political site about Situations: A detour into the throbbing heart of the mall," as well as by an array of films and videos such as Frathtas F urname's E ials and A Piece of Fire, Tony Rub's work on African-American steelworkers, and Laura Kipnis's The Video.

There was a whole series of sessions on sexuality and queer studies with papers by Eve Sedgwick on "Queer Performativity" in which she explored the "queer body" as a site of unstable social meaning, and Cindy Patton on AIDS discourse. Rosemary Hennessy challenged the left for its silence on queer theory. She critiqued Judith Butler and others who have spoken to problematizing play and narrative strategies, and located "a radical materialist queer theory" which challenges the bourgeois subject, but which also comes to terms with postmodern and capitalism. Meredith Michaels explored the possibilities of reproductive technolo

gies such as surrogacy may hold, if women can appropriate them, for assisting in the construction of the heterosexual nuclear family. There were also a number of papers which dealt with sexuality in history: Chayes Inglish on the Comstock Act of 1873, in which she spoke of middle-class interests in working-class reproduction; Michelle Bardes's analysis of the rhetorical strategies of 1960s lesbian pulp novel cover art; and Barbara Epstein and Jennifer Terry, who each examined the marginalized ways in which homosexuality was constructed in the 1890s and 50s, in the popular media and in dominant psychological discourse, respectively.

There were a number of sessions on materialist literary criticism, as well as cultural studies and popular culture. Alex White's presentation in the session "Cultural Studies in Late Capitalism" was a very good example of the kind of exciting work that can be done in intellectual history. Arguing that cultural resistance is a good indicator of the strengths and weaknesses of emancipatory movements, White traced the various careers and work of a number of now half-forgotten working class, ethnic, gay and lesbian American leftists writers of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Writers such as Howard Fast, Elia Kazan, Joe Skrent, James T. Farrell, Tilly Olsen, Dorothy West, and Josephine Herbst not only contributed to an original non-electronic proletarian literature that interrogated dominant reproductive literatures, but were themselves inspiring figures whose work — some of it rendered feminist and anti-racist — recorded the excluded memories and experiences of an oppositional left culture. Wald's talk with a critique of contemporary cultural studies for not being sufficiently interested in the cultural history of the American left. Barbara Harlow continued the theme of resistance literature by focusing on the current Irish literary and political scene. During discussion period she also pointed to the shortcomings of British cultural studies for paying scant attention to the material and cultural experience of Irish cultural resistance and Irish anti-colonial struggle. Both Harlow and Wald emphasized that there are some counter-productive tendencies in contemporary cultural studies; namely, its emphasis on theoretical abstraction and its lack of historical rootedness and empirical research. There were also several sessions on eco

logical issues — in some ways the most salient indication of a true paradigm shift on the left — with papers by Alex Wilson and Andrew Bore. Their presentation on the use of the environment in refreshing concrete and historicized ways. On the second day of the conference there was a wide-ranging roundtable, "The History of Modern Feminism," which included Sheila Rowbotham, Lourdes Beneria, Ila James, Cynthia Holmberg, Barbara Joseph, Rosemary Rosson and Harriet Frazer. The panel raised important questions, even if they could not be fully answered, about different tendencies in feminism, the import of Third World women's movements and questions of race and ethnicity on Western feminism, the relationship of feminism to other social movements and to socialism, and the integration of different oppressions, race, gender and class, in the traditional foregrounding of the latter on the left.

What's Left?
The New Internationalism

The conference left us with a sense that Marxism in North America are living through a problematic historical moment that is simultaneously depressing, challenging and liberating. Many of the speakers stressed that a renewed commitment to internationalism is a crucial part of the solution. There are many problems that cannot be solved today that cannot be addressed at the level of the nation-state, and must be articulated globally and require the active participation of socialists and progressives alike. The most pressing issues such as AIDS and environmental disaster also must be addressed with a global strategy in mind. Women's oppression, which Rowbotham and Gayatri Spivak made clear, must also be seen within a complex structure of power, property and privilege. Women have a long history of resistance against systematic subordination, and their resistance tied into networks and structures and must be perceived in interconnec
tions with others. Critical environmental problems such as the damage of nuclear power and waste, and the destruction of water and air pollution need to be linked with the labour movement, and it must be made clear that the export of manufacturing jobs and industries to developing countries is motivated not just by corporate desire for lower wages and higher profits, but by the the wish to avoid even marginal pollution control and health and safety standards.

Finally, the basic strategy of building socialism, whether in the United States or Latin America, must be closely linked with the proper current of the social protest movement: the struggles of indigenous and oppressed peoples and the oppressed. For the near future, as Manning Marable eloquently argued, the essential debate will not be between socialists and capitalism, but with the character and content of the socialist capitalist order. Progressive and Marxists should seek to strengthen their own counter-hegemonic resistance in order to resist both the systemic racism and the new-found influence of xenophobic groupings. Such a strategy may not be "socialism" (and it does have its drawbacks), but as James Wollaston points out, it can provide the necessary bridge to the site from which a new socialism, which may take a form incommensurate with ours now, can emerge.

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Browsing the Apparatus: homosexuality, classification, power/knowledge

By Nicholas Pachwood

I was browsing recently in the Maxwell MacOdrum Library when I had a nasty surprise. Everything that MacOdrum had to say about "homo"phobia was stashed on the shelves between everything that he had to say about sex crimes on the one hand and prostitution on the other. This is not an accidental (d)isplacement.

Our society is a society which has very spe

cific and unflattering ideas about homosexuality. My browsing did not reveal anything to contradict this constructions. Gay men, after all, are commonly held to be notorious for selling their bodies and for tampering with children.
The founder of the American Library Association Gay and Lesbian Task Force recognizes the iniquities of such a perspective.

Today when I speak to gay groups and mention "the lies in the libraries," listeners know instantly what I mean. They, like us, at some point have gone to books in an effort to understand being gay or get some help in living as gay. What we found was strange to us (I'm the kind of person they're writing about but I'm not like that!) and cruelly clinical (there's nothing about love) and always bad (being this way seems grim and hopeless).

Barbara Gittings

While this is a common concern for lesbians and gay men, little has been written to challenge the established order of either politically or theoretically. Borrowing library literature written from 1967 on, I discovered only four articles under the headings homosexuality, gay, or lesbian. Library Association Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Three of these articles concern library services and none concerns reclassification of material related to lesbians or gay men.

When browsing performed for me was more fundamental than the simple assertion that services may usefully be provided to "homosexuals" in a library setting. I found a map of a power, a guide through the ordering principles by which power places ideas and experience into categories and rigidities knowledge. Before me on the shelves were the outlines of an "order of things" where it makes sense to put sex crimes, homosexuality and prostitution together. This order posits categories as essential in themselves and implicitly imposes has...
A significant minority of young men have learned about homosexuality from books written by psychiatrists. In consequence, the teen-aged gay searching for identity with which to clothe his desires is offered an idea that is extremely negative. Some may give in to that identity and perceive themselves as mentally ill.

In this context, the valuation of knowledge has direct consequences for those who must seek to understand themselves within an apparatus where certain desires and acts are shameful. Making concrete this form of knowledge and power, the library has further created a space where the person seeking this understanding must risk exposure of an illicit and contagious softness.

hierarchy and subordination

Very specific and socially contingent assertions concerning sexuality and gender sex constructed in the HQS's subject-header of "Homosexuality, lesbianism." A nineteenth-century logic is here incorporated into the taxonomy following the distinction between a male homosexual and a female homosexual as a lesbian. This typology is made explicit in the Subject Headings directory where for "Homosexuality, Female" the inquiring researcher is directed to "USE Lesbianism.

The assertion of a category of sexuality not only serves to valorize this category, but in its operation also naturalizes the increasingly transparent associations and co-dependent categories of sex and gender. This valorization serves to concretize these categories within a taxonomy of knowledge and power and situates underlying frames of sex and gender within an all too obvious hierarchical relation. Lesbianism follows homosexuality and is subordinated within this category in precisely the fashion that topics concerning women are systematically subordinated to topics concerning men.

This hierarchical relation is regular, rigid, and systematic. Its logic serves to assert certain categories of human, experience, being and knowledge over others. Under the heading of "Sexual behaviour and attitudes" the category of girl follows the category of boy (HQ37; HQ922). The category of men (HQ20) is followed by women (HQ20). HQ30 is a catch-all category further subordinated to the preceding categories in which the aged, the handicapped and the sick are conflated.

The category of homosexuality is systematically subordinated following the same logic. Under the subject area of "Sex instruction and sexual ethics." HQ55 is a single classification in which the aged and homosexual men are conflated. Lesbianism does not suffer the same comparison but is simply erased. This precise logic is represented again in general as the problem of alcoholism where HIV3135 "Alcohol and the aged" is contiguous with HIV3139 "Alcohol and homosexuals." The precise logic by which these two categories are arbitrarily associated in a subject of investigation in itself. It is sufficient for the purposes of this investigation that the Classification Schedule regularly links these categories.

Borrowing as derive and detournement

The Library of Congress Classification Schedule may be understood as a "system of relations that can be established between...elements." Multiple overlapping scats of sex and sexuality, gender and identity are medially ordered in nothing less than an attempt to categorize all knowledge. As a representation of our society in its construction of power/knowledge the classification system offers us an opportunity for substantial archaeological exploration. As a result of it we can move into a space at random and discover meaning in everything we stumble across.

The Macdonald Library represents a concrete manifestation of the abstract disposition which is the taxonomy of knowledge and power articulated in the Classification Schedule. The physical site is precisely contiguous with the site of multiple epistemologies and as we meander through the one we do so through the other. For this expedition we are either limited to the site charted and afforded us by the apparatus or we may decide to browse, to wander off the posted routes.

Gere Marcus

Alongside this "systematic questioning" we may perform another kind of questioning. As we derive the syntax of the social life - its underlying epistemological assertions, its tyranny over knowledge and subsequent destruction of our selfhood - we may begin to free ourselves from our allotted disposition and reweave the stakes at will.

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Further Reading