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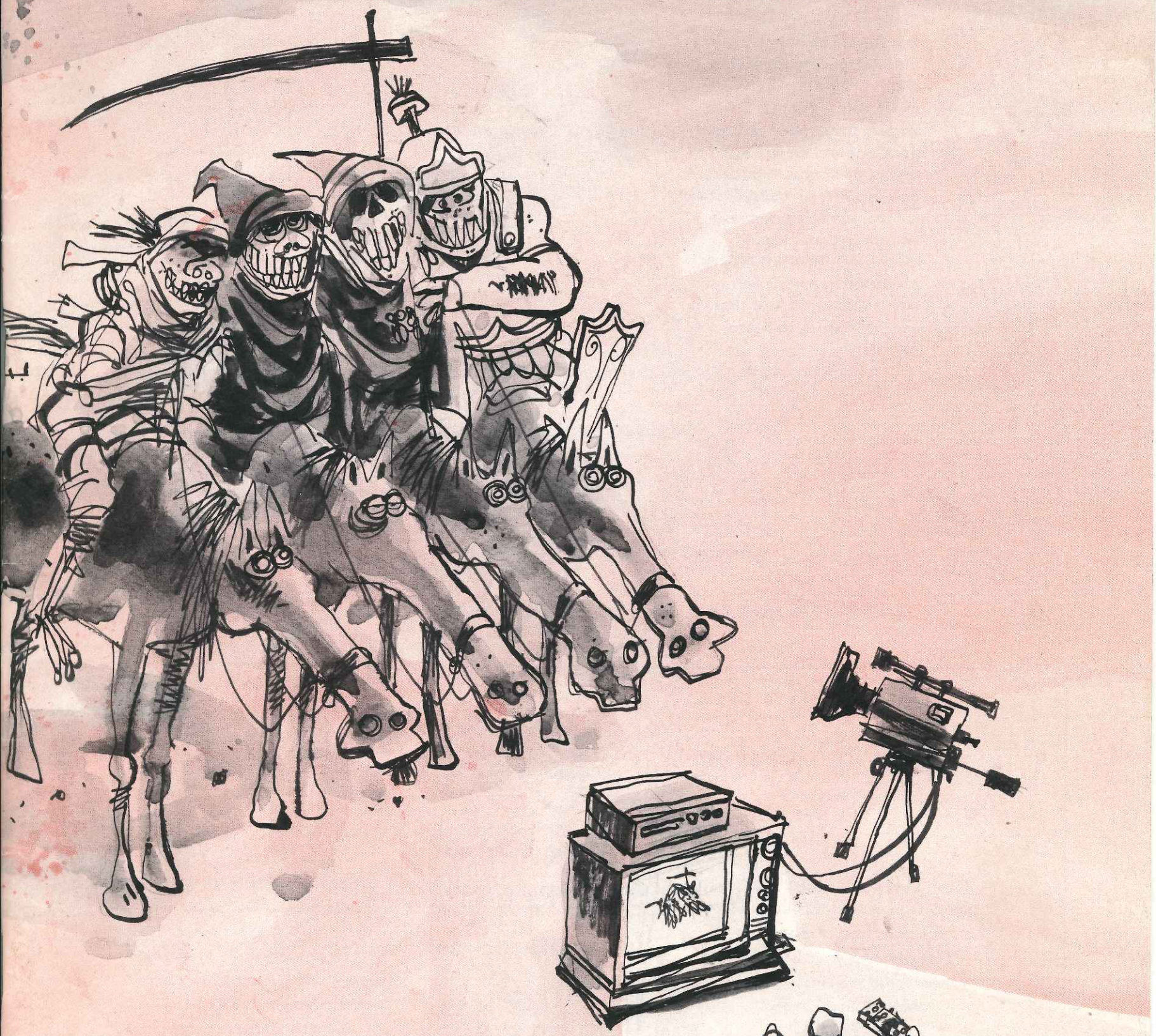

Remembering *Phoenix Rising*

Fragments of the Berlin Wall

Ioan Davies on Prison Writing

Barbara Harlow on Palestinian Prison Culture

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BORDER/*LINES*

EXCURSIONS

JUNCTURES

ARTICLES

REVIEWS

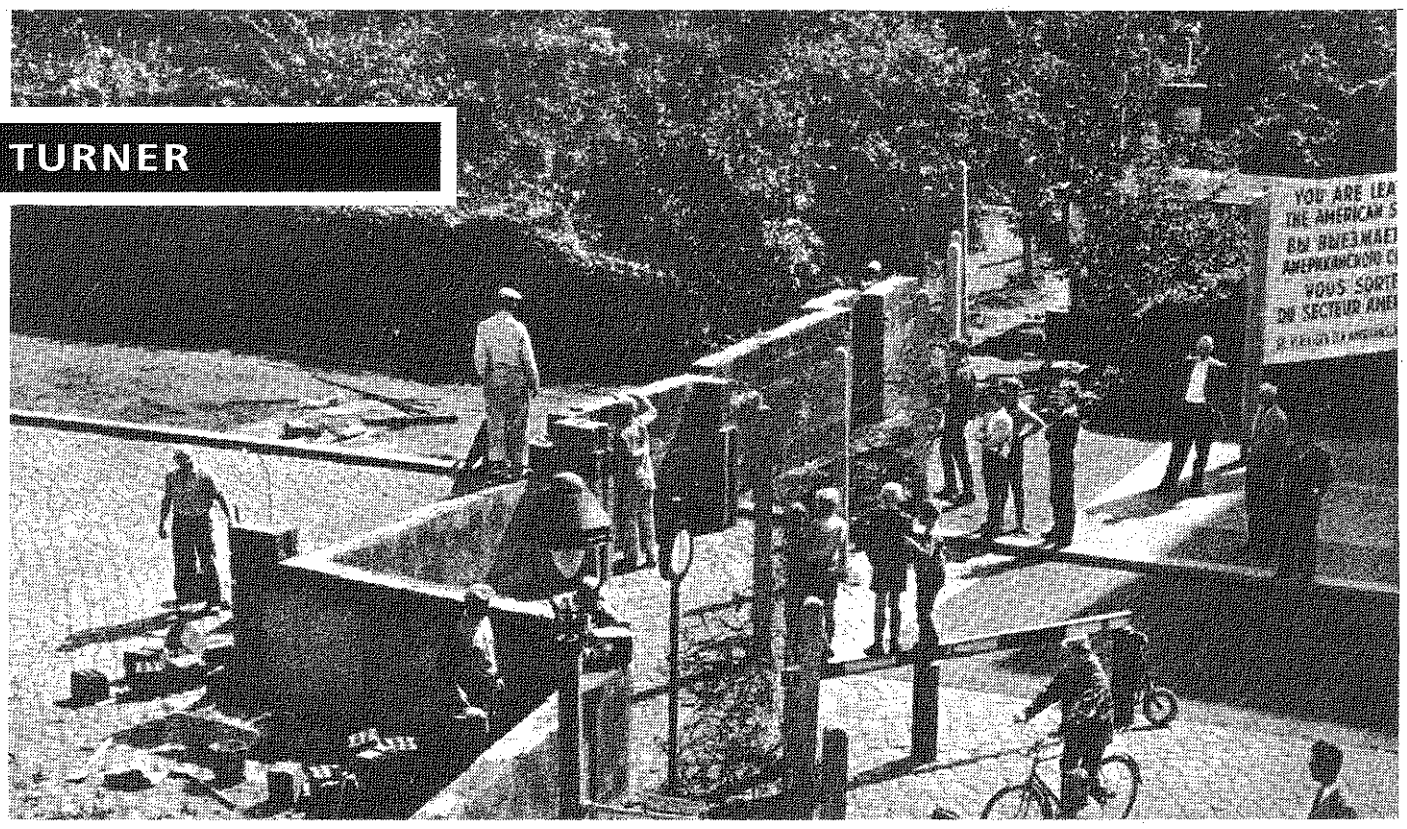
VISUALS

COVER

Brian Gable, Toronto

ERRATUM: The review, "Where Is Here? and Other Travels Through the Canadian Psyche" in Border/Lines #18 contained an error in the second paragraph. In the sentence that ends, "identity is portrayed as something that is contained within each Canadian solely by birthright," "birthright" should read "citizenship."

LORI TURNER



EXCURSIONS

The Berlin Wall:
Fragment As Commodity

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses VII"

There is one kind of prison where the man is behind bars, and everything he desires is outside; and there is another kind where the things are behind bars and the man is outside.

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

In 1939 Walter Benjamin likened commodity fetishism to the collection of souvenirs. The commodity as souvenir is seen as the result of the transformation of historical events into mass-produced articles. Ironically, fifty years later in his native city of Berlin, one finds great parties of people (*Mauer-Specbten,* wall-peckers as they are called in the West German press) hacking away at the Berlin Wall for the raw material a new commodity/souvenir will be made from: "authentic cuts from the Berlin Wall."

Benjamin's notes on the souvenir/commodity form part of his study of the now extinct Paris Arcades (the precursor of the modern department stores). When one now refers to the Berlin Wall fragment which appeared for sale in New York and Chicago only 48 hours after Egon Krenz announced freer travel, one must see it in the context of the Berlin Wall as a fragmented/fallen monument. Benjamin's research on the Paris Arcades can be understood as a reconstruction of the *ur*-form of modern capitalist circulation. It is useful, then, to invoke Benjamin's research not only because he was a Berliner (his sister-in-law, by the way, was justice minister in East Berlin at the time the Wall went up) but also because his particular take on the nature of the commodity-form, its auratic and souvenir qualities, will hopefully help even the score amidst the cold war terminology appearing daily in the western press to "report" the events surrounding the Berlin Wall fragments.

The Wall, since its inception, has always been considered politically evocative, dangerous, symbolic. Not so long ago Erich Honecker claimed it would last another one hundred years. The East German SED called it an "anti-fascist protection barrier." The justification, for better or worse, was that it served security interests. For the West, however, it symbolized the height of the cold war. It is difficult still for western journalists to describe it without using outright provocative cold war terminology. There has been no reluctance to crow about its demise as a triumph for liberal democratic capitalism. It has been called a "scar" and a "snake" which runs "through the heart of a once proud European capital, not to mention the soul of a people." (*Time,* 20.11.89) The Wall also became symbolic for artists, musicians, and playwrights. Lou Reed devoted an album to it, David Bowie sang about it (*auf Deutsch*) on his *Heroes* album and the Sex Pistols themselves wanted to jump over it to the east side. Now, in the West Berlin press at least, there have been attempts to poke fun. One West Berliner said it looks like a piece of Swiss cheese. Another writer referred to those gaps in the Wall as a peepshow. There are surprisingly few jokes about it in the Canadian or American papers.

West Berliners, noted for their ironic sense of humour, have lived with the Wall for twenty-eight years. *Amerikanismus,* it seems, is alive and well in West Berlin too. Despite the stereotypical view of the German obsession for cleanliness, the Wall has always been fair game for those with an urge to graffiti. The layers of indexical signs, painted over and over, lend the wall an auratic quality. The pre-fab slabs of interlocking concrete are not without traces of human intervention. Indeed, according to the official publishing house at Checkpoint Charlie, "the Wall speaks." It's too late now, however, to study the allegorical messages written on the Wall.

Apparently, the writing on the Wall was in direct contradiction to Honecker's prediction. Amidst the often conflicting messages two positions were relatively clear: there is evidence of a hatred of the Wall and belief in its transitoriness. We now see photographs of people taking a whack at the Wall; this sort of bravery is directly in line with the bold act of writing on the Wall. Both heroic deeds contain the same impulsive desire to alter the meaning of the Wall; both show studied disregard of who it belongs to.

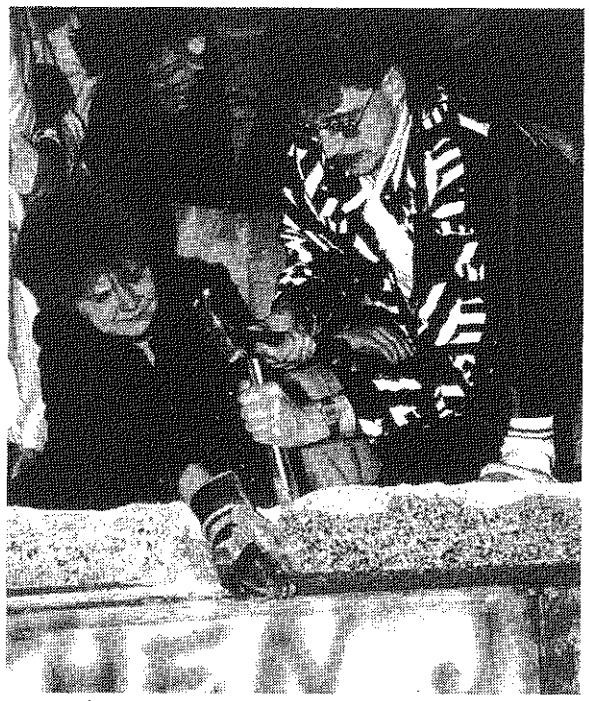
The Wall, in fact, is turned into the trophy reserved for the winners of the cold war. While the east side was carefully maintained and painted a high-gloss white, the west side was left the natural colour of concrete but painted over by wannabe political pundits. Now the most highly prized pieces of the Wall are those colourful surface bits which contain traces of graffiti. The auratic quality it had then (as Wall) is testimony now to the authenticity those rarer bits of painted concrete have in circulation. A piece of the Wall with graffiti on it assures the consumer that the structure really has fallen down. But more important still, for the souvenir collector, a fragment of the Wall with these fossil remains carries a powerful propaganda message.

Within days of its demise some West Berlin reporters were scrambling to understand the significance of the Wall's becoming a commodity. In the West Berlin newspaper *taz* one reporter (14.11.89) wrote of how flexible capitalism is. With the selling of the Berlin Wall fragments we can see just how easy it is to extract profit from any situation. Another *taz* reporter (13.11.89) pointed out that while there were people on both sides ripping the Wall apart, those on the west side were doing it "as if" the Wall belongs to the West. An interesting twist. The East Germans built the Wall but the West Germans and their allies sell pieces of it as souvenirs. According to the West German magazine *Stern*, the Federal Republic's external affairs minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher presented George Bush with a nice souvenir piece during his last trip to Washington.

People now seem to have a soft spot in their hearts for the Wall; it's now become a novelty item. The German community in Winnipeg just purchased a huge slate of it. They intend to donate it to the historically significant "Forks" development. This is noted with some dismay by the Winnipeg Native community. While agreeing that the Wall is historically significant for the Germans, they see this purchase for the Forks as indicative of a kind of imperialist practice: hauling off with the spoils. They would prefer to see Native artifacts at the Forks, preferably those that have been ripped-off and now find themselves in other countries.

The Wall as border lost its meaning on the evening of the 9th of November 1989. It is significant to note that the Wall came down on the day which is usually remembered in post-war Germany as the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* – the night of the shattering glass (the night Nazi thugs were given permission to smash Jewish businesses, houses, synagogues, etc.). The western press, however, preferred to make another historical analogy: the storming of the Bastille in 1789. Both analogies are appropriate to remember except that, unlike the Berlin Wall, commodities were not made of the fragmentary remains.

One Canadian Wall fragment entrepreneur was cited in the *Toronto Star* (14.12.89) : "I knew everybody in the world was watching history happening here and that's when I got the idea. I figured people would love to have a piece of that history, too. So I bought a hammer and chisel and started knocking off pieces of the Wall to sell back home." He apparently shipped 200 kilograms out of Berlin. According to *Stern* magazine (14.12.89) on the 18th of November nineteen boxes carrying 10,630 kilograms left Hamburg airport for Chicago. Another American entrepeneur took 75 tonnes through the Berlin Tegel airport. These are, apparently, typical examples. The *Chicago Tribune* (reprinted in the *Toronto Star*, 12.2.90) tells the story of an unnamed American promoter of the Berlin Wall fragments who claimed to have sold 90 tonnes of the stuff. According to an East German trade official the pieces marketed must be of questionable authenticity because that much concrete had not been removed from the Wall by private entrepeneurs.



Back in West Berlin, Wall fragment entrepeneurs were making 600 DM ($360 Cdn.) per day selling to tourists who were not bold enough to get their own piece. A chunk about the size of a saucer would go for 40 DM ($ 24 Cdn.). The seller could, of course, demand twice the amount if the piece still had graffiti on it. In Toronto CME Marketing would sell you a one inch piece of the surface material for $14.95. Before Christmas you could buy pieces of the Wall marketed by Hyman Products Inc. in the Eaton's Centre for the same price. By February, however, the price was slashed three times. If this company is still selling them you will probably be able to find them for $7.50 (or less). One word of warning, however, if the pieces are authentic they may be hazardous to your health. Both *taz* (2.12.89) and *Der Spiegel* (25.12.89) reported that the stuff of the Wall had tested positive for quantities of asbestos. Apparently the tests had been undertaken in the USA.

Hyman Products Inc. tries to disguise the commodity character of the Wall fragment by calling it (in their so-called "Declaration of Authenticity and Origin") a "fragment of freedom ... a part of which you now own." Included in the brick-sized box in which the rubble is sold is an "Informative Booklet." One line reads: "The Wall was erected, but somehow a ragged (sic) few managed to slip by." The "Informative Booklet", however, reads more like an owner's manual:

> Grip the artifact and in your hand is the past and the future. Let your fingers wander slowly across its battered surface. You can feel the balance of our lives. You can feel the struggles and the triumphs, the grief and the joy, the hope and the fulfillment. You can feel the distant tremor of tomorrow's history gently unfolding in the palm of your hand.

Marx himself couldn't have found a clearer case of the promotion of commodity fetishism. Indeed, the "Informative Booklet" also calls the Wall fragment "an icon for future generations." It may seem strange to ask, but if the West hated the Wall now as much as it professed to hate it then, then wouldn't the West prefer to have it vanish overnight and forever? Instead, the pieces have become fetish objects packaged as souvenirs.

Admittedly it is a rather peculiar souvenir. After all it is sold to people far away from its place of origin. The buyer may never have visited Berlin or ever intend to go there. As a souvenir the promoters proudly advertise its origin and authenticity (this distinguishes it, by the way, from other commodities like the pet rock of a few years ago). Promoters couldn't get away with selling a vial of Parisian air or a can of San Francisco fog in Toronto or New York. For that you have to have "been there." One doesn't have to have been in Berlin on the evening of the 9th-10th of November. The fragment's status as a souvenir resides in the fact that it is a remnant of an historical event turned into a collector's object.

a "fragment of freedom...

part of which you now own."

◀ Tearing it down

The message implied by the promoters of the Wall fragment is clearly a thinly veiled ideology. Capitalist free market ideology asserts itself by offering itself to the consumer, thus negating in one fell swoop any hint that there might be any choice. What makes it a collector's item is not really that it is in limited supply; it is a collector's item only while it still contains an aura of the cold war. In its commodity form it's sold as if it were a cultural treasure. In the examples on display at the major shopping malls you'll find it enclosed in a velvet draw-string bag.

As commodities the Berlin Wall fragments defy memory: as fragments they are dead history. As the Wall came down its historical meaning went with it. Wolf Biermann (an East German folksinger and Nina Hagen's stepfather) asked in an open letter to *taz* (11.11.89) what would happen to the rubble from the Wall? He was probably the first to raise any questions. He wondered whether it is better that the pieces become souvenirs for Americans or whether they could perhaps be used for a better purpose. Biermann's question is buried under an avalanche of commentaries on the Wall. As simple as his question might seem, it raises an interesting point: the instant the Wall came down it seemed that anything might have been possible. This is not the impression one gets from most West German or North American papers.

That the fragments became commodities/souvenirs is perfectly in line with the logic of the production of commodities; that is, this seems to be a natural outcome. In retrospect it shouldn't seem surprising that the fragments became commodities, but this is not a *natural* result. The Wall built by East German workers was never meant to be anything other than a wall. That the pieces now are seen as commodities/souvenirs signifies that the Wall as monument has receded into the irretrievable past. The presence of the fragment in the present is contingent and tenuous. The emphasis placed on the authenticity of the fragment obscures its commodity character.

By invoking its authenticity, by highlighting its aura ("let your fingers wander slowly across its battered surface") the promoters of the Wall fragments are encouraging western consumers (western workers) to partake in the triumphal procession – to buy something that once symbolized oppression. The East German workers were forced to build the wall which prevented free travel to the West. Now that the Wall is fallen, its fragments have come to mean something quite different: the adoption of capitalist market principles, class division, unemployment, homelessness, etc. They have exchanged one prison for another and Berlin is a whole city again. ◆

Lori Turner is a graduate student in York University's Social and Political Thought program.

JOYCE NELSON

Culture and Agriculture

PART II: Monoculture

Life is plurality, death is uniformity. By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilizations and cultures, progress weakens life and favors death. The ideal of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress and technique, impoverishes and mutilates us. Every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility of life.

Octavio Paz

What I have previously termed "the Disneyfication of culture and agriculture" is much more than the robotic takeover through simulacra of species and nature at specific Disney-sites around the planet. It is more than the perverse preference for the "life-like" that permeates post-modernity. Disneyfication might best be understood by reference to that term dreamed up by Walt himself to name his overarching goal: "imagineering."

The word conflates three others – image, imagination and engineering – and is thus a term entirely suited to this century: a century in which Descartes' metaphoric image of the cosmos, and all matter except the human body, as a lifeless clockworks or engine, became entirely concretized, i.e., literally lived out in every aspect of society. Through the triumph of Mechanism over Vitalism as the prevailing scientific and socio-economic paradigm, the machine became the highest value and most numinous symbol in the West.

Disney was thus the fulfillment of three centuries of Cartesian thought and rampant industrialization, but he was also the harbinger of the future. Reaching the peak of his career at mid-century, Disney was both sign and stimulus of a culture so thoroughly "imagineered" that the ability to imagine alternatives different from the prevailing technological dictates had all but entirely atrophied.

In the immediate post-World War II period, Siegfried Giedion observed in *Mechanization Takes Command:*

> The assembly line and scientific management are essentially rationalizing measures. Tendencies in this direction extend relatively far back. But it was in the twentieth century that they were elaborated and became a sweeping influence. In the second decade (with Frederick Taylor as the central figure), it was scientific management that aroused the greatest attention: the interest of industry, the opposition of workers, public discussion, and governmental enquiries. This is the period of its further refinement and of its joining with experimental psychology (Frank B. Gilbreth, central and most universal figure). In the third decade (Henry Ford, the central figure), the assembly line moves to the key position in all industry.

Writing in 1948, Giedion recognized the unquestioned power accruing to the key figure in the Mechanistic paradigm: the engineer. "In the time of full mechanization," he writes, "the production engineer gained sway over manufactures of the most diverse types, seeking every possible opening in which an assembly line might be inserted." Replacing artist, priest, shaman, and even politician as the most numinous figure of our time, the engineer (as Disney recognized) is the techno-magician fulfilling Descartes' dream.

But even such an astute observer as Siegfried Giedion could not have known that those "manufactures of the most diverse types" over which the production engineer would gain sway included literally every realm of life. Genetic engineering, or biotechnology, is in this sense the logical development of the rise to supremacy of technology as our primary metaphor and the engineer as hallowed techno-magician. Jeremy Rifkin, the most outspoken opponent of biotechnology, writes: "Engineering is a process of continual improvement in the performance of

a machine, and the idea of setting arbitrary limits to how much 'improvement' is acceptable is alien to the entire engineering conception."

The lack of limits in the engineering mind-set is reflective of boundary-problems in every area of the dominant, techno-imperialist culture. Indeed, the degree to which the boundary between human and machine has blurred is noted by Bill McKibben in *The End of Nature.* Discussing the effects of global warming through the overwhelming release of "greenhouse gases" like carbon dioxide, McKibben writes:

> Over the last century a human life has become a machine for burning petroleum. At least in the West the system that produces carbon dioxide is not only huge and growing but also psychologically all-encompassing. It makes no sense to talk about cars and power plants and so on as if they were something apart from our lives – they *are* our lives.

Even more disturbing, we must recognize that the last three words of McKibben's phrase, "cars and power plants *and so on,*" actually encompass those two huge interlocking areas known as "the culture industries" and "agri-business." The bullet we must bite is that petroleum-based film, video-tape and audio-tape comprise the centrepiece of the former, just as petrochemicals are the basis for the latter. Our dependency on fossil fuels is virtually total. Most problematic of all, we have exported that dependency as the model of "progress" everywhere, encouraging some five billion others to similarly become "machines for burning petroleum."

Having already achieved a petrochemicals revolution in North American farming praxis during the World War II years, the corporate non-farm sector controlling agriculture set its sights on the global market. During the 1950s and 1960s, scientists employed by multinational agribusiness developed new strains of hybrid seeds called high-yield varieties (HYVs) that were hyped as part of a so-called "Green Revolution" to end world hunger.

Susan George, author of *How the Other Half Dies,* has traced the Green Revolution back to 1943 when "Four American plant geneticists/pathologists financed by the Rockefeller Foundation were sent to Mexico" where they founded the forerunner of CIMMYT (Mexico's "non-profit" agricultural research centre) and developed corn and wheat HYVs from 1944 to the early 1960s. "With this success under its belt, the Rockefeller Foundation teamed up with Ford to repeat the performance in Asia – this time with rice – and founded the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines in 1962."

The Green Revolution was heavily promoted throughout the Third World, especially between 1965 and 1973. Countries were encouraged to abandon traditional farming methods and adopt the new HYV monoculture farming methods to produce cash-crops with mass yield to be sold on the world market. Such crops were highly dependent on massive use of petrochemicals – pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers – sold by the same companies which developed the "miracle seeds." As Jack Doyle documents in *Altered Harvest:*

> In 1967, the Indonesian government contracted with Ciba-Geigy to provide the technical apparatus for an experimental Green Revolution rice production project. Following this contract, companies such as Hoechst, AHT, Mitsubichi, Coopa, and Ciba-Geigy all worked with the Indonesian government in dispensing the ingredients of the Green Revolution – including fertilizer, pesticides, and management services, and the miracle seeds themselves.

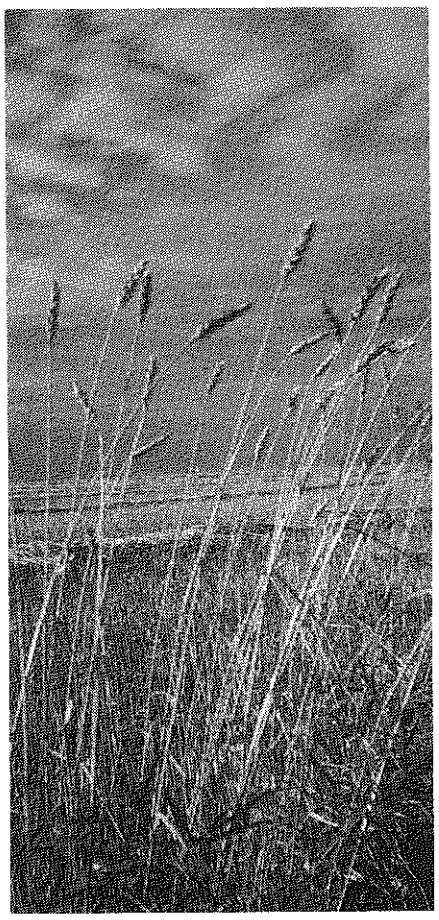
As a result, more than twenty percent of Indonesia's wet-rice land – roughly 2.5 million acres – had become part of the Green Revolution by 1970.

This transformation to HYV monoculture happened throughout the underdeveloped world as companies like Imperial Chemicals Industries (ICI), Monsanto, Bayer, and Dow also jumped on the monoculture HYV bandwagon of promotion. As Susan George documents, the main beneficiaries of Green Revolution hype were Mexico, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Nepal, North Africa, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, which turned over millions of acres to the new wheat and rice strains. According to George, in many countries American interests pushed the Green Revolution "as an alternative to land reform and to the social change reform would require."

In many countries American interests pushed the Green Revolution "as an alternative to land reform and to the social change reform would require."

While increasing cash-crop yields, the new farming methods of HYV monoculture nevertheless had several serious repercussions. First, they almost completely replaced the subsistence crops by which a given region had previously supplied its own food base. This meant that peasant farmers and the local population were forced to rely on imported foodstuffs since the land had been turned over to cash-crops for export.

Second, the new farming methods of the Green Revolution threw millions out of work in the rural areas of underdeveloped countries. As Susan George notes, "In the beginning, the Green Revolution



In both agribusiness and "the culture industries" the same goals prevail: mass yield, cash-crops for export, uniformity of product

increased the need for labour; there were fertilizers and pesticides to be spread; moreover, there were two harvests a year. Hired labourers saw the increased yields and increased their wage demands accordingly. Tractors do not present this disadvantage, as wealthy farmers were quick to understand."

Similarly, rice HYVs introduced in Indonesia "changed harvesting practices" because the big landowners bought First World tractors for tilling, thereby replacing traditional jobs for women in the rice fields. As well, they invested in new rice milling technology, through which some two million women rice pounders lost their work.[1] Made redundant by the new technologies which the wealthy landowners quickly adopted, millions of rural peasants across the Third World were forced to migrate to the cities to look for work.

Such disruption by agribusiness interests occurred throughout the underdeveloped world during the 1960s, mainly benefitting the multinationals of the First World and the tiny percentage of landowners in Third World countries. The Green Revolution was more than an increase in crop volumes through HYV monoculture; it was a fully technological revolution and intended as such by the corporate interests involved. Even more specifically, it meant that Third World agriculture would become just as addicted to petrochemicals as the First World.

But besides this vulnerability in HYV monoculture, there is another, initially unforeseen by the engineering mind-set enthralled by mass-yield. Acres and acres of a single genetic strain of one crop may adequately meet the agribusiness criteria of uniform plants all ripening at the same time, all same-sized for packaging, and all ideal for machine-harvesting, but such uniformity makes the entire crop fully susceptible to any new strain of pest or any other unforeseen factor. Ironically, the desire for total control of the crop through monoculture has often constellated its opposite: loss of the entire yield because of this uniform vulnerability. It is this feature of monoculture, as well as its dependency on petrochemicals, that is motivating many farmers to return to traditional practices involving mixed crops, crop rotation, and organic methods.

It should not surprise us to learn that the U.S.-exported Green Revolution in agriculture historically coincided with that country's effort to establish television networks throughout the Third World. During the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, U.S. corporate and network advisors convinced most of the underdeveloped world to invest in TV hardware, thereby becoming dependent on the glut of American programming available for export.[2]

In both agribusiness and "the culture industries" the same goals prevail: mass yield, cash-crops for export, uniformity of product, but the comparison is even more specific. Just as the Green Revolution "miracle seeds" brought with them an entire socio-economic transformation of the recipient countries – including a reliance on imported petrochemicals, foodstuffs, new technologies and a complete disruption of traditional culture- so, too, the simultaneous adoption of TV hardware (that "miracle seed" of U.S. enterprise) brought with it another layer of socio-economic transformation that included reliance on imported TV programming, consumer products, and a more decisive disruption of traditional culture.

In both instances, the underdeveloped world was enfolded into U.S. monoculture, as thoroughly as Canada had already been subsumed by the same processes. As U.S. anthropologist Edmund Carter once noted: "We use media to destroy cultures, but we first use media to create a false record of what we are about to destroy."

It is not surprising then that at the same time both the exported Green Revolution and TV revolution were utterly transforming the underdeveloped world, the Disney enterprises offered North American TV viewers a series depicting peoples and places around the world. Carpenter writes:

> Twenty cultures were chosen, scattered among tundra, desert, and jungle, but even though the people dressed in different clothes and ate different foods, they were all alike, members of a single culture. That culture was *our* culture – more accurately, our cliched image of ourselves that might be called the Hallmark greeting card view.... The audience enjoys a painless, undemanding, mirrored image of itself, under the illusion that it is experiencing an alien culture.

All real differences were collapsed into those sentimental "universals" that reassured us, in Carpenter's words, that "though people differ in colour and creed, they all love, quarrel, protect their children, etc., exactly as we do." Disney had long done the same to animals through his TV series about nature that depicted wild animals as cute suburbanites in disguise. In terms of his people and places series, Carpenter writes, "The message is clear: we should love them because they are like us. But that statement has its questioning brother: what if they aren't like us?"

But Carpenter was writing in the late 1960s. The question has since become meaningless through the rampant spread of monoculture world-wide. It now can be said, with Bill McKibben, that human life is defined as a "machine for burning petroleum." Disney, with his obsession about death and his hatred of the land, must be smiling in his cryogenic vat. ◆

Joyce Nelson's latest book is Sultans of Sleaze: Public Relations and the Media, *published by Toronto's Between the Lines. She wishes to acknowledge financial assistance from the Ontario Arts Council for the writing of this "Culture and Agriculture" series.*

NOTES

1. *Asian Action,* Nov.-Dec., 1983.
2. See "The Global Pillage" in Joyce Nelson, *The Perfect Machine: TV In The Nuclear Age.* Toronto: Between The Lines, 1987.

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RON PARKS

Busking

The street performer's bug is like any other artistic addiction. You crave the excitement and the terror of putting yourself on the line every time out. Edith Piaf started on the street and continued to perform in Paris on her corner at times all through her professional stage career. For some it's just an easy way to make a few quick bucks when they move to a new town, but for most performers it's an art form.

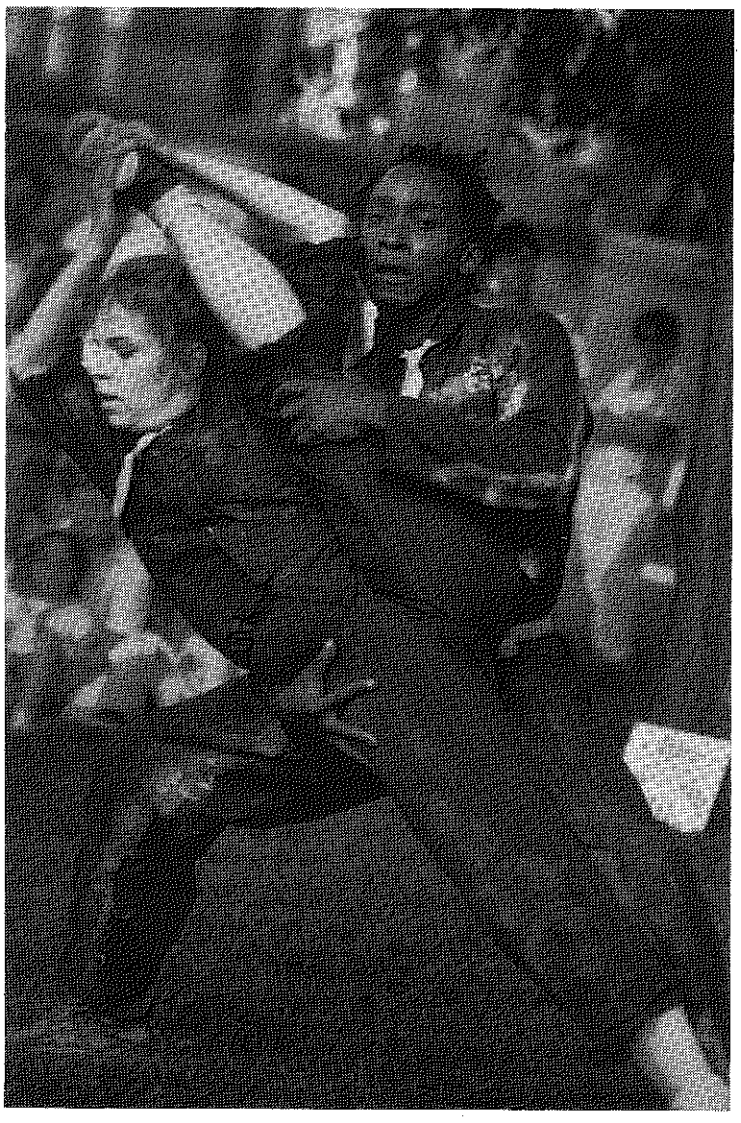
In any city the lowly Pan Handler can make substantially more than minimum wage on the street. Determined ones with a plan can make a lot. Some pan-handlers have a straightforward method of creating capital, like the blind guy who sees a little, whose act consists of repeating the same line "got a penny nickel dime quarter dollar." The phrase ripples out in a staccato four-four rhythm in time with the tapping of his cane, and he goes home ten pounds heavier in change. Another nice compact begging act is the kid about 20 or so dressed in a heavy plaid shirt, jeans and half worn-out sneakers carrying a sleeping bag. He is everymom's runaway son. It's a fine-tuned act that works well as long as the kid is on the move and doesn't stick around the same neighbourhood for too long.

In the politics of fun, individual participation is the beginning and end of democracy

Any busker who has reached the stage of their craft where a living is viable, i.e. they can afford a place to live, food, dental and health care, plus kids, is usually involved with some form of indoor entertainment. The gigs are usually far enough out of the mainstream club and concert hall scene, keeping the busker spirit intact. Daycare centres, old folks homes, store openings, anniversary parties and prisons are a few of the fringe gigs that could supplement a well-tuned and determined street act. Some buskers do make a living on the street, but they are the exception. It's a rare busker who has never worked indoors.

Top of the line street performers are to be found in cities around the world. In 1987 Halifax invited buskers from Amsterdam, Paris, London, Boston, Key West, New Orleans, Toronto, New York, Montreal and Los Angeles to participate in the first International Buskers Competition. First prize was ten thousand dollars, with another ten thousand for categories including most photogenic act, children's entertainer, best music act, etc. The first prize, called the People's Choice Award, was determined by votes from the public. One vote was included in a three-dollar picture brochure of all the acts. Thirty-eight busking acts, including jugglers, (lots of them, and eventually the big winners) musicians, puppet and mime troupes, one-man bands, novelty comedy groups, a travelling family band, an organ grinder with monkey, and a story teller performed on the streets in some of the warmest sunny weather the city had seen in years. The people came out nightly in the thousands blocking the streets and enjoying each other's company while children ran from crowd to crowd to get autographs from overwhelmed entertainers.

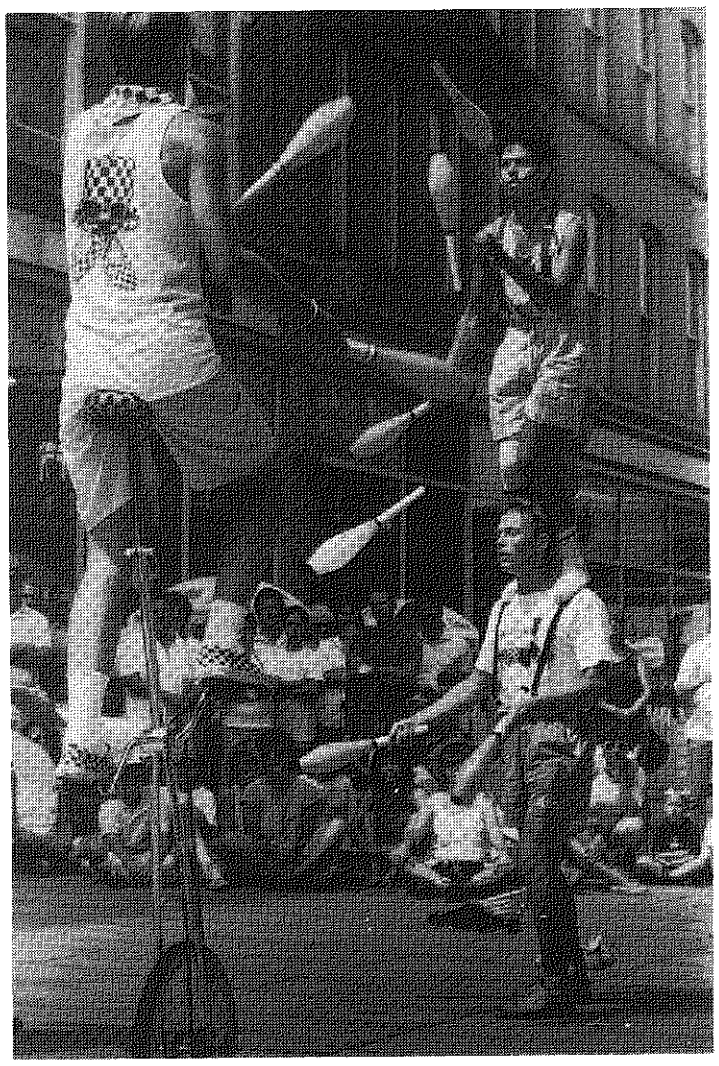
Busking is usually a spontaneous answer to the need for self-expression and the desire for freedom from conventional forms of work. It is also a way to make money with very little capital investment. Equipment can range from relatively expensive unicycles to a few pieces of coloured chalk, some metal cleats for taps or nothing but the human voice. Some parents find their most valuable resource is their children. Four young girls from four to 14 with dad on guitar sang for their



◀ *Special Blend* members Jessica Goldberg and Eugene Poku at the Halifax Buskers Festival / photo: Christopher Majka

supper as well as their lunch in Vancouver and could always make a buck from the tourists.

An act I met at the Halifax festival from Texas got started up when the man got sick and had to leave his job. His wife took the family guitar and went out on the street to perform. When he got better he joined the act instead of going back to work. Now the whole family travels and plays from the subways of New York to the streets of Halifax and Paris. They've even added an ageing uncle who plays fiddle and tells Henny Youngman jokes. Four kids play an assortment of instruments and dance. The youngest, barely walking, sits in a shopping cart and beats the drum, keeping great time.



▲ *Bounty Brothers* David Aiken, David Gomez and Henrik Boethe / photo: Christopher Majka

▶ Ron Parks in Halifax

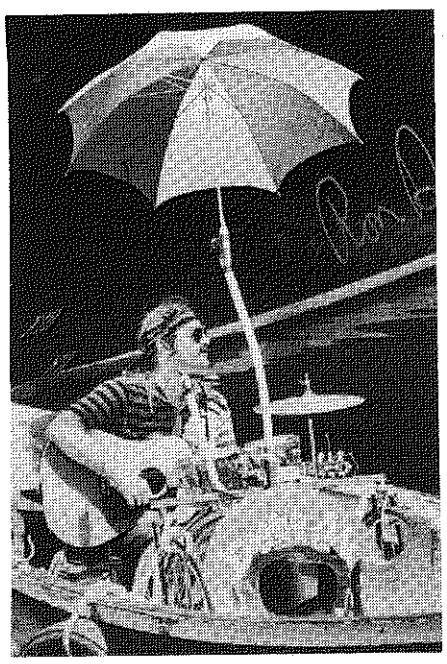
The oldest buskers I've seen perform at Historic Properties on the Halifax waterfront. Sadie and her troupe of old folks, all over seventy, play a snappy selection of memorable tunes and sing-alongs. Even the skateboard generation stops to listen. I dream of cutting such a gig someday.

The busking stage is also there for beginners and for those whose entertainment abilities don't fit into the mold of the more formal venues like clubs, TV or radio. A man with bottlecaps clamped to his fingertips, tapping out a rhythm on a tin can has his place in the music business, even if it isn't in the recording studio or as a warmup act for Eddie Van Halen. Outdoors is also a great place to practise, and young performers who have few places to play amateur gigs can always find a corner to cut their teeth on.

At St. Lawrence Market in Toronto there is a weekend busker who arrives at four a.m. He does a regular job during the week, so he's raring to go with the first light, full of all that pent-up job frustration energy. He has a spot that he likes and in order to get it he has to get there early. Market shoppers are up with the birds. After playing his classical guitar for eight hours he goes home with considerable cash. During a Saturday at the Market there will be 25 or so different acts including an old man playing spoons to taped tunes on a boom box, another old fella playing his guitar singing the praises of his elixir, cayenne pepper pop, three gents from Peterborough hoein' down some hot fiddle music, a complete South American ensemble, boom boom, toot toot, a Neil Young clone, an alley full of jugglers and a young girl playing bagpipes you can hear for a mile. All this and more within half a city block in Toronto the Staid.

Street performers are beginning to see their art as a vital expression for people to counterbalance the megabusiness of global TV culture

One of my most memorable busking experiences took place in Terrace Bay, a little town east of Thunder Bay. I just happened to stop for lunch after leaving Thunder Bay where I learned, for the first time, the rules about playing on liquor store property in Ontario, a big no no. There was a liquor store in Terrace Bay right next to a movie theatre. I could play on the theatre sidewalk and still be close enough to get the people's attention and donations. I was enough of a novelty in town to do some good trade. Then a whole swarm of kids came to the matinee at the theatre. They were with a birthday party so I got them involved with a few shakers and noisemakers. The mom came up with a nice folding bill and I was set to leave town with plenty of gas money for the old Chev. It wasn't to be. The theatre manager came out with an offer for me to play that night before the main show. The theatre had just been refurbished and was having its grand opening. This was a real gig. I decided to play a bit more to fill up the afternoon when out of the liquor store comes a guy loaded up with rum and beer. He walks straight over to me and says, "It's me thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. Will ya come and play for me at my house party tonight? I'm a Maritimer, there's a priest who sings, he'll be there, all ya can eat and drink, and I'll pay ya thirty-five bucks besides."



With the economy threatening to bottom out any day, more and more of us are looking for alternatives to the 40-hour work week that seems to be fast disappearing. Busking certainly isn't the answer to a sagging economy, but it does make sense for those with a little ham in them and the nerve to get over the first few times out on the street. After that it's an addiction no matter what the hat pulls in, and it's an honest living. It's entertainment for the people who pay what they can and see what they get before they pay. There are usually no big lineups to get in and the biggest pollution byproduct from the industry is laughter. As the world appears to shrink under the blanket of communications systems and the word "international" comes to mean "next-door," street performers are beginning to see their art as a vital expression for people to counterbalance the megabusiness of global TV culture. Given the eccentric, anarchistic nature of the busker, a natural, spontaneous, unique, original folk entertainment can survive the drone of the mass-produced tyrannical pop show.

In the politics of fun, individual participation is the beginning and end of democracy. The watch phrase should be a musical instrument in every home, or better still, an instrument or piece of busking gear for every TV in the house. Despite their individuality, minstrel buskers remain public property. They are accountable daily to the people. They are naked, vulnerable, and open to judgment every time out. There is no free lunch, no hiding out in the washroom, or sleeping on the job while the hourly wage ticks away. This closeness to hand-to-mouth existence is what expunges the tyranny of the pop show and by example strengthens resistance to it. ◆

***Ron Parks** has been a musician for 30 years: a rock drummer in the 60s and 70s; a one-man band in the 80s; and a concertina, clarinet, portable, acoustic street-musician-on-a-bicycle in the 90s. He currently maintains street corners in Toronto and Halifax.*

ROBERT GAUCHER

The Canadian Penal Press

A Documentation And Analysis

The penal press is a world-wide phenomenon which reached the height of its achievement in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in North America.

A survey taken in the United States in 1959 found that there were more than 250 penal press publications in Canada and the United States, reaching an estimated readership of two million *(Collins Bay Diamond,* January, 1959). Russell Baird (1967), in his study *The Penal Press* (which focuses exclusively on the United States), discovered that the penal press started in the late nineteenth century, with *Summary* (1883) from Elmira Reformatory in New York State laying claim to being the first publication. It was followed by *Our Paper* (1885), Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Concord, and *Prison Mirror* (1887) of the Minnesota State Penitentiary at Stillwater (Baird, 1967).[1] The Canadian penal press officially came into being on September 1, 1950 with the publication of Kingston Penitentiary's *Telescope.* Since then there have been more than one hundred separate penal publications produced and published by prisoners in Canada's federal penitentiaries.

I have read and subscribed to numerous penal press publications since the early 1960s, but did not give them the serious consideration they are due until recently. My new interest was spurred by my doctoral research into the history of Canada's prison system, and the dearth of available documentation which provides an account of the experience of criminalization and incarceration from the perspective of those subjected to it. While working on my reconstruction of the history of the development of Canada's prison system (See Gaucher, 1982; Gaucher, 1987), I came to readily accept the arguments of historians such as George Lefebvre (1949) and George Rude (1970) concerning the necessity of taking into account what they refer to as "history from below." In my research I discovered neither organized sources nor analytic texts which addressed this aspect of Canadian criminal-justice in its formative years, and I would argue that the same situation holds for the contemporary post World War II period. My interest has also been heightened by pedagogical concerns. Frustrated by having to rely on sensational commercial work by writers like Roger Caron (1978) and Steven Reid (1986), or specious academic products whose editors force feed prison writers to reproduce the editors' perspectives and prejudices (See Adelberg and Currie, 1987), I had almost given up assigning such ethnographic reading to criminology students.[2] Upon re-examining some of the penal press publications I had accumulated over the years or currently receive, it became clear that they constituted an exceedingly rich ethnographic source of prisoner experience and prison life in Canada during the post-war period of prison reform and change.

A distinction needs to be made between what I define as "outside directed magazines" and "inside directed or joint magazines." Outside directed magazines are intended to serve as a means of communication with the Canadian public, and therefore feature an analysis of contemporary criminal-justice issues and serious prose on the experience of criminalization, incarceration and recidivism. Joint magazines are directed at the population of a particular prison and focus on reporting institutional activities such as sports, social events and club endeavours, and on providing information on new programs and legislation, coming events and internal news. Both provide insight into the perspectives and understanding of prisoners and the everyday experience of prison life in Canada.

Penal press publications constitute a rich ethnographic source of prisoner experience and prison life in Canada during the post-war period of prison reform and change

In the outside-directed publication, one can trace prisoners' views on the whole post World War II program of

Ste. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary (Laval)

Sports Bulletin	An inside magazine. Weekly commenced publication May 17, 1950 to September 1951.
Pen-o-Rama	An outside-directed magazine with wide distribution, fully bilingual. Monthly commenced publication May 1951 to November/December 1968.
Exodus	An inside magazine in French. Monthly commenced publication November 1970 to 1971(?); series information minimal.
Ravon D'Espair	An inside magazine in French. Bi-monthly commenced publication in October/November 1976 to 1977(?); series information minimal.
L'Optique	An outside magazine in French. Monthly commenced publication in November 1982 to October 1986(?).

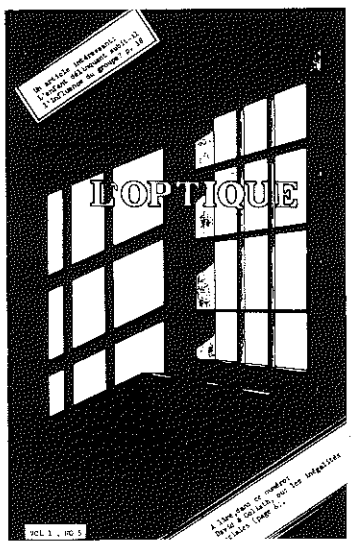
prison reform and its implementation, and on the major problems and concerns that dominate their lives while in prison and after release. For example, one can trace the history of the parole board, from its initial proposal and eventual creation through its changes and adjustments up to the present. It is possible through these publications to discover the central issues debated and to gain an insight into prisoners' perceptions, conclusions and recommendations vis-a-vis conditional release. Within these publications as a whole, one also discovers the burning issues of responsible prison editors and writers over the past four decades. In the 1950s, a major theme was the problem of juvenile delinquency, and prison writers expressed strenuous opposition to the incarceration of youthful offenders in maximum security (warehouse) penitentiaries. Another major focus was on penal reform programs and vocational and educational training. Through their press, prisoners lobbied on the prison reform issue in an attempt to gain public and official recognition of the need to reaffirm and go forward with newly developed programs.

The problems of post-release, the stigmatization of a prison record and the need for post-release facilities and work opportunities for the released "reformed convict" were also addressed. More localized concerns were also thoroughly debated in these journals. For example, British Columbia Penitentiary's *Transition* (1951-1966) often focused on the area of drug addiction, drug legislation, the legalization of drug use (following the British model of that period), and the use of the Habitual Criminal Act to control drug users.

Even the strictly "joint magazine" provides (in total) a fertile insight into the everyday activities of prison life and prisoners' concerns and problems. One also gets a sense of the "temper and feel" of a particular penal institution through its publications. For example, Warkworth Institution's *The Outlook* (1972-1989) presents an image of a tightly controlled institution in which the inmates are somewhat subservient and pliable to the authority of the staff and administration, while publications from Millhaven Penitentiary (e.g., *Odyssey*, 1978-1982) reflect the high level of tension, despair, and opposition which has characterized that institution's history.

Special publications produced by specific prisoner groups (and speaking only for those groups) such as Native Brotherhood groups, Lifers' groups, or Alcoholics Anonymous groups, provide a particular perspective on criminal justice and correctional issues. They also reflect the historical changes that characterize Canadian society in this period. In this regard, I have found the publications of Native Brotherhood groups to be particularly interesting. As the people of Canada's First Nations' perception of their role and social situation changed in the containing society, these changes were reflected in the move towards traditional ways, and spiritual understanding amongst Canada's large incarcerated Native population. The history of the Native Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods in Canada's penitentiaries can be researched through the penal press, and in doing so one encounters many outstanding Native leaders, such as Malcolm Norris (Dobbin, 1981) and Art Solomon who were instrumental in their development.[3]

The widespread distribution of these publications and the support of public figures like Gardner heightened media attention and the Canadian penal press was acknowledged, refuted and analyzed in the outside media

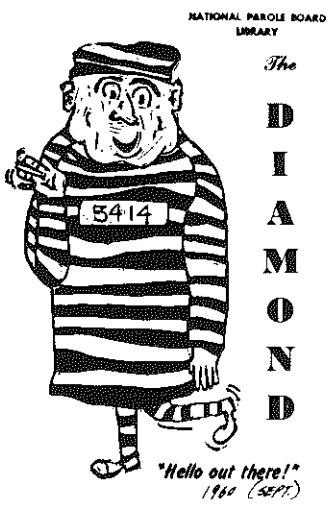


Canadian Membership in the International Penal Press

The penal press and its exchange network was a major international phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s. The legacy of this phenomenon is apparent in the continuation of the penal press today. While the centre of interest was the United States and Canada, most European nations (including Soviet block countries), Australia, New Zealand, Latin American and Far Eastern nations had prisons which published magazines as members of the International Penal Press network. Membership in the International Penal Press was a dominating factor throughout these two decades, providing direction, form and encouragement to prison writers and editors throughout the network, and acting as an unofficial but highly influential censor. A publication was not a success until it was formally recognized within the press exchange columns of the network's publications, and many new magazines or new editorial staffs waited anxiously for the network's approval or disapproval. Publications which were "too supportive" of prison regimes and administrations, those which were too bitter and cynical, or those which simply did not meet the demanded standards of quality (demeaning rather than raising the public's view of prisoners) were openly censured in the penal exchange columns.[4] To receive wide-spread recognition was the ultimate sign of success, as was the reprinting of outstanding articles in fellow penal press publications. Canadian penal press publications were no exception to this rule, and until the demise in the late 1960s of the principal magazines from Canada's maximum security penitentiaries, Canadian publications were staunch members of this network.

The Canadian penal press peaked in the 1950s, with widespread outside distribution. Kingston Penitentiary's *Telescope* (1950-1968) was the forerunner of penal publications here, establishing the credibility needed to gain official support – and it was strongly supported by Penitentiary Commissioner R.B. Gibson and his office. After publishing for six months within the institution (September 1949 to February 1951), it was allowed to solicit outside subscribers. By June 1951 it had 625 outside subscribers, which grew to 1,500 paid subscribers by June, 1958. The Kingston Prison for Women provided columns, articles, and poetry from January 1951 and editorial staff from May 1952 until the mid-1960s. The success of *Telescope* opened the door

to publications from all the remaining penitentiaries, with the exception of The Kingston Prison for Women. Saskatchewan Penitentiary's *The Pathfinder* (February 1951) was the second subscribed magazine, followed closely by British Columbia Penitentiary's *Transition* (March 1951), Ste. Vincent de Paul's *Pen-O-Rama* (May 1951), Dorchester's *The Beacon* (July 1951) and Stony Mountain Penitentiary's *Mountain Echo* (September 1951) and the *Collins Bay Diamond* (January 1952). This is the roster of publications that firmly established the penal press tradition in Canada. Each with its own individual style and focus, they ably represented Canada in the international network. Next to *Telescope, Pen-O-Rama* (1951-1968) was the most successful, by 1958 having a paid subscribers list of 4,000 and numerous outside advertisers. A fully-bilingual magazine (all articles translated), it is noted for its outstanding prose on prison life and serious treatment of criminal-justice and penology issues.[5] Like all of these Canadian publications, it benefited from the stability and continuity of its editorial staff and their serious commitment to the standards of the International Press. Except for *The Beacon* (1951-1971), all were printed in institutional print shops as adjuncts to vocational training programs, giving the high quality writing within their pages a high quality presentation.



The importance of stable, continuous editorial groups needs to be stressed, for this stability enabled staff to learn their trade and maintain the quality that developed over a long period of time. These Canadian publications clearly reflect the high standards and abilities of their staffs. Mentioning only a few: Gord Marr, Cliff Bastine and Sam Carr of the first editorial group of *Telescope,* Vladimir Nekrassoff of *Pen-O-Rama,* Gus Constantine and Lyle Jennings of *The Pathfinder,* Blondy Martin and Gord Thompson of *Transition,* Tony Ricardo of *The Beacon* (whose eight plus consecutive years as editor, 1953-1960 is the record), W. Lake and Bud Winters of *Mountain Echo,* and Nancy Ward-Armour of *Tightwire.* Outstanding writers and poets such as Doug Bevans, Harvey Blackstock, Frank Guiney, G. Hjalmarson, Steve Reid and George Watson all appear in these pages,[6] as do outside supporters of note such as Earle Stanley Gardner, whose eloquent support of the penal press in other publications was constantly reprinted in the International Penal Press.[7] The widespread distribution of these publications and the support of public figures like Gardner heightened media attention and the Canadian penal press was acknowledged, refuted, and analyzed in the outside media throughout this period. Some of Canada's major penal reformers were also enthusiastic supporters, and spokespersons such as Alex Edmison figure prominently in these publications.

The problems facing editorial staff were and are considerable. Confined by the isolation of incarceration, faced with the prospect of pleasing both administration and fellow prisoners, constrained by often unintelligible censorship demands, and in the first two decades, by the prospect of being panned throughout the penal press network, editors had to walk a tightrope of conflicting demands and expectations in a situation where failure could have serious personal consequences. As long as the right tone was attained, one which pleased the Commissioner's office, prison administrators and prison populations, the continuity of staff and publication required to maintain a quality product was forthcoming. This held throughout the 1950s, but changes in the mid-1960s spelled the end of this golden era of the penal press in Canada.

History And Development Of The Canadian Penal Press

The Canadian penal press got its tentative beginning with the publication of *Vocation* (1949-1954), a correctional staff-produced publication involving prisoner writers at the Federal Training Centre at Laval, Quebec. It was an occasional publication which focused on and lobbied for the new vocational training program being put into place within the federal penitentiary system, and which was already established in this prison. With the permitting of sports programs (1949), largely prisoner-organized, there was a tentative encouragement of prison populations to get involved in their own reform and to take some small measure of self-determination in prison life. This led to the creation of a weekly, *Sports Bulletin,* at Ste. Vincent de Paul in May 1950, the Kingston Penitentiary's *Softball Review* in the same year, and *Sports Week* in April 1951 in Dorchester Penitentiary. Similar "joint magazines" may have been published in other penitentiaries at the time, though I have found nothing to that effect. The *Collins Bay Diamond* (1951-1968) exemplifies the process of their early developments. Commencing as an inside sports magazine in 1950, it became an outside directed penal publication in April 1951, and started taking paid subscriptions in January 1952.

Telescope established the credibility of this endeavour and served as a notice to the penitentiary authorities that penal publications were a positive means of selling the new "humanized reform-oriented prison" they were in the process of trying to create under the leadership of Commissioner R.B. Gibson. Magazines were officially encouraged and financially supported by both the Commissioner's office and senior management. The professional presentation of these publications, the product of vocational print shop programs, spoke highly of the scope and quality of the "new" vocational training component of the "new" penitentiary system. In short, these magazines were a valued means of publicity for the "new" penology, and their large paid subscription lists, advertisers, and country-wide distribution assured that the message got across to the public.[8] News media and literary circles

Collins Bay Penitentiary

C.B. Diamond	Started as an inside sports magazine in 1950, then outside-directed magazine from April 1951. Monthly commenced publication April 1951 to April 1968(?).
Avatar	An outside-directed magazine. Monthly commenced publication June 1974 to September/October 1978 when replaced by C.O.N.T.A.C.T.
C.O.N.T.A.C.T.	An outside-directed magazine. Bi-monthly commenced publication October/November 1978 to 1981(?).
Ice Carrier	An inside magazine. Monthly commenced publication May 1986 to present.
CONquest	Ten-plus Fellowship Group Newsletter. Monthly commenced publication February 1970; series information minimal.
Olympiad News	Newsletter of the "Exceptional People's Olympiad Committee." Quarterly commenced publication Spring 1978 to present.
Tocsin	An outside-directed magazine of the John Howard Society Group. Bi-monthly commenced publication in September/October 1980. Occasional from May 1982 to present.
Tribalways Brotherhood Newsletter	An outside-directed Brotherhood publication. Bi-monthly published in 1980 and 1981; series information minimal.
Fallacy of Life	An outside-directed magazine of the Infinity Lifers' Group. Occasional commenced publication October 1986 to present.
Spiritual Newsletter	An outside-directed religious magazine. Bi-monthly commenced 1986(?) to present.

Millhaven Penitentiary

Momentum	An outside-directed magazine. Bi-monthly, date commenced publication unknown; published in 1976; series information minimal.
Highwitness News	An inside magazine. Monthly commenced publication in November 1983 to March 1988.
Millhaven Flash	An inside magazine. Bi-weekly commenced publication in summer of 1986; series information minimal.
The Partisan	An outside-directed magazine. Bi-monthly commenced publication April/May 1988 to present.
Quarter Century News	A special group publication of a criminal justice and self-help group. Quarterly commenced publication in Fall 1973 to 1974; series information minimal. First penal press publication from Millhaven.
Odyssey	A special group publication of a criminal-justice study and self-help group. Bi-monthly commenced publication August/September 1978 to November 1982(?).

responded and gave additional publicity to these unofficial organs. In the 1950s, the Canadian penal press was constantly publishing letters of congratulations and support from Commissioner Gibson and his staff, from the particular institution's administration and the classification staff, and from supportive prisoner aid and voluntary assistance groups.

I am not suggesting that these prison magazines did not represent the voice of the prisoner, as their penal press mandate demanded, and as their logos and mottos suggested. This collaboration of prison editorial staffs and penal administrators was tenuous if somewhat contradictory. Certainly the penological innovations of this era were supported by prison populations, and editorial staff also "had" to meet prisoners' demands and deal with their perceptions of the role and function of the penal press. However, this was a period of optimism throughout the penitentiary system, and prisoners were also affected by it and gave tenuous, but real support to the liberalization of the regime (e.g., sports, outside visitors and groups) and to the promise of serious vocational and educational training programs becoming available. So prison editors were supportive of the direction of the new penology in Canada, and came to constitute one of the most important and influential lobbies for its implementation in the federal system. Furthermore, these early editors accomplished even more by consistently presenting a substantial, critical analysis of Canadian criminal-justice and penology. The articles from the penal press in the 1950s constitute an important critical mass of commentary and analysis on penal issues in the formative years of Canada's modern prison complex.

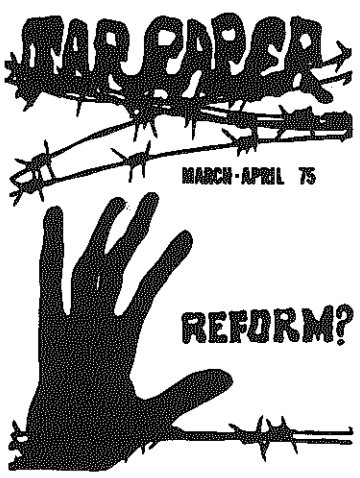
By the late 1950s, the effectiveness of the new reformative and increasingly rehabilitative (i.e., treatment oriented) penology was being questioned. For prisoners the promise of the continued development of vocational and educational opportunities was not being met. Nor was acceptance by and reintegration into civil society of "reformed convicts" forthcoming. By this time prisoners who had "benefited" from vocational training (etc.) were returning to penitentiaries with a different story. Discovering that their vocational and trade credentials were not accepted outside, that stigmatization was as problematic as ever, and that promised employment opportunities did not materialize, they added an important ingredient to the developing cynicism vis-a-vis the new "reformative" penology. And so, the temper and internal social relations within our penitentiaries started to change for the worse. Increasingly, reform programs were used by prison staff and the new parole authorities as a "hoop" through which the convict had to jump to win release. As the rising refrain from front line custodial staff, "The cons are running the joint..." started to have an effect on official and public perceptions, as well as staff actions and, therefore, internal staff-prisoner relations, the penal press came under a new, critical scrutiny. The growing internal problems resulting from the "control versus reform" contradiction spilt over onto the pages of the Canadian penal press. The chummy, positive relationship of editorial staff to the Commissioner's office and prison administrators changed to one focusing on the issue of censorship, and the failure of reform programs (existing as policy) to be actually implemented in the spirit and material manifestation promised. The result was a constant turnover of editorial staff, irregular publication (affecting subscriptions, advertising and distribution) and a lack of consistency in style, form and content. The tone of the writing reflects the situation, and is more biting, openly critical and oppositional, or muted and silenced. The key to keeping this penal press flotilla in the water was their membership in the International Penal Press, and the network's intersubjectively shared conversation over the goals, focus and necessity of the penal press.

By openly discussing their problems, the International Penal Press provided support, answers and strategies for dealing with the changing circumstances of their publications. A fixation with the role of the penal press, and the role and function of the editor and editorial staff is highly characteristic of the Canadian penal press in the 1960s and indicates a number of important factors being addressed. First, as tension rose within the penitentiaries and prisoners increasingly rejected the new penal programs as a fraud masking the traditional goals of domination of the prisoner by the prison complex, the format, style and substance of the prisoners' publications became an important point of contention within prison populations. The population's demand that their magazines more stridently air prisoners' grievances was made in a period when censorship was heavy and administrative demands were largely in contradiction with those of the prisoners. This is played out in the pages of this press with the endless discussion and editorial commentary on the question of tone and content – bitterness and "crying" charges being countered with exhortations to be positive or to write more substantial critical analysis. Second, the process of penal reform itself slowed in the 1960s, the result of strong custodial staff opposition to a liberalized penal regime and the rehabilitative goal, and of a growing confusion and self-doubt amongst senior management staff of the penitentiary service, and their academic and professional advisors and supporters. In this atmosphere, the penal press was a liability whose previous officially endorsed lobbying activities were now defined as "incessant demands," particularly their lobbying "to continue to move forward" towards the originally stated goals of prisoner reform through training and opportunity, an essentially critical task expressed as front line experience.

As the rising refrain from front line custodial staff, "The cons are running the joint ..." started to have an effect on official and public perceptions, the penal press came under a new, critical scrutiny

By the mid-1960s, the majority of the original Canadian penal publications had ceased publication or were going through their death-throes. In the winter of 1968, *The Beacon* reported that it was the only publication still operating from a maximum security prison in Canada, and was the last of the original group of publications. It also ceased publication later in that year.

The Canadian penal press is transformed at this moment. Its focus on education and conversing with the public, its strong identification with the International Penal Press, the regularity and continuity of its publications, its widespread distribution and large readership, and prisoners' positive evaluation of their publication goals and achievements, disappeared. The lack of the Penitentiary Service's continued financial support and curtailment of outside subscriptions and distribution was justified administratively as the product of the irregularity of penal press publications. Tighter censorship and new rules in the form of Commissioners' Directives pushed prison publications to be much more "joint-oriented," amounting to inside informational newsletters, containing far less substantive writing by prisoners, particularly on criminal-justice and correctional issues. The highly characteristic irregularity of publication (mid-1960s to present) and constant change in format, style, quality and even title, indicate the massive destabilization of prison populations and therefore prison publications, which was taking place at this time. The wholesale classification of prisoners and their redistribution into different types and classes of penitentiaries started seriously in the mid-1960s with the commencement of a major prison construction program. Later, a "rehabilitative system model" was put into place which encouraged, indeed demanded, that prisoners move through the system towards less secure institutions and gradual release through "community corrections": temporary absences, day parole, parole and mandatory supervision. This movement within the prison population was supplemented by the constant use of involuntary transfers. Though there were other important factors in the destabilization of the prisoner community (e.g., the new rehabilitation programs and new prison regimes) and its drift towards a state of social disorganization, it was the constant movement of prisoners which had the most debilitating effect on the editorial continuity and regularity of publication for the Canadian penal press. Add to this situation a constant turnover of editorial staff and the closing down of publications because of disputes over institutional censorship and the growing turmoil developing in the larger penitentiaries, and the demise of the Canadian penal press in this period is easily understood.



The exceptional history of *Tightwire* (1973-1989), the penal press publication of the Kingston Prison for Women, confirms the importance of institutional and editorial stability on the continuity of the penal press. A bi-monthly that started publishing in 1973, it represents the penal press of the past in terms of its consistency of policy, format and quality. It is the only Canadian publication of note which maintained its ties to the International Penal Press network into the 1980s. It presents a consistently critical analysis of Canadian criminal-justice and corrections, and ably addresses the particular problems of women who are caught within the social control bureaucracy. I attribute the stability and consistency of *Tightwire* to the lack of wholesale transfers and constant movement of this prison population (because no other federal facilities exist) and the minimal changes in the internal regime which have occurred. Constant changes in policy and program demands in federal (male) penitentiaries, under the guise of prison and prisoner reform, have contributed strongly to their social disorganization. This has not happened at the Kingston Prison for Women, and is reflected in the regularity and quality of *Tightwire*'s 16 years of continuous publication.[9]

There were a number of exceptional magazines in the 1970s. *The Outlook* (1972-1989) published from Warkworh Institution is the longest current, continuous publication. I especially enjoy *Tarpaper* (1971-1980) from Matsqui Institution, with its exceptional graphics and cartoons, and a strong commitment to publish substantive analytical essays on social control issues. Taken collectively, the post-1960s era of Canadian penal publications presents a portrait of the changing composition of our federal institutional populations, their internal social relations and organization (increasingly disorganization) and the basis for current problems and debates.

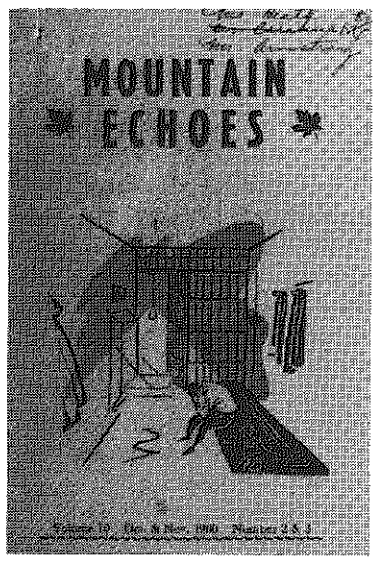
The Canadian penal press has experienced something of a resurgence in the 1980s, and once again includes some high quality, outside-directed writing. A new understanding of the penal press has been developing, and its editors have provided it with a new format and style. Of particular note are special group publications, such as the Collins Bay John Howard Society Group's *Tocsin* (1982-1989) or the "Infinity" Lifer Group's newsletter, *The Fallacy of Life* (1986-1989). Special Group publications can be traced back to the 1960s. In 1965, the Jaycee Group at British Columbia Penitentiary commenced publishing *Bridgeview* (1965-1973?), the first such publication which concentrated on its club activities and the Jaycee program. Many Native Brotherhood Groups had newsletters and magazines dating back to the 1960s. What is new is the specific and exclusive criminal-justice focus of some of these recent penal press publications. I have traced this strand back to its prototype, *Quarter-Century News* (1973), the publication of a criminal-justice study and self-help group at Millhaven Penitentiary. It was followed by *Odyssey* (1978-1982), the magazine of a similar type of group at Millhaven. The latter is a highly critical, analytical and combative publication. Today these special group publications, along with a few more traditional (stable) publications like *Tightwire* and *The Outlook*, constitute the core of prisoners' writing on criminal-justice in the penal press. ◆

Stony Mountain Penitentiary

Mountain Echo	An outside-directed magazine. Monthly commenced publication September 1951 to May/June 1965(?).
Inside-Outside	An inside magazine. Monthly commenced in 1968 to 1969; series information minimal.
Terminator	An outside-directed magazine. Bi-monthly commenced publication in January/February 1974 to 1977(?).
Vanguard	An inside magazine. Bi-monthly commenced publication in 1979(?) to 1980(?); series information minimal.
Stony Mountain Flyer	An inside magazine. Monthly commenced publication in 1978(?) to 1983(?); series information minimal.
For the Record	Series information minimal. Published in 1986 and 1987.
Terminator	An outside-directed magazine. Monthly commenced publication Spring 1988 to present.

Reprinted from: Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, *Vol. 2, No.1, Autumn, 1989.*

NOTES



1. The latter is of particular note, having been started through the financial contribution and editorial support of a group of prisoners which included three of the infamous Younger Brothers, Cole Younger playing a major role in its production (See Baird, 1967).
2. To try and offset this problem we have recently started a new publication, the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* which presents the analysis of prisoners and former prisoners on various aspects of criminal-justice and corrections.
3. Art Solomon, an Ojibwa spiritual leader and elder, has devoted the last two decades to

establishing Native religious rights in Canada's prisons. He has twice been awarded honorary doctorates from Canadian universities, is a member of the International World Council of Churches Steering Committee, and a central figure in the International Prison Abolition movement.

4. Penal exchange columns were featured in most penal publications throughout the 1950s and 1960s. They served as a means of recognition, camaraderie and censorship, and as a way to carry on internal debates and to maintain contact.

5. See for example Vladimir Nekrassoff, "About Penitentiaries: A Review of Trends and Ideas," in *Pen-O-Rama* October 1961, Ste. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary.

6. Blackstock, Hjalmarson and Reid have published commercial books on prison and their lives, while Frank Guiney has written the best historical pieces on prison life and its subculture that I have encountered in the pages of the penal press. He has also been the recipient of numerous awards for his poetry.

7. See for example, E.S. Gardner's articles in his column "The Court of Last Resort" in *Argosy* magazine throughout the 1950s. His pieces such as "The Importance of the Penal Press" were reprinted by many of the Canadian penal press publications.

8. Note that institutional financial support, large paid subscribers lists, and advertisers allowed publications to be distributed free to many media outlets and professionals working within the criminal-justice system.

9. For a current commentary on Kingston Prison for Women, see J. Mayhew (1988).

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DON **WEITZ**

Phoenix Rising

Its Birth And Death

Phoenix Rising was a unique magazine, not simply because it was the only anti-psychiatry magazine in Canada, but also because it was published by former psychiatric inmates. *Phoenix* began publishing in March of 1980 only to die in July, 1990 due to lack of funding. During its decade of publishing, the magazine was a supporter of the international psychiatric inmates' liberation movement. Thirty-two issues were produced, including three double issues, exposing psychiatric abuses and challenging the tyranny of psychiatry over people's lives. We focused on a wide variety of social, political and human rights issues faced by psychiatric inmates and survivors: homelessness, electroshock (ECT), forced drugging, and the abuse of the rights of women, children and elderly prisoners. We did our best to draw attention to the myth of "schizophrenia," to the deaths caused by psychiatric treatment, and to the psychiatric victimization of gays and lesbians. It is doubtful that another magazine will replace *Phoenix* in its fearless exposure of psychiatric abuses.

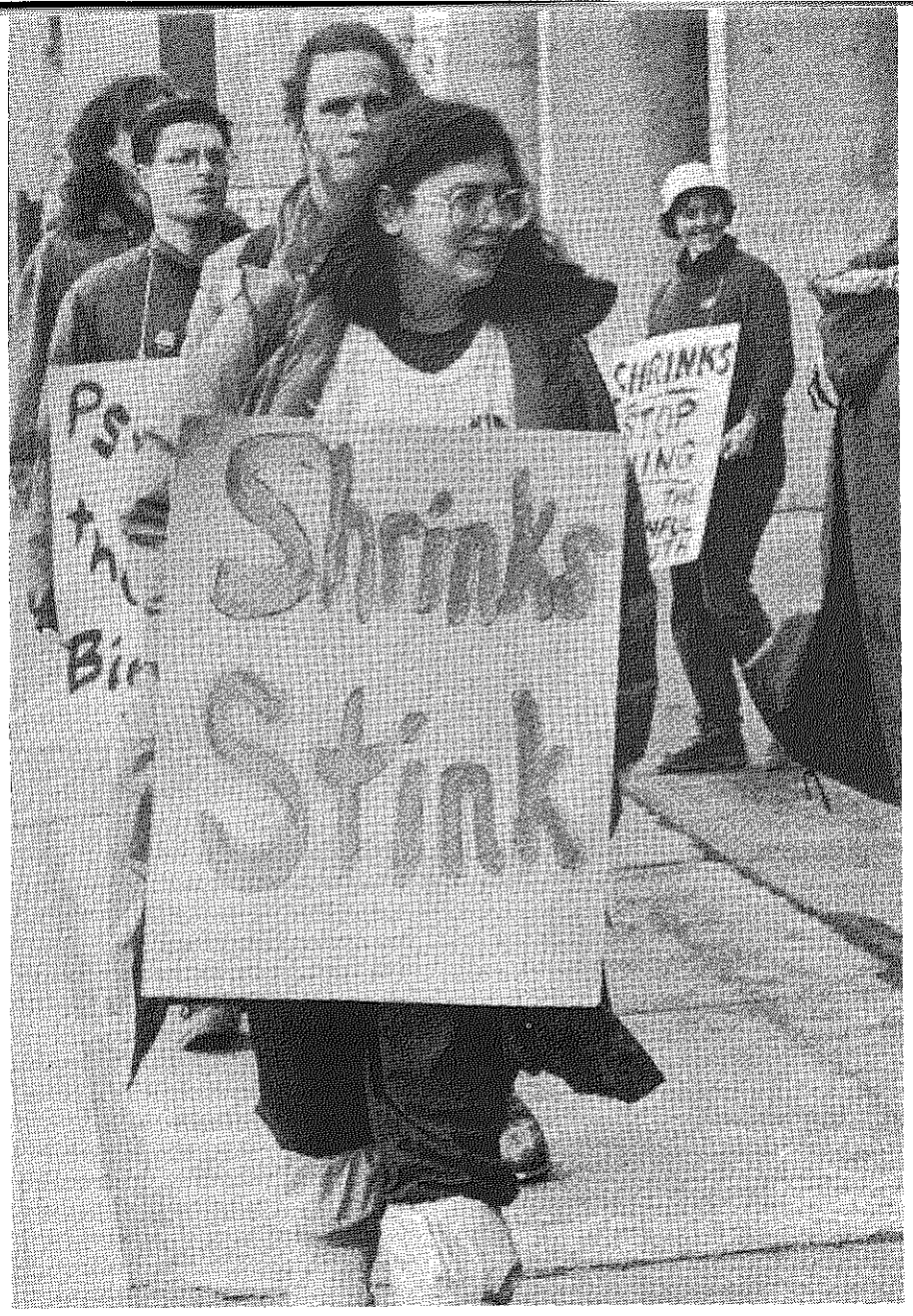
I founded *Phoenix Rising* with Carla McKague in 1979. We were both psychiatric survivors. We had read and been inspired by *Madness Network News,* the first inmates' liberation and anti-psychiatry magazine in the U.S., *In a Nutshell,* a newsletter of the Mental Patient Association in Vancouver, *The Cuckoo's Nest,* a now-defunct Toronto newsletter, and the outspoken critical writings of dissident psychiatrists such as Thomas Szasz, Peter Bregging and R.D. Laing. Unfortunately there are still very few dissident mental health professionals in Canada.

Inspired by these other publications, we believed that a magazine published by psychiatric survivors like ourselves could become a credible and powerful voice for psychiatric inmates and ex-inmates living in Canada and throughout the world. It could help to empower our brothers and sisters by publishing their personal stories, poems and artwork, by encouraging them to keep writing and speaking out, and by allowing them to establish contact with other groups and individuals. When *Phoenix* finally emerged, it became a creative outlet for many people who had been damaged and rendered voiceless by institutional psychiatry.

The first four issues were published in one year out of a two-bedroom apartment on Spadina Road in Toronto. A small, committed editorial collective gradually formed. The first collective consisted of Carla, Cathy McPherson, Mike Yale, Joanne Yale and myself. We held frequent meetings in the apartment, and one bedroom became the office where we did all the typing, editing and layout. At the time we had no word-processor or computer. We began with very little funding, receiving a $5,400 grant from PLURA, a multi-denominational Canadian church group which gives start-up grants to grassroots groups.

Our first issue came out in March 1980. The front cover featured an illustration of the mythic phoenix rising from its ashes, a symbol of the psychiatric survivor reborn after a kind of death by fire. In our first editorial we outlined our goals and philosophy and coined the term "psychiatric inmate" to replace "mental patient." A few excerpts from this editorial are worth quoting:

> We'd like *Phoenix Rising* to serve as a rallying point for inmates and ex-inmates who want to bring about changes in the "mental health" system



Phoenix Rising was probably the first Canadian periodical to point out the close links between the psychiatric inmate and the regular prisoner

◀ Resistance Against Psychiatry (RAP) members picket Ontario Psychiatric Association conference / photo: Konnie Reich

that is all too often damaging rather than helpful, and oppressive rather than liberating. ...We want to educate the public about the shortcomings and injustices of the present system..., and challenge the myths and stereotypes attached to "mental illness".... We've chosen to use the term "psychiatric inmate" rather than the conventional one of "mental patient." We were there ... against our will. We lost such basic rights as the right to choose our own therapist, the right to refuse treatment, the right to leave the institution – even the right to make phone calls or have visitors. These are all rights which *medical* patients take for granted. In short, *we lost control over our lives,* in the same way that inmates in prison do. The fact that what happened to us was called "therapy" rather than "punishment" does not obscure this basic fact. ...Our hope is that by providing medical and legal information, and bringing into the open the problems of stigmatization and community rejection, by encouraging inmates and ex-inmates who have something to say to say it in *Phoenix Rising,* by pointing out abuses and injustices in the "mental health" system, and above all by offering real and constructive alternatives, we can hasten the day when the terms "mental patient" *and* "psychiatric inmate" are things of the past.

With these principles in mind we began several columns. One was called "Phoenix Pharmacy," in which we warned our readers of the numerous damaging and often deadly – not "side" – effects of many psychiatric drugs, effects like brain damage, tardive dyskinesia (a grotesque and permanent neurological disorder), and death. At first we focused on the "minor tranquilizers" such as Valium, but we soon explored the damage of antidepressants, lithium, and powerful neuroleptics – euphemistically called "major tranquilizers" or "anti-psychotics." We started a "Profile" column which highlighted psychiatric survivors and self-help groups doing outstanding advocacy, organizational or political work in the community. We also had a "Rights and Wrongs" section where we reported some key legal decisions directly affecting survivors.

Phoenix was probably the first Canadian periodical to point out the close links between the psychiatric inmate and the regular prisoner. In an effort to establish a common understanding of our oppression, as well as a basis for future solidarity, we used our second issue's editorial to bring attention to the shared experiences of inmates and prisoners: sensory deprivation, forced treatment, and solitary confinement. The following are excerpts from that first editorial on psychiatric inmates and prisoners:

An inmate ... is "a person who is confined in a hospital, prison, etc." The "etc." includes "mental hospitals" and other involuntarily entered institutions in which people's daily lives are totally controlled by the authorities.

People in prison and psychiatric inmates are deprived of many of the same civil and human rights. These include freedom of movement; the right to vote; the right to communicate openly with anyone; ...the right to privacy and confidentiality; the right to wear one's own clothes; the right to refuse any treatment or program; the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and the right to appeal any abuse or violation of these and other rights while locked up.

...In addition, people judged to be suffering from a "mental illness" and about to be involuntarily committed to a psychiatric institution are automatically denied the right to *due process*.... They're denied the right to legal counsel before and during commitment procedures. Due process is the legal right to a trial or public hearing *before* loss of freedom. People accused of criminal acts are routinely given their day in court before imprisonment. However, people who have committed no crime but have been judged "insane," "psychotic," "suicidal" or "dangerous" by one or two psychiatrists are routinely denied the right to defend their sanity in court before being committed.

Prisoners are traditionally given a fixed, definite sentence; they know when they will be released. Involuntarily committed inmates generally do not know this...

Statements from *Phoenix Rising* contributors:

Carla McKague, co-founder of *Phoenix Rising*, a lawyer with Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, and the co-author, with Harvey Savage, of *Mental Health Law in Canada* (Butterworth's, 1988):

I feel as if a child has died. It is one of the great glories of my life that I helped start *Phoenix Rising*. Don and Cathy and I began it as an infant. It grew up exactly the way you would want your child to grow up, and I was unbelievably proud of it. I can't express the grief I feel over the fact that *Phoenix* is not going to be published again. But it survived for ten years, and in that ten years its accomplishments were enormous.

Maggie Tallman, Business-Circulation Manager of *Phoenix Rising*, 1985-1989:

I'm so proud of *Phoenix*; I wasn't there at the first or last, but I was part of it. Everyone who was there never really left.

I particularly remember the letters. Every letter I opened and answered added to the urgency and assured me it was right and worthwhile – letters from Mulroney on the drug bill, letters from "name withheld so I'll not be fired," from psychiatric nurses, LGWs, APSWs, advocates, psychiatrists, relatives, inmates, prisoners, foreign officials asking for direction, but most of all, letters that started "I just found your magazine, thinking I was the only one to have gone through this experience—thank God I've discovered you!."

Tears! I remember tears – God knows mine included. Crying with an Adult Protective Service Worker (APSW) over the permanent effects of Tardive dyskinesia in a 15-year-old client, and for an 80-year-old mom who had ground her teeth to the gum from jaw spasms, and who couldn't read my letters because of the "side effect of the side effect" – benign ectoblepharospasm which painfully spasmed her eyes shut for hours on end.

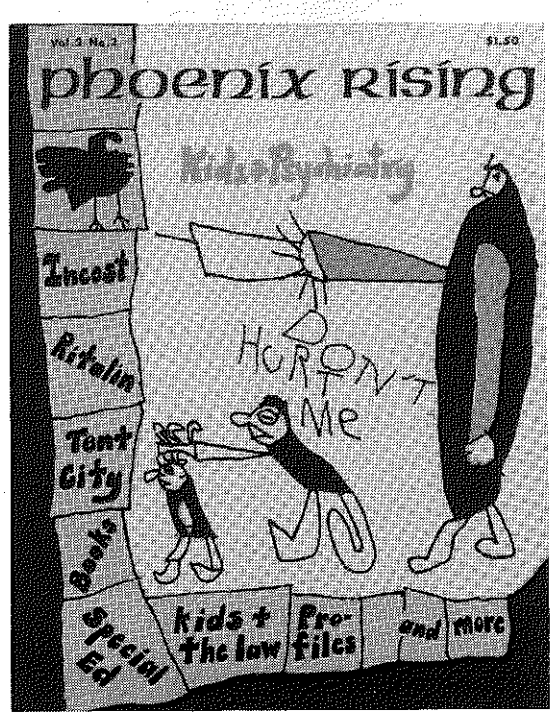
The joys were endless. Seeing changes in legislation, in people's thoughts and attitudes, in treatments and in treaters. Seeing people come off the "lifetime" meds, get their shit together, get a *real* job, get on with living. But there was also the sadness of seeing dreams go down the drain becuase the hope was lost and they were too damned tired to try – and we had no "secret" pill to give them to ease the road.

It ripped my heart out to see Don attending inquests and visiting prisons. There were the out-of-the-closets (David Reville), the dedicated (Carla McKague), the informed Public Relations experts (June Callwood), the take-charge-and-speak-outers (Chris and Irit), the old fighters through thick and thin (Alf). But most of all those who remained anonymous in their letters, but gave us love and thoughts, and a reason to be. The bottom line is we were right!

For me, *Phoenix Rising* was an inspiration, a dedication and an accomplishment, and I sure do miss it.

Irit Shimrat, an editor, writer and researcher for *Phoenix Rising*, 1986-1990, and the Coordinator for the Ontario Psychiatric Survivors Alliance:

Phoenix Rising is one of the best things that ever happened to me. I came out of two tortuous years in the "care" of mental health professionals knowing that I had been abused and debilitated, but feeling very isolated in my condemnation of the psychiatric system. When I found out, quite by accident, about



Both prisoners and psychiatric inmates are victimized by forced "treatment." Unlike medical patients, inmates have no right to refuse *any* psychiatric treatments, many of which are dangerous and damaging.... Refusal can easily be overridden by an appeal [by a psychiatrist] to a review board; it is often interpreted as just another symptom of the patient's "mental illness."

...Regular prisoners are often placed in "behaviour modification" programs.... Sometimes prisoners, especially those judged to be rebellious, ringleaders, or trouble-makers, are used as guinea pigs in dangerous and even life-threatening psychiatric experiments utilizing...drugs such as scopolamine and anectine, or "aversive conditioning."

...The inmate who is probably the most abused and discriminated against is the person who is committed to a psychiatric institution through the criminal process, either as "unfit to stand trial" or as "not guilty by reason of insanity" under a lieutenant-governor's warrant. They share with the civilly committed psychiatric inmate the uncertainty about when, if ever, they'll be released, and with the regular prisoner the lack of protection against the routine use of damaging experimental psychiatric treatments.

To call people "patients" when they are locked up and treated against their will is not only insulting, but a lie. Euphemisms such as "mental patient," "mental hospital" and "mental illness" obscure the facts: that "mental hospitals" are in fact psychiatric prisons; that the institutional psychiatrist is actually a judge-jury-warden; that "psychiatric treatment" is a form of *social control* over unco-operative or non-conforming people whose lifestyles (usually working-class) are too different from or threatening to that of the upper class white psychiatrists; that terms such as "diagnosis" and "treatment" are fraudulently applied to non-existent "mental illness"; and that psychiatric "treatment" is frequently experienced as punishment.

We are not "patients." We share with our brothers and sisters in prison the experience of being an inmate: loss of freedom, loss of civil and human rights, loss of control over our own bodies and minds, and stigmatization for life.

In the early 80s we published our first women's issue, "Women and Psychiatry," in which we ran an interview with Phyllis Chesler, a prominent feminist psychologist, and the author of *Women and Madness* (1972), an examination of the abuses and sexism of traditional, male-dominated psychiatry. In our second women's issue we continued to highlight psychiatric sexism with the article "Mental Health and Violence Against Women," a powerful feminist statement written by seven women psychiatric survivor-activists. A feature article on psychiatric malpractice by Greta Hofmann Nemiroff described a woman's frustrating struggle to sue the psychiatrist who sexually abused her. In this issue we also reprinted a compelling piece on women and shock treatment written by radical social worker Paula Fine which documents psychiatry's excessive use of electroshock on women and condemns it as psychiatric rape.

The most powerful statement on electroshock in Canada was published by *Phoenix Rising* in April of 1984. This issue was part of an ongoing critique of electroshock aimed at the abolition of this barbaric procedure, with its effects of permanent memory loss, difficulty in reading and concentration, and brain damage. Shock doctors and other physicians still try to sanitize this procedure by calling it "electroconvulsive therapy" or simply, "ECT."

In our Fall 1980 issue we ran a feature story on the tragic drug death of 19-year-old Aldo Alviani. Although there was an inquest into Alviani's death, the case simply served to whitewash a psychiatric crime. The Coroner's Jury decided the cause of Alviani's death was "therapeutic misadventure"—in other words, just a medical accident—after Alviani was forcibly subjected to roughly ten times the usual dose of Haldol in less than 24 hours. *Phoenix Rising* published a press release covering Alviani's death as well as a report on the demonstration sparked by the news of his demise. This was Toronto's first public protest against psychiatric drugging and institutional deaths.

Because legal rights have been central to our cause, over the years we took

We believed that a magazine published by psychiatric survivors like ourselves could become a credible and powerful voice for psychiatric inmates and ex-inmates living in Canada and throughout the world

◀
Kids and Psychiatry issue / cover: Michael Steven

particular interest in the legal implications of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and "The Charter of Rights and Freedoms vs. the Psychiatric System" was the title of a double issue published in August 1985. We were awarded a grant from the federal Justice Department to produce this issue which was largely written by supportive civil rights lawyers. The Charter spells out many of our fundamental civil, legal and human rights. Section 15, the crucial equality section, is particularly relevant to psychiatric survivors since it legally prohibits discrimination against people with a "physical or mental disability." Section 7 of the Charter is of even more importance because it affirms "the right to life, liberty and security of the person...." These rights are violated every day in virtually every psychiatric institution or ward in Canada. Furthermore, Section 12 of the Charter affirms "the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual treatment or punishment." In our view, cruel punishment includes such things as forced drugging, electroshock, and chemical or mechanical restraints such as four-point restraints, which, we argued, should be declared unconstitutional. Lawyer Harvey Savage wrote an excellent piece on the Lieutenant Governor's Warrant (LGW) legislation, which authorizes indefinite detention for those declared "unfit to stand trial" or "not guilty by reason of insanity." He criticizes the LGW as unjust and unconstitutional, and cites the case of Emerson Bonnar, who was incarcerated for 17 years as unfit to stand trial for attempted purse-snatching. Our "Charter" issue featured a reprint of the antipsychiatry movement's historic "Declaration of Principles," probably the most concise and powerful antipsychiatry/liberation statement produced so far. We also reprinted "The People's Charter," a down-to-earth translation of the Charter's legalese which was first published in *Just Cause* (a now-defunct disability rights journal).

In September 1988, the board of directors of On Our Own, the original publisher of *Phoenix*, tried to evict us. The board claimed that the magazine rarely paid any rent, which was untrue. We first moved to a warehouse, then a year later to new office space at Euclid and College. By incorporating ourselves as "Voice of the Psychiatrized of Ontario, Inc." we separated the magazine from On Our Own. Despite the odds, we brought out two more issues which rank among our very best.

Our May 1989 issue focused on the psychiatric atrocities suffered by prisoners. It scrutinized solitary confinement, forced drugging and the dangerous behaviour modification "programs" which still exist in Oak Ridge, the notorious behaviour modification wing of Penetang. In it, we established a Prisoner Network which prisoners and ex-prisoners could use for advocacy, legal advice, or support, and we identified over eighty prisoners' rights groups, newsletters and journals in the United States, Canada, and other countries, including thirty-seven in Canada. We made a special effort to reach out to more prisoners, to let them know that we care deeply about their issues and the injustices they, like us, have experienced. ◆

▲
Will Pritchard drawing from 1990 Lesbian and Gay supplement

***Don Weitz** is a psychiatric survivor, a freelance writer, a researcher and an outspoken critic of the psychiatric system. He is the co-editor, with Bonnie Burstow, of* Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada *(Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988).* *He wishes to thank Sarah Evans, Susan Folkins, Joe Galbo and Sally Lee for their editorial suggestions, and to acknowledge financial assistance from the Ontario Arts Council for the writing of "Phoenix Rising: Its Birth and Death."*

the existence of an anti-psychiatry magazine, I realized that other people felt the same way I did. I was not alone after all.

Being the editor of *Phoenix Rising* for four years was a wonderful experience. I got to find out a lot more about how psychiatry works. And helping disseminate this kind of information was extremely good for my mental health. At last, I had a sense of getting revenge on the people who had come so close to ruining my life – psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychiatric social workers. At last, I got to say publicly, "Look you hurt me. And you hurt a lot of other people too."

I felt very connected to the people writing and working for the magazine, and I think that connection helped all of us begin to heal the wounds inflicted on us by the psychiatric industry.

Bonnie Burstow, a radical feminist therapist and writer, and the co-editor, with Don Weitz, of *Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988):

As its subtitle announces, *Phoenix Rising* was a "Voice of the Psychiatrized" – and oh, what a strong, relentless voice it was! For hundreds of years the frightening knowledge of the psychiatric inmate had been silenced by the medical jailers who labelled, controlled and invalidated. In issue after issue of *Phoenix*, inmates spoke out against the labellers, and every time the survivors spoke, the tyranny and the lies of psychiatry became clearer and clearer.

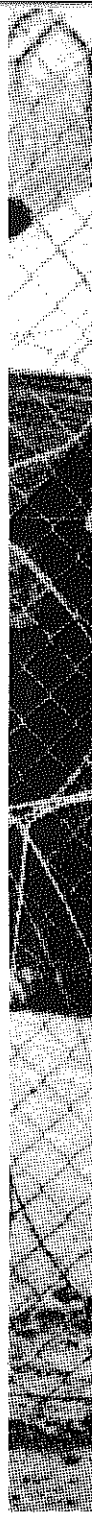
Like its sister, *Madness Network News, Phoenix Rising* allowed us to place anti-psychiatry out there so firmly it became something which stuck and would not go away. It was empowering for the survivors who read it, for it expressed loudly and clearly what many knew and still more suspected. It said, "Yes, the drugs are poisoning you. Yes, drugs and shock are making it harder to think." It said, "No, no, you are not alone; it happened to me too." It said, "No you are not crazy for thinking it; they *really are* stealing your life." It helped people have the courage of their convictions and break out of the system. It helped people reclaim their Selves.

For me personally, *Phoenix* was an act of solidarity with our sisters and our brothers who are being and have been labelled, drugged, shocked, stigmatized, incarcerated, and lied to. It was a joining-with. It was education. It was love. It was also a hell of a lot of work. Year after year, I found myself writing articles, helping plan issues, speaking with funders and writing some more. There were a number of times when I was concerned with the amount of time being spent, and when I withdrew temporarily to address other issues and other parts of my life. Invariably, however, after a very short retreat, I would think of the psychiatric holocaust, and I would think of Don blasting the system with every breath he drew and every word he spoke; and I would pick up my pen again. It was hard and demanding work all right. But it was also a great thing – a *mitzvah*. It is always a *mitzvah* to participate in a genuine awakening. I am proud to have been a part of *Phoenix*. And I know that whether it is being published or not, *Phoenix* remains a part of me.

PRISON CULTURE

Countering the Occupation

A "battle of the 'power of the will'
against the 'will of power' "



by **Barbara Harlow**

Early on the morning of 3 October, Riad Malki, a professor of engineering at Birzeit University, was arrested by Israeli military authorities in the Occupied West Bank.

Malki, who was taken from his Ramallah home following a two-hour search of its premises by four Israeli intelligence agents, had been scheduled that day to attend a press conference at East Jerusalem's National Palace Hotel on the "tax war" that had been taking place since 20 September in the West Bank village of Beit Sahour. One hour before the conference, that would have begun to penetrate the communications barrier surrounding the besieged village, was to begin, the Israeli army declared the entire area surrounding the hotel to be a closed military zone, thereby cordoning off public discussion as well as disclosure of the events ravaging the villagers of Beit Sahour. The simultaneous arrest of Dr. Riad Malki served as an additional stratagem in this military cordon designed to interrupt and ultimately foreclose alternative information, its political analysis, and their popular dissemination.

The forcible obstruction of communication, its coercive appropriation and the attempted reformulation of the organizational narrative of the Palestinian resistance has been a crucial and escalating dimension of the Israeli political and military response to the Palestinian intifada since it began on 9 December 1987. It targets as well cooperative efforts between Palestinians and progressive Israelis. Michel Warshawsky, for example, the head of the Alternative Information Center, was recently, following a long trial, sentenced to a non-parole jail term of 20 months and ten months suspended arrest, with a fine of 10,000 NIS (US $5,000). His crimes were providing typesetting services to "illegal organizations" and holding printed material belonging to "illegal organizations." This printed material was a booklet for Palestinian activists that included guidelines of how to resist torture and interrogation by the secret service.

A critical and contested institutional site in this struggle over the control of the communication of information is the Israeli prison apparatus which, during the two decades of occupation, from June 1967, and preceding the intifada, had

▲
The Ketziot detention camp also known as Ansar 3

housed, for varying periods of incarceration, more than 20,000 Palestinian political detainees. In the first two years of the intifada this number has increased dramatically, with over 40,000 arrests, putting great pressure on the prison facilities themselves and necessitating the opening of new prison camps such as Ansar 3 (Ketziot) in the Negev desert, and detention centers like Dhahriyya, just outside of Hebron, and even using the militarily-closed Palestinian schools as temporary holding stations.

As a penal system, one of whose major targets is identified as the Palestinian people and its resistance to Israeli military occupation (and indeed the prison population in Israel can be largely distinguished as Israeli criminal and Palestinian political prisoners), Israeli prisons function on multiple levels not only to incarcerate individuals, but to destroy the collective and organized Palestinian popular resistance and its networks by isolating and containing alternative information systems through the imposition and attempted enforcement of bureaucratic, disciplinary and "official" channels of information and discursive exchange. From the inaccessible location of Ansar 3 in the Negev desert, to conditions of detention that include holding the prisoner incommunicado, with no contacts with lawyer, Red Cross representatives, or family, for the first 18 days of arrest, to the practice of administrative detention that allows for the holding without charge of a suspected dissident for six months (renewable indefinitely), to the significance of the confession as constituting sufficient evidence in and of itself to convict the detainee, to the practice of torture during interrogation and the use of informers (*asafir*) inside the prison cells as a means of extracting information and undermining prisoner political solidarity, the Israeli prison apparatus is constructed in such a way as to perform the combined functions of both repressive and ideological state apparatuses.

In prison, however, and within the framework of the collective work of political opposition, counter-strategies of communication, instruction, mobilization and organization are exercised and developed as critical weapons in the struggle itself. The theoretical and practical reconstruction of the site of political prison as a "university" for the resistance, a training ground for its cadres, is more than a literary topos or metaphoric embellishment in the writings and "prison culture" of political detainees. This holds true whether in occupied Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, Northern Ireland or in the United States. Examining the relationship, for example, between the policing system in Britain with its various definitions of criminality and the recent history of legal and cultural constructions of English national identity through and against the laws promulgated with respect to immigration, Paul Gilroy has argued in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* that "new kinds of struggle can be solidified by the very institutions which are deployed to answer their demands and to channel them into fragmented solutions: into separate cases and claims." Similarly, in his reading of "Marxist Theory and the Specificity of Afro-American Oppression,"

Cornel West has described the processes whereby this deployment of what are presented as "structural constraints" are reconstrued through the analytical practices of political engagement as "conjunctural opportunities." The institutional and physical restriction of political detention are thus forcing the outlines of the dichotomizing definitions of a separatist relationship between communication and cultural practices on the one hand and institutionalized state repression on the other. They also establish the discursive grounds for launching a frontal challenge to a dominant history of the state-sponsored suppression of internal and external dissent.

Walid al-Fahum is a Palestinian lawyer in Israel and the Occupied Territories and an advocate for Palestinian political detainees. In *These Chains That Must Be Broken,* a collection of writings originally published in newspapers between 1974 and 1977 on the prison situation under Israeli occupation, al-Fahum, who began his legal work in the offices of the Israeli woman lawyer and activist Felicia Langer, recounts an exchange that he had with one of his clients. The two men, from their respective positions, are discussing the unsatisfactory prison conditions and the lawyer comments to the prisoner on the excessive crowding inside the cells. The crowding is so extreme, he says, it is as if the detainees were "packed in like sardines in a can." The prisoner, however, responds, "No, my friend," and when al-Fahum expresses surprise at his answer, the prisoner adds, "we are like matches in a book of matches." Asked to explain, he replies, "Sardines are arranged next to each other in the can with the head of one next to the tail of the other. With a book of matches, the heads of all the matches are facing in the same direction."

Al-Fahum, from outside the prison and despite his own political commitment, sees at first only the physical crowding of the prisoners. The prisoner, inside, discerns instead, through his own participation in it, the active ideological counter-organization of the prison population against the prison system itself. The dominant "communications frame" with its demand for objectivity, neutrality, and distance occludes, often even suppresses, the representation of alternative paradigms of resistance. "Popular insurrection," however, according to Don Pinnock in his study of "culture and communication" in South Africa in the 1980s, "demand[s] acute peripheral vision."

"We organized ourselves collectively because the prison officials wanted us to remain as isolated individuals."

While the dominant autobiographical tradition in western literary history has valorized the personal trajectory, the *Bildung* or socialization of the individual, prison memoirs, and in particular those of political detainees, reformulate that trajectory as a collective and contestatory response to the ascendant forms of social and cultural domination that require privatization, isolation and atomization of the individual-oriented social system. "We organized ourselves collectively," writes Nizam Aboulhejleh in his *Portrait of a Palestinian Prisoner,* "because the prison officials wanted us to remain as isolated individuals." Two Palestinian prison memoirs from the pre-intifada period outline some of the issues at stake in political organization within and against the occupation prisons, forms of organization that served critically to maintain the resistance in a period of disarticulation. One, *Cell Number 7,* is a story of apparent failure, the other, *Cell Number 704,* a history of success, but both are major contributions to a larger strategic narrative.

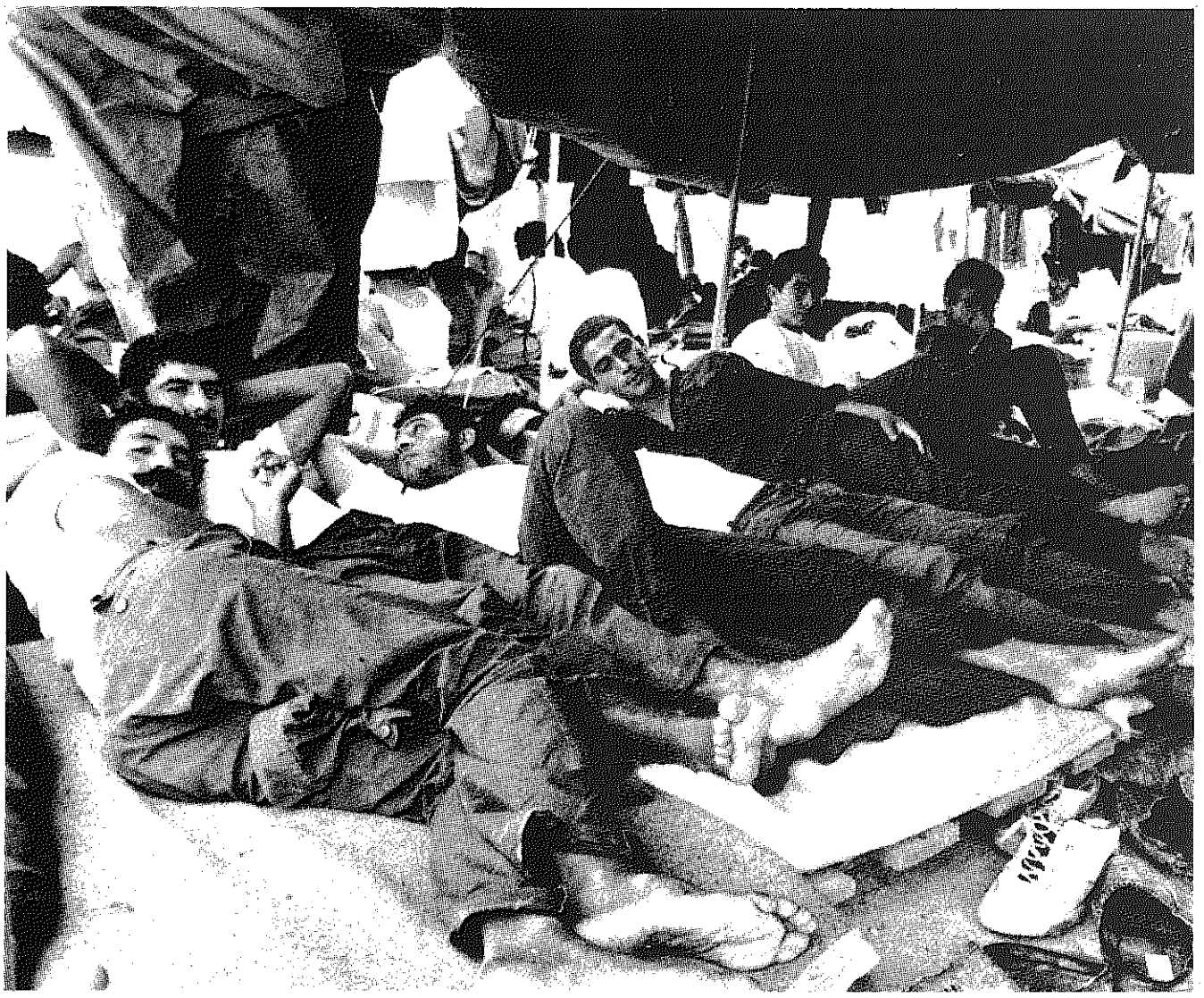
"The rattling of chains reached our ears, and then silence fell on our cell." Fadl Yunis's prison memoir opens with the transfer of himself and a group of his comrades from Asqalan prison to Gaza Central prison. In Asqalan Yunis had been among the organizers of a hunger strike and it was the intention of the prison authorities to undermine the solidarity of the prisoners by removing the "hotheads," or *ru'us hamiya,* the reputed leaders of the prisoners' struggle. But it is only later that Yunis and his fellow transportees understand the nature and full extent of these machinations. When the narrative of *Zinzana raqm 7* (*Cell Number 7*) begins, the prisoners are still in their cell at Asqalan, about to be shackled in preparation for the move. The fetters which bind the prisoners two by two make it difficult for them to move together, to walk in step with each other. The chains of bondage enforced by the prison system are still another manifestation of the regime's effort to undermine the prisoners' own forms of solidarity.

> The gatekeeper fumbled with the heavy prison door and opened it in front of us. Several soldiers led us outside with several others walking behind us. One soldier opened the door of the "busta" (the cell used to transport prisoners) and with difficulty Adnan and Abdallah walked over to it, followed by Hasan and Muhammad. Musa and I tugged our heavy possessions toward the door of the "busta." With his left hand Musa lifted up his belongings and put his foot on the first step; lifting his right foot, he had to yank roughly at mine which I then lifted and placed it next to his, so that he got to the second step. I pulled myself and my belongings up with great difficulty while the sergeant shouted meanly, "Hey … Hey…" It wasn't easy to make my steps match with Musa's…

The lessons of solidarity and collective action that had been learned in Asqalan prison are out of place in Gaza, which was reputed in the prison system at that time

for its lack of prisoner interaction, and Yunis wonders to himself on arrival, "Is this the way they're going to treat us, and will we remain silent like these others are silent?" Adnan, Abdallah, Hasan, Muhammad, Musa and Adel (Yunis's name in the narrative) adopt instead a policy of organization amongst themselves and a strategy of passive resistance in order to secure the minimum comforts they require – such as some fresh air for Musa who suffers from asthma. Even this minor resistance is met by the intransigence of the prison guards and their superiors and two of the prisoners' number are transferred to another cell. The effort to divide the prisoners against themselves is endemic to the prison system, and in Gaza prison it is effected even in the questions put by the interrogators who seek to coerce the prisoners into accounts of themselves that would be consonant with the system's hierarchical and authoritarian narratives. "How many prisoners are in Asqalan?" "About 260." "No, 290. But how many of these would you suppose are hotheads?" Yunis' answer deflates the question: "All the prisoners..."

Paramount among the issues that confront the newly arrived prisoners is the question of whether or not to continue in Gaza prison the strike they had left behind in Asqalan. But what can six of them do alone? Nor can there be a strike if no one has heard about it. Public awareness is required. The focus of *Zinzana raqm 7* is the issue of collective organization, how to develop it and then the struggle to maintain it against the divisive pressures exerted by the prison authorities: separate interrogations, unannounced, for unpredictable reasons, at different times and of varying lengths; nights punctuated by screams of pain from the cell directly above; the use of female wardens to tempt the prisoners into laxity and collaboration; visits from the families who try to convince their sons to be less "troublesome," and, finally, the permission to receive newspapers – so that the prisoners can learn of the Arab defeat in the October 1973 War. While the efforts on the part of the transferees from Asqalan to organize the Gaza inmates ultimately meet with failure, the internal cohesion within their own group and their ability to integrate into that group new prisoners introduced into their cell remains steadfast and effective. But in Asqalan prison too, the strike has failed to achieve any of the prisoners' demands, and the Egyptian prisoners captured in the October War are looking forward to their return home as the result of a prisoner exchange. The Palestinians remain behind; as the guard tells Yunis, "You're not prisoners of war." But in his final words, Yunis reminds him, "I've learned, my friend, that you know now that Palestine costs dear."



▲ Ketziot detainees in the Negev desert

Like Fadl Yunis, a member of Fatah within the PLO arrested in 1970 for carrying out operations inside Israel and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment spent in various Israeli prisons, Jabril Rajoub came to know in the Nafha and Jnaid prisons the diverse features of the Israeli prison regime. Rajoub's prison memoir *Zinzana raqm 704 (Cell Number 704)* recounts too a narrative of struggle and collective organization. Although the political and cultural conclusions remain much the same in *Cell Number 7* and *Cell Number 704,* Rajoub's narrative, which relates events a decade later, comes to a different ending from that of *Zinzana raqm 7.* According to Samih Kana'an, another inhabitant of cell number 704 who wrote the preface to Rajoub's account, "'Jnaid' and its struggle framed a turning point, a very specific leap forward in all the preceding tactics of the struggle." *Zinzana raqm 704* tells the story of the "battle of Jnaid" in 1984 and the 33-day hunger strike in Nafha prison begun on 14 July 1980 that provided important lessons and precedents for the prisoners' organization in Jnaid. The chronology of hunger strikes (*idrab al-ta'am*) has acquired a conscious historical significance in the Palestinian narrative of Israeli prisons. Their succession and development articulates the progressive evolution of the resistance being formed inside the prison. For Rajoub, furthermore, as for the other political detainees, the "struggles and resistance of the prisoners of the Palestinian revolution inside the prisons is the natural extension of the struggle of our revolution and our people." His narrative proper begins accordingly with the beginning of the Palestinian resistance: "With the outbreak of the Palestinian revolution on 1 January 1965, led by the Fatah movement..."

Zinzana raqm 704 describes the transformation, through the hunger strike, of a collection of individual prisoners into a collective front challenging the sway of the prison system. The successes achieved by the prisoners' movement are due, according to Rajoub, not to any humanitarian consciousness on the part of the prison authorities but to the organized resistance of the prisoners. The Jnaid strike must itself be understood as continuous with the previous strikes in Asqalan and Nafha prisons, and each of these are seen as an active part of the larger history of the Palestinian resistance. Two prisoners, Ali Jaafari and Rasem Halaweh, were added to the list of martyrs of the resistance when they died from forced feeding dur-

ing the Nafha strike and, in the end, twenty-six prisoners were transferred. Meanwhile Nafha had become known as the "address of the prisoners' movement," the "academy for revolutionaries."

Jnaid, to which the detainees were later transferred, gave "new meaning to the words 'modern deluxe.'" Jnaid prison, opened in Nablus on 7 June 1984 to relieve the overcrowding in other prisons, was designed to house eventually as many as 1000 political and common law detainees. Most of its prisoners at the time were under 40 and serving sentences of more than ten years. The hunger strike, begun on 23 September, was a protest against the "modern deluxe" conditions provided to the prisoners by this new facility: overcrowding, deprivation of exercise, lack of medical services, poor food, use of gas to control the cells, physical punishment, lack of religious worship, and isolation from the outside and social contact. The organization of the hunger strike involved the organization of the prisoners and the prison itself. A central committee was formed and a working paper issued. The strike committee inside the prison further reflected the dynamics of the resistance organization outside and consisted of three members from al-Fatah, one from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and one from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Saiqa, however, refused to participate. Indeed, the internal structure and workings of the prisoners' movement, while it maintains its organizational connections with the configurations of the different factions of the PLO outside, is importantly conditioned by the fact of the prison regime and the need to confront its authority collectively. As Fadl Yunis had already described his own experience with a fellow prisoner from a different faction: "He was from Popular Front General Command and I was from Fatah, but we were members of one revolution." The Jnaid strike that ensued was to be, according to Rajoub, a "battle of the 'power of the will' against the 'will of power.'"

The isolation that a decade earlier had confined the resistance activity of Fadl Yunis and his comrades in cell number 7 in Gaza prison is transformed in Jnaid in 1984 into an extensive and effective network, drawing on the now developed history of hunger strikes by Palestinian prisoners and penetrating both inside the prison and across prison walls. Participating in the strike were 678 prisoners who succeeded in mobilizing support through letters, lawyers and news agencies, not only in the town of Nablus, but throughout the Occupied Territories, in Israel and abroad, and enjoining solidarity strikes in Hebron, Nafha, Asqalan and Ramla prisons.

As Mario Hector wrote from death row in a Jamaican prison, "the free flow of letters is crucial to the intelligent and calculated struggle for life on the Row." For Hector, however, a "criminal prisoner" imprisoned for a murder that he did not commit, the emergence from a private grievance to a politicized resistance came gradually, until "during daily discussions through the ventilators with these brothers, the need for an organized struggle group in the prison to keep the struggle alive and unify the prisoners' common objectives under an organized system of struggle arose." The prisoners' struggle, is necessarily a collective one and as such transgresses the barriers and definitions described by the state and its social orders. The political threat posed by that struggle to the state is the success of an alternative social organization and popular communications systems that would challenge the dominant historical narrative.

Jabril Rajoub's narrative is structured then by the three consequential stages to the Jnaid hunger strike: first, preparation for the strike; second, the strike itself; and then, consolidation of the organization. The Jnaid hunger strike, begun on 23 September 1984, ended twelve days later, on 4 October, with the capitulation of the prison authorities to some of the prisoners' demands. And although the system later refused to follow through on many of the promises and agreements made to the hunger strikers, the prisoners' movement had emerged decisively as a powerful counter-organization to the prison system itself. Rajoub was released from prison in the May 1985 prisoner exchange, only to be redetained without charge in November of that same year (the fate of many of the exchanged prisoners who chose to remain in Israel or the Occupied Territories) and held in solitary confinement. His new hunger strike there again elicited widespread support and the Campaign to Free Jabril Rajoub that was formed at the time eventually became the Committee Confronting the Iron Fist. Rajoub, as it would happen, was also among the first deportees to be forcibly removed by the military authorities from the Occupied Territories over the border to southern Lebanon in the early months of the intifada.

"We will teach

them a lesson.

We will break

Beit Sahour,

even if we have to

impose a curfew

for two months."

The prisoner exchanges in 1983 and 1985 between the state of Israel and "intermediaries" for the PLO released several thousand Palestinian political detainees from Israeli prisons and detention centres. The prisoners, many of whom were permitted to return to their homes and thus to remain within the Occupied Territories (although subjected to persistent harassment, rearrest and even assassination), brought with them their "prison culture": strategies of resistance elaborated, not only organizationally, but culturally as well, in memoirs, poetry, drawings and stories of organized cultural opposition against a state system of political detention. Political literature flourished again, now "beyond the walls." A new corpus, a genre defined less by formal criteria than by historical circumstances and political exigencies, was constituting itself. The prisoner exchanges, however, had the further effect of decapitating the leadership and dismantling the resistance inside the prison – a consequence that may help to explain why these prisoner exchanges were managed in the first place. Palestinian political detainees inside Israeli prisons had been remaking the resistance within the walls, a resistance that was in turn mobilizing the popula-

tion outside in support of its hunger strikes, work stoppages and protest actions demanding improved conditions, if not release. But as Ehud Ya'ari goes so far as to argue in the article, "Israel's Prison Academies," "The uprising's Unified National Command [known to Palestinians as the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU)], which has steered the intifada by means of periodic handbills, is constructed along the same lines as the special committees formed by the Palestinian security [sic] prisoners."

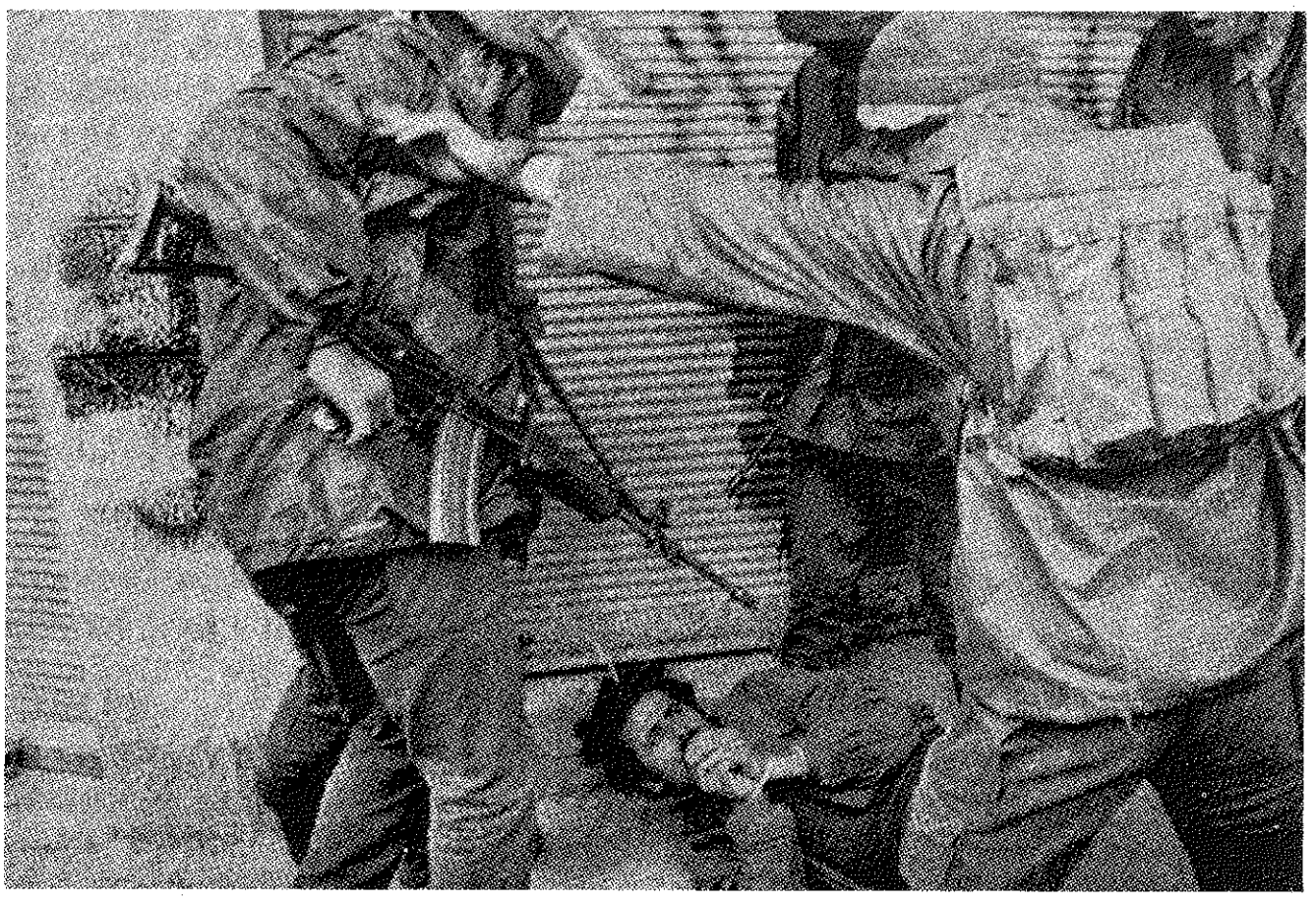
Palestinian universities and schools in the Occupied Territories have, since December 1987, been militarily closed more often than they have been open. Indeed, in order to accommodate the massive numbers of detained protesters since the beginning of the intifada, the Israeli occupation authorities have for certain periods used the closed schools as makeshift prison centers. The threat that prisons and universities pose to the state if not properly policed or effectively disciplined is told, for example, in a short story, published in May 1989, by the Israeli Matt Nesvisky. "The Game's Up" relates a Navy frogman attack on a boat moored in international waters off the coast of Israel. None of the commandos involved in the operation know what they will find there. "Military intelligence hasn't determined if it's drug-smuggling, gun-running, white-slavery or terrorism. But we do know gambling is a front for something big and our job is to find it. Any more questions? Okay, men, after me – and good luck." The attack is carried through successfully and the ship's gamblers are "herded into the central lounge." But there is still the locked door below deck. This is then opened with plastic explosives and the Israeli frogmen confront there 40 West Bank pupils and their teacher. "' I suspected as much!' Bar-Barian snorted. 'A clandestine matriculation class! In the name of the Civil Administration, I hereby arrest you for illegal education.'"

With the Palestinian schools and universities militarily closed, despite international accords recognizing education as a basic human right, and with many of the schools transformed into prisons, the task of the education of Palestinian youth was assumed, in significant part, by the popular committees. This "popular education," or *al-ta'alim al-sha'abi,* which included not only the basic skills necessary to pass the *tawjihi,* or Jordanian secondary school leaving examination, but a Palestinian nationalist content as well, was itself declared by the Israeli government to be "illegal education" and the teachers and students who were discovered and caught promulgating and practicing it were in their turn arrested and detained. The educators were seen to constitute a serious danger to the sway of Israeli dominion. In Ramallah, for example, according to a report published in the "irregular" journal *Finus* in July 1989, there were over 600 students enrolled in these popular education schools, and in the nearby village of Birzeit, 150 students and pupils had completed eight months of schooling, "a clear indication of the intifadist determination to continue and to realize the potentials of the intifada to transform the very life of the mass of the people."

Critical to the grounded development of the intifada and its persistent continuation, even escalation, have been the emergent infrastructural and social organizational networks of which popular education is a part. These networks are established at various levels, from the coordinating direction of the the UNLU (with its equal representation of all factions from within the PLO, Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Communist Party, and including a representative of the Islamic movement), to the "popular committees" created at the local and grassroots level in towns, villages, neighbourhoods and refugee camps to facilitate the distribution of health care, agricultural production, education and labor activities.

Instrumental in the constructive interaction of these several political and social arrangements have been the communications networks that include the transmissions between the Occupied Territories and the organizations in the international community. Among these the most distinguished is perhaps that of the *bayanat,* or communiques in leaflet form disseminated regularly, every ten days to two weeks, by the UNLU. These contain reports on general developments in the different aspects of the intifada, political analyses, solidarity messages, and specific instructions for general strike days, planned actions, etc. As a critical archive in their own right, these *bayanat* represent the political and strategic intersection, as a communications weapon, of "form" and "content." Even as they issue, and are reproduced and passed from hand to hand, circulating in tactically determined ways that challenge the officially sanctioned channels of communication, they chronicle the theoretical and political development of the intifada as a resistance struggle. According to Yusuf Mustafa, in his study of the *bayanat* in *Finus,* "A Reading of Specific and General Goals and Slogans of the Intifada":

> In the course of its continued development the intifada has sharpened the specific slogans that the masses of the Palestinian people aim to achieve and that are expressed in the announcements of the Unified National Leadership. These slogans reflect the concerns of the different factions and strata of the people and the fact that they are not limited to one group or another gives them their comprehensive character. Their reflection of different grievances is expressed in such political slogans as "End the Emergency Regulations," and "Withdrawal of the Army from the Occupied Territories," or economic slogans such as "Stop the Payment of



▲ Israeli troops in occupied Gaza

"No taxation without representation."

Taxes," and other demanded goals, that call to "Close the Prisons" or that are connected to the educational institutions and the holy sites, etc. This is what brings the people to mobilize around these slogans and to struggle, even in the face of death, for their realization. The concerns of all the factions are clearly emphasized in these slogans without ever forgetting the general goal. That general goal, however, was not altogether clear or pronounced in the first days of the intifada, but varied according to the points of view on the correctness of what was proposed by the general slogan. The slogans articulating demands, however, are the goals around which the different points of view encounter the national forces and all the factions of the Palestinian people.

Mustafa's reading of selected *bayanat* begins from the early days of the intifada and examines the evolving critical relationship formulated in these texts between the levels of the general and the specific and their strategic importance in establishing and maintaining the Palestinian struggle as a collective enterprise.

The effective and systematic use on the part of the intifada of alternative communications structures to reorganize the popular social formations and collective strategies of resistance has in turn elicited from the Israeli occupation authorities a series of attempts, both discursive and coercive, to penetrate and intercept the networks of the emergent counter-discourse. Such attempts have included, for example, the use of an isolated Palestinian editorialist, a "monologist" whose writings in the pages of the right-wing Israeli newspaper *Maariv* are analysed and sharply critiqued by Afif Salim in his *Finus* article, "Those Who Have Fallen into Cooperating with Zionist Propaganda," as the calculated manipulations by the authorities of a self-constructed and individualized "native informant" in order to contradict the collective project of the intifada. Similarly, as Salim Tamart has described in a forthcoming article, "Eyeless in Judea," the Israeli government has, in its now infamous "leaflet war," sought to appropriate and deflect the intifada's concerted counter-hegemonic means of communication through the production and distribution of counterfeit leaflets that, even while imitating, at times anticipating by having intercepted preliminary transmissions of the proposed communiques between the Occupied Territories and the PLO in Tunis, the style and format of the UNLU's authentic *bayanat,* seek to countermand and abort the directives and goals of the intifada and insinuate factional dissension and sectarian contradictions into the organized objectives of the popular mass uprising.

This effort on the part of Israel both to penetrate and to capture the uprising's popular communications and cultural system, appropriating thereby its networks and deforming its political discourse and its operational messages, also functions through the military occupation's creation of extended militias of collaborators. These collaborators, as many as 5000 according to the *New York Times,* are drafted, armed and paid by the Israeli Shin Bet, and have in recent months been the target of organized reprisals from the Palestinian populace, some spontaneous but most coordinated by the uprising's leadership. The collaborators are used by the secret police to gain substantial information about the plans and projects of the uprising as well as to identify members of its leadership. According to a report in *News from Within,* published by the Alternative Information Center, "Without the collaborators, the 'wanted lists' [of leaders] would not have existed and there would have been no meaning to the army's 'initiated actions.'" While the many reprisals, including assassination, against the collaborators have been much publicized and self-righteously condemned by the US media and administration spokespersons in particular as evidence of the internal disintegration of the uprising, *News from Within* goes on to argue the contrary, that "killing is the last step in a long line of efforts to convince the collaborators to sever their connections. The aim is to bring the collaborators back from their bad ways. First, the suspect is warned. Then they are beaten or their property is damaged. Sometimes the family is approached with the suggestion that one of its heads take the responsibility of improving the collaborator's behavior. Only when there is no other choice do they kill." And according to an Israeli journalist from *Ha'aretz,* Ron Kislev, "With every assassination, the flow of information that streams to our security forces dwindles" (13 September 1989).

Especially significant in Israel's formation of these marauding bands of collaborators is the conscription, through threats, bribes, physical coercion and promises of early release, of informers (or *asafir,* as they are called) from amongst the Palestinian detainees inside the prisons. Such conscription ultimately designates two levels of operation: first, to interrupt the organized clandestine dissemination of political education within the prisons, and second, to create a fractious "ally" within the ranks of the uprising "outside."

> We will teach them a lesson. We will break Beit Sahour, even if we have to impose a curfew for two months.
>
> Yitzhak Shamir,
> Israeli Defense Minister

> No taxation without representation.
>
> Beit Sahour residents

The example of the small town of Beit Sahour, just outside of Bethlehem and with a population of approximately 12,000, mostly Christian inhabitants, that was besieged by the Israeli army for six weeks, ostensibly to enforce the collection of unpaid taxes, recapitulates in large the lesson of "prison culture" as a strategy for countering the occupation. According to Don Pinnock, writing about the 1980s South African context, "Popular communications systems – those means by which information and symbols are communicated – also transmit social *patterns* and are, themselves, a social relationship." The permanent curfew and the cordoning off of the town of Beit Sahour imposed by Israeli occupation authorities attempted to

interrupt those "popular communication systems" and the "social pattern" and "social relationships" that they transmit, both internally and in connection to an outside world. The statement distributed by the IDF to the inhabitants of Beit Sahour following one month of military siege and unyielding popular resistance evidences this intent. On the one hand, the military sought to interrupt the collective program of the town:

> There are quite a number of residents who are worried about the future, and they want to stop this kind of confrontation that brings them nothing but harm. However, a group of irresponsible individuals incite the inhabitants to break the law, in addition to certain elements from outside Beit Sahour who wish to gain opportunities for political profit from what is happening in the town.

By restricting access to the area, on the other hand, the authorities attempted to cut off not only food but external communications as well. The statement went on:

> The attention given by the mass media to what is going on in the town will soon disappear and the town itself will no longer have its name in the news headlines, just as the attention to events in the territories has decreased and no longer excites the world media.

Indeed, when one elderly woman whose house was being ransacked by soldiers suffered what was later diagnosed as "stress-related heart blockage," a soldier ripped the telephone cord from the wall in order to prevent the woman's daughter-in-law from calling a doctor.

For over a month, Israeli soldiers accompanied tax collectors through the town of Beit Sahour, confiscating the personal property of its residents to be sold as tax payment at auction in Tel Aviv. An estimated three million dollars worth of property was pillaged from the town by the military, well in excess of the taxes owed. A report by al-Haq, a legal aid service in Ramallah, to the state signatories of the Fourth Geneva Convention expressed grave concern at the human and civil rights violations being perpetrated in Beit Sahour. The report emphasized especially: arbitrary assessments, the militarization of tax collection, confiscation of third party assets, confiscation of identity cards, and the isolation of the area. The tactic of the "confiscation of third party assets" was, it would seem, designed in particular to disrupt the internal social organization and property relations of the town. According to testimony by the victims collected by the Arab Studies Society in East Jerusalem, when there was nothing in a house deemed valuable enough to confiscate, the soldiers insisted that it was not the "right house." According to the witness report of Habib Hanna Habib Kheir, for example:

> When the soldiers and taxmen entered my house, they seized my identity card, and checked my name against the list they were carrying. They did not find my name, but they found my father's name. They claimed that my father owned a restaurant in the city. They asked me to show them my father's house so I got into the jeep with them. We arrived at my father's house and entered. There, they did not find anything worth confiscating. So they told me this was not my father's house, although I protested that it was indeed the house. They told me that they knew my father's house, so I told them if they knew it, they could go there.

Similarly, if the person being questioned by the soldiers was discovered by them not to owe any taxes, the money in that person's possession was declared to belong to another person who did owe it. This too is reported by Habib Kheir:

> When they searched one of the rooms, they found 10,000 shekels (US $5,000) in one of the drawers and confiscated it. When they found that there were no legal reasons for confiscating the money, they claimed that the money belonged to my neighbor Elias Salsa. I denied that and told them that the money belonged to me and that they had taken the house allowance and asked how I was going to live after they confiscated the money. The officer said that they were going to investigate the matter and see. I was taken to the camp again and there I was given a receipt under the name of Elias Salsa.

While the Israeli military and tax authorities were thus systematically refusing to acknowledge, and thereby admitting their recognition of, the existing property, social structures and history of the town of Beit Sahour, the inhabitants were themselves transforming, under the occupation's institutional pressure, the traditionally separate social patterns into a strategy of collective resistance. For the Israeli government, it was not simply taxes that were at stake and had to be collected, but the exemplary history of resistance being written in Beit Sahour, a counter-history that needed to be intercepted. In the words of Yitzhak Rabin, "We will teach them a lesson. We will break Beit Sahour, even if we have to impose a curfew for two months." But according to the inhabitants of Beit Sahour, "They can come again. They can come a hundred times. We will not pay a single cent." In other words, "No taxation without representation."

Palestinian prison culture, both inside and outside the prison walls, is designing even now the liberatory possibilities of that representation. ◆

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INTIFADA INDEX

Number of Palestinians detained during the first six months of the uprising: **8,362**

Number of Palestinians imprisoned in Ketziot tent-prison in the Negev desert: **2,722**

Prison sentence imposed on Israeli soldier for killing a Palestinian resident of Gaza by firing nearly a dozen bullets into his stomach at point-blank range: **1 year**

Prison sentence imposed on Palestinian youth for throwing stones at passing cars: **2 years**

Sentences imposed on four Palestinians for throwing stones at passing cars: **8-10 years**

Sentences served by Israeli soldiers Ya'ir Nisimi and Dror Cohen for using a bulldozer to bury Palestinian Arabs alive: **2½ months**

From Middle East Report, *September-October 1988*

PRISON WRITING AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE META-NARRATIVES[1]

by **Ioan Davies**

"There is no document of civilization," wrote Walter Benjamin, "which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."

In many respects the experiences of incarceration, slavery, deportation, war and physical annihilation are at the centre of that barbarism. Benjamin continued: "And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another." The most pertinent case study in this thesis is that of prison writing, which is written against the barbarism but which is then appropriated by "civilization" for its own purposes.

There has been writing out of prison since at least the third millennium B.C., some of it (particularly that relating to ethnic deportations and slavery) entering into the ritual narratives of Western civilization, while in some societies (the Soviet Union, the United States, France, South Africa, Ireland and Palestine/Israel are particularly notable) the experience of incarceration has become the site of contending narratives.

For example, the Old Testament, which contains a large amount of material relating to deportation, exile and imprisonment has not only become integral to both Jewish and Christian narratives but, by adaptation, to the narratives first of black slaves, then subsequently of black populations in the United States, Jamaica and Britain. In this sense the meta-narrative is turned back against itself, though ultimately it could be argued that it is rejuvenated (certainly the persecution of the Puritans in the 17th century and the Black evangelicals in the 19th led to a reaffirmed Christianity rather than to its demise). What is clear is that Judeo-Christianity, because of its incarceratory origins, shows infinite capacity both to be extremely cruel and to give hope to those whom it locks up and damns: we should not forget the grisly spectacle of the Pilgrim Fathers sailing to freedom in the "Mayflower," and then the ship sailing on to deliver slaves to the West Indies.

The idea of prison is at the heart of Christianity, and Dante's *Divine Comedy,* with its stratified level of punishments and rewards, perhaps its most telling document. As George Steiner said of the *Inferno:*

> The concentration and death camps of the twentieth century, wherever they exist, under whatever regime, are Hell made immanent. They are the transference of Hell from below the earth to its surface. They are the deliberate enactment of long, precise imagining. Because it imagined more fully than any other text, because it argued the centrality of Hell in the Western order, the *Commedia* remains our literal guidebook – to the flames, to the ice-fields, to the meat-hooks. In the camps the millenary pornography of fear and vengeance cultivated in the Western mind by Christian doctrines of damnation, was realized. (Steiner, 1971: 47-8)

Thus at the core of Christianity there is a lunatic logic which not only allows for annihilation, imprisonment and banishment, but also for resurrection, self-affirmation and transcendence. The present situation in South Africa provides ample opportunity for meditating on such a paradox, where the Afrikaner Nationalists, themselves victims of large-scale incarceration (for them the British invented the concentration camps), have, ostensibly in the name of a white Calvinist sense of

predestined power, locked up the spokespersons of the majority race, some of whose leaders speak on behalf of their people in the name of Christianity. The recently freed blacks will presumably agree with their erstwhile captors on how to create a truly Christian South Africa.

The situating of prisons within the meta-narrative goes all the way from the historical and literary correspondences behind designing the penitentiaries (as Michel Foucault argued in *Discipline and Punish*), through the language and ritual which gives meaning to the quotidian reality of the jailers' actions (see *Shoah* and Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* for some accounts of these), to the series of quasi-religious rationalizations which are used to justify various forms of punishment (Michael Ignatieff's *A Just Measure of Pain*, Philip Priestley's *Victorian Prison Lives* and Hughes contain some of the best English stories from the 19th century). In *Prison Writing in America*, Bruce Franklin traced the response by black prisoners in the States (from slaves and convicts to penitentiary inmates) which worked within and against the meta-narrative. His story is about the origin of Gospel music, work songs, jazz, the blues, Eldrige Cleaver, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Chester Himes. It is the story of creating culture underneath another culture: it is the story of the limits of the meta-narrative.

Franklin's and Priestley's books bring out an obvious fact about incarceration: most people who are locked up are from the poorer classes of any society, illiterate, belong to ethnic minorities, usually the visibly ethnic minorities (today one in four black American males in their twenties are either in prison or on probation, over 50 percent of the inmates of Manitoba prisons are native people – 'Indian' or Metis). And, as the film *Roger and Me* showed, as unemployment increases, the penitentiaries get bigger. But these are well-known facts, that could be recited by any undergraduate criminologist. (And criminology must be one of the fastest growing disciplines, an adjunct to the meta-narrative, a substitute in North America and Europe for a dwindling priesthood).

So where does this leave writing in prison? On a very different plane from the meta-narratives. Foucault, in an interview after a visit to Attica prison in 1972 told a story about Genet, which emphasizes the difference between the meta-narrative and the experience of prisoners (and we must not forget that political prisoners are just as concerned with creating a meta-story as are religious ones).

> During the war [Genet] was in prison at the Sante and he had to be transferred to the Palais de Justice to be sentenced; at that time the custom was to handcuff the prisoners two by two to lead them to the Palais de Justice; just as Genet was about to be handcuffed to another prisoner, the latter asked the guard, "Who is this guy you are handcuffing me to?" and the guard replied: "It's a thief." The other prisoner stiffened at that point and said, "I'm a communist, I won't be handcuffed with a thief." And Genet said to me that from that day on, with regard to all forms of political movements and actions that we have known in France, he has had not merely a distrust but a certain contempt... (Foucault, 1974: 159)

The implication of this, if the politics of prison expression is not to be dismissed, is that there is a politics beyond Politics. Genet recognized that prisoners everywhere shared a common fate, whose definition ultimately had to be conceived of in political terms. In the introduction to George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* he expressed his solidarity with the American Black Panthers, while in his last book, *The Prisoner of Love*, he deals at length with his love/hate relationship with the various Palestinian *fedayeen*. The farthest that Genet dare go is to be a *supplement* to their activities: "For five years I'd lived in a sort of invisible sentry-box from which I could see and speak to everyone while I myself was a fragment broken off from the rest of the world." (Genet, 1989: 315)

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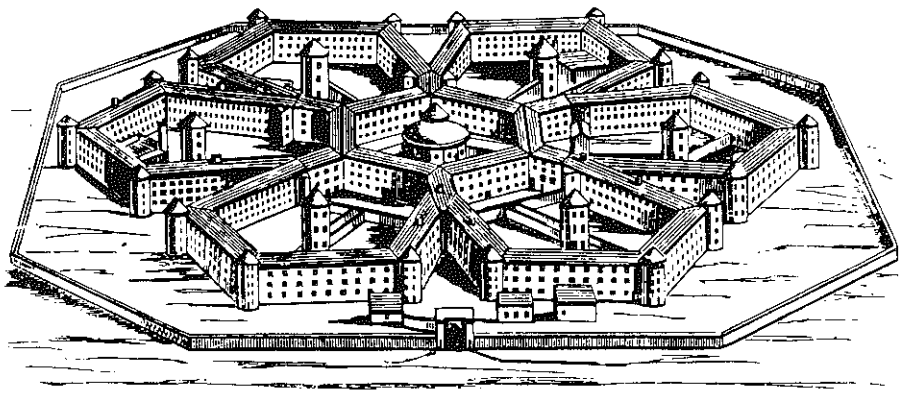

Bird's-eye view of Millbank Prison

This brings us closer to the nature of prison experience and the politics that may flow from it. There is no Politics out there onto which the prisoner might latch, though there is politics. Every prisoner lives as a supplement to all the other politics. But is there no connection between the common experience of prisoners? This depends on how we ask the question. The commonsensical answer is that as a counter-narrative there is a commonality. So many stories in so many countries at so many different historical periods sound as if they were penned by a collective hand, so much so that when prisoners (particularly male prisoners) write their own autobiography they end up claiming for themselves stories that have been circulating for centuries:

> At last I should call it a day, there are only stories left, old stories, repetitions, nothing else, if I am not repeating my own story, I repeat those of others. I remember a story by a Spanish author, or he may have been a South American.... Well now: no repetitions, let's have done with old stories. (Bienek, 1972: 59)

But many of these stories exist on the surface, as if the prisoner wanted to be the

The feminist case is based on

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redefine not only prisoners'

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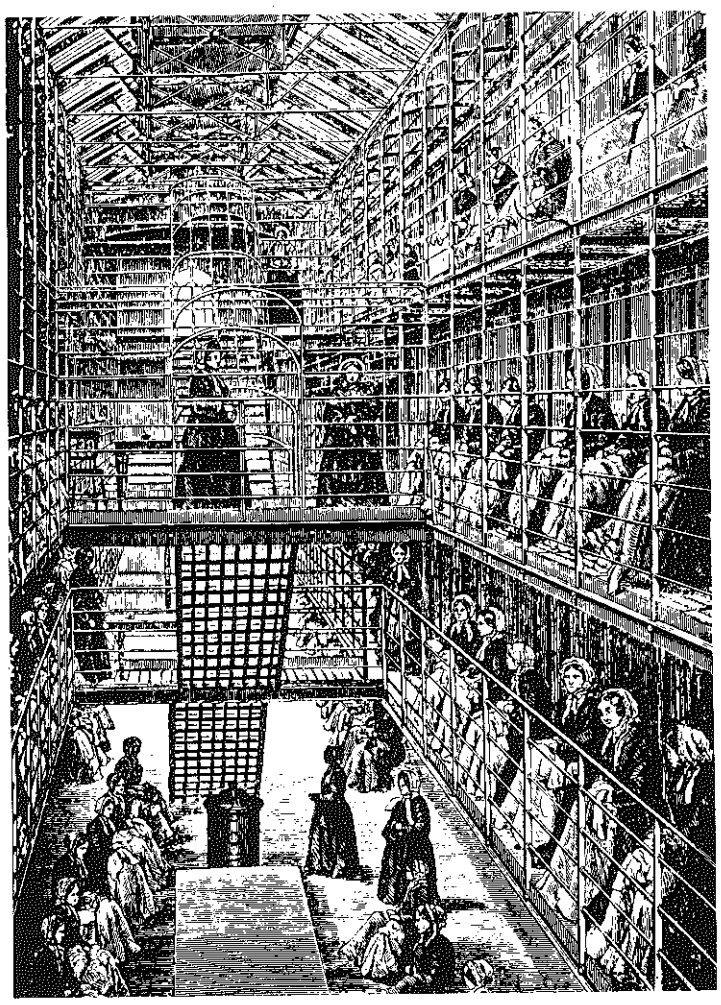

▲
Victorian-era women's prison

hero of an ur-epic of which he is only a minor player.

> But it is important to know that you are nothing. And to search without stopping, be you awake or withdrawn into the wakefulness of sleep, for the hairline cracks, for the gaps and the unexpected moments of deep breathing, for the space which is created by alleys and by walls … prepare yourself for the interstices of freedom. (Breytenbach, 1984: 309)

The surface stories and the deep, personal experience do suggest a commonality:

> When you are interested in prison accounts as a genre you will soon see that prisons are much the same the world over…. The least all of us can do – the marginal ones, the outcasts, the displaced persons, the immigrant workers, citizens of our various countries – is unite to expose all the intelligence services and the spy organs and the security or political police and the secret societies of the world. Pipe dream! So much for universality. (Breytenbach, 1984: 339)

This means that even the politics that is against Politics is an illusion. What does that do to the "political prisoner" or the "prisoner of conscience?"

Ultimately it means that he or she is a prisoner like everyone else, that any attempt to use prison to create a grand narrative is a distortion of the fragmentary nature of prison life. The most that any political prisoner can do is to chip away at the walls of the concept of imprisonment, not to use the prison system as an excuse to create even bigger prisons when the prisoner becomes the supreme agent of Politics.

> I am afraid not of what they will do to us, but what they can make us into. For people who are outlaws for a long time may feed on their own traumas and emotions which, in turn, strangle their reason and ability to see reality…. I pray that we do not return like ghosts who hate the world, cannot understand it, and are unable to live in it. I pray that we do not change from prisoners into prison guards. (Michnik, 1985:99)

If this might seem (because of its source) yet another resignation to the dominant narrative (which it is), there are clearly some shifts. The sentiments expressed by Michnik (and Havel and Mandela and Breytenbach) are those of Ghandi, and therefore a different (Third World, non-Christian) sensibility has entered into our discourse around the politics of prison. In the prison game nobody wins. The strategy to overcome the Prisoners' dilemma, as the mathematical games theorists put it, is Tit-for-Tat, where I assume that my opponent is rational and that his strategy is not predicated on mutual self-destruction. It presupposes that his objective, like mine, is self-preservation. Thus I assume in any negotiation that he is honest. If he fails to keep his bargain, I will change the rules of the encounter, not by assuming that he will remain duplicitous, but by providing another clue towards regaining mutual trust. I force his hand by turning him back towards recognizing that his ego is at stake because he cannot win by duplicity. (See Hofstadter, 1985: 715-734 for an account of the logic behind this). Thus the Christian game in which all will be risked in one final zero-sum Armageddon is exposed as illogical.

Such metamagical theorems are confirmed in many ways by women's writing out of prison, where the real politics is not based on creating a totalizing alternative, but in producing accounts where the realities of being locked up are explored against the very everyday experiences of a fractured society. Most of women's writing out of prison (See Gelfland, 1983 and Scheffler, 1986) is about resisting the meta-narratives, but doing so by patiently exploring the grounds of being incarcerated, not in order to posit a violent overthrow of the social system, but in order to establish the very mundane reasons for being where they are. Judith Scheffler quotes from an American prisoner, Patricia McConnel, who writes fiction:

> An extremely important element in my motivation to write these stories is to give the reader some sense of the reality of this form of social madness – that these are real human beings being destroyed by a machine designed and run by madmen, for the most part. In spite of this dark theme, most of the stories are life-affirming in some way. I am impressed, all these years afterwards, at the resiliency of the spirits of the women I knew.

> My stories are about women struggling to preserve their wills, their self-respect, in a system intent on destroying them. (Scheffler,1986: 261)

The feminist case is therefore based on building from the ground up, rather than establishing a grand narrative that will redefine not only prisoners' existence but that of all of us. And yet this case is compounded with the problems of doing anything either about prisons or the conditions that put them in place.

The truly problematic feature about prisons is their universality, the fact that, in any society, the feckless, the indigent, the racial minorities will be discriminated against by a judicial system that is only concerned with replicating a form of social order which comforts the dominant elements of society.

Thus prison is not about *preventing* crime, but ensuring that the middle classes feel safe. Equally, in societies where the free-flow of ideas is perceived to be a threat, intellectuals and others who contest the status-quo will be incarcerated or executed in order to maintain the social order. And yet when intellectuals are freed, much of the philosophical underpinnings of prison remain untouched. When Vaclav Havel became president of Czechoslovakia he freed all political prisoners but none of the regular ones, thus ushering in a new political order, but not a new order of criminal justice.[2]

Havel (and perhaps Mandela) can therefore begin to alter aspects of the meta-narrative without the penal system changing one jot. The tension that Foucault noted in Genet's attitude to political prisoners is thus at the core of understanding what prison is all about. Censorship may be (more-or-less) abolished in civil society, but it is ever-present in prison: indeed the existence of prison is predicated on censorship (an excellent recent issue of Simon Fraser's *Prison Journal* is devoted exclusively to censorship within Canadian prisons, both by the administration against prisoners and prisoners against themselves).

The fact of regular prison writing (as opposed to that by prisoners of conscience or political prisoners) is that most of it does not deal with the grand scheme of things, but with the everyday living struggles of minorities to survive in a predatorial world. In that sense a far stronger narrative has to be written. As a black prisoner from Attica wrote in 1988:

> That the criminal justice system of the United States is a facade for gross and shocking violations of the legal and human rights of Third World people and poor citizens can be confirmed by an examination of the prisons of the society. The prisons and jails in the United States have become bulging warehouses for Third World people, the uneducated, and the unemployed. They provide a legally sanctioned instrument for social, political and economic control.... We who have nothing to look forward to but long years of enforced idleness, coupled with programs designed to destroy our bodies, minds, and spirits – designed to render us incapable of any future assistance to our people – have the historical duty ... to change the relationship of forces between the prison administration and us by gaining effective control of as many areas of prison life as possible. (Curcio, 1989: 69)

This story is surely ultimately more significant than embellishing the old one, because it starts out of the belly of hell itself. As with women's writing, it is decentred and specific, but unlike theirs, it is highly politically charged. It also suggests that the collapse of the meta-narratives will occur only when the Damned finally take over, and prisons, all forms of deportation and extermination are abolished. Then Heaven and Hell, in William Blake's sense, will be merged. But that day will not come until the voices of our prisoners reach a crescendo so loud as to cause the walls to crumble. This will be done, of course, country-by-country, maybe even prison-by-prison. Meanwhile, more and more people are incarcerated, and our technology assures that the jails are more and more electronically secured. Meanwhile, the meta-narrative censors the accounts of those inside. Meanwhile, everything we write is supplementary. ◆

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NOTES

1. Meta-narrative is used here much in the sense that Hayden White does, or in the suggestion that Levi-Strauss uses to find the Central Myth – that is as a story that binds together all the other ones. A somewhat different version of this is Gramsci's use of hegemony, which gives a particular political inflection to an interconnecting set of beliefs and symbols on which we draw to legitimize struggles for power. Meta-narrative is the literary version, myth the anthropological, and hegemony the political.

2. Havel's transition from prison to presidential palace has become one of the most strategic cases of the last year. However, it is a transition that has some unique features to it. Havel did not become president reluctantly. His career shows that he systematically built himself up as a political figure, even using prison, drama, and Charter 77 to achieve this end. As Ivan Klima notes in a recent interview with Philip Roth, "Right from the beginning, when I got to know him, Havel was, for me, in the first place a politician, in the second place an essayist of genius, and only lastly a dramatist.... Havel was for a long time the only active representative of the line of thoroughly democratic Czech politics represented by Tomas Masaryk." *(New York Review of Books,* April 12, 1990: 21) The genius of Havel was knowing that Time, and the West, was on his side. The problem is that, apart from his grasp of prior Czech experiences and philosophies, as well as his ingestion of George Orwell's *1984* as a metaphor, does he have a political philosophy? He certainly has no philosophy of prison which is not linked to his personal desire for power. All of his essays and plays are anecdotes en route to gaining control. Surely the strategy of critical thought should be to recognize that as the central starting-point, rather than being mesmerized by his meteoric rise.

The most that any political prisoner can do is to chip away at the walls of the concept of imprisonment

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an interview with

Michael Ignatieff

BORDER/LINES: You have been the mediator of intellectual ideas in the press and on radio and TV, especially on TV, and one thing that's really struck me is the way in which in England writers and intellectuals like Jonathan Miller, Melvin Bragg and yourself are hosts and directors of programs, whereas in Canada the media people make their way up to taking these jobs. Do you have a sense of why this should be?

IGNATIEFF: I think there is an intellectual history to be written of the British television and radio audience, and the key thing must be to go back to the BBC Radio's *Third Programme* (which was very much before I was born). I have a sense that in its heyday at the BBC an audience was created from the educated and liberal middle classes. I don't think it's a simple left-wing audience, but an audience that's catholic in its politics, that listens to classical music on the radio. All of us in my generation derived from the audience that was created around talks in the twenties and thirties in the early days of radio. In other words, what makes us possible is that we inherit a public service broadcasting tradition together that goes back 60 or 70 years. Before that there must surely be some Edwardian antecedents: the popular libraries, the quality press. At the other level there's the Workers Educational Association. The ability not to be self-conscious about talking about ideas on television and radio has a historical and cultural preparation and it's all in the audience. Once you've got an audience, then whether it's Ignatieff, whether it's Miller, whether it's Bragg, doesn't really matter. They are bound to emerge to fill that audience need. If they work in a broadcasting culture which isn't always looking at the numbers, or the advertising revenue, then the fact that my audiences are, by television standards, small is never brought up against the shows. Instead, the arguments I fight within the BBC are a bit different, a bit like: "you should have gone for him and then you didn't get him," good, sound producers' questions, and questions about the content and intellectual approach of the shows, but never questions about numbers. In other words, there are two variables here. One is the historical creation of audiences and secondly, a public broadcasting ethos which doesn't look at the numbers and therefore presents you only with the discipline of doing a decent intellectual job.

I understand and I think that is important in understanding what is going on here in Canada. For example, let us take *Realities* with Robert Fulford and Richard Gwynn. One of the interesting things, it seemed to me, as a contrast with what you or Bragg or even Miller have done, is that Fulford and Gwynn weren't really concerned with getting to the point of the idea of the person they were interviewing, but rather with translating it as if translation was absolutely essential. I wonder if that's to do with two totally different cultures? It was actually assumed that if you were interviewing Bertrand Russell (and I remember one interview on BBC radio in the early sixties) that everybody would know who he was, whereas in Canada if, for example, Chomsky is interviewed, it is assumed that no-one knows who he is, and therefore the interviewer has to start from scratch.

In the kernel of that question is a question about translation, that is, what's a person like me doing? Am I translating highfalutin' abstract intellectual questions into words of one or two syllables for an audience? Am I a translator or am I a mediator?

I see the roles as being different. I see my role as being a mediator between the audience and often quite abstract and difficult and abstruse thought. It's talk or thought that speaks only to the tribe out of which it comes. If I'm talking to a philosopher the problem with the philosopher is not that what a philosopher says is so goddam difficult to understand, but that a philosopher is not used to talking to people who aren't philosophers, who do different things. My job is to moderate between self-

referential intellectual groups, between specialists and a general audience, to get those specialists to speak the language that reaches groups who don't read the specialist journals, who don't know the lingo, who don't know the jargon. I'm constantly stopping someone in mid-flight and saying, "Now what did that word mean?" That's where I'm doing my job. I don't think my job is to say "What you really mean by some extraordinarily complicated sentence is x or y," except when they really aren't making any sense at all. Then I'm struggling to understand what I mean myself. I do translation, but it's for me, not just for the audience. I make myself the test of what has to be translated. I think of my role in terms of mediation, not simplification, and that cuts to the heart of what I think people like me ought to be doing in the media, and why I'm working in the media at all. The modern world's talk is balkanized to an inconceivable degree. Historians debate among historians, literary critics among literary critics, journalists among journalists, politicians among politicians. The one area, the one public place where all of this balkanized, self-referential, enclosed jargon can reach beyond the converted, is in the media. Most times it doesn't happen. The media can become a stage which is as self-referential as any other, but the ideal to me is quite clear.

"Historians **debate**

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Can I just pick up on that for a moment? I have a tape of you interviewing Raymond Williams. I'm not sure where it came from but...

That was at the ICA (Institute for Contemporary Arts, London, England).

I also heard Robert Fulford interviewing Raymond here for TV Ontario. The interesting difference between them is that you actually let Raymond talk, and Raymond was quite capable of talking in his own right and exploring his own ideas, whereas Fulford was only interested in his sense of Welshness. He did the same thing with Edward Said.... Although those are important parameters relating to what Raymond was about it's a curious – shall we say Canadian? – way of getting at Raymond's project. It struck me that the difference between your interview and Fulford's was basically that there was a kind of party agenda, there were certain things one shouldn't allow Raymond, or Said, to say. I've been concerned about whether that is a different style in Canadian and British thought.

I **feel** strongly that my role is not to take up the airwaves. My role is to get other people to talk. I have another role in my life and I play it all the time: I am interviewed, I have my own views, I write books, but that's a separate thing. I can keep both roles quite distinct. When I'm doing one job I don't need to do the other job. There's an American style of interview in which the only star is the host. Nobody ends up talking but the host. In effect, nobody ends up being heard but the host. Again, the audience is crucial. When I interviewed Raymond Williams at the ICA I could take for granted that the audience knew about Williams and that it would not be appropriate for me to set an agenda.

Again, being a mediator depends on a very intimate set of relations with each audience. I get into real trouble if I think they don't know anything. That's when it starts to go bad because then you get pedagogical, you get heavy with an audience, and they will immediately turn to baseball if you start to do that.

If you were doing a program here in Canada, let's say that you hosted *Realities* or *Arts National*, would you do it differently here than in Britain?

I'm sure I would and I couldn't say in advance what the differences would be.

I would have to **watch** a lot of tapes. The first thing I would do if I was doing a show is not sit down and write a guest list, but just watch a lot of TV and see what's out there. I'd look at some old stuff. I'd watch talk shows all over the gamut, from Oprah Winfrey to Carson, and just try and pick up that enormous tacit range of cultural difference between what I do in Britain and what they do here. We think television in Canada is the same as in Britain or France. But you only have to change national context to see how this medium is radically different from context to context, and nowhere more different than in the style and culture of a talk show.

"We think television in Canada is the **same** *as in Britain or France. But you only have to change national context to see how this medium is radically different from context to context, and nowhere more* **different** *than in the style and culture of a talk show."*

One example, Bernard Pirot's *Apostrophes,* a talk show about books in France, is unrepeatable anywhere else. It depends upon a whole set of cultural contexts which we cannot reproduce. In answer to your question, the first thing I'd do if I did a show here on the CBC or TVO is watch a lot of the local product and figure out how it works when it works and how it fails to work when it doesn't work.

Of course, in a way, if you were doing it here you'd have the Americans over your shoulder. A lot of the stuff here gets listened to in the States. I think that most Canadian programs don't think of that, they just do it, and that's probably what's right. This actually raises another interesting question, the whole question of the academic or the writer in the media. I suppose that in some ways it's perfectly appropriate that someone like yourself who is of Russian origin and comes from the country of Marshall McLuhan should want to do it in every conceivable way. And yet very few of us actually dare do it, very few dare to take on the media if they come from academia.

I didn't particularly **dare**. I was just asked. But your question raises the issue of the extreme professionalization of intellectual life in North America. I'm not a media person, I'm a sort of freelance intellectual. I use the media to sustain myself outside of academe. I do lament the passing of a kind of writer who was both a fiction writer and a nonfiction writer, both an essayist and a specialist. It's not merely that everybody has a job in academe now, and so teachers have to grind out a very standardized product for institutional acceptance to the university, with all the consequences to their intellectual integrity, independence and freedom of expression that goes with it. It's also that writers themselves are more specialized. Novelists stick to their novels – one comes out every five years. They never deviate, they never move, partly for market considerations because they feel that once they have established their niche as a novelist, the marketing of anything else is just impossible. There are very few people who have the range of a John Updike. What I worry about is that this professionalization of the intellectual produces a kind of balkanization of intellectual life, each person acquiring all the professional deformations that go with their speciality, ceasing then to be able to speak to the enormous audience out there, people who subscribe to Harper's, who read Esquire, who follow PBS, who may be lawyers, doctors, Indian chiefs, school teachers, skilled union people, people who just have a hunger for what could be called a general culture. This audience is not being spoken to as well as they should. I enjoy working in the media because I'm reaching that audience which is refusing those specialist boundaries.

Let's be clear about the cost and the risks. The pathos about my kind of position is that you know less and less about more and more. Your legitimacy, your authority as an intellectual diminishes to the degree that you intervene stupidly on issues and subjects about which you really have no distinct competence. This role of the general intellectual requires a kind of discipline and a certain amount of renunciation. There are some subjects that you shouldn't touch because you don't know what the hell you're talking about. I don't talk about science for example because I just feel a kind of terror that I might say something inconceivably stupid. I try and choose a number of areas where 15 years of professionalized learning actually helps me to see more clearly. There are tremendous advantages in refusing professional specializations and trying to be a general intellectual. There are tremendous opportunities as well as dangers.

There is also another problem with that because, as we know, the media is high profile. Everybody watches it or listens to it, or reads it, whereas nobody bothers to look at all the academic journals unless they're professionally involved in it. In the media, when one, I think, almost feels obliged to make connections, connections between culture and politics and so on, it seems to me that what you do as an outsider, bystander or observer, is to make a stab at the connection, whether it's on TV or the occasional column.

You have to **acknowledge** the fact that books that are read by hundreds of people often make a more fundamental change to how we see the world than any number of television programs seen by millions. John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* is a book for specialists

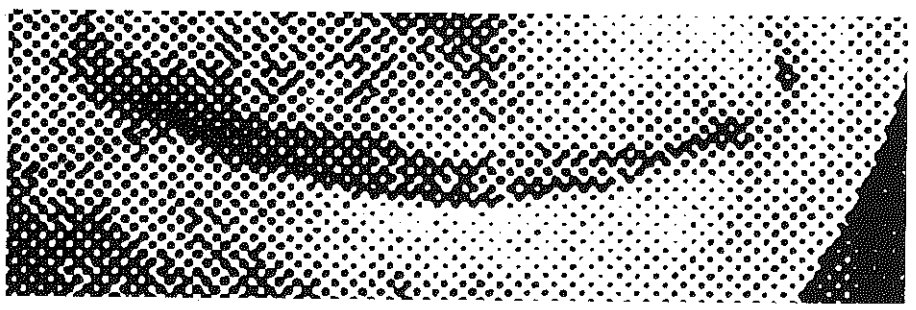
that has transformed the language of politics in the last 15 or 20 years. If you are a "media intellectual" you must respect people that have no media savvy at all. People like John Rawls, who are, as they say, "terrible television." There's a lot of vital intellectual argument in the world which doesn't play on the small screen because it's "terrible television." So the media gives you a very skewed picture of the intellectual agenda at any one moment. At any one moment there will be Umberto Eco everywhere because Umberto is good on television. There will be George Steiner wall to wall. What there won't be is the immense impact of, say, Quine's linguistic philosophy, or Rawls' theories of justice, or some absolutely explosive new theory on particle physics or something which is "terrible television."

In the piece in the *Observer* published during the European elections you tantalizingly called yourself a postmodernist Green and a Canadian, and there was this classy picture of the virgin snow.

A self-portrait greeted with guffaws at the breakfast tables of the nation.

Sure, but how does travelling between two or three countries work? I was intrigued with the whole postmodern thing, but I was much more interested in the Canadian Green.

The more time I spend in England, the less I actually understand the culture. I don't understand the place anymore. Whenever I'm given a public opportunity I find myself almost unconsciously declaring that I am a Canadian. I think there must be some connection between being Canadian and being increasingly Green. I think that political legions like greenery spring out of emotional and personal experience in almost every case, and mine springs from memories of the Canadian landscape, a sense of the unspoiled and the untamed, and therefore the pure and the undefiled. These feelings are constitutive of that sense of indignation that pollution of the environment arouses. In the piece that you referred to I mentioned that my image of purity is white snow, clear white snow, snow so clean that you scoop it off with your mitt and suck it through your teeth. I'm sure Scandinavians would have analogous ones but there are very few places in England where that image of purity would resonate. For an Englishman the images of purity are clouds or willow trees over a flowing brook. They are very powerful reservoirs of English indignation at the despoliage of their own natural environment. Each culture has its own image of purity against which they test the despoliation that is occurring, and mine are Canadian, and I think that's why Canadian Green is not a fortuitous culmination.

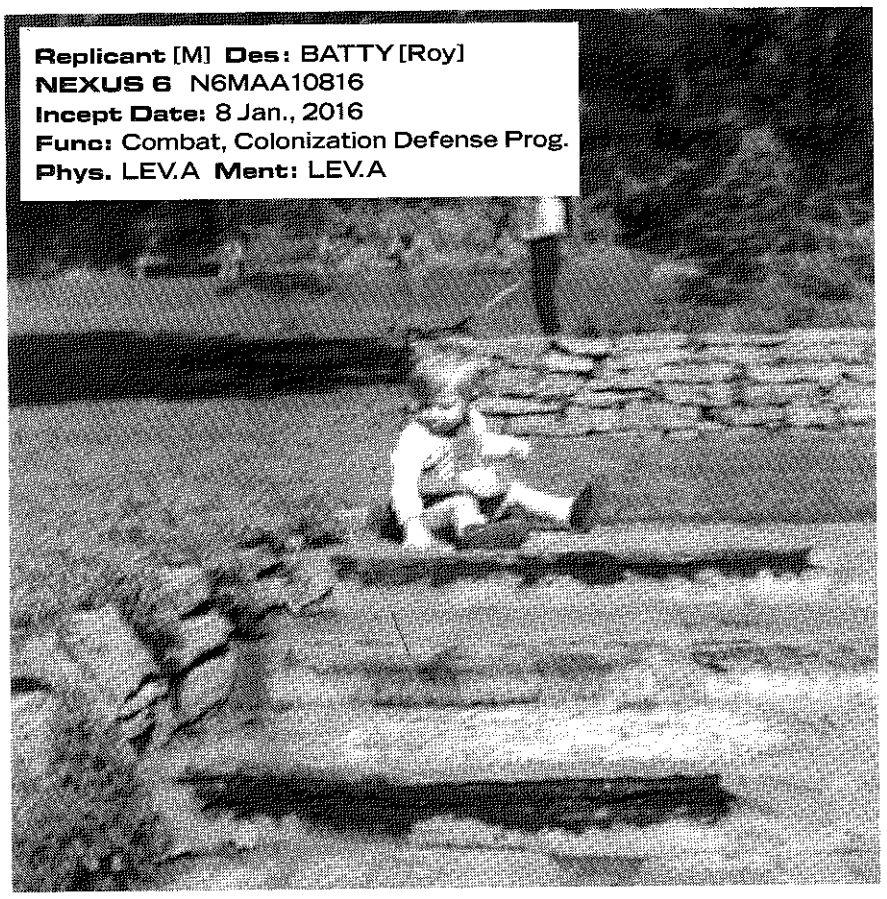


"There's a lot of vital intellectual **argument** *in the world which doesn't play on the small screen because it's 'terrible television.' So the media gives you a very* **skewed** *picture of the intellectual agenda at any one moment."*

As for the postmodern question?

As for the postmodern question, I'm **dubious** about the word "postmodernity" because I can't distinguish between whether we're simply in another stylistic variation of the modern adventure: which is to say that the Promethean trip we've been on for the past 400 years seems far from exhausted to me. There is a certain contingent style of exhaustion and of irony: what new can we possibly say? Hence, lets make clever variations on everything that's been said before. This is very much in the postmodern style. Yet I can see that pose of exhaustion in a host of earlier moments. I can see it in Vienna in the late 19th century; exhaustion is very much in the work of Klimt and Schiele. I can see it in Weimar in the twenties. What might be new about our exhaustion is our irony towards Bauhaus modernism, towards the hard edge futurist kind of modernism. Yet after every episode of hard-edged utopian modernisms of a Corbusian or Gropian kind there is an ironic recoil. These seem to me styles, oscillations in an essentially modernist project and that's why I don't take postmodernity seriously. We're still on the "Twentieth century Express" in my view, and we will be into the 21st. I think I'm unsympathetic to these poses of exhaustion because I am a Voltairean. A rationalist. I like science. I like progress. I like growth, damn it. I like a world in which people have more consumer goods. I've got no problem with it. I've got great problems with environmental despoliation, but that's a very traditional set of modern problems. It doesn't cause me to despair about modernity or think it's all been a dreadful mistake. ◆

***Michael Ignatieff**, broadcaster, writer, is the author of* A Just Measure of Pain, The Needs of Strangers *and* The Russian Album.



Childhood Fantasies

TORSTEN **KEHLER**

Fin-de-Siècle Socialism

Fin-de-Siècle Socialism and Other Essays
by **Martin Jay**

New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc., 1988, 216 pp.

With the publication of *Fin-de-Siècle Socialism,* Martin Jay, the noted intellectual historian of the Frankfurt School, Western Marxism, and 20th century German social theory, has given us an effort worth purchasing if one has $18 but not a library card. The book is not without flaws, chief among them being the forced coherence of the collection. This time Jay has taken advantage of the current trend in academe of running together essays on different topics, thereby bowing, as he admits in the postscript, to professional pressure to publish. While Jay pulls it off, one notes with regret that one of his most widely recognized essays of the eighties (on Michel Foucault) has been left out of the present collection.

One immediate problem is that neither Jay nor his publisher state when or where these essays were originally anthologized or published. I note this only for the reader who might buy this book thinking that these are new or contemporary essays; actually, some of these pieces are more than ten years old.

For example, Jay's essay on the Habermas-Gadamer debate, a minor classic, now seems dated, having been surpassed in quality by other studies. A second problem is that Jay is often too vague; for example, he will use unwieldy phrases such as "the plural sites of the discourses of politics" when greater clarity is obviously needed.

In *Fin-de-Siècle Socialism* Jay has moved into territory somewhat new to him. Whereas in previous work he charted the history of this century's German social thought, he now concerns himself with some of the polemics raging in culture criticism and intellectual history. At the same time, he still attends to debates that have raged in the past, such as that between Max Horkheimer and Siegfried Kracauer. What underlies Jay's emphasis is his conviction that social thought in general and critical theory in particular can thrive only where it not only takes its point of departure from the past, but also engages the present. The question I would pose to Jay is whether critical theory thereby loses its always tenuous identity as a unified utopian body of knowledge concerned with criticizing all presentations of the historical as natural.

In the book there is a tacit linking of critical theory with other, seemingly disparate, forms of inquiry, such as those practised by Alvin Gouldner, Jurgen Habermas and Hans Blumenberg. This is the theme that Jay hopes will hold the book together: namely, that the scope of critical discussions and interventions in culture must be expanded to include many different endeavours with different trajectories, even if the only thing that explicitly links some of these endeavours is a recognition of the need to grapple with current social concerns. But even on this score, Jay is a revisionist with respect to more orthodox critical theory. The older generations of critical theorists saw the need to come to grips with capitalism in all its various facets. It seems clear that Jay, to the delight of some and to the chagrin of others, has abandoned the idea of a comprehensive critique of capitalism. In jettisoning a Marxism tainted with faith in totality, Jay has simultaneously jettisoned that which served as the *object* of (Marxist) criticism – capitalism. Ironically, in doing so, Jay has succumbed to the type of Either/Or thinking condemned most vigorously by those thinkers (Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin) of whom his *The Dialectal Imagination* is still the most compelling history.

Jay advocates a critical intellectual history. As he describes this intellectual history, one sees its resemblance to the version of Western Marxism sketched in his *Marxism and Totality.* In that book Jay wrote that Western Marxism has undergone a transformation from an earlier holistic position – one represented philosophically and aesthetically by the concept of totality, politically by Leninism and Stalinism, and in all these by the notion of a vanguardist representative elite – to one represented by a pluralistic politics. For Jay, intellectual history must follow the lead of what he calls the new politics in renouncing totality, and give up the search for "a perfectly unitarian political identity" on the basis of which alone the social order can be overthrown in one massive revolutionary heave. Indeed, resistance can be undertaken in different ways by the "new politician":

> Rather than seeking an ultimate explanation for all oppression in economic, productivist, or class terms, they've sought to yoke together a series of relatively autonomous struggles in a loose and unhierarchical bloc or coalition.

In this context, Jay rightly highlights the contributions of the ecological and feminist movements. And he mentions, in the space of one page, a number of recent political events all adduced as evidence for the relevance and success of this new pluralistic politics with its new appreciation of the values of political democracy: the anti-apartheid movement; Solidarity in Poland; the overthrow of Marcos; the yearning for democratization in places like China; and the improved human rights record of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. However, one wonders about the importance or interpretive power of a conception of democratic politics that is so easily applied to so many complex events. If intellectual history rests on combining Jesse Jackson, Ernesto Laclau and Adorno, then it threatens to become banal. This new emphasis on democracy and pluralism is said by Jay to be apparent in social theory, and not just in the world of politics. Jay paints a picture of the happy family of theorists, where Althusserians, Budapest School Lukacsians, Trotskyists, *New Left Review* (ex and still) Leninists converge with Frankfurt School devotees and Habermasians, all affirming the value of democratic politics.

REVIEWS

The melancholic paralysis that has accompanied the *fins* of modernity's *siècles* had raised the hopes of many thinkers that the century around the corner (i.e., our century) would usher in a time in which their hopes could be realized.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Many of Jay's speculations occur in the context of his first essay, "Fin-de-Siècle Socialism." Here Jay draws a number of parallels between the 19th century and the waning years of our own century, in order to find suggestions for the kinds of social thought that might appear in the 21st century. He holds that the melancholic paralysis that has accompanied the *fins* of modernity's *siècles* had raised the hopes of many thinkers that the century around the corner (i.e., our century) would usher in a time in which their hopes could be realized. However, our no-longer-Western and no-longer-bourgeois current fin-de-siècle movements differ from previous ones.

First, Jay distinguishes late 19th century socialist theory from late 20th century socialist theory, misleadingly calling the latter "fin-de-siècle socialism" (misleadingly because both can claim the title fin-de-siècle). Jay maintains that the latest fin-de-siècle socialism is characterized by its willingness to defend accomplishments of bourgeois modernity and modernization. He properly mentions in this regard the work of Habermas whose attempt to extend and complete the emancipatory aspirations of modernity represents a firm departure from the apocalyptic despair that marked the earlier bourgeois fin-de-siècle and compelled it to posit a melodramatic "choice between socialism and barbarism." Thus, the two fin-de-siècles are distinguished above all by the fact that our current one (if indeed it exists) has lost hope not just in utopia but in the yearning for totality which inspires utopian thinking.

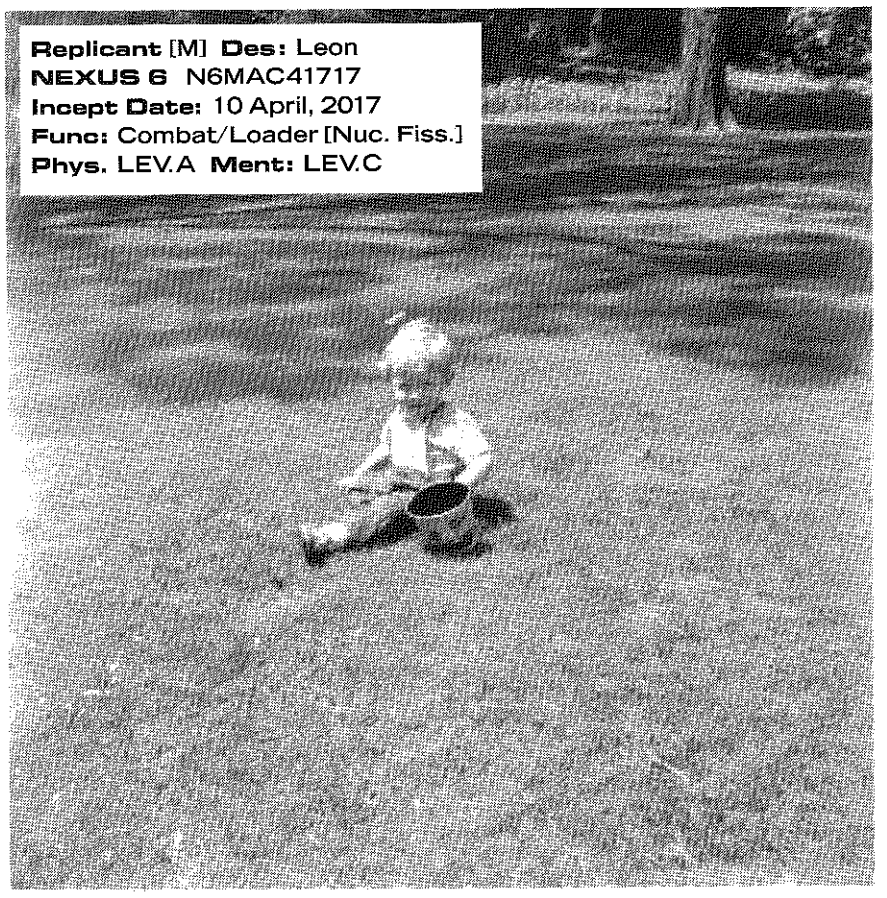
Accordingly, Jay says, we have learned to accept some "inevitable imperfections of whatever social order humans might create." While such a cavalier attitude might disturb many readers, Jay insists that such lowered expectations do not necessarily lead to political paralysis. On the contrary, for Jay, a new post-redemptive socialism may accomplish more as a rainbow coalition, "a counter-hegemonic block of disparate protest groups." Released from the constraints of having to measure all achievements against the daunting model of a "normatively totalized, fully redeemed social order," our new fin-de-siècle socialist theory can (Jay claims) build on the better parts of the socialist tradition (such as enlightenment, emancipation), preparing "for the challenge of a new century – or to be more precise, of a new millennium, in which the millennial hopes of the last are finally laid to rest." Fortunately, most readers should be able to recognize that in the absence of any concrete discussion of specific "achievements," or any criteria for discussing the "better parts" of something as broad as the socialist tradition, Jay's effort in this book amounts to little more than an uncritical capitulation to political postmodernism.

In the course of drawing out some of the implications of the parallels he finds between the two fin-de-siècle socialisms, Jay mentions a number of thinkers who represent significant landmarks in the move from the grandiose ambitions of a messianic redemptive avant-garde to the contemporary suspicion of holism and totality. These thinkers, or the debates surrounding their work, then become the subjects of the book's individual essays. Such a practice is meant to give the book a certain coherence. However, because most of the essays were not specifically written for this collection, there is a sense in which they are forced to provide answers and responses to questions posed by the first, introductory essay, written after them. The upshot is that the later essays seem murky and directionless in comparison with the first essay, which ironically points to them for support.

The second essay, on the dispute between Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer, while not the best to have been written on the subject, is at least one that tries to put the debate in the context of philosophical speculations on language, communication, and understanding. From the 20th century theologians, for whom revelation is intimately connected to speech, through Anglo-American ordinary language philosophers, to semiologists and post-structuralists, semanticists and action theorists, Chomskians and intentionalists, language has been seen as the central mediating entity, insight into which would also give insight into something special about humans. For Gadamer, language is central because all human reality is in the last analysis shaped by its linguistic nature. This represents a twist on the older *Geisteswissenschaften* tradition for which Spirit or collective mind provided the context for knowledge. Habermas is interested in Gadamer's work as it challenges both transcendentalism and subjectivism, as well as the notion of language as a technological instrument of manipulation. But for Habermas, (self) reflection is more binding; it can appraise distorted communication because it is tied to a pragmatic universe of discourse – it is, in a word, evaluative. Jay doesn't give enough of a sense of the profound disparity between a critical theory (Habermas) that emphasizes critical reflection based on validity claims that allow us to transcend and criticize tradition, and a hermeneutic rehabilitation of tradition and prejudices (Gadamer) that necessarily subordinates anything like Habermas' communicative theory of social action to a dependency on the authority of a pre-understanding and a non-evaluative tradition. Nor does Jay highlight what Habermas has learned from his exchange with Gadamer. Habermas learned that the possibility of a neutral social science is an illusion, a notion to which he has added the stronger claim that there can be no act of understanding or description of meaning without critical judgment.

Jay fares a little better in the third and fourth essays and the postscript, which are thematically linked. Here he teases out the implications of Adorno's late remarks on how this century has shattered the faith in the redemptive powers of high culture. Several practitioners of cultural criticism who are highly suspicious of hierarchy in general, and in particular that hierarchy implied by the high culture/mass culture split, come under Jay's scrutiny. He concludes with a subtle version of the argument that hierarchy, rather than being something to be blindly and violently opposed, is a "conservative idea with radical implications." Pleading neither for a timeless canon of any kind in the humanities and arts, nor a flattening out of esoteric and exoteric art one into the other, Jay argues that even if there are "genuine reasons to bemoan the specific implications of the types of hierarchy that now exist, and I think that there are, there are also lots of reasons to be thankful that we have not entirely lost our capacity to make distinctions of quality and rank." Aspects of high art, an art that Jay maintains is nonetheless renewed from below, exercise a kind of criticism over and against the world of mundane objects. The blurring of all hierarchies would destroy the capacity for art to serve as the guardian of the distinction which relies on

Language has been seen as the central mediating entity, insight into which would also give insight into something special about humans.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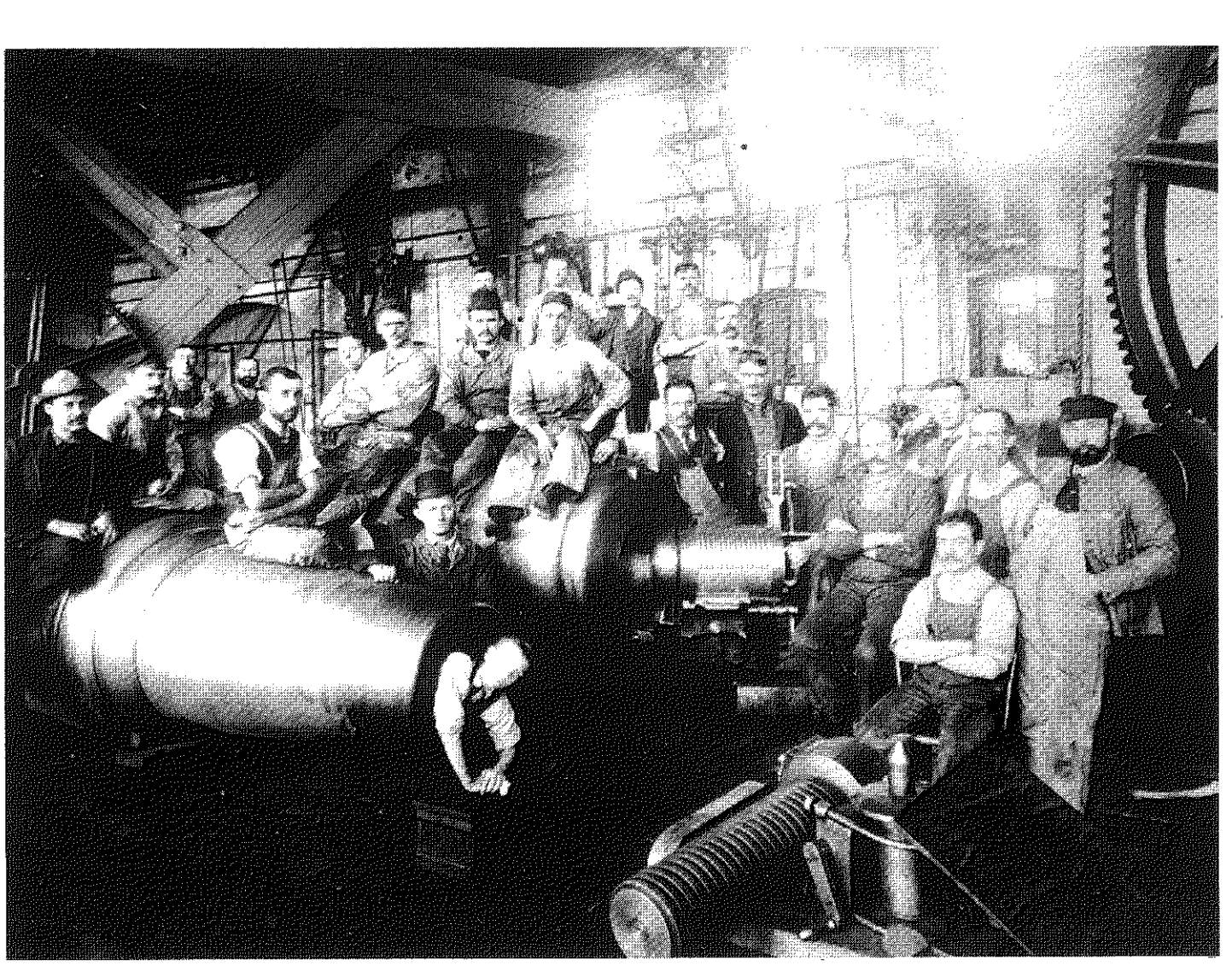

the alienation of high art from society in general to sanction whatever emancipatory role art can play today. Adorno expressed this best when he wrote that truth is the antithesis of every and any society.

The next seven essays – on Vico and Western Marxism, the Horkheimer/Kracauer debate, two on Gouldner (the late "outlaw" Marxist), two on Habermas, and one on Blumenberg – continue the theme of the challenges to orthodox Marxism. Once again a discussion of art is central to several of them, for art and its relation to culture has consistently represented a problem for Marxist criticism of culture which confines art to the superstructure.

Jay's essay on Vico draws attention to Vico's ambiguous legacy to Marxism, a legacy which was fertile in "liberating that tradition from the scientistic delusions of the Second International" but which "now appears to be entirely spent." Vico was largely responsible for the distinction between the "made" and the "discovered," where the former refers to human history and the latter to a nature somehow outside of human influence and hence knowledge. Jay notes Vico's problematic reduction of *praxis* to making, which bequeathed a dubious legacy to Western Marxism, and which "oversimplifies the complex ways in which men are active in the world." Correct as Jay is on this score, he offers little insight, and one has the impression that this essay is included here only because it wasn't good enough to be included in his massive book on Western Marxism. And in all his discussions, Jay ignores pragmatism and the tradition of social democracy and critique that often intersected with pragmatism. While he also deals briefly with the *Naturwissenschaften/Geisteswissenschaften* split in the first essay, noting that it inspired Marxism to conceive of the process of totalization as emancipation from human embeddedness in nature (and "to delimit the concept of totality by excluding the natural from it"), Jay again fails to mention pragmatism. Pragmatism has the merit of working with a notion of holism without any metaphysical splits between categories like the social and the natural, and so avoids reducing mental or any other activity like language to either "producer" of the world or to "mirror" of reality.

The next essay deals with a topic that hasn't seen much press – the Horkheimer/Kracauer debate, and it is to Jay's credit that he resurrects it as an important example of the conflict between modernism and the avant-garde with respect to attitudes towards mass culture. Relying on the work of Peter Burger, Jay writes that modernism originated as a reaction to "art-for-art's-sake" movements, calling into question "the traditional image of the coherent, closed organic work of art by problematizing its formal and linguistic assumptions." While it called these assumptions into question, modernism uncritically accepted the model of aesthetic autonomy: like *L'art pour l'art*, it was largely complicit with an institution of art contrasting with "other social and cultural practices by its utter indifference to ethical, instrumental, utilitarian, or political concerns:

> The avant-garde, in contrast, attacked the very institution of art itself, challenging its alleged differentiation from the larger life world from which it arose.

Both Horkheimer and Kracauer reacted against the category of *Bildung* (intellectual development or formative educational process), which had dominated all Western discussions of culture, art, and education for over one hundred years. But they reacted in different ways and by different means. Horkheimer adopted the position now associated with Adorno and held that affirmative high culture implicitly contained a protest against social conditions by maintaining a utopian moment in art. Thus Horkheimer was drawn to modernist art, and was suspicious of overtly political art, such as Brecht's which he accused of creating a false harmony. Kracauer took the opposite track and championed the view, now called "avant-gardist," that the distinctions between art and the life world should be collapsed with the intended consequence that a reconciliation of art and life "would be a way-station to a rational future." Jay is a sure guide through what he calls the "sobering lessons" of the dispute over art and its utopian potential, and this chapter, though one of the shortest, is one of the most interesting.

Jay's *Fin-de-Siècle Socialism and Other Essays* testifies to the vitality and importance of the debates surrounding such topics as: intellectual history, the future of critical theory, post-totality politics, the relationship between art and society, and Western Marxism and fin-de-siècle cultures. At a time when many efforts at cultural and theoretical interpretation and critique amount to little more than chic, it is to Jay's credit that he has set high standards for debate even as he struggles to reach them himself. ◆

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MARK **DRISCOLL**

Hip or Hippie? Old and New Cynicism

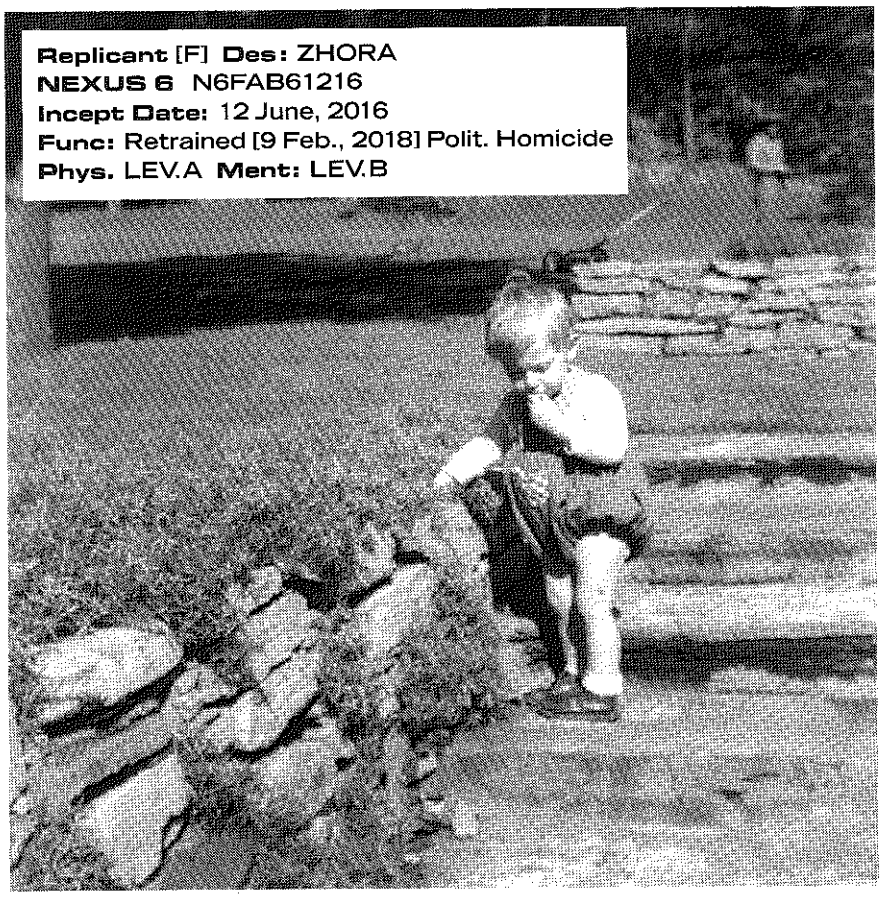
Critique of Cynical Reason
by **Peter Sloterdijk**

University of Minnesota Press,
1987, 558 pp.

Part Foucauldian genealogy, part Nietzschean volume of aphorisms, Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason* is mainly an attempt to marry the melancholics of critical theory to the textual free-play of French post-histoire, with a revived Heideggerian ontology performing the ceremony. Sloterdijk is writing against and with Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a major critical theory text that explores how the pernicious effects of Enlightenment rationality turned enlightened "progress" into barbarism and fascism.

Sloterdijk critiques cynicism as the predominant mode that is making postmodern man's (there are hardly any women present in the text) body more docile than ever. We have inherited the Enlightenment's negative strains and, as a result, are lobotomized victims of what he calls "enlightened false consciousness; that modernized, unhappy consciousness on which enlightenment has laboured both successfully and in vain." Postmodern cynics are "borderline melancholics" who can barely keep themselves together long enough to get to the office or boardroom/boredroom/bedroom every day.

Aspiring to more than a history of the Diogenic impulse, Sloterdijk seeks to counterpose the cultural and political malaise he finds dominating the *Zeitgeist* of the postmodern 1970s and 1980s with the paradigm of Diogenes the Cynic, the exemplar of an embodied strategy of kynical resistance. I find this Diogenic impulse problematic, for it spoils what is otherwise a dashing intervention into the present passive space of cultural historicizing.



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According to Sloterdijk's reading, it is unfortunate that the more kynical and utopian aspects of the Enlightenment have been repressed and forgotten. Still, he is hopeful that they can be resuscitated. His salvage project offers us Voltaire and Heine dressed up in tight 501 Levi's, cruising the detritus of the postmodern world. In an attempt to revivify the Frankfurt School's moribund resignation to a "damaged life," Sloterdijk produces a theoretical tracking of historical anti-theoretical tendencies. These tendencies are what one might expect: Diogenes, Rabelais, Dada and Surrealism, and the 1960s student movement and counter-culture. Thus, the critique of cynical reason hopes to cheer us up, whereby it is understood from the beginning that "it is not so much a matter of work but of relaxation."

According to Sloterdijk, Adorno was not a relaxed, laid-back kind of guy. Sloterdijk relates the famous scene at Frankfurt University in 1969 when members of a student action group rushed onto the podium during Adorno's lecture, the women baring their breasts, and "attacked" Adorno with flowers and erotic caresses. Sloterdijk seems gleeful in telling us it was not "naked force that reduced the philosopher to muteness, but the force of the naked;" "only a radical nakedness and bringing things out in the open can free us from the compulsion for mistrustful imputations."

Adorno was terribly unnerved and humiliated and left the lecture hall to the chorus "as an institution, Adorno is dead." We are *not* told that Adorno died four short months after this incident. Instead we are warned that *leitmotifs* of "naked truth" and "disparate sensuousness" will be pursued throughout the book.

In his introduction to the *Critique of Cynical Reason,* Andreas Huyssen warns us that the reproach leveled against Sloterdijk is that "he constructs a merely binary opposition between cynicism and kynicism which simply misses the mark." Sloterdijk, Huyssen continues, postulates "the split within the cynical phenomenon itself, which pits the cynical reason of domination and self-domination against the kynical revolt of self-assertion and self-realization." Is Sloterdijk defining these terms in opposition? Clearly he is not regressing into a space solidified during the Enlightenment where one system of thought always has to designate its Other as weak, inferior, and dark. Post-structural protocols have demonstrated how antipodal systemic structuring always privileges one term over another. Sloterdijk does show his awareness of binarism. However, there are many instances in which he falls back on a binary logic to make his argument: the sexually liberated sixties New Left versus Adorno's repressed, bourgeois anality; Plato's idealism versus Diogenes' corporeality, etc..

In a book as good as this one, such reductions are surprising. I admit to being seduced in my initial reading of the text by the free-play of the signifiers and the kynical textual economy. But it was during my second reading that certain subtextual themes such as "return to reason" and "reclaiming a tradition of rationality" made me suspect that while employing French methodologies of *ecriture,* Sloterdijk is basically a Habermasian rationalist, who simply appropriates French style to illuminate and ground a space of rational truth. Habermas *en francais?*

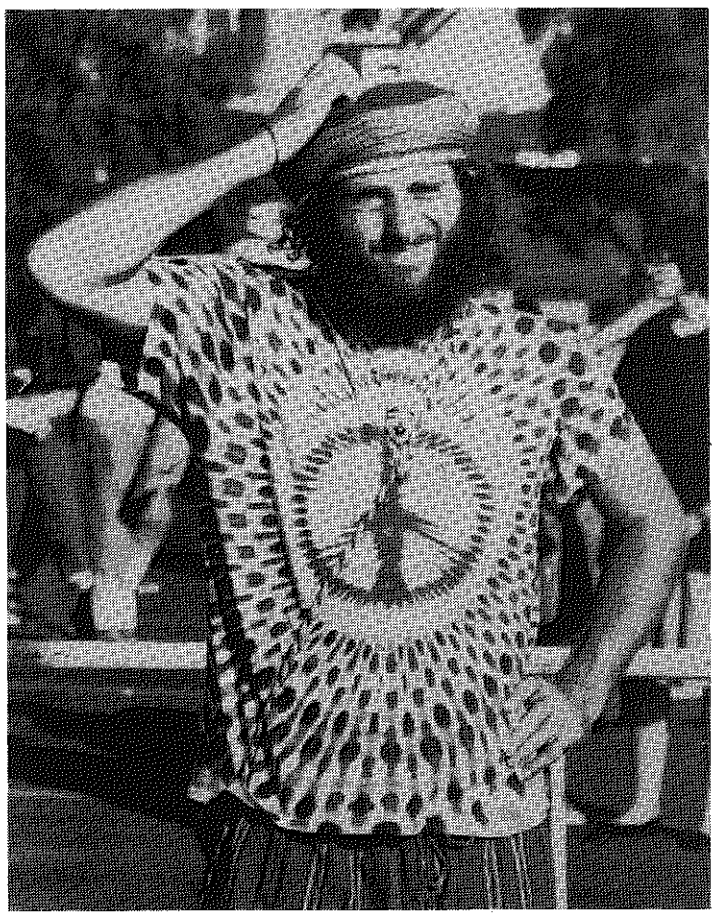
For Sloterdijk it is with Diogenes the Cynic that the resistance to theory in Western philosophy begins. Sloterdijk names Diogenes as the original hippie freak: he's the one who masturbated, urinated, and defecated in public. Sloterdijk even claims that Diogenes, living outside, was unshaven and slovenly of speech and cloth, and that he was a "forerunner of the modern proponents of raw foods and a natural diet."

Against Sloterdijk's exegesis of this hippie, we are presented with a very different picture of Diogenes in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers.* Here, Diogenes is violently misogynistic and materialistic. After seeing a woman hanging dead from an olive tree, he said, "would that every tree bore similar fruit." Upon seeing a peasant woman kneeling before an altar, praying in "an ungraceful attitude," he felt it his kynical duty to warn her that she was just begging to be done from behind by any passing god. Originally a native of Sinope, Diogenes was run out of that city, accused of absconding with funds and of counterfeiting in his role as city treasurer: "adulterating the coinage," as it were. This picture of the Kynic, Sloterdijk's man, is far from the anti-social, counter-cultural drop-out that Sloterdijk evokes in his book.

A kynical philosophy of the body might be located more easily in paradigms of women dancing against nuclear missiles at Greenham Common, or with the sacrifice made by the Central American activist and Vietnam vet Brian Wilson, who blocked a train bearing arms for the Contras with his body. Rather than looking for places of real resistance to domination, we get, in Sloterdijk's version of Diogenes, something like a celebration of male sexual privilege.

What does Sloterdijk propose as answers to postmodern cynicism? For me his strategy of a return to a kynical body, although provocative, poses some problems. Adorno spoke of a Western body that is subjected to markings and tattooed by instrumental reason and the administered world of the culture industry. How would Diogenes counter the disciplinary technologies and symbolic terror of Western scripting apparatuses? How, indeed, would Sloterdijk respond to a Foucauldian claim that "the resistance of the self-

For one who concerns himself with contemporary politics and culture, Sloterdijk seems to show no concern with *real* social change.



conscious body is produced by the culture of cynicism itself, as a regenerating and legitimizing device?"

His response seems to be something resembling a free will argument. He calls for us to thrust off the armour of subjectivity which has become "an armed state unto itself" and "free ourselves through transcendental polemicism and eroticism." Unfortunately, Sloterdijk never enlightens activists about possible epistemological focuses where social change can or could arise. There are no suggestions of how the activist might slip through the iron cage of the administered world. For one who concerns himself with contemporary politics and culture, Sloterdijk seems to show no concern with real social change. He is, however, mainly interested in a reactionary return to the 1960s, a return that must ignore the socio-economic reality of the 1980s. He sighs melancholically, "the optimism of those days ... has pretty much died out."

As for the North American political landscape, Sloterdijk thinks that cynicism has led to the neo-conservative backlash of the 1980s. Of course, the Diogenic strategy of returning the body to the Enlightenment concerns of rationality and truth is the antidote to this backlash. Again, this smacks of Habermas, who is also concerned with a redeployment of the Enlightenment. The French (Foucault's technology of the self and Lacan's misrecognition) deny this space of embodied truth, and it is this denial that the German neo-rationalists find nihilistic and politically conservative. Sloterdijk seems to ignore the postmodern critique of identity and ideality, which would allow and encourage the ruptures and openings necessary for micropolitical resistance to hegemony by unburdening theorized activists from the need to act within a space of truth and reason.

I scan a North American left that is heterogeneous and divided but is very active around issues of homelessness, US imperialism in Central America, and gay and lesbian liberation. This divided post-New Left is practising sophisticated micropolitical resistance strategies while remaining aware of systemic problems that need critique. I see an effervescing of resistances to domination that is almost completely bereft of utopian tendencies, a fact that 1960s New Left intellectuals often bemoan. This new generation of activists, who are in many ways acting against the sixties, find that local political radicalism is more effective when stripped of its metaphysical demands for truth and justice.

Sloterdijk seems pressed to dismiss certain countercultural spaces that are offering counter-hegemonic points of resistance. He extends his critique of the cynical movements of Dada to the punk movement and to the "necrophilic robot gestics of New Wave." In three instances he flatly states that these movements are breeding grounds for fascism. He draws a continuum of "cool generation" from the "Nazi fraternity" scene to the "sceptical generation of the fifties" to the "developers in cynicism already making themselves noticed as New Wave.... For, we know that Bohemianism is dead and ... in the subcultures are to be found the cheerless attitudes of withdrawal." After apotheosizing the sixties drop-out culture, he labels the 'eighties cultural space of post-punk "fascist." Embodying this cultural space of post-punk myself, I disparage the 'sixties as being overly Rousseauian and, in its idealism, not sensitive enough to local domination-effects.

Finally, I become one of Sloterdijk's borderline melancholics when I think that this book, in many ways a brilliant tracking of telos from the Enlightenment to fascism – the wonderful Weimar sections almost led me to overlook Sloterdijk's horrible sexual politics – could have been so effective, yet failed. It reduces itself to a cynical exercise in finger pointing. An exercise that produces real melancholia for this reviewer, who suspects that the (old) New Left which is pointing fingers has removed the index finger from the peace sign signifier, materializing a middle finger now pointing alone, this new sign signifying something entirely different. ◆

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JEAN YOON

Against Polarization: Fluid Oppositions

The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory
by **Joan Cocks**

London, New York: Routledge, 1989, 245 pp.

> Radical feminism's romanticization of women as essentially innocent or good may be more benign than the dominant culture's degradation of women, and it may be more well-meaning than that culture's idealization of women in a backhanded way that suggests they are really the weaker and less dramatic sex. Still, it is absolutely infantilizing and embalming.
>
> Joan Cocks,
> *The Oppositional Imagination*

From the feminist perspective, Joan Cocks' *The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory* is an unusual work because instead of critiquing dominant patriarchal structures, Cocks focuses on the fault lines in the populist "common sense-isms" of radical feminist politics which, she argues, are apparent in women's newspapers, etiquette at women's gatherings, popular music, fashion, approved pairings, and some works of the feminist canon. *The Oppositional Imagination* is not an anti-feminist work, but rather an attempt to reveal and rectify a shift towards increasing polarization of the sexes, a reassertion of the "Masculine/feminine regime" in a new but no less restrictive form. Feminism resists dominant culture; by identifying radical feminism as a network of political communities with an identifiable ideology containing certain fundamental flaws, Cocks places herself in a counter-resistance to the alternative hegemony. The salient irony evident to any reader is that Cocks risks rejection from the very community to which she claims citizenship.

Her book is important precisely because she addresses issues troubling the very centre of the feminist movement and does so successfully.

Cocks' principle argument is really quite simple. Feminism began on the premise that sexual difference is culturally created. Difference, she argues, rests "on the harsh, systematic fashioning of brute bodies into masculine and feminine selves." Or to cite de Beauvoir, women are not born, they are created – and so, by extension, are men. If the regime of Masculine/feminine is a cultural imposition upon the body revealing no anatomical truth, then both women and men are capable of escaping it. Contemporary radical politics, however, promotes an ideology based on the implicit belief that men are biologically and ontologically violent, oppressive, technocratic, that they have been so through time, and may always be so. According to this ideology, women are pacifist, truth-producing and connected with wild natural forces; they are victims of an organized male conspiracy. This conspiracy theory is, however, "unable to account with any persuasiveness not only for dominative power's advances and slippages in the sexual domain, but for feminism's own appearance and development as an oppositional tendency."

Cocks is not the first feminist critic to point out the fallacy of the "patriarchal conspiracy." According to literary theorist Toril Moi, the "theory of sexual oppression as a conscious, monolithic plot against women leads to a seductively optimistic view of the possibilities for full liberation." The enemy is identified, targeted, externalized. It is the other that can be severed completely from the "good" and destroyed. This reverse essentialism, which gives rise to innumerable practical and ideological paradoxes, stems from an inadequate understanding of how power operates in the cultural domain.

Drawing from Gramsci and Foucault, Cocks contends that cultural power is perpetuated or transformed on the "organic" or "molecular" level, rather than from a center or a top-down authority. Only such a model allows for resistance movements such as feminism to appear or even continue. But with few exceptions, Cocks argues, radical feminism falls into the trap of assuming that the "patriarchy" is centralized and deliberate. It "uncover[s] men as the ghost writers and secret agents of social life." Women were "blind" while men had "clear vision," women the victims and men the manipulators. By ascribing all the evils or weaknesses of women solely to male authorship, radical feminism rewrites herstory as a demeaning puppet show.

Cocks scraps the notion that "any subordinate is incapable of thinking and doing ugly things of its own accord." This idea accompanies the misguided belief "that every ugly thing a subordinate actually thinks and does can be traced back to the evil genius of its dominator." The crimes of white supremacist women against blacks then, cannot simply be ascribed to the authorship of white men, or

in Adrienne Rich's terms, "patriarchal fragmentation." This approach is not only simplistic and "monotonous," it also inadvertantly flatters men with virtual omnipotence and humiliates women "in a way that rivals all the comtemptuous things men have said against them." Needless to say, in recent years feminism has shifted dramatically from a naïve representation of racism as a phenomenon of male authorship, but the underlying mandate that sisterhood should override racism remains.

If cultural power is evident in the "common-isms" of daily life, then its prime target is sexuality – how pleasure is achieved and with whom. The "truth of the body" is a cultural-political regime. Drawing from Foucault, Cocks argues that the body is an arena where domina-

By ascribing all the evils or weaknesses of women solely to male authorship, radical feminism rewrites herstory as a demeaning puppet show.

tive power has been exercised through a system of punishments and rewards that exaggerate or even create the apparent differences between male and female. She goes half a step beyond Foucault in arguing that "the modern regime of truth of Masculine/feminine [is] pre-eminently a drama not of lineal connection, inheritance rights, and familial authority and obligation, but of sexual personality."

The radical feminist version of the body's meaning fails, however, to disarm the dominant culture's portrait of the "phallic personality." Men, by virtue of having a penis, are assumed to be aggressive and violent. Feminism, which holds as one of its primary tenets the assumption that anatomy does not represent ontological truth, violates its own founding principles in its analysis and interpretation of the male sexual experience. The male genital organ is assumed to be synonymous with the phallus, a cultural idea of male-centred power; they are not, in fact, the same thing. Nor can it be assumed that all male passion and exclusively male passion is fueled by a phallic "will to power." Evidence of the failure of the axiom that the "will to power" in the sexual realm is directly linked to male genitals lies in the very existence of lesbian sado-masochism. Heterosexual passion is not necessarily violent and phallocentric, nor is lesbian sex necessarily non-violent and reciprocal.

The radical portrayal of the lesbian erotic is one of reciprocity, mirroring, non-aggressive and yet non-passive; lesbianism is the "ideal" sexuality. Cocks refutes this with the counter-assertion that passion is "endemically unstable," and that the radical feminist stance must be understood as an alternative cultural hegemony. She refuses to pass judgement, or make any gesture that seems to favour one sexual preference at the expense of another, but underlying her text is an implicit approval of resistance to any culturo-politically determined eros. Even lesbian S/M, an issue that is dividing the feminist community into unforgiving factions, is treated as an issue of political resistance and a further example of the instability and private nature of desire and pleasure between consenting adults.

Cocks indirectly rejects separatism as a viable political option. Men who successfully escape the pull of the dominant culture can become "traitors" to their own sex. Similarly, women and men who maintain a naïve belief in the Masculine/feminine regime are "loyalists." The "naïve" loyalist is the "key" to the continued perpetuation of the old order, by leading a life without political resistance. The strident "Real Woman" who pickets birth control clinics is a living paradox. The "rebel" lives a life of revolt, the "critic" interprets, and the "maverick" (a rare species) lives entirely outside all orthodox sex/gender classifications. These stances to the Masculine/feminine regime, even in this truncated re-telling, clearly demarcate a field of political resistance that is not determined only by gender. The "question of political alliance," she concedes, is "very complex:"

> Although [women] are far more likely than men to become critics and rebels of Masculine/feminine, they are not more likely to become critics and rebels than to become loyalists. And of course they are not the only possible critics and rebels around. Thus it is that women who are actively at odds with the dictations of Masculine/feminine may be closer in their sensibilities to the few men who are traitors than to the many women who are loyalists. Any sexual politics of resistance ultimately will be brought face to face with that.

What woman has not dealt with a mother fretting about marriage, or a female co-worker who turns chalk white at the mention of "lesbian" or "abortion" and at the same time has a far more liberally-minded male friend? Who can argue that Mary Wollstonecraft did not find an intellectual partner, a "traitor" in Cocks' terms, in William Godwin? While most feminists would be able to supply examples of "traitors" in their own social sphere, Cocks' argument is an exhaustively thorough *critical* rebuttal of a growing populist movement towards separatism which maintains the hegemonic classifications and becomes a "living negative" of the regime.

The form of *The Oppositional Imagination* confirms Cocks' commitment to a non-hegemonically determined society. By devoting the first half of her work almost exclusively to the ideas of male scholars (Foucault, Gramsci, Said), she breaks a tacit rule among feminist writers to cite male authors at length only to expose deep-rooted, "invisible" and incapacitating sexism. (Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* is one model of this technique.) In the second half, Cocks assumes the reader has read or may sometime read (American) feminist theory in depth; Andrea Dworkin, Mary Daly, and Adrienne Rich are her prime targets. Feminists, she suggests, might start with Part II and work backwards, while political theorists (male, presumably) should start with Part I – "something might ease up along the way."

This image of readers of opposite genders reading towards each other, meeting perhaps somewhere in the middle, is, I think, a bit too linear, too monodimensional. It is telling, however, of Cocks' fundamental optimism for a vital, free-flowing culture in which one's gender no longer determines one's relationship to power and the Masculine/feminine regime is broken down completely. In many ways, *The Oppositional Imagination* is an appeal for fluidity and multiplicity in the political sphere analogous to feminist literary critic Toril Moi's linguistic ideal of a free floating sexual signifier, a "multiplicity of sexually marked voices," an "indeterminable number of blended voices." ◆

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NATHALIE **COOKE**

Inventing Herself

Great Musgrave
by Susan Musgrave

Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989, 207 pp.

At first glance, *Great Musgrave* is a collection of Susan Musgrave's recent essays, with their trademark blend of the confessional and the sensational, full of Musgrave's playful exaggerations and sense of fun. On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that these essays are at the eye of the storm of current literary debate on such topics as the status of the self, the significance of the increasingly problematic boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose, high and low art. But Musgrave cuts such a colourful figure in her writing that she distracts her readers, tempting them to look for the author in and behind the work, and not at the work itself. That, however, is where Musgrave is to be found; she is a woman of letters, the creator and the product of her own creation.

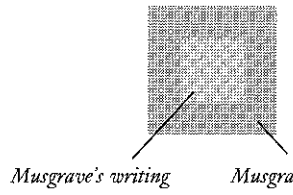
As such, she and her method are reminiscent of another colourful figure: Hemingway. The name conjures images not only of the things he wrote, but also – and perhaps more so – of the things he did, the places he visited, the people he knew, the man he was and the man he made himself out to be.

Hemingway's contribution to the tradition lies in the stylistic and technical innovations of his work – the famous iceberg principle – and in the Hemingway persona he described and came to represent. For both these reasons, he makes fascinating reading. So too does Susan Musgrave's *Great Musgrave,* and for similar reasons, since the book's title refers to its subject as well as to its author. Indeed, Susan Musgrave's writing has become more and more intimately connected with her person, her personality and her various personae.

The subject of the book is threefold for Musgrave constructs at least three selves:

1. Musgrave's persona

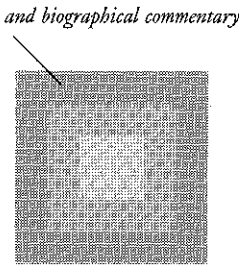
Critics dubbed this author of ten books of poetry, two novels and two children's books, the "tormented sea witch with 'Medusa-like hair' who explores sexuality at the primal level of bone hurt" (Musgrave's own summary). "Tormented," because Musgrave began writing poetry while secluded in a psychiatric institution after a failed suicide attempt. Her poems were discovered and published by Robin Skelton, professor and then editor of *The Malahat Review.* "Sea witch," both because of the title of her first collection of poetry (*Songs of the Sea Witch,* 1970) and because



of the mystical nature of those poems whose symbolic language grows out of her life on the west coast where she was raised, and where she has now returned to live.

2. Musgrave the personality

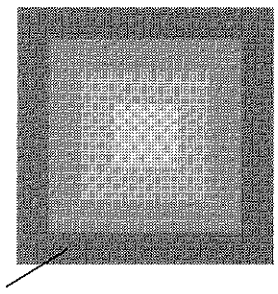
One newspaper headline read "witch gives way to woman," suggesting that Musgrave had come down to earth, so to speak. (The original title of the book was *Musgrave Landing,* a play on the name of a small boat mooring on Saltspring Island, just as *Great Musgrave* is a play on the name of a village in Cumbria, England that borders on another called Lesser



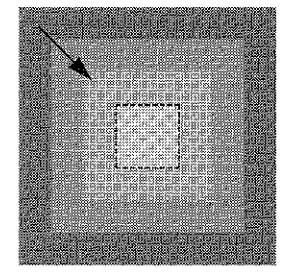
Musgrave.) But Musgrave's life is no letdown for her readers. She has been married three times: once to lawyer Jeffrey Green; once to Paul Nelson, the alleged drug smuggler Green successfully defended; and now to Stephen Reid, a bank robber turned author. Her wedding to Reid received considerable publicity, being aired on television, as well as being described by, among others, Musgrave herself.

3. The personable Musgrave

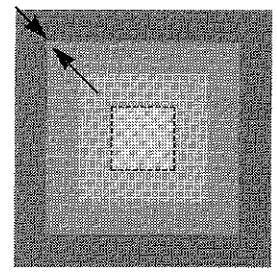
Musgrave now lives with Reid and her two daughters in Sydney, B.C. where she has become a journalist, writing columns for the *Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, Vancouver Sun* and Victoria's *Cut to: Magazine.* Her columns contain thoughts on writing and motherhood, usually introduced with an anecdote gleaned from a writer's biography. *Great Musgrave* is a collection of her recent newspaper columns, together with "Wages of Love," an article she first published in *Vancouver Magazine,* and an explanation of why she posed nude for *Saturday Night* (something that should not be spoiled by paraphrase).



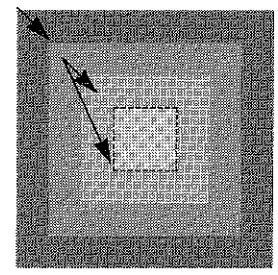
Musgrave's anecdotal style and her personal, almost casual, tone are deceiving, however, for these essays are highly self-conscious. Not only does Musgrave write about her three different selves in these articles but (and here is the really tricky part) she does this on at least four different levels.



1. Most obviously, she describes her experiences directly, explaining first hand what it is to be a writer and a mother. She confesses to the time spent sharpening pencils and sorting paper clips. She describes the dailiness of a writer's life, the minor interruptions of loud radios and bored children.



2. Interspersed throughout such direct confessions are indirect descriptions of her writing. She describes an interview in which she provided a summary of her 1980 novel, *The Charcoal Burners.* "It was about a commune of cannibals living off a commune of vegetarians in the north of British Columbia," or so she says she said.



3. More often and more indirectly still, Musgrave describes the ways in which others describe her or her work. She repeats introductions ("Whenever we hear the name Susan Musgrave in Toronto we automatically think of seaweed"), responses to her novel ("a chilling tale"), as well as critical classification of the poet ("the chance daughter of Allen Ginsberg and Sylvia Plath") and her oeuvre ("dangerous in the extreme").

4. She provides her own responses to such descriptions.

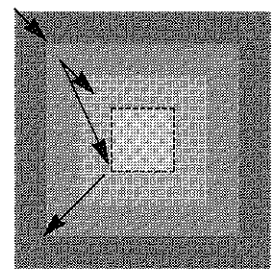


illustration: Kimberly Hart

Of course, one advantage of such an elaborate system of narrative frames is that it allows Musgrave to have the last word. And this is part of the fun. For example, to the criticism, "It's pointless to criticize Musgrave for being Musgrave," she replies, "Rhetorical drone may break my bones but no Envious Prig, no eunuch, no blasted jelly-boned swine of a slimy belly-wriggling sniveling, dribbling, dithering, palsied, pulseless book reviewer was going to hurt me."

But the complex layering of narrative forms also situates Musgrave's work at the centre of current explorations (most of which are considerably more tedious) of the first-person singular as literary device. And this, I suggest, is where the innovation of Musgrave's nonfiction lies.

A self-declared "performer"in person, and an "ironist" on paper, Musgrave is quite aware of the power of the first-person pronoun. Indeed, as Ken Adachi noted as early as 1987, Musgrave was already wrestling with problems of personal expression and identity in her poetry. "A few of the poems," he wrote, "conjured up a sense of a poet looking for a new approach to the problem of personal identity and not having much success in finding it." However, what Adachi did not notice in *Cocktails at the Mausoleum* (1985), Musgrave's most recent collection of poetry, was at the back of the book. There, in a section entitled "Notes on Poems," Musgrave was beginning to discover the potential of nonfiction as a vehicle for exploring the very issues that (as Adachi quite rightly pointed out) had defeated her in the earlier poems and novels.

"Notes on Poems" marks a significant shift in the emphasis, as well as the genre, of Musgrave's writing: with them, she moves from text to context. Since "Notes" Musgrave has concentrated not so much on the subject (and in all Musgrave's work, she is the subject) but rather on the way it can be written and read, presented and perceived. "I have written notes on many of these poems," she writes at the beginning of this section, "in the way that I might introduce them at a poetry reading: this gives them a context, I feel, without attempting to explain them away."

Critics dubbed this author of ten books of poetry, two novels and two children's books, the "tormented sea witch with 'Medusa-like hair' who explores sexuality at the primal level of bone hurt"

One result of such recontextualization on Musgrave's part is the multiplication of referents for the first-person singular. "I" comes to signify all of (i) Musgrave the author, (ii) Musgrave the subject, (iii) Musgrave the reader, (iv) Musgrave the author of readings of her own work, (v) Musgrave the subject of readings of her own work, (vi) Musgrave the reader of readings of her own work, and so on. The paradox, of course, is that by reinserting her presence in her work, by "personalizing" it, Musgrave serves only to further imprison the "I" within various layers of discourse (as the diagrams above are intended to illustrate).

But not for long. Musgrave, as that title "Great Musgrave" suggests, is something of an escape artist. Like the "great Houdini" before her, she teases and thrills her audience not with the process of her imprisonment (the intricate system of narrative frames I have outlined, more than a little tongue-in-cheek), but rather with her daring escape. And in this book, she makes her break in "The Wages of Love," the longest and most entertaining piece in the collection.

The Great Musgrave's Disappearing Act

Originally published in the fashion supplement of *Vancouver Magazine* (March 1986), this article appears to be a light and entertaining record of Musgrave's romantic encounters around the world. The article is divided into seven sections, each one containing a thumbnail sketch of a particular man, his environment and the reasons for the failure of the relationship. The last section is an exception since it centres on Musgrave's ongoing relationship with her present husband, Stephen Reid. The names seem to be unchanged: Stephen Reid is Stephen Reid, Susan Musgrave is Susan Musgrave. And, despite the necessary brevity of the descriptions, the piece appears to give us a chance to learn more about Musgrave and her love life, two things that have recently attracted much media attention.

The problem is that the character within the story is very unlike the Musgrave who narrates it. In fact, she is part of the hoax. Musgrave removes herself from the story and puts, in her place, a naïve innocent who seems ill-equipped to succeed in the sophisticated world in which she travels. Her first relationship, for instance, is with a lost luggage handler. She chooses him by default; when she gets off the plane she is too nervous to leave the lost luggage counter. Still later, when clothes designer Sebastian tells her that he "goes both ways" she thinks he means that he is a "unisex designer." To be sure, her naïvete is part of the fun, but we would be very wrong to take it as an indication of Musgrave's own perspective; the character is the vehicle for Musgrave's irony, not Musgrave herself.

We can easily fall into the trap of equating the two though, because Musgrave both erases her presence from the story and disguises her controlling hand. The relationships within the article all seem to be written and directed by the men within them. It is *they* who decide on location and setting – a deserted Indian village, a 15th century castle. They describe the characters too. When Sebastian calls himself a "spic-and-span sort of person," for instance, Musgrave cleans his castle. And when Hank calls her an incompetent, she becomes one. Even worse than losing control over the relationship however, is Musgrave's inability to extricate herself from it. When her friends tell her that there is something "unwholesome about a relationship with a man who suggested [she] have every part of her body surgically removed and replaced with a new one," Musgrave does no more than record the comment.

Lest we overlook the submissive qualities of Musgrave's heroine, we are reminded of them with her final choice in a mate, the imprisoned bank robber, Stephen Reid. Here, the relationship is determined in a very real way by the regulations of the penal system. With this last choice, then, Musgrave seems to relinquish her control completely. And, since Stephen Reid is the name of Musgrave's own husband, we might be tempted to confuse the character's situation with that of the author.

But if Musgrave buries her control in the article, she exercises her control by writing it. Musgrave's powerlessness is an illusion that fools us only if we ignore the distinction between author and character, the living self and the created subject. If we remember that distinction, however, we can strip away Musgrave's disguise. After all, what better way to deflate the men who have controlled her than by reducing their tyranny to concise prose? Or to categorize them according to date and place – "Ireland, 1972," "Panama, 1982?" The answer, of course, is Musgrave's writing about them in a women's fashion magazine (an irony that is lost within the context of *Great Musgrave*), a format that reinforces our sense of power imbalances of male-female relations. Woman's role in Musgrave's article, and on the glossy pages of the fashion magazine is limited to the ornamental. By writing the article, though, Musgrave makes these men her playthings. She tries them on as the fashion models do clothes. To be sure, the men in Musgrave's stories become objects, something she anticipates in the language of the article itself. "I went straight to the Lost Luggage counter, and stayed there," she writes. "His name was Ulysses."

Loss of identity, in other words, is a problem for the men in the story, not for Musgrave herself. In fact, it becomes clear that these men are not real people at all, but types. Take Hank, for instance. He's the all-American boy. "Hank was a Californian. His father gave him a sports car for *failing* Grade 12, and he went on to study football at college. His brothers were Marines and his sisters would be virgins until they married. He loved his mother as much as apple pie; his mother would *always* be a virgin."

But it is not just the names that are contrived, so too are the scenarios. "Ulysses" is the hero in a story about the encounter between two "searchers." "Adam" frustrates Musgrave with his roving eye. His previous wife, Eve, must have found this to be a problem as well. "Paddy" is the hero in a story about various kinds of madness; and surely we hear the faint reference to padded cells. (To have access to another level of the irony one must know the colloquialisms about having an "Irish paddy," or bad temper.) I could go on, but I think the point is clear: these men have power only in so far as Musgrave chooses to give them power. They are her fictional playthings.

The final irony, however, is that "getting" Musgrave's point is a dubious privilege. Once we realize that her voice is posed, and that she toys with the men who people her article, we must also realize that she is toying with us as well. In particular, we cannot ignore that these anecdotes are fictionalized enactments of the dreams upon which fashion magazines base their sales – dreams of glamour, wealth and romance. The article's byline is particularly telling: "Some were dangerous. None were ordinary. The men who loved Susan Musgrave in their fashion led to the one beyond anyone's reach but hers." As we read the article, though, we find that Musgrave pokes fun at these hollow aspirations. She tells us that a bank robber – in jail – is her dream man. Mythic characters – Ulysses, Adam, the all-American boy, and earl-to-be – all fall short of the mark. And the bank robber is surely symbolic of someone who aspired to a life of wealth and excitement but now, as a prisoner in the story, and as a writer in real life, he has inevitably lowered his standard of living and his financial expectations.

This article is a series of put-ons, in other words. First, Musgrave suggests that she will reveal her past life and loves; instead, she distorts them. Next, she describes herself as a victim of youth and idealism, dominated by the men in her life; but really she reduces them in print. Finally, she promises to write of adventure, glamour and romance, only to reject the values that make these things so attractive. What this article reveals to us are our own expectations as readers and as dreamers. Certainly, we do not get a clear and reliable portrait of Musgrave emerging from her work. She is hidden, after all, disguised by the past she created for herself and clothed in the garb of the fashion magazine female. Herein lies Musgrave's great escape. ◆

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GREG M. **NIELSEN**

Adventure Culture: Notes on the Origin of the Social Imaginary

The Ideology of Adventure: Studies In Modern Consciousness 1100 – 1750
by **Michael Nerlich**
translated by Ruth Crowley
with a preface by
Wlad Godzich

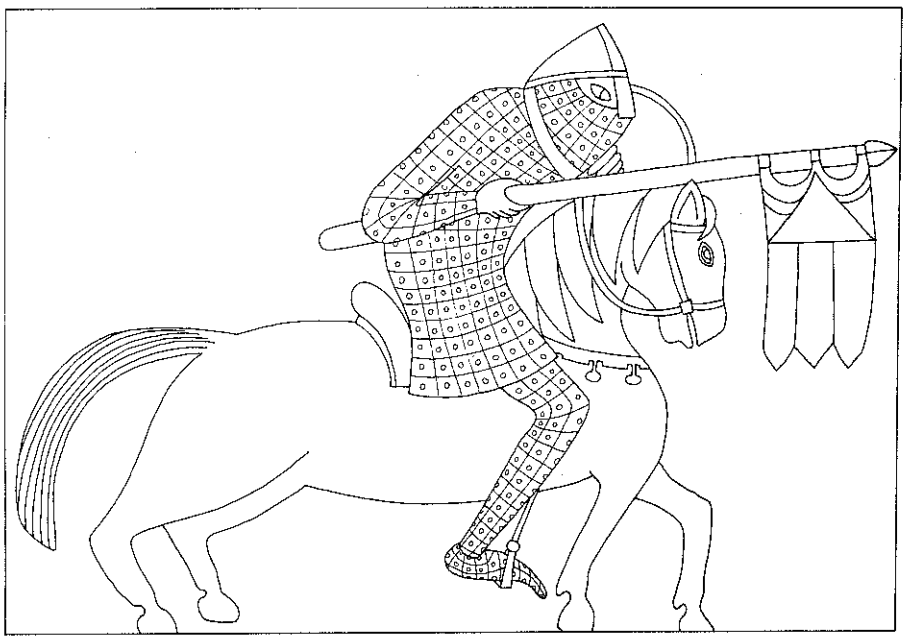
Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987, two volumes, 426 pp.

Studies in culture have witnessed steady growth over the last two decades. For many, the ways of investigating and writing about culture have changed. Semiotics, deconstruction and emerging feminist and ecologist critiques of science are pressing traditional disciplines to reconsider their axioms and rejuvenate their historical foundations. Still, even in the most innovative of the new approaches wherein the interdisciplinary purview is at its maximum, some of the older questions about the concept of culture return: questions of difference, of structure, of praxis and of universalism are certainly not new. We could argue that contemporary debates about the nature of culture follow a controversy already established in the classical sociologies of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. Each of these theorists might argue that for a society to exist it must first have an imaginary representation of itself, a set of signs produced by actors and reproduced through institutions and the symbolic order that they provide. For a host of philosophical and political reasons, however, Marx differs from the others regarding the explanation of the transformation of the imaginary and the social. For Marx, the first critical sociologist, change is about praxis, about the overcoming of the constraints of the synchronic structure or layers of dom-

The integration of adventure ideology into bourgeois thought ultimately informs all social practice from primitive accumulation to the most ruthless and violent forms of imperialism.

ination; while for Simmel, Weber, and Durkheim (although for different reasons), change is about the rational management or objectification of the diachronic, or historical, order of difference. Structure, difference and praxis are each measured against the universal or the transcultural in order to come to terms with the transition from one social order to another. Michael Nerlich's controversial study on the images of adventure, written around 1968 and first published in East Berlin in 1977, is concerned with the ideological constitution of transition. But before we address his book directly, let's further consider the history of the social imaginary, the desires and images at work inside of culture across time and space.

In an age when any object is potentially an art object (Warhol), when any sign can be appropriated (advertising) and when institutions like the family, the church and the state, along with art and literature, are undergoing transformations so fundamental in nature that the production of images (of themselves) is rumoured to be in a kind of ultramodern crisis, it would seem that now, more than ever, we need to question the genesis of our social imaginary. This question calls for a reflection on the potential dangers of transculturalism; that is, not that which is common to all cultures, but rather that which crosses cultures, that which strives toward the universal through difference, and therefore challenges identity, negates power, and complicates tradition. There is no culture or language that is not already populated by a trace of some other foreign element. Mikhail Bakhtin argues that culture is a kind of open dialogue in which we are always anticipating the words and expressions of others, their evaluations, their judgments, their ownership claims. Anticipation of the word of others is as much about curiosity as it is about semiosis or language games. Is it not the paradox of curiosity that witnesses the birth of culture?



It seems reasonable to assume that a certain curiosity about the culture of others has always existed. Even in neolithic societies that were unfamiliar with such metaphysical notions as "humanity" (as Levi-Strauss points out, outside the tribe there are only savages), the possible exploration of the other's culture would have been a central narrative in the imaginary representation of one's own sense of place, of belonging, of being. In a continuous development from the most traditional to the ultramodern, travel still contains this element of evaluation and, as such, is always bound as much by its cognitive as by its affective accomplishments to a social imaginary and its construction of otherness. The question that this theoretical position suggests is: What has travel between cultures contributed to the shift in the social imaginary of societies as they develop? Moreover, what has the image of travel as adventure contributed to social change?

It would also seem safe to assume that the curiosity that accompanies travel manifests itself differently in traditional and ultramodern societies. The first women, children and men who walked across the top of the world experienced travel in the context of a purely mythical view of the world. Here, the strange is accounted for through symbolic laws and not through a polyvalent imaginary (Club Med?). To be sure, each culture deals with its own excess through ritual sacrifice or some form of carnival, but in the ultramodern excess becomes the norm. For traditional culture, symbols provide a complete fiction for interpreting that which is not known. Everything can be accounted for through a coherent and,

as Jurgen Habermas points out, not necessarily irrational, order. Here, curiosity is communal as is the shamanism or magic that obscures the relation between signs and what they refer to. The question that the social sciences and humanities have been posing, at least since the Enlightenment, is how to account for the incredible set of processes that have accompanied the mutations of inquisitiveness, of curiosity, and the "spirit" of adventure that inform the shift to the cultural practices of modern life.

Nerlich challenges conventional views from both the left and the right concerning the genesis and development of cultural modernity. He pushes back the Eastern Bloc's official interpretation, which situates the origins of capitalist society in the industrial revolution of the 19th century. He goes much further back than Weber, Sombart, and other western scholars who would place the origins of capitalism in either the French Revolution or in the birth of Protestantism in the 17th century. Nerlich demonstrates that the practice of adventure is a much studied but widely misunderstood motor force driving the shift from traditional symbolic culture to modern sign-based culture. His project is ambitious. He seeks to situate the origins of modernity not so much by reducing it to social structure as by following through a meticulous critique of the evolution of what he calls, variously, "adventure desire," "adventure thought," "adventure mentality," and "adventure practice."

As Nerlich argues, from its very beginning, adventure ideology includes qualities, values, and activities that "transgress boundaries between social groups and classes." At the same time, what we might call "adventure culture," or the sum of all the different nuances he attributes to the term, is seen as a central legitimizing force in the process of modernity. For Nerlich, this legitimizing force affirms the acceptance of the unknown as a positive value, allows for the incorporation of economic and social chance, as well as the creation of order from disorder, and, ultimately, facilitates the reduction of risk and the minimization of chance for the purpose of gain. The integration of adventure ideology into bourgeois thought ultimately informs all social practice from primitive accumulation to the most ruthless and violent forms of imperialism. The curiosity of adventure carries with it a recognition of the other (language, race, ethos, sex). But in the same moment – and this is perhaps Nerlich's most impressive insight – in modernity one appropriates the other, whether by peaceful means or not, for one's own interest; the other is either destroyed or transformed into a business partner

Nerlich locates the literary imaginary of adventure in 12th century France with the birth of the *chevalier* in the verse romances of Chretien de Troyes and in the legend of King Arthur and his Round Table. Here, the meaning of adventure is strictly confined to the medieval context. In old French it signifies fate, chance, and above all, the surprising event "that the knight must seek out and endure ... indeed it is only in experiencing adventure that the (knightly) human being realizes himself in his true essence." In a phrase, Nerlich's book is about how this older sense of adventure as fate is transformed into the modern notion of adventure as adventure.

Nerlich traces this transition across literary, philosophical and historical documents over a period of more than six hundred years, tailing off with the split between the progressive ideology of adventure during the French Revolution and the aggressive English imperialist appropriation of the notion, finally showing how it appeared in Spain and Italy in a variety of representations.

Although Nerlich refuses a deeper existential critique of the medieval "man in the man," he does provide a rigorous explanation of the historical conditions that accompany shifts in the ideology of adventure across the epoch. Each shift is introduced with extensive but selective quotes from Marx and Engels which describe the social conditions of the representations under consideration.

An initial glance at Nerlich's book leaves one disturbed by what would appear to be yet another vulgar literary sociology based in socialist realism and reflection theory. But further reading reveals that a more traditional, though multi-layered, historical methodology is being employed: one that establishes the link between the literary and the social in a discursive and documentary framework rather than through correspondence, homology, negation, or deconstruction. We don't slide into an interpretive regression of the "hysterical male" in Lancelot's mirror stage, nor of the sign systems operating at a Round Table dinner party (an equally interesting thesis topic).

Instead, Nerlich develops a political economy of the rise of knighthood as a social class in the 9th century, of how a mode of production is reproduced within certain historical conditions, and of how, in the pre-capitalist mode, agents are already forced to seek out new territories in order to support their class base. His *sociocritique* combines the historian's fetish for argument, proof and refutation, and the literary hermeneut's passion for the recovery of meaning at the cost of abandoning objectivity. The result is a curious critique of texts. On the one hand, his investigation ranges from medieval philosophy and literature to selections from Rabelais, Shakespeare, and Defoe; while on the other hand, he provides a materialist critique of the ideology of adventure as it accompanies the development of capital. *The Ideology of Adventure* stands out as a landmark work of a master scholar, one that offers an original look at the sources of our social imaginary. ◆

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