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Special Section on Eastern Europe

Dick Hebdige Goes to The Wall

Greil Marcus's *Secret Impulse*

John Rodden on the Cultural Studies Boom

Interviews with **Tatyana Tolstaya** and **John Fiske**

Border/Lines is an interdisciplinary magazine about art, culture and social movements. We publish writing from many different positions and we are open to artists, musicians, filmmakers and readers. An indispensable companion to contemporary culture in Canada and elsewhere, **Border/Lines** is produced in a large format and is published four times a year by a Toronto-based collective.

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IOAN DAVIES

A Culture in Suspension

All culture is simply a random collection of artefacts

isn't it?

The Gulf War marks the high point of the Mulroney government's running battle with everything that has smacked of opposition. The record of this government is depressing enough without adding a knuckling under to the Pentagon's war-machine. But it is important, for all of us, to set out that record, before the carrion-crows return from Arabia Deserta with Canadian flesh in their beaks. For what has happened in the last few years is an emasculation of all that was, is, and might be seen as the core of our culture – in the interests, one presumes, of making the economy more efficient and more pliable to market forces.

The list of measures taken by the government that actively affect the ways that we live, socialize, create, communicate, read like a litany for the dead:

- the CBC subjected to repeated cuts to the point that neither Saskatchewan nor the Gulf war can be adequately reported, let alone represented;
- a Free Trade deal with the United States which leaves the entire hardware of communications and the ownership of the means of communication open to predators south of the border;
- a Via Rail hatchet job, which reduces the whole country to communications between a few major cities, which, coupled with the privatization of Air Canada (and its pending appropriation by multinational concerns), means that none of us can get anywhere;
- reductions of grants to the Canada Council;
- the axing of grants to native peoples' and women's groups;
- the elimination of subsidized postal services for Canadian periodicals;
- abortion laws (based on the dull rhetoric of a few who reify family against sensibility) that discriminate against women's rights, but now sensibly vetoed by the Senate;
- the introduction (via GST) of taxes on reading and all forms of communication and socializing;

◀ Canadians protest cuts to culture

- a Meech Lake non-accord which did little for Quebec, nothing for native people, and which emphasized that secrecy was more important than democracy;
- a stand-off at Oka which demonstrated the government's fear of being either decisive or honest;
- a stalled copyright bill which does not even begin to address the issue of access to electronic and media archives;
- a Charter of Rights which still does not recognize the right of workers to organize, nor the rights of soldiers to be conscientious objectors (retaining the possibility of the death sentence for objecting, as well as aiding and abetting objectors);
- the involvement in the Gulf War which has put back (perhaps for a long time) the notion that multiculturalism is a viable option for this country;
- ultimately a coordinated strategy to render as impotent as possible all definitions of difference within Canada as well as all definitions of Canadianness which respect a system of communications which is not controlled by a philistine market.

The consequences of this envelop us. Publishing houses (Lester & Orpen Denys are the tip of the iceberg) founder on the continental deal; film (where is Hollywood North now? not to speak of imaginative *sui generis* creations) is frozen; magazines die (even *Saturday Night* is pushed to making a deal with Southam to stay afloat); the CBC, and hence an independent audio-visual eye, is emasculated beyond belief; A & A tries to salvage what it can from a pending bankruptcy; the cultural activities of native people and of women are savagely truncated; theatre is slowly frozen out of space, except for the imported spectacles in Domes and vamped-up old music-halls; free speech, free thought, free expression dies a lingering death as the Market takes over; even the Universities, seeing themselves as the corporate intelligentsia, sell out to Japanese shipbuilders, real estate developers, multinational electronics concerns.

Welcome to the Terrordome, to the Nintendo War, to the Superbowl of culture out of which the Teenage Mutants emerge in a world which does not know Django Reinhardt, Osip Mandelstam, Tom Paine, Charles Baudelaire or even Marshall McLuhan, but which signs itself off with curious signatures: Donatello, Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo – Don, Mikey, Raffi and Leo to you. Zap! I've got you covered, but Hey, Dude, don't take it bad.... All culture is simply a random collection of artefacts, isn't it?

Now that we know that the Mulroney government is playing the ultimate, cynical post-modern trump-card, self-destructing itself and us in a series of brutal measures, it is time to take stock of where we are now. The major cultural institutions in this country have, over time, been established on the principle of "arms-length" government support – the CBC, the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council, the National Research Council, the Canada Council, the National Film Board, Telefilm, the National Arts Centre, the Federal Museums and Galleries, and, to a lesser extent, the Universities, Colleges and Schools. In addition, cultural support has come directly through various ministries and Crown Corporations: notably the Secretary of State, External Affairs, Manpower and Immigration, the Post Office. These are the sources that are being systematically killed off, leaving the field to the "private" agencies whose sources of funds are largely American and Japanese, and putting a very large onus on the provinces to pick up the pieces. All of the Federal agencies were essentially connecting and enhancing ones, across the country and between the social fragments. As they slip away, two features become evident: the fragments remain even more fragmented, and the connecting links are progressively forged by the dominant significations of the multinational (i.e. American) media.

We are, of course, not alone in this fix. The countries of Central Europe have been deluged with marketization and many other countries have been overcome with the monetarist lobbies who care little about indigenous cultures and much more about unfreezing what they see as frozen assets, i.e. unloading the products of Hollywood Babylon onto a beleaguered, destitute population. Our status in relation to the moguls of Wall Street is a little better than Hungary or Poland but a good deal worse than France or the UK, countries that trade on dead reputations. Here and there the living culture of a people is denied.

So what can we do (unlike those who wallow in apocalyptic, mordant, post-modernist anguish, ranting on about the *fin de siècle, fin de millenium* and the absurdist periodization of a culture which was apparently all prefigured in the Book of Revelation)? Nihilistic essentialism is not part of our mandate. Mulroney is a real person, though espousing essentialist policies. Real people are being killed with real bullets in real sand. Living journals are dying. The creative impulses of a people are being squandered on lining up for jobs, social welfare, trips to Buffalo or Seattle in order to find commodities that they can afford.

So what we do is to recognize that a culture does not die. Under such conditions it is transformed into samizdat, is expressed in subterfuge gatherings, tries to make a space for itself in conversations, performances, exhibitions that argue for the continuation of discourse. It is, of course, a culture in animated suspension, a process that is familiar to our colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe. Above all, it is a culture that necessarily becomes international, because that is the only route by which we come to understand our peculiarities and the commonalities, and, until the frontiers get closed off, the only route that we can take to fight an iniquitous, anti-intellectual regime. In a more serious way than we ever thought possible, Mulroney has made culture political. It is time to get on with the task of making politics a subject of cultural engagement. ◆

***Ioan Davies** is a member of the* Border/Lines *collective.*

An Interview with John Fiske

Since the early 70s British cultural studies have examined the role of popular culture, and have produced some remarkable works that have influenced a generation of scholars in the English speaking world. Cultural studies have been so successful in North America in part because their rise coincided with the growth of other intellectual trends such as postmodernism, poststructuralism and semiotics. All of these theoretical approaches share with cultural studies a number of assumptions: a critique of the regulatory role that the traditional "canon" plays in national culture and university education, a distrust of the ideological assumptions of claims that underlie the distinctions between "high culture" and "low culture," and a need for an exploration of a new set of interpretive strategies for the reading of a cultural text which empowers the reader. *Border/Lines* collective member Joe Galbo interviews John Fiske, one of the leading exponents of the study of popular culture. Fiske is currently professor of communication arts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and has taught previously in both Australia and Great Britain. He is also editor of the journal *Cultural Studies* and a prolific writer whose recent publications include *Television Culture* (1987), *Reading the Popular* (1989) and *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989). Fiske explains his views on popular culture and the important link between the understanding of popular pleasures and the development of a Left cultural politics. The interview took place last spring, a month before the much-touted conference, Cultural Studies Now and in the Future, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The academic success of cultural studies in North America also carries with it a number of serious problems, as John Rodden suggests in his review, which follows. ◆

Border/Lines: Can you tell us a bit about your intellectual background?

John Fiske: The traditions that I came out of are really a mixture of structuralism and semiotics on the one hand, and Marxist critical social theory on the other. All my work is in one way or another concerned with problems of analyzing how it is that meanings circulate within capitalist societies divided by class, gender, race and all sorts of other divisions, and how we can trace these meanings at work. More recently, my emphasis has been much more on investigating those aspects of the circulation of meanings which might function as a de-stabilizing force in society and as an agent of social change.

Ten years ago, if you had asked me that question, I would have put the emphasis on the other side of the coin, that is, on how the circulation of meanings favours the status quo and works to stabilize society in the interests of a minority with power. Now my epistemological, and therefore political, interest has shifted quite diametrically, although I do not think that it contradicts my earlier work. I think it complements it actually.

Can you discuss the distinction between popular and mass culture?

Yes, at one level popular culture is necessarily made out of the products of various industries, the cultural industries in particular – television, film, music, but also the clothing industry, the car industry and so on. What the industries produce is mass culture, what the people produce out of mass culture is popular culture. All industrial products *can* be taken into popular culture, but most are not. It is a fallacy to believe that the commodities produced and distributed by the mass culture industries are therefore synonymous with popular culture. For a start, there is an enormous popular discrimination at work. Twelve out of every thirteen pop records fail to make a profit, eight out of ten movies fail to recover their production costs at the box office, although many will pick them up on video later, four out of five prime time television shows do not make it to the end of their first season. The industry does not know which of its products will be taken up and made into popular culture. If it did it wouldn't produce the rest. So it produces this repertoire out

of which the various formations of the people make popular culture. What is often thought of and described as mass culture is the industrialized end of this process, the production of cultural commodities; some of these are taken up, re-worked, re-cycled, re-produced by the people, and what they are made, or re-made, into is popular culture. Popular culture is a culture of practices and processes, not like mass culture, one of commodities, nor high culture, one of texts and art objects. The distinctions are crucial ones to make.

But popular culture is also inscribed with an ideological message. How do "the people" evade or resist the dominant ideology?

I agree with you that the ideological and economic interests of the dominant are necessarily inscribed in the cultural commodity, or if you prefer it, in the text, *before* it is remade into popular culture. One has to look for the origins of evasion or resistance in the specific social circumstances of those who do this remaking, and it is here, in the remaking that resistance or evasion occurs. The life of a people under a capitalist society is deeply contradictory because the society that restricts and oppresses them also nurtures them and offers them the resources by which to live. Popular social experience is used to dealing with such contradictions. So to activate the popular television text or any other cultural text, a popular reading practice is used to negotiate the contradictions between the dominant ideology and popular meanings or popular interests. In fact, I would argue that there cannot be popular meanings or popular pleasures which are not formed in some relationship to a dominant ideology, whether that relationship be one of resistance, or one of escape or evasion. If the dominant is not there in some form to be opposed or evaded, there is very little popular pleasure involved. The *social* practices of the subordinated are shaped by their relationship to the forces of domination, and so must their *reading* practices as well.

How, specifically, can we go about analyzing popular culture?

I think there are at least two dimensions that we need to look at. The first is that of the so-called text, or cultural commodity, which should not now be seen as a singular art object, on the one hand, nor as a simply ideological agent, or an agent of commodification, on the other. Rather it is a resource. Some aspects or elements of the text will be activated, others will not. And while the structure of the text itself is not totally open – it is not a completely unstructured resource – that structure cannot determine finally which elements are taken up by which formation of the people and made into a popular culture. So we need to analyze texts, not for their coherence in structure, but rather for their contradictions, their gaps, because that is where popular culture is made, in the contradictions, in the gaps, fractures and weaknesses of the text. It is a different form of textual analysis which gives priority to potential over actualization, the text as what it might be rather than what it is.

I think we also need some form of analysis of the socially specific practices or instances of this potential of the text being actualized, of the text being made meaningful and pleasurable by and for a specific formation of the people. It is a form of conjunctural analysis that brings together text, social formation, and historical conditions. Ultimately it is not the text which is the object of analysis, but the social circulation of meanings.

The site of the body is where much popular pleasure is located, in the physicality, in the here and now, of me, right here, now.

What about the role of pleasure in all of this? Is popular culture produced simply because it is pleasurable?

Pleasure is an extremely strong motivation: if there is no pleasure in this process of cultural production and reproduction then why on earth should anyone engage in it? The people can't engage in it for direct economic gain, they can't cash it in for immediate material gain. The main gain is pleasure and a sense of self-control, or at least control over some of the conditions of one's existence. While this does not explain everything that is going on, I think that pleasure is certainly a very

We need to analyze texts, not for their coherence in structure,

but rather for their contradictions, their gaps, because that is where popular culture is made.

powerful motivator for people to engage in this business of production of popular culture.

Wouldn't pleasure also be hooked up with ideology?

That's a different sort of pleasure entirely, that is pleasure as the bait on the hook of ideology, a top down pleasure that tries to organize the responses of people. Of course there is a certain degree of pleasure in aligning oneself with the forces of ideology, with the forces of power. But that to me is a pleasure of domination, which does not mean that subordinated people cannot participate in it, they can and do – in advanced capitalist societies people often do participate in their own oppression – but this form of pleasure is a hegemonic one: it is certainly not a popular one. So we are talking about quite different orders of pleasure here.

Explain these orders of pleasure.

One of the differences is that popular pleasures are socially located and organized by the subordinate; hegemonic pleasures, top down pleasures, are ideologically organized and circulated, and I suppose I would go on to say that the top down construction of pleasure is often conceived of as a pleasure of the unconscious mind, of subjectivity, of ideology. It is a fairly abstract, distant sort of pleasure. Popular pleasures are often much more located in the body, in the physical, they are much more vulgar. The site of the body is where much popular pleasure is located, in the physicality, in the here and now, of me, right here, now.

Is that one of the dividing lines between high culture and popular culture?

It is one of them, certainly. High culture typically validates those art forms that transcend the immediate, the material, the body and its immediate contacts, so it goes for transcendent meanings. But popular culture is solidly located in the here and now, and the body becomes the inevitable materialization of the here and now. The body in popular culture is always very important.

And this would bring in current Foucauldian and Bakhtinian arguments about the body.

Yes, absolutely. Bakhtinian arguments about the indiscipline of the popular, carnivalesque body, and Foucauldian arguments about the disciplinary mechanisms which try to control and organize the body are crucially relevant here. I think that this is one of the most significant shifts in cultural theory within the last generation. The question has shifted away from how ideology works and controls, to how the body works, how the body is controlled – not just the individual body, but the body of the people, the social body, the body politic. And so there is this movement towards investigating material bodies in material places, and material behaviours, rather than a continuation of the much more abstract, non-material theories of the generation before. I don't want to put that generation down because I was part of it, my work contributed to those theories. The current shift does not invalidate its pre-

The Left has concentrated much more of its attention on the conditions of production. We are only now beginning to get some sort of analysis of the conditions of consumption.

decessors, but builds on them, and enters a dialogue with them.

How do you explain the current success of cultural studies?

That's a very good question. I think one reason is that in the eighties we had a swing to the Right – Thatcherism, and Reaganism, and so on – and this has been facilitated through the success, in a limited sense, of the Right's colonization of popular pleasure and the popular voice. Reagan and Thatcher were both expert right wing populists. The Left has completely failed to articulate or connect itself with the people whose interests it claims to represent. So scholars on the Left have begun to shift their attention, and have started asking questions about how we can understand the ways in which popular culture and popular pleasure are produced. Hopefully, in the long run, the Left, instead of being abstract, distant and preachy, will learn how to understand popular pleasures and how to reconnect itself with the ways that subordinated peoples actually live under capitalism, rather than with the way the idealizing Left would like to see them live their lives. And I think that another reason for cultural studies' trendiness lies in the way that Reaganism and Thatcherism have exacerbated social difference, have widened the gap between the haves and have-nots: both have exaggerated the differences between the power-bloc and the people among multiple axes – of which gender, race and class are only the most salient. Cultural studies of the right sort is crucially concerned to analyze social difference, not pluralistically, but as part of a structured system of domination, subordination and struggle.

When we talk about the role of intellectuals and their relationship to popular culture, George Orwell comes to my mind. He, I believe, wanted to start a left wing comic book.

Yes, indeed. He was one of the first of the left wing workers in popular culture who really took aspects of that culture which the working class liked, and took them seriously. And he was able to find in them some positive values for the members of the working class.

What about Brecht?

Brecht, I'm afraid, is a wonderful example of how to get it wrong. While nobody can doubt the sincerity of his intention, his whole thesis of alienation is exactly the opposite of what popular pleasure consists of, which is participation. Bakhtin and Bourdieu have shown us that popular culture is a participatory culture, and Brecht's attempt to alienate it means that his work is now circulated almost exclusively among the educated middle classes, and not amongst the people which he genuinely wished to reach. There was a moment, in pre-Nazi Germany, when it looked as though his project might succeed, but it passed, as I think it had to. The case of Brecht's affords us a clear example of how the Left gets it wrong when it does not understand popular culture and popular practices.

Why does the Right get it right?

Because sections of the Right have economic interests that can only be advanced by understanding popular pleasure. They have a strong motive for getting it nearly right, at any rate as right as they possibly can, so that they can incorporate these pleasures and turn them to their own economic advantage.

This brings up the whole question of consumption once again, and its relation to a popular politics of resistance.

I think that consumption is a hugely problematic area. One point to make is that the subordinate have more control over the conditions of consumption than they do over the conditions of production. They have evolved much more effective strategies for consuming in their own interests than they have for producing in their interest. Here again, the Left has concentrated much more of its attention on the conditions of production. We are only now beginning to get some sort of left wing analysis of the conditions of consumption. I see within this sphere of consumption a cultural struggle between the forces of incorporation and excorporation – a struggle *within* low culture, not a vertical one between high and low brow, but rather a horizontal one between mass culture with its economic interests and popular culture with its interests in the subordinate. The industry will constantly attempt to incorporate the practices and pleasure of the people, and the people will work to excorporate the products of the industry. It is here where much of the cultural struggle occurs, and this will, I think, be a key area of investigation for the immediate future. ◆

This interview with John Fiske was originally videotaped as part of an educational video project on cultural studies that Joe Galbo is currently working on with the Media Centre at the University of Toronto. He would like to thank Michael Edmunds, Director of the Media Centre, for his support, and John Fiske for generously taking the time to read the transcript and make useful additions to the text.

Joe Galbo *is a member of the editorial collective of* Border/Lines.

JOHN **RODDEN**

Cultural Studies and the Culture of Academe

The Conference

Cultural studies is "booming."

"But a boom isn't a fad," says Lawrence Grossberg, a leading American exponent of the postmodern wing of cultural studies. Grossberg argues that booms have "sustainable lives." The question facing cultural studies, he says, is simply "what the substance and direction of its life will be."

That question was much on the minds of those who attended the highly publicized conference, Cultural Studies Now and in the Future in early April of 1990. The five-day international conference was organized by Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treicher, and other members of the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Among the 32 guest speakers and 570 registrants were several of the most prominent scholars in cultural studies, including Stuart Hall, Simon Frith, John Fiske, Iain Chambers, Tony Bennett, Meaghan Morris, Andrew Ross, Constance Penley, James Clifford, Donna Haraway, Emily Martin, Cornel West and Janice Radway. Among the Canadian participants were Martin Allor and Jody Berland of Concordia University, and Elspeth Probyn of the University of Montreal.

"We wanted to bring in some of the top people, especially from the English-speaking countries, in order to define what the focus of the boom will be in the US," Grossberg explained.

Several of the British visitors had been members of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies when Stuart Hall was director in the 1970s, provoking one non-Birmingham British speaker to dub his fellow Brits "the Birmingham diaspora." Grossberg had studied in the early 70s with Hall at the Birmingham centre (recently merged with Birmingham's sociology department to become an official university department). Notably missing from the list of invited guests was Richard Johnson, current department head at Birmingham.

The celebrity speaker program, the advance publicity, and the strong turnout for the conference generated an air of excitement, which was tinged later with keen disappointment when expectations were not met. In all these respects the conference gave a fair picture of the state of cultural studies in 1990. With 16 sessions featuring panelists and video artists from the US, Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Finland and Italy, the conference covered a diversity, indeed sometimes a disconcertingly wide and puzzling range, of topics – e.g., portraits of people with AIDS, porn written by women and featuring *Star Trek* heroes as gay lovers, ethnographies of Indian widow-burning rituals, analysis of New Age technoculture, a postmodernist reading of Salman Rushdie, a history of nineteenth-century British missionaries, a discussion of reproductive politics and popular representations of primatology, a critique of the early postwar politics of the Book-of-the-Month Club, and much, much more.

A strength of the conference was that no sessions ran concurrently. This allowed for continuous audience adaptation by speakers, who could gauge the changing mood of the conference as a whole. Speakers recalled and developed points raised in previous sessions, secure in the assumption that most audience members had heard the earlier panelists. As the conference progressed, however, shared frustrations also emerged, fuelled by the discontent of many listeners who believed that the radical spirit of cultural studies was being tamed before their very eyes.

Problems of Definition

What is cultural studies anyway? Richard Johnson asked the question in his much-discussed 1987 article in *Social Text.* The Illinois conference gave a bewildering array of answers. A theoretical "style"? An intellectual-political tradition of Marxist criticism? An academic discipline? A critique of the diverse aspects of everyday life? An interdisciplinary perspective on the human science? A postmodernist discourse about embodied experience? A "new politics" focussed on feminist, ecological, gay, and Third World issues? A critique of the "disciplining of knowledge"? A euphemism for the word "radical"? A new opportunity for *engaged* academics to influence public policy?

Scholars working in cultural studies have recently characterized it in all these ways and others. Most of the Illinois

Cultural studies will never transform the culture of academe if it does not criticize its own place within it.

speakers, however, did not take up Grossberg's invitation to address in their presentations the "focus" of the "boom." Indeed some of them worry that even preliminary efforts to "define" cultural studies will prompt attempts to police its boundaries. And yet, they acknowledge that cultural studies can't be "just anything," that it does have a tradition whose insights will be lost if its history is forgotten. Some panelists pointed out that cultural studies possesses a variety of traditions in the plural – national, regional, ethnic, linguistic, theoretical – and noted that these particular, unstable formations necessitate that cultural studies be understood not as a tradition or theory, but as a dynamic, evolving project. On this view, cultural studies becomes a series of intellectual engagements within various historical conjunctures – ranging from Hungary and the New Left to Thatcherism and postmarxism.

It may be unwise to talk about a "general future" for culture studies. Graeme Turner of the University of Queensland argued that future work should be local and comparative, and so the agenda must be specified according to circumstance and place. While British cultural studies from Raymond Williams to Dick Hebdige had been explicitly and unapologetically English, cultural studies is no longer a British export. Cultural studies must now stress, not gloss over, national and other differences. Turner suggested that the development of cultural studies in Australia, which is on the margins of the developed world yet affiliated with and drawn to the centre, could help stem both "Birmingham imperialism" and the rise of any new universalism.

Stuart Hall argued at the conference that cultural studies must "stake out a wager" because it "must rule out some things if it is to matter." Overall, the general dilemma consisted in negotiating alternately the desire to stake out a wager and the refusal to "close things off." Concerns about a Popular Front hodgepodge on one side were met by fears about litmus tests for political correctness on the other. By its choice, the conference seemed to refuse to close *anything* off. The inclusion within cultural studies of AIDS studies, Third World studies, feminist studies and black studies was presented by the organizers as a sign of productive difference. But it was sometimes impossible to see, beyond a few ritualistic radical gestures, what numerous talks had to do with one another. Too many of the presentations instead appeared merely to meet some unstated quota system for representation. The unhappy result was a collapse of key intellectual distinctions in a relativistic muddle.

The Marxist Legacy and the Cultural Studies Intellectual

IF there was one potentially unifying thread, it was the Marxist heritage of cultural studies. But the celebration of Birmingham's distant past, along with the absence of any current Birmingham faculty at the conference, did not so much provide a focus as lend the proceedings an air of nostalgia. It was as if many of the older speakers, even as they dutifully mused on the future, were lamenting a lost radicalism and intellectual vitality. (One frequent criticism of Birmingham under Richard Johnson has been the achievement of institutional success at the price of intellectual drift, since Birmingham has arguably spawned no significant theoretical innovations since Hall's encoding/decoding model in the late 70s.) In a moving, backward-looking address titled "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," Hall himself (now at the Open University in London) seemed, perhaps inadvertently, to give the green light for deradicalization when he described Marxism as one of the "historical moments" of cultural studies, since superseded by feminism and race.

One speaker, however, who insisted on "reinserting a Marxist dimension" into cultural studies was John Fiske, of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. If Stuart Hall was the saintly guru of the Illinois conference, Fiske seemed the lightning rod for criticism – or perhaps the scapegoat for audience disgruntlement. Whereas Hall stressed the relevance of race and gender issues for cultural studies, Fiske emphasized class. Yet both Hall and Fiske raised one issue that many speakers preferred to ignore: the role of the cultural studies intellectual. Author of *Television Culture, Reading Television, and Understanding Popular Culture,* Fiske developed his now-familiar themes. He urged students in cultural studies to recognize that while middle class scholars are "distanced" from their cultural theories, the culture of everyday life of "ordinary" people is an immediate, concrete, materialized, lived practice. Because intellectuals

prefer to theorize and "can't take 'ordinary' cultural practices" – like supermarket shopping – and put them in a library, they escape us," Fiske said.

Fiske's sharp distinction between the intellectual and "ordinary people," and between the critic and the fan, outraged many listeners. "I cringe when he says 'us,'" said Constance Penley of the University of Rochester. Although she herself is a *Star Trek* fan, Penley stressed that one can take up various positions in relation to cultural objects, and the "critic" and "fan" are only two choices; furthermore, the academic intellectual can be not only a person who theorizes about, but also one who enjoys, "ordinary" culture. Other listeners argued that Fiske's optimistic talk represented a reductionistic pseudo-populism, which ventriloquizes "ordinary" people and panders to them by proclaiming reassuringly that they invariably "resist" capitalist exploitation. On this view, Fiske naïvely celebrated shopping, Madonna, TV – whatever the object of popular culture happens to be. Some of this criticism is fair. Fiske tends to dichotomize the intellectual and the popular. Opposed to Left critiques of mass culture as mass opiates, he sees popular culture as endlessly manoeuvrable. He emphasizes that the popular can resist and even overcome capitalist forces. So the accent of his work falls on celebrating popular culture rather than criticizing capitalism.

Fiske's appeal to reintroduce Marxism into American cultural studies was subtly at odds with Hall's talk, and it may have been that Hall's warning about glib "theoretical fluency" was directed not only at the postmodernist/postmarxist turn in cultural studies but also at Fiske. Hall worried that postmodernist cultural studies (apparently represented by Grossberg, Andrew Ross, and Iain Chambers) risks formalizing politics and history into matters of language and textuality. Fiske's similar problem with postmodernist cultural studies is that it reduces oppression to a "play of images" and disdains a larger collective politics, thus amounting to little more than aestheticized postmarxist pessimism. Fiske emphasized the need to reinject a Gramscian, rather than an Althusserian Marxism into cultural studies, i.e., a critical self-reflexivity rather than a structuralist Marxism. And yet, though Fiske is concerned with concrete particularities and hegemonic practices, Fiske's Gramsci is not the Gramsci Hall embraced in the 1970s. Fiske's "Gramscian Marxism" stresses the body and the "body-habitat" rather than the subject. It is strongly filtered through Foucault, Bourdieu, de Certeau, and the Laclau and Moffe of *Hegemony and Social Strategy*. Ultimately his call is to reinsert not a critical Marxism, but an affirmative postmarxism.

It was as if many of the older speakers, even as they dutifully mused on the future, were lamenting a lost radicalism and intellectual vitality.

So has the moment for Marxism and cultural studies passed? Cultural studies in Britain arose from arguments about class. The American versions seem to be developing along status lines. The conference provoked many attendees to worry about the American commodification of cultural studies itself.

The Institutionalization of Cultural Studies

Increasingly visible, increasingly influential," wrote the Illinois organizers in a pre-conference promotional letter, cultural studies "is also in the process of being more widely institutionalized and commodified." The conference was designed "not only to reflect on these events but also to intervene in them. We have brought together many of the most well-known people in the field and encouraged them to write papers that can help define the core aims and commitments of cultural studies work."

Unfortunately, many of the "most well-known people" were invited on the basis of their status – which owed to their scholarship. So they gave displays of that scholarship, often from works-in-progress on special topics, which in most cases did nothing to help "define the core aims and commitments of cultural studies work." As a result, rather than quell charges from Right and Centre that cultural studies is just the newest umbrella term for "Left eclecticism" (in Frederick Crews's phrase) or a trendy slogan for an incoherent Marxist cum feminist cum post-structuralist *mélange*, some of the papers left just that impression. Disappointingly, except for Hall, Fiske, Turner and Simon Frith, few speakers even took up explicitly the large question of cultural studies "now and in the future." This led some chag-

▲
John Fiske celebrated shopping, Madonna, TV

rined observers, many of them graduate students who had never before attended a conference organized by the Left, to append a question mark to the conference's title.

The simmering dissatisfaction finally erupted on the fourth day. Several visiting students distributed a document, "Hypocrisy in Cultural Studies," parts of which were read aloud during the discussion after Stuart Hall's talk by Alexandra Chasin, a Stanford University graduate student. It complained about the "terrorizing" and "policing" of "subordinated voices" by a "ruling elite." The outburst was a release of pent-up frustration: the conference didn't seem so different from most others. (Equally upsetting for otherwise contented subordinate voices was the simple fact that the popular didn't think they were learning very much from the elite.)

Thus the hyperbole of the manifesto disclosed an important fact about the current state of cultural studies. American cultural studies is *already* institutionalized and commodified. The "star system" format of the conference provoked a response to the anxieties mentioned in the Illinois promotional letter. The student manifesto served as the "intervention" which the celebrity speakers had failed to make.

And yet, the non-speakers were arguably no less "hypocritical" than the organizers or speakers: after all, most of us had come to see and hear "the stars." Many disaffected listeners fumed (justifiably) that there were no caucuses for informal conversation, or just opportunities for more give-and-take between guest speakers and audience members, or at least one panel which dealt with pedagogical aspects of cultural studies. Yet as one of the Illinois organizers put it, "We certainly couldn't have persuaded this university to put up $80,000 for a showcase conference if it were going to feature classroom approaches to cultural studies or several caucuses of grad students and junior faculty." Nor, one assumes, could they have persuaded Routledge to contract for an essay collection based on the proceedings. (It will resemble the widely-read volume which emerged from the 1983 Illinois conference, Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.) A book-driven conference, which advertises radicalism and yet gives preference to celebrity speakers even on opportunities for asking floor questions (since these too are to be printed by name in the proceedings), inevitably risks charges of hypocrisy.

So the "elitist" format exposed the contradictions of cultural studies as a radical practice. Cultural studies claims to be practically synonymous "with the word 'radical.'" Yet only the stars spoke. The "star system" reproduces the university's and the publishing world's hierarchies. Yet the Illinois organizers couldn't get the funding or the turnout or the book contract without the stars. And so on.

Constance Penley acted as fan and critic of *Star Trek* fanzines
▼

But if you can't keep 600 people with a shared intellectual formation together for even five days without having them balkanize into numerous factions, how can you possibly build a broad movement? The conference hubbub thus pointed out the larger problem of the relations between activism and the academy. It's hardly a new question. But it's one which has been raised with reference to the structure of Left academic practices only intermittently since the early 70s.

The Culture of Academe

Cultural studies aspire to be a mode of academic work that is activist in a way different from established disciplines. And yet, what was conspicuously missing from the conference was a critique of academic culture.

Why the avoidance of a self-critique? Perhaps precisely because so much of American academic life, including conferences on the Left, is market-driven. It's about careerism, not excepting the professionalism of the tenured Left. Other countries, including Canada and Britain, are not so professionalized. It's not that they're morally superior (*vide* David Lodge's novels!). They just don't have the numbers: money, universities, faculty, and students. They don't have the resources within universities to fly in dozens of guest speakers from abroad. Nor the huge book market to publish conference proceedings profitably. Nor the healthy job market to attract hundreds of graduate students to conferences (even at the Illinois conference, most attendees were graduates), students who see graduate study from the outset as preparation for a likely career, need sponsorship, and form a sizable ready-made pool of disciples. And it's hardly a secret that many non-American Left academics speak in the US (or accept jobs) for economic and status reasons.

So an analysis of Left academic culture may well strike too close to home. To study academic stratification risks academic statuses. Indeed it was revealing that most objections from the floor at the Illinois conference had little to do with political issues outside academe. They were status claims. They dealt with issues of generational, ethnic, gender or regional status. They were claims to victim status – as grad students, blacks, women, gays and Third World, or other representatives. But this is not surprising. On the contemporary academic Left, given the political capital to be won, the urge to claims for professional ethnic, postcolonial, or some other marginalized status often proves near-irresistible. For the title of "Oppressed" may confer privileged, almost gnostic standing.

But if cultural studies is supposed to be activist and interventionist, why no discussion of political developments in Eastern Europe or Latin America? Or current debates about the "end of History" and the advent of postmarxism? Or, for that matter, Canadian biculturalism? A total silence also prevailed on Northern Ireland, despite the presence of numerous British participants. What about the "worldliness" of cultural studies? It was all further testimony to the depoliticizing of the American academy and the blithe detachment of the academic Left.

One panel, titled "The Politics of Cultural Studies" illustrated how narrowly institutional, provincial, and self-indulgent the "politics" of cultural studies sometimes is. (It also showed how non-Americans succumb to the Americanization of cultural studies.) Speaking on "Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt," Homi K. Bhabha of the University of Sussex spoke in an impenetrable poeticized jargon about the recent calamities which have befallen Salman Rushdie, utterly obscuring them. When he was asked in the discussion session if he was bothered that almost nobody in the audience had understood him, he replied, as if he were appealing to an Arnoldian saving remnant, that if only two or three listeners had comprehended him, he was satisfied. (One doubted even that many had grasped much of the talk.) Nominally addressing herself to "Money and Real Estate: The Limits of Cultural Studies," Meaghan Morris, an independent Australian writer currently at Illinois as a visiting professor, emoted a rambling mini-autobiography of personal anecdote. Bhabha's and Morris's presentations were two models of the star speaker syndrome often encountered at conferences: the "work-in-progress" talk, delivered regardless of its relevance to the occasion; and the "wing-it" talk, delivered

The popular didn't think they were learning very much from the elite.

in the belief that content is secondary since listeners really seek to bask in the celebrity's presence.

Toward a Radical Pedagogy?

The argument about how the Illinois conference should have been structured was, of course, a debate about pedagogy. And what *is* a radical pedagogy, anyway? With all the conference talk about public intellectual, or Gramscian organic intellectuals doing committed scholarship with social influence, one might have thought that speakers would have addressed themselves to the classroom as political arena. And yet, amid all the breast-beating about the potentially "imperialistic" designs of British cultural studies upon other national traditions, nobody asked any of the British participants about their roles as teacher-activists or about the success of the eleven UK cultural studies departments (in nine polytechnics and two universities). Concerns about pedagogy would have been practical, since most audience members were university teachers and students. But several speakers worried that a concentration on pedagogy would reinforce a prevalent American misconception about cultural studies: that it amounts, *à la* the apolitical Bowling Green tradition, to a study of pop-art icons since 1945. These speakers argued in interviews that cultural studies should focus its energies outside the university. For non-academic AIDS activists like medical writer Jan Zita Grover of San Francisco, the struggles outside the university are far more important than those within it.

Most participants seemed to think that cultural studies activism for academics meant two things: as scholars, a radical critique of the politics of representation and of mass-mediated communication; and as teachers, efforts to combat racism, sexism and homophobia in the classroom. Other participants added that the Birmingham tradition of collective work was valuable. Following the example of Tony Bennett on Brisbane museum policy, however, Left-liberal pragmatists might also intervene by advising government on cultural policy. But there was little practical advice for academics seeking to align with a political movement. Asked what academics could do *as academics* in the face of the AIDS epidemic, Grover answered: "I have no idea."

Cultural Studies Now and in the Future?

Within the academy, what should the future of cultural studies be? Should it aim to become a "discipline," thereby imparting a set of skills to students and perhaps reconstructing the university, yet probably capitulating to the forces of deradicalization and institutionalization? Should it remain instead a program or centre, thereby regaining its radical edge, yet probably remaining highly eclectic and peripheral within the university?

Various combinations of two leading alternative scenarios can thus be easily envisioned for the next decade. Either the year 2000 witnesses the rise of American and Canadian university departments of cultural studies, perhaps along the lines of the British models, or similar to Peter Robinson College at Trent University. Or, continuing present American trends, more programs and centres for cultural studies develop, organized as interdisciplinary concentrations and staffed by different departments, like the centres at Illinois, Miami, University of Ohio and the University of Pennsylvania. If there are to be departments, they need to have a concrete vision, a distinctive critical pedagogy, a program of study, degree requirements, etc. If there are to be programs or centres, cultural studies may survive as a critical voice within the university.

Cultural studies faces the challenge which confronts all radical academic projects. The question is how it will assert itself. If it adopts chiefly a postmodernist language, it will probably be marginal – or it will be elitist. Paradoxically, suggested pop music critic Simon Frith, one road to future success might be that cultural studies becomes so institutionalized that it loses much of its distinctiveness. Its success could then be to have no "future," because it will dissolve as it transforms academic culture in its image. If it becomes departmentalized, it operates like other departments, but changes the university more than the university changes it.

For now, that scenario is panglossian. Cultural studies will never transform the culture of academe if it does not criticize its own place within it. Any intellectual history of cultural studies must attend to the institutional settings and academic politics which have constituted its formation. That includes the pressures for the emerging American cultural studies intellectual to be merely another academic specialist with a disciplinary discourse and with no public voice. So far, the American Left has abdicated the task of a broadly accessible critique of academic culture, leaving it to prominent neoconservatives, who have delivered influential, widely-selling trade books like Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind,* Charles J. Sykes's *ProfScam* and Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals.*

The academic Right glorifies "making it." So its elitist pseudo-humanism is less susceptible to charges of hypocrisy. Given our moral and ideological pretensions, however, we on the academic Left and liberal-Left must hold ourselves to a higher standard – and yet resist the impulse to self-righteousness and heroic posturing. Rather, if cultural studies is to face the charge of hypocrisy from within and without, it must interrogate itself about the role of intellectual celebrity and of the academic entrepreneur in its own evolution. It must address the claims raised by conservatives that cultural studies is just an agenda of popcult canon-bashing, just a failed Marxism with a postmodern face, just a surrogate mode of play for New Leftists in refuge from street politics, or just the newest style of radical chic consumption by "slumming" intellectuals immersed in popcult as a pathetic way of identifying with the underclass. It must, therefore, overcome a different, yet arguably more crippling , "theoretical fluency" than that which Stuart Hall explicitly warned against: the facile evasion of open debate about political positions, achieved by disguising arguments about specific issues with ideological abstractions (or with punk haircuts and black suits).

The problems of definition and identity are inseparable from the perils of sectarianism. And this means, once again, that the Left must learn to respect yet not enshrine difference. Differences within cultural studies are productive. But differences which spin off in all directions ("the future of cultural studies is what I do," said one panelist) or congeal into demands for conformism are not. In developing an oppositional discourse and a counter-disciplinary praxis, the cultural studies intellectual must resist the impulse both to celebrate difference for itself and to conflate difference with inequality. At one pole lies the risk of an "anything goes" farrago. At the other is the more-radical-than-thou ultimatum for intra-sect solidarity.

The line between productive differences and between differences which generate calls for party-line purity is, of course, hard to draw except in particular cases. But Kobena Mercer of the British Film Institute wisely drew attention to the danger of the "race, class, gender mantra" of cultural studies. That mantra threatens, on the radical side, to mire and fracture cultural studies in parochial squabbling, and on the liberal side, to turn it into just another approach to multiculturalism. Neither to fall into a stance of exclusivity and moralistic judgement, nor one of an all-comers Pollyanna pluralism is the challenge of the near future. If cultural studies is to become more than just another university game or a marginal academic activity, one of its tasks must be to embrace contentiousness as a way of affirming an inspiriting, if sometimes troubling, heterogeneity. ◆

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Tourists of the Post-evolution

This is, in many ways, an unusual issue. The central articles are not *about* Eastern Europe, but about us looking into that imaginary world that had long been part of our consciousness. Leo Panitch, Dick Hebdige and Ioan Davies were, more-or-less, there as things fell apart (the pieces were written at different intervals: Hebdige in late 1989, Panitch in June 1990, Davies in January 1991). Tolstaya was interviewed in Toronto in October 1989, and Todorov wrote his piece in the summer of 1990. Thus none of the pieces are up-to-date: how could they be, as the walls came down and up in a brief period of 18 months? Thus we are engaged in an exercise of staccato recollections, of instant archival reconstruction, of political and intellectual voyeurism.

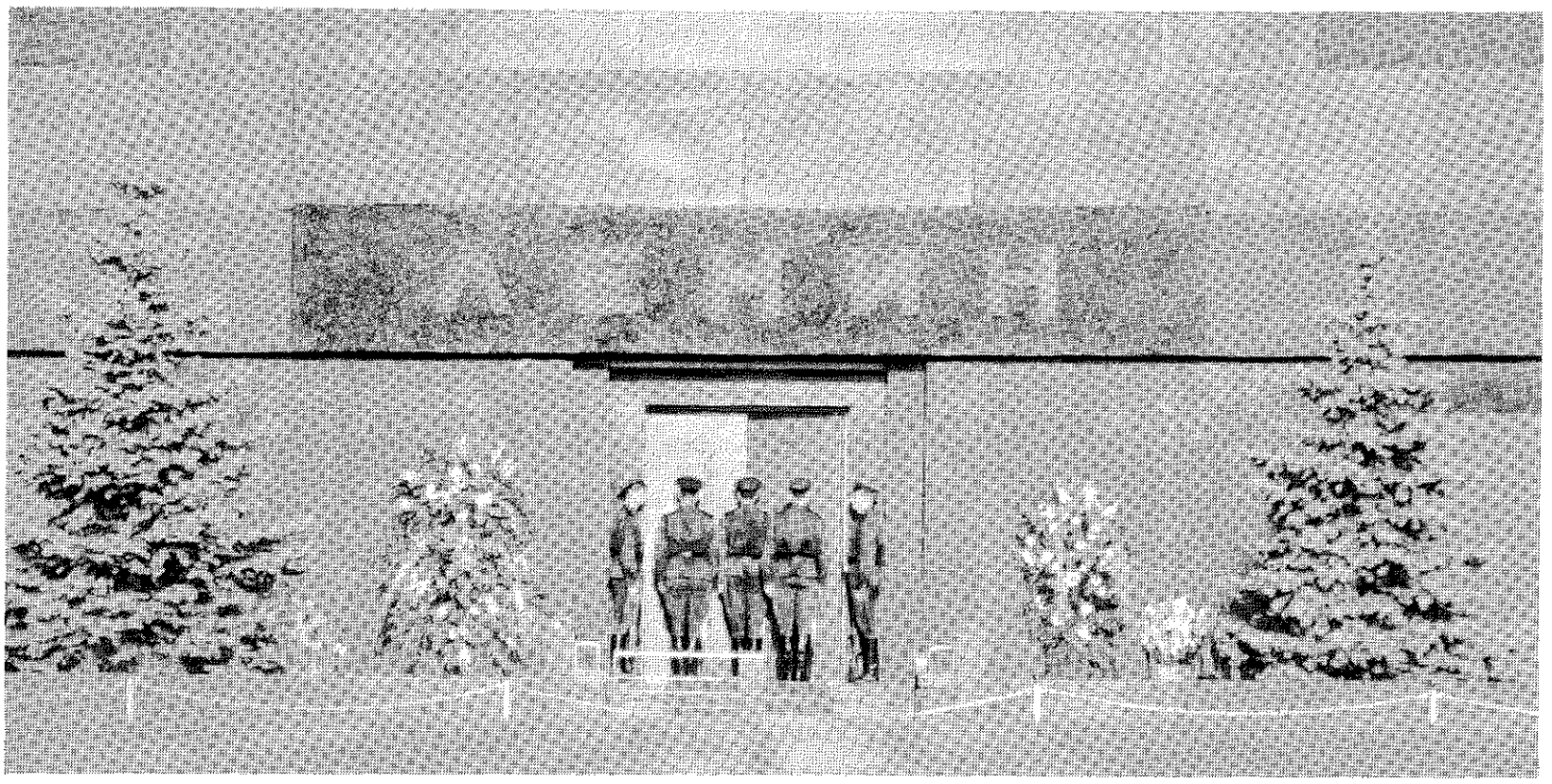
Why do it? Apart from the normal Canadian reasons that this is a multi-cultural project (and that is not necessarily a bad reason: it keeps our antennae tuned to the rest of the world), the most serious project is that the Soviet Union and Central Europe are a landscape of cultures in flux (as they always have been, but now perhaps more than ever) and that unless we try to understand that fluctuation, rather than impose on it our Western definitions, we will neither understand them nor us. And, a hidden agenda, of course, is that as tourists of that *other* revolution, we are not beholden to it, but want to make sense in a real, everyday, practical way of how everyone copes.

The articles that follow are therefore, and obviously, impressionistic. Todorov, from Bulgaria, provides a semiological reading of the central (physical and political) space of Russian culture; Hebdige (as a linguistically-impoverished East London non-Jew) takes a plunge into the heart of all our darknesses; Tolstaya, drawing on her aristocratic heritage, her own privileged status, and her writing experience, damns feminism in the West and agit-prop in the East. Panitch and Davies are our tourists of the post-revolution, employing such theory and observation as seems to be useful, but finding people – there – struggling to make sense of a confusing situation. Both of their pieces are excerpted from much longer articles: Panitch's from a study of work conditions in Moscow, Togliatti and Yaroslavl, and Davies' from a study of cultural organization in the Soviet Union and Central Europe. None of the writing is "typical"of Eastern Europe – as if such a thing could exist – but perhaps it provides clues to understanding an extremely complex area of the world.

There have been several important documents to have come out of the upheavals in Eastern Europe, which might be used alongside the material published here. Throughout 1990 both *Granta* (notably #30) and the *Eastern European Reporter* have published pieces of importance that provide a more thorough reading than that which is available in the daily press or on much of TV. The *New Left Review* (issues #179-184) has carried important articles on a range of topics: Soviet feminism, separatist movements inside the Soviet Union, Western economic pressures on Central Europe, the "socialism" of Gorbachev. In its last issue *The Idler* (Jan-Feb 1991) published an article by the Polish author Kostas Gebert which analyzes the Polish scene, and *This Magazine* (February 1991) included an impressionistic piece by Rick Salutin of a trip to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Moscow *Literary Gazette* is now publishing an English fortnightly (available in Canada), which invariably contains querulous articles on the state of Soviet culture. *Index on Censorship,* while keeping a global watch on terrorism against writers of all kinds, has been extremely vigilant in monitoring events in Eastern Europe. While all of these journals are partisan to their own causes, none of their angles are those of the dominant media in Canada. What is more, their copy reads well and does not depend on either *The Globe and Mail*'s or the *Toronto Star*'s "Manual of Style" to get their points across. In trying to understand what is happenning in the rest of the world, it is important to know that there are other sources of information which do not depend on a multinational corporate sense of the median audience or the self-serving ideology of the (obvious?) monetarist economy. The fate of Eastern Europe and of ourselves is too serious to be left in that arena of wind-bag rhetoric. ◆

As tourists of that other revolution, we are not beholden to it, but want to make sense in a real, everyday, practical way of how everyone copes.

RB
red/black



The Poetics of Conspiratorial Space

Vladislav Todorov

"...fight for communistic deciphering of the World."

Dziga Vertov

The Red Square: Induratio spatii

The ability of the reader to envision what he reads, to see it in his mind's eye as on a map: flat and in contours, as opposed to a three-dimensional image with light and shadow effects at play is of utmost importance for the correct interpretation of all that follows.

1 Topography

The Red Square 1989.

There are two ways of standing in Red Square. The first (tourist) version would be to face the Lenin Mausoleum, which represents the symbolic centre of the square. From this position Moscow's central space is arranged in the following way: the Mausoleum is in front with the Kremlin behind it; the Passage or the Central Department Store is behind the tourist; to the left is the Church; in front of it – the Place of Execution; behind it – Russia Hotel; to the right – a large ancient museum building, behind which are the Inter Hotels. From this point the Hotels could be reached through a long tunnel under a gigantic empty space with automobiles soaring over it.

The alternative way is to see it from the viewpoint of a person standing with his back to the Mausoleum. This is the most privileged point of view since it is commanded by the mummy itself – if we imagine it standing up. This is the viewpoint of leaders, teachers who ascend the rostrum of the Mausoleum on solemn national days to face the exulting crowd below.

2 The Head of the Corner – *Matthew*, 21:42

The mummy is laid low underground in the Mausoleum with its head pointing towards the Kremlin Wall. If I use the masonary idiom, it is "the Head of the Corner" which props up the whole construction of the Kremlin and signifies the ultimate, i.e. the primal symbolic point of the entire space which opens above and around it.

The mummy is the Head of the Corner which opens up the huge volume of the Kremlin, the Red Square, Moscow, and the USSR as a whole.

LENIN is engraved on the Mausoleum – one of Vladimir Ilych's conspiratorial nicknames. The mummy bears the name of the Great Conspirator, of the Master – the Head of the Corner with which the Masons propped up the Brave New World. It lies beneath a glass lid, carefully guarded. Its right hand is clenched into a fist, as if it was clutching a cap only a while ago.

3 The Egg

It is worth noting that the Mausoleum is not situated in front of the Kremlin entrance but rather in front of its Front Wall. Facing the entrance with the clock is the Place of Execution which will be discussed further below. Thus, the Mausoleum resembles a giant swelling on the Front Wall, having locked inside it an incredible Abscess.

The Mausoleum is a catacomb. Something like a huge Egg, buried half-way into the ground which, like any ellipse, has two foci: an upper one, the Rostrum, which governs the time of solemnity in the city; and a lower one, the mummy, which governs the time of mourning in the city.

The Mourning space immediately bears the Solemnity one. Mourning emanates Solemnity. In times of mass exaltations and parades the two foci merge into one, coinciding. The Egg-ellipse becomes a perfect sphere. Solemnity is erected Mourning.

The Mausoleum is a peculiar door which does not immediately govern horizontal space. It allows a vertical flow of life, i.e. up/down. Down is the womb; up, the phallic space of the Mausoleum-Egg. The Womb emanates the Phallus as the Head of the Corner erects itself into a Tower. The mausoleum is an Androgene.

The Head of the Corner is erected into the Head of the Tower, represented by the Kremlin clock. The dead mummy becomes a live device: the clock. The numbed body becomes a machine. The place becomes time. The apathetic womb-like mummy emanates the pathetic striking clock which articulates the city's life time. The rhythm of the town is caused by an incessantly erecting womb.

4 The Womb

The womb has engulfed the dead body without being able to make it decay. It is the black opaque space into which the ultimate symbol is dropped, that which opens the entire horizon of actuality from itself. The ultimated symbol is wholly expressed spatially, beyond any possible time. It does not pass. It is. It opens the actuality and in this sense is the limit of history, of time as a whole, of mortality as well.

5 The Parade as a Syncope

The womb is shaken by contractions in solemnity cycles. Because of them it throws the symbol upwards, rising and shining. Because of them it is able to throw the city's time of solemnity away from the mourning space. The dead one becomes alive on the Rostrum, mourning becomes exultation. The opaque becomes sparkling. Thanatos-Eros. The Black-Red.

The womb's pulsations contract its own space. Thus, syncopically, the square space erects and becomes raised. The Rostrum.

The Egg-Mausoleum governs the vertical, i.e. the sacred space of the square.

Lenin is much like himself.

He isn't dried up, there is

no mask, no days of sacred

exposure and no days of taboo.

★

The Mausoleum has working

hours, not a holy calendar.

It represents the point where this space is fractured and is split into opposites. It is an assemblage-joint which governs the city's life. It makes space act in a definite way.

6 Hammer. Sickle. Five-pointed Star.

The Mausoleum is a Centaur – a galloping mutuality of mourning and solemnity, of Black and Red. Of the Mower and the Blacksmith. The Hammer and the Sickle. Life and Death.

Just as the Mausoleum is present on the Red Square, so is the state emblem present on the Red Flag. The state em-

blem is a coded Mausoleum.

The five-pointed star is a Gordian knot of angles. In contrast to the six-pointed star, it cannot be decomposed into parts, into triangles. In this way it represents a primal indivisible symbolic device. It is drawn in a single stroke of the hand, i.e. with an unbroken line, locked together, a figure which cannot be disassembled.

This is the fortified space of the symbol: ultimate in its meaning and wonderful in its form.

7 Opposites: The Eye vs. The Finger

The double cosmos of the Mausoleum infects the surrounding space.

The viewer always finds himself in the spaces of the museum and never in that which fills them. He is forced to reconstruct the invisible body of actual power only from the traces deposited by it in the museum. The museum is an allegorical order which bears the traces of something immediately absent Here – the body of the actual power. The museum is a device for compulsive guessing.

b/ *The "Passage"*[2] is on the opposite side, i.e. opposite the Mausoleum. Contrary to the Kremlin, contrary to strictness, here is situated promiscuous space. The low space. The guts.

The gigantic gate of the Passage stands gaping exactly opposite the Mausoleum. It is a concavity in the corpse of the building with two winding staircases like two windpipes or like vertebral tapeworms. An orifice which opens up the gulping soft insides of the "Passage." The insides are crawling with people. Its spaces are segmented into a multitude of cells and passages between the cells where the ultimate act of promiscuity is performed – the buying and selling of goods by means of a universal equivalent, the Rouble. The whole promiscuity of objects and bodies which change hands, the whole promiscuous acquisition is governed by a universal equivalent – money. The capital increases precisely by the bustle of bodies and goods, by this frantic eroticization of touch and acquisition, of the enslavement of objects.

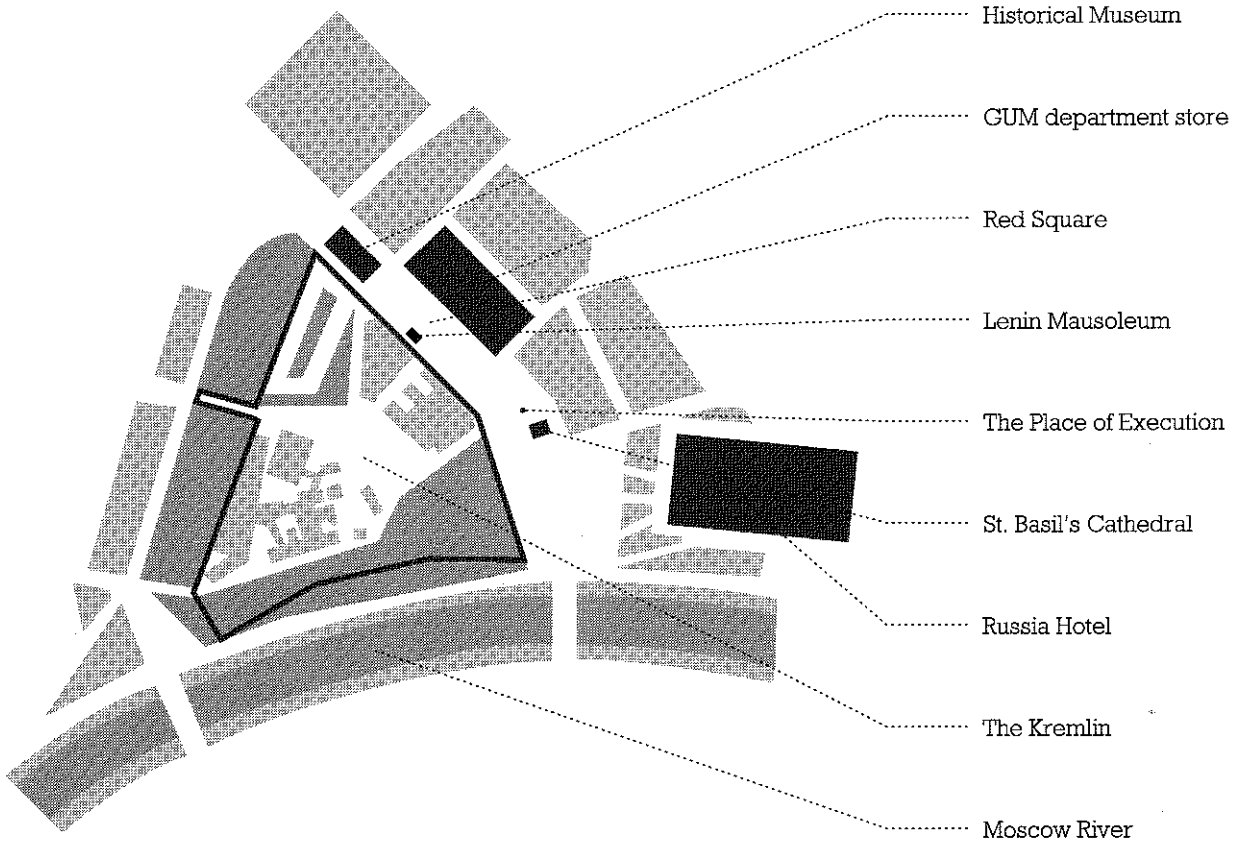
There, in the Kremlin, the law of this increase is made. Here, in the Passage, it is immediately put into life as a bacchanalia. The objects and bodies here are not exhibits, they are commodities. The body of the commodity and the body of the buyer fall into common definitions, they are in a horizontal relationship and in a position of mutual acquisition. The body of the power which governs them here is immediately, tangibly ulcerous: the Rouble.

c/ *The Rouble* (literally, "coined") is the most perfect and ultimately efficient sculpture. In Latin *sculpto* means coined.

The capital symbol is coined on it. The rouble is the very own space of the symbol. Often, LENIN's capital is engraved on it. Thus, on the one side the Rouble doubles the strict symbolic space by the image of the mummy. On the other side it bears the sign of its pragmatic value expressed in numbers.

The Rouble simultaneously bears the coined signs of the strict and the promiscuous space. Of high symbolism and low commercialism. Of ocular and tangible space. It is a joint. A Centaur. It is the point of intersection of the two kinds of social order. It is a Head of a Corner. A device which makes us at once worshippers and invaders. It constantly brings us back between the Museum and the "Passage:" i.e. on the Square.

The Rouble is the sculpture which can be equally erotically groped and watched. Through it acquisition and deprivation



a/ *The Kremlin*[1] is behind the Mausoleum – it is a strictly official space. The Kremlin is a museum. The museum issues strict relationships between the exhibits' bodies and the viewers' bodies. The exhibits represent a sacred, mummified reality, which with its presence confirms various high values such as Nation, History, Greatness, Etc. The body of the exhibit excludes from its own definitions the body of the viewer. The exhibit is raised. The Museum is vertically assembled.

Besides being a Museum, the Kremlin is the actual headquarters of power, of that which generates museum space because it leaves behind itself the histories and traces which are exhibited in this very museum. The Kremlin is a museum, together with that which fills its space from the outside with exhibits.

can be carried out. It unlocks both the horizontal and the vertical space of the Square.

d/ *The Temple*[3] stands to the side of the Kremlin. Nowadays, it is a potential, non-actual sacred space. It is not acting, just as the Place of Execution in front of it. The Temple resembles a huge rudiment, exhibiting the long-gone Assembly life of the city. This exhibit holds the signs of the Congregational space whose functions at the moment are taken over by the Mausoleum.

e/ *The Hotel*[4] is situated behind the Temple, and on the other side of the Square there is another Hotel. The Hotel is also Assembly space but a non-disciplined, a Promiscuous one. Just as the Temple is a Common Home, so is the Hotel, only it is not sacred but vulgar; not high but low; not strict but lenient.

The Hotel opens the city's prostituting space. At twilight when the Mausoleum closes, just before the hour when the guards change, the prostitutes walk out of the Hotels and towards the Red Square. At this hour it is full of foreigners and tourists of all sorts who by definition belong to the hotel, i.e. to the prostituting space.

The prostitutes are dressed in black sombre attire with bodies seized by a slow, extremely decorous gait, devoid of any aggression or exhibition of insolent flesh. Like mourning figures coming out of the Requiem, they gather in front of the Mausoleum. After the changing-of-the-guard ceremony, unless they are dispersed by the militia, they walk away just as slowly.

The Eros of the city performs mourning ceremonies. The Red is disguised as Black. It is exactly in this way that the mummy makes the prostituting space of the city in a peculiar way active, bowing to it.

The global space of the city with all its segments manifests the presence of the mummy in it.

f/ *The Tunnel.* The Red Square is connected with one of the hotels by a long tunnel, winding like a labyrinth. The intestine. The sewer. The prostitutes creep into this space below the level of the Square in order to take off the burden of the mourning and to twist their bodies erotically. Around the orifice of the Intestine a lecherous crowd is bustling, and with the approaching darkness of the night this central erogenous zone of the city blushes. The increasing voluptuousness of the night makes the rim of the orifice blush. The Red and the Black are once again joined together. The Centaur.

Below the level of the Square is the dead numbed body of the mummy and the feverishly alive body of the Eros. The entire space above the Square performs their mutuality. It presents the forms of their fearsome kiss.

g/ There exists a certain Place on the Square which disturbs its quadrature as described above. This is the round Place of Execution. It is situated in front of and a little to the side of the Temple and doesn't fall into any of the symmetries on the Square. Slightly raised, it is situated across the entrance of the Clock Tower. In this way it is a rudiment of a once existing centre of the Square, of a once existing Assembly place of the city.

Once it was the ultimate public place. This is where the decrees were read. This is where the sentences were carried out. This is where the body of power exposed its sublime visibility. It is a rudimentary centre of a once existing Congregational space of the city.

When the Mausoleum was erected, it rearranged the symbolic dominants of the centre. This happened after the death of the Great Conspirator, of the leader and founder of the new actuality. The removing of the centre changed the codification of space. It replaced the symbols of the once existing Christian Congregation with the symbols of the actual Party Conspiration. The Congregational form of life was replaced by a Conspiratorial one.

8 The Congregation

The Temple and the Place of Execution, now exhibits-rudiments, once legitimated the Congregational space, at the centre of which the Czar-Father stood. The Place of Execution and the Temple were the sublime rostrums of His double transcendental power – secular and religious.

The Congregational space had been assembled at some primal mythical time. Once it had mythically appeared and had been supported by various metaphors and images which justify its total presence, its civic and religious legitimacy. Congregational life represents a liturgical concord which is supported by sacred allegories and attributes of age-old tradition. It is made cosmic by the suggested presence of a Unicum beyond it made visible Here-inside, exactly by these allegories and attributes. God. The Congregational space is arranged by His transcendental power as a liturgical concord. It is the embodied DECORUM and thus it is beauty and bliss.

9 The Conspiracy

It is concord, but in the sense of plot, of cabal. The Party conspiracy arose within the boundaries of the original congregational order at the moment when it disintegrated because of its deepening economical and political debility. The party plot emerged within the boundaries of the Congregational debility of society. The Conspiracy represented the idea for a radical change of the social order with all its mechanisms and arrangement. The idea for a brand new social apparatus originated and was realized within the boundaries of a politically but not of a mythically justified time. This calls for a new principle of concord to emerge and get a firm foothold conspiratorially outside the law and tradition.

Unlike the Congregation, Conspiracy presupposes entirely new metaphors and attributes which ought to make it legitimate. Its legitimacy is political and is finally enforced through Revolution.

10 Here/There

The classic mummy represents the dry body of the dead fortified by a mask as a sign of NON-presence Here and Now. A sign of his actual presence There, Beyond, in the Other World. By the body of the mummy this presence beyond is reinforced to the utmost.

The Unicum is calmed down Here in the space of its own eternal sign, i.e. the mummy. The classical mummy is a device which locks together in a joint Here-placement and There-placement. The mummy is a Centaur.

The Egyptian mummy and the Soviet mummy codify the world's space in a contrasting manner – as a congregational and a conspiratorial order. Mythically and politically. Power is either accepted or seized according to a conspiratorial plan.

In contrast to this, Lenin is much like himself. He isn't dried up, there is no mask, no days of sacred exposure and no days of taboo. The Mausoleum has working hours, not a holy calendar. Any congregational expectance that there may be something of Lenin There besides that which is Here, is therefore eliminated. His perennial body is a sign of the OMNI-HERE-PRESENCE of conspiratorial power. Later, Stalin was also laid next to Lenin and remained there for years. This is how the conspiratorial order demonstrates its intransience, as it reduplicates the symbolic devices which guarantee its being Here. The multiplication of mum-

mies manifests that everything is in progress, that it deposits over the world's territory more and more signs-mummies of the Party Omnipresence. The mummy is the original power-quantum.

The Egyptian mummy and the Soviet mummy codify the world's space in a contrasting manner – as a congregational and a conspiratorial order. Mythically and politically. Power is either accepted or seized according to a conspiratorial plan.

11 The Place of Execution

This place is a rudiment of a once existing sublime visibility of the legal power. Through it the laws in society were decreed as vox of a higher transcendental will and people were beheaded, i.e. sent in a congregationally lawful order from Here – There beyond. In this place the city's space reaches its ultimate public openness, transparency and eternity. The commonplace "Here" breaks against the Supreme "There."

And conversely, the mummy LENIN is the Head of the Corner which opens and locks the total Here-Actuality. Which emits the permanent Here-presence of ultimate power. Which builds society by a permanent political "turning point." The entire social space suffers a syncope each and every minute. The only constant thing that is the stuff of the mummy which is a sign of its own non-presence anywhere else except Here, in this syncopic space failing to discard the dead body.

The traces of the abused congregational space by the actually pervading conspiratorial one can be found on the Red Square. The rudimentary place of Execution remains as a mutilated monument by a once performed conspiratorial action – the Revolution.

The Mausoleum is the engine of the actually happening political action.

12 The Mummy as a Sight Before the Communal Eye of the Worshipper

12.1 A line of worshippers over a kilometre long waits in front of the Mausoleum.

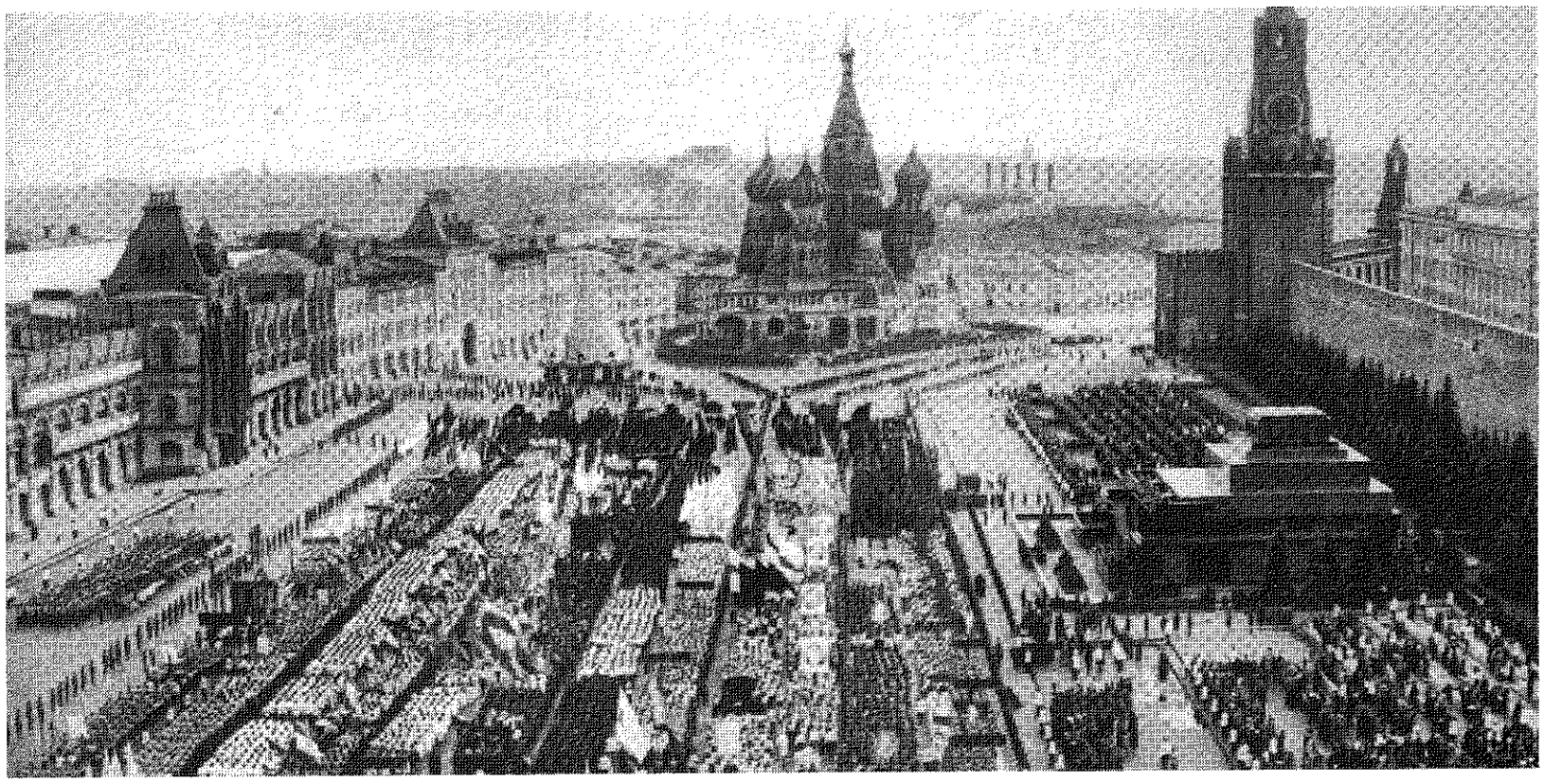
The line crawls slowly, enters the Mausoleum, exits, passes along the Kremlin Wall behind the Mausoleum where the remains and the ashes of many a conspirator have been buried, and disperses in the crowd. This mourning ceremony enacts the conspiratorial assembly of the inhabitants of the largest country of the world every single day. The mourning procession sinks into the depths of the Mausoleum in order to see the Head of the Corner there. Thus every citizen acquires his own underground conspiratorial actuality, gets involved with the reasons of political Party life and initiated into the secrets of the Party plot which will fold the face of the earth anew. Everyone meets with the ultimate body which bestows with authenticity everything that has happened and is happening since it is the original thing that has happened and is about to happen. It perpetually provokes the political life.

The mummy is the *perpetum mobile* of the conspiracy.

12.2 But the Red Square knows other days as well – days of jubilation and not of mourning. The mourning ceremony, the queue is transmuted into a parade procession. The crowd lined in rows exhausts through marching its exultations at belonging to and being initiated in the conspiratorial plot. The mourning is torn apart by erotic chanting. In the Black, Red breaks forth. The supreme organ of power raises on the rostrum to welcome the exulting crowd and to hide with its own body the graves of the heroes which remain behind its back in the Kremlin Wall.

12.3 The total actuality of political Party life makes Eros occur in the outlines of Thanatos, jubilation in the bosom of mourning. The exulting ones tread over graves. The rostrum is the highest place on a gigantic coffin. Everything happens Here and Now together. Thus conspiratorial space embraces the mummy. The mummy is the Party stump.

12.4 The original body in this space is the body through which time does not flow, nor does history. It alone is the primal engine of history. It is undecomposable space, a symbol assembled once and for all. Decay as a trace of time flux is eliminated. Symbolically fortified body reigns over life. The principle INDURATIO SPATII is in force. The stump.



This body, so to say, deposits time out of itself. Its own body definitions are no other body definitions in this space. It is the ultimate exhibit which turns every other existence into staring Eye.

12.5 No photography is allowed inside the Mausoleum. The machine eye is prohibited. An eye, not included in the code of the Mausoleum is not allowed to see it, and the camera is a machine whose definitions are not the definitions of the naked eye staring at the mummy. The mummy represents the original sight which codifies the very seeing of every eye that has looked at it. It assembles in the eye the intuitions of real and unreal, of truth and falsehood. The machine eye is enemy of the mummy.

12.6 The ultimate body is the boundary between Eros and Thanatos. It is dead but is not rotten. It is dead but this is precisely how it provokes the triumph of life. It is deadly pale, but the gazes which touch it redden its surface.

12.7 The ultimate body is the Prototype.

Eternally unburied but also undecayed, eternally inflamed by the gazes which cross over it, it must calm down somehow. The eye of the worshipper in whose space the ultimate sight has settled down must also find relief. This is why right behind the Mausoleum there is a long row of graves with busts. In the bust the dead face has its own image without being its very self. Decay is replaced with the hardness of the rock on which the features of the live face are engraved. Behind the graves with the busts, right into the Kremlin Wall, is the dreary long row of urns where the ashes of a number of heroes are engraved on golden plates. Cremation has cleared death from decaying flesh and from its dead mask. Heroism, totally liberated from the bodies and the faces of the heroes is built into the foot of the Kremlin Wall.

12.8 This is how the ultimate body calms down as it twice denies its own face and substance in the Busts and the Ashes, as it lustrates into a pure Idea. This represents the processional immuring of the mummy into the corpse of the city. The mummy is the magic device of the city, making it able to exist in a rigid form.

The uniqueness of the original body is calmed down as an assembly body. The same happens with the feverish eye of the worshipper. Having seen the mummy, then the busts, then the hundreds of names of heroes, the eye introjects and subdues the ultimate sight which shall govern its vision from now on.

The mourning procession is an initiation which bestows the Eye with common intuition of Party truth and justice (*Pravda*), and the Body with communal assemblyness, initiation in the underground Party plot.

The mummy opens up the eyes. It disciplines on a mass scale the communally acting body and communally seeing eye, the body of subjects drawn up in a line.

12.9 The primordial body of the mythical giant, having once suffered *sparagmos*/ torn apart, was divided into segments and in the passions folds the relief of the world and puts together the social body of the congregation. This in short is the myth about the Beginning.

12.10 The conspiratorial body which is the original device of the entire political space in order to be politically efficient, must be Whole.

Tales exist about the mythical body, i.e. myths. The different figures and plots make it visible to us. The political body is only that which is immediately exposed Here and Now. This is why the political body is constantly on the verge of scandal. It has great problems in maintaining its own ad hoc pose, because nothing props it up from the outside.

12.11 The political body is Here. Here again it emits all its meanings, images, symbols and attributes to the full. Exactly to the full, it is connected with all of its extensions and prolongations which it creates and governs. It does not give rise to any transcendental excess.

...Sublime power is given to a body which is literally that which originates from Here and Now. The power itself perpetually originates from Here and Now. According to the classical concepts of a body this is the ultimate Idol. The Simulacrum.

12.12 All this, of course, is valid for the person immediately involved in the soviet space. For the stranger the mummy is the ultimate curiosity. It could also be called the ultimate souvenir which would never be acquired. The stranger is always an agent of OCULUS EX MACHINA because his body remains firmly estranged, i.e. not included in the conspiratorial space. The stranger possesses a photographic eye.

"I am a mechanical eye
I, the machine, will show you the world
in a way only I could see it."
Dziga Vertov

The Six Oaths and the Six Days

Lenin died on 21 January, 1924. On January 26, the mourning conference of the Second Congress of the Soviets was opened, where Stalin held a speech. In it, on behalf of the Party, he pledged six oaths. The speech began with the following words: "We, the communists, are people of a special make. We are made of a special stuff."

Later on there appears in the speech a recurring rhetorical figure which interrupts the normal progress of the speech six times. It is in this figure of speech that Lenin's six legacies are mentioned, followed by Stalin's six oaths. The figure reads as follows: "On leaving us, comrade Lenin bequeathed... We pledge to fulfil your bequest, comrade Lenin!"

The repetition "On leaving us, comrade Lenin..." is wonderful – in fact Lenin leaves for nowhere because on January 27, on the day following the oaths, he was laid in the Mausoleum. Thus he remains forever pledging to build and widen Party space. Lenin cannot leave because his body became the party Head of the Corner. His body is the primal joint. It remains to emit the territory where Stalin's Party imperialism shall expand.

Six days – from the 21st to the 27th, during which Lenin's body is laid out between the bed and the grave. Six times Stalin calls this body "leaving."

It has been rightly said that "We shan't remain in this world but neither shall we leave."

Stalin's speech began with the following words: "We the communists, are people of a special make. We are made of a special stuff" – the communist body does not decay!

The mummy is the greatest communist. The stump of the Party.

Induratio spatii

The maximum of power is not manifested as a time process. It is manifested as stiff symbolic space stuck between Life and Death.

The maximum of power is a joint which makes the Real in a strict way acting. The Centaur.

The communist Centaur is out of joint! ◆

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EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Behind the Kremlin walls are housed two palaces, four cathedrals, the Supreme Soviet Building, and various government buildings.
2. Here Todorov is referring to GUM, the major department store in Moscow, built at the end of the nineteenth century after the style of the Paris Arcades.
3. By "The Temple" Todorov means St. Basil's Cathedral, erected by Ivan the Terrible as a sacred monument to himself.
4. "The Hotel" is The Russia Hotel where politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and tourists stay when they visit Moscow. It contains a hard-currency store which accepts only dollars, pounds and marks.

Post-Glasnost : The Culture of Vertigo

The Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow (currently in temporary premises while the gallery itself is being refurbished) is dedicated to contemporary Russian painting and sculpture and includes marvellous sections on nineteenth and twentieth century art, most of which was buried from 1930 to the early 1970s. At the end of a series of corridors, one comes to an area popularly known as the Stalin room. In here the art is not impressionist, post-impressionist, surreal or expressionist (which the immediately preceding rooms are), but Social Realist, or perhaps, more accurately, Hagiographically Representationalist.

Ioan Davies

Here are Stalin, Svetlana Alilueva (Stalin's daughter), General Timoschenko, Maxim Gorky, etc. as they would like to have looked (Gorky looks like a romanticized Mark Twain). Pride of place is given to an enormous painting of Stalin and his war cabinet, with Moscow unfolding through a vast window behind. It is every corporate director's dream of how he would like to be remembered (and, indeed, Soviet representational art was selling well in the last years of Thatcher's Britain, as the business executives tried to find an aesthetic style that was commensurate with their perceived status).

Through the wall in the next gallery is a collection of contemporary paintings (for sale). Most of them are heavily symbolic, apocalyptic pieces, drawing on themes which go back beyond the nineteenth century. They evoke Redon, Schwabe, de Chavannes, Moreau, Delville and even further back to Bosch and Piranesi, but much more pessimistic, violent and based on a Russsian sense of total disaster. All of them have been painted in the past five years, and, if it were not for the fact that they are painted in Russia, might be mistaken as promotion material for Western horror "B" movies. But the Draculas are Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev. If, in another adjoining gallery, the geometrical and mechanistic work of El Lissitsky, which did so much to affect the architecture and industrial design of the Soviet Union, receives great prominence, here it might never have existed.

In the Hermitage gallery in Leningrad there is a special Picasso exhibition. Stalin, it is well-known, disliked Picasso and all forms of abstract art. And yet the Hermitage from the beginning of this century to the 1940s continued to buy Picassos. In the late 1940s Stalin ordered that they be sold to produce some ready hard currency. The gallery did so, but kept a record of where they went. This exhibition represents a lease back to Leningrad of those paintings that were formerly its own.

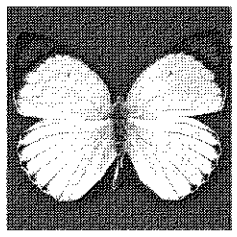
In Kiev, St.Vladimir's Cathedral, built in the late nineteenth century in imitation Byzantine style to commemorate the 900th aniversary of Christianity in Russia, is a fully-functioning church of the Ukrainian Orthodox church, although it served its time as a museum, and was damaged by the Germans in the Second World War. Virtually every art object in it is an imitation of traditional Byzantine works, and most were painted or recreated in the post-war period. The major exception is a Virgin and Child by Vasnetsov, a non-iconic symbolist portrayal from the inter-war years, which shows how Ukrainian religious art might have developed in other circumstances. In these moments of uncertainty it is barely conceivable that its hour has come round at last.

The Byzantine, the symbolist, the social realist, the representationalist, the gothic, the mechanistic – these seem to be the competing styles of the Russian eye, here and there puncuated by the abstract-symbolism of a Chagall, who represented another culture burrowing into the Russian.

Culture, Perestroika and Glasnost: The Case of the Writers' Union

At the heart of the Soviet dilemma has been the problem of culture. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the issues of education, intellectual freedom, workers' control of the processes of cultural production, the organization of the media, and the importance of ideology in determining the direction of Communism produced as many experiments, manifestoes, edicts and blood-letting as any of the economic issues. The classic experiments took place under Anatoly Lunacharsky's period as Commissar of Education (1917-1929). ("The people themselves, consciously or unconsciously, must evolve their own culture," he declared in 1917. This was echoed by Lenin's wife, Krupskaya: "We were not afraid to organize a revolution. Let us not be afraid of the people... Our job is to help the people *in fact* to take their fate into their hands"). The experiments were characterized by attempts to work with existing institutions and also to help to set up parallel ones, with Narkompros, the People's Commissariat for Education being both the guide and mediator. But Narkompros represented in many respects the democratic, culturist tendency in the Revolution. For all the problems he had with schoolteachers and university lecturers (they almost all went on strike), actors, writers and film directors, Lunacharsky believed in the liberating potential of education and culture, and fought for culture as an important (maybe the most important) element in constructing social change. He is one of the brightest lights in the early Bolshevik pantheon.

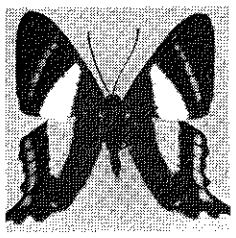
At the heart of the Soviet dilemma has been the problem of culture.



But Lunacharsky had serious problems with the Party. Narkompros at the beginning of the New Economic Policy had about seven percent of the Union budget, almost all of which went to schools, universities and the Academy of Sciences, though it continued to have some control over music, film, theatre, the fine arts, and literature. Its main competitor for control of the cultural apparatuses was Glavpolitput (the chief political department of the Commissariat of Communications, which had ten percent of the budget), Vesenkha (the Supreme Council of the National Economy, which had nine percent of the budget), and VTSIK (the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets) which was responsible for the distribution of printed matter. Under NEP the budget for Narkompros (and its power) declined, to the extent that fees were charged for schooling. Glavpolitput progressively took over cultural funding and administration, and academic research was increasingly funded by VTSIK. Lunacharsky ceased to be commissar because the high schools were put under Vesenka control. The cut and thrust of the debates that had characterized cultural policy in the 1920s were foreclosed, both because of the trials that took place in the 1930s, and because of the complete subordination of all cultural institutions to the Party, the economy and the war effort (from 1941-5). As is well-known, most of the major writers, theatre directors, film-makers, intellectuals and artists of the 1920s had been killed by 1940 or had been forced into exile. If a Marxist debate continued to exist, it was either directed discreetly towards the West (as in the work of Lukacs), or as masking terrorism and censorship in the East (as in the infamous attack by Zhadnov in 1947 on the satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko and the poet Anna Akhmatova). In education, the debates on school pedagogy were increasingly influenced by the regimental ideas of Anton Makarenko, former NKVD organizer of labour colonies and camps for juvenile delinquents.

And yet "culture" continued to be made. In 1934 the First Congress of Soviet Writers was held in Moscow, following the dissolution of RAPP (the proletkult-based Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) and foundation of the Writers' Union of the USSR. By that time the centralization of the cultural apparatuses had been completed, with the control of printing,

distrubution, publishing, radio, film and theatre firmly established at the centre. The concepts of "autonomy" of cultural bodies had long been discarded, with the Central Committee having absolute power of veto, even over the management of obscure literary journals in Leningrad or Alma - Ata (a prerogative that it periodically claimed, as when, in 1947, it decided to close the literary magazine *Leningrad* because of its "viperous" content). Thus the creation of the Writers' Union, as well as other cultural unions (Cinematographic Workers, Actors, Artists) took on the appearance of their being company unions to the one great State enterprise. However, after the death of Stalin, even more so after Khrushchev's speech at the Twen-



The writer had access to the media in so far as the writer was considered essential to the smooth running of the system

tieth Party Congress, and progressively through the 1980s, the character of these institutions slowly changed. My visit to the USSR in October 1990 was concerned with monitoring those changes.

Probably the first break in the control of the Party over cultural ideas was the re-organization of the magazine *Novy Mir* in 1958, under the second editorship of the poet Alexander Tvardovsky. (Tvardovsky had been editor of *Novy Mir* from 1950-54, but was bumped in the early years of Kruschev.) It was a curious change. Although initially sanctioned by the Writers' Union and unchallenged by the Party, mainly because Tvardovsky was a Party member and operated in the spirit of the Twentieth Congress, most of Tvardovsky's own writing was itself not published until the 1980s. Western writers debated whether Tvardovsky was "a Party man" or "an oppositionist." He was, of course, both. *Novy Mir* was not seen as an "opposition" journal until 1965, even though its policy and ostensible content had not changed since 1960. The Twenty-second Congress of the Party sanitized the democratic intent of the Twentieth Congress. Henceforth *Novy Mir* became the intellectual opposition within the Party, and, through the following years, acted as a force against intellectual and political stagnation.

But the institutions established in the 1930s also slowly changed. The Writers' Union, tied into a single sponsor, was strongly affected by *Novy Mir*'s stance of democratic resistance. If the Leningrad Union's attempt at autonomy in the 1940s had been met with Zhdanovite obstruction, clearly *Novy Mir* survived it. The Union itself had adopted a policy which borrowed something from Proletkult, that the Revolutionary writer could only come out of the working or peasant class. With this went a concern with providing the writer with all the amenities that allowed him or her to write, including hospital care, meeting places, restaurants, working spaces and access to periodicals. The Union itself controlled 120 journals, at local and national levels. The price, of course, was that the writer (including screenwriters, journalists and playwrights) had access to the media in so far as the writer was considered essential to the smooth running of the system. When, as in the spectacular cases of Pasternak, Brodsky, Solzhenitzhyn, Sakharov, and several other people, the writer was declared *persona-non-grata* by the Party, the Writers' Union did not stand by its members, and frequently aided in censoring them. Its attitude to *Novy Mir* in the fifties was that of unmitigated hostility, and was responsible for Tvardovsky being sacked as editor twice, first in 1954, and again in 1970, when the Khruschev thaw was overtaken by Brezhnev's heavy-handed, nepotistic politics.

Something of a purge of the union leadership took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the ambience at least allowed for the admission that other writers existed than those who had been officially sanctioned by the Union in the past. But what really affected the attitudes of the union executive, once again, were issues which were beyond its immediate control. Perestroika and glasnost provided the context within which the monopoly that the Union had on publishing, distribution and accreditation was broken. The growth of independent publications and publishing houses in the late eighties and the emergence of separatist movements in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia, Moldavia and, in particular, Ukraine challenged the *raison d'être* of the Union. The circulation of Union publications declined sharply in the mid-eighties, leading to some internal questioning. (Was the Union really representing ideology, writers, workers?) Today there is certainly a major segment of the Union that supports "Pamyat" (a nationalist group that announces that Russia must be for the Russians, and that all foreign influences – Jewish, American, Lithuanian, British or Asian must be purged to clean the Russian soul: it is certainly anti-semitic and anti any minority nationality). In 1986 a new organization, the "April" Group, composed largely of Western-oriented intellectuals, emerged to challenge the hegemony of the Union. It almost immediately gained control of the executive of the Leningrad Writers' Union, and by 1990 claimed that 30 percent of the members of the Writers' Union of the USSR supported it. Politically it was backed in Moscow by the city council who in 1991 granted it a lease on premises. Since 1990 the Union has been affiliated with the international organization PEN, though not necessarily for the best of motives: it allows delegates access to international travel, which is increasingly denied under present austerity programs, though obviously PEN is an organization which does not want just any delegate.

In Kiev the Writers' Union was by 1987 controlled by the separatist group Rukh (in fact the founding meeting of Rukh took place in the headquarters of the Union, the former home of the Czar's Governor of Greater Kiev, Count Ignatieff, and the president of Rukh, Ivan Drakh, is a former recipient of the State Prize for poetry). Thus the notion that the Union had a symmetrical relationship to the Party was increasingly called into question (if the Party relationship mattered, it was which members of the Party rather than the Party as a monolithic whole, a process which had started with Tvardovsky's wheeling and dealing with Krushchev in the 1950s). Statistics in 1989 show that 60 percent of the Union membership were members of the Party, a figure which is very close to that of the USSR Congress. (Much more revealing, however, is the fact that only 14 percent of the membership are women).

While I was in the Soviet Union in October of 1990, I interviewed Alexander Prokhanov, the secretary-general of the Writers Union of the USSR (who is also a military novelist and editor of the Union's monthly magazine, *Soviet Literature*), members of the April group, and members of the Ukrainian and Leningrad Unions, as well as some playwrights, journalists and theatre directors. In addition I went to Poland and interviewed some journalists and attended the Helsinki World Assembly and the People-to-People media conferences in Prague. Several things emerged out of these encounters, which might put the relationships between the writer, the unions, the publishing and media industries, the political processes, and the economy into sharper focus.

It might be prudent to start with the interview with Prokhanov, because Prokhanov (a "non-Party man," as he said to me) represents the new "conservative" bent within the Union, and also (and, perhaps, therefore) the representative of a system that looks like being phased out. Prokhanov is probably the epitome of the

kind of person who has become prominent in the Union (and possibly in the higher reaches of the Government) since perestroika destroyed the flimsy reserves of Marxist rhetoric that were left after Brezhnev reduced the Party to being the agent of a Czaristic nepotism. In spite of his military writings, he is not an expansionist imperialist, in the sense that he wants to impose on the rest of the world Russia's view of itself (he sees the futile war in Afghanistan as providing the origins of perestroika). He is, however, troubled by the "intellectuals," who are out of touch with the spirit of the country. The Writers' Union has a mandate – to make them realize their political responsibilities, and to maintain the continutity of an ongoing commitment to the working-class and peasant writer. He is particularily fierce on the "April" group, those whose god is Vaclav Havel, "a caricature of a President": "If I had the power, I would demand of the April group that they apologize for all the nasty things they have said about me. I have given them every opportunity to write and publish and meet. I am a democrat, but my patience is wearing thin." And then he becomes very eloquent in saying what he would do if he were cultural Czar:

> If I had full dictatorial powers, I would construct a cultural Empire. I would build a new pyramid. I would search in all the cultures for mutual goals, and create a mystic structure that would unite them all. As Cultural Dictator, I would have many faults, including repeating the crimes of Stalin. But everyone would be united for a common purpose.

Prokhanov is the once and future king, and his shadow hovers over all other deliberations of writers, theatre directors, film-makers. He is the populist anti-intellectual who sees a role for writers as part of a "well-oiled machine." Thus the long debates of the 1920s, the theoretical issues of proletarian versus bourgeois writing, phenomenological Marxism versus structuralism, even Party loyaly versus opposition, are reduced to maintaining law and order. I asked him whether he was a Marxist. "I am not a member of the Party. I am a Conservative. Marx, Hegel, Kant, Freud... do they really address the issues of the survival of our culture? All of them might provide useful tools in understanding what is happenning to us, but I'm afraid I do not have those tools. I am simply a writer, a small cell in a big machine."

The Writers' Union, for all the bombast of Prokhanov's talk, should not be written off yet. The Union has about 10,000 members across the USSR, and the control by the goverment over the means of distribution, of printing presses and the supply of paper is still very great as is its control of other media of communication. Thus between them the Union and different levels

The long debates of the 1920s, the theoretical issues of proletarian versus bourgeois writing, phenomenological Marxism versus structuralism, even Party loyalty versus opposition, are reduced to maintaining law and order.

of government can effectively stifle the production of work considered to be unsuitable. *Novy Mir,* for example, in January 1991, had been waiting since March 1990 for paper supplies to enable it to print Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle.* But, clearly, many things have changed, inside the Union and outside it. A large number of previously unpublished works are now available, including writings by Isaac Babel, Alexander Tvardovsky, Mikhail Bulgakov, Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, Mikhail Bakhtin, though, as yet, no Mandelstam or Trotsky. *Soviet Literature* has recently produced special issues on Bulgakov, Akhmatova and Pasternak which, if rather late in history, are at least welcome. In general, the magazine has committed itself to having a full debate on all aspects of literature and art.

These changes in the apparent ideological position of the Union in many senses mirror that in the Party itself. It is an authoritarian liberalism (repressive tolerance, in Marcuse's phrase) that Prokhanov advocates, as much as Gorbachev: an opening out to discourse as long as power is held on to. Or, as the Russian Marxist thinker Boris Kagarlitsky has commented, in discussing the Party's conversion to notions of a market economy: "They consider that, in practice, the sole means of implementing a liberal economic reform is the creation of a strong, authoritarian regime capable of effectively suppressing the resistance of the masses." It is, of course, a solution which owes nothing to Marxism, except in rhetoric, and as a claim to legitimacy. The major change from the old Bolshevik position is merely one of the nature of the economic model to be used. To quote Kagarlitsky again, "If the Bolsheviks viewed the economy as one big factory then, according to the new liberals, society and economy should be run as one big supermarket." *Soviet Literature* operates as the supermarket of Russian culture, though within a framework that is classically Soviet paternalistic.

The opposition to this view of culture is fragmented, incoherent, despairing. At this moment, the intellectuals in the Soviet Union are engaged in an act of retrieval and regrouping. The traditional sense of the intelligentsia (see the accompanying interview with Tatyana Tolstaya) was that of being the collective moral conscience of the society and it was a tradition that was carried on, underground, by poets and short story writers throughout the 1960s and 1970s, writing, reading into audio casettes (paper was always scarce), and trying to get published anywhere. Much of this literature, composed in elevators, boiler rooms, kitchens and waiting lobbies disappeared though some of it appeared in *Samizdat* or, now, 20 years later in newspapers and magazines. It was an ongoing resistance to the policies of the government and of the Writers' Union. The oppositional intelligentsia, however, was, more or less killed off by the remorseless fear of them by Stalin and the bureaucrats of the Party system. But it was inevitable that the idea of the intelligentsia would be reborn when the conditions were ripe. But this intelligentsia was one which had links to its immediate community and, for some, to the West, but ultimately none to the matrix of the culture of the society in which it lived, those links having been effectively sundered by the purges of the 1930s and the slow emasculation of talent in the 1940s and 1950s. The rebirth of intellectual life therefore was bounded by the polarities of "community" and "Western-ness," both of them highly problematical concepts, and particularly because the middle ground was occuppied by the *nomenklatura* of the Writers' Union and the upper reaches of the Party. Thus the intelligentsia did not really exist anymore. It did not have a life or a series of connecting links of its own: "Life", as Milan Kundera remarked, "is elsewhere." Neither professional in the Western sense, nor truly communal in the Czech, it began to operate in no-man's-land.

This sense of lack of purpose and of intellectual blockage was marked by all the writers, playwrights, directors, critics, cultural activists that I met in the USSR. Serially, I will list my impressions.

"If the Bolsheviks viewed the economy as one big factory then, according to the new liberals, society and economy should be run as one big supermarket."

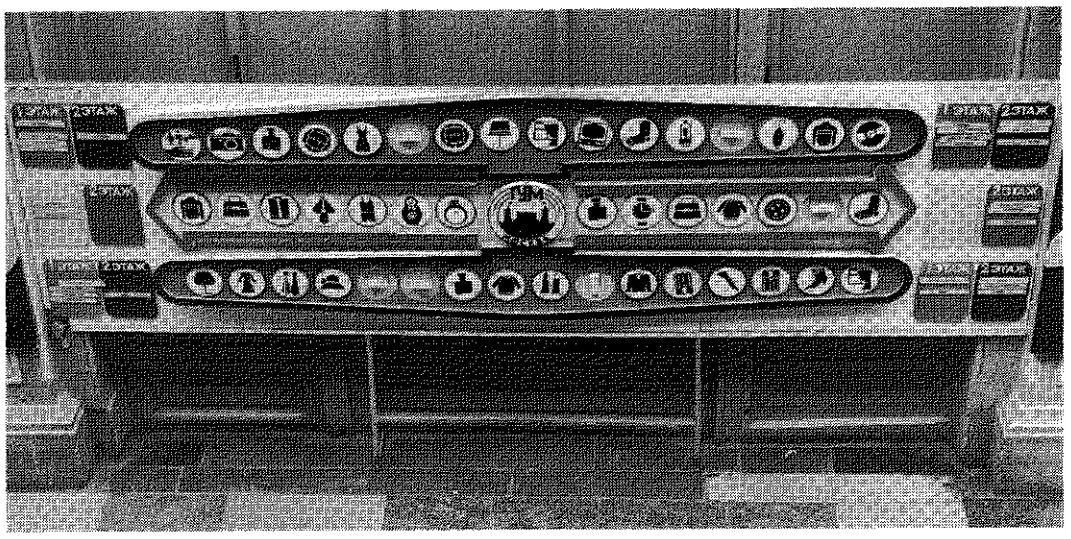


photo: David Hlynsky

- Svetlana Vragova, 38, Director of the Theatre on Spartakus Square (housed in an old Stock Exchange), passionately argued for a theatre which would be apocalyptic, exposing the iniquities of the present system, but knowing that it would get no-one anywhere. Theatre had to display the realities of the present, while being conscious of the Stanislavsky heritage (see Svobodin, below). Her plays have been performed in Chicago, San Francisco as well as Moscow.
- Israel Metter, 80, Jewish novelist, short story writer from Leningrad, whose novel, *Five Corners,* written 30 years ago about an agricultural community on the Russian-Finnish border, and now published in Russian, English and German, said that nothing of any consequence was being written now. Everyone was busy reading the material that had suddenly become available and lining up for food.
- Alla Gerber, 50, film critic, whose son had just produced a film based on one of Babel's Odessa stories, argued that all the new films would be instantly put on the shelf, because the new market economy allowed everyone to catch up on the old Hollywood movies which were cheaper to import. Thus the old Stalinist censorship and the new authoritarian market liberalism amounted to the same thing.
- Alexander Svobodin, Theatre Director and chief archivist/animateur of the

Stanislavsky Centre. In a sense the Stanislavsky cult is to theatre what the Writers' Union is to writing, Lunacharsky having come to a deal with Stanislavsky in 1918, to recognize the pre-eminence of the Stanislavsky school in Soviet drama, a deal which has more or less stuck since then. Svobodin, however, reflected the winds of change. To maintain the Stanislavsky heritage, the great man's country home was being restored as a museum and acting school with foreign aid, mainly from the USA and Germany. It was important to maintain standards in the theatre against potential barbaric incursions.

- Alexander Gelman, 50ish, playwright, probably the best known playwright from the USSR in the West (particularily in France and New York, but that is the penality for being avant-garde), saw theatre everywhere as having no place to go apart from exploring the Kafkaesque realities of all the bureaucracies that we live under.
- A group of people from the Writers' Union in Kiev (including Valerij Shevchuck, Igor Rymaruk, Volodymyr Musienko, Mykhailo Hryhoriv, Parlo Hirnyk and Soloma Pavlychko as well as Ivan Drach, President of Rukh, in a separate encounter). Also attending the second congress of Rukh, evocative of being at a convention of the Parti Quebecois, though without the sense that they know what they are doing, apart from preserving the 'national' (i.e. Ukrainian) culture. Using the Writers' Union as the agency of a separatist culture might seem bizarre, but what structures are there left? The magazines, newspapers that the Union publishes in Kiev as autonomous Ukrainian writing depend on the sponsorship from Moscow. Has anybody figured out what will happen if Moscow cuts off the print-run? Is there a sense of Ukraine which is not based on purely separatist sentiment? The *élan* of nationalism is exciting, but what if it is only *élan*? Is there, anywhere, a comaraderie of dissent which has a principle, a theory of dissent except the gut feeling that linguistic community is important and that life is elsewhere?
- Galina Drobot, one of the founders of the April group, out of whose apartment the annual journal *April* and the general conclaves of the group have emanated. Certainly a group founded on a sense of the "Western" intellectual, whose antennae are tuned to the *New York Review of Books, Nouvelle Observateur,* the *London Review of Books,* maybe even *Tikkun.* And, of course, the real problem is that the Soviet Union does not have a space for Western-style intellectuals. The space that *April* tries to occupy is precisely that which has been left vacant by the demise of the old intelligentsia. *April* wants to occupy the moral space, but has not yet been convincing enough to demonstrate that that is not a space whose audience is (because of the form within which the issues are put) either abroad or dead.
- Tatyana Tolstaya, short story writer, distantly related to Leo Tolstoy, who spends her time alternating between Moscow and the USA. She showed unmitigated hostility to the Writers' Union, which she thought should be closed down, though she also thought that an organization like PEN, as a purely advocacy group, might have a place. She was quite hostile to the idea of the necessity for a women's movement (as was Drobot) seeing it as a feminist equivalent of Proletcult. She argued that writers should be published because they were good, not because they belonged to a union or were women.
- Valentina Konstantinova, sociologist, deputy director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the Academy of Sciences (whom I met in Prague), who argued strongly for the necessity of a feminist movement, particularily now as the rhetoric of Marxism gave way to that of the market. If women had received some backing under the old regime, now they received absolutely none. It was time to encourage feminist writing.

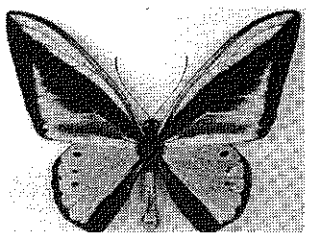
These interviews represent a cross-section of the positions adopted by some members of the creative intelligentsia. In addition, some background factoids are illuminating in knowing what people think, read, do. *Pravda* is down from a circulation of two million to 200,000 in one year. The weekly *Argumenti i Fakti,* a cross between *People* magazine, *USA Today* and *Index on Censorship,* sells an astounding 32 million copies a week. A wide array of broadsheets and newsletters dealing with everything from astrology to business forecasts are available at the street corners and in the entrances to the Metro, mainly German tourists line up to be seen eating at McDonalds, and Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV has a regular slot on Moscow TV producing rock music. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has now sold ten million copies, and, while independent newspaper reporters write and make film right across the the Soviet Union, the amount of this material shown on Soviet TV is very low.

But the real factoids are elsewhere. In Hungary, after the introduction of the free market economy, all the daily papers are owned by Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell and all the local papers by the Springer group. The production of serious literature has declined (the state subsidized Dickens and Zola, while Orwell, Zamyatin and Havel were produced in samizdat). The soft porn that was encouraged by the State publishing houses in the mid-eighties has now given way to an avalanche of Harlequin romances, *Penthouse,* and worse. Meanwhile in Poland, most of the publishing houses are going bankrupt under the privatization laws, and even the schools cannot get textbooks. And in the former East Germany, the Kohl *anschluss* has resulted in all community theatres being closed, because they do not have an adequate (i.e. West German) tax base. The Berliner Ensemble survives because of a potential outburst from the West, and the possible loss of tourist dollars.

The threat of the market therefore hangs over everyone. In a society without values, the valueless dollar imposes itself. (Not for nothing did Gorbachev and Thatcher get on so well: if they shared anything it was a touching faith in old culture as marketable commodity but no faith in the peoples' ability to create culture). There is no evidence that into this vacuum a Prokhanov will not project himself and impose a solution.

When I met Prokhanov, I was struck by the amazing collection of butterflies that were displayed in his apartment in Pushkin Square, above McDonalds, with a crippled Coka-Cola sign blinking "Coka," "Coka" through the window). The butterflies were framed in glass cases, each containing a particular genus of butterfly: reds to pink in one, navies to light blue in another, bright yellows to cream in another, and so on. Sixteen frames in all. "Where did you get them?" I asked. "Nicaragua, Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Afghanistan," he replied. "But I did not shoot them, I caught them in a net."

One thinks of the writers under Prokhanov's command, and the ambition to trap them in one "mystic structure." Prokhanov is currently the last in a line that began with Lenin and Lunacharsky, the head of what has been described as the "greatest cultural experiment since the Middle Ages." That experiment owed a lot to men more intelligent than him, who read their Hegel and Marx. Will the experiment die as Prokhanov has a shootout in the cultural supermarket? What will he do with more dead butterflies? ◆



The threat of the market hangs over everyone. In a society without values, the valueless dollar imposes itself.

Ioan Davies is a member of the Border/Lines *collective. He was in Moscow at the invitation of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and his trip was funded by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council.*

an interview with

Tatyana Tolstaya

We pick up ideas and they are already cold
like yesterday's dishes.

Border/Lines *collective member Ioan Davies interviewed Tatyana Tolstaya at the PEN congress in Toronto in October 1989. The great-grandneice of the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, Tolstaya, a short-story writer, has had privileged access to the West throughout most of her life (at the time of the interview she was a writer in residence at the University of Texas).* Border/ Lines *is publishing the interview because Tolstaya articulates a particular point of view from the aristocratic intelligentsia which has to be set in context with the recent transformations in the Soviet Union. The collection of short stories* On the Golden Porch *was published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1989, and created great confusion among western feminists. See the special issue on Soviet women of* Canadian Woman Studies, *vol. 10, no. 4, 1989, for versions of this confusion.*

Border/Lines Give me a sense of what you write.

Tatyana Tolstaya Well, I write all kinds of things, but the real things that interest me are people from the psychological point of view, as human beings. I'm not interested much in the social life of people, though everything one describes becomes social. I'm not interested in social problems as such. I believe in eternal problems. So from my point of view there is no history. There are all sorts of events but there is no progress in history as many people believe. A man is a man whether he lives in ancient Rome, in the middle ages or in the present. It is the same human being, with everything that describes him as a human being. With his fears, expectations, illusions, disillusionments, beliefs, disbeliefs, the desire to be religious, the desire to be nonreligious. To believe in God or to be afraid of God. To hate God and to challenge God. To love, not to love. To want to be loved. That's what I'm interested in and of course as I want my characters to develop and to be active, so I have to place them in the surroundings and the scenery I know. And this is the scenery of our everyday life in the Soviet Union.

As it is a strange life it can be defined in many ways. A sad life. A horrible life, a fearful life. Yet to survive in that crazy life you have to develop a certain sense of humour which allows you to survive. Those who have no sense of humour are in a desperate way. Very soon they perish as human beings. They become half animal. So a sense of humour is a very good thing. It just keeps you on the surface and there's a lot of possibility of making fun of what is going on. Just to show the absurdity of everyday life, of all the social arrangements and how it affects you and how ridiculous you are yourself because you are just a human being thinking that you are potentially a God – that is, just a weak person who depends on everything and everyone. So that's what I'm interested in. Often I write about old people because they still have the same expectations as the young person has, while there is nothing for them in the future. So somehow their expectations turn back and they become, as it were, the wrong memories. Illusions about their past. They try to make their past more interesting because otherwise there is nothing behind and nothing in front of them. It is this impossible situation that I'm interested in.

Can you say how you compare yourself with, or do you even think of yourself in relation to other women writers in Russia?

I don't believe in any women's literature. I think there are just writers. Good writers, bad writers. If they happen to be women, O.K. If they are men, O.K. I don't see any difficulty in it. We are just human beings who write.

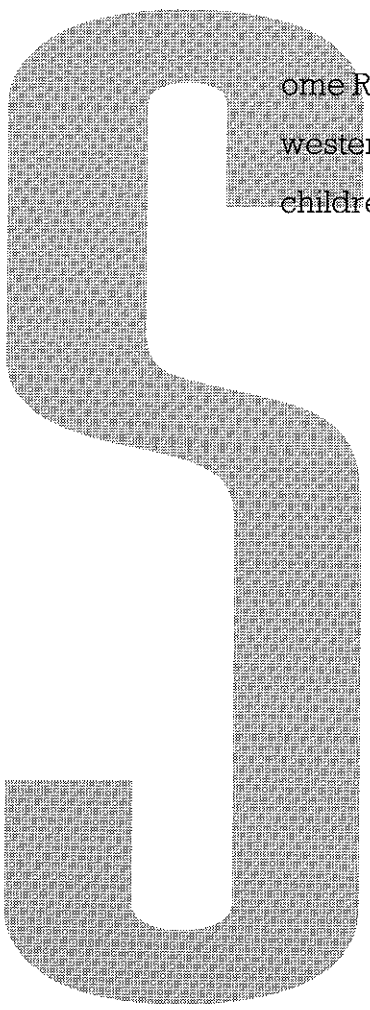
I mean, do you think that in that way the whole emphasis here in Canada, Britain, and the United States on feminist writing is an indulgence of the West?

I think that's one of the stereotypes. Usually, westerners think of the East in terms of stereotypes because the East is opposite to them. They are different. But this is the western stereotype, the feminist stereotype. You know what the feminists invented: they invented the idea of phallocracy – that the world is bad because it is ruled by men. That is completely ridiculous because, for example, England is ruled by a woman. The United States are ruled by a man. But if you compare them this way there is much more in common between America and the Soviet Union than there are differences. Both are ruled by men. It is not the question of men having power. Just the question of some more deep differences – economic, social, ideological, political, historical, religious and so on. If you just divide humanity in two pieces, men and women, you will not understand the differences and the complexities of the world. It is a primitivization of everything, of all our consciousness and, somehow, of what we all want to be. Some of them – I speak only of the extreme feminists of a certain kind which irritate me infinitely – want to develop a sort of neutral person. Both men and women in the same person that would be simply neutral. Everything would be the same with this person. So who will it be? A worker? I don't understand. I like the differences, and I like the differences not only between men and women, but just differences in everything. I think that the more differences you have the more interesting is life. I like racial differences and sometimes I even feel it's a pity that there are only three main races, black, white and yellow. I would like people to be green with spots of violet, or I don't know what. To have the diversity of flowers. If we had only the rose we would just hate it. Simply a flower.

O.K. You've touched on something which I think is really quite important. In terms of everyday life in the Soviet Union, one of the ideas that comes over through the media and people who travel in USSR is that everyday culture is really very Victorian. People dress in 19th-century clothing and they have their hair braided and so on. What we're talking of is a world in a time warp and the whole idea of perestroika and glasnost has an impossible task because here are people who are actually used to a sense of security, whereas modernism is something which is terrible and frightening. What has actually happened in the Soviet Union is that it is expected suddenly to drop out of the Victorian age.

It's not exactly like that. I think that our society has different spots and different groups of people and places who live in different ages. Some live in the stone age. To reach the Victorian age is as difficult as, for example, the wildest parts of India to reach the level of the civilization which exists in Japan. It's impossible. Now the Victorian age is perhaps our future. Some people live in the stone age. Some live in the middle ages. Not the western middle ages but the Russian middle ages. Some live a half-wild life. They have no morals at all. They've never heard of basic morals, not to kill, not to steal, not to offend: all these things. Some people are very sophisticated in the most western way and you will find no differences in dealing with them. The only thing is that they do not have the technical devices to which westerners are used. In some sense some people are much more advanced than westerners and that even helps some Russians to develop a particular attitude towards westerners as though they were dealing with children, children with expensive toys such as computers. They are children who do not know life. They don't understand. They have never been in such complete conflicting psychological situations as Russians have always experienced. So you have everything. But in our country people live in different periods, in different times; deep past, past, present, future and, maybe even distant future. So our society is really very pluralistic. This is very difficult to discuss. You can take one group of people in one place and speak about them. Then you can speak about the others. Maybe that's why one of the great Russian poets of the nineteenth century gave us an idea that has always been very popular: you cannot understand Russia, you can only believe in it. We cannot understand it. We cannot explain it to ourselves! Only to those who are outside, which we do weakly.

That of course raises another question. I think it was the Russians who coined the term "intelligentsia." The importance of the knowledgeable sector of society. What kind of influence do you think it has? What is it?



some Russians develop a particular attitude towards westerners as though they were dealing with children, children with expensive toys such as computers.

Well the idea of intelligentsia also developed and changed during the years because when the term was coined last century it meant only educated people with a developed consciousness. The majority of the population was undeveloped and had no consciousness at all. Self consciousness just didn't exist. They were believed to have had a state of collective consciousness against a purely individual one. Later it changed because it started meaning cultured people, and sometimes educated people. But during these 70 years, and especially during the Stalinist era, the intelligentsia or the cultured educated people were destroyed. Destroyed as a whole class. So what it is now we just don't know. We don't understand how the intelligentsia might still exist. There are educated people who have the formal education but they don't have the teachers of the old intelligentsia and there are those who are as cultured as it is possible. But intelligentsia? There's a great difference. Intellectuals are those who deal with some intellectual activity. Intelligentsia are people with a sophisticated soul so to speak. That's the Russian difference: those people who feel responsibility for the others, themselves or society, for the environment, the life, for the future and so on.

Are you saying those people virtually disappeared over the years?

Well they were killed. They were killed by the hundreds and thousands and millions, but something remained always. The root remained.

I'd like to know. What do you think remained?

What remained? It's all so very complex. For me intelligentsia was the flower of the nation. The only group who could lead the country somewhere and not let it become just a crowd of crazy people, not knowing where to go and what to do.

Is there any connection with the ones that remain and, say, Gorbachev and the new sense of glasnost?

The ideas always existed even though they were hidden. Of course these ideas affected Gorbachev because he is orientated toward the intelligentsia. That is clear, and even if he is pretending, still he is pretending this way and not another way. He doesn't say that the dictatorship of the proletariat is what we need. No.

That's interesting because in a way we in the West who read Russian literature see everything from black Pushkin to imprisoned Dostoevsky and Jewish and exiled Mandelstam as a continuous tradition of survival. I think it is a very important tradition. And in fact this conference in a way is founded on that premise. Russia is the classic example of what happened to writers. Do you think there's any way in which that tradition is now fed back as a result of perestroika and glasnost into the curriculum and the newspapers? To what extent are people now rethinking their imprisoned writers? To what extent are they rethinking the culture as a whole?

To the extreme extent.

How?

Starting with Pushkin, or even earlier, but Pushkin was the one who just shaped this concept, that there is in existence two different governments. The government of the earth – either the Czar or the politburo – and the moral authority of the invisible government that nurtures souls. That is art, literature, poetry and all sorts of creativity. There is constant competition between these two realms, but ultimately the poet or the painter wins. He is predestined to be the winner.

In the long run.

In the long run. The poet is the victor. Sometimes it was just an ideal but it was soothing for those who suffered from oppression. Not from the Czar (you never met the Czar) but from your neighbour who thinks that he is better than you. From the policeman. From the little man with a little power.

Somehow the hope existed that in the long run the poet might be the victor, but the Russian poets and all the others perished, one by one, some earlier, some later, some just became crazy and died, others were killed. It lasted for two centuries so of course it couldn't be but noticed. And long ago people of the word, of letters, started pointing each other to the fact of what was going on. "The poets are killed one by one. If we have a poet he is killed." And so there was an awe towards this sort of thing and it was clear that some sort of competition was going on. The government was always aware of these things. Competition from the margins. So now the story of life and death, the meaning of the activity of different writers and poets is what is told and retold and repeated even if you just cannot listen to it any more. People just write about these horrible stories of one's life and how it all happened. So practically all the writers I know already received their reward after their death. Everyone is aware of how they lived and how they died and of what happened.

And how do you think in the Soviet Union today the writer who inherits this incredible legacy sees himself as carrying on the task?

It's an interesting question because we had a poet – David Samolev is his name – who once wrote a little poem, beautifully written. The idea of it was that the great ones have passed away. There are no great ones. So there's a great silence now and in this great silence there is an ill feeling, that, like children now that the adult has gone away, we can do anything we want and no one will watch us. Everything is permitted and so the horrible time starts. Because when everything is permitted you can imagine what the people who have just waited for this moment will allow. So there is a great sorrow.

They somehow stay silent like the souls you know who are now dead. Ancestors watching us. So people who want really to create something and not to please the authorities, not to gain money, are constantly aware of the great ones. It's a sort of pagan religion.

Do they have any contemporary writers outside Russia that are taken seriously – say from England, the States, France or Germany?.

Yes. Of course they do and several different generations had different models. For example, in the sixties the most popular writer in Russia was Hemingway. He affected our writing a lot. In some ways he improved peoples' writing but in another he spoiled it. While the strongest survived, he taught how to write sparingly. That was a good lesson. But he also taught how to pretend to say something without saying anything seriously. But it was a very good experience. He was one who really affected people.

He was so popular that in every house you could see his photograph on the wall. Unbelievable. Who else? Faulkner was very important and people became hysterical over him. I wonder if they understood what he wrote because he wrote for people of another culture. People extract some other message from Faulkner. Not the one he meant. But still it is something. I think that's the way it always is in writing a book.

Salinger was considered to be more Russian than American, somehow. He's closer to the Russian sense of detachment from politics.

What about central European writers like Kafka?

Kafka was extremely important. There was a generation of Kafka readers. Funny, when I was young I used to look at the young boys and girls, sophisticated boys and girls of 17, who said they read nothing but Kafka.

I'm interested about the Central Europeans because in a way one would have expected Central European stuff to become available.

No. no. no.

It's not being translated now?

They are translated.

Nobody picks it up?

Usually people are interested in something exotic from somewhere else that binds us to the others. Latin American writing is popular because I think it deals with the same problems as we do. They have the same problems – like tyranny. Marquez with his fantastic realism is very

ntellectuals are those who deal with some intellectual activity. Intelligentsia are people with a sophisticated soul, so to speak. That's the Russian difference: those people who feel responsible for others, themselves or society, for the environment, the life, for the future.

close to what Russian life is. A truly fantastic reality. There are of course many other writers. Some of them affected our culture. They became ours. Mark Twain is a sort of Russian writer because everyone knows him. Just everyone. O'Henry is a sort of Russian writer but he didn't affect the literature, in the literal way. But Hemingway, Kafka and Faulkner did affect.

Any English writers?

No. Joyce has only recently been translated, and people have only just heard of him. So he lost a century, almost a century. He will not affect anymore. He lost the ability to affect.

One of the people who was in a sense resurrected here in the 1970s and who I think has become a very powerful influence on people's thinking, not just about Russia but about more general issues of writing in its relation to society, is Mikhail Bakhtin. Is there any continued influence in Russia?

Yes. Yes, but he is regarded as sort of a classic of this approach.

He is one of the old dead?

Yes. Maybe the last one in a way. He was a great one, and he had a different approach which is rather rare in our country because usually our writers are illiterate from the point of view of literary criticism. That's because it was all forbidden. We did have a very good formal school in the early 20s. But they were all dispersed and died. They emigrated or they were shut up during all these years. In many respects Russians were very quick to pick up the ideas that were just appearing in the late teens and early twenties: such as new painting, new thinking, new philosophy. But immediately it was cut. Today there is no critical theory in Russia.

So do you think that one of the ongoing problems is how to pick it up again. I mean, from where do you start?

Yes, how to pick up the things that already are of no use! You know the West has lived it through and had its passions about it. So now we pick up the ideas that are already dead. Its the same as to be in love with a woman whose portrait you see and now you find out well, O.K., she exists but now she is 90. So what's the use of falling in love with her? I wrote a story with this very plot. About a man of 40 who is in love with the voice of a singer who lived in the twenties. He is in love. He doesn't want anything because she is the best and he shuts his door and listens to her voice. Listens and listens and he imagines and it is just a sweet dream of his. Perhaps he would meet her. But he understands that she doesn't exist any more. And then suddenly he finds out that she does exist. He doesn't know whether to go and see her or not because she must be old. But he goes and he is extremely disappointed because she's an old, rough woman who lost everything 50 years ago. Just a ruin of a person in every sense. That's what is going on here in every respect. We pick up the ideas and they are already cold like yesterday's dishes. As for new ideas, you know it's difficult to pick up new ideas without living through the old ones. So, just imagine, that's what is going on in our country.

> here's a great silence now and in this great silence there is an ill feeling that, like children now that the adult has gone away, we can do anything we want and no one will watch us.

We don't know how to live. We don't know what to do. One thing is obvious. There are people for whom, as with me, it's obvious that the western way is the best. The West has a lot of difficulties and vices and so on but it has the tendency to improve. At least life can become more comfortable for most of the people. The Swedish way. No wars. Three hundred years without wars and a very high standard of living.

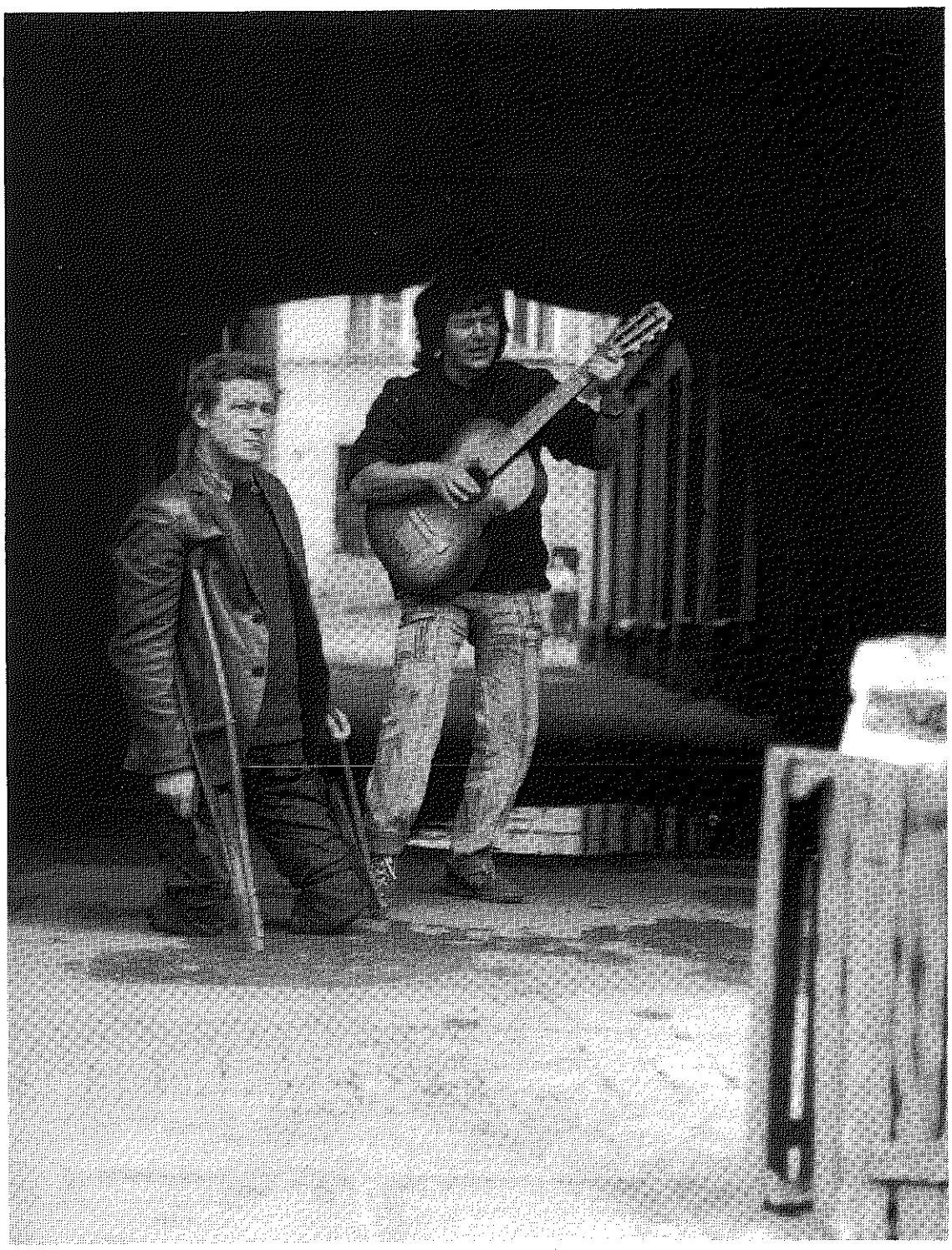
If you live without war, if you just work and work to develop, then you have money enough to feed even the most hungry. Of course there will be social differences. There are social differences in paradise. You know some simple angels just deal with people and the angels of high rank deal with God. There is justice everywhere. So it is all obvious to me. The others just want to have a totalitarian government and still think that it will work. They want the Cambodian way. They want, perhaps, the Vietnamese way or the Chinese way, but you see what's going on. People are poor and they suffer and they run away. No one runs away from their own difference.

Let me just ask you one last question and then I think we've probably done as much as we can. This is the first time that PEN has had Russian representation. And that by itself must have involved a whole series of debates within the Writers' Union. I just wonder whether writers want to belong to the official union or whether a lot of writers say who cares? Does it matter? Do people actually feel it's important to belong to the Writers' Union?

Yes, and not because the membership at the Writers' Union brings privileges. Real privileges go only to the authorities of the Writers' Union. Simple members receive only slight privileges. The majority of normal writers, simple members and non-members, believe that it would be better for the Writers' Union not to exist at all. They would like to see it dissolved and then themselves organize in associations and clubs. They want to receive more equality because each one thinks that the rules of the game amount to simple injustice. The secretaries of the Writers' Union are the worst writers and they get the best privileges. The whole situation with the Writers' Union is very complicated. Those who are already in don't want to get out. They lose even the few privileges they have. It would be better, somehow, to work together to destroy the Writers' Union. But there are different ways of destroying. Some people tried to create a second writers' union. It didn't work. Some tried to create different associations but that doesn't give you any power at all. So the PEN organization may become a core of a body that would replace the Writers' Union in the most creative way. At best it would be one such organization. ◆

The Culture of Glasnost

In June 1990, political science professor Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, Assistant to the President of the Canadian Autoworkers Union, toured the USSR at the invitation of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In order to "discern the nature and tendency of the reforms in [Soviet] political institutions and the economy," Panitch and Gindin travelled to the industrial centres Togliatti and Yaroslavl, and to Moscow where they met with intellectuals, journalists, political leaders, activists and the people in the streets.



It is hardly surprising that in the process of profound transition the Soviet Union is going through (some of the most acute analysts and participants we talked to were ready to describe it as a revolution), it is the manifold problems and conflicts that attend such an era that now capture the headlines.

But amidst the attention deservedly paid to each and every new manifestation of crisis, one may take for granted or even lose sight of the most important change that has taken place in the Gorbachev era. Certainly what is immediately most striking for someone visiting the Soviet Union today after a long absence is the breadth and depth of "glasnost," the regime of "openness" associated with Gorbachev's coming to power.

There is in the Soviet Union today a remarkable discursive openness which stands in sharp contrast to the strong sense of constraint a visitor could palpably feel disfiguring even private conversation in the earlier era. Now there was a no less palpable absence of constraint (on both sides) in the discussions we had with a very broad array of people: from neo-classical economists to Trotskyist sociologists; from the political editor of *Commersant* ("Russia's business weekly") to the Deputy Head of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist party; from local union leaders to the workers we met on the assembly line.

This absence of constraint is of course visible in the confusing (and often just

plain confused) profusion of independent movements, parties and groups that have emerged and are still taking form. They reflect the high degree of politicization in Soviet society today. Indeed, one sociologist said that Soviet society was increasingly polarizing into two camps, defined in terms of their positive or negative orientations to the politicization itself. On one side are the "activists"; on the other are the "active non-activists," whose insistence on their right to be left alone to tend their own garden has to be no less militantly asserted in the face of the overall trend to politicization.

Moscow itself is alive with the street culture of glasnost. Outside the offices of *Moscow News* there are always about a hundred people debating politics, amidst a profusion of hawkers of crudely printed newspapers ("Read all about it: How much Raisa Gorbachev costs the people!"). One also comes across knots of people in subway tunnels and streets grabbing up such newspapers. Some of these papers are religious, some are pornographic, yet all of them are politicized if only by virtue of their relatively unhindered distribution.

To be sure, the street culture of glasnost is as commercial as it is political. The profusion of craft and artist stalls on the Arbat or at Ismaelovsky Park gives Moscow some of the vibrancy that was so notably absent in the past. This directly blends with some of the most unsavory aspects of the kind of market freedom we know in the West. There are near the Arbat many beggars attempting to scrounge a few kopeks by turning pity for their physical handicap or the visible impoverishment of their children into some sort of exchange value. Rather more pleasantly interspersed among the stalls are many buskers, such as a jazzband playing with gusto Dixieland renditions of Glen Miller's greatest hits. (The quality of their music is actually much higher than the no less derivative rock music videos that occupy all the airspace on daytime television.)

Reflecting a far more traditional aspect of Russian culture, a much larger crowd gathers amidst the stalls to hear a poet declaim his verses in the richest of Russian tones. His poems are all political and all splenetically anti-regime. One anti-Gorbachev poem in particular, in which he does a quite brilliant satirical take-off of the man himself, produces rapture from the crowd. The crowd includes a clutch of young men in militia uniform who, far from taking notes or making arrests, display in their laughter and applause as much appreciation of the poet's sentiments as everyone else.

Thus does the politics of glasnost blend with the commercialism of glasnost. Indeed, among the crafts on the stalls themselves the hottest new commodity, produced by hundreds of political-artistic entrepreneurs in an array of styles ranging from the most crudely painted to some of high artistic quality, is the "Gorby" doll. Like the traditional matrushka, it opens up to reveal a succession of dolls inside. Inside Gorbachev one invariably finds first Brezhnev (usually bedecked in his military medals), then Kruschev (the one we bought is carrying a shoe), then Stalin (ours has a pipe in one hand and, held behind his back, a bloody dagger in the other), then, finally, inside Stalin, there is always a tiny Lenin, looking sage or stunned, benevolent or evil, according to the whim, ideological orientation or sense of consumer demand of the dollmaker. *Guardian* correspondent Jonathan Steele has bought a doll that goes even further: inside Lenin is Czar Nicholas, and inside Nicholas, Peter the Great. He claims that he has seen others which have a tiny proletarian inside Lenin, and inside him, a traditional Russian *muzhik!*

As already may be gleaned, Gorbachev is little revered (to put it mildly) in this street culture of glasnost. Muscovites especially (one hears this less in Togliatti or Yaroslavl) are disdainful of the adulation they sense he was accorded on his recent trip to our own country. The things for which we would give him credit, for inaugurating glasnost itself or for a foreign policy explicitly designed to undo the knots in which the world has been tied by Cold War attitudes and structures, don't seem to impress people at home. Instead one hears the lament (more often the complaint) that after five years he has "done nothing." What is meant by this is, first of all, that he has accomplished nothing to improve the domestic economic situation, above all the economy of consumer shortages; and, second, that the system of privileges for the bureaucratic-administrative elite, the old Communist *nomenklatura,* still remains in place. Yeltsin's popularity rests largely on his insistent speaking to this latter theme.

It is not actually clear that most people's standard of living has fallen under Gorbachev. When directly asked, most people say they are not worse off in terms of how much they are able to obtain for consumption, only that they have to devote more time to getting things, or that some goods disappear inexplicably from the shops for a month or two (such as soap last winter, when – such is the irrationality of the extreme centralization of production – a major soap factory temporarily closed down for retooling). The lines we saw at food shops were not as long as we had been led to expect by newspaper reports in the West, although this may have just reflected how little there was to buy or the effect of resident restriction on sales. At the Moskova department store where we went to buy a suitcase (one of ours arrived destroyed in transit), we not only found a good number of perfectly adequate ones to choose from, but amidst a large midday crowd of shoppers ranging over four storeys, there were

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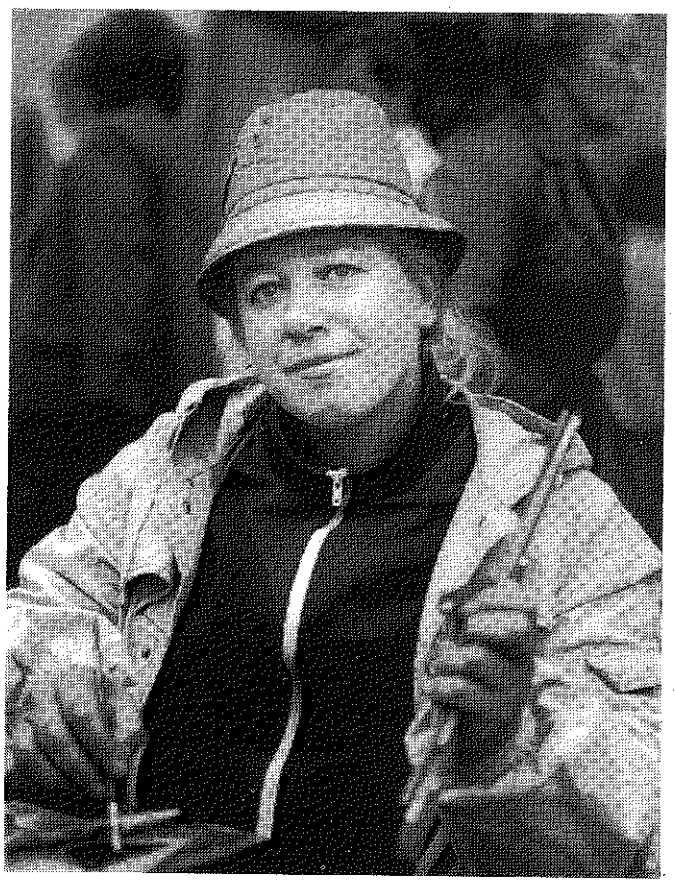
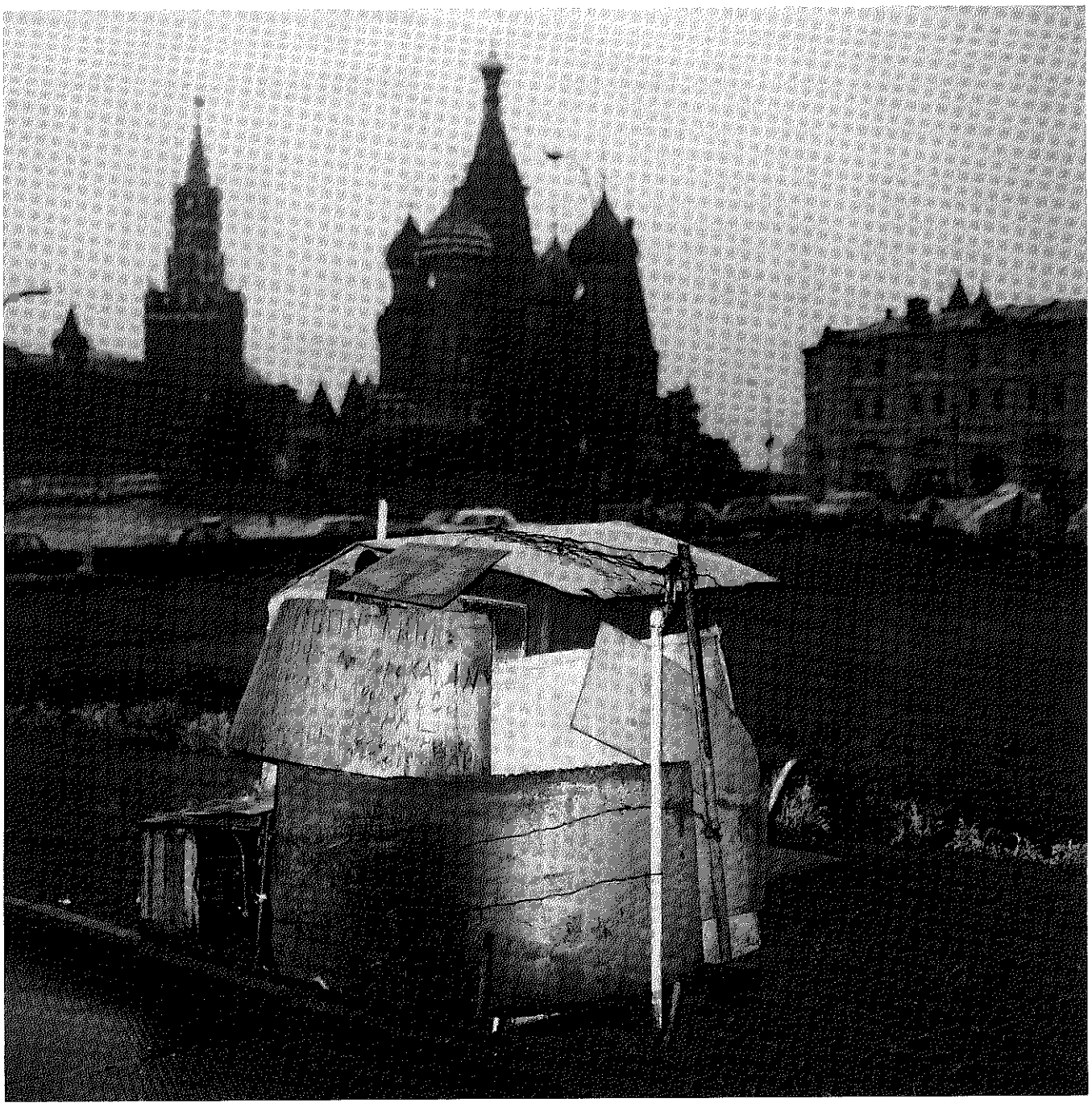
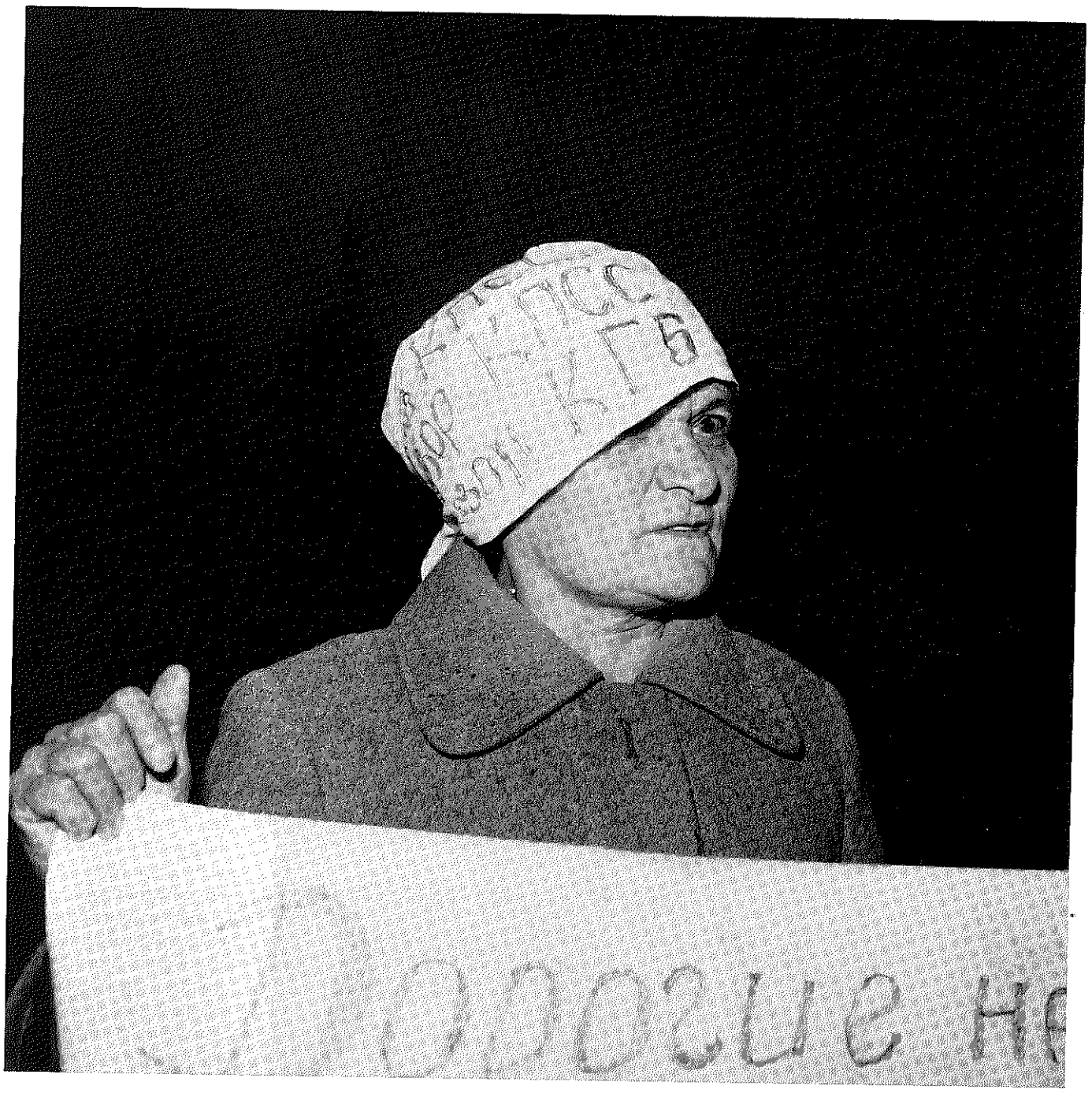
LEO PANITCH

photographs by David Hlynsky







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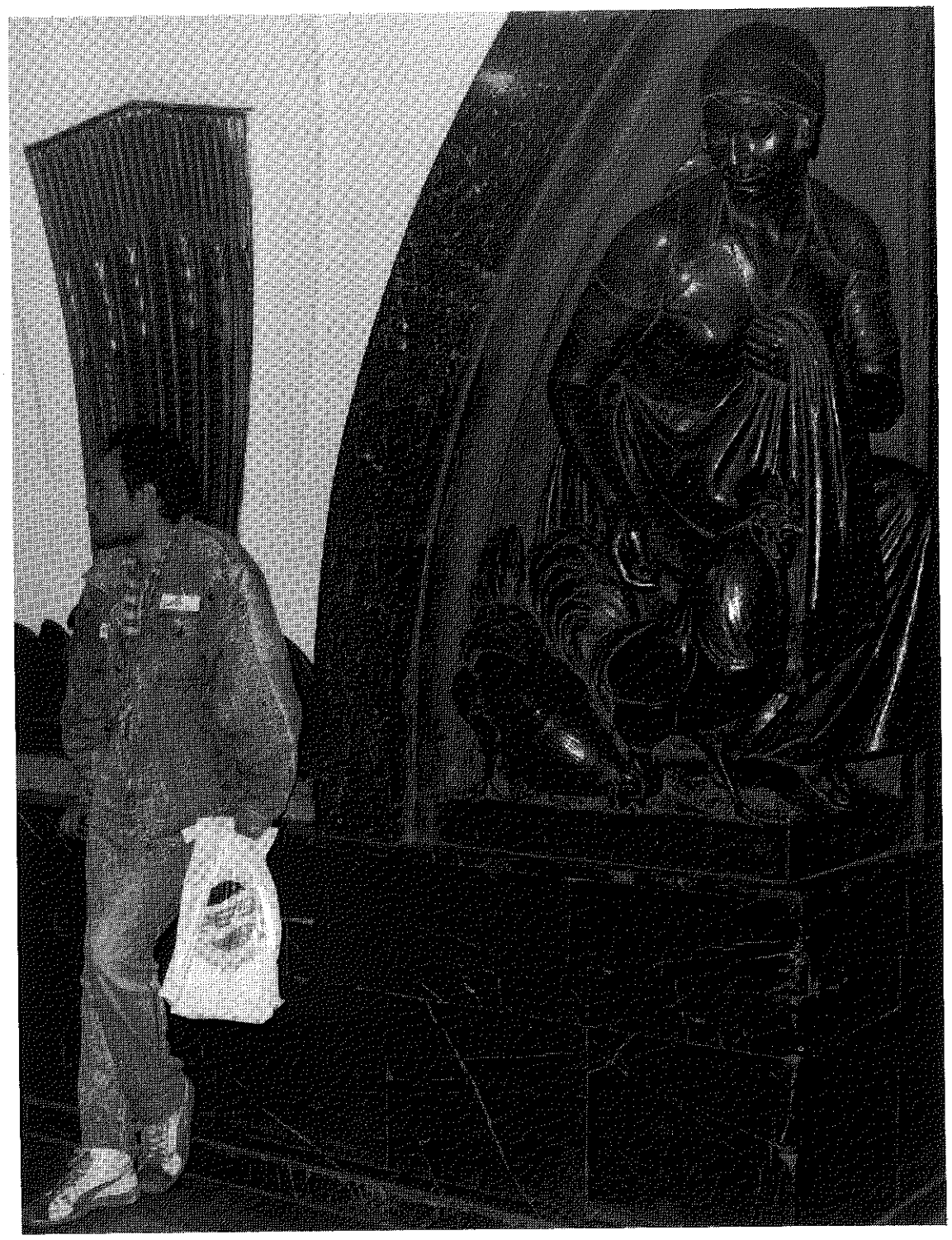
long queues for only three of the many hundreds of goods on sale. One of these was for women's shoes, another for western-looking sweat suits. Much of the complaint relates to the quality and style of goods, which are, at best, of a western mass discount house or flea market variety.

What is rarely made clear in the West is that, apart from the city shops, there is also the system of distribution in the place of work, although the mix of goods available, and the quality thereof, varies considerably. Somewhere between ten and 20 percent of a family's consumption may be available through this, but in a few places much more. In Togliatti, for instance, there is no consumer crisis. The enterprise shops, run by the autoworkers' union, are full. But this is due to the direct access the Vaz enterprise has to foreign currency through the export of cars to the West. Most enterprises elsewhere, even those that produce final goods for export, don't have the same degree of independence and the foreign currency is absorbed and then selectively meted out by the central ministries.

The failure to catch up to America through a statist mode of parallel development has led to a widespread determination to catch up through emulating the American way.



Goods are also available through the new legal informal economy and the (still somewhat illicit) "shadow economy." Food prices are high in the large Kolkhoz markets which are dotted through Moscow, where farmers bring the goods they produce on private plots, but the quantities are plentiful, and the quality higher than in the state or most enterprise shops. The new cooperatives (private enterprises in everything but name) also sell a variety of goods and services at high prices. Since most people have savings equal to a year or two in income (which they will normally use to buy a major consumer item like a car when it becomes available), they can dip into this to purchase from the high price alternate economy to supplement their consumption from city or enterprise shops.

People, especially Muscovites, see the American consumer culture as "normal" (this is a word much used to describe what people want – "a normal society," "a normal economy," "a normal life") and by this is mainly meant how they perceive most people to live in the United States. There is a strong sense of inferiority to all things American. People especially feel humiliated by their experience as consumers. "We feel this every time we go to the store," Len Karpinsky of *Moscow News* told us. The failure to catch up to America through a statist mode of parallel development has led to a widespread determination to catch up through emulating the American way.

But the American way is a composite of many things. And one sometimes feels that what they may be heading for could well look like the Chicago gangsterland in the 1920s that Brecht so brilliantly used as a backdrop to satirize the roots of fascism in his play *Arturo Ui*. The culture of glasnost has opened new space for corruption, even as it has led to the exposure (and some prosecution) of some of the more sordid corrupt practices of high officials. As a means of coping with consumer shortages, petty appropriation was always commonplace and remains so. To see, as we did at the airport waiting for our flight to Togliatti, an employee of the restaurant going home from work with three very large cellophane bagfulls of tomatoes, represented nothing new except for the brazenly open manner in which she did this. Nor in a domestic consumer market where foreign currency has long been the

effective king (not only in the shadow economy but in the government-run Beriozka shops where western goods were and are still available only in foreign currency) is it anything new for the western visitor to be offered roubles or goods at a high rate of exchange for dollars; only the minimal surreptitiousness with which this is now done is reflective of glasnost. But the half-way house that cooperatives occupy between the market and statist modes of distribution has created new forms of corruption. We were assured by two knowledgeable economists, both very pro-market, that the recent shortages in the state shops have much more to do with corruption than anything else. According to one example: 500 pounds of meat arrives at a state-run shop and 300 pounds of it will immediately be sold illicitly at a premium by the manager to a "cooperator," leaving only 200 pounds (or less depending on what informal system exists for the employees to get their take for themselves or friends and relatives) for general distribution in the state shop at the low official price.

There is indeed much loose talk in Moscow of the mafia as a power in the land, thriving in this halfway house. This seemed to confirm the boasts of one proud self-proclaimed gangster sitting at the hotel restaurant table beside us on our first night in Moscow, who ventured to inform us that the most important thing we needed to understand about his country was that nobody obeyed the law – that the system only worked insofar as everyone broke the law. We wondered, that first night of our trip, when one prostitute telephoned directly to our hotel room at 1:30 a.m., and another at 5:00 a.m. ("You Canada? Very nice! I come to your room?"), whether this was the pimp who ran the scam of paying the front desk of the trade union hotel to inform him of the telephone numbers of the rooms occupied by the foreigners who registered each day. When we related this the next day to our union host, he said he had complained of this before, but been threatened with his union having difficulty placing guests in the hotel.

We also tell the story later, at the office of the new Socialist Party. It is a tiny room in the Rossiya Hotel looking directly over the Kremlin. The office is run by Yuri Ostromov. He is extremely thin and pale, looking every inch like a throwback to a young Menshevik in 1910. But this image is an incongruous one as we watch him constantly answering the telephone, computer on his lap, fax machine at his elbow, with the television across the room emanating its never-ending rock videos. ("Why are you watching this stuff?" "There is nothing else on.") The party's founder, the Marxist intellectual and Moscow City Soviet deputy, Boris Kagarlitsky, arrives as we are relating the incident with the prostitutes at the hotel and he finds the scam rather humorous. In a country with a terrible service sector, he quips, we had been offered the best of what that sector had to offer. He is much more interested that we are leaving that night for Togliatti and Yaroslavl. Yuri promises to consult their computerized lists to put us in touch with contacts in those cities, and both of them bade us to report on whomever we might find there on our own that the party might be likely to recruit for its campaign for democratic socialism. Glasnost has many faces. ◆

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Guilt Trips

Coming Up Against The Wall

Dick Hebdige

As a Freudian, I believe what Freud said about biographies applies even more to autobiographies, namely that the person who undertakes such a task binds himself to lying, to concealment, to flummery.

Bruno Bettelheim, interview in *Guardian* published after his death

Regression is not origin but origin is the ideology of regression.

Theodor Adorno, "Perennial Fashion-Jazz," in *Prisms*

From out of its cultural unconscious, where the apocalyptic structure of Old Testament journeys jostled with the redemptive allegories of Bunyan, English romanticism produced the archetype of the journey to image the escape from the overknown world back into wild unconsciousness and authenticity. Romantic travel was ecstatic – *ex-stasis* – "Roam-antic."

Peter D. Osborne, "Milton Fiedman's Smile," in *New Formations*

There is a special kind of regression involved in ecstasy and tourism.

Through organized trips, we go back into a universe made strange not least because everybody in it is suddenly, supposedly benign (hence the special tone of horror when tourists become terrorists' victims, when baggage handlers go on strike, when Romanians have bloody revolutions at Christmas – the first reports from Timosoara were coloured on British news by concern for a group of British schoolgirls on a skiing trip marooned in Bucharest). Above all else the universe in tourism is a universe blessed – restored to the idealized affability of childhood.

The craze for "Acid House" music which precipitated the latest moral panic about the state of British youth – the focus of concern shifting from abuse of the drug metamphetamine (ecstasy) in 1987 to public health and safety in the Bright Bill currently before parliament – is motivated by the same regressive drives. Acid House ("Acieed") was the first British youth subculture to have its rhizomatic "roots" directly in mass tourism. It was brought back as a stylistic package by package holiday makers returning from Ibiza ("Isle of Love"), the latest product of that traffic between vacationing British youth and "Continental" beach culture that had brought matelot shirts and hipster slacks to English mods in the early 1960s. Acieed, though, has none of mod's fabled "English inhibition." It is instead the postmodern hyperrealization of the brochure promises of limitless mobility, casual beachwear, promiscuous fun: a whole life On The Beach. Acieed raises the adolescent ambition of "having a laugh" to the status of a moral imperative. Adorno would have gone to town on Acid House:

> **They call themselves jitter bugs, bugs which carry out reflex movements, performers of their own ecstasy...**[1]

Ecstasy users grin for hours, high on glucose-laden Lucozade and "balearic" rhythms which simulate the pulse of the mother's heartbeat. The Mr. Smiley mask that floated over the "Summer of Love" in 1987 amounted to an invitation issued to the international disco-dancing public to abandon itself to the beat, to regress to a pre-natal state: to plunge back into the pre-Symbolic. (Gregory Bateson, pursuing our cousinship with the aquatic mammals, once suggested in that other Acid Age, the 1960s, that what we recognize and warm to in the dolphin's smile is the human face stretched back, rubbed smooth by oceanic pressure exerted down the aeons.[2])

It is no coincidence that the music – snatches of sound from all over the world which have been electronically "sampled": homogenized beneath the gentle amniotic despotism of the beat – is called ("Acid," "Deep") house, for ecstasy makes house into a (mobile) home and home is of course the first place and the safe place. It is the "firm position" (Agnes Heller). Home is "the territorial core and a fixed point of reference" (J. Douglas Porteous). It is "our corner of the world ... our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Gaston Bachelard). Gathering in their thousands in remote suburban sites in fields and abandoned aircraft hangars on the edge of the orbital roads in response to obscure messages secreted in the music press, on pirate radio broadcasts, in record shops, the revellers form a persecuted but relaxed nucleus which constitutes itself, after its participants have been pursued up and down the motorways by jumpy cops, only to disperse at dawn like a virus attacked by antibodies. Acid is about the triumph of unconstrained mobility. It celebrates the absolute plasticity of filiation. Its lack of edge and corners is what constitutes its threat (for both police and style watchers who like to know who's where, where they've come from and why they're here not there) because in Acid as in Jericho the walls come tumbling down. It would not be stretching a point to say – *pace* Meaghan Morris – that Acid *subverts* the principle of what Raymond Williams calls "mobile privatization" and that it accomplishes this *subversion* in a truly late 20th-century fashion – one which Baudrillard would no doubt recognize – by inverting the terms, by mobilizing private citizens into a community where each finds safety in the temporary ("weak") formation of an assembled and prohibited mass. Acid House is the West's weak echo of what was being called at the end of last year in Leipzig, Prague, Berlin and Bucharest, "People Power." The game – to keep one step ahead of the cops – has a real stake: the right of individuals to assemble in a crowd. It's about reinventing a utopian public space at a moment when all virtues have been privatized. It is about finding safety in numbers.

Tourism too is about making the world into a place to feel at home in. That see-saw, *fort-da* rhythm where you lose your bearings in foreign cities only to find them again in the guidebook is supposed to be pleasurable: a lullaby on Broadway. In this infantile inversion of everyday order we fall up into the air like a baby heading skyward in an elasticated baby-bouncer – we relish what Barthes described as "the sensation of falling into an easy and opaque world (for the tourist everything is easy)." For Barthes there was a special dispensation in travelling to places where he didn't speak the language because language in those circumstances is utterly reference-free, stripped of all but its poetic functions. Presumably not being able to understand anything means that you don't have to feel responsible for anything either: "the voluptuous immersion in a language ... in which one can only perceive the

sounds ... is an enormously relaxing thing that eliminates any vulgarity, any stupidity, any aggression."[3] Blissful *ex-stasis*. The cogency (and candour) of Barthes' remarks are in no way undermined (though his intended drift is nonetheless diverted) if we add that actually it doesn't quite work out like that. The "authentic" journey lurks inside the imaginary of tourism as the "voyage of self-discovery," along with the *derive* waiting to leap out and enclose it no less than the encounter – for which there can be no preparation – with otherness as Other, to turn it back into a guilt trip as the holiday-ordeal, to turn it inside out as the ironized *Bildungsroman*, the Package That Went Wrong. Guilt is the motor of regression: after the summers of love, tales of drug psychosis... London gangsters armed with shotguns and rottweiller dogs are reported to have moved in on big-profit Acid House parties which have become, in the words of one police chief, concerned at the flouting of safety regulations, "Hillsborough disasters waiting to happen." A rumour now circulates that ecstasy use can lead to Parkinson's disease.

[redacted]

> The joyful carnival after the Ninth of November will not pass off without a hangover.
>
> Jens Reich, founder of Neues Forum[4]

> The weight of history is heavier, and the scars more visible on the eastern side of the Wall ... entire neighbourhoods and many major buildings have been reconstructed to appear exactly as they did before the War. Post-war areas of the city strive to repudiate the past: the futuristic Alexanderplatz, the sterile apartments, and the mirrored Palast der Republik.... To cross [at Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse], you must take the S-Bahn through the intricate security precautions of the Wall: you will viscerally experience the post-war division of Europe.
>
> *Let's Go: 1990 Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe*

On a freezing day in February 1983 when there was a Wall I took the S-Bahn from the Bahnhof Zoo to Friedrichstrasse in order to experience the postwar division of Europe viscerally. I went prepared: the day trip east had been written in advance by Deighton and Le Carre as surely as the nightlife scenes in Kreuzberg and the Kurdamm in West Berlin had been lit all week by Hannah Hoch and Isherwood (at least by *Cabaret*). So deeply established is this mythology of the city as a hell-hole that the residents live it out like New Yorkers producing a distinctive brand of "earthy" humour that travel writers describe as "coarse," "debunking," "cynical." If you don't speak the language however you tend to miss the joke...

"First we take Manhattan..."

...so I took the alternative Gothic route across the city moving a trifle mechanically in time to old Kraftwerk records, floundering from scene to scene rather like Paul Hackett, the protagonist in Scorsese's *After Hours*. The simile is obscure enough to need elucidating: *After Hours*, to quote the video blurb, was "without doubt the blackest comedy thriller of 1985. (You never realized your worst nightmares could be so funny.)" Hackett is a sexually retarded data processor who works in Manhattan and whose nocturnal ("after hours") ambition is to "meet a nice girl" – as he euphemistically puts it. This quest, continually blocked and frustrated, triggers the regression to psychosis which constitutes the "plot" as Hackett moves through a single long dark night on the town. "Berlin" figures in the film as the name of the club where, in the penultimate scene, Hackett seeks refuge from a castrating vigilante mob led by a murderous female Mr. Softee ice cream vendor. ("I mean I just wanted to leave, you know, my apartment: meet a nice girl – and now I've gotta die for it?!!!") As the night drags on from one disastrous encounter to the next, the entry price to "Club Berlin" escalates from a compulsory mohawk haircut inflicted on the "hero" by a gang of manic punks ("What the shorn hair [of the modern jazz musician] represents hardly needs elaboration..."[5]) to mummification at the hands of a predatory sculptor/sorceress who turns Paul into an *objet d'art*, crouching for his life encased from head to toe in plaster of Paris (she tapes up his mouth to complete the mummy-fied effect). ("The aim ... is the mechanical reproduction of a regressive moment, a castration symbolism. 'Give up your masculinity, let yourself be castrated.' "[6]) Throughout the film a host of golden succubi float after hours across the zoned expanse of NYC/"Berlin" in the form of a succession of interchangeable screwy blonde stereotypes.

"Then we take..."

> Berlin is a city of apocalyptic energy. The best guides to theater, cinema, nightlife and the extremely active musical scene are the biweekly magazines *Tip* (DM 3.40) and the more 'alternative' *Zitty* (DM 2.80). Listings are usually comprehensible to non-German speakers ... *Berlin von hinten* (Berlin from the Rear) is the best guide to gay life.[7]

I had already had the encounter with the Nihilist-who-ate-glass-in-an-all-night-bar. ("Warum?" I'd asked – my first and last attempt at a conversation in German. "Warum nicht," he'd snapped back, spitting bits of wine glass in my face.)

> Forty five years after the War, Berlin remains a battleground – if only in its western half...

I had already had the encounter with the beautiful-Hungarian-aristocrat-who-had-come-through-Checkpoint-Charlie-in-the-1960s-in-a-car-boot ("You like?" she'd asked glancing, irritated, at the grey meat dish she'd ordered for me when, fazed by the menu, the Kirchner reproductions, the clumsy failed attempt on my part to find the "right" romantic register, I'd declined to order for myself. "It comes from the" – here she'd paused and, drawing a long red nail across the delicate, pale flesh underneath her chin, made a sudden, rasping, guttural noise – "throat of the pig.")

"In bocca del lupo"

There is a notorious passage in Benjamin's *One Way Street* where the brutal, nihilistic "spirit" of Berlin is condensed into the image of a prostitute standing on a threshold. The redemption of the lost city of Benjamin's childhood turns out to depend – no less than in Grosz's etchings of skeletal streetwalkers – on the evocation and consignment to the "void" of an edgy set of paranoid masculine projections:

> ...the places are countless ... where one stands on the edge of the void, and the whores in the doorways of tenement blocks and on the less sonorous asphalt of railway platforms are like the household goddesses of this cult of nothingness.[8]

For the young Benjamin this double aperture – a woman for sale in a doorway – opens up a beckoning "void." The budding Cabbalist/Marxist-visionary/philanderer/*flaneur* is stopped in his tracks by this figure standing silhouetted on the threshold, a figure whom we've already encountered in the opening pages of *A Berlin Chronicle* as the "Ariadne" who leads the young Benjamin on an educative stroll across "the threshold of class" through the Hohenzollern "labyrinth" which at the turn of the century used to circle back from the Tiergartenstrasse. It is through losing himself on entry to this labyrinth ("to lose one's way in the city, as one loses one's way in the forest") that his "impotence before the city" is eventually exchanged for knowledge: "Whole networks of streets were opened up under the auspices of prostitution..." The prostitute, token of a double degradation – the "fall" into commerce and the flesh – is also the empty medium, the "void" through and against which the writer learns the redemptive power of love:

> It is likely that no
> one ever masters
> anything in which
> he has not known impotence: and if you
> agree, you will also see that this impotence
> comes not at the beginning of or before the
> struggle with the subject, but in the heart of
> it.[9]

The young Benjamin is pulled back through time into the next, rescued in this dialectical movement from epiphany to loss and back again. And just as these two moments become synchronized by the rhythm of the steps the writer takes on the course of his journey, so are the two terms – loss and revelation – paired and rhymed: getting lost, in fact, is the master key to Benjamin's romantic eschatology.

> It is impossible to get lost in Berlin because
> you can always find the Wall.
> Taxi driver in Wim Wenders's
> *Wings of Desire*

Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* is the animated version of *The Berlin Chronicles,* an homage to Benjamin which seeks to transpose his redemptive poetics via film to Berlin in the late 1980s. Much, of course, has changed: the war which took Benjamin's life has also left devastated his city, now divided by the Wall which is at once the wound, the limit and the axis the film revolves around. Without "Berlin" as the paradigm of post-lapserian/post-War-space-as-divided-space, *Wings of Desire* would never have gotten off the ground. The Wall here is more than a mere symbol of the universal functioning of difference. It runs like a scar across the body of the film as the trace of a particular historical catastrophe – the old man ("Homer") who spends his days pouring over history books in the central library trying to bear witness for the times through which he's lived is constantly drawn back to images of the War. The Wall becomes the cutting edge: the line alongside which the film's multiple narratives run and towards which they are ultimately oriented, giving meaning and tentative coherence. The Wall is the limit against which desire is mounted and the obstacle in the face of which the will to

▲ still: courtesy Cinematheque Ontario

wholeness that motivates individual action in the film struggles and gets worn away and broken in moments of despair. Searching for the point from which to begin his story, "Homer" the old man of history wanders alongside the Wall searching for the Cafe Josti where he used to sit and watch the crowd only to wind up sitting worn out in an abandoned armchair in the wilderness/rubbish tip that was Pottsdammerplatz. In so far as it acts as the horizon towards and against which all the film's human characters are in process of becoming, the Berlin Wall is figured here as Wall of Death.

The angels who have gathered in this split or wounded city are nesting in the library. They are text-bound, compassionate recorders of the human scene, incapable of any kind of interested agency within it. Their role is to float across the city's western half as Berlin chroniclers/invisible *flaneurs* transcribing spatially and logically unrelated incidents, tuning in and out of the vast cacophony of silent monologues that attend the passage through time of the mass of individuals who live or visit there. The questions asked by a child in the film's opening sequences are repeated at regular intervals:

> Why am I me and not you? ... Why am I here
> and not there? ... Where did time begin and
> where does space end?...

The angels inhabit what is for the viewer a voluptuously freewheeling space drained of all passion and colour where these questions, muttered as it were under the breath of consciousness, can be heard but not directly understood because for the angels they have no existential reference. Instead they float outside the space where difference is supposed to make a difference, beyond the oppositions which make such questions meaningful (which is why, within the film's self-consciously romantic logic, children can see them and adults can't). The central narrative revolves around the willed descent of Damiel, one of the angels who is curious to learn what it is to

be divided and to live in time, to be sexed, embodied as a man and to fall in love, for instance, with a woman...with, to substantiate this instance, the high-flying trapeze artist named "Marion" who he's already "clocked" – to use a vulgar Cockney idiom (*clock* vb, to see, to take notice of, to face, to face up to) – working in a circus which is just about to fold because it's out of step with the times. (The naturalizing/universalizing function of this apparently arbitrary but normative "for instance" causes problems for some audiences: see below.) When Damiel falls, he lands of course in no-man's land in the rabbit-run between the eastern and western sectors.

> Anyone whose goal is "something higher" must expect someday to suffer vertigo. What is vertigo? Fear of falling? Then why do we feel it even when the observation tower comes equipped with a sturdy handrail? No, vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves.
>
> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

In the end, Damiel finds Marion again in the near-deserted bar of a nightclub (there's a black leather mass going on on the adjacent stage where a "dark wave" Australian rock band, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, is conjuring up the old Satanic version of "Berlin" which is about to be dismantled in the bar). In what the *City Limits* reviewer described as an "absurdly, irresistibly romantic ending," the two embrace and merge in a kiss. Through this closure the film symbolically reconsecrates heterosexual love as a Holy sacrament – as the "natural" metaphor for the promise of redemption-through-transcendence-of-difference. When I saw the film in a cinema in London I was moved almost (though the hissing of a group of women seated two rows in front rather screwed up the catharsis) to tears.

Where are the angelic men in heavy overcoats going to perch now that the Wall has come down?

> Can we really stand the prospect of living without the Wall? It wasn't just a piece of masonry. It was part of a faith for the West as well as for the East with all kinds of ideological tents and bivouacs leaning on it.
>
> Anthony Sampson, *The Observer* (19 November 1989)

If I could mek the border
If I could step across
Please tek me to the border
I will not count the cost.
'Cos I'm leaving...

Gregory Isaacs, *The Border*

[redacted]

EAST

The disappearance of the Wall was prefigured in February 1989 when 45 seconds of Austrian TV footage showing Hungarian soldiers tearing down barbed wire on the Austro-Hungarian border was relayed globally via Eurovision. In the summer tens of thousands of mainly young Czechs and East Germans were sucked through the hole made by this puncture in the seal protecting East and Central Europe from contact with the West. The idea of the hermetic seal between the two systems had been exposed as a politburo pipedream ever since Radio Free Europe began broadcasting. So commonplace was access to the West's version of the world via TV in East Berlin that the one corner of the city prevented by chance features of the local topography from receiving West German transmissions was known throughout the neighbourhood as the "Valley of the Unenlightened."

Walking through one street in a residential area in central Warsaw in summer 1988, I counted more than a dozen satellite dishes, their faces like a field of sunflowers craning up to catch the last rays of the sun. Even in Ceausescu's Romania, satellite dishes were in places unofficially tolerated. And this resignation in the face of invasion from the air sits oddly with what we know of censorship and regulative surveillance within the Comitern states before 1989. We could hazard a number of more or less plausible hypotheses as to why TV reception was overlooked in this way. The most likely is that satellite dishes were reserved for the CP elites. Alternatively the blind eye turned to foreign TV watching may have indicated an uneven, residual respect for the antique distinction between public and private space which has been eroded – thanks to TV, marketing, etc. – in the West. (This might also explain the unofficial toleration of *samizdat* reading groups in private flats even – for certain limited periods – in Czechoslovakia.) The most likely explanation is that in societies where "some people pretended to work and other people pretended to pay them," the cynicism had become so rife and had created such inertia that nobody "in surveillance" cared less what the silent masses did so long as they stayed silent.

Either way, Gorbachev's reforms cleared the air(waves) altogether. Just as the ancient frescoes in Fellini's *Roma*, preserved intact in a secret underground chamber, are uncovered by a drilling team in one moment only to be destroyed in the next by the influx of air, so the monumental fabric of "actually existing socialism" was simultaneously revealed and obliterated by the change in atmospheric pressure effected by glasnost. Whatever blooms there were hidden in amongst the weeds soon withered under the arc lights. The decision on the part of Moscow to broadcast throughout the Soviet bloc images of the Wall being breached in November amounted to an official endorsement of Gerasimov's "Sinatra Doctrine (you do it your way)."

Gerasimov's statement in itself marked a major shift in the Kremlin mode of address – combining Western PR values (outgunning Reagan in the speed/skill with which he drew on Americanized popular culture/populist discourse) with heavy

A poignant scene witnessed at the Wall: a young East German, given a banana by a well-wisher, had to be told to peel it first before eating it.

irony (what got ironized of course were postures of "heroic" Cold War resistance to "American cultural imperialism"). It may be that Vaclav Havel – who recently made a speech to an audience of US congressmen (including Dan Quayle) in which he suggested that 1989 had proved Marx wrong because the pattern of protest had shown conclusively that "Consciousness precedes being, not vice versa" – may one day have to learn Gerasimov's lesson.

MEETS

> I have lived so long behind high walls that I am afraid to come out into the open.
>
> East German man recovering from a breakdown triggered by last year's events, in a studio discussion in Dresden on East German TV

> A brilliant invention. Two containers holding two chemical substances. Each in itself almost harmless. Only when the shell strikes do they react with one another and together turn into a deadly chemical weapon.
>
> Jens Reich, "Germany – A Binary Poison"

> I was touched by what they said. But I was a little afraid of them too. They seem so easily disappointed.
>
> West German woman responding to the same Dresden studio discussion which was broadcast in the West

WEST

It would be mistaken to suppose that the catastrophic effects on social and political order, on economic and cultural life manifest within what used to be the "Eastern bloc" will be contained there. Both terms in the equation have been wiped out at a stroke and triumphalist celebrations of the victory of Capitalism fail to conceal that while market forces have indeed emerged victorious, the specific congealment of forces, and interests drawn together under the name of the Western Alliance and established as a holding operation at the base of the Wall, is in terminal crisis. If crisis is too small a word to designate the implications for that configuration of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, try "catastrophe" ... So vast and irresistible were the forces released in the disintegration of the Soviet empire that to approach them in language meant undergoing a crash course in the new science. Comparisons with global warming, nuclear fission, with processes and principles defined in quantum theory and particle physics ("strange attractors," "butterfly effects," "implosion," "chaos theory" – comparisons explored years earlier in the laboratory of postmodern sociofiction, in the hyperbolic commentary of people like Virilio and Baudrillard) began appearing in newspaper editorials as the analogical support for a simple statement of the facts. The night of November 9th when the tidal wave of brushed denim broke across the Berlin Wall beggared even these attempts at representing the scale and implications of the changes. The day after the world went flat the prose did too:

> **"WHAT A NIGHT!"**
> **"BRAVE NEW WORLD!"**
> **"DAWN OF A NEW ERA!"**

The withdrawal of the "other term" in the bipolar superpower system that had held the West in place as a combination of alliances imagined "in the last instance" as a bounded spatial, socio-cultural, economic, ideological entity which knew itself by knowing what it wasn't, created such profound giddiness, disorientation, *ex-stasis* in the Western media that elation soon gave way to alarm, to vertigo.

> Why am I me and not you? ... Why am I here and not there? ... Where did time begin and where does space end?...

When the old geo-political maps were ripped to pieces, the reversibility of binary terms like "left" and "right" was suddenly made public and British Tory party MPs began haranguing the BBC for referring to politburo hard-liners like Ligechev as "conservatives." Further offence was given when Channel 4 TV news described the opening in October 1989 of the first ever televised session of the House of Commons (months behind Moscow) as the "coming of televisual *glasnost* to Westminster." More disturbing still for many established Western politicians of all parties was the implication – there for all to see in the manifestoes of Civic Forum, Neues Forum (and, incidentally, in the statements issued by the students in Tianamen Square) that these people were serious when they used words like "diversity," "pluralism," "democracy" and "freedom," and that they actually intended to effect the radical dispersal of authority that a principled commitment to democracy as a real not simulated value logically entails. (The fate of Neues Forum, swept aside by the influx of hot air emanating from West German pollsters and politicians in the run-up to the 1990 election in the GDR, suggests however that they needn't worry too much.) Elsewhere a more openly warlike posture was adopted: throughout February and early March, Gartmore Unit Trust Euroventures were offering readers of the business sections of Britain's quality papers shares at the knock-down price of 25p (min. investment £1000 with a one percent discount during the three-week fixed-price offer period) under a map which looked like one of Hitler's wish-fulfilment scenarios drawn up on his last day in the Bunker. The map shows Central and Eastern Europe under attack from all sides by the combined forces of Allied and Axis Powers. Czechoslovakia is caught in a pincer movement as an arrow from the East marked Aika, Minolta, Sanyo, Samsung converges on another from the West marked Volkswagen, ICI, Siemens, British Aerospace, etc.

BERLIN [NEWS] CHRONICLE

In Berlin on the day after the Wall came down every major television company in the "Free World" was jostling for the prime spots in front of the Brandenburg Gate: the ideal location for straight-to-camera reports and live interviews thanks to the dramatic (and dramatically lit) architectural backdrop. Hastily erected wooden platforms sprung up like a forest of mushrooms overnight in the shadow of the Wall. Whereas when journalists covering Gorbachev's tour of Honneker's fiefdom on the 40th anniversary of the GDR's foundation in October had complained that it was impossible to get a phone out to the West, by the time of the East German elections in March they were running cables for faxes and satellite links from West Berlin right into the Palast der Republik.

> Old East German maps of Berlin end at the wall as if the West did not exist. People today remember with astonishment that they often did not notice the buildings of West Berlin, visible though they always were beyond the Wall.
>
> *Guardian* (15 March 1990)

Within days you could buy bits of the Wall in sealed plastic bags (prices determined by whether or not graffiti are regarded as "significant"). Within a month the cranes were moving in and sections of the wall were being shipped to New York galleries. By March entrepreneurs were climbing over the pits of Wall still left standing to spray facsimile "protest" messages on the untouched eastern side before chipping chunks off and selling them to tourists on the other side.

> In Poland *Politika* reports that unwanted portraits of Karl Marx are being changed into St. Joseph, patron saint of workers. The background is merely repainted to depict a New Testament scene. Artists are enjoying a brisk trade in preparation for St. Joseph's Day on March 19. Meanwhile volumes by Marx, Engels and Lenin, dumped by libraries all over the country are being seized not for the contents but the bindings which tend to be in mint condition as the books have never been read. The bindings are removed to be recycled for prayer books and bibles.
>
> *The Sunday Correspondent* (February 1990)

German visitors were photographed in the first days returning home "exhausted but elated" bearing trophies – cosmetics, toiletries, pornography, fluffy toys – captured in exchange for the deutsch-mark voucher issued as a gesture of good will by the West German authorities at the crossing points. By the second week, West Berliners were reported to be violently pushing past the window-shopping East German crowds who were milling at every street corner patiently waiting for the light to change before crossing.

> Waiting is a way of life in Romania. Expect long lines in which short tempers are often provoked to violence ... write out as many details of your request as you can or try to find a person in the line who speaks some English. If necessary allow the person behind you to go ahead while you collect your wits. Above all, do not relinquish your place in line.
>
> *Let's Go: 1990 Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe*

One of the first announcements Helmut Kohl made in the immediate aftermath of the victory in the East German elections was the removal of refugee status, entitlements to jobs, housing and other welfare privileges for those still determined to settle in the GDR.

> In Poland, inflation is running at 740%, the cost of registering a car has gone up tenfold ... Lech Walesa has received death threats after it was disclosed that the $100 million modernisation plan for the Gdansk shipyards accepted from Barbara Piasecka, the Polish American heiress to the Johnson baby products fortune, will entail the sacking of 12,000 workers.

By early 1990 people were driving more carelessly in the GDR, so that traffic accidents were up as were the crime rates (a side-effect, in part, of the emptying of the prisons during the amnesty). At the Friedrichstrasse station, West German drunks gather to sell used train tickets to East German day trippers and Polish visitors.

> On January 31st the world's largest McDonalds will open on Pushkin Square. "It's got to be worse," said one Soviet citizen. However, Moscow City council who control 51% of the management insist that McDonalds' normal catering standards will apply here. The four Soviet managers had had the opportunity to enjoy a year's intensive study at the Institute of Hamburgerology in Canada.

In November a poignant scene witnessed at the Wall: a young East German, given a banana (a scarce commodity throughout the Eastern bloc) by a well-wisher, had to be told to peel it first before eating it. In early March bananas were still being handed out free by canvassing West German politicians in Leipzig. Dr. Otto Drephal, a Leipzig theologian, described how an unaccompanied child was told he could have a banana only if his parents were present.

> To western visitors Eastern societies restrained from free development since the end of the War, come over as uniquely old fashioned: uncomfortable but also charming with their mainly safe streets, small shops and slow food...
>
> *City Limits* (March 1990)

> Film, motor oil, and feminine sanitary products of any sort are completely unavailable. Women running short should ask for cotton wool (*vata*). Bring twice as much toilet paper as you think you'll need and plenty of diarrhoea medication to combat Romanian food. Soap, towels, and toilet paper are not provided in most public bathrooms.
>
> *Let's Go: 1990 Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe,* Bucharest section

Takings at Costa del la Sol resorts were reported to have dropped drastically in 1989. The decline in revenue from tourism was attributed to a number of factors: the abysmal state of the amenities, declining standards of service, chronic overcrowding and overdevelopment, dirty beaches, pollution from life-threatening holiday traffic clogging up the coastal roads, indifferent catering, inadequate, "jerry-built" accommodation, a much publicized mid-season outbreak of dysentery, the visible presence in the sea of untreated sewage, and in the streets, of the omnipresent hordes of British "lager louts" who had been descending *en masse* on the clubs and bars of what had once been the "picturesque" fishing villages of Benidorm and Lloret-del-Mar year after year throughout the previous two decades. In addition there has been an acceleration trend – even at the bottom end of the intensely competitive pack-

[redacted]

I was coming up against the Wall.

> *The German Wall,* in other words – "The" Wall, "Il" Muro, "Le" Mur, "Ta" Stena – that wonder of the world which is everywhere addressed only as a proper noun...
>
> Jens Reich, 20 October 1989

As the S-Bahn sped along the elevated sections of the track you could look down through the window onto no-man's land... The idea was, I think, redemption through catharsis: to pass like Harry Palmer/Lime through the concentrated point of all that agonistic violence, the point of convergence for all those binary tensions which served not only to authenticate, make whole and wholly different the identities of the two antagonistic Systems which 40 years before had parcelled up this space called Europe but which also seemed to guarantee the more dangerously elastic borderlines between other psychic/sexual territories. Adorno would have no doubt recognized this identity-thinking, this regressive urge to closure as a function of the will

> to strengthen and extend down to the very physiology of the subject, the acceptance of a dreamless-realistic world in which all memories of things not wholly integrated have been purged.[10]

At every station down the line, I pulled out my passport to check it was still there (vertigo having days before given way to hysteria).

testaceous (zool.) having a shell; shell-like

> Passport control and currency exchange generally take 15-90 minutes ... The day visa DM 5 (under 16 free), payable only in Western currency; you also must change DM 25 into Ostmarks (seniors only exchange DM 15, 14-yr olds DM 7.50, ages under 14 exempt). The exchange rate is one to one.
>
> *Let's Go: 1990 Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe*

The day I went it took 30 minutes. There was some kind of hold-up at the front of the queue.

testament will disposing of property and appointing an executor; covenant between God and Man; each of the two divisions of the Holy Scripture or Bible.

testicle semen-secreting glandular organ of male mammals – testiculus, dim. of testis witness (the organ being evidence of virility)

testify bear witness to

testimony evidence; spec. in Scriptural lang., of the Mosaic law etc.

testis (anat.) testicle, L "witness"

Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology

Under the yellow subway lights a guard was splitting up a group of Gypsy men and women, marked off from the line of tourists by their darker skin, "expansive" body language and "peasant" clothes (the men in cheap suits and trilbies, the

age holiday market – away from the beer-chips-and-suntan model of the annual vacation. The expectations and requirements of the average Northern European holiday maker have been revised upwards in line with rising standards of affluence at home: part of the progressive gentrification of the proletarian imaginary. The days when a crowded hotel swimming pool and bar were regarded as "luxury" are long gone. The buzz words now amongst tour operators are "choice," "sophistication," "adventure," "unspoiled" (even, amongst more "discriminating" middle class consumers, "wilderness") locations. Benidorm, the archetypal destination for the "classic" package in the 1960s and 70s is played out as far as Northern Europeans are concerned. In 1989, hotels boasting "sea-views" were standing empty in the baking August heat as if deserted in the wake of a holocaust. In 1990, 4,000 free holidays for the children of workers in the Neptune shipyard in Rostock were cut – early casualties of the reduction in social welfare expenditure in East Germany, stipulated by Kohl's Christian Democrats as a precondition for reunification. The cuts were reported in the same month that an association of hoteliers in Benidorm backed by the local town council, announced that they were offering 10,000 free holidays to people in Eastern Europe.

> There were things I liked: the feeling of solidarity: that money is not the most important thing in the world. There wasn't much crime ... You could lead a life that wasn't hectic. Was it an illusion? Probably, but illusions can be beautiful.
>
> 40-year-old teacher from Leipzig

> Folklore from the Soviet Union is coming out of my ears. I want to know more about our own history and tradition.
>
> 18-year-old Leipzig skinhead, supporter of the Republican Party, *Guardian* (9 March 1990)

> All the King's horses and all the King's men Couldn't ...

women bundled up like bag ladies from their headscarves to their boots). Because of some irregularity in the travel documents, the men were being allowed through but not the women or children. Armed guards stood impassively over the flurry of embraces, the desperate, fumbling sorting out of luggage. Beneath the sodium lights, items of clothing, packages of food, machine parts wrapped in newspaper, a mirror done up with bits of string and cardboard were being transferred from one bag to another. Urgent messages were exchanged in a language I didn't even recognize. After some minutes the men went through the gate. The women, struggling with the children and the plastic bin-liner stuffed with clothes, began to ululate in concert, their cries amplified in the restricted space, building to a brief rhythmic crescendo – a wave of tears breaking on this underground outpost of the Wall. One woman detached herself from the group, called to her husband or brother who wheeled round – Orpheus now to her Eurydice – to pick up the battered cardboard suitcase which she swung across the rail partition. The women turned, now silent, snatching up the children and the bags and walked back past us down towards the trains as we stood in the queue avoiding eye contact, seeking absolution in our blind, devout inspection of guidebooks, maps, passports, papers.

> Although membership of the Gypsies in terms of blood is denied by family X, the racial diagnosis as regards the members of family X is undoubtedly "Gypsy" and /or "Gypsy-Negro-Hybrid".
>
> This verdict is based on
>
> 1. racial and psychological features
> 2. anthropological features
> 3. genealogical data
> 4. the fact that the family is regarded as Magyar by Hungarians...
>
> These few data are sufficient to be regarded as presumptively Gypsy. Itineracy and unsettled journeying as a family unit are characteristic of Gypsies as far as Central European conditions are concerned. Whereas the external appearance of the members of family X is not entirely Gypsy ... the gestures, affectivity and overall behaviour are not only alien-type but in fact positively indicate Gypsy descent.
>
> Report for Racial Hygiene Research Centre, Reich Public Health Office, 10 July 1944[11]

It occurred to me later that these "presumptive Gypsies" at the Wall might just as well have been Turkish guestworkers from Kreuzburg.

> How can a Jew be a Romanian?
>
> Valentin Gavrielescu, spokesman for the National Peasants' Party, January 1990

> In all spheres of the Russian peoples' life there is but one mission: to repulse the attack of rootless and cosmopolitan elements, to throw off the foreign western forms that have been foisted on the people, and to return to the immemorial origins of Russia.
>
> Michael Antonov, spokesman for the Union for the Spiritual Revival of the Fatherland, November 1989

> The half million Albanians in Kosovo should be provided with maps, escorted to the frontier and kissed goodbye.
>
> Vuk Draskovic, head of the Serbian National Renaissance, February 1990

Who knows what will come through the hole burned out of the centre of the Romanian flag where the hammer and sickle used to be. Did we really expect the dancing to go on forever?

Neal Ascherson,[12] more sensitive than most to that other Orientalism which threatens to collapse the historical and cultural complexities of diverse national and regional traditions into a homogeneous (solidly "despotic") bloc, has nonetheless referred to Eastern Europe as an immense toxic landscape – a vast ecological, ideological, political and administrative disaster zone. The poisons released into the atmosphere in the wake of the Soviet Empire's collapse have been gathering for years. It wasn't just champagne corks that got forced into the air when the Wall came crashing down. Foreigners beaten up by skinheads in Leipzig in the last of the Monday night demonstrations; synagogues in Budapest and Debrecen in Hungary and in Lublin in Poland desecrated; an arson attack on a Jewish rest home outside Warsaw; Jewish cemeteries daubed with obscene graffiti; anti-semitic demonstrations organized by Pamyat (Memory) in Red Square; Armenians massacred in Norodny-Karabec; Azerzis murdered in reprisal; ethnic Albanians poisoned in Kosovo; ethnic Hungarians murdered by Romanians in riots led by the far-right Romanian Hearth... Who knows what will come through the hole burned out of the centre of the Romanian flag where the hammer and sickle used to be. Did we really expect the dancing to go on forever?

An even more rhetorical question: which "we" is it that is being addressed here? If it is the "we" into which I am interpellated as "British Citizen" and subject, the designation under which, after all, I am permitted to travel in the first place, to pass "freely without let or hindrance" across borders expecting as of right "such assistance and protection as may be necessary," then this hardly affords access to the high moral ground. What can this "we" say about the resurgence of the language of the pogroms when Britain oversees the incarceration in concentration camps of boat people labelled not as champions of freedom like the escaped prisoners from E. bloc whose flight – at least in the first few months – was represented as the expression of an abstract desire for "more liberty" (Thatcher), but as "economic refugees" – an altogether lower category of persons who are out to "swamp" our culture and steal our wealth? What can this "we" say when the entitlements through which British citizenship is defined are seen in the case of potential Hong Kong immigrants to be calculated on the basis (a) of race (the unspoken "yellow" quota) and (b) professional status? (50,000 British passports are to be offered to eight categories of persons from business men to accountants and doctors.)

But just as there are questions, so too are there questions which are not just rhetorical (concerned merely with the rhetoric of justice). It is no more legitimate to reduce the

problem of our own implication in these issues of politics, ethnicity and culture to a problem within representation – as if our responsibility consisted solely in choosing where "we" stand in the contest of competing rhetorics, externally opposed "position," "ideologies," "discourses," and then "arguing our corner" – than it is to frame the "question" posed at the interface between culture, nationalism and "race" as, say, "the Jewish question" or "the German question," as if, for example, "the Troubles" in Belfast or on the border between Eire and the northern Counties could be understood as the simple, necessary predicate of something called – in Westminster at least – the "Irish question."

The issue is partly situated *within rhetoric* (the "politics of discourse" question: "who speaks for whom in whose interest?") but it is also at the same time *outside rhetoric* at the limit of our "entitlement" to speak at all on certain subjects at certain times in certain contexts, and ultimately it points beyond even that towards the unstable perimeter which separates what can and can't be said full stop. The adjudication of these boundaries is not just a question of linguistic etiquette. The issue is not answered by the kind of serial righteousness which disguises its particularistic, interested focus by resorting at strategic points to a simple reading out of lists of supposedly empowered and empowering categories – race *and* class *and* gender – to present an armed-on-all-fronts "Critical" discourse designed to address everyone and to satisfy no one in particular. Nor is it enough in a properly reflexive cultural studies to stand gobstruck or gutted, to use two more vulgar cockney idioms (*gobstruck, gutted;* trans. stunned into silence), in the face of the Other conceived as the apotheosis of the principle-of-difference-in-the-abstract. The boundaries drawn around the sayable are proscribed by our *located, lived* relations to concrete, embodied, historically constituted others. The contracts and obligations which bind us to these others are the products of particular historical processes, struggles, settlements. In other words those limits are overdetermined by what Edward Said might call all kinds of *worldly* factors. The other, here, is worldly not other-worldly. It is in fact the point where actually existing others are condemned, expelled, silenced in the name of some invisible Other as founding principle or originary force that the necessary edge which we use to constitute collectivities of any kind – to mark off US (however we define ourselves) from THEM (however we define them) – degenerates into a cutting edge where other people are made to disappear in a willed historical regression which is figured as the vengeful realisation of the "historical destiny" of a "People" and its "culture."

[redacted]

In official Zionist photos at the beginning of the century, one can see Jewish colonists in European dress, on a deserted beach, holding a few spades, "founding Tel Aviv." These pictures had to be carefully touched up before they could become part of the official album, in order to remove the Arabs who are visible in the original photos, to the right and left of the group of pioneers in ties: those who built Tel Aviv and whose houses and tents, simply by being there, turned this "desert" into a building site. This presence everywhere of the Arabs traumatized the territorialists: but, conversely, it seemed natural to the offspring of the *Shtetl.* Their cultural narcissism constituted a mental rampart around the ethnic frontiers of the community and the group. It also constituted a better preparation for the physical expulsion of the Arabs and its legitimation.

Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews, Ancient and Modern*[13]

"Unification," Mr. Modrow insisted last week, "must not be an *Anschluss* – the mere incorporation of East into West Germany. Dr. Kohl has no such scruples. Hans-Jochen Vogel, the leader of the West German social democratic opposition, accused him of brow-beating the GDR into unity, as if it were an 'ownerless territory.'"

The Sunday Correspondent
(18 February 1990)

In January a photograph appeared in *The Guardian* of a group of three captured "Ceausescu supporters" in their cell at Bucharest police headquarters. Hemmed in by their bunk bed. heads bowed, eyes fixed on the floor, it looks as if they've been made to stand for the cameras. Their expressions range from anguish to resignation at the fate which undoubted awaits them at the trial "after their arrest for possessing arms." Their arms hang loosely, hands clasped together in a contrite gesture as if these men had been handcuffed, interrupted in an act of prayer. In their striped prison uniforms, they are being made to wear their guilt for the world. A friend of mine (he happens to be Jewish) pointed at the photo. He didn't doubt that these men – alleged members of the Securitate – had charges to answer, in all likelihood crimes to answer for. "But why," he asked, "do they have to be degraded like *that.* What do those uniforms *mean* today?"

In early February it was reported that a new graffito was cropping up alongside the NPP and NSF slogans and the Ceausescu dummies swinging by their necks in the winter wind from the trees and lampposts of Bucharest. Poster portraits of the prime minister, Petre Roman, were being defaced and two symbols scrawled underneath: a hammer and sickle and a star of David. Sometimes the two had been linked with an = sign.

They were of high quality rayon and cheap, a real bargain. Only one crown for a star made of fine pre-war material. There were six tips and a word on the star, all contorted and twisted, in a foreign language that seemed to make a face at me. I felt for my heart through my coat and marked the place with pins. It beat quite regularly. I looked into the splinter that was my mirror. The black and yellow star looked provocative...

Jiri Weil, *Life With a Star*[14]

"Can we too live without the Wall?"

withdraw take back or away, cf. RETIRE, RETRACT

within adv. on the inner side

without adv. outside

witness knowledge, wisdom; attestation of a fact, etc., testimony

The day in July 1988 when I stood before the Wall of Death in Auschwitz was the hottest day of the holiday. People were walking round in their shirt-sleeves and cotton dresses and there were of course – what else would you expect in Poland? – long queues at the drink stand for the thin watery cola concoction they sold in the parks and public squares for a few zloties a shot. The supply of individual paper cups had dried up hours ago so that by now those wanting a drink had to use the metal mug hanging by a chain from the stall. I thought I'd wait till I got back to the bar opposite the bus station at Oswiecim and get a proper can of coke. I might even treat myself to a bottle of Czech beer.

> Block 11 was called by the prisoners the "Block of Death." It stood in some isolation, apart from other blocks, was always locked and served as the camp prison. Its yard was surrounded by a high wall. Wooden baskets were affixed to the windows of the block which stood next to it, in order to prevent its inmates from observing what was going on in that yard in which at least 20,000 prisoners were shot under the "Wall of Death." The ground-floor of Block 11, together with the cells in its cellars (so-called bunkers) is preserved intact.
>
> Kazimierz Smolen, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Guidebook through the Museum*[15]

I remember that the air was thick with the fragrance of the flowers that people had laid in heaps, in wreathes, in bunches, single blooms along the base of the wall. I remember that the colours of the flowers stood out against the black square at its centre...

> Auschwitz defies imagination and perception: it submits only to memory... Between the dead and the rest of us there exists an abyss that no talent can comprehend... I write to denounce writing. I tell of the impossibility one stumbles upon in trying to tell the tale.
>
> Elie Wiesel[16]

I kept looking at my watch. Ari had gone off on her own and we'd arranged to meet at 3:15 outside Block 15 – that way we'd know where we were supposed to be without losing track of the time. The last bus back to Krakow went at 4:15 and we couldn't afford to miss it. It had taken most of the morning to get the woman at the reception desk to agree to let us have the room for one more night. That was the price you paid for not going through Polorbis, the state-run tourist agency. If you didn't submit to their iron-tight schedules and stay at their overpriced "international" hotels, then you just had to queue and barter like everybody else. And it didn't help if, like us, you didn't speak the language or only had, as I did, a smattering of elementary-level German half remembered from lessons lazily attended at school. My "German" had in fact proven to be a real liability. It had only been after I'd run out of change and slammed down the phone at the railway station on that first rainy day in Warsaw after ringing around every hotel in the *Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe* that I'd realized the blunder I'd just made. The German for "room" was *Zimmer,* not *Raum.* No wonder my enquiries had been greeted with silence, incomprehension. Perhaps I'd sensed (though I also thought I might have been imagining it) a muffled kind of rage. "Haben sie Raum?" They must have thought it was some kind of sick...

> Most of you know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck this out and – excepting cases of human weakness – to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard. In our history this is an unwritten and never to be written page of glory.
>
> Heinrich Himmler addressing SS commanders in October, 1943[17]

At Auschwitz you avoid making eye contact with strangers and even friends become strangers there. Each person is engaged in a solitary communion with the dead, turned inwards by the vastness of the slaughter. Family groups and organized parties seem to congregate in silence orbiting the exhibits, each individual locked into a singular trajectory. In the crematorium where the brass loading trays were hung with floral tributes to the dead, I watched a party of young people filing by behind their German-speaking guide like ... I felt the words forming, to be used perhaps in some future piece of writing ... like a group of medieval penitents, like martyrs *en route* to the gallows and I felt ashamed that I had watched their shame as if my guilt for what had happened in this place was somehow less than theirs, that by reducing them to objects in this way, by weighing them in the balance provided by some facile simile I had betrayed some basic covenant imposed at the Gates on anyone who enters. It was I who was diminished by seeking to make less of their pilgrimage, a journey undertaken of necessity in a spirit of atonement, a spirit darkened in the knowledge of what it was that waited for them here, a journey that made my own presence in this place appear by contrast casual, unconsidered. I was older than they. I should have known better. But what was "knowledge" and what did it amount to here? And what in the end did it mean for me to visit this place intent on storing up "observations" as sentences to be fitted into some "future piece of writing" – what did it mean to "make something out of" a day trip to Auschwitz? The very fact that this history is exhibited for our inspection in the Auschwitz museum, is assembled and made legible through photographs, texts, statistics, models, objects in glass cases confronts the visitor in the form of an accusation. What access is there for the living to the place of the Disaster? The Disaster presents only itself and what it presents it also obliterates. At once and absolutely. The "products" of the Disaster – if what lingers in its wake can find a designation – are, as Maurice Blanchot points out, not "knowledge" at all but rather dread and silence:

> Knowledge which goes so far as to accept horror in order to know it, reveals the horror of knowledge, its squalor, the discrete complicity which maintains it in a relation with the most insupportable aspects of power... And how, in fact, can one accept not to know? We read books on Auschwitz. The wish of all, in the camps, the last wish: know what happened, do not forget, and at the same time never will you know.[18]

While the enormity of "Auschwitz" defies narrativization the camp itself was of course notoriously efficient at keeping its own accounts: "products" at this level can be at least

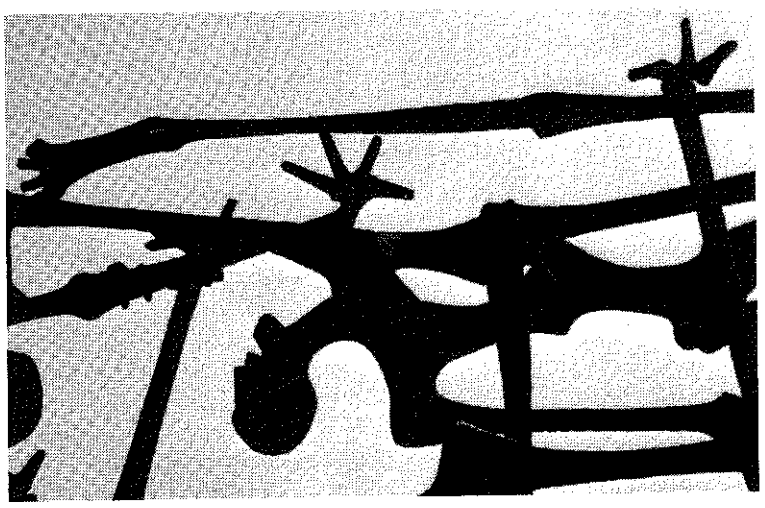
enumerated. On the coach back to Krakow, I read the guidebook (120 zl) in its porous paper cover turning back from time to time to the blurred grey photographs which haunt the text. I read that camp inmates who cheated the gas chamber worked as slave labour for IG-Farbenindustrie at their factory in Monowice; that Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Schalingsbekampfung (German Society for Combatting Pests) which produced the Zyclon B used in the gas chambers was a subsidiary of IG-Farben; that other beneficiaries of the slave labour program included Krupps, Hermann Goring-Werke, Siemens, Deutsche aus Rustungswerke, Deutsche Erd-und Steinwerke, Hugo Schneider AG, Heinkel, J.A. Topf & Son.[19] I read that an estimated 30,000 prisoners died in IG-Garbenindustrie in three years and that while estimates of the exact total of deaths is still subject to debate and revision, "no less than 4 million people perished in Auschwitz" (Soviet State Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes), including in addition to the Jews, political prisoners, prisoners of war, gays, religious minorities, 21,000 gypsies. Last week I read that Professor Raoul Thalberg of the University of Vermont and Yehuda Bauer, Director of Holocaust Studies at the Hebrew Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem, have revised their estimate downwards in the light of the evidence made available by the Soviets to a figure as low as 1 million to 1.35 million Jews murdered. On the other hand this total is disputed by Rudolf Vrbo, Professor of Pharmacology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, himself a Jewish prisoner at Auschwitz until his escape in April 1944, whose job it had been to count the number of people arriving each day at the ramps. Vrbo estimates Jewish deaths at approximately 2.5 million.[20] By coincidence I also read in the same week an article detailing the controversy over the total number of victims killed under Stalinism where the numbers of those said to be executed together with deportation and famine fatalities vary from 3.5-8 million (Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick, University of Chicago) to 50 million (the London *Sunday Times*), although the writer added that the attempt to establish a median figure around 20-25 million is being resisted by some scholars on the grounds that a possibly inflated final count may have the effect – intentional or not – of effacing the qualitative uniqueness of the Nazi genocide program.[21]

I read in the guidebook that an inventory of items recovered from six storeroom barracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau partially destroyed by fires lit by retreating SS troops included: 348,820 men's suits; 836,820 women's dresses; 5,255 pairs of women's shoes; 38,000 pairs of men's shoes; 13,694 carpets; together with a vast quantity of tooth brushes, shaving brushes, artificial limbs, spectacles, etc.

At the Auschwitz museum I remember filing past a wall of glass which ran the length of an entire waiting room in Block 4. Through the wall the visitor can see, stacked from floor to ceiling, a tangled mess of human hair cut from gassed victims: "7,000 kilograms of human hair, packed in paper bags (average weight of each bag – circa 25 kilograms),"[22] part of a regular consignment to the Bavarian A. Zinc Co. where it was processed and converted into lining for the greatcoats worn by German soldiers heading for the Eastern front.

I remember stopping in front of a similar exhibit: a whole room, visible behind a sheet of glass, containing a mountain of empty luggage. I remember reading some of the names and addresses written on the sides of the suitcases by people who had come here from every major city in every country in occupied Europe: proof of the gigantic diabolical ruse maintained from start to finish – from the proclamations for the transports to the death pits camouflaged as showers. I imagined men and women in cities as remote as Athens, Berlin, Bucharest laying out the luggage on the floor, kneeling down to paint their names and thereby colluding – discreetly or otherwise, whether knowingly or not – in the orchestrated lie that they were heading for a new life in the East.

> I noticed that women who either guessed or knew what awaited them nevertheless found the courage to joke with the children to encourage them, despite the mortal terror visible in their own eyes...
>
> Rudolph Hoss, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Authentic Confession of a Mass Murderer*[23]



Months before when planning this trip to Eastern Europe I had fished an ancient, battered suitcase out of the basement where it had lain for years filled with old clothes earmarked for some forgotten jumble sale. I remember thinking it was perfect. It fitted in absolutely with the "refugee fantasy" I'd been cultivating ever since we'd struck on the idea of Poland as a possible destination, drawn by the romance of a place that didn't feature on most travel agents' maps. The fantasy had its iconographic origin in a fragment of film footage I remembered from childhood of refugees from Hungary or Poland crossing borders wheeling handcarts and bicycles loaded down with whatever belongings they'd managed to salvage in the face of what was – for them at least – the catastrophe of Yalta. Other elements had been added down the years: images and narratives from spy novels; news reels; the early films of Andrzej Wajda; tales of the Polish resistance and the Warsaw uprising; a phrase from Gregory Corso about the traveller ("after Hiroshima") entering "the modern city with two suitcases filled with despair" … but at its core that simple image-memory of childhood that remained intact, allergic to these baroque adolescent refinements. The suitcase simply *was* the lost object, the clinching prop for the whole regressive movement.

It was 3:15, time to make the rendezvous…

> An exhibition illustrating the history of the occupation in Poland will be housed in Block 15. Its opening is planned for 1979.[24]

Though open, the exhibition in Block 15 had still not been completed. The work had been held up as a result of the bitter wrangle between Jewish and Polish nationalist groups over whose history should be privileged at Auschwitz. (The question of who has prior claim – and hence authority – over this territory has since taken on an increasingly overt, and ugly, political resonance in the wake of a resurgent Polish national consciousness after Archbishop Glemp made his "Jewish media conspiracy" speech in 1989 in defence of the proposed siting of a Carmelite convent just outside the compound fence.) Unlike the other Blocks which had seemed part of a 19th century "exhibitionary complex" built around a concern for authenticity, the thing-itself, the muted testimony of material evidence and, quite unlike Auschwitz 11-Birkenay with its sprawling encampment of abandoned barracks, ruined gas chambers and crematoria three kilometres down the road, left as the Russians found it when they liberated Auschwitz in 1945, Block 15 felt like a "contemporary" white wall gallery space. Here display panels were clearly and consecutively laid out. Design values had intervened here to make the exhibition "user friendly." The total effect was nevertheless far from seamless; photographs and text had been arranged in an uneasy narrative sequence which threatened to explode altogether at the point where a shrine to the "Martyrs of the Polish Resistance" flanked by phoenix emblems collided with SS photographs of the "Judgement at the Ramp" and photographs taken secretly by Jewish members of the Sonderkommando details whose job it was to dispose of the dead. The conflict between competing stories, framings, interests was inscribed across the very surface of the walls. Here the war of memory had been spatialized.

> The gallows stood there … Hossler's voice was to be heard … "all traitors will perish like this…" I was standing between Ela and Lola and thought, "I must see and remember everything." I overcame my weakness and looked towards the gallows, but saw only indistinct shadows…
>
> R. Kagen, Auschwitz inmate[25]

Block 15 had been laid out – whether by design or because the site itself had become a battlefield – as a nest of defiles, spaces subdivided by partitions, linked by low-ceilinged corridors and narrow staircases down which the visitor is drawn but not directed. Whether intentionally or not what had been constructed here was a kind of maze.

We were cutting it a bit fine; we'd have to get a taxi to the bus station if we were to make it back to Krakow. Getting a taxi could take forever and I couldn't get my head round the exchange rates. What you saw on the clock was just the square root of what you ended up paying – they add a few naughts at the end of every number. When you ask them why, they say (if they speak English that is) "inflation," but they don't even seem to know what their own money's worth, so how are we supposed … I bet I have to bung the driver a couple of quid to get him to put his foot down except they won't take sterling only dollars – if we get a driver that is.

We had walked into a cul-de-sac; a spare white room closed off at one end. This had to be the end of the exhibition but neither of us could see any exit just a bare white wall in front of which a shrine to the victims of the Holocaust – a plaque and some flowers under heavy glass – had been set into the concrete floor. We hovered over it for a few moments like kids hanging over a pond, conscious of our faces reflected in the glass, distracted by the heat and the pressure of time. There seemed nothing for it but to try to retrace our steps. Acting on impulse or intuition – I never asked her why – just as we were about to turn back, Ari stretched out her hand and placed it in the centre of the wall. Like the secret door in a children's fairy tale the wall swung open onto the courtyard. The concealed exit was another undecidable contrivance like the labyrinth of Block 15 itself: either it was intended (the consequence of some administrative stalemate in the context

of forces that were fighting for possession of this space) or it was deliberate – a lesson imparted in code, a parable built in three dimensions, the key secreted in the very wall itself.

> But we shall continue our work, we shall try to preserve all this for the world. We shall simply hide it in the soil. And he who would like to find it, will find it – on the Other side.

This page written by the Auschwitz victim Salmen Lewenthal was found along with the rest of his written testimony buried near the crematorium. It is displayed on the wall adjacent to the hidden door which faces out towards the sunken Holocaust memorial. One touch had been enough to move the wall aside. Like children we stepped out, blinking in the light, relieved to find ourselves outside inside Auschwitz.

> One young woman caught my attention particularly as she ran busily hither and thither, helping the smallest of children and the old women to undress. During the selection she had had two small children with her, and her agitated behaviour and appearance had brought her to my notice at once. She did not look in the least like a Jewess. Now her children were no longer with her. She waited until the end, helping the women who were not undressed and who had several children with them, encouraging them and calming the children. She went with the very last ones into the gas chamber. Standing in the doorway, she said:
>
> "I knew all the time that we were being brought to Auschwitz to be gassed. When the selection took place I avoided being put with the able-bodied ones, as I wished to look after the children. I wanted to go through it all, fully conscious of what was happening. I hope that it will be quick. Goodbye."
>
> Rudolph Hoss, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Authentic Confessions of a Mass Murderer*[26]

[redacted]

Postscript

On the day before we flew back home I threw the suitcase away. It would be tempting to say I had outgrown it, chastened in the knowledge that all journeys are not the same, have different starting points and different destinations, that there is a line between the poetics and the politics of travel which should not be crossed. After all, at least four distinct orders of travel have been invoked here: the self-authentication voyage, the decentred *derive*, the package tour, and those other mass migrations driven by an altogether other and more terrible force. Perhaps it would be politic (and wise) not to confound them, for these orders, especially the last one, impose specific remits, obligations and entitlements upon any one who tries to write their way into the world. All of this may well be true. But the plain fact is that it was the thing itself that had outgrown me and not vice versa. Browsing through a department store in Prague the day before we were due to take off I'd stumbled on the suitcase of my dreams – rectangular and light, made of thick new cardboard with plastic protectors stapled to each corner and an old-fashioned spring mechanism working the hinge – all for the equivalent of just £1.50 (and that was at the official exchange rate). There was then, in the end, something to be said for the inertia of a command economy where things designed in 1958 are still available, brand new, unchanged, in their original form 30 years later. "Actually existing socialism" had managed to produce what is, for me, a utopian object: the platonic suitcase. In a less than perfect world, it had nonetheless succeeded in delivering – for once – the Good. ◆

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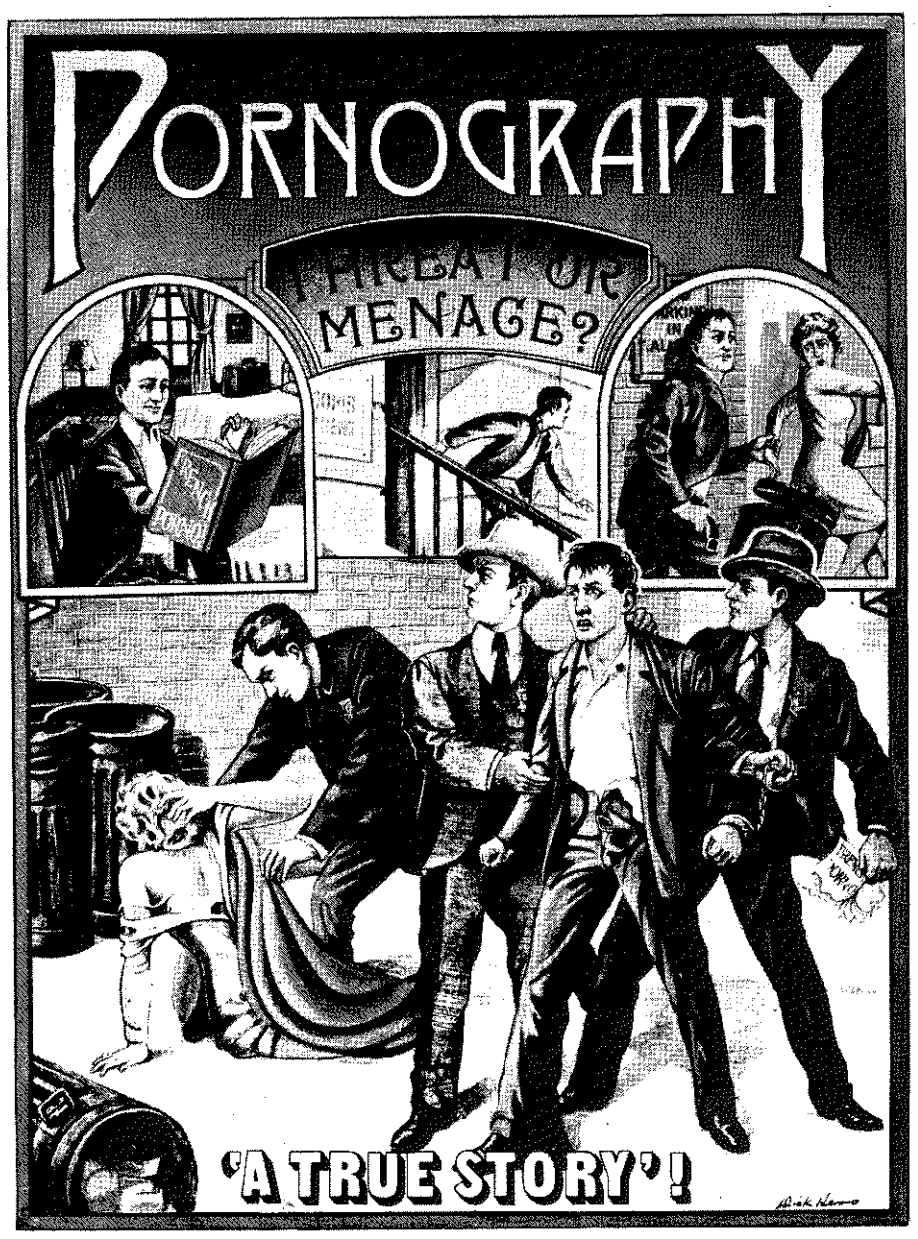
NOTES

*The last thing that readers need is another theory of quotation. Suffice it to say that as far as I can tell, quotation operates throughout this article predominantly though not exclusively in four related modes: (1) as interruption, (2) as intervention, (3) as interference, and (4) as indigestion: "trouble from below."

1. Theodor Adorno, "Perennial Fashion – Jazz" in *Prisms,* Garden City Press, 1967.
2. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* Picador, 1973.
3. Roland Barthes, interview with Bernard Henri-Levy in *Art & Text,* 6 (Summer 1982-83).
4. Jens Reich, "Germany – A Binary Poison" in *New Left Review,* 179 (Jan.-Feb. 1990). All further quotations attributed to Reich are from this text.
5. Adorno, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Paul Caleb Deemer, ed., *Let's Go: 1990 Budget Traveller's Guide to Europe,* Pan Books, 1990. All other guidebook references apart from the Auschwitz section are from here.
8. Walter Benjamin, "Berlin Chronicle" in *One Way Street and Other Writings,* Verso, 1979.
9. Ibid.
10. Adorno, op. cit.
11. Quoted in Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life,* Penguin, 1987.
12. See especially Neal Ascherson, "Eastern Europe on the Move" in S. Hall & M. Jaques, eds., *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990's,* Lawrence & Wishart, 1989; "The Borderlands" in *Granta 30 The New Europe,* Penguin, 1990; and his earlier collection of essays *Games with Shadows,* Radius, 1988.
13. Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews, Ancient and Modern.* Zed Books, 1988. Barnet Ltvinoff's *The Burning Bush: Antisemitism and World History* (Fontana, 1989) is interesting in so far as the issue is hardly confronted in more than 400 pages.
14. Jiri Weil, *Life with a Star,* Collins, 1989.
15. Kazimierz Smolen, *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Guidebook through the Museum,* Krajowa Agencjay, 1981.
16. Elie Wiesel, quoted in Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History,* Penguin 1989.
17. Quoted in above.
18. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster,* University of Nebraska Press, 1986.
19. See Marrus, op. cit., and bibliography; for personal experiences of slave labour, for instance, see Primo Levi, *If This is a Man* (Abacus, 1987) and *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York, 1969); Anton Gill, *The Journey Back from Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (Grafton Books, 1988).
20. *Jewish Times* (8 March 1990); also, e.g. Marrus op. cit.; Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War.*
21. Seumas Milne, "Stalin's Missing Millions" in *Guardian* (10 March, 1990).
22. Smolen, op. cit.
23. Rudolf Hoss, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Authentic Confessions of a Mass Murderer,* Pan Books, 1959.
24. Smolen, op. cit.
25. R. Kaglan, woman prisoner in Auschwitz quoted above.
26. Hoss, op. cit.

MICHAEL **HOECHSMANN**

An Impure Criticism



No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture
by **Andrew Ross**

New York & London: Routledge, 1989, 269 pp.

What links together such disparate events as the US espionage show trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the mass culture debates of the 1950s, bebop jazz, television game show scandals, cultural imperialism, the Pop and camp moments of popular culture, and current debates on pornography? In *No Respect,* these are several of the symbolic moments through which Andrew Ross tracks the "traditional antagonisms" between intellectuals and "popular culture" in the US. Ross's wide-ranging analysis describes a selective but carefully intertwined series of epochal events and movements, and attempts to undermine *en route* the tension between "popular 'anti-intellectualism' on the one hand, and educated 'disdain' on the other."

When Rodney Dangerfield returns to university as an overaged benefactor-turned-student in the film *Back to School* (1986), he is given "no respect." But Dangerfield draws on his own life experiences to contest the pretentious academic claims to knowledge of the professoriate, conceding "no respect" to those who have power over him. While Dangerfield's obstinate rejection of the academic regime of transcendental truths is symbolic of popular distrust for intellectuals, his dubious reception in the university is symptomatic of high culture disdain for vulgar common sense. And though Dangerfield's narrative works to poke some fun at the dry seriousness of the university, Ross points out that it also serves finally to fortify the cultural authority of those who "know best."

With *No Respect,* Ross is trying to chart a course for "American Cultural Studies" which can navigate the treacherous waters between "the prestigious but undemocratic, Europeanized contempt for 'mass culture'" and "the more celebratory native tradition of gee-whizzery." Ross suggests that it is not enough for histories of popular culture to focus solely on the producers and consumers of cultural messages and products, but they must also include traditional intellectuals, the arbiters of cultural taste, "those experts in culture whose traditional business is to define what is popular and what is legitimate, who patrol the ever shifting borders of popular and legitimate taste, who supervise the passports, the temporary visas, the cultural identities, the threatening 'alien' elements, and the deportation orders, and who occasionally make their own adventurist forays across the borders."

Ross draws on the work of French critic Pierre Bourdieu to show how "categories of taste, which police the differentiated middleground, are also categories of cultural power which play upon every suggestive trace of difference in order to tap the sources of indignity, on the one hand, and 'hauteur' on the other." Cultural power in this context is "the capacity to draw the line between and around categories of taste." Thus, intellectuals have had to invent a *cordon sanitaire* for their "adventurist forays" into the world of the popular, adapting to this purpose categories of intellectual taste like "hip," "camp," "bad" or "sick" taste. Ross remarks that "hip is the first on the block to know what's going on, but it wouldn't be seen dead at a block party." If Bourdieu is taken far enough it becomes apparent "that the exercise of taste not only presupposes distinctive social categories," but it "helps to create them." Indeed some of these categories of taste "have also served as initially powerful conduits for expression of social desire that would otherwise be considered illegitimate," as in the case of the "hip" and "camp" moments of the civil rights and gay rights movements.

No Respect tracks the relationship of intellectuals to the so-called popular culture in the US from the 1930s to the present. The book is episodic by design, made up of a series of "close readings" of "iconic moments" in recent cultural history. Although annoying at times, the leap-frogging narrative nonetheless allows Ross to resist closure, shifting instead from one allegory to another, each of which serves to inflect the introductory theoretical chapter in a distinct way. Ross deals with "four, primarily generational, cultural moments" which are not methodologically governed by "strict or absolute

definitions of the role or function of intellectuals." These are: the intellectuals of the Old Left and bohemian intellectuals of the Underground subcultures; the counterculture and the New Left; Pop intellectuals and celebrities; intellectuals of the liberation movements. Rather than try to sum up each of these historical trajectories, Ross's brand of "impure criticism" makes it "necessary at times to refuse any high theoretical ground or vantage point" and instead "to enter into the fray."

Ross launches directly into an account of the show trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, describing the reaction of cold war liberals such as Leslie Fielder to what was perceived as the Rosenberg's middlebrow tendencies. Says Ross: "For the intellectual, 'ordinary,' like middlebrow, is not a code in itself; it is defined against, or is signified by its transgression or corruption of other codes like those of the 'vernacular' or the 'literary.'" That the Rosenbergs were aligned with the Popular Front and its cultural "levelling" eschewal of "serious" art was bad enough, but that they wrote public letters proclaiming their faith in the popular made them threatening to US anti-Stalinists. Somehow, Ethel's proclamation that "we are the first victims of American Fascism" just did not mesh with the image of an 'ordinary' couple who liked folk music and the Dodgers. Ross points out that while the Rosenbergs weathered one of the greatest show trials in US history, they were simultaneously tried and condemned on literary grounds by critics such as Fiedler. And, to complicate matters, critics of Fiedler such as Harold Rosenberg and Morris Dickstein "tend to reproduce the critical strategy" by which the Rosenbergs were stripped "of all their contents," hence condemning Fiedler to the same "critical death" to which he had sentenced the Rosenbergs.

What is required in this context is a more self-reflective cultural politics that does not limit itself to arm's-length discussions of an imagined, or imaginary, "popular." This seems to be Ross's motive for focussing on the role of intellectuals, a social grouping in which he is deeply implicated. Ross also identifies a larger project which cultural studies must come to terms with: "the problem of petty bourgeois taste, culture and expression remains to this day a largely neglected question of cultural studies and a formidable obstacle to left cultural politics." Unfortunately, for all of Ross's incisive readings of popular movements and their reception "chez les intellectuels," he tends to fall short in his discussion of how intellectual currents are felt by common folk. His references to "committing critical speech to common, vernacular ground" and "not pricing one's discourse out of the market of popular meanings" are hardly born out in this volume and, though not promised, underscore a point which bears mention: this book is written by a professional intellectual and is addressed primarily to an academic or artistic audience. If no one else is listening, then Ross is condemned, like a dog biting its tail, to live the lie which he tells, that an "impure criticism" can ever be more than a theoretical whistling in the wind.

On the other hand, Ross's episodic history makes for interesting reading and I, for one, am convinced by his case for an "impure" version of critical theory. Others have, of course, already labelled this same rhetorical stance; Stuart Hall recently referred to this as "engaging in the dirtiness of the semiotic game" (U. Mass.-Amherst, Feb. 27, 1989). For Ross, an "impure criticism" requires "putting aside the big social picture, forsaking polemical purity, speaking out of character, taking the messy part of consumption at the cost of a neat critical analysis of production." To facilitate this analysis, Ross borrows the concept of the conservative unconscious from psychoanalysis, an unconscious that can learn, but that "just cannot be taught in any direct way." As played through popular culture, this is the ground where people's contradictory feelings of resentment and deference to knowledge and authority "are transformed into pleasure which is often more immediately satisfying than it is 'politically correct.'" Another feature of "impure criticism" is that it allows Ross to directly address issues of race, gender and ("marginal") sexuality in his cultural politics, as reflected across the range of cultural moments in *No Respect,* where popular culture and new social movements nearly intersect. As a WASP-male-identified-person (who tries to be anti-racist, gay-positive and feminist), I find some comfort in this development, that the new-found centrality of formerly marginal voices in contemporary questions of race, class and gender should not necessarily preclude the participation of formerly central, now negotiated, voices.

In "Hip and the Long Front of Color," a study which evokes Dick Hebdige's "phantom history of race relations" in *Subculture* (1979), Ross describes what he refers to as the "overexchanged and overbartered record of miscegenated cultural production," symbolized most vividly in the white hipster figures of Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac and Norman Podhoretz. In "Candid Cameras," Ross tackles, among other things, monolithic theories of media imperialism like that of Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart (*How to Read Donald Duck,* 1975) which do not leave room for oppositional readings. In "Uses of Camp," Ross links pop and camp as two crucial moments in popular culture, describing camp on the one hand as "that category of cultural taste which shaped, defined, and negotiated the way in which sixties intellectuals were able to "pass" as subscribers to the throwaway Pop aesthetic," and on the other hand as having had implications for the sexual liberation movements in general, and for the sexual politics of gay men in particular. These movements, in turn, have influenced Ross's own cultural politics and the central thesis of *No Respect* itself: "the spirit of resistance on the part of civil rights, the women's and gay liberation movements to vertical forms of left organization and to centralizing explanations of power, has quite clearly shaped my often unfavorable treatment of the vanguardist intellectual tradition."

Ross closes his case on the feminist "anti-antiporn" intellectuals who embody a "more exemplary model of intellectual engagement and activism," in contrast to the vanguardist "tradition of suspicion, recruitism and disaffiliation." Says Ross: "what the anti-antiporn position embodies could be read as a full bill of rights for a new social contract between intellectuals and popular culture, or, conversely, as an epitaph for older ones." Ross hails a generation of "new intellectuals" who valorize popular culture as a site of contestation, and who recognize the uneven development of contradictions of life in capitalist cultures; in short, the emergence of the progenitors of a "political criticism" which will enable "a more popular, less guilt-ridden, cultural politics for our times." Theirs is the agenda of the "liberatory

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imagination," a stance which fundamentally departs from the "libertarian imagination" in imagining an alternative world, in imagining that there could be "anything else."

According to Ross, it is crucial for intellectuals to forsake "the intellectual option of hectoring from on high," to learn to live with contradictions. This is an ongoing theme of Ross's work, a sustained critique of "political correctness." In *Men in Feminism* (Jardine and Smith, 1987), Ross speaks of the "invocations of correctness and fears of incorrectness alike," reflected in the MLA sessions on "Men in Feminism," which characterize the negotiations of women and men over a space for men in feminism. Ross finds it ironic that strict notions of "correct" politics, this spectre of feminism's own historical repudiation of Left-Leninist thinking, would now emerge from within the feminist community. However, regardless of how may times we say that the unconscious is fundamentally conservative, that we must wait for the unconscious to learn because it will not be taught, these are hypothetical and ahistorical assertions. One does not have to read much Andrea Dworkin to feel the anger seething beneath the perhaps essentialist, closed prose. Nor should it be a surprise that the anger (and fear) which motivated "Take Back the Night" marches across North America should find its way into text. Anti-antiporn feminists may be right in bringing pleasure back to the fore, and also in claiming something in common between feminism and pornography, both of which have insisted that women are sexual beings and have made sex an experience open to public examination and debate. However, these same anti-antiporn feminists would hardly repudiate issues of danger as a formative influence to the women's liberation movement.

This may seem patently obvious to Andrew Ross, and to the many readers who are familiar with the contours of the pornography debate. Nonetheless, it calls into question Ross's own political correctness in choosing to minimize the resonance which the anti-porn position has for both intellectuals and "ordinary" folk. In my view the weak link of his discussion of "The Popularity of Pornography" is his reference to Al Goldstein, "the ebullient publisher of *Screw*," "who boasted, in 1973, that if he caught his wife cheating on him, he would probably 'break her legs off and pull her clit off and shove it in her left ear.'" Ross states that "while obviously horrific" this comment "can be read as a contextual reference, unconscious or otherwise, to the displacement of the clitoris into the heroine of *Deep Throat*." Whether Goldstein, an organic intellectual of the pornography industry, had to wait to discover the clitoris at a film targeted to "an audience with higher interests than the simple pleasure of arousal" is questionable; more disturbing, however, is the ongoing conflation of sexual education and liberation with misogyny. Of course, this is the nasty side of "impure criticism," that "what the truck driver wants" might entail contradictory positions which are offensive, not only to intellectuals with a liberatory agenda, but also to those at the receiving end of racism, sexism and other bigotries.

It seems that *No Respect* does quite a few of the things it takes other intellectuals to task for: it has its own "highly priced discourse," its own "correctness" and its own "big social picture." However, in calling for a self-reflective cultural politics for our times, *No Respect* is both refreshing and elucidating. Ross's book is, after all, a manifesto for more than just critical reflection; it also calls for action. It interpellates its readers as the "new intellectuals" with a "liberatory imagination," but without the "preachy disdain of technology, popular culture, and everyday materialism" of an earlier generation. With Foucault, Ross suggests that as "specific intellectuals" we must limit our site of intervention to specific struggles that demand our specific knowledge and expertise. And in the case of "professional humanists," the area of contestation is "our specialist influence over the shaping of ethical knowledge and the education of taste." The task, according to Ross, is for professional intellectuals to find some "common ground" with a broader popular base. Ross warns: "But the challenge of such a politics is greater than ever, because, in an age of expert rule, the popular is perhaps the one field in which intellectuals are least likely to be experts." ◆

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JOSEPH **KISPAL-KOVACS**

Hollywood Narrative in the 1940s

Power and Paranoia
by **Dana Polan**

New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, 336 pp.

Social historians and scholars of the Classical Hollywood cinema will find a wealth of useful information in Dana Polan's exhaustive and somewhat eclectic reexamination of American popular culture in the 1940s. *Power and Paranoia* is an attempt to give a fairly exhaustive analysis of some 700 films and numerous cultural documents released between 1940 and 1950.

Interweaving the work of a veritable who's who of social theory from Marx to Foucault, a cursory reading of hundreds of films and dozens of books, and a critical engagement with the work of other film theorists, the book is extremely ambitious in scope.

The author sets out to produce a "historical deconstruction" of some of the narrative strategies deployed by the American culture industry, especially the Hollywood cinema, during the decade that included the Second World War and the immediate post-war period. As Polan puts it:

> I want to look at the ways that a dominant power and a disturbing paranoia interweave and find each to be a parodic image of the other. Power here is the power of a narrative system especially – the power that narrative structure specifically possesses to write an image of life as coherent, teleological, univocal … Paranoia here will first be a fear of narrative, and the particular social representations it works to uphold, against all that threatens the unity of its logical framework.

In other words, Polan wants to show how the strategies of containment employed by the Hollywood cinema began to be unravelled by the social pressures of this rather unsettled period in American history. There is already a wealth of scholarship that places this shift in the American cinema at the end of the Second World War.

Polan acknowledges this, but then goes on to argue that in fact this neat dualism, between wartime unity and post-war disillusionment (especially as evidenced in the *film noir*), is itself problematic. In fact, many of the "war-affirmative" films of the early forties themselves exhibit contradictory narrative formations. The drive to unite a nation behind such an enormous war mobilization – one fought abroad in combat and at home in the factories and even inside the family – irrevocably transformed America.

Power and Paranoia is divided into an introduction and six chapters. The introduction and the first two chapters are methodological in orientation, raising issues of cultural and film historiography, and examining the "drive to narrativity in the war-affirmative" films.

In the third chapter Polan attempts to address the internal weaknesses of the drive to narrative coherence in the films, and the contradictions that undermine the gloss of wartime unity in American society.

The preoccupation with the power of the sciences and rationality in American society during the forties is the subject of the fourth chapter. Here Polan contends that the re-emergence of sci-fi and horror films in this period points to new forms of narrativizing the conflict between desire and rationality.

The increasing forms of defamiliarization in representations of time and space that come into play in the narratives of the Hollywood cinema, and the rise of a non-narrative spectacle are seen as expressions of a reified and completely commodified post-war society. In the final two chapters of the book, the author tries to map out the possible connections between these phenomena.

Polan's reading of many of the films of the period works well in fleshing out the cinema's recording of the important changes that took place in American society during the Second World War and the dawn of the Cold War. Under this reading Polan attempts to connect the narrative concerns of certain films with the social upheavals and transformations that took place in American society.

Polan demonstrates that wartime issues such as racial segregation in the armed forces, labour unrest, and the breakup of families, are handled allegorically through narratives that magically affirm racial and ethnic unity, working class solidarity against the enemy, and the miraculous reunion of separated couples. The Hollywood machine was forced to work overtime to heal the rifts that arose in a fractured society.

Nevertheless, the films were not entirely successful in portraying a nation united in facing its challenge in a rationalistic and altruistic manner. Narrative drives were often in conflict with one another. This is evident in a particularly popular narrative of "conversion" from 1943:

> a combined American populism ... and American spiritualism ... can conflict potentially with the oedipal structure of classic romantic narrative where authority figures are also sexual figures – rivals – and women are the objects of desire for men.
>
> In *Casablanca,* for example, the conversion narrative is in tension with an oedipal narrative. It may not be insignificant that the screenwriters report their confusion all through the days of production as to which ending to use (Should Rick stay with Ilsa or not? Should desire or duty triumph?); their hesitation is the hesitation of the Hollywood machine at this moment, the hesitation of narrativity itself at this moment.

In no other decade in history did Hollywood come under closer scrutiny by the forces of government.

This examination of narrative conflict in the wartime films, which Polan uses to reassess the received view of wartime unity, is continued in his examination of the post-war period in which, most commentators have argued, Hollywood narrative strategies became seriously unravelled. Here conflicts like those between desire and rationality, power and paranoia, wartime victory and post-war disillusionment become clearly evident in a large body of films, especially *film noir,* which entered its darkest period after the war,

and in numerous horror and science-fiction films (which, respectively, reflected contemporary fascinations with psychoanalysis and the downside of scientific positivism).

However, despite Polan's interesting rereading of the history of the Hollywood film in this period, *Power and Paranoia* suffers from several weaknesses. The first, and perhaps most evident, follows from the enormity of the project the author has undertaken. Because Polan tries to address so many individual films, his analysis often falls back on generalities and simple dualisms (as in the reading of *Casablanca* quoted above).

The other problem with the book is Polan's decision to focus almost exclusively on film narrative itself. There is virtually no discussion of the extra-filmic, political interference exercised on the Hollywood film industry by the American state, despite the fact that in no other decade in history did Hollywood come under closer scrutiny by the forces of government.

During the war, institutions like the Office of War Information had a tremendous power over what Hollywood could, should and should not show on the screens across the country. Its manual became a significant guide to industry self-censorship. Polan only alludes to this phenomena in a couple of passages in his book.

The post-war period was also the beginning of the Cold War, the heyday of American anti-communism. While Polan does discuss the late forties rise of the sub-genre of anti-red films, he makes no attempt to look at the impact that the communist witchhunt, initiated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, had on the industry. The government's attack on "leftist" influence inside the industry, and the subsequent blacklisting carried out by the studios themselves, led to the dismissal of some 600 to 1,000 of Hollywood's most creative talents. This attack led to a relative artistic decline in the films made at the end of the decade and into the 1950s.

Perhaps it was a conscious decision on the author's part to exclude these extra-filmic political influences on Hollywood narrativity. However, this exclusion tends to give the book a mono-thematic character. Polan discusses outside social influences on the cinema only where they seem to directly affect the interplay of different narrative strands in specific films.

As a discussion of narrative dissonance in the 1940s, *Power and Paranoia* has few precedents, and is worthy of serious consideration as an immanent critique of the Hollywood cinema. The difficulty lies in the fact that it leaves the impression that narrative conflict is self-generating or, at best reflective, almost impervious to the general and indirect impact of outside social forces. ◆

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KIM IAN **MICHASIW**

The Therapy of Culture

Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression

ed. **David Michael Levin**

New York: New York University Press, 1987, 548 pp.

In recent years literary, cultural, and social theorists have borrowed liberally from theories of the human subject that derive from the consulting room and clinic. Practising therapists and analysts have, however, tended to seal themselves off from extra-disciplinary influences, even from what used to be called "applied psychoanalysis." Disciplinary lines have hardened and specialization has removed the specialist from movements in "general" intellectual culture. David Michael Levin's collection of 16 essays attempts to redress this imbalance. The volume is witness to the encounter between various contemporary psychotherapeutic practices and those recent theoretical developments that we have come to call postmodern. Here Jacques Derrida visits the consulting room, Martin Heidegger roams the back wards of state psychiatric hospitals, and Michel Foucault drops in for Awareness Week at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur.

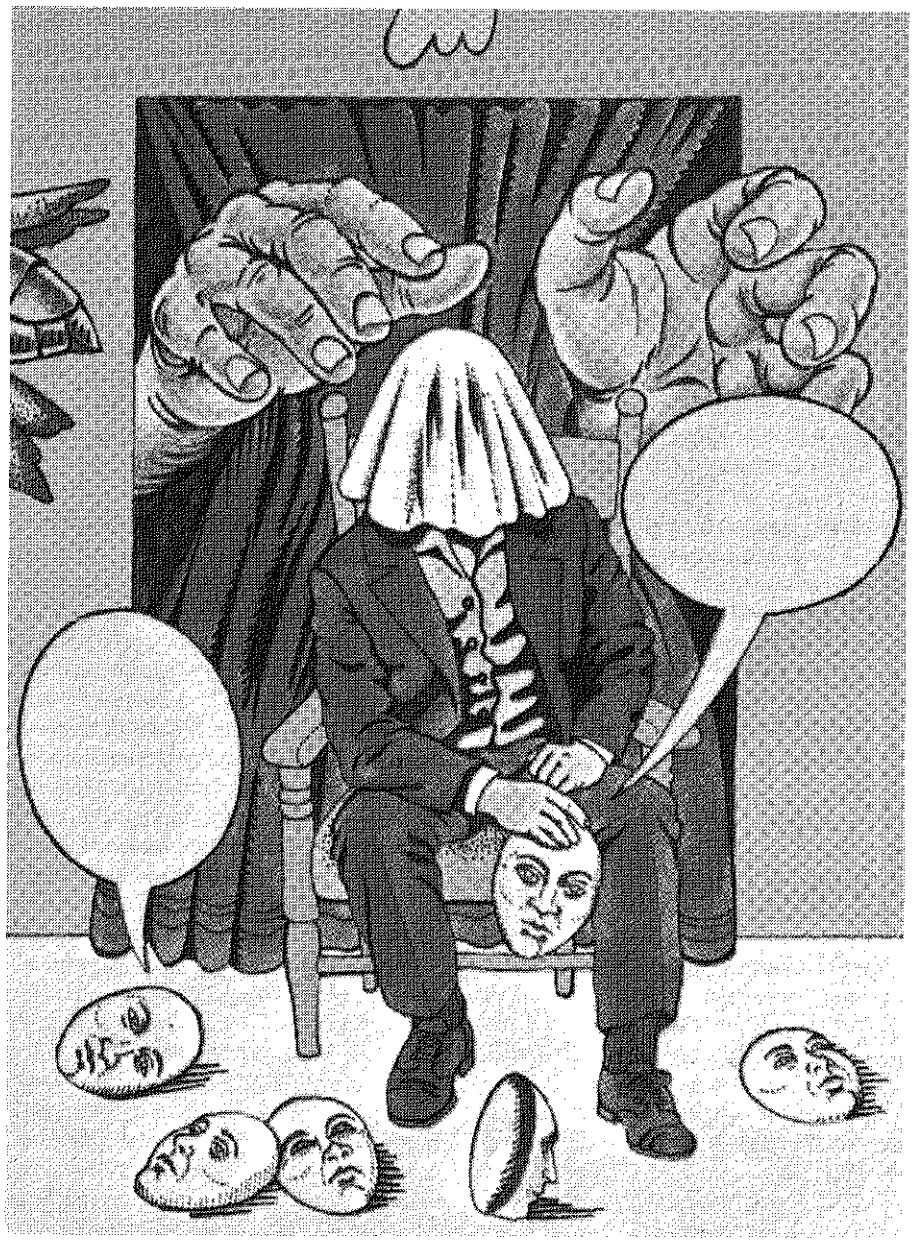
The rationale for these encounters is Levin's call for a "cultural epidemiology" for our times. That is, the volume's project is an investigation of those psychic disorders that are now culturally dominant, with the assumption that these are characteristic expressions, perhaps the truest products of the postmodern condition. This assumption is based on the frequently asserted claim that the types of disorder on which Freud founded psychoanalysis – notably hysteria – are rarely encountered by today's analysts. Other types of disorder are now dominant. This shift is in part the result of changes in nosological definitions but is also a sign of the inevitably historical character of psychic disorders.

Emphasized here are the intricate linkages between the human subject and its society. These linkages cannot be seen in simple terms of cause and effect but are figured rather as a set of reversible *trompe l'oeils* of figure and ground. The disturbed subject is not simply the product of a pathogenic environment (family, institutional structure, workplace) as the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s claimed. Rather the subject is both produced and productive and is only institutionalized when that productivity drops below a pre-set level. This project marks a reassertion of Freud's insistence on the continuum between the disordered and the functional members of a society, a continuum that disguises itself as a binary opposition by occluding the middle and by developing a massive psycho-medical establishment to police that occlusion. This policing function is the focus of several contributions to the volume. Notable among these, and the collection's most typically postmodern study, is Irene Harvey's deconstruction of the American Psychiatric Association's 1980 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-III). This manual serves as guide to those who separate the "mad" from the "sane" and, as Harvey demonstrates, presumes a radical pre-diagnostic divide between the two. This divide permits identical sets of symptoms to signify entirely different conditions. Senses of uniqueness, individuality and self-initiation are, for instance, signs of normality in the normal and of disturbance in the disturbed. As the essay concludes, "If one were actually to submit to the manual's concept of normality – what it calls our 'sense of self' – one would lose one's job."

The instruments with which the "therapeutic community" creates taxonomies are clearly open to question but these questions do not make the patients (in the literal sense of those suffering) vanish. The way the patient is seen may transform that patient but it is difficult to maintain that the diagnosis *creates* the disorder and the suffering it brings with it. Moreover, even if diagnosis helps to create the disorder, it does so as part of society's pathogenic apparatus.

This last possibility is one of the abiding concerns of Levin's volume and is one of the three primary reasons why the contributors to it feel the need to appeal to contemporary social theory for aid. The first of these is that if technological late capitalism is productive of specific sets of pathologies that can be labelled "character disorders," then some attention to the character of that society is necessary on the part of those who are attempting to cure its victims. Unfortunately this question is addressed directly less often than one might wish. The exception is Cisco Lassiter's committed but disconcertingly brief "Dislocation and Illness," a study of the disorders characteristic of those Navajo forced into urban society by the 1974 Land Settlement Act.

The second reason is that if Foucault's analyses of the birth of the clinic and the



If Foucault's analyses of the birth of the clinic and the genealogy of our modes of distinguishing mad from sane are accepted, then the eye of the therapeutic establishment must be turned upon itself.

genealogy of our modes of distinguishing mad from sane are accepted, then the eye of the therapeutic establishment must be turned upon itself. In order to do so that eye must see without its discipline's own blinders. It must adopt others' critiques of the prevailing technological rationality in order to see itself as that order's product and servant. This approach, for reasons that I will examine below, produces the volume's most satisfying contributions.

The third rationale, and this is the most troubling to those authors who are in practice, is that if the patient is the product of a diseased and diseasing society, and if that patient's suffering is in part the result of her/his "emargination" from that society, what can a cure mean? Obviously neither the brain chemists' program of drugging the patient into acceptance of institutionalization nor that pharmaceutical simulation of lobotomy that permits outpatients to wander through a world the clinic has expanded to engorge can be accepted. No more acceptable is any variation on the ideal of normalization. How can bringing a patient into line with the order of a pathogenic society by justified? But what does this leave as the therapist's imagined end?

Perhaps because of the contradictions involved in the therapeutic project, the most achieved and assured of the contributions to Levin's volume are authored by those who are not practising, or those who are but have chosen in this instance to take the high ground of historical, statistical, or rhetorical analysis. Harvey's attack on DSM-III is both instructive and convincing, as is Kenneth Pope and Paula Johnson's survey of gender, race and class biases in mental health service. One wonders, however, of how much use either of these is to those who require these services and thus are subject to DSM-III. Regardless of therapeutic biases and classificatory confusion, patients such as those who are quoted at agonizing length in James M. Glass's "Schizophrenia and Rationality" are suffering from more than the institution that defines them. Similarly the volume's several Foucauldian genealogies of the state of mental health care in the USA – notably those of James Bernauer and Richard F. Mollica – are descriptively useful (and damning) but prescriptively limited.

More problematic are those of the volume's studies that take up the editor's challenge to identify the links between late capitalism and its characteristic personality disorders. These fall roughly into three groups: 1) derivatives from the tradition of Critical Theory; 2) "New Age" polemics; 3) variations on anti-psychiatry.

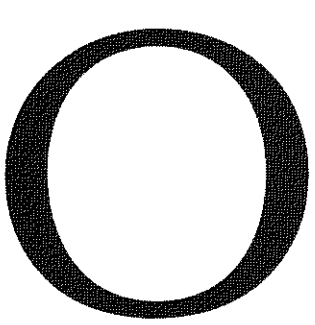
Representative of the first group are the contributions of the editor: an introduction, an introductory essay, and a conclusion, amounting to about one quarter of the volume's length. Levin situates himself in the philosophical line from Nietzsche to Heidegger by way of Horkheimer and Adorno. Thus he stands as an anti-Cartesian, a foe of the mind-body split,

and one who finds in psychopathology witness to the falsity of that divide. Moreover, in what Levin calls our "Epoch of Nihilism," what the Cartesian mind has been objectified as subjectivity. That is, as the old term "self" has been replaced by "subject," "the Self will be increasingly subjected to the most extreme objectification, i.e., domination by the exigencies of an 'objective' ordering of reality." The subjectification of being is a manifestation of the will to power's turning against itself. We become "beings who are subject to the terror of a total objectivity, and we conceal this hopeless dependency within a delusion of omnipotence that makes us believe we have the capacity to survive." Such fantasies of omnipotence slide easily into what are labelled delusional states or pathologies. Accordingly, narcissism, depression and schizophrenia have to be seen as what Christopher Lasch has called "the characteristic expression of [our] culture."

Levin's descriptive case is persuasive – in part because his analysis is analogous to those of Jean Baudrillard and Arthur Kroker and in larger part because he does not share their cheery, theatrical apocalypticism. The difficulty presented, though, is where one moves from this analysis. In this movement Levin himself begins to cite what he calls "the wisdom in Buddhist psychology [which] is ancient, but amazingly relevant." This turn allies him with the frequent recourse to shamanism and other non-Western, parareligious forms in the volume's Jungian and "New Ageist" essays.

It also produces one of the volume's significant (and surprising) villains, Susan Sontag, whose *Illness as Metaphor* serves as emblem of Cartesianism run mad. Sontag's work is a protest against those American cancerphobes, within and without the medical establishment, who brand cancer a psychosomatic disease and who, in effect, blame the patient's disease on the patient's weakness of character. Sontag argues that to blame a person's cancer on her or his (usually sexual) repression is a peculiarly vicious act of interpretive violence. "Cancer and the Self," Roger Levin's contribution to *Pathologies,* provides a prime example of this procedure. His exemplary male patients free themselves, Huck Finn-like, from social encumbrances (wife, family, job) and cure their cancers. His exemplary females are, however, too socialized, too repressed to light out on the road to health indicated by their male therapist. As a result they die.

Sontag is a villain and cancer is an issue because both put in question the reductive psychosomatism both Levins wish to assert. For Roger Levin, cancer is the body's protest against an unhealthy life dominated by the mind. His cure is effected through listening to the body and presumes that the body is an untainted, asocialized oasis, that technological society has affected only the mind. This potentially pure body is the basis of "New Age" ideology as it manifests itself in this volume. The key statement of the position is Eugene T. Gendlin's "A Philosophical Critique of the Concept of Narcissism: The Significance of the Awareness Movement." This essay is an extended attack on those "psychoanalytic thinkers [who] can see little more than selfishness and self indulgence in current trends, [who] use the term 'narcissism' to say that people's inner preoccupation interferes with their social bonding." For Gendlin those whose primary concern is with the "intricacy" of their private emotional lives are not self-absorbed bores whom one wants to strangle after ten minutes' "conversation." Rather they are a wonderful new evolutionary development. "In Jung's scheme," Gendlin comments, "such people are not the highest stage of human development." In this instance, however, Jung is wrong, as such people are encountering, regularly, "experiential openings that only poets and mystics once enjoyed."



One of the volume's signficant and surprising villains is Susan Sontag, whose *Illness as Metaphor* serves as emblem of Cartesianism run mad.

Withdrawal from social engagement, then, is a good; so too is outward conformity with a social order, however corrupt, so long as the apparent conformist doesn't really mean it. Inarticulateness is also a virtue. The experiences once confined to poets and mystics appear to be immune to verbal representation. Gendlin shares with other contributors, and with postmodern theory in general, a profound distrust of words. His particular strictures on speech are curiously reminiscent of those of Antonin Artaud. One doubts, however, that the expressive, purgative, praeter-verbal shrieks of Artaud's actor-victims should all commence with "Well … like … you know…."

Despite the occasional amusement Gendlin's essay provides, the argument's implications are sinister, or they would be if they rested on firmer ground. Any defence of upper-middle class quietism based on the assertion that no one (poets and mystics excepted) has ever, in the history of human consciousness, experienced the intricacies of emotion that beset the average Toronto commodities broker every day, is likely to lack power of persuasion. (The reader is driven to wonder if Gendlin has ever read a novel, or a diary, written before 1900.) Those who might be persuaded, those who are personally complimented or excused, are those who must comprise the majority of Gendlin's clients. Gendlin, and those who share his views, employ the analysis of a pathogenic social order as a rationale for withdrawal and discover in the body an unsocialized site for privileged, untainted experience. That is, they employ a social/historical analysis to remove their patients from history and locate in those patients' bodies a space of freedom that resists, of its own accord, traditional coding and institutional control. From these miraculously pure bodies derive "non ego" experiences that are then "focused" through a sequence of non-linear steps. This results in "a new kind of simplicity … enabling speech and action." How this translation evades the programming that, Gendlin assures us, infects all language is unclear, as is how we know that an adequate translation has been effected.

This process must, however, be reassuring to the client. In listening to the body the subject's self-mastery is reaffirmed even as the subject "transcends" both Descartes' mind-body trap and conventional patterning. On the other hand, Gendlin's clients, like those of the other contributors who frame similarly hopeful schemes are (at least) middle class and are troubled by such questions as the choice of a mate or the decision to have a baby. These problems are of a rather different order than those of James Glass's patient 'Chuck' who is sent messages by Eddy a police clerk who sits in a small town in Illinois: "'Eddy speaks to everyone in the Hospital … he controls it all … he's going to kill everyone with a machine gun … three million people. …Eddy speaks to me about crucifixion; he tells me I've been crucified, hacked into a thousand pieces, stuffed into a Baltimore sausage.'" It

seems unlikely that "Chuck" is going to be helped much by listening to the voice of this morselated body.

Glass's account of "Chuck" and other patients similarly disturbed serves as an index to the radical separation between the essays of those contributors who treat patients who would be diagnosed as disordered even by a system infinitely more enlightened than DSM-III and those who deal with what Pope and Johnson identify as psychotherapy's preferred client: "young, attractive, well-educated members of the upper-middle class, possessing ... no seriously disabling neurotic symptoms, relative absence of characterological distortions...." Glass and Joel Kovel confront directly the anti-psychiatric maxim that schizophrenia is perhaps the most reasonable response of the human subject to the dehumanized condition of the citizen of late capitalism. They confront also the sheer misery of many schizophrenics' existences, misery that is partly but by no means completely the result of the medical, pharmaceutical, institutional prison into which most schizophrenics are placed. In so doing they address the currency of schizophrenia as metaphor in contemporary theory. In the context of Glass's patients, the schizophrenic taking a stroll who is Deleuze and Guattari's emblem for the postmodern condition is revealed as a remarkably neutralized figure. That "schizo" is not reduced constantly to quivering terror by the threats and orders of a genocidal police clerk. Those whose lives have demetaphorized this postmodern commonplace are generally less delighted about the situation than are those who invoke blithely Deleuze and Guattari's figure at academic conferences. (Glass's account of his patient "Vicky's" becoming-bug underlines the metaphorical opportunism of Deleuze and Guattari's program for becoming-animal, where the human retains control and is merely taking a vacation from species specificity.)

The question for these writers is whether or not there exists a continuity between schizophrenic and "normal" experience. For Kovel the continuum is interrupted by catastrophe. In schizophrenia the "critical negativity within being – that capacity to refuse the given world while remaining one's self – is demolished and transposed to the zone of non-being." Schizophrenia can tell the observer "more about existential possibilities – including emancipation – than does the flaccid despair of normal adaptation. But we appreciate this only if we recognize just how far the schizophrenic has fallen – that he shows us the contours of transcendent possibilities precisely by being so far removed from them." The schizophrenic is the pure product of technological rationality but one whose minor resistances, those guaranteeing the subject's continuing and socially necessary illusion of independence have imploded, leaving only the chaos out of which schizophrenia is constructed.

Glass's essay is less engaged with the actual treatment of schizophrenics than is Kovel's. Thus it can emphasize the lines of continuity between his patients' illicit delusions and the "legitimate" political delusions that operate in society at large. That is, his patients' convictions of conspiracy are seen as signs of their alienation from reality; the equally ungrounded conspiratorial convictions of the National Rifle Association are regarded as sane. As François Roustang remarks in *Dire Mastery*, "delirium is the theory of the one, theory is the delirium of several." If "Chuck's" conviction that malign forces are arrayed against him and the other citizens of Baltimore centred on the KGB, or a cabal of liberal legislators, rather than an Illinois police clerk, he might have emerged a national leader rather than an institutionalized schizophrenic.

Kovel's and Glass's treatment of the schizophrenic can, I think, be a guide to our own dealings with Levin's volume. Both schizophrenia and the collection are definite products and potential critiques of the postmodern condition. The central problematic of the collection is only occasionally addressed directly, but the editor's challenge to see both psychic disorders and writings about them as symptoms broods over and affects the reading of all the essays. Those set at an academic reserve suggest a number of applications of postmodern theory to an area of practice that remains primarily modernist in its assumptions. Those studies more involved, particularly those originating in campaigns for self-improving, self-transcending therapies, are useful as manifestations of sophisticated forms of adaptive pathology. Finally, in Kovel and Glass, we encounter ways of thinking through the critique of our society that is enacted by extreme, debilitating psychic disorders. These ways are beginnings only but they are better beginnings than others being at least relatively free of the metaphorical excess, sentimental liberationism, and the denial of the disturbed individual's actual being that too frequently infest such arguments. ◆

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ALAN **O'CONNOR**

Just Plain Home Cookin'

City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles
by **Mike Davis**
photographs by Robert Morrow

London, New York: Verso, 1990, 463 pp.

Like most enjoyable books on cities this one is bulky and unorthodox. It's over 450 pages of text, notes, maps, and Robert Morrow's black and white photos. Mike Davis no longer drives a truck for a living. But if he now teaches at the California Institute for Architecture he wants us to know that behind this book "There are no research grants, sabbaticals, teaching assistants, or other fancy ingredients...." Just plain home cooking from the same person who brought us *Prisoners of the American Dream* – one of a handful of books that actually makes sense of the Reagan and Bush years.

City of Quartz sounds like the title of a bad novel. You know the sort of thing: "Footsteps echoed on dark paved streets. The phone rang in the small sixteenth-floor office of Brad Concrete, Private Investigator." But *City of Sand* wouldn't have done because although Los Angeles seems at times to be built on a kind of dreaming, it is real and solid enough, and not about to collapse back into the desert. And *Silicon Valley* says only one part of what Southern California is all about.

One of the most fascinating parts of *City of Quartz* is an overview of the many ways in which this sprawling metro-centre has been imagined. One thinks of Los Angeles as a city which gets bad press. It has been variously thought of as a retirement health spa for elderly Midwesterners, a socialist utopia, a place of brutal union-breaking and racism, a nightmare of crime fiction and *film noir*, empty space for your very own $500,000 Dream Home, and a military playground for the Pentagon.

Robert Morrow's photographs for the book might be called documentary. A great many of them are images of monuments or signs such as "Century Woods

Estates, from $2 million NEXT RIGHT." As evidence they play a different role than the images that were to be part of Walter Benjamin's great book on Paris. Benjamin wanted to show that something like an advertising image works because it offers *something* of a dream for a better world as it distorts that dream for gain. Morrow's photos work like a wagging finger or security camera: they accuse. A good example is his photo of a "bum-proof" bus bench: shaped like a log so that anyone who tries to sleep on it falls off. It is useful to have that evidence. Just hope that municipal authorities elsewhere don't notice it. There is no photo in the book of something like this: Mike Davis, long-distance truck driver and socialist, watching (in his words) "the Space Shuttle in its elegant final descent towards Rogers Dry Lake." That would be a different kind of photo.

It is surprising how many intellectuals have tried to crack Los Angeles: the Frankfurt School in exile, Marcuse in the 1960s, Baudrillard and Jameson in the 1980s. But the hype that surrounds these names can distract us from other types of intellectuals who have decisively shaped what Southern California is about: water-works engineers, physics Ph.D.s, real estate developers and their boosters, and, in a different way, the artistic and intellectual elite of Southern California's museums, research institutes and universities, and the artists, musicians and writers who add culture and help increase property values. The work of most of these intellectuals is an organic part of the Los Angeles enterprise. What are the chances of resisting? The socialist utopia of the 1910s was driven out. The mural art movement has died out. But today Davis cites the work of radical intellectuals called the LA School. Located mainly in the planning and geography faculties at UCLA they're fixing on alternatives to the yuppie restaurants and the hungry streets of the fastest growing metro-centre in the industrialized world.

Los Angeles has often been taken, by visiting and famous intellectuals, as a general model for the world of late-capitalism. Davis describes the city as a product of its own particular history. In the early 20th century, this city based on real-estate speculation had two power elites: one based downtown, the other in the west-side. Each time one elite tried to use the Mayor's office to bolster its property values (for example with the public transit) the other side accused it of socialism. The Watts Rebellion of 1965 – of blacks against racist police and housing polices – momentarily upset the balance between the power elites, but they were soon back in control, pushing the same corporate development plans. This changed in the 1980s as new money from Japan, China, Korea and Canada started to buy up more than 75 percent of LA real estate. Mayor Bradley denounces any criticism of the powerful Japanese developers as racist.

Meanwhile, neighbourhood preservation organizations of middle-class home owners have organized for decades to keep housing segregated by class and race. Today, a slow-growth movement wants to put brakes on development and keep property values rising for those who already have a mortgage. The imminent collapse of the sewage, flood control and water systems along with the worst air pollution of any city in the advanced industrial world demonstrate in a different way that there are real limits to growth. The non-Anglo working class looking for a place to live is caught between the powerful development corporations and the limousine environmentalists.

Los Angeles has often been taken, by visiting and famous intellectuals, as a general model for the world of late capitalism.

Both public architecture and private dwellings have been militarized as part of a war against street people. Public buildings are built like prisons to keep undesirables out. Affluent home buyers want private streets with electronic gates and armed security patrols. The Los Angeles Police Department carries out more helicopter surveillance of high crime areas than the British army does in Belfast. Gatherings of young people, even white youth, are strictly controlled and policed.

In spite of the LAPD record of anti-black violence, even some liberal black leaders support its war on black and Latino youth. Actual violence between the two super-gangs of crack dealers (since 1987 an average of a death every day) have been amplified into a demonology. Massive police sweeps which have resulted in 50,000 arrests (there are 100,000 black youth in LA). In effect, martial law has been imposed on a whole generation, their families and neighbourhoods.

Black street gangs in Los Angeles have a history that goes back to the 1940s when they were a response to racist attacks by *white* youth gangs. Traditional rivalries among the black gangs were overcome during the Black Panther years of the late 1960s. The Crips emerged in the early 1970s among the ruins of the black power movement. Something between a teen-cult and a proto-mafia developed in the context of massive black unemployment, overcrowded schools, a lack of recreation facilities, dilapidated housing and racist policing. The city put its money into downtown skyscrapers and then into a militarized police force. Even good leftists sometimes condemn the LA drug gangs as out of hand. Davis wants to open a dialogue: in a post-liberal society, with the gangplanks pulled up and compassion strictly rationed by the federal deficit and the Jarvis amendment, where a lynchmob demagogue like William Bennett reigns as drug czar – is it any wonder that poor youths are hallucinating on their own desperado power trips?

While the Crips and the Bloods were figuring out how an Uzi automatic works, the historically conservative Catholic Church in LA was discovering that more and more people coming to Sunday Mass were speaking Spanish. The Pope on his 1987 tour briefly addressed the predominantly Latino crowd gathered outside the downtown Cathedral. He spoke in English. The nominally progressive archbishop flies around in a $400,000 jet-powered helicopter while busting attempts by his 140 gravedigger (paid $6 to $7.85 an hour) to form a union. The key seems to be that the hierarchy's moral agenda (against abortion and safe-sex education) neatly dovetails with the Reaganite political agenda of the Californian agribusiness elite. Nonetheless, his Lordship has been continually embarrassed by a small number of progressive priests who actually seek to empower the city's Latino population, especially large numbers of refugees

from the various Central American wars sponsored by the United States government.

This is clearly not a book about postmodernism. For Davis, history has not ended and a story can still be told. Nonetheless, this book is not composed as a single narrative, but is a series of smaller stories each working in its own different way. Los Angeles is clearly many different places. The final chapter – the book as a whole has no conclusion – tells the story of Fontana, 60 miles east of Los Angeles. The area was first marketed as franchise citrus and chicken farms. It was doing well when Henry J. Kaiser moved in with a steel plant to supply his wartime shipyards. The coke fumes killed off the orange trees but Kaiser Steel was a paradigm of the postwar partnership between unionized labour, government and business. Black workers were kept in the dirtiest jobs in the steel plant and the worst part of town. To enforce this, in December 1945, the KKK soaked the home of a black activist in coal oil and set it on fire. The entire family died in agony.

In December 1983 the last fires of the steel plant itself cooled. The plant closed, a victim of under-investment, competition from the Japanese steel industry and a final sharp Reagan-era takeover bid. However, Fontana didn't become another town like Flint, Michigan. It rose from the ashes as a new community of middle-class commuters. Mind you, it took creative financing and quite a bit of effort to overcome its gritty image problem. Along with this development came the rebirth of the KKK in Fontana the same year that the steel plant closed. The 1988 Martin Luther King birthday celebrations had to be protected by 120 cops as Klansmen shouted: "Long live the Klan. Long live the white boys." ◆

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GARY GENOSKO

The Bar of Theory

Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond
by **Douglas Kellner**

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, 246 pp.

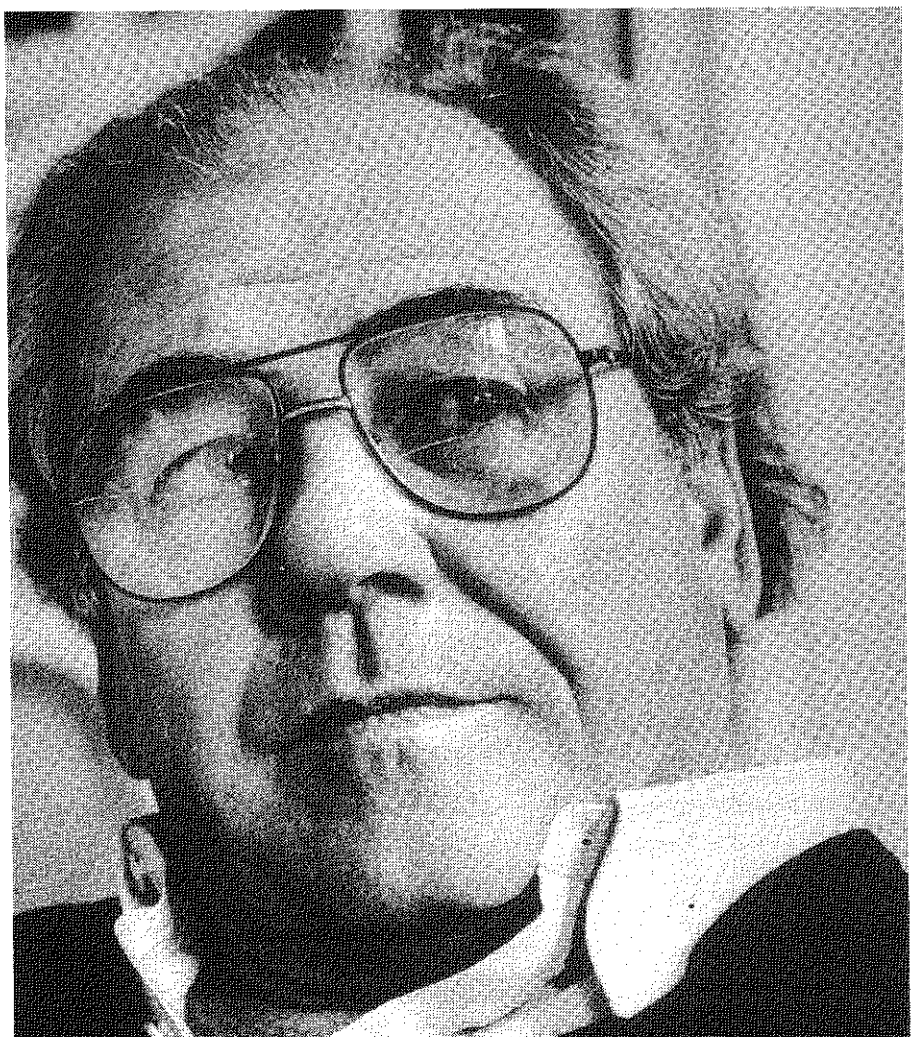
Kellner's *Baudrillard* has not been kindly received. It has come under attack in the pages of *Telos, Economy and Society,* and the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory.* Rather than rehearsing these criticisms here, I will take a different tack.

A glance at the literature on Baudrillard published by English speaking critical theorists (some of whom take the prefix "neo-") provides insight into the ironies of Baudrillard scholarship. Aside from the illustrated Baudrillard of the art magazines and the pleasing diversions of the panic readers, the critical theory literature constitutes the major "tradition."

There are numerous papers and chapters on Baudrillard's relation to Marx. In general, there is as much banality as there is innovation with respect to the way that Baudrillard is positioned in this relation. For instance, the Marx-Debord-Baudrillard trajectory is as obvious as it its popular to repeat, while an investigation of Baudrillard's debts to Marshall McLuhan, Herbert Marcuse, Henri Lefebvre, the Arguments group, his role in the review, *Utopie,* his early translations of Peter Weiss, Bertolt Brecht and Fredrich Engels are less well known, if they are mentioned at all.

Among critical theorists, however, there is no agreement on whether or not Baudrillard has what might be called, generously or otherwise, a sense of counterpraxis, an oppositional strategy. Baudrillard's idea of hyperconformist simulation has proved to be undecidable. This undecidability can neither be reduced to the strength of Baudrillard's use of paradox, nor does it arise from the collapse of a unified critical perspective, with all of the nostalgia for the unity of the past. It is, to be sure, a situation that Kellner has chosen not to recognize. He is firm in his belief that Baudrillard offers no strategic-political alternative. While this position is not lacking in politico-textual

Baudrillard has consistently argued against "semiological dandyism," even though Kellner insists on pinning this label on him.



savvy, it is one which not only refuses contextualization, and thus obscures several acts of the Baudrillard "scene," but operates on a level too abstract to appreciate the effectiveness of such notions as hyperconformity on the tactical level. Kellner makes no distinction between the strategic and the tactical, and this is the kind of omission that I will build on.

Kellner never tires of repeating that Baudrillard has no subject who might valorize itself in a given sphere, such as Michel de Certeau describes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a work which Kellner repeatedly valourizes without interrogating its claims. For Certeau, consumption is a sphere of self-valorization, although only on the tactical level, as Kellner omits. When he comes to consider hyperconformity, Kellner refuses to afford it any strategic value and looks to Certeau for an alternative. Any operation such as Certeau's *la perruque* or "ripping off" time and materials from one's employer for personal ends, or even Baudrillard's use of Freud's Witz as a means of short-circuiting signification and establishing a potlatch of laughter and the exchange of stories and jokes (the techniques of which give pleasure in themselves), may be seen as tactical. In a way, and in spite of himself, Kellner confirms the tactical viability of several of Baudrillard's notions (given their similarity with those of Certeau) by enabling us to appreciate the ways of the tactical. With respect to hyperconformity, consider the brilliant ruse unfolded in Hirose Takashi's *Nuclear Power Plants in Tokyo.* By hyperconforming to the propaganda of the nuclear industry, Takashi's eco-peace group forced an admission of the dangers of nuclear energy from the industry by means of the convincing simulation of the possibility of constructing nuclear power stations in downtown Tokyo. This tactical victory, based on the principle of what one might call a homolopathic exaggeration, did not pretend to put an end to the nuclear problem in Japan. Such is the local wiliness of the tactical. Kellner will make a similar mistake with respect to his use of the work of Roland Barthes.

In the critical theory tradition, semiology remains somewhat of a mystery. Such a claim might be ignored or taken as evidence of the ongoing standoff between semiology and critical theory if Baudrillard had nothing to do with semiology and Kellner did not call on the spirit of Adorno in his book on Baudrillard. No such excuses are available. In fact, one of Baudrillard's most consistent concerns has been with the continental semiological tradition. There is room for a paper on Baudrillard's Saussure, but one will not find it here.

It is evident from the beginning of Kellner's *Baudrillard* when he speaks of the "French semiologist Ferdinand de Saussure" (Saussure was Swiss and a linguist who dreamt of a science of signs) that the presentation of semiology will be, let us say, brittle. Consider Kellner's use of Barthes as a thinker who, unlike Baudrillard, has a multiplex theory of the code; whereas Baudrillard, thinks Kellner, has a monolithic code and relies inappropriately upon a model of language. Barthes's much commented upon glottocentrism which arose from his inversion of Saussure's idea that linguistics would be a branch of a general science of signs (for Barthes, semiology was instead absorbed into a trans-linguistics) seems to have escaped Kellner. Barthes's brand of linguistic imperialism is thankfully confined to a minor tradition in semiotics. Once again, though, Kellner's choice of an alternative turns out to be regrettable.

Kellner thinks that Baudrillard is a semiological idealist, thus expressing his fear that everything solid melts into air when it becomes a sign. This enthusiastically misapplied chemistry takes on increasingly frosty forms as the book progresses.

In *L'echange symbolique et la mort,* Baudrillard singles out an essay by the American zoosemiotician T.A. Sebeok which he thinks contains the idea of the precession of the structural code. In spite of Sebeok's purpose, and indeed, in light of it, the code stains everything with differential value. The pretension to a universal commutability may be grounded, thinks Sebeok, in the genetic code, a kind of super code for both bio- and socio-logics. More-

over, the genetic code may be theorized as an objective model in a phantasy of a unified semiotic field. Baudrillard thinks that this code is a reproduction machine: it is the model of models, a single irreducible metaphysical principle which provides a perfect example of operational simulation. Kellner does not overlook the obvious analogies of such an example between DNA, linguistics and social organization. These analogies, however, serve Baudrillard's purpose because they express the tyranny of the code, by which he means the system which underlies every message. In Sebeok's use of genetics, every message is coded many times over by numerous sub-codes, all of which are reducible to the code, the model of models.

Kellner is uneasy with the idea of the code and expresses concern that "one must avoid the semiotic mistake of projecting the idea of 'inscription' onto the world of nature." This is especially the case for the genetic code since, for Guattari, it functions asemiotically (it is linguistically unformed).

The code in its most general and flexible terms is a system of rules for the combination of stable sets of terms into messages (*langue* is to code as *parole* is to message; whenever there is signification, there is a code). By "the system" Baudrillard means "the code," and the logic of the code is disjunctive. In these terms, as a generalizable structural principle, the code can accommodate a range of contents. In order to see why this is the case one must first understand what makes an analysis structural. That is, a given content is brought to light in virtue of a model, a structure consisting of a formal set of elements and relations.

By reading Sebeok against himself, Baudrillard finds evidence of what Kellner seems to think is some form of fetishism on Baudrillard's part. Kellner, then, denies Baudrillard any critical distance from his examples. At the same time, and this is what makes Kellner's effort so frustrating, he has not missed the fact that the structural revolution remains for Baudrillard a repressive, reductive and reifying institution against which he sets his concept of the symbolic. This revolution neutralizes poetics, excludes ambivalence, polices anagrams and, in general, divides and conquers by means of *la barre saussurienne,* the bar of structural implication between the signifier and the signified. Baudrillard has consistently argued against "semiological dandyism," even though Kellner insists on pinning this label on him. Substantial sections of *L'echange symbolique* and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* are devoted to attacks on the disjunctive code whose structural effects are produced by the separation of terms in a form of mutual exclusion in which each term in its turn becomes the imaginary of the other.

There is also the matter of Kellner's charge of sign-fetishism. Baudrillard too has called for a critique of the signifier-fetishism of the sign-form that "Marxist analysis has not yet mastered." He complains of both Saussure's and Emile Benveniste's idealism, of the metaphysics which drives semio-linguistics, and of the fictional separation and subsequent bridging of this so-called "gap" between the sign and the referent. Marx, that is, Harpo, thinks Baudrillard in *L'echange symbolique,* knew better than to create a gap in-between the sign and the referent only in order to fill it with the problematics of motivation: "...when Harpo Marx brandished a real sturgeon in the place of the word 'sturgeon,' here, then, in substituting the referent for the term, in abolishing their separation, he truly destroys arbitrariness and at the same time the system of representation – a poetic act *par excellence:* killing the signifier 'sturgeon' with its own referent." Baudrillard's point is that in everyday life, even linguists like Benveniste have no need of the baggage of semio-linguistics.

In short, Kellner's *Baudrillard* does not initiate us into the bar games of post-structuralism. Baudrillard's critique of the structure of the sign and of signification as fundamentally simulacral was part of a collection of practices which I call bar games – the bar in question is the one in-between the signifier and the signified and, really, any bar of difference. Bar games were standard features of the anti-semiological routine of post-structuralist critical practices in the face of the institution of interpretation called structuralism. Just as Derrida had his hinge, Lyotard his band and whirling bar, Deleuze and Guattari their weak disjunction, Baudrillard had his bars of structural implication and radical exclusion. The former may be found in his table of conversions between political economy and semiology; the latter separated the fields of value from non-value (everything that is structural as opposed to symbolic). One may be said to be a post-structuralist if one plays anti-semiological bar games. Lacan too made the bar an issue since he was, in spite of his claims of scientificity, an important player of anti-Saussurean bar games. The period from 1966 to 1976 in Paris was a time of intense play and hanging around the bar. Now, it's not that Kellner refuses to play, but rather that he hasn't noticed the games.

As the curtain begins to fall on the Baudrillard "scene," we will have time to read his work in semiotic terms, and on this basis mount a new production. In this respect, Kellner's *Baudrillard* may serve as a negative example, although as any player of bar games knows, a negative such as "-" may become, with a well-placed stroke, a "+" or a "=," bringing into play Lacan's stroking of the horizontal bar, or Pierre Klossowski's maniac of the parallel bars. I'm game, bar none. ◆

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LORENZO BUJ

The Secret Impulse

Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century
by Greil Marcus

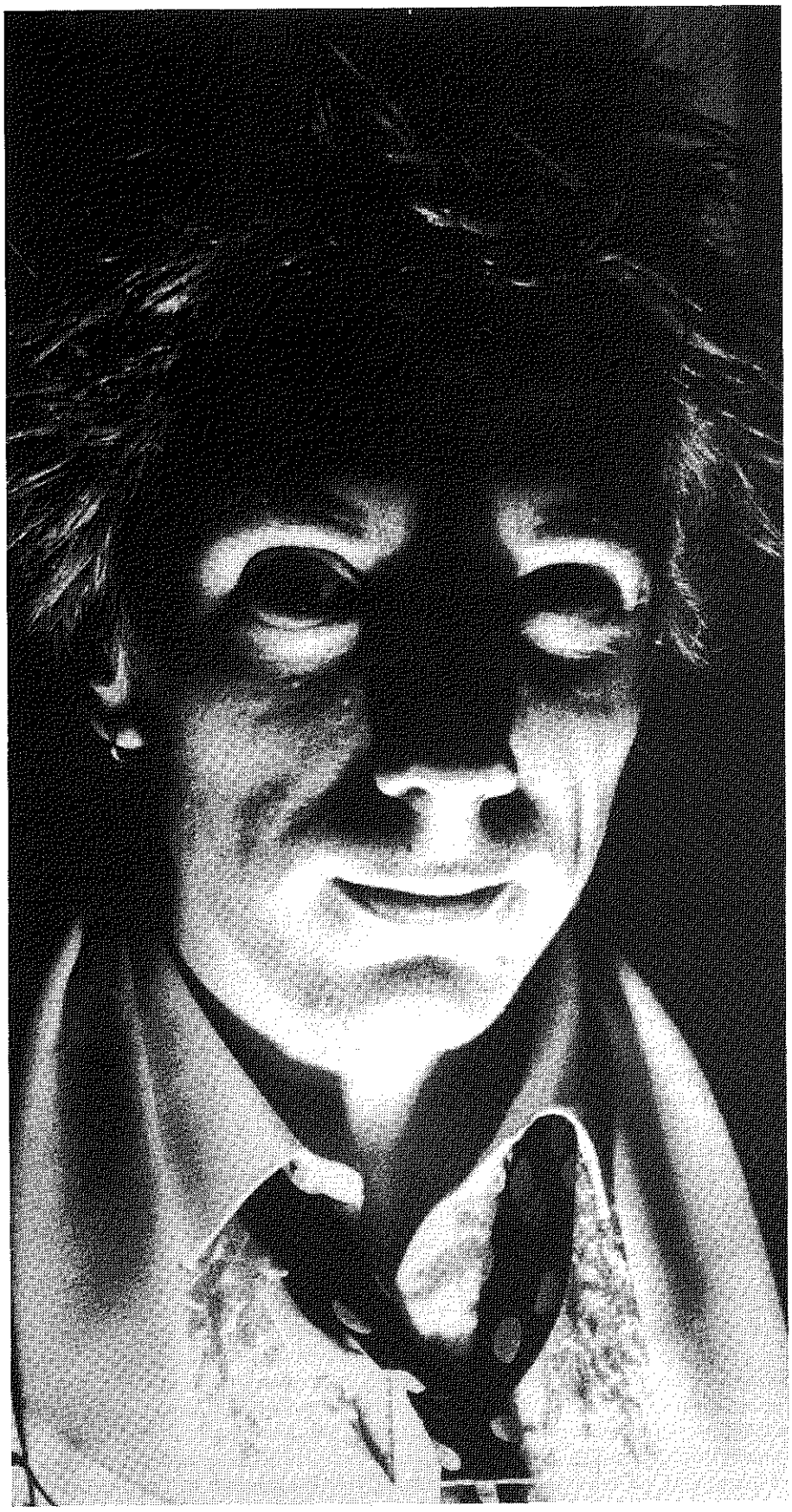
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,1989, 496 pp.

At age 45 Greil Marcus maintains that "any good punk song can sound like the greatest thing you've ever heard." The line comes from *Lipstick Traces,* a vast amplification of the themes that have obsessed him in the 80s, and a book that actually exceeds his noteworthy achievement in *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock and Roll* (1975).

Lipstick Traces is a recursive meditation on "the spirit of negation," an aberrant trans-historical force that has fueled orgies of social protest and political disgust, or, more likely, propelled avant-gardes, secret societies, restive anarchists and petty thugs with a theological axe to grind. Marcus is drawn to those moments in a cabaret, a cathedral, a lecture hall, when an individual or a small group makes an absolute gesture, carries out an act of transgression, that promises to wipe out or radically reconfigure all social facts.

The last Sex Pistols gig at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom is at the autobiographical core of the book, for that's when Marcus heard Johnny Rotten's voice bring all "the unpaid debts of history" back into play. Reflecting on that night in January 1978, the text reaches for an uplifting malevolence and swells into hyperbole, but when the narrative cuts off we assume that the intellectual aftershock must have been equally empowering, leaving Marcus with a burden and a premise for a book: in annihilating history, in denying all personality but his own, Rotten may have evaded the debilities of influence anxiety, but he was nevertheless carrying on a long-standing "conversation," one he may not have consciously understood or even been aware of.

This conversation, whose ageless documents are reduced to shattered pieces and refracted particles, is made up of bizarre congruities and stray echoes sounding



each other out across space and time. Marcus uses the Pistols as a radioactive fragment in a great code that includes the Paris Commune, the Situationists, Michael Jackson's "Victory" tour, gnostic heretics, Dadaist blasphemers, etc. The diversity of such material is pulled together by a deliberate strategy of repetition and iterative explication. The method is non-systematic but relentless, resulting in a lengthy work that nevertheless disclaims the possibility of its own totality. It sometimes feels as if the intellectual content simply crystallized around memories and fantasies, and things Marcus had been clipping and collecting over the years: newspaper scraps, notes from abandoned projects, excerpts of outdated essays, snatches of music and bits of poetry. The author himself thereby enters into the conversation, carried forth by a visionary itch that underwrites the residue of confessional longing evident everywhere in his text.

Scholars or ideologically committed readers might complain this kind of approach can hardly be to the author's credit, but such are the perils of a book whose repressed aim is to confess an attraction to the apocalyptic transports that form the secret impulse of all "revolutions." It's all there in the long opening chapter on the Pistols, which shows that when it wasn't stupid, petty and fascistic, punk was a promise that the wild and beautiful violence of life was vibrating at the precipice of everyday armageddon. But between the promise and its implied demands (demands fanning out from the music, then reformed and fired back by its adherents), the self-cancelling ideals of

When it wasn't stupid, petty and fascistic, punk was a promise that the wild and beautiful violence of life was vibrating at the precipice of everyday armageddon.

punk were always being sucked back into the aesthetic vortex that was one condition of their actualization. And the searing rage, likewise, forced itself into a hopeless *ménage* with the existential ugliness which punk felt it was privileged to exploit.

Of course, the same can be said of Dada, thus making the book an activist's nightmare, a troublesome tale of movements and gestures that could not accommodate themselves to any lasting form of political efficacy. If the Situationists, the most theoretically sophisticated of the lot, eventually formed a cultus "armed with the dispensations of poetry," then the stakes – as Marcus tells it – are invariably metaphysical, even when the gamblers are clear-sighted Marxists defying the odds in a vast, postwar videodrome of consumer capitalism. Rather than being revolutionary and reconstructive, the language of paradox and negation is, it seems, provocative and dissipative, like the social energies it unleashes. In piecing together the secret history, or in unknowingly reassuming a titanic and essentially private responsibility for its debts, the "revolutionary," like the liberal critic, comes upon "a map made altogether of dead ends, where the only movement possible [is] not progress, not construction, but ricochet and surprise."

Here Marcus sounds uncannily like a West-coast heir of Emerson. Even more so when he claims that Jonathan Richman's "Road Runner" shows that "the power of rock 'n' roll was all in its leaps from one moment to the next, in the impossibility of its transitions." I am awed by this simple revelation, perhaps because of its analogue in Emerson's *Self-Reliance*: "Power ceases in the moment of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim."

There are many images in Marcus of compressed intensities, microcharged synaptic leaps, risks hurled across the void and originating beneath all thresholds of consciousness – images that deny the wicked pieties of the past, the fatalism of the future, and the paralyzing reifications of life in the capitalist present. Therefore, if ultimately too slight, too romantic in its political commitments, the book keeps reminding you that its operative word is "secret," and it begs for a patient anagogic response – a corollary to the probing, mature anguish that compels a middle-aged man to come to terms with the teenage *revenant* in his psyche. ◆

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an interview with Greil Marcus

Lorenzo Buj: For me the most remarkable fact about this book is not its great range, but how utterly personal it is, how much you confess without actually sounding confessional.

Greil Marcus: I thought a lot about whether to write the book that way, with that kind of voice, but it seemed to me that after 20 years of writing about music and other things, that I had the right to write as a public person, to step out, not because whatever I had done, or seen, or thought, had more validity than whatever anyone else had done, but because it would be dishonest for me to pretend I've written this book as some sort of disinterested, historicist study, which it isn't. I don't write to explain. I write to make things happen. I overdramatize, but I'd much rather overdramatize than overexplain. The fact is we have all been socialized, and educated, and brainwashed to think that the kind of culture we live in our everyday lives, and most care about, is worthless, empty, and merely amusement, and if we actually were truly moral people we wouldn't waste our time with it. I'm trying to make the case in a dramatic way that that's totally false.

You didn't write very much about punk in America.

No, not really. I wrote about God and the State. I think the only American punk band I would have written about would be X. Just given their first album, which I think is as extreme as anything that came out of England, and as shapely, and as convincing and as upsetting. But this is not a book about punk, and this is not a history of Dada, this is not a treatise on the Situationists. It's a book about a voice, about a movement through time of a certain impulse, and how that impulse catches up various

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people. I had a great time writing about all these people, but I never made any effort to be definitive or completist. On the other hand, I do think that there is nothing English on Dada remotely like what I wrote. Everybody starts off saying Dada was an anti-art movement, so let's talk about the art. And I wanted to not talk about the art. I wanted to talk about Dada and not talk about art at all, and one of the reasons that I focused on Richard Huelsenbeck is that he is the one original founding Dadaist who was not an artist. He did a little art here, and he did a little bit there, but that's not what he was about. He was a noisemaker, he was a trouble-maker, he made people unhappy, he pissed people off.

There's this passage somewhere in Faulkner where he describes the Satanic figure as "the splendid dark incorrigible one," and then he says this figure – and this struck me as a sentence you might have written or incorporated – "did not only decline to accept a condition just because it was a fact, but he wanted to substitute another condition in its place." Wasn't that the point you were making when you were talking about social facts suddenly being shattered and reorganized around a pitch of the voice, a snarl?

If I'd known that line from Faulkner, believe me, it'd be in this book somewhere. That sums up what so many of the people I write about tried to do and believed they were doing, particularly with the word "satanic."

Black music. Where has it been in the 80s, where is it now?

I think the great tragedy of black music in the last decade is the failure of reggae to break through as a major commercial force. Of course, it got heard and got popular; it became a cult music for many people; Bob Marley became an enormous international saint, you know. Bob Marley becoming a star was a way of ghettoizing the music. "We'll pick one guy; he'll be the star, then we won't have to listen to all the other shit." What was going on in Jamaica in the 70s was absolutely extraordinary. It was as alive a music scene as there had ever been in terms of people talking to each other, talking to all of Jamaica, talking to the world. But I think because it didn't break through, and because everybody in Jamaica thought that it would, there was a tremendous let down, a tremendous amount of energy went out of the music combined with a vast intensification of violence in Jamaican politics which led to the attempted assassination of Bob Marley, which probably had a lot to do with Peter Tosh's murder, which had a lot to do with a lot of people just shutting up and going for the hills, which had a lot to do with the whole spirit of the music contracting and becoming much safer.

But what's been going on in the 80s is the emergence of hip-hop as the absolutely dominant form in terms of culture, in terms of money, in term of what white kids want to listen to, what blacks want to listen to, and what it's done is pushed every other kind of black popular music to the side and made it irrelevant, made it marginal, made it quaint, which is what always happens when one form takes over. What worries me is that hip-hop hasn't discovered a subject or its subjects, I don't think. I think the music over the past five or six years has just expanded enormously as music, as sound, but it hasn't expanded equivalently at all in terms of what it's talking about, and I think ultimately that's going to kill the musical expansion. I hope I'm wrong, but it's kind of weird that after all these years people are still talking about how tough they are, what a hot-shot they are, how they can stomp anybody else. I mean, you sort of would have thought it would have gone past that a long time ago, and it hasn't.

Prince. What was his place in black music in the 80s?

That's a good question. I don't think Prince ever wanted to be known as, understood as, heard as, a black musician. He did not want to be ghettoized. He wanted to be number one in every way possible. He wanted to be the best, the most famous, the richest, the most powerful – and he's done alright. At the beginning of his career, just like Bob Dylan put out all those phony stories about who he really was and how his parents were dead, how he ran away when he was 14 and he played with Carl Perkins, played with Gene Vincent – Prince's line was that his father was black and his mother white. Not true. That he was part Indian and part Italian, he was the ultimate American. Which he may be, but not that way. The whole uncertainty around the time Prince was making *Dirty Mind,* as to whether he was black or white, whether he was gay or he was straight or bisexual – some people thought he was actually female – I think was all part of his attempt to refuse to recognize any of the boundaries that we all immediately set up around anybody. His music was not strictly black by any means. There was a lot of punk in it. There was a lot of soul music, which, at the time he was working, was anything but the mainstream of black music. He was obviously the kind of music fan that Sly Stone was. He obviously loved the Beatles. He listened to everything. He learned from everything. He was, I mean, the ultimate anti-racist. He was

Moments of history calling to each other across time through passageways that can't be charted.

an omni-American, to use someone else's phrase.

Prince has gone his own way. You know, there really have been no successful Prince imitators. He did his best to make lots of them, all the Paisley Park bands and the Family. Just like there are no real Madonna imitators. She's one of a kind. Which says a lot about their limits. I mean, truly great pop figures are imitated by thousands and thousands of people in ways that are productive. People start out as imitators, and then through that imitation of the Beatles, or Elvis, the Sex Pistols, they find their own voices. Through James Brown, Ray Charles, they find their own voices, and they start saying things the people they're imitating would never say, in ways they would never say it. So that says a lot about Prince and Madonna being just who they are, and not more.

Has there been a negationist moment or a moment of the absolute, of the kind you discuss in this book, in black music in the past ten or 20 years?

Well, probably there has, but I haven't heard it. If you want me to pick a negationist moment from black music I'd have to go all the way back to "Concrete Jungle" on the Wailers' second album, *Catch a Fire*, 1973. The guitar solo in that recording is just [pause] the ultimate shiver. With the way the rhythm is going behind, the rhythm is so inexorable, and the guitar solo is pure desire, and the rhythm behind it swallows that desire and just makes it disappear. An incredible moment. And that guitar solo was played by Wayne Perkins, a white Nashville guitarist, and that's because the original recording of the song didn't have that solo, and when it was gonna be released in America, Chris Blackwell who ran Island records, said, "We wanna make this music sound, you know, a little more accessible," i.e. a little more white. So he got Perkins and some other people to do overdubs on the Wailers' stuff, and it's one of those moments where this utterly corrupt, racist, capitalistic, patriarchal, hierarchical, active suppression and erasure ended up creating something that I think is stronger than what was there before.

But I'm just talking about what I've heard; I'm not saying it isn't there. The strongest music, the music that's most akin to what I write about in this book, and not just the music, that I've heard recently is from the Czech band Pulnoc. They're a band made out of what was left of The Plastic People of the Universe. That was a Czech band that formed in the 70s, played Frank Zappa and Pink Floyd, stuff like that. They were imprisoned, they were banned. They've just been subjected to the worst kind of repression over a 20-year period. Two or three of them formed a new band with a couple of new people, and they played the United States last year, and that stuff was truly spooky. It really spoke for a kind of history, a kind of Eastern, Central European history, that ever since the war and in many ways long before it, a lot of people have done their damndest to erase, to pretend it never existed. But you cannot erase the deepest cultural, religious impulses. You can lose generations in between, but they get passed on.

That's interesting because you speak about moments of history calling to each other across time through passageways that can't be charted, but only after having said "The question of ancestry in culture is spurious." For you the secret history is really the irruption of the "absolute" *into* history, a kind of repetition without genealogical program.

Well, that's right. A lot of what the book is about is reversibility, the idea of the reversible connection factor: the idea that one intervention does not act on what it's attacking in a dialectical way, it just makes it disappear. And the people that I write about, whether they're heretics, whether they're Communards, musicians, revolutionary writers – I think it's that wish for reversibility which is much cruder, much simpler, much more violent than a dialectical conception, that really drives them. Anyway, I don't think dialectically. I don't pretend to. Like I said, I'm a much cruder thinker than that.

Can one generate a politics or an ethics out of a book like this?

It's not for me to say. This book is not written to tell anybody what to do or what they should think. It was written out of a tremendous despair and loathing of what the United States has become over the last ten years, and began to become when I began the book, and became in an ever more intense way as I wrote. This is not a book written by someone who sees many good things in the future. It's a very deeply pessimistic book, and yet it's full of moments that say anything is possible, anything can happen. ◆

let them eat...

BANANAS!!!