

# BORDER/LINES

CANADA'S MAGAZINE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

ISSUE NO.31 1993/94

\$6.00



killing bodies,

censoring bodies,

new age bodies,

blaming bodies,

porno bodies.

exhibiting bodies,

+ Rampike  
Literary  
Supplement





Stephen Andrews

# editorial

In the 1920s and 1930s the Russians invented a discipline called Kul'turologiya (Culturology) which was suppressed as an ongoing enterprise by Stalin in 1937, but was resurrected after the collapse of the Wall in 1989. In the same period the Frankfurt School developed in Germany, until Hitler forced it into exile, only to re-emerge in Frankfurt after its American exile in the 1950s. In the 1960s Cultural Studies emerged in Britain, until it suffered emasculation at the hands of a deeply reactionary political establishment, and many of its authors dispersed to UCLA or Australia. In the late 1940s, first existentialism, then structuralism, and ultimately post-structuralism debated culture as myth, resistance and anti-text until, ultimately, the culture of the market took over and the discourses could only be sold to Yale or Harvard as the highest academic bidders. In all cases when these forms of cultural critique return to their native lands, they are not (cannot be) the same, because the years have elapsed, the social conditions have changed, and the ideas carry with them something of the stench of exile.

What an amazingly reactionary way of looking at all these processes! Reactionary, of course, because it assumes that, like a garden, someone grew it, someone-else came and cut down the plants, then some friends of the gardeners took some of those cuttings and grafted them onto plants elsewhere, and then, much later, someone else decided to bring them home when the ground was clear. In many ways all these metaphors derived from horti- or agri-culture do the study of culture a disservice. None of the forms of cultural studies should be compared to well-tended gardens. Rather (if we keep to botany) they should be seen as weeds which encroach on other peoples' cultivations. They are therefore cut back, frequently, by those who do not want the gardens to be taken over. But these weeds are crafty, like ivy, and know that they can never be eliminated, and that they will grow more resilient strains because the savage pruning gives them a strength beyond the pampered perennials.

These thoughts are stimulated by the contents of this issue. For example, all that bodily stuff about Ripley's Believe It or Not, of Derrida's toilet habits and the origins of Pomo. Even more so by the two obituaries. Both Alex Wilson (in spite of being a gardener) and E.P.Thompson (in spite of being a stickler for the rule of law) were finding the weeds which had been bulldozed underground by the Engineers of Culture. Progress is a Machine: real culture is the ivy cracking open the concrete. Which is why Culturology, Existentialism, Cultural Studies, Post-Structuralism were not moments that we can try to recreate, here or anywhere. They were examples to us of being our own weeds in our own machinic society. If we try to cultivate them, they become part of the mechanized landscape. This issue of B/L, put together by Julie Adam, Michael Hoechsmann (Book Reviews), Lindsay Smail and myself, is dedicated to those weeds that will ultimately destroy the nuclear arsenals, the Disney-parks, the wax-works of the politically grotesque. Like "bodies" these weeds need no cropping.

We would like to thank Roger Babcock, Stan Fogel and Sophie Thomas for their contributions.

Ioan Davies

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Ioan Davies

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Marginal Distribution, Unit 103 - 277 George Street North,  
Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 3G9 (705) 745-2326

#### Printing:

Glenparr Litho

#### Editorial Address:

The Orient Building  
188 Bathurst Street, Suite No. 301  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 2R7  
Telephone: (416) 360-5249  
Fax: (416) 360-5412

#### Business Address:

Border/Lines  
Bethune College  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
North York, Ontario  
Canada M3J 1P3

#### Subscriptions: (four issues)

- Individuals: \$20 - Low Income: \$16  
- Institutions: \$35 - Outside of Canada please add \$5.00  
Foreign subscriptions for all countries are payable in US  
dollars. Rates for air mail delivery are available on request.  
*Border/Lines* is published four times a year by *Border/Lines*  
Magazine Society, Inc. a charitable organization engaged in  
producing written, visual and audio educational materials  
on culture, the arts and contemporary social issues.

Federal Charitable Status No. 0681528-29-13,  
donations welcome

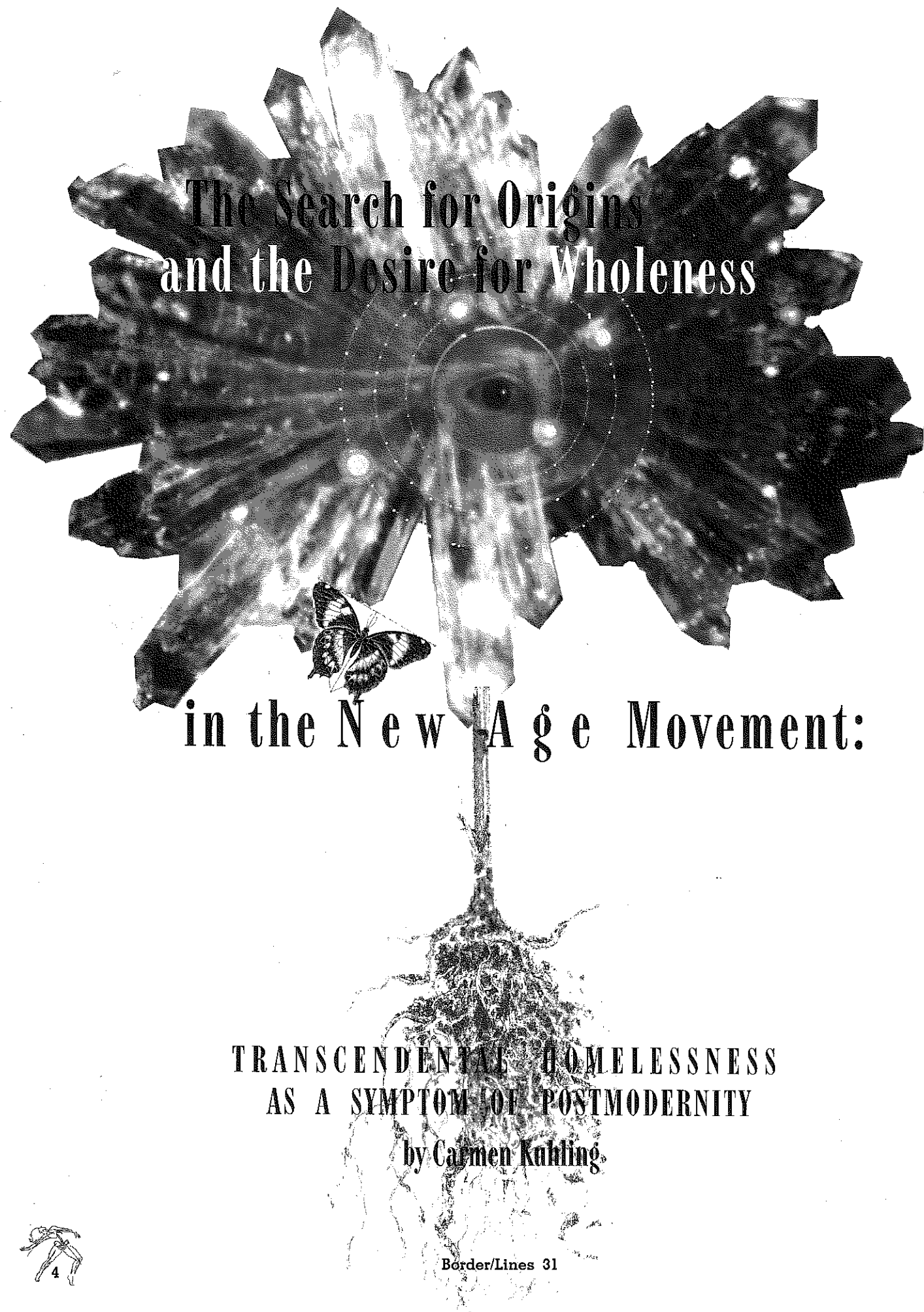
*Border/Lines* is indexed in America: *History and Life*,  
*Historical Abstracts*, *The Alternative Press Index* and in the  
*Canadian Magazine Index* by Micromedia Ltd. Back volumes  
available in micro-form from Micromedia at 20 Victoria  
Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 2N8 (416) 362-5211

We would like thank the Ontario Arts Council,  
The Canada Council, the Ontario Ministry of Culture and  
Communications, The Ontario Publishing Centre and  
York University for their generous support.

2nd Class Mail Registration No. 6799  
Date of issue December, 1993 - ISSN 0826-967X

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Printed and Published in Canada 1993, by *Border/Lines*  
Magazine Society Inc.

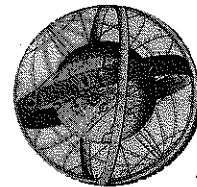


# The Search for Origins and the Desire for Wholeness

## in the New Age Movement:

### TRANSCENDENTAL HOMELESSNESS AS A SYMPTOM OF POSTMODERNITY

by Carmen Kuhling



"The transformative journey... *Magical Blend* accepts the premise that society is undergoing a fundamental transformation. A new world is being born, and whether this birth is an easy or a difficult one will depend largely on the individual. It is our aim to chart the course this transformation is taking, and to assist the individual to cope with and contribute to the birthing process. We believe that people's thoughts influence their reality; if this is true then the world we live in is a combination of our highest hopes, our deepest fears, and the whole range of experience that falls in between. Our goal is to embrace the magical behind the mundane. In this way we hope to act as a catalyst to encourage the individual to achieve his or her highest level of spiritual awareness. We endorse no one pathway to spiritual growth, but attempt to explore many alternative possibilities to help transform the planet."

When theorists of the left discuss the New Age movement, it is usually to dismiss it as individualistic, abstract and ideologically confused. While such charges are not untrue, such a dismissal overlooks the extent to which the New Age movement shares similar aspirations, histories and desires with what we call the left that may be instructive for us. The above "statement of purpose" of the New Age movement, published in the journal *Magical Blend* is a "New Age manifesto" in the sense that it, like other manifestos of the left, expresses the desire for a "break with history," for transformation, for change. However, what distinguishes New Age "manifestos" (besides their high level of abstraction, their reification of the "spiritual" and their failure to articulate concrete or collective strategies to accomplish their goal of transformation) is the frequency with which they use concepts such as rebirthing, reclaiming, recharging and other images which imply that we have lost something which must be regained. In the New Age imaginary, "we" originally existed in a state of unity with each



other, with "nature," with our "selves," a unity that was shattered by the serpent of civilization, the apple of technology. In this way the New Age positioning of "nature," the "primitive," the "spiritual" and, ultimately, the past as sites of wholeness, fulfillment, completeness, can be seen as one particular response to various "crises" of modernity, i.e., of "science," "reason" and, more generally, the crisis that has accompanied the reevaluation of the project of the Enlightenment. But, perhaps, this search for origins, this desire for reconciliation, which appears in exaggerated form in the New Age, is something we need to be aware of in the project of reconstructing the left, and is a symptom of our contemporary "transcendental homelessness," of a condition which some call postmodernity.

The "New Age" desire is the desire to "reconstruct" a community through reconciliation with various Others, with nature, with the Third World, with the aboriginal and with the divided parts of the self, which are posited as integral to the self. Insofar as this New Age fantasy of reconciliation has emerged in reaction to various crises announced by postmodernism, it is, in a sense, a symptom of postmodernity, and can tell us a great deal about the extent to which we invest in various "origin myths" in order to consolidate our sense of continuity with both the past and the future. We will need to acknowledge the extent to which this fantasy is shared, to some extent by theorists of the left, if any reconstructive project of the left is to be in any way successful. My intention in studying the New Age is not only critical — I will also draw out how, despite what some would call the ideological confusion of the New Age, it provides an interesting point of departure for imagining a "postmodern politics," for it is animated by a critique of technological rationality and the desire for community, and for a revival of political agency that underlies the current attempts at reformulating a politics of the left.

Furthermore, the New Age fantasy of reconciliation with various Others, with, for instance, the "Third World"/ aboriginal, with "nature" (Haraway), and with the divided parts of the self (Lacan) provides a point of entry into the formulation of "difference" and the constitution of the Other in contemporary social thought. The formulation of difference and the Other provides the most pressing challenge to our capacity to formulate a version of postmodern politics. First, in reaction to the colonialist impetus to consume or annihilate the Other, the New Age has responded by identifying with, or, in Irigaray's terms, "consummating" with, the Other, a strategy which ironically replicates the same denial of difference found in colonialist narratives of the Other. Second, the New Age desire to "protect" nature through its programme of "cleansing," "detechnolo-



gizing, "decivilizing nature" constructs nature as the site of some idyllic, preindustrial, essentialized past that is as much a commentary on the dissatisfaction with the antagonism of the social and with the contingent character of identity, as it is a fear of environmental destruction. Third, New Age self-help technologies which stress achieving "inner balance" and "harmony" represent the New Age fantasy of the unified, accessible, and coherent subject devoid of conflicting desires or a chaotic unconscious. The Other in the New Age is coded through the figures of the "alien," the crystal and "auras," figures which reveal how the realms of the "Third World," "nature," or the "the spiritual" are sites in which fears and desires, in which projection and transference, regarding "difference" are played out.

Part of the appeal of the New Age can be explained by its positioning of the subject as a traveller who can potentially transcend the epistemological limitations of the body and social location, through access to another dimension. The figure of the traveller, who can travel both through time and through space, appears with increasing regularity in contemporary popular culture in movies, television shows and even advertisements. This positioning of the subject as time traveller reveals our desire to recreate our origins, to rewrite or re-discover our "roots" and, in a sense, to consolidate the fantasy of "autogenesis." The fantasy of time travel is integrally linked to what Lukács calls "transcendental homelessness," a condition of the modern Western mind which emerges out of the tenuousness of identity. This condition is characterized by the experience of the self, in Lukács's words, as "kaleidoscopic and changeable," as "nefarious and evasive." The fantasy of time travel is one manifestation of the desire to go home, to recreate our origins. This desire to recreate our origins, this transcendental homelessness is a symptom of the postmodern skepticism towards origin myths, and reveals our ambivalence towards the dissolution of these grand narratives. It reveals the chaotic and contradictory desires of the postmodern, split subject. The New Age desire to be a time traveller, expressed in the phenomena of astral projection, and "harmonic convergence," is representative of nostalgia without irony, the part of the postmodern subject caught in the abyss that yearns for the sacred, the absolute, the community and the totality.

The fantasy of the time traveller as played out in the yearning to recreate our origins is integrally related to the tenuousness of identity in a contemporary context. The West has constructed nature, the Third World, women, primates, aboriginals and Others as the site of the "primitive" in an attempt to reconstruct our "past" in order to come to terms with our "present." What gets coded as primitive becomes articulated in a self-sustaining set of binary opposites that became central to consolidating the Western sense of self and Other. The primitive becomes a repository for the fears

and desires of the Western subject: it is nature to our culture, the field of the unrepressed to our "disciplined" society. Hence the time traveller represents the fantasy of the Archimedean point, the God's eye view; this traveller is the historian who accurately captures our "essence" through "re-reading" our past.

Even more, this phantastic figure, the time traveller, is perhaps the New Age revolutionary subject. The New Age time traveller is an expression of the desire for transformation, for a "break with history," since this time traveller can "re-read" the past and forecast the future. The New Age manifesto at its most extreme is a call to join in "harmonic convergence." This transformation, however, has no real vanguard, no concept of species-being, no theory of alienation (beyond the Garden of Eden myth that we were corrupted by civilization). The New Age vision of transformation, at least in the phenomenon of harmonic convergence, thus is both despatialized and detemporalized. We are to "explode in an ecstasy of light and sound" in another dimension when we have reached a sufficient degree of "spiritual elevation." The more moderate, and perhaps, comprehensible, expression of the New Age world view is encapsulated in the slogans "think globally, act locally," "one people, one planet," and other phrases which advocate an organicist, holistic philosophy evoking images of harmony, integration, balance. The New Age manifesto reads like a "final solution" which seeks to impose order, unity and purity on a chaotic, disorderly world.

This desire to impose order on the social can be seen as our response to the problem of difference. Entrapped in binary logic, we posit the Other as something which we can either consume or consummate with, annihilate or merge with, repudiate or identify with, devalue or idealize. The boundary between self and Other is experienced as intolerable; we must either forcibly erase all vestiges of the Other's existence or construct an ideological fantasy that the Other is really us in disguise. In new right movements such as neo-Nazism and the Heritage Front, the "primitive" is formulated as the Other, the object which is devalued; the Other must be annihilated in order to consolidate the identity of the subject. In New Age, however, the Other becomes idealized. The new right is caught at the moment of the dialectic in which the Other, for instance what is coded as the "primitive," must be consumed or annihilated to ensure self-certainty, and to consolidate the self/Other boundary, whereas the New Age is arrested at the moment of "consummation" with the so-called "primitive," where the self tries to recognize itself in the Other through a dissolution of the self/Other boundary. Insofar as the New Age movement articulates what some would call an essentialized version of nature, woman, native Celt, oriental, and Others with which it identifies and seeks to discover in the self, it presents one alternative to dealing with the subject/object gap that, ultimately,

advocates a denial of difference. In effect, such formulations, which are positioned in political rhetoric as vehemently opposed to the new right, ironically replicate its annihilation of difference and its lack of concern for the Other through merging with the Other. For instance, the New Age is motivated by an impetus to find ourselves through identification with the "goddess," the "shaman," the Celt, the masculine "Iron John," the "aboriginal," the "primitive," animals, crystals, etc. as ways of reclaiming our own natures, positing these figures as "selves" that we have lost but can regain. These figure as extensions of the self, to prop up the identity of the Western subject and to patch the gaps of the exhausted narratives of the Western subject.

The New Age, then, can be seen as a "symptom" of postmodernity. In order to avoid dealing with the messiness of multiplicity and of polyvocality, the New Age deals with difference by trying to eradicate it. However, the idealization of the primitive in the New Age, in its most generous moments, is symptomatic of an "anthropological nostalgia," a mourning for what we have "lost" and, in a sense, an attempt at reconciliation with others that have been hurt by colonialism and industrialization. The fantasy behind the movement, however naive and ideological, is to make reparation with those we have wronged by giving them an exalted, purified status. The figure of the primitive in the New Age is an apology for the past.

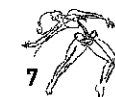
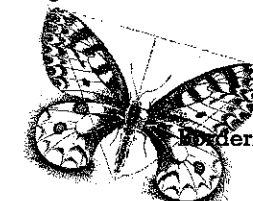
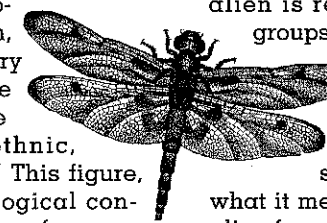
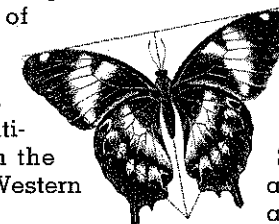
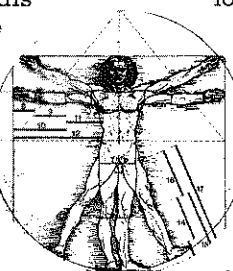
Similarly the New Age figure of the alien is a repository for our hopes for the future and an expression of our desire for a postcolonial imaginary. The figure of the alien, both in the New Age and contemporary science fiction, reveals the intense ambivalence we have toward the unknown, the future, as well as ethnic, racial, sexual and other "differences." This figure, however, is more than just an ideological construction, for it represents the fantasy of a non-exploitive relationship between two disparate and even technologically unequal cultures. New Age narratives of "friendly" contact with extraterrestrials share the same spirit as that which is behind our current theorizations of "postcolonialism" and behind current attempts to formulate representations of and material relations with Third World cultures which do not resort to "primitivisms," "orientalisms," or other oppressive tendencies that have characterized First World-Third World relationships in the past. A simple critique of the alien as "ideological" overlooks the extent to which the fantasy of alien contact is representative of a new postcolonial imaginary.

Since the alien represents the "most Other of the Others" that we know nothing about, the characterization of this figure can tell us a great deal about

how we view difference. For instance, in popular science fiction, aliens are often portrayed as terrifying, hostile and threatening. In New Age, however, the alien is benign, friendly and helpful. Many New Age gurus profess to be able to "trance channel" alien entities who are helpful, beneficent, kind. New Age literature is littered with references to "transeekers" and other alien entities which offer simple folk wisdom and platitudes.

A recent Caramilk commercial is an example of how the New Age tendency to transform the strange into the everyday has influenced popular culture and advertising. Here the Pyramids, Stonehenge and other "unexplained natural wonders" are explained as being merely a good-natured but colossal joke on the part of the superior alien entities that created them merely to have "a bit of fun." This theme is also apparent in the Reece's Peanut Butter Cups ad which presents circles left in wheat fields in England as merely alien attempts at perfecting this "mysterious" confection. Both of these examples reveal the New Age desire to minimize the threatening, unknowable aspects of the alien by denying the alien's "alienness," making this Otherness appear in the realm of the explicable, mundane, and in fact, consumable everyday. They show how the New Age incorporation of the alien into the everyday has been a recent and undeniably popular marketing strategy that has infiltrated mainstream advertising. The appeal of this strategy of anthropomorphising the alien resides in its capacity to alleviate anxiety regarding difference by domesticating it: if the alien is really human, perhaps different ethnic groups and races, perhaps men and women, are also really the "same."

Furthermore, the fantasy of the alien also tells us about our relationship to difference since it is about the fantasy of community and the struggle with what it means to be human. The significance of the alien for us lies in its gaze: we imagine it imagining us as a singular species, as a "whole" community of "humans," as an object of desire. From the alien's point of view, we are a common species; we have common identifiable characteristics, and we are basically "good." The popularity of this alien point of view can be seen in *Star Trek* and *Terminator 2*; to both Lieutenant Commander Data and the "good" Terminator, we as humans are an object of desire, of perfection, something they would like to understand and implicitly to become. Data, for instance, tries to learn to paint, to dream, to tell jokes, all in an attempt to become more human. The Terminator tries to find out why we cry, why we don't like to kill people (!). Thus aliens or, in this particular example, androids/cyborgs, allow us to imagine ourselves as an idealized imago; in these versions, we are good, compassionate, and ethical.



However, the point I am trying to make is not that these aliens reveal the assurance with which we believe we are "good," or that we are a "global" community, but rather, our profound fear that we are not. In the context of global conflict, imagining the alien imagining us enables us to constitute ourselves as a community, for, from the vantage point of the alien, we are a community, a "global village"—the alien does not see our "difference." It is from the point of view of the alien that we can conjure up Earth Day slogans such as "one people, one planet," alongside the satellite/alien view of the planet earth. Ecologism is not, then, a human or even an "earthly" imaginary; it is rather an alien imaginary. The figure of the alien reveals the desperation with which we are trying to revive various discredited narratives: the human as essentially "good" and the global community as essentially unified. In a postmodern era, we cannot believe in these narratives ourselves, so we let the alien believe them for us.

The New Age, like several left and feminist theorizations of community, ultimately subscribes to a closure of the gap between subject and object, and articulates difference as something that has to be overcome. For instance, Dorothy Allison, in a collection of articles edited by Doris Young, proposes an ideal feminist community as characterized by a "shared feeling of merging and belonging," with an "ecstatic sense of oneness." In the same collection, Isaac Balbus represents the goal of radical politics and the establishment of community as overcoming the "Otherness" of the Other in reciprocal recognition. This is not to say that all attempts to achieve a recognition of collective interests should be abandoned, but rather, that such formulations must take account of the inevitable antagonism of the social, the impossibility of "fixing" difference, the contingent character of identity and, in particular, of the fragmented, multiple and conflicting desires of the subject. Any theory of community that denies difference is doomed to failure. Thus the challenge for radical politics is how to formulate a version of community that stops short of consummating with the Other. The problem, in Hegel's terms, is how to cancel the opposition but preserve the difference.

In turning to the crystal, it is interesting how the New Age posits nature as an Other, which again, becomes a repository for the fears and desires of the New Age subject in response to an antagonistic Social, an antagonism which the New Age tries to overcome by annihilating the gulf between the "human" and the "natural." The insistence on the healing powers of rocks and crystals represents an insistence that both animate and inanimate natural actors are a part of our community, and that nature, like the primitive, becomes the source of purity,

beauty, happiness and harmony in response to the corrupting influence of "culture" and of technology. Nature, like the primitive, is formulated, in terms of origin myths, as an original "unity" which we lost, a "state" from which we became separate. The New Age configures nature as oppositional to culture, to technology and as a "force" within ourselves struggling against the "alienating," frequently dehumanizing, effects of culture. Thus the New Age buys into the same set of dualisms as scientific rationality, but views nature as an extension of ourselves rather than as an expendable resource. Scientific rationality has been predicated on the construction and systematic domination of nature, on a construction of "nature" that is dependent on a set of mutually sustaining binary dualisms between male/female, nature/culture, civilized/primitive. Whereas the legitimacy of the fundamental premises of Enlightenment rationality rests on the subordination of the latter set of signifiers, the New Age has responded by an elevation of the female/natural/primitive. Nonetheless, the New Age approach still serves to perpetuate the logic of enlightenment rationality through a simple inversion which is still driven by binary logic.

The crystal operates as a symbol of continuity, both across time and across space, since it reminds us of our connectedness to Others, our community. Ironically, however, these objects serve to act as stand-ins for real relations with the Other — they come to mediate relations between individuals. For instance, in some versions of the New Age, "attunement" with nature or natural symbols (such as the crystal) takes precedence over human relations. In this version of the New Age, some crystals are called healers and openers, others are conditioners and cleaners. This association with qualities we commonly ascribe to hair products draws out the New Age emphasis on "cleaning," "clearing away of debris," a theme that is frequently used with reference to the "self help elements of the New Age" that I call psychic cleaning. Such antiseptic, sterile metaphors the New Age relies on are reminiscent of the emphasis on purity and unity in the Nazi "final solution."

The fantasy of the coherent, unified essentialized subject is also clearly symbolized by the "aura," a metaphor for the desire for a protective shield, for clearly identifiable boundaries between self and Other, which some New Age practitioners claim to be able to identify visually or photographically. To Jean Baudrillard, this desire for a protective shield is a symptom of "schizophrenic" society, against "a state of terror which is characteristic of the schizophrenic, an over-proximity of all things, a foul promiscuity of all things which beleaguer and penetrate him, meeting with no resistance and no

halo, no aura, not even the aura of his own body protects him."

Furthermore, the symbol of the aura reveals more than just a desire for a protective shield, it represents the fantasy of the unity, the opacity of the subject, a subject that recent psychoanalytic literature has called into question. In effect, the image of the aura is an example of the desire to annihilate the Other in the self. The New Age subject's desire, then, is to become fully comprehensible to itself, for once the subject is "read" through aura readings, astrological readings, etc., unconscious and conflicting desires, multi-layered meanings, ambiguities, all conveniently dissolve into one description, one reading which reorders them. The split subject is superimposed with a "reading" which "organizes her actions, behaviours and gestures into a unifying framework which explains "them." Thus the chaotic unconscious, contradictory conflicting desires, aspects of the subject that are inaccessible, incomprehensible, ambiguous, or in other words, the parts of the self that we designate as Other, are annihilated.

The phenomenon of the aura on one hand reveals the fantasy of the opacity of the social, the desire for unmediated intersubjectivity, unobscured by language, social location, or cultural specificity. On the other hand, aura readings stress individual interpretation and the active participation of the subject in inserting him/herself into the "reading." In a sense, aura, horoscope, palmistry, tarot card and other such "readings" can be seen as merely an enactment of the analytic situation in which the subject can be seen as exhibiting an openness to the social, since s/he is opening him/herself up to the influence of Other. This Other in the New Age is sometimes a "radical" Other, since aura readings are frequently "channeled" through "spirits" or "aliens." Other aspects in the New Age, such as past life regression, hypnosis, lessons on trance channelling and automatic writing, encourage the subject to develop an openness to the Other in the self. In these technologies, aspects of the self that are conflicting, desires that are contradictory and ambivalent, are acknowledged by actually attributing them to a "past life," a "spirit," a doppelgänger. In a convoluted way, then, the New Age perhaps can be read as more acutely aware of the conflicting desires of the divided subject than conventional analysis, since it actually literalizes the notion of the Other in the self. For instance, trance channelling "other entities" or "past lives" as well as the New Age therapeutic move of "speaking to the inner child" can be read as literalizing the postmodern notion of the multiple subject.

The New Age incapacity to deal with difference, to tolerate "openness," antagonism, ambivalence and so on is a part of the Enlightenment tradition from which we have emerged. This intolerance, this

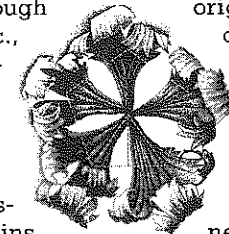
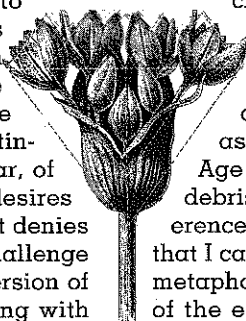
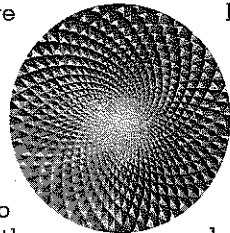
anxiety towards openness, this desire for a suturing of the social, that appears in exaggerated form in the New Age is perhaps the "return of the repressed" of modernism. The primal father, the fully self-conscious subject, who emerged from a sutured and self-defined society, has been slain, but returns to haunt his homeland as the spectre of the New Age imaginary, because he does not know he is dead. Insofar as the left is the progeny of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and other discourses that originally posited an undifferentiated unity out of which difference has emerged, this spectre could haunt the political left as well, unless we become more honest about our own investment in "origin myths." We are, in a sense, caught between the modern and the postmodern: perhaps postmodern theory posits an openness that real humans cannot (yet) accept.

Thus, any reconstructive project of the left, any version of postmodern politics, must become more self-conscious of how its subjects simultaneously fear and desire the dissolution of grand narratives. Lukács captures this ambivalence in his claim that we are both "secular, but yearning for the sacred, ironic but yearning for the absolute, individualistic, but yearning for the wholeness of community, asking questions but receiving no answers, fragmented but yearning for imminent totality."

Carmen Kuhling is a doctoral student in Sociology at York University.

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# Call for Submissions

Issue #34/35 of *Border/Lines* (our tenth anniversary issue) will explore the emergence in the past few years both of religious fundamentalism and of ethnic purity, particularly in Asia, Europe and Africa. The situation in the former Yugoslavia, the rise of Zhirinovskiy in Russia, the Hindu fundamentalists in India, the religious/ethnic confrontations in Nigeria and South Africa are all indications of responses to what Western social theorists like to call globalization. *Border/Lines* would like to examine the issues as imaginatively and critically as possible, in articles, stories, poems and images. The editors for this special issue are Himani Bannerji, Ioan Davies and Ato Sekyere-Otu. Please submit material by June 1, 1994 to the *Border/Lines* editorial office. Please feel free to contact us at 416-360-5249.

## Guidelines for contributors

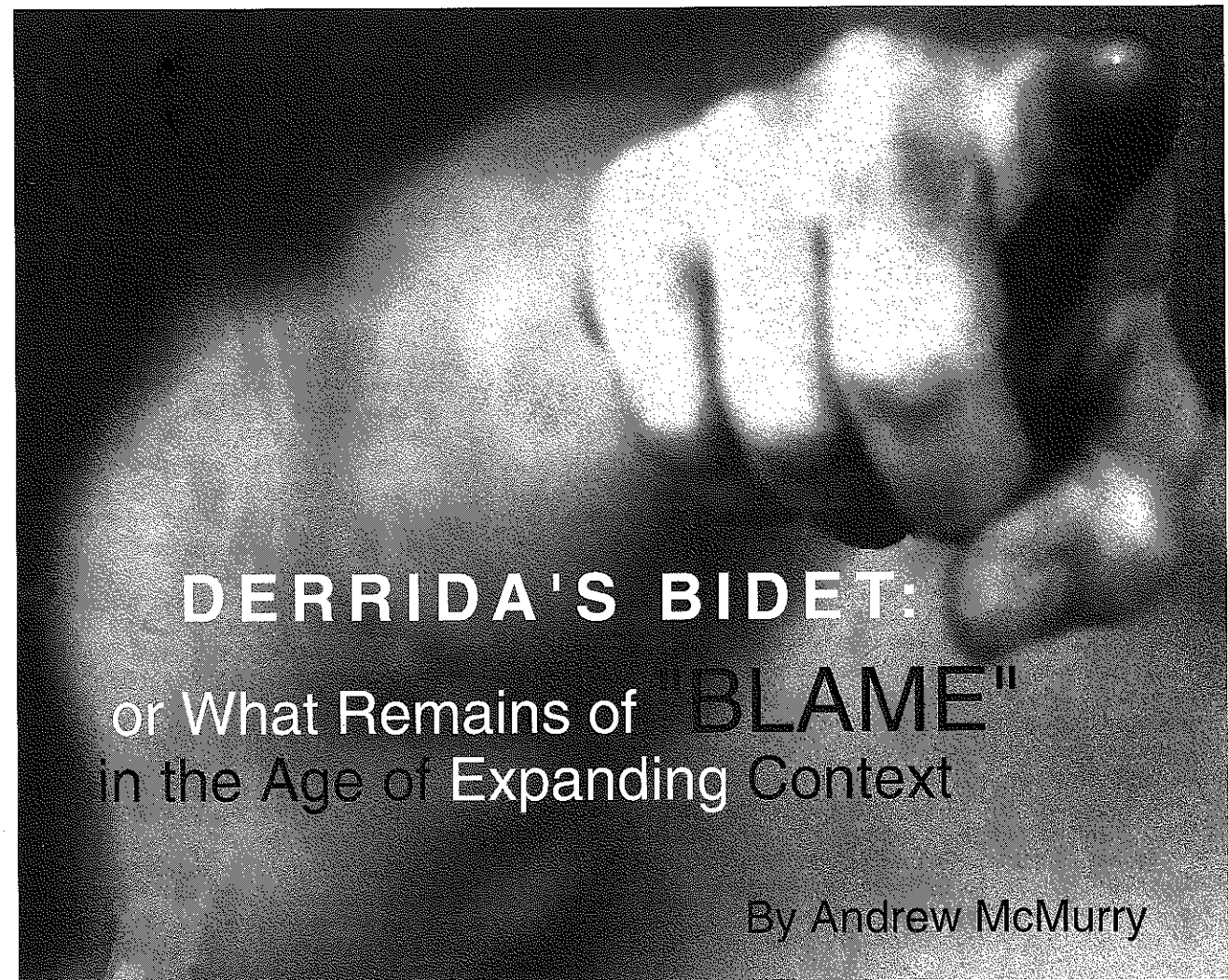
*Border/Lines* is an interdisciplinary magazine committed to exploring all aspects of culture—including popular culture, fine arts, visual arts, gender, literature, multi-culturalism, mass communications and political culture. Although its geographic focus is Canada, this is taken as meaning anything 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.

*Border/Lines* also publishes the *Rampike Literary Supplement* (2X a year) which features innovative art, poetry, fiction and "unclassified genres." Submissions should be addressed to Karl Jirgens.

**We welcome new writers.** Manuscripts should be sent to our editorial address. All correspondence should be accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped return envelope. If your manuscript is on disc please send us the disc (MAC format is preferred).

**Visuals:** Writers are encouraged to send illustrative work with their manuscript. Visual artists are encouraged to submit work. Please carefully consider the reproductive qualities of your submissions, as well as the page proportions of the magazine. Captions, photo credits and return address should be included. Final design decisions rest with the collective.



## DERRIDA'S BIDET: or What Remains of "BLAME" in the Age of Expanding Context

By Andrew McMurry

### Spill Doctors?

Captain Hazelwood had put back a few beers, so naturally he thought he'd have a little lie-down. The ship had made this passage many times, and with Alfred E. Newmanian confidence, Cappy took to his bunk.

The rest is history, or what passes for it. When the oil settled, Hazelwood had taken some heat, EXXON had acted suitably remorseful, the sea-otters in Prince William Sound had died of hypothermia. Rocks were subsequently scrubbed. Valuable lessons about arctic oil spill dynamics were learned, America's dangerous dependence on oil was highlighted, and the gross-national product went up as a result of the money shelled out for "clean-up."

In the Age of Expanding Context, however, things can never be entirely cleaned up. True, the waves, the

wind and the slickered, hose-wielding personnel dispersed the crude, busted up the floating puddle of oil as in a shaken jar of salad dressing: they made it go away. And in the same manner, the emotions the collective "we" felt about EXXON, Hazelwood or our own dirty little oil habit would be dispersed by the winds of an oil imbroglio in another Gulf, the thunderous breaking of the communist wave, the Blue Jays winning a pennant, etc. But a lingering sense of dread remained that the EXXON *Valdez* grounding symbolized more than cavalier treatment of the natural environment. Just as the toxic oil residues in the Alaskan ocean sediments wait to precipitate a slower, deadlier crisis, so do the event's symbolic effluvia taint the cultural domain by some vague, submerged process.

As pictures of oily birds shivering in the Arctic wilderness were juxtaposed with oily EXXON officials brazenly attempting media spin control, an angry public cried out for accountability. *Who was at fault? What fiends were behind this?* Yet the anger gradually sput-

tered and subsided into mere undirected frustration when it became more and more clear there was to be no one to blame at all.

And this remains perhaps the most haunting revelation to emerge from the EXXON Valdez disaster: there is no longer anyone to blame for such events because their contexts, like the events themselves, have become too complex to define, let alone control. The contexts in which events occur have become illimitable—resulting in *decontextualization*, a condition wherein blame finds its rest point nowhere and everywhere. To put it simply, those who appear most directly negligent are merely iconic of the greater negligence of our entire planetary culture. In effect, we must all share in the blame, for no one is really blameworthy at all. Blame, like so much else, is going global, and rendering the localized conditions under which responsibility was normally assumed, quite simply, irrelevant. The conclusion: "Blame" becomes a noun without referent.

### In Defense of Slick Willie

It has become a truism that we no longer live in a Newtonian universe, where effects were linked explicitly with causes and could be sorted, theoretically, with a certain degree of confidence. Major events still happen—disasters, assassinations, political and social scandals, environmental catastrophes, wars—but causes and effects appear as intensities, pulsations, waves and radiation: they do not coalesce into discrete, identifiable elements.

"Taking responsibility" may once have entailed a reluctant embrace of such discrete elements, like a ship loading a dangerous cargo. But perversely, in its death throes responsibility has become a quantity that, like water, seeks its own level; it settles on those who don't have the wherewithal to deflect it further along the networks of power. The blame game becomes structurally identical to musical chairs, and those with the slowest reaction time lose, punished for the perniciousness of the game itself.

The growing zeitgeist of unaccountability finds expression in Homer Simpson's aphoristic "I'm not to blame;" it is encoded in the techno-establishment's centrifugal apologetics for absolute failure, most famously in the agentless phrase "mistakes were made." Gone now is the bold MacArthuresque "I shall return;" instead we have bland Bushisms, such as "I was out of the loop." The motto of the

politicians of this unheroic age is not Truman's "The buck stops here" but rather a non-committal "Shit happens."

Well indeed it does, as it always has. Politicians have never wanted to face the music, yet never has it been so disconcertingly clear that they really shouldn't have to. A case in point: Americans continue to focus their anger at the president, the one figure who above all others must take responsibility. They think themselves cheated, however, when each president seems slicker and less substantial than the last. Such aggrievedness is absurd. Executive responsibility and the gravitas that accompanies are shed proportionately with the attenuation of the power of the presidency, which reaches new lows with each passing year. The metaphor of the "ship of state" with president as "captain" should be scuttled. Clinton, for all that has been laid at his feet like a bag of garbage, has been able at this point to do precisely nothing: the major issues confronting him—"Bosnia," "the deficit," "gays in the military"—are all impossible contexts into which he has plummeted, like a balloonist set down on a nude beach.

He can do little but keep his gaze high and pretend he meant to land there. When all is said and done, however, capricious weather, bad charts, a loss of hot air, and so on, brought him hither. His actual control over the "winds of change" is minimal, and for the electorate to blame him for his failures by one-terming him would be mere petulance. And elections—supposedly the ultimate determinations of executive responsibility—are simply referenda on advertising campaigns anyway.

So despite the charges of cowardice, butt-saving, and amorality levied at those who resist or shift the assumption of responsibility, the types of deferrals, disownings, and delinkages described here are not necessarily *bad* or *wrong*. On the contrary, the refusal to be held accountable and the concomitant de-shouldering of responsibility are theoretically defensible positions, and indeed obey an inexorable logic. Words like *accountability*, *responsibility*, *liability* and *blame* no longer work. Their catachresis is an adducible correlation of a number of trends of modernity: the revelations of sciences such as ecology and physics; the structural logic of late-capitalism; the erosion of the "subject" as the central locus of thought and action; and the rise of the signifier and the disappearance of transcendent reference points.

### Ecology

John Muir said, "when we try to pick out something, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." "Everything is connected to everything else": so says a New Age maxim. "Interconnectedness" [sic] has become the new buzz-word in every field from computer science to environmental spirituality. Paradigmatically, a billiard-ball universe is junked in favor of the mushiness of relativity, particle/wave dualities, strange attractors.

In biological terms, the "food chain" has been replaced by the "food web." A food chain was a barely ecological notion, but it did allow some recognition of the important links between components of a particular ecosystem. In a food chain, energy passes linearly through the links in the system and any break in the chain could spell disaster for all components. A hypothetical example: the fox ate the mice ate the grasshopper ate the grain; all those higher up in the chain suffered when the wheat crop was destroyed by wheat rust.

Now, by contrast, in the food web model the energy fluxes associated with ecological change arise and disperse multidirectionally, often without easily discernable origins or ends. A number of events occur when the wheat rust enters the area: grasshoppers migrate to better feeding grounds; mouse population declines; rabbit population increases; hawks benefit from the rabbit explosion; snakes increase as hawks switch to preferred food; the wheat field is returned to fallow allowing recrudescence of native plants; foxes go hungry and their litters are smaller; and so on, in uncounted directions. Although the wheat rust appears to be the identifiable catalyst of change in both cases, only the web model illustrates adequately the ramifying, resonating, cybernetic nature of ecological revolution. On the other hand, the determination of cause and effect becomes more troublesome in the food web model. As in the food chain model, we might try to "blame" the wheat rust for the fox decline, but it is not clear that the rust initiated the decline, nor even that a fox decline is necessarily a bad thing. It may instead be a restoration of a previous balance. Other species have increased. And we should not forget that the wheat is an introduced plant to begin with, and thus the pre-rust balance was itself artificial.

The very sophistication of the ecological paradigm thus results in a more sophisticated and nuanced ver-

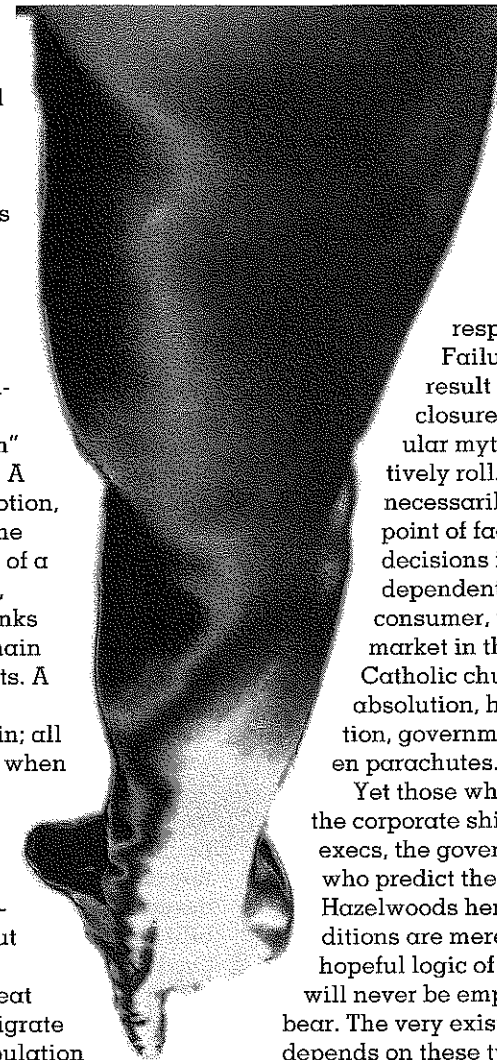
sion of reality. In terms of our discussion, context makes possible blame, but it is context itself that is now in question. "Your wheat field is responsible for the raid on my hen-house" becomes a tough charge to make stick.

### Economy

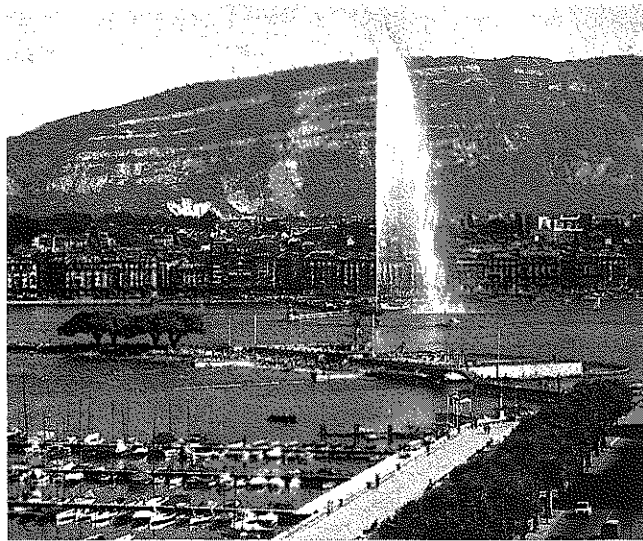
In business, decisions are made in response to changing market conditions. Failure to understand the market can result in bankruptcy, loss of profits, plant closure. When a bad decision is made, popular mythology has it that heads will figuratively roll. But even in business pain does not necessarily inhere in the primary parties. In point of fact, the real hurt stemming from bad decisions is shifted to workers, communities, dependent industries, or more generally, the consumer, whose choices *en masse* shaped the market in the first place. The system, like the Catholic church, is rigged to provide sinners absolution, here in the form of Chapter 11 protection, government bailouts, tax write-offs, and golden parachutes.

Yet those whose blunders most immediately put the corporate ship on the rocks—the shareholders, the execs, the government bureaucracies, the economists who predict the market trends—are the Captain Hazelwoods here; for their responses to market conditions are merely programmatic, and follow the hopeful logic of the alcoholic who believes the bottle will never be empty nor the hangover too painful to bear. The very existence of capitalist economies depends on these two linked idealities of inexhaustible resources and insatiable consumption. If there is a problem with those assumptions, how can the people whose livelihoods must presuppose their correctness be blamed? Thus, in economic terms, responsibility is automatically ceded to the market. It is the market that ultimately must take responsibility for the messes it creates. Yet what is the market? It is the perfect scapegoat, since it is composed of everyone and everything and therefore appears an impersonal, inescapable force, like the weather. (And even in the confused aftermath of a hurricane or flood, "I blame the weather" is perhaps the most vacuous statement one could make.)

Let us consider the situation in more detail. Liberals decry the conventional wisdom that the S&L frauds and other related financial debacles are attributable to an amorphous "greedy 80s culture"—which thereby implicates everyone who lived through the decade equally instead of those most directly involved. Yet even "those most directly involved"—Reagan, Neil Bush, congress, Wall Street, land developers, speculators—have attained in some parts the status of tragic heroes, and







rightly so, for their ability to profit was sanctioned by a complicitous public long enamoured with the possibility of unlimited wealth creation.

So the failure to alchemize silk purses from sows' ears does not mean therefore that the magic doesn't exist, but that fallible magicians botched their spells. Mistakes were made. Americans have internalized the rules of the capitalist shell-game, and they believe that anyone and everyone can attain the status of millionaires. Unlike in the Philippines, the American Marcoses receive social sanction for their accumulations. If they "work hard and play by the rules," the sky's the limit; and if they appear to have gone astray, it is ultimately because the system didn't correct their excesses, the system is at fault, the system must be adjusted, perhaps capital gains taxes should be lowered. But the system is us. In a crypto-Calvinist context like this, how can any one individual be damned for greediness?

Thus, culpability for the tremendously expensive S&L bailout is dispersed outward from Washington and urban financial zones into the hinterlands, even to future generations. Pious commands to "stop the finger-pointing" and "take the medicine" resound; "belt-tightening" becomes the clarion-call; "we" must "share the burden" say the Wall Street clergy—i.e., we must all share in the atonement for the sin. In the understandable but theoretically indefensible resistance to this kind of group flagellation, small wonder that a Texas tycoon made rich at the public trough can act as a born-again populist messiah for the presumptuously guiltless Great Unwashed.

Responsibility for the EXXON Valdez disaster is similarly and correctly devolved onto the head of an energy-hungry everyman. It is his collective fault that eco-insensitive pipelines must be built, that wars must be fought to provide him with oil; for in the age of expanding context the producers and purveyors of oil and their apologists and benefactors in governments act solely in the service of the all-powerful consumer. Democracy of

the wallet. The collapse of the nuclear power industry, the clean-up of toxic waste, the retraining of primary industry workers: all of the social and economic costs incurred to repair these spectacular failures of the industrial mentality—instances where people suffer for being in the wrong place at the wrong time—might be viewed alternatively not as the price of progress but as part of a national strategy to expiate sin through the dilution of blame. Shit happens, and in the absence of isolable guilty parties we must all take the fall.

## Subjectivity

And this is now the diffused condition of blame in our webbed culture. Bad things still happen to good people, but it is useless to try to determine beyond all doubt who should be hung. Felony, capital crime, rape should be easy to define; yet even when murder most foul is caught out, the murderer is almost by definition insane, or at least exhibiting the conditioned responses of bad childhood and negative environment. Criminal psychologists argue convincingly that offenders are simply the inevitable products of an unforgiving classist, racist, sexist society. Society is a total system from which the criminal's motivation (or lack of it) only appears to arise spontaneously. Society therefore must be held ultimately responsible for its criminal excrescences.

Of course we still maintain codes and standards by which to adjudicate responsibility, and there is no question the law does pronounce guilt and innocence. All of this anachronistic legal inertia does much to assuage the societal conscience but little to halt the unassignability of blame, as most forward-thinking jurists realize. On the other hand, part of the conservative right's agenda is to damn the liberal penchant to place blame squarely on all but the accused. Yet the right's nostalgia for stocks and gallows only reminds us of the theoretical poverty of their position. Far from building more prisons and increasing executions, we ought to call for a therapized future in which malefactors are seen and medically treated for what they are: burst pustules on a filthy body politic.

## Textuality

A final theoretical matrix for this phenomenon of unaccountability draws upon the post-structuralist dictum that "il n'y a pas d'hors texte" (which Jacques Derrida says is the same as saying "there is nothing outside of context"). This means, in effect, that every spice in the kitchen went into the soup. There is no simple way to isolate the taste since the melange depends for its flavour on each component. You may say it is too salty, but you thereby ignore the extent to which pepper informs it, and you certainly have minimized the complexity added by the pinch of dill. Have another spoonful before you pass judgment on the recipe. And then another. And still another.

This expanding contextualization presumably would

be halted by some sort of reasonable "reining-in." In mere gourmanderie it is (e.g. "But I don't like it!"). Elsewhere, however, the reining-in becomes progressively more difficult because the expansion is governed by the postmodern flight of meaning itself. In what context, so the logic goes, is the delineation of context to be made? When and where do we decide to interrupt the ripple-effect of dilating frames of reference, and in whose name? With the Valdez, the sequential blaming of Hazelwood-EXXON-oil demand at first seems governed by a mechanistic penchant for first causes; but when blame cannot find a clear focus, it will not settle on anyone at all, and the very notion of responsibility, unlike heavy crude, evaporates. Culpability is ceded then to the too many actors, to the techno-socio-historical conditions, to the nature of reality itself. Even EXXON can credibly appeal for exoneration, as it recently has, because the initial settlement merely proved that, given the legal climate, culpability follows the money.

## Whither Blame?

So what can we expect when it becomes theoretically incorrect to say "mea culpa"? As has been suggested, one highlight will be the growing reactionary consensus for punishment of the body as if in sacrificial retaliation for the flight of sin. A return to Foucault's favorite century seems in the offing, when the brutalized flesh paid for the weakness of the spirit. Only this time, the body is mere scapegoat: electrocuted, gassed, injected, testicles removed—in ritual response to the social palate's nostalgic taste for blame. (This is all presaged by the cinema, where excessive violence against bad guys is deemed morally instructive—whence the general tolerance, for example, of Clint Eastwood revenge flicks.) We will soon see the day when young ghetto-felons are tried as "drug-pins," sent to the chair for passing cocaine through the narcotics pipelines of South Chicago, East L.A., as well as upper Manhattan and the Hamptons. As the most visible manifestation of the U.S. drug culture, such youths will be bled to pay for the sins of an entire nation hooked on various forms of escapism.

We can also predict that blame, despite its practical disappearance, will continue to be theorized. Derrida, for example, knows better than anyone that the text-view of the world creates linkages between wildly disparate elements, heaps context on context, and makes meaning—read "blaming"—undecidable. But to him, this does not mean that blame cannot be pronounced, only that the attempt to fix blame is always political, i.e., that blame can arise only in a context and entails certain responsibilities for the blamer.

One useful tactic, then, for those who wish to avoid being targets of blame in our incipient reactionary culture will be to recontextualize blame so that it instead adheres to those who persist in blaming. People who blame generally do so according to principles they think

are actually beyond praise and blame. But, mutatis mutandis, such folk themselves become vulnerable to blame because blaming is in essence a totalitarian act. A blamer wishes to shut down the play of signification and the consideration of other contexts. Also, and significantly, to cry "J'accuse" is to distance oneself from the structure of responsibility: by blaming others one attempts to exempt oneself from blame.

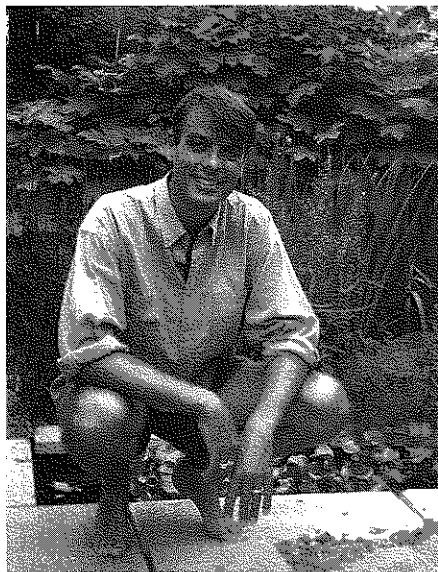
On the contrary, one should attempt to be so responsible to the contexts of "responsibility" that one may risk appearing irresponsible. For example, when Derrida considers the Paul de Man affair, to those who accuse the latter of never taking responsibility for his anti-semitic wartime writings and the former of irresponsibility in defending him, Derrida can say that those who are most irresponsible are the critics who will not do the work of deconstructive reading, who do not read de Man—and Derrida himself—with enough attentiveness. These critics, say Derrida, without sufficient rigour or self-consciousness, seek to assert blame in the most totalitarian manner, to bring the discussion to rest without probing the limits of de Man's discourse—as well as the limits of language itself and their own necessary implication therein. In effect, they do not wish to be fully responsible for their charges of irresponsibility.

Derrida, on the other hand, the defender of the accused, cannot be considered irresponsible because he keeps open the possibility of mitigating contexts. He wishes to trace down every linguistic lead, tease apart every abstraction, place de Man's words in context after context. To some this seems like obfuscation, post-structuralist bullshit. But at bottom, Derrida remains untouched by the apparent odiousness of his defense because by multiplying contexts for de Man's obviously execrable writings Derrida simultaneously purifies his own discourse—by demonstrating time and again the impossibility of reading and thus of making blame stick. And by castigating his critics' unwillingness to consider the implications of their own accusations, Derrida is able to shift the charge of irresponsibility to them. As the old joke goes, the bear asks the rabbit if shit sticks to his fur; the answer being no, the bear wipes himself with the rabbit.

To conclude, then, it seems that when the concept of "blame" at last reaches the end of its tether and vanishes into the ether of non sequitur, the most "responsible" thing to do will be to speak up vociferously for the negative responsibility of others—and pray that when the time comes they'll do the same for you. This way everyone's ass will stay clean.

Andrew McMurry is a graduate student of English at Indiana University, Bloomington.

# Alex Wilson



photos: Alex's garden by Rosemary Donegan, Alex by Stephen Andrews

**Obituary: Alex Wilson**  
by Jody Berland, Rosemary Donegan, Peter Fitting

Alexander Wilson died on October 26, 1993, after a lengthy illness. He was 40. How to communicate the devastation of that illness, that death? No one loved life more generously, or gave more of the gifts of beauty, spirit, and language. His death was an enormous loss. Yet he left us each feeling thankful for what he gave us. Those who knew and loved him will struggle with that poignant equation for as long as we live with his memory, for as long as we live.

Alex moved to Toronto from the U.S. in 1976, and lived here until his death. He was a founding editor of *Border/Lines*, and during the early years, from 1983 when we first met to plan the magazine, to 1988 when he departed for India, he was the editorial collective's heart and lungs. He brought balance, grace and intelligence to its deliberations, while ensuring the magazine's practical survival. He read and edited manuscripts, wrote letters to neglected correspondents, prepared agendas for collective meetings, found and negotiated with printers, held meetings in his garage-studio-kitchen-bedroom-living room on de Grassi Street (where he also prepared wonderful meals), and otherwise cared for the diverse material needs of production. His particular talent for giving at both levels, the intellectual and the practical, taught us something about their deeper connections, with all their worldly and spiritual truths. Alex was a curious, open-minded, yet deeply committed thinker, determined to create a hospitable space for critical exploration and a diversity of voices. He was also a nurturer with a practical mind and practical hands, a sensitive gardener of words and pages as well as an artist of speaking landscapes.

Alex came to Canada to attend the University of Toronto as a graduate student in English. He quickly found a lively community of graduate students and professors, including Peter Fitting and Fred Jameson, who remained his lifelong friends. The University proved resistant to Alex's research plans, which centered on issues of sexuality and representation, and Alex left before completing his PhD. Alex then became the editor of the "Our Image" section of *Body Politics*, Toronto's Gay Weekly. Here Alex gathered together and inspired some important new voices: Sue Golding, Andy Fabo, Leo Casey, Martha Fleming and others worked with Alex in the late 1970s. They hoped to expand the field of gay identity politics to include cultural issues; they translated Foucault for *BP* readers, and more generally tried to broaden the mandate of gay activism to encompass representation and image politics. Other *BP* editors saw this interest in sex and representation, and in theory and everyday life, as antithetical to their human-rights oriented political agenda, and amidst controversy and debate, Alex was removed from his position in 1981. Subsequently Alex worked briefly with *Fuse*, co-editing a special issue in 1983 with Jody Berland and Rosemary Donegan. Soon after, with Alex, we joined Ioan Davies, Alan O'Connor and others to create *Border/Lines*, con-

ceived as a vehicle for moving across a number of powerful barriers: between culture and politics; between the academy and a vibrant non-academic urban intelligentsia; between critical commitment and a diversity of languages and voices.

In 1982 Alex began a brief tenure teaching part-time with the Cultural Studies Programme at Trent University. Alex was not in search of an academic career. By this time, his income came from gardening. But this experience was the catalyst for a new unification of Alex's concerns: ecology, culture, the socially constructed languages of nature, local restoration. He began to write and to create radio programs about cities and bicycles, about tourism and cars (*B/L* 11, 1989), and about the qualities and consequences of urban life. Alex loved nature, but he also loved cities; he loved looking at and thinking about architecture, parks, collective gardens, Toronto's ravines, all built landscapes coexisting with the hum of city life. His creative energies were turned to the cultivation of more harmonious people-nature relationships in urban contexts. He and his life and landscaping partner, Stephen Andrews, (later joined by a third partner, Kim Delaney) formed Garrison Creek Planting Co., and created many lovely and ecologically sophisticated gardens. His widely praised book, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*, was published in 1991. Two one-hour radio programs on restoration were broadcast in the 1992 *CBC Ideas* series. In these works Alex elaborated his understanding of human-nature relationships. He did not believe in a remote ideal of pristine, untouched nature, but rather advocated a more integrated and activist human-ecological community defined by ecological diversity and respect for local growth—

values that also shaped his journalism and cultural activism. Watching Alex work in a garden was (as many have commented) like reading his sentences. He worked with physical grace, deft skill, intuitive balance, and a deep appreciation for the beauty of the word and the world. Each had its own pace, its own rhythms and textures, smells and tastes, its own magic. His generosity, spiritual warmth and openness to pleasure infused his materials and touched everyone he knew. He faced a difficult death—before AIDS took his life, it took away his gardens and his language—with singular grace, calm and compassion. In his last months there was only the love of his friends and caretakers. That was, and remains, without end.

*"For all the promise restoration holds out, it's not a cure-all. ... Yet, I've come to think that the value of restoration lies in the chance it gives people to do hands-on work with natural systems and to learn about them. As we ponder the possibilities for life on this planet in the next century, restoration points the way toward a new natural philosophy, one that celebrates our relationship with the rest of nature. Its rituals -- collecting seed, tending plants, bringing life back to urban waterways -- hold out the possibility of what Aldo Leopold called 'a mutually beneficial relationship with the landscape,' a relationship that integrates technology, ecology and human livelihood in an expanded notion of community, a new idea of home."*

Alex Wilson  
"Restoring the Earth"  
*CBC Ideas*, March 1992.



## EXHIBITING BODIES: ARTICULATING HUMAN DISPLAYS

By JENNIFER FISHER

**Forms** of popular display, rather than being divorced from official museum culture, form a constituent part of what Tony Bennett has termed 'the exhibitionary complex.' This complex, Bennett points out, extends across a range of institutions including non-profit art, anthropological and science museums, as well as for-profit museums. Bennett's own study refers to the great world exhibitions of the nineteenth century. Considering exhibitions as vehicles for displaying power, he emphasizes the significance of an internalized surveillance function as the spectator becomes aware of his or her *integral* role in the exhibition. This form of intersubjective relation, he believes, functions to educate a citizenry by enlisting the public as subjects rather than objects. Taking a different tack on the question of intersubjectivity, I will describe how exhibitions which consist of encounters with live people, or replicas of human beings, both locate and destabilize conventional states of apprehension

The phenomenon of human spectacle, while unearthing the strange within the everyday, also profited from employing marginalized, and often disabled, human beings. While this sad history of exploitation must be acknowledged, my aim in considering sensate exhibitions is to contextualize later recuperations of agency through practices of self-exhibition. What is interesting to me is that exhibition rhetoric that incorporates people functions to produce a face-to-face encounter, which, to varying degrees, engages the spectator with a representation that 'looks back.' This situation raises not only the question of enunciative agency, but also impinges on the affectivities between bodies within the display context. Keeping in mind, then, the question of 'who speaks' and 'how,' I will identify the claiming and reclaiming of bodies across a range of historically specific sites of the 'exhibitionary complex'.

Madame Tussaud's wax-works, a popular medium during the French Revolution, illustrate and articulate power relations through corporeal display. Rather than a side-line

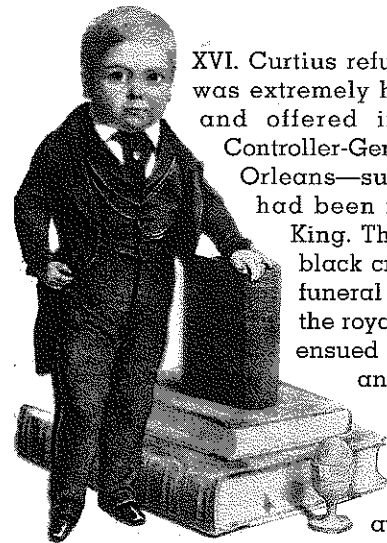
to official public culture, these commercial displays quite literally embodied key proprietary shifts of the turbulent political context.

Marie Grosholtz (later to become Tussaud) had come to Paris to apprentice to her uncle, a Swiss doctor named Christopher Curtius who modelled human bodies in wax for his *Salon de Cire*. Curtius' exhibition included various thematic arrangements of coloured wax effigies portraying the famous and the infamous. A popular tableu was 'The Royal Family at Dinner,' which enabled ordinary people to gaze closely at life-sized effigies of Louis XVI and his family. It was customary for the royal family to freely admit the public while they dined. For those who could not make the trip to Versailles, Curtius' spectacle proved a successful alternative. He produced the tableau working from Marie's sketches, which detailed the table and attitudes of family members. To augment its authenticity, the queen's dress-maker, Rose Bertin, was commissioned at great expense to dress the effigy of Marie Antoinette.

Curtius and Tussaud's enterprise afforded them unconventional mobility across classes. Marie lived with the royal family for nine years as art instructor to Madame Elizabeth, the King's sister. Curtius had a sideline in erotic miniatures for aristocratic customers. Yet, despite his niece's court affiliations, his political sympathies were aligned with 'the people.' The museum was open to all classes as long as visitors were properly dressed in wigs and stockings 'no matter how threadbare.' Curtius' success in Paris enabled him to open a second exhibition, the *Caverne des Grands Voleurs*, devoted to notorious criminals, which was a forerunner to the *Chamber of Horrors*, subsequently to become a trope of wax museums world wide.

During the Paris riots of 1783, a mob arrived at the door of the *Salon de Cire* requesting Curtius' life-sized wax work of Louis

**To be made into an exhibit involves an epistemological violence which also functions in other display institutions constituting the exhibitionary complex. The exhibition of people in anthropological museums has involved the brutal collapse of their lives and even death. The residency of Ishi—at the University of California's Museum of Anthropology—is well known in anthropological circles. At his death, his tenure as an exhibit merely transformed from an exhibition displaying daily activities to one comprising his skeleton and death mask. Similarly, Saartjie Baartman, known as 'the Hottentott Venus,' was exhibited live in Paris and London. After her death, her genitals were cut off and displayed at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.**



"Tom Thumb" 1844 engraving made while exhibiting in England; Houdini Collection

XVI. Curtius refused on the condition that it was extremely heavy and could be broken, and offered instead the busts of the Controller-General Necker and the Duke of Orleans—supporters of the people, who had been recently dismissed by the King. These effigies were draped in black crepe and paraded in a mock funeral protesting the oppression of the royal regime. The struggle which ensued centred on the appropriation and procession of these simulated humans, and marked the first casualties of the French Revolution. Concerned about Tussaud's personal safety after she espoused his political affiliations, Curtius recalled his niece from Versailles.

During the Terror, the Revolutionary government focussed upon the potential of public culture, including the fine arts, to re-make the citizenry. The life-sized wax effigies at the *Salon de Cire* had an immediacy and verisimilitude that the heavily academicized codes of painting and drawing did not. Because they were extremely popular and accessible to even the illiterate classes, they provided an ideal means to carry the revolutionary ideology.

As the events of 1793 escalated, Tussaud was called by the Jacobins to a gruesome task: to cast the features of those "enemies of the people" who met their death at the guillotine, including the King, Marie Antoinette, and Tussaud's patroness, and friend, Madame Elizabeth. This Tussaud performed under personal threat and duress. Aside from its obvious horrific aspects, the exhibition of decapitated heads marked a concurrent shift of corporeal ownership. Within the feudal system of the *Ancien Regime*, 'the people' were, in effect, 'possessed' by the aristocratic classes as part of their properties. During the Reign of Terror, this was dramatically inverted as the wax effigies of heads—functioning both as relics and metaphors for the death of the *Ancien Regime*—were collected and displayed for 'the people' of the Revolution. (Madame Tussaud eventually left France, transporting her uncle's two Paris exhibitions to London. Given her conflicted relationship with the royal family, it is curious that she later chose to exploit the Terror by procuring and exhibiting parts of the original guillotine. Surrounded by the wax impressions of decapitated heads, of Marat dead in his bath, and other relics of the Revolution, the guillotine became the centre of her famed *Chamber of Horrors*.)

George Bataille has linked the origin of the modern museum to the development of the guillotine. Rather than locating 'an origin' of the museum as such, I would contend that the Reign of Terror marks

both a significant articulation and point of divergence between the display cultures of the museum and those of the wax-works. But while the guillotine's sharp closure assured the Enlightenment taxonomies of the Louvre's collections, it was Madame Tussaud's museum that eventually procured this technology of death to sensationally augment the *Chamber of Horrors*. In 1854, Tussaud's son Joseph purchased the blade, lunette, and chopper as well as scale drawings of the guillotine from the grandson of Charles-Henri Sanson, the executioner of Louis XVI.

As a presentational mode, the people of Tussaud's displays consisted of still tableaux of wax effigies. The exhibition of live human beings, however, operates on another level of display practice. During the nineteenth century, the extension of European imperialism increased encounters with alterity. Living human beings were sought out for the express purpose of exhibition in sideshows, World Exhibitions and circus acts. P.T. Barnum was amongst those who sent agents throughout the world to procure so called human curiosities—albinos, siamese twins, hermaphrodites, midgets, dwarfs, giants, the physically and mentally disabled, and groups of aboriginal people. (Robert Bogdan describes three types of 'freaks': those born with physical abnormalities, those produced either ideologically—i.e. displaying 'primitive' types—or physically—the tattooed woman—and those which were faked—the four-legged girl where one set of legs belonged to another girl behind a screen.) Barnum's American Museum, which he bought in 1840, was billed as New York's greatest display of curiosities: 'natural, theatrical and unnatural.' In the tradition of a European *kunstkammer*, his collection included stuffed animals, miniatures, portrait galleries and so called 'freaks' of nature. As an unorthodox cousin to museums of art and science, Barnum's exhibits were framed by superlative claims which translated to 'what he could get away with.' Likewise, his hyperbolic self-promotion found a market in people's capacity to be attracted to 'the sensational,' however ethically questionable.

Barnum's American Museum marks the institutionalization of the 'freak show,' both in its conventions of presentation and as a social formation. Human beings had been exhibited previously, but their primary professional relationship had been with their managers rather than with each other. As residents of the museum, so-called human curiosities in fact often developed mutually supportive affiliations.

Where 'being exhibited' involves an inherent epistemological violence, 'exhibiting oneself' holds the potential of rupturing such representational closure. Significant in this regard is a midget born to a low-income family in 1838 as Charles Sherwood



Re-articulation of the "Dinner Party." Display of Human Curiosities at the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum, St. Augustine, Florida

Stratton. Barnum began his performing contract by renaming him General Tom Thumb and molding him as a Victorian aristocrat.

Thumb's form of reflexive 'exhibiting' involved singing songs and telling stories. Barnum's living exhibitions also resided in his museum. While the potential existed for 'live' exhibits—like servant classes—to serve life-long, inescapable contracts, there was also the possibility for certain star exhibitors to jump social classes. The aristocratic titling of giants and midgets was common practice, perhaps prototypical of the entertainment industry's star system where fame based on 'class' was displaced by fame generated by 'publicity.' Postcard portraits were sold by Barnum's performers to promote their performances and to supplement their incomes. As both a resident and ambassador of the museum, Thumb toured widely as a celebrity and a frequent guest at glamorous dinners of the rich and royal. Stratton is significant here in how he negotiated the narrative he was obliged to enact by tactically seizing the privileged space of his performative context—deflecting curious gazes by singling out and provoking his audience. His reputation as an iconoclast of etiquette had the effect of increasing his popularity. Refusing 'thingness' by talking-back, his transgression of manners became a means of asserting himself as an embodied agent within the institution of the 'freak show.'

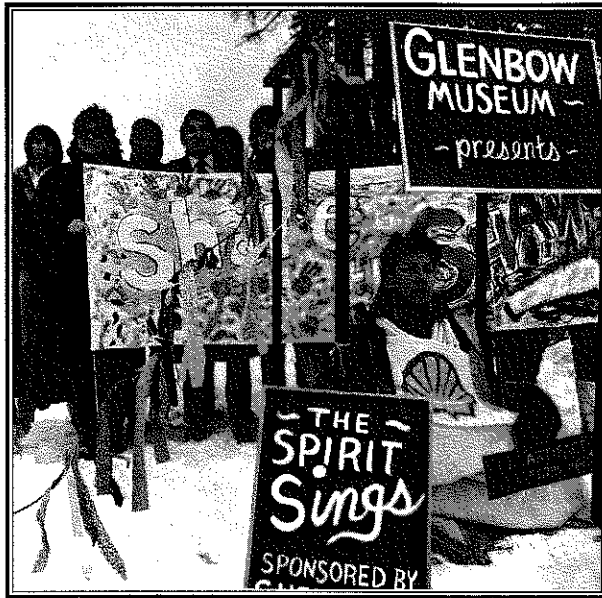
'Freak shows,' which had paralleled the museum boom in North America, were outlawed in the United States in 1940. As descendents of these dis-

plays, the *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* museums are noteworthy here in that they have re-articulated aspects of both live and inert human displays within the entrepreneurial context of global capitalism. With headquarters in Toronto, Ripley's International comprises perhaps the first worldwide museum syndicate of owned and franchised museums, which operate at tourist sites in Canada, the United States, Australia, South Korea and Mexico. Rooted in the 1930s world fairs, they display original and copied artifacts from the collection of Robert Ripley, well known for his 'Believe It or Not!' syndicated newspaper cartoon.

Ripley himself never showed his collection publicly. Yet, the proprietary fiction of Ripley the collector is sustained by the strategic placement of his wax effigy within the exhibition narratives. In St. Augustine, Florida—his actual residence—he is shown in his reconstructed office amongst fan mail and cartoons. In Niagara Falls, he is presented as a young boy at his first job polishing tombstones. Ripley's personage weaves through the narratives as a metonymic 'man of the world' implicitly sustaining a colonialist world view that characterized America's rise as a world power. Yet, more sinister perhaps is the way that Ripley's life story feeds and fronts an anonymous corporate substructure.

The display practices of the Ripley museums appropriate popular tropes in the for-profit side of the exhibitionary complex. For example, Tussaud's 'The Royal Family at Dinner' and Barnum's freak show have been re-articulated at the Ripley muse-





um in St. Augustine Florida into a dinner party scene consisting of human curiosities, among them Tom Thumb. Similarly, the *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* museum at Niagara Falls includes an exhibit of wax models of popular 'human oddities,' photographs of amazing feats and a stuffed two headed calf. Within the display, a sign beside a 'dressing-room' type mirror invites visitors to curl their tongues—a genetically determined feat that only few people can do. Moving on through the ambience of neon lights, signage and the cacophony of bombastic audio loops, the exhibition script eventually circles back to a quiet dark space—the other side of what is actually a two-way mirror—which confronts more recent entrants hilariously contorting their faces in attempts to curl their tongues. (Which, of course, you have just done yourself!) In this way, visitors unwittingly entertain as the 'living freak' component of the display.

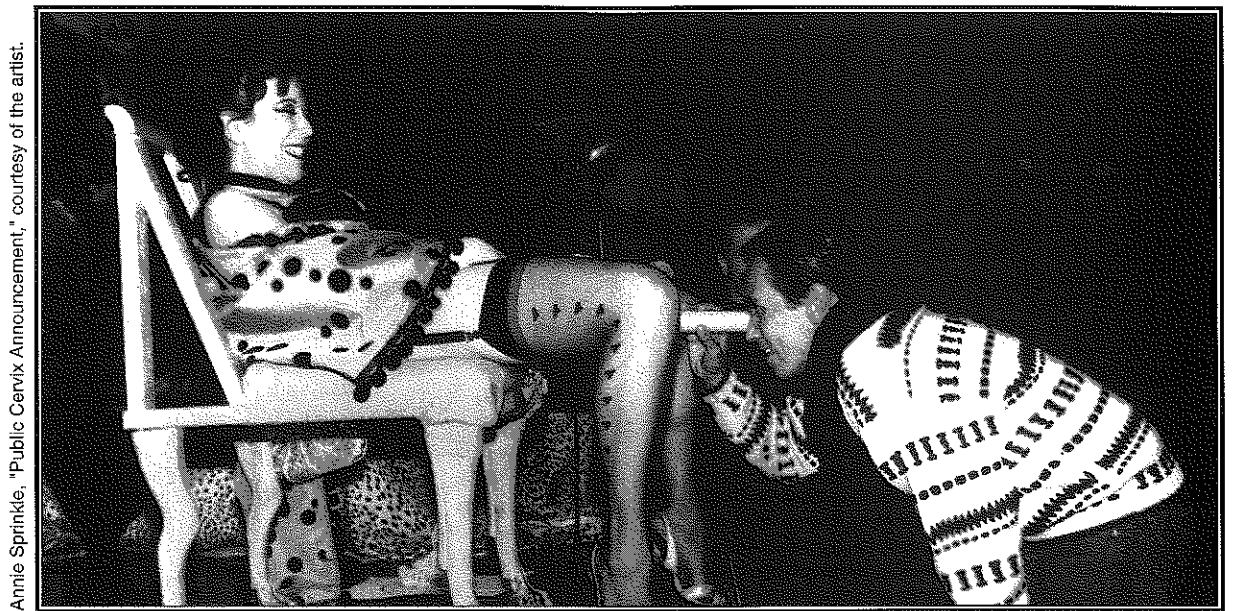
Within the contemporary fine-art discourse, the destabilizing effects of situating the viewer-as-the-viewed have been mobilized by artists working out of feminist and post-colonial positions.

James Luna's *Artifact Piece* involves 'exhibiting' himself in a museum vitrine along with 'the contemporary artifacts of a Luiseno man': his divorce papers, college diploma and a label stating his name, birth date and tribe. In the context of New York's 1992 *Decade Show*, his breathing, living presence functions to fracture the stasis common to museological representations of Native Americans. Pre-dating Luna, Ojibwe artist Rebecca Belmore also framed herself as an artifact to protest *The Spirit Sings*, an exhibition mounted at Calgary's Glenbow museum during the 1988 Olympic Games. Billed as the 'artistic traditions of Canada's Native Peoples,' the display returned many extraordinary

objects to Canada. Yet its support by Shell, an oil company the Government of Alberta had awarded drilling rights on the lands of the Lubicon Lake Cree, was broadly contested. In the path of the Olympic torch relay along the Trans-Canada Highway near Thunder Bay, Belmore displayed herself as 'Exhibit #671 B,' which is the Ontario Liquor Control Board's licence number for a brand of skid-row wine. Presenting herself as a live 'artifact' refused what Charlotte Townsend-Gault has called the "history" without time, social context or human beings' which characterized *The Spirit Sings* designer-displays of ceremonial objects.

In a similar gesture, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena's *The Year of the White Bear* confronted the 1992 quinqucentenary celebrations of Columbus' 'discovery' of America. The performance involved publicly incarcerating themselves as 'two undiscovered indians.' Their clothing combined pseudo-primitive grass skirts and high tech running shoes. While in their cage, they would work on laptop computers, watch TV, sew voodoo dolls or exercise. Consciously drawing upon conventions within the history of human display, a plaque in front of the cage gave information about their supposed origins and explained that, for a fee, they would dance, tell stories or pose with audience members for polaroids. In the performers' estimation, over half of their audience thought they were real captives, 'true natives tainted with the detritus of popular culture.' This performance investigates two aspects of specularly. In twisting back the spectatorial gaze, it functions as a parody of the self-conscious ethnographic subject. Yet, if spectators don't catch the parody and actually believe these performed roles of 'authentic others,' it functions to foreground the territory of cultural misunderstanding.

Ex-porn star Annie Sprinkle's show *Post-Porn Modernist*, which was first presented at the Kitchen in New York, takes up exhibitionism in her attempt to demystify sexuality and affirm sex in the context of the AIDS crisis. During the show she describes her transformation from shy, insecure Ellen Steinberg into 'Annie Sprinkle: Porn Star' in a slide show of 'before and after' photos. According to Sprinkle, 'The bigger the hair and the higher the heels, the bigger the star.' Sprinkle's stories from her days in the sex trade advocate safe sex practices and tolerance of sexual preferences. In preparation for her widely publicized 'Public Cervix Announcement,' she douches on stage while continuing a friendly banter. After inserting a speculum to expose her cervix, she invites members of the audience to peer inside her with a flashlight. This performance appropriates visual display practices of the medical discourse to break the taboo of shame about genitalia, to enhance aesthetic appre-



Annie Sprinkle, "Public Cervix Announcement," courtesy of the artist.

ciation of the cervix, and Annie admits that it is a way of saying to some men, 'you guys want to see? I'll show you more than you ever wanted to see.' Like Fusco and Pena, Sprinkle reconstitutes the tradition of 'freak' photography. For a fee of five dollars, members of the audience are invited to pose with her for polaroids, her breasts forming Micky Mouse ears on their heads.

Returning to the art gallery proper, Gary Hill's installation *Tall Ships*, part of the 1993 (New York) Whitney Biennial and now at the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation (Toronto), simulates a face-to-face encounter by confounding conventional exhibition apprehension. Behind a black velvet curtain is an enclosed darkened gallery where the visitor feels the specular object of multiple video generated viewers. In stereotypes of gallery viewing practices, life sized people appear to carefully approach the visitor, stop and ponder, shift from one foot to another, register a mild response, and then turn and walk away. These video loops have a rivetting effect, short-circuiting a consumptive one-way viewing habit by opening up an awareness of the state 'in-between' spectators and spectacle.

The above performances push beyond the superficial meaning of a given representation and stimulate a recognition of the social, political, and experiential implications of human exhibition. In terms of recuperating the body, then, 'exhibiting oneself' can deliberately confound the privileged viewing normally operative in display culture, for a disconnected, objective position is problematized if the state of 'looking' involves being looked at. Contemporary exhibition practices which thus direct attention to the ontological status of subjects interrogate the means of cognition itself and hence the basis of aesthetic experience.

*My thanks to Susan Douglas and Jim Drobnick for their comments and suggestions.*

*Jennifer Fisher is a doctoral candidate in the Humanities Program at Concordia. She teaches contemporary art criticism and museum studies.*

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Board  
Games,  
or I  
Was a  
Member

by Marcelle  
Lean

Andy Fabo



Andy Fabo



Of the Ontario Film  
Review Board

'Oh,  
yeah! Harder! Yeah! Faster! Yeah! Faster!'

For six years, most mornings, I would eat my breakfast to the cadence of noisy (and if I was lucky, enraptured) sighs punctuated by mechanical thrusts of bodies. My eyes would be glued to the television screen while I would sip my coffee and chew my delicious muffin, until, all of a sudden, laborious screams from the television accompanied by a triumphant 'Ejaculation!', yelled by one member of the working panel would startle me.



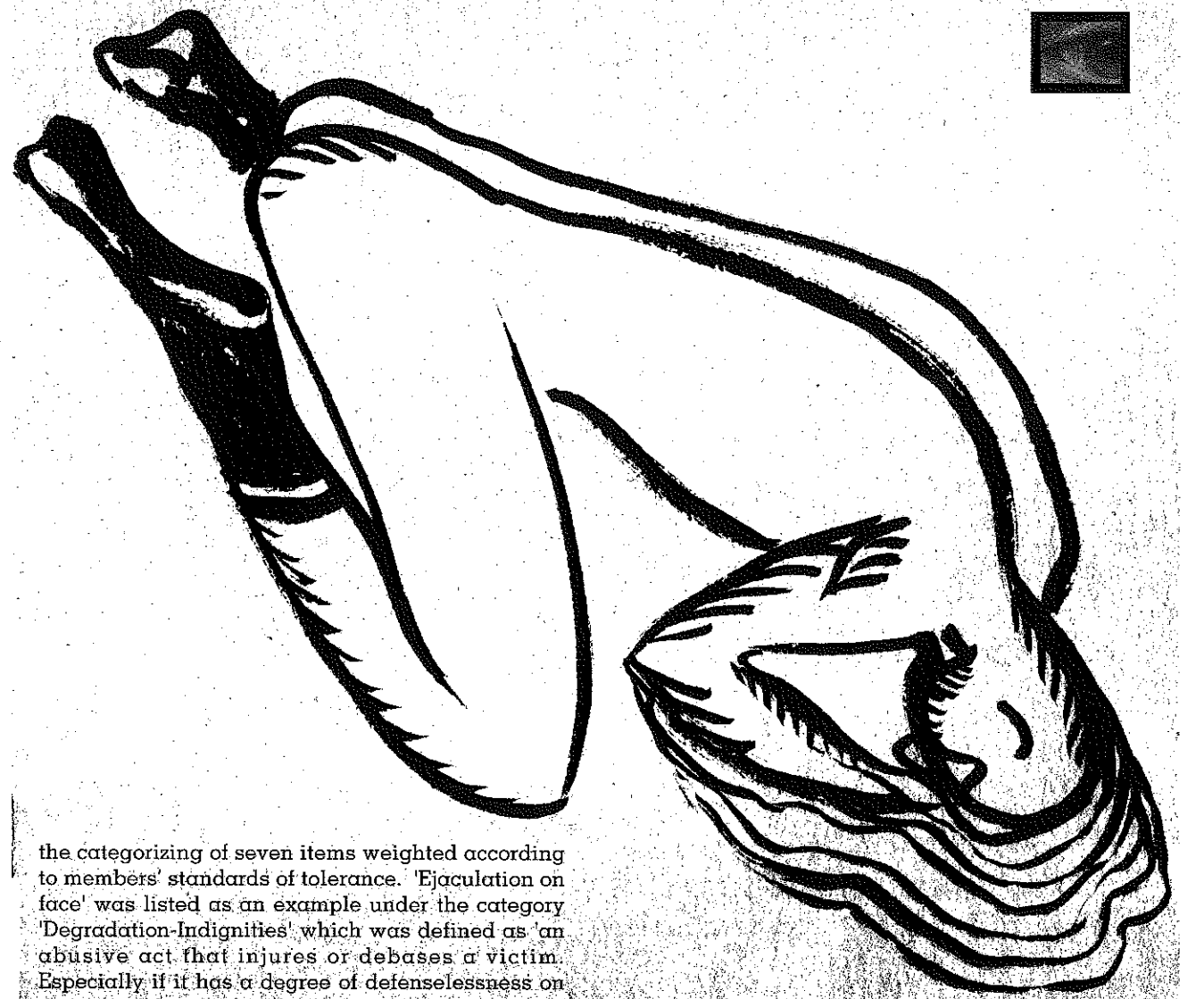


Everyone would have to abandon breakfast to scribble (on summary sheets) what they had just witnessed: the ultimate, tangible, successful accomplishment of a sexual act performed by a superman overwhelming a raving woman with gallons of semen. While she is moaning with the hedonistic privilege of rubbing 'the stuff' all over herself, he seems to have an untapped reservoir of semen he aimlessly and foolishly sprays around. In the middle of this frantic agitation, a panelist's shrieking voice would claim to have seen the semen hit the woman's eye or mouth or chin. The video would be immediately stopped and an intense discussion would start.

The object of the argument would be to determine whether the sexual partner received the semen on the face and whether ejaculation was accomplished in a degrading way. In some contentious instances, especially when the semen landed in or on the mouth, in the region between the neck and the chin, on the hair or on the temples, the members of the viewing panel would discuss whether or not these gray areas are parts of the face. One member would argue that if the semen enters the mouth, it is not on the face; another would debate that a drop accidentally appearing on the corner of the lips means nothing; but somebody else would question whether the semen really got on the

chin or on the neck. The leader of the pack (that is, the vice-chairperson of the panel) would take the initiative to rewind the tape so that we could all see the scene again in slow motion, frame by frame. The pro-censorship members would call for an elimination of the scene; the others would refuse to give in to that reading of visuals. A vote would be taken, and the majority would win.

A few months earlier, in September 1990, the 'repressive' majority had won: fifteen members, out of roughly twenty-five who then comprised the Ontario Film Review Board, had gathered in Barrie on a two-day retreat. Their job was to label sexual activities, as well as clarify, define and draft criteria for guidelines aimed at 'Adult' sex films. With the help of facilitators, the meeting, initiated by Robert Payne (then Chairperson of the Board), resulted in



the categorizing of seven items weighted according to members' standards of tolerance. 'Ejaculation on face' was listed as an example under the category 'Degradation-Indignities' which was defined as 'an abusive act that injures or debases a victim. Especially if it has a degree of defenselessness on the part of the victim, which could be a living being or a corpse.' (OFRB, Adult Sex Film, Rating Guidelines—September 1990). Other examples recorded under the same category were 'defecation, urination, forced penetration.' On a scale of one to four, 'ejaculation on face' weighted three, reflecting a high degree of intolerance, topped only by 'portrayal of a minor [a person intended to represent a person under the age of 16] appearing nude, in a scene which is sexually suggestive or explicit.' In February of 1991, the whole Board met again to finalize the weighting and the guidelines. The majority reneged on some of the definitions, blaming the facilitators, the relaxed atmosphere of the retreat and the air in Barrie for their earlier attitude.

In 1986, the year I was appointed to the Ontario Film Review Board, no one dared dream of such debates. The Board had entered a transitional era. In December 1984, the Censor Board officially shed its infamous name to be rebaptized the Ontario Film Review Board. The reign of Mary Brown as

Chairperson and champion of censorship ended with the appointment of Ann Jones in August 1986 as her successor. Regardless, little changed. The porn films sent to Ontario rarely showed explicit sexual activities. At the time we were operating in panels of five members (now only three because of budget cuts) led by a vice-chairperson supposedly in charge of eliciting relevant remarks, sometimes arousing discussions that would culminate in the classification of films and videos. The inspiration came from the amended (1975) *Theatres Act*, a blue booklet, now replaced by the amended (1988) *Theatres Act*, a red booklet. This 'bible' contained a section (Section 14) that was the basis for two working documents.

One of the basic documents is a set of guidelines which are reviewed yearly. At a glance, the neophyte can see four columns of classifications, in turn defined by such criteria as language, violence,

nudity, sexual involvement, horror, subject matter/treatment. For example, in the category 'Restricted,' under violence, one finds that "graphic portrayals of violence, torture, abuse, horror, extreme bloodletting, sexual violence integral to the plot" are permitted. The 'Family' classification restricts violence to "restrained, non-graphic portrayal of: armed combat, natural disaster-accidents, hand-to-hand combat, bloodletting." However, in Section 14 of the 1988 *Theatres Act*, another statement appears:

After viewing a film, the Board MAY refuse to approve a film for exhibition or distribution in Ontario....

The use of the verb 'may' enables the reviewer not only to classify a film, but also to cut, edit, delete, censor or ban a film. Free interpretation of Section 14 justified the austere, puritanical position of Mary Brown prior to my coming to the Board in 1986. (Interestingly enough, the legendary organ of repression was well-liked by her colleagues.)

When I joined the Board, I had to go through the initiation rite of watching the 'Take-Out Reel,' a montage of film snippets that send one to hell and back. I understood that this 'Take-Out Reel' originated by Mary Brown in the early eighties became her powerful tool to rally people to the censorship cause. The film displayed extreme images of horror and bestiality, ranging from snuff films to films showing women having intercourse with horses, pigs, dogs.... These sequences were taken out of context and put together in such a manipulative, arbitrary way that their excessive violence could only beg passionate pro-censorship reactions. Mary Brown would show the 'Take-Out Reel' to visitors, including community groups eager to understand what the Board was about. As a fallout from the Mary Brown era, between 1986 and 1988 profanity in films was tabulated to catapult films into the restrictive category regardless of contexts. Porn had become a disgusting commodity from which Ontarians had to be protected. The imprints of such attitudes linger to this day in some reviewers' minds. In 1986, these marks were so fresh and deep that the classification of a film was often reduced to counting the number of times the word 'fuck' was used.

The classification of a film or video is recorded by the vice-chairperson on a summary report and signed by all members present at the screening. The signatures of the members constituting a majority are visible on the front of the page; the members who constitute the minority sign on the back with a brief justification.

The summary report, which is a legal document, refers to the *Theatres Act* to support and justify the

reasons of a chosen classification. It works like an identification card where the film's title, genre, length and type (35mm, 16 mm, etc.) are recorded. A short plot summary is followed by additional observations (racial slurs, documentary footage...). If a film requires an information piece in addition to the category, then the panel agrees to choose from among a list of brief words to describe its dominant feature. For instance, the video *Silent Night, Deadly Night 5: The Toymaker* was unanimously classified 'Restricted' with two information pieces: 'Brutal violence' and 'Frightening scenes.' In case a member feels very strongly, he or she can ask for a cumulative vote, a process by which other members screen and classify the contentious film. When a film does not go to general distribution (as indicated in the summary report), it can run for a limited time on exhibition and be shown as many times as requested. Paul Morrissey's *Mixed Blood* came back so many times that all members must have screened it at least twice in the course of their tenure. Watching this hyperrealistic and ultra-violent film for the second time felt like punishment intended for Alex, the protagonist in Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*, and mistakenly inflicted on the relatively innocent members of the OFRB by the wrong director. A distributor can also appeal the decision of a panel by simply re-submitting the film to a new panel preferably made up of members who had not classified it (some exceptions apply). The decision reached by the Appeal Panel is final and can only be contested at a lower court by the distributor. The fate of the distributor's product depends entirely on the members and vice-chairpersons. Panels are put together according to members' availability, not according to their compatibility.

The chairperson, whose job is administrative and representative of the whole Board, is appointed by the Premier of the province. The vice-chairpersons and the members are also appointed through the same channel. During my tenure, some members came through political routes: connections, patronage, etc.; others applied to join the Board because they had an honest interest in movies. (Although I am an unconditional film buff, I wish I could say I came from the latter.) Still others were recommended by influential people in recognition of their involvement in community affairs.

Throughout my six years' tenure, the number of members fluctuated from roughly fifteen to thirty-two and reflected the multicultural fabric of Ontario. At first, Mary Brown left the legacy of a pro-censorship, anti-sex squad composed mainly of older male members. I recall chairing (as an exercise) a panel of four middle-aged men screening a gentle porn movie in which a woman was fantasizing about sex in her letters. The video depicted

gentle flogging with a cat-o'-nine-tails, and an array of sexual activities of the fellatio and cunnilingus type. The members of the panel were mesmerized with pleasure. Classification time came, I asked for the verdict: rejected unanimously.

However, not all members were obtuse. I look back with nostalgia at the private conversations I had with a cinema professor on the meaning of Bellocchio's *Devil in the Flesh* and on feminism in *Patti Rocks*. Stimulating discussions rarely occurred during classification, though. Members seemed resentful that 'pretentious academics' would try to enlighten them. Most of the time discussions were distinctly un-theoretical. They would focus on issues such as ejaculation on face, or on uncanny visual detail: he slapped her on the behind, he left a red mark, is that torture or pleasure?

By about 1990, the police, through Project P (a vice-squad making sure that no obscene, illegal material is being circulated) began to review material the Board had approved. Video operators got arrested; Robert Payne, the Chairperson at the time, had to testify. One of the most memorable controversies centered on *Oriental Taboo*. A young actress was playing with a fake snake that she supposedly inserted into her vagina. Project P interpreted it as bestiality; the Board saw a plastic object (not a real snake) being consciously manipulated by a woman.

Board meetings occurred every two to three months, moving from the antiquated location of the Board to the elegant Sutton Place Hotel. Generally in our sessions we discussed internal policies, then hosted various guests from the video and film industry or the Minister and his/her assistants. A tasteful lunch concluded the day. On these occasions great attention was paid to costume: members (male and female) proudly paraded in their ostentatious clothes, then congratulated each other on their looks, smiled at each other, nodded at each other, sizing up opponents, already coagulated into cliques. This ballet then entered the performance stage, the boardroom. Very often pettiness took over, and the meeting came to a halt because of a disagreement on the use of a word or the settlement of the fair distribution of screening days or the appropriate starting time. In the middle of cacophonous disputes, items were left unresolved, deferred to the Policy Committee. Vice-chairpersons were elected at the June Board meeting to voice the grievance of members and act as buffer between chairpersons and members.

In 1987, I became the Chairperson of the first Policy Committee. Ann Jones, Censor Board Chair at the time, acted as though her authority were undermined by the existence of such an organ, while others were trying to dominate and appropriate issues. At first, my voice was often silenced by

clashing members; gradually I gained the respect of some members who recognized the difficulties of my position in that ocean of sharks. I introduced so-called academic research on the wording of information pieces. At one point, I studied the differences between 'coarse language' and 'swearing,' which led to the elimination of the latter word from our information list pieces. (My background in linguistics and lexicology-lexicography made it easier.) I also did some research on the thriller genre, differentiating between psychotraumatic thrillers and psychological thrillers.

Guidelines were also revised and recommendations presented to the whole Board to discuss and adopt. Through their yearly examination, the guidelines were modified to engage new realities of current movies (whence the attention paid to the relevance of subject matter in documentaries and waves of movies dealing with war [e.g. *Platoon*], sexual violence [ *The Accused*, *Fatal Attraction*, *Internal Affairs*, etc. ] ) and even current events and issues.

Under the Liberals I had never felt any pressure to be pro or con censorship. The visits of officials from the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations seemed to affirm that the people there were aware that we existed and did as good a job as we could. I was under the positive impression that I was trusted and respected as an individual capable of assuming the responsibilities of the Board. When the NDP took over, I felt like a pawn in the political game of issues that mattered to the ministers who took the commands. Their interferences (frequent visits of the respective ministers' assistants, the speeches from the ministers on their views on censorship, violence, etc.) left me struggling for my own oxygen in a 'Big Brother Is Watching You' atmosphere.

In retrospect, if I were to draw a balance sheet of my experience on the Ontario Film Review Board, I would refer to three levels of existence, as a member, a film addict and an art activist. As a member, I became acquainted with two chairpersons who administered the Board very differently. In 1986, Ann Jones attempted to maintain a dignified image of the OFRB by giving our meetings some decorum. She shuffled raging dissension aside by finally accepting the creation of a Policy committee in 1987 and the destruction of Mary Brown's 'Take-Out Reel' (circa 1989), the remnants of the cumbersome cadaver of censorship.

Ann Jones' successor, Robert Payne (1989-1992), tried to harmonize the members' views on standards of tolerance regarding sex in porn movies. The discrepancies in classification had become so confusing that distributors would submit their products with a prayer: they had been left with no ammunition in their arsenal to reason with us since



the classifications had grown so unpredictable. During his tenure, Robert Payne was an intelligent mediator and listener who treated everybody with deference. In the summer of 1992, a distinct rift between the Minister and the Chairperson involved an inexplicable isolation of the latter. In September 1992, he was promptly replaced by Dorothy Christian as the new Chairperson. Ms. Christian had served on the Board with the 'old school' members.

As a film addict and a celluloid consumer, I bathed in glory: between the summers of 1986 and 1992, I screened as many films and videos as I could, besides attending the Floating Film Festivals, the yearly Montreal Film Festivals, the Toronto Festivals of Festivals, and going to see films in cities like Paris where I gorged on French films, or in Hong Kong where I saw *The Lover* in its integral form before it opened in North America.

As an art activist, I was given the concrete opportunity to fight for the freedom of expression of filmmakers in all genres of film and video, including pornography. From screening hundreds, if not thousands, of 'porn flicks,' I certainly gathered a wealth of information about myself, about the attitudes of my colleagues and of society regarding sex.

Some members had to leave the Board to protect themselves: they had become casualties of the insufferable violence and vulgarity to which they had been subjected as censors. When video operators were arrested on charges of obscenity (around 1990), when Project P disagreed with the members' classifications and attempted to stigmatize them publicly, all the layers of accumulated experience exploded. We became warriors in an open zone where the pro-censorship and the anti-censorship camps intensely clashed. Memories of long, dogged, passionate debates tearing us apart and turning us against one another still linger in our lives. An alumna, profoundly marked by her experience at the Board, found artistic expression writing and illustrating erotic poems. I, with two other alumni, wrote a script on pornography and its effects. In this attempt, we felt a need to share our knowledge and experience with the public. At the same time, in a cathartic movement, the writing enabled us to "cleanse our brains," to expurgate the dirt, the violence, the on-screen degradation we had to witness day after day.

My experience on the Board broadened my horizons, and I feel that I served the institution with fervour and integrity. I donated my time and energy writing reports, preparing arguments, often speaking to various groups. Those of us who enjoyed working hard and devoting ourselves to cinema were frowned upon by other members and people in general. For the public at large we were censors,

a hated breed. To this day, my friends, acquaintances and others will not let me forget that I was part of a 'Censoring Machine' that was too lenient, a contradiction no one can escape or reconcile in spite of my protest that I was there to defend the creator's right of expression. Ironically, the Board had been the only place that made my addiction gratifying and somewhat lucrative: where else would I have been paid one hundred dollars per diem and how else would I have satisfied an insatiable appetite for celluloid? I will not deny that I have experienced painful symptoms of withdrawal since my termination, in spite of my haunting movie theatres and video stores. The fix is expensive, but at least I can pick and choose what I want to see.

Or is it that I pick and choose what the new OFRB members want me to see?

*Marcelle Lean is a member of Telefilm Canada, the Vice President of the Toronto Arts Foundation and a freelance writer.*



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## TWO POEMS

By Gary Barwin

### GLYPH

where a = b:

pme qpoe  
 xbufs tpvoe  
 b gsph

#### line 1:

pme, the sound of a poem -- pome -- the o a tiny pond, a moon risen from the lips & lost by cloud, or pomme as if o its picture felled by arrow off the head of a frightened child.

qpoe, kapow -- the sound of arrow hitting apple, qpoe, poetry truncated, "try" broken off, q the p reflected as in a pool of water, as if p poetry tried suddenly to turn its head

#### line 2:

xbufs, x the spot where the confident father aimed, the spot where the young saint ended his alphabet, the teacher marking it x wrong. buf s -- buf s -- aficionados, they've taken a shine to it, then later, ex-buffs, their enthusiasm dimmed, gone cloudy, they've polished it off & now regret it, x crossing it out, taken the apple back.

tpvoe, typed over it, typo vers (fr.), voe -- no sibilance in their "voice", "voe" calling out as the arrow hits its mark. kapow. no time for reflection now. too late to cut it short, diving first, then thinking of water.

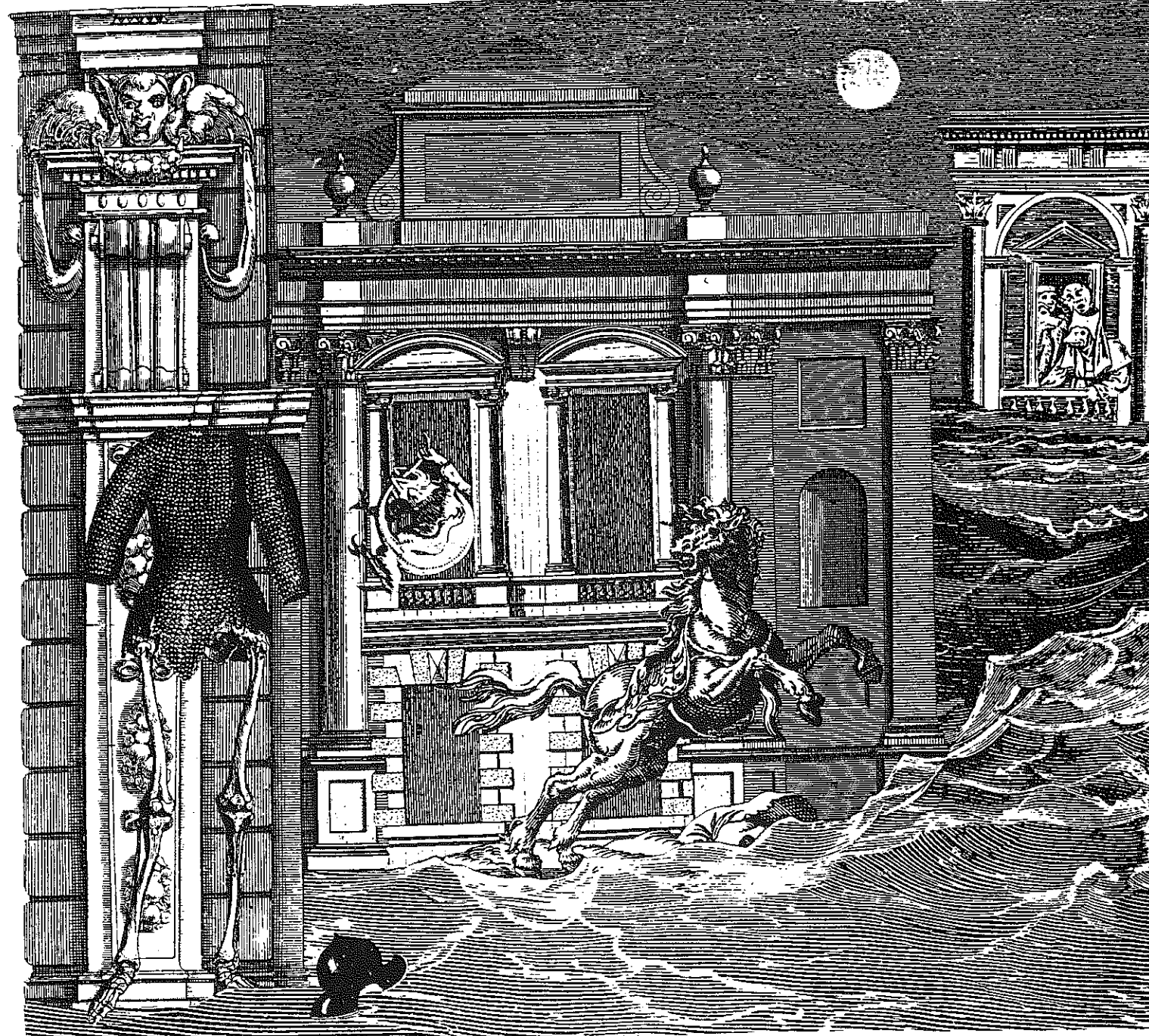
#### line 3:

b, an existential imperative, the apple bisected, the command follows. "b", speckled with droplets of water, apple juice, the moon covered by clouds in the mist. gsph the gasp as the apple falls, as the cold water closes, as the poem is thought of, the sudden breath like gsph, a gospel remembered, the young saint writing, coming to x like a glyph.

### RED DOGS OF DAWN

wind up the gramophone, play that scratched caruso platter. let us change into tennis clothes and hide under the couch for the red dogs, the red dogs of dawn have arrived. they are at the door howling, their voices a bed full of ants. they've gathered on the welcome mat & are watching the door, their pupils swim like wounded fish across their sweaty eyes. & their tongues hang from their faces like broken arms.

my body is a plain white countertop. my fear is a dishwasher gone mad. i open and close the cabinet doors of my nervousness, i open and close the cabinet doors of my -- my body is a formica tabletop, their sweaty tongues are drooling up my dress, my curtainrod, a candlestick. i undress & take a bath in the cloud of their damp breath. if only i were a missile, an aeroplane, a subterranean cove, because i forget which part of the bible the dogs wrote, though i've seen them gathered at night by the swimming pool, burying each verse before dawn.



"Who Sang to the Moon on that Last Evil Night?"

Image by Helen Lovekin

### Contributors to the Rampike Literary Supplement #2:

Guillermo Deister of Germany is a superb textual-graphic artist who has appeared frequently in *Rampike* magazine.  
 bill bissett is ever-prolific. His latest excellent book is *inkorrec tshots* (Talonbooks).  
 Richard Gessner lives in New Jersey where he thinks about hair and things inside his couch.  
 Gil Aufray may well be stealing rides on freight trains in England when he isn't writing stories.  
 Fernando Aguiar is conducting performance/text experiments in Lisbon, Portugal.  
 Alice Burdick has recently moved to the west coast of British Columbia where she continues to write.  
 Domingo Cisneros makes his first entry in *Rampike* with this entry. Welcome Domingo!  
 Robert Dassanowsky-Harris is a foreign correspondent to *Rampike* living in sunny California.  
 Kim Ackerman began writing in Guelph, & also has material in the upcoming issue of *Rampike* magazine.  
 Pierre-André Arcand has recorded performance poetry on a C.D. which is now available to all.  
 George Swede lives and works and teaches and writes and thinks about Latvia in Toronto, Canada.  
 William Mark Sutherland is a multi-talented individual from Toronto working in music, visuals and text.  
 Helen Lovekin, Toronto graphic artist/writer, was introduced to *Rampike* by the intrepid poet & impresario --- David McFadden!



Front & Back Cover images by Guillermo Deister (Deutschland).

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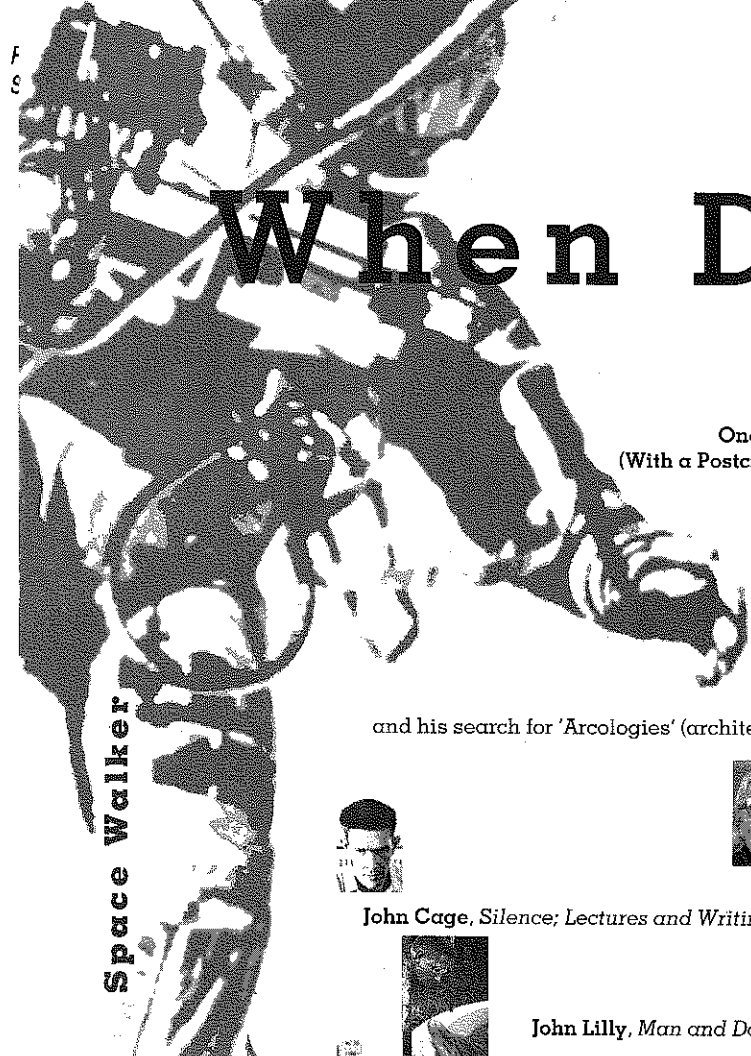


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Space Walker

# When Does Post - Modernism Begin?

A.: 1965 plus-or-minus four years.  
One Hundred Starting Points of the Post-Modern: The Age of the Baby Boomer  
(With a Postscript on the Beginning of the Post-Postmodern Generation in 1985 +/- 4 years)

"The truth is in the whole."—Hegel



**100**  
Yuri Gagarin, manned space flight, 1961, orbit and weightlessness make time and space more relative than any person has experienced before.

**99**  
Paolo Soleri's cave-house-studio, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1961, and his search for 'Arcologies' (architectural ecologies), the paradoxical blending of high tech and the eco-freak.



**98**  
Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961, the attack on artificial, order-imposing city planning begins.



**97**  
John Cage, *Silence; Lectures and Writings*, 1961, mainstreaming the avant-garde notion of chance in composition.



**96**  
Berlin Wall, 1961, the admission of failure by Soviet Communism.



**95**  
John Lilly, *Man and Dolphin*, 1961, the serious view that man is not superior to all of the animals.



**94**  
"Last of the epics to date: *El Cid*," 1961 John Cary writing in 1974, the mindless spectacle, Hollywood's first major formula, wanes.

**93**  
Robert Zimmerman reinvented as Bob Dylan releases *Bob Dylan* (Columbia/CBS), 1962, the commercial counterculture begins.



**92**  
Death of the "Big Red Cars" and their 1,000 miles of track in Los Angeles, April 9, 1962: "the day the dismantling of the city's once great transit system was complete."



**91**  
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962, birth of the ecological movement.

**89**  
Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962: objective science is a myth.

## REPORT ON BUSINESS

**88**  
Introduction of "Report on Business" in Toronto *Globe and Mail*, 1962, the national newspaper will aim only at the upmarket reader now.

**87**  
1st International Biennial of Tapestry, Lausanne, 1962, launches international career of Magdalena Abakanowicz of Warsaw, the artist who subsequently does the most to make fabric a leading sculptural material.



**86**  
Robert Venturi builds a house for his mother at Chesnut Hill, Pennsylvania, 1962. It has zappy colour, toy-block shapes, decorative mouldings and a steeply gabled roof: the fun begins.

**85**  
Independent architectural practice: Frank Gehry 1962, Ricardo Bofill 1962, Charles Moore 1962.

**84**  
Marylebone Cricket Club drops the distinction between the Gentlemen (amateurs) and the Players (professionals), 1962.



**83**  
Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le totemisme aujourd'hui*, 1962 and *La Pensée sauvage*, 1962: western civilization stinks.

**82**  
Vatican II, 1962, watershed for modernizing the Roman Catholic Church.

**81**  
Max Kozloff, "Pop' Culture, Metaphysical Disgust, and the New Vulgarians," *Art International* (1962): American Pop Art instantly identified and named (borrowing term coined earlier for British Pop Art by Lawrence Alloway).



**80**  
Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, 1962, beginning of the Soviet thaw.

**79**  
Cuban Missile Crisis, October-November 1962: nuclear brinkmanship. The Cold War peaks.

**78**  
BBC "Open University" initiates television-transmitted courses, 1962-63; the medium that brought "the news from nowhere" now brings "knowledge from nowhere."



**77**  
Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," *Film Culture* (Winter 1962/63), Truffaut's theory—that the director is the "author" of a film—enters the English language press: the personalization of the medium.

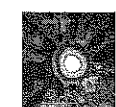
**76**  
With the instant success of *The New York Review of Books*, 1963, "the reading of reviews had replaced the reading of books"—John Lukacs, *Outgrowing Democracy* (1984):312.



**75**  
Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963, the women's movement begins anew.



**74**  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent Birmingham campaign, 1963, met by force, arrests, hoses, galvanizing resistance and world opinion, in the industrial bastion of segregation.

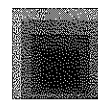


**73**  
"1963 when specialty units for intensive care of critically ill and injured patients first evolved"—prospectus of 18th annual *Critical Care Symposium*, San Francisco, Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 1983.

**72**  
1963: Cal Tech's Maarten Schmidt discovers quasars ("quasi-stellar radio sources"), older, faster, brighter than anything known before: remnants of the ancient universe.

**71**  
Video sculpture pioneered, 1963, in the United States by Nam June Paik and in Germany by Wolf Vostell.

**70**  
Picasso's late style begins, 1963 (according to Gert Schiff), 1964 (according to Christian Geisler). The conventional knock on Picasso being that he had no late style or, if he did, it was his style of the fifties, which was considered banal. (He continues to dominate the century despite all efforts to destroy him or replace him with Duchamp. Each time an Ariana Stassinopoulos Huffington "destroys" Picasso, a Mary Walker's *Go* effectively 'recreates him'.)



**69**  
"Angst is dead," Josef Albers, 1963, writing to Harold Rosenberg.

**68**  
"Expressionism is dead," Leo Steinberg, 1963.

**67**  
French Ministry of Culture closes and seals Lascaux Cave, 1963: the end of the beginning; a new age of archaeological responsibility.



The Wall

**66**  
Direct "hot line" established between the White House and the Kremlin, 1963, proving that the Cold War has peaked with the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**65**  
March on Washington, August 1963, the biggest demonstration in Washington history: a new generation demonstrates that racial civil rights must now be addressed in America.

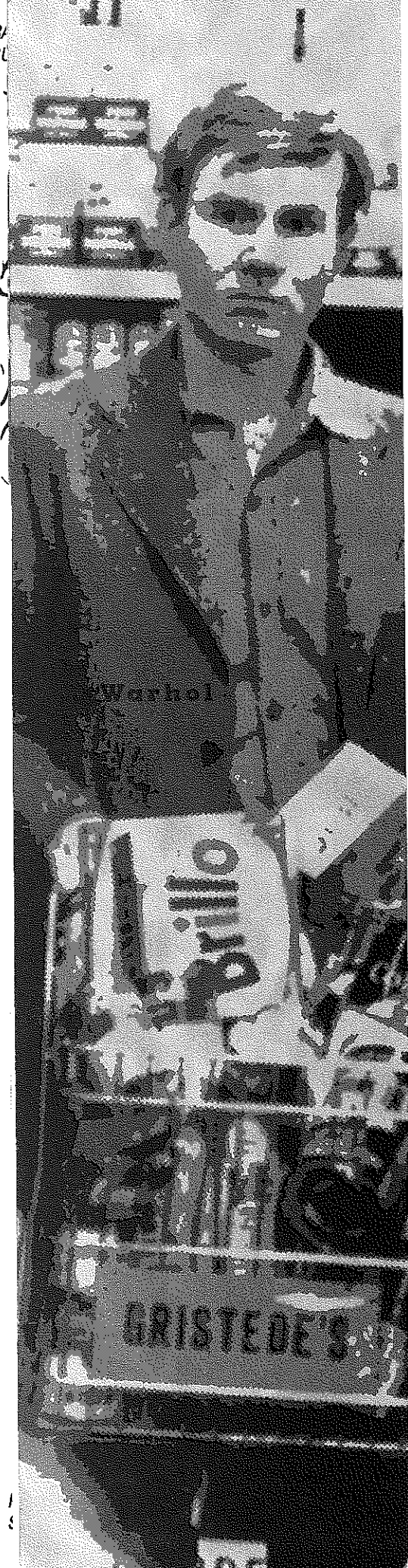


**64**  
Assassination of John F. Kennedy, November 22, 1963: "Watershed of this generation"—Marshall McLuhan.

**63**  
Roger Sperry, "The Great Cerebral Commissure," *Scientific American*, January 1964, the "split brain" with its two conscious worlds signals the end of behaviourism and the reevaluation of non-linear thinking.







62

"The top five singles and two albums are all by the Beatles, April 1964, the nadir of culture by numbers is reached according to Sidney Zion."—Richard Schickel, *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity* (1985):245.

61

Performance art begins: Carolee Schneemann, "Meat Joy," 1964.

60

Leslie Fiedler, "The Death of Avant-Garde Literature," *New York Herald Tribune Magazine*, May 17, 1964: "But the literature major and his wife, along with the second generation literature majors who are their children, constitute the new middle-brow audience, whose appearance testifies to the technical exhaustion of the avant-garde."

59

The Blockbuster begins with André Malraux's loan of the *Mona Lisa* to the United States in 1963 and of Michelangelo's *Vatican Pietà* to the New York World's Fair of 1964—Robert Hughes, *Nothing If Not Critical* (1990):22. The *Venus de Milo* travels to Tokyo during the 1964 Olympics.

58

Bob Dylan brings Paul Butterfield out to back him on electric guitar at the Newport Folk Festival, 1964, to boos, hisses, tears in Pete Seegar's eyes, signalling a generational change.

57

"Widespread purchase of colour receivers began in the United States in 1964." The second generation of commercial television begins.

56

Andy Warhol, Brillo Box exhibition, Stable Gallery, New York, 1964: The real Andy Warhol stands up and Arthur C. Danto calls it art entering the post-historical phase.

55

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 1964, leads to the discovery of McLuhan, publishing since the forties, by American readers.

54

The losers begin to win in the "dirty Western," pioneered by the Spaghetti Westerns, themselves led by Sergio Leone's dubbed *Per un pugno di dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*), 1964, starring "The Man with No Name" (Clint Eastwood).

53

"The exact date of the collapse of the rule of modernism is difficult to determine... Or 1964 and the construction of a condominium called Sea Ranch, whose architect, Charles Moore, avoided flat roofs and plate-glass windows and instead based his design on local northern California barns"—Witold Rybczynski, writing in 1992.

52

The shift of American politics and dynamism to west of centre, 1964, with the nomination of two southwestern presidential candidates—John Lukacs, *Outgrowing Democracy* (1984):312.

51

Estimated date at which California passes New York as the most populous state, circa 1964 (confirmed by 1970 census; doubles New York state by 1990 census). The American imagination increasingly defined by Los Angeles rather than New York.

50

Free Speech Movement, Berkeley, Sept.-Oct. 1964, birth of the student movement: this touchstone of the Baby Boomer generation declares a Utopian ethos for an affluent generation.

49

Chinese nuclear bomb test, October 16, 1964, nuclear proliferation to the Third World takes First and Second Worlds by surprise.

48

Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'," *Partisan Review*, Fall 1964, a lateral, non-linear, fragmentary, and intentionally incomplete article. This article is Hilton Kramer's nominee for the birth of Po-Mo: "The whole point of camp, Miss Sontag wrote, 'is to dethrone the serious,' thereby defining the special temper of postmodernist culture."

47

Fight to stop Disney's Mineral King ski resort with its access road through Sequoia National Park begins to radicalize the Sierra Club and inaugurates ecological activism, 1964.



46

"Between 1962 and 1966...the nation's values [changed]."

—Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies & the American Dream* (1973):328.

45

March 18, 1965: first space walk: Aleksei A. Leonov of the Voskhod 2, simulcast to earth: first steps beyond native Earth.

44



Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flaked Streamline Baby*, 1965, the New Journalism begins: the reader as hip initiate of the author.

43

Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile*, 1965, taking on General Motors bare-handed, the consumer movement begins.

42



Sudden death of David Smith, the last great pure capital-M Modernist sculptor, 1965, when he rolled his steel truck off a curve near Bennington, Vermont. After Smith, large-scale metal sculpture would increasingly be fabricated by technicians for the artists.

41

University of British Columbia "Media is the Message" multi-media performance, 1965, illustrates McLuhan's dictum and leads to a generation of experiments elsewhere (via *Time* magazine's report of the event and in Vancouver art: InterMedia Theatre, Pacific Cinematheque, Co-op Radio).

40

Leslie Fiedler, "The New Mutants," *Partisan Review*, 1965: "the post-humanist, post-male, post-white, post-heroic world is a post-Jewish world by the same token..."

39

Rising middle class expectations, circa 1965: the Baby Boom generation begins to come of age and demand spiritual satisfaction, physical gratification, and artistic expression instead of more "console model Magnavox's" (in Richard Schickel's phrase).

38



"The ideal of a broad education for students went down the drain with the explosion of academic activity and disciplines in the 1960s..." —David Suzuki writing in the *Globe and Mail*, November 14, 1967.

37

Breakdown of the previous distinctions between painting and sculpture, e.g. Iain Baxter, *No. 11, Landscape with Cumulus Clouds*, 1965; made of vacuum-formed butyrate plastic painted with acrylic but looking like a landscape-seen-through-a-window and hanging on a wall: it could be either.

36

Replica of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1917-23) by Richard Hamilton, built and exhibited at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1965 (Tate Gallery declines to drop it on the floor and shatter it to complete the effect of the original, dropped accidentally in 1936.) The conscious simulation of modernist high art begins.

35

The waning of New York, circa 1965: the diaspora of intellectuals, writers and artists to the campuses of America; the cost of living in Manhattan leads to less experimentation and the showcasing instead of work developed elsewhere; the decentralizing policies of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and Humanities (NEH)—Leonard Wallock, *New York, Culture Capital of the World, 1940-1965* (1988):14.

34

"In 1965 the famous 'cosmic microwave background radiation' was discovered by Arno Penzias and Robert W. Wilson at Bell Labs and explained by Robert Dicke's group at Princeton." Predicted by the Big Bang theory, this was striking evidence for an expanding, cooling, slowing, decaying universe.

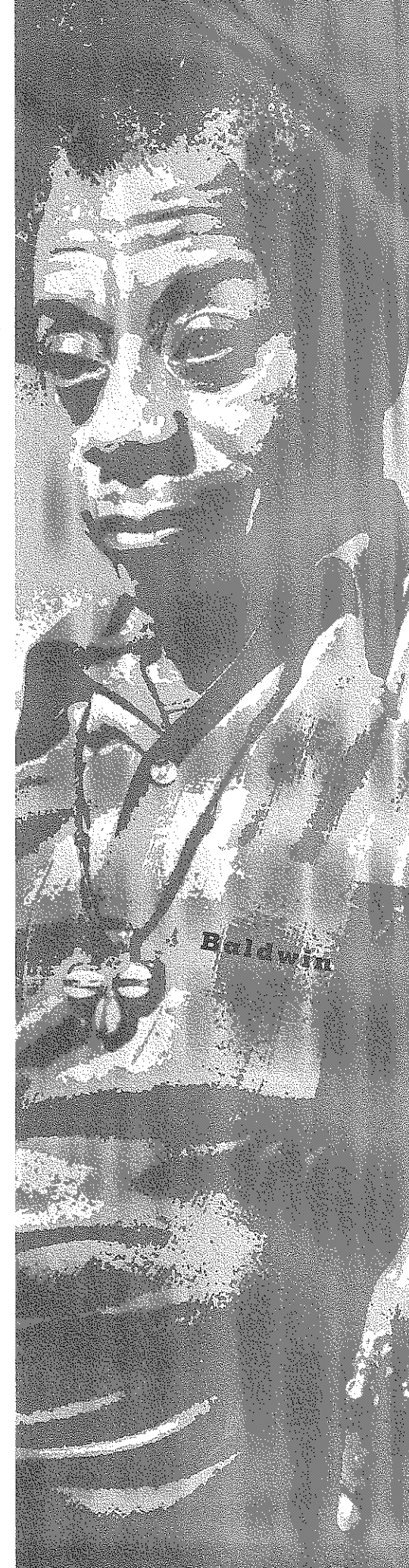
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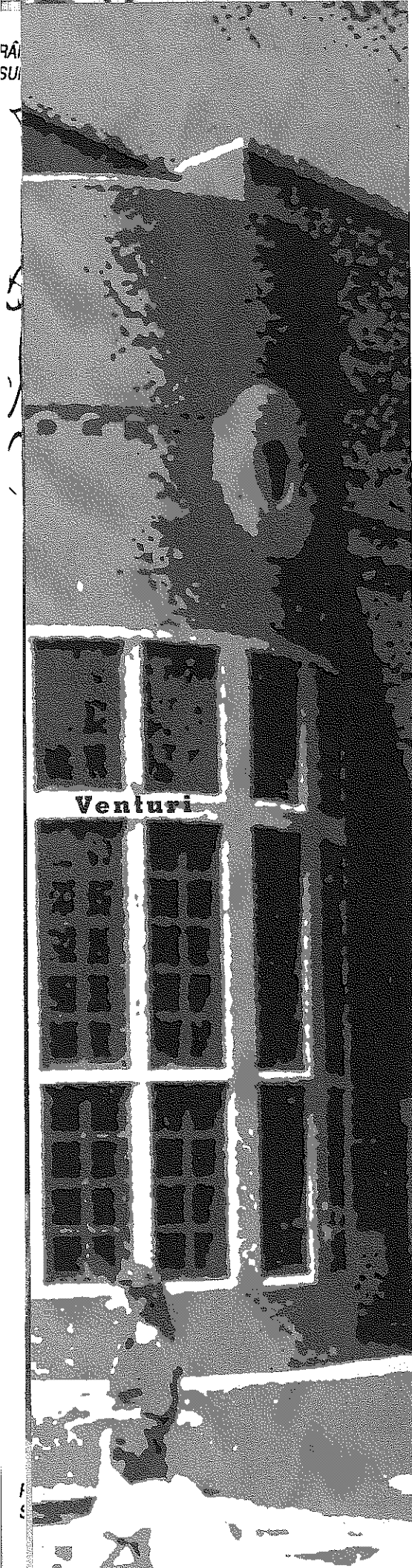


James Baldwin gives up on America, leaves, 1965 (to return from France in 1977 after which he comments on the Arab Oil Crisis of 1973-4: "It is the end of the western world. But the end of the western world is not the end of the world.")

32


Joseph Beuys performs his first "Aktion": *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, November 26, 1965. With his first shamanistic performance, Beuys initiates the reenchantment of art and its relationship with a resanctified nature.






**31** Belated publication of **Jean Rhys's** *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966 whose West Indian heroine turns the tables on the England which imprisons her. An important early example of art reflecting the emergence of dual cultures.

**30** The 1966 report of Cambridge physiologist Robert Edwards, to have cultured "immature egg cells from the human ovary up to the point of ripeness for fertilization [and] tentative claims to have actually achieved fertilization in test tubes" leads to a furor in newspapers over "test tube babies." The age of genetic engineering is launched in the broad public.

**29** **Robert Venturi**, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 1966, the American New Testament of postmodernist architectural thinking. 

**28** **Aldo Rossi**, *L'Architettura della città* Padua, 1966, the Italian New Testament of postmodernist architectural thinking. 


**27** 1966: Walt Disney dies and work begins on **Disney World, Orlando**: Disney dies and is reborn for another generation.

**26** Jordan's **West Bank**, Syria's **Golan Heights**, and parts of Egypt's **Sinai Peninsula** occupied by Israel since 1967 war: an aggressive Jewish state, something new under the sun.


**25** "It turned in 1967. Various things peaked: postwar North American prosperity, Vietnam war, popular art became high art: *Sergeant Pepper's*, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Ian."—Jill Wade.

**24** **Sha Na Na** was born when Columbia Choristers were a hit singing fifties numbers at the 1967 Ivy League Trivia Championship: the triumph of nostalgia begins.

**23** *Rolling Stone* founded in 1967, a two-headed hydra: pop capitalism (reporting on music posing as anti-establishment expression).

**22** Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967: "that was...a watershed movie," said Pauline Kael, "it delighted but confused." American film history splits here: according to Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America* (1975), it was the end of self-censorship. 

**21** "Nineteen sixty-seven was a turning point in art, as the minimal styles fell apart into distributional, anti-formal, anti-illusionist, conceptual, process, or body art. All these sub-categories I believe were inspired by the larger than life blow-ups of Namuth's Pollock photographs that accompanied the 1967 **MOMA** retrospective,"—Barbara Rose, *Pollock Painting* (1988):n.p.


**20** **Jacques Derrida**, *De la Grammatologie*, 1967, *La Voix et la phénomène*, 1967, *L'écriture et la différence*, 1967, the shift from diachronic to synchronic studies. 

**19** Expo 67 Montréal and Canadian Centennial, 1967, birth of a new phenomenon: fashionable Canadian nationalism.

**18** Off-road racing invented, semi-spontaneously, with make-shift officiating, the **Baja 1000** in 1967: searching for a new frontier; a race from nowhere to nowhere.

**17** **Gilbert & George** form their artistic partnership, 1967, two brains to work as one.

**16** The Los Angeles Police Department creates in secret the first paramilitary **SWAT** (Special Weapons and Tactics) Units, 1967, under chief Ed Davis, to contend with anticipated urban guerrilla warfare.

**15** First human heart transplant, December 3, 1967, by flamboyant South African surgeon **Christian Barnard** and a team of 20 surgeons for incurably ill grocer Louis Washkansky, starts a medical revolution. The further erosion of anatomy as destiny. 



**14** **Tet Offensive**, January-February, 1968: simultaneous attacks on 41 cities demonstrate that the United States is losing its neocolonial "Boer War"—the unexpected news that the American empire is on the wane.

**13** "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes...."—**Andy Warhol**, 1968. Prophecy/wish/curse from the living litmus paper of fame.

**12** "Research universities were riding the great rising wave of federal funds for research (which lasted until 1968)...."—Clark Kerr, president of University of California, Berkeley.

**11** The third modern age begins, "the **Media Cycle**," 1968, following the University Cycle from 1880, and the Publishing Cycle from 1920, according to Régis Debray, writing in 1981.

**10** May 1968: a would-be **French Revolution**: a new generation demands a new egalitarian France.

**9** **Jean Baudrillard**, *Le Système des objets*, 1968, Saussure's half-century-old sign systems achieve the high ground of intellectual discourse.

**8** Replica of **Vladimir Tatlin's** destroyed model for a proposed *Monument to the Third International* (1920) built and exhibited at Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1968: the historicizing recreation from whole cloth of holy icons of modernism (Tatlin's *Letatlin* glider recreated at Newcastle by Martin Chalk, 1968).

**7** *Art - Language* magazine begins publishing in May 1969; subsequent exhibitions in 1969 by the Art & Language group launch conceptual art: the abnegation of the visual/visceral/emotive/intuitive in art.

**6** New York police close down the **Stonewall Inn**, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, June 1969, precipitating the riots that launch militant gay activism: the "gay liberation movement."

**5** **Black Sabbath** album, 1969, the genre of teen-aimed heavy metal music begins: the successful marketing of a corporate product designed to annoy parents.

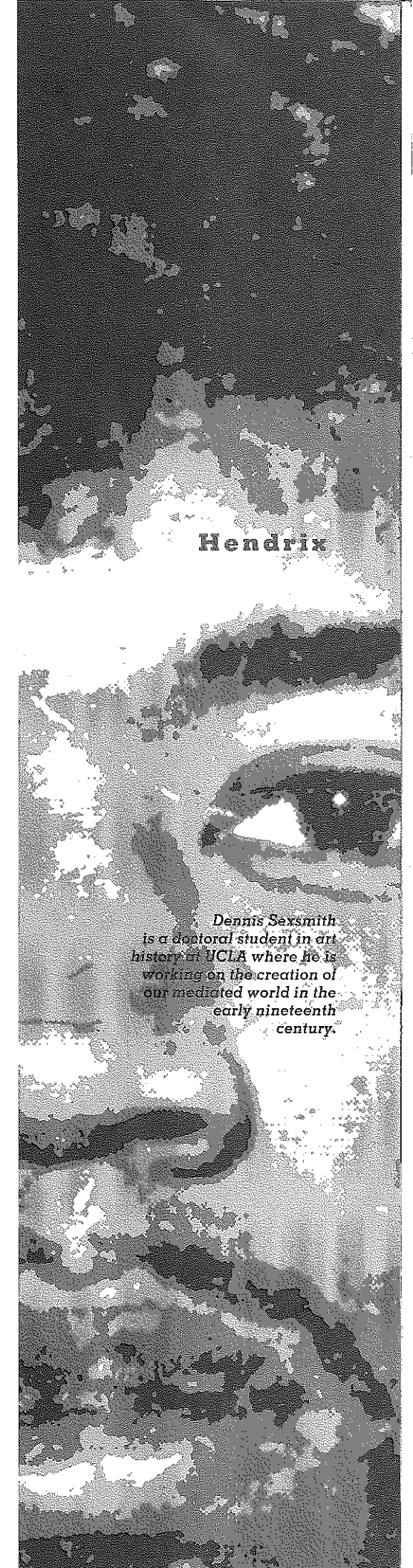
**4** **Alain Touraine**, *La Société post-industrielle*, 1969, inspired by "French Revolution" of the previous year, popularizes the term "post-industrial" for this new period.

**3** **Kenneth Clark**, BBC television series, "Civilization: A Personal View," 1969: the conscious attempt to demystify and popularize high art earns Clark the enduring enmity of art snobs and leads to the false trope, "Kenneth Clark does bad art history."

**2**  Independent scientist **J.E. Lovelock's** "Gaia Hypothesis," that the entire Earth is a living, self-regulating organism, first presented at a conference at Princeton in 1969: the reenchantment of science begins, reversing a four hundred year trend.

**1**  **Man on the Moon**, 1969: Earth is no longer destiny.

**P.S.** When does the Post-Modern generation end? When the generation after the Baby Boom generation comes of age: twin photographers Doug and Mike Starn turned twenty in 1982, as did painter Attila Richard Lucacs. Ojibway performance artist Rebecca Belmore turned 20 in 1980, Scottish painter Stephen Conroy in 1984, Los Angeles painter Lawrence Gip in 1982, and London Montagemaker Sonia Boyce in 1982, just to name a few of the artists. These are the "television babies," raised on Madonna, very cheeky, very hip. A few years from now, when their mature work is traced back, their era will be seen to begin to supplant the Po-Mo generation's after 1985 plus-or-minus four years.



**Dennis Sexsmith** is a doctoral student in art history at UCLA where he is working on the creation of our mediated world in the early nineteenth century.



RAN  
SUP

PARTIAL TO WHA

THE STORY THE STORY

HE HAD NO  
PRE-WAR MEMORY

HE HAD NO  
PRE-WAR MEMORY

WHAT, YOU SAY?

TO WHAT, YOU SAY?

YOU SAY?

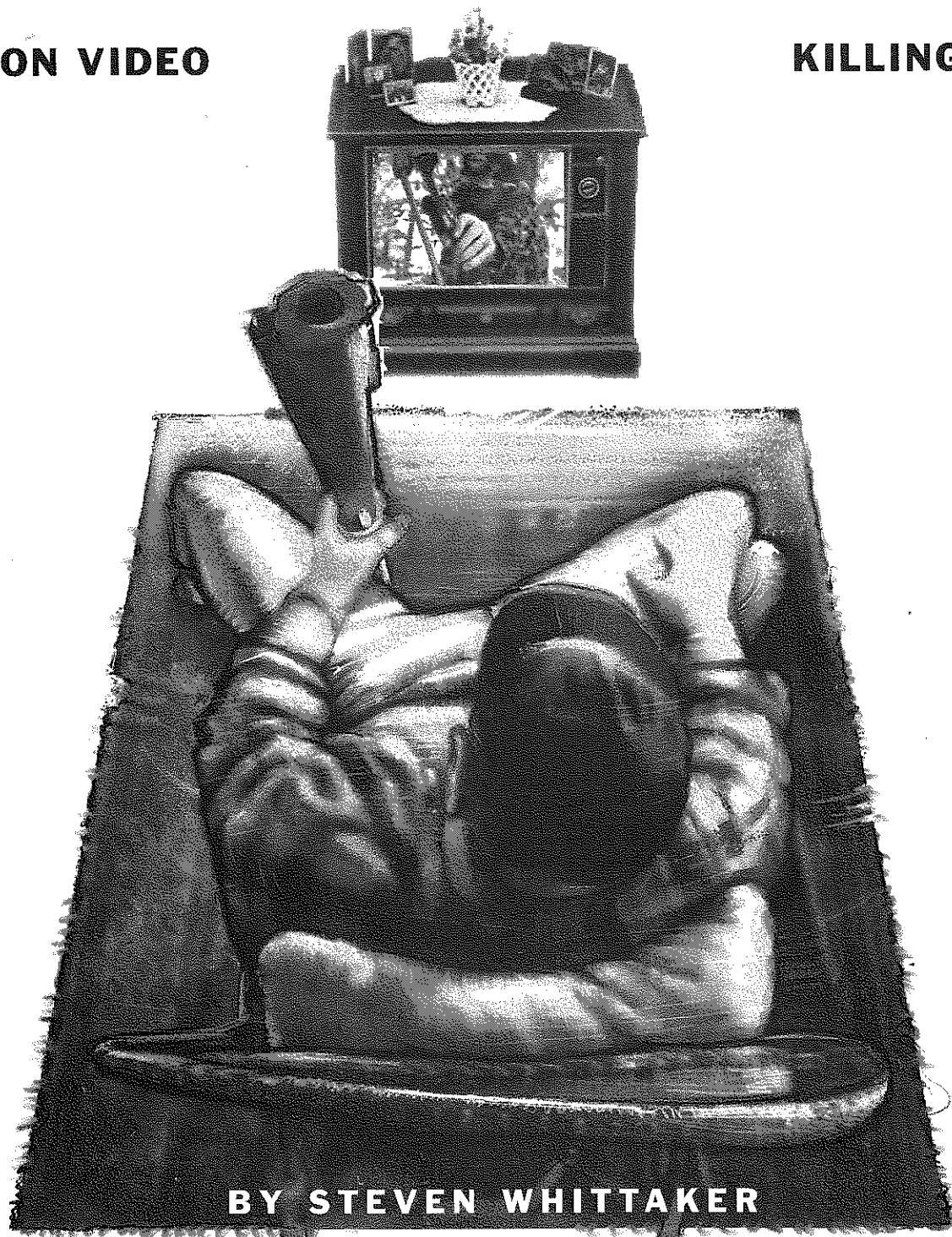
*The story is*

*always*

*partial -*

Vera Frenkel, *Journey* from the installation at the Art Gallery of York University, 1993

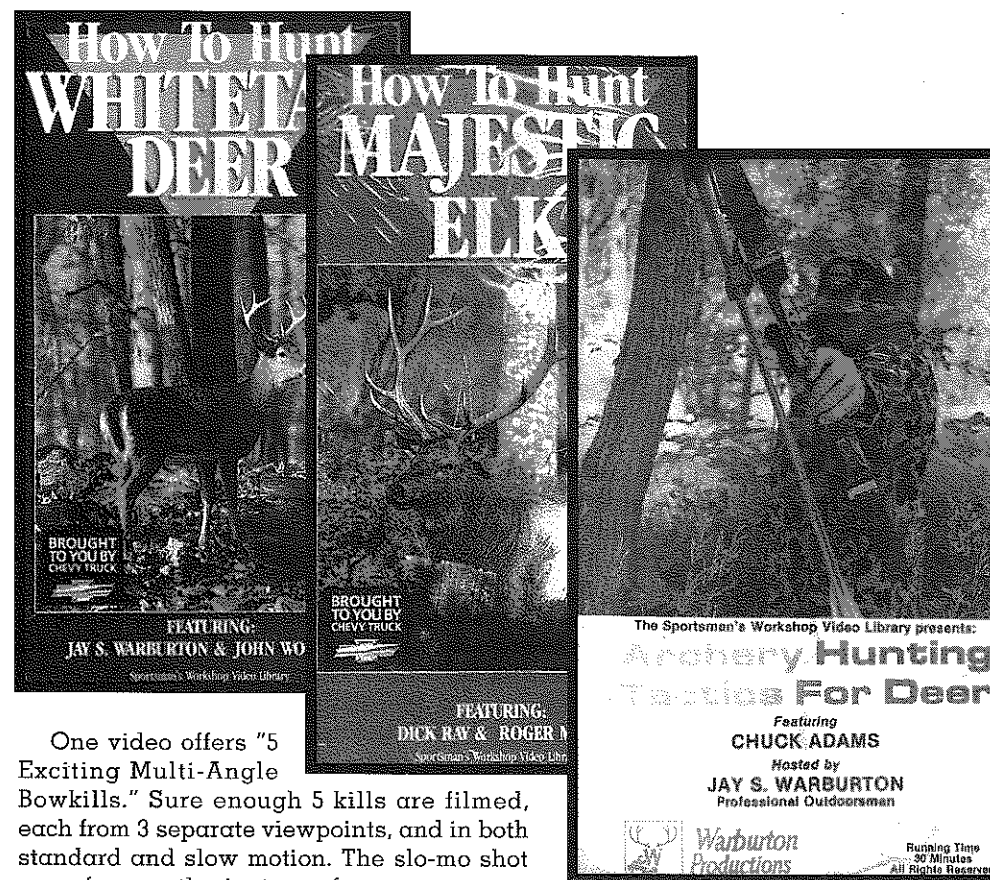
**KILLING OUT OF EARSHOT OF DEATH: HUNTING ON VIDEO**



**BY STEVEN WHITTAKER**

My local video store has a new section. With 140 videos, it is twice the size of the arty or "Foreign" film section. It contains lyrical features such as *Autumn Antlers: Bowhunting Big Bucks Under a November Sky*, hunting lodge ad-films such as *Horns of Plenty* and *Hunting Dall Sheep and Caribou in the N.W.T.*, and low-budget redneck offerings like *They're Going Down*. Production values differ from video to video. Some use as many as four carefully directed camera-angles per "kill," while others appear to have been filmed by a buddy looking over the hunter's shoulder. Yet each of these videos records, as one jacket blurb proclaims, "Explicit Live Action" kills.

**KILLING OUT OF EARSHOT OF DEATH: HUNTING ON VIDEO**



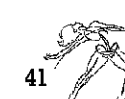
One video offers "5 Exciting Multi-Angle Bowkills." Sure enough 5 kills are filmed, each from 3 separate viewpoints, and in both standard and slow motion. The slo-mo shot even freezes the instant of arrow penetration-and-exit. Another video, coyly titled *Bear Facts*, invites us to "Listen to the eerie moan of the bear after Bruce delivers the fatal arrow."

Some of these videos are sustained ads for particular outfitter-and-guide hunting packages. These aim at hunters of relative affluence, hunters who can afford to indulge desires for pristine bounty in a prospective hunting ground. One narrator says: "If you've ever wanted to not raise your rifle for a big buck because you knew you would find a bigger one, then join us in the North-West Territories." On this video the guides are Canadian. The two hunters, who evidently paid substantial fees to outfit this hunt with cook, horses and gear, are American. This video features one heart-warming scene in which the sycophantic guides coo over the hunters' trophies.

Another video, in which the hunt was filmed near Whitehorse, promises that "most game here have never seen a human." The camera scans the wide spaces. Nature in the buff, and you have a chance to pop the wild cherry. To put you in the mood, the soundtrack offers a pastoral Spanish guitar selection, as you savour the unsuspecting dall sheep grazing on their bluff. The narrator says Dall sheep hunting provides the longest sustained excitement of any hunt, because it often takes hours between the time a group is spotted and the successful execution of the kill. No 'whambam thank you lamb,' this.

Each video offers a "variety of kills." Some present a single hunter using different techniques on a single species. Some feature different hunters, or a lone hunt and then a 'rites of passage' hunt. Others offer a smorgasbord of species, killed for the vicarious hunter's consumption. "Hunt with me," says the hunter of *Big Timber Bears* into the camera.

Still other videos are the productions of defensive hunters who are obviously feeling the heat of anti-hunting groups. These films offer various vindications of the hunt. Hunt-deaths and other means of animal death are contrasted, with the former coming out on top. Hunt-deaths are claimed to be cleaner, faster, less painful, even more natural. *Fight for the Right*, for instance, shows the wrung-out cadavers of deer that have died as a result of disease, hunger, getting stuck on barbed wire or struck by a car. "This ain't how nature meant it to be," says the sympathetic narrator. Alternatively, hunting is justified by distinguishing the good hunter from the bad hunter. The latter may be bad because he poaches, or is careless of his own safety, or merely uses inefficient techniques. And, in some of these videos, hunting is hitched to an "unquestionable" value such as God or Country or Family. In the hunt, sons apprentice to dads and bring home the meat. They may even give away the meat to others, and so hunting makes possible the lesson of altruism. One video, concerned with



defending the right to hunt, joins its cause to the Gulf War: "Dan Fitzgerald has dedicated this video to the American soldiers in the middle-east as they fight for our rights." In the same video Fitzgerald speaks at a meeting of hunters. "After the Lord," he says, "bowhunting's my first love."

When we peel away the layers of justification, what do we find underneath? What do these videos reveal that the modern American hunter desires when he is hunting? At the very least it seems he desires to see the immediate outcome of his own action. He desires unobscured work, direct evidence of his own agency. The modern hunter is in search of a pure productivity. "You should always make things happen rather than let things happen to you," says Fitzgerald. The kill is the unambiguous deed.

Also, the hunter must not "come undone" when the time for action arrives. "A good bowhunter is almost Ninja-like." Stalking and hunting gives the hunter the opportunity to produce not only venison or a trophy, but, in "the moment of truth," to produce or verify his own composure.

Over and over, the men on these videos say that what they are doing is "real." But the realness these guys are after is something other than what life might just happen to send down the pike. The contemporary North American hunter verifies himself by setting strict parameters for success, and then getting the right hardware to do that job. The "right equipment" is crucial. Without the appropriate camouflage, ammunition and animal-call device, he lessens the probability of attaining composure. And yet that composure isn't the goal in itself. The hunter's composure is only another element of technique. Like any technique, it is, with practice and the right equipment, reproducible. If he films it, he also has a reassuring record of that composure.

The modern hunter desires Real Experience and seeks it in the immediacy of predation. (Most organized of hunters, he nonetheless likes playing the instinctual predator.) Yet these hunting videos document a distrust of the realness of the hunt. In the majority of these films the soundtrack records the natural sounds of the woods only while the hunter is setting up his stand (his ambush position.) As soon as the stalk begins (and sometimes this consists of a hunter merely waiting in a chair in his tree-stand) and the animal appears, a music soundtrack intrudes. Apparently the filmmakers don't believe in the starkness of the event they record.

In one video, a "stalked" deer approaches his demise to the accompaniment of a slow bourbon guitar riff. This has the effect of a strip-tease, with death the final exposure. The music in each scene puts a bump-and-grind of inevitability into the recorded hunt. In a sense it works to break up the tension, or at least make the tension our friend. The music aligns us with the hunter. The music is with the hunter. The deer sure isn't tapping his foot.

There is an obsession with death, or rather with the mere externals of death, in the multi-angled and slow-motion filming of each kill in these videos. Given sufficient footage from enough angles, the videographer/hunter pieces together and fixes that visible moment of death. But this is death as holograph. Despite all his stalking of Immediacy, the hunter is damned to remain on the outside of death and nature.

In *Autumn Antlers* the vital (!) statistics of the kill appear on the screen as the moment of arrow penetration is stilled, as if these numbers represented the content of the kill. For these hunters, being is the trophy of doing. "People kill to find out if they are real," said Marshall McLuhan. The hunter bags a trophy and has, for the moment, irrefutable evidence he's real. The video trophy is one more medium for the message of the killing ego.

When he isn't simply dozing in his tree-stand, the hunter, with the help of his camo, withdraws into the scenery, so he can "come out of nowhere" on the animal, and suddenly prevail as a killing presence. Watching such an event transpire on video, one in effect also "comes out of nowhere" with the camera. The video record of the hunt is an invitation to kill the animal vicariously. One cannot help but feel a Peeping Tom, hidden from an already impersonalized death by a superfluous camo of anonymity.

Every "narrative sequence" in these videos draws towards the killing "moment of truth." Everything else — the panoramic shots of nature, the inspection of weaponry, the buddy-chat — is table setting. Like the hunter, the camera is interested only in stalking up to the kill, to that moment of

pure doing. For the hunter, during the stalk and the kill, being is doing. The video reproduces this obsession by stopping time at the instant of pure doing, by halting and replaying the kill-moment as if it were the sum or focal point of being.

Does the modern hunter discount the animal's sentience? Does he believe he's just converting mobile matter into an immobile trophy? He claims that a messy, belaboured kill is unethical. He thus at least claims to acknowledge the fact of the sentience of animals. In actual fact, even on these videos, when a poor shot fails to take down an animal, the hunter retires for the night and recoups his kill the next morning. The videos say it is standard safety procedure to wait a few hours before tracking a felled bear. One video records the shooting of a bear, then follows the hunter to camp where he cheerfully drinks coffee out of earshot of the bear's dying. I am reminded of a Raymond Carver story in which a hunter places a gut-shot in a deer and, failing to track the animal, goes into town to get a haircut.

Rather than disbelieving in animal sentience, the hunter removes himself from the throes which are its evidence, when it is most convenient to do so. He is acutely aware of that sentience, even while he chooses not to identify with it. His is cognition without recognition. Further, when the hunt is on, that sentience contributes to the pleasure of the stalk. "Was he leery? Did he know you were there?" asks one guide after his hunter has killed a bear. "I think there's no question he knew something was up," answers the hunter, still breathy with adrenaline. It sharpens the thrill, that he has "taken" an alert, though not alert enough, animal.

This "taking" of an acutely sentient animal is also, simultaneously, the 'making' of a trophy. The moment of kill is a moment of conversion from reality to image. The trophy is a made image of the animal. The hunting video is a second-order trophy, as it were, making "real" images to replace an already stylized event.

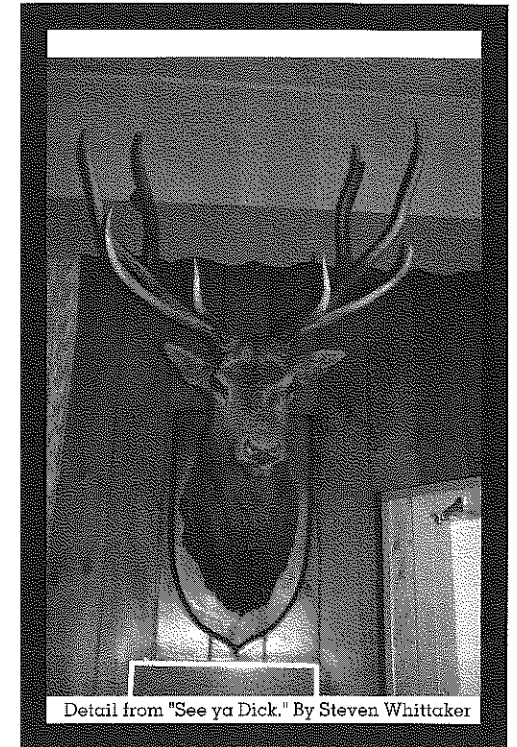
Yet isn't this hunting real within the scope it defines for itself? Not unless we pervert the meaning of "real" so that it applies also to the annihilating of the real. At the instant of kill, the moose carcass becomes immediately a simulacrum of the live moose. The hunter's libido and his self-esteem and his prestige are all juiced into that moment of conversion (from live-aura-real to dead-measurable-simulation.) The modern hunter's fantasy is of production and annihilation in the same act.

The produced simulacrum is preferable because it belongs to the hunter, whereas the live animal does not. The hunter credits himself with the size and form of the animal's body. It is as though he personally had caused his bear to grow to 350lbs and to develop a head nearly a foot wide. It is as though he has made him, not just killed him. Indeed he has made him, qua trophy. Alas, his trophy only confirms him temporarily, before he needs to go out and make himself real again. He secretly suspects he really hasn't created anything. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. Out of nothing comes nothing.

Similarly, fixing the kill in time, the video enables the hunter to believe he has made the event itself. The use of video finesses the hunter's illusion that he can be sheer agency, unconditioned by either his historical context or the exigencies of nature. Video enables him to create a stasis not only from an animal, but from an event.

In making his trophy, the modern hunter also produces his prestige. If the animal is large enough it will qualify (read quantify) for the *Boone and Crockett* or *Pope and Young* record books. Like the other elements of hunting success, this production of prestige is accomplishable by simply *doing* the right things the right way with the right equipment. There are clearly defined techniques for acquiring recognition.

In their emphasis on the "the right tool for the job," these video hunters act under the illusion that technique unambiguously produces freedom; that technique is freedom. His All Terrain Vehicle and state of the art hardware and software (much of it of military origin, eg. camouflage) permit the hunter to take technology out of its industrial context and to pretend he is not at its disposal. This equipment lets him entertain the illusion that he is master of a kind of pure application. He considers himself free, not only because he doesn't



Detail from "See ya Dick." By Steven Whittaker



"The Occidental," Nanaimo. By Steven Whittaker

answer to nature, but because all these tools serve him.

He doesn't recognize in the gun and tools and cameras at hand technology having its own purposive density, its own internality. He takes for granted in his equipment the intensiveness of applied cognition which its material form objectifies. He lets himself forget he relies on objects which others have made for this purpose. The modern hunter knows his weapon only in the external grace of execution, the skilled individualism it makes possible, not in its made-ness, its indebtedness to the organized efforts of others. He knows his technology only in the disproportionate power it focuses in his trigger finger.

While utterly dependent on intensive technology and organized activity in his hunt, the modern hunter imagines himself a lone, instinctual predator. He doesn't see that his tools and weapons and cameras do not only extrapolate, but also mediate his sentience and his will.

The videoing is just the next (techno)logical step in this obscuring of the real context of the modern hunt. This high fidelity trophy only re-presents what was already present in the hunt itself, the denial of the actual industrial context on which it depends. In this regard these videos are typical of most contemporary media, which tend to render their subject matter as though with immediacy, obscuring their own mediating role from view. Such media exacerbate, and maybe produce, the chronic North American appetite for immediacy. These same popular media, by severing events from real contexts, end up placing the real world of viable action and responsibility at one further remove.

In exposing the hunt to the video camera, the hunter also further removes himself from the actual event. His desire for multiple camera angles and slow motion shots leaves the modern hunter "on the outs" with a nature that is sheer externality. Nature is reduced to what is transparent to the camera eye. These videos recall Jean Baudrillard's description of "the era of hyperreality" in *The Ecstasy of Communication*. In these videos image supersaturates event. The event of the hunt is replaced by the myriad recorded angles and speeds. External verisimilitude thus replaces the internal content of the event, the killing and the death. The effect is comparable to that of the high-resolution pilot's-eye-view images of detonating missiles, which came to us out of the Gulf War's version of production value. With such excess of visual image over lived event, these videos cross the line Baudrillard would mark between spectacle and obscenity:

Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, ... when every-thing becomes immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication.

The modern hunt is obscene before a camera even enters the picture. The video is pornographic because it records the prior fact of this obscene event. And it is pornographic because in producing another explicit trophy, it converts death from grave indignity to "raw" information.

Which is to say death is missing here. The video production of the hunt both immerses us in the hyperreal immediacy of the hunter's kill, and puts us at one further remove from the animal's death. With his video camera the hunter produces a reviewable trophy of his Real Experience. His video record further confirms his hunt as an action that produces freedom from a world of impermeable externality. He ignores the fact that he himself determines nature as explicit, material surface, in order to then free himself from it.

We should be worried, living in an info-milieu which makes byte-sized, two-dimensional units of all events, even death. On the news we watch an inhabited building, videoed by the missile that destroys it. The image may fade to grey, but death withdraws from such a scene, in which it is no longer even implicit. The unrecognized disappearance of death is the trophy of the video hunter. The failure to realize death is also, though, the implicit truth of the "explicit immediate" media in which we are, with killing anonymity, immersed.

So much killing, so little death.

Steven Whittaker is a freelance writer living in Nanaimo, B.C.

#### Further Reading and Viewing

- Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988).
- Autumn Antlers* (Wildlife Quest, 1990).
- The Bear Facts with Bow and Arrow* (Eagle's View Productions, 1990).
- Big Timber Bears* (Chamberlain SD: Tom Miranda's Outdoor Films, 1989).
- Bowhunting Monarchs of the North* (Dave Coleman Productions).
- Fight for the Right* (Tecumseh MI: Dan Fitzgerald Hunting Videos, 1990).
- Horns of Plenty* (Spokane WA: Sun West Films).
- Hunting Dall Sheep and Caribou in the N.W.T.* (Calgary, Alta: Lifestyle Home Videos, 1986).
- Techniques for Instinctive Bow Shooting* (Ashboro NC: White Tail Visions, 1988).
- They're Goin' Down* (Tecumseh MI: Dan Fitzgerald Hunting Videos, 1991).

## Edward Palmer Thompson 1924-1993

Cultural Studies, which has become something of a buzz-word for those who see themselves as dissident academics in North America and the Antipodes, did not, of course, spring ready-made out of Larry Grossberg's imagination of what the British were up to in the 1960s and 1970s, but was a product of a very real struggle involving all the political definitions that were present then and have become more pronounced now. Those of us who marched to Aldermaston and back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, who helped to establish the New Left Club (at the Partisan Coffee House at 7 Carlisle Street in Soho, London), who discovered Jazz with Eric Hobsbawm, who taught evening classes for the Workers' Educational Association, who fought with the Fife Socialist League, who defended (equally) Tom M'boya, Lenny Bruce, Wole Soyinka, C.L.R. James, Vic Allen are surprised to discover that what we were doing was inventing Cultural Studies.

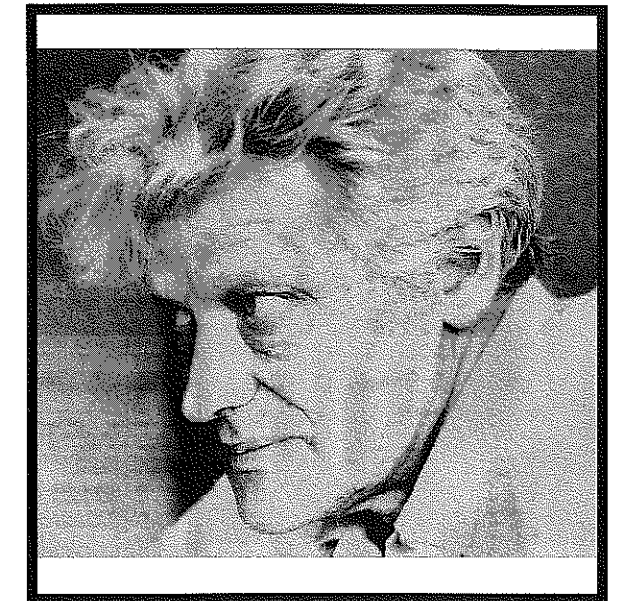
The death of Edward Thompson pulls us up short. Cultural Studies has become the gossip of this and that. In Thompson's case this involved the petulant diatribe against Perry Anderson in the 1960s, the cantankerous outrage against Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson in a History Workshop conference in an old church in Oxford in the late 1970s, the absurd pomposity recorded by those who only knew him from the outside. And, of course, the labeling: in the Oxford meeting he said, "I reject without reservation the identification of the Marxist tradition of historiography of which I have been taken as one representative of 'culturalism.' This term is Richard Johnson's invention." But, of course, Thompson was all and none of that. It is impossible to think of any of these disputes without recognizing that they were not academic in the arcane sense that much cultural theory is couched, but directly political. On the other hand there was nothing that was technically 'academic' which was not equally political. Ultimately, even the very personal was political. From the death of his brother by a firing squad in Bulgaria in World War II (which he recounted in his first book) to his last book on Blake (Thompson becomes Blake), the literary, the historical, the political, the personal are one.

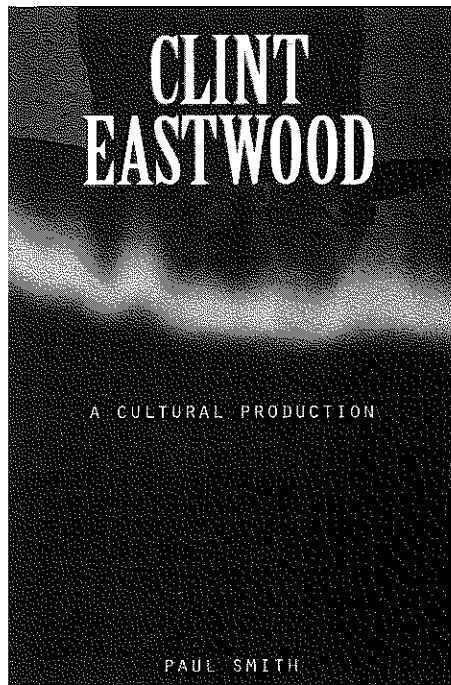
His legacy was to compel us to engage with human others, to think ourselves into their situation, whether they were the late eighteenth-century working class making themselves, or those, in the twentieth century, living under the terror of nuclear power, who chose to resist the ultimate death machine. If Thompson was the ultimate Luddite, it was because he was convinced that the mechanization of everyday life was not conducive to our social health.

The central feature of Edward's life and work was that it was not academic in the narrow sense of the term. He was not part of condescending academia which saw itself as setting rules, in order to create an academic 'culture' that was sealed off from the everyday world. Quite the contrary. That academic world was just as culpable in compounding the problems that face us as were the multinational corporations, or the politicians who constantly speak of our venalities. The real test of our scholarship was how it measured up against the harsh realities of every-day life. His venom was directed against those (politicians, academics, even Marxists) who behaved as if their rules, their tribal customs, were the only ones that mattered.

But Thompson will be remembered primarily for the marvellous books on social and cultural history (*William Morris, The Making of the English Working Class, Whigs and Hunters, Blake*), his many pieces of journalism (in particular, perhaps, those collected under the title *Writing By Candlelight*), his ferocious intervention in the theoretical concerns of the New Left (*The Poverty of Theory*), and his systematic campaigns against nuclear weapons from the late 1950s to his death. Ultimately, however, his major contribution was to a complete rethinking of how history is written, involving the reclamation of people's history, and the involvement of non-academics in the research and writing of that history. More than any other thinker in the British New Left, Thompson, to use Gramsci's phrase, helped to create Organic Intellectuals. Anyone concerned with Cultural Studies today who forgets his legacy does so at his or her peril.

Ioan Davies  
September, 1993





## Clint On Clint

BY Clint Burnham

Paul Smith, *Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

When the new Clint vehicle, *In the Line of Fire*, appeared this past summer, John Harkness's capsule blurb in Toronto's *NOW* magazine said that the movie "allows Eastwood to deconstruct his own steely persona." Just what is it about Eastwood's films, or his actorly signification, that everyone thinks he's suddenly "deconstructing" himself; or, rather, isn't that precisely what he does in almost every film: last year's *Unforgiven*, his s/m flick *Tightrope*, the sensitive-guy-goes-to-war *Heartbreak Ridge*, all the way back to (chop off his leg! chop off his leg!) *The Beguiled*?

I almost wrote *The Beguiling* there for a minute, and Toronto's pre-eminent 'zine and comicbook store should indicate my level of critical taste, so before I turn to Paul Smith's new book (which explains precisely why the above paragraph is the case), I should just mention

that the best guide to Clint's newest flick (which of course is not covered in Smith's book) is the 'zine *Open Mouth, Insert Gun*. *OM,IG* deals expertly with homoeroticism in action flix, including the celebrated (well, I'm celebrating it, anyway) gunblowjob scene in *In the Line of Fire*. (There's an even more explicit scene like this in the new Canadian movie *I Love a Man in a Uniform*, but in this case it's a woman's gun that gets sucked!)

But Paul Smith's book on Eastwood does nothing if not move film theory to a new, materialist level that I've seldom seen before in academic criticism. The book ranges widely over Eastwood's filmic career, both as actor and director (not including TV stuff), and even into such "extra-textual" arenas as his term as mayor of Carmel, California. By examining films in terms of cultural materialism, Smith makes us see movies as "material" significations in ways the *Screen* chappies could only dream of. (The Seventies may be back, but surely Laura Mulvey, Colin MacCabe and their bizarre theories of fetishism and floating signifiers have gone the way of the dinosaur.) This is signalled in the first chapter, "Subaltern Spaghetti," which argues that Leone's spaghetti westerns were in effect subversions of 1950's and 60's U.S. cinematic imperialism. Leone's "No Name" trilogy dealt with the unsaid of U.S. westerns: Mexican-Spanish constituents, bounty hunters, a grittier and more violent action, etc.

Smith argues convincingly that while Eastwood's persona as a Sergio Leone "spaghetti" cowboy was in fact very critical of U.S. myths and hegemony, Eastwood essentially tried to make his Western heroes since then fit more squarely into the filmic mainstream. This "restitution," Smith shows, was conducted everywhere from plot and characterization down to the level of the shot and lighting. Thus, *High Plains Drifter*

takes on the full brunt of the task of integrating the No Name character ... into the Hollywood plot. The stranger's role here is to act once more as the agent and instigator of responsible community action and ideology

— a far cry from the role of No Name in the Leone trilogy .... The repeated long takes of [Eastwood's] slowly moving body and the close-ups of the formality of his behavioural rituals and of the almost total impassivity of his squinting face compose by far the bulk of the film's shots, and their overall effect is to offer the Eastwood body as an object of contemplation and objectification in a way that Leone does only sporadically. In other words, this is a highly formalized representation of Eastwood's body, which is itself a gesture of restitution, literally putting the white male demigod back into the center of the screen .... Eastwood attempts to exploit the power of the image that Leone has bequeathed him, while melding it back into the traditional array of devices in which Hollywood cinema has been constituted. (38-39)

Smith is equally uncanny in his assessment of Eastwood's play with masculinity. He takes as his cue an Annie Leibowitz photo of Eastwood all tied up and seeming to enjoy it (I always knew Clint was a bottom! He's pretty cute, ya know ...). So, in most Eastwood westerns or cop movies the hero is first offered as spectacle, whom we enjoy seeing move and be eroticized; this is then followed

by the destruction of [the] body. That is, the heroic man is always physically beaten, injured, and brought to breaking point [followed by] the obvious third stage, in which the hero is permitted to emerge triumphant within the movie's narrative line. This third stage obviously provides the security and comfort of closure and is a crucial element in the production of spectatorial pleasure, but [Paul] Willemen proposes that both of the first stages of representation are also in their way pleasurable for the spectator. The first 'pleasure'—that of voyeuristic admiration of the hero's body and presence—is followed diegetically and graphically by the 'unquiet pleasure of seeing the male mutilated ... and restored through violent brutality.'" (156) But while Eastwood's military or

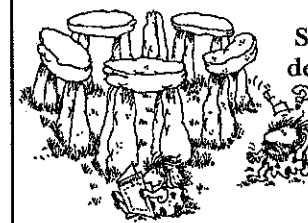
police movies are conservative in their harnessing of viewers' identificatory pleasure into the service of patriarchal power, Smith argues that there is always a hysterical residue or underside to the filmic text. Thus the way in which Eastwood's characters will flirt with identification with women or gays/lesbians, or male impotence, are "an unresolved or uncontained representation of the body of the male as it exceeds the narrative processes." So it's not the tired old dichotomy of whether Clint meant it or not (and thus is apparently deconstructing himself at every turn): even as the narrative tries out its strategies of containment, it's still pleasurable. Smith talks about his own titillation when he sees Clint in handcuffs; he too, threatens to exceed certain critico-narrative processes.

Smith is equally critical of Eastwood's recent status as 'auteur'; he shows, for example, how auteurship is constructed by a complicit media and the extent to which Hollywood depends on the myth of "fiercely" independent filmmakers. (Eastwood's Malpaso production company thus fashions itself "against" the major studios, for instance.) Discussing the close of *White Hunter, Black Heart*, Smith writes: "The auteur-father makes his movie. He mutters the word 'Action' and announces the closure of all the hysterical dramas, all the obsessions, all the self-doubting stories of the patriarch turning in upon himself, and all the narrative tests that he has therefore gone through, and he becomes a director." (262)

Smith's critique of the Eastwood phenomenon is as impressive as his practical theorizing; at the level of jargon, that is, he displays both a love for bizarre or eccentric turns of phrase and a light hand for innovative and novel lexical meanings. Thus, on the one hand, words like "risible," "subverting," "insipissated," "enocratic," and "lugubrious" are likely to send you reaching for the OED. On the other hand, "intendment" (a legalistic term Smith uses to mean the intent of a text—as opposed to that of its author), and "tributary media" (a pun on tributes and tributary rivers: the various magazines, TV shows, and newspaper journalists who construct Hollywood on an edifice of gilt-edged shit) are also useful terms that will most likely spread beyond the province of their author.

Everyone's talking about masculinity now: what's important about Smith is that he concentrates on a large body of work, organized around one "character," Clint Eastwood. So there's ample opportunity to test arguments, take account of current work, and provide sheer volume of articulation. Paul Smith's work here is impressive; no one can write on Eastwood now without referring to it, but the book will also influence how we think about masculinity in film, the western, and the cinematic apparatus in general.

*Clint Burnham is a poet and literary critic living in Toronto.*



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## Revisoning Modernism

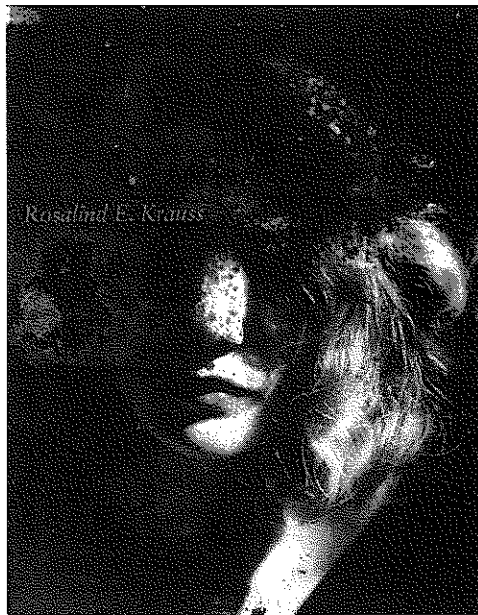
BY Shane Nakoneshny

Rosalind E. Krauss,  
**The Optical Unconscious.**  
Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

From impressionism to abstraction via the upwardly linear route of neo-impressionism, fauvism and cubism, the positively progressive story of mainstream modernism nicely and unproblematically unfolds. Delineated by the infamous American art critic, Clement Greenberg, in the 1960s and exemplified by the work of Manet, Picasso and Pollock, this particular trajectory of modernism has long been the ideology of artists, art historians, critics and theorists, as well as the rite of passage for many students of art history, undergraduate and graduate alike.

Greenberg's formulation of modernism's self-critical capacity extolled the peeling away of realist, illusionist art (an "art to conceal art") and the intensification, almost the exacerbation of an "art to call attention to art." In pursuit of 'purity' by means of an ever-increasing emphasis on flatness, two-dimensionality and the properties of pigment, modernist art revealed and exhibited the conditions of vision itself, as these were understood abstractly. As Greenberg wrote, modernist painting "no longer permit[s] sculptural illusion, or *trompe-l'oeil*, but it does and must permit optical illusion."

Paintings such as Pollock's *One (Number 31, 1950)* (1950) embraced whole-heartedly the modernist aesthetic championed by Greenberg because eye and object connect instantly. In fact, so rapid was the connection that neither eye nor object seemed attached to a carnal body. It is this disincarnated look with no 'before' or 'after' but a reified 'now' that epitomized the modernist ambition. In its hermetically sealed environment, it exhibited completeness, silence and atemporality.



In *The Optical Unconscious* (resonating with Benjamin's "A Small History of Photography" (1931) and later, Jameson's *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Art* (1981)), Rosalind Krauss argues for an alternative history to the above Greenbergian narrative based on vision itself. Not rejecting what she calls the 'official story,' Krauss rigorously re-works the grand narrative through Freudian and Lacanian insight. Akin to the slips of the tongue, the daydream, or the fantasy that threatens the ego's stability, Krauss' counter-history speaks of those 'other' moments in the visual arts that challenge the hegemony of this modernist logic.

*The Optical Unconscious* functions as a template composed of a rich tapestry of diverse narratives. Ranging from the theoretical to the art historical, and from the anecdotal to the fictive (such as her eavesdropping on Roger Fry and John Ruskin), these various narratives punctuate the text at select moments. With a dazzling array of some well-worked and creatively employed concepts such as *informe*, mimicry, the uncanny and *bassesse* from theorists such as Bataille, Caillois, Deleuze and Lyotard, Krauss analyzes the 'other' works of modernist artists such as Ernst's collages, Duchamp's rotoreliefs, Man Ray's pho-

tographs and Giacometti's sculptures. These works, borrowing from popular culture's obsession with optical devices, exploit the idea of a separation of the senses in order to relocate vision in the entire body.

In chapter one, Krauss exposes modernism's underlying visual functions and implications by rethinking the modernist paradigm through Saussure's notion of meaning (vision in this case) and the Klein Group's thesis that for every social absolute there is an accompanying shadowy correlate. Krauss's semiotic square maps out four points: ground, foreground, not-ground and not-foreground. The opposition between the first two terms, the distinction of object from ground, produces realism and visual perception. The last two terms simultaneously preserve and cancel their distinction, creating abstraction (grids, all-over painting, collage, or colour-field painting) and a vision that is self-reflexive and pure. The structural graph affirms modernism's closed-endedness, its ahistoricity and its self-generated repetitiveness.

Krauss' analysis of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs* in chapter three illustrates the dynamics of her thesis. Obsessed with the physiology of vision for fifteen years, Duchamp called himself a 'precision oculist.' Vehemently opposing the work of 'retinal' painters whose primary concern lay with the patterns of colours and lines, which were autonomous visual images isolated and detached from the social, Duchamp's interests lay in creating an art form that appealed to the 'grey matter.' His primary interest was in the area of the cerebral cortex in which both exterior and interior stimuli meet, where the eye and brain encounter each other in the process of forming objects. Occurring within the body, thereby restoring vision to its carnal support, Duchamp's work undermines modernism's claim to vision's autonomy, purity and transparency.

Similar to the phonographic record, Duchamp's rotoreliefs, *Chinese Lantern* and *Goldfish* (both of 1935), create an erotically soothing, yet almost disturb-

ing, three-dimensional pulse that is produced for the viewer's eyes. Specifically addressing vision's relation to desire, the images of a rising balloon or a fish swimming resemble the body parts of a breast (*Chinese Lantern*) or eye (*Corolles*), while their thrusting and parrying quality mimics the rhythm of substitution as informed by Lacanian theory. *Corolles* acts out an endless array of substitutions from one part-object to another: from eye, to breast, to urinary tract, to sexual penetration. Ernst's 1930 collage novel, *A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil*, shows the pulse or beat connecting the interior image of the girl to the exterior form of the zootrope. Constructing a gestalt only to deconstruct it, its rhythm is jerky. The to and fro swing of Giacometti's *Suspended Ball* (1930-1) shows anything but modernism's claim to stillness or indivisibility.

For the artists of the optical unconscious, the beat is deep inside vision. Invisible and transgressive of the constitutive intervals of discourse and distances of representations and hence, akin to the primary process of the unconscious, it is figural but in a unique sense of the word. Called the matrix, according to Lyotard's *Discours, Figure*, this third order of the figural, known as "bad form," is the heteroclitite, unimaginable space of the unconscious. Recognizing no difference, it has no stability, identity or order — which is exactly what Greenbergianism (and the Symbolic Order) relies upon. Analogous to Freud's case, "A Child is Beaten" (1919), in which one sentence/ scene contains several contradictory and overlapping sentences/ scenes, the pulse may also have many places in one place. According to Lyotard, it "do[es] not form a system but a block." It is also erotically stimulating and repetitive, which accounts for the on/off beat in the work of Ernst or in Picasso's studies of *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe après Manet* (1962).

Known only through the figuration in fantasy, to be pushed out of the figural and into real time, it appears in the form of a rhythm or pulse. Thus, this oscillating presence and absence of pleasure

shows the moments in which desire is caught in the formal matrix of dreams and symptoms. Akin to those moments say of the Freudian slip, it shows the fragility of the gestalt as the death drive tries to break through.

In her last chapter, Krauss switches from the analysis of early 20th-century European artists to such American artists as Jackson Pollock and his followers, who in one way or another "decode" his drip paintings. Focussing on a multiplicity of often fragmented, often insufficiently articulated theories (sublimation, mimicry, *bassesse*, to name a few), that at times seem to confuse rather than corroborate the main thesis of the book, Krauss nonetheless provides some illuminating and rather creative interpretations.

For instance, she briefly theorizes Pollock's move from the floor (where he executed his works) to the wall (where they were exhibited) through Freud's notion of sublimation, paralleling the human evolution from horizontality to verticality in which vision becomes the privileged sense. Pollock's obsession with surpassing Picasso's genius is theorized through triangular desire and mimetic rivalry. Through the notion of abduction, that is, through the model of the detective story in which the murderer always unconsciously leaves a clue behind for the detective to create another narrative from, Krauss re-reads how each of 'Jack the Dripper's' heirs seized a particular aspect of his work from which to create their own art.

Attracted to Pollock's fame and the form of his work, Warhol executed *Piss Painting* (1961) on the floor, which takes the notion of liquid gesture literally one step further. Morris Louis's sublime *Saraband* (1959) extends the operations of gravity by allowing the stain of colour to bleed down the canvas. Greenberg's analysis of Pollock's work focused on the collapse of foreground and background in which, by "avoiding the cut" as Greenberg remarked, Pollock created a totally immediate visual field. Robert Morris' *Untitled* (1967-8) re-reads the notion of the cut of continuity in the can-

vas by disturbing all geometrical planes with his soft undulating forms of black cloth falling upon the gallery floor. While these interpretations are indeed innovative, two larger problems prevail, affecting the overall framework of the text.

First, Krauss seems to contradict herself by basing the decoding of Jackson Pollock's work on the notion of repetition. Arguing against Fried's point that "Among the important American painters who have emerged since 1940 Pollock stands almost alone in his refusal to repeat himself," she argues for repetition, remarking, "Isn't repeating oneself precisely what painting allows one to do, especially once one has found one's particular language, the stylistic invention that will allow one to move inside it and inhabit it, growing and changing within the new syntax one can call one's own." This seems to contradict her earlier comments in chapter one on modernism. Also, trying to mimic the theme of repetitiveness in her writing style, her repetitive use of a certain anecdote concerning an earlier encounter with Greenberg soon loses its effectiveness after several readings.

Second, while critical of modernism's linearity, Krauss nonetheless proceeds in the same type of trajectory citing one Greenbergian approved modernist work after another with, of course, the exception of Warhol. Interesting too, and in contrast to some of the 'other' modernist artists' works, such as Duchamp's rotoreliefs or Ernst's collages which do not form part of the Greenbergian canon, Krauss in her last chapter reverts to canonical artists and their celebrated works.

Why then is chapter five at odds with the earlier chapters? Possibly because many of the earlier chapters are reworkings of such previous essays as "Grids," "No More Play" and "Corpus Delicti," which for the most part are reproduced in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1986). Her essay, "The Im/Pulse to See," is reproduced almost verbatim in *Vision and Visuality* (1988). Containing few surprises, *The*

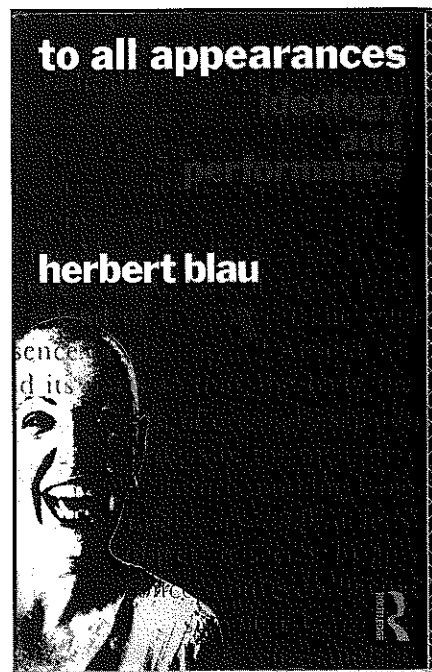




*Optical Unconscious* appears as a logical extension of Krauss's earlier work. Notwithstanding this, the employment of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis is for the most part well articulated. The tapestry of narratives is refreshing and cleverly employed because while undermining the authority of the author, it covertly supports the author's point of view. Moreover, these various fictive moments strategically offer the reader a breather from a heavy dose of theory. But her colourful, repetitive use of anecdotes from Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg in and out of the text (they have appeared time and again elsewhere in her writings and public talks) seems strangely and suspiciously therapeutic for Krauss.

For many students of art history, Greenberg's story has always been problematic. Devoid of context and 'other' considerations, the narrative is still strongly contested as well as militantly defended. Krauss's re-working of it (especially with the theme of visuality, which has become extremely popular since the 1980s) — not rejection of it — provides an alternative that one has always envisioned, but been afraid to see.

*Shane Nakoneshny is an art historian and a PhD student in Social and Political Thought.*



## The Future of Illusion

BY Julie Adam

Herbert Blau, *To All Appearances: Ideology and Performance*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Ideology permeates everything: the more we protest this ideological truism — insisting on neutrality, universality and other forms of political (ideological) blandness — the more ideology controls us, shapes us, is us. *To All Appearances* attempts to evade the shadow of ideology while trying to capture it, for "all performance occurs in an ideological blur," says Herbert Blau.

Blau, known for his work with the experimental KRAKEN group and his seminal books on theatre (*The Impossible Theater; Take Up the Bodies; The Eye of Prey; The Audience*), uses 'ideology' to mean both consciously and unconsciously biased structures of belief, with hidden or open partisan objectives, and 'performance' to cover theatrical practices from the proscenium to the street, and even the stages of politics. Not only do ideologies perform on the boards of history, but performance, itself an ideological act,

"involves questions of property ownership, hierarchy, authority, force, and what may be the source of ideology according to Nietzsche: the will to power."

While tracing the ideology of performance and the performance of ideology in the twentieth century, Blau distances himself from both Marxism and feminism (considering the latter "one of the more threatening discourses of recent years to those with any investment in...inherited systems and conventions, habits and reflexes"), but admits to having "been stimulated by...[Marxists'] revisionist discourse" and the critical insights of some feminist theorists and academic Marxists.

Blau sees ideology as a series of disguises and believes that, rather than "ideological analysis," he is engaging in "a kind of speculative double take on aspects of performance, with attention to the particular circumstances or variable conditions that put them into question." Specifically, what interests him is

the instance of emergence or transformative moment at which any practice, in the theater or elsewhere, becomes like ideology itself, something other than what it appeared to be, like theater itself before it identified itself; that is, before it could be distinguished for better or worse from whatever it is it was not. It is here...that theater blends with ideology at the most disturbing level of demystifying thought, for when we think twice about the question of priority, whatever it *was* appears to be theater.

His disjointed, untamed investigation of theatrical practice ranges widely and wildly over territory from Shakespeare to Kathakali, Meyerhold to Robert Wilson, Marx to Jameson, Nietzsche to Baudrillard, Aristotle to Brecht, rushing breathlessly over Tadashi Suzuki and Pina Bausch, Bunraku and Annie Sprinkle, the ANC and E.T. ... It is post-modern criticism that is guaranteed to enchant some, infuriate others and put to sleep a few more.

In exploring the constantly changing ideology of illusion in a decentred post-

modern world, Blau must consider the illusion of ideology as well as everything else a skeptical approach to both ideology and performance (as concepts and practices) entails. As he says in the Foreword:

...if [the book's] partial subject is ideology, it is a book without a thesis. It has, rather, a sense of things, derived (I think) from years of working in the theater, a form which more than any other is both nurtured and disturbed by, or subject to, the contingencies of appearance.

Certainly it is a book with a rich sense of many 'things,' to use Blau's own modest term, but it is questionable whether it is successful in its double address, both to people in the theatre, possibly unaware of theory, possibly hostile to it, and to those interested in theory but having little knowledge of theatre. The latter will not have it easy keeping up with Blau's casual, aphoristic forays into the theatrical world, where he is no doubt comfortably at home, in spite of some intellectualized protestations to the contrary; conversely, I doubt that too many theatre practitioners, with the exception of theoreticians/academicians like Blau himself, will be at ease with Blau's viewing the stage through (unfocused/refocused; here fogged-up, there smudged; once rose-coloured, then blackened) ideological lenses of his theatrical binoculars.

However, *To All Appearances* raises a number of important questions, for both theatrical practice and cultural theory. If in theatre all is appearance and all is illusion (representation; character, mask and costume; imaginary time and space), and at the same time all is concrete material and organic reality (presentation; actor/body; real time and space), what does performance reveal? What does it conceal? And what is its relationship to reality? How do we perform reality? (Is reality the performance or the performed? If both, where is illusion?) And what is the illusive and elusive nature of ideology? The perceptual process itself, Blau believes, is an appearance based on ideology, an appearance that determines

our reality, itself an illusion.

Appropriately, Blau explores various dramatic representations of perceptual processes (realism and a number of counter movements, including expressionism, epic theatre, agit prop, happenings, performance art, imagistic theatre), and several prominent European theories and techniques of acting (especially Stanislavski's, Meyerhold's, Brecht's, Grotowski's). He also discusses, as well as specific (ideological) issues of performance, for instance, in the section 'The Surpassing Body,' historical concerns with the body and the 'body politic,' and in 'Distressed Emotion,' theatre's changing relationship to the emotional life of texts, characters, actors, audiences. His analyses are both diachronic and synchronic, often in one phrase.

*To All Appearances* has special significance for those practitioners of theatre who think of themselves as politicized, for it both describes and embodies (through its own ironic doubting, bracketing, double-taking) the complexity of ideology and its shadowing in performance. Blau traces the legacy of early twentieth-century ideology (in the theatres of Stanislavski and Meyerhold) through Brecht and leftist American theatrical practice in the thirties to happenings in the sixties, and postmodernist performance in the eighties, with shifts in focus from class to gender to race to body to language and back again, always with an eye to the problematic of illusion.

Unlike many commentators, not to mention practitioners, Blau brings his erudite historical perspective and shrewd skepticism to postmodern performance. He is well acquainted with the emperor and has seen his new clothes. Earlier powers, it seems, were more potent:

...the verbal content and incipient dramaturgy of many performance pieces seem to me, with whatever avant-garde, postmodern, or political claims, retrograde in comparison to various segments of Pinter's drama that, like Beckett's, are virtual models of solo performance or other aspects of performance art.

This is no news to those of us who long for something innovative but know that so many 'innovations' are themselves, illusory. Newness, like everything else, of course, is ideologically construed. And whose avant-garde is it anyway?

There is much to enjoy in Blau's at times theoretically dense, at others casually anecdotal, adventure in ideology and performance, that is, if one can rise above (wade through?) the logorrhea, the frequent self-conscious and self-satisfied cleverness, the forty-something-line sentence (I prefer Molly Bloom's) ... the unevenness of ideas and styles. In places *To All Appearances* reads like an unedited journal, in others like a turgid lecture. But some of Blau's statements on modern and postmodern theatre are memorable in their crystalline simplicity, as for instance the following observation:

So far as the theater is concerned, it has always seemed to me as if Beckett's practice occurred, with a certain virtuosity, in the space left empty, the precipitous silences, of the drama of Chekov.

The sentence forces one back into/onto the early stages of modern drama to consider 'realism,' that most complex of simplicities in theatrical practice. In the silences of a world on the edge of disaster we discern the murmurs of a fragmenting universe. (Perhaps now when students ask what the breaking string in *The Cherry Orchard* signifies — yes, they are still asking and we are still answering — we can say 'the hopelessness of Vladimir and Estragon.')

*To All Appearances* reminds us that everything is ideology; everything is illusion; illusion is ideology; ideology is illusion; ideology is reality; reality is illusion; illusion is reality; reality is ideology; ideology is illusion.

We perform ourselves on the shifting sands of ideology ... to all appearances.

*Julie Adam is a member of the Border/Lines collective.*



## The B/L List

**Ellen Willis.** *No More Nice Girls: Countercultural Essays.* Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1992.

If you like *The Village Voice* (and I do) you'll love Ellen Willis (and I do). Breezily intellectual yet incisive and rigorous, Willis presents a feminism full of ecstasy and excess (in the approbative sense of that word): unrepentantly pansexual and anti-anti-pornographic. Because *No More Nice Girls* is a collection of previously published essays, it is occasionally repetitive, reconstructing the same theoretical ground to make different practical points. Willis' radical prose, though, is so refreshing compared to what passes for academic adventurousness (brackets and "slashes") that you'll want to read the book in its entirety. Willis might be the Emma Goldman of the '90s. S.F.

**Bonnie Haaland.** *Emma Goldman: Sexuality and the Impurity of the State.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993.

This book provides a solid account of Emma Goldman's introduction of feminism and sexuality into anarchist discourse. It is, however, burdened by, call it an identitarian approach to theories: critics are cited as "social constructionist" or "social constructionist feminist." Also, Haaland's book seems to fault Goldman for not being a late 20th century anti-essentialist thinker. Goldman's social-political activism exempts her, I think, from needing a grad course in theory to be lauded. Nonetheless, the book develops lucidly Goldman's influences and positions, especially regarding sexuality. S.F.

**Sande Cohen.** *Academia and the Luster of Capital.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Every un- and under-employed Ph.D. should read this book. Despite its sometimes cumbersome prose, *Academia and the Luster of Capital* is a relentless and angry critique of "tenure," "research" and other apparatuses of the university that too rarely get examined as text. Cohen's sense of the commodification of intellectual endeavours here and in an earlier book, *Historical Culture: On the Recording of Academic Disciplines*, is apt. Cohen's own contractual battles with an unnamed school (rendered in a titillating way as \_\_\_\_\_) give his book what I'd say is an attractive gossipy/vindictive dimension. S.F.

**Craig Calhoun.** (ed.). *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992.

This volume brings together a variety of essays and responses presented at a conference (University of North Carolina, 1989) on the occasion of the translation of Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Originally published in 1962, this work not only established Habermas' reputation, but also spawned a wide ranging interest in the public as an historical and political concept and a re-evaluation of Marxist and liberal theories of democracy. The essays collected here testify to both the continuing relevance of Habermas' early work and its problematical character. D.W.

**Bruce Robbins.** (ed.). *The Phantom Public Sphere.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

The fifth volume in a series on cultural politics by the Social Text collective, this collection brings together various essays which interrogate the notion of the public sphere. While the title derives from Walter Lippman's elitist rejection of the public (1925), the broader intention of this volume is to provide a critique of Habermas' concept of the public sphere from the perspective of cultural studies and communitarian politics. It thus brings into focus the divisions within the contemporary left over the relationship between culture and politics. D.W.

**Noam Chomsky.** *Year 501: The Conquest Continues.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993.

*Year 501* is vintage Chomsky. Exhaustively documented and passionately argued, it portrays 1492 as the beginning of a dark chapter of greed and exploitation, initiated by the pillaging of the Americas and climaxing in the apotheosis of the United States as the patron of a "new world order," following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Chomsky, the arch linguist, revels in exposing the political doublespeak of this "old world order," as much as he displays pained outrage in his chronicle of its endless crimes against humanity. R.G.

**Lee Maracle.** *Ravensong: A Novel.* Vancouver: Press Gang, 1993.

*Ravensong* is Lee Maracle's second novel. Maracle, a west coast Native writer known for her storytelling and autobiographical writings, traverses familiar territory in this narrative which juxtaposes the thoughts and experiences of two sisters living in a native community. The common thread running through this tapestry of a story is Raven, the trickster spirit who both ponders and initiates the thoughts of these women, finally inspiring action as well as self-realization. *Ravensong* is written in a densely textured style highly descriptive of both the setting and culture of west coast Native life. R.G.

**Martyn J. Lee.** *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

The increasing significance of a critique of consumption practices in contemporary culture has been met by a concomitant flurry of texts available on the subject. For those readers looking for a careful overview of the field, Lee just might be the ticket. Lee's ostensible contribution to the ongoing debate is to link the discourses of political economy and cultural studies, but - while heartening - this is not a groundbreaking development. M.H.

**Simon During.** (ed.) *The Cultural Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Well, here it is folks! "Cultural Studies II: The Textbook," playing at a bookstore near you! This admirable collection includes some groundbreaking cultural studies essays, but resists the temptation to include everything and everybody. During has provided individual introductions to each essay, as well as a succinct overview of the "field" (not!). M.H.

**Henry Giroux & Peter McLaren.** (eds.). *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies.*

New York: Routledge, 1993

Given that a systematic analysis of the relationships between cultural studies and critical pedagogy is long overdue, to expect one collection of essays to fill the void is an onerous, if untenable, demand. *Between Borders* is both wide ranging and eclectic. It makes connections between the work of educational practitioners in schools and the university and other cultural workers whose projects are also in some sense pedagogical. *Between Borders* provides much food for thought; having ruminated over this tasty morsel, however, the reader may be left hungering for a more substantial feed. M.H.

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Reviews by Stan Fogel, Robyn Gillam,  
Michael Hoehsmann and David Wallace



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