Nordau to postmodernism**

It was inevitable that somewhere in this conference there would be a session that addressed the vitriolic attacks on higher education by Allan Bloom (see *Border/Lines* # 12). One of the more engaging speakers in this session was Leon Botstein, president of Bard College, who called Bloom the "Max Nordau of the 20th century." The analogy between Max Nordau and Allan Bloom went a long way in explaining why Bloom could so effortlessly become the willing guardian of a white, male Western culture. Max Nordau was a German Jew of the last century who wrote a highly popular book in 1892 called *Degeneration* which maintained that the moderns in art and literature lacked clarity and self-discipline and were incapable of upholding bourgeois moral standards. The idea of degeneration provided the foil to the idea of degeneration concept of clarity, tradition and values. Bloom's lament for the souls of today's students once again sets public discussion firmly on conservative ground. But more importantly, what both Max Nordau and Allan Bloom have in common as Jews, says Botstein, is a deep anxiety of losing the 'civility' and privileges they had gained through assimilation. Like many other American Jews, Bloom was able to gain access to American "high culture" through the benefits of an open public school system. Now fearing a threat to his status, he has become a warrior in the *Kulturkampf* and his defence of "excellence" becomes in reality an argument against equal access to schooling.

The trouncing of Allan Bloom drew a considerable audience and so did the session on modernism, which, logically, turned out to deal more with postmodernism. Here Todd Gitlin, another contributing editor to *Tikkun*, made a McLuhanesque distinction between hot and cool postmodernism. Cool postmodernism is "Goyish" since it is the kind of work which simply transcribes the impoverished experience of our current culture and denies us an engagement with our fears and anxieties. Hot postmodernism, by contrast, suggests that something has been evaded by our obsession with mass culture. Going underneath the images and the surfaces of everyday banality, hot postmodernism hints at real emotions and feelings. Hot postmodernism, Todd Gitlin continued, extends the ideals of High modernism and is linked with a movement with which Jews have always been associated. So characterised, hot postmodernism soon became an expression of a Jewish aesthetic sensibility and something of a rallying point and battle cry for

*Tikkun* enthusiasts. The validity of the distinction of hot postmodernism; a more fruitful work of postmodernism is to work with the minority in the session on action in a time when to what comes next.

**Tikkun's Liberalism and the Democratic Left**

This is not an easy time in America, and none know it better than Michael Harrington. In 1964 F. Buckley Jr. once quipped that the tallest building in America has dedicated his life to the political struggle and given the current economic conditions the proper political alliance within the Democratic Left. This was the substance of a strategy session on American session which highlighted differences between Traditionalism and the political democratic Left.

Harrington reminded how he ran his campaign for *Tikkun's* regular contributor. He wrote a searing critique of the mietown-Farrakhan affair and should not remove the programme because it is one available to deal with homelessness, racism in education. It is, however, that needs to be combined with ideas and new vision.



Judy Chicago

definition of working hours of a 30 to 32 hour week of democratization of the work force against the religious barb against the religious *Tikkun* conference, that serious atheists, as concerned with values of people, but values are

*Tikkun* enthusiasts. I'm not sure of the validity of the distinction or the association of hot postmodernism with Jewishness; a more fruitful way of seeing postmodernism is to view it, a dissenting minority in the session argued, as a holding action in a time when we are unsure as to what comes next.

#### *Tikkun's Liberalism and the Democratic Left*

This is not an easy time to be a leftist in America, and none know that better than Michael Harrington. Harrington is America's leading socialist which is, as William F. Buckley Jr. once quipped, "like being the tallest building in Topeka, Kansas." The political struggle to which Harrington has dedicated his life requires endurance, and given the current American realities, the proper political alliances with a broad coalition within the Democratic party. This was the substance of his talk at the strategy session on American politics, a session which highlighted some crucial differences between *Tikkun's* Jewish liberalism and the political practices of the democratic Left.

Harrington reminded his audience that Jews can be critical of Jesse Jackson and how he ran his campaign — in fact one of *Tikkun's* regular contributors Paul Berman wrote a searing critique of Jackson's Hymietown-Farrakhan affair — but they should not remove themselves from his programme because it is the only realistic one available to deal with unemployment, homelessness, racism, and improvements in education. It is, however, a programme that needs to be complemented with bold ideas and new visions, particularly a new

distributes the wealth of the world and takes a critical view of the power distribution within the global economy.

The political strategy outlined by Harrington was set against a stark backdrop of American realities. During the past eight years, American organized labour has been savaged by Reagan to the point where only 14 percent of the workforce is now unionized. There are other problems as well and Frances Fox Piven, author of *Why American's Don't Vote*, pointed out some of the more glaring difficulties of American democracy. In the 1988 election just slightly more than 50 percent of the American electorate voted: one of the lowest turnouts in any democracy in the world. The U.S. is also the only country in the world where there are sharp differences between those who vote and those who don't. As a consequence, the underrepresented in politics are also the underclass in economic terms. The poor and the minorities are *de facto* disenfranchised. One of the key reasons why conservatives win elections in America is that the electoral base is so narrow that the two opposing parties stumble into each other for the same symbols and values: often the charged symbols of sexism, racism, and jingoism. If the Left is to make headway in American politics, says Piven, then it must work to change one of the most restrictive voter registration laws in the free world and continue to build a grass-root infrastructure in order to increase voter registration and turnout.

Yet it is the emphasis on the structural inequalities of the global economy and the building of grass-root political action that Peter Gabel, *Tikkun's* associate editor, finds spurious. He is more concerned with the ethical and psychological grounding of politics and criticises Harrington and Piven for being economic and technocratic. In a nutshell this is *Tikkun's* orientation: its basis is ethical and religious. Ultimately it fails to have a clear critique of both the larger structural issues and the smaller community practices, and to compensate for its lack of experience relies on pious notion of community and politics. Clearly, ideas about the family, religion and community should be assimilated into a Left politics, but with caution, with a mind open to pleasure and danger, and bristling with doubt. Often in *Tikkun* skepticism and caution yield to romantic ideas of "community," "Jewishness," and "family." And these are the most flagrant flaw I find with the magazine and with some aspects of the conference.

#### *What's left in America?*

But such criticism is easy to make. With the current trend in the West towards the political Right, all factions within the Left must do some serious strategic thinking about how to turn the political tide. Within this debate a magazine like *Tikkun*, and the conference that it sponsored which the planners are hoping to make an annual event, can play a constructive role. *Tikkun's* self-proclaimed goal is to enlarge the liberal vision of society and more spe-

cifically reaffirm a socially conscious role for Judaism in North America. It is a reasonable objective and one wishes them well. Nevertheless, *Tikkun* is in need of honest critics that can point to its idealistic excesses and its ill-founded optimism that intellectuals, and especially Jewish intellectuals, can transform the current political climate. Intellectuals are only part of the equation of political change and sometimes not a significant part at that. Russell Jacoby, who was present at the



Edward Said with Brazilian journalist Sylvio Band

conference, reiterated a key point that he made in his recent book, *The Last Intellectuals* (see *Border/Lines* #14). "If the *Tikkun* conference," said Jacoby, "can prove to me that the spirit of the activist, left-leaning Jewish intellectual is not dead, then I would withdraw the book and remainder it for \$1.25." To Jacoby the long-term political record of the radical Jewish intellectual in America is not particularly remarkable.

Despite some of the difficulties I have with the whole enterprise — its emphasis on ethnic meaning over political rights, and its polyanna reliance on terms like "community" and "religion," which in a sense yields the political discourse to the reactionary right — *Tikkun* has shown that it has the energetic individuals, the organizational skills, the political commitment and the dedication to bring together a vast array of people who have an interest in progressive politics, however loosely one defines that term. They have also shown that they can ask some tough questions about how North American Jews should respond to the new PLO initiative. This is where *Tikkun* has been most successful. They have been able to clarify the difference between traditional humane Jewish values and brutal and obturate Israeli policies. And it is mainly because of this distinction that many American Jews are turning their backs and closing their wallets to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the American Jewish Committee, and *Commentary*.

Joe Galbo is a member of the editorial collective of *Border/Lines* and teaches Cultural History and Popular Culture at York University.



Judy Chicago

definition of working life, the possibility of a 30 to 32 hour work week, and the democratization of the workforce. As a barb against the religious overtones of the *Tikkun* conference, Harrington declared that serious atheists, like himself, are just as concerned with values as religious people, but values are empty unless one



# Never Meant to Happen

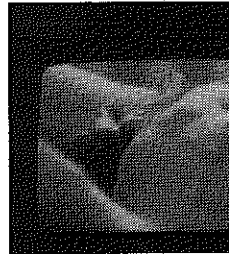
## Linda Clow

Linda Clow lives in a treatment facility in Belleville. Before that she was an inmate of the Prison for Women to which she was sent as a result of the events which she recounts below. Her trial was the subject of a 1985 CBC documentary, hosted by Patrick Watson, in the series *The Lawyers*. Bonny Walford collected some of the stories of Linda's co-prisoners in her impressive book *Lifers: The Stories of Eleven Women Serving Life Sentences for Murder* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1987). As far as I know, however, this is the first personal account to be published in Canada by any woman who has been incarcerated for murder. *Border/Lines* does not have the space to publish the entire story, preferring to use those sections of Linda's record which deal with the "crime," the arrest and the trial. As she mentions in her concluding (unpublished) section, Linda survived the entire ordeal by discovering a strong religious support. On a re-trial the charge was dropped to manslaughter, and Linda was sentenced to six years, of which she served four.

The story is presented to *Border/Lines* readers partly because it is a powerful story in its own terms, but also because it projects several elements in our culture which are easily

glossed over, but which are evident in any concern about patriarchy, and legal process, deviant subcultures, personal alienation and the abuse of chemicals. Unlike most male accounts of prison life (see, for example, Stephen Reid's *Jack-Rabbit Parole* or Roger Caron's *Go-Boy*, the best-read of recent Canadian prison books), Linda's story has no false sense of banditry or criminal camaraderie. There are no Bonnie-and-Clyde hyper-realities here, nor any pretences to possessing an alternative mythology (such as Jean Genet's) which the prison culture may have put in place. Linda's commonsensical matter-of-fact story is about the men and the women who are inter-related in the production of crime, the chemistry (booze/drugs) which ensure that it will persist (by making the actions themselves amnesic), the subcultures that provide a cushion, the procedures by which the law takes its course and the personal loneliness that is the cause and consequence of the whole process. Linda's staccato account is free of jargon, excuses, bombast or vindictiveness and therefore allows the reader to share directly in the events as they unfolded.

Ioan Davies



I have known Carol for years. I stayed at her house many times. We were good friends. I had done something for her one day, a couple of days before she came to Carol's place. I had been driving fast and drinking so much that I got into almost anything. She needed much coaxing to get me to the room of a man who had been and steal his wallet while she kept him busy while she was there.

When we got to the house, we had a few minutes. I had snatched the wallet, but I only had a hundred dollars. It was a far cry from what I had believed. I gave her some of the money, and kept the wallet for myself.

I walked on down the street. Fred, a man who knew me, was at a restaurant. He asked me, "What's go?"

"Fine," I said. "I kept the money that had been stolen. I also showed him the money."

We decided to go to the bank to drink. While in the bank, I ran the charge cards. I bought leather coats at Simpsons-Sears and gave them to a bar and sold them. I took orders for whatever they wanted.

I managed to pick up the money that told us what cards we had. On my first day working with the bank, I decided to rent a motor car out of there. We had to pick up new clothes and whatever else we needed. We set up and ready to work. We made because I had done lots of speed and weren't in stores. We had the time that money was in matter how long we had. It seemed to be enough. We had speed we were doing. We bought VCRs and other things that I don't even remember what we had. Fred left all the money. I went into stores as a man. He could go alone with the money.

While living at the house, I had of us ate or slept. We



I have known Carol for 15 years. I've stayed at her house many times, and we were good friends. I had been asked to do something for her one day so I agreed. A couple of days before, I had gone to Carol's place. I had been partying, doing speed and drinking so I could be talked into almost anything, although I never needed much coaxing. I had agreed to go to the room of a man who I didn't know, and steal his wallet with her. She was to keep him busy while I took it.

When we got to the man's rooming house, we had a few drinks. As soon as I'd snatched the wallet, I suggested we leave. It only had a hundred dollars in it which was a far cry from what she had led me to believe. I gave her some of the money inside, and kept the wallet with the I.D. in it.

I walked on down the street and met Fred, a man who knew about the wallet, in a restaurant. He asked, "How did things go?"

"Fine," I said. "I kept pretty well all of the money that had been in the wallet." I also showed him the I.D.

We decided to go to a bar and have a drink. While in the bar, we made a deal to run the charge cards. We went to Simpsons-Sears and got to work. We bought leather coats and jeans, took them to a bar and sold them. From there we took orders for whatever else anyone wanted.

I managed to pick up a hot sheet which told us what cards were hot. It was on the first day working with these cards that we decided to rent a motel room and to work out of there. We had used the cards to pick up new clothes for ourselves, and whatever else we needed. By then we were set up and ready to work. I can't say what we made because I really don't know. We did lots of speed and were in bars when we weren't in stores. We were so high all of the time that money was like water. No matter how long we worked there never seemed to be enough money for all the speed we were doing and the night life. We bought VCRs and many other things that I don't even remember. I don't even remember what we had gotten for them. Fred left all the money dealing to me. We went into stores as a couple until I decided he could go alone while I drank all day.

While living at the motel, neither one of us ate or slept. We spent our time run-

ning charge cards and doing drugs. Needless to say we weren't in very good shape. You can only do speed for so long without sleeping or eating. You start getting paranoid along with thinking that you look fine. But really you look like you crawled out from under a rock. When we weren't in bars or working, we would be in the motel room drinking and scamming how much money we needed to buy more dope. When in the motel, we also figured out how much money we had left and what our plans would be when we went out.

The last time I remember clearly being in the motel was at night. Fred and I were having a conversation. He wanted me to go back to the place where I had stolen the wallet to see if the man who owned it had reported it missing yet. At first I put up an argument, but then I decided to go. We agreed that he would wait in a restaurant down the street for me to call and let him know if it had been reported or not. We then went out to a bar. I don't remember anything else about that evening, not where we went or who we saw.

The following morning when I got up I went to get my dope. I had put a bag of speed in a lampshade above the bed the night before. I got on the bed and took it out, went to the bathroom and mixed it up. Then I had a shower, drank a few beers and was ready to go. Fred was in the other room getting ready himself. As we were getting ready, he was telling me about this man who was coming by to give us a ride. Fred must have talked to him the night before.

Shortly after that a car pulled up. It was a station wagon and the man driving was bald with a beard. After they dropped me off, this man was going to take Fred around to stores and wherever else he wanted to go. We jumped in the car, and this man drove downtown and dropped me off two blocks from where I was going.

Fred told me as I got out of the car, "I'll be at the restaurant. Call me as soon as you know what is happening about the charge cards."

"Fine," I said and turned to walk up the street. I went into the same house from where I had stolen the wallet. I don't remember feeling afraid or anything. There was a man in a small kitchen at the top of the stairs who said good morning to me. I went on around the corner and knocked

on the door to the room.

Ben, the man, called out, "Who is it?"

I answered, "Brenda." He came to the door and opened it. While standing at the door, I gave him some excuse. "I need to use your phone."

"Sure," he said and let me in. He was really quite friendly up to that point. After I was in his room, he asked me, "Would you like a drink?"

"Sure," I answered. We had a few drinks of straight gin, and he started to tell me how his wallet had been stolen. I let on I knew nothing about it.

"I reported it to the police and they told me to sober up first. Then to look around my car and room. If I didn't find it by the next day, to call back."

I knew then that Fred and I could still use the charge cards. So I asked, "Could I use your phone now?"

"Sure."

I called Fred and said, "One o'clock." With that Fred knew that he could still use the charge cards. As far as Ben knew I was talking to my daughter. Then I hung up the phone.

Ben poured me another drink and began to pace back and forth across the room. As he was pacing back and forth he said, "Carol or you stole my wallet."

"No, I didn't!"

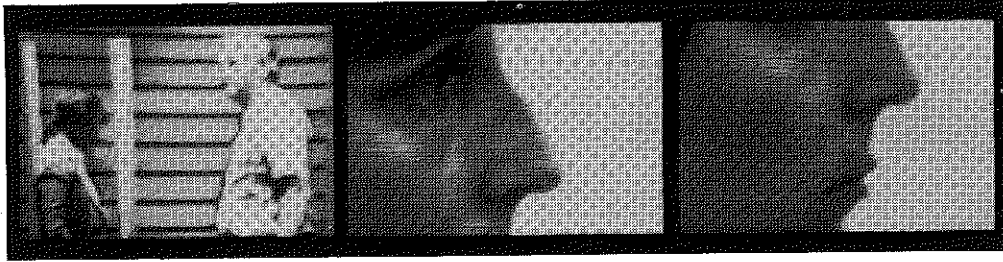
"He continued to get madder. He ranted and raved, "The police are no damn good." He turned on me.

As I went to get up to leave, he slapped me across the face. I felt trapped. There was a 40-ouncer bottle on the floor at my feet. I picked it up and hit him over the head. That didn't stop him from coming at me. It only stunned him a bit. At that point a knife appeared. I can't be sure if he had it or where it came from. The next thing I knew I had pushed him away with it. I think that was the first stab wound. I continued to stab at him, and I pushed him back into a chair.

The first time I remember it coming into my head that I might have hurt him was when I saw his arm. It was cut from about the wrist to the elbow. I pulled the sleeve on his housecoat down and put his feet onto a footstool. I backed into the corner of the room. I remember feeling scared that I still couldn't get him out the door, and that if I moved to go by him, he would grab me. I could hear strange, gurgling noises coming from him. Finally,

Frames taken from the video of 5, 1985, CBC, by Carol McBride





after what seemed like hours, I did rush by him out into the hall.

I walked down the stairs to the outside and down a driveway beside the house with the knife still in my hand. As I was going through the parking lot behind the house, I threw the knife into the snow and kept walking. I put on a pair of gloves that belonged to Fred.

I walked a couple of blocks until I came to a hotel bar. In the bar I asked if anyone had seen my mom. They told me no, and I asked them to tell her that I was looking for her. I then went out to the hotel lobby and called a cab. When the cab came, I asked the driver to take me to a bar on the other side of town. A couple of people I knew were there.

I told Nancy, "I need to talk to you right away."

"Okay, sure," she answered.

"In the washroom." Inside the washroom I took the gloves off and said, "I hurt someone badly." My hands must have had blood on them because I can remember her washing them.

I asked someone else to get rid of the gloves and he said that he would. Then I went by cab from the bar to the liquor store. At the liquor store I bought a 40-ouncer of rye. I kept the cab driver waiting while I went in and then asked him to take me back to my motel room. I didn't have a key to get in so I went into the office and asked the man on the desk if he would unlock the door for me.

Inside the room, I took off my coat, went to the washroom, wet a face cloth and then wiped my coat off. I called Deb-

bie, a friend, and said that I was in some trouble and needed to see her right away. After hanging up the phone, I made a drink, took a shower and changed my clothes.

About 20 minutes later, Debbie was at the door. I let her in and started to tell her what I had done.

"Get your things and let's go," she said.

"I have to wait for Fred to get back," I resisted. "Fred will be home any minute."

After about a half an hour, Fred pulled up with his friend in the station wagon. When he came in, I told him what had happened.

Fred told me, "Get your coat and get in the car." The back of the station wagon was loaded down with goods that had been gotten off with charge cards that day.

"I'll follow you in my car," Deb said.

"Did you kill him?" Fred asked me over and over before we got into the car. There was a woman in the station wagon I had never seen before so Fred and I really didn't say anything while in the car. We drove to a house where we were going to get rid of the goods. I took what was left of the bottle of rye and went in. Fred followed a few minutes later with the things from the car. I don't remember much about what happened while we were at the house other than I put the bottle on the bathroom to do some speed. From what I can piece together I must have sold the goods from the charge cards for speed. My mind gets pretty patchy from here on in. I don't remember leaving this house.

## THE ARREST

The next thing I remember is being in a cab and a restaurant with antiques and a brass railing, and then walking down a long hall of an apartment building. Fred's sister, Gwen, answered the door. A few hours or so later, I can remember a conversation between Fred and me. He told me then that we had taken the train to Ottawa, and that he was taking me to Calgary. Then he said we would have to listen to the news and watch the papers. I hadn't seen Gwen in years, so I didn't have much to say to her. I did ask her if she had anything to drink. I sat at the kitchen table and drank a beer.

Fred went to the beer store. He wasn't gone long. When he came back, I asked him if we could go some place to use the phone. We went to a shopping mall. I have no idea how far away from there it was, but I do remember using a pay phone. I called my brother who lived in Ottawa. I told him I was in trouble. He asked me where I was and Fred gave him the address. Before I hung up he said he would be right over to get me. Fred also made a couple of calls, but I don't know to whom. I don't remember ever asking him. Then we went back to his sister's house.

Shortly after that, my brother's wife came to the apartment door. I told Fred I wouldn't be long and left with her. I can't remember talking to her at all in the car, but I do remember talking to my brother in his bedroom. After about what seemed like an hour, he had talked me into going home. At this point I had no speed left, and I was talking Valium along with what I was drinking. Before leaving my brother's house, he made me promise that I would go home. Then I asked my sister-in-law to drive me back to Gwen's place.

I told Fred that I was going to go home and turn myself in. I got the feeling from that point on that he had changed. I can remember that I hadn't eaten anything or slept in days. I sat in an armchair for a long time. Later on that day Fred's brother-in-law came home. They wanted to go out for a few drinks so we went. I know it was only a small place like a restaurant-bar. While there I spent most of my time on a pay phone. I called Belleville

and told Deb I was co- only stayed there for we went back to Gwe-

Gwen, her husband drinking at the kitchen some other people th- and fell asleep.

When I woke up, one had gone but Fre- tress lying on the livi- Fred was asleep on it- kitchen table and got- decided to lie down o- while. The apartment- didn't bother to turn-

A couple of second- yell, "Police! If you m- head off!"

The police then w- him out of the apart- me not to move. I ca- Fred on his knees in t- up against the brick w-

The police officer- up. Keep your hands- your hands flat on th- spread your legs apar- for the murder of a m- proceeded to handc- my rights.

I can remember b- Gwen's little girl. I to- and over again, "Get- You can't leave her a-

"I'll take care of it-

A few minutes lat- way to the door. We- and he asked, "Whe- "In the closet. The- are mine."

Then we went ou- cruiser was parked. I- with Fred in a differ- took me to a police s- this day I still don't l-

After we got to th- put me in a small roo- dow, only a desk and- asked me if I wanted- them, "No," and the- room. After a few ho-



and told Deb I was coming home. We only stayed there for a few beers, and then we went back to Gwen's house.

Gwen, her husband, and Fred were drinking at the kitchen table. There were some other people there, but I didn't know them. I sat down in an arm chair and fell asleep.

When I woke up, it was dark and everyone had gone but Fred. There was a mattress lying on the living room floor, and Fred was asleep on it. I walked over to the kitchen table and got a smoke. I lit it and decided to lie down on the mattress for a while. The apartment was still dark, and I didn't bother to turn any lights on.

A couple of seconds later I heard a man yell, "Police! If you move, I'll blow your head off!"

The police then woke Fred up and took him out of the apartment first. They told me not to move. I can remember seeing Fred on his knees in the hall with his face up against the brick wall.

The police officer then told me. "Get up. Keep your hands over your head. Put your hands flat on the kitchen table and spread your legs apart. You're under arrest for the murder of a man in Belleville." He proceeded to handcuff me and read me my rights.

I can remember being worried about Gwen's little girl. I told the officer over and over again, "Get a babysitter for her. You can't leave her alone."

"I'll take care of it," he said.

A few minutes later we were on our way to the door. We stopped at the door and he asked, "Where is your coat?"

"In the closet. The suitcases at the door are mine."

Then we went outside to where the cruiser was parked. I saw them driving off with Fred in a different car. The officers took me to a police station in Ottawa. To this day I still don't know which one.

After we got to the station, the officers put me in a small room. It had no window, only a desk and chair. They then asked me if I wanted to call a lawyer. I told them, "No," and they locked me in this room. After a few hours had gone by, I

knocked on the door and asked for a smoke. The officer said fine and brought me a cigarette. He then locked the door again. I can remember pacing up and down the floor.

At that point I realized that I had better call a lawyer so I rapped on the door again. When the officer opened the door, I asked if I could call my lawyer. He said that I had been asked once and said I didn't need a lawyer. I told him I had changed my mind. So they let me make a call. I called my brother who lived in Ottawa and asked him to call a friend in Belleville and to have her contact Frank Getson. When my brother asked "why," I said that I had been arrested for murder. With that, I hung up.

I was put back into the same room I had been in earlier. It wasn't long after I had made the call, that the door opened and Frank Getson was standing there. He explained, "I was in Ottawa on holiday and my answering service happened to catch me at my hotel just before I checked out — so I came right over."

We didn't talk long. He just told me. "Don't say anything. Just give them your fingerprints and your mug shot — nothing else. I'll see you as soon as you get back to Belleville."

Shortly after, two police officers from Belleville came in. I knew them from before. They started to ask me some questions. I told them, "My lawyer has just left. I am not saying anything." After a while they left the room.

A couple of hours went by before they came back again. This time it was to take me from Ottawa to Belleville. At this point I hadn't seen Fred since they took him from the apartment. When the officers took me out to the car, they already had Fred in the back seat. I was put in the back with Fred, and the two officers sat in the front. We were on our way back to Belleville.

I remember well the trip back. It was cold out. We were handcuffed all the way. Our coats were put over our shoulders and the officers found it necessary to keep the windows halfway down all the way home. I had asked for a cigarette a couple of

times. Neither officer smoked, so they said, "No." When we arrived in Belleville, we were almost frozen. We got to the station and were booked in.

It was cold in the cell so I asked, "Could my mother bring me a warm sweater from home?"

"Later."

I lay down and fell asleep. When I woke up, I called for an officer. When he came in, I saw he was a different one from the man who arrested us, so I asked, "Could I call my family?"

"Yes."

Shortly after, I called my mom. I told her where I was and asked her to bring me some smokes and a warm sweater. I also asked her to call Frank Getson and tell him I had arrived. Then I hung up the phone. The officer returned me to my cell again. I lay back down and drifted off to sleep.

The next thing I remember was a police officer calling me. "We want your prints and your mug shot." I got up and went with him. Once I was in the fingerprint room, they asked, "Could we have nail clippings and a saliva test?"

"Only prints and my picture," I told them.

After they had done that, they returned me to my cell. Later on that day they came in and said, "Someone is here to see you."

When I went out into the interview room, I saw Carol. I couldn't figure out why she was there when they had said I couldn't see my family. I sat down and she went on to say, "I told the police that you stole the wallet from the man who is now dead."

I can't remember word for word what I replied other than, "Thanks a lot!" I asked the officers to take me back to my cell.

I don't remember how many days I was at the police station. It seemed like forever. I know they brought me fried egg sandwiches for each meal and nothing to drink. By then I was too sick to drink or eat anyway. I was then taken in a paddy wagon from Belleville to the Quinte Detention Centre in Napanee to await a preliminary hearing.



## THE DETENTION CENTRE

After arriving at the detention centre, I was put into a small room to wait for the officer to book me in. They treated me pretty fairly because I arrived before the officer who recognized me got on duty. I don't remember how long I was in that room.

The next thing I remember was the officer asking me a bunch of questions about myself. Then a nurse came in. She wanted to do my medical history. I don't remember much about what she had to say other than that she was asking me about the needle marks on my arms. Then I had a bath and they gave me some clothing to wear. I was put in a room they called the hospital area. I lay down and went to sleep. I have no idea what time it was when I woke up. I do remember that when I woke up, I wasn't very happy about being locked in that room. I called for the officer that was on duty and asked her, "Why am I here?"

She said, "You're under observation. You've been in here for three days."

"When are they going to let me out of here?"

"You have to ask the head of security." "Call them."

When the security staff finally came to me, they really didn't want to let me out. They thought I was going to flip out. I gave them my word that I would be fine. After talking to me for a while, they decided to let me out into the room with the other girls. They did say that if I had any problems to just ask to go back into the hospital or my room. I agreed to that and they left. I really wasn't in a very good head space, but I knew a few girls and I felt better for that.

Later I received a phone call from my lawyer to tell me that I would be going for my preliminary hearing the next day. I said "fine" and he told me that he would see me in court.

The following morning they took me out to get ready for court. I can remember that the police had taken my boots while I was at the police station so I had no shoes to wear. I went to court in my stocking feet. There was snow on the ground, so by the time I got to the paddy wagon my feet were wet.

Once at the court house, I was put in a cell to wait for them to call me to appear. I was only there a short time when my lawyer asked to see me. I was then taken out to an interview room so he could talk to me. At that interview my lawyer said that we wouldn't be in court very long. The judge was going to see if I was fit to stand trial. He left and I was taken back to a cell.

I wasn't there very long before they told me that the judge was ready to see me. They unlocked the door and took me up to the courtroom. When I entered the courtroom, they placed me in a small prisoner's box that was just inside the door. The judge came in and started the session. I really don't remember much of what was said except that the judge ruled that I was fit to stand trial. I do remember asking my mother to bring me some shoes.

I was taken out of the courtroom and placed in a cell downstairs where I waited for them to take me back to the detention centre. Before leaving the court house, my lawyer said that he would be up to see me the following day. It was around supper time when I arrived at the detention centre and was booked in.

I was back and forth so many times from the centre to the court house that I just hated it. I was in the detention centre so long that it's hard to think of everything that went on. I do know that I listened to some other people's advice and decided to change lawyers and get someone from out-of-town. That was a mistake from the word go. I didn't know this new lawyer, Doug Hubley, and I had no confidence in him at all. In fact, I never knew what was going on in my life from one court day to the next. He was from Ottawa, and this meant that I could only see him when he could get to town. When I saw him, he never told me anything. I felt really alone and didn't know what to do.

At that point I got a phone call from Doug Hubley. As I was talking to him, he said, "CBC wants to tape your trial."

"My trial? I've never heard tell of that before. I'm leery of the whole thing," I told him.

"Think about it. I'll call you back in a little while."

"What do you think?"

"It couldn't hurt. If anything, it may help you."

With that I hung up the phone. My family hadn't been able to get up to see me, so I didn't know what I was going to do. I tried calling them, but there was no answer. I was left to make the decision on my own. I had no idea what the whole thing consisted of, and I didn't know what to do. When Hubley called back, he was sure I would have an answer for him. I didn't. I told him, "I haven't been able to reach my family."

"It would be good for you in court," he answered.

"I don't know."

"Things would work out."

"I guess so."

In less than a week he came down from Ottawa to see me with some other men. He asked if he could see me in an interview room. We then went into a small room. Once we were in the room, he said that the men with him were from the CBC and that they wanted to tape an interview between him and me. At this point I wasn't sure what was happening in my life. I was kept on a lot of medication and nothing much seemed real to me, let alone what was happening around me.

We left the interview room, and I was taken to an office that was in the front of the building. When I walked in, there were cameras set up all over the place. I was told to sit down in a chair they had already picked out for me. My lawyer sat across from me. He went on to say that he was going to ask me some questions and for me to answer them. He told me not to pay any attention to the other men in the room. After we were finished, he said he would speak to me before he left the detention centre. The officers came in and took me back to my cell.

My whole life seemed like something you would read in a story book. The next day my family came to see me. When I told them that my trial was going to be taped, they were really upset. They wanted to know why I would ever agree to anything like that. I explained to them, "I tried to reach you and couldn't."

They told me to go back to my lawyer and tell him "NO." I told them I would tell him, but when I finally got a hold of Hubley he said, "You have to go through with it. You have no choice in the matter."

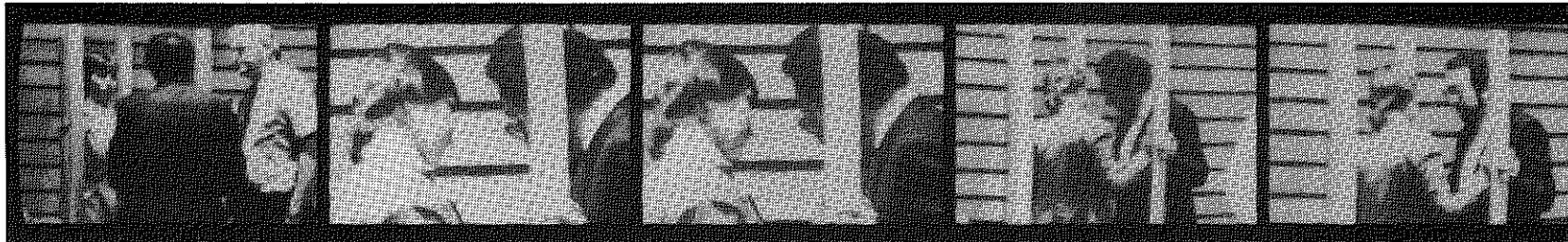
I wasn't doing so well as far as handling things went. I asked to be put in a segregation unit. At first they weren't going to let me, and then they thought that it might do me some good. I was sent to a "seg" unit, and after a week they wanted me to see the doctor because I didn't want to come out. I felt I could hide from everyone as long as I stayed there. After seeing the doctor, I decided to come out. It was really hard from then on. Some days I thought I was never going to make it through the day. Some really nice people showed me a way to help me find strength. At that point I got into doing some Bible studies. At first I did them only to pass the time, but the more I did, the more strength they gave me. After being locked up in the detention centre for a year, it came time for my trial. I wasn't in the best of shape for anything, let alone a trial.

## THE TRIAL

I remember my first day in court. It was a real circus. I had never been dressed the way there. I still remember this as one of the things that stuck in my mind. I can also remember the place. No matter how I keep my face covered, the TV camera right in front of me was a concern was that my face would be seen. Every chance I got I would look at them. I think for the first time I saw all the hurt and pain in my mother in her eyes. When I can still see the hurt in her eyes.

I went to court for my trial. I don't remember too much of what happened there. I can remember a dream, nothing seemed real. I was sitting in a brown bench, looking straight ahead. It seemed like I was looking ahead for hours. I was hearing people talking. I was hearing myself so I thought maybe it didn't matter what they were saying. The judge was that I kept having a vision of the whole thing. In my mind, I was like I did it, but yet I was pretty mixed up about it. After day as I sat in court, I was looking on the face of the judge. It didn't even enter my mind what was happening as far as my trial went. I really didn't feel like I was in court. My lawyer was there, but things were going to happen when each day ended. I was back to the detention centre.

The day came when I was taken on the witness stand. I was looking forward to a paddy wagon pulled up outside. There were TV cameras everywhere, no matter where I looked. The officers took me right out of the court house. On the way there was another car. We rushed by it in a small room just before the courtroom. I was on the stand before they called me. It was full. I wonder what was going on there. It was called to the witness stand.



## THE TRIAL

I remember my first day in court as being a real circus. I had never seen people dressed the way there were in court. I can still remember this as being one of the things that stuck in my head the most. I can also remember the TV cameras all over the place. No matter how hard I tried to keep my face covered, there was always a TV camera right in front of me. My main concern was that my family was all right. Every chance I got I was asking about them. I think for the first time in my life I saw all the hurt and pain I had caused my mother in her eyes. When I think about it, I can still see the hurt now.

I went to court for about a week but I don't remember too much about what happened there. I can say it was like a dream, nothing seemed real. I remember sitting in a brown box and looking straight ahead. It seemed like I just kept looking ahead for hours. I do remember people talking. I wasn't sure what had happened myself so as people talked I thought maybe it did as people talked they were saying. The only thing wrong was that I kept having nightmares about the whole thing. In my thoughts it was like I did it, but yet I didn't do it. I was pretty mixed up about everything. Day after day as I sat in court I remember the look on the face of the dead man's sister. It didn't even enter my mind what was happening as far as my court case went. I really didn't feel like I was there. Every day in court my lawyer would tell me that things were going to be fine. I was glad when each day ended. After court I went back to the detention centre.

The day came when my lawyer put me on the witness stand. It was a day I wasn't looking forward to at all. When the paddy wagon pulled up outside the court house, there were TV cameras all over the place — no matter where I looked. The police officers took me right on by them and into the court house. On our way up the stairs there was another camera at the first landing. We rushed by it, and I was placed in a small room just before the entrance to the courtroom. I was only there a short time before they called me into the courtroom. It was full. I wondered what everyone was doing there. It wasn't long before I was called to the witness stand. My lawyer had

told me to just answer the questions I was being asked, and do the best I could. I don't remember all the questions that were asked. I do remember the prosecutor for the Crown saying that I had gone to the man's room to kill him. He kept saying the same thing over and over again.

Then there were some pictures thrown down on the railing in front of me. My lawyer never said anything about them showing me pictures. They were pictures of the man who had been killed. One picture showed him sitting in the chair. I'm not sure about the other ones. I just know that I kept trying to shove them away, but every time the Crown prosecutor pushed something back in front of me. He kept saying something about glass. All I really remember saying was, "I never meant to hurt anyone."

I thought that day would never come to an end. The following day the jury went out. They were gone about two hours, and then a rap came on the door where we were waiting. A man was standing there. He told the police officer that the jury was ready to come back in with the verdict. I asked if I could use the washroom. While I was in the washroom, I prayed. I asked the Good Lord no matter what happened to just give me the strength to walk back out of the courtroom. Then I told them I was ready to go.

We went back into the courtroom. I sat back down in the prisoner's box. The judge asked the jury if they had reached a decision. A representative from the jury said "yes." I was asked to stand. The jury found me guilty of second degree murder.

I was taken out of the courtroom for a few minutes and I waited in the same small room for them to come back and get me. It wasn't long before they came back for me. The judge asked me to stand. He sentenced me to 25 years in jail, with eligibility for parole in ten years.

My only real thought at that time was whether my mother and my daughter were all right because I could hear them crying behind me. I do remember turning myself around and looking to see if my mother was okay. I also knew that I had to be strong for my family so I stayed strong for them. Once I left the court house, I fell apart. I was crying one minute and laugh-

ing the next. I was taken from there to the police station.

At the police station there was a girl there who I had known for a long time. I can still hear her asking me, "What happened?" I remember trying to tell her, but the words just wouldn't come out. Then I heard the police officer saying that she had gotten life. I was then placed in the cell next to hers. We weren't there very long before they took us back to the detention centre. I don't remember much about our ride back; when we got there the police officer took us inside. The guard was waiting for us at the door. They called for the doctor to come over right away. The doctor gave me a sedative, I was booked in and returned to my cell.

There was a really good friend of mine in jail with me. She was so upset that she couldn't even talk to me. That night I remember sitting on the floor in a corner of my cell and crying. I can't remember what time of night it was when I decided to just give up. My whole life flashed in front of me. All the pain and hurt I had been through. How much pain I had caused my family and other people. I just couldn't see any reason why I should go on, so at that point I decided I didn't want to live.

I remember lying in my bed. By this time it was morning, and the guards were opening the cell doors. They opened my door and told me I had to get up. I told them I was staying in bed. They shut the door, but it wasn't long and they were back at my door again. This time three officers came into my room. One sat down on the side of the bed and tried to talk to me. I didn't want to hear anything that he had to say. As they were leaving, he told me that, if I decided I wanted to come out, to just call them.

After they left, I lay in my bed for a while. On my desk there were pictures of my two daughters. I turned them over and looked at them. Then I realized that I couldn't give up, that they needed me no matter where I was, or what I had done. I called for the guards to let me out. I decided on that day no matter what I would do whatever I could to make up for all the hurt and pain I had caused.



# Dead Daughter

G.S. Poonia



Illustration by  
Laurie Lafrance

Even now, after all these years, whenever I come across the word funeral, I think about that hot summer day and the last rites which took place in our house. The funeral of Neelam Prashad links my present to my past.

I never remember experiencing another funeral like it in our town. The chaos was the same as any other funeral — neighbours and friends gathered in our house, orgies of anguish, wailing, and beating of breasts. And, as always, the women were more expressive than the men. They sat on the hot and hard ground, clasped each other's shoulders, beat their own breasts, and cried in inarticulate utterances. The men, on the other hand, sat quietly. What made the funeral exceptional was that the body was not in our house. Perhaps not having the body made the mourning more difficult.

It had been an ordinary summer day; by noon the sun was blazing hot. The mailman delivered an air mail letter to us, not an unusual event in itself since we were accustomed to receiving air mail letters from Canada.

I opened the letter and read it aloud to my mother. It was written in Punjabi and was just a few lines long. I had difficulty

deciphering the poor handwriting, but the letter began, "The purpose of this letter is to inform you that our daughter Neelam died..." Mother protested and demanded that I read the letter again, carefully. When she heard the same words, she shrieked. The woman from next door, having heard the wails, came running to our house and they cried in anguish together. Then a woman from two doors down came, and so it went. Shamu, the bare-footed boy from next door ran to the bank to fetch my father. In no time, our house was filled with mourners.

Neelam was not a relative of ours; she was the daughter of our former neighbour and my father's best friend, Suraj Prashad. During the partition, my father and Suraj Prashad traveled out of Pakistan and into India together. In the midst of the terrifying atrocities, they supported each other and swore a bond of friendship, a bond which remained intact even though Prashad had moved to Canada.

After my mother drained all her tears, she came to my father and said, "We should do everything properly." My mother was a devotee and knew all the rituals of birth and death and how to please the gods.

"I shall go and get the holy one," my father said.

"No, not yet," she responded. "We should get ready for the funeral."

"Funeral? Why a funeral?" I could not hold back my question.

My mother ignored me. "She was just a young girl. A maiden. Lord Shiva must be very angry with her. We have a few relics in our house which belonged to her."

Mother wanted to be on the safe side. She gathered up all of Neelam's cloth articles the Prashads had left with us when they moved to Canada. Fearing that Lord Shiva, the god of death, might strike at our house, my mother instructed my father to take her belongings to the cremation grounds.

The next day a holy man came dressed in saffron robes. While chanting a prayer, he placed large pats of edible butter and pieces of dried fruit on a fire. When he was through performing all the rituals, my mother fed him curried foods and paid him a hefty sum for his services.

One last ritual had to be performed. My father went on a pilgrimage to Benares, the holiest of the cities of the Hindus and the earthly abode of the god Shiva. He threw the ashes from Neelam's possessions into the holy river Ganges and took a bath to purify himself. He also brought back a set of enamelware with Neelam's name carved on each pot and pan. It was sent as a gift to the Prashads. Because of the great care that had been taken, my mother was convinced that the girl had been liberated from the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation and had achieved unity with the eternal.

"We could have bought an electric fan for what you spent on the ritual," I said to my mother. "That would have kept us cool all summer."

"Your free thinking will never gain you salvation." She was flushed with anger. "When you start earning your own money, you can buy all the fans you want. I really don't know what deep-seated feelings you have against the girl. You don't even remember her."

My mother was with feelings towards the girl had not been told the truly sorry that she had. And I did remember the tiny mite of a girl who had been in the fourth floor she left for Canada.

"College education for him," mother said to should have found her wasting money and her college education."

As always, my father was futile, my father's rituals, vigils, fasts, or the and the moon. To her vine. Every month she to honour the new moon moon appeared again the narrow sliver with everyone else to look

"The moon is not a piece of rock," I said. American, Neil Armstrong even brought back some rock?" "You went with her that is why you know rock?"

"No, but I've seen it." "Did you take the

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"What do they w girl?" my mother as could say anything

My mother was wrong. I had no ill-feelings towards the girl. Even though we had not been told the cause of death, I felt truly sorry that she had died prematurely. And I did remember Neelam; she was a tiny mite of a girl with rosy cheeks. We had been in the fourth class together before she left for Canada.

"College education is doing this to him," mother said to my father. "You should have found him a job instead of wasting money and his time on all this college education."

As always, my father remained silent. It was futile to argue with mother about rituals, vigils, fasts, or the worship of the sun and the moon. To her, the moon was divine. Every month she fasted for 24 hours to honour the new moon. As soon as the moon appeared again, she would gaze at the narrow sliver with eagerness and call everyone else to look at it too.

"The moon is not a god; it is actually a piece of rock," I said to her once. "An American, Neil Armstrong, went there and even brought back some rocks."

"You went with him, I suppose, and that is why you know it is just a piece of rock?"

"No, but I've seen the pictures."

"Did you take the pictures?"

Mother was adamant; no one could convince her that humans had landed on the moon. My father was also orthodox, but he did not argue. As a guard in the bank and a small farmer, he worked tirelessly and lived frugally to earn the money which my mother spent freely on religious customs and pilgrimages.

Neelam's death had other consequences. My father lost an opportunity to benefit from his friendship with Suraj Prashad, who had appointed him to serve as a matchmaker for his daughter. Before the letter arrived, he had positioned himself well. Mr. Gautam, the bank manager and my father's boss, had offered him a promotion and the forgiveness for a loan if his son, Parshotam, would be betrothed to Neelam. Parshotam attended the College in Hoshiarpur and was working on a master's degree in economics. It might have been a good match. To my parent's satisfaction, even the town astrologer approved of the planned marriage because Parshotam's stars agreed with Neelam's stars.

There was a complication. My mother heard a rumour that Mrs. Gautam had saved a young Moslem's life during partition. She hid him in her house while rampaging mobs looked for him. The rumour spread that Mrs. Gautam did not save the Moslem's life because she was good-hearted but because the Moslem was her lover and the father of Parshotam.

Not only the bank manager, but many other people were willing to offer my father advantages if their sons could go to Canada. But I dared not inquire too much concerning this marriage arrangement.

"These people are insane — selling their sons," I said to my father. "They don't even know anything about the girl."

"What do they want to know about the girl?" my mother asked before my father could say anything.

"What she looks like and how she thinks," I said.

"What she looks like and how she thinks? Our girls always look beautiful and think right," my mother answered.

Then she blasted my college. When I had first enrolled in college, my mother had bragged about me and the school, but her mind had been changed. A marriage between two staff members at the college had caused a scandal throughout the province. Ranja Singh, a debonair professor and poet, married a colleague, Miss Kapoor, from a well-known family. Not only was she a beauty, but she was high caste. Ranja Singh regrettably was a harijan, a low caste, and so the marriage was taboo. The Kapoor family had lots of influence on the college managing committee because of their wealth and position. Soon after returning from the honeymoon, the professor was dismissed from the college without reason. Many threats, but few sympathetic gestures, were shown towards the couple.

A handful of students — all of them low caste except for me — commiserated with the newlyweds. We demonstrated in front of the President's and the Principal's offices and demanded that Mr. Singh should be reinstated. Neither official would meet with us. I knew that the demonstrations would not have any influence and that we were asking for trouble. A few of my classmates made crude remarks about me siding with low class people. My roommate whom I liked — he always fed stray dogs and cows with his left-over food — simply moved out and left me to pay the whole rent by myself.

That was bad, but for me the worst was yet to come. I had to face my mother who waited for me at home in a tigerish mood.

"How dare that *chammar* boy defile one of our girls!" She confronted me as soon as I put my bag down.

"He did nothing. They fell in love with each other and got married."

"Love?" she said, "Rama, Rama, Rama..."

"What's wrong with love?" I asked. The conversation was oppressive to me.

"That *chammar* boy must have used some sort of sorcery on that poor girl which made her head run around. Otherwise why would one of our girls go after that scarecrow?"

I was patient. "You should not call him all those names. He is one of the best-looking and most intelligent men I have ever known."

"So that is why you went on a strike instead of attending classes? You should have gone on a hunger strike and fasted unto death."

I was never forgiven at home or at college for that demonstration. My mother believed that sending me to college was a mistake which filled my head with bad and immoral notions. I always felt that the demonstration made me a better person than I otherwise would have been.

Soon after my graduation, I escaped from that ritualized and limited world and came to live in the United States. The attitudes toward religion, sectarianism, and

personal freedom were different here than in the world in which I grew up. For the first time in my life I began to realize what it meant to live in a secular and pluralistic world which I had always envisioned. American civilization was a true melting pot, unlike the world I came from in which one's religious and communal visions dictated everything.

The time went by fast in Washington where I studied and worked. The demonstrations I saw in Washington reminded me of my demonstrating back home. I had mixed feelings.

Letters came from home. My mother always worried about my salvation and morals. She also implored me in each and every letter to go to Canada to pay our personal condolences to the Prashads for the death of their daughter Neelam. The Prashads lived on Canada's west coast. My mother seemed not to be able to comprehend the distance or the effort it would take to go and see them. In the end, I yielded to my mother's wishes and decided to take a train trip across Canada at the end of which I would make a brief visit to the Prashads.

I flew to Toronto where I would be able to catch a train to the west coast. After I checked into a hotel, I went out for a walk. On the busy streets, a raw nervousness came over me. It followed me no matter where I went: to a shopping mall, a bookstore, a restaurant. The city itself was like other large American cities; it held no surprises. Yet, I could not shake my feelings of being out of place.

Randomly I stepped into a bank to cash some traveller's cheques. There were long lines at all the tellers' windows. As I waited, the cashier caught my attention. She had light brown skin and an exotic and inviting face, like the ones which always intrigued me on the billboards that advertised holidays in Mayatlan. I dredged my memory and realized I had seen the girl before. As I advanced up the line and studied her more intently, I felt anxious and embarrassed.

"May I help you?" A voice addressed me while I was still in a daze, struggling with my memory. I realized that I was now to the front of the line.

I smiled uncertainly. She smiled back, a sunny smile.

I tried to force some sort of conversation with her while I signed my name slowly on the traveller's cheques. Even though I can normally be charming and at ease with strangers, I couldn't initiate a conversation. The raw nervousness turned into a tension which I felt growing between us.

"Are you visiting here?" The disarming innocence of her question broke the tension and gave me an opening to talk. When I looked up at her, she had a friendly and open look on her face.

"Yes, I am visiting from Washington." Our eyes focused on each other. "You live here?" I felt foolish as soon as the words came out.

"Yes," she said. "But not in the city, out in the suburb of Mississauga."

"Are you from India?" I did not feel uncomfortable asking her the question



though many Indians living abroad take the question as an offence.

"I was born there."

"Where?"

"In the Punjab."

"What district?"

"Hoshiarpur."

"That is where I am from," I volunteered jubilantly. "What town?"

"Moran Wali."

I was stunned; I had heard the name of my own town. And then the life-giving recognition hit me. "Neelam, Neelam Prashad. You're Neelam Prashad!"

"Now I am Neelam Khan," she corrected me. Her tone was calm but assertive. She stressed the "Khan."

Later over coffee, our conversation was like a dream — charming and vivid one moment, sad at the next.

"My parents must have written about me."

"Yes, they wrote that you were not with them any more." She did not understand what I meant.

"They broke all relations with me when I decided to marry a Moslem. We have not seen each other since." She told me about how happy she was. She adored her husband, a civil engineer, and her son who had just started kindergarten. The family lived in a stylish house in the suburbs, and she enjoyed her part-time job at the bank. Except for the parental rejection, her life was in order.

Later on in my hotel room, I dressed for an evening of reminiscence at Neelam's house. I thought about myself and Neelam; we were the children of partition and grew up hearing horror stories from our parents. From those stories I could understand our parents. Having known bloodshed and slaughter, they would find it difficult and unconventional to accept a mixed marriage. But so many years had passed that their hate seemed pathetic.

Neelam's husband Khalid was handsome, affable, and understanding. He welcomed me with enthusiasm and said, "You brought a touch of joy into my wife's life. It is nice to know that someone from back home accepts her as she is." We discussed politics, the economy, ethnic problems, and his job. Intentionally, soon after dinner, he left us alone.

We were both in a pensive mood and stared at each other.

"Have you been in touch with your parents?" I asked.

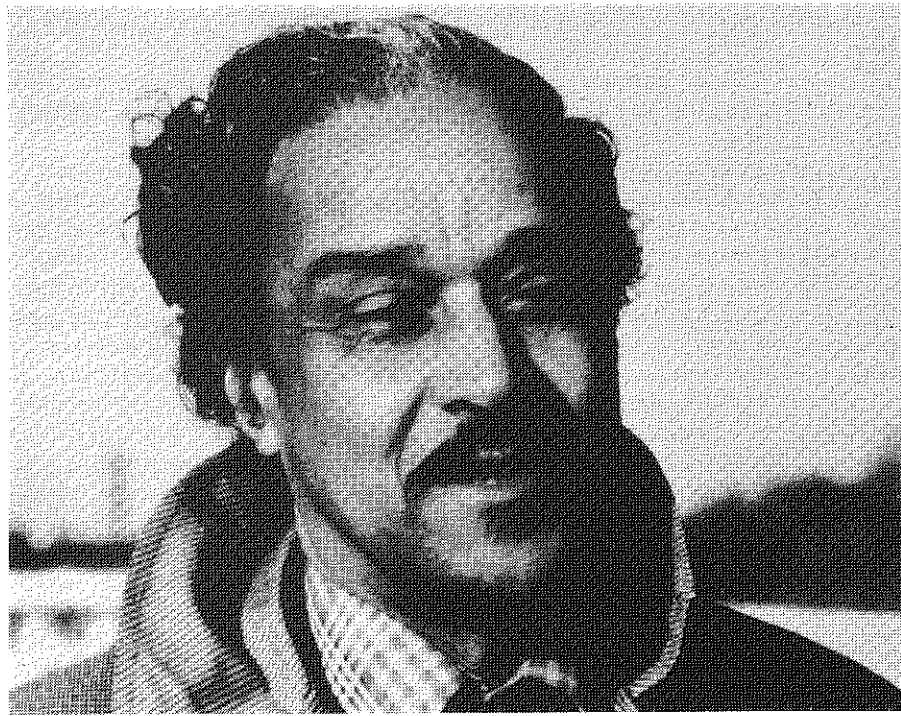
"No," she said quietly. "My parents believe that children who do not follow their parents' mores are dead."

"Did you know that before you decided to marry Khalid?"

"Of course," she said. "Saying yes to an arranged marriage would have been to sacrifice my whole life to something I could not control. Saying no to the marriage devastated my much-loved parents. It was a dilemma. What could I do?" Tears began to roll over her cheeks.

I had no consolation to offer her. My own mind filled with silence.

G.S. Poonia lives in Edmonton, Alberta. He has previously published in the *New Quarterly*, *University of Waterloo*, and *Quarry* magazine.



### Marc Glassman

*Wilson Harris was born in Guyana when it was still a British colony, in 1920. He took advantage of his position as senior land surveyor for the government to become intimately acquainted with the people of the interior in then British Guiana. Harris steeped himself in the myths and legends of the "natives" while maintaining a cultural veneer befitting a colonial official. He moved to England in 1959 and published his first novel, Palace of the Peacock, to great critical acclaim the following year.*

*Harris' first four novels form a group which explores the mythology of his homeland. The Guyanan Quartet consists of remarkable works which create a cross-cultural pollination, dealing as they do with a combination of European archetypal adventures grafted onto a mysterious evocation of the Guyanese landscape and population. Guyanese natives are Caribbean Indian, African, South American and Asian in origin, so the possibilities for cross-fertilization are endless, as Harris has clearly discovered.*

*His novels, poetry and essays reveal a sophisticated sensibility with an awareness of Third World economics, Jungian psychology, African mythology and linguistic theory. He was interviewed by Marc Glassman after his appearance at the Fall 1988 Wang International Festival of Authors in Toronto.*

Marc Glassman: I'm interested in you as a writer but also as a person who has come from one culture and is now living in another. Would you tell me something about that transition?

Wilson Harris: I left Guyana in 1959; I was 38 and I had traveled extensively in the interior of Guyana, which means that I sensed the different kinds of landscapes, because the terrain changes quite complexly and sometimes dramatically as one moves from the coastlands into the interior. Now in regard to the question of moving from one culture to another, I think that if I had left earlier, I would not have been able to visualize it the way I did, and if I'd left later, then I might have been a bit quiescent about those sorts of issues.

I appear to be speaking intellectually about an issue which is really a deep-seated intuitive one. (I must establish this caveat, that when one attempts to intellectualize what exists in one's fiction, in a complex and perhaps truly authentic way, [one places] a different emphasis on the discourse.) What seems to me peculiar about Guyana and indeed about South America and the Caribbean is that for many generations, there were very powerful European models that had been imposed on the native cultures. Now these models, let us call them archetypal myths (and I use the word myth in a profound sense to imply ways in which the colonizing power sought to articulate its moral position), those very formidable structures

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were implicitly inter-archetypes or myths eclipsed by the Euro- problem was, how to bond and to arrive at the European model different kind of rela- archetype, to create Prior to that historio- tional self-realization- logue at all, there wa- tion, but deep inside- isted the seed of pot- this meant that one- situation in such a w- dable European myt- luteness, its total sov- to its partiality, to it- we moved into a dif- in relation to the na- ing a different kind- which altered the pr- nation, transfiguring- much more profound- a new kind of key w- colonial complex th- visualization and res- been deeply buried a-

Let me give you a- this. In *The Secret La-* Perseus has a potent- the surveyor who tra- River, is in part a Pe- burden of the Perseu- There are two figure- Perseus: Fenwick, th- one of the members- They pick up a nativ- ize that] they have b-

# Interview with Wilson Harris

were implicitly interwoven with the native archetypes or myths. Often those native archetypes or myths were temporarily eclipsed by the European models. The problem was, how to break that kind of bond and to arrive at a position in which the European model would come into a different kind of relationship to the native archetype, to create a different dialogue. Prior to that historical moment of national self-realization, there was no dialogue at all, there was simply a domination, but deep inside that domination existed the seed of potential dialogue and this meant that one had to open up that situation in such a way that the formidable European myth would lose its absoluteness, its total sovereignty and confess to its partiality, to its biases. In so doing, we moved into a different kind of position in relation to the native archetype, creating a different kind of nourishment, which altered the previous mode of domination, transfiguring it into something much more profoundly universal in which a new kind of key was planted into the colonial complex that released cultural visualization and resources, which had been deeply buried and eclipsed before.

Let me give you a demonstration of this. In *The Secret Ladder*, the myth of Perseus has a potency, because Fenwick, the surveyor who travels up the Canje River, is in part a Perseus figure, but the burden of the Perseus myth is broken up. There are two figures who are playing Perseus: Fenwick, the surveyor, and Ryan, one of the members of the survey party. They pick up a native Guyanese and [realize that] they have begun to secrete into

themselves elements to do with the apparition of the Gorgon. In fact, the camp attendant, Jordan, becomes a Gorgon figure. And the dialogue Fenwick has with Jordan is one in which he is invited to succumb to certain temptations of authority, to impose himself on his troops, to impose himself as the European masters impose themselves, to treat his crew as pawns to be moved around. So Fenwick, the native Guyanese, has to face that temptation, but in facing that temptation, he begins to break out of that mould and to begin a much more profound dialogue with the members of his party.

In addition to this, there is the African descendant of a slave, and he is given the name Poseidon, because he is half land and half water. You know, the Guyanese landscape is a very peculiar landscape in which the watersheds are all broken and a lot of river capture occurs. As a result, the country has become a natural reservoir. But in addition to this, it is the sort of place into which the slaves would run, because you have great islands, surrounded by moats, and they could hide themselves on those islands. It was very difficult for the Dutch, who were their masters in that period, to get all of them. Poseidon is supposed to be the descendant of one of those slaves who escaped in the 17th century. So Poseidon is rooted in an African archetype, but when he is inadvertently killed by Bryant, it sets up a state of terrifying tension that recalls the ancient Greek model, in which the Perseus figure intervenes. The dread and devastation which is intended does not happen because of a series of events in which this

myth is articulated in a new way, incorporating not only the European but the non-European elements, and as a consequence you being to release [something new] from the [Caribbean] soul. So the European model enters into a dialogue with the new archetypes and out of that you get an apprehension of the universality of the myth, keyed by elements of the native soil which had been disregarded as irrelevant.

When you were a young man did you spend much time with people who would have been specifically "native" in their upbringing and in their culture?

Guyana is the only territory that relates to the Caribbean in which you would find a pre-Columbian presence. [In my youth,] we called them all Amerindians — even though they were all different kinds of people — you see that's how the European model functions. It functions in an implicitly fascist way, or if not fascist then authoritarian. Nevertheless, there were values in that model that had to be salvaged.

**My point is this, that those people who believe that you can return to some ground purity in which you dispense with the European heritage, I believe are quite wrong. These things have been woven together for centuries.**

Cover art from *Carnival* by Chris Brown





**The question that arises is whether one can open up that in the way we've been discussing. There is no possibility of going back into some remote past in which you can come back to some pure pristine basis and reject the colonizer or the conquistador.**

You cannot do that because they are interwoven, and people like myself, for example, are of mixed blood, so I have antecedents on both sides of the fence. And that's true of many Guyanese and South Americans.

In Guyana, you had, for example, people of African descent, Indians who came in after the emancipation in the 1830s. There were Chinese. There was that kind of potential for cross-cultural exchange. The women were always at a pre-

mium because the immigration policies were so bad, they always brought more men than women. As a result, inevitably, you did have interracial relationships. In the 19th century, there was a growing middle class of highly intelligent mixed people who had begun to be taken into the civil service by the British, who were then ruling. But it doesn't mean the British were encouraging interracial relationships.

When did you decide to leave?

Looking back, I realize this was something I had to do, but there were various reasons, some of which I won't discuss with you because they are private, but also a very great help to me was the fact that my present wife, Margaret, who is a Scot, and I have had an absolutely marvelous relationship. When I arrived in the United Kingdom, we were married. I had been married before.

There were all sorts of complications. All I can say is that at that moment, precisely because of what I was discussing, I was able to go to Europe and begin very serious work, because for the first time, I could sense an opportunity, writing the kind of novel which seemed to me immensely important to the South American/Caribbean situation. It wasn't a comedy of manners novel. It wasn't in the 19th century European genre.

**It arises from deep necessities. In other words, the social fiction that I have been writing is not abstract or arbitrary at all. It has its roots in complicated pressures and political historical events that one had to cope with. One couldn't run away from it.**

And so to write something much more conventional would have been a total betrayal of everything. When I went to Britain, the important thing was to break through at a philosophical level which critics are just beginning to look at seriously.

You are distinctly individual as a writer, yet you stand for a lot of things that are important in contemporary literature. In the last 25 years there have been many changes,

and two generations have grown up since that time. Do you find both cultural and political discourses changing?

I think they are. Guyana has very severe economic problems, as you probably know. Perhaps a change in political orientation is occurring. Guyana is a marginal society, one that relates neither to the West Indies, nor to South America. In a way, it has a cross-cultural potential that could reach beyond the West Indian establishment as such and could penetrate the South Americas, in an innovative way because of the peculiarities woven together there. There is a Protestant kind of tradition which comes dutifully into conversation with the Latin thing in South America, so both potentials are there. I believe that Guyana has that kind of future, but it's not going to be easy.

I was delighted to go back there recently (to receive the Guyana Prize for Fiction). They're thinking of themselves, this question of awarding important prizes. Mind you, they had a very carefully selected panel of judges. One man had come from England, he was on the Arts Council, another was from the University of the West Indies. The chairman was a West Indian poet of Scottish descent, Ian MacDonald, but his ancestors have lived for a long time in the West Indies, so he's Creole.

The difficulties there are enormous and there's no use evading them. The possibility exists that the authoritarian thing will raise its head again. But then, this is happening all over the Third World, it's one of the patterns that must be broken. But I think it's a kind of recurrence of the whole domination in which people are gripped by the fallacies of the past, which they have not sufficiently investigated or undermined in culturally creative terms. As you know in the Western world there is a drift to the right and all parties are becoming virtually the same, because that's the only way they can win the electorate. Therefore the Labour party has to move more to the right. Some people (in the Labour party) are moving rightward as they want to move deeper into some preoccupation with issues which they cannot easily define but which they feel are important. All over the world there is this drift, but in the Third World it tends to become authoritarian. But in essence it is the same assertion of dominance, of conquistadorial model, and the needs to be broken by the kind of detailed exploration that begins to sense the dialogue we have been discussing. The fabric of narrative changes, because to a large extent these people accept a realism that is authoritarian, that is one-sided. However sophisticated it may be, it does not allow for other texts to come up and break the mould of the authoritarian realism.

This notion of rupture comes through in your books in very powerful dreams that create a parallel structure, or an alternative way of thinking through the character's dilemmas. I see that as an example of fighting

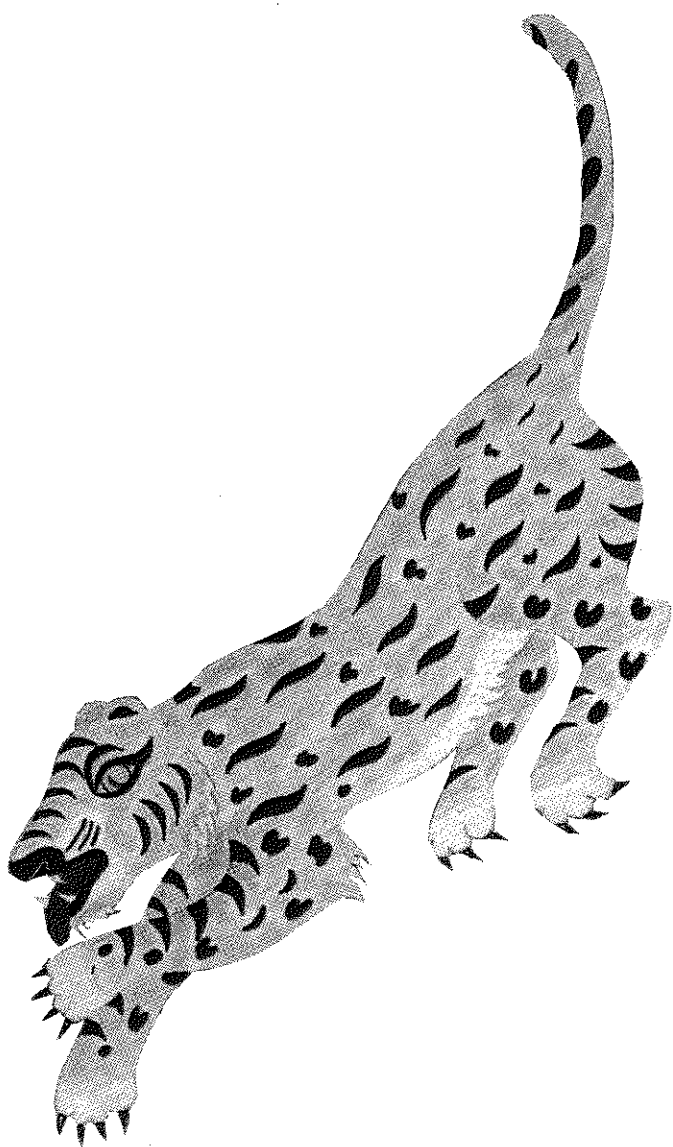
against a dominance and the previous comedy of continually employed. In *Satanstoe*, for example, he goes on for one-fifth of reverie, a dream of a man going mad. And Muslim take it to be the truth of written out on paper. V to get across in *Satanstoe* an opposite notion to a viewing religion. And I write there is often this reality, if I might use the

Yes, that is true exception of these matters emphasis on the colle All dreams of course c

**When I speak of the collective, it's through Jungian way, a subtle evolution, ring so that the unconscious form. These come through that have to particular particular moment Guyana or in America, fiss So one is sub dream in a way.**

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Cover art from *The Guyana Quartet* by Chris Brown



against a dominance and narrative tone that the previous comedy of manner writers continually employed. In Salman Rushdie's latest book, for example, he has a sequence that goes on for one-fifth of the book that is a reverie, a dream of a man who is probably going mad. And Muslim fundamentalists take it to be the truth of course, because it is written out on paper. What I think he wants to get across in *Satanic Verses* is a parallel or an opposite notion to a standard manner of viewing religion. And I find that in what you write there is often this parallelism or poetic reality, if I might use that terminology.

Yes, that is true except that my apprehension of these matters may place a deeper emphasis on the collective unconscious. All dreams of course come from there.

**When I speak of the collective, it's the one term I can think of in a Jungian way. There are subtle evolutions occurring so that collective unconscious is not uniform. These evolutions come through fissures that have to do with a particular place at a particular moment. In Guyana or in South America, fissures occur. So one is subject to the dream in a very complex way.**

As one revises, one finds that there are clues planted in the narrative which seem to be planted by another hand. Then a strategy appears which begins now as you concentrate more and more, and that strategy may be validated by some ancientness of which one knew nothing. For example, in *Carnival*, an epigraph was placed after the book was written. As soon as I saw the very first line, "The wanderings of the soul after death, our prenatal adventures, a journey by water in a ship which is itself a goddess to the gates of rebirth", I realized that that was a strand running through the novel, though I knew nothing of this while composing the novel. But the strand isn't running through in a static way, it has different edges and complications. The result is that despite the horrors of the world in which one finds oneself, one is not simply reversing the traumas of imperialism in a dream reverie. But suggesting there is a breakthrough, a dimension we have almost forfeited but not completely forfeited, so that

the past is not locked away from us. In fact for South Americans, the past is very uncertain. We know there are cultures that disappeared but we don't know why. Those uncertainties can be woven together to release a complex rehearsal of possibilities which were ignored in the past but which are still profoundly relevant to the present and as the present moves into the future. Consequently there is this tension which arouses uneasiness among critics. What this suggests is that there are potentials which could lead us into the position in which the very psyche, the very nature of man, begins to change. I don't want to use the abused term "a change of heart," but it means that in a way, that something else can come into play. I don't know to what extent writers who use the dream reverie as parallels are pushing in that direction, and whether this has anything to do with a kind of religious state. I must confess that despite my despair at times, I have a profound religious faith. I use it, for example, in *Carnival* where there is the Thomas figure and the Thomas mask. Now Thomas as you know put the wounds in Christ. [I am] suggesting that that gesture is much more significant than it appears to be. If you take it as a static gesture, that's the end of it. But I'm saying there's a revolution, in seeking the wounds in a society that has hardened and those wounds have disappeared. The Czar was supposed to be the substitute for Christ (and Hirohito was supposed to be a God), and the Czar was murdered brutally. But I am suggesting that the men who murdered him were revolutionaries, blind to the fact that they were once again seeking out the wounds in the body of Christ. They were doing this in an utterly blind manner, therefore they could never really understand the impulses that drove them, so they became more and more terrorist, more and more hungry for blood. At no point could they understand the religious seed which lies at the heart of revolution. But if that religious seed is there, then it is possible to see that whole wounds can be transfigured. They do not have to fester into total disease. Salman Rushdie said that allegory is diseased; this is a point I would have liked to have made. Allegory is diseased because the wounds that are supposed to relate to allegory have festered. This is because there has been a blindness to the obsolescence of the institutions, which we continue to call sacred. Therefore you get this catastrophic assault on the sacred and impose on it allegory. Allegory in the modern sense can be transfigured so that the wounds which allegory sustains can become visionary.

The notion of allegory being diseased has to do with the fact that the institutions themselves are not changing, if anything they are becoming that much more what they always have been. There was a hope, say 20 years ago, of a time of great change, great openness, willingness, greater dialogue being effected, but now when we look at institutions, whether the Church or most states in the world, we find that there is less recep-



tiveness, not more. It is on this level that one wonders if it is possible... certainly it is possible to re-examine works of art and recuperate them; certainly it is possible to reclaim essential moments in civilization such as the Crucifixion and talk about that and make that a recuperative moment, but on a more banal level or specific level of what is going on today, I wonder whether it really is possible.

That's a very good point. I think that the obsolescence of institutions results in an eruption from the unconscious which becomes very destructive. So we live in a world of terrorism. For example, nowadays there is a guard around the politicians, you may have to have guards around academics going to university, because these obsolescent institutions are not inactive because of their obsolescence. They erupt in us and in the society at large, and the society at large succumbs to terrorism because the society then, no matter how sophisticated it may be, has to function within a tautology in which violence overcomes violence, so violence becomes absolute violence. That kind of tautology is crippling.

**The eruption in the unconscious is also a way of addressing us catastrophically about our blindness, [telling us] that it is happening. We are seeing, though, that the wounds which we are inflicting on the body of our civilization are wounds which we must address, but address more deeply than we do address them.**

To do that requires an imaginative strategy that begins to alter the very fabric of what we call the creative adventure. Rather than having a fabric which you simply cut up and make different escape routes, or even when you do formidable parallelism and reveries, you may still not have touched what our blindness signifies, our very clarities may be false. We have to address that. If we can address that and accept that, then we can look for other resources in the fabric of a fiction. I believe those resources are there but they are unfathomable in the sense that you can never pin them down. You can ignore them, you can try to eclipse them. They come back in this horrific way. But there is a different way of responding to the obsolescent institutions to allow us this breakthrough when the wounds become transfigurative. Through the carnival mask, you can revisit the phantasmagoria with all of its diseases in such a way that guidelines and openings begin to appear that can lead to a re-assessment of very ancient myths.

Marc Glassman is a Toronto bookseller, writer and film programmer on the Board at Northern Visions, producers of the Images Video and Film Festival.



# RADIO

## Audio Art's Frightful Parent

**Bruce Barber**

I

No matter how different from television the works of individual video artists may be, the television experience dominates the phenomenology of viewing and haunts video exhibitions, the way that the experience of movies haunts all film. (Antin, 36-45)

Among the many media theorists on the left who have realized the inherently undemocratic and undialectical nature of radio (and television) communication, we owe to Bertolt Brecht the seemingly self-evident notion that neither the emancipation of the (tele)communication systems, nor the emancipation of the listening public can occur independently of the other; they are in fact mutually dependent.

Radio must be changed from a means of distribution to a means of communication. Radio would be the most wonderful means of communication imaginable in public life, a huge linked system — that is to say, it would be such if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of allowing the listener not only to hear but to speak, and did not isolate him but brought him into contact. Unrealizable in this social system, realizable in another, these proposals, which are after all only the natural consequences of technical development, help towards the propagation and shaping of that other system. (Brecht, 129, seg. 134)

Just after Hitler's assumption of power in January 1933, and a full year before the invention of the "volksmpfaenger," the people's wireless set, model V.E. 301, Brecht had realized the extent toward which radio could become an ideal apparatus for control. How different, indeed, is Brecht's critical comprehension of the uses of radio technology in the indoctrination of the masses from that of Hans Bredow, the 'father' of German radio who in 1927 enthusiastically endorsed its "general communication and educative possibilities"; or from that of Albert Einstein, who upon opening the seventh German Radio Exhibition in August 1930, enjoined his audience to

remember that it was the technicians who made *true democracy* possible. They have not only simplified daily work, they are also disseminating *true thought and art* to the public at large. Radio, furthermore, has a unique capacity for reconciling the family of nations. Until now nations got to know one another only through the distorting mirror of the daily press. (von Eckhardt and Gilman, 57)

"Radio," he continued, oblivious to the neo-colonialist pretensions of his statement, "...acquaints them in the most immediate form and from their most immediate side."

Three years later Einstein's eulogy on radio as the putative technological vehicle for democracy was destroyed. Under the

direction of Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, wireless wardens appeared in rural villages and towns to ensure that communal wireless sets were installed (and listened to) in the correct fashion. This dispelled the identity of a radio system with the "capacity for reconciling the family of nations." Leading members of the National Socialist Listener's Union realized the extent to which party unity, and further the education of the whole German people to the ideologies and ambitions of the Third Reich, were to be obtained: "The German radio programmes must shape the character and the will power of the German nation, and *train a new political type.*" (Sington and Weidenfeld, 273, emphasis added)

From a relatively privileged middle and upper middle class clientele in the mid-1920s, radio was by the mid-1930s being purveyed to the masses in individual receiver sets. The emancipatory potential of the new communicator's medium had been denied in favour of its limitless capacity to order information in such a manner as to ensure the unilateral demonstration of power. It must have been of little comfort to Einstein in America to realize that the same technicians he was suggesting were responsible for democracy could at the same time be responsible for the formation of fascism.

There are still those today who believe that the democratization of the communications system is possible. Questions relating to production and reproduction, and the "shaping of other systems" remain

central to contemporary nature and extent of within the media and it conforms. These questions presented by Brecht are resolvable within the of actual or incipient best explained by the izing concept of heg issues besetting inter changes and the cor examined within the colonialism," their r achieved simply thro of the uses and abus though this would h have to begin with a the problems and pe constitution of the t

Power, however, ing point. While the tions of power may tional contestation o waves, the dialectic rejoinder — "unreal system, realizable im ues from the interst community, and fir individual. The repr tation of power rela ery level. It is towar must now turn to re nations on the prod rary audio artists.

II

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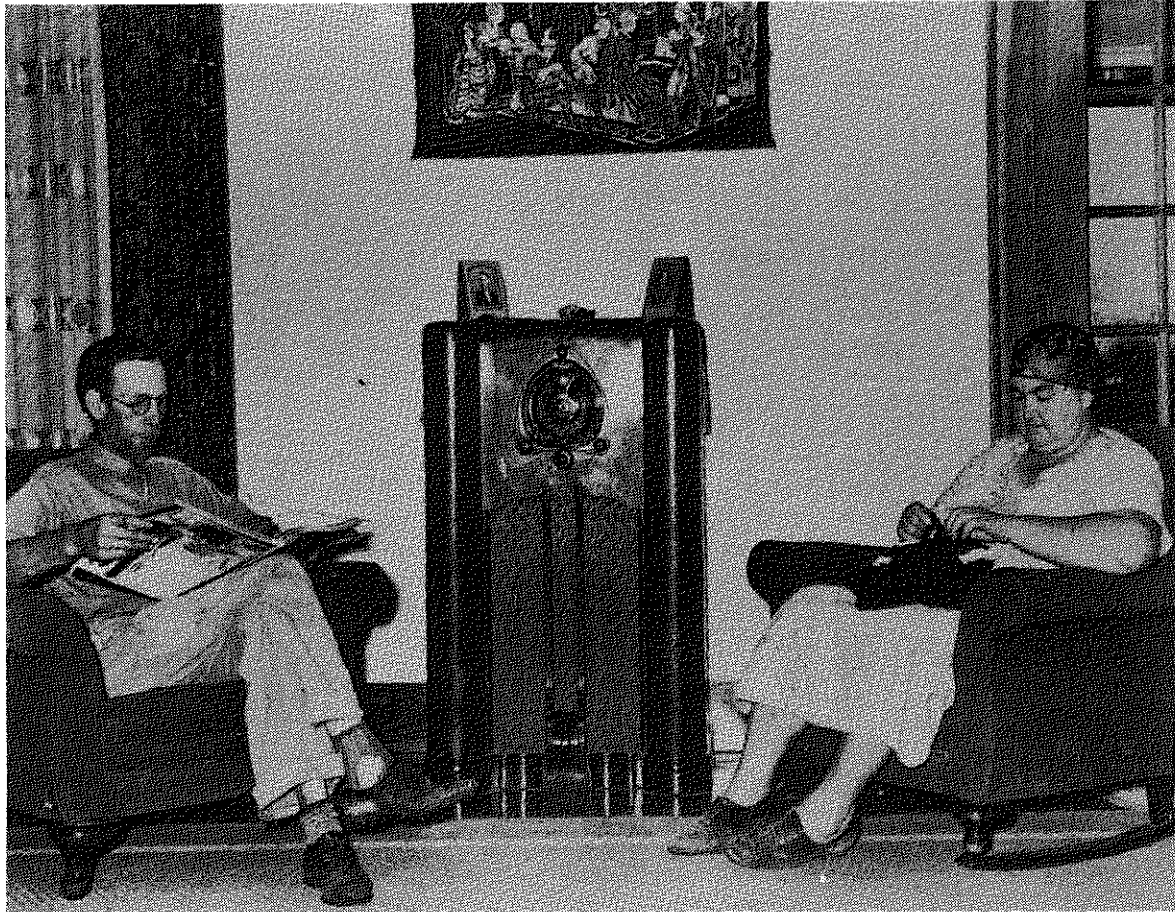
central to contemporary debates about the nature and extent of emancipation, both within the media and the society to which it conforms. These questions, as they were presented by Brecht in 1932, may be irresolvable within the present conditions of actual or incipient control and may be best explained by the abstract yet totalizing concept of hegemony. While the issues besetting inter-community exchanges and the control thereof can be examined within the terms of "electronic colonialism," their resolution may not be achieved simply through a re-negotiation of the uses and abuses of the media, although this would help for starters; it may have to begin with a radical refocusing of the problems and possibly as well, the re-constitution of the terms of discourse.

Power, however, remains a good starting point. While the macrocosmic conditions of power may be seen in the international contestation of wills over the airwaves, the dialectic implied in Brecht's rejoinder — "unrealizable in this social system, realizable in another..." — continues from the interstate and national to the community, and finally, to the level of the individual. The reproduction and contestation of power relations continues at every level. It is toward this examination we must now turn to recognize these determinations on the production of contemporary audio artists.

## II

Within the history of broadcasting there are few instances of broadcasts which demonstrate the peculiar and absolute power of the medium. Aggrandizing public addresses — we may call these the classic use of radio — have usually been generalized under the term propaganda. The authority of radio is confirmed in wartime documentary newscasts, which today evidence a peculiarly melodramatic and fictive character.<sup>1</sup> The powerful propaganda speeches of Churchill, Hitler, Stalin and Roosevelt are paradigms of radio's propensities toward mass indoctrination. Goebbels and others argued convincingly that indoctrination was the necessity, the very actuality of the medium.

One very famous instance of radio's peculiar ability to convince has been im-



mortalized in the annals of broadcast history. Since the publication of Howard Koch's book, it has become known simply as *The Panic Broadcast*. The event took place on Halloween, Sunday 30 October, 1938 at 9:00 pm. The occasion was Columbia Broadcasting System's production of H.G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds*. Produced by Orson Welles and the Mercury players, the play documented the "landing" of hundreds of Martian aliens in an obscure New Jersey town called Grover's Mill. The Martians' destructive machines, the total disruption of communications and the defeat of thousands of "defenders" took the listening public by surprise. For a total of 40 minutes hundreds of thousands of demoralized listeners believed that Martians had occupied whole sections of the country, indiscriminantly mowed down hundreds and incinerated whole villages with their "heat rays." The CBS network audience reacted accordingly. They panicked.

At the programme's end, Orson Welles read a statement suggesting that the broadcast had been a Halloween prank, but this did little to dispel the fear of those caught off-guard by the totally convincing character of the first half of the programme. According to one of the many studies undertaken after the event, these were the people who subsequently lobbied for legislative powers to prohibit "such pranksterism" on the airwaves. It is unlikely that a similar programme could spark the same response today. Sociologists and psychologists who conducted "post-invasion" studies suggested that the responses of the approximately six million people to the broadcast, and the estimated one and half million who took the story literally, were the result of a number of

factors, including the approach of conflict in Europe, previously reported sightings of alien airships and extra-terrestrial visitors, and the traditional effulgence of paranoia associated with All Hallows' Eve. However, the fact that one short radio programme can have such extraordinary effects gives some pause for reflection on the power of radio in general and art in particular.

Within popular culture there are many representations of radio as "the disturber of the peace", the public intruder, which invades the sanctity of domestic space, filling up warm and intimate rooms and substituting the natural sounds and harmony of everyday life — with noise. In marked contrast, revealing the popular representation of the schizoid nature of the medium, early newspaper and magazine advertisements for radio tended to emphasize its intimate qualities, or at least its capacity for providing intimacy and companionship. The wireless was often illustrated in the 1920s as a piece of furniture amid the other material possessions of the petit-bourgeois interiors in which it was most often found. The radio's function and its existence as technological apparatus was de-emphasized in favour of its decorative (aesthetic) values which were in keeping with other objects in the household.

**The radio is represented as the substitute for the absent friend on those cold lonely winter nights, or alternatively, as the additional (indispensable) "family member" surrounded by adoring siblings, parents and household pets, exuding its "warmth" like a coal fire.<sup>2</sup>**

At home with the radio,  
1930s

These familiar conditions of radio-as-friend, or surrogate "love object", in a multiplicity of images, have provided the lyrical content for many musical performers as diverse as Bing Crosby, Dolly Parton, the Beatles and Queen. They have provided the necessary reflection and nostalgia base for "when I was young movies" like Woody Allen's *Radio Days* and reproduced the stereotypical images and sounds of Americana: Vaudeville's "Oh, de...doh...doh's" (via megaphone); the "movin' on, out n' up" of Nashville; the Motown refrains of "turn on (off) that radioo"; and the post-ghettoblasted, hip hop "ra, ra, ra, dio, dio, di, di, di, io, o." The extent to which these cultural representations have become social and ideological indicators of some significance has begun to be explored by a growing number of popular culture researchers examining the soundscapes of contemporary societies (R. Murray Schafer's term in *The Tuning of the World: Toward a Theory of Soundscape Design*.)

Some of this work on the social effects of radio, which includes the examination of sound imaging, and audio/cultural analysis generally, has taken its theoretical cues from recent debates within post-structuralism and marxism. The marxist interpretation and analysis of culture (and society) as well as contemporary post-structuralist and feminist film theory have been particularly useful for those exploring the psycho-social and socio-political

aspects of audio production and consumption. During the past fifteen years the locus of debates within film theory and film analysis has tended to revolve around the nature of sexual sublimation, voyeurism and filmic pleasure. The work of the 70s *Screen* group — Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen et.al., who have based their theories on the writings of Christian Metz (*The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*), Jacques Lacan (*Ecrits* and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*) and Julia Kristeva (*Desire in Language*) among others — has done much to isolate and identify significant aspects of *cinematic pleasure*, the construction of meaning and the production and reproduction of ideology through the agency of the cinematic apparatus. Similar theoretical work ("textual" analysis) is beginning to be undertaken with respect to sound and has located its points of reference in psycho-social rather than in bio- or eco-social terms as had previously been the case in the work of Schafer and others.

The desire for listening, which places emphasis on the passive subject as the recipient of the 'code', has begun to be more widely understood in psychoanalytic terms. The *pulsion invocante*<sup>3</sup> so eloquently evoked by Lacan, is a process which involves the sublimation of sexual desire into the level of imagining(s). These imaginings, reveries or semi-conscious states allow feelings of pleasure (*jouissance*) to be obtained.

**In (practical) audiophonic terms, Lacan's thesis allows us to understand a range of listening behaviours described by those studying the social behaviours of audio consumers: why, for instance, many people listen to the radio or other audiophonic equipment in darkened rooms, or just prior to sleep; why listening aids digestion; why muzak increases commodity production in factories and commodity consumption in shopping malls.**

The power of radio is more readily understood if we consider the less public concerns of radio listeners (and some television viewers) who use their listening behaviour to almost literally *stay alive*. For somewhat obvious reasons, little is understood about the behaviour of those who, fearing or nearing death, maintain a semi-alert, somnolent, often hypertensive state by keeping the radio on while they attempt (not) to sleep. In such cases, the intrusive presence of sound, of "noise," often regardless of content (although talk and phone-in shows are favourites), is used as an analgesic. In such instances, radio acts as both an "upper" and a "downer."

The split yet *interdependent* nature of listening — its intrusive yet friendly character, as well as its source of pleasure and unpleasure (distinguished from displeasure) — finds its corollaries in the general problems associated with broadcasting: the privileging of reception over transmission, and of consumption over production. There is a paradigm in the historical developments which link the first radio receiver with those of today. It is of some significance that the first speaker was in fact a listening tube placed in the ear rather like a stethoscope. From the first, the experience of listening was very much an *individual* one. Dr. Lee de Forest's invention of the vacuum audio tube hastened the development of the audio speaker, which became, simply because of its shape, size and power, a *communal* reception device. The wireless is aptly named in more ways than one. The intimate contact of the body with the machine was soon lost. Once connected to the body by a cord, the radio soon became an instrument of collective listening, part of the furniture and, by extension, the architecture — or in Murray Schafer's terms, taking his cues from McLuhan, the

"bio-sphere." During have regained the intimate contact with tus.

Some 70 years after tion we have returned verely individualistic ing on the 'new' equi and 1980s. The listen replaced by the umbilic presented in the "advan mini-phones and ster where in the late sixti enjoined his followers turn on," we now hav on and turn in." It is ing that the machine cessfully in the 1980s on play-back and rec man/Walkwoman wit audio tape players — chines of production tures like stereo or m capabilities; although reveal that the decrea equipment has led to chases. Still, such equ tains an emphasis on far as its productive u stricted to the passiv ords, tapes and radio

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Göring, Himmler, Hitler and Goebbels in Brecht's *Schweik in the Second World War*





"bio-sphere." During the past decade we have regained the intimacy of this vital umbilical contact with the audio apparatus.

Some 70 years after de Forest's invention we have returned to savour the severely individualistic hyper-phonic listening on the 'new' equipment of the 1970s and 1980s. The listening tube has been replaced by the umbilical cords represented in the "advanced generation" of mini-phones and stereo headsets. And where in the late sixties, Timothy Leary enjoined his followers to "drop out and turn on," we now have a situation of "turn on and turn in." It is particularly interesting that the machines marketed so successfully in the 1980s were those focusing on play-back and reception — the Walkman/Walkwoman with AM/FM and mini audio tape players — and not the machines of production with multiple features like stereo or multi-track recording capabilities; although recent indications reveal that the decrease in prices of such equipment has led to an increase in purchases. Still, such equipment still maintains an emphasis on consumption, insofar as its productive use is primarily restricted to the passive duplication of records, tapes and radio broadcasts.

The history of audio traces a vector of listening behaviour from the extremely individualistic, to the family, to the community and, prior to World War II, the masses. For the last 20 years it appears that we have been reversing this trend, traversing the terrain of choice, which is less fully articulated than advertisers of audio equipment would have us believe.

**And the choice now is not so much between signal and noise, or the sound and its source (Schafer's "schizophrenia"), but between a narcissistic withdrawal and self-imposed isolation or advanced commodity fetishism and hyper-consumption — the latter conditions associated with various states of alienation.**

The first involves a form of self-abnegation, the second, self-aggrandizement. The rough terrain in the centre, which must be negotiated, is manifest as a form of critical schizophrenia.

That radio has the capacity to both combat or resist alienation, and assist in its reproduction, is not yet fully understood in human terms. Within recent theoretical discussions acknowledging this fact the primary tendency has been to focus on programming and content as a means of engendering an information "exchange" in step with contemporary social reality. The fact that radio in its ac-



tive form could be used to examine and change this reality has rarely become a major item on the agenda at any of the debates attending discussions about the role of public broadcasting services. Radio has been discussed as a "social lubricant"<sup>4</sup> which can assist in ameliorating the social impact of change. It has also been suggested that talk-back radio shows give maximum opportunities for community input into crucial decision making processes. However, it has often been demonstrated that most of the situations where public responses have been invoked have remained superficial. Listeners, potential social actors, remain isolated consumers. Domestic listening programmes tend to domesticate their audiences.

### III

As Hans Magnus Enzensberger observed in his famous Brechtian essay "Constituents of a Theory of the Media" (1974), radio, since its raw beginnings in the minds of mid-19th century technologists, has been reinforced as an apparatus for broadcast. While there is nothing intrinsic to the technology which privileged consumption at the expense of production, the interactive communication possibilities inherent to transmission/reception technology became subordinated to a one-way distribution and passive reception system. The value of Enzensberger's ideas, and before him those of Brecht, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, is that they each questioned in different ways this emphasis on consumption.

It is wrong to regard media equipment as a means of consumption. It is always in principle also a means of production. The contradiction between producers and consumers is not inherent in the electronic media; on the contrary, it has to be artificially reinforced by economic and administrative measures. (Enzensberger, 56)

While many of the examples Enzensberger used in his essay to demonstrate the undialectical uses of the media (network broadcast radio and television, satellite communications) still hold true, others used to illustrate his thesis — the telephone, the computer, electro-static copiers, user/producer audio and visual equipment and services — have been altered by (usually) subtle emphases and/or reconceptualizing in order to adapt to either the changing demands of the market and consumers or the new determinations of the communications systems. The telephone, for instance, can no longer be considered primarily as a single line speaker/receiver apparatus, as Enzensberger argued. It must now be understood in terms of its dialectical potential as a multiple tele-conferencing (networking) system as well as a place where a number of communications systems (computers, copiers) can interface simultaneously.

Within the past decade, theory has preceded the practical applications for the new technologies. Technologists point to the "education gap": the fact that people are unable to adapt quickly enough to the newer generations of technological apparatuses. Moreover, the new technologies

The Martians invading Los Angeles from *The War of the Worlds*





War-time news room,  
National Broadcasting  
Company

themselves have demonstrated their fallibility as interactive systems. Information flow is often marked by conflicts, drop-outs, or, to use a political metaphor which may become more instructive in the next few years, *anarchy*. The counterpart to the AIDS virus among the human population is the computer virus (system bug) and other "new age" syndromes which have increasingly given new meanings to the "science" of cybernetics and particularly to the notion briefly explored by Enzensberger: stochasticism, the randomness of interactive communications systems.

Stochasticism, while it reduces the Orwellian spectre of *total* control, is no reason to applaud the impending arrival of democracy. Neither is the late capitalist hyper-consumption of user/producer audio and video equipment, cam-corders, micro-wave video broadcast systems, citizen band and low frequency transmitters, etc., etc. — none of which can in themselves usher forth the emancipation of the masses. For as Enzensberger noted,

Until these instruments find their way into the actual *working lives* of people, that is into the schools and factories, farms and government bureaus rather than their *lives as consumers*, then their potential use as instruments of emancipation remains unrealized. (Enzensberger, 56)<sup>5</sup>

Control and the undialectical use of the media will continue as long as the consuming masses are buying the ideology of autonomous production imbricated together with hyper-consumption. Mass production and mass consumption (as it is

implied by Benjamin, via Marx)<sup>6</sup>, is best assisted by the reproduction of the masses.

Even where it can be demonstrated by "futurolgists" like John Naisbitt (*Mega-trends*) that in the U.S., for instance, the increased number of radio and television stations is allowing greater flexibility in programming to ever increasing numbers of special interest constituencies, this does not offer cause for celebration. These constituencies are still composed of isolated individuals whose lives are, to a major extent, "controlled" by the major media conglomerates and other institutions of capitalism. The consumption of local media programmes by these groups is limited and while they may own a cam-corder, C.B. radio, VCR, stereo or four track equipment which allow production, they remain amateurs.

It has long been clear from apparatus like miniature and 8mm movie cameras as well as the tape recorder, which are already in the hands of the masses, that the individual, as long as he remains isolated, can become with their help at best an amateur and *not a producer*. (Enzensberger, 57)

The emphasis given by Enzensberger on the term *producer* is derived from the importance given it by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Author as Producer" (1937, reprinted in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* 1982) in which he argues that the artist/author must relieve him/herself of the traditional stereotypical roles and class alliances and identify with the struggles of the proletariat and other disenfranchised or marginal groups within society. Enzensberger re-offers this problem of "conscientization" to those within the left as well as those liberals who wish to locate conditions ripe for change — including their own consciousness.

#### IV

For the old-fashioned "artist" — let us call him the author — it follows that he must see it as his goal to make himself redundant as a specialist in much the same way as a teacher of literacy only fulfills his task when he is no longer necessary. (Enzensberger, 76)

Both Enzensberger's and Benjamin's positions encourage the articulation of a new role for the artist, one which is premised less on the production of aesthetic objects or events for exhibition or broadcast, than on the provision of objects or actions which have some kind of social and cultural utility. Their insistence on the artist's relinquishing the exhibition (cult) and hence commodity value of his or her work carries with it the indications of alternative practices; at minimum the transposition or substitution of work beyond its service as a bearer of 'spiritual' or economic signs. The critique of the specialist role of the artist, as this identity has been historically constituted, is at base a critique of the autonomy of the institution — art. The use of new technologies and

the emphasis on developing critical strategies for the attack on the status quo of conventional artistic practice — both of these have been at the core of many so-called avant-garde theories, from the Futurists of the first decade of this century to the conceptualists and contextualists respectively of the early 1970s and 80s. And yet, often the attack on the status quo — the hegemony of bourgeois culture — merely resulted in what Peter Bürger has suggested is a "re-newing of the stereotypes" (*Theory of the Avant-Garde*). Too often the works of contemporary artists, including those using audio technology, have capitulated to the production of discrete objects for exhibition and sale in the conventional manner associated with the dealer gallery system and its surrogates. This, or the aggrandizement of the artist's persona-as-star; the result is the same, the construction of a commodity.

An "alternative" which many audio and intermedia artists have intentionally adopted as a quasi-critical strategy is the role enactment of the marginal "outsider" figure. The most compelling images of this role are represented in many of the major works of audio art, performance, theatre and film produced within the past 75 years, including arguably one of the most influential, Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958). The narrative of the play is deceptively simple. As it progresses we learn that Krapp, Beckett's artist figure, has habitually recorded, on each of his birthdays, the principal events of that year. During the recording for his "last" birthday, Krapp chooses to review and reflect upon some of the previous years' recordings, playing back significant portions of his tape collection.

As a few critics have suggested, the play contains one major theme — impotence. *Krapp's Last Tape* is informed by a kind of narcissism broadly represented in the deliberations of a man in his late middle ages whose creative impotence is coupled with his imagined (or actual) sexual impotence. His audio reminiscences reveal his lost youth; the mistakes he has made have been carefully chronicled in the stacks of tapes which have become his electronic diaries. Without these diaries, Krapp would become the contemporary (Nietzschean) man-without-belief forced into the existential anguish of willing himself to power. His attempts to reconstruct his (life's) identity from his remembered history (his tapes become his *aides-memoire*), even where his acts and those of others around him refute that his existence has any higher meaning, offers little consolation to those who have rejected the solace offered by religion. And to Krapp, art and sex provide necessary, yet ultimately poor, substitutes.

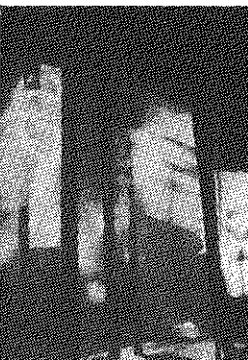
The implicit materiality of crap, and the scatological references throughout the play, further reinforce the existential aspects of Krapp's intellectual onanism. The cultural significance of shit, or rather its purging — within literature, from Rabelais to Swift, Sade, Jarry, Artaud, Beckett, and the visual arts, from Bruegel to Duchamp, Manzoni and Warhol — is too large a subject to discuss here. Suffice it to suggest

that Beckett's repression and cultural alienation and bodily dysfunctions, is one which may also be of many contemporary ruminations on the id through a focus on the type for an artist like

Day after day I look still see something dunk a Johnson an alcohol and rub the pimple. And while drying I think about always in style... Well, dry, I'm ready for an acne-pimple medicine pimple's covered. (Warhol, 7)

Warhol's mirror and his ghost, as do in his audio recordings. This engages the twin aspects — self-aggrandizement (effacement or self-ab) at the basis of the power entirely under examination.

Beyond the historical neo-avant-garde's attenuated power of radio remains many of the works from



Vito Acconci's *Other Voices*

riod and particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s presents a watershed for artists' audio. Vito Acconci's *Studio for Air Time* and *Voices for a Second Site* are examples of production as (paradigmatic) installation being described as the radio, the manner in which the exhibition of audio in this manner in which the haunts all film. These acts of consciousness, ideological underpinning of this period since the invention of other technological applications.

Acconci is acutely aware of the public aspects of

that Beckett's representation(s) of social and cultural alienation through Krapp's bodily dysfunctions, is a powerful trope, one which may also be found in the works of many contemporary artists. Krapp's ruminations on the identity of self through a focus on the body are the prototype for an artist like Andy Warhol.

Day after day I look in the mirror and I still see something... a new pimple.... I dunk a Johnson and Johnson cotton ball into Johnson and Johnson rubbing alcohol and rub the cotton ball against the pimple. And while the alcohol is drying I think about nothing. How it's dry, I'm ready for the flesh coloured acne-pimple medication... so now the pimple's covered. But am I covered? (Warhol, 7)

Warhol's mirror and scrapbook become his ghost, as do in similar manner Krapp's audio recordings. This image of narcissism engages the twin aspects of this syndrome — self-aggrandizement and self-negation (effacement or self-abnegation), which is at the basis of the power dynamic presently under examination.

Beyond the historical avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde's attitude to the *absolute power* of radio remains. It is evident in many of the works from the post-war pe-

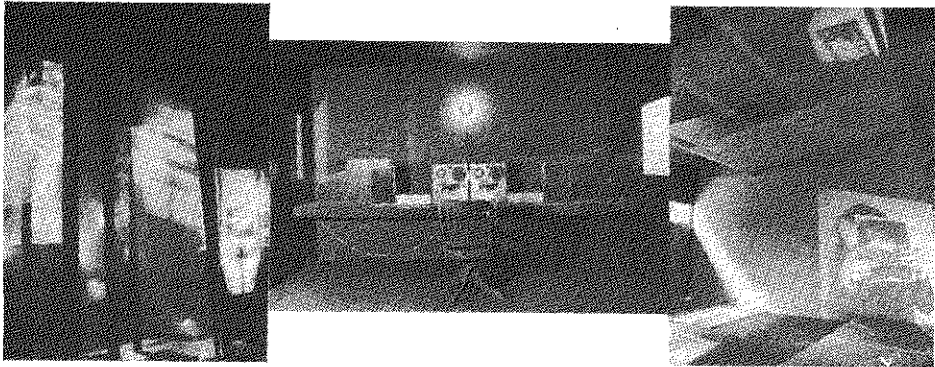
performance work, his attitude of sitting in front of a mirror or camera often approached the condition of self-abnegation of the individual at confession. Like Beckett's Krapp, the presence of an audience, albeit one distanced by technology (video and audio players) in a work such as *Air Time* assists him in being "honest" with himself. The videotape of the 1973 performance/installation, produced for the Sonnabend gallery in New York is arguably the most intimate of any that Acconci produced. It deals specifically with the ending of, and making public his decision to do so, his long term relationship with Kathy Dillon. The artist had himself locked in an "isolation chamber" for three hours each day for two weeks. After each one-and-a-half hours he would emerge for a fifteen minute break and then return. A closed circuit video system revealed Acconci talking to himself, looking again into a mirror and acting out scenes from his five year relationship with Dillon. Audio tape players and speakers were placed in seven wooden boxes and dispersed throughout the gallery. Stools were placed beside each tape box for the listeners' convenience. Acconci's voice, at low volume, could be heard from each box: "What I'm doing here may be hard for me to reveal to them (the audience)... so my voice from the past (on the tape recorders) can be used to get rid of them, insult them, de-

**Although Acconci's audience, like Beckett's, may be an indispensable aid for securing the proverbial "whole truth and nothing but the truth," the "confessions" are for the most part egocentric affairs. The audience members are not requested to be givers of absolution, witnesses, a judge, nor even the jury. Like the audience for the typical radio programme, they are merely asked, like Peter Sellers' character Chauncey Gardner in the film *Being There*, to be there.**

The audience members support Acconci to come to terms with himself. And arriving at some kind of resolution regarding the "other" is ultimately a marginal operation. At the conclusion of the tape Acconci affirms his prior intention and admits, "Maybe coming to terms with our relationship means ending our relationship." And the parallel identification of the other with the audience results in his ending his relationship with them as well.

The recording studio in *Air Time* was further developed in an exhibition the following year for New York's Museum of Modern Art. It represents an interesting comparison for later works by a number of other artists including Eric Bogosian's (and now Oliver Stone's) *Talk Radio*. Titled *Other Voices for a Second Sighting* (1974), Acconci's performance/installation represents the self-writ large aspects of the disc-jockey or talk-show host moving into and controlling the hearts and minds of his listeners, while locked into a hermetically sealed sound-proof chamber with an audio projection device — radio: "Like building a life on an all night talk show" (my emphasis). The middle gallery space contained a recording/transmission studio and on either side was the light room (right) and the dark room (left). The right room contained slide projections and films of the artist in various poses projected across thin fabric fields... "transcendence calls to me." In the left room, slides were projected through acetate banners revealing the artist's naked body as well as a series of political figures. As Acconci has written: "Like a room of the world — public life comes down to me" and the D.J./host is the "voice that drifts through the dark, that lulls you into the night that makes you forget (emphasis added)"; yet the radio show is a final hour, a final program that seemingly may go on forever." And later, in a perfect description of the dialectic we have been attempting to describe:

...it's a power dream, a dream of glory, yet my voice...like a machine; the voice becomes an undercurrent, it sneaks in a frame of mind, installs a habit. Abdicate, it says; refuse, withdraw, don't make a move.



Vito Acconci's *Other Voices for a Second Site*

riod and particularly those from the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time which represents a watershed for the development of artists' audio. Vito Acconci's works *Recording Studio for Air Time* (1973) and *Other Voices for a Second Site* (1973) are useful examples of productions from this period. Within Acconci's oeuvre they may stand as (paradigmatic) instances of what is being described as the residual effects of radio, the manner in which it "haunts" the exhibition of audio art in the same manner in which the experience of movies haunts all film. These affects become products of consciousness. They represent the ideological underpinnings of the dominant culture of this period, and perhaps all periods since the invention of radio and other technological apparatus of reproduction.

Acconci is acutely aware of the private and public aspects of his art. In his early

lude them, transport them." (Sondheim, 26-68)

Like Krapp, Acconci is ultimately ambivalent about his audience's presence in what is essentially a private affair between himself and Dillon (and in Krapp's case, between Krapp and himself). Yet Acconci needs their presence to remain truthful to himself, even if this might place him in the position of "acting out something for them." He may wish to reproach (efface) himself and gain absolution for his sins by placing himself under confession, yet he also wants to make it clear that in some of the instances which he outlines, he believes he is above reproach. The isolation chamber, simultaneously reminiscent of cells in prisons, psychiatric institutions, confessionals and sound-proofed recording booths (the tape's full title is *Recording Studio for Air Time*) reveals Acconci's deliberate obscuring of the public and private.

While he attempts to provide his work with some kind of socio-political use value, Acconci is frustrated in his attempts, because, as he says, he may not "believe anymore in the efficacy of art." He is trapped as surely as is Krapp, in the ineffectuality of his own actions. He is forced into a position of either aggrandizing his persona, renewing the stereotypes of the neo-avant-garde and/or finally capitulating to the safety of the art market. In Benjaminian terms he reproduces the conventional social powerlessness of the isolated author, acting out the behaviour, producing the products which will secure the autonomy of the institution art and deny its potential to achieve through the aims of its authors as producers, a critical praxis.

The determinations of alienation on the production of audio artists is a larger subject than there is space for here. Suffice it to say that the denial of art's social utility for the sake of transcendence, both social and cultural, has always been subsumed under the avant-gardist's intentions. While a small number of artists have obtained a truly praxiological condition for their art (Tatlin, Brecht, Heartfield, among them) this has usually been for a short time only.

It is a well-known function of the art world's institutions that they have the capabilities of co-opting that very work which presumes to announce their redundancy.

We have witnessed the power of radio and tape recording in other ways since the late 1940s when Pierre Schaeffer began to manipulate audio recordings to produce some of the first electro-acoustic works. John Cage's celebrated *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* (1952) has been described as one of the first uses in the U.S. of magnetic tape to produce a musical work for radio broadcast. In keeping with the Duchampian ready-made aesthetic, the work of Cage and others was perceived as an intrusion into the conventional ear and airspace of audio reception. The title *Imaginary Landscape* is somewhat ironic given the technical aspects of the recording itself and the material objects, including hub caps, bottles, etc., which produced the sounds. Much of the broadcast work produced in the late 1950s and early 60s by artists in the U.S. and Europe shocked its listeners with its non-musical form. However, it did not take long for Cage's music, composed and their variants to be accepted as conventional high art practice. Like Duchamp's anaesthetic ready-mades, they have found their place as classics in the cultural hall of fame.

An unanticipated result of this institutionalization process is the manner in which Cage's avant-gardist strategies have become a justification, in aesthetic terms, for a bio-social apprehension of the airwaves which, after McLuhan, has tended to obliterate cultural, class and ethnic boundaries in favour of a total homogenizing of the eco-sphere.

Murray Schafer's celebrated *Soundscape* projects place much significance on the reception analysis of periodized content. And yet this analysis is limited, providing

material for the subsequent rendering of radio transmission into rhythmic confirmation of bio-harmony. The work of a number of Canadian composers and audio art producers has been influenced by Schafer's book *The Tuning of the World* — even its title echoes McLuhan's "Global Village" — although most have neglected the salient criticism of the culture of consumer capitalism implied in his work and have opted for the grandiloquence (and aesthetic potential) of his metaphors. Montreal audio artist and composer Paul Theberge, for instance, produced a radio-phonetic work which is based on an entire day (18+ hours) of programming from the Radio Canada FM network. Brief extracts of music, news and cultural programmes were montaged together on an eight track recorder, then mixed down to form a one minute to one hour ratio of recorded time to transmission time. About this work Theberge has written:

...through this extreme compression of material, themes, juxtapositions and modulations characteristic of Radio Canada perhaps became, more apparent and hopefully, a certain *global rhythm* inherent in the programming structure begins to emerge. (Theberge, 3)

A similar approach to radio broadcasting and hence audio composition is apparent in the work of many artists producing audio art. As we have seen, however, radio broadcast and tape recording can be recognized and understood in more diverse ways. The naturalization of the technology in the hands of artists who believe in the neutrality of the media can only hasten the depoliticization of culture and the further alienation of individual producers.

#### Postscript

During the past five years many artists using audio and video technology to produce their work have become increasingly aware of the problems associated with the traditional venues for distribution and broadcast. In response to these problems, they have adopted new methods of distribution, collectively produced programmes for regular broadcast, and attempted to develop alternative audiences. A few community-based radio and television stations, as well as the more community service oriented galleries, have allowed access to artists for alternative programming. However, even when they have the instruments and institutions of mass communication at their disposal, many artists still address a limited, usually elite audience. They have done little to confront some of the intrinsic problems of the media, especially those associated with the power dynamic underscored in this essay. Nor have they altered the content of their work accordingly.

At least distribution is now understood as a problem of some magnitude and with it a slowly changing orientation to the content of audio is discernable. Strategies for distribution have been varied. Audio artists have usually distinguished between

three market models for the distribution and/or sale of their work.

The first may be dubbed the Hollywood option (Brian Eno and Laurie Anderson are good examples): artists emulate the strategies of MGM, Warner Brothers, CBS, et al, the major institutions of capitalism, developing styles, behaviour packaging and marketing formulae which will address the conditions of the so-called free market. For the successful few, co-optation is the happy result. Even as Punk entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren demonstrated, the "anti-capitalist" products and behaviours of the counter (sub-) cultures, can and in fact need to conform to the capitalist models of appropriation. McLaren successfully adopted a systems marketing approach to the selling of punk products, fashions and behaviour: the Sex Pistols, the clothes, the jewelry, the food tastes, hairstyles, the language, the looks, beliefs, etc., all conforming to and reinforcing the sustaining ideologies of punk. Successful as his operation was, McLaren diminished his profit margins by not adequately protecting his patents.<sup>7</sup>

The second option does not exhibit the conventional extremes of the first. Artists adopting the "high culture" option usually follow the paths of least resistance and attempt to market their work through the museum system and the small scale alternative recording industry. Alvin Lucier is a good example of this, the preferred marketing model for most audio artists today. Artists from this group usually aspire to graduate to the first option — they produce work which tends to conform to the styles and tastes of a highly phonoliterate minority group of consumers who may also be artists themselves. Worldwide, this market constituency is of substantial size and developing and yet by the standards of the industry giants, it is minimal.

The third Underground option is characterized by an extremely small market and a relatively closed system of production/consumption. Tapes and records are produced at the margins by groups subscribing to various left wing, right wing and occasionally liberal causes. Often the work produced within this category has the look and feel of that produced within political cells or cadres. It is produced in limited edition, often anonymously or under the cover name of a group and is sold, exchanged or given away. The most celebrated form of this kind of marketing strategy was that of Ayatollah Khomeini before the Iranian revolution and the fall of the Shah. From his place of exile in Paris, Khomeini purportedly orchestrated a major religious coup by clandestinely exporting cassette tapes of his speeches which were subsequently dubbed in their thousands for distribution among the faithful and disaffected in Iran, thus giving new meaning to the phrase exported revolution.

This third option is also the preferred one for alternative broadcasting. Airwaves piracy and micro-wave transmitting in urban areas has often become an alternative for those who feel excluded from the dominant centres of production and distribution. Why run the risk of having your

programming rejected or to operate successfully on a national marketing/broadcast level. Around the world imitative religious factions, various and lobby groups, environmental groups, special interest wave musicians, poets, various denominations that the risks associated outside of the law are particularly given the satellite waves and the control of major networks of broadcast.

The relationships between the options are more fluid than they appear. Many permutations within native distribution models. The third option is given to those who recognize the risks within the present system of recording and broadcast to be understood through *powerlessness*.

In the past decade and particularly audio art has been demonstrated in Iran. The Khomeini example and Irangate all emphasize the magnetic recording event has focused attention and fallibility of the system in which wire-tap support and strengthening, or undermine art to reel and the humbled into their own, upset the visual which had to secondary status for at least since the invention techniques of representation and the subsequent of photo-mechanical early 19th century. Of audio-image films of Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* rarely depicts the impact of audiophonic representation of *The Conversation* symbolic representation of power ultimately real.

It is to the example of Irangate, *The Conversation* that artists must address is within these examples and potential power in all its negative and becomes intelligible. The nation of the institution of production and consumption condition to the re-negotiation of the artist's role from the author.

Perhaps the most of the power relations between the all power consumer and the alien — is contained in *Nature To Andy Mannix* (sent/ audio installation presented at the Kitchen and Performing Arts) tribute to Andy Mannix who had converted the former Mercer Arts Center performance space. P



programming rejected or altered if one can operate successfully outside of the conventional marketing/broadcasting systems?

Around the world immigrant groups, religious factions, various left wing activist and lobby groups, environmentalists, anti-nuke groups, specialist producers, new wave musicians, poets and other artists of various denominations have often decided that the risks associated with operating outside of the law are worth taking, particularly given the saturation of the airwaves and the control exercised by the major networks of broadcast systems.<sup>8</sup>

The relationships between these three options are more fluid than the brief description above would suggest. There are many permutations which allow for alternative distribution methods to develop. The third option is gaining popularity for those who recognize their powerlessness within the present system. The power of recording and broadcasting is beginning to be understood through its agency — powerlessness.

In the past decade the power of radio and particularly audio tape recording has been demonstrated in spectacular ways. The Khomeini example above, Watergate and Irangate all emphasize the importance of the magnetic recording apparatus. Each event has focused attention on the fidelity and fallibility of the technology; the manner in which wire-tapping/bugging can support and strengthen an existing institution, or undermine and destroy it. The reel to reel and the humble cassette have come into their own, upsetting the primacy of the visual which had subjected the aural to secondary status for hundreds of years, at least since the invention of illusory techniques of representation in the Renaissance and the subsequent development of photo-mechanical apparatus in the early 19th century. One of the classic audio-image films of the 1970s, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation*, accurately depicts the importance and power of audiophonic representation. While the plot of *The Conversation* is imaginary, its symbolic representations of the contestation of power ultimately give way to the real.

It is to the examples of Watergate, Irangate, *The Conversation* and Khomeini that artists must address themselves. For it is within these examples that the actual and potential power of audio production, in all its negative and positive aspects, becomes intelligible. An extensive examination of the institutional conditions of production and consumption is also a precondition to the re-negotiation of the artist's role from author to producer.

Perhaps the most appropriate image of the power relations flagged in this essay — between the all powerful radio, the passive consumer and the alienated author/artist — is contained in Nam June Paik's *A Tribute To Andy Mannix* (1982). This performance/audio installation work was presented at the Kitchen (Centre for Video and Performing Arts) in New York as a tribute to Andy Mannix, a stage carpenter who had converted the kitchen of the former Mercer Arts Centre into the Kitchen performance space. Paik's *Tribute*, de-

scribed by John Howell for *LIVE* magazine, consisted of the following:

He (Mannix) put together a stage platform while Paik wandered around eating rice-cakes. As a classically trained Cage student, Paik always wanted to work a burlesque house and so he played, smashing old Victrola records, banging out snatches of cords and scales and Beethoven, broadcasting recorded tapes backwards — as only Paik can "play". While on stage, Lois Welk performed a discrete strip to a Sony Walkman (so as not to be disturbed) by Paik's cacophonous, less than rhythmic score. (*LIVE* Vol 1. no. 6/7 1982)



Sony advertisement, 1980s

#### NOTES

1. This is a larger subject than there is space for here. Within the past ten years much has been written on the "constructed" and fictive characteristics of documentary film and photography. See Frith, S. "The Pleasure of the Hearth: The Making of BBC Light Entertainment" in *Formations of Pleasure*, Bennet, T., Burgin, V. et al, eds. London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1983: 101-123.
2. See Frith, S. "The Pleasures of the Hearth: The Making of BBC Light Entertainment" in *Formations of Pleasure* (eds) T. Bennett, Burgin, V. et al. London, Routledge, Kegan, Paul 1983: 101-123.
3. The desire for listening. Metz suggests that the distance of the look has its corollary in the distance of listening. As opposed to other sexual drives, the perception (perceiving) drive combining into one the scopic and invocatory drives, represents the absence of its object in the distance at which it maintains it and which is part of its very definition: distance of the look, distance of listening. Metz relies fairly heavily on Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.
4. See Atheide, D.L. and Snow, P.R. "The Grammar of Radio" in *Intermedia* 273-281, reprinted from the authors' *Media Logic*.
5. Benjamin, W. "The Work of Art in the Age of Reproduction" (Benjamin's footnote 21 reads "Mass reproduction is aided especially by the reproduction of the masses," 251. In Arendt, H. (ed) *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken 1969, 1977.
6. Beckett also produced two plays under the titles of *Radio 1* and *Radio 2*.
7. See Hebdige, D. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen, 1979 and Frith, Simon. *Sound Effects: Youth Leisure and the Politics of Rock*, London: Constable 1983, and *Music for Pleasure* New York: Routledge 1988, for some interesting and at times conflicting insights into capitalist appropriation, within and outside of the new music and subculture/style industries.
8. For some interesting descriptions of these forms of radio see Wilson, Alexander, "Self-Serve Radio: A Conversation with a Pirate." *FUSE* volume 6, No.6, April 1983, and Kogawa, Tetsuo, "Japan Free Radio" in *Cultures in Contention*, Neumaier, D. and Kahn, D., eds.

Seattle: Real Comet Press 1982. For a useful introduction to the state control of the air waves see McPhail, T., *Electronic Colonialism: The Future of International Broadcasting and Communication*. Beverly Hills, London: Sage Library of Social Research, Vol. 126, 1981.

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A version of this essay was presented at the Kunstradio/Radio Art Symposium, Styrian Festival, Graz, Austria in October 1988. The full essay will be published in *Sound By Artists*, Lander, D. and Lexier, M., eds. Toronto: Art Metropole Press, forthcoming late 1989.

## New Theoretical Perspectives on Advertising

*Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being* by William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally

New York: Methuen, 1986

*Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society* by Sut Jhally

New York: Saint Martin's, 1987



Since the emergence of "critical" media studies in the 1970s, a substantial literature has developed that examines and questions the role of mass communications and advertising within the institutional structures of contemporary capitalist societies. In contrast to "administrative" media studies that focus on how to use mass communications within the given political economic order to influence audiences, sell products, and promote politicians, critical research has addressed the social and cultural effects of mass communications and their role in perpetuating an unjust social order.

One facet of critical analyses of advertising — exemplified by Goffman's *Gender Advertisements*, Williamson's *Decoding Advertisements*, and Andren, et. al.'s *Rhetoric and Ideology in Advertising* — has examined the content and structure of advertisements for their distorted communications and ideological impact. Employing semiotics and/or content analysis, numerous critical studies working at the micro level have examined how advertising's mass communications "persuade" or "manipulate" consumers.

By contrast, works such as Schiller's *Mass Communications and American Empire*, Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness*, and Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* present broader historical analyses which locate advertising and mass communications within the history of contemporary capitalism and examine their impact on the larger social and political economic structure. Studies such as these have probed how advertising and mass media have contributed to the development and perpetuation of an undemocratic social order by concentrating enormous economic and cultural power in the hands of a few corporations and individuals.

These two facets of critical media stud-

ies have generated numerous insights into the conservative social functions and ideological effects of mass communications that were ignored by "administrative research" which tended to focus on the effects which mass communication had in carrying out certain specific tasks (i.e. capturing an audience, selling goods, conveying messages, etc.). One persistent problem, however, has plagued critical media studies and blunted its potential impact on cultural studies and public policy. Very rarely have critical studies of advertising and mass communications adequately articulated the linkage between the macro political economic structure of mass media and the micro mass communication forms and techniques so as to reveal how the overall structure of media institutions shapes mass communications and reproduces existing social systems. The failure to clearly and comprehensively articulate this linkage has often generated an implicit "conspiracy theory" suggesting that a few elites in control of the mass media consciously conspire to manipulate culture and consciousness. This deficiency has plagued critical analyses of advertising and communications and while there is certainly justification for many of the

criticisms of mass communication that have not been explained in general, particular, can exercise a significant impact that critical t

*Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being*, by William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally, and *Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*, by Sut Jhally, are welcome contributions to the field of media analysis to provide a social and cultural theoretical framework to explain how advertising and mass communications exercise their power in a contemporary capitalist society. The collaborative work of William Leiss, a Canadian contributor to the field, and Sut Jhally's critiques of mass culture, including William Leiss — a student of Marcuse — is in the tradition of the work of Stephen Kline in the field of Cultural Studies at York University. Sut Jhally (now in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst) directed his dissertation in Canada. His *Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*, 1984) which he published after his collaboration with Leiss in *Social Communication in Advertising*.

*Social Communication in Advertising* (hereafter SCA) is an extensive and thorough analysis of advertising yet provides a thorough summary of advertising and a concise summary of the theoretical frameworks used to analyze advertising controversies. The authors' goal is to conceptualize a social communication complex set of roles within contemporary societies. By expanding "information" beyond that of utility to include social systems, the authors view advertising as an influential formation which provides commodities media allows them to explore the functions of advertising and its social functions.

One major strength of *Social Communication in Advertising* is its locating advertising within the structure of a "market economy" where the industry, and advertising, are central premises of SCA. The implications of the book are best by seeing how advertising is put into place in the "new century". Thus a social book involves tracing the development of each form of advertising and how they form a "privileged form of communication" as the authors describe the "consumer culture" and its industrial to consumer

criticisms of mass communications generated by critical media studies, what has not been explained is how mass communications in general, and advertising in particular, can exercise the power and impact that critical theorists suggest.

*Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being*, by William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally, and *Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*, by Sut Jhally, are two welcome contributions to critical media studies that address the problem of linking media analysis to political economy and social and cultural theory in order to explain how advertising and mass communications exercise their power in contemporary capitalist society. We might see their collaborative work as constituting the Canadian contribution to North American critiques of mass culture and society. For William Leiss — a student of Herbert Marcuse — is in the Department of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Stephen Kline is in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, and Sut Jhally (now in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst) did his graduate work in Canada. His *Codes of Advertising* was originally a dissertation (Simon Fraser University, 1984) which he revised and expanded after his collaboration with Leiss and Kline in *Social Communication in Advertising*.

*Social Communication in Advertising* (hereafter SCA) is one of the most comprehensive and thorough critical analyses of advertising yet produced. It contains a thorough summary of the "debates on advertising and society" which provides a concise summary of the controversies surrounding advertising and the analytical frameworks used to address these controversies. The authors' unique vantage point is to conceptualize advertising as a form of social communication which plays a complex set of roles within consumer capitalist societies. By expanding the concept of the "information" conveyed in advertising beyond that of utilitarian product features to include social symbolic meanings, the authors view advertising as an important and influential form of social communication which provides insights into how commodities mediate social relations. This allows them to explore the cultural impact of advertising and its multifarious social functions.

One major strength of SCA involves locating advertising within the larger structure of a "market-industrial economy" where the institutions of media, industry, and advertising converge. A central premise of SCA is that "we can grasp the implications of present-day practices best by seeing how they were composed and put into place step by step during this century". Thus a substantial portion of the book involves tracing the historical development of each of these key institutions and how they formed a constellation making advertising an institution with a "privileged form of discourse". The authors describe the "origins of the consumer culture" and the transition "from industrial to consumer society," and how

the communications media and advertising agencies evolved hand-in-hand into "the modern advertising industry" where advertising is a central institution of the "market-industrial economy."

Another contribution of SCA is its synthesis of works by other scholars in a variety of fields which encompass advertising, communications, and society. The book provides a concise description of the historical and structural context of advertising and its developmental trends, while at the same time introducing positions of the major scholars of advertising, e.g., Arlen, Schudson, Pope, Fox, Curran, Barnouw, and Pollay, to name a few. One of the more original approaches concerns their studies of "The Theatre of Consumption." Here, they examine the structure and content of advertisements and their social and cultural impact using both semiology and content analysis. The first study, derived from Jhally's doctoral dissertation, involves an analysis of television commercials sampled from sports programming targeted to males and prime time programming targeted to females. Jhally's goal was to illuminate "the differentiated codes used by advertisers in their messages directed at male and female audiences". The study reveals, not surprisingly, that advertisers utilize different codes and strategies to appeal to different audiences and genders. For example, "beauty," "family relations," and "romance" are codes used to address female audiences while "ruggedness" and "fraternity" are primarily male advertising codes.

The second study, conducted by Leiss and Kline, involves an historical examination of magazine advertising (1908-1984) for the trends and uses of audience codes. Following Leymore's semiological analysis in *Hidden Myth: Structure and Symbolism in Advertising*, Leiss and Kline analyze magazine ads for their use of "person," "product," "setting," and "text." One important trend discerned involves the steady decline in the use of text or copy in ads and the increase in display and illustrations, confirming claims by Daniel Boorstin, Guy Debord, and Jean Baudrillard concerning the increased importance of images in contemporary culture.

A second important trend involves a shift of emphasis within ads away from communicating specific product information towards communicating the social and symbolic uses of products. To illustrate this trend, the authors present 25 ads from different historical periods. For example, a Bull Durham Tobacco ad from the turn of the century "places greatest emphasis upon language — description of the product, promises, and argument", whereas a contemporary Marlboro ad is revealed to have no copy nor product information, just an image that "conveys a range of attributes...to be associated with the product..."

In studies of "Goods as Satisfiers," and "Goods as Communicators" the authors piece together their main thesis. Consumer society has caused a "profound transformation in social life" involving "the change in the function of goods from being primarily satisfiers of wants to being



primarily communicators of meanings". In the consumer society, individuals define themselves and gain fundamental modes of gratification from consumption. Hence, marketers and advertisers generate systems of meaning, prestige, and identity by associating their products with certain lifestyles, symbolic values, and pleasures.

Informed by sociological and historical accounts of how market relations erode traditional sources of meaning and anthropological insights into how material things perform social communication functions about social standing, identity, and lifestyle, Leiss, Kline, and Jhally have expanded the category of "information" within advertising to include not just functional product information, but social symbolic information as well. It is in this sense that goods function as "communicators" and "satisfiers" — they inform and mediate social relations, telling individuals what they must buy to become fashionable, popular, and successful while inducing them to buy particular products to reach these goals. As the authors point out, "quality of life studies report that the strongest foundations of satisfaction lie in the domain of interpersonal relations, a domain of nonmaterial goods." But in the consumer society, commodities are important means to interpersonal relations because they communicate social information to others. "They serve as a 'projective medium' into which we transfer the intricate webs of personal and social interactions."

The significance and power of advertising, according to the analysis presented in SCA, is therefore not so much economic, but cultural. "Advertising is not just a business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving some merchandise off the store shelves, but is rather an integral part of modern culture." Advertising is significant because, in consumer capitalism, in-

Magazine advertisement,  
Coca-Cola



dividuals depend on it for meanings, a source of social information imbedded in commodities that mediate interpersonal relations and personal identity. Advertising should therefore be conceived as an important institution in the consumer society because it produces "patterned systems of meaning" which play a key role in individual socialization and social reproduction.

Consequently, the "marketplace" should be seen as a "cultural system" and not just as a mechanism for moving commodities and money. Furthermore, it is cultural symbolism and images that provide crucial insights into the nature and functions of advertising. The authors' analysis of the "persuasive" form of modern advertising indicates how cultural forms of social communication create meanings through non-discursive visual imagery which come to shape consciousness and behavior directly by sanctioning some forms of thought and behavior while delegitimizing others and by presenting proper and improper images of behaviour and role models for men and women. The result is a culture where image plays a more important role than linguistic discourse, for while verbal imagery is discursive, visual imagery is non-discursive, emotional, associatively, iconic, and fictive.

Advertising thus plays a key role in the transition to a new image culture and in the transition from a book/print culture to a media culture. In this culture, domains of social life ranging from religion to politics fall under the sway of the reign of images. As the authors point out, "iconic representation," or persuasive images, have a greater impact in decision-making, "affective opinion," and behaviour, than verbal discourse, and can be absorbed without full conscious awareness and without being translatable "into explicit verbal formulations." Consequently, the authors suggest that advertising is a form of social communication which promotes non-communication, or what Habermas calls "systematically distorted communication." Advertising promotes "commodity fetishism" and in general a fetishized consciousness that invests goods, services, and individuals, etc. with symbolic properties.

Studies of commodity fetishism and the extension of other Marxian categories to the analysis of advertising is the focus of Sut Jhally's *Codes of Advertising*. Jhally takes as his starting point the analysis of the commodity in Marx's *Capital* and applies the categories of exchange value, use value, surplus value, commodity fetishism, etc., to studies of advertising and the communications media. He provides perhaps the most detailed and insightful explication of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism yet found in the vast literature on the topic and applies the concept — and other Marxian categories — in interesting and provocative ways, to a vast amount of material. In so doing, he provides a sharp critique of Baudrillard's attack on Marxism in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* and *The Mirror of Production*, demonstrating conclusively through a wide range of quotations that Marx does not, as Baudrillard claims, naturalize needs, use

values, and so on. Rather Marx provides a powerful critique of bourgeois apologetics which claim that capitalism is legitimate because it provides people with what they want and fulfills their pre-existing needs. Against this ideology, Marx argues that needs, use values, and ideologies are all historically produced under capitalism and thus serve as essential elements of social reproduction.

Consequently, Jhally attempts to demonstrate how traditional Marxian economic categories and analyses can be used productively to analyze advertising and mass communications and can be combined with semiological analyses of codes and the production of meaning. Both SCA and Jhally's *Codes* provide much useful analysis of how advertising produces consumers and how the consumer society reproduces itself. Jhally provides a more systematic use of Marxian categories to analyze advertising as an institution within contemporary capitalist societies. Yet he sometimes resorts to a somewhat vulgar Marxism, as when he insists on interpreting media communication simply in terms of the exchange value and use value produced by capital, rather than analyzing the interactions between media content, forms, institutions, social and political environments, and the uses of the

media by the audience. While he provides a critical political economy framework to analyze the social and economic functions of advertising and mass communications, he is less successful in analyzing how audiences produce meaning and what specific meanings and effects are produced. Although he carries out an "empirical study" of advertising codes and fetishism, his study is highly quantitative and abstract and fails to provide analysis of specific meanings, ideologies, or effects produced in the actual ads which he studied, none of which are analyzed in any detail. Moreover, Jhally fails to offer any proposals concerning public policy aimed at the regulation of advertising, or of the use of advertising to promote social change, or how a society might be organized without advertising.

The "Conclusion" to SCA examines advertising for "its proper place within a democratic society," and raises some serious questions about modern advertising practice. One is "that the discourse about goods today is too narrowly controlled by commercial interests, and that it should be framed more broadly... we do not believe that any single institution should control the public discourse about goods." Another issue involves advertising's impact

on overall media content, the dominance of 'controversial' program formats, stereotypical segments, [and] ownership in media industries." point to "the reduction of advertising to a mere 'persuasive' communication tool for marketing, politics, corporate branding," and other domains of discourse.

These are all significant issues in advertising and discourse, and naturally, Leiss and Jhally offer few suggestions for change, "not done," and frequently legitimize discourses that are generally while neglecting to do otherwise. The massive amounts of money expended every year on advertising. They also avoid the radical critiques of advertising by Horkheimer, Baudrillard, and others, generally present a liberal democratic perspective on advertising. Jhally adopts a rather conservative theoretical approach that avoids taking any distance toward advertising and its effects (if any). Although the authors do not explicitly "suggest that the focus of attention should be shifted from advertising practice to the set of social relationships through which advertising addresses the social issues that it does, they do not adequately question advertising's position and suggest what alternatives to these relationships must be explored.

Admittedly, this is a book that necessarily is not a set of proposals. But, given the depth of analysis presented and the critical nature of advertising, especially in a historically developing context, it is disappointing that the book does not do justice to the topic and issues. The *Communication in Advertising*, offer a wide range of modern advertising practices, diverse and dispersed, that surrounds this most controversial of media. They are, therefore, one of the few involved in critical theory that contain aspects essential to the critical theories of communication in capitalist societies.

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## SCIENCE as CULTURE

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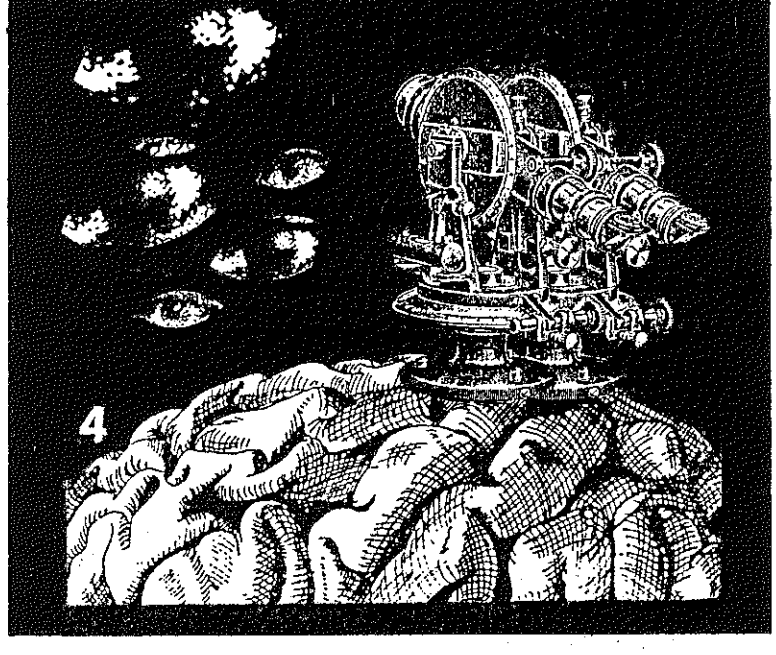
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on overall media content, i.e., "the avoidance of 'controversial' subjects, banal program formats, stereotyping of audience segments, [and] ownership concentration in media industries." The authors also point to "the reduction in rational appeals" and the increasing use of "persuasive" communication techniques in marketing, politics, corporate "image-building," and other domains of public discourse.

These are all significant issues concerning advertising and democracy. Unfortunately, however, Leiss, Kline and Jhally offer few suggestions about "what is to be done," and frequently reproduce industry legitimating discourses about advertising, while neglecting to document and criticize the massive amounts of wealth squandered every year on commercial advertising. They also avoid some of the more radical critiques of advertising of Adorno, Horkheimer, Baudrillard, and others, and generally present a liberal, Social Democratic perspective on advertising (though Jhally adopts a rather orthodox Marxian theoretical approach in his own book, he avoids taking any distinct political stance toward advertising and the consumer society). Although the authors of SCA quite correctly "suggest that it is time to change the focus of attention from advertising practice to the set of institutional relationships through which advertising is tied to the social issues that concern us most," they do not adequately develop this insight and suggest what institutional relationships must be examined and changed.

Admittedly, this is a difficult task and one that necessarily involves radical proposals. But, given the thoroughness of the analysis presented and its insightful integration of advertising practice into the historically developing institutional context, it is disappointing to find so few suggestions. Twelve pages of conclusion simply does not do justice to the importance of the topic and issues. Yet both *Social Communication in Advertising* and *Codes of Advertising*, offer a wealth of insights into modern advertising practice and the diverse and dispersed literature that surrounds this most controversial institution. They are, therefore, essential texts for anyone involved in critical media studies and contain aspects essential for developing critical theories of contemporary capitalist societies.

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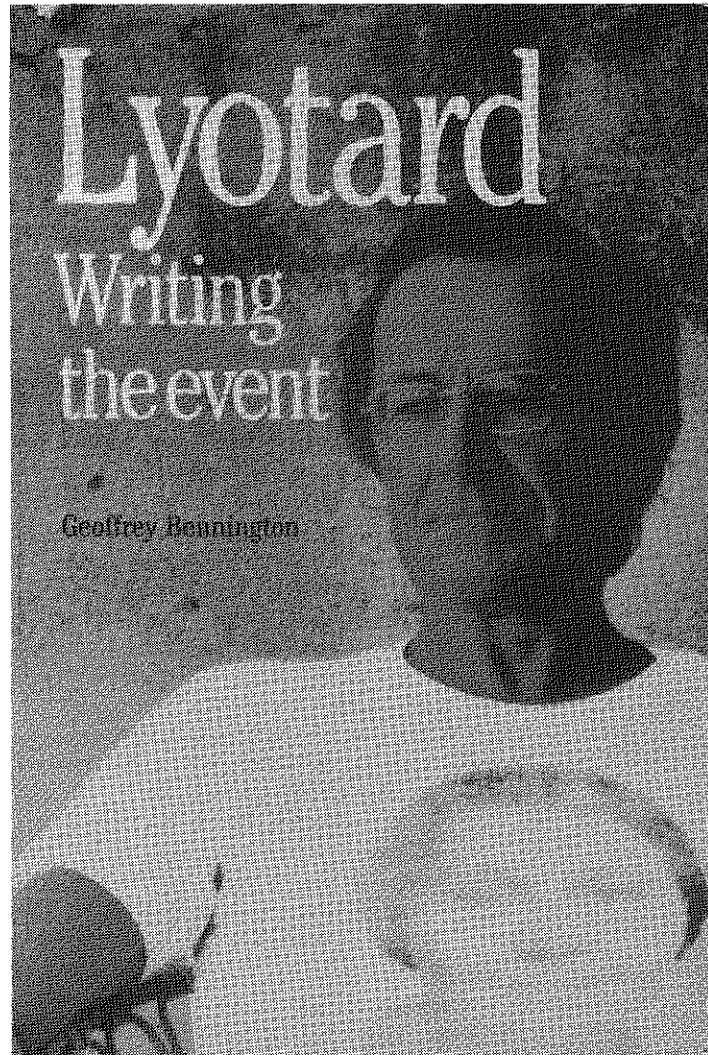
**Lyotard, Writing the event**  
by Geoffrey Bennington  
New York: Columbia University Press, 1988

**Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event**  
by Jean-François Lyotard  
New York: Columbia University Press, 1988

As a translator of major poststructuralist works into English, Geoffrey Bennington is perhaps best known for his joint translation (with Brian Massumi) of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*; one might equally know Bennington from his partial translations of Lyotard and critical articles in such academic journals as *Paragraph* and *The Oxford Literary Review*, among others. As Bennington remarks in the opening lines of *Lyotard, Writing the event*, "Lyotard is without question best known in the English-speaking world as the author of *The Postmodern Condition*." And inasmuch as something called the English-speaking world "knows" Lyotard through his notorious *Report*, it cannot be said to know him very well, a situation to some extent rectified by Bennington's book.

What makes Lyotard's *œuvre* so difficult to re-present and reduce to the requirements of an introduction (theoretical summary, academic rigour, dividing and conquering the text along various lines) is simply that it is a collection of events: it resists the introduction *qua* narration which conserves, anticipates and maintains the main arguments.

*Lyotard, Writing the event* "introduces" three of Lyotard's major philosophical works: *Libidinal Economy* (1974), *Discourse, figure* (1971), and *Le Différend* (1984), in that order. Clearly, we are not given a historical survey of Lyotard's long career in politics and philosophy, nor does Ben-



nington for a moment believe that he has presented Lyotard's works without lacunae, even important ones.

The major virtue of *Lyotard, Writing the event* is that it takes us along the central but not well-trodden pathways of what Lyotard has called his "real" books in a way which is modest, careful and at times meticulous (especially with respect to the section on *Le Différend*), and it does so with attention to Lyotard's other writings, including the *Report*. Bennington, then, will undoubtedly find an appreciative audience in those who are poised to enter (or have already entered and found themselves wandering unattended) the world of poststructuralism and the growth industry of Lyotard's studies.

I have spent some time with the "introduction" for several reasons. It is one thing to be aware of the limits and problems of introductions in general, but another less straightforward matter to entertain the idea that the writing subjected to an introduction resists and possibly eludes just that sort of attempt to domesticate it. While I have the slippery *Libidinal Economy* in mind here, the concern expressed also pertains to authors other than Lyotard.

The introduction is a sort of prosthetic device that helps the reader stand up before texts which are disabling and alienating; it is like a cane, an artificial limb and even an implant, depending upon the degree to which one relies on it to support

Lyotard - photo by Gianfranco Baruchello

one's understanding of a certain author. The introduction is at odds with a kind of writing which is tumultuous, a writing which barely acknowledges that it has readers. For instance, with respect to *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard remarks that even its rare readers disliked it, adding "thank God there were few."

The problem is not that such writing is incompressible, thus precluding any sort of synoptic approach. The question is whether or not an introduction can address the matter of its cutting against the grain of the texts which it treats while gathering and communicating their so-called "tenets", "contentions", etc. To extend the text is to engage in a mimetic libidinal writing, an anti-theoretical, discursive form of following along the mobile cathectic intensities as they have their run of a voluminous libidinal skin.

But what other choice does the author of an introduction have? One cannot rely on partial translations. After all, we should not complain too loudly, too quickly about the way in which Bennington unravels and questions the centres of power of *Libidinal Economy*: the paradoxical (immobile and spinning) bar of disjunction (an imaginary object) engenders the indescribable libidinal band, from which the bar is also derived; the libidinal band is neither an object of desire nor even an object, neither a lost referent like Jean Baudrillard's "symbolic exchange" nor an ontological ground.

While Bennington has us think of the bar of disjunction in terms of what separates the inside from the outside or the subject from the object, we might also think of it in terms of the signifier/signified relation. When Lyotard sends his bar on its way spinning and buzzing like a mad hummingbird, it no longer disjoins or, to use other words, everything flows together over the band which is nothing less than the flow of largely anonymous libidinal impulses. Lyotard is in one sense getting off a joke at the expense of Jacques Lacan with the spinning bar. A bar that doesn't maintain differences allows all of the algorithms which Lacan constructed out of the sign's bar of difference to collapse into an undifferentiated heap.

Bennington thinks that the libidinal band is "too ontological" and "inevitably proclaimed as good, as lost." Despite these criticisms, Bennington has a reclamation project in mind: save *Libidinal Economy* from its own drift. Thus, we read: "much of what is advanced in that book can be saved from itself. The base project of the book, that of describing and situating *dispositifs* [set-ups], and that of seeking out the possibility of *singularities* and *events*, is never repudiated by Lyotard, and is in his view fundamental to the task of philosophy." Lyotard's "evil book" (his own admission) is saved by the event.

In the second essay of *Peregrinations*, "Touches," Lyotard calls "an event the face to face with nothingness." "Actual events," those kernels of nothingness, are often hidden under everyday occurrences, wrapped in pre-texts of what Lyotard calls "what they happen to be." Events are singular occurrences, they just happen, as it

were: *that* they happen is more basic than *what* has happened. Sensitivity and attentiveness to an event is likened to Paul Cézanne's reception of what he called the "small sensations" before Montagne Saint Victoire and Immanuel Kant's reflective judgement, insofar as one must respond to a case without recourse to a criterion under which the case may be subsumed: "in order to take on this attitude you have to impoverish your mind, clean it out as much as possible, so that you make it incapable of anticipating the meaning... the secret... lies in the power to be able to endure occurrences as 'directly' as possible." The recipe for this hybrid philosophical attitude is complicated: a bit of phenomenology, some Kant, a word from Freud about how to listen to the discourse of the patient, the brushstrokes of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*...

In treating the event as the "fundamental drive in all Lyotard's work" and finding in *Discourse, figure* explicit confirmation of that drive, Bennington describes the book as "something of a collection of events." Although Bennington admits that his approach to *Discourse, figure* is "severely selective," it is also a struggle for coherence against the figure which disrupts discourse with the *violence of an event*, discourse foiling any attempt to introduce it by keeping it at arm's length, as one might keep an "object" of knowledge. As Bennington follows along and explains some of the ways in which Lyotard deconstructs the opposition between discourse (reading, surface, signification, opposition) and figure (seeing, depth, *sens*, difference) it is made evident that discourse also inhabits and disrupts the space of the figure. For instance, Bennington's detailed treatment of "Le travail du rêve ne pense pas" (The dream-work does not think), an essay in *Discourse, figure* which quotes Freud's description of the final process of the dream-work, secondary revision, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, brings out well what is at stake in the "originary complication of discourse and figure." Lyotard's assault on Lacan's reading of the unconscious on the model of language points to the insistence of discourse in figure and *vice versa* in Freud that Lacan could not see because of his desire to find the operations of language in the dream-work. Lacan, then, overlooked the elementary import of figurability.

For all of the trouble that *Discourse, figure* caused him, Bennington's treatment of it exhibits a healthy tension between the habit of an academic orthodoxy and the need to comport oneself in such a way as to receive the events which are the text.

Might we take *Peregrinations* to be an introduction which does not entail an imbroglia? No. *Peregrinations* is barely a book and only an introduction in the most feeble sense of the word (although it is advertised as an "ideal introduction"), which is to say that it is the record of three short oral addresses given as the Wellek Library Lectures at the University of California, Irvine, and a translation of an essay from 1982, "Pierre Souyri: Le Marxisme qui n'a pas fini."

Lyotard's Wellek Lectures — "Clouds,"

"Touches," and "Gaps" — are anamneses of his work which concern the passage of thoughts (clouds) which are not our own as well as our attempts to enter into them as we peregrinate with them: "Imagine the sky as a desert full of innumerable cumulus clouds slipping, and into metamorphosing themselves, and into whose flood your thinking can or rather must fall and make contact with this or that unexpected aspect." To touch is to make "loving contact" with what a cloud of thought brings forth and in the flash of that accedence develop one's own signature, as Cézanne before the Montagne Sainte Victoire. The gap between two phrases or sentences is the condition, says Lyotard, of the appearance of a phrase through which the gap may be grasped (being ungraspable in itself). The gap is the site in which phrases of different regimes (ostensives, prescriptives, etc.) are linked together by different genres (philosophy, science, etc.).

The addresses in *Peregrinations* are highly metaphorical and personal and as such stand in stark contrast to *Lyotard, Writing the event*. The essay concerning Lyotard's *différend* with Pierre Souyri, however, while intensely personal and reflective, articulates the theme which Lyotard develops in *Le Différend*, although in that latter work it is presented in an analytical manner perfused with quasi-legal terminology.

In *Le Différend*, Lyotard explains that "as opposed to a litigation, a *différend* would be a case of conflict between two parties (at least) which could not equitably be decided for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments." Imagine that a stretch of wilderness is being defended by an ecophilosopher against a developer. The plaintiff, presenting the case for preservation, appears before a panel of scientists, lawyers, civil servants, etc. During the presentation of the case it becomes clear that the plaintiff cannot provide the sort of evidence which the panelists wish to hear.

Why is this the case? The argument for preservation is based on regard for natural beauty, the wonder of non-human being, and the injurious effects of having non-human being which one identifies with (to the point of encompassing it into a concept of self) razed by the bulldozers of the developer. The panelists ask for hard data: evidence of the negative impact of development on certain habitats, the costs of such losses, tangible benefits of non-development, etc. The plaintiff cannot give herself over to the language of the panel because in so doing she adopts the very terms in reference which one wishes to overcome; yet, in not adopting that language, the panel treats the case as mere poetry, mysticism or worse. The plaintiff has no way to state the case and suffers a wrong which, as Lyotard defines it, is "a damage accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage." And there is more. The victim of the *différend* attempts to explain to the panel that she has been wronged. The panel replies: yes, such has happened, but it was not a wrong because you bear witness to it before us; or no, no such thing has occurred, you have no evi-

dence, or false evidence.

Like our ecophilosopher, Lyotard would trade Souyri over the a priori to provide a revolutionary alternative to the contemporary world of difference in that world for "difference" (everyday the four poles of sense, of meaning) in order to give up his position: "I presented myself not as an object, as the judge, as the subject of objectivity, thereby occupying the position of stupidity which I found myself in, unless it borrowed the name of that is, unless it betrayed the *différend* revealed to Lyotard. Marxism cannot be one of several income courses which seeks to replace others." That is not enough about it because "one cannot give up his position." But even this admission the *différend* demonstrates out of such cruel silence emerge, those which have been expressed. It is the *différend* and politics. It is the *différend*.

The main lines of *Le Différend* yield easily to a introductory "summary" of the *différend* presenting themselves as aspects of sentences, although attention to them in the depths of Lyotard's thought as it does the philosophy from little rhetors to modern rhetors. Bennington compen- abundant quotations between quotations (others) marked by a reference. What is more consisting of several (primarily from Lyotard) chapters like textual by libidinal runs to n

*Le Différend* begins with a summary," as Bennington's "Fiche de Lecture" would "allow[s] the reader to have a book", if the fantasy of having read it." Bennington's book as an act of resistance commercial *raison d'être* "Modern Masters" in which gains one time rooms and at cocktail one to speak, as Lyotard has given the book. Even this review, two Lyotard's "real book" some time in a chat book, in which case ate source of knowledge.

The very fact of *Le Différend* however, the question of the introducer and the that discomfort is en-

Gary A. Genosko is an author of *Border/Lines*



dence, or false evidence.

Like our ecophilosopher, Lyotard found that the *différend* with his friend and comrade Souyri over the ability of Marxism to provide a revolutionary critique of the contemporary world and orient intervention in that world forced him into a "sentence universe" (every sentence presents the four poles of sender, addressee, referent and meaning) in which he could only give up his position: "[Marxism] thus presented itself not as one party in a suit, but as the judge, as the science in possession of objectivity, thereby placing the other in the position of stupor or stupidity in which I found myself... a point of view... incapable of making itself understood, unless it borrowed the dominant idiom — that is, unless it betrayed itself." Still, this *différend* revealed to Lyotard "what in Marxism cannot be objected to": there is one of several incommensurable discourses which seeks to transcribe all the others. That discourse is "capital, bureaucracy" and it is not enough to philosophize about it because "one must also destroy it." But even this admission does not make the *différend* demonstrable. However, it is out of such cruel silence that new idioms emerge, those which enable *différends* to be expressed. It is the task of philosophy and politics to find such idioms.

The main lines of argument in *Le Différend* yield easily to Bennington's introductory "summary and critique," showing themselves as aspects of a "philosophy of sentences," although even such close attention to them in no way reaches the depths of Lyotard's text, running and roaming as it does through the history of philosophy from little known Greek rhetors to modern revisionist historians. Bennington compensates by producing abundant quotations and "quotations" between quotations (from Lyotard and others) marked by a stationary bar of difference. What is more, two "patchworks" consisting of several pages of quotations (primarily from Lyotard) link the book's chapters like textual cartilage perforated by libidinal runs to nowhere in particular.

*Le Différend* begins with an "ironic summary," as Bennington puts it, entitled "Fiche de Lecture" which, Lyotard muses, "allow[s] the reader to 'talk about the book', if the fantasy so takes him, without having read it." Bennington offers his book as an act of resistance against "its commercial *raison d'être*" as a sort of "Modern Masters" introduction-summary which gains one time in examination rooms and at cocktail parties by enabling one to speak, as Lyotard put it, without having read the books under discussion. Even this review, twice removed from Lyotard's "real books," might gain one some time in a chat about Bennington's book, in which case it stands as a degenerate source of knowledge about Lyotard.

The very fact of Bennington's book, however, despite his assurances, aggravates the question of the relation between the introducer and the introduced. And that discomfort is entirely appropriate.

Gary A. Genosko is an associate member of *Border/Lines*



**Ciencia propia y colonialismo intelectual. Nuevos Rumbos.**

by Orlando Fals Borda  
Bogota, Colombia: Carlos Valencia, editores, 1988.

*Science and Intellectual Colonialism. New Directions*, is the most recent edition of a volume published for the first time in 1970, and again in 1973, both times with several printings. The book is a collection of essays written by Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian historical sociologist who has had an intense, long-term involvement with *campesinos* in rural areas of his own country, and whose work is known internationally.

In this volume, the author presents reflections on his earlier work, as well as his current views on sociological issues that, although pertaining primarily to social research in Latin America, also constitute a challenge for social scientists elsewhere. When the book first appeared, it was received as a radical rejection of Euro-American social thought by the Latin American community of scholars. In this light, it is interesting to note that the work has not been translated into other languages, nor (to the best of my knowledge) has it been published elsewhere. The title translation is my own, and might perhaps be more faithful to the original if it read "independent" or "autonomous" science and intellectual colonialism.

Fals Borda's prestige has grown throughout Latin America for his original contribution to a new perspective in sociology, which can be paralleled to that of Anthony Giddens (*New Rules of Sociological Method*), while arising in very different sociopolitical contexts, an important fact indeed. Fals Borda's thought was born in the midst of various developmentalist

schools that have dominated Latin American sociological inquiry. This fact underscores his importance as theorist and practitioner on the continent, and has recently earned him further recognition in the position of President of the Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL). While some researchers might claim that Fals Borda is on the "Border/lines" of social science, others obviously recognize his place in the leadership of an alternative sociology of/for Latin America. This is one of the reasons why this selection of his work seems so appropriate as an introduction to his thinking. Indeed, it would provide excellent translation material.

The essays are organized into three parts. The first, "Crisis and Compromise," consists of six works dating from 1969 to 1970. This section refers to two important historical events within which the role of science and technology in development was called to question. These were, initially, the IX International Congress of rural sociology in Enschede, followed by the IX Congress of Latin American Sociology held in Mexico City in 1969. In these encounters a diagnosis was made of the sociological crisis in the region and the need for new approaches in the social sciences clearly identified. This process of reflection gave rise to the initial challenge to the collective "sociological imagination" of researchers, to find new, innovative solutions to longstanding, pervasive sociological problems.

The second part of the book, "Reflections of Transition," consists of two essays dated 1972 and 1974, in which the author looks back to the first publication of his work and reflects upon the changes that have already become apparent within the human sciences, over the ten years since the first edition appeared. One of these changes is the possibility of questioning both "objectivity" and "neutrality" on the part of social researchers in general another is the recognition of the political value of social research. Starting from this rather liberating stance, Fals Borda urges fellow social scientists to move in the direction of a unification - or synthesis - of research and agency. That is to say, given the recognition of the political dimension of research activities, it is now possible for research agents to consciously steer their work towards serving the broadest of interests.

The third part, "Lived experience and knowledge," is composed of four essays, written from 1980 to 1987. They constitute a reflection about the meaning and the position of science within society, with an emphasis on the production of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and power. In a Foucauldian fashion, politics and epistemology are brought together to explain the birth of participatory action research, a new integrative method proposed by this author, amidst the renewed awakening of social movements throughout the world. The connection between the production of knowledge and its uses seems more clearly identified within these movements.

As indicated above, the work encompasses the development of the author's

thought throughout the last two decades, which incorporate the contribution of earlier writers, such as Albert Memmi (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*), Barrington Moore (*Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*), Dilthey and Cooley, among others.

The main thrust of the book, as the title suggests, is the need to de-colonize science, to break with the previously existing models that dichotomized the researcher from the researched and to foster new integrations, new possibilities, new knowledge. Thus, the introduction of a new paradigm for the understanding of social reality, not only in Latin America, but in all situations within which colonialism may persist. How would we recognize intellectual colonialism? In this author's view, it manifests itself, primarily, by a lack of insight into the consequences of social research, by a blind faith in the scientific paradigm (as an absolute that will solve all social ills), by a limitation of the kinds of questions that are posed, particularly when what is questioned is the organization of social relations (i.e., the institutional order).

There is a need to reintroduce the use of reflexivity into the methodology of the social sciences, recognizing that this is a critical aspect which has been absent from a great deal of modern, positivistic thought. Without this critical element, social research becomes a sterile academic exercise that only contributes to the status quo. Of course, intellectual colonialism can be more readily accepted in the case of the so-called Third World, where so many developmentalist experiences have shown to be fruitless. It may be somewhat more difficult to acknowledge the lack of autonomous thought in other contexts where the colonized have not maintained a historical memory of their earlier identities, but have assimilated into the hegemonic influence (in Gramscian terms) of the colonizer, as was the case in pre-nation-state Europe, for example. This possible resistance motivates Fals Borda's insistence on the need for an autonomous science in Latin America. Rather than continuing to accept, a-critically, the diffusion of innovations created in the colonizing centres, the critical approach will foster a sociology of liberation for the colonized. This proposal gives rise to epistemological questions and carries political implications that need to be explored.

Perhaps the most important factor underlying "new paradigm science" is the open recognition that any kind of science is political by nature, a clear distinction from the more readily accepted "non-political," "objective science," which is clearly a myth. Outrageous! cry the "objective scholars." Science *has* to be "objective" or it ceases to be "science!" This is now a questionable statement. Current critical sociology posits a hermeneutic that seeks to demystify and understand what is meant by objectivity, rather than blindly accepting, as heretofore, that neutrality is achieved by maintaining some ideal "objective distance." In Fals Borda's view, this is the critical essence of social science which has somehow given way, histori-

cally, to a much more formalist approach. In his view, therefore, "new paradigm" social science seeks to recover its own essence, not to change it. It seeks to awaken the human sciences from the political complacency that has veiled their utility as a means of domination and control, a social science at the service of the elite that produced it. It seeks to reconstitute the awareness of the researcher about the broader implications of the uses of his knowledge.

But this would be falling short, in terms of the Latin American and other Third World experiences, where, throughout history, a vast majority of people have been excluded from the access to both the production and the appropriation of knowledge. Fals Borda therefore proposes a *participatory* social science, also recognized as a "militant" social science, one that incorporates "the researched" into the production of knowledge in a dialectical process. The emphasis of this research process is not so much on quantification, but on the interpretation and understanding of a social reality and the generation of new knowledge. Once an awareness has been developed both on the part of the researcher and of the researched, and once reflexivity is incorporated into an analytical practice, it would be naive to pretend to be "neutral" (is there such a position?). Knowledge can be generated by an elite to serve an elite, or it can be generated cooperatively to serve all those involved. The potential of this new science is considered socially transformative.

Is this a new prescription to bring about social change? Because of its em-

phasis on the generation of new knowledge, there cannot be a prescription to "magically" change the order of things. If the reflexive process is carried out as a one-time event, of course, the generation of knowledge will again lapse into some type of complacency, a "domestication" that becomes mechanistically reproduced and deprives the creative impetus of the critical edge. Thus, social researchers are called to incorporate the reflexive element into their methodology. Such a process challenges the scientific community to become more overtly conscientious so that the full implications of its agency can no longer be disregarded nor veiled.

The questions that remain unanswered are: how can the scientific community achieve greater control over the uses of the knowledge they produce? What kinds of institutional changes need to take place so that an "autonomous science" can be sustained? Fals Borda perceives that there is a movement from the "periphery" to the "centre," from the base upward, that aims to reformulate the rules of "the political game;" it is a move towards the creation of new international networks that strive to work consensually towards an increasingly participatory socialization of power. The future of this new social movement with its ensuing re-structuring of social relations, social action and social thought is the challenge that Fals Borda puts to social and humanistic researchers throughout the world.

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**Rasta and Resistance:**  
From Marcus Garvey to  
by Horace Campbell  
Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1987, 236 pp.  
[Africa World Press, Inc.,  
Trenton, New Jersey 08611  
First published London 1983]

People of African descent in the Americas have struggled to preserve a sense of their being. They share a resistance with other colonized native Canadians, a history with implications for the experience of white people who find themselves fronting a world which is white-dominated. Disrespect on the basis of perceived or imputed race means that specific people are defined negatively. It is this racial dimension that distinguishes the experience faced by other oppressed workers or women.

The fact of racial oppression at the centre of the Rastafarian Western experience, and its culture is based on a history of resistance that experientially and politically distinguishes Rastafari with the struggle in the Caribbean. It suggests that the Rastafarian culture is not only a critique of the Western World but also a history of slavery, racism and the permanent struggle for community and self-respect.

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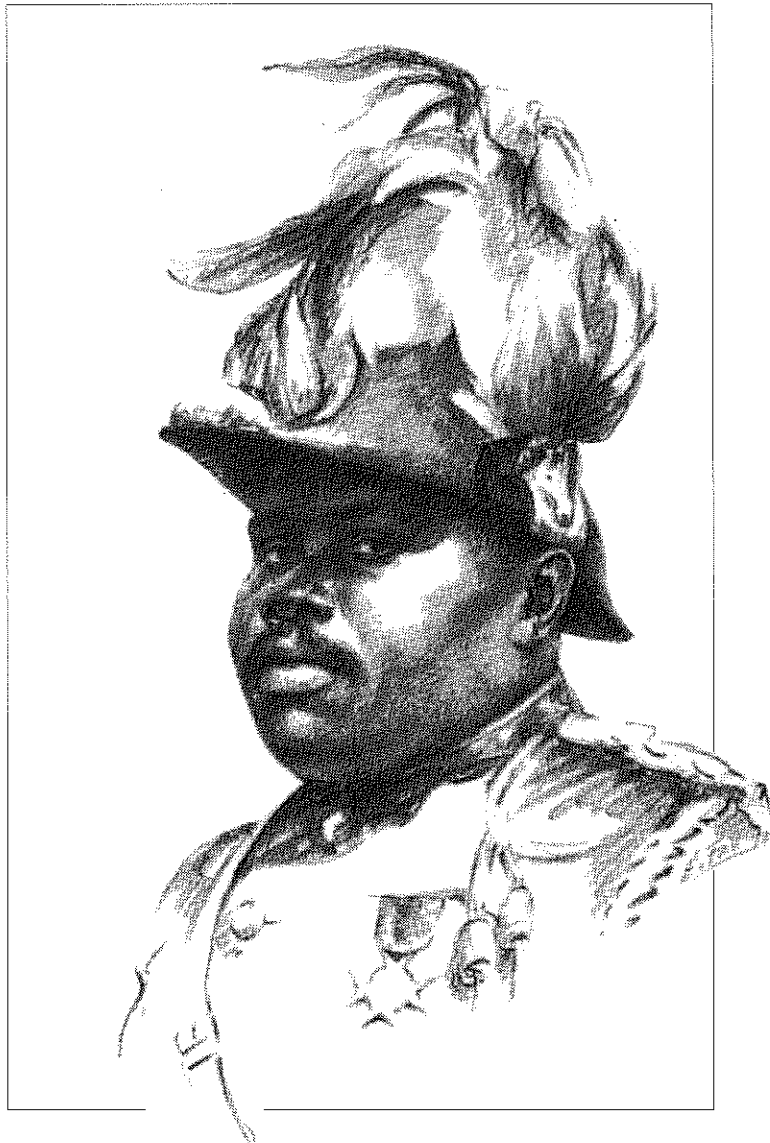
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tel, Michael Taussig, Irene Silverblatt and others have shown how symbolic systems developed in opposition to colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and the Christianity which accompanied it. To some extent, Campbell's analysis of Rastafari as resistance goes further than such theorists because it places the struggle against racial oppression at the forefront of this resistance. This brings his work closer to that of Caribbean historians such as Edward Brathwaite and Monica Schuler who have begun to show how slaves and their descendants resisted slavery by recreating a sense of themselves as different from and in opposition to their white masters.

In the Caribbean escaped slaves defied the plantation system to build African-based Maroon communities in the mountains; other slaves risked their lives in the many revolts which culminated in the Haitian Revolution; post-emancipation uprisings continued the fight for social equality or basic political rights. As Campbell indicates, slaves and their descendants resisted, and they encoded their resistance in cultural forms: in their adherence to African traditions, in the cunning associated with Anancy the trickster hero, and in religious expressions which called for a new social order.

Campbell examines in some detail 20th century resistance and its link to Rastafari: the racial self-consciousness reawakened by Garveyism, the labour movement of the late 1930s which would culminate in independence in the 1960s, the new struggle against neo-colonial entities to which Walter Rodney sacrificed his life, the climax of these struggles in the Grenada Revolution. Throughout, he shows that Rastafari is not a marginal "cult" divorced from the reality of life in the Caribbean, but is instead a cultural formation dynamically connected to the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. This dynamism carried Rastafari beyond Jamaica throughout the Caribbean, and beyond the Caribbean itself to metropolitan centres such as London, New York and Toronto where black people continued to suffer the legacy of colonial racism.

Campbell has the sociologist's sense of variations within a movement and transformations in relation to external pressures. He shows how African-based culture in Jamaica reproduced and transformed itself, even incorporating non-African elements. Ganja was introduced to Jamaica by East Indian indentured workers, but it was incorporated to the Afro-centric symbolic structure created by Rastafari. Reggae is sometimes considered to be a sell-out of Rastafari or a popularization, something that is not true to the roots and drums of Rastafari's nyabinghi origins. But though reggae can be foreign to Rastafari, a form circumscribed by Western technology and marketing strategies, it could become a vehicle for Rastafarian consciousness and it helped spread Rastafari throughout the world. As Campbell points out, reggae artists identified with Africa, poignantly criticized capitalism, and movingly called for African redemption. The example of reggae is one indication that Rastafari is not an orthodoxy packaged by high priests or



Marcus Garvey - drawing by Elton C. Fax

by scholars in a university; it is a popular movement whose directions and variation will be determined by those involved in it at many different levels.

Campbell also shows how aspects of Rastafari could be and were manipulated by non-Rasta Jamaican or foreign interests. Jamaican politicians are astute at using popular religious symbolism. More detrimental to the spirit of Rastafari were the activities of the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church. According to Campbell, the Coptic church was a white-controlled American corporation that claimed to be Rastafarian and to represent Rastafarian interests. While campaigning for the legalization of ganja, it bought up land and property, linked itself with elements of the police and the judiciary, and took control over a large part of the ganja trade. The Coptic newspaper was overtly anti-communist in orientation. Rastas and others were drawn into a capitalist enterprise promoting individual rewards and American consumer expectations quite out of keeping with the Jamaican socio-economic reality. Though the activities of the Coptics have been set back by a number of arrests, capitalist control over the ganja trade continues.

Campbell avoids the claim sometimes made that resistance to oppression is an innate force in history inherently oriented to the building of a free and just society and polity. Resistance has its limits. Following the analysis of culture provided by Amílcar Cabral, the father of Guinean in-



**Rasta and Resistance:  
From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney  
by Horace Campbell**

Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press Incorporated, 1987, 236 pp.  
[Africa World Press, Inc., P.O. Box 1892,  
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People of African descent throughout the Americas have struggled for centuries to preserve a sense of themselves as human beings. They share a long history of resistance with other colonized peoples such as native Canadians, a history which has implications for the experience of all non-white people who find themselves confronting a world which is still largely white-dominated. Discrimination on the basis of perceived or imagined racial difference means that specific groups of people are defined negatively as "non-white," and it is this racial dimension of oppression that distinguishes their struggle from that faced by other oppressed groups such as workers or women.

The fact of racial oppression is the centre of the Rastafarian analysis of the Western experience, and Rastafarian culture is based on a history of struggle to transform that experience. In *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* Horace Campbell explores the social and political dimensions of Rastafari. De-emphasizing the more mystical aspects of Rastafari and casting aside sociological and anthropological readings which fail to situate Rastafari within a history of struggle in the Caribbean, Campbell argues that the Rastafari movement "challenges not only the Caribbean but the entire Western World to come to terms with the history of slavery, the reality of white racism and the permanent thrust for dignity and self-respect by black people."

Analyzing the complex belief system of Andean men and women, Nathan Wach-



dependence, he argues that the challenge of Rastafari is to transform itself into a "universal culture" capable of playing its part on the stage of world history. Rodney worked with the Rastas in Jamaica, recognizing that they were "the leading force in the expression of black consciousness in the Caribbean." Yet their vision was clouded by the myths of Ethiopia, the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, the Redeemer. Rodney and, following him, Campbell set themselves the task of demystifying Rastafari by carefully analyzing the soci-historical process in which it is located without losing the power and vigour of Rastafarian consciousness.

A comparison with another fairly recent book on Rastafari is revealing. In *Black Heat Man: A Journey into Rasta* (Chatto and Windus: London, 1986) Derek Bishton begins with the myth and reality of Ethiopia but like Campbell situates Rastafari in the history of oppression and cultural resistance in Jamaica. Bishton presents a less scientific, more experiential account of Rastafari and he does not emphasize the history of resistance to the same extent as Campbell. Bishton's photographs are alive; Rastas and ordinary Jamaicans talk in his interviews.

In his attempt to understand the deep roots of Rastafari, Bishton visited the Accompong Maroons in Jamaica, the living, visible reminder of the earliest attempts to flee slavery and rebuild Africa. Maroons who acquiesced and agreed to work for the British continued to live in Jamaica. But those who went beyond these limits found themselves transported first to Nova Scotia, then back to Africa. A "back to Africa consciousness" had some influence in Jamaica in the 19th and early 20th century, and a number of individuals actually made their way back. But it was not until 1914 when Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association and mobilized Jamaicans, black Americans, and others that the slogan "Africa for the Africans" began to take on new and renewed meaning. Whereas Campbell emphasizes the dynamic connection between Rastafari and the social structure, Bishton places more emphasis on its roots in Jamaican popular culture and the back-to-Africa theme. Campbell is intent both to recover the truth of Rastafari and to demystify it; Bishton is content to try to let Rastafari tell its own truth.

Campbell does not entirely succeed in his task and the reader is forced to confront the inadequacies of his conceptual approach and descriptive presentation. Campbell implies that the emphasis on Selassie and repatriation, far from being essential to Rastafari, were deviations imposed by external factors. Once the Jamaican state recognized that Rastafari was a force to be reckoned with, it promoted the deification of Haile Selassie through the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Similarly, he states that the idea of repatriation was largely a response to the displacement of the Jamaican rural population in the 1950s and the land grant made by Selassie to descendants of Africans in the West. No Rasta would tolerate Campbell's belittling

of these central tenets of Rastafarian knowledge. Rastas have affirmed the divinity of Selassie and the necessity of repatriation. But what outsiders often fail to realize is that the metaphorical richness of these two ideas overflows their literal (non-Rasta) interpretation.

Time and time again Campbell refers to Rastafari as a form of idealism; one which is "pregnant with criticism of the social order" but idealist nevertheless. He states that Rastas have not addressed their own bourgeois individualism; nor have they seriously dealt with the question of class relations. He is acutely aware that racial claims have been used to legitimate exploitative regimes in Haiti, Guyana and elsewhere. In the case of Ethiopia, Selassie fought against Italian fascism and claimed to represent the interest of black people throughout the world. But this cannot hide the fact that he was a feudal monarch in an exploitative social order. Rastas who settled in Shashamane in Ethiopia found themselves in competition with each other in a struggle for limited resources. After the emperor was overthrown in the Ethiopian Revolution, Shashamane Rastas had to face the wrath of Ethiopian peasants who regarded them as feudal retainers and expropriated their land and property. Campbell's task, following Rodney, is to bring materialism to Rastafari. Rastafarian thought, one begins to suspect, is what Marx called an "opiate" of the masses, a form of resistance, but one which rises and

declines in inverse proportion to efficacious social action.

Here lies the fundamental problem in Campbell's entire analysis. Though he is critical of any form of materialism that fails to leave room for the specificity of racial oppression and racial consciousness, Campbell ultimately opts for the presentation of external reality and external concepts of reality rather than for the lived and sustained meaning of Rastafarian cultural action. In Campbell's book the analysis of the structure and meaning of Rastafarian thought and practice is neglected in favour of looking at the relationship of the movement to external factors. Campbell repudiates a host of sociologists for calling Rastafari a racist oriented millenarian cult. He particularly blames the University of the West Indies "Report on the Rastafari Movement" for laying the basis for future distortions. But Campbell has added his own distortions. If he is to make his assertions convincing, he has to analyze the critical implications of Rastafarian thought in greater depth.

Compared to Campbell, Bishton's journalistic approach presents an opportunity for the alert observer to make more space for the expressiveness of the Rastas themselves. But Bishton's space is limited; his photographs present a history, but are incomplete; and his presentation of Rastafari covers too much territory too quickly. He overemphasizes the millenarian component in Rastafari. The voice of Rastafari

does not emerge in *Black Heat Man* to the extent that it could. The work poses a tragic enigma. At the end, with Shashamane's few huts and the few acres of land, the "revolutionary" government of a dead monarch's followers is the view beyond the police. Howell's commune after being destroyed by the police. In Jamaica the middle class and the middle class's Rastafarian performances; but it is also the poet Michael Smith's own country. And the struggle continues. Bishton chooses in Birmingham, choosing to strike back with solidarity with a South African for its freedom. Bishton has with the critical problem of the quest for Africa, but he has provided the tools which are thrust for emancipation.

There is within Rastafari itself a disjunction between or idealistic conception of critical or emancipatory Rastafari is sympathetic to the millenarian. Campbell's Rastafari from the millenarian sociologist, but then he would be more fair to experience if they recognize grounds for social and

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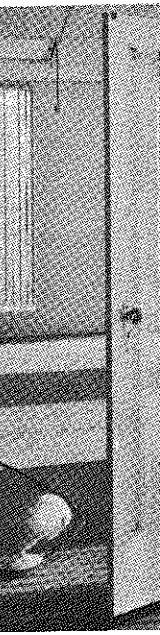
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does not emerge in *Black Heart Man* to the extent that it could. The structure of his work poses a tragic enigma: he begins with the end, with Shashamane reduced to the few huts and the few acres which the "revolutionary" government has left the dead monarch's followers. He ends with the view beyond the pinnacle, beyond Howell's commune after it has been destroyed by the police. It is a view of the Jamaican middle class enjoying Rex Nettleford's Rastafarian inspired dance performances; but it is also a view of Rastafarian poet Michael Smith stoned to death in his own country. And so the tragic struggle continues: Bishton closes with scenes in Birmingham, with black people choosing to strike back, and doing so in solidarity with a South Africa demanding its freedom. Bishton has left his readers with the critical problem of demystifying the quest for Africa, but he has not provided the tools which might further the thrust for emancipation.

There is within Rastafarian thought itself a disjunction between a millenarian or idealistic conception of reality and a critical or emancipatory conception. Bishton is sympathetic to Rastafari but calls it millenarian. Campbell attempts to rescue Rastafari from the millenarianism of the sociologists, but then he proceeds to reduce Rastafarian thought to idealism. Both would be more fair to the Rastafarian experience if they recognized that the grounds for social and political critique

can be found within Rastafari itself.

Campbell is correct in identifying resistance as one of the most important aspects of Rastafari's relationship with the colonial and neo-colonial world. Rastafari has always resisted the status quo whether by overtly challenging it or by withdrawing from it. However, millenarianism is a recurring theme in Rastafari and is quite consistent with resistance. Howell's claim in 1933 that black people owed their allegiance to the new monarch of Ethiopia was indeed a political act challenging the authority of the colonial regime. But as Robert Hill has shown, Howell's act was also classically millenarian for he preached about a new and inverted social/racial order: Ras Tafari (Selassie) was "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" who had come "to break every chain" which had kept black people enslaved to whites. Campbell does not mention Prince Emmanuel Edwards, one of the longest surviving of the early Rastafarian patriarchs. Prince Emmanuel described himself in a Rastafarian paper in 1983 as "the Black Christ" who has come to redeem his people from colonialism; his followers (Bobo-Dread) acknowledge as much. But while most millenarian movements have been associated with violent outbursts and military campaigns by God's chosen armies, Howell, Prince Emmanuel, and indeed most Rastas are non-violent.

However, millenarianism is only one aspect of Rastafari. At the core of Rastafari

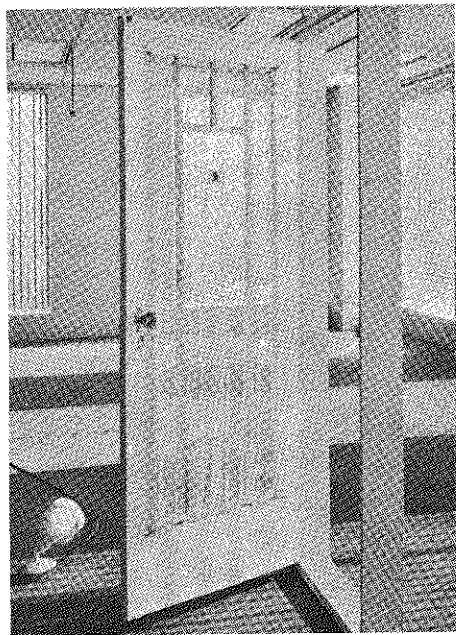
"reasoning" is the infinite interplay of partially constructed meanings which arrive at a temporary unity in the dialogical act. Rastafarian thought, even in its idealistic or millenarian guises, yields itself to alternate convergences of meaning. What does Prince Emmanuel really mean when he calls himself "the Black Christ?" At some level could he be saying that a group of people which has been humiliated for centuries can take possession of their own purity and godliness, their own freedom as human beings to mutually create a human world.

Students of Rastafari such as Rex Nettleford and Joseph Owens have argued in several works that the Rastafarian understanding of Selassie is a statement about the divinity in each man, and this gives to the black man a claim to humanity denied him by colonialism. Likewise Ethiopia exists on earth and the millenarian vision of the promised land can be translated into a call for the creation of a new and just state wherever the black person finds himself, even if that be in Jamaica, Babylon itself. Inherent in Rastafarian thought is its ability to establish its own interpretative self-critique.

Sam Brown, very much an "orthodox" Rasta, ran for political office in the early 1960s. The Rastafari Movement Association with which Sam Brown was later involved was oriented towards dealing with the concrete social issues in the Jamaica of the day. Campbell provides us with useful information when he discusses Rodney's influence on the Rastafarian Movement Association. However, Rastafari's self-critique came prior to Rodney, and Rodney's "materialism" was a tool which the Rastas could rework in their own terms without giving up their deepest beliefs. This tradition is carried on today by Rastas associated with the Rastafari International Theocracy Assembly and by Rasta social theorists in the universities. As elections in Jamaica approach, Rastas are beginning to make plans to have their voice heard.

Those Rastas committed to radical social and political change in Jamaica do not have to give up the claim of black divinity and the belief in the right to repatriation. What they have given up is the millenarianism that triumphed in other Rastafarian tendencies. There are two logics in Rastafari, the one millenarian and in that sense escapist, the other socially and politically oriented in an emancipatory quest. What disembodied social thought cannot provide is the group cohesion and commitment provided by a cultural matrix such as Rastafari. Campbell's work really demonstrates, therefore, that Rastafari is a powerful cultural phenomenon among people of African descent which carries within it a commitment to social and political change. And in a unity such as this, the Western imposed dualism of idealism and materialism falls away, revealed for what it is, an alien imposition.

*Patrick Taylor has recently published The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture, and Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). He teaches at York University.*



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of contemporary capitalism. Class War is the name of a smallish bunch of British politicians with decidedly anarchistic tendencies. Home has an irritating habit of italicizing words like art, theory and idea. Towards the end of the book, anyone who might have missed it in the very brief introduction will have become painfully aware of why he does this. The point is that Home disapproves of art. Like *theory*, it is a bourgeois *idea*. Ideas, it seems, are not the kind of thing that an engaged materialist is supposed to be much possessed of.

This is not the first place we've been told that art is a phenomenon of the bourgeois world. As such, it lives and dies with the bourgeoisie — so the argument goes. Thus, on the one side, Home's chronicle of the tradition within which he places himself reads as a bit of a burlesque of each successive utopian current. On the other, one does get the impression that he finds something important running through the core of all these doings, important enough for him to do the research (which is quite considerable for such a slim volume) and the writing. Also, one would think it important enough to read about it all, to know enough of the tradition to keep it alive, to nourish and expand it. And yet, Home is thoroughly contemptuous of what he calls "essentialism," the notion that an intelligible core may actually be discernible beneath appearances.

Art, it would appear, is the most contemptible of these "essentialist" practices, being so bourgeois, so male-dominated and so mystifying. This is why Home is ultimately so scornful of Guy Debord and the original Situationist group — their concerns included "realizing and superseding" art. The break-away 2nd Situationist International earns more of Home's sympathy because it was less concerned with art as such.

If this story has a hero, though, the most likely candidate would be the painter Asger Jorn, who appears in the cover photograph. Mentioned early in the book, he gradually emerges as perhaps the most sane and likeable personality involved. Jorn became successful enough in the art world that he was able to fund much of the activity described in *The Assault*. This he appears to have done without discrimination: Home reports that Jorn financed individuals and projects on both sides of the Situationist divide until his death, long after he had formally disassociated himself from either organization. Interestingly enough, none of his beneficiaries appear to have had qualms accepting assistance from such a source.

The stylistic nuisance of over-reliance upon italics flows from Home's conception of what his engagement entails. Engagement, he presumes, releases the writer from such constraints as a theorist or person concerned with ideas might feel. This is belied by his own care with the material and his evident annoyance with the carelessness of others. He is particularly harsh with the Lettrists and Situationists for making grandiose claims for themselves. Home is piqued by the "International" tag, for one thing, as neither group was

nearly so international as they would have liked the world to believe. This seems reasonable enough. Things become a little strange, though, when Home decides to rectify matters by renaming the original Situationist International — in light of the existence of a break-away International. Thus, in his book, the Situationist International of May '68 fame becomes the "Specto-Situationist International" because of its interest in Debord's ideas about the spectacular nature of post-war society. This peculiar usage seems to bespeak a terribly fastidious, not to say impatient, mentality for an author so impatient with these tendencies in others.

While the Lettrists do seem to have been a very hokey bunch (the originator of the movement, Isidore Isou, was among the worst of megalomaniacs in a milieu full of them), Home takes an odd opportunity for really slamming them. At the "First World Congress of Liberated Artists," held in 1956, the nominated chairperson was one Christian Dotremont, a COBRA veteran not well beloved by the Lettrists. As it happens, he seems to have been unable to attend due to illness. It is not quite clear what's happening here, but Dotremont's indisposition, says Home, may have been "diplomatic."

Now, when the Lettrists publish their opinion that this was indeed the case, that a majority would have objected to Dotremont, this is the opportunity Home takes to remark upon the "fundamental dishonesty of the LI [Lettrist International] as an organization." What an odd little controversy, and what an odd way of relating it. An author less concerned with opposing scholarship to engagement might have given a better picture of just what happened here. What did this nomination consist of? Who did the nominating? Was Dotremont elected as well? Did he preside *in absentia*? We don't know. Then again, for a book of but 115 pages in length, one wonders if this is such an important historical detail after all when we know little about Dotremont beyond his associations with COBRA and Jorn. Home evidently wants us to understand the main point he has discovered about the LI: we know what he thinks, but the unevenness in his handling of the details leads one to question rather than confirm his judgement.

The combination of crankiness and breathlessness leads to a quirky kind of work. Home breezes across a few vast territories in a way that only a superficial knowledge could permit. For instance, along with his lightning-speed account of how we got art in the first place, we find the loaded term "revisionist" placed precariously close to the equally loaded "Marxist." Home seems not to notice that few Marxists since the turn of the century have cared to be known as revisionists. This does not stop him from informing us of the "revision" of Marxist thought in France in the '50s. This "revision," Home says, accompanied a loosening of the grip of the Communist Party. He inaccurately likens French developments of this period to the German '20s. Home then refers to "commentators" (only one — Richard Gombin — is named) who "say French

revisionism lacked the thought of Lukács, Adorno, that the Party member along with Karl Korsch, with fomenting a renaissance thought, would participate in the epithet "revisionism." course, is really a later imagine either one sitting with Eduard Bernstein usually regarded as revisionism.

The brevity of the book that certain interesting lines not touched upon, or the movement of the German Front mentions Joseph Beuys, an alumnus. Had Beuys been two more, the interest in Canadian Clive Robert *Notes to Dead Air* (a reference to Beuys' most famous work, *Notes to a Dead Hare*) was mentioned, as only one.

The book gives occasional glimpses of what might be interesting lines of thought, given a chance to develop. Note on the Trotskyist line, an over-centralized bureaucracy to a discussion of the line, states that we are, perhaps, read the one as an alternative. Perhaps Home has a better category, for there is also a quote from Walter Benjamin which is hardly necessary. But theories are like a game. Home doesn't come out of kinds of things. Perhaps ashamed of myself, but I did.

To give him credit, one should mention the Neoism, which may be



**The Assault on Culture:  
Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class  
War**  
by Stewart Home  
London: Aporia Press & Unpopular Books,  
1988, 115 pp.

There are by now a number of ways to tell the tale of art and culture. Art history tends to regard itself as the chronicle of a triumphal march forward. Dissenters are given short shift, except insofar as their ideas or methods become integrated into the mainstream at some point, as was the case with Marcel Duchamp, for example. Another way of looking at the matter is to concentrate on the dissenters. This can result in the presentation of a sub-history, or, as Stewart Home would have it, the history of what's really important.

The trajectory of this short book shows more clearly than anything else what Home's opinions are. The first two-thirds of *The Assault on Culture* are devoted to groups such as COBRA and the Situationist International whose members consisted mostly of "painters, poets, architects, ethnologists and theorists." He then begins to alternate between chapters on art/anti-art and outfits such as the Yippies and the Class War of the subtitle. And no, this isn't Home's comment on the tendencies

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revisionism lacked the vigour found in the thought of Lukács, Adorno, &c." I doubt that the Party member Georg Lukács, who along with Karl Korsch, is usually credited with fomenting a renaissance of Marxist thought, would particularly agree with the epithet "revisionism." T.W. Adorno, of course, is really a later figure. It is hard to imagine either one sitting comfortably with Eduard Bernstein and others more usually regarded as revisionist.

The brevity of the book also means that certain interesting relationships are not touched upon, or barely so. The treatment of the German Fluxus group scarcely mentions Joseph Beuys, its most famous alumnus. Had Beuys been given a line or two more, the interesting videotape by the Canadian Clive Robertson, *Explaining Pictures to Dead Air* (a reference to one of Beuys' most famous works, *Explaining Pictures to a Dead Hare*) might have been mentioned, as only one example.

The book gives occasional tantalizing glimpses of what might have been interesting lines of thought had they been given a chance to develop. A longish footnote on the Trotskyist 4th International as an over-centralized bureaucracy appended to a discussion of the Situationists intimates that we are, perhaps, intended to read the one as an allegory for the other. Perhaps Home has a bit of a theory of allegory, for there is also a very long footnote quoting Walter Benjamin on Baudelaire which is hardly necessary in the context. But theories are like art, after all, and Home doesn't come out and say these kinds of things. Perhaps I should be ashamed of myself, but I can't help wishing he did.

To give him credit, however, perhaps one should mention Home's treatment of Neoism, which may best illustrate what he

is getting at. What Home finds most interesting about this largely North American phenomenon, is the use of the "multiple name." One of these, Monty Cantsin, was devised by a group of mail artists in Portland, Oregon. Istvan Kantor, who became one of the central figures of Neoism, began to use this name in Montreal in 1979. Kantor and others influenced by the "punk phenomena" painted the walls of Montreal with slogans such as "Hunger Is The Mother Of Beauty" and "Convulsion, Subversion, Defection." These were, says Home, "the slogans of surrealism, situationism and the occupations movement of May '68, with some late romanticism thrown in for good measure." Having disseminated the idea of Monty Cantsin as the "open pop-star," Kantor took to calling himself "the real Monty Cantsin," Home says, in response to a more widespread use of the appellation by European Neoists in the 1980s. It might have been expected. Before this, Kantor had, at various Neoist events, offered up his "chair" to anyone willing to take it. The aggressive way in which this was done, along with the violent nature of the performances, says Home, discouraged people from taking up the offer.

Neoism exhibits what Home regards as the unsavoury features of an international art movement. It was thus susceptible to all the failings that this would presumably entail. Its "degeneration" in the hands of Kantor and others preoccupied with ideas could be anticipated.

There are many minor annoyances to be encountered in *The Assault on Culture*, and a few more significant flaws. Of the latter, the most important is a failure to really discuss the problematic relation of culture to art in the bourgeois era, but to proceed as if he had done so. Home's

chapter on Neoism, while pointing toward such a discussion, does not really suffice. This is, of course, a very complex issue which can't be solved here. But I do think Home is indulging in wishful thinking when he implies that art should be abandoned as an act of political conscience.

Although this appears to be the main thrust of the text, it can be treated as a side issue. This book can be recommended, with a few grains of salt certainly, as a good quick reference work to the politically oriented Dadaist, anti-art tradition in the post-war period. Home's discussion of Punk is measured, showing the influence of the Situationists upon it, but not making too much of this. His history of the multiple name from mail art to Neoism, though brief, is of some value. At \$7.95, *The Assault on Culture* is hardly over-priced by current standards. It contains a reasonable index and useful bibliography. It can be read in an evening or two. While Home's book will not stand as the definitive work on the subject (I doubt this remark would displease him), it is a useful précis of an important part of recent cultural history.

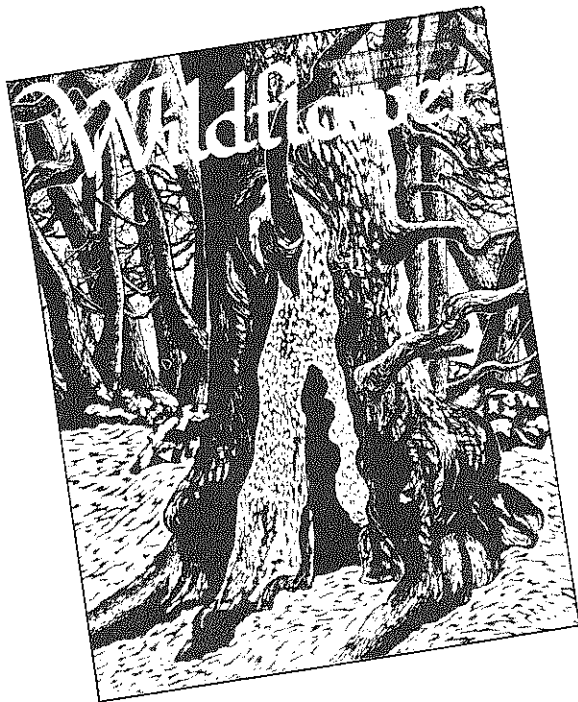
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border/lines summer 1989

A listing of academic, political and cultural events, compiled by Mimi Mathurin. This section aims to bring together the various events, particularly in Canada, which are not generally publicized. Information to be published in future quarterly issues of *Border/Lines* should be sent to our care of: Scanner, 183 Bathurst Street, #301, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2R7.

**Social and Political Events**

Scanner provides free publicity to those political and/or cultural events which, for financial or ideological reasons, do not have access to major media outlets.

**Marxism 89**, June 30-July 7, 1989. A week of conferences at the University of London, England. Sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party. For more information call: (416) 925-1731.

**The AIDS Memorial Quilt**. The Names Project Quilt is a statement of hope and remembrance; a symbol of unity and a promise of love. The Names Project Foundation - Canada has all the information needed to make a panel, either alone or with friends. The Canadian tour of the quilt will be June-July, 1989. For more information contact The Names Project Foundation - Canada, P.O. Box 1013, Halifax, N.S., B3J 2X7. Tel: (902) 425-4882.

**Critical Fictions** presents the summer 1989 "Writing Criticism Workshop" at the Banff Centre For the Arts, July 17-28, 1989. Critical Fictions will debate and present possible alternatives to the scientific models which have dominated the theory and practice of contemporary criticism. The life of fictional, dramatic and poetic texts as criticism will be presented, discussed and workshopped. The censorship of feeling and expression for the sake of a self-conscious rigour will be examined in light of the politics of art publishing, in both critical magazines and popular media. For more information call: (403) 762-6180 or (403) 762-6194.

**The Third International Meeting of the Committees in Solidarity With Nicaragua**, to take place in Managua, July 24-26, 1989. This tenth anniversary conference commemorating the revolution in Nicaragua has the following objectives: a) to explain the Revolution in perspective and deepen an understanding of its current status;

b) to give recognition to the solidarity committees and their leaders for the work they have carried out in the last ten years; c) to jointly design plans for solidarity with Nicaragua for the future. On the 27th and 28th a parallel program will be carried out and on the 29th and 30th the Fifth International Solidarity Fair will take place. For more information contact: APARTADO 5216 Managua, Nicaragua, tel. 66065.

**Creating Professionals 1989**, July 23-29. A Canadian writing workshop at the University of Toronto, St. George campus, featuring world-renowned Canadian authors. This intensive week-long program will focus on participants own work. Instructional workshops in poetry, the novel, television, theatre and "free-fall" technique; seminars on poetry, children's literature, the novel and science fiction; business of writing "Shop Talks," by editors and publishers and evening readings open to the public, by some of Canada's finest writers. Speakers include Michael Ondaatje, Neil Bissoondath, Mary di Michele and Josef Skvorecky. For more information call: School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto, 978-8560, or Anne Montagnes, 534-8685.

**The 4th Annual Environmental Round Table** will be held on Grindstone Island, Friday, July 28 to Sunday, July 30. Theme: "Healing the Planet/Healing Ourselves." Having succeeded at making the environment a priority issue on the public agenda and the international stage, the active environmental community looks now to exploring ways to build strong, sustainable ecological communities outside the realm of environmental rhetoric. Activists are also looking at the connections between the way we treat the planet and the way we treat ourselves. Treating ourselves and others as mere resources or commodities and reacting to external agendas and timelines ultimately results in burnout which can weaken rather than sustain the movement. Speakers, healers and ecological nutritionists will be invited to the beautiful island setting to offer positive examples of achieving personal and planetary sustainability. For more information: Grindstone Co-op, 202 - 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1X7, or call: (416) 968-9187.

**Women and Unions**, August 10-13, 1989. The third annual Grindstone Women and Unions Conference will give union women a chance to take time together away from their hectic environments to share experiences and discuss plans for the future. For more information call: (416) 968-9187 or contact Grindstone Co-op, 202 - 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1X7.

**Power of the Egyptian Pyramids and Earth Energies**, August 25-27, 1989. A weekend of sharing, learning and music. Seminars will be given by experts in the field of Egyptology. Bring instruments, camping gear and Egyptian costumes. For information

contact: Crossroads, 8288 Netherby Road, RR #4, Welland, Ontario, L3B 5N7, or call: (416) 734-6933.

**Resistance Weekend: Non-Violent Resistance and Community Action**, Friday, September 22 to Sunday, September 24, 1989. Reviving the traditions of the Quakers' Non-Violence Institute of the 1960s and the peace weekends of the early 1980s, this gathering is for both new and seasoned activists to develop strategies for non-violent resistance on a wide range of issues. Through focused discussion groups, participants will pull together common threads to create long-term campaigns on collective community issues. For further information about the conference, or if you want to register, call Liza or Myk at (416) 462-1819.

**National Symposium on Aboriginal Women of Canada: Past, Present, and Future**, October 19-21, 1989 at the University of Lethbridge. For information write to: Professor Christine Miller, Native American Studies, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta. (403) 329-2635.

**Wandering Spirit Survival School**. We are now receiving signs of a planetary malfunction. The Beluga whales are heading for extinction while many other forms of life are suffering from our neglect for the environment. We are only one species out of 30 million. Our mother earth, who has existed for billions of years, must be protected by leaders who are seriously concerned with her survival. To see the beauty in all life forms is to find balance between one's self and mother earth. The public is invited to join artists and environmentalists for a three-day event at the Wandering Spirit Survival School at 935 Dundas Street East (at the corner of Broadview), Toronto, Ontario, October 28-30, 1989.

**Conferences**

**International Sociological Association, 12th World Congress of Sociology**, July 9-13, 1990, Madrid, Spain. Papers are invited for a session on "Personality and Society: Dysfunctional and Pathological Dimensions." Send all communication to: Gordon J. DiRenzo, Department of Sociology, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.

**The African Research Program of the Eotvos Lorand University's Third International African Studies Conference**, August 27-September 4. Theme: "Tradition and Modernization in Africa Today." Contact: Szilard Biernaczky, Director of the Conference, African Research Program, Eotvos University, Budapest H-1536 POB, BP 387, Hungary.

**33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies** to meet August 19-25, 1990 at the University of Toronto. The theme is "Contacts Between Cultures." For more

information contact: Prof. Julia Ching, Secretariat, 33 ICANAS, Victoria College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1K7.

**International Film Seminar Inc.** presents the 1989 Robert Flaherty Seminar, August 12-19, at the campus of Wellesly College, Aurora, New York. This seminar will be the 35th consecutive meeting. It will explore some of the ways film and video reveal cultures with an emphasis on how third world and minority film and video artists express their ideas in both fictional and non-fictional forms. For more information call (212) 727-7262 or contact 305 West 21st Street, New York, NY 10011.

**"Our World" A summit on the environment** in the Don Valley, Toronto, Ontario, September 10-17, 1989. An international conference and exposition for environmentalists, government and industry officials and concerned citizens of the world. For more information contact the Summit on the Environment, 999 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M4J 1M1. Tel: (416) 462-3250. Fax: (416) 462-1675. House of Commons Office: (613) 992-7771.

**The 10th Biennial Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Conference** presents "The State of the Art, The State of Practice," October 18-21, 1989, Palliser Hotel, Calgary, Alberta. Topics will address the following: the state of art in individual disciplines, women and ethnicity, ethnic literature, oral history, ethnicity and politics, Native studies, immigration and refugee policy. For further information contact: CESA Conference 1989, Dean's Office, Faculty of Social Science, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive, N.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4. Tel: (403) 220-6151.

**Media and Crisis**, an international conference at Laval University, October 4-7, 1990. To mark the 20th anniversary of Canada's "October Crisis" of 1970, the Département d'Information et de Communication of Laval University is organizing an international conference on the role of media in times of crisis. This conference will consider both case studies and proposals of a more theoretical nature in areas such as media and terrorism, media and political upheaval, media and economic crisis, media and social crisis. Proposals are invited on other sub-themes as well. In addition to traditional academic papers the conference is interested in audio-visual material documenting specific uses of media in times of crisis. Prospective participants should send a detailed abstract of three pages (750 words) in French or English before November 15, 1989. Address all inquiries to: Media and Crisis Conference, Département d'Information et de Communication, Faculté des Arts, Pavillon Louis-Jacques-Casault, Université Laval, Quebec, Canada, G1K 7P4. For more information contact: Bernard Dagenois or Marc Raboy at (418) 656-5212 and (418) 656-7305, respectively.







