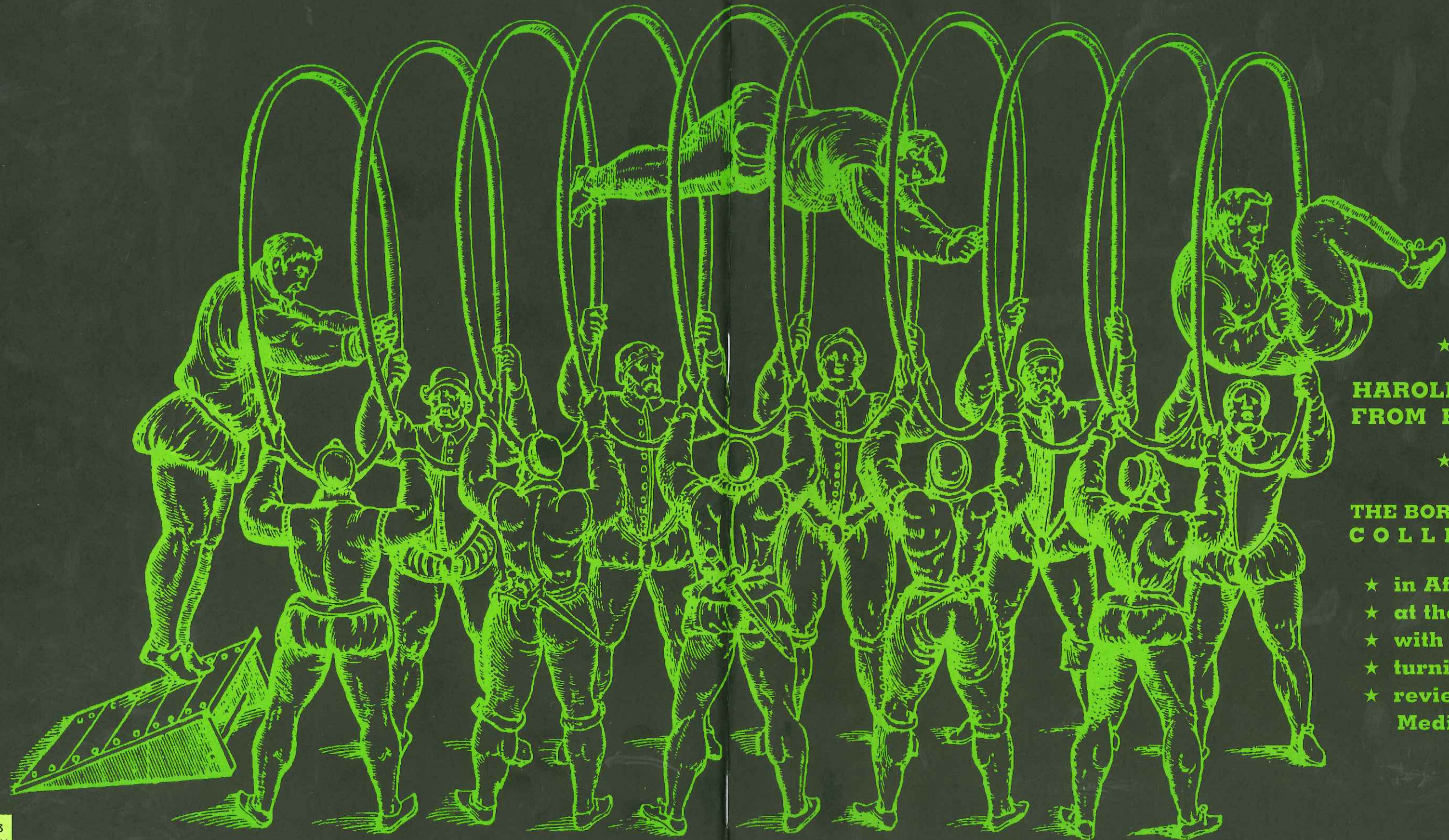


BORDER/LINES

CULTURES • CONTEXTS • CANADAS

ISSUE NO. 26 1992 \$6.00



★★★

**HAROLD PINTER
FROM ENGLAND**

★★★

**THE BORDER/LINES
COLLECTIVE**

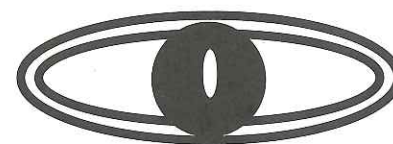
- ★ in Africa
- ★ at the Museum
- ★ with the Circus
- ★ turning 50
- ★ reviewing the Media



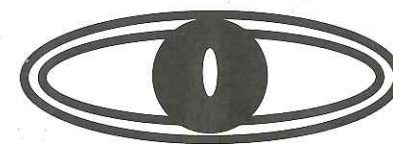
03



E D I T O R I A L



For some of us it was a Long Revolution, assuming the ongoing and continuous struggle (with some achievements) against the patriarchs, predators, capitalists, narrators who dominate our lives and our culture. We were wrong, of course. Either the revolution would be even longer than we thought, or its location was misplaced: not in London, Havana, Moscow or Paris, but in the closest recesses of the everyday, or in the negotiations through the entanglements of bordercrossings. If the objective conditions changed, the subjective encounters did not.



So who would represent, or speak for us? Was there an Us to represent? This issue of *Border/Lines*, our anniversary one, raises the issue of representation, which is an active buzzword now, but based on selves who negotiated themselves by thinking and living into the present world that they inhabit. As we might expect, the accounts are as eclectic and diverse as the people who wrote them, though they should be read with the last two issues (#23, on Native Culture, and #24/25, which included a series of identity-searches) as indicating the terrain that we take as our habitus. The styles adopted are varied, from the short and whimsical to lengthy accounts of becoming what we are now; from actual life stories to particular encounters along the way. Harold Pinter's difficulties in publishing a poem about the Gulf War (for which we thank Index on Censorship) should be read alongside Christina Varga's explorations into becoming a woman via an academic Eastern European household, various jobs, as well as universities staffed by our friends. Philip Corrigan's cri-de-coeur from England must be set in stark contrast to Yoram Carmelli's identity search as an Israeli working in a British circus. Janice Williamson, writing from Edmonton, remembers working with us; Alan O'Connor went with some young people to the Royal Ontario Museum; Stan Fogel does the tourist bit in East Africa, hunting for the ideological significance of safaris and Gary Genosko deconstructs and reviews various articles about nature. Finally, Joe Galbo looks at media literacy in Ontario. The US that is revealed in all of this contains multitudes, though clearly not Richard Nixon's silent majorities. But there is more to come. The next issue of *Border/Lines* is a special on Latin America, edited by Michael Hoechsmann and Alan O'Connor, which gives a voice to people who think theoretically about their culture and history, a people whose identities have been made even more problematic than they were by the creation of the North American Free Trade Association. Beyond that, there are rumours that sometime in 1993 *Border/Lines* will contain a regular literary supplement. What it all means is that *Border/Lines* is more energetic now than in its first, chaotic years. Having Julie Jenkinson as managing editor is a major factor in that momentum. A collective editorial policy depends a lot on the voluntary labour, energy and commitment of those who, for whatever private and public reasons, see this venture as being important. But it depends on something else: a sense of stability, a home, a continuity. Julie has provided that and more.

I o a n Davies.

BORDER/LINES

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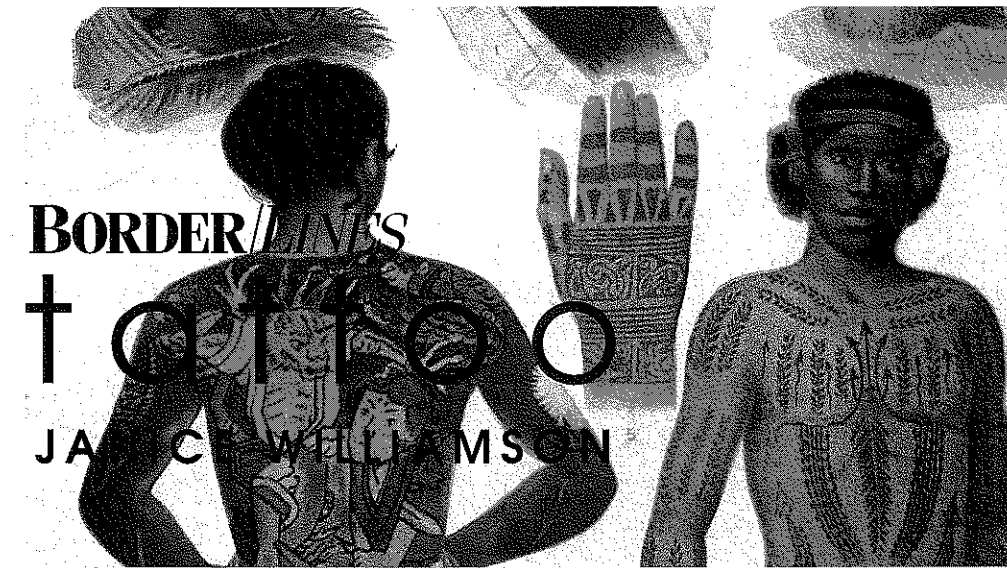
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Stencel's Fairground and Circus
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I Was a Teenage FOB:
Designed by Celine Cassar



BORDER/LINES

memory tattoos under my skin: interlinked domestic occasions - home to certain passions, occasional miseries and lots of critical pleasures. Collective work on a magazine like Border/Lines had all the makings of what an ideal intellectual community might be: theoretical inventiveness, creative engagement, interdisciplinary richness, companionable support and an understanding of social justice. While the editorial collective initiated word & image production, my memories of early Border/Lines days are ordered by domestic locations: the beautiful watery garden I wanted to wander in and the stomach aches I assumed after the populous meetings in Alex Wilson's sensual coach house; the wine and discussions about magazine names, typos (alas, once all my publishing naivete's fault), and cultural politics at dinners in Peter Fitting's backyard; the good talks in my neighbour Christine Davis' installation-filled loft while working together on my first image/text collaborative work (How can I forget the rude cockroach which one morning emerged from under the bodice of C's dress?).



For several years, a number of the women had been meeting independently as The Bad Sisters, a feminist reading group which explored borderlines between feminism and psychoanalysis. We strategized about how effectively to raise feminist issues in a mixed gender feminist-positive collective full of good will. Origin of the stomach aches. I remember bad-girl belly laughs shared with Kass Banning and Brenda Longfellow when we orchestrated our "Bad Sisters in the Big Apple" piece in three scintillating voices. Consuming Kass's delicious kitchen cappuccinos, we contemplated the ethics of the outrageous in writing about the whiteness of a feminist film critic's underpants.

This is my Border/Lines tattoo: friends with energy, intelligence, and occasional companionable lunacy - many of us juggling too many part-time jobs, graduate school and political activism. Or this spatial tattoo: a community of placed - scarred tables burdened with food, gardens promising a new season, and a city busting up all over with stay-up-all-night political and cultural work.

I miss all but the stomach aches. Janice Williamson is Associate Professor of English at the University of Alberta and the author of *Telltale Signs*.

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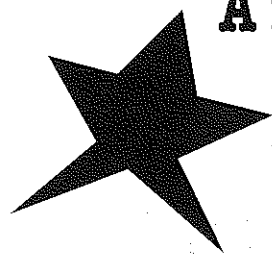
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Anthropologist As Clown



In June 1992 Ioan Davies interviewed Yoram Carmeli, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Haifa in Israel, about his experiences in conducting research in a travelling circus in Britain. Carmeli was at that time a visiting Professor at Victoria College, University of Toronto.

ID: I'd like you first to tell us a little bit about your background and how you came to be interested and involved in studying the circus.

YC: I think that in much anthropological field-work there is this hidden side which is probably more directly related to the anthropologist's biography than usually is the case with other scientific work. For the more personal part, the circus initially attracted me as a musician. I wanted to study the problem of doing art, the experience of performing. The other part was shifting from sociology to anthropology. I taught sociology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and we had this positivistic kind of sociology, a theoretical discipline which very often sacrifices the

holistic - both the holism of the individual and even the holistic view of the group or the community - in favour of categories and in favour of correlating dimensions, etc. This sociology is old-fashioned now but that was the sociology I was involved with, so I missed something more direct, and more synthesizing. The few anthropological works that I'd read from the English anthropological tradition attracted me. These were monographs about West African societies: Black Byzantium, the Nuer, and Meyer Fortes' work on the Tallensi. I liked these coherent systems. Of course, later criticism and theory made a strong case against that kind of anthropology, against the closed system approach, but I liked it a lot. There was something very aesthetic about it and it appealed to my artistic imagination. That's what attracted me to anthropology. In addition to this, there was this challenge which is now really

commonplace but at that time was quite new: that was an anthropology of modern society and anthropologists learning about their own society or at least learning about their own culture. I felt that if I did anthropology it must be an anthropology of modern society. So these elements combined. At the time I was a soldier in the Yom Kippur War: I had six months on the west bank of the Suez Canal to reflect on what I was going to do intellectually. All these together brought me to England, the 'home country' of classical anthropology.

ID: What happened then?

YC: That was a fun story because I came as a mature student. I was thirty five years old, and a fairly experienced sociologist. I registered at University College, London, as a graduate student to be supervised by Mary Douglas and I was about to start taking courses. However, after two months I realized that I wanted

to get out into the field. The department was flexible enough and, after examining me, allowed me to go and start my field-work.

ID: How did you find a circus to work with?

YC: It was Christmas and there was a circus on Clapham Common in London. So I came to the circus and went behind the ring doors. I tried to talk to people but they all discouraged me and said that no one would take me on in the circus because I'm not "family."

ID: Because you are not family?

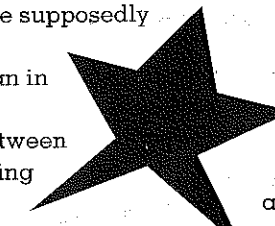
YC: Because I'm not from a circus family and because, well, you see, outsiders come to circuses, for a week or for a few days, if they are journalists, and then go away.

They're not very liked by circus people. (T.V. people are more acceptable because they provide a chance of being seen). But then they all told me about Gerry Cottle (who is Mr. Brown in my papers) and they said that Gerry Cottle might be interested because he is not from a circus family and is more open-minded than others. I met Jerry Cottle at Blackheath, where his circus was performing its Christmas show. When I offered my services as a cello player he said "Well we don't need a cello player but can

you play a trumpet or saxophone?" We agreed that I would contact him when I was ready to play the saxophone. I bought a saxophone and started to take lessons in London. For five weeks I used to practice in spite of all my neighbours. However, you can't develop vibrato in five weeks. When I came to the circus I failed the band-leader's exam but Cottle agreed to take me as a tentman and that's where my Circus career started.

ID: Can you say something about the way in which the other people in the circus viewed you.

YC: In the beginning I didn't have accommodation in the circus and as long as the circus stayed in the London area I travelled every day to my work as a tentman. That kept me a little bit of an outsider and the relationship didn't crystallize, but once I had been allocated some space in the organist's caravan, then circus people immediately had to categorize me. I said I was a student of the circus and that I wanted to write an Anthropology of the circus but that sounded strange. Besides, I was working as a tentman. But then again, although I was working and generally considered a tentman, some of the people knew about me supposedly being a musician or expecting to be a musician in the circus. (There is a big cleavage in the circus between being a musician and being



a tentman). They asked me but couldn't make sense of it: I was a musician, but worked as a tentman! Also, because I wanted to be honest with them, I told them that I was going to write about the circus. So first they thought

that I was simply one more journalist. They were suspicious, but gradually my tent-manship took over. I was a very good worker. I also had this mystique of being an ex-Israeli soldier who could handle difficult tasks. The performers, however, were not very cooperative. The issue of hierarchy was very, very strong in circuses. Either you were a tentman, coming as a drifter from somewhere, going away to somewhere else or you were born to the circus. I was a tentman and I stayed.





DORSET EVENING ECHO

Saturday, August 13, 1977 5p

Circus wedding

IT was the day the circus came to the Town Hall at Weymouth, the day that unicyclist Roland Santus married 19 year old Anne Strawford.....



ID: On the other hand, being a tentman must have given you the opportunity to view entire performances a number of times and get a sense of what the whole organization was.

YC: That's right. That could be done, also, from an artist's point of view, as happened to me later, but as a tentman I could learn a lot of



Two of the bridegroom's five unicycling brothers provide a guard of honour for the circus couple.

things. For instance we used to crawl every morning underneath the seats to see what people dropped. That was an interesting experience. It was also interesting to see what the tentmen tried to pick up and collect. (I always give this story to students in my anthropology courses as an exotic example demonstrating how responsible anthropologists are as far as data collecting is concerned).

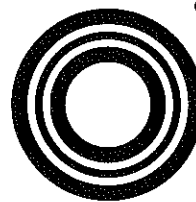
One morning, when we were crawling, my partner Big Brian found a lapel button and asked me, in his Yorkshire accent, "Read it to me, read it to me." I couldn't understand him at all at that time and he couldn't understand me. Eventually I said "Read it yourself!" and he became very angry. Later I asked someone, "Why was Brian angry?" and they said "Don't you know he cannot read?" I found out about Brian's illiteracy by actually confronting it.

Later on, there was another case. We arrived in Portsmouth and he fell in love with a prostitute and really wanted to marry her. He kept dreaming about

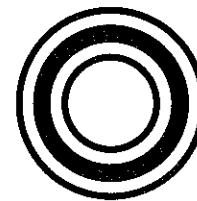
it, especially that the woman would cook for him. When we left Portsmouth the girl was left behind, and then he started corresponding with her, but as he couldn't write his letters, the owner's secretary wrote letters for him. That was another proof that Brian could not read and write. Then there was another occasion when we came back to the Portsmouth area. I was driving a truck and he was sitting alongside me. Suddenly he identified something on the roads, on the traffic signs, and he said, "Oh are we around Portsmouth?" I said, "Yes." "O Fuck! I could find this girl." That was another opportunity where I could see that Brian could not read and write. If I had gone about this question of reading and writing by using a sociological questionnaire, Brian would have kicked me out of his caravan. That's a good example showing how anthropologists can collect data so that it means something. I could learn only these details as a tentman. I could, of course, also feel how heavy and rough is circus tenting paraphernalia and how things are composed from bits and pieces, which was very important to my own experience of the circus. As a tentman I had an opportunity for personal experience which I did not have as a performer where I had to cope with the pressures of other performers. I could experience the circus hierarchy from the bottom up. I also gained a sense of England from below, for instance being called "Boys," "Gerry's Boys," by T.V. people who came for some shots. I was one of the boys.

ID: Can you say something about the family connections in the circus and how that works at getting people jobs in the hierarchy. For example, to be a performer do you really have to be a relative of the people who run that particular circus?

YC: It's hard to be precise but that's fairly correct. There is some



discrepancy, because some people do penetrate especially by marriage, but then they have to invent family identities. They might call themselves by their wife's name if the wife came from a circus family. Gradually they become part of the "family." The issue of inventing genealogies and relating oneself to a circus figure is very important. Once you're "family" you're entitled to the ring even if you're very bad. And of course if it's a small family circus everyone goes to the ring, as well as doing technical and mechanical and administrative jobs. It is however noteworthy that no one in the family really becomes a star because a concept of stardom is something which doesn't go very well with the traditional circus family and family relationships. Stardom is something which is developed in the most modern, spectacular circuses and among international performers. Family performance is not based on stars. As a family member you're a performer and even if, as sometimes happens, you're expelled from the family show, expelled from the circus world you are not. Suppose you have a struggle with your parents: you want to marry that girl, they don't allow you. You marry her nevertheless, you even go to another circus because you want to live with your girlfriend and in that other circus you don't have a performing job. Still, you're recognized as circus family, from a circus family, entitled to the ring.



ID: Historically, are the circus families descendents of people who have been in circuses since the year dot?

YC: When I looked at a list of circus people 100 years ago and at an equivalent contemporary list (for instance a guest list of circus reunions) I find very few common names. This means that there really is a circulation of people in the circus business. Still, once you're in, you consider yourself family, the public expects you to present yourself as family. It's part of the show to be



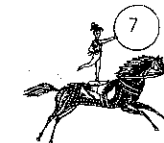
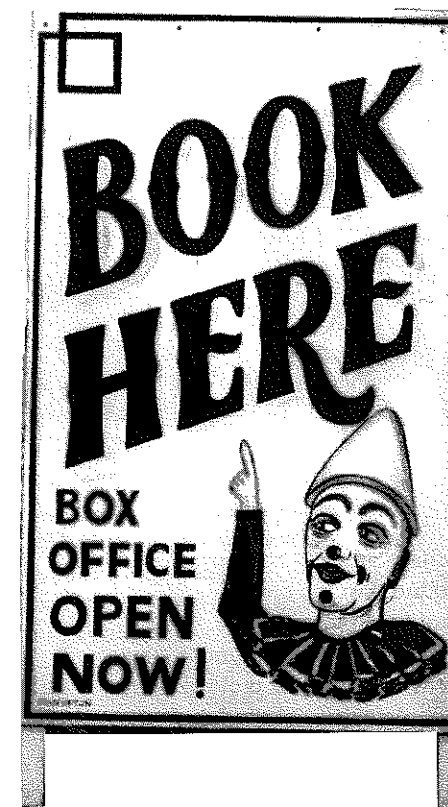
family and also to think about yourself as family because that's part of the existential condition that you are put in. Statistically and demographically, however, there is a rotation of names in the circus and the reason is very simple: people come from the outside by marriage or even as tentmen or general workers, who may also seldom marry in. Then people leave the circus because

they marry out. Also, because circuses collapse very easily, people have to find somewhere else to go and, if they stay outside the circus business for two years or so, they already have removed themselves. Thus although it is run by families and presents the image of family, the real families are much more flexible and fragile.

ID: Did you get any sense of the length of time a circus survives? Do they collapse easily? Do they re-form after a collapse, or do they just disappear?

YC: Well, every season there were ten to fifteen new circuses, new small circuses on the road. It's very easy to launch a small circus. All it takes is one lorry in which you put the tent and one caravan which a

lorry pulls and in which you live with your wife. You can make a living. However, if you make two, three or four unsuccessful moves which cost money - gasoline, renting the ground, feeding animals, if you have any, and paying the license for them - then the circus collapses. In every season many small circuses collapse, the more established names of companies survive longer. In England they can survive as long as three generations. Beyond that, there is the problem of the expanding family and even the largest or the optimal sizes of circus can feed only so many people. Thus there are processes of fission in circuses, and then fusion because these little nuclei, the little fragments of families can combine to form smaller circuses or unite with other circuses so



that new ones start again. But, then, they collapse easily, economically and structurally, because of the family cycle and the size.

ID: Let's move on. In one of your papers you deal with being on-stage even if one's off-stage. Can you say something about that, that is, the circus performer's awareness of public perception?

YC: I think that this is really the most important issue about the circus. It even defines, in my understanding, what circus is, something which I call "total self display." A whole life, every bit of interaction, of privacy, the personal setting, the life setting: your apartment, your caravan, inside and outside, everything is presented to the public and that's exactly what the circus is about, turning the whole person into an object, something to be displayed.

In this respect, the spectacle of a modern circus is comparable to the traditional freaks in the fairground. But the circus people are human beings, they are not traditional freaks. Even if a freak is presented in the circus, the freak is human - the midget is not in a cage or behind a curtain, he is a clown. He speaks, he tells jokes. So circus people are displayed and constitute a strange sense of human beings who are also at the same time objectified, relating by dis-relating, communicating by dis-communicating. To my understanding this is the main attraction of circuses, the attraction of creating a sense of unique ontology, unique time, time out of

Now— do you get the point, son?

● LIFE isn't exactly a bed of roses for eight-year-old Tony Walls.

In fact following in father's footsteps is leaving young Tony at the sharp end of things.

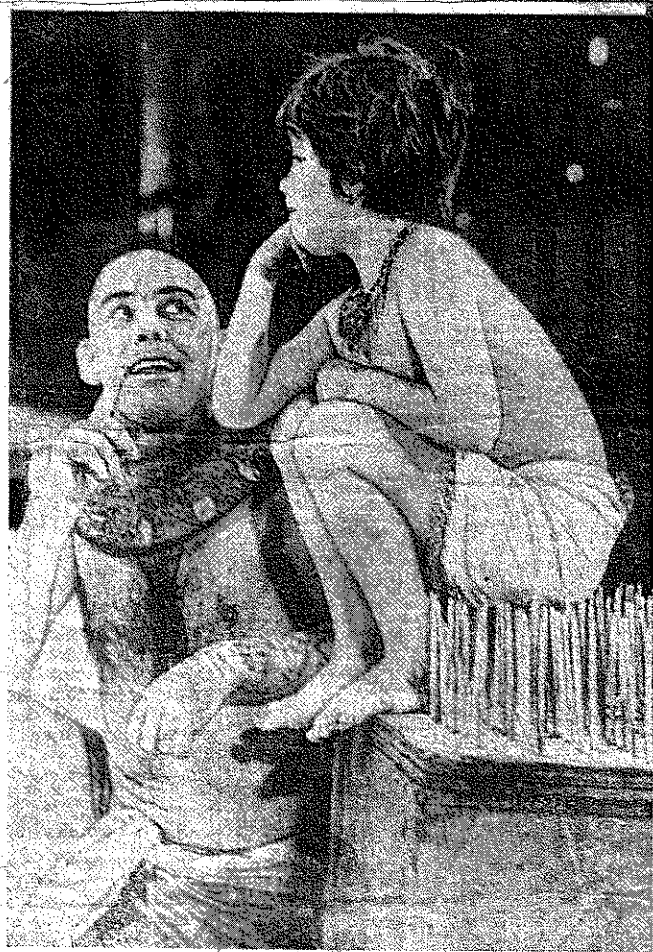
It's the sort of thing that happens when your Dad earns his living by lying on a bed of nails and walking barefoot along razor sharp sword blades.

Dad in this case is Barrie Walls—professional name El Hakim—one of the members of Garry Cottie's Circus, which is in Cardiff this week at Ninian Park car park.

Last time he appeared in the city Barrie got his name into the Guinness Book of Records by spending a couple of days lying on his bed of nails.

Now it looks as if young Tony is heading the same way. He spends hours under the watchful eye of Dad learning the point of it

that sort of expert job. It's virtually a short life.



time and thus reifying for the public an illusion of historical time, of relations, of community. That's what circus, or the tradition of the circus, tried to convey for a long time, till we come to the post-modern age. The modern circus started creating a unique genre which grew out of the traditional fair to establish something new which fitted into nineteenth-century experience.

ID: How did you find yourself fitting into that as a participant observer?

YC: First of all, it was hard to be accepted because obviously if we talk about people who live by dis-communicating themselves by displaying their "real" "off-stage" life, then absorbing somebody from the outside becomes very problematic. These people's life experience involves having a family as a very important dimension of their lives because in the family they live and relate as subjects.

have their own historical time, their own biographies, and themselves as a circus people. If someone tries to penetrate from the outside, to break in without being part of the family, in other words to erode the principle of family, then this person erodes something very crucial to their life experience and to their survival. Thus it was hard to be accepted. It was also difficult for me to understand the very experience that I'm now talking about. These people speak English

THE INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS CLOWN CLUB

Membership Book

No.654

YORAM CARMELI

better than I do, they watch the news on T.V., sometimes they bet on horses but, still, they were so different. It was hard to understand that they considered me as "the public" and that that was the only way they could consider me. Later on, I myself became, to a limited extent, a part of the circus. However, to live the circus experience as an anthropologist, to look at my own performance while I was trying to present myself and write about my own presentation was again something extremely different and difficult.

ID: Can you make that specific in terms of being a clown?

YC: There were many layers which made my being a clown problematic. First of all, they hated my upgrading from tentmanship to being an artist. That's something which shouldn't be done. You can become a clown only if you are family. They hated my skills: I was a musician and I could very easily fit into some kind of performing role so they tried to sabotage my work in the ring itself, during the performance. It was much more difficult to be a clown than to be a tentman, although, of course, it was an important experience. As far as I see it, clowning inculcates a general scheme of self display, of a human being objectifying himself. The clown is

life condition was like living in a goldfish bowl. I tried, and to a certain extent succeeded, to experience the circus from the inside, and then, at the same time, it was something which I couldn't take any more. I used to run away

from it. I hid in museums and libraries and tried to spend hours outside, to write letters, to phone, to go to a public bath and wash in those deserted public places. (Most of them were old and decrepit.) There I tried to regain my real person, not the circus self, and tried to mobilize that self in order to carry on with my circus work. I was in the circus but I didn't have a family in the circus, and therefore didn't have all those resources which were necessary in order to

really live in the circus.

ID: There were times when you left the circus and either went to the United States or back to Israel. What did they think of you over a period of time?

YC: I had become a clown and then, suddenly I'd leave. From their point of view there was something strange about it. I was so lucky, so successful, and yet I left. The second time that I left some of the people started to believe my stories about being an anthropologist. At the same time the whole issue of my identity became less important because by coming and going I was less threatening. They realised I didn't really mean to be in the circus at all and therefore was not dangerous enough. Later on they thought that being a researcher was a way of life, a way of my being weird, of being strange. That was a kind of solution because these people themselves lived the

AIMS and OBJECTS

1. To raise the standard of Clowning
2. To promote and develop friendly relations among the Clowns of the World.
3. To issue Bulletins at intervals containing Clown and Circus news.
4. To hold an Annual Clowns' Service and a General Meeting.

a character who trips on his own tools or hits himself by his own hand, by making self-referential movements which display him as not being aware of himself. English clowning is very much into slapstick. It's not reflexive or artistic like European clowning: it's into stupidity and the physically grotesque. Although I was a white-faced clown, which is supposedly the clever clown, the role was basically dominated by this concept of clowning. I tried to immerse myself in this experience of someone who faces the public with a display of being unaware of his own identity, objectified by his own doing. The clowning experience augmented the rest of my circus experience - this business of travelling from town to town as an alien: the sense of constantly presenting my being estranged or of my being an outsider. Time and again I could see the closure of the circus caravans, of their being painted outside, their always being on exhibition, always suggesting something to the voyeuristic eye of people, always an object. The whole framework of life, the whole



experience of being weird and I think at that point they could already relate to me, in some ways. Unfortunately the day came when I had to stop my field-work. I wouldn't say "finish" because there is no end to field-work but I had to stop. When I felt that I was partially accepted and beginning to understand the "circus" rejection of me and my own rejection of the circus - it was also the time when I had to leave.

ID: Can you say anything about the background of the people who work in the circus? Gypsies? Working class? Unskilled or semi-skilled? The bourgeoisie down on their luck?

YC: In many cases they or their circus parents came from working class families. However, looked at from a public standpoint, circus people comprise a category of their own. They have the stigma of being vagabonds, which is an old tradition in England. It's not even that they are working-class entertainers. The idea that they are associated with gypsies is bizarre. Circus people hate the idea and try to differentiate themselves from gypsies. That is seen by them as an externally-imposed stereotype. They see gypsies as giving nomadism a bad reputation.

Basically, the circus presents a totally different life situation from the gypsies. In the popular imagination, gypsies are outsiders who ignore any social contract. They are people who come to stay, while the circus goes away once it has performed its acts. The circus doesn't threaten society, nor present an alternative way of life. The circus is perceived as being constantly on the move while enhancing dominant values.

ID: Would you say something about the audiences? Was it similar in every town or did it vary?



YC: Of course it varied. When we performed in Portsmouth, Leicester, or Finsbury Park in East London we'd have this rougher kind of public. The reactions were different. When we performed in Kingsbury Park or in Barnet in North London we had this middle-class educated public. When "civilized families" came, their reactions were different. There was lots of giggling as if they didn't take it seriously, looking at the whole thing as an anecdotal thing, a piece of ongoing nostalgia. In the working-class areas, or in mixed neighbourhoods where there is unemployment, and in Harbour towns, the whole experience of being objectified was reacted to in a different manner. In a way it was a more lively performance than it was in the middle-class areas. The circus is challenged even from outside. It is sabotaged. There was much more tension there. You could even see it when the performers did their regular routines. For instance, when performing on the high wire or when putting their legs on swords, they acted more forcefully, more provocatively. For instance, during the Strong Man's performance the ringmaster challenged the public, "Is there anybody who wants to try and lift it?" Well, there was this very tall, very strong guy, who came and picked up the Strong Man's weight. That was a very critical intervention which wouldn't have happened in a middle-class area. But the Strong Man was clever; he tapped this guy on the shoulders and he took him, in full view of the public, behind the ring, and made him a Strong Man as well, rather than turning himself into an ordinary human being.

ID: So what is the essential uniqueness of circus?

YC: Circus differs from other genres in its claim to present the "real," in creating a sense of its own realness. In this respect it rejects the clear illusion and pretence which are immanent in fairground games, and yet it is not

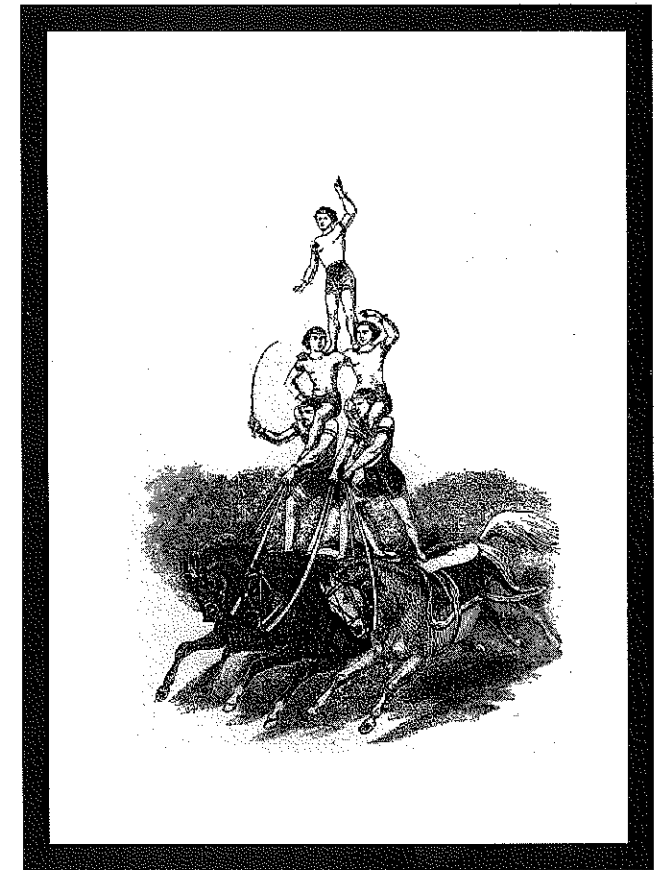
a performance like a rock concert or a theatre show. The circus performance of the real has its particular characteristic. It is not simply that the circus performs real acts, rather that the real itself is its subject-matter. When I was talking about circus performance of dis-communication and self-objectification, that's what I was trying to describe and it can be done very simply. You don't have to be a great performer, perhaps even the opposite. If you're a great performer you may spoil the whole show, because if you try to attract a public to the way you perform, then it's already clearly a play, just a performance of and not the real thing. One of the secrets of the circus is that there is no secret. The public has no high expectations of the English circus. That's an important part of the significance of the circus, thought of in terms of families and a long tradition, beyond history and time. That's what objectification is about. But to do that, to create this impression, doesn't uphold - and as a matter of fact somewhat contradicts - the notion of performance, text, or role and even the criteria for good and bad performance. The public is not called to judge the performance. The public doesn't want to judge the performance. It is not interested in how elaborate the act is; it just wants to see this subject/object play and display, and to have an experience which can be evoked by very simple means. In this respect the circus is different from theatre and any other performing art.

ID: The circus has of course been used metaphorically in different ways. It's also been painted, photographed, encapsulated into works of literature. Yet in some important respects it sits outside the concern of most artists, or of most novelists. I wonder if you can say something about that.

YC: I want to relate both to academic and artistic interest - or lack of interest - in the English circus. When I first tried to write about it I was looking for other writings about circuses and I couldn't find any serious academic material. You can say that the circus is so successful in being outside, in presenting itself as the epitome of being outside, that it really rejected researchers who wrote about serious subjects. In this way - according to my understanding - they were actually playing in the play of circus and participating in the performance, in keeping the circus outside. At the same time, on the continent of Europe things seem to be different. This is true not only for academic but also for artistic interests. It's interesting that the high culture relationship with the circus is much more developed on the continent than in Britain. There the circus is more of a play, performed by ordinary human beings. The European circus is more prevalent or attractive as a metaphor. Think of Cocteau! It is still a marginal phenomenon and it encapsulates modernity, in the sense that it evokes the search or longing for totality; it's alienated, and a metaphor for the experience of alienation. But in order to be observed and used as a metaphor circus needs to be more apparent, more conspicuous. In England, according to my experience, circus people are considered as outside the social order in such a fundamental way that excludes them even from counting as subjects for research or as "metaphor". This in itself is a very interesting research question.

ID: Was that true of the big organizations like Bertram Mills?

YC: Well Bertram Mills presented a circus which was very similar to the present day big continental circuses. It was much more established and was patronized by royalty. Everyone came to its circus which mainly performed indoors,



for example in Olympia in London. The fact that it was in a building rather than a tent makes a major difference because travelling - which resonates with the fairground - also echoes the vagabond, and the outsider which was missing from Bertram Mills. Many people in the English circus still remember the big circus. Stories are told about Bertram Mills, but that is not a circus which you could find in England after the 1960s. There were some big names - there has always been nostalgia for big names - 'in the past it was different' - but that's also part of the English circus's mystique.

ID: Is there a post-modern English circus?

YC: There is, but the concept raises difficulties. The Circus Archaos version is typical. When I saw the production two years ago it had so much "Englishness" in it, and it sort of exploded what the circus always contained in itself

and presented by being outside society. Circus Archaos explodes society by exploding the circus's significance. But once you've seen it, that's enough. You're not likely to go and see Circus Archaos year after year and take your children to see it in order to watch how they continued your own tradition, nor how you yourself grew up compared to your children. That is something that the traditional circus provides by being the same, by not changing. But this doesn't work with Archaos. In a way it blew up and exhausted the old circus experience. There are other ways of post-modernizing the circus. So far there have been no great successes in England which should be somehow related to the particular English context.



DOING /

BEING

(For Roger Simon,
in love
and solidarity)

1. SENSING TIME

Sunday afternoons (I think) television used to show 'films not seen for more than a quarter of a century.' Immediately, but of course now, the brain thinks of the indices of economy and the rest which made such a slot broadcast. But, then, it was the problem of imagining 'a quarter of a century' which sticks in the memory.

'The War' was much talked about, often initialled by 'D'you remember...' not addressed to me (and how much learning comes from such half-attentive early listening (in)?) but between, for example, my mother and her sister who had survived 'The War' together (with me there too from 1942).

Recollections, otherwise, before my birth, were likewise of the occasioned reminiscence, especially materialized on walks with my (maternal) grandfather who lived into his nineties. This talk, his talk, was also mobilized (and subsequently forever concretized) because we walked whilst he talked, along by the river Thames where he'd worked as a Waterman and Lighterman, as a Docker, and then, so his pocket watch told me, for twenty-eight

years (more than that 'quarter of a century' above) for the Woolwich Free Ferry, ending up as Bo'sun (Boatswain, check the O.E.D. for that!). The first of my substitute 'fathers' but different from almost all the rest: anarchistic, pleasure-seeking, patriarchal, always angry about any talk of the 'Good Old Days' ('Them was bleeding hard times, Philip, don't you forget it.') When he died, by then within that caring social institution called 'sheltered accommodation', his wife, my (maternal) grandmother, threw all his clothes, and, a terrible loss for me, his 'documents', down the rubbish chute, and demanded of her two daughters (Norah my mother and Edith, her sister/my aunt) that his chair, yes HIS chair, be burned in the yard, watched from above by my grandmother, slightly, every so slightly, smiling. Then her long, lingering death, with all its extra labour for Norah and Edith (situated close enough to my grandmother's 'sheltered accommodation' that they could attend, and so no 'need' for medical/social assistance), but in the end, her calm decision, to my mother 'I'll not be here tomorrow' and dying, passing on, passing away, in that lonely (by then) hospitalized night....

Other times, other dyings. Never to be forgotten, the dream, grim (I think in a poem I called it 'greer') midevening of my running, running (no use of taxis then!) to the 'Maternity Hospital' to find Janet half-dead through blood loss, and the/her/our child born dead at birth (stillbirth, such an evocative shocking category!) and all that the State allowed was a 'disposal certificate.' Screaming and clinging and hurting our dualistic and different way through to Ruth Natasha Sarah (1966) and, subsequent to our separation (9 November 1969), Rebecca Clio Julie (1969).

All I am suggesting, hinting, delineating, simply (and, yes very,very

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Remarks on a personal anniversary

By Philip Corrigan

obviously) is that what normally passes itself off as 'History' and 'Cultural Studies' says nothing of this, indeed such remembering, such senses of time, of being there/not there, are ruled out. Such practices of exclusion, denial and, yet, a violent abstraction which thereafter claims as comprehensive (even, universal) validity what are the sign systems of very very distant (seemingly disembodied) observers. Nothing shown, everything known. Deaths and Entrances (I am sure this 'quotes' Dylan Thomas, whose 'Rage, rage against the dying of the light' stays with me, as I once - to the massive hilarity of my Mum and Dad - brought an Ordnance Survey Map which included his place (and that of Under Milk Wood, who now amongst my friends recalls, knows, that exact spaced memory of the opening words of the radio (and best) version, spoken by Richard Burton?) but also a lot of ocean and, being practical, they both guffawed at all the blue space, all that sea.)

2. BEING PRACTICAL

Cultural forms (and productions) first came to me in a split which is (I subsequently discovered) seemingly universal (in fact it is a production of a certain Societal-form which works very hard to deride and deny the validity of the aural, except when opera-ed or dramatized, or, indeed broadcast in the Arts section of radio and TV, the rest is, talk, chatter, or gossip, along with that much contested evidential form, oral history): I read and wrote, quietly, privately, out of sight of the parental and,

mostly, the teacherly gaze; but certain radio, certain musics, certain television could be enjoyed in company, en famille (precisely). The whole enclosure of the latter aural, audio, audio visual mediations, as entertainment (pleasure) sometime seemed, and today excessively seems, to me wrong.

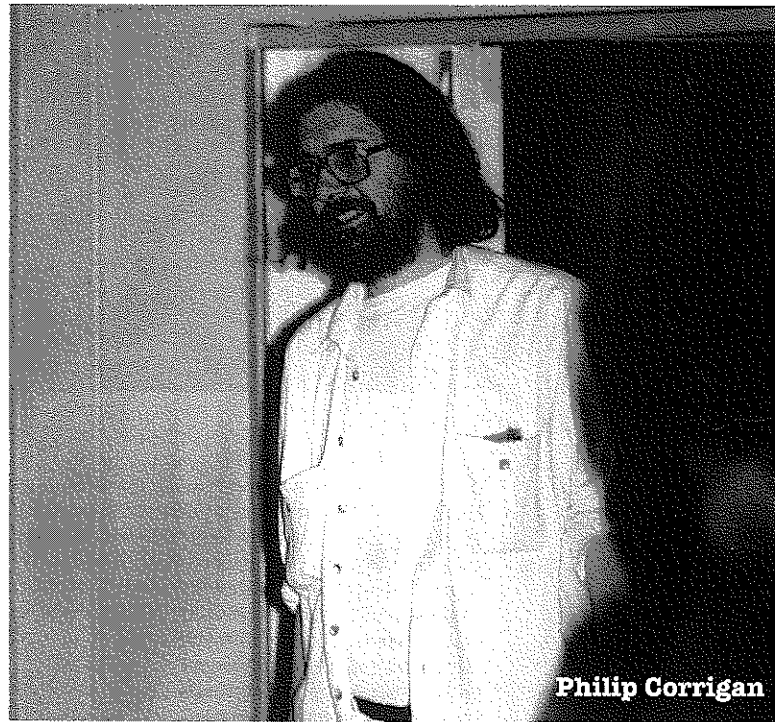
But there is also a whole set of cultural forms (of production) that are still almost impossible to proffer within even the most progressive (in the end, academic) discourses: varieties of having fun. One memory, very strong, is of the annual holidays (less so, the day-trips) out of South East London to 'the Sea.' By coach (bus), by train, Dad struggling with 'the cases', Mum with 'the bags', brother Paul and I: queues (line ups), special coaches (buses), special trains, the excitement of 'Going On Our Holidays' (constructed, and of course, through discourse 'Where you going this year, Norah?!). A whole bodily sense of TRAVEL (although I doubt the word was much used), MOVEMENT, GOING ON GOING ON, which was and is so strong with me now. 'Going On our Holidays' meant, for example, meals out, distance, the sea (ocean), the beach (sand, cliffs, sunshine): Difference. Ever since, and in all sorts of ways, I am usually very tearful when I see people 'Going On Their Holidays', going forth, going on, of course, going on. Quiet, gentle, in their various ways, Apocalypses.

Later of course (and this is yet another 'lateness' in learning why, learning how) I realized what this all meant in terms of scrimping and saving, a few pennies/cents a week, calculated to bring enough surplus at the right time to make the holiday good. And the planning of when/where/by what means of transport. This, and of course quite generally, you too, in other words, part of a too-late discovery that those figures of abundance and control, my parents, had their own limitation, their won constraints, their own 'experienced determinations' (providing that we



understand the latter as Raymond Williams argued as the setting of the 'limits of variation'-later, after Paul and I were 'offhand', in all senses, then, only then, could Mum and Dad enjoy a different set of spaces, times, occasions, namely the hotel, the luxury trip... Curious, is it not the way in which we endow these adults with enormous powers (especially in the last 20 years, monetary powers) and yet, quite soon, discover the limits of possibility, that whatever our dream (including our dream of the Not Yet) we have to hustle and bustle to find what is possible, what is doable, within OUR LIMITS OF VARIATION, in our cultural landscape?

Nevertheless, just now, in that/this time in the rhythm of knowing what 'being practical' means, I want to accentuate the culture of 'fun' (in a later, argot:time out) against the culture of 'restriction', the daily hustle, needs, constraint, working 'it' out, doing well, carrying on. In this I want especially to salute that group, quite and totally universal, who conduct, with dignity and care (including frequent self-sacrifice), such 'carrying on carrying on': namely, women. But, without any hesitation or contrast, I want now, from the remembered embodiment, want to greet all the children of the world, who are rarely given an explanation of what constrains them (their parents, guardians, adults) and so who suffers in silence and anguish (increasingly so when they begin, as I did, circa age 13, begin to think and feel that it is 'all their fault'). To slightly amend a famous song: 'Growing Up.....is HARD to do.'



Philip Corrigan

3. DIVE IN, THE CULTURES'S WARM

Somewhere, sometime, I started to write. I embody these words in the way that someone might say, for example, they started to cycle, to swim, to dance, to grow rare orchids, to understand astrophysics, and so on. I started to write in a particularly inky sense to do with a typewriter that was willed to me after my Aunt Grace's death (she being the sister of my father). There was something, as there is, quite literally now, as I type this, in the action of the hand and the production of some trace which looked quite a lot like the 'printed word' like The Books I had been borrowing from the local 'Junior' and then 'Adult' Library from the age of 9. That we often combined

such trips to Plumstead Library with going to swimming lessons seems to me entirely exact! Suddenly I could press - and the word is hardly lacking in significance - keys and produce this trace, these worked out letters. A lot of this result from the triple confluence of (1) being silent (concealing, even) at home about 'School'; (2) encounters with the sung as much as the written word, and also with other musics, notably 1942 be-bop jazz (3) Antony Harding who suddenly appeared (from the 'YOU/SSSS/AAAY' no less) to teach us 'English.' Indeed, in a peculiarly strong way, I'd think that my life has been organized, in terms of the Word, by the three sided reality of the familial remembrance, Tony Harding, and VERY contrastingly the History Master(s) I have then and ever since encountered (another range of my surrogate Fathers).

And so, what then, what, uh, 'career path.' did I "choose" after school? Well its quite a normal story, I had two interviews, one in the morning and the latter in the early evening: the first was to become a salesperson in a Menswear shop, the latter to be an assistant librarian in a Public Library: for the former, I was deemed 'over qualified'; for the latter 'tall enough to reach the top bookshelves.' Hey, heightism, *avant le mot!* So, by such decisions are lives made, yes? But concurrently with this 'career move' I also (re) moved

myself from the domestic space to life in a flat (apartment) with a friend, called Philip also. He happened to be involved in the Bookshop in Central London that was avant-garde, so fast and loose we made contact with what was then called 'The Scene' (London, to track back, had always been the fascinating place, severally I'd journeyed there and returned on a train that left at 0108 reaching the parental/familial home circa 2 a.m.). Together we discovered the shallow, shadow copy of both Beats and Jazz in the USA. So, at night I did "The Scene," during the day I was tied and jacketed 'The Librarian.' If, as I was, I'd been split in class, and to some extent, sexual, categories, before, here I was being asundered around cultural forms: echoing, with some loving, Andy Warhol: Allen Ginsberg slept on my floor in early 1961!

The practises here (as they had been since age 16) were essentially those of the (type) written and the aural, but always at the edge, waiting to be realised, was that of my greatest adoration and worship, that of film. Since an early age, say 10, there had been various affiliations to, and filiations from, film, the cinema, 'Going To the Pictures.' The other 'outlet' of all that passion was musics of various and contrasting kinds; but nothing then, or since, has matched going to the cinema, finding a seat, settling down, the lights dim, and then the big (or nowadays, alas, usually the small) screen: attention, musics, credits, attention....A chance to be 'lost,' a chance to 'find' oneself; equally so, but usually, and here's the 'charm,' both at the same time.

Later, some shifts, feeling awkward, feeling gauche, going to the Berliner Ensemble at Sadlers' Wells Theatre, and waking up, changing posture, attending, in other words to the PRACTICES thereby revealed. Suddenly, slowly, inadequately, discovering PRACTICES, and later, much later, PRODUCTIONS.

4. OTHER PLACES/ PLACING THE OTHER(S)

Like 'most people' (but only 10% of US citizens have passports) I hadn't been far. I recall a 'school' trip (to Paris when I was 13 years old), but nothing else. Then, in 1967 came the invitation to 'Go To The U.S.A.' in 1968. What did this mean, a whole-istic flood of desire since the invited trip (all expenses paid) involved - after the conference in Albany, some 3 days in New York. NEW YORK, a magical icon if ever there was one. So the first time ever on an aeroplane I flew off to New York, fumblingly found my way to Albany, did 'Doing Conferences' and was then free: curious memories: iced sherry from the refrigerator, the largest piece of meat on my plate I had ever seen, being booked (and with advance payment) for a cab because 'otherwise it was dangerous,' leaving the very day that Columbia University 'blew' up...

Sometime, a lot, later (having been to New York in 1973, 1979, and - to attend Yoko's arrangement for a memorial to John Lennon, in Dec 1980) I was telegraphed to request 'Can you teach the History of Capitalism in Tanzania?', 'I did not know what this meant, but said 'yes.' Then, perhaps amongst the four or five most improtant moments of my life, I went to 'Africa' (because, of course, I 'already always knew' about Africa, had I not taken part in innumerable school ceremonies called at first Empire Day, and then Commonwealth Day, and did I not learn at infant (kindergarten) and primary (elementary) school, ALL about 'Africa'?) - and after a fourteen hour flight, I 'landed' in 'Africa' and at least, initially ALL was confirmed. This was/is/and ever after shall be: 'Africa.' Two, of at least two million, experiential truths which punctured this happy white male illusion: I learned of, met and became comprehensively friendly with, someone who knew far more about European (especially French) debates within Marxism, than I even knew a trace of; there, in Tanzania, and later, as I

landed, in a rainstorm (tropical monsoon?) at London Airport (when I thought the electricity consumption here, London Airport, could support the whole of Tanzania) I discovered, very belatedly, very, as Barthes would say it, 'stupidly,' DIFFERENCE. Henceforth I would have, and have, no time, no place, for anyone, from WHATEVER political perspective, who claims a voice, standpoint or

thematic which DENIES DIFFERENCING. The first trace of this is 'Towards A Celebration of Difference(s)' (presented at a British Sociological Association Conference in 1981).

I returned in Summer 1991 (to use the Norther Calendar) to Dar Es Salaam, and was intending to do so in Summer 1982 when I was invited to 'do' Summer School at OISE, University of Toronto, Canada, Summer 1982. Recall that I was jumping off to the latter from the Institute of Education, University of London's Department of Sociology of Education (Bossman: Basil Bernstein). So the 'jump' in some ways seemed less, but I experienced it as greater, in a certain measure of cultural and pedagogic difference, and found it possible to make myself welcome within the prevailing norms. In other words, as so many before me, I found it comfortable/easier. So in 1983, after some bloody struggles with the Canadian High Commission, in September, I crossed the Atlantic, landed and became a 'Landed Immigrant,' to a permanent job (after 3 1/2 years of temporary contracts).

5. TO TORONTO/WITH LOVE & SOLIDARITY

In anyone's lives there are places and moments, situated times, no less, that are specifically SPECIAL/CONCRETE. For me, arriving in Toronto in September 1983 will be mentionable in such a series (although a Summer School visit in Summer 1982 had been some kind of 'advance warning'). Arriving from the enclosing fog of England, TORONTO (which I capitalize for I may be talking of a fantasy here) was well down the Liberation Road I'd chanced upon after 1960. I could teach what, and how, I wanted. Well, and so it seemed (seemed, like there were no constraints of form/realization!), the foolish innocence of the newly arrived! But not so stupid (and here I will annoy certain readers, my apologies in advance) since, when I returned to England in 1988, I felt like I was walking into walls, into fog, into miasmatic unnamings of what was happening, whereas all the time (and, hey, I do know the limits here!) in Canada there were sanctioned or half



allowed discourses, forms, and images which remained and remain unsayable, unshowable in England's green and pleasant land. Of course, and age here does 'tell', I was re-turning to a place, space & time, that was one I could much more caringly decode and understand, BUT, and the 'BUT' here is very solidly material, there are spaces, however grudgingly provided and whatever ways negated in practices, in situational contexts like that of 'Canada,' which do not exist in the 'YOOOO/KAAAAAY.' Put more generally, the 'crisis' of what it means to be (any sort of) 'Canadian' is in effect a series of spaces of contestation, withdrawal, opposition or refusal, at the very least, within that 'infinite hospitality' so well identified by Jody Berland, some forms of alternation, decoration, or supplementation of 'the State' and its ways. You see, here, in 'YINGLAND' (I think here of 'KANADA' there's so very very little space, so little time, in the rhythmic organizing of the subject population, albeit within a recent rhetoric of 'citizenship.' They call, we jump (or turn, bored, away): their rituals continue (decoratively and efficiently) to 'successfully claim' a certain allegiance, a certain belonging, a definite sort of home: all, materially, such that naming of difference and/or distance seems increasingly more and more difficult. 'Europe' does not help here, since it has assumed none of the forms of, e.g. the USA/Canada 'Free Trade Agreement'; rather it is a sort of inevitable 'happening' (like the changeable English weather) which nothing very much can be done about. In the very construction of its very UNpopularity, it is popular, if you take my meaning, and if you don't think about the varied crises of 'Canada' internal and external since 1975.

6. OXYMORON: IT'S VERY SIMPLE / IT IS NOT THAT SIMPLE

(WITH DEDICATION TO JUDITH MILLEN)

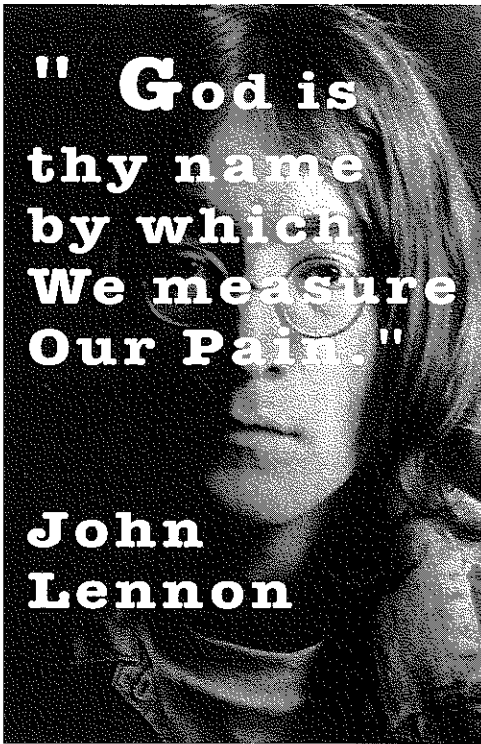
So here I am being doing 50 years old (and all that is mobilised as meaningful). This whole script (strike ONE) has been written whilst listening to a collection of the 'Very Best' of MOTOWN. As Wim Wenders has so often said, various Rock & Roll musics have saved my life. "I've been undressed by kings/And I've seen some things That A Woman isn't supposed to see...." and so on. In what ways (and how far) was Bruce Springsteen



7.

wrong to sing that he'd learned more from a three minute record than he'd ever learned at school? Well, of course, there is much to say and show about that claim. But, that being proposed, and argued, I can think of no other cultural form that has been both meaningful and energizing for me through the 60's and 70's and 80's and 90's....

So along with the cinema (partially, but not quite violently abstracted as 'film') has been 'Rock&Roll.' How to collide these two forms? Well, do not both allow (much more massively than other forms?), a sort of arranging of meaning and, very very significantly, a refusal of any meaning that can be communicated (i.e. 'D'you hear/feel/get it?') And then, just like I am arguing, what and whose language of love/ing do we have? The interruptive linguistics of 'WOW, 'COOL', 'YES/YEAH,' 'Now/NOW/N O W,' and alternating special coded language games, do they not all indicate the boundaries of Language-USE as normalised? If rhyming slang, along with other specific codes, were invented to defeat or at least confuse Authority, then why not trace a widespread language of refusing inclusiveness regarding e.g. bebop jazz and Rock&Roll? Who, after all, really wants Boring Old Farts (BOFs) and Heavy Academic Males (HAMS) on board, there, knowing what, knowing where, since such knowledges and invasions deny the project (projet) to create a space, a hope, a sight of another world. And IS NOT ALL CULTURAL PRODUCTION THE BEARER OF SUCH HOPEFULNESS?



Apple Records

John Lennon's albums after his scream therapy (like those of Tears For Fears after theirs, e.g. 'Songs from the Big Chair') as, differently, with Annie Lennox after 'going solo' or resolutely those of Bonnie Tyler (whom few would connect with both a South Wales singing tradition or that now famous Shirley Bassey from Tiger Bay, South Wales, not to mention Tom Jones) provide a certain embodied voice which I want to liken to film (like, that is all, no 'grim similarity' is here intended). There is the multitracking: the words, the music(s), and then, specially strongly, the grain the voice (one of a million tributes to Barthes in this writing). Recently, listening to a lot of Motown records, there is something, a quality which 'ranges' across the different singing voices (and may be to do with the standardization of the 'back up' both musical and voiced?) which is there in Dexy's Midnight Runners also. Perhaps, to further honour Roger Simon's recent book (Teaching against the Grain) and, following to the source, his (re)sources, we might limpidly think, for a moment, as it were, from the corner of our ears, of the musical voices in that Age of Mechanical Reproduction?!

I say this after viewing yet another offering in the (English) Channel 4's *Fin de siècle* series (as the late and much lamented Angela Carter phrased it: "The *fin* is coming rather early in this *siècle*") here (unlike the semiruin temple provided for Stuart Hall, Salman Rushdie

and Alain Finkelstein all those months ago) set in what was either a Gentleman's Club or the adjunct to an Oxbridge Senior Common Room: we were provided with (in order of who spoke most): George Steiner, Terry Eagleton, and Julia Kristeva. They were presumed to be discussing nothing less (and nothing more) than the 'God-shaped hole' recently voiced by Salman Rushdie. In fact they discussed (a lott) about Steiner's recent book *Real Presences*, that is to suggest whether or not any language appropriate to (isomorphic with ?) works of something called 'Art' is not, of necessity, the strong version of Steiner's argument, religious. In the midst of this (yes, the boredom factor was high, it was after all postmidnight [a safe time for such voices to be grained?]), it was noticeable that it was Steiner who spoke of the 'end collapse' of 'communism' as the loss, the terrible loss, of a Messianic Hope. Not Eagleton (Wharton Professor-Elect at the University of Oxford, 'of Marxist leanings' we were told in a soft voice-over at the start); not Kristeva (whose recent reversion to/acceptance of Catholicism is congruent with her novel writing), but George Steiner, and the grain, in his/then voice spoke and showed very muchly.

Is that /this into which dark night we are proceeding (being processed)? Once again, whereligion(s) provide for the sigh of the suffering soul, for the tracing of our chains with paper/plastic

"If any meaning is possible, then - quite precisely, no meaning is possible."

flowers; rather than our release 'to pluck the living flower.' These paraphrases of Marx's 1840s words (read aloud to myself in that lonely Christmas 1969 after Janet, Ruth and the just about born Rebecca had gone, gone, gone away, because A.N. Other provided what, it may be presumed, I could not, or no longer). By then I had, from the USA, Allen Ginsberg reading HOWL, KADDISH, and, above all, SUNFLOWER SUTRA ('we are not our skin of grime....'). And in ways I have never fully understood I had 'moved, *après* 1968', *les evenements*, etc etc. But unlike the pomposity which opens Edward Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* (1978); then, after 1968, I started to UNreason. Never at any time would the notions of 'dream' and 'task' cease to be collided and scrambled together, a *menage à trois* of a certain excess, of a certain embodiment. Later, and deliberately, the word 'Culturalove' would be formed (I still do not know what it means, for one strand see the BOOMISTA MANIFESTO, Shades (Toronto) Feb 1984; for another, listen to Diana Ross whilst it is raining!).

So, in shortness, the 'hopefulness' within cultural production is profoundly ambivalent, multi-accentuated, means for the embodied meaningfulness of difference. And, does this have to be said, not all differences (and their celebration) are progressive in that measured expansion of DIFFERENTIATED human capacities within REGULATED social forms. Think, simply, of all the varieties of fascism. Fascism is what I most fear; defined simply, as I am here, it means the taking of an aspect/one characteristic of a group (or some members of such a group) and playing that back - as a sign-system - as though that exhausted all there is or ever will be to speak, depict, represent that group. In these terms, which I would defend, then patriarchy/sexism, racism/ethnic violation, age-ism, linguistic imperialism, class-ism, height-ism and able-bodied-ism (and this list does not begin to even list the categories involved) are all fascisms. Fascism, in this capacious definition, is therefore coextensive with the history of all Feudalisms and Capitalism, not to mention Ancient forms!

In contrasting critique, a cultural (re)presentation/production that is 'Progressive' all ways shows that more has been found (or could be found) than has been lost. That is to say, the energy is focused not upon alternation/ supplementation, but upon oppositional, refusing, TRANSformation.' But, another huge 'but', this all too frequently happens in the very very lonely hours of the First Instance: some bodies, some wheres, hearken to a trace (the grain, perhaps?)

and think/feel/work out and/or retain somatically, that this particular I/Eye could be different, could live difference, differently! But with whom to speak of this, who will celebrate this understandingly and caringly, isn't it usually taken, more often, commonly, as 'not quite feeling right'/'not being/feeling myself, today, now....I'll be alright in a minute....'

8.

NERVOUS BREAKDOWNS, TO THE 13TH DEGREE

There's a branch of medical science which is called Neurology. There's a history of commonsense estimation which concerns itself with 'being nervy', with having 'nerves.' The two, for a while came together, in a focus called 'Neurasthenia' (coincidental with the masculinist rendering of some 'female' complaint called Hysteria). A friend of my parents, Alf Bullen, had 'nerves' (later spoken of as 'neurasthenia') and had to be handled with a certain care (or, as often, avoided when out in parks and common spaces, walking). In my teenage years I was spoken of, *en famille* and by Doctors, as 'highly strung' (an odd musical analogy, a return of a certain repressed, the body as tuneful?). Accused at Primary/Elementary School of being 'an only child' that set of designations (denying any signing I might have made/claimed for myself) stayed and stays with me: nervy, later 'neurotic.' One liberation came when I, in my usual mad collage reading, 'ran' the opening and closing sentences of C. Levi-Strauss' *Totemism* together! Another with the antipsychiatry movement and writers of the mid 1960s through early 1970s. What the latter provided was a notion of the necessary familial 'devil' (The Enemy Within/The Other Amongst Us), whilst the former (and much work before and since) shows how arbitrary SELECTION of a series of passable symptoms could become networked and connected, without contradiction(s), as a 'dis/ease', and 'ill/ness.' In the crisis of my/familial experience, all of us (the four of us) were diabolized in turn by particular circumstances - later I came to see this was the warp and weft of all (familially



**9. NOWTIME,
A SONG OF
VARIOUS
SERPENTS AND
LOVING FOR
TREES**

based) Soap Operas, hence their BODILY connection and appeal: the mundane facticity of their ordinariness, within a working, and lower middle, class meaning-making, was precisely WHAT MATTERED!

Yet, over and beyond that, indeed to some important extent as rejection of that mundane facticity, the nervous breakdowns associated with 'creativity' (The Author, The Artist, The....) provided a counter challenge, not just within the family but also at school, where a certain sort of, um, 'culturalness' provided a means of holding off the twin pressures of (1) denying the system and all it stood for (cf. P. Willis *Learning to Labour* for a paradigmatic exploratory ethnography); (2) joining in Their Game about doing well/getting better. That, let me name it as, life line opened for a certain homo-erotic (it was a boys only school) grouping which took as its 'neurotic' stand Neither/Nor, a lesson I've never forgotten; tho it took me a long time to find, thanks to Mao Tse-tung and Raymond Williams. Both/And. Later, much later, I discovered that this was the paradigmatic form, social form, of organized social struggle against the obvious, The Normal, that which goes without saying, etc. and here 'Toward(s) a Celebration of Difference(s)' is a shifting text, to which all writings previous are struggling and from which all writings after are struggling, also. Lindsay Anderson's film *IP* leads, via enormous detours, to *The Making of the Boy* (1988, another text of a breakdown, or as my friend Stephen argues they should be called, 'break/up' well, yes, both!).

It's always seemed to be a relevant question, within metaphoricality, about whether a given (some)body would want to be confronted by a dangerous poisonous snake or, say, a boa constrictor. Against the former, if there is

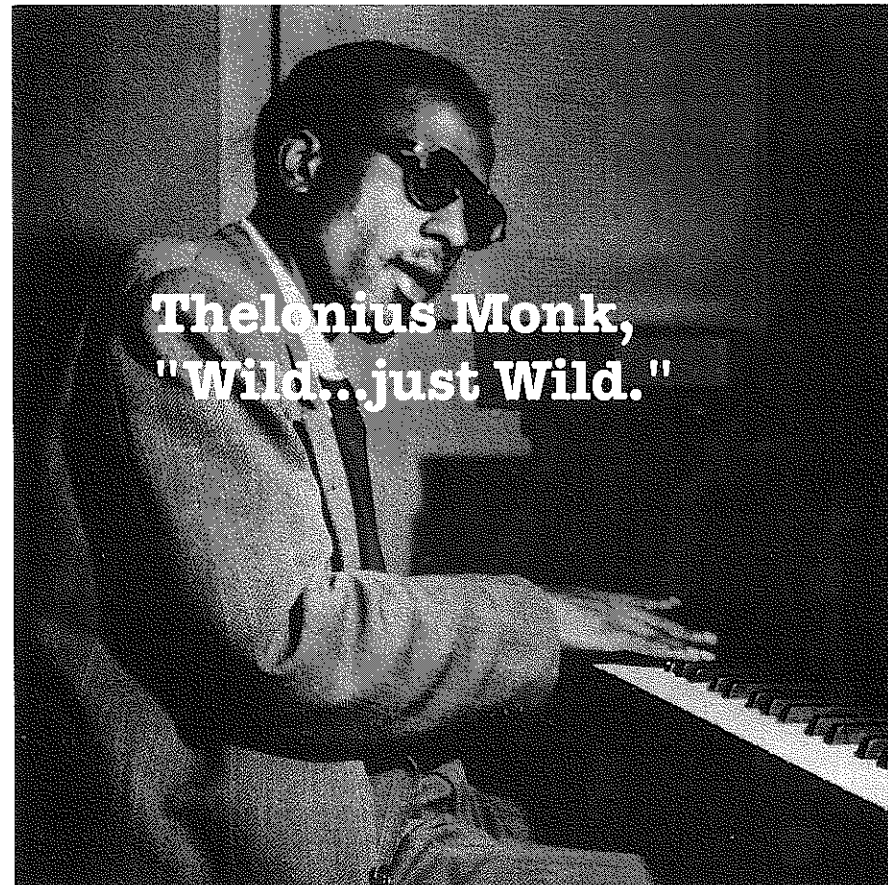
time, there are antidotes, against the latter, there is no escape, once the broils and squeezing have started. But, from the latter somebody might run, whereas the bite of the former is often too quick, too unexpected, to be avoided. Capitalist relations of (here, academic/intellectual) production seem to me to provide such pseudo-choices. This is not just a matter of cultural forms, after all. I write now from a curious social formation which has, through its ruling historic blocs, offered approval of a variety of nation/states in their sovereignty claims whilst remaining, since the 1830s anyway, the most centralising and Statist of social organizations ever experienced. Latvia, Estonia, Bosnia, Croatia, and, rather differently, Albania, are urgently welcomed into some company of 'Free States' whilst, quite deliberately, such possibilities are not even 'thinkable' for Wales, Scotland and those two curious 'difficulties': The Channel Islands and the norther part of the island called Ireland, the latter having been subject to continuous forms and means of English imperialism since 1086; the former now considering forms of Independence struggle because of the rigid authoritarianism of Westminster. This is taken further in a number of forms: the non-legitimated, ad-hoc bodies now claiming some sort of national hegemony (the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, to take two prominent exemplars) and various politicians (notably the former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher) talk of the dangers of a Euro-centralisation, and/or, in the case of the ad hoc bodies, a national centralisation whilst the politicians (since 1975, mark you) have engaged in the largest augmentation of Central State powers since the 1830s or

possibly since the 1530s, whilst the latter, within their 'own' institutions, have centralised power upwards and (re)presented themselves as national authorised/legitimate 'Bodies.' To have lived this, as I did, from 1975 to 1983 and then, more violatingly, from 1988 onwards, is to see the disappearance of part of a social (social-democratic, in fact) fabric that had simply been thought to be there (for ever).

Working through, working across, the range of possible cultural institutions and sites, what can be seen, time after time, is the delimiting of any possibilities of producing other than within what Raymond Williams (*Towards 2000*, Ch 1) called 'Plan X' and which has been in evidence since 1988 in a rapid idealism of repudiations, aided and abetted (in a sort of McCarthyism without McCarthy) by the 'end of communism.' And, rarely uttered in the same breath, the same text, the same moment: 'The Rise of Consumerism' (with a few empty signifiers about 'Citizenship' in more recent years).

**10. So,
FEELING
BACKWARDS/
THINKING
FORWARDS**

What Roland Barthes once called 'the fires of language' cannot be (entirely, all at once, in every instance) smothered by forms of moral regulation. Eyes melt, skins and fingers connect, words meld, songs link, images connect, hopes have a way of laughing critically (I image here brandy into black coffee, it's only a personal image). There'll always be a certain space between words/within sounds/around images: I'd like to embody these as always already hopeful, but I cannot, they can, for two examples: confirm isolation and individualism; they can also foster fascism. That is why there cannot be, in design, in hope, in loving solidarity, any/old/just 'Open Text' (Foucault's critique of Derrida is here very exact). If any meaning is possible, then -



The Record Changer

quite precisely, no meaning is possible. As I wrote in 1983 to say/depict 'An Old Woman' is to provide an encyclopedia of always already known meanings, a reassuring text for some (for many) but a violating text for some (for a few).

As I suggested in *Border/Lines* No. 1 ('Doing Mythologies') - a writing whose love, solidarity and hopefulness I would wish to stand within there are always resources for making meaning differently and, importantly, these need not be those solitary candles of the lonely last instance, but may indeed be very much in the Now-Time of our lives, may indeed be, in all the luscious senses of the words, coming together. It does not have to happen all ways, it may not happen often, but that IT CAN HAPPEN ONCELY, and MUCHLY, IN SOME HAPPENSTANCE OF SUDDEN UNEXPECTEDNESS blows apart (Charlie Christian on the first electric guitar is whom I honour here, Mintons, New York, 1942 and the grain of Gertrude Stein's voice in her reading of, e.g., the poem 'Picasso' not that different in time, in *limbre*) that which was always to be/to seem 'the case.'

Sexuality has been much more discussed in the last 10 or 20 years than previously (at least within the rarified spaces of the academy and approved publication) but the living of varied and variable sexualities does not yet seem to be an approved academic discourse, a lot

of the time, indeed, it is the sexualities of Other People that become discussable, not how the wordless merging and enlightenment of suddenly varied bodies SHINING comes to a be/coming of a certain soft, gentle silence. That is not, emphatically, witness the chatter which followed, a silencing. Rather a sort of song, the grain again here tho, the voice of the skin, the sing of the shine, the slipping of the body, in and out, of its skiful container and into a certain, uh, ectoplasmic ether, but without the narcotic (or aided by the same: highs on C, deep deep dives on M). There is, in other words, a graininess and difficulty to word situation about *bliss* (for sweet Roland, all ways seen from a distant shore, his definition of pleasure). And, is this not true, quite generally, there is a certain loss of words, and or a certain stuttering, when it comes to DESCRIBING being within the, um, field of cultural productions that reduces, in fact to certain words, like Great, Wonderful, Far Out, Too Much, Cool, WOW and the rest. Now, pause for just a millisecond, and think of the language of love/ing, does not that tend to the wordless (e.g. the long sighing) or the staccato jubilation (alas, not always *jouissance*) of singular words: WOW, Cool, Too Much, Far Out, Wonderful, Great. There's an ending, on a tape I have, of a Thelonius Monk performance, where Monk at the end, says

'Wild....just Wild.' How can the meaning of such a word, that word, be violently abstracted from the circumstances, context, situation of its employment, its use, not precisely as EXCHANGE, but as Use, as labour(ing)?

I talk, nonetheless, and arrogantly, of 'feeling backwards/thinking forwards' (precisely the stupid sort of either/or which intellectuals and academics trade in!), and there's a hint here of Gramsci's abused ideas about pessimism/optimism, normally made to link to intellect/will. Yet I, and I cannot be alone in this, have always been optimistic intellectually and pessimistic regarding the will (whatever that might be). Thinking and thought(fulness) seem, to me, much neglected in such simplicities. I've had a couple of seminar experiences which accentuate the rhythm of what I am saying here: returning to London, England, in 1984 I 'performed' a first version of 'The Body of Intellectuals' which was greeted by a muchness of heavy silence; coming back to Toronto in 1989 (was it?) I (with the help of Allen Ginsberg and Laurie Anderson) performed 'Analysis is not enough, there's all ways pleasure' and was greeted by the heaviness of a muchly silence. Later, in Exeter, at Michael Wood's STAR/CROSSED seminars I preformed something similar which almost led to violence, with people saying 'But what does it mean?,' 'But what do you think?,' when all I had done was play Laurie Anderson singing. This revealed, somewhat palpably, the 'limits of variation' that are 'proper' within an academic discourse/display/performative utterance. Later I learned this ALL OVER AGAIN when I began my inaugural lecture, on Occidentalism, with Laurie Anderson's song THE DREAM BEFORE (for Walter Benjamin) and showed slides simultaneously about 'Clogies,' but then I gave 'Them' lots of quotes and so latterly they were 'made happy.' For me, tho, and here a great loss, a further causation of my 13th nervous breakdown that dates precisely from then, what mattered was not this or that textual/songful form, but their collage, their montage, their-precisely-Unreasonableness, their distinctiveness within a general range of possibilities (yes, for hope).

So, to an ending, or a pause, just for now, and for our shared Now-Time: it seems to me that we are all still trapped in a very early paradigm in which analyst-observers make sense of the confusions/resources of SOME others. That these minorities happen out to be white male heterosexual metropolitan middle classes etc etc etc, isn't surely an accident! That continuously we read in various (New) Times of the cultural producer.....he, he, he, he.....cannot be some sort of typographical constraint, can



it? That since the late 1970's there has been a stalling and since the early 1980s a regression regarding - and this must be said boldly - MAJORITIES not now so accepted into postsecondary schooling in e.g. the USA, Canada, 'Europe,' the USSR or China, for some signifying examples, surely relates and yet contradicts some wider claims about equality, access, freedom, advancement through certification, etc etc. Do we not now, and very caringly, have to attend to contra/dictions! Do we not have to find the means, voices, the grain to show that and how even 'admission' (granted by whom, I might ask) can tear, wound, savage and, I use the word VERY directly, abort the desire, the possibility, the dream....the dream, and the hope. How, in other words, there are not enough of 'US' to MAKE A DIFFERENCE when we singularly, alone, arrive at some destination (which may well be an end stop) of a driven hope, a desired be/coming, and find it is not enough, it is not excessive enough, there is no (be)coming, there is no orgasmic release. So, finally, and sharply, when will, and can it ever, in an embodied way, cultural studies/historical sociology (re) turn to the conditions of its own varied PRODUCTION, as c u l t u r a l production? To place, e.g. in graduate school the analyst professor as simply another 'analysand' with no Words (certainly not 'The Word') but a member, a participant, in that all ways open, never to be completed unstitching and reweaving of the fabrication of meaningful possibilities, such that any interpretation is not dismissable solely, and in advance, because it does not gel with, link to and become OVER determined by 'The' meaning, handed out, in small droplets, as Artaud suggested, to succour the beasts of desire (here the empirically common male-graduate course providers are, strictly, mummified, hence, once again, sexuality returns to the centre of meaningful provision and meaning making. It may indeed be the embodied 'situational logic (that analysis is NOT enough, there is, after all, albeit with stuttering, hesitation, mumbling and thus a certain lexical erasure, ALL WAYS PLEASURE). And that, in the end, Historical Sociology, Cultural Studies, and YES, critical pedagogy, cannot reach me, this body here jumping up and down, dancing, singing, and speaking that body language which is never body reading. To that hope these autobiographical remarks are, uh, sung. Milton wrote of someone sightless, I write for everyone to be tuneful/dancing. That anarchistic dancing, laughing and singing Against The Power has had rather a limited 'press' in the last few years (the historians continually turn and return to those who so refused). Surely what such signs sinew is a realised (and not just perhaps, potential) embodiment of showing and sharing that, and what could be more profound than this, 'it' doesn't matter. 'It' is superfluous, 'it' slips by, 'it' simply does not concern us (bodily), 'it' goes, yeah, and also 'it' goes by. I want here, finally to invert or, better, disrupt, a certain cosy theory of ideology much (ab)used in the last ten or so years: so what that 'they' claim certain rights, and indeed do so successively and successfully,

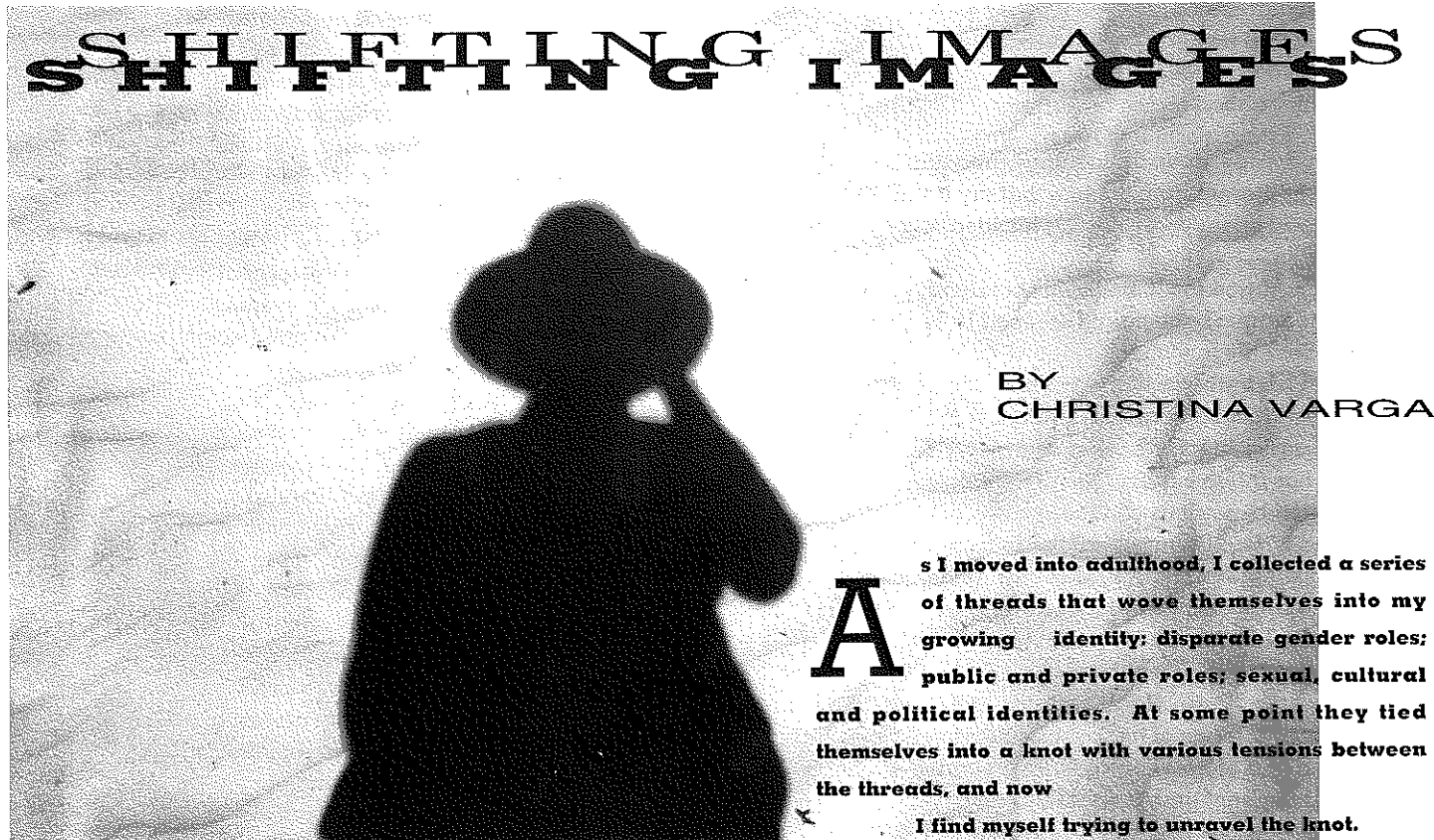
"Historical Sociology, Cultural Studies, and YES Critical Pedagogy cannot reach me, this body here jumping up and down, dancing, singing, and speaking that body language which is never body reading."

so what?! Does an adopted universal Christian oriented calendar stop Jews, Chinese, Muslims, and many many others celebrating their days, their years? Of course it does not! Does the worldwide and precapitalist resourced practices of racism and patriarchy stop nonwhites and nonmales saying 'This' just t h i s 'cannot be true, is not fair, is monstrously and violently unjust'? Of course not!

So, yes, and of course, 'we' (a term which is empirically unuseable) haven't done 'it' yet, found a way to organize/celebrate differences differently, but neither have 'They' found a way to celebrate them as grim similarity, have they? So what is going on is a shifting and complicated, indeed, contra/dictory shifting 'Frontier of Control', but our advantage is that this is several and differentiated. No sooner has a programme and policy been articulated around ONE difference than it is revealed that this CANNOT address or attend to differences within that difference. Then the game, round about, roller coaster starts again.

You see, as a final comment, they can never 'get it right,' they'll always stumble and misrepresent/misallocate; we may not yet be able to unify our refusal within a celebration of difference. But, you see, the differences are not simply eradicable, as if they were facts of nature, but they are produced and reproduced by the very workings of this anti-Human violation of any possibility of GENERALLY being human, called, for shorthand, capitalism. They claim to have the dream; ours, in fact, in labour, and that all so so difficult production, organisation, is the task. Organized knowledge, differenced, differently remains our cultural studies, resourced by our historical sociology, and informing our social curriculum, our political pedagogy. Thank you all.

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One of the deepest contradictions that has influenced the way I see myself in the world is the tension between "European" (especially East European) and "North American" cultures. I was born in Hungary, but apparently my birth was the catalyst for my parents to leave. They decided to emigrate to the West soon after I was born, to allow me the opportunity to grow up with greater political and economic freedom.

For decades the situation in Hungary had been such that it was dangerous to voice any opinion contrary to the regime. The increasing bureaucratization and deteriorating economy of a state socialist system meant a lack of consumer goods and housing, long work hours and deepening cynicism for most people, with the exception of an elite few. However, my parents did not leave after the partly-failed and bloody revolution of 1956 as many others did. Both had familial ties cementing them there and it was illegal, and therefore dangerous, to leave. They would not have been

able to take most of their belongings with them and only the unknown awaited them in the West. Their knowledge of certain aspects of Western culture was limited, as isolation of the East Block was encouraged by elements such as a tightly controlled media with anti-Western interests. As a Canadian today, I take travel for granted. Even on a secretary's salary it is possible for me to travel (I don't have a criminal record or outstanding traffic fines) and I have access to foreign currency. For my parents in the fifties and sixties, however, even a trip to another East Block country was difficult enough. Obtaining a visa meant going through endless layers of bureaucracy and the money they were allowed to take out of the country was very limited.

In addition, my father, particularly, was engaged in political activity. There was rebuilding of the country to be done after the Second World War. As a socialist he was committed to working towards bettering the condition of workers and peasants, at the same time as creating a more just and equal society.

However, the existing regime did not live up to many of its promises and, in fact, during the 50's and under the influence of a Stalinist model, conditions became extremely oppressive for many. Intellectuals were particularly targeted for violent censorship and scapegoating. Nevertheless, while many people were disillusioned by the way socialism was implemented, believing in those ideals made simply packing up and leaving difficult.

It was, then, the appearance of their child, along with the obvious deterioration and bureaucratization of the regime, that led them to leave everything behind and turn to the West. They did not expect to settle in North America, but came to Canada because my father found work here. Although they did not come from a radically different culture, unlike some of the immigrants who come to Canada, they, like many others, found the cultural transition difficult. The freedom they found was built, as it was



in Western Europe, upon an ideology (free-market democracy) different from the one that my father in particular had spent years basing his ideals, actions and writings upon.

In addition to his belief in socialist ideals, my father came from a background steeped in higher learning. Both his Jewish and central European urban intellectual background formed in him a love of books, music and political discussion. Although Hungary was largely an agriculturally-based country, its capital, Budapest, has a rich cultural history. Ironically, centuries of domination by various conquerors has produced a vibrant and lyrical literary heritage in Hungary. Its connection with German-Austrian culture helped Budapest to become a centre for learning and the arts. Nevertheless, I see in the Budapest that I know a curious tension between the perspective of a colonized and a European elite culture. North America, then, was a shock to my parents in terms of its consumer and mass cultural emphasis. I, therefore, grew up with a sharp distinction between "European" and "North American," based both on my parents' tension-filled perspective and on the dominant popular imaginary in Canada.

The myth of "Europe/the European," in the eyes of many European emigrés, is characterized as the standard of culture, to which their new cultures are compared. Its history and tradition of scholarship and refined artistry engender a strong appreciation, a secure and grounded identity, a sense of communality. Images are, for emigrés, narrative and extended. Cultural and political rhetoric is based on traditional disciplines. The prime example of this "European" stereotype is the type of European film that is touted as having "real" artistic merit: the expectation is that several layers of political, social and historical commentary exist in the work.

The feeling is that "North America" is less rooted in tradition, based more in a commodity/consumer culture; the emphasis on mass media communication engenders a proliferation of seemingly free-floating imagery, shallow and displaced. Status, identity and the right to participate in the culture are validated through values of individualism and increasing technical specialization. Technology inserts itself everywhere. Mainstream culture and political rhetoric is based on ahistorical readings of particular phenomena, in a self-referential world. Again, the stereotypical Hollywood film can be used as an embodiment of these values: the pace and pyrotechnic extravaganza whirl the viewer past any possibility of deeper examination.

Although partly a Eurocentric reading, these stereotypes also have a basis in reality. How to reconcile my distaste of conspicuous consumption with my disgust for Eurocentric elitism became a source of tension for me.

As I try to reconstruct the development of my gender-consciousness, it seems that in some ways it caught me by surprise to realize that I was a woman. This has partly to do with the fact that as a child I was mostly concerned with my cultural allegiances. As an only child of two people who felt culturally displaced, I spent a lot of time under the influence of a defiantly constructed "European" atmosphere at home. Accompanying them almost annually on trips to Europe, I was cushioned from Canadian culture outside of school. During the school year I spent almost all my time with one girlfriend. I remember that time as skipping between being a model student and creating a private world of stuffed animals, miniature models and endless conversations. My parents dressed me in their conception of a European school-girl: dark, woolly

"As I try to reconstruct the development of my gender-consciousness, it seems that in some ways it caught me by surprise to realize that I was a woman."

tights, dark dress shoes, woolen skirts or dresses, usually in subdued colours, a blouse and bookbag. A picture from grade four shows me demurely sitting with hands folded and ankles crossed. Unlike that of my T-shirted schoolmates, this is an almost painfully typical portrait of a child dutifully picking up (middle-class) gender-appropriate cues. However, when my best friend moved away in sixth grade, I suddenly found myself an anachronism in the middle of an already developing



microcosm of gender relations. Since I went to a small-town, nearly homogeneously middle-upper-class WASP school, the gender socialization was a little more subtle than in other schools I subsequently visited, where the girls looked like extras for "Flashdance" and the guys like aspiring "West Side Story" characters. Still, I found myself with a choice between developing my public persona as either a coy, flirtatious, "feminine" girl, or "one of the guys." I intuitively drifted towards the latter, finding, however, that this meant a crash course in mimicking Canadian (pre-teen) culture. I had already had painful experiences, the consequence of having inappropriate props, such as taking green peppers and rye bread for lunch. I wonder now whether my ability to assimilate myself almost immediately into a set of unspoken codes has to do with the fact that my family moved through four different cultures and languages (from Hungary to Africa to Germany to Canada) before I was six years old. Or whether, being a girl, I had already felt the pressure to be hypersensitive about my appearance and self-image, and able to manipulate it.

Whether manipulation or assimilation, the fact that I started to direct my image meant that I began a process of reconstructing the mold I felt had been made for me. I remember the dismay my purchase of track pants and a pair of Nike runners caused my parents. I started playing sports and watching hockey games.

"Eh" entered into my vocabulary. It astonishes me even now how almost overnight I metamorphosed from a socially and physically clumsy outsider into a friendly, sports-literate person accepted into the WASP world. This is not to say that I did not have my problems with this world. I remember a gym class where we played a game of "girls against the boys" volleyball. The inanity of such an artificial separation angered me to the extent that I walked out of the class. But, in general, I am struck by the sense of power and competence that I felt in "passing." It is also

at this time that I noticed my persona encompassing some "masculine" traits, such as competitiveness in the areas of sports and academics - in other words, in the "public" realm outside of emotion and interpersonal relations, in which boys usually outstrip girls. I had a "buddy" relationship with both boys and girls. (This may have to do with the fact that because to a large extent I was playing a role, I did not divulge much of myself to anyone.) I especially found myself relating to boys and sticking up for them in class. Still more defiant, for the most part, towards the straightjacketing discipline of school than the girls, I



related to their predicament. Later, as I began to develop sexual relationships, I found myself having fairly unromantic, realistic, and straightforward attitudes and expectations. Men later told me that they found me intimidating in that respect. At the same time, though, I had some "feminine" traits, such as a nurturing, compassionate attitude towards others, a high degree of self-awareness about my presentation and the fact that I never overtly initiated a sexual relationship.

In many ways I was lucky, in that I never had the fact of my womanhood thrown violently in my face by getting pregnant or getting raped. Because of my supportive background and, therefore, my intellectual confidence, I was seldom treated as inferior and destined for the woman's ghetto. My body, until it later began to express a greater confusion of influences upon it, molded itself with an iron discipline to the dictates of my intellect.

This portrait of a self-assured person, however, began breaking down somewhere along the way. As happens to many girls in their teens, I began to crack. Whether this is because at this point most girls begin experiencing the conflicting pressures that follow them through much of their lives, to integrate contradictory messages into their identities as women, or whether I felt that I was expending more energy "passing" than being a multi-dimensional person, I don't know. The fact is that I was becoming increasingly depressive and concerned about my weight. I grew more and more incapable of dealing with the meaninglessness of much of what I experienced in school, and what I saw going on around me, especially as I became more politically aware. I particularly found myself unable to manipulate language. I saw language as being one of the influences upon what I gradually came to see as a constructed experience. I saw wild contradictions around myself. It seemed so incredible that the world I had known was steeped in such privilege - for instance, education, the luxury of simple moral choices and the unexamined embrace of limited parameters of acceptability. I saw that privilege being painstakingly rationalized and alternatives relentlessly silenced in attitudes and institutions around me, such as in my school and the mainstream media. Even something as innocuous as trying to start a peace group at my high school, focussed on raising consciousness through alternative venues of information, was met for a year with accusations by both students and administrators that we were anarchist agitators. What I saw around me made me mistrust all that I associated with the process of established written and verbal expression. I began to mistrust language as a tool of institutional power, a tool

that allows the manipulation of the perceived realities that society bases its values upon.

At this point I was bulimic, close to flunking out of school, suicidal and seeing a succession of psychiatrists. Eventually I was hospitalized for clinical depression. When I was released, I decided to go to an alternative school in Toronto.

So, at the age of 17 I found myself beginning the process of really taking control of my internal and external possibilities, not simply manipulating the facade. I find it sad that the only way that the medical profession knew how to deal with a girl going through existential/identity questions was to medicate her. As I took myself off the antidepressants I began to re-evaluate the possibility of making sense of things on my own and of being an active agent in the community. I began to use the city to gain access to a small community of young, experimental artists, many belonging to different subcultures, such as gays, punks, anarchists. I went to underground music events, exhibitions, theatre, and participated in demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. I was playing music, experimenting in the visual arts and conducting seminars for classes. I was more creatively active, but I still could not write anything other than fragments, as I could not form coherent conceptions of the world around me. I did not yet understand the power of play and irony or of expression through the interconnection of fragments. I came from a background of personally experienced privilege, but with a vicarious history of suffering. I could "pass" in the dominant culture, but I did not really belong. I was trying to exit the "establishment," which I connected with a self-conscious reproduction of class and other biases, but I could not deny that a large part of myself was firmly yoked to it. Neither radically inclined, nor mindlessly accepting, I felt I was floating between boundaries. My physical image literally reflected this state of mind: I dressed neither conservatively nor playfully, but wore a neutral assortment of baggy, cast-off clothes. I also had a series of emotionally uninvolved sexual encounters with both men and women. It is telling that something as "radical" as bisexuality almost did not register, as such, with me. That either points to a relaxed attitude to sexuality or the fact that my body and desires were obviously still not really acknowledged as having an existence, other than as subordinate to my intellect. Although desire obviously has a lot to do with the mind, especially the subconscious, my expectation was that if my evolving intellect was able to imagine a possibility, then my body should follow like a puppet. My state of mind can be illustrated by a few fragments from a journal I was keeping at the time:

The city creates things in the imagination that have nothing to do with being day-to-day reality. It's all film. Sex takes on the dimensions of success. Packaging.

I thought of how dirty clothes get in the city. It is more than particles of car emission, viruses or vomit from a drunken person on the bus - it is the residue of people's lives and outrageous experiences.

Fragments. This is an age of fragments. Nothing is whole. Things are parts, alterations, glimpses, limited promises. It seems like things are not created, but altered, distorted.

The frenzied delvings into the sewers of the mind ... dark needs, desperate failings ... the power that comes with the knowledge of the buried ferocity within.

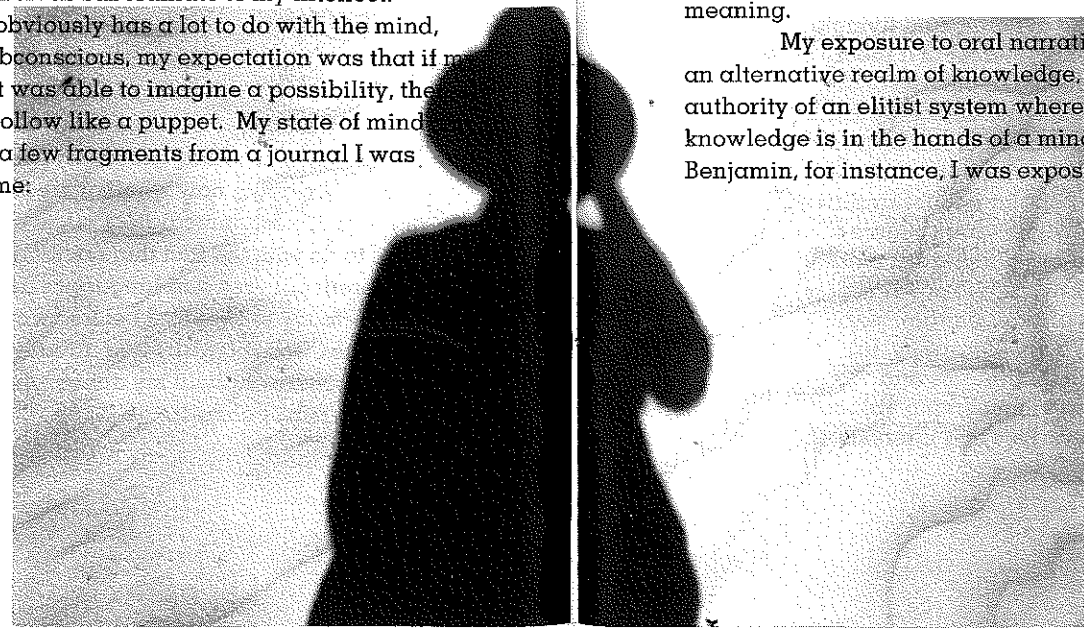
These fragments display a kind of urban sensibility - feeling the pressure of image manipulation and sensing the power of subversion through acknowledging the dirty underside. But I didn't have a language to talk about the shifting, slippery nature of reality - and the power relations that go into its definition. As I was groping my way towards an attempt to understand and define these perceptions, I made a decision at the end of grade 13 to go to university. This was somewhat of a throwback to the days when I could not imagine a future for myself other than an institutionally condoned, intellectual existence. Obviously influenced by a "European" understanding of culture and education, I went to university with a conception of it as being an accepted series of steps to go through to get educated. I therefore chose a variety of first-year survey courses in traditional disciplines and rapidly found myself screaming with frustration. However, I soon realized that I was not looking to assimilate a body of knowledge into an already established framework, but was seeking the beginnings of languages in which to talk about my earlier sensibilities. In Cultural Studies I found a forum for reflections on modernity and transmissions of meaning.

My exposure to oral narrative provided me with an alternative realm of knowledge, different from the authority of an elitist system where the power over knowledge is in the hands of a minority. Through Walter Benjamin, for instance, I was exposed to a language

which discussed the role of "authority" in the constitution of meaning. I was led to move towards a new understanding of knowledge as the end product of specific practices and I began to see myself functioning through the problems and phenomena of the modern and post-modern.

I began to recognize that I had a background of stories and jokes upon which I constructed a conception of my parents' (and, by extension, of my) background. The stories I remember with greatest clarity have to do with the privations and violence my parents sustained. Trivial concerns led without warning to heartrending stories. For instance, my mother yet again voicing her annoyance about my father's incessant smoking drifted into his relating an experience of being imprisoned for political activities and being forbidden to have a cigarette. My father occasionally talked about being a Jew in collaborationist Hungary under the Nazis. He recounted incidents such as Jews being stopped in the streets and ordered to pull down their pants so that their penises could be checked for circumcision. He personally escaped being exterminated by the Nazis, as the "Soviet Liberating Army" marched in when the Nazis were literally blocks away from where his family was living. Later, after his participation in the 1956 revolution, he was black-listed from working because of his dissident activities and made his living translating or writing under other people's names. When I went to visit Budapest 30-odd years after the event, he showed me the public square where he was shot at in a demonstration in 1956. Again, he was nearly killed and survived because someone illegally hid him in a building. (Thirty-five years later he met the woman who had let him in. She was still working in the same building, which had been converted to archives, and she showed him where the bullet holes had been left in a cabinet.) He once described himself dressing up in his best clothes at the age of ten, and going to the "high school" in order to procure himself a sponsor, which was the only way he could go to secondary school at a time when a restricted number of Jews were permitted to do higher studies. He later worked full-time to support himself and his parents while acquiring the equivalent of two M.A.'s and a Ph.D.

My mother came from minor nobility (landowners) and, as a result, was treated as a pariah under the existing regime. In spite of her straight A's, she was told that she would never be admitted to university and that she might consider becoming a shoemaker, as she had had polio as a child, and making shoes was not considered heavy labour. Fed up with the system, she once tried to flee Hungary on a train and was caught. In her desperate fury, she berated the official for the inhuman zeal of a system persecuting people of a generation who had had nothing to do with the oppression of the lower classes. She ended up persuading him to intervene on her behalf to admit her to university. It was at the age of ten that she had contracted polio, and her mother had proceeded to Austria, leaving her and her



younger sister and intending to send for them later. This, however, never transpired and they were left under the care of their grandmother. In a lighter vein, she tells of her grandmother seating a communist propagandist under the family coat of arms and telling him, "Have a seat, Sir Comrade." My mother later ended up supporting the three of them and never got the chance to go to medical school as she had wanted. Hearing this, one begins to understand the importance my parents place on a formal education, the idea being that even after losing everything, one still has one's education.

My oral background also contains a variety of humorous anecdotes and jokes. As in other communities where people are dealing with conditions of oppression, uncertainty and deprivation through underground humour, there is a strong tradition of ingenuously bitter, politically biting humour, not only in East Europe, but in the Jewish intellectual community. There is a great deal of power in the subversive use of language. As an illustration of the shield of irony that renders language ambiguous, I recall an anecdote about a skit performed on stage in Budapest during the 40's. The Hungarian word for steering wheel is also the word for government. An actor simply came on stage with a steering wheel and complained that the steering wheel was broken. Unfortunately, the police in the audience shut the theatre down at that point. Two jokes also stand out in my mind:

Andropov has woken up in the morning. His entourage bustles in and asks how he is feeling, to which the response is, "Fine." How was his sleep? "Fine." How does his head feel? "Fine." How does his stomach feel? How was his urine? "Fine." Finally, how was his bowel movement? "Fine." Then he adds, "I think I will get out of bed now."

The other joke goes as follows:

Rabbit sits on his doorstep filing his nails. Fox comes by and asks him why he is filing his nails. Rabbit replies, "Because when Lion comes they will be sharp enough so that I can tear him to pieces." Bear comes by and asks him why he is filing his nails. Rabbit gives the same response. Blackbird comes by and asks him why he is filing his nails and Rabbit answers, "Because when Lion comes they will be sharp enough so that I can tear him to pieces." Finally, Lion himself comes and asks Rabbit what he is doing. Rabbit replies, "Nothing, I'm just sitting here filing my nails and minding my own business."

These stories constitute a kind of vicarious memory which refers to a time at least a generation older than me. In the fall of '91 I visited Budapest for the first time since leaving as a baby. This was an occasion to reformulate the place from a mythical narrative told in my parents' voices to a collection of impressions viewed first hand. While they were lamenting the loss of a café culture, I was meeting a younger generation which was functioning in a milieu of bars, clubs and fast-food restaurants. The Hungary I've carried around in my heart and mind is not particularly related to the reality of today. The narrative that I know, that revolves around an aesthetic of suffering, creates a monochromatic experience of spectatorship. People living there participate in a reality outside of this aesthetic of suffering. There is an ongoing process of social and political transformation that this historical memory does not include.

My realization of the dynamic and living aspect of Budapest coincides with my interest in a theory of popular culture that is interested in the role of the consumer. I carried with me the residue of my father's concerns about the marginalization of intellectuals by a narcissistic and commercial fascination with mass culture; I also realized that popular culture traditionally is seen as trivial and shallow. However, differentiating between the production and consumption of mass culture enables one to think of the role of agency. Although the various forms of mass culture, from fashion to fast food, from TV to pornography, are produced through a series of institutions and corporations with an interest in preserving values conforming to dominant narratives and interests, their

consumption is influenced by the interests, experiences and values of a variety of subcultures. In this way, the consumers of mass culture are not necessarily passive objects, but rather agents active in the construction of their own experience. This interests me as well in terms of representations of and for women and in terms of how women present themselves in everyday life. Already a veteran of female image construction, I embarked on a course of playing with my image in the real world. Although I found Cultural Studies introduced theories which engage, rather than impose upon, the spaces they try to describe, I became acutely aware that I was not actually inhabiting a space.

As I became increasingly uncomfortable with my disembodied theoretical approach in university, I began to fantasize about being a flight attendant. As I had flown a lot when we were moving around in my childhood, I had come to see flight attendants as some kind of ministering angel, always patient, always in control, kindly and glamorous. Of course, later I understood this image to be a consciously and falsely perpetrated one. It was, therefore, with a self-consciously ironic sense that I prepared for my entrance into this glamorous and grubby world. This job seemed to me to be the epitome of uncomprehending stereotypes of women's roles. On the one hand, it is a dirty, exploitative job. On the other, you are glamorized. It is a wonderful opportunity for self-consciously playing with a stereotypical image and realizing its patently constructed veneer. I saw a pair of drag queens dressed as flight attendants at Gay Pride Day in Toronto and it pointed out to me exactly how this image is open to appropriation by people playing with gender identity. The stewardess has the same larger-than-life aspect of a nostalgic movie star, with the duality of a real person underneath.

Again, I find it amazing how immediately and intuitively I achieved the hostess image. I had never considered myself typically "feminine," but I instinctively knew how to dress, put on make-up and be graceful and charming when applying for positions as a flight

attendant. It later amused me to watch myself negotiating the female trinity of roles that it seems female flight attendants are expected to perform. One is at the same time unattainable virgin, titillating whore and nurturing mother, all wrapped up in one perky package. "Well-groomed" was the greatest compliment I heard among my co-workers (as the plane goes down in flames we remain calm and assured, with knotted scarf firmly in place). Although the contract did not state any overtly sexist conditions, there were unspoken double standards. For instance, at one point in training we were required to jump out the side of the aircraft and slide down an inflatable slide. We were emphatically told not to wear nylons because the friction had once caused a woman's nylons to melt on to her legs. However, the women's uniform consisted of a skirt and nylons. When we pointed this out, we were told that an emergency was unlikely to happen and, anyway, if it did occur, we would have more important things on our minds.

Although I was ambivalent about the image I was creating for myself, I was also having fun playing with my image. In giving myself over to an intuitive understanding of certain social relations I came to an understanding of the body as a visible site of conflicting influences. The process was curiously liberating, as I was using this persona for my own purposes. I got a great deal of pleasure from adopting my different roles outside of their own context. I found that consciously playing with mainstream images, within the mainstream, allows for a certain flexibility in crossing boundaries. It serves a different purpose when played out in a subversive context, such as cross-dressing. It is the context, or intention, which plays a large part in how subversive, pleasurable, or oppressive a role becomes.

At the same time, I realized that the stereotypically feminine image I chose to inhabit requires a degree of attractiveness and "breeding." It is not available to everyone. It is also not desirable to all women to play with mainstream femininity. Some women have undergone a great deal more

oppression than others, and they may not want to have anything to do with an oppressive culture, not even in humour or play. It is often difficult to say at what point one is co-opted by the system. In the process of self-consciously living a game and a reality I was able to experience the tensions of manipulating, and, at the same time, being manipulated by the power relations that go into constructing an image. This was illustrated to me when, after the airline folded, I worked as a secretary. As there are certain assumptions about the intelligence and ambition of people who work as secretaries, it was a slight disruption of my role to be having a theoretical discussion with consultants in the office. However, afterwards I overheard them exclaiming that I was "cute as a button." It was obvious that, in spite of my attempt at inserting an alternate identity into my role, the power of interpreting the meaning of that conversation lay within their control as superiors and men.

One of the secretaries I worked with said, "the sad reality is that appearance counts [in terms of status]." As I weave my identity through shifting images I wonder what there is to recover from the process of image-construction. As I watched people in Budapest struggling with economic and ideological issues in the wake of the collapse of communism in the East Block, I wondered if the preoccupation with appearance and representation is more a North American concern. Of course, this kind of struggle does take place here, as well. I am also more aware of the invisible codes and boundaries dictating the meanings of representation and behaviour in Canada than in Hungary. Through self-conscious and unconscious manipulation of image, I struggle to make the boundaries more visible, while making an ambiguous place for myself.

Christina Varga is an undergraduate student at York.



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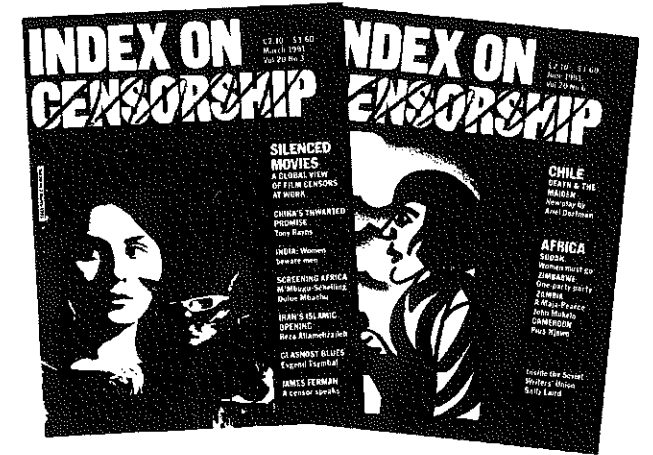
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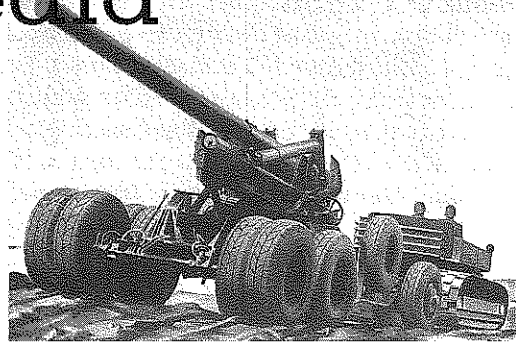
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Blowing Up The Media



Harold Pinter

American Football

(a reflection upon the Gulf War)

Hallelujah!
It works.
We blew the shit out of them.

We blew the shit right back up
their own ass

It works.
We blew the shit out of them.
They suffocated in their own shit!

Hallelujah.
Praise the Lord for all good things.

We blew them into fucking shit.
They are eating it.

Praise the Lord for all good things.

We blew their balls into shards of
dust,
Into shards of fucking dust.

We did it.

Now I want you to come over here
and kiss me on the mouth.

**Harold Pinter
August 1991**

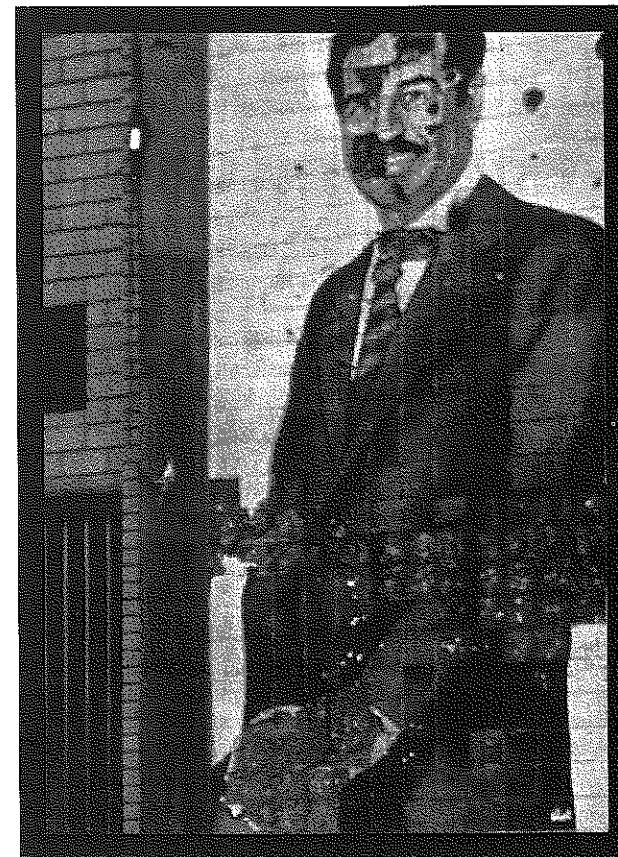
I started to write this poem on the plane going to the Edinburgh Festival in August 1991. I had a rough draft by the time we landed in Edinburgh. It sprang from the triumphalism, the machismo, the victory parades, that were very much in evidence at the time. So that is the reason for 'We blew the shit out of them.' The first place I sent it to was the *London Review of Books*. I received a very odd letter, which said, in sum, that the poem had considerable force, but it was for that very reason that they were not able to publish it. But the letter went on to make the extraordinary assertion that the paper shared my views about the USA's role in the world. So I wrote back. 'The paper shares my views, does it? I'd keep that to myself if I were you, chum,' I said. And I was very pleased with the use of the word 'chum'.

So I sent it to the *Guardian* and the then literary editor came on the telephone to me and said, 'Oh dear.' He said, 'Harold, this is really ... You've really given me a very bad headache with this one.' He said, 'I'm entirely behind you myself, speaking personally.' This is my memory of the telephone conversation. 'But,' he said, 'you know I don't think ... Ooh, I think we're in for real trouble if we try to publish it in the *Guardian*.' Really, I asked innocently, why is that?

He said, 'Well, you know, Harold, we are a family newspaper.' Those words were actually said. 'Oh, I'm sorry,' I said, 'I was under the impression you were a serious newspaper.' And he said, 'Well, yes, we're also a serious newspapers, of course. Nevertheless things have changed a bit in the *Guardian* over the last few years.'

I suggested he talk to some of his colleagues and come back to me in a couple of days. Because, I said, 'I do believe the *Guardian* has a responsibility to publish serious work, seriously considered work, which I believe this to be. Although it is very hot, I also think it is steely. Hot steel ...'

He called me in two days and said, 'Harold, I'm terribly sorry, I can't publish it.' He more or less said, 'It's more than my job's worth. So that was the *Guardian*. I then sent it to the *Observer* ...



going to lose lots of readers'. I asked, 'Do you really believe that? Anyway, we had a quite amiable chat. He said, 'I want to publish it but I seem to be more or less alone.' I then said, 'Look, the *Observer*, as a serious newspaper, has in fact published quite recently an account of what the US tanks actually did in the desert. The tanks had bulldozers, and during the ground attack they were used as sweepers. They buried, as far as we know, an untold number of Iraqis alive. This was reported by your newspaper as a fact and it was a horrific and obscene fact. My poem actually says, "They suffocated in their own shit". It is obscene, but it is referring to obscene facts.

He said, 'Absolutely right. Look, I want to publish the poem. But I'm running into all sorts of resistance. The trouble is the language, it's the obscene language. People get very offended by this and that's why they think we are going to lose readers.' I then sent the editor of the *Observer* a short fax, in which I quoted myself when I was at the US Embassy in Ankara in March 1985 with Arthur Miller. I had a chat with the ambassador about torture in Turkish prisons. He told me that I didn't appreciate the realities of the situation vis-à-vis the Communist threat, the military reality, the diplomatic reality, the strategic reality, and so on.

I said the reality I was referring to was that of electric current on your genitals. Whereupon the ambassador said, 'Sir, you are a guest in my house,' and turned away. I left the house.

The point I was making to the editor of the *Observer* was that the ambassador found great offence in the word genitals. But the reality of the situation, the actual reality of electric current on your genitals, was a matter of no concern for him. It was the use of the word that was offensive, but not the act. I said I was drawing an analogy between that little exchange, and what we were now talking about. This poem uses obscene words to describe obscene acts and obscene attitudes.

But the editor of the *Observer* wrote to me and said he couldn't publish, with great regret. 'I've been giving serious thought to the publication of your poem on the Gulf War. As you know, my first instinct was in favour, despite warnings by senior colleagues that many readers would be offended ... I admit to having cold feet.' Recently an *Observer* columnist spoke of his paper's rejection of the poem and referred to his editor's concern 'for its shortcomings as a piece of verse. This was

Which has published your poems previously ...

Oh yes, the *Guardian* has published me in the past, too ... As, incidentally, has the *Independent*. The *Observer* was the most complex and fascinating web that I actually ran into. I sent the poem not to the literary editor, but to the editor himself.

A couple of days later, he called me and said that he thought it should be published. He thought it was very testing. Probably going to be quite a lot of flack, he said. But he thought it should be published, not on the literary pages, but on the leader page. It was a truly political poem, he said. So I was delighted to hear that. He'd send me a proof, which he did.

The next Sunday nothing happened. And then the following Sunday nothing happened. So I called the editor. He said, 'Oh dear, Harold, I'm afraid that I've run into one or two problems with your poem.' I asked what they were. 'In short, my colleagues don't want me to publish it'. Why not? He said, 'They're telling me we are

not of course true. The editor showed no such concern – to me, at least.

I then sent the poem to the literary editor of the *Independent*, saying I hadn't sent it to him in the first place because I did not think the *Independent* would publish it. But now that everybody had turned it down, the *London Review of Books*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, perhaps I was wrong about the *Independent*! To cut a long story very short, the literary editor wanted to publish it but he felt he had to show it to the editor. The editor sat on it for a few days and then made no comment except to say the *Independent* was not going to publish the poem. And I've never had any explanation. Nothing. It was simply, No.

The *London Review of Books*' letter was dated 24 September 1991; the *Guardian*'s rejection came in a conversation on the telephone at the beginning of October. The letter from the editor of the *Observer* was dated 6 November, and that from the *Independent* was dated 9 December.

In conversation earlier, you said you would rather not write down the record of this poem yourself, because it would sound as if you were whingeing. But there is an issue here beyond the complaint of the rejected poet. This poem has been dropped by the mainstream press, which would normally have snapped up anything written by Harold Pinter.

I did incidentally, send it to the *New York Review of Books*, just as a laugh. The editor thanked me warmly for sending the poem, but said he was afraid they couldn't use it. So I finally did not waste any more time. I heard that a magazine called *Bomb*, a very well-produced publication in the West Village, might be interested, and indeed they published the poem.

It was also finally published in Britain, in January 1992, by a new newspaper called *Socialist*, with a limited circulation. But as far as national newspapers go, in Holland it was published in one of the main Dutch dailies, *Handelsblad* – in no uncertain terms, too, with an article about the rejection in England, written by the editor. And it was published in Bulgaria, Greece and Finland.

It is interesting, isn't it? At a time when papers are not too troubled about the severity of the language, when it is about the body, scatological, sexual, or whatever. We have overcome the years when you had to put a series of dots in place of an 'F' word. Yet the objection to your poem was justified in your use of some strong words.

This may be because it is a formed piece of work, and perhaps that is where its strength lies. It is a deliberate piece of work. So it alarms more. I'd like to say, as the poet, that I regard it as a very ugly poem. It is necessarily ugly. Its reference is to the grossest ugliness.

But nobody ever said, 'We don't think this poem is good enough. It is not a successful piece of work.' Nobody has actually said that.

I feel particularly sensitive about the language. I am the editor of Index on Censorship responsible for losing Index an annual grant of £7,000. Somebody objected to the word 'cunt' in an article in our special issue on women, *Breaking the silence* (9/1990). I thought the word, though strong, was in context. However, although I do not know the exact details, one funding organisations obviously took exception.

I wonder what would happen if your poem were to be re-submitted now, as an exercise. People and editors change. Perhaps it would be an exercise worth pursuing ... The reactions seem to be final for the wrong reasons: 'family paper', or 'offending readers' ...

Oh no. I have no intention of re-submitting it – or anything else – to any of these newspapers. Unless I decide to write nursery rhymes.

At a time when we have become far more accustomed to strong language in print, it is almost amusing to find sensitivities expressed in this way. Perhaps it reflects this very peculiar political period we are living in. There is a rather coy and false reaction to matters and events, which are 'strong' in themselves. Brutal language is shunned as a way of avoiding brutal issues.

I think that is a valid conclusion to be drawn. It was well known and has been often asserted that the sanitisation of the Gulf War was palpable. The actual nature of the horror was hardly ever aired, or seen on TV. Such a thing as this poem, for me, is about opening a curtain which many people would prefer to see remain closed. And it is in the interests of government that the curtain, that veil, is forever drawn over the nature of reality.

Every war has its share of blood and dripping guts, and bodies blown to pieces, but barring one photo published by the *Observer*, as it happens, of a carbonised figure above a tank, this war had no dripping guts.

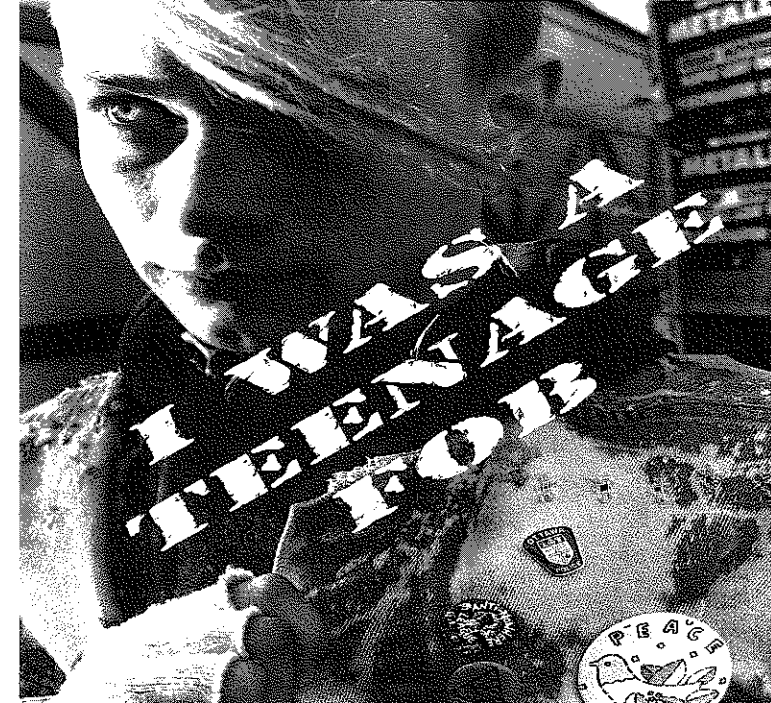
None of it then, and none of it wanted as a reminder now. You can trace the history of the present state of affairs to a series of events through the 1980s, which I am quite clear about. I'm talking of the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, the 'low intensity' war against Nicaragua, the invasion of Panama in 1989, followed by the Gulf War. I do believe this is what I represent in the last line of the poem: 'Now I want you to come over here and kiss me on the mouth.' It refers to who is the boss, who is in charge, who is the master.

But the behaviour of the media is crucial in all this. It has been confirmed that the number of deaths in Panama approached 4,000. But at the time the media talked in hundreds.

Do you remember the revolution in Romania in 1989? The TV was full of statements saying 80,000 people had been killed, especially around Timisoara. The true figure, as I understand it, is about 1,000.

So we are really talking about a controlled media. What the Western media actually does is blow up or exaggerate certain facts in its own interests – or in its government's interests – and ignore and suppress other facts. The dead in Iraq and the continuing deaths in Iraq are hardly front page news.

This piece has been reprinted courtesy of Index on Censorship (Vol 21 No. 5, May 1992) London, England.



TORONTO TEENAGERS: MAKING CHOICES IN THE 1990s

Exhibition curated by
Grant McCracken
at the Royal Ontario Museum
May 30-September 7, 1992

by Alan O'Connor

Rebel intellectuals turned their attention to youth subcultures in the 1970s as a way of challenging their conservative colleagues in sociology, education and media studies. Many of these investigators and writers had personal affinities with the subcultures they studied. They smoked up, listened to the same music and read the same outsider books. They were more comfortable with thumbed-up copies of Genet than with sociology textbooks.

However, from American sociology came Howard Becker's hip books on outsiders: jazz musicians, dope smokers, and others. Becker paid attention to how the media, the police and the courts could create a moral panic about specific outsiders, turning them into deviants and resulting in harsh prison sentences for relatively minor offences. From England came a series of books by radical sociologists who met at radical conferences aimed at understanding the worlds of groups like British soccer fans who were the subject of sensational reporting in the national press.

The new discipline of Cultural Studies cut its intellectual teeth with a series of studies of studies of British youth scenes: Mods, Rockers, Skinheads, Punks, and others. To criticize such books as Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* because they ignore highly politicized youth is in part to miss the point. Hebdige was trying to show that there was an unstated politics in styles of dress, music and

dance. It was not organized resistance to capitalism, racism and sexism but it was resistance through ritualized everyday culture. At a low point in working-class consciousness in Britain, it seemed that the political weakness of the hegemonic system was in reproducing itself. At least some of the youth were visibly opting out.

The *Toronto Teenagers* exhibition, curated by Grant McCracken at the Royal Ontario Museum, is at least indirectly influenced by these intellectual traditions. However, it is also centrally situated in the traditions of material folklore and anthropology. The idea here is to attempt to uncover the cultural meaning of styles of clothing and material artifacts. The first section of the exhibition presents male and female clothing typical of teenagers from the 1930s to the 1980s. Even though these displays resemble those of department store windows, they do have an intrinsic interest for today's teenagers. Video screens play brief extracts from interviews which explain the cultural significance of the changing styles.

Very much in the British tradition of Cultural Studies, the second part of the exhibition gives space to five subcultures: Preppies, Hippies, Punks, B-Boys and B- Girls, and Rockers. Here the focus on material artifacts becomes a real

EXCURSIONS



limitation. The music of each group plays in the background but even that cannot bring frozen models to life. The video-taped interviews become very important in the section. McCracken and his team gathered some interesting and rich ethnographic material from interviews with 120 teenagers in the downtown Toronto area. But they seem somewhat uncertain about what to do with it. The project of bringing the material artifacts to life begins to seem somewhat lame. If the Royal Ontario Museum is serious about continuing with studies of contemporary Canadian culture, it will need to free its investigators from the ordinary purpose of the museum--to collect and store objects--and allow them more intellectual and creative freedom.

The study of youth subcultures in Britain was developed at a small graduate research centre at the University of Birmingham. Related concerns were developed at the same time by other radical intellectuals as either individual or collective projects. Among these were Jeffrey Week's historical research on homosexuality, journals such as *Feminist Review* and *Race and Class*, and also Marxist studies of the mass media. These concerns were woven into Cultural Studies, sometimes implicitly and other times as explicit challenges.

From the early 1970s the modern lesbian and gay movement developed its own specific intellectuals, journalists and artists, usually outside the university system. It took an inspired guess to realize that Howard Becker was gay. Hebdige wrote a book that today we'd call "queer." But in the late 1970s and early 1980s we didn't have that word and I never expected to find Hebdige's book on subcultures in a lesbian/gay bookstore. There was evidently a kind of block. A highly developed school of writing on subcultures and style apparently had nothing at all to say about the most damned obvious historical and contemporary subculture: that of lesbians and gay men.

The third section of *Toronto Teenagers* is devoted to the problems and concerns most often voiced by the youth interviewed. These are as follows: the environment, family relations, racism, multiculturalism, sexism, dating and their own futures. The difficulty in this section is that complex problems can neither be properly described nor analysed in television-style soundbites. The presentation is cautious. The section on dating is a timid exploration of teenage sexual activity but it does at least touch on the issue of safer sex. The section on racism says nothing about police shootings of Black men and women. Most tellingly, the complex and diverse lives of lesbian and gay youth are completely silenced.

Among the most interesting moments of the exhibition are segments of the displays on youth subcultures. The video clips present for each subculture testimonies about the transition of youth from one style to

another. One white boy used to be a Preppy but now he's a B-Boy--and for the first time hangs out with Black friends. A punk woman tells about the necessary steps to becoming accepted as a punk. This sense of emergence is important--vital for the queer youth who are not present here.

The experience of immigration is important for many Canadian young people. Their peers can be merciless about kids who are "fresh off the boat" and try to fit in but get it all wrong (acid-washed jeans). Children born of immigrant parents have well-known problems with the conflicting demands of two worlds: that of their parent culture and that of school. Styles and images cross borders too. Black leather jackets, shaved heads and Doc Martins have crossed and recrossed the Atlantic. What does it mean to be a skinhead in Canada? In crossing the Atlantic do subcultural styles lose meaning and gain other meanings? Are they often simply fashions? A serious investigation of subcultures in Canada will have to address such issues.

Another serious issue to investigate is hostility, racism and conflict between youth groupings and cultures. In the *Toronto Teenagers* exhibition these issues are there very briefly in soundbites about parents and about racism. But overall the show presents a rather cheerful perspective on life: unemployment, homophobia, police beatings don't exist. The power of adults over teenagers is glossed over. Is life ever boring, ordinary or just weird? We brought two small children with us and they spent the afternoon at the Royal Ontario Museum fascinated by the prehistoric animal skeletons.

Alan O'Connor teaches cultural studies at Trent University. He thanks Mariam Durrani, Andrew Kim and Albert Kim of the youth caucus at CKLN 88.1 FM for their critical observations on the exhibition.

Q ALAN O'CONNOR: I'm speaking with Grant McCracken of the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum and curator of the exhibition on *Toronto Teenagers: Making Choices* in the 1990s. Could you start by saying something about what you set out to do with this show?

A GRANT McCracken: We wanted the first exhibition of the Institute for Contemporary Culture to bring within the museum materials that are not normally within the walls of this institution. To

give people a chance to glimpse as systematically as possible an aspect of the world to which they would not otherwise have access. Our assumption was that if you are over twenty-five the world of adolescence is pretty inaccessible to you. And finally we were concerned to let teenagers tell their own stories. The museum as an institution has been quite rightly criticized for presuming to tell other peoples' stories. We wanted young people as much as possible to speak for themselves.

Q How was the research for the show done?

A We set up a 8-high video camera around town: Queen Street, the Eaton Centre, drop-in centres, high schools. We set up the camera in nooks and crannies in the city where we could catch young people as they passed by and interviewed them on camera.

Q The first part of the exhibition shows the changing fashions of teenagers from the 1930s to the 1980s. For each decade you have a window that is rather like those of a department store. Why did you decide to present the lives of teenagers through displays of clothes?

A Our focus was on the materiality of culture. Material objects are especially important in a culture like our own. Once you've said something about the symbolism of an object you've said something about the world from which that object comes. One of the purposes of the show was to create archives that people can visit in a hundred years from now to glimpse the last decade of the twentieth century. What we wanted to do was to capture the objects. That is after all the traditional focus of the museum and of the Royal Ontario Museum in particular. We wanted the viewer to look at the objects, but through them to glimpse something of the world from which those objects came.

Q The second part of the show selects five subcultures for attention.

A What are the major subcultures in Toronto today?

A That's a very difficult question to answer and it was hotly debated within the museum. When we made our proposal for the exhibition there was some concern that we were just talking to marginal groups of teenagers. We had a group of eight teenagers who were our advisory committee throughout. They told us that B-Boys and B-Girls

were fifty percent of some high schools, rockers were about ten percent, hippies about fifteen percent but growing, preppies were sometimes thirty percent but dropping in numbers.

Q The last part of the exhibition is about problems and concerns that most affect young people. What were their major concerns?

A The topics of that section are environment, racism, multiculturalism, sexism, family, the future. These came from open-ended questions. We simply asked the 120 teenagers to identify their major concerns.

Q How would you respond to the criticism that the lives of lesbian and gay youth are silenced by this exhibition?

A It is certainly true that some of the teenagers we talked with are gay. That has to be the case. They don't identify themselves as being gay and that's a kind of problem. So the show certainly fails to tell their stories. The show fails to tell the stories of a lot of groups. There seem to be as many fifteen clearly defined subcultures in as many high schools. We had room only to show five. There were limitations on what we could do. But I absolutely agree with the criticism. This is one of the faults of the show.

Q Even though your intention was to allow young people to speak for themselves, clearly you and your team shaped the exhibition. What was your theoretical framework, your political framework, for shaping the exhibition in the way that you did?



Photos: Laena Wertberger



A Our theoretical framework comes from a school of anthropology

that undertakes ethnography from the point of view of the material culture of the culture in question. The notion here is that material culture carries and creates and organizes various kinds of cultural meanings. More particularly we understood that the world of adolescence is now an extraordinarily rich and varied world. This was not the case even three decades ago. A woman who was a teenager in the 1950s told us that then you had only two choices: you could be mainstream or James Dean. Now there are as many as fifteen possibilities. There is a kind of archaeological accumulation of possibilities. There are new stylistic innovations that take place. Instead of fading, the older ones continue to exist as possibilities. We wanted to look at this world of choice. Teenagers are called upon to make a selection from this world. These choices made as stylistic decisions have profound ideological and political implications. This is not just wacky dressing up. The choices that people make from the envelope of stylistic possibilities reflect an ideological position and that is what we wanted the show to present: the cultural, the ideological, the social and political meanings with which each of these stylistic categories is charged.

Comments by

MARIAM DURRANI, ANDREW KIM
AND
ALBERT KIM OF THE
CLASSROOM STRUGGLE ON
CKLN 88.1 FM.

"It was refreshing to see that the introductory video was done by a person of colour. I thought that was pretty cool, the first thing we saw. And a female too."

"And I also enjoyed the exhibition of clothing styles and people reminiscing about their youth from 1930 to 1980. We really liked that part because it made us aware of how styles come back, even though it's different now."

"When we got into the present we didn't like the

way that teenagers were put into specific little boxes: preppies, hippies, b-boys and b-girls.

And you really only focused only on downtown schools. And there's a

certain way in which lesbian and gay youth dress and you really didn't cover that."

"When we went through the exhibit we thought that this is a white-washed exhibit. It seemed centred towards parents."

"I know about the b-boys and the b-girls that in the things they wear there is a political statement they're trying to make. And some groups really hate each other. You should have brought out the emotions of youth, the raw emotions of wanting to belong and not wanting to belong."

"The section on racism, sexism, environment and so on should have been much more specific. That's what kids want to talk about. When we went into racism we didn't talk about the police and tension between coloured youth and the police. When we went into sexism it was like you just asked what's your opinion about sexism and they just rambled on. They are big issues. You should have broken them down: there's not just dating, there's inter-racial dating, homosexual dating, parents' input into your dating, who you date, age-ism. The topics are way too broad to make any sense to us whatsoever."

"What's the use of telling the adults what they already know. Tell them what they don't know."

"Youth have much more to say. We wish you had asked questions that challenged the kids and made them think. It seems a bit too empty. The issues are way too sugar-coated. If this is supposed to be about us then we get the feeling that it's not us. You should have brought in issues: the Gulf War, what do you think about that? The feminist movement, what do you think about that? You could have asked them about all these things. If my parents came in there they would not see the reality of what students are thinking now."

"As a student I want to talk about the youth that are trying to fight racism and sexism in their high schools. And about their families, how they limit you."

"The youth that were interviewed were the ones who think of themselves as the popular ones. The youth who don't think of themselves as being popular weren't interviewed."

IMPRESSIONS OF AFRICA



BY STAN FOGEL

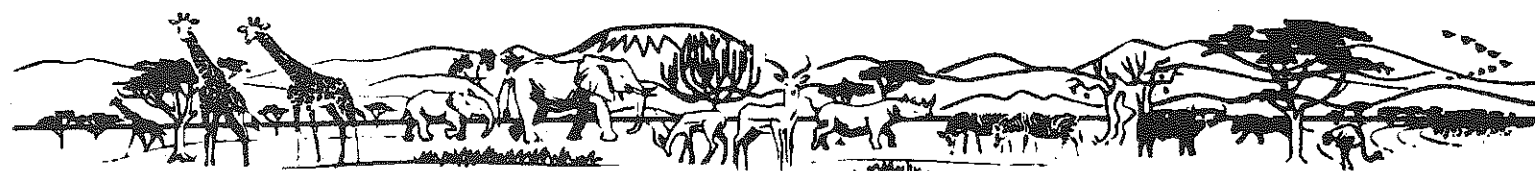
At

the Egypt Air office in Cairo where I went to purchase my Cairo-Nairobi, Kenya ticket I was greeted by a dazzling Cairene. She made me forget Cairo's monumental traffic jams, its obsessive beggars, its monuments ringed by tour buses. Instead of baksheesh, a handout, I would have handed out myself...as ransom. In the dense dark souk or market, which travel books invariably describe as colourful, I would have shopped for her; on buses where one belch produces a ripple that, in their crowded confines, registers on the Richter scale I would have ridden to the movies. The movies, themselves, make Bruce Lee kung-fu films seem like they were done by Bergman, but I would have watched them avidly.

All this I told her, but nothing, surprisingly, wooed her as much as the succinct statement of my profession: "Professor of Literature." I do not know whether there are entomologists out there who make "them" swoon merely by muttering "Bugs," but periodically the love of literature, long since forgotten by a jaded academic who says it for his supper, erupts in his presence. Such was the case here. Despite the line expanding behind me, which no doubt joined the one winding around the Sphinx and/or the pyramids, crowds being a Cairene's constant companion, the Egypt Air clerk told me at length her own lofty goals. She was a student of English literature in Cairo who worked part-time in the airline office. Her love was Jane Austen. And Egypt's authors? As easily as if she could blow the city's



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smog from the sky, she dismissed her countrymen and women and lived in the England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries invested with value by English professors who, I am convinced, are spread around the world preaching a sherry party utopia of urbane speech and English gardens. Although I would have gone to that kingdom with her had she enveloped my hand in those elongated fingers of hers that can make poetry out of a pen writing "Fogel," "flight time" and "date," I had to leave her where she was. Jane Austen's prose, I could have told her, reads like it was written by blunt fingers, but I said she should do graduate work in Canada at my university where she would no doubt find "Paradise Regained." Even though other blunt fingers produced that text, it was one, I promised her, I would amend with my own more poetic digits.

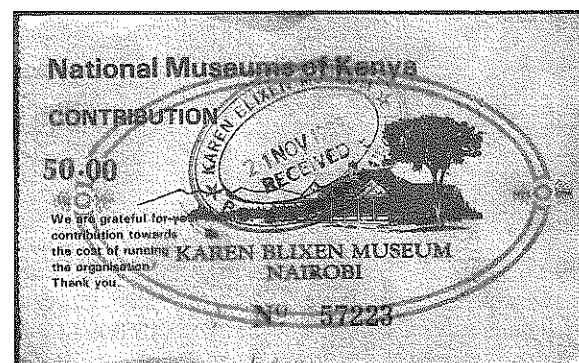
I gave her my academic address and moved on to Nairobi where her literature lesson was repeated. Still, the frisson of that encounter or ones like it are what propel me around the world or around the block repeatedly, if legs I long for stand there. I am at my best in those situations. I'm gracious, attentive, sensitive to nuances that are otherwise to me like the boulders that built the pyramids. Most monuments are built from those latter, large chunky blocks. I can only respond as an archaeologist when I glean something erotic. Then I'll sift for hours through the equivalent of a desert stretch of sun and sand for the Tutenkhamenish gold of a profile or a glance or an accidental grazing. Such rigorous commitment of a devotee has made me renege on my already announced departure. This time for sure, savouring the possibility of the airline clerk's postgraduate studies with me, I promise you I'll move on to Nairobi.

Straight to Nairobi's bookstores, in fact, where a Kenyan literature student with the taste of the Cairene's did the shopping. Indigenous writers are on the bottom shelves and are spoken of derogatorily. Theirs, so the Brit-bred aesthetic goes, is an unrefined, raw product not nearly as crafted and magnificent as *Out of Africa*. The book which Karen Blixen wrote as Isak Dinesen is

everywhere--and usually it's the glossy new edition with the glossy new cover photograph which clearly shows the book's secondary status to the movie. Aptly named is *Out of Africa* because, except for the African men and women shuttling around to facilitate the amours and intrigue of a bunch of, what else, jaded Europeans, and except for the other background shots of lush nature, the book and film could certainly have taken place out of Africa, say in a Florida health spa. It wouldn't have had, however, the cachet of a continent that is still paraded by travel agencies as unspoiled; thus, it would have failed as anything except, done a lot more raunchily, an x-rated romp for the home video market.

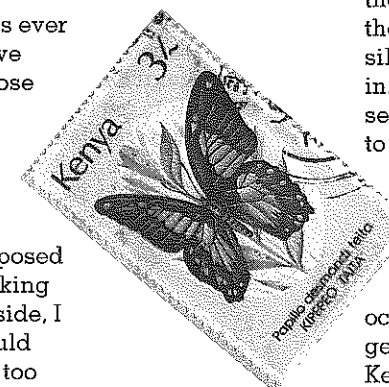
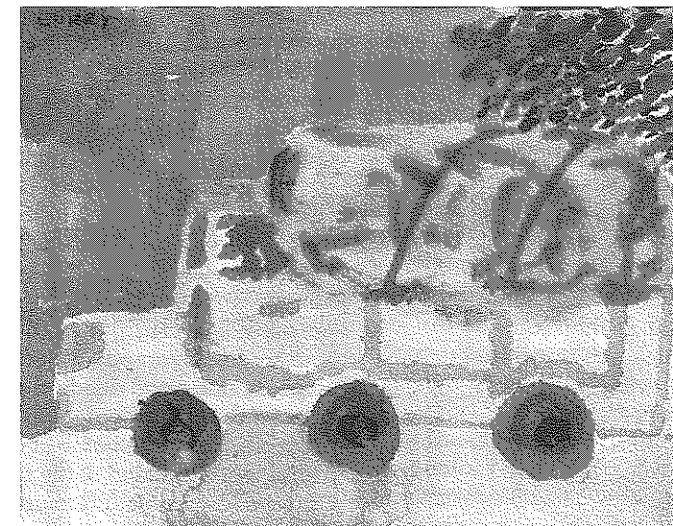
The Blixen house, too, is there for those who can't get enough of the expatriate ambience. It's a nice country house in a suburban setting, without mystique except, again, for its African allure. Although the house is now a museum kept up for tourists, down the road is a golf course still crammed with rich, lolling white men and women served by deferential Africans. Segregated by club fees rather than culture now, it offers about the same ratio of integration that Beverley Hills, California does, though a few African government officials made privately wealthy by the public purse keep the golfers' handicaps from too closely resembling apartheid.

If this weren't enough, there are safari-going tourists to provide after-the-fact dress rehearsals for the set born out of Africa. While the Kenyans I met professed little interest in the organized camping trips that seem to rank among the highest of supposedly authentic travel experiences, they are the *sine qua non* of adventures for what is becoming hordes of Europeans and Americans. So my friend, Julie, and I went on a safari; we had a driver/guide. His pecking order firmly in place, he was determined to spot us or have us spot a cheetah. Despite Julie's illness, the lingering stomach malaise that took hold in Cairo and kept her company over roads and trails designed to torture her and that had gotten quite acute as we wandered the Masai Mara National Park where wild animals do roam in abundance, Emile refused to take us directly back to our hotel. Sensing that a cheetah lurked



nearby, he wheeled around and around in the tall grass, elephants, giraffes, wildebeestes, zebras and even lions a mere scherzo to his grandest revelation. Prostrate in the back of the van Julie would not have been able to see the cheetah unless it leapt through the hole in our retractable roof. Regardless, we were on the hunt and, Hemingwayesque, we were going to win big; if hers was going to be a short life, it would be a short, happy one. Sure enough we sighted a cheetah. Emile, sensing a large tip tied to his adroit hunting and manoeuvring, coaxed the van to within a few feet of the animal. Lazily the cheetah lolled, oblivious to our van and the six or seven others that gave the grassy spot the look of a snack bar parking lot. Oblivious themselves to the sounds of metal purring more loudly than the cheetah, if purring is what cheetahs do, the satisfied safari-goers trained their video cameras onto the animal, thereby getting a protracted still, the cheetah immobile throughout. Pleased that our score card was complete, score card being literally in evidence in many of the game park lodges, Emile finally returned us to our hotel.

The only times that he was ever that assiduous again were when we stopped for our travel breaks at those way stations that, given all the energies of the sellers who lurk there, turn into equatorial "five and dime" stores. Whenever we passed a village where the signs "Butchery" and "Hotel" were juxtaposed over two dingy but fascinating looking establishments that were side by side, I would suggest we stop. Emile would then mutter that such places were too dangerous, that butchery and hotel were co-operative enterprises and that more sublime snack and toilet facilities existed. Whereupon he would stop at an emporium selling nick-nacks to hundreds of other tourists, their vans and land rovers as familiar as yet another sighting



of a herd of wildebeestes. Lest one harbour any illusions about the remoteness of these remote tourists traps, they were dispelled for me when I was given a sales pitch by a guy wearing a t-shirt with a reproduction of a Chicago, Illinois newspaper headline dated May 29, 1989. The news item celebrated something only a Chicago baseball fan could ardently respond to: the ascension to first place the day before of the Chicago Cubs, a team rarely ensconced in such august realms. Since it was barely five months after the date on his t-shirt, I assumed in jest he was an avid if slightly dislocated Cubs fan and tried to talk batting averages, the merit of day versus night baseball, the beauty of Wrigley Field, etc. His only interest in averages was the seller's equivalent of the Dow Jones. His Cubs t-shirt had been bartered for and I quickly realized anything I had I had, in his mind, as currency. Pensive he was reaching into the van now--and clothing could augment the Kenyan shilling and cement a sale for spears, ashtrays, tiny machine-made animals.

Outposts offering such nick-nacks litter the land. One can no more relax at one of the rest stops than one can walk uninterruptedly on Kenyan beaches. The minute one leaves one's hotel, itself protected by guards, one is confronted by a stampede of elephants, or rather hawkers of those replicated wares. Instead of oases of tranquility by the Indian Ocean, itself edged with seaweed that makes swimming unpleasant, one gets portable shopping malls, the males selling their wooden wares, the females their bodies. In the shallows of the ocean, within sight of the hotel, prostitutes splash and play languidly until their silent siren calls are heard by a hotel guest who reels one in. Augmented by hordes of school children, too young it seems to sell but old enough to demand sponsors for them to walk, run or whatever in some charity-a-thon, the bazaar offers everything except an uninterrupted time.

It seems most tourists are happy with the attention. The irony of burnt white bodies, fat and soft, served by black ones, thin and attentive, goes unnoticed. The hotels, both in the game parks and along the ocean, do their best to conform to the definition of the generic tourist hotel. What gives them a little twist in Kenya is the abundance of no doubt negligibly paid busboys, baggage carriers and maids etc. who hover. In the dining room of our Mombassa beach hotel cutlery came and went at a more rapid rate than the buffet visits by the Germans in tour groups. Also, bills are dealt with and money transacted in a way that can only be described as raw capitalism. No New York disdain or French hauteur here; coins are picked up and pocketed as quickly





as they are placed on the table. The attention, finally, makes one feel claustrophobic. Still, being served soufflé fritters while monkeys dangle overhead and watching hotel watchmen complete their patrols with bows and arrows instead of guns and nightsticks offer a little hint at least of what we think of as the offbeat. Offbeat in a less flattering way is the phalanx of paparazzi-cum-tourists whose uniform is a mixture of the great white hunter and Bill Blass or Pierre Cardin. Khaki safari clothes that look like the roughest ride they've had is in a washing machine adorn everyone. Starched and ironed the clothes are invariably set off by enough jewelry that, should a trek up Kilimanjaro ever be attempted, varicose veins would turn hikers legs into road maps from the exertion. No Sherpa has been asked to carry more. While the men's bellies batter their durables and their cameras bounce over the bulge, the women's accessories to safari style include their long painted finger nails. Long enough to pick lice off offered monkey's bellies, but they never do, glowing manicured nails mark the modern hunter as made of the stern stuff...that makes nails unbreakable. Then, of course, there are the Clint Eastwood caricatures with the white hunter, black beard syndrome who stride aggressively to the bars of the fashionable hotels to wrestle a pack of Camel cigarettes and straight whiskies into submission.

Throughout the game parks there are occasionally wondrous sights: for instance, baboons frolicking on the golf course of the Aberdares Country Club, the course with the highest elevation in the British Commonwealth. At dusk out they come to dive into the sand traps and abscond with any balls hit by golfers foolish enough to think of playing through. Treetops, the lodge Princess Elizabeth was sequestered in at the time of her father's death and her subsequent promotion to Queen, features one of the true colonial anachronisms, a hunter whose safari outfits are worn more and much more worn than those of the overnighters he greets many days of the year. In a voice rich with the understatement



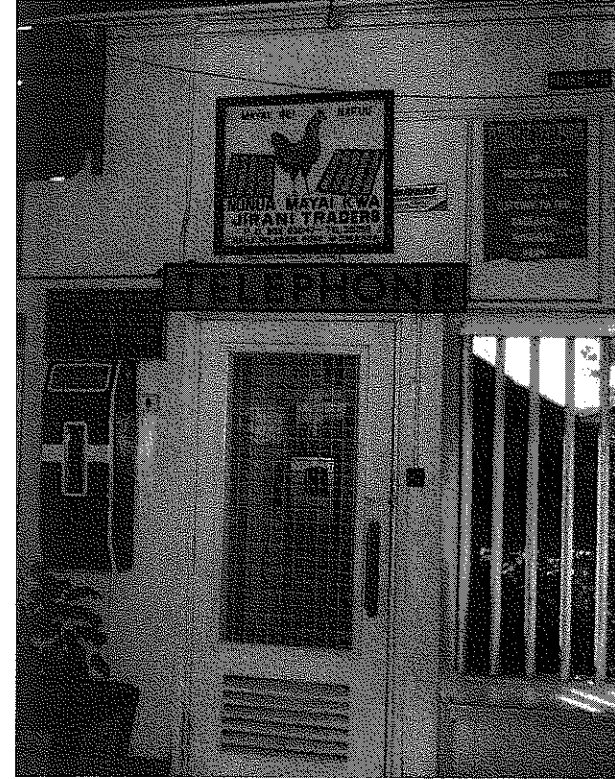
Edward Oyugi, before being arrested for the second time by the Kenyan government. He is currently awaiting trial.

and experience of an old man of the parks, he tells us of his days as Elizabeth's hunter-protector and of the dangers and delights of an area he knows better than the meaty back of his hand. Tourists inspired by his pep talk stay up all night to stare quietly and at close range at the animals that wander obliviously up to the salt lick that is floodlit for Treetops' guests.

The official Kenya that is available to tourists can yield many pleasures even if they come from overhyped safaris. Still, it should be noted that the rutted, boulder strewn roads that convey most visitors to their rendezvous with "wild" animals offer a meaning other than that of an impoverished country doing the best it can to ferry people about the country. My visit to Kenya coincided with ex-U.S. President Jimmy Carter's visit. I might have had the same august view as Carter presented of Kenya's President and the country he governed as models of African stability and good deeds were it not for the fact that I was watching the televised proceedings in the home of an African friend who chuckled softly throughout Carter's formal reception and toast to Kenya. Afterwards, we chatted about what we knew best, university life. While I carped ungratefully (but aptly in my milieu, huh?) about the rigors of teaching a hundred students and hanging out in a conservative university ambience that made academic life a snore, my friend Edward offered a scenario of hundreds of students lectured to without a microphone, of supplies having to be paid for by himself, of salaries that barely sustain the sipping of an occasional Kenyan beer. Books were difficult to get, sabbaticals were unfunded: the list of horrors to a pampered North American academic read like a life sentence to a mid-

American junior college outfitted with one concrete building and a favoured basketball team.

Still, I felt a kind of kinship with the complainant until I was told the following: six years ago Edward was at home when a bouquet of soldiers knocked on his door, invaded his home, searched it thoroughly, questioned him on the Marxist texts he as a sociologist had



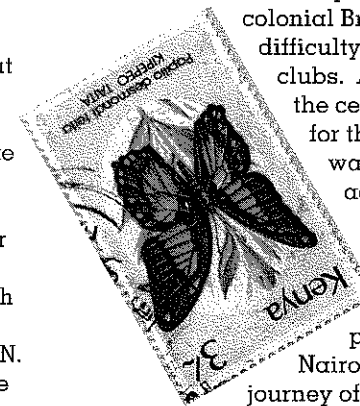
plenty of, then hauled him away. Blindfolded he was taken to a prison where he was placed in solitary confinement. For four years he was held without trial, always in solitary confinement. Finally, on a hunger strike and with Amnesty International's support, he was summarily released without explanation or apology. He had been shanghaied from his home and subjected to a good many abuses simply for being on the executive of his university's faculty union. Had he not been married to a woman who was not Kenyan and whose embassy was apprised of his detention, perhaps an even worse fate would have ensued. (Edward told me these things in an easy narrative manner.) An amiable but charismatic person, he was returned to the faculty he had disappeared from, but without the rank and status he had previously attained. He joked that the most difficult adjustment he had to make after being released from prison was to the comfortable bed that for four years had been supplanted by a concrete floor and one woollen blanket.

The remaining days I spent with him he conducted Julie and me around the unofficial Kenya. Tourist dollars, U.N. money and aid money from abroad have clearly not been channelled by the one party state into a party for all. All the clichés of poverty and degradation that

mix with some modern Nairobi apartment buildings, lavish hotels and quirky monuments built to assuage the ego of Kenya's leaders were in place and placed in full view for me. Edward, himself, lives on the border between the power brokers who have already once attempted to break him and the majority of Kenyans who have much less than he does. He lives in a middle class section of Nairobi in a large new house with ample grounds and servants to tend to them as well as other domestic tasks. Sitting cosily in his living room sipping a beer, I thought, previous to his opening up to me, that he, like many academics around the world, had made his comfortable pact with a world that for the most part is paternalistic towards some academics' tenacious scrutiny of the social order. The house has bars on the windows and doors; there are even bars blocking the sleeping quarters in case ruthless intruders manage somehow to get by the second line of defense, the first being the barbed wire fences and dogs that surround the house. This, I was assured, is a necessity to repel the have-nots in a society where few have. Caught in the middle of corruption Edward must lecture hoarsely during the day about the conditions of his country, then retreat to his home where he barricades himself against people disadvantaged by those conditions so that he can take the time to reflect on that iniquitous set of circumstances. Thus, the roads to the game parks and those around the shanty towns that ring Nairobi are paved with the good intentions of European and North American travellers and governments whose dollars line the pockets of a handful of men who, no doubt, prepare to drive over smoother roads in other countries.

The crew that apes the *Out of Africa* crew can put up with the momentary discomfort of bumpy roads. It's their trip-of-a-lifetime and, besides, comfortably padded hotel suites cushion them once they arrive at their destinations. That they are warned not to go out in the evenings, the mean streets so in part because of a mean government, is not much an impediment to a week or two of holidays. Like the gang that frolicked, making white mischief in the days when *Out of Africa* was lived instead of filmed, they are oblivious to the political and social milieus of the majority of the population. Why *Out of Africa*, in an era of burgeoning African self-assertion, should be filmed and the novel, the novelist and her coterie glamorized is a questions that can probably be answered by one word, nostalgia. Hollywood would have trouble raising money for an African project unless Meryl Streep's white face was allowed to peek out of a sea of black ones.

Although Kenya has a more secure sense of its nationhood than many African countries and although it has swept its colonial British masters out of power, there is a lingering difficulty with identity that goes beyond literature and golf clubs. At the New Stanley Hotel, a rather nondescript hotel in the center of Nairobi that is also the centre of safari activity for the region, two African women angrily upbraided a waiter in the coffee shop for ignoring them. They accused him of paying attention to later arriving white tourists by whom, they said, he hoped to be tipped profusely. Such friction rarely surfaces now that the African presence in the government is paramount. One of the more charming legacies of the colonial past is the train that slowly makes its way between Nairobi on the plains and Mombassa on the coast. The journey of a few hundred miles takes a wheezing thirty-six hours or so to accomplish. Stops along the densely populated strip are frequent and there is much coming and going. There are still



first class sleeping compartments, but they provide only a rumour of their former grandeur. The sheets, the towels, the uniforms of the porters and servers: all are remnants of the past, held together by contemporary starch. The train, though, has a rollicking, festive character that is not staged for the sole pleasure of so-called first world tourists. One doesn't have sealed off air-conditioned chambers from which one distinct set of people observes another. Not only is there no air-conditioning available, there is no toilet paper either. Probably because even the first class fare is affordable to many Kenyans, the cars are not mobile segregated parlours. In the dining car people are mixed at tables that still bear the semblance of a statelier era. Although the china and cutlery have done countless laps on the Nairobi-Mombassa track, they wear their faded stature well and the food on them tastes as if it made its way onto the circuit immediately before consumption. Easy circulation, so difficult for the traveller in much of Kenya, is possible on the train.

I remember laughing when I heard the story of Raymond Roussel, a quirky turn-of-the-century Frenchman who visited the continent of Africa in preparation to write a novel about Africa, but who, once installed in his elegant hotel suites, never left them. He is reported to have said the real Africa was less interesting than his own imagined one and would only contaminate his version. No Kenyan bookstore I know of carries the novel that Roussel published in 1910 as *Impressions d'Afrique*, probably because it is nominally about French West Africa. An English translation published in 1966 as *Impressions of Africa* may not even be in print. Still, if one prefers to read an outsider on Africa, if one prefers to read something that in a number of sense comes from out of Africa, *Impressions of Africa* is far richer than *Out of Africa*. It is extravagantly false; it parades its outsider status so palpably that whenever its fiction and the reality of Africa collide, it points out the weaknesses of outsiders' systems of making sense of Africa. That makes it different, indeed, from *Out of Africa*, which elevates the outsider, or from a number of other books and movies about the continent that purportedly offer sage, impartial insights into African culture or African sensibilities.

While I was in Kenya the local papers reported the banning of four Zimbabwean soccer players from further league play. It seems that at half-time of a game in which they were trailing, they urinated on the field at the behest of a witch doctor who advised them that was the way to rid the stadium of evil or harmful spirits. That this seems sillier or more unsophisticated than what takes place at half-time of American football games comes from watching too much American television and reading too many books that champion practices originating out of Africa. I think I would prefer to see a few steroid bulked behemoths urinate on the artificial grass on which they play that watch a few hundred marchers play loud, tuneless songs celebrating, all at once, the country, the state, the university and Disneyland. *Impressions of Africa* just as

fantastically records the coronation of Talu VII, Emperor of Ponokele and King of Drelishkaf. For his delectation Europeans, captured after a storm has wrecked their ship nearby, entertain the Emperor-King and his people by setting up a miniature Paris Bourse or stock market to take bets on the best performers and performances; by training two teams of cats in different coloured ribbons to play "Prisoner's Base"; by having one of their troupe, a marksman, shoot away the white of an egg to reveal an intact yolk. Other dazzling acts of European legerdemain are mixed with indigenous rites, none more or less ludicrous than the other. Roussel's Africa is more interesting than the spectacle-laden one available from travel agents anywhere. For a Kenya, to name one country, that is less fictional, you might try a tour conducted by my friend Edward; some of the places on his itinerary, however, are off limits.

Stan Fogel is trying to invent himself as a travel writer.

Visuals: J.J. INK



Teaching the Media in SCHOOLS

JOE GALBO

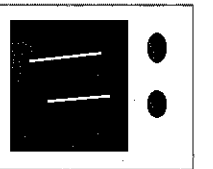
There is no doubt that the mass media are a crucial political and public issue. That is why media literacy at high school and university levels has been recognized as a crucial component of the curriculum. Today's postmodern culture requires a critical and active audience that not only can scrutinize the persuasive power of the word but also must increasingly know how to deal with the power of the image, for the image has become the dominant form of public address.

Ideally the mass media, both audiovisual and print, are supposed to offer a wide variety of voices and help sustain the political plurality of our society. For too long, however, the media have been allowed to develop pretty much as they wished in the pursuit of the commercial imperative and in the process have managed to undermine cultural considerations and to silence the very voices they are supposed to have aided. Broadcasting and publishing facilities are now in the hands of large global corporations. The media are one area where corporate control is at its most concentrated. Any attempt at meaningful change becomes particularly difficult since alternative programs and publications are either edged out silently and by stealth or drowned out by the stentorian voice of the corporate media.

There are ways to start taking some control over the very media that define much of our daily life. Community

radio, alternative magazines and community cable are some of the obvious places where people can begin to make their own culture and pursue their creativity. This is not to suggest that the television and radio spectrum should be immediately crowded with amateur TV and radio shows, but that professional and semi-professional alternative spaces can be created where ordinary individuals and groups normally excluded from the mainstream media--Native people, working people, lesbians and gays, people of colour and people with disabilities--can tell their own stories in their own ways without appropriation by the corporate world.

The educational system is another place where the cultural battle over meaning can be fought. Here, issues such as media ownership, as well as skills such as analyzing television and film, and rudimentary hands-on skills for students' own media productions can be discussed and taught. Once again there is no point minimizing the difficulties of these tasks. In today's educational curriculum there is little that prepares the student to make sense of the rhetoric of the image or the historical development and social implications of popular culture, and there is still less opportunity to study how to use the media for oppositional rather than for corporate



ARTICLES



purposes. Nevertheless, it is through education that a constituency for change can be organized and issues can be brought out into a public space where they can be further debated, examined and defined.

On the theoretical front, the proliferation of the mass media and the rise of a "mass culture" have given birth to heated debates. Many people see the mass media, especially television, as the work of some sinister cabal that transforms individuals into zombies with an attention span no longer than that of a gnat. The "tepid ooze of mass culture," as Dwight MacDonald called it, is perceived by some critics as producing a superficial, shrivelled-up culture that corrupts everything it touches by offering numbing delights to the increasingly alienated masses. Still, there are others who optimistically defend the audience's ability to see through the commercialism and bad faith one finds in television, newspapers, radio and advertising. These critics defend the ability of the audience to be critical of the distortions and noisy sloganeering of the media, and they hold to a belief that the audience can generate from the media its own popular pleasures and their own resistant meanings.

We should be wary of these kinds of theoretical polarities. I believe one cannot easily answer the question about the impact of mass media and the power of the audience to generate its own popular meanings without a good deal of equivocation and contradiction and ambiguity. The fundamentally argumentative nature of a popular democratic culture is captured only sporadically by the mass media. The products of the mass media embody the rules and values of the market system that produce them; nevertheless, they offer the audience a limited opportunity to resist and define aspects of this culture. A more apt analogy is that of a tug-of-war between the forces of cultural indoctrination and the forces of popular resistance. One crucial key to teaching about the media is to understand the nature of these forces and tensions.

Today the cultural industries provide for people resources similar to those which several generations ago

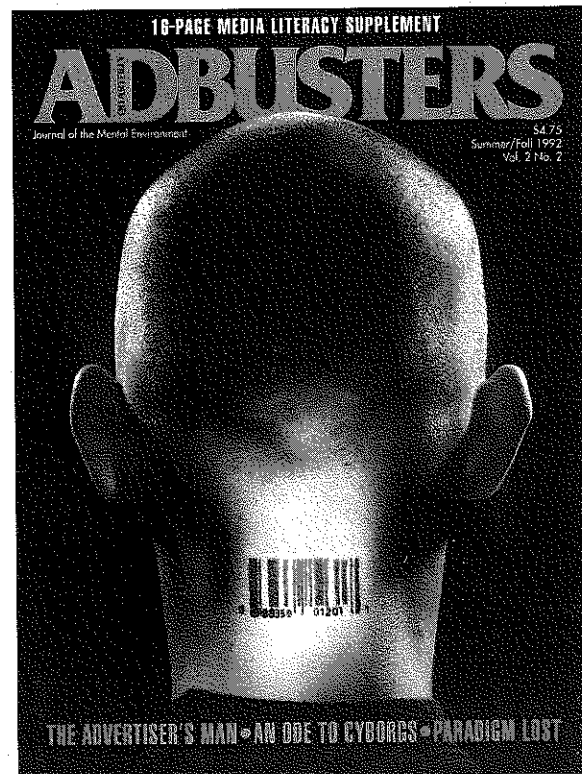
were rooted in folk tradition, the family, religion and other traditional institutions. The most accessible cultural materials used and circulated within culture, such as music, songs, visual images, fashion, entertainment and ideas are the outpourings of a varied and vast mass media apparatus. The culture produced largely by the mass media and selected by the audience is powerful because it addresses ideas simply, energetically and with a great deal of feeling. Admittedly, many of these cultural messages lack irony, verve and rely on mollicoddling formulas for arguments, yet their directness and accessibility are their major source of strength. The success of the mass media rests precisely on their ability to deliver a clear emotional message with mind numbing repetition and with a good deal of entertainment. The more powerful the feeling, the more important the message, and the more often it is repeated.

But there is a further point: the media have been successful in shaping our culture, partly because they have been able to deliver messages that make at least partial sense to a large segment of the audience. The recent spat over Murphy Brown is clearly indicative of the ability of the media to touch issues that resonate with a majority of people. Vice President Quayle may rail about the failure of Hollywood to reinforce family values--read heterosexual, middle class, white Christian values--but the reality is that a significant number of women are sole-support parents juggling work, home and child-rearing, usually with considerably less money than Murphy Brown. There is an on-going negotiation between the audience and the media, with the audience choosing

those messages that reflect aspects of their everyday experiences and overlooking and rejecting other aspects that do not.

The cultural industries know quite well that their interests are closely connected with the moods and feelings of the majority of the people; that is why they are acutely sensitive to the nation's many publics. Virtually every product of the cultural industries is intent on satisfying some fundamental wish and desire of their audiences. Over the past decade programming and advertising have become more specific in their demographics: that abstract and older concept known as the "mass audience" has now been broken down into more detailed and particular entities. The "mass" has become more segmented, with

more individuated pockets of audiences who have specific interests, ambivalences, desires, anxieties and needs. The pressures of a consumer society, the extra strains imposed on women who are working and at the same time raising a family, the



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blatant racism throughout society, the economic depression and the effects of free trade which have led to plant shutdowns underemployment and mass unemployment, all of these forces affect individual audiences in a number of concrete and different ways.

These are issues of which the cultural industries do take account through a sophisticated technology of polling and the surveying of market preferences--and popular preferences are far more difficult to identify and control than many people believe. If the cultural industries failed to accommodate these factors and offered only escapist fare, their ability to grab and involve an audience would effectively evaporate. The corporate world is compelled to tap into these desires and anxieties and to examine the needs of their audiences. Nevertheless, the individual feelings and the political ideas of specific popular groups cannot be completely incorporated into the products of the cultural industries nor can they be disseminated without alteration by the media since that would represent an unwelcome challenge to their hegemonic power. The media's role has traditionally been to naturalize the status quo, make it look normal and commonsensical, by orchestrating a political and cultural

consensus and by selling what Hans Enzensberger calls "the existing order." Public issues such as the Gulf War, the environment, feminism, ethnic, race, and gay and lesbian concerns are at best contained by the mass media. These issues are sometimes addressed obliquely and sometimes directly. Most of the times, however, these questions and others as important are defused, and, as in the recent case of the Gulf war, distorted.

We don't need to be inoculated against the media as much as we need to know how they work, who owns them, and how the underlying values and messages of shows, news, and films are structured. Who gets represented in the media and how? Who gets excluded and why? Media literacy should acquaint every student with how the media are organized, what policies have been promoted to regulate the media and how these policies can be changed in order to empower excluded publics, and how to use effectively the media to reach these audiences. Finally, media literacy should examine how different audiences use the messages of the media. One thing that becomes obvious is that teaching the media is not exclusively about the media, but about fundamental social and political issues that have been worked on, transformed and constructed by the media. The task of the instructor is to encourage a critique of the media's naturalized constructions and to stimulate a larger analysis of social, economic and political power.

How then have we fared in teaching the media? In Ontario we have moved perhaps farther than many other provinces. In September 1988 Media Literacy became a mandatory component of the English curriculum in Ontario High Schools. One key organization that has promoted the teaching of the media at the high school level has been the Association for Media Literacy (AML) which to a great degree has set the media



studies curriculum in the Ontario school system. The AML is made up chiefly of high school teachers and others who work in the media, and their self-appointed task has been to encourage the critical study of the media and to train teachers through conferences and workshops, to analyze the media and popular culture. A conference recently held in Guelph, Ontario was the second that has been held by the AML, and both have been attended by over 400 teachers from across Canada and the US, with some participants coming from as far away as Australia and Europe. Having been to both conferences I have been generally impressed by the level of energy, analysis and commitment, though I also have some critical observations of the AML.

Founded in 1978, the AML has grown to a membership of over 1200. When in 1987 the Ontario Ministry of Education was revising its guidelines for English, it felt a strong need to address the media and they turned to the AML for guidance.

"When the Ministry,"

noted Barry Duncan, the current president of the AML,

"came to us and said we need to write a media literacy resource guide." I guess that's when we were institutionalized. You may say co-opted. But the only way that we were going to effect change was if we worked through those traditional structures, the Ministry of Education, school boards, teacher's federations."

The recent publication of the *Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide* (1990), and the production of CBC's video program *Inside the Box* (1990), as well as the NFB's *Media and Society* (1990) video program, have all been prompted in some degree by the efforts of the AML. The rationale behind media literacy is to enhance students' critical faculties with regard to new and emergent audiovisual technology, and to analyze the effective presence of dominant ideologies: patriarchy, commodification, sexism, racism, heterosexism, and consumerism. The theoretical framework of the AML is eclectic, influenced by McLuhanism, semiotics, feminist theory and formalist analyses of the media. Much of this falls into the tradition of media studies, but in this case influenced by the engaged position of cultural studies through the tradition of critical pedagogy in the writings

of Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, and Roger Simon, and more specifically by way of Australia and England where media literacy programs at the secondary school level have been in place a lot longer and where the AML originally turned for its pedagogic models.

The most important factor that influences the development of media literacy is classroom practice itself. Those who teach media literacy quickly realize that because they deal with popular texts of which students often have more knowledge than teachers, they are being challenged to involve themselves in a new kind of teaching that calls into question the very power and discipline of the classroom. Len Masterman, an English educator, author of *Teaching the Media* and a participant in the past two AML conferences emphasizes this crucial point:

"Studying the media,"

he said in an interview,

"actually involves a new way of education. In traditional pedagogy the student/teacher relation is part of what Paulo Freire called the banking process of education which does not encourage critical understanding. The expertise of the tutor is tied up with the education. What is interesting about media analysis is that immediately the relationship changes. Suddenly both teachers and students are together looking at the object out there and we can talk about it and discuss it. Media is transmitting knowledge and education laterally. You don't pass down knowledge but we are creating our own knowledge with our own critical interaction with whatever text there is.

Knowledge is not something out there that we accommodate ourselves to. Knowledge is something that you create, that you make your own, and you do that through your own critical interaction through the world. That's the importance of media analysis. If you see it as reality then you can't change it. If you see it as a construct then you ask: who is doing the constructions, who is behind it, who is producing it, for what purposes, using what techniques, for what audience, whose interests are being served, and so on."

What this asks of teachers, of course, is

that they do not privilege a single discourse, or silence the multiple voices within the classroom. The analysis of the media and popular culture is not simply a reading of ideology from texts but a field of practices that can and should empower students through a radically different pedagogical encounter.

This kind of curriculum change means training and retraining teachers with new pedagogical skills. Many high school teachers, already set in their traditional classroom ways, will resist change and will teach media literacy in a way that will meet only minimum requirements. The accomplishments of the AML are yet to be tested. One of the hurdles it must overcome is the structure of its own organization--its leadership is predominantly white, middle class and male, and seems to feel most comfortable dealing with the educational issues of its own constituency. The other hurdle is the educational structure itself, which resists change and innovation to the curriculum.

Having taught media literacy, mostly to teachers at Atkinson College at York, there is another factor that must be added to the equation: there is really no curriculum development at the university level that has forcefully pushed for media literacy and integrated the areas of educational pedagogy, communication and media production so that teachers can be trained in the field. Media Literacy is often a course disconnected from other courses. And while as such it offers students some rudimentary analysis of how the media represent and frame issues, it fails to integrate media analysis with media production. Resources should be made available to people who want to take the next logical step and move on to the production of community-based alternative programs and develop useful skills that can be passed on in the classroom.

The fact that media studies is growing in Canada is heartening, though as I have noted, what gets defined as media literacy is often diffused across a disorganized curriculum both, I would venture to say, at the university and the high school levels. Even if one demystifies the media, there is also little sense that one must carry the investigation further into the areas of the family, school, the work place and politics. It is encouraging that at least in Ontario media literacy programs have eschewed an "inoculation approach" to teaching about the media. There is the opposite danger that in teaching media literacy and in stressing an

active audience that produces its own unique popular culture we begin to attribute to the audience too much power to decode the messages in their own interests. When media literacy engages the popular forms of entertainment it must be careful that the resistance that is attributed to an audience--its perceived ability to read in its own interests--is real rather than imaginary. It is imperative not to succumb to a subjectivist and popular model that easily dismisses the power of the media and returns that power to the individual viewer and interpreter.

Media literacy must not stop at the classroom door. The most important work is done outside the classroom. For those interested in an activist position there are other venues, such as the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* and its parent organization the Media Foundation. Despite its smug moralism and simplistic attacks on consumerism, *Adbusters* does provide an alternative that, if not emulated, at least can be modified. Media analyst John Fiske in a letter to the editor printed in last issue of *Adbusters* had this to say: "Your message is wonderful and needs to be widely heard--but boy oh boy, do your tactics suck!" Fiske was complaining about the magazine's irritating habit of positioning the audience as mindless couch-potatoes and frenetic consumers. Fair criticism. *Adbusters* and the *Media Foundation* have managed, on the other hand, to attract the attention of a generation of students where a slew of critical academics have failed. Part of the reason for the success of *Adbusters* is its unabashed cultural guerrilla tactics: a form of artistic terrorism that is both anarchic and locally based, directed against the media and cultural industries.

The most successful *Adbusters* campaign has been its production of what it calls television non-commercials. The tapes are made available to the public free with information about how to buy local media time and how much it costs. Individuals can then purchase a 30 second spot to show their non commercials, which deal with a range of topics: TV addiction, with a commercial aptly named "Tubehead"; an anti-logging ad called "Talking Trees"; and an ad against consumerism called "American Excess." So far this campaign has raised its share of controversy. Last year NBC, CBS, and ABC affiliates in Boston refused to show the commercials on the grounds that they represented advocacy advertising that was "too controversial." In Canada, the CBC has recently relaxed its 30 year old policy against controversial advocacy advertising, and the Media Foundation will be testing the limits of the new regulations.

Adbusters promotes a form of "culture jamming": a subversive attack on the symbolic power of the media which takes apart media generated images and turns them upside down, a kind of carnivalesque attack on the power of the media. Billboard bandits who alter billboards to make ironic and anti-commercial messages are the best examples of ways of disrupting the media and turning our familiar commercial world upside down. These kind of strategies are significant in that they allow people to get involved in an individual and immediate way in subverting the power of the media, but they should not be seen as a replacement for a first-rate education in the media and for the building of a wide network of local and oppositional cultures.

Joe Galbo teaches media at York and is a member of the Border/Lines Collective.





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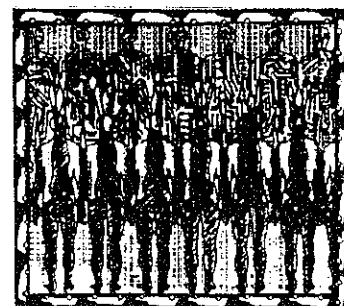
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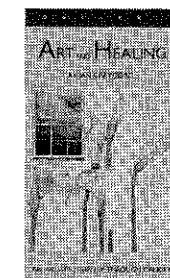


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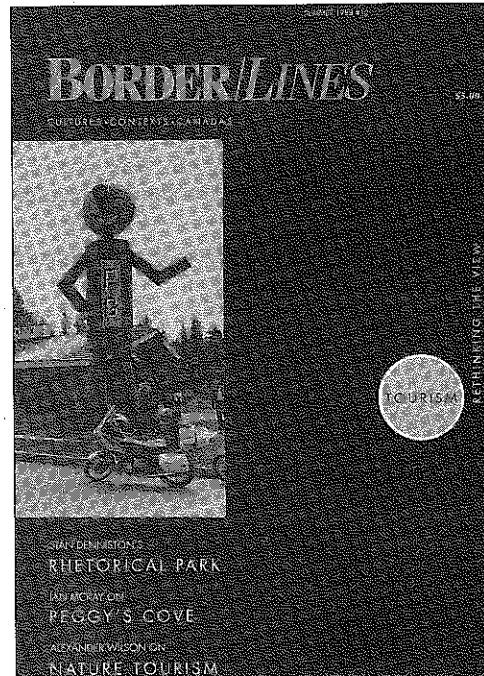
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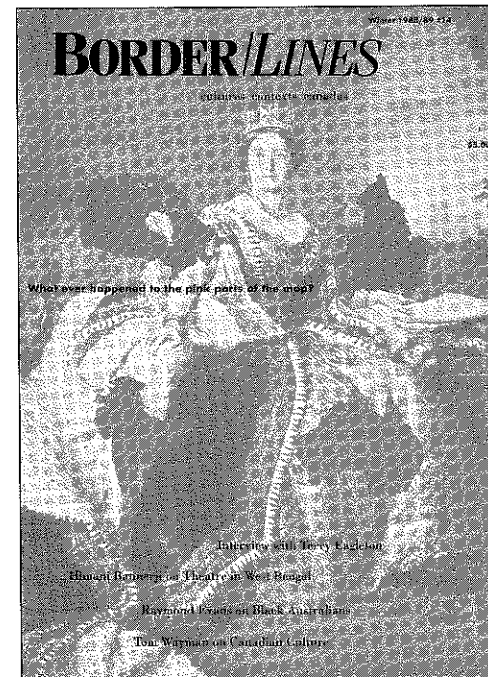
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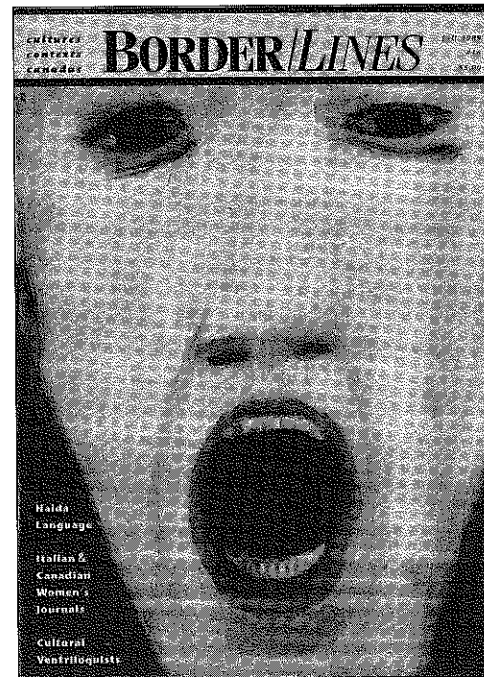
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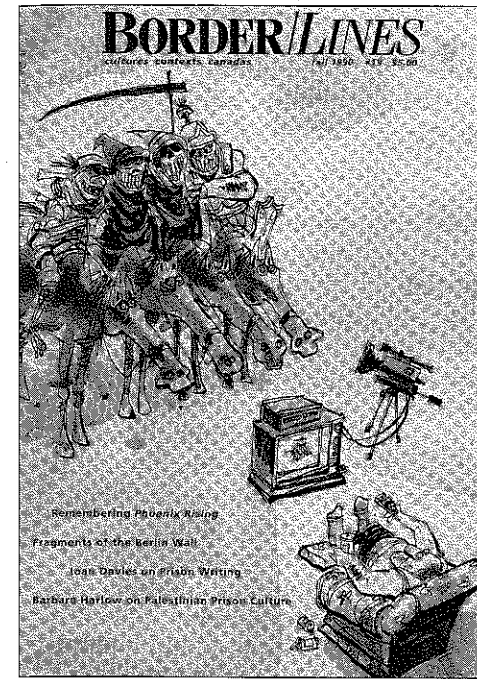
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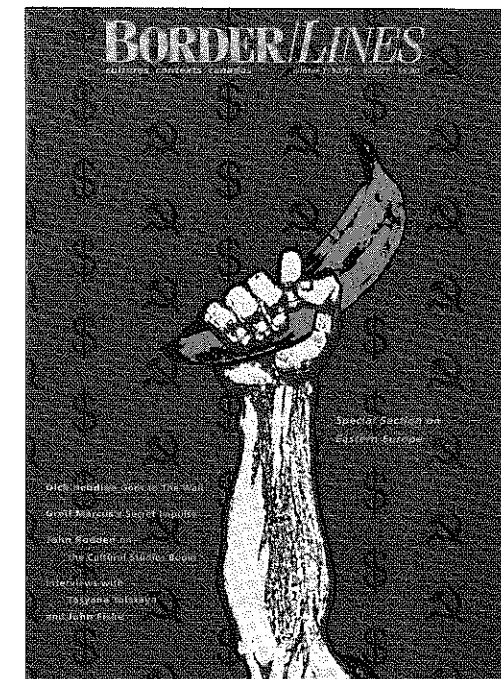
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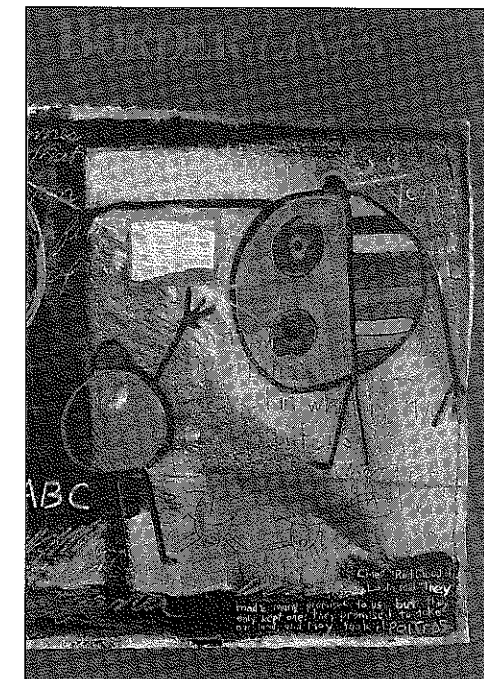
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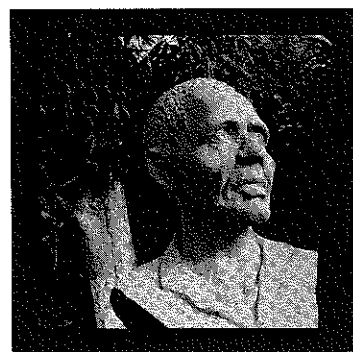
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Border/Lines is an interdisciplinary magazine committed to explorations in all aspects of culture -- including popular culture, fine arts, gender, literature, multiculturalism, mass communications and political culture. Although its geographic focus is Canada, this is taken as meaning anything that is relevant to understanding Canadian culture.

Border/Lines aims to fill the gap between academic journals and specialist cultural magazines. Our audience is diverse and eclectic; so too are our contributors, drawn from a broad base of writers, cultural producers and animators. Potential contributors should bear this diversity in mind, and try to address cultural issues with spunk, humour and the occasional sideways glance. For example, we would hope that theoretical debates would be opened up to the intelligent, but non-initiated reader.

The magazine contains four sections:

Excursions deals with specific cultural themes, topics and responses directed towards a non-specialized audience. It attempts to provide contextualized readings of places, events, objects and presentations. Length ranges from 100 to 1500 words.

Articles range from 1500 to 4000 words and include investigative journalism, critical analysis, theory, visual essays and short stories.

Reviews vary in length according to the number of books covered; review essays can be up to 4000 words.

Junctures examines other magazines, journals and aspects of radio, television or video.

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AFTER NATURE

BY GARY GENOSKO

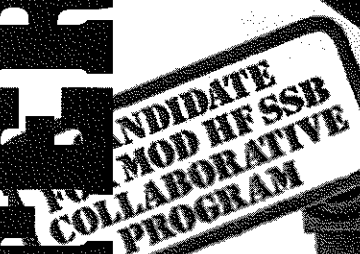
Anyone familiar with the evolution of *Border/Lines* will have recognized our long-standing commitment to the cultural study of nature. In the following pages I reflect upon the diverse ways in which numerous authors have attempted to address both pressing eco-political concerns

and struggled to find something of the once mighty referent called Nature, in spite of an almost overwhelming sense that it has passed into a state of pure simulation.

In a past issue of *B/L*, Alex Wilson's appraisal of six books urban nature in "Toward A Culture Of Diversity: Politics In The

Urban Ecosystem" (*B/L* No.4, 1985-86), furthered theoretically his activist goal of remaking the city in biologically and culturally diverse ways, while Grahame Beakhurst's review (*B/L* No. 7/8, 1987) of 'deep ecology' literature, a monkeywrenching handbook, and Neil Evernden's *The Natural Alien*, a book inspired as much by Heideggerian phenomenology as European biology, interrogated the diversity of contemporary environmental thought - from how to disable construction equipment through how to do things with the bio-semiotics of Jakob von Uexküll to how, if possible, to take seriously whimsical American versions of the Norwegian tradition of *friluftsliv* (the 'open air' life); Jimi Hendrix, I think, summed up the matter rather well when he sang 'scuse me while I kiss the sky.'

What my former teacher Evernden taught me was to be suspicious about environmentalism. For, in short, the environmental crisis is the crisis of environmentalism, the splitting apart of environmentalism from the environment. When certain factions in the environmental movement began to borrow the methods of their opponents, supporting their own positions with techniques which were once an anathema to them, they ensured a future for themselves among the ecocrats and solar-powered barbecues. Such factions, then, came to depend upon the internal inconsistencies of their newly acquired methods because these methods enabled them to validate certain kinds of claims and show them to be true in the very forums to



which they were once denied entry or were received very poorly. This trial by paradox has exacted a heavy toll: much of what is called environmentalism is laughable but very marketable.

One of the issues here is that nature has been reconstituted, like a fruit drink, as environment. 'Environment' tells us about the world-wide phenomenon of environmentalism in which conservation strategies are exchanged by governmental and non-governmental organizations. When environment became a strategic global concern, it began to drift without an anchor. What we are witnessing today is the manipulation of an empty sign in the fantastic copulation of strategic environmental scenarios and summits which refer to one another and little else. In spite of the headlines, Earth comes last. These scenarios and scenes are like energy probes, satellites which carry environmental concerns into orbit around our blue planet, and report on its slow burn while adding fuel to the fire. As everyone becomes more desperate about the disappearance of nature, strategies proliferate, white and green papers are produced and circulated, scenarios are staged, and 'environment' becomes a word on everyone's lips. This desperation produces more 'environment,' more empty signs of itself.

My Baudrillardian rant has not dissuaded those ecological thinkers wedded to phenomenological method from recovering their own primal scenes of nature. Recalling the rally cry of phenomenology 'to the things themselves,' Evernden writes that phenomenology 'requires a return ... to a world that precedes knowledge and yet is basic to it, as a countryside is to geography and blossoms to botany.' A sense of wonder emerges after the achievements of the positive sciences have been put into brackets. The necessity of recovering the ability to wonder at the world, not as quizzical bemusement nor as a variant of curiosity, but to be continually surprised and thus to lift the 'disguise of ideas,' is the message of *The Natural Alien*:

If we were to do so, and if the new story we subsequently elaborated no longer cast us in the role of global locust, then our essence would no longer be environmental crisis. But there is no way to deliberately elaborate a new story - it is not a conscious exercise, not something susceptible of reasoned solution. One can only hope to pull back and see what emerges to fill the void.

Evernden asks the ecologist and the wilderness defender to remember their wonder at life behind the disguises of the laboratory and real estate interests. He puts his faith in the 'natural alien' or human placelessness, a faith propelled out of existential despair by the lure of flexibility. One must be flexible enough to let go of modern environmentalism, and perhaps even have the strength to not take refuge in the abstract notion even if, in the end, what is required is that one take a purely theoretical attitude out of contexts in which questions of value can arise and make sense.

Squirreled away in his cabin in rural New Hampshire, the phenomenological philosopher Erazim Kohak found a place conducive to bracketing the world of artifacts in order to achieve a nonreductive understanding of the intrinsic sense of natural events. Kohak's literal clearing in the forest opens up the Da - the space of understanding and disclosure - so that the evening, the forest and a family of porcupines, as he describes in *The embers and the stars*, have room to show themselves. For Kohak "the sense of nature's presence, ultimately, is the sense of the



presence of God." Even nonhuman animals, to the extent that they know in some respect, should not be excluded from knowing God. What is disclosed is the ingression of the eternal or value in the temporal. In Kohak's hands, phenomenological understanding leads to a stewardship argument: the faithful steward is responsible for a part of God's household because one is responsible to God.

One of the Canadian naturalist John Livingston's most enduring and controversial contributions to Canadian debates on conservation is his sustained questioning of stewardship and wise-use arguments. His article on the implications of domestication, "Rightness or Rights: Dominance, Domestication and the Paradox of Animal Rights" (B/L No. 5, 1986), was no exception. Indeed, the scripts Livingston produced for CBC TV's ground-breaking series, *The Nature of Things*, brought the pot of the conservation movement to a boil despite the fact that they were softened for televisual consumption and mouthed by David Suzuki.

Livingston's inflammatory arguments in such books as *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation* struck at the presuppositions of self-interest arguments buttressing stewardship entreaties

(anthropocentric dominion and the utilitarian imperative). Among the bird watching set, Livingston is far removed from the proselyte Jack 'in-the-pulpit' Miner (1865-1944) for whom "He ... gives me dominion over the fowls of the air and they honk and sing their way to and from my home." Miner's conversion from hunting fowl to banding and mapping the navigation patterns of Canada geese from his bird 'sanctuary' in Kingsville, Ontario was serialized in comic strip form by Walt McDayter and Norman Drew in the *Toronto Telegram* in the 1940s. It is doubtful that Livingston too will receive the dubious honor of having his life work turned into a comic strip.

Echoing Freud's remarks in his letter to Einstein of September 1932 that the evolution of civilization "is perhaps comparable to the domestication of certain species of animals," Livingston came to focus on the processes of domestication, not so much in psychological terms of aim inhibitions, sublimation and displacements of sexual and aggressive instincts, but through the means by which animal-human relations are shaped by distorting the relationships between animals and their conspecifics. In the aforementioned B/L article, Livingston wrote:

The essence of domestication is tractability, docility and manageability. This is obtained through selective breeding, by systematic dismantling of the animal's social dependence on conspecifics, while at the same time maintaining, encouraging and reducing its innate need to participate in a group social arrangement. Group interdependence is replaced by one-way dependence on the human proprietor.

Under the tutelage of Livingston I

applied his insights by comparing the domestication of animals to military indoctrination in the context of studying the military uses of animals in war and the symbolic construction of pseudo-species in advertisements for armaments ("Animals in the Army," B/L No. 9/10 1987-88).

The mechanomorphic hybrids which I discussed 'evolved' into product lines of children's toys while the military bestiary of advertising



simultaneously became more toy-like. This military imaging system has expanded into what is called the *animat* approach to artificial intelligence. The Proceedings of the First International Conference on Simulation of Adaptive Behavior, *From animals to animats* (1991), contains a remarkable overview of the research, most of which has developed only over the last five years, involving the use of simulated animals in the study of adaptive behavior and intelligence. First coined by Stewart Wilson in 1985, the term 'animat' - often simply referred to as 'bug' given the large number of artificial insects under study - refers to a simulated animal or autonomous robot. The study of an animat's 'adaptive behaviors' (physiological, sensory and learned) in selected artificial environments, the mutual influences of which are modelled on the postulates of ethology, biology as well as cognitive

science, furthers a variety of Artificial Intelligence research agendas such as making practical inroads into robot design and construction, improving computer modelling techniques, investigating the difficult question of emergent consciousness, and returning to ethology something of the insights gleaned (I am reminded here of the naturalist-documentary film maker Wladyslaw Starewicz's reanimation of insect

corpses dressed in human garb in his pre-revolutionary Russian films such as *Happy Scenes of Animal Life* (1912), *The Grasshopper and the Ant* (1913), and *The Lily of Belgium* (1915), in which stories of love, betrayal and the 'environmental' excesses of war are rendered, often parodically, in taxidermic simulations). It is perhaps not, as Baudrillard once put it, a castrated little doggie which exists somewhere between a piece of furniture and a living being, but an animat, a simulated animal like the 'papoola' described in Philip

K. Dick's science-fiction novel, *The Simulacra*. This is the animat, a simulation of an extinct Martian creature, which used car salesman use to draw passersby into the lot.

After nature, there is Disney. As Joyce Nelson stated in the first essay of her two-part exploration of "Culture and Agriculture" (B/L No. 18 & 19, 1990), "Disneyland - and its later clone, Disneyworld, which is 150 times bigger than its predecessor - tells us that technological simulacra are superior to their biological counterparts." Disney's vision of nature without dirt and animals without shit created what Nelson calls "a spectacular advertisement for the end of nature." Working at the tail end of nature, Margot la Rocque and I launched into "Animal Reproduction" (B/L No. 18, 1990) with the phrase: "The extinction of animals is offset by their textual reproduction," thus lifting sex out of biology in order to



describe "the pre-eminent manner in which our culture recoups its losses." The circulation of animats and pseudo-species of all kinds in artificial environments not only furthered Disney's sense of his own patriarchal dominion over the earth, but inspired his crony Ray Kroc to establish a McNature populated by caricatures of physically and mentally challenged adults and children (Ronald McDonald, The Hamburglar, etc.) to promote his simulation of food. If Baudrillard is the theorist of the conditions which obtain after nature, then Disney and Kroc were true frontiersmen and profiteers from this abject condition.

Lest we forget that Vancouver too had its 'Disneyland,' all we need be reminded of is that Brian Fawcett used the very term to describe Expo 86 in his article "How Walt Disney infected the design of Expo 86 and why we should all be frightened as Hell about it ..." (B/L No. 7/8, 1987). Not only did Disneyfolk (senior administrative staff from Disneyland and Disney-inspired projects) come to dominate Expo by "erect[ing] a post-ideological monument to geopolitical globalism, which is to say, to propagandize consumerist values, and to degenerate any other form of consciousness," but they put into place a great deal of "sterilized novelty" to sterilize the critical imagination of, Fawcett fears, many young people in Greater Vancouver. Vancouver already had its own third-rate "debraining facility," after all, in Fantasy Gardens.

France has its EuroDisney; Alberta has its indoor beach, petting zoo, and exotic animal displays in West Edmonton Mall; Ontario has its fiberglass mountain at the heart of Canada's Wonderland, and Arizona has its pseudo-planet Biosphere; but there remains the massive intrusion of Hydro Québec in James Bay I & II. Winona LaDuke's critique of Canadian 'environmental racism' in her article "The Culture of Hydroelectric Power" (B/L No. 23, 1991/92) exposes provincial and federal intolerance for cultural and biological diversity, perpetrated in the economic name of 'cheap electrical

rates,' with reference to the concept of 'sustainable development' as an endocolonialist strategy which requires the destruction of an entire ecosystem and Cree society:

...it makes no sense, whatsoever to explain to a Cree the concept of 'sustainable development' when my father-in-law and his ancestors have been harvesting and hunting this same area, for thousands of years. It appears to me that 'sustainable development' and a 'sustainable economy' are scheduled for destruction, only so, twenty years from now, some southern expert can 'reinvent' a sustainable economy for this same area.

Like all simulacra, a 'sustainable economy' attempts to put *Aborigines* in their place; (Both the original inhabitants and their place; the Latin term *aborigine* retains the name of the Italian tribe from whom, since *ab* means 'away from,' the Latins were descended) that is, finds a place for them in history since they are not supposed to be of the present, for instance, in Quebec, this is accomplished by literally drowning their place in order to replace them with its own hydroelectric culture and subsequent higher-order simulations (hyper-sustainable developments) of this ecocatastrophe. A similar point is made by Edward Poitras in his contribution to the *Eye of Nature* exhibition, "Summer Snow Tribal Relocation Project." The work consists of four white panels upon which three words, English, French and Spanish, are foregrounded in black script against the background of the names of dozens of tribes written in white script, appearing and disappearing from view like flakes of summer snow.

Alex Wilson's namesake was a well known American bird biologist (1766-1817) who, together with his contemporary, John James Audubon (1785-1851), is considered a 'father' of North American ornithology. Our contemporary Wilson's two articles, "The View From the Road: Nature Tourism in the Postwar Years" (B/L 12, 1988) and "Nature at Home: A Social Ecology of Postwar Landscape

Design" (B/L 22, 1991), both of which found their way into his recently published book *The Culture of Nature*, treat the expansion of 'landscaping' toward the artificial (chemical, technological, monocultural) as inevitable but not irreversible.

Wilson's redemptive vision and commitment to natural restoration based upon topo-sensitivity is at odds with the dark scenes of the death of nature which I have discussed. This is the tension which has run through and animated investigations of 'natural' phenomena in B/L. What makes Wilson's project an exception is his ability to rethink in-between places such as parkettes, empty lots, degraded river banks, and everywhere designated by the Canadian term 'wastelot,' including many people's backyards, as well as overdesigned 'green' spaces. He tries to reread these places in terms of a democratic, interventionist, environmental ethic cognizant of its own history, pitfalls and successes. His position will be tested every time the results of the next site design competition are announced, when the disarray of the landscaping profession redresses itself, and during the debates in which light green to hunter green revolutionaries engage in hot pursuit of their educational goals.

Gary Genosko is a member of the *Border/Lines Collective* and a *McLuhan Program Fellow* at the *University of Toronto*.

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The Principal Meal

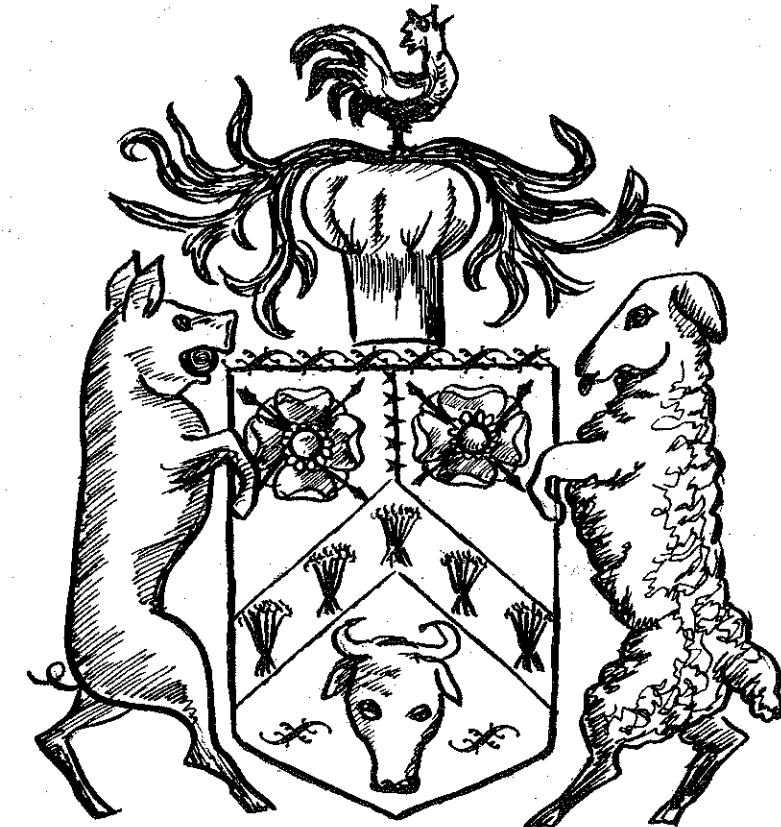
BY Neil Evernden

Nick Fiddes, *Meat: A Natural Symbol*. London: Routledge, 1991

I suspect that a person's initial reaction to seeing this book on the dealers' shelves would be mixed. There is no ambiguity about the prominent title *Meat*, nor any doubt about the appropriateness of the reddish cast to its cover images. I also suspect that an ambiguous response to the book is entirely appropriate to its topic: we are both attracted and repelled by this material entity that plays such a central role in our social life. The term "meat" is, on one hand, an easy, apparently neutral means of identifying a range of foodstuffs. Yet on the other hand, it can leave slightly troubling aftershocks: it sounds slightly vulgar, a little raw, and could quite easily be turned into a derogatory term if transposed to other contexts. It is a highly valued indicator of civilized dining, but its history is inevitably bloody and "primitive." And it constitutes a very rich topic for discussion, since it reveals so much about our association with the natural worlds.

Fiddes' choice of title was felicitous, yet it does have one failing: it falls far short of indicating the full range of his discussion. One might expect to encounter

discussions of nutrition and the history of meat-eating in such a book, but perhaps not cannibalism, pet-keeping, and sex. Yet so central is meat to our ordering of affairs that very nearly any social activity may be shown to have some connection to it. That is, meat constitutes the kind of symbolic entity through which we think about a wide range of social and material relations. It is, as the subtitle



asserts, a "natural symbol." As the author says, "what meat exemplifies, more than anything, is an attitude: the masculine world view that ubiquitously perceives, values, and legitimates hierarchical domination of nature, of women, and of other men and, as its corollary, devalues less domineering modes of interactions between humans and the rest of nature."

As Fiddes explores the development of our attitudes toward meat, it becomes apparent that much of our conversation about it conceals its deeper significance. We speak, for example, about its qualities as a source of protein, and we use such qualities in support of meat as a superior foodstuff which can produce a strong, healthy body for its consumer. Yet while we couch this assertion in terms of

chemical ingredients, we are also implying that the qualities of the animal -- its strength -- are to be acquired by the appropriation of its life force. Conversely, when, as is increasingly common, we criticize the consumption of meat, we speak of cholesterol levels or the probability of contamination by hormones of toxic chemicals, thus maintaining credibility by expressing our concern in terms of empirical fact. Yet that concern with contamination is also symbolic, and our critique of meat constitutes a critique of our

system of relationships with the natural world.

Our concern about meat is, in short, evidence of the more wide-ranging concern over environmental well-being and the appropriate relationship of humans to nature. Fiddes cites the well-known anthropologist Mary Douglas as saying that what

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concerns us is not the threat of toxins to the body but the threat of contaminants to our cultural sense of order: "the threat is less to our stomachs than to our thought: to our clear classification of how the world should be." The way we talk about meat and its dangers (or strengths) is revelatory of our ideas about health in general, personal and global. Health becomes the medium of our discussion, but a discussion which goes well beyond the boundaries of bodily functioning.

Fiddes amply demonstrates that meat offers a useful entry to discussion of pollution and contamination. Yet he also demonstrates an emerging contrast between contemporary attitudes and those of the very recent past. Meat has long been regarded (and perhaps still is by a majority) as the premier food, one of so high a status that it seems a near-necessity. Indeed he cites one instance in which fresh fruit and vegetables were actually banned during an epidemic as unsafe, while meat was taken to be pure. But quite aside from its alleged physical properties, meat has also been emblematic of the status of its consumer. That is, the ability to eat meat has been taken to indicate a superior being, an aristocrat among people or among species, one who wields the power of life and death and who is entitled to consume the flesh of others. This evidence of power is part of the symbolic significance of meat-eating, and meat thus constitutes the kind of nourishment needed to sustain the arrogance of a world-dominating being. Meat-eating is, then, the environmental crisis in microcosm: it is daily evidence of the attitude of domination and control which Western societies have practiced upon nature and upon their own minorities. Parenthetically, Fiddes' distinction between the contrasting reactions to environmental malaise - the advocacy of ever-greater

control under the guise of "wise stewardship" versus the call for greater humility in the face of environmental limits -- is a useful encapsulation of much of the literature, and his contrasting labels "light green" and "deep green" are a welcome change from the shallow/deep dichotomy more common in North American debates.

The really striking feature of recent times, then, must be the evidence of a decline in meat consumption, accompanied by a rapidly growing antipathy to the very idea of flesh-eating. It is not the mere fact that some people shun meat that is significant, for there have always been dissenters. What is interesting in the current debate is the range of participants and the rapidity with which the resistance to meat seems to be growing. The larger context which Fiddes provides -- the underlying significance of meat eating -- helps considerably in understanding the current trend. Simply put, resistance to meat is a social indicator of resistance to the traditional attitudes to nature in general.

However, while this may constitute the major significance of the book, Fiddes' illustration of the symbolic content of material objects will also be of interest to those who have had only minimal exposure to the writings of social anthropologists. His discussion of cannibalism, for instance, reveals a traditional means by which one society can indicate its superiority over others, in this instance by implying that "they" eat people and are therefore subhuman. And if the ban on eating people is a consequence of the sense of kinship, we find ourselves in a categorical anomaly, which is always troubling. These creatures are clearly "they" and therefore devoid of any protection from our appetites, and yet at the same time they are "us" when taken into our homes. Hence our discomfort at the thought of

people eating dogs or cats, and at attempting to explain why it is proper to eat infant cattle as "veal" but improper to eat kittens. In short, Fiddes gives us a primer on the social constitution of meaning in the course of a discussion of meat.

Fiddes has provided an intriguing study of the history of meat-eating, and has done a considerable service in raising the level of the discussion from the physical benefits/hazards of that foodstuff to its symbolic importance to the societal psyche: meat is not just nutrition, but a metaphoric connection to the "otherness" of nature. A similar understanding of "environment" might well provoke a more useful discussion than does our usual litany of pollutions and depletions. The sparks that disperse from his discussion of meat will ignite enough intellectual bonfires to keep any reader entertained -- and this despite the fact that the book had its origins as a doctoral dissertation, which so often leads to stodgy literature. But Fiddes writes very clearly, and deftly directs the reader to his thoughtful conclusion. Most readers will find this a thoughtful and enjoyable exploration of a surprisingly rich topic.

Neil Evernden teaches in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University.

Reading Transvestism

BY Patricia Elliot

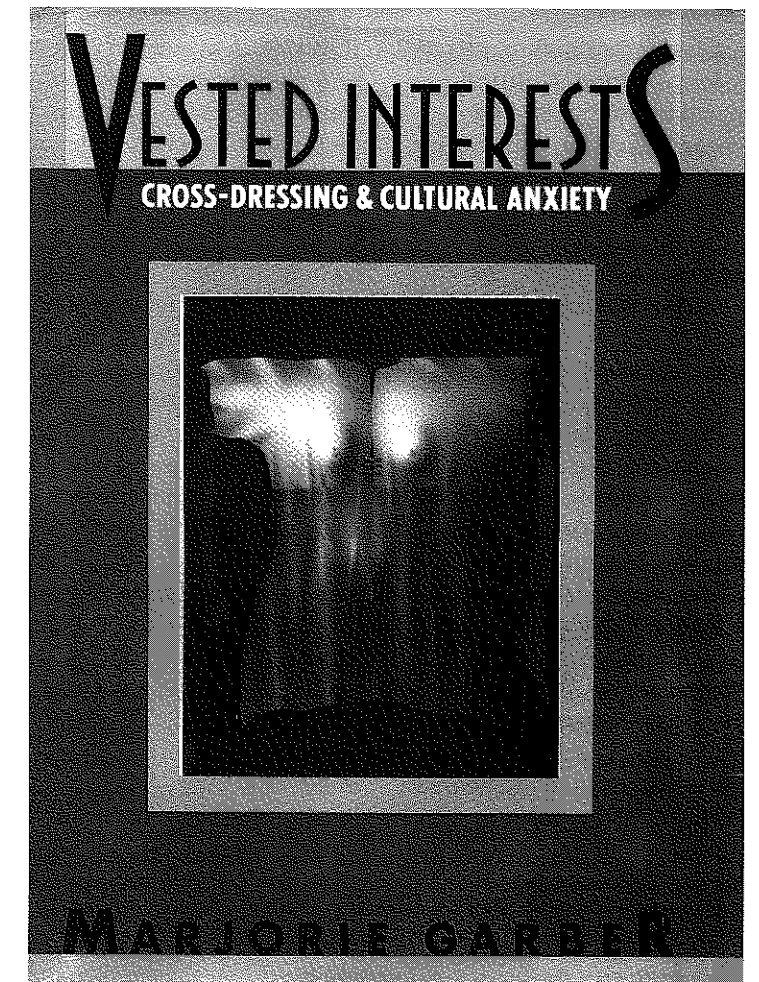
Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, New York: Routledge, 1992

On February 8, 1992, headlines "Burglars in Drag" and "Dressed to Steal" drew the attention of Globe and Mail readers to Eric Morgenthaler's story from West Palm Beach, Florida where "a shadowy gang of 100 transvestites has been terrorizing Florida's up scale boutiques". What makes a "big-time burglary ring manned by female impersonators" shadowy is their success in eluding police who "don't seem keen to go undercover themselves." The transvestite gang appears to have captured not only sequined gowns, but also the attention of "law-enforcement professionals" who attend transvestite beauty pageants in voyeuristic fashion, to videotape, photograph, and take notes. Transvestite beauty contestants appear to the police as suspects, as transgressing the border between law-abiding and law-breaking citizens. But the elusive nature of their criminal activities is repeatedly brought back to the elusive nature of their gender, hence to another transgressed border. According to detectives, the transvestite criminal eludes the police because society has sanctioned the transgression of gender borders, so that the transvestite no longer "stands out like a sore thumb." In this case, the failure to nail the transvestites as men is displaced onto, and given as a reason for the failure to nail the suspects as criminals. Although the detectives warn against the temptation to regard all transvestites as potential criminals ("These are criminals who just happen to be transvestites"), it is clear that they

also regard cross-dressing as a clever way to elude the law.

Neither the confusion nor the appeal of cross-dresser as criminal would be news to Marjorie Garber, author of *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. Professor of English and Director of the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard, Garber draws on an impressive knowledge of cultural history to explore the nature and significance of cross-dressing and to account for our fascination with it. Garber contends it is important to look closely at the transvestite, rather than looking through or past him/her, because the transvestite is a complex and overdetermined cultural signifier.

To facilitate focusing our gaze on the transvestite, Garber has included forty pages of photographs and illustrations of transvestism (both familiar and obscure). These images are helpful reminders of the prevalence of transvestism in culture, and reinforce Garber's claims that transvestism both creates culture and is created by culture. *Vested Interests* is organized into two sections, "Transvestite Logics" and "Transvestite Effects," where arguments for these two claims are made and supported by an almost overwhelming number of examples. It is clear that the transvestite (defined by Garber, perhaps too broadly, as any cross-dresser, from Tootsie to transsexuals) appears in



all forms of culture (theater, literature, music, sports, film, art) and has a very long history. Cultural historians will undoubtedly find Garber's research compelling reading as it includes hundreds of examples from classical Greek theater to Madonna, from Elizabethan dress codes to contemporary clubs for cross-dressers. The sixteen page index also serves as a useful guide to anyone in search of examples of transvestism. But it is not the sheer volume of examples that leads to Garber's more radical claim that "there can be no culture without the transvestite." Rather, this claim is part of an extended argument concerning the meaning and function of transvestism in (predominantly Western) culture.

Unfortunately, Garber's theory is never very clearly stated, nor is it located in one place in the book. Often presented as a kind of Lacanian riddle ("there can be no culture without the transvestite because the transvestite marks the entrance into the Symbolic"[34]) which is likely to baffle even those readers familiar with Lacan, Garber's theory does not compare favorably with her excellent anecdotes and textual readings of particular instances of transvestism. Despite this lack of clarity, it is the theory I find most engaging, and other readers will probably share my desire to have more of it. In what follows, I discuss the central tenets of Garber's theory, with particular emphasis on those aspects that most interest me: transvestism as signifier of "category crisis," and transvestism as cultural fetish.

Garber employs Lacanian theory to make sense of the phenomenon of transvestism, primarily by drawing an analogy between the function of the phallus in what Lacan calls the Symbolic order, and the function of the transvestite in the realm of culture. Just as the phallus in Lacan's schema plays its role "only when veiled" (the repression

of the desire to be the phallus allows the subject to emerge as a separate and desiring being), so too, the transvestite, who blurs the distinction between male and female, must be repressed or veiled if the cultural signifiers of gender difference are to appear. Moreover, as long as there is no culture without gender categories (regardless of how the content of those categories is defined), there will be no culture without the (repressed) figure of the transvestite.

When the transvestite appears, or rather, returns, as the repressed is bound to do, it serves as a troubling reminder that binary sex and gender distinctions are social constructions, cultural fictions, not natural facts. In other words, the (main?) function of the transvestite is to indicate what Garber calls a "category crisis," which is "a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another." At one level, then, the transvestite makes his/her cultural appearance at those historical moments when some aspect of gender has been seriously questioned. Garber describes transvestism as the "third term" that "challenges the possibility of harmonious and stable binary symmetry." Like the appearance of the phallus (according to Garber's reading of Lacanian theory), the appearance of the transvestite marks a "space of possibility" or "space of desire."

Although I have some questions about the analogy between the transvestite and the phallus (does it matter that the transvestite is a person?) and about Garber's reading of Lacan (doesn't the presence of the phallus obstruct the circulation of desire and eliminate the possibility of consciously choosing to embrace ambiguity?), I find Garber's description of

transvestism as a signifier of gender crisis convincing. But this is not its only role.

The transvestite signals a crisis not only in the category of gender, but also in other categories such as those of class, race and sexuality. Through detailed analysis of many historical texts and contexts in which transvestism appears, Garber observes that the transvestite is an "index of destabilization" marking not only illicit boundary crossings of male and female, but also of black and white, gay and straight - of other categories that have become displaced onto gender. Thus, the presence of the transvestite in a context that does not seem to be primarily concerned with gender indicates a "category crisis elsewhere." For example, official concern with "excessive" men's dress in Elizabethan England was provoked not so much by a fear of crumbling gender codes, or of female impersonators, but by a fear of loss of status and social position. According to Garber, the figure of the transvestite appears at moments of social or political crisis, whenever distinctions of class, race or gender seem to be threatened. To take another example Garber discusses at length, transvestism in Barbara Streisand's *Yentl* signals more than a crisis of sexist distinctions that excluded women from participating in intellectual life. It also signals a crisis of race - the oppression of Eastern European Jews; a crisis of sexuality - *Yentl* is married to and loved by another woman; and, at another level entirely, a crisis of power relations in the film industry - Streisand's personal struggle to be both star and producer of the film.

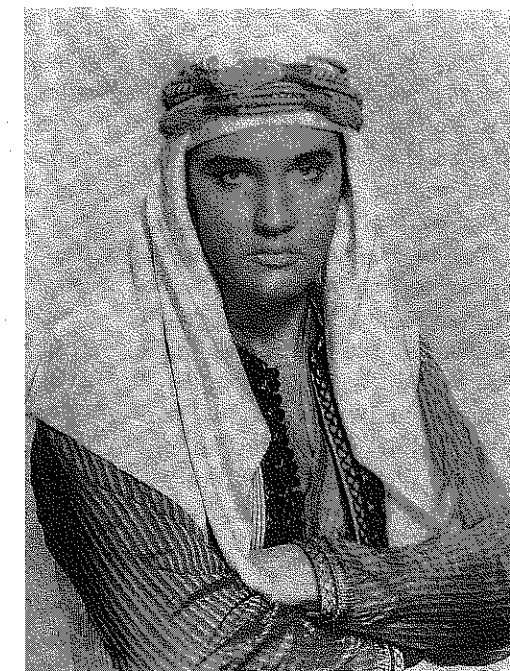
That transvestism can and does mark any number of category crises leads Garber to claim that it signifies "the crisis of category itself." In her view, this makes the transvestite a powerful figure, but also one that fascinates insofar as it

embodies an unconscious desire for what is not contained or containable within socially constructed categories, a desire for the unbounded, the excessive. This brings us to another role or function of the transvestite, that of cultural fetish.

In the chapter "Fetish Envy" Garber argues that "fetishism is a kind of theater of display...and that theater represents an enactment of the fetishistic scenario." We should not be surprised, then, at the prevalence of transvestism in theatrical representations, or at the connection between transvestism and fetishism. Garber does not suggest all transvestites are fetishists, but discusses fetishism as a kind of representation that characterizes at least the "theatrical" cross-dresser.

According to psychoanalytic theory, fetishism involves an unconscious desire to preserve the maternal phallus, to deny "castration," separation or loss. The fetish object, like the theatrical transvestite, stands in for the phallus and is the source of erotic pleasure as long as it remains disguised: "The fetish is a metonymic structure, but it is also a metaphor, a figure for the undecidability of castration, which is to say, a figure of nostalgia for ordinary 'wholeness' - in the mother, in the child. Thus the fetish, like the transvestite - or the transvestite, like the fetish - is a sign at once of lack and its covering over." Thus, for Garber, the transvestite on stage is involved in enacting the fetishistic drama of castration and its denial, of phallic presence and absence, what she describes in the last chapter as the enactment of a "primal scene."

Needless to say, this fetishistic drama does not belong to the transvestite alone, for the spectator also fetishizes the transvestite. Garber argues that figures like Elvis or Madonna are "transvestic symptoms" of popular culture which serve "to gratify a social or cultural scenario of desire. The on stage transvestite is the fetishized part-object for the social or cultural script of the fan." Scattered throughout the book are endless examples of transvestite writers, rock



stars, musicians, artists, actors and actresses who are fetishized by fans and who are more adored the more category boundaries they cross. Garber's reading of Elvis as a "living category crisis" is perhaps the best example of this fetishization.

What accounts for our attraction to transvestites, and why would we be bound to create them if they didn't already exist? Vested Interests may be read as an elaborate response to this question, although the focus is more on the functions and effects of transvestism than on the reasons why we find it so

compelling. Garber's analysis suggests, however, that the transvestite's function both as signifier of category crisis and as fetishized fetishist may serve as a clue to our fascination. Like the phallic mother, the transvestite is both despised - a scapegoat for our fear when identities are threatened, and loved - the star whose imagined ability to transcend the categories of gender, class, race or sexuality makes him/her an object of desire. Garber suggests the combination of pleasure and danger evoked by the figure of the transvestite is due to the fetishistic provocation and dissipation of our anxiety around phallic loss: "The theatrical transvestite literalizes the anxiety of phallic loss. The overdetermination of phallic jokes, verbal and visual, that often accompany transvestism on stage, is a manifestation of exactly this strategy of reassurance for anxiety through artifactual overcompensation."

One need not subscribe to the theory of universal nostalgia for "originary wholeness," as Garber sometimes appears to do, to grant a certain unconscious power to the enactment of the drama of loss and recovery played out by the transvestite. Insofar as the construction of any identity involves loss, separation and the forming of boundaries, the transvestite dramatization of loss and recovery may well have some kind of universal appeal.

On the other hand, what seems to appeal most to Garber about the transvestite has less to do with any symbolic function or fetishistic appeal it may have. Rather, her interest lies in the transvestite as enigmatic figure who occupies a space of seeming or appearance where every gesture needs to be read as a "complex cultural sign that defies any simple translation into meaning." Developing an idea from Severo



Sarduy's essay "Writing/Transvestism" where the politics of reading transvestism are explored (Review 9, Fall 1973). Garber claims, "this emphasis on reading and being read, and on the deconstructive nature of the transvestite performance, always undoing itself as part of its process of self-enactment, is what makes transvestism theoretically as well as politically and erotically interesting - at least to me." Garber's fascination with the transvestite is a fascination with the imaginary space where the "transvestic fantasy," characterized by the "complex interplay, slippage, and parodic recontextualization of gender markers and gender categories" demands to be read.

While the "theatrical" transvestite, as opposed to the actual transvestite, does indeed provide ample ground for the textual play in which Garber indulges, we should also remember that to be on the wrong side of the distinctions the transvestite transcends is to be marginalized, oppressed, even endangered. Garber does not ignore the negative implications of calling into question those categories that structure society, but in her idealization of the transvestite's destabilization of binary terms she does seem to gloss over some important distinctions.

First, is there a difference between the way we might read the theatrical or on stage transvestite and the way transvestites read themselves? Would discussions with transvestites corroborate Garber's reading of their function in society or suggest something else? I am not suggesting Garber write a different kind of book, nor would I introduce the disputed distinction of original and imitation, but I do suggest the conflation of real transvestites with fictional or theatrical ones might well be problematic.

Second, the inclusion of transsexuals in the broad category of

transvestite raises another set of questions. While Garber makes some interesting observations about transsexuals, particularly with respect to issues of gender and subjectivity (see chapter 4), her location of transsexuals on a "transvestite continuum" where the difference is reduced to one of degree, is highly questionable. If the transvestite fantasy is to put gender categories into play, and to keep the fantasy in play, as Garber claims, then how can transsexuals who, as Garber acknowledges, "wish to literalize that fantasy through an alteration in the body" be seen as sharing the same fantasy? To take another example from Garber's theory, she claims that "if transvestism offers a critique of binary sex and gender distinctions, it is not because it simply makes such distinctions reversible but because it denaturalizes, destabilizes, and defamiliarizes sex and gender signs." While Garber's multiple examples of transvestism appear to corroborate this claim to function as critique, her descriptions (and my understanding) of transsexuals blatantly contradict it. For transsexuals, sex distinctions are reversible, genitalia are essentialized (as Garber also notes), gender identities are considered stable and fixed, and corresponding sex and gender signs are rigidly upheld. Other instances of what I would call undercutting differences could be mentioned, but my point is that Garber's inclusion of transsexuals in the category transvestite undermines rather than supports her theory.

Another distinction that becomes blurred in the transvestic space of Garber's book is the distinction between what is conscious and what is unconscious. It seems to me transvestism's potential for critique, "for rupture and for the reconfiguration of the cultural Imaginary" will be rather weak as long as that critique

functions at an unconscious level for both transvestite and spectator. Garber has a tendency to idealize the figure of the transvestite (both the theatrical and the actual) whose actions are not necessarily freely chosen or consciously embraced, but the result of compulsion. Likewise, our fascination with transvestism, our desire to cross gender boundaries as well as other boundaries, may only exist at the level of the unconscious. Garber is fond of psychoanalyst Robert Stoller's phrase "a fetish is a story masquerading as an object" because, like the transvestite, the fetish only works when it is in disguise, when the story remains unconscious. However, Stoller also warns that "if the text becomes conscious, the fetish no longer in itself causes excitement, is no longer a fetish." To continue the analogy, then, the transgressive power of the transvestite can only function at an unconscious level, it cannot be realized in the world. What is disconcerting is that neither the transvestite nor those who are fascinated by her/him consciously embrace the deconstructive potential she/he represents. Until we find some way of making the unconscious desire a conscious one, we will continue to be haunted by that phantom, the transvestite. On the other hand, perhaps that means Florida's transvestite thieves will continue to elude the voyeuristic police who, not having read *Vested Interests*, have not learned to see in the transvestite the embodiment of their own desire.

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Blank Generation

BY Todd Dufresne and Clara Sacchetti

Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales For An Accelerated Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991

Generation X chronicles the search for meaning and identity in our post-mortem, post-structural and, in particular, post-baby boom world. In effect, and not unlike Bret Easton Ellis' *Less Than Zero*, Coupland captures the fragmentation of modern life experienced by the "twenty-something" crowd - the so-called "X generation." In the process he introduces the reader to 96 seductive, often amusing, anecdotal characterizations of postmodern culture. And these he places, parodying intro textbooks everywhere, in the book's wide margins.

Structurally and thematically, the novel opens under the ominous shadow of a solar eclipse over the Manitoba prairie in the late 1970s. Alas, this significant image marks an opening which is already a closing, a blotting out of the sun, of reason itself. But it also marks, of course, the promise of rebirth, of a new day in the sun. This, then, is the crux of "a mood of darkness and inevitability and fascination" that envelops the characters (and perhaps the readers) of *Generation X*. The eclipse can thus be read, and even demands to be read, as the beginning of the end of our posted values (or lack thereof). Or again, the eclipse marks a first step in Coupland's Christian revaluation of our postmodernist devaluations. This, at least, is the sub-text upon which the novel operates.

In *Generation X*, the search for meaning functions almost entirely in the most negative and reactive terms. Coupland's enemy is predominantly the economic and social culture of the hippie turned yuppie, a culture (or shadow) to which he directs sometimes funny, but always resentful, arrows of hostility. For instance, one of Coupland's anecdotes reads: "Bleeding Ponytail: An elderly sold-out baby boomer who pines for hippie or pre-sellout days." But such resentment is not limited to the baby boom generation. Railing against his parents, one character states: "Sometimes I'd just like to mace them. I want to tell them that I envy their upbringings that were so clean, so free of futurelessness. And I want to throttle them for blithely handing over the world to us like so much skid-marked underwear." Siblings are also attacked ("Global Teens"), and so too are the "sub-groups" which comprise the X generation. Coupland characterizes (or, if your prefer, caricatures) this subgroup thus: "Yuppie Wannabes" (those who desire and affirm the yuppie lifestyle), "Squires" (those couples who yearn for "Eisenhower-era" plenitude), and "Black Holes"

(those who romantically reject these options).

In addition, Coupland adds a fourth, undefined group; a group which is either the true X generation, or is that which goes beyond its (coopted) devaluations. This is a group, in other words, which mediates Coupland's more disguised attack on postmodern values. Not unlike the "Black Holes," they have chose "by free will to inhabit that lunar side of the fence." Escaping their unfulfilled lives, each character enacts the logic of the desert father and relocates to the desert town of Palm Springs. Claire, for instance, leaves her old job in Los Angeles as a garment buyer, loses her "unwanted momentums" and escapes the "endless, compulsive and indulgent" family discussions of Nostradamus, JFK, Warhol, Tylenol and milking horses. Dag, having suffered his (seemingly inevitable) "Mid-Twenties Breakdown" - "My crisis wasn't just the failure of youth but also a failure of class and of sex and the future and I still don't know what" - leaves his job as a "Yuppie Wannabe" and escapes the "Veal-Fattening Pens" and "Sick Building Syndrome" of

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL RIVOCHÉ



Toronto office life. And finally, Andy leaves his former employment with a "teenybopper magazine office in Japan" and, in the process, escapes his history: "I needed less in life. Less past."

Out in the desert, the three diagnose the sickness that had once made them, among other things, "confuse shopping with creativity." In the process, they invent funny, morbid, bitter stories about real and imagined life, stories that are cathartic and foundational. They invent, in other words, intersubjective "tales for an accelerated culture" which overturn values and "make their lives worthwhile in the process." Claire states: "Either our lives become stories, or there's no way to get through them." One product of this work-in-progress is the mythical asteroid world of "Texlahoma" - a place where citizens are routinely fired from their "Mcjobs", and where kids take drugs and fantasize about "pulling welfare-check scams as they inspect each other's skin for chemical burns from the lake water." Notably, it is also where "the year is permanently 1974... the year starting from which real wages in the U.S. never grew ever again." It is also a year, we might add, when war-marching, flag burning hippies slowly began turning into bar-hopping, briefcase toting yuppies.

In the course of the novel, we learn that these tales of revaluation, of resentment, are modelled on Andy's experience at Alcoholics Anonymous. There he was advised: "Never be afraid to cough up a bit of diseased lung for the spectators . . . How are people ever going to help themselves if they can't grab onto a fragment of your own horror?" Once again, postmodernity (in the largest sense of the word) is treated as an addiction which must be overcome, posted. The novel's reactive structure, or meta-structure, is thus mirrored in its prescriptive advocacy of AA's confessional approach to addiction. It functions, that is, not

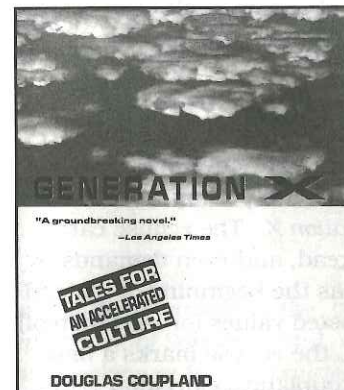
by self-affirmation but by negative self-abdication. Not surprisingly, then, Coupland depicts the self as transcendental, liquidated. And thus, for instance, Andy happily dreams of the day when his "brain will turn into a thin white cord stretched skyward up into the ozone layer and humming like a guitar string."

The combination of transcendental values with a reactive structure of overturning finally designated Coupland's revaluative effort as essentially Christian. At its deepest level, then, Coupland's enemy is less the baby boomer and late-capitalism than it is the figure of Nietzsche and post-structuralism. In effect, Coupland announces the resurrection of Nietzsche's dead God, of meaning it(Him)self. It is surely to this end, for instance, that his novel opens with the chapter, "The Sun Is Your Enemy," and closes with the slogan, "The Sun Is Not Your Enemy." Meaning and identity are salvaged, in other words, in the salvation of the desert sun, of God as ultimate signified. But to this end, all segments of our postmodern society are rejected - from yuppie to X generation.

These Christian (re)values find expression in a number of ways throughout the novel and operate structurally in the passage from darkness to light, prairie to desert, library (as Platonic cave) to sun, eclipse to apocalypse (the last chapter, "Jan. 01, 2000"), death to rebirth, yuppie to Christian. But Christianity is also present through the dreams and aspirations of the three main characters. Andy dreams, as suggested, of transcendence and communion. And Dag - who, not unimportantly, resembles "the lapsed half of a Mormon pamphleting duo" - also imagines the day of his transcendent resurrection, stating: "The sun will be right overhead and behind me there'll be this terrific flapping of wings - louder than the flapping any bird can make." However, and this cannot be surprising, Claire does not imagine

the angel who will carry her "directly into the sun." Rather, she imagines "dowsing for water" in the desert, her hope limited to finding a certain "someone": "Someone who's dowsing for water, just like me." No doubt, tarnished by her encounter with a "Yuppie Wannabe," Claire seeks love and purification from a latter-day John the Baptist. Women, then, are the included excluded of Coupland's dream of escape from postmodernity. But such misogyny, of course, is just another instance of the Christian resentment which pervades the novel.

Generation X is written in a sexy, aphoristic style and certainly taps into some real and often justified anger. Consequently, the Christian content of its popular surface is easily missed, or dismissed, treated uncritically like a twenty second commercial or a six syllable "sound bit." But for these reasons Coupland's novel is an especially insidious and dangerous piece of pamphleteering. It is, therefore, unfortunate that many critics - apparently enamoured by its glittering surface - have reviewed *Generation X* as the "defining document" for a lost generation. As two undefined parts of that generation, we can only pray they are wrong.



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